

Goodbye Easy Rider: latest trends in motor-bikes

Press Release

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This year has seen the market launch of several interesting new types of motorcycles and various technological and design innovations. One example is that of scooters designed for leisure use. Another major trend is discerned in e-bikes with advanced sporty propulsion systems, which can easily compete with high-end conventional motorbike drives.

For a very long time, the market for motorcycles was clearly divided into two main segments: Utility bikes and recreational motorcycles. In recent years, however, the border has been blurring between utility and recreational bikes. Especially scooters that were clearly designed for utility purposes in the past are now being developed for recreational purposes, too. One example is the new 946 scooter introduced by Piaggio (picture left): it includes configurations like two disk brakes, ABS and traction control as well as a sophisticated interface module, which are not really necessary for a scooter. However, a considerable fly in the ointment is the price: the scooter comes with a rather unreasonably high price tag of approx. EUR 9,000. Peugeot has also launched a scooter designed to impress. It is intended to be customized according to individual owner's wishes (picture right).



Pictures: Piaggio Vespa 946 (left) and Peugeot Django (right)

Another sector of the motorcycle market that is currently undergoing rapid change is the market for e-bikes. While in the past Europe was overcrowded by electrically driven scooters for inexpensive commuting and limited performance, Zero, Brammo and BMW have now turned this low end drivetrain into an advanced sporty propulsion system which can readily compete with high-end ICE (internal combustion engine) motorbike drives. For example, the recently introduced Zero ST provides the same bombastic 144 Nm of torque as the newly launched KTM 1290 Super Duke R. And the price is in fact comparable (approx. EUR 15,000 for the standard model). A clear drawback for many bike enthusiasts is, however, the lack of a typical motorbike sound. Thus, enthusiastic riders are eagerly awaiting the market introduction of an appropriate sound module by Akrapovic (a well-known retrofit exhaust manufacturer).

Technically, highly interesting innovations are related to the indirect link between the throttle lever and the throttle body. Not only e-bikes use electric throttle levers. Most new bikes utilize fuel injection to cope with emission regulations. This assists the broad introduction of gas curve modes and traction control. Improved ABS systems and semi-active suspension assistance systems almost on a passenger car level make biking far safer than it ever was in the past.

A somewhat neglected aspect of the current discussion of e-bikes is the fact that the latest driver and vehicle license regulations in Europe clearly favor electric drives: For the licensing of bikes and for driver licenses, the continuous power rating is decisive. With combustion engines, the continuous power rating equals the top power rating. If a vehicle is electrically driven, then the continuous power rating is considerably below the top power rating. As e-bikes typically have a peak power available for a limited period of time and a much lower continuous power, e.g. the new BMW Concept e-scooter with a peak power of 35 kW and a continuous power of 10.5 kW may also be driven by a 16 year old A1 license holder, although the 35 kW acceleration power provided by ICE motorbikes requires an A2 license. This fact should probably boost the registration of electric two-wheelers, whether scooter or motorbike.

We are looking forward to this new generation of stylish and safe bikes. Perhaps the biker population will grow again as safety increases.

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