

2008 BIG DOG MUTT

A dog with street smarts





Many believe that a mutt is simply an inferior mixed breed. I personally disagree since every mutt I've ever known has always had the sort of street smarts lacking in purebreds. So, when Big Dog Motorcycles invited me to picturesque Torrey Pines just north of San Diego for its 2008 launch, I was delighted to see a new model called the Mutt had been added to the kennel. As soon as the bikes were introduced, it was obvious to me that the company's plan for 2008 was simple: add diversity to the Big Dog lineup while at the same time refining an already successful product. As the new base model in the family, the Mutt could be referred to as an entry-level bike, but not entry-level in the traditional sense. The Mutt is a perfect bike for those considering entering the Big Dog family, but it's not a beginner's bike. It offers all the benefits of a Big Dog, with a slightly lower price tag (\$24,900 base price) than the rest of the family.

Although the Mutt is new for '08, it isn't entirely new. As the name suggests, this bike is a combination of previous Big Dogs. Some would call this a parts-bin bike, but BDM alpha dog, Sheldon Coleman, likes to refer to it as a greatest hits bike, since many of the parts come from models that have previously proven themselves. For example, the 1-1/2" diameter frame and hidden shock swingarm come directly from the 2006 Mastiff.

PHOTOS BY GAVIN PETERS



At the same time, the rubber-mounted, low-rise, chrome handlebars, stretched steel, one-piece fuel tank, and steel fenders come from the now discontinued Chopper. You can see why this bike was aptly named the Mutt. Though the intent in reusing parts was simply to keep costs down, there is no doubt that the heart and soul of this bike is all Big Dog.

The power plant is comprised of the same wonderful 117" S&S engine and six-speed BDM Balance Drive system you find on all Dogs. And an S&S Super G carb does a perfect job of feeding the Mutt. Chrome legs keep the beast looking sharp, as do chrome 80-spoke wheels (a 2.15-21" up front, and a 8.50-18" on the rear). And I must say that it's almost refreshing to have a 250mm (as opposed to a 300) tire out back since it makes a big difference in the bike's stance, profile, and handling agility, all of which seem to be right. Like I said, this Mutt has street smarts.

Besides the wheels, the Mutt's distinctive custom styling comes from the Wrinkle Black finished engine, and powder-coated frame with matching struts, license bracket, and speedo housing. As with every Big Dog model, multiple levels of factory custom-paint options are available. In addition, an extensive parts and accessory catalog allows owners to further customize their Mutts.

Throwing my leg over the Mutt, and taking her for a run up and down the Pacific Coast Highway was a pleasurable



experience. The first thing I noticed is that the 24-1/4" seat height makes it easy for anyone to feel sure footed holding this bike up. When I initially fired the bike, I was pleased to hear the growl of the 2-into-1 exhaust. When it was time to roll, I pulled in the clutch and couldn't miss the fact that it has been redesigned for 2008; the pull is reduced from 25 pounds down to about 12. This made a big difference in stop-and-go traffic as we headed north up the PCH. Simply put, once on the road, this bike was easy to

ride. The combination of Pro-Street setup, 250mm tire out back, 2" over 41mm front forks, and 37-degree frame rake with 2 degrees in the trees, made the bike feel more nimble than its kennel mates. Shifting through the gears was positive, and finding neutral was a breeze thanks to the proprietary Neutral Detent System. The combined solo seat, forward controls, and pull-back handlebars make for a comfortable riding position. Braking, as always, is right-on, thanks to Performance Machine calipers and two-piece rotors front and back.

I was told that before coming to market with the Mutt, the engineers at BDM spent a solid year testing combinations until they were completely satisfied that the bike had street smarts. And that it does. A relatively inexpensive way to join the Big Dog family, the Mutt is sure to appeal to a broad range of riders. It might not be a purebred, but it's a first-rate Dog nonetheless. **AIM**

SOURCES

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