



C O V E R S T O R Y

# THOSE MAGNIFICENT *and women* MEN AND THEIR FLYING MACHINES >>>

Nasty people may refer to them as bicycles with engines attached, but say the word 'motorcycle' aloud and most guys (and girls) will stop, stare and begin to salivate. Just what is it about these machines that turns us all on?

by Veenu Singh

**B**ANDANNA WOUND around his face, cap on his head, scarf around his neck... None of these precautions ever helped Dino Morea arrive for his shoots in anything less than grubby condition, his face absolutely black with grime.

Yet, the then-new-to-Mumbai model refused to get a car or even a cab to ferry him about the city. He'd always ridden a motorbike in Bangalore; he saw no reason why moving to a more polluted Mumbai should change that.

"There's something about bikes that attracts me," says Morea ruminatively. "Maybe it's the feeling of oneness you get when you're on a bike. Maybe that's what makes all the difference between a bike and a beautiful car. But I have never given up my passion for these machines. And I never will."

**FREE AS A BIRD**

Ever wondered what it is about a motorcycle that turns people on? After all (as nasty people would say), it's nothing but a bicycle with an engine attached. Yet, just say the word 'motorbike' out loud or hear the roar of one as it passes, and you'll see men (and not a few

women) turn, stare and either give a long, appraising look, or begin to salivate.

"Bikes are men's alter ego; they keep that part of the soul alive that can whoosh into the heart of the city at night, they give men wings as the air rushes by, and they make men's hearts throb as they race time," says Sameer Parikh, psychiatrist and chief of mental health department, Max Healthcare.

"Moreover, men think that riding a bike is a definitely male thing to do. Men are loud, boisterous, and always challenging. So are bikes. It is as if two similar souls meet when a man rides a bike. He sees himself reflected in the chug and roar of the engine, and catches every eye as he whizzes past."

In other words, motorcycles offer men (and not a few women) a sense of freedom that even the sexiest car cannot.

Motorbikes have always been an integral part of city life. They are relatively easy to maintain, look exciting and manoeuvre well in traffic. No wonder,

as Sanjay Tripathi, division head, product planning and brand management, Yamaha, says, motorcycle companies "see an upward swing in their demand on a regular basis."

But convenience has nothing to do with a passion for bikes. In fact, this passion can often be inconvenient. What we're looking at are bikes that have acquired cult status, bikes for which men are ready to go to any extreme, bikes that are perfect for long rides, winding roads and speed.

"These bikes, such as the Harley-Davidson or our very own Royal Enfield, are revered for their looks, their style and that ultimate feeling of power and freedom they provide," says auto enthusiast and vintage car and bike collector Dijeet Titus who owns three vintage bikes including a 1936 BMW R12. "On these bikes, you feel like you're riding a horse. Taming a beast used to give men a great deal of satisfaction earlier, and when you ride something as powerful as this kind of motorbike, you get the same feeling."

Gurmukh Singh, restorer and owner of 71 bikes including vintage bikes, cruisers and superbikes, agrees. "It's the passion for owning something so powerful as well as beautiful that drives men to buy these beauties," he says.





PHOTO: SATISH BATE

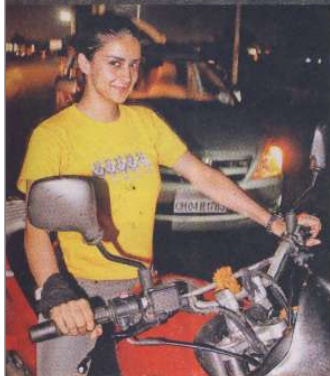
## Arjun Khanna

FASHION DESIGNER

Arjun, seen here with his vintage Royal Enfield Flying Flea bike used in World War II. He also owns a 1942 Harley, a Norton and a Triumph and would love to own a Brough Superior one day.

### ONE FOR THE ROAD

The Dyna Super Glide Custom from Harley-Davidson is one of the iconic bikes that will make an entry into the Indian market by next year



## Gul Panag

ACTRESS

Gul, seen here on her BMW S650, also owns an Enfield. She has been riding to Ladakh on the Enfield for five years.





