

TVS APACHE 180

The same Indian goodness now looked after by Puzey

By Donovan Fourie

This isn't a new bike – in fact, this isn't even the first time we are doing a story on it, but it does have a new importer, and that warrants something. Puzey is now the official importer, which is good news, because they have already done a good job with their eponymous Puzey brand, which company owner and engineer, Mike Puzey, oversees and

modifies everything on offer (occasionally redesigning models completely and sending said designs to China with a note: "Do it like this!").

Previously, we rode this bike at the end of 2011, when there was a crises, one that extended beyond mere recession, natural disasters and Julius Malema. Simon had been invited to the opening of the Gautrain,

and we had a shortage of motorbikes.

The World Superbikes were on at Kyalami, so I had secured our permanent resident Triumph Street Triple R, the KTM 690 SM was at the shop for a service, and the scooters were for some reason unavailable, and this left Simon transportless. He was getting desperate. He almost resorted to using a car! This was the point at which we did a small garage stock take, and found the little Indian, shy and retiring, sitting in the corner minding its own business. I suggested he used it, assuring him that he would enjoy it, and apprehensively, he agreed.

The day passed on, Superbikes were brilliant, the Gautrain didn't explode and everyone managed their day.

The next day was Superbike race day, and we both had to be at Kyalami. Feeling duty-bound, I offered Simon the Triumph and volunteered to ride the TVS. Simon, surprisingly, said "no, I'll ride the TVS. What a nice little bike," and jumped aboard and merrily rode off towards Kyalami.

The likes of Russell Peters, Trevor Noah and other comedians are voluble about Indians being cheap, and while the stereotypical Indian may always look for a bargain, what they will never do is buy something that is rubbish. This is the quandary that beholds Indian manufacturers – their products cannot be overly expensive, yet they must still be flashy, quality and must do the job.

This compromise is paramount to the success of bikes like TVS, and why it is such a surprise to get on it and find that it is actually rather good.

It has a single-cylindered, air-cooled engine spinning out 17.3 hp. This coupled with a meagre 137 kg means it has some vroom to it. The top speed is 125 km/h, but it gets there in seemingly no time at all, out-dragging all the miserable cagers from the robots in bursts single-cylindered torque.

Where the Indian reputation comes in is in the actual feel of the bike. It revs cleanly and responsively, it is Tropica smooth, there is not even the mildest hint of shaking or vibration and everything just seems to work, without this gut feeling that something is bound to go wrong.

This bike came with Puzey's own branded top box, which negated the need to carry annoying back packs while riding, and carrying an even more annoying helmet while not riding.

Prices are R17990 for the bike, and an extra and recommended R910 for the top box. www.puzey.co.za



This is probably not what TVSs were made for, but they have a reputation in India for performance to the everyday man, as Damien Hall exhibits.

The Indian-built TVS180 in all its glory.



TV director, and petrol head, Vuyo Dube had a go, and insisted, in flurry of visual creativity, that a profound photo illustrating the might of the human race juxtaposed with the boundless possibilities of easy personal transport be taken. We think we did alright.

