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January 2016

CITY @ BIKE

RIDE FAST **TAKE CHANCES**

**APRILIA'S
CAPONORD
1200 RALLY
Adventure
Capo-bilities**

Max Klein's Try-fecta • FJ-09 Project Update • Dron Buell Concept Bike
Our Favorite Things • Ride Friday Give Back • Any Two Wheels Show • Intertia LEDs
Helimot B11 Gloves • Nexx X.D1 Voyager Helmet



tried this year, this is the one that feels the most like a companion on the road. It's a little fussy. It wants to be kept in its in the meat of the powerband, or it gets grumpy, bogging at 4,000 rpms while doing 50 MPH. It takes a crank or two more to fire up sometimes, making you momentarily wonder if it's going to start. And then it roars to life, like an old buddy that's just fuckin' with you.

And like an old friend, the Capo also has you back, or in this case, your front, coming equipped with badass auxiliary lights. On the way back from Bear Valley, we see several deer so I hit the switches, flipping on the brights and turning on the flood lights. That's when I notice that the blue brights-on indicator light is, well, really bright. Ah well, just more character from the quirky Italian. Nothing we can't solve with a small square of duct tape or a sharpie marker...

On Thanksgiving, I ride it up to Napa, taking a few back roads along the way, curving through the dairylands behind Sears Point and skirting the wetlands near Skaggs Island. Some of you may know Ramal Road, an out-of-the-way side route south of the Carneros district in wine country.

This is where the Capo is most at home, on the poorly-paved backroads amongst the vineyards.

There's a little spare time before sundown and dinner time, and I double back, thundering over potholes and patches, gazing across the fields and wetlands

towards the coastal range. The sky was clear and the air was crisp. Me and my buddy, the Capo, the Green Goblin, are out cruising around, waving to the people on the side of the road. Ciao!

Sam is CityBike's newest columnist, and our resident "bashin' bikes 'round the city proper-like and hinterlands too" guy.

I've Become A Capo-nerd

By Max Klein

Like something out of a Warren G song, it was a clear black night, a clear white moon. As I rode out to swap bikes and pick up the Caponard from Sam, I pondered the problem at hand: I was not really prepared to give the "other Italian twin" a fair shake. I've been a bit of a Multistrada fanboi for a couple of years now and figured that the Aprilia was going to Capo-not compare.

Sam's words as he passed me the key didn't help: "That heated grip button? ignore it, there are no heated grips. Oh yeah, the cruise control is kinda tricky too."

Awesome.

I threw a leg over this guaranteed disappointment, thumbed the starter, and heard the big twin come to life through its ridiculously large exhaust. I mean, seriously. Look at it. Bulbous.

My ride home from the meetup was only about a half hour, but 15 minutes in I knew I needed to extend it. It took just 15 minutes to come to grips with the lack of heat, to realize that I was in control of my cruise, and from where I was sitting, I could

not see the fat pipe. All I could see was how good of a bike this thing was.

The riding position is very comfortable, with the bars sitting almost too wide. Once you start putting the Caponard through its paces though, the extra width helps guide the 500ish pounds with pinpoint accuracy. Well, at least as accurate as a 500 pound pin can be.

The ADD suspension (it really should be called "Ritalin" as it keeps the bike focused no matter how many surface distractions there might be) was perfect for the side trip into Port Costa that I made on the way home, and it made Redwood Road feel like the racetrack those regulars like to think it is.

Confidence in the suspension and comfort in the saddle will only get you so far. Without a good motor, what good is a motorcycle? Aprilia has that covered as well. Quite well, actually.

The 1197cc, 90 degree v-twin really made me happy, and having three engine maps kept me from becoming sad in the wet conditions that I found myself riding in. I found the rain mode to be a bit too restrictive even in a traction-challenged environment so I switched over to touring mode when the roads were moist or made of a non asphalt material. Sport mode was the most grin-inducing, though, and that's where I would keep this thing 99% of the year if I owned one.

