

# ARIZONA RIDER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE ON TWO WHEELS

**N**aked is good. Stripped is most desirable. Especially if you are a motorcycle. This year sees the renaissance of what the Japanese popularized years ago—bare parts.

The Asian motorcycle manufacturers were famous for using full-coverage bodywork, and when they removed it one year, they called their machines “naked,” although Harley-Davidson also claims it originated the idea. This year, naked bikes have better suspensions, more powerful engines, and improved ergonomics. Most makers are offering at least one bare-bones model. Since bodywork is expensive, eliminating much of it should bring prices down, but don't bet on it.

“The 2003 naked are tremendously hot,” says Larry Huffman, motorcycle guru, host of the TV show *Motorcycle World* and commentator for ABC, CBS, NBC, and ESPN. “It's definitely a trend that has returned, and the great thing is, several are great for cruising, which is the fastest-growing segment of the market right now.”

But there's lots of other news this year too, including Harley-Davidson's 100th anniversary, the Honda Rancher which is the only machine with a GPS, superbikes for the street from England, the BMW R1200CL luxury cruiser, Kawasaki's cutting edge Ninja, and Yamaha's Road Star Warrior with its huge, huge engine.

With the motorcycle industry growing by leaps and bounds, with 1.5 million expected to be sold this year (8 percent to women), it is no surprise that manufacturers



## Max Minimalists

2003 MODEL OVERVIEW : STANDOUT ROLLOUTS

BY JILL AMADIO



Kawasaki Z1000



Kawasaki Vulcan 1600 Classic



Kawasaki Ninja ZX-6R

are expanding their categories to include cruisers, sport bikes, superbikes, tourers, and street machines. The flagship models take the cake, though, and here's a look at these motorcycles that you'll find locally, some of them arriving fresh from the factories just now, in March.



Honda Valkyrie Rune



Honda 919

### Aprilia

One of the newer motorcycle companies to reach these shores is Aprilia, and, like Ducati, the company is both Italian and for upscale buyers.

Winners of 21 world championships, Aprilia motorcycles are often seen being raced by weekend warriors at Firebird Raceway, and during track days. Aprilia's flagship is the brand new RSV1000 Mille R, priced at \$17,299. Considered a superbike, the R is an elite product that has been adapted for the street, with Italian style and sex appeal.

“We make performance easy, through technology, for the weekend biker,” said Robert Pandya, a spokesman for Aprilia. “Superbikes are great because they are very responsive to rider input. Our models, like Ducatis, are equipped with the V-twin, although we use a different angle, 60 degrees instead of 90 degrees, which means that with the motor fitted into a tighter package, the wheelbase is shorter, with better control of traction with a longer swing arm in the rear.”

The forks are Swedish Ohlins, famed in racing circles. While Aprilia's most popular model is the R, their newest product is the Tuono. Naked as they come, this sportbike with V-twin engine is priced at \$11,999. Sister to the R, the Tuono is more of a street-going version, a more comfortable superbike. Instead of a rakish, aggressive handbar position, it has a much more upright position, higher handlebars and a taller windscreen. The suspension is high-end, but not as racing oriented as the Ohlins.



Aprilia RSV Tuono



Aprilia RSV Mille R (above and to right)

### Kawasaki

So what is Kawasaki doing to drag sales away from Harley and its cohorts? Debuting more models. Three of the newest and most interesting Kawasaki bikes are the Ninja ZX-6R, a mid-weight sport bike, and two street bikes: the super-naked Z1000, and the Vulcan 1600 Classic. The company's most expensive bike is the \$12,999 Vulcan 1500 Nomad Fi cruiser. Although it is not changed for 2003, the Nomad is popular for its low, comfortable seat height and a liquid-cooled SOHC 90 cu.in. V-Twin that provides a massive 84.6 ft.lbs. of torque. The newest and biggest-engined bike in this line is the Vulcan 1600 Classic, priced at \$10,499. A long, lean muscle machine, it's loaded for bear with a 1552cc V-twin SOHC engine, tuned for max low-end torque that you can only guess at, and distinctive dual slash-cut mufflers that improve power. The new \$7,999 Ninja ZX-6R is not your daddy's sportbike. It shares the same radical design and several of the power enhancements of the race-ready ZX-6RR, but street riders get an added bonus: an extra 37cu.in. Okay, time to get naked again. Kawasaki's baring-all Z1000 has

nothing to hide with its aggressive styling and backs it up with a sleek, hi-performance, compact 953cc 4-cylinder engine, liquid cooling, six-speed transmission, and stacked twin mufflers.

