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Red Bikes Matter

By Dan Baizer

We've all seen events nationwide that led to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement. BLM is now a component of US History that will eventually weave its way into school textbooks, so many years after Selma. Deal with it.

So deal with this, riders and enthusiasts of two-wheeled motorized travel. If it's true that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, what about the blatant theft of ideas? One of the disadvantages of watching television, reading magazines, browsing newspapers (except for *CityBike*, of course) is that we are barraged with stolen brain emissions. Commercials, advertisements, even "editorial" content—these things insult our intelligence and steal our time by preoccupying our mental spaces with mindless "content" instead of thought.

Here's one that manipulates to the max: SaveMart Supermarkets created a TV commercial showing people (of diverse color and creed, of course) fawning over produce. You know, the healthy organic stuff that grows in manure-supplemented dirt.

The commercial ends with a simple on-screen statement: "Roots Matter."

Stay with me here, I promise it won't hurt... much. You'll only feel a slight pressure, just for a moment.

Mazda's commercials, touting their latest, greatest automobiles (Sky Active technology!) now proclaim "Driving Matters."

Verizon—perhaps correctly—claims that their area of wireless coverage provides the biggest, bestest footprint your cellular life can ever have. How? Why? "Better Matters."

And if it matters to you that more than just the human species is involved in that which matters, PetCo advertises, "What We Feed Them Matters." All too bafflingly, these PetCo commercials often immediately follow the Mazda commercials.

Thank you, sir (or madam). May I have another?

By now, you're probably wondering if I keep a note pad by my chair, just to harvest and reprise these advertising gems. Nope, don't have to.

You see, when it's repeated like a North Korean Pledge of Allegiance, ad infinitum, despite Ollie North's claims that "your notes will save your ass," it kinda sticks between the ears, behind the eyes.

Doubt that? Take a ride through a Disneyland "attraction," allow yourself to be pummeled with a recurrent theme song. Try and erase that stuff from your mind during the following three months. Uh huh. Damaged brain matter.

Oops, did I say "matter?"

Back to the wonderful world of motorcycling... *CityBike* readers have enjoyed the perspective of the good Doctor Gregory Frazier regarding the usage of "adventure motorcycle" terminology. Myself, I truly cannot recall when and where I first learned of this category of motorcycle.

I used to ride a 1989 R100GS, bumble bee black and yellow. An excellent bike, although the later versions of the GS line are way the hell more expensive and over-farked beyond anything I'd want to learn to master.

But that's okay if it makes your socks roll up and down. Personally, my current fleet of motorcycles (two) and my wife's (one) aren't even fuel-injected—just carbureted; but somehow they manage to perform as we desire.

But just as commercialized claims of *what matters* are flooded over us through dullards, we are faced with motorcycle relics that don't have the hip-cool, high-tech features touted by the manufacturers. Apparently it doesn't matter that the prices for these beasts are, well... beastly. After all, if you want an adventure, you gotta have the right bike. Never mind that whoever stole the term "adventure bike" should be charged with profiteering idea theft.

I'll tell you about a rather adventurous motorcycle ride I had recently. I was on my bright red, 22-year-old sports bike on a moderately busy freeway, just merged in from the on-ramp. Approaching me from the rear in the lane to my immediate left was a jacked-up pick'em up truck. Loud, aggressive-tread tires. Loud exhaust pipe and diesel clatter. The driver was alone, but accompanied by an obvious conversation with his hands-free cell phone mic on the sun shade: yelling at his windshield, but seeing nothing else around him, including me and my obviously red but suddenly invisible bike.

As his desired, but not well-planned for off-ramp quickly drew closer, he returned to partial consciousness and swerved rapidly to the right, into my lane, trying to get off the freeway. His action converted my machine, at that stage, into an "adventure bike." Six of Brembo's finest (non-ABS) masterpieces did their work, while the pricey but worthwhile aftermarket rear shock kept me in a straight line while braking.

