



# SW



# MEET VICTORY



WE TRAVEL TO THE SUNSHINE COAST FOR A 'DOUBLE CROSS'.

WORDS BRUMBY PICS LOU MARTIN

The big, black, stretched Hummer sat outside Brisbane's domestic air terminal attracted the attention of everyone nearby. "Is this for us" I wondered, somewhat apprehensively. Lowly bike journos like me are not used to such salubrious transport to a bike launch. But the big Victory sign stuck on the rear window confirmed it and a dozen of us jumped in the big limo to be ferried up to the Sunshine Coast and the launch of the all new Victory models; the Cross Roads and Cross Country.

This was the first official Victory launch in Australia and the Hummer was proof that they were determined to tick all the boxes. Actually, there was no need to go to the trouble; the new bikes are plenty good enough to stand up for themselves.

Both these bikes have been the subject of intensive development and I was very keen to have a ride. That evening we attended a preview where Mark Blackwell, head of Victory Motorcycles, explained how the models were developed.



The engineering for both is based on the Victory Core concept bike which utilises a central, cast alloy backbone chassis. It incorporates the airbox and fuel tank as part of the chassis and provides a rigid platform to mount the engine and suspension. The engineering is impressive but I was waiting for the ride next day.

We set out on a loop through the hinterland behind Coolool and first impressions were very favourable. I rode the base model Cross Roads although it hardly qualifies as a basic model. The Roads is equipped with standard panniers which are huge, a removable touring screen and four piston, split system brakes as standard. Cruise control is optional on the Cross Roads (standard on the Cross Country) and a number of bikes were fitted with it. Both models share the latest version of Victory's 106 cube V-twin which pumps out 94hp and 109ft/lbs of torque and the big motor has plenty of low down grunt. Sixth gear is a true overdrive and offers very relaxed cruising at the legal limit.



Around town, the Roads was very light and easy to handle, helped by the low (26.2in) and very comfortable seat. The riding position places you upright and adjustable footboards ensure there is a riding position to suit all sizes. I thought the standard height screen was good as it allowed a clear view just over the top while diverting wind blast away to the side.

We stopped for lunch before attacking the winding roads around Kenilworth and the big bike started to show what it really had to offer.

**“AS WE CLIMBED ONTO THE PLATEAU THE ROAD BECAME TIGHTER WITH ROADWORKS EVERY FEW KILOMETRES BUT EVEN SO, IT WAS HARD TO FAULT THE HANDLING ...”**

It was rock steady diving into bumpy sweepers and shook off deep potholes with ease. The front suspension is very well sorted despite its lack of adjustability and the rear shock offers plenty of travel, backed up by air adjustment. As we climbed onto the plateau the road became tighter with roadworks every few kilometres but even so, it was hard to fault the handling. Big bumps taken at high speed didn't knock it off line. The brakes scrubbed off speed quickly and I never felt either wheel

The Cross Roads handles a winding road with ease.





# “WHERE THE VICTORY SCORES POINTS IS IN THE LAID BACK RIDING EXPERIENCE, A TRADITIONAL AMERICAN TOURER IN A TOTALLY MODERN PACKAGE ...”



lock up, despite plenty of gravel in some places.

Victory claim the new models have very generous ground clearance and they do, up to a point. You have to remember that any bike that weighs around 350 kilos will flatten its suspension in corners occasionally. But you had to be trying pretty hard and even then, touching down the footboards failed to knock it off line. It just sounds bad!

We pulled over soon after for a photo session and to compare notes. Interestingly, given that both bikes are identical save for the fairing fitted to the Cross Country, everyone had a strong preference for one or the other model.

I like the Cross Roads. I'm not into stereos and appreciate a clear view ahead. The Cross Country however, had plenty

of admirers who appreciated the extra comfort and the luxury of a top line music system. Each to his own. Later that day I removed the clear screen from the Roads and that was great. If I owned one I would leave it off, except for long trips. The bike looks better without it.

Both models displayed impressive levels of fit and finish. The paint is first class, particularly the custom skull paint scheme on one of the Cross Countrys. Chrome is lustrous on both and the styling very distinctive. They sure don't look like a Harley, which is exactly the point! And judging by the lack of bangs and crashes on poor roads, the Victory product impresses with its build quality. That big strong chassis really works in keeping flex away.

