

# BUILT LIKE A GUN



ROYAL ENFIELD CLASSIC 500 IN SQUADRON BLUE

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PHOTOS BY KOZ & GABRIELLE ROMANELLO

Rebirthing classic styling is very popular, sometimes successful, other times not so. For me a Volkswagen Beetle has always been an ugly duckling but I'll take a new Dodge Challenger in a heartbeat. And sometimes designs are frozen in time as fashion fads come and go. The Royal Enfield is such a beast. A British munitions maker of the Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifle took the name "Royal Enfield" in 1890, and Royal Enfield Motors was founded in Redditch, England in 1901. Subsequently, with the slogan "Built Like A Gun" the Bullet motorcycle brand has become the longest lived marquee in history and Royal Enfield has become the longest running production motorcycle manufacturer in the world.

An entire tourist trade was created around riding Royal Enfields in the Himalayas. I will be on a Bullet for three weeks traveling 1,200 miles from Kathmandu to Lhasa with Hi-

malayan Roadrunners. They are the very first company to offer such trips thirty years ago. See "Motorcycling the Himalayas" in this issue.

Today I'm on the Royal Enfield Classic 500 in Squadron Blue which is pure nouveau retro, because ostensibly its cosmetics have changed little in seventy years. But what has changed is a Mikuni Electronic Fuel Injection System on a fully-integrated unit construction engine. Twin gas charged shock absorbers with five-step adjustable preload on the rear and in front a 280mm two-piston caliper disc brake.

This bike feels at home through the twisties, and its very vintage 27.2 horsepower and 31 lb. ft. of torque, is enough to keep up with the gang. The 500cc air cooled one banger thumps along nicely with the growl of a mad cat. It has a kickstarter! I love that. Steering gets a bit twitchy at terminal velocity, the foot pegs and handlebars buzz and mirrors blur as she maxes out in fifth gear at

about seventy on freeways...at least you won't be getting any speeding tickets. Weighing in at 425 lbs. with a 3.56 gallon tank and claimed 75 mpg, the Classic 500 puts others to shame in the mileage department.

Anyone looking for the fastest, most comfortable, best handling, best braking motorcycle should look elsewhere, that's not what the Classic or Bullet is about. Riding the wave of 'new vintage' motorcycles, Royal Enfield hits the mark dead center.

This is a commuter bike that not only gets the job done respectfully, it will steal the attention from motorcycles three times its price. Gawkers commented on the impeccable restoration job or queried its history and lineage. Royal Enfield's reek retro cool without the stench of costly maintenance and exorbitant prices of actual vintage. At \$5,499.00 what's not to like! I just bought a vintage Bullet on eBay that will be prominently displayed in my living room.

Royal Enfield also revealed an all new Interceptor 650 and the Continental GT 650 will be released this year. Both bikes share the same steel tube chassis and an all-new air-cooled 650cc parallel making them more highway-friendly and faster. The 2018 Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 is a standard bike with an upright riding position while the new Continental GT 650 is more of an enthusiast's cafe racer with a solo seat, clip-on handlebars, and sportier gas tank. Pricing is expected to be below the \$7K mark. Stay tuned for Quick Throttle reviews.

Special thanks to Southern California Motorcycles, Brea, CA.



## ENGINE:

Type: Single Cylinder, 4-Stroke, Spark Ignition, Air-Cooled, Fuel Injection  
 Displacement: 499cc • Bore x stroke: 84mm x 90mm  
 Compression Ratio: 8.5 : 1  
 Maximum Power: 27.2 bhp @ 5250 rpm  
 Maximum Torque: 41.3 Nm @ 4000 rpm  
 Ignition System: Digital Electronic Ignition  
 Clutch: Wet, Multi-plate • Gearbox: 5-Speed Constant Mesh  
 Lubrication: Wet Sump  
 Engine Oil: 15 W 50 API, SL Grade & above, JASO MA 2  
 Fuel Supply: Electronic Fuel Injection  
 Air Cleaner: Paper Element • Engine Start: Electric/Kick

## CHASSIS & SUSPENSION:

Front: Single Downtube, Using engine as stressed member  
 Front suspension: Telescopic, 35mm Forks, 130mm Travel  
 Rear suspension: Twin gas-charged shock absorbers with 5-step adjustable preload

## DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase: 1,360 mm • Ground Clearance: 135 mm  
 Length: 2,140 mm • Width: 790 mm (Without Mirrors)  
 Height: 1,090 mm (Without Mirrors) • Curb Weight: 194 Kg (with 90% Fuel & Oil)  
 Fuel Capacity: 13.5 Ltr

## BRAKES & TIRES:

Tires Fr.: 90/90 - 19 • Tires Rr.: 120/80 - 18  
 Brakes Front: 280mm Disc, 2-Piston Caliper  
 Brakes Rear: 153mm Drum, Single Lead Internal Expanding

## ELECTRICALS:

Electrical System: 12 volt - DC • Battery: 12 volt, 14 Ah  
 Head Lamp: 12V, 60 W / 55 W, HALOGEN  
 Tail Lamp: 12V, P21/5W • Turn Signal Lamp: 12V, R10W X 4nos