

# THE X FACTOR



Our GTX-F test bike came with GPS – a real handy thing in foreign cities ...

## MEET BBC'S GTX-F: A WHOLE LOTTA BIKE WITH A WHOLE LOTTA ENGINE ...

WORDS & PICS DOC

California's Big Bear Lake was under several feet of snow as expatriate Aussie Kevin Alsop drove me up there from the LA airport, and more snow was forecast. The weather gods had definitely determined that I wasn't going to ride the GTX-F X-Wedge back down the twisty and treacherous mountain road the next day, so we resorted to 'Plan B'. After a tour of the busy factory and a look over a swag of BBC bikes, we settled down to discuss the world economic outlook and its effect on the bike world.

The beauty of being a niche manufacturer with a relatively small volume is that you can be quick on your feet in what you offer the riding public, making changes on the fly and innovating at a very fast pace indeed. I saw evidence of this at the V-Twin Expo in Cincinnati, where BBC's latest

chopper model, the Paradox, had taken out 'Custom Production Bike of the Year'.

Now the BBC GTX is an innovative bike, which sure ain't your grandpa's bagger. And believe me, heads spin around wherever you ride it. With the baby boomer generation aging and many of them wanting to get off their choppers but not yet ready for the tall, fat and comparatively short bikes typical of the bagger scene, the GTX offers a mega-cool option. Taking its styling cues from the long and low lines of a pro-street custom, and with a 12in stretch in the mid-frame, the GTX completely redefines cruising style.

Now we reviewed the un-faired BBC GTX Standard, powered by BBC's S&S-built proprietary '100 Smooth' engine, back in issue #101. It was an impressive bike in many ways. However, the GTX on which I was going to spend a few days cruising around southern California was the GTX-F, BBC's faired model, this one powered by S&S's radical 114-cubic-inch, 56-degree X-Wedge V-twin. While Editor Brumby and I were among the first bike journos in the world ever to ride X-Wedge-powered bikes, neither of us had spent too much time on them, so this was an exciting prospect indeed.



The next morning Kevin and I trucked the BBC bikes back down the mountain and spent a couple of hours burning around the local roads – me getting a feel for the X-Wedge and Kevin having a ball riding the snot out of his own personal chopper.

Down here it was fairly warm and sunny, as was my mood when – after bidding Kevin farewell – I pointed my GTX-F south to San Diego.

With the comparatively relaxed attitudes of the American authorities toward the speed limits on most US freeways, I was able to run the bike along at speeds that would have you throwing your licence away in Oz.

Rolling on and off the throttle and changing up and down through the top three gears of the ultra-smooth Baker gearbox demonstrated great torque and impressive smoothness. Not perhaps the smoothness of a Twin Cam B motor, but damn impressive nevertheless, especially give the engine's large capacity.

The frame-mounted composite fairing offered excellent protection from the wind blast and the sight lines to the speedo and the GPS screen are just right. The reach to the handlebars suited my medium height and the switch controls were easy to locate and operate. The seating position is most un-bagger-like, as you tend to sit in the bike, not on it, and your feet are up in more of a chopper riding position than the typical bagger – but this is something to which you quickly become accustomed.

The outstanding impression of this bike that I gained at speed was its enormous stability, thanks to a combination of contributing factors including the overall length of the machine, its low seat height, a low centre of gravity (which is aided by a five-gallon fuel cell mounted beneath the seat) and the extra-strong and stiff BBC-designed-and-built frame.

Now the downside of straight-line stability can often be found in cornering, where the combination of the GTX's length, its 36-degree rake and its massive 300mm rear tyre don't add up to super-swift canyon carving. However, once you become accustomed to the extra body language required to throw this thing around, it's surprisingly nimble – much more so than the specs suggest. And, in addition, I found the extra-low seat height of 25.5in (compared to 30.7in unladen on an Ultra) was utterly confidence inspiring when cornering on, or close to, the bike's limits.

Campo Road leading out of San Diego is a riders' favourite, and while I was certainly getting passed by various sport bikes, I was holding my own and often passing a bunch of cruisers and tourers.

While I was riding solo, one of the proprietary and patented characteristics of this bike is the position of the passenger sitting in front of the rear wheel. This seating position places more weight in the centre of the vehicle in order to produce better handling and comfort for both the operator and passenger.

San Diego is one of my favourite US cities; there's a lot to see and do there and many great roads in the



You want head-turning 'presence'? It's hard to beat BBC's GTX-F!



## GUTS &amp; BOLTS

## ENGINE

Type: .....114ci BBC/S&S 114  
 .....SMOOTH™ EFI X-Wedge  
 Finish: ... Polished case chrome covers  
 Bore: ..... 4.125"  
 Stroke: ..... 4.250"  
 Cams: Three belt-driven camshafts  
 Horsepower: ..... 97hp (crank)  
 Torque: ..... 113ftlb (crank)  
 Induction: .....S&S closed-loop  
 ..... electronic fuel injection  
 Air cleaner: .....S&S Tear Drop  
 Oil pump: ... S&S Dual Gerotor Pump

## TRANSMISSION

Type: .....Baker 6-Speed overdrive  
 Primary drive: .....BBC encl. wet chain  
 Final drive: .....belt

## WHEELS &amp; TYRES

Wheels: .....Big Bear Choppers  
 Type: .....Forged aluminium  
 Front rim: ..... 21 x 3½"  
 Rear rim: ..... 18 x 10½"  
 Front tyre: ..... Avon Venom 120mm  
 Rear tyre: ..... Avon Venom 300mm  
 F brake: ..... Dual disc PM  
 ..... 4-piston calipers  
 R brake: ..... PM 4-piston caliper

## FRAME &amp; SUSPENSION

Make: .....Softail BBC GTX  
 Backbone: ... Thick ¾" wall, no stretch  
 Mid Section: .....12" stretch  
 Neck rake: ..... 36°  
 Fork: .....BBC mount, hidden axle  
 Triple tree rake: ..... 6°  
 Trail length: ..... 3¾"  
 Tube length: ..... 2" over, stock  
 Rear shocks: ..... Softail-style  
 ..... Progressive Suspension  
 Seat: ..... 2-up leather/vinyl with  
 ..... removable lumbar support

## ELECTRICAL

Wiring harness: .....BBC/Wire Plus  
 Charging system: .....BBC 40-amp  
 Ignition: .....S&S

## GUARDS &amp; TINWORK

Fuel tanks: .....5.1 gallons (total)  
 Oil tank: ...14-gauge steel with cover  
 Guard: ..... 12-gauge steel

region, including the coast road back up to LA. I meandered along this road in laid-back style, now used to the gaping mouths and swivelling heads of adults and kids alike. Thanks to the 100 willing ponies and some 112ftlb of torque, changing down wasn't often required, and passing trucks uphill was just a twist of the wrist away.

When it came time to stop, the twin discs and Performance Machine 4-piston calipers up front and the rear PM 4-piston unit down the back worked a treat – nice to know given the speeds the GTX can achieve.

I'm a bit of an old school biker and I've been a bit slow to completely accept some technological advances in motorcycling. Give me a carby, a set of points and a spare condenser and I can fix most breakdowns. But it must be said, the ultra-reliability of electronic ignition and EFI has transformed performance parameters.

This is especially noticeable with the closed-loop EFI system on the GTX, which is continuously monitoring the engine and tuning itself to optimise performance despite major changes in humidity, temperature and elevation, in a way that a carburettor can't get within cooe of. Despite riding from sea level to some 6000ft in the mountains, the X-Wedge didn't miss a beat.

I admit to a nervous moment when I went to start it after spending a night in the mountains and I noticed the motor had iced up overnight, but a slightly prolonged press of the starter button and it was idling smoothly.

Motorcycle design always involves some compromise; the need to find the middle ground between (say) a slammed look and cornering clear-



ance. Or between cool style and bulky practicality. The GTX-F is no different in that respect, but the end result is a classy, cool-as-a-cucumber-styled bagger that has a little less carrying capacity than some tourers – and perhaps a little less plush comfort – but which oozes hip and class from front to rear.

A Commodore will do things a Ferrari will not and vice versa. Dare I compare the GTX-F X-Wedge to a Ferrari? Hell yeah! **HD**