There's no doubt Victory have targeted the H-D market with these models. The Cross bikes are aimed directly at the Road King/Street Glide market and Victory believe they have all the bases covered in comparison to both H-D models.

**Four piston brakes and floating rotors do a great job but when will we see ABS? The CORE concept bike (below) is magnificent!**



I believe that these bikes are actually comparable with some Euro tourers as well, such as BMW. They don't offer the outright speed of those bikes but their level of sophistication is very similar. Where the Victory scores points is in the laid back riding experience, a traditional American tourer in a totally modern package.

There is a large range of accessories available for both bikes including plenty of bling as well as more practical lines such as pannier liners, luggage racks and sissy

bars. Personally, I would like to see both bikes fitted with ABS and cruise control as standard but I guess it all comes at a price. Speaking of which, the Cross Roads retails at \$27,995+ORC and the Cross Country is two grand more at \$29,995.

I liked these bikes very much. They have what I suppose could be described as integrity; solid, inspiring and very competent.

Thanks to Victory Australia for the very enjoyable ride but next time, don't worry about hiring a Hummer! **HD**



National Aussie sales manager Peter Harvey (top) and Mark Blackwell (below) Victory Motorcycles VP. They both ride – fast!



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## GUTS &amp; BOLTS

## ENGINE

Type: .....Freedom 106ci V-Twin  
 Horsepower: .....92  
 Torque: .....109  
 Cooling: .....Air / Oil  
 Valves: .....4-valve SOHC  
 Bore/stroke: .....101x108mm  
 Compression Ratio: .....9.4:1  
 Injector: .....45mm throttle body

## TRANSMISSION

Type: .....6-speed overdrive  
 Primary Drive: .....Belt

## SUSPENSION &amp; FRAME

Type: .....Inverted Fork  
 Front travel: .....5.1"  
 Rear travel: .....4.7"  
 Rear spring pre-load: .....Yes  
 Frame: .....Cast aluminium

## WHEELS &amp; TYRES

F rim: .....Aluminium 3x18"  
 R rim: .....Aluminium 5x16"  
 F tyre: .....130/70 R18 Dunlop  
 R tyre: .....180/60 R16 Dunlop  
 F brake: .....300mm Dual Disc  
 F caliper: .....3-piston  
 R brake: .....300mm Disc  
 R caliper: .....2-piston

## DIMENSIONS

Rake: .....29°  
 Length: .....8'  
 Weight (Cross Country): .....347kg  
 Weight (Cross Roads): .....338kg  
 Fuel capacity: .....22lts  
 Seat height: .....26.3"

