

QUICK VICTORY

TEST DEAN MELLOR PHOTOGRAPHY LOU MARTIN

Victory is a young manufacturer, but its new Cross Roads and Cross Country models prove it's mature



Victory is a motorcycle company that has come a long way in just a short period of time. Since its inception in 1998, Victory Motorcycles now claims sales of up to five percent of the US premium cruiser market, up to three percent of the premium touring market, and has more than 10 models in its line-up.

And the company that describes itself as the manufacturer of the new American motorcycle is taking the Aussie market very seriously.

Victory's first store in Australia is located in Melbourne, and it's a company-owned store – not a franchise – that is a template for the way in which Victory markets motorcycles around the world. And Victory's second Australian factory-owned store will open in Sydney very soon.

The presence of Victory Motorcycle's vice president, Mark Blackwell, at the company's first media launch in Oz, shows just how seriously the American-based manufacturer takes our market. Victory even flew out its Core Concept bike that is said to represent the essence of Victory.

Spearheading the 2010 model range is the all-new Cross Roads and Cross Country. Both touring machines slot below the Vision Tour Premium in the line-up and are powered by Victory's 1731cc 50° V-twin Freedom engine mated to a six-speed gearbox with a true overdrive.

The Cross Roads is aimed squarely at Harley-Davidson's Road King and the Cross Country at the H-D Street Glide but, as Victory states, its aim is to offer less retro, more power, better handling and more comfort. As such, the Cross Roads and Cross Country are claimed to offer 26 percent more storage, 60 percent more wheel travel and 18 percent more torque than their Yank competitors.

Although they have many traditional styling cues centred around that big V-twin donk, the low stance and flowing lines that start at the headlight and continue all the way to the tapered panniers and thin vertical taillight, are not traditional.

Both machines are built on the same engine platform, but the Cross Country offers more fairing and added features compared to the Cross Roads that make it more suitable to touring.

The low 667mm seat height makes the 338kg and 347kg bikes easy to manoeuvre at low speeds and

MARK BLACKWELL, VICTORY MOTORCYCLES' VICE PRESIDENT

How important is Australia to Victory?

It's real important. It's one of the largest markets outside North America and we're doing something very unique here – it's the first place in the world we actually have our own company-owned store.

We had a plan to have up to four stores in the major markets and, as you know better than I, Australia is a huge country and the population is concentrated into some major markets, and so we thought we could effectively penetrate the market with just a handful of stores of our own and that in the secondary markets we would try and have independent dealers.

In some ways this is kind of an experiment, but there are a number of us who really believe this is the right way to go to market – and frankly we can do it here because we didn't have an existing network.

So far we're really please with the result. The store in Melbourne is ahead of plan. Where not doing huge numbers yet, but it's ahead of the plan.

Can you explain what you mean by that?

I believe we've done a hundred units in our first year. I don't know the exact number but I think it's north of 100. Prior to the launch there were a lot of people who had no idea who Victory was.

Victory had no presence here and I think the first few months, the traffic and interest was good but we weren't really selling bikes, but now the momentum is picking up.

We're just about to open our second store, in Sydney, which is very exciting.

Australia is a real important market in terms of the volume downstream but also the learning. If this is effective here, there

may be some other parts of the world where we don't have distribution where having a company-owned store might be a better way of starting up.

You've been described as the Godfather of Victory. How long have you been with the company?

I joined when the company had just finished its second model year and was starting the third, and frankly, we were really lost.

While there was initial excitement about Victory, and we had accolades such as Cruiser of the Year [from *Cycle World* in the USA], the synchronisation, getting the suppliers to get the parts right, and get the bikes built and get them to the dealers on time kind of all broke down, and we delivered the bikes late and lost some deposits, dealers were frustrated and

customers unhappy.

But the good news is the company didn't give up. They recruited me, brought in a new engineering leader, and we totally reorganised the engineering group. We put together a new product plan and the Vegas was the first product, and we've been building steady momentum since then.

Right about when we got the company very healthy financially, a couple of years ago, unfortunately the market turned down.

So the last couple of years it's been very challenging from a financial standpoint, because we've had to work real hard to help the dealers clear out inventory. But once again, the company [Polaris] took the long view and said 'Look, this is a business that's very important to our long-term success'. As a company, we want to be more on-road, and we want to be more global, so

motorcycles are important to that plan.

