

THE MOST FUN YOU CAN HAVE WITH £5,499

At £5,499 on the road, there's nothing quite like the Interceptor, Royal Enfield's first twin-cylinder motorcycle since 1970. "I sold two yesterday morning," says John Hogsden, of Hartgate of Mitcham. "There's nothing like it at the price."

The original Interceptor was introduced in 1960, and these 700cc (later 750cc) twins found a ready market in the US, where there's still recognition for the Royal Enfield name, which is apparently the world's leading maker of mid-sized motorcycles.

It attracted a degree of attention which was almost alarming given the parlous state of the UK motorcycle market. Five people came up to ask about it while we were photographing on Wimbledon Common.

So what is it? Highly conventional, that's what, though you tend to count upwards in terms of specification when it comes to this 118-year-old name, which has had a reputation for basic and decidedly retro machines. The frame is a round-tube, welded and painted steel item with a twin gas-shock rear end and curiously wide-set footrests. Wire-spoked wheels look the part, and the Interceptor has modern single disc brakes at each end, with a Bosch anti-lock system.

The engine is a 47bhp air- and oil-cooled vertical twin. Its relatively lowly power output means that



LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

The Interceptor is thoroughly modern, yet looks like an old bike

an A2 licence holder can ride the Interceptor.

While the weight of 202kg is on par with the competition, the seat is mounted quite high. The general mien is old school, with large engine casings and gearbox covers (there's plenty to polish), gently rising handlebars and separate instruments.

Press the starter, and the twin fires with a clackety

idle. With peak torque at only 2,500rpm, the Interceptor pulls from walking pace in seconds.

It's a joy to ride around town, with a geometry that allows rapid changes in direction at low speeds without feeling as though the bike will fall over. The fuel injection isn't quite as smooth as some, but it's good enough to give confidence when rolling on

the throttle on the exit of roundabouts and the like, where clean fuelling is desirable. I reckon the fuel consumption to be about 50mpg.

On the open road, the Interceptor will cruise at 70 to 80mph although you'll need to lay flat on the petrol tank to see the magic "ton", while the exhaust note is first rate.

Faster roads show up the machine's Achilles heel, however, which is the mediocre damping. Push through the turns, and the ride gets bouncy, and heaves over longer undulations. At the same time, sharper road bumps crash through the frame and sorely test the seat padding.

But will owners push the machine this hard? Most won't and will simply relish the good looks and exhaust note. Also, it might be of interest to those who have suffered the variable reliability of the company's previous machines that the Interceptor has a three-year, unlimited mileage warranty.

The Interceptor is a fine machine, with terrific looks and what seems like decent build quality. I was going to say that at this price, it can sit at the back of the garage for occasional use without making you feel guilty, but the Interceptor is much more than that; it's great fun, so it would be a crying shame not to use it at every opportunity.

Andrew English

