

# Motorcycle

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### INSIDE:

- Cam Donald rides Suzuki DR-Z400E
- Chapman's Honda CB500X test
- Harris on a Harley Street Bob Ltd
- Falloon on an H-D Knucklehead
- Tyres – a beginner's guide



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## TYRE LAUNCH

PIRELLI ANGEL GT

ROD CHAPMAN

# BLACK | M A G I C

We dream about a tyre with excellent grip but one still capable of putting up giant kilometres. Rod Chapman thinks he's found it...

WORDS: ROD CHAPMAN IMAGES: PIRELLI/LOU MARTIN

**M**otorcycle tyres lead a thankless life. Upholding a rider's safety and allowing a bike to fulfil its performance potential, companies like Pirelli invest millions in R&D so its products can largely be forgotten – if the tyres are doing their job, they need not even enter a rider's mind.

Pirelli launched its Angel ST sports-touring tyre in 2009 and it quickly won global praise. Offering a seemingly perfect balance of wet and dry grip, handling and longevity, it cemented

itself as a very attractive option in a cut-throat market. However, time stands still for no-one, tyre manufacturers included. Enter the Angel GT – an all-new successor that Pirelli says embodies the essence of 'Gran Turismo'.

I've had Angel STs on my Honda Hornet 900 for two years and I love 'em. My 550km-odd weekly commute is largely conducted on motorways, albeit at a snail's pace due to traffic congestion. I've found them to be truly excellent, offering good grip

rain or shine, neutral handling and a pleasingly smooth and responsive ride. Furthermore, I got a solid 18,000km out of the first set before reaching the wear markers on the rear hoop – about 4000km more than any previous set.

Now, however, the Angel GT has arrived and Pirelli is making some bold claims, like 30 per cent more mileage. Now while I take any manufacturer's claim with a grain of salt, that can't help but catch the eye.

Pirelli says an independent German test organisation (Motorrad TestCentre)

At the international launch, and on the deck of an Italian aircraft carrier, the Angel GT displayed its wet-weather performance in spectacular fashion.



The Angel GT is also available in a two-ply carcass for heavier, high-output bikes, at no additional cost.



found the Angel GT gave the highest mileage in the sportstouring tyre segment, bettering comparative offerings from Michelin, Dunlop, Bridgestone, Continental and Metzeler. Tyres aren't cheap and longevity ranks high on my priority list, so the Angel GT promises to be my ultimate do-the-lot hoop.

#### CLEAN SHEET

In raising the bar, Pirelli pushed the Angel ST to one side and started with a clean sheet. The experienced gleaned in Pirelli's involvement in the World Superbike Championship has trickled down into a new rayon carcass, which Pirelli says offer significantly greater rigidity and a higher linear density than the Angel ST, resulting in an agile ride and consistent performance over the entire life of the tyre.

A revised tread design is said to offer improved water drainage and more regular wear, while the design remains unaltered through the tyre's life (unlike



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All creatures great and small  
await the day's tyre torture test.  
Yes, it's a tough old gig...

### SUITS YOU, SIR!

Pirelli's Angel GT will retail in Australia from \$179 for a front and \$259 for a rear, with a typical 120/70ZR17 and a 180/55ZR17 costing \$199 and \$279 respectively. Sticker kits to personalise the sidewalls of the tyres are available through Pirelli, via mail order, for around \$40. For more information or to find your nearest stockist visit [LinkInt.com.au](http://LinkInt.com.au) or phone (07) 3382 5000. The Angel GT is available in the following sizes:

#### FRONT

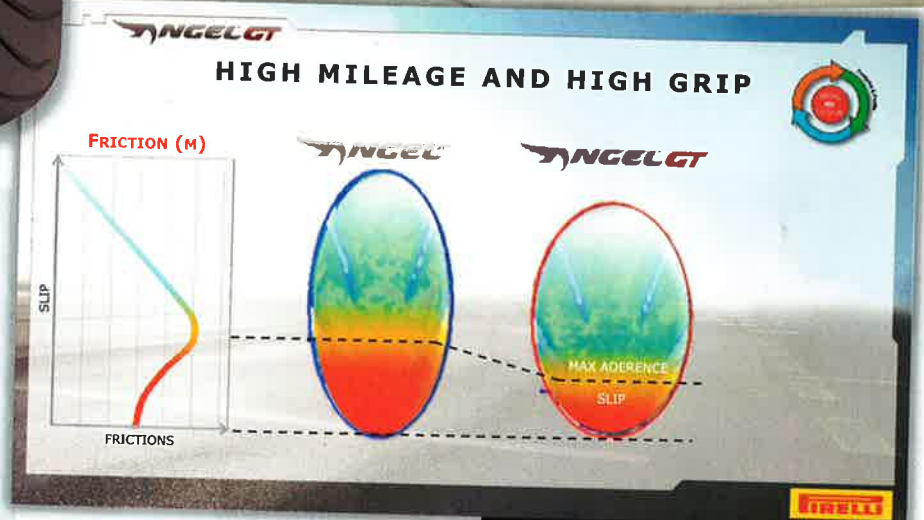
120/60ZR17 M/C (55W) TL  
120/70ZR17 M/C (58W) TL  
110/80ZR18 M/C (58W) TL  
120/70ZR18 M/C (59W) TL

#### REAR

150/70ZR17 M/C (69W) TL  
160/60ZR17 M/C (69W) TL  
170/60ZR17 M/C (72W) TL  
180/55ZR17 M/C (73W) TL  
180/55ZR17 M/C (73W) TL (A)<sup>1</sup>  
190/50ZR17 M/C (73W) TL  
190/50ZR17 M/C (73W) TL (A)  
190/55ZR17 M/C (75W) TL  
190/55ZR17 M/C (75W) TL (A)  
190/55ZR17 M/C (75W) TL (D)<sup>2</sup>  
160/60ZR18 M/C (70W) TL

<sup>1</sup>Two-ply carcass for improved stability on high-output, high-load motorcycles

<sup>2</sup>OE fitment for Ducati Multistrada



on the Angel ST's evolving angel/devil tread pattern – possibly the most talked-about tyre gimmick in years).

The Angel GT's profile is also new, with a shorter but wider contact patch that Pirelli says distributes the wear over a larger portion of the tread.

It's this new profile which, together with new compounds, has allowed Pirelli's engineers to increase the GT's mileage significantly.

The rear Angel GT sports a bi-compound construction, with a 45mm-wide central strip composed of at least half silica and a mix of carbon black and resins, and shoulders composed of 100 per cent silica.

We're all familiar with bi-compound tyres these days and the result here is the same: better straight-line wear and stability with enhanced cornering grip.

ABOVE: The totally different construction has achieved a shorter but wider contact patch. Pirelli says the load is spread more evenly over the GT's tread, which – helped by new compounds – has boosted mileage by a claimed 30 per cent over the Angel ST.

The front tyre is composed entirely of the same 100 per cent silica compound found on the rear tyre's shoulders.

The Angel GT is manufactured at Pirelli's state-of-the-art production facility in Breuberg, Germany, near Frankfurt.

#### ON THE ROAD

While I couldn't hope to definitively test Pirelli's mileage claim for the Angel GT, Aussie distributor Link International did lay on a comprehensive itinerary for the tyre's local launch that saw journo sample a



**“If the tyres are  
doing their job, a  
rider need not even  
think about them.”**



The big Viffer 12's torque and weight barely put a mark on the Angel GTs – that bodes well for high mileage.

bevy of bikes on road and track. The bikes available represented the Angel GT's target market – sportstourers, naked bikes and adventure bikes – with models spanning Honda's VFR1200F, BMW's K 1300 R and K 1300 S, Suzuki's Bandit 1250S and GSX1250FA, Husqvarna's Nuda 900R and Ducati's Multistrada, among others.

Our route took us from Link International's headquarters in Yatala, roughly halfway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, on a twisting route over the Gold Coast hinterland and on to Warwick and Morgan Park Raceway – a fun track operated by the Warwick District Sporting Car Club since the late '60s.