Today we're still pretty dependent on off-road vehicles, ATVs and side-by-sides, and that's very important to the company, but we think longer term those segments are going to come under more and more pressure from land-use issues and so on. I'm not suggesting we're backing up from those, we're still investing and launching products, but what we want to do is try and grow faster outside that and the motorcycle business is very important.

Victory is kind of our foundation motorcycle business, but we're thinking beyond that. You probably know that a couple of years ago we bought 25 percent of KTM, with intention of fully acquiring it. That didn't work out, but there may be some other brands that become available or there may be some other partnerships that could be available, or we may choose to organically develop other kinds of

motorcycles – off-road, on/off-road, sportsbikes, those are all possible.

What percentage of the cruiser market does Victory have in the USA?

We've got about a five percent share of what we call the premium cruiser segment, so those are cruisers over 1400cc. We've got about a three percent share of premium touring, but that's growing really fast because the Vision was our first entrant, but now that we've come with the Cross Roads and the Cross Country, and those are really selling well and they're picking up speed so we think our share will grow quickly to five or six percent. Our intermediate term goal is to be in the seven to 10 percent range [in the next couple of years].

You're a new brand and the competition is established. How do you overcome that?

The awareness of Victory is quite good now. That was our first challenge – to get people to know who Victory is. The last couple of years we've been building familiarity. The most effective thing is to get them down to the dealer and get them to take a demo ride. Demo rides centrepiece of all the marketing efforts and we have five or six trucks this year on the road, full of bikes, going all over the country to key markets in the States.

If we can get people on a Victory, it really persuades them that it's a great motorcycle.

Quite frankly, we've got to offer the customer more – more value, better performance, more product than the competition and I think we're doing that. We've clearly got the product part of it right and what we've got to do is let more people know about that, and that's what our marketing team is focussing on.



The engine's midrange is very strong and will readily rev through to the 5100rpm redline



1. All the usuals, plus the sound system controls
2. Instruments mimic the bike – traditional, but not
3. Meaty torque with a true overdrive
4. The Core concept

the low centre of gravity makes them feel much lighter and smaller than they are when you're up to speed. But long footboards and a reasonable stretch to the 'bars means that taller riders won't feel too cramped on either the Cross Roads or the Cross Country.

Being a shorter bloke, I found myself looking through the screen of the Cross Roads rather than over it, and I copped a bit of wind buffeting around my helmet at highway speeds, but the screen is a quick-detach unit. The Cross Country's screen is more suited to shorties, with its lower overall height, yet the wide fairing offers plenty of wind protection for long-distance hauls.

Both bikes offer a highway bar that is designed to accept accessories such as highway 'pegs and driving lights. The units fitted to the Cross Roads are traditional chromed tube items but the one on the Cross Country is a stylised, forged alloy bar.

The sculptured seat on both bikes offers good support and the big rubberised footboards minimise vibrations. The pillion seat is reasonably spacious and pillion footboards are generous. There aren't any grab-rails for the pillion, but there's a strap they can hang on to, or there are optional backrests for rider and pillion.

With lockable top-opening panniers that offer

a claimed 79.5 litres of weather-proof storage space, you'll be able to carry plenty of gear.

Claimed peak output is a healthy 69kW and 148Nm. As you'd expect of a large capacity V-twin, the engine makes plenty of useable torque from very low in the rev range. In fact, you can poke along with less than 2000rpm showing on the tacho and there's plenty of instant response as soon as you crack the throttle, with well sorted fuelling that delivers a smooth result throughout the rev range.

The engine's midrange is very strong and although it will readily rev through to its 5100rpm redline, your best bet is to make the most of the plentiful torque from 2000rpm through to around 4000rpm. And cruising in top gear at 100km/h sees the tacho needle sitting on a relaxed 2300rpm, right in the meat of the torque.

While the six-speed gearbox is a clunky unit, shifts are positive. The gear lever is set quite a way forward but it's not too much of a stretch and the clutch, although a little on the heavy side, is progressive in its actuation.

Gear ratios are evenly spaced and the abundance of torque means you can be lazy with shifts once you're on the road.

