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- August 8, 2011
- Gabe Ets-Hokin
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Victory 2012 Press Introduction



Victory's excellent cornering clearance and quality suspension make a ride through the twisties more fun than you should have on a touring bike.

There's plenty of gloom and doom to go around when you look at financial and business news these days, but that seemed pretty remote to me last week, feted in a swanky hotel suite in Park City, Utah by Victory Motorcycles. That's where the fledgling American brand (a mere 13 years old) held its annual new-product launch, and from where I sat, bombarded with the company's rosy PowerPoint demonstration and marketing collateral, things looked good for the company.

And it wasn't just marketing puffery. Parent company Polaris is doing as well as it was doing last year, Indian has been

tucked into the corporate portfolio, and according to an “unnamed third party,” Victory is ranked first in owner satisfaction, and Pied Piper Management company (which sends “secret shoppers into dealerships) found that Victory dealers are ranked number one for customer satisfaction. That may be why Victory has climbed from number four to the number-two seller of heavyweight (over 1400cc) cruisers, if Victory’s numbers are to be believed. Overseas sales are up 59 percent, and there is a new marketing push composed of both increasing the number of test rides as well as a program designed to team prospective buyers to current Victory owners—or, as Victory’s people call them, “mavericks.”



Cross Country Tour



Cross Roads Classic LE

Pretty strong showing for a young brand going toe-to-toe with the world's best-known motorcycling icon. How does it do it? In a very quaint way that seems to have been forgotten by most consumer-products manufacturers: building good products at a reasonable price. Victory seems to be proud of the way it undercuts similar Harley-Davidson products, and this year some of its models got price cuts—the Vision has been slashed to \$20,999. To add a bit of icing to the cake o' value, now all Victory touring models come with ABS—standard.

We told you about the updates to the model line [last month](#). How are they to ride? Well, the Cross Roads Classic LE sure does look pretty, but there was only one at the press launch, and it was spoken (pardon the pun) for, so I can't tell you how the new wheels and other modifications changed the experience of riding the bike. However, there were plenty of Cross Country Tours, so I can speak about that.

The new Tour, as we've mentioned, is the basic Cross Country laden with touring-oriented accessories. There's ABS, a higher windscreen, heated grips and seat, cruise control, adjustable (for both height and angle) passenger floorboards, crashbars, the gigantic Lock n' Ride trunk, an iPod connector and HID lighting. But the main addition is the Victory Comfort Control system. It's four panels that can be easily adjusted by the rider to channel or block off airflow to his upper and/or lower body.

How does all this stuff work on the Victory? I was intrigued by the "Comfort Control System," as I found it very clever and well-designed. It's easy and (sort of) safe to use while the bike is moving, and the mid panels—small, clear plastic wings just under the big bat-wing fairing—are easy to reach with your hands and do a great job directing airflow at a rider's chest. There are also two lower panels that can be swung open with your foot (I'm sure Victory's lawyers don't want you to do this while the bike is moving) that can make the bike feel half-faired or fully faired in seconds, which can make a big difference if you're wearing vented or mesh riding gear. They can also vent the rear-cylinder heat away from the rider's legs, a welcome sensation, as my thighs heated up so much I thought the three-position seat-heater switch had been clicked to the "hibachi" setting.



Cross Country Tour lower vents provide air-flow management for 2012; Upper vents send cool air to the rider's upper body.

Those new fairing lowers don't just add Comfort Control. They also contain a gallon of non-locking storage each, boosting the bike's total capacity to a class-leading 41 gallons. The iPod connector resides within the left pod.

So how does the higher windscreen work? Great. The buffeting Dirck and I noted in our [bagger](#) test last year is gone. It's now quiet enough behind that big screen to almost be comfortable without earplugs, at least comfy enough to not have to resort to borrowing grubby earplugs from a large and hairy V-Twin journalist.

Victory's press intros are notable for offering a lot more riding than other events, and this one was no exception. I was on the shorter wave, which meant about 300 miles of total riding—the other wave was heading to Sturgis, over 600 miles away, in addition to our 300 miles of riding. The company likes riders to discover how good the handling, braking, performance and suspension is. I found it to be just as good as last year—the suspension is smooth and sporty, yet plush. The steering is linear and stable leaned over, even over bumps. Cornering clearance can't be beat in its class, but there's still plenty of legroom, even with the low seat. What I found really remarkable was the low-speed agility—the low center of gravity and vast steering lock makes feet-up U-turns very easy, even on narrow two-lane roads.

New vents and a few new customized models may not be big news, but the peek I got into a burgeoning motorcycle brand was interesting. Victory isn't going to outsell you-know-who anytime soon, but it does seem to be calmly building its reputation and success by slowly building market share and a customer base by refining existing product and steadfastly getting the word out to potential buyers.

Editor's Note – Stay tuned for a short article on the new 2012 Ness custom models.



Victory has had success with the new apehanger-equipped Highball. It's \$13,499 and is only available in matte black with white accents and whitewall tires.



[Double-headed attack for Rizla Suzuki at Brno](#)
[More Information on the Future of the Indian Brand Under Polaris](#)

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2012 Victory Motorcycles Photo Gallery

[View as Slideshow](#)

Victory introduces the 15 motorcycles which comprise its 2012 lineup which includes the all-new 2012 Cross Country Tour and motorcycles customized by the Ness clan.



Victory describes Arlen Ness' new paint on the Signature Series Victory Vision a rolling fireball.



Let the Hammer drop, Victory style!



Victory took its popular bagger and gave it the touring treatment. The 2012 Cross Country Tour is the only all-new model in 2012.



The 2012 Cross Roads LE is a numbered model which includes exclusive paint, graphics, pinstriping, a classic leather seat and saddlebags with custom stitching, and wire wheels.



Victory continues to black them out, this time in the form of the 2012 Vegas 8-Ball.



The 2012 Victory Vegas maintains its prominent styling cues, a raised spine running the length of the bike, a tall front hoop and a wide rear.



The 2012 Victory Cross Country is one slick looking bagger.



The 2012 Vegas Jackpot has wicked billet wheels and crisp two-tone paint, from the headlight housing to the color matched frame.



The 2012 Victory Vision has handy features like heated grips and seats and an electrically adjustable windshield.



The Ness clan rolls out on the motorcycles they customized this year for Victory.



Arlen Ness has been lending his eye for design to Victory since 2004 and customized a Victory Vision for 2012.



The 2012 Victory Hammer comes in a bitchin' black version, too, called the Hammer 8-Ball.



The 2012 Cross Country Tour comes with hard fairing lowers with vents that open and close to allow riders the ability to manage air flow. Here it is in the closed position.



The Lower Air Controls on the hard lowers of the 2012 Cross Country Tour in the open position.



The view from the rider's seat looks sharp on the 2012 Zach Ness Vegas thanks to a tank with custom paint and graphics, a Ness handlebar crossbar and Holeshot billet handgrips.



The 2012 Victory Kingpin continues to don a classy, classic cruiser look highlighted by long, flared fenders and a scalloped tank.



The Freedom 106/6 V-Twin powers all 2012 Victory Motorcycles.



A view of the clean looking cockpit of the 2012 Cross Country Tour.



The racy Hammer S muscle bike sets its blacked-out components off against race stripes.



Zach Ness is a third generation custom bike builder who has been recruited by Victory to help demonstrate the customizing potential of its motorcycles.



2012 Victory Vegas



2012 Victory Cross Country



2012 Victory Cory Ness Cross Country



2012 Victory Cross Country Tour



2012 Victory Cross Roads



2012 Victory Cross Roads LE



2012 Victory Hammer 8 Ball



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