Transitioning from hard pack to pavement will snap you back in the saddle once the rear wheel is no longer struggling



for grip, and on the flip side the sudden power chop upon the first loss of traction is a bit rough as well. It's hard to fault the machine, as many traction control systems behave the same way. (I'm looking at you, Multistrada.) That said, hitting wet tar snakes while leaned over a bit did not seem to trigger an massive power chop, making me think that the combination of my ham fist and the dirt/gravel was a bigger issue than the electronics package.

The ABS worked well in the rain too. The rear brake pedal would catch and release like a bass fisherman when it locked up—again very typical of even more expensive machines. The front lever seemed to almost vibrate when the ABS first kicked in with those vibrations giving way to a slower pulse later in the braking process. Again, that might have been my ham-fisted "let's test this" inputs, but the power output is, well, let's say eager.

If you're thinking about picking one up, plan on immediately replacing the Pee Wee Herman handguards and matching skidplate with something substantially more Chuck Norris. Another must-have addition for me would be that \$150 centerstand. Given that you can grab a Rally brand new for \$15,999, about the same price as an aged-out Multistrada, throwing a few hundred bucks towards bolt-ons is still a bargain.

Max likes it any time we put him on something that leaks less oil than that damn GS racebike of his. Which is pretty much any motorcycle this side of the Dirtbag Challenge.



CityBike FJ-09 Long Term Project More Tour To Go With The Sport



Photo: Max Klein

By Aaron Bonner

Photos by Max Klein & Aaron Bonner

For the five or six of you who have been patiently waiting for the next installment of the FJ-09 long term test, you are in luck. As you might recall from the first article, I have been testing the factory comfort seat and two Cal-Sci windscreens (the tall and the shorty). I'll start out with a bit of an update on those items, followed by my thoughts on a few of the more recent mods to the bike.

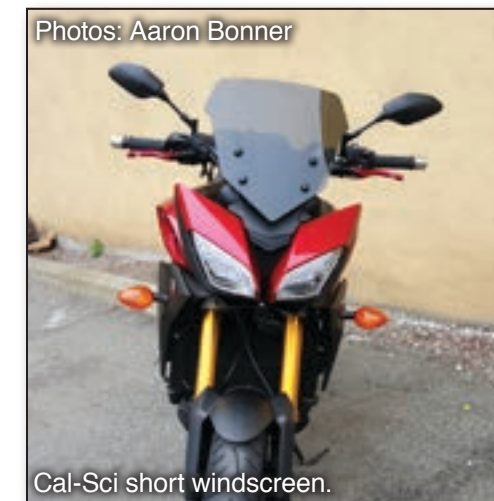
Seat: now that Yamaha's comfort seat has conformed to my butt (or vice versa), it's quite comfortable. I've spent 8-9 hours in the saddle several times now without wanting to push the bike off a ledge and crawl into a hot bath. It doesn't turn the bike into a rolling sofa, but it is plenty comfortable for whatever trips I might take in the future. In short: Yamaha's upgraded seat is absolutely worth the money, and I highly recommend it.

Windscreens: I really like the Cal-Sci shorty. It provides much more laminar flow than the stock screen, without much buffeting. The tall screen, however, is less wonderful. It's not Cal-Sci's fault—the mounting bracket on the FJ-09 is just not very well thought out. The four mounting holes are low on the screen and the bracket itself is unstable with larger screens due to the way that Yamaha designed the adjustment feature. So while the shorty is great for warm weather, for my sometimes-chilly daily commute I would like to have a bit more wind protection.

Enter Madstad, who offer a few options for the FJ-09, starting at \$219.95. I decided to try the 20" and 22" models. Both of these are mounted via Madstad's proprietary bracket, which is adjustable for both height and angle. Because the stock bracket is replaced, the mounting points on the windscreen can be spread much further apart, providing the stability required for a larger windscreen.