Didn't I mention that, before this unexpected adventure ride even started, Mr. Truck Balls caught up to me from behind, in an adjacent lane? Isn't there

reason to believe, therefore, that he saw me and my bright red bike, before his sudden swerving maneuver?

This is where the disconnect began. You see, at that point, I didn't matter. Nope, not one bit. His phone conversation, his fifty-thousand-dollar truck, his off-ramp—those things mattered.

Somehow, my undershorts survived the incident without rising to meet my internal organs, in spite of the extremely high pucker factor brought on by this unexpected adventure. Somehow, a bright red bike on a clear, sunny day became invisible to a driver (whose parents were likely brother and sister) perched three feet above me. And somehow, I finished my journey that day scarcely a blink of my eyes.

Navigating through the lexicon of 21st Century-speak, this is the organic, natural, non-GMO, cage, gluten and sugar-free, nondairy, unsalted, politically-correct, non-aggressive, vegan-approved, free-range, nonfat, reduced, re-used and recycled, locally-grown, environmentally friendly, employee-owned, gender-neutral, small-business-owned truth:

Red Bikes Matter.



Dan Baizer is long-time occasional *CityBike* contributor—almost as old as Hertfelder, but without the Eastern accent. These days, he mostly focuses on keeping Editor Surj in line and advocating for loud clutch awareness. ☹️

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CityBike FJ-09 Long Term Project Road-Ready For Gettin' Long Gone

By Aaron Bonner

Photos by Max Klein and Surj Gish

If you're a regular reader of *CityBike*, or rather, you read *CityBike* regularly—none of you are what we'd call regular—you know we've had a long-running *thing* for the FJ-09, beginning with Editor Surj naming it Bike Of The Year for 2015, back in March. Since then, I've been working to whip my already pretty awesome FJ-09 into even awesomer shape.

In this final installment of the *CityBike* FJ-09 project bike series, I'll cover the suspension upgrades and ECU flash that really transformed the bike into the near-perfect machine I knew it could be all along. I'll also summarize the upgrades and changes that I made.

After all changes I made to the bike, there were still two issues which needed to be addressed. The first: suspension—a definite need. The second: flashing the ECU, which some might argue is really only a need in the same sense as how some riders need a garage full of bikes that do the same thing slightly differently.

Anyway, suspension... The Oh Nine is a bit under-sprung in stock form. I say under-sprung because there's no way that 265 pounds can be considered overweight, right? This is America, after all. Beyond the necessary spring changes, however, I found that the fork's damping was quite harsh. For most roads, the suspension was fine, even at a brisk pace, but on the bumpy, goaty stuff that I like to ride, the rear would blow right through the stroke. Unsettling, to say the least.

We asked around, and heard that the folks at KFG racing (KFGracing.com) know exactly how to fix the front of the FJ. A couple of weeks after I sent the fork tubes

to KFG, they returned with brand new GP internals.

The 25MM GP cartridge kit runs \$1,199, and includes new springs. Labor plus new fork seals and oil bring the total to just a hair over \$1,400. This might seem pricey, because it is—good suspension isn't cheap—but the changes really transform the front of the FJ, and work within the limitations of the stock fork tubes, keeping compression damping on one side and rebound on the other.

Fixing the shock, in my opinion, was even more critical than the fork. There are a few options, but I have had great luck with Penske and chose their 8983 double clicker, remote reservoir unit for this application.

I was not disappointed. This shock will set you back \$950 (including the proper spring for your weight), which like the fork upgrades is not chump change. But this cost gets you improvements to the handling of the bike, both in straight line stability at speed (remember, I've got bigger luggage on this thing) and in cornering. Well worth the money, in my opinion.