**COVER STORY**

## 4 superbikes



**HONDA'S CBR 1000RR 999CC**  
Popularly known as 'Fireblade', this bike was awarded Cycle World's International Bike of the Year in 2008-09. It is a very strong competitor of Suzuki and Yamaha



**YAMAHA YZF R1 1000CC**  
With a jaw breaking price tag of Rs 11.5 lakhs, this machine can produce a maximum power of 175 hp. This power house stands head on with Suzuki and Honda



**SUZUKI'S 187 PS GSX 1300R HAYABUSA**  
With power of 156.1 hp @ 9,500 rpm it can take you to from 0-100 mph in a mere 4.91 seconds! Of all the superbikes launched so far, this bike exceeds all expectations



**HONDA'S CB1000R 999CC**  
Uses the same engine as the Fireblade but this superbike priced at about Rs 9.5 lakhs has been re-tuned for midrange performance

- DILJEET TITUS



PHOTO: AJAY AGGARWAL

### HOT WHEELS

Bikes are generally classified into categories such as street bikes, cruisers or touring bikes, choppers, sports bike and superbikes. "While cruisers are generally retro styled, untouched by the march of fashion and technology, superbikes are powered by engines with a capacity ranging from 750 cc and above that can provide you with the thrill of speed," explains Titus. "Almost all the major brands like Harley-Davidson, Suzuki, Ducati, Yamaha and Kawasaki manufacture bikes across all categories."

Till a few years ago, superbikes had to be imported. So you had to cough up the cost of the bike as well as the duty of 134 per cent. Now, with international brands like Suzuki, Yamaha and Harley-Davidson entering the market, fulfilling your dream of owning a mean machine has become easier - though you still pay the same amount of duty.

"Superbikes are technological marvels just like gadgets like the iPod or the iPhone," says Tripathi. "Today, the profile of bikers has changed. They are well-travelled, keen, knowledgeable, and usually follow the Grand Prix and other bike related programmes. Superbikes are the new man toys."

Yamaha was the first to launch a superbike in India in 2007. Its legendary R1 - the Formula One bike - was the first, followed by the MT 01. In the first year, says Tripathi, 130 superbikes were sold. Other brands like Suzuki followed and today roughly 600-700 superbikes are sold all over the country. "There may not be enough good roads to ride these bikes at the moment, but with develop-

ment, we may soon get better roads," says N K Rattan, operating head, Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India Pvt Ltd. "Plus, biking as a tourist culture is also evolving. People are willing to take their bikes anywhere. Coimbatore and Chennai have good race circuits and the idea is to promote the culture of using these bikes for fun. We have had an amazing response since we launched two models of our superbikes and we look forward to selling a hundred bikes a year."

### EASY RIDER

Bikes are often referred to as toys for big boys, but it's usually small boys who fall in love with them - with a passion that never dies.

Entrepreneur Navin Ansal was 16 or 17 when he got a Royal Enfield that he rode till he was about 21. "I love feeling the wind on my face and the thrilling sense of freedom," says Ansal. "The experience has nothing to do with speed. It's more like a romantic adventure." As he began to 'settle down', Ansal gave up his bike. But the passion never subsided and years later, his wife Raseel presented him with

**Lakshmi Rana**

**MODEL**  
Lakshmi is seen here with the Yamaha Fazer. She has ridden the Yezdi, Suzuki and a five-gear Enfield. She loves cruisers.

