

Motorcycle Consumer

Volume 37

Number 6

June 2006

\$7.00

NEWS[®]

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Cycle C Retro-Reflective Waterproof Jacket

YOU'VE HEARD MANY times that "conspicuity" plays a major role in motorcycle safety. Cagers just don't see us. Which is why our government requires reflective vests on all motorcyclists riding on military reservations. The reflection from the vest clearly identifies the rider as something different from a car or truck, and alerts drivers to the presence of a motorcycle in their midst. It would probably be best if all of us rode with such vests all the time, but let's face it, we really don't want to cart around yet another piece of riding gear, and quite frankly, the vests look sort of dorky.

Warren Johnson, the president of Cycle C, and an avid rider himself, looked at this problem, and has come up with what I think is the best solution to date: A motorcycle-specific riding jacket, with a reflectivity factor about five times greater than even the best safety vest. The Cycle C jacket is made from a patented, high-tech textile material called "illumiNITE," originally designed for firefighter "turnouts," to be visible in low-light, and even smoky, low-visibility environments. The jacket appears to be a normal, dark-gray or even black material in normal light, but when struck by a headlight, it lights up like a neon sign. I've been using one for a couple of years now, and have actually had people ask where I plug it in, or where I carry the batteries. They just can't believe it is not electrically-lighted.

Though the retro-reflectivity is obviously the Cycle C's major selling point, what I have really come to appreciate is that it is also a very



well-designed riding jacket, and not just a one-trick-pony. The sleeves are longer than those on a normal jacket, so they don't ride up your arms when you put your hands on the handlebars, and the cuffs have both zippers and elastic, for snugging down over your gloves. The front closure has a double storm flap, with both a steel zipper and snaps, and the waistband features both elastic and an adjustable belt. The jacket is 100% waterproof, with a soft cloth liner and two deep front pockets with double, Velcro and zipper closures. The collar has a soft cloth lining, there is a huge rear air vent with a storm cover, and the left sleeve has a zippered utility pocket for toll booth change, sunglasses and such. I have one of the older models, but Warren says his newer design, just coming

out, will also have built-in pockets for installing armor in the elbows, shoulders and back.

The Cycle C jacket is American-made and comes with a one-year warranty. I've had mine for over two years now, and can't find any defects in its design or workmanship. It is, quite frankly, one of the best-designed riding jackets I've ever seen. The cost is quite a bit higher than many other lightweight rain jackets, at \$450, but I think the design quality and added safety make it more than worth the money.

—Fred Rau

See how the flash picture (right) makes the jacket's illumiNITE material reflect light.



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Monkey Ass Leather Boots

IF IT'S NOT enough to ride a custom bike that knocks the socks off other riders, but you like to wear high-style too, a problem when you're in the mood to flash a fashion statement is what to wear on your feet. Custom cowboy boots might look great but leather soles on a bike invite disaster. Two-wheeled high-rollers now have another option: MA Leather has come to your resplendent rescue with a line of killer boots that have an innovative rubber tire tread sole that is glued, stitched and then nailed to the original leather sole.

While I would not recommend these to replace well-designed, dedicated riding boots, they are far better than leather-soled boots for special occasions. To test for road stickiness, I compared the Monkey Ass boots with my classic road-worn rubber-soled Alpinestars and a pair of traditional leather-soled Tony Lama cowboy boots. After spilling small quantities of oil and coolant onto the blacktop of an abandoned parking lot (in the process of being torn up to make way for a new Walgreen's), I put each boot to the test in a rather unscientific way. In each of the different pairs, I tried sliding my foot in various directions and at various angles in each of the two spills.

As you can well imagine, the leather-soled boots were a real disaster and provided the least traction. I've never worn them when rid-



ing a motorcycle and, after this test, would not consider doing so in the future. The Alpinestars with their wider contact patch were the best, but the Monkey Ass boots were a considerable step up from the leather cowboy boots, and I'd be quite comfortable wearing them riding a cruiser with a low seat height. However, I'd think twice before wearing them on taller bikes, particularly since I am "inseam challenged."

These Monkey Ass boots are striking, hand-made works of art for your feet. They use domestic ranch-raised exotic leathers — caiman, python, stingray, ostrich or crocodile. Although I've not worn them long, they appear to be rugged enough for riding and the makers claim the skins are low-maintenance, water-resistant and durable.

The company also offers exotic leather jackets and custom seats to complete the look and welcome custom orders. E-mail them at info@maleathers.com with your ideas. The boots are priced from \$299 to \$489.

—Steve Larsen

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