

'Now I feel like myself again'

After a four-year injury absence, electronic shifter allows Mark Silcox to get back on a bike

DETAILS:

1. The green button changes up and the red button changes down. You can alternatively have the buttons lined up vertically rather than next to each other.
2. The actuating rod is attached to the gear lever and either pushes or pulls to execute the shift. There's no need to pull in the clutch lever for upshifts, but I use it for downshifts.



Kliktronic electric gearshift, £499 + VAT (where applicable)



Tester: Mark Silcox, MCN contributor
Time tested: 1500 miles / eight weeks

What's good? Simply, that I'm able to ride a bike after a long time off. In March 2009 I crashed while racing at Brands Hatch and suffered several injuries, one of which has left me unable to move my left foot. For some time I thought I would never be able to ride a bike again and with bikes having been a large part of my life for 35 years, that really wasn't something I wanted to consider.

After looking at the various options I chose to fit a Kliktronic electric gear-changer to my Ducati Monster 695. It is basically an electrical actuator that's mounted to the frame with a purpose-built bracket and connects to the gear lever. When I press buttons on the left handlebar, the actuator moves the gear lever either up or down to change gears.

I dropped the bike off at Kliktronic's workshop near Bury St Edmunds and after a couple of days it was ready to collect. Fitting costs £150-£200, depending on the bike and any complications. After a brief tutorial, and with much apprehension, I set off for a lap

of the industrial estate.

The guys at Kliktronic and my wife, MCN's editorial assistant Alison, said they could see my smile through the closed visor of my full-face helmet. The Kliktronic has given me back a big part of my life.

It is simple to use and after my initial nerves had settled I was soon beaming... I was back on a bike, after four years.

My first trip was to ride back home from the workshop, a distance of some 70 miles. I had a couple of stops en-route and was shattered when I got home because I'd concentrated so hard. The device works smoothly and allows clutchless changes up through the gears. I was also pleased to find that when I informed my insurance company of the modification it didn't affect my premium.

Since starting riding again I've taken advantage of the good weather and have just come back from a 500-mile round trip to North Wales and am already planning a jaunt to Europe next year. It's great to be back.

What's not? There's nothing negative about it.

Contact: www.kliktronic.co.uk or 01359-242100

Quality Rating: ★★★★★

Value Rating: ★★★★★



Alpinestars TZ-1 Reload leather jacket, £299.99



Tester: Richard Newland
Time tested: 3000 miles / 24 months

What's good? It's a subtle, stylish, top-brand-name perforated leather jacket that's made from full-grain leather and has lightweight, CE elbow and shoulder armour. Vented panels mean it keeps me pleasantly cool on all but the hottest days, but you'll be shivering on anything but a short journey if the temperature drops below 12 degrees. I like the blacker-than-black style and despite my ungainly

dimensions, it feels very well tailored. The closures are all good, and none have failed – as you would hope with YKK zips. **What's not?** Nothing has come adrift in use, and while I get a tad paranoid about the side pockets opening in use, they never have. There's no proper back protector, but I wear a separate one anyway so it's not a major concern. It's a fairly one-dimensional jacket, fit for purpose, but useless on anything other than a hot day. **Contact:** www.alpinestars.com
Quality rating: ★★★★★
Value rating: ★★★★★



Knox Aegis level 2 back protector, £89.99



Tester: Simon Patterson
Time tested: 900 miles / four months

What's good? I've never worn a back protector before and wasn't sure what to expect in terms of comfort, but once I've got this on and positioned properly (it needs to sit lower than I initially thought) I soon forget it's there. There's good waist and shoulder straps that mean it only moves if I want it to, and I wear it under a rucksack all the time with no problem. It's rated to the higher Level 2 CE standard as well,

which is reassuring. The hard plastic plates are in individual sections, which means the protector bends to fit my spine. That I wear it every single time I'm on the bike without a second thought is the best recommendation I can give. **What's not?** The stitching that holds one of the shoulder straps has come loose, pulling the buckle away from the material a little. It's not a major issue at the minute but it looks like it's going to get worse. **Contact:** planet-knox.com
Quality rating: ★★★★★
Value rating: ★★★★★



Rukka Argosaurus, £199.99



Tester: Tony Hoare
Time tested: 8000 miles / 16 months

What's good? Everything except the price. In a climate like ours, waterproof summer gloves like these end up seeing near daily action. Once the temperature drops into single digits I go for insulated winter gloves, and if it's much above 20°C these become a bit sweaty and I prefer vented gloves. But the rest of the time – pretty much everything from April to November – these are perfect. They are a little thicker than

race gloves, thanks to the waterproof membrane, but still give the right feel for the bars and controls. They're still tough and have never leaked, despite some horrendous conditions, and have an effective visor wipe on the left thumb. **What's not?** They're good value if you can stretch to the asking price, but not many of us do the miles to justify the tag. The wrist restraint would be more effective if it were on the palm side of the glove. **Contact:** www.headlynz.co.uk
Quality rating: ★★★★★
Value rating: ★★★★★