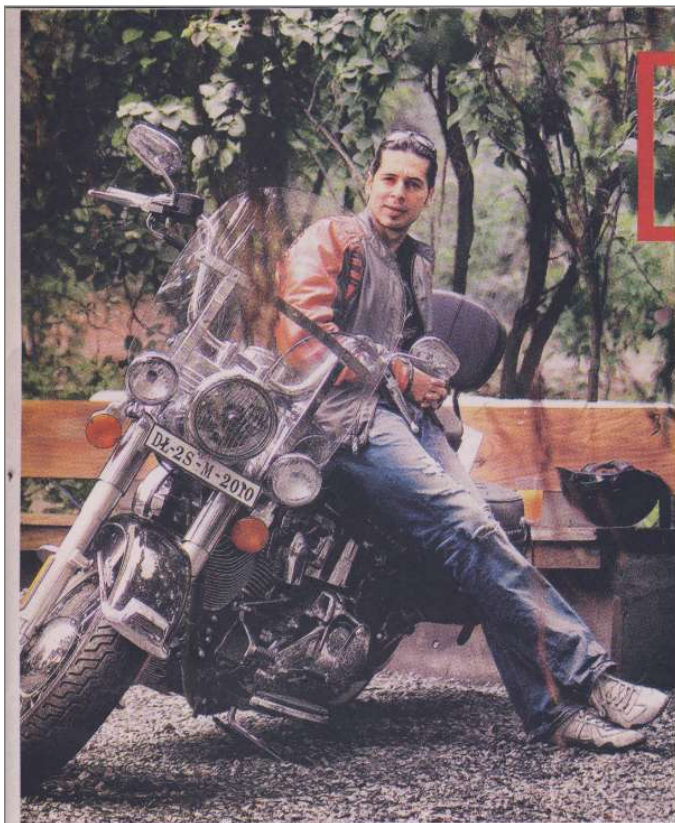


PHOTO: RAJ K RAJ

## Dino Morea

ACTOR

A passionate biker, Dino is seen here with a Harley XL 1200N Nightster, 2010 model. He also owns a Yamaha R1 and Yamaha RD 350 and wants to buy a Yamaha V-Max.

gives its riders a sense of power and freedom that is incomparable. "I have always been fascinated with the sound of the old Bullet," says Dilip Kapur, owner of the Hidesign brand of leather goods. "In comparison to it, the Japanese bikes are kind of flimsy."

Kapur lives in Pondicherry and has travelled all over the South on his Bullet. For him, a bike is the best vehicle there is. "I seem to have developed a dislike for four wheelers," he says. "I think they are social disasters that have separated people from their environment. When you are on a bike, you have the brute power of the bike below you and a complete connection with nature."

It's exactly the combination that Kapur describes that prompted Royal Enfield, makers of the Bullet, to promote its annual Himalayan Odyssey. As Shaji Koshy, head, sales & marketing, Royal Enfield says: "In June when we organise the Himalayan Odyssey, the true pleasure of riding takes over Royal Enfield. As a motorcycling company we feel it is our moral responsibility, and as a cult brand, our role in society is to not only promote safe riding but also leisure motorcycling."

Soon, the company will launch a Nepal Odyssey, a Southern Odyssey and a Rajasthan Odyssey. "These will be team trips in different geographies so more people can get hooked on to riding," says Koshy.

Graphic designer Pranab Dutta doesn't need to be told about the spirit of motorcycling. A biker, he swears, gives you far more freedom than a four wheeler, and Pranab enjoys his daily ride from Gurgaon to his workplace in Defence Colony on his Triumph Rocket 2300cc bike.

"The kind of excitement you feel on these bikes can never be felt in a car. Besides city driving, I have also enjoyed long trips with a set of riders to Jaipur and to Ranikhet," he says. "However, most of these bikes are huge and very heavy, and most people are not trained to handle them. So the risk factor is always there." Dutta has had bad accidents on his bike himself, but usually, he says, big bikes are safe. They just need mature handling.

a 500 cc Royal Enfield.

"Now I have a couple of bikes, all cruisers since I love bikes with an old world feel about them," says Ansal who has a 1300 cc customised Yamaha and a modified Bullet. "I love to ride my all chrome 2300 cc Triumph Rocket with a friend who has similar interests. My favourite area is behind Faridabad in the Aravalis. There is no proper road and you can only take a big bike there. I have been on several long trips to the hills in Kasauli on these bikes. They are not just comfortable but safe for long rides."

