

News monitored for: Royal Enfield

ride // RE INTERCEPTOR 650

OLD FLAME NEW WICK

The Interceptor 650 was a retro motorcycle from the very beginning – it still is. But this time around, it's sporting a new Denim jacket!

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The Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 is just five years old. But when a retro motorcycle is trying to bring simplicity back to motorcycling, being five years old is hardly a bad thing. In fact, the Interceptor is a retro motorcycle only as far as the eye can see, because underneath its skin there are a bunch of modern mechanicals, which make the riding experience not so retro. Now, after five years of being on showroom floors, Royal Enfield has given it a nip here and a tuck there to bring it more in line with the expectations of buyers in 2023. So, what's the 2023 Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 like?

LOOKS OH SO GOOD!

The Interceptor 650 has always been a handsome motorcycle. I even

found it better looking than the Continental GT 650, but, then, that's me. Now, to keep a product competitive in the Indian market, it is imperative that a manufacturer offer timely updates to it so as to keep it fresh and attractive. The Interceptor has just gone through the same process, and honestly, it has come out the other side looking more upbeat than before. The headlight is now an LED unit, which has been directly borrowed from the Super Meteor 650. The headlamp looks good, but its throw is just about okay. But, personally, being a fan of yellow light instead of white, I preferred the older setup. White light tends to diffuse at night and doesn't properly light up the details on the road. The difference between the two is not that of night and day, but, then, it does make a difference.

The alloy wheels are next. In fact, it's the first time they have made an appearance on the Interceptor, and they are finished in black – an excellent choice! With this one change, the Interceptor has gone from being a retro motorcycle to one that's trying to be neo-retro.



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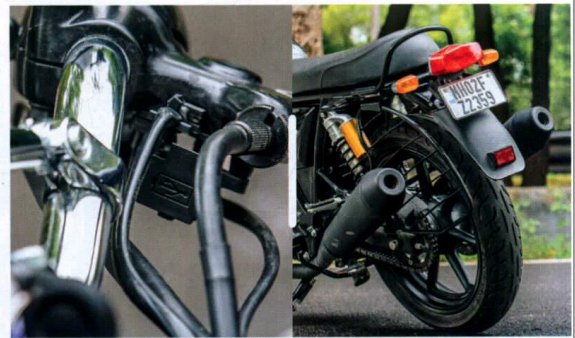
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And I, for one, don't find that to be a bad thing. The levers too have been borrowed from the Super Meteor, and I love their chunky feel. It feels quite natural to use just one or two fingers to operate the clutch or the front brake. The adjustability is also not limited to three or four steps. Instead, you can set them to any position within a pre-defined range. A neat touch if you ask me, especially if multiple people ride the same motorcycle in a family.

Royal Enfield has also used the Super Meteor's switch gear on both sides of the Interceptor. It gets rotary dials for the starter button and the headlight dimmer switch, but I am not a big fan of the latter. It requires too much effort to toggle between low and high beams or even to use the 'pass' function. And even if you get used to it, a rocker switch will still be faster. It's not a deal breaker, but don't be surprised if you find yourself hunting for the headlight button every now and then. Last, but not the least, the Interceptor's engine and exhaust now get a blacked-out treatment, which truly transforms the way this motorcycle looks.

A TAD BIT MORE PRACTICAL

The changes listed above pretty much make up most of the new bits on the Interceptor, and one might wonder if it has become any more practical to ride. If you own the older Interceptor and ever had a puncture, you will understand what a relief it is to have an alloy wheel setup on the updated motorcycle. It lets you ride with peace of mind – you don't have to worry about any nail or a sharp object piercing its way through the rubber of your motorcycle, as you won't find yourself stranded looking for someone who can repair a punctured tube. What's more, you will have enough time to be able to ride the motorcycle to a puncture shop without worrying about damaging it.

The adjustable levers, too, add to the practicality aspect of the bike. Royal Enfield is now also offering a hazard light switch. In the search for adventure, motorcyclists often find themselves in a pickle, and a hazard light switch in such cases can come in handy. It's just one of those features that you wouldn't mind living without, but once you use it, you can't go back to riding a motorcycle without it. There's also a USB socket on the left side of the handlebar, which makes charging your smartphone easier.

STILL RIDES LIKE A BOSS

If there was one thing that made everyone fall in love with the Interceptor, it was the riding experience. And that continues to be the case. The engine continues to impress with how it pulls from the lower end of the rev range and builds up to the redline. At no point, you are left wanting for more power. The transmission feels as smooth as butter, and RE has tuned it to ensure that you can effortlessly shift up or down by just using less than an inch of clutch

THE INTERCEPTOR'S ENGINE AND EXHAUST ARE NOW BLACKED-OUT, WHICH TRULY TRANSFORMS THE WAY IT LOOKS

travel. Impressive! I have been racing recently – you can read about it elsewhere in this issue – and I must say that the Interceptor's shifts made me feel like I was back on track. The brakes, while they leave you desiring a little more feel and feedback, can bring the Interceptor to a stop rapidly. And the tyres...well, they do the job.

VERDICT

The Interceptor 650, then, comes across as a motorcycle that has not really changed a lot – in fact, it hasn't. And while changes are subtle, they will make a world of difference in terms of attracting newer buyers. Previously, the Interceptor with its incredible mechanicals appealed to old-school bikers who truly valued the retro look. But with this update, the Interceptor has now put on a new Denim jacket, which is likely to make young riders interested in riding it, and once they do, it will be pretty hard for them not to sign on the dotted line before leaving the showroom. **OX**



ROYAL ENFIELD INTERCEPTOR 650

ENGINE: 648CC	PROS: BLACKED-OUT LOOKS, ENGINE
TRANSMISSION: 6-SPEED	CONS: STANDING WEIGHT
POWER: 47BHP @ 7,250RPM	X-FACTOR: AN OLD-SCHOOL MOTORCYCLE WITH MODERN RELIABLE MECHANICALS THAT JUST LOVES TO BE AN EVERYDAY WORKHORSE.
TORQUE: 52.3NM @ 5,150RPM	
PRICE: ₹ 3.02 - 3.30 LAKH (EX-SHOWROOM, DELHI)	