### Honda

Honda has four new machines, including two new dirt bikes, in its lineup of a total sixty offerings. The two most significant are cruisers, the high-dollar, radically-styled Valkyrie Rune that is a 2004 model but available now, and the VTX1300S. A Limited Edition, the muscular, nimble Rune is a unique, maximum cruiser based on a GT racing machine targeted at the upscale owner who wants his steed to be truly distinctive. “Just a few months ago the Rune was a concept bike,” said Jon Seidel, a spokesman for Honda. “But it received such tremendous response we brought it into production as soon as we could. We're not building a lot of them, in order to preserve their exclusivity. Pricewise, they're up there with Ducati.” Power? 1832cc liquid-cooled horizontally-opposed six cylinder engine. Five speed transmission.

KEEP RIGHT >>



Harley-Davidson VRSCA V-Rod



Harley-Davidson Ultra Classic Electra Glide



Buell Lightning XB9S



Yamaha Royal Star Midnight Venture



Yamaha FJR 1300



Yamaha Road Star Warrior customized

The ignition is computer-controlled digital with three-dimensional mapping. Honda's new VTX1300C joins the company's stables of VTXs, and if you want naked, Honda's 919cc fits the bill. Specially tuned for low- and mid-range power, the engine is installed in a huge square tube backbone steel frame, with a single abbreviated box-section downtube. Want noise? Tune in to the 919's four-into-two-into one-into-two exhaust system with center-up mufflers.

### Harley-Davidson

Over at Harley, it's one hundred percent all the way, to celebrate the maker's 100th birthday. "Every single 2003 model will carry the anniversary logo, a special ID on the crankcase, and we're offering a special paint, too, an almost transparent silver over black, that's fantastic looking," said Harley's Paul James. The four-billion dollar company brought out its brand new flagship VRSCA V-Rod last year, joining the growing new category called performance customs, an emerging class that's very stylish, cool, and strictly custom-looking. The \$17,995 radical V-Rod's blistering performance and hot rod style is equipped with a 1130cc, liquid-cooled, 4-valve head engine that throbs out 115 horsepower, and is fully exposed, à la naked. The VRSCA is built on the architecture of a racing engine that Harley designed and built in conjunction with Porsche's engineering services.

"Some of the old-line Harley purists may not like it," said Huffman, "but Harley is after a new market, young guys who want a touring/cruiser bike." Touring is a big part

of Harley, and one of its best-selling models is the Ultra Classic Electra Glide that allows riders to take along everything including a small kitchen sink. A \$19,760 bike that lists for \$21,000 fully loaded, it has a CB radio, intercom, electronic cruise control, in-dash CD player, weather band, and a huge luggage-carrying capability. Still, Harley's most popular motorcycle is the \$16,195 Fat Boy, with the fat front end that gave it its name. The burly FL fork, massive headlight, fat rubber shoes, giant fenders and a big, juicy Twin Cam 88B power plant combine for a touring bike with the custom look of a softail.

### Buell

Buell, a Harley subsidiary, has probably the most naked bike on the block: the Lightning XB9S. With the shortest wheel-base of any production motorcycle, a 21-degree fork rig for extreme aggression, an easy-handling engine, responsive steering, quick turning and lots of torque, the XB9S is all ready for backroad riding. Its nakedness allows for a more upright, comfortable riding position for all day in the saddle. For \$9,950 you won't get a fuel tank, but then, you don't need one. Buell fills its big aluminum spar frame with fuel, which means it carries it lower and offers a lower center of gravity. The space that would be the tank is a large airbox, so that the engine can really breathe. The XB9S also uses a swing arm as the oil reservoir and actually pulls the heat out of the oil, and the natural movement of the swing arm agitates the oil and keeps air bubbles from forming.

### Yamaha

If you have \$16,399 to spend on one of Yamaha's premier machines, check out the Royal Star Venture and the Midnight Venture. The former is retro-style, and the latter is its twin brother except for a chromed-out front end, a black engine with polished fins, a studded seat, and backrest. These 8-ft.-long tourers are Yamaha's largest and most luxurious, with cruise control, CB radio and 2-way intercom. The engine is a 1300cc V-4 drawing 98 hp. Built for long-range comfort, they both have plush seats, floating floorboards, air-assist suspension, and a spacious trunk.

For those who need power and performance as well as pampering, check out the FJR 1300. Designed for sport freaks who also endure all-day touring, its comfort level is high, and the 1298cc, 16-valve, DOHC-in-line 4-cylinder engine pumps out 145 hp.

Yamaha says its Road Star Warrior has the world's biggest pushrod air-cooled V-twin that'll blow your socks off, and the widest tires in the industry. It won the 2002 *Motorcyclist* magazine's Cruiser of the Year.