Vintage bikes are fashion designer Arjun Khanna's passion. He has been collecting and restoring them for the last six years. "I never owned a bike in school or college but the Bullet was imprinted on my mind," he says. "Its great sound and design kept me excited about bikes. Now my collection consists of a Norton's Triumph, a 40-year-old Harley and my favourite, the Royal Enfield."

For Khanna, who dreams of owning the Brough Superior, the joy of collecting vintage bikes lies in putting them back on the roads. "And they can easi-

ly compete with any of the newer bikes," he says.

"Though there is little space to ride these bikes in Mumbai, I go for a ride every Sunday. Otherwise, I have biked from Mumbai to Pune and Goa. But I really want to do a trip to Ladakh on one of my bikes. That's the great thing about these oldies - they can take you on a long trip without trouble."

### ROYAL RIDE

Over the years, the Bullet has grown to become the ultimate Indian cult bike. The Bullet, say its fans,

### SPEED KINGS

But there is another aspect associated with bikes - speed. Bikes are also meant for zipping around at

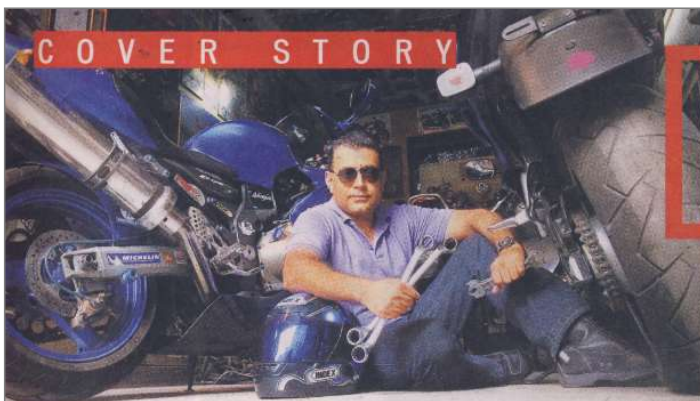
PHOTO: AJAY AGGARWAL



## Navin Ansal

ENTREPRENEUR

Navin shows off his all chrome Triumph Rocket 2300 cc bike. He also owns a customised Yamaha and a Royal Enfield and would love to own a Ducati.



COVER STORY

PHOTO: RAJ K RAJ

## Dr Arun Theraja

SUPERSPECIALIST SURGEON

The doctor is seen here with his Kawasaki ZX-12R Ninja superbike. He also owns a Yamaha R1 and Yamaha RD 350. He now wants a Ducati Desmo.

great speed, and that's where superbikes come in. It was the thrill of speed that made former rally driver Rajeev Khanna opt for superbikes years ago. "The biggest draw for me was the sense of adventure," recalls Khanna, the proud owner of a Harley. "I started with racing bicycles and then graduated to these bikes. Later I did move on to cars, but bikes always remained a big interest. In fact, these days my latest passion is off-roading."

Speed is usually associated with the young, but its fascination can strike later in life as well, as Dr Arun Theraja, head of the ENT unit at Maharaja Agrasen Hospital in Delhi and a superspecialist in head and neck cancer, found out. Dr Theraja's passion for superbikes struck out of the blue in 1985

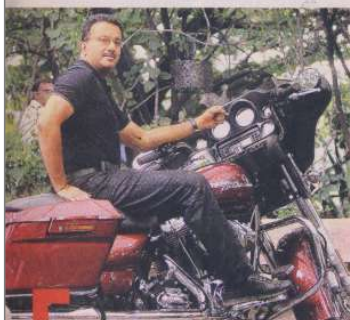


PHOTO: RAJ K RAJ

## Diljeet Titus

AUTO ENTHUSIAST

Diljeet seen with a Harley XL 883R Sportster. He also owns a BMW R12, Swift 550cc and BSA ZB 31 Goldstar. Now he wants a Harley 1200cc Cruiser.

when he was just through with his MBBS.