## ACROSS COUNTRY

## BRUMBY FLEW BACK TO MELBOURNE BUT DOC TOOK THE LONG WAY HOME...

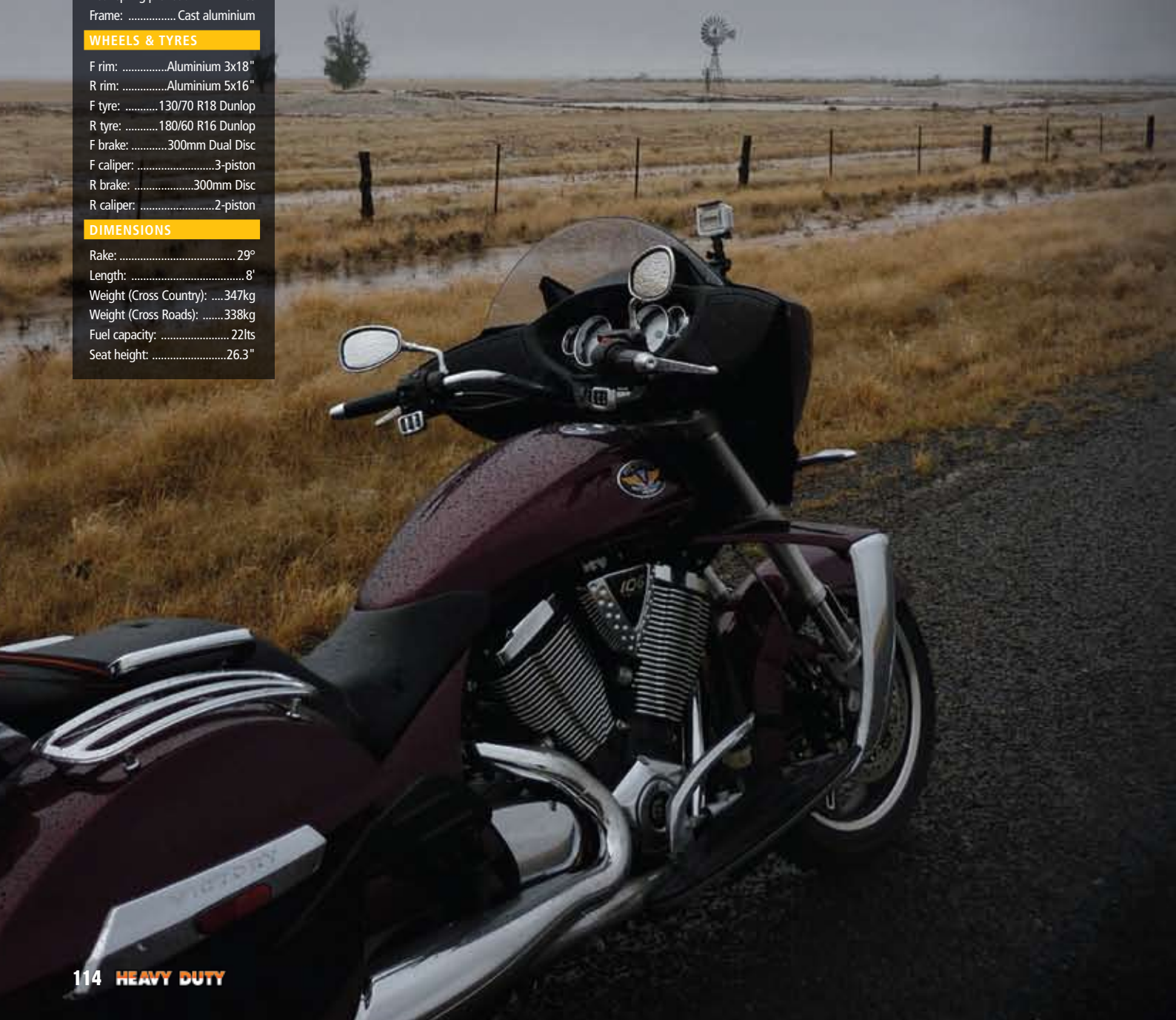
WORDS &amp; PICS DOC

With the model named Cross Country, what choice did I have? Cross Country indeed. How on earth could I be satisfied with just the ride day put on for the motorcycle press? Great though that day was, with its couple of hundred kilometre route

through the sensational Sunshine Coast hinterland, this bike deserved a longer run to properly uncover its strengths and ferret out any weaknesses.

To set the stage, let me begin by stating that my record of test riding Victory motorcycles is fairly extensive, beginning with the very first model back in 1999 and which, I must say, did not overly impress me with its styling or clunky gearbox which felt like it came straight from an old Ferguson tractor.

However, from a wobbly start, Victory have since travelled light years in both design and performance, to be right up there with anything on the market.



In 2008 I put a whopping 15,000 miles on a Vision, riding across America and back a couple of times and in 2009 took a Victory Kingpin from Adelaide up to Darwin and back, some 6000 plus kilometres. So I set out to ride the Cross Country back to Melbourne from Coolum Beach, a lazy 2000 kilometres which I figured should be a doddle. Which, was not quite how it turned out, but we'll get to that.

Let's deal with the styling first. Whereas the naked Victory bikes are relatively conservative, yet still do their own styling thing, their touring range is bold to say the least. With its release in 2008, the Vision Tour and the Vision Street rewrote the book on styling for big American motorcycles and the predictable reaction from bikers was a total love 'em or hate 'em one.

Well, in some ways the Cross Country is a little less in your face with its design, perhaps a little more conservative. But only a little. With its 106-cubic-inch Freedom V-Twin engine coupled to a 6-speed true overdrive transmission, this jigger eats the miles and eats them fast. However, more noteworthy than the power it delivers, is the ride.