My first mount was a Suzuki GSX1250FA, a fully faired Bandit cousin that was as docile yet as potentially potent as I remembered it. With a cool winter chill in the air but a blazing sun overhead, we rolled out and headed for the hills.

At the start of this story I mentioned how if tyres are doing their job well a rider need not even think about them, and that's the case here – the freshly scrubbed Angel GTs simply got on with it, allowing me to focus purely on the enjoyment of the ride. They feel as compliant as the Angel STs currently fitted to my own bike and when the pace was

**ANGEL GT**

**COMPOUNDS**

<b>FRONT</b>	100% SILICA MONOCOMPOUND	
<b>REAR</b>	DUAL COMPOUND + CAP & BASE CONSTRUCTION	
	CENTRAL STRIPE	<b>70% SILICA</b> - MILEAGE AND HIGH SPEED STABILITY
	SHOULDER	<b>100% SILICA</b> - DRY AND WET GRIP
	BASE LAYER FOR HANDLING, DAMPING AND FAST FEEDBACK	

**100% SILICA**  
**FRONT  
FULL COMPOUND**

**100% SILICA**   **70% SILICA**   **100% SILICA**  
**20%  
CENTRAL  
COMPOUND**  
**40%  
SHOULDER  
COMPOUND**   **40%  
SHOULDER  
COMPOUND**

**PIRELLI**

upped in the hills they simply clung on like barnacles to a boat – even powering away from corner apexes couldn't coax them into breaking traction.

Pirelli says the Angel GTs offer a marginally reduced braking distance over the STs – the fact underlined at the tyre's world launch when Max Biaggi gave a braking demo on the water-soaked deck of an Italian aircraft carrier. While I had no opportunity to test the GT's wet-weather braking performance, certainly in the dry they exhibited nothing but stability and impressive grip whenever I grabbed a handful – of throttle or front brake.

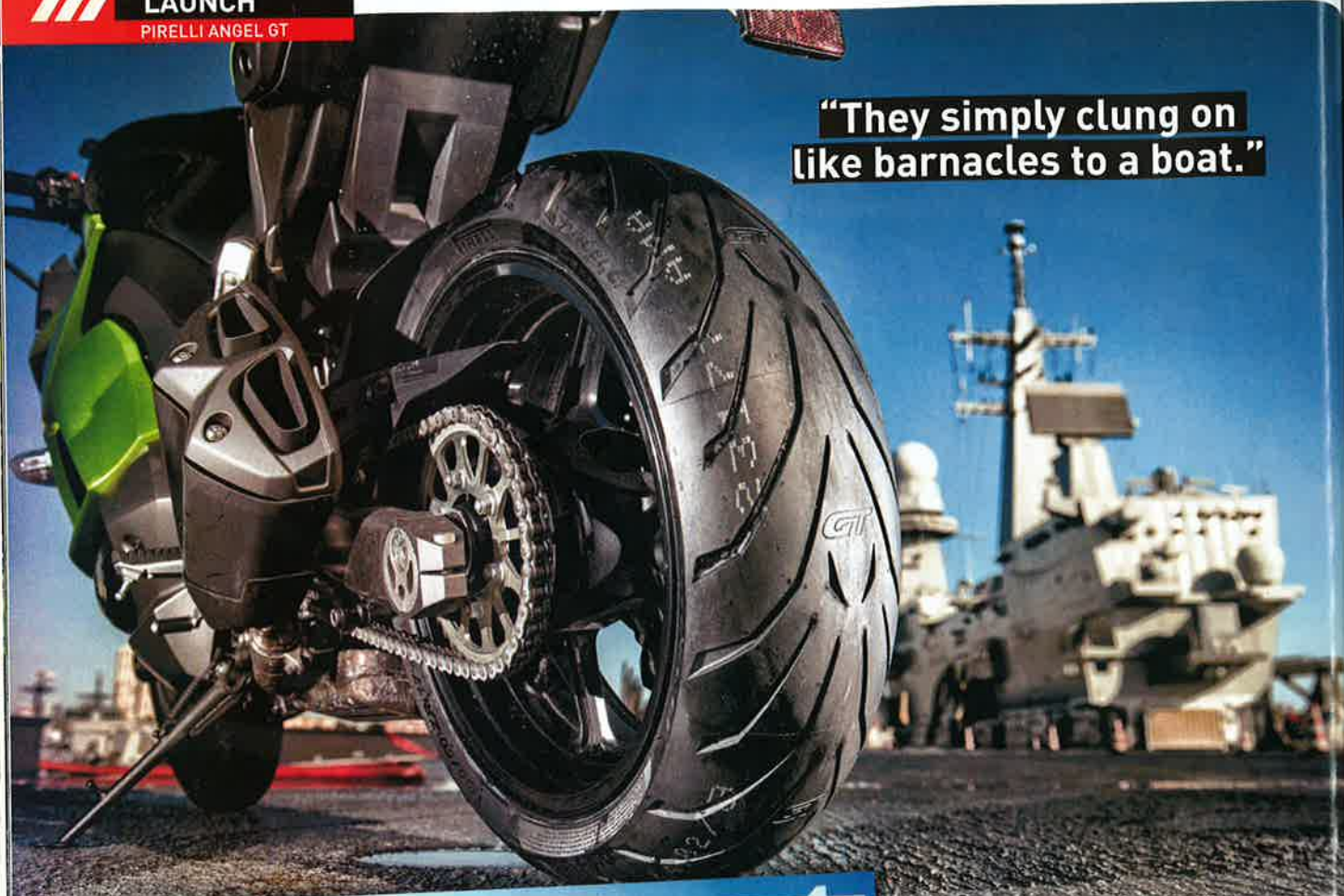
After a coffee at Boonah I was off the Suzi and onto a Husqvarna Nuda 900R for the run