However, even with the increased stability, I was still getting a bit of wobble in the stock base bracket, which would periodically loosen the stock height adjustment knobs. My solution was simple: I drilled a hole in the base bracket and the mounting bracket and used a bolt and lock nut to secure it—no more movement. The Madstad bracket offers plenty of adjustment and I don't miss the stock adjustment knobs at all.

I prefer the 20" Madstad over the 22". Both are fantastic and can be positioned to allow quite a bit of flow on warm days (though not as much as the Cal-Sci shorty), as well as a position which limits air flow and has the wind hitting near the top of my helmet. The buffeting is minimal, and the protection is fantastic. It should be noted that the handguards must be modified or removed in order to use the Madstad screens. I didn't like them anyway, so they



Photos: Aaron Bonner

Cal-Sci short windscreen.

were removed long before I mounted the aftermarket screens anyway.

Looks-wise, the Madstad is a bit funky. It sticks out further than the stock mounting bracket, resulting in a look that is not nearly as sexy as the Cal-Sci shorty. I am a fan of function over form, so I don't mind too much. If I could only have one aftermarket screen for the bike, it would be a very difficult decision. Fortunately, I have the luxury of having the Madstad for daily commute, long hauls, and cool weather riding, and the Cal-Sci shorty for warm weather canyon carving runs. Both screens are fantastic and either one would be a wise purchase.

Now that I had a couple of good windscreen options in place, it was time for luggage. This is, after all, a light sport touring bike. Shad USA has a really nice setup for the FJ-09 that is leaps and bounds better than the factory luggage. The 3P mounting system is pure genius. It provides an extremely stable mounting platform for the side cases, but doesn't ruin the lines of the bike when the bags are not attached. Rather than the typical rectangle shape, it simply has one bar that swoops up from the passenger peg mounts and follows the contour of the bike. Regardless of how much stuff I crammed into the side cases, they didn't budge at all while riding, even

on the goatiest of roads. Another cool part about the side cases is the shape. The cases are not overly large, but each will accommodate a full face helmet with ease. The top case is equally well-designed, and is an all-but permanent fixture on my bike for my daily commute. I highly recommend the 3P setup with all three cases, \$1,020, as tested, to anyone with an FJ-09, and Shad will be the first place I look for luggage solutions on future street bikes.



Madstad adjustable screen and bracket.

Performance update. The motor has been fully broken-in for quite some time and I am completely in love with it. Sure, the 847cc triple isn't as powerful as a Multistrada 1200. For a bike that costs roughly half as much, it sure is incredible. This bike has more than enough grunt to make any ride pleasurable, and it will loft the front effortlessly in the first couple of gears. The gearbox is smooth. The display and associated controls are well-designed and intuitive. The stock suspension is pretty good once adjusted for my weight

and riding style. That said, this is definitely the weak point on the bike. No matter what I do I can't get rid of the little bit of wallowing on acceleration while driving out of corners, and the front wants to push a bit while transitioning from heavy braking to turn-in. The worst thing, however, is that it does not like having three fully loaded cases mounted to it. Speeds above 85 or 90 get a bit dicey, as the front tends to wobble, hinting that there might be a violent tank slapper in the near future. The fact that I'm a big guy probably doesn't help, as I have the preload maxed on the shock and the forks. Rather than lose weight, I think I'll just throw some money at the boingy bits.

Summary thus far: The FJ-09 is an absolutely incredible bike. It has appliance-like reliability but it is an absolute hoot to ride. Equally comfortable as a commuter, canyon carver, and long range cruise missile, this bike really does do it all. Mine has also seen more dirt roads and jeep trails than most "adventure bikes," and it has handled everything I've thrown at it with ease. Aside from the suspension, my only real gripes about the bike are the windscreen mounts and the fact that it comes with a speed governor that limits top speed to around 112 mph (tested by a *cough* professional rider on a *cough* closed course. Of course). I can see this bike occupying a spot in my stable for a very long time to come. Thanks, Yamaha!

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.



Photo: Sam Devine

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