

Café racing, Bullet style

CONTINENTAL GT Royal Enfield has dug into the 1960s to invoke the glory days of British-made bikes. Will it work? We take a look

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Tinker, tailor, soldier, spy. Throw in the milkman and the local goon, and the friendly neighbourhood Spiderman, and virtually everyone and his brother in India owns a Bullet or one of its siblings. So it was perhaps time that Royal Enfield brought something new to the field, and it did so in style a couple of days ago, when it launched the Continental GT, a café-racer, in India.

Unveiling the bike, Royal Enfield CEO Sidhartha Lal said the GT looked to bring fun back into biking. We got to ride it in the conditions that it was designed for — twisty, turny, narrow roads with scant traffic and scantier regard for traffic laws. Here is what we found.

THE LOOKS

Without doubt, it is a show-stopper. The colour alone would have done it — what is called Ferrari red in auto slang — but the styling and sound are right up there. There is a yellow variant that brings even more dash. The Continental GT is modelled on its iconic namesake that was a Royal Enfield bestseller back in the 1960s, and the café racer seat borrowed from the original only makes it stand out more.

RE does have an optional double-seat, but more about that later.

THE PERFORMANCE

The engine is a 535-cc single-cylinder unit construction engine, basically a re-bored version of the existing 500-cc that does service on the Bullets. But it has been extensively remapped to bring a racer-like performance to it. The power output is up by a marginal 2 BHP, and the torque by 4 Nm, but it is the delivery that is completely new: it runs gear-to-gear, at high RPM and takes off, from the word go with wheelies at the drop of a hat — very un-Bullet like behaviour. This bike loves to be pushed, so we spent a full day racing and exploring its limits.

THE HANDLING

With Paioli twin gas-charged rear shockers and massive 41-mm forks up front, the springs are good, and suitably stiff for great handling at high speeds. Brembo disc brakes at both ends ensure that it stops when you want it too. We did feel the rear brake could have been stiffer, but other bikers on the run did not find anything remiss.

The long seat, the pushed back foot pegs and controls, the long tank and the crouched

rider position all fall together to give the bike an aggressive feel. If you choose to be a family man and put a double seat on this bike, you would probably be doing great disservice all round — to yourself, to the bike and the family too. Just a feeling.

THE RIDE, AND THE VERDICT

The 250-km hair-raising ride behind us, let us analyse: great take-off, excellent cornering, confident balance, sure braking, all-round, a great bike. But... It has a top-speed of just over 120 kph. The company says café racing is all about the fun of riding, about finding your limits, about riding skills rather than super-bikes with power, torque and top-speeds that will never be fully used (in Indian conditions). We can buy some of that. With the GT you do get to fully utilise all that is on offer. But will it satisfy your adrenaline thirst? We feel it may fall short by 5-10%. Do explore the bike, though, and decide for yourself. It is great, and value for money.

CONTINENTAL GT VS ITS SIBLINGS

	CONTINENTAL GT	Bullet 500	Thunderbird 500
ENGINE			
Type	4-stroke, single-cylinder, air-cooled		
Displacement (cc)	535	499	499
Max power BHP@ RPM	29.1 @ 5,100	26.1 @ 5,100	27.2 @ 5,250
Max torque Nm@ RPM	44 @ 4,000	40.9 @ 3,800	41.3 @ 4,000
DIMENSIONS			
Length (mm)	2,060	2,140	2,060
Width (mm)	760	810	790
Height (mm)	1,070	1,110	1,205
Wheelbase (mm)	1,360	1,370	1,350
Ground Clearance (mm)	140	135	140
Weight (kg)	184	193	195
Tyres: Front	100/90 - 18	90/90 - 19	90/90 - 19
Rear	130/70 - 18	120/80 - 18	120/80 - 18
Fuel Tank Capacity (Ltrs.)	13.5	13.5	20
Price (₹lakh) (ex-showroom, Delhi)	2.05	1.54	1.82

