

SHOEI X-SPIRIT

HELMET

Three Shoei X-Spirits have lasted me the last five years and 65,000 miles. A rough estimate says my head has spent 1200 hours cocooned in one. I've commuted in them, travelled all over Europe in them, club-raced in them and nutted the tarmac on more than one occasion. What helmet you like is based on a number of factors – the shape of your head, how much money you have and what racers were your heroes when you grew up. I can't say it is better or worse than an Arai as my head shape might be different to yours, but I can say it suits me so well that I can't actually think how it could be improved, save for it being a bit quieter. These are the things I like about it.

- 1) The visor system. Satisfyingly precise, shields are swapped on and off in seconds without any of the crunching you get with an Arai. If I recall rightly, Shoei pioneered this system, and I'm sure no-one has beaten it yet.
- 2) The vents. You can feel the air passing over your head, inside the helmet's lining. This, combined with a lining that's designed to wick sweat away, means I've never suffered from an overheating head. It works.
- 3) The stability. The spoilers might look like the doings of a marketing department, but they actually work. There's none of the head-shakes or wobbles that I used to get with my old 'goldfish bowl' Shoei Z-One.

● **PRICE** £380 ● www.feridax.com ● **FOR** Comfort