### BMW

If your BMW 7-series sedan is lonely in the garage, you can match it up to a BMW bike, with one of the most expensive motorcycles on the market: the flagship \$22,500 K 1200 LT Exodus. A sophisticated, luxurious tourer, with all the bells

KEEP RIGHT >>

When you walk the walk,  
you don't need to talk the talk.

racing

aprilia

"On strictly a got-to-have-it basis, however, the Aprilia RSV Mille R makes me the most anxious. If I have to narrow it down to a single Twin, she's the one."

--Cycle World

"We love the Tuono for its sheer indifference in the face of incredible tire-smoking, wheel-lifting performance."

--Motorcyclist

"In the Caponord, Aprilia has created perhaps the first worthy competitor to BMW's GS and its lock on the adventure-touring title."

--Cycle World

"A scooter for interstate cruising, the Aprilia Atlantic 500 features the performance and safety of a touring bike with the comfort and styling of an Italian scooter."

--Popular Mechanics



RSV MILLE R 1000cc



RSV MILLE 1000cc



TUONO 1000cc



FALCO R 1000cc



RS50 50cc



FUTURA 1000cc



CAPONORD 1000cc



ATLANTIC 500cc



SCARABEO 150cc



SCARABEO 50 DITECH 50cc



SR50 DITECH 50cc

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BMW R 1200 CL



BMW R 1150 R



BMW K 1200 GT



Ducati 999



Victory Vegas



Victory Touring Cruiser



Triumph Daytona 955i



Triumph Trophy 1200

and whistles, it came out last fall as a 2003 model. With plenty of power from its liquid-cooled horizontal in-line 4-cylinder that brings you 100 ponies and 85 lb.ft. of torque, comfortable seats, protection from the elements, and ergonomic design, the Exodus is built in Berlin, as with all BMW bikes. It provides riders with expensive features including an electrically adjustable windshield, cruise control, heated handgrips, AM/FM/CD stereo with controls for rider as well as the passenger, CB radio, adjustable seat, windshield, hand brake and clutch levers, and a power socket.

Other top motorcycles from BMW are the \$15,990 R 1200 CL luxury cruiser (custom version is \$16,490) and the \$17,990 K 1200 GT, a new grand touring version slightly sportier than the RT flagship model.

So, does a conservative company like BMW ever get naked? You bet. Its R 1150R, a 2004 model, arrives in the buff at dealers this March. Priced between \$11,000 and

\$12,000, has no fairings, and very few features but plenty of power and—the new bikes celebrate BMW's 80th birthday.

#### Ducati

Ducati, the Ferrari of motorcycles, has its new 999 with Testastrada improved head design, at \$17,695. The company calls this the motorcycle of the future. Ducati has dominated the world of superbike racing for more than a decade, and their 2003 model upholds that tradition with a trellis frame, a liquid-cooled, L-twin engine with 124 horsepower, combined with new aerodynamics, improved rider ergonomics, and improved design over its predecessor, the 998. Instruments include a rev counter, speedometer, lap counter, high beam indicator, turn signals, oil pressure warning light, low fuel light, water temperature and an immobilizer security system. Improved rider ergonomics include adjustable foot pegs and seat position on the Monoposto (single seat) version.

#### Victory

Want curvy and naked?

The brand new, split tail Polaris Victory Vegas, ready this spring, is a sensuous V-twin custom cruiser with a 1507 cc engine all ready to roll. Polaris brought out its first motorcycle just five years ago after building snowmobiles, ATVs and other vehicles for fifty years.

Flagship of the fleet is the more dressed Victory Touring Cruiser, powered with the Freedom 1507 engine, and tuned for long-distance days along with hardbags that hug the rear.

#### Triumph

If you want to fantasize you're Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape* or Matthew McConaughey in *How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days*, try a Triumph.

These British bikes have been around since 1902, and for 2003, their flagship Daytona 955i and Trophy 1200 are both priced at \$11,699.

The Daytona 955i superbike/sports-bike delivers no less than 147 horsepower from its three-cylinder layout, and welcomes a fuel-injected addition to the family for the US, the impressive 112-horsepower 600 model that's priced at \$8,699.

The perennially popular Trophy, a no-nonsense, big-bore tourer with a six-speed gearbox, cranks out 108 horsepower from its 1180cc engine. ■

International award-winning journalist **JILL AMADIO** has covered the automotive and motorsports scene for 20 years. The author of six books, her latest is a biography, "Günther Rall: Luftwaffe Ace and NATO General." She writes a monthly column for *Entrepreneur* magazine, and also writes for *AMI Auto World* and *www.thecarconnection.com*. She has written for *Road & Track* and Conde Nast Publications, and her syndicated car column has appeared in the *Washington Times*, *Houston Chronicle* and 124 other newspapers. She was the first female syndicated automotive columnist for Gannett Newspapers. For five years Jill Amadio worked with the Skoal Bandit Indy Car, NASCAR, Can Am and drag racing programs as a publicist.

