Slow Ride

SINCE WE AREN'T A MUSIC MAGAZINE, WE WON'T be discussing Foghat's classic hit *Slow Ride*, though it's a cool song. However, we'll take a closer look at a skill that seems to bewilder some riders who can't see the benefits of becoming more proficient at riding within limited spaces.

We've all seen riders at rallies or in dealership parking lots riding at slow speeds with the infamous outriggers spanned: aka their feet off the pegs/floorboards hovering inches above the ground in the event of a loss of balance to hopefully prevent the bike from having contact with the tarmac. What most of these riders don't understand is that one will have better balance and control at lower speeds with feet planted on the rests, and that the action of the foot drag will assist with changing the motorcycle's center of balance. Cruising down the roadways may certainly be easier than riding inside limited spaces at slow speeds, but it's a skill that is attainable with a bit of information, education, and plenty of practice.

While many may consider this level of skill as more of a convenience to be used in parking lots, the fact is that the skill components associated with slow speeds encompass various portions that any beginning or experienced rider uses on regular rides. The understanding of steady speed control with constant adjustments (in this case a combination of throttle, clutch, rear brake, and counterweight), plus looking where one wants to go and an overall bonding experience between a rider's capabilities and what his bike can do is a true benefit to any rider. Working with all these controls at once may be certainly challenging for some, but this is where proper education and practice comes into play.

One of the biggest issues to overcome when working toward becoming better at these skills is fear of dropping the bike. Having gone through this process myself, as well

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as working with students over the years, you need to understand that this could happen, and in most cases, no damage occurs. If you think about it, the first reason for a dropped bike is the speed being almost at a standstill and, typically, riders will once again extend their outriggers to try to prevent the drop. Hence, it's more damaging to one's ego than one's bike.

I know many riders who have gotten their information from instructional videos on this topic, and for some, they work well. The one problem you may have with using a video to learn these skills is that if you're doing something incorrectly, there is no one around to point out the snag and offer a corrective action. This is the benefit of rider training, whether in a course scenario or private lessons.

Many of us have seen the skills of motor officers either in person or on videos and have been in awe of what they can do. Well, believe it or not, just about anyone can work toward such skills. Perhaps not to a competitive level of accuracy or quickness, but at least the basic portion of riding slowly and smoothly. What does it take? It's as simple as becoming better informed and educated. The biggest thing is to practice at every opportunity, whether in a vacant lot or wherever the chance arises on your ride.

So, besides looking cool to others when executing such skills, is there any benefit other than making your way around a crowded lot safely? Being able to adjust to low speed maneuvers helps when you need to make a turn from a stop or a sharp turn that exceeds a 90-degree angle onto adjoining roads. Also, the key elements of looking where you want to go to, smooth speed adjustments, and a better bonding of your bike and skills will also pay off when riding and improve your level of competence. Pretty good things to have in your bag of skills to minimize risk.

If riding at slow speeds has always been a nemesis of yours, it can be overcome with some proper info and, of course, practice, practice, practice. And remember the famous words of Foghat, "Slow ride, take it easy." **AIM**