



URBAN WARRIOR

With the CVO Pro Street Breakout, Harley-Davidson has a new market in its crosshairs – man-about-town millennials for whom style means as much as performance. So, how does it cope on the streets of the capital?

WORDS: HUGH FRANCIS ANDERSON

When William S. Harley and Arthur Davidson wheeled out their first production motorcycle in 1903, little did they know that they had founded a company that would one day reign as king of the motorcycle industry. During Harley-Davidson's illustrious history, it has produced motorcycles for both World Wars, set land speed records, won

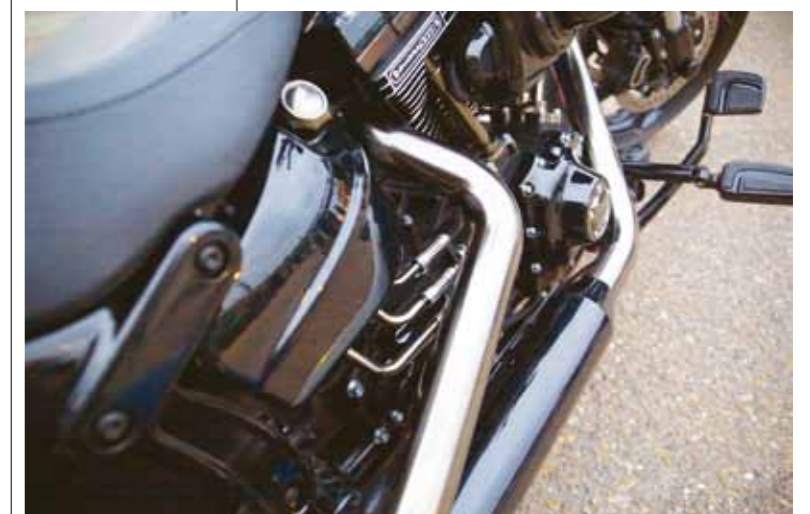
When I collect the CVO, one bitterly cold winter day, I immediately understand what all the hype is about. It's vast, and I'm initially concerned with how it will handle on London's busy streets. But I'm itching to jump on. The all-new 110 cubic inch Screamin' Eagle® engine, which displaces a staggering 1,800cc, is, on paper at least, a stomach-churning powerhouse, and at nearly 2.5 meters long and weighting 332kgs, the bike's physical presence is enough to make you weak at the knees.

I start the brute, feel the pistons reverberate beneath me, pump the throttle a few times, and shoot off towards London. ☺

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myriad endurance and road races, been the motorcycle of choice for celebrities including Presley, Pitt, Clooney and Becks, and today produces the second largest number of machines in the world (behind Honda). Harley-Davidson has a dark side, too; the brand is associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs and is often the bike preferred by the bad boys of Hollywood films.

The 'new-phase' Harley-Davidson is targeted at the young, inner city man, someone who wants to feel the rumble of the iconic V-twin between his legs; a man who wants to commute, undertake the occasional road-trip, or cruise in style; a man who embodies what it means to be an urbanite. And so, Harley-Davidson's new offering, the CVO Pro Street Breakout, proffers all of the above, and then some.





⊙ I'm surprised at just how nimble the CVO is, needless to say it accelerates like a rocket ship, but it's loose under the hands too. Its narrow width makes filtering an easy task, and, even on a two-hour motorway cruise, I'm pleasantly comfortable throughout.

The CVO is, in its essence, a futuristic motorcycle. Its cruiser-cum-racer styling, with hand-painted details and jet-black finishes, makes it appear like something Batman or The Terminator would ride, and it's safe to say that part of you does feel like a movie star while you're on the road. But what causes it to stand out is the technology incorporated into its uncluttered body: cruise control, a vastly novel idea on a street bike; keyless ignition, which automatically alarms the bike when you walk away; and state-of-the-art ABS so you never feel a loss of control under heavy braking. As a biker, the addition of such elements is both rewarding and a little dissatisfying. Purists will loathe the 21st-century spec, bemoaning the fact that it detracts from the raw nature of a motorcycle, and, although I had expected to fall into this camp myself, the features pleasantly surprise me. And they certainly favour the new 'urban-rider'.

Riding through the City, even at rush hour, I find the traffic so easily manoeuvrable that it almost ceases to exist. Surely this is the reason why you would ride in London; distances that would take an hour on public transport, and even longer by car, suddenly become minutes on the CVO. It pulls when you need it to pull, and weaves when you need it to weave.

It does have its drawbacks, though. Out on the open road, when you want to push it a little harder, you find that cornering becomes increasingly cumbersome. Sure, you may never buy a Harley-Davidson for speed and cornering, but for all the visual and ergonomic pizzazz of the low-profile, enormous 240mm rear tyre, combined with the miniscule 120mm ground clearance, taking corners at speed is nigh-on impossible.

And then comes the price, which sits way above its competitors at £20,995. For a stock motorcycle, this is about as steep

as you're going to get. Triumph's Rocket III Roadster, for example, comes in at just over £14,000; BMW's R Nine T is under £12,000, as too is the reborn Indian Scout. But while all of these motorcycles do perform well, they simply don't exude the raw, unadulterated aggression of the CVO. Nor do they come with that famous Harley heritage, again, reflected in the price.

The CVO, it must be said, is not a bike for the first-time rider. Those considering spending £21k should do so in the

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knowledge that they're buying a Harley-Davidson with a twist. Most new riders will seek out the Iron 883 or the Forty-Eight, a few might pick up a Low Rider or a Fat Boy. The CVO is the next level. It's Harley-Davidson for millennials, rather than for men going through a mid-life crisis. It's a statement of intent and might just represent the direction in which the planet's most famous motorcycle manufacturer is heading. And to guess where Harley-Davidson's new vision will take it, is a very exciting prospect indeed. ⊙

CVO Pro Street Breakout, £20,995, Harley-Davidson, harleydavidson.com

ALL IMAGES Freddie Haines