Each of the new models employs the technology used in the Vision's frame to create a new - but similar - two-piece sand-cast hollow aluminium frame. The stiffness inherent in this frame provides an amazingly stable and predictable ride at any speed. This stability has to be experienced to be believed as it truly is that impressive. And the remarkably precise steering allows cornering tactics more akin to a sport bike than a touring rig which is pretty sensational for a 347kg (dry) machine

Victory claim to have the longest suspension travel in its class at 120mm and I can tell you it worked a treat riding down the Newell Highway, which some (including me) have referred to as the New Hell Highway. Well, the Cross Country just ate the bumps, potholes and ruts I encountered along the way and spat them out with disdain.

Most impressive, and most confidence building, is the way the bike holds its line effortlessly in high speed sweepers virtually regardless of the road surface. And at BNM speeds (Better Not Mention) it is as steady as a rock.

While it does not have ABS, the braking setup on the Cross Country does a fine job of hauling down the speed when required, thanks to twin four-spot calipers up front biting down on a pair of 300mm floating



rotors and the two-spotter at the rear.

The Cross Country has a smaller fork mounted batwing-style fairing than the Vision's bigger unit but the instrumentation includes all you could ask for including analogue fuel, voltmeter, speedo and tachometer along with an informative LCD display, while a panel of warning and indicator lights round out the dash.

There's no CD player but an AM-FM tuner comes standard and a nice touch is the blue backlighting of the instruments which gives a Star Trek kind of feel to it at night. There's a power port under the left speaker to readily power a GPS unit, iPod, iPhone or whatever takes your particular fancy.

The cruise control buttons located just below the throttle are easy to operate even with gloved hands and lit to ensure night visibility. The seat is pretty comfortable and the extra large floor boards allow for varying foot positions during a long ride.

The panniers are much roomier than the Vision's and top loading as well, which makes them much more practical while the optional luggage rack on the model I rode extends the carrying capacity significantly.

At the start of my ride to Melbourne I made the decision to cut inland before heading south and in this way hoped to miss the heavy rains forecast for the coastal areas. After making a mid-morning start and heading south to Brisbane I then swung east and made Goondiwindi for a first day's total of a lazy 515 kilometres. And whether riding across flat country or negotiating the mountain twisties the Victory purred along, carrying me in relaxed comfort.

Day two dawned fine and just a bit above freezing, or so it felt as I hit the road. The screen that was fitted to this particular bike was low enough to look over to get a clear view of the road surface and just

high enough to duck under when the rains came in order to avoid the worst of it. So at my average height I did experience some buffeting but nothing to really be a worry.

I needed to achieve around 800km on the second day so I humped it along a bit, cursing the stupid 100km limit on NSW roads which I may have crept a bit over from time to time. This bike wants to go and when I did encounter a 110 zone in Victoria discovered that it was ticking over at a lazy 2600 revs. I hit West Wyalong just after sundown and was warned at the local gas station that bad weather, really bad weather, was forecast for the next day. Oh joy.

I was awakened in my room about midnight by rain pounding on the roof. This went on and on and wasn't just heavy rain but a serious downpour. And it kept up all night and kept me mostly awake and worrying about impassable floodways. So about 5.30 I decided to hit the road, figuring that my progress from here on might be slowed by the mega litres cascading from the heavens.

West Wyalong is kangaroo city and I normally only ride through this region in broad daylight, but I figured that any un-frozen roos around today would either be shivering under low lying bushes or treading water in the flooded paddocks. So they weren't a problem but semi trailers were, each oncoming truck kicking up a virtual wall of water which slammed into the front of the bike. However, by ducking down behind the screen I managed to stay ... well only dripping wet, rather than totally saturated. For a while anyway. I tried to laugh at the silliness of the situation but it came out as a gurgle so I gave up and just rode on.

And what a bike to do it on! The Cross Country's sure-footedness gave me the confidence to keep the throttle rolled on and the speed right up, something I would have been reluctant to do on quite a few other bikes indeed.

I hit Melbourne mid-afternoon after a very wet 600 kays and at the Victory showroom, as I unclenched my frozen fists from the grips and stiffly dismounted, I was welcomed with a cheery hello and a steaming hot cup of coffee. Sipping my coffee, I reflected on the 2000 kilometre ride, and then the rain stopped and I wished I could jump back on and head cross country once again. It's that good a tourer, it really is. Did I ferret out any weaknesses? Nope. **HD**