

NZ RUSHhour

The magazine for smart commuters

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Riding with the Y-FACTOR

Why the Y-factor? Why not the X-Factor?

Well, maybe it has to do with the Y-shaped design of the Can Am Spyder Roadster. Or maybe it has to do with the way Can Am spells Spyder Roadster, with a Y instead of an I.

It certainly is not for generational reasons. This machine is designed for Generation X rather than Generation Y - let them find their own toys to play with.

Whatever the reason, we don't really care. The Can Am Spyder Roadster is an intriguing machine, which the Rush Hour ride team was fortunate enough to play with for a couple of days.

As you can see, there are two Spyder Roadsters.

One happens to be a conventional (yeah, right) motorcycle geared five speed. The other has a semi automatic, electronically controlled, five-speed, controlled by trigger levers on the left hand handlebar. Both have reverse gear.

We say 'semi-automatic' because this gearbox will default set to 1st gear, and it will engine brake for you.

It doesn't however, move up through the gears, but rather leaves the rider in charge of the level of speed and excitement, with either sedate or racier shifts, and yes, the Spyder Roadster is racy.

How racy? Powering the Spyder is a liquid-cooled, 990cc Rotax V-twin with 79kW available at 8500rpm and 104.3Nm of torque at 6250rpm, moving a mass of 316kg dry.

But then you have to ask the question: is the Spyder a bike, a trike, a car or a quad?

It depends. The Spyderys we rode are officially registered as cars but, as we at Rush Hour are more inclined to ride motorcycles, both riders felt the Spyderys were actually motorcycles with a little extra added.

After longer rides through the twisties of Coatesville however, the handling characteristics of the Spyder better resembled that of a quad, in that higher speed cornering was a darn sight easier if the rider shifts his/her bodyweight to counter the turn.

However, the registration of the vehicle defines who can actually ride the Spyder. As a car, anyone with a car license can drive the Spyder, no special skills/licenses required.

Do you need to wear a helmet? Technically no, but you'd be insane not to. There's no roof, and gravel at any speed over 20km/h hurts, let alone wind burn.

Even Can Am recommends helmets and we heartily endorse them for any form of open air transport.



So is this the lazy motorcyclist's way to have the thrill of a bike ride without actually getting a license?

Perhaps, but there are drawbacks. Once the Spyder is registered as a car, you can't change it later. Once it's a registered car, it's always a car in the eyes of the authorities.

And the Spyder takes up the space of a car on the road anyway. At 2.6 metres long and 1.5m wide, the Spyder is comparable to something like a Suzuki Swift, Honda Jazz or other small car.

Does it have any other small car like characteristics? Well, it has a boot, err bonnet, um, storage compartment in the nose, holding 44 litres or 15kg worth of budgie feathers, if that's your preference.

And it has safety features similar to a car. Anti-lock brakes for instance, are standard, as is a traction control system, vehicle stability system, rollover mitigation system (that's an interesting one, we've only seen this feature on very expensive Volvos!), dynamic power steering and a digitally encoded security system.

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We have received a great deal of feedback from the last issue of *Rush Hour*, with a number of buyers voting with their cheque books for specific products we featured.

That's good, but we have to confess to slipping up on two articles – the first of which was picked up by Edward Meili

We said the Super Fly 150 from Vespa did not have access to what looked to be a large glovebox. This opens by pushing the ignition barrel in and yes, it is a well-sized stowage area.

Thanks for that Edward, we might just take you up on the offer of the Auckland to Wellington run, we'll be in touch.

The second was from three people who read our article on the Kymco Exciting 500 scooter, a machine which suffered from "publicitus" - a horrible condition which manifests itself with a complete lack of images.

You said we gave you all the information, but no clue as to what this adventurously-sized scooter actually looks like.

Our apologies and thanks – to all those dedicated readers who wrote in and asked us for more information – and specifically for pictures.

For those of you who haven't managed to get to Bug Central in Grey Lynn and check it out, this is what the Exciting looks like:

So, with all the mea culpas out of the way, what have we got for you this month? The importance and good sense of servicing, what's available in wet weather gear and a few other bits and pieces, including an early start on Telethon and a national carpooling day to mention but a few.

What have I missed? Plenty. So don't let me hold you up, have a read, have a laugh and stay safe till next time.

Happy reading, *Sean*



Riding with the Y-FACTOR *continued*

digitally encoded security system.

This last is a tad dramatic, given the Spyder is not merely started by turning the key. There is quite a bit more to it, but we'll let your local Spyder-man tell you all about it.

Our machines also had sports mufflers fitted, allowing for distinctively impressive crackles and pops, which also made a few blue suited officials notice us.

Well, there are downsides to being conspicuously appealing, and yes, in our opinion the Spyder IS conspicuously appealing. It's a great promotional vehicle and nobody can argue the point.

So what about the ride? Well, it's different, that's for sure. The two wheels up the front are fixed, so they'll turn left and right, but they don't 'flex' like the trapezoidal suspension on the Piaggio MP3 and neither does the body of the machine 'lean'.

Somebody once asked if I had ever ridden a snowmobile and the answer is no, but I know what snowmobiles feel like now.

The rear drive wheel puts down an awful lot of power via the carbon-reinforced belt and can kick around a little.

Countering this is the excellent responsiveness of the throttle, which allows the rider to come back off the power quickly enough to be safe.

Even so, it's not a good idea to relax too much on the Can Am Spyder. Pay attention at all times, especially when it comes to where you put your wheels. Riding over potholes by putting them between your



leading wheels is a good plan, but remember your rear wheel is likely to hit them square on.

Add to that a little caution when cornering. You'll want a few miles under your Roadster before you start taking corners above the AA roads sign recommendations.

But yes, at the end of the day, the Spyders are fun, and they attract a lot of attention. As a viable transport alternative, the jury's still out but if you want to make a statement, this is definitely a good place to start.

At around \$30,990 the Spyder can be found at dealers all over New Zealand and yes, that includes the South Island.

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