"I happened to see the RD 350 cc bike that Yamaha had just launched and was bowled over," says Dr Theraja, president of a biking group called GODS (Group of Delhi Superbikers) and owner of a 1000 cc Yamaha R1, a 1200 cc ZX-12R Kawasaki Ninja, a 1300 cc Suzuki Hayabusa, a Royal Enfield Bullet, a Hero Honda Karizma and a Yamaha 350. "I have been on several biking trips to Leh and Ladakh on my Bullet and my Karizma, but riding a superbike gives you a different kind of high altogether. It's a great combination of beauty and power and when you go from 0 to 100 in a mere 2.8 seconds, you feel like God. But you need a mature mind, otherwise these bikes can go out of control."

Dino Morea's first and last love remains the Yamaha RD 350, but he also loves the superbikes made by Suzuki and Yamaha. His dream list includes the Yamaha V Max and also the Harley, and there's nothing he likes better than taking his bike on roads trips from Mumbai to Pune.

### SEX AND THE GRITTY

Bikes are a man thing - or so men think. You can't blame them for thinking that, of course, since aside from offering power and freedom, bikes are also great at generating interest among women, as restaurateur Riyaz Amlani of Saltwater Café, Mumbai, Smokehouse Deli, Delhi and the Mocha chain, suggests.

"Whether you like it or not, men definitely get an ego boost when women turn around to admire them and their bikes," he laughs.

And his premise is confirmed by 22-year-old student Shamita Verma who says: "I think men look best on a bike. Even a decent looking guy on a sexy bike would make me go wow immediately."

But what about a decent looking woman on a sexy bike? It sounds offbeat, but there are more women bikers than you think. "I don't agree with all these notions about men and bikes," says model Gul Panag. "I have been riding a bike since I was 16 or 17 years old and it gives you a sense of freedom that can never be felt in a car. I have also had falls and minor accidents but that is part of the game."

Many of the men we've quoted dream of biking to Ladakh. Panag has been to Ladakh on her bike five times. "I go on my Enfield as it is a fun bike to ride and is very reliable on long trips with bad roads," says Panag who also owns a BMW 650.

Model Lakshmi Rama began fiddling with her father's old scooter when she was in class VI, and then tried out her older brother's bike before deciding that this was what she wanted to do. "Women look much better than men on a bike," she grins. "And I'm sure men love watching a woman on one of these speed monsters too. For me, riding a bike was first like taking up a challenge. Then I got hooked to it. The thrill of speeding is something I thoroughly enjoy."

Lakshmi started riding with a Hero Honda, and has since tried everything from a Yezdi to a Suzuki to a five-gear Enfield. "I have been on road trips from Delhi to Mussoorie and am now looking forward to going on a long trip to Ladakh," she says.

So like many things in life, bikes turn out to be something to which gender is no bar. The only thing necessary is a certain bent of mind. As Pranab Dutta says, "Whether you love the lazy ride of a Bullet or a Harley or the excitement of a Hayabusa, you just need to be in complete sync with the machine to get that ultimate high!"

veenus@hindustantimes.com



BIKES ARE A MAN THING

Dilip Kapur, owner of the Hidesign brand, is completely sold on Royal Enfield, but would love to own a Harley-Davidson as well

## YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY

### ROYAL ENFIELD

If there's any cult brand we can call our own, it has to be the Royal Enfield. It was used in World War II, but continues to be manufactured today with little change in the 1949-55 design. The charm of this bike lies in its low-tech gas-guzzling four-stroke engine. Turn it on, and the air around you reverberates with a low frequency rhythmic rumble. This is the classic heavy-bike-sound of the '50s and '60s. And if you think that the bike only appeals to older men, you are wrong. According to a recent survey, Royal Enfield was seen as one of the most aspirational brands in the country.

### HARLEY-DAVIDSON

The Harley-Davidson bike has long been part of popular American culture. It symbolises adventure and a reckless attitude. In the more than 100 years of its existence, the Harley Davidson bike has survived with very few modifications. The Harley of today is similar in looks to the Harley of 1903. And fans of this bike will (finances permitting) be able to own one when the Harley Davidson rides into India next year.