

Bullet penetrates Canada

If you attended any of the Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council-sponsored motorcycle shows around the country this winter, you likely noticed a booth displaying some shiny new Royal Enfield motorcycles.

After an absence far too long for diehard fans, the venerable brand is returning to Canada thanks to an Edmonton-based distributor.

Royal Enfield Canada president Rob McMullen and his business partner Brett Morgan feel the time is right for bringing back the made-in-India Bullet. Not only does the classic bike combine affordability, retro styling and appeal to new riders, but the factory has upgraded the bike's components to bring it more into the 21st century.

Four models will be available in Canadian dealerships:



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the Bullet Electra (\$6,895), Bullet Electra Deluxe (\$6,995), Bullet Classic (\$7,395) and Bullet Classic Military (\$7,495).

You'll also be able to order cafe racer, sidecar and vintage kits that will retail for \$1,500 to \$3,000. A range of accessories to customize the bikes will be sold along with a line of Royal Enfield clothing.

According to McMullen, Royal Enfield Canada will sell their bikes through existing motorcycle dealerships selling other brands. Contracts have already been signed with four dealers in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and

Quebec. Product should be in showrooms by April. McMullen says they ultimately aim to have agreements with 15 dealers across the country this summer.

The 2010 Royal Enfield Bullet is based off the bike's original 1950s design, but now boasts a unit-construction all-alloy 499-cc engine/gearbox and a frame redesigned for reduced vibration. While there's still a rear drum brake set up, a front disc brake offers extra stopping power.

On the technology side, electronic fuel injection and electric start are now standard features. Emissions are reduced by a catalyst-equipped exhaust and fuel economy has also been improved. The factory claims you'll be able to squeeze out about 540 km from the single-cylinder Bullet's 14-litre gas tank.

As for the individual models, the Bullet Electra Deluxe is a variation of the vintage-inspired Electra that sports a chrome tank, airbox and fenders, with rubber knee pads on the tank.

The Bullet Classic (only the 500-cc model is available in Canada, although there is a 350-cc version) takes its cue from the marque's early post-Second World War G2 model. It features a die-cast headlight casing, hand-painted graphics and solo sprung seat.

The Bullet Classic Military pays homage to Royal Enfield's original 125-cc RE model called the Flying Flea. During the Second World War, it was dropped by parachute with airborne troops. It comes in an olive-drab paint scheme and is normally accessorized with saddlebags and a rear luggage rack.

The Royal Enfield company has a long and inspired history. The Royal Enfield and Bullet names come from links to the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield, England. Early on, the company adopted the motto "Made like a gun, goes like a bullet." It introduced its first motorcycle in 1909, powered by a 2 1/4-hp V-Twin.

In 1931, a four-valve, single-cylinder bike was built and called the Bullet. It featured an inclined engine and exposed valve gear and was one of the fastest bikes on the road at the time.

For the 1939 model, Royal Enfield designed and manufactured its own suspension consisting of sophisticated telescopic front forks and a rear swing arm with hydraulic damper system.

The Royal Enfield Bullet in its present form was first

introduced in Britain in 1948 as a 350-cc bike. The Bullet's swing arm and strong single-cylinder engine helped it excel in trials competition. A 500-cc model was also produced at the time to compete with Triumph's popular Speed Twin.

From then on, the Bullet was destined to have the longest continuous production run of any motorcycle in history.

With Royal Enfields in demand in the late 1940s, the government of India ordered hundreds of Bullets for military and civilian purposes.

They were first shipped as kits and assembled by the Madras Motor Company. The Bullet proved a popular bike and by 1956, the decision was made to build a Royal Enfield factory in India.

Royal Enfield ceased production of Bullets at its Redditch, England, factory in 1967 and the company itself collapsed in 1970.

The 1980s was a time when, ironically, India found a strong niche market in the U.K. and Europe for its "new vintage" bikes and began exporting them.

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FACT FILE

2010 Royal Enfield Bullet

Model prices (before tax): \$6,895-\$7,495

Engine: 499-cc, air-cooled, OHV, single cylinder

Fuel system: electronic fuel injection

Transmission: five-speed constant mesh, chain final drive

Horsepower: 27.2 @ 5,200 r.p.m.

Torque: 30.5 ft-lb @ 4,000 r.p.m.

Brake (frt): Single 280-mm disc

Brake (rear): 152-mm drum brake

Suspension: gas-filled shock absorbers

Seat height: 820 mm

Fuel capacity: 14 litres

Curb weight: 186 kg

Basic warranty: 24 months, 10,000 km



SUPPLIED

Long absent from Canada, Royal Enfield's lineup of "new vintage" motorcycles, like the Bullet Classic, are returning to dealerships in a number of larger markets.