Couple the improvement to handling with increased tire life due to the suspension keeping the rear tire in good contact with the pavement as the throttle is applied, and the price starts to sound a lot more reasonable. I go through a lot of tires, and I figure that reduced tire costs due to the suspension improvements will offset the



Photo: Surj Gish



Photo: Max Klein

cost of the shock over time. That's what I'm telling myself, anyway.

Spending over \$2,300 to upgrade the suspension of a brand new bike is not something everyone will want (or perhaps even need) to do. For me, it was worth it—I ride pretty hard and as a husky gentleman, I'm used to doing suspension upgrades on pretty much every bike I buy. With these upgrades, my FJ-09 handles as well as any bike in the \$12-15K range; particularly if

you have good throttle control to help mellow out the super twitchy A-mode. Speaking of A-mode... let's talk about flashing the ECU.

I chose to have my ECU flashed by 2

Wheel Dynoworks (2wheeldynoworks.com). The process is simple: pluck the ECU out of the bike (very simple to do), send it to them, wait a week. Oh, and hand over \$325. That price is a bit richer than some other tuners, but 2WD includes lifetime re-flashes—handy if I ever decide to modify the intake or exhaust. They may also develop cruise control functionality that would be offered on future re-flashes.

The results are impressive. A-mode is much more rider-friendly, but still frisky under aggressive throttle. Additionally, the pesky speed limiter was removed. I've only broken 115 MPH a few times, but it was quite annoying when it kicked in. Good riddance, I say!

The bike supposedly makes a few more horsies now, but I can't really tell the difference—perhaps if I ate more salad and drank less beer it would matter more. But even without a noticeable power increase, I'm very pleased with the improved fueling thanks to the ECU flash, and highly recommend it.

These two major improvements—suspension and fueling—coupled with the previous upgrades have helped the FJ fulfill the promise it's sport-touring promise. The Shad triple-case setup offers capacious storage for longer trips, while the MadStad adjustable screen, Yamaha comfort seat, Oxford heated grips and Throttlemeister make it a right proper long-distance mount, offering comfort and reasonable protection from the elements.

Want an FJ like mine? It'll cost you just north of \$15,000, which does put it in the price range of some *very* capable bikes. That said, I'd probably put at least \$2,000 to \$3,000 into any of those bikes as well—suspension upgrades, for example. So for the money, while no longer a hell of a deal, this FJ-09 is one hell of a bike: versatile, comfortable, and an absolute blast to ride. It's the first new bike I've ever purchased, and I can't imagine a scenario in which I would sell it any time in the next 10 years or so. It's as close to perfect for commuting, canyon carving and touring as any bike I've ever ridden. I just hit 10,000 miles this week, and I am looking forward to the next 90,000!

Aaron is a multi-bike guy whose multi-bike tendencies are being called into question by his FJ-09. He lives in Pacifica with a KDX200, a blue (seriously!) KTM 690 and the FJ-09. ☹️

Expense Report

I started with the standard FJ-09 at \$10,490. Here's how the upgrades to my FJ-09 add up to that "just north of \$15,000" price I mentioned.

Modification	Cost	Rating
GP 25MM Cartridge kit, custom sprung and valved	\$1,400	9
Penske 8983 shock, custom sprung	\$950	10
ECU Flash	\$325	7
Oxford heated grips	\$50	8
Cal-Sci tinted shorty windscreen	\$125	9
Cal-Sci large windscreen	\$200	6
Madstad windshield system with 18" shield	\$220	10
Yamaha factory radiator guard	\$100	9
Yamaha factory comfort seat	\$365	8
Throttlemeister bar ends/throttle lock	\$125	8
Shad 3P system with side cases and top case (with backrest)	\$1,000	10

Your Friends Will Be Jealous.



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Our new American Apparel t-shirts (available in men's and women's sizes) rock the same classic Ride Fast Take Chances logo you know and love across the front, but feature a brand new design on the back.

(Don't fret, you foul-mouthed, old school riders. The original "Shitty Bike" t-shirts are still available on our site.)

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