ABOVE: Makes tyre construction look easy, doesn't it? We suspect there's a bit more too it...



## TYRE LAUNCH

PIRELLI ANGEL GT



**"They simply cling on like barnacles to a boat."**

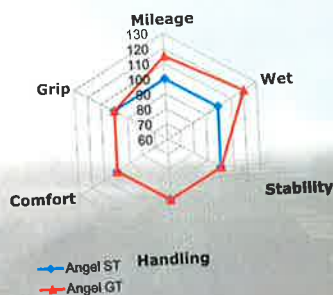
ANGEL GT

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- REFERENCE FOR WET PERFORMANCE
- SPORTY PIRELLI DNA
- MY TYRE

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cause for concern. Furthermore, after the session was done, the tyres on all the bikes looked like they'd barely been used – even those being flogged by the fastest blokes, with a former pro racer among 'em. That bodes well for that mileage claim.

Riding comfort, precise cornering, secure stopping, high mileage – Pirelli's Angel GT looks set to blaze a trail the others can only hope to follow. I will follow this piece up with a more in-depth review once I've got through a set of Angel GTs on my own bike, but don't hold your breath – I have a feeling it's going to take me quite some time! ■

TOP: Pirelli distributor Link International wasn't able to rustle up an aircraft carrier for the Angel GT's local Aussie launch, but a strop through the Gold Coast hinterland and some time on a fun little track was ample compensation.

ABOVE: What's a tyre-launch yarn without a spider chart? Here the message is clear: the GT has all the performance of the ST, while delivering extra mileage and better wet-weather performance.

to Warwick, where I then hopped on a Honda VFR1200F for a fang around the track. I'm the first to admit I'm fairly sedate around a circuit these days, but here the Angel GTs were as impressive for what they *didn't* do as they were for what they did.

Despite the neck-straining torque of the big V-four and the Viffer's hefty weight, the GTs never once lost their composure. When on the odd occasion the rear did feel like it was squirming, it felt controlled – certainly it wasn't any

### WHAT OF THE ANGEL ST?

If you're sold on the Angel ST and don't feel inclined to opt up to the Angel GT, you're in luck. Aussie Pirelli distributor Link International says the Angel ST will remain on sale alongside the Angel GT, but at a reduced price (approximately \$399 for a pair (120/70-17 and 180/55-17), representing a saving of \$79.