Final drive is via a low maintenance carbon-

2010 UPDATES



VEGAS

- Lower 640mm seat height
- 'Bars pulled back 50mm
- 'Pegs moved back 60mm
- Three new colours



KINGPIN

- Two new colours



VEGAS JACKPOT

- Four new colours, two with Extreme graphics



HAMMER

- Blue Ice with Extreme Graphics, Lime Green with Extreme Graphics



HAMMER S

- Suede Black & White with Red Stripe, Boardwalk Blue with White Racing Stripes



KINGPIN 8-BALL

- Lower 640mm seat height



VISION TOUR PREMIUM

- Linked ABS → Brake pad material
- Radio display → 12 Volt accessory outlets
- Two new colours

ENGINE

Oil capacity 4.75L
Configuration 50° V-twin
Cylinder head SOHC, four valves per cylinder
Bore 101mm
Stroke 108mm
Capacity 1731cc
Compression ratio 9.4:1
Ignition Transistorised
Cooling Air/oil
Fueling EFI, 2 x 45mm throttle bodies

TRANSMISSION

Type Six-speed
Primary drive Gear
Clutch Wet
Final drive Belt

CHASSIS

Frame material Cast aluminium
Frame layout Backbone
Rake 29°
Trail 142mm
Wheelbase 1670mm

RUNNING GEAR

Suspension
Front: 43mm telescopic, no adjustable, 130mm travel
Rear: Monoshock, adjustable preload, 120mm travel
Wheels Six-spoke, cast aluminium
Front: 18 x 3.0 Rear: 16 x 5.0
Tyres Dunlop Elite III
Front: 130/70R18 (63H)
Rear: 180/60R16 (80H)
Brakes
Front: Twin 300mm discs, four-piston calipers
Rear: 300mm disc, two-piston caliper

DIMENSIONS

Weight Cross Roads: 338kg (dry, claimed)
Cross Country: 347kg (dry, claimed)
Seat height 667mm
Max width Not given
Max height Not given
Fuel capacity 22L

PERFORMANCE

Power 65kW @ 9500rpm (claimed)
Torque 141Nm @ 4500rpm (claimed)
Top speed 145km/h (est)

CONTACT & SALE INFO

Testbike Victory Motorcycles
Contact www.victorymotorcycles.com.au
1300 721 360
Colour options Cross Roads: Cherry or Black
Cross Country: Black, Cherry and Skulls
Warranty 24 month, unlimited km
Price Cross Roads: \$27,995
Cross Country: \$29,995 (Skulls +\$500)



The Cross Roads is aimed at riders with a high disposable income

fibre-reinforced belt.

The Cross Roads/Country chassis is based on the Core Concept bike and it features a cast aluminium frame to minimise weight and the number of components used in its construction.

Front suspension consists a pair of 43mm upside-down forks with a generous 130mm of travel, while there's a monoshock at the rear with air adjustable preload and 120mm of travel.

Our test ride included a variety of road surfaces including a lot of chopped up bitumen. The wide handlebar and low centre of gravity made it easy to tip the bikes into corners and although the footboards would scrape if lent over too far, cornering stability proved faultless.

The Dunlop Elite 3 tyres offer good grip in dry conditions and previous experience with these tyres suggest they'll also work well in the wet.

Twin 300mm discs up front with four-piston calipers and a 300mm disc at the rear with a two-piston caliper offer plenty of braking power. The brakes are linked and brake feel is good front and rear, although there's no ABS option on the Cross Roads or the Cross Country, yet

ABS is now offered standard on the top-of-the-range Vision.

According to Victory, the Cross Roads is aimed at riders aged 45 and above with a high disposable income and who want a back-roads tourer with plenty of storage, comfort, performance and only the essentials when it comes to equipment levels. At \$27,995 the Cross Roads is competitively priced and well equipped.

The Cross Country is aimed at a similar demographic, but more so at riders likely to do longer trips. At \$29,995, or \$30,495 with skulls graphics, it has all of the features of the Cross Roads, but a more substantial fairing, a two-speaker MP3-compatible sound system and cruise control.

By slotting in below Victory's ultimate tourer, the Vision Tour ABS, and above the Kingpin, the Cross Roads and Cross Country give Victory a touring machine to suit just about anyone. Sales in the USA to date suggests that the Cross Country will outsell the Cross Roads by about two to one, and with more than 100 items on the optional accessories list, there's plenty of gear available for riders to personalise their machines. 🏍️



Main: Cross Roads

1. Cross Country
2. A quick-detach screen
3. Nearly 80 litres of weatherproof storage
4. Linked brakes

