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CityBike Of The Year, Reloaded: We Get To Work On Yamaha's FJ-09



By Aaron Bonner

Photos by Surj Gish & Aaron Bonner

When I first read Editor Surj's take on Yamaha's FJ-09 ("2015 Yamaha FJ-09, CityBike Calls It Early—2015 Bike Of The Year" - March 2015), I was skeptical. "It's only March, and we're already calling this thing 'Bike Of The Year'? There's no way that a bike with an MSRP of \$10,500 can be *that* good, right?"

When our FJ-09 review went to print, I was in the early stages of shopping for my next motorcycle, looking for something that would essentially be an appliance. Something fun, but economical; something to pile the miles on to, with minimal worries or maintenance costs; comfortable for long hauls, but nimble enough to make commuting and canyon carving fun.



I tried a bunch of bikes: the Super Tenere, NC700X, Versys 1000, Tiger 800, and DL650, before I finally threw a leg over the FJ-09. After my brief ride, I knew immediately that this was the bike for me. That engine, that sweet exhaust note, plus comfortable ergonomics... the bike's light weight (quite a bit less than many of the other bikes I considered) was just icing on the cake.

I'm a competent mechanic, so I've always bought used bikes—but the FJ is a brand new model, so I was left no choice but new. Two days after my first ride, I signed the papers on my first ever brand new (not just new to me) motorcycle, which was also my first Yamaha street bike since my old RD400 race bike.



Aluminum radiator guard by Yamaha.

Photo: Surj Gish

I piled on as many miles as I could during the first week, and changed the oil at just over 400 miles. With fresh oil, I started my long weekend, and ended up three days later with just under 1,400 miles on the FJ. The bike was virtually flawless. Virtually.

As shipped, the Oh Nine has a few shortcomings that reveal themselves on long days and rough pavement. The stock seat is too soft for long distance riding, especially for larger riders. The windscreen is too narrow at the bottom (in order to accommodate the wonky alien spaceship handguards), and there's some buffeting at higher speeds. The suspension, although remarkably good for this price point, is operating outside its comfort zone on rougher pavement.

Ergos are important, so I went to work on the comfort and rideability issues first.

I replaced the seat with Yamaha's comfort seat, which is firmer, slightly taller, and a vast improvement for long days in the saddle. Like many distance-oriented saddles, it took some break-in to become comfortable, but after a couple weeks of commuting, it's really working very well for me.

There are several options for the windscreen, and I decided to start with a pair of screens from Sacramento-based California Scientific, a tall clear screen and a smoked shorty. Mark at Cal Sci warned me that the limitations of the screen mount on the FJ meant the tall screen would be a bit wobbly at higher speeds, and he was right—above 60 MPH, the big fella dances like an epileptic spider. The wind protection, however, is *very* good,

making the tall screen a good choice for winter commuting.

The short screen is fantastic. It allows a lot more air to hit me, but the flow is quite laminar, with no buffeting. It's also quite

with the bars, I added heated grips. We're working on a seriously bitchin' luggage solution, too—stay tuned for more on that in my next installment.

Speaking of next installments, we're also



Cal Sci's short and tall screens.



Photo: Aaron Bonner

handsome, and complements the look of the bike. It's the perfect windscreen for summer commuting, canyon carving, and medium-length trips: the air flow feeds my jacket and helmet vents, and the smooth airflow keeps my brains from being beaten into scrambled eggs inside my helmet.

I also put a few small, quick fixes in place on the bike during the first few weeks of ownership.

First (to go) was the ridiculous "handguards." I'm not quite sure what Yamaha's intent was with those, but ditching them allowed me to fit a Throttlemeister. If you're not familiar, Throttlemeister sells bar end weights with a mechanical throttle lock built into the right side weight—very handy for long stretches of slab.

Second, I added a radiator guard for peace of mind, opting for the Yamaha aluminum piece, a sharp-looking black guard with a cool white "FJ-09" graphic on it.

In classic *CityBike* (read: cheap) style, I bought a basic bike with no heated grips or luggage. So while I was screwing around

working on improved suspenders for the bike, and I'll tell you all about that soon, too. I might even have something special up my sleeve with the ECU.



Good-bye handguards. Hello, Throttlemeister.

Photo: Surj Gish

The more I ride the FJ, the more I like it. Our early BOTY call seems pretty accurate. If you're in the market for a showroom new, multi-disciplinary street bike, do yourself a favor and get your butt on the seat of an FJ-09. If you're still on the fence, stay tuned here as we make our bike even more bitchin'.

Aaron is a multi-bike guy whose multi-bike tendencies are being called into question by the FJ-09. He lives in Pacifica with a KDX200, KTM 690 and FJ-09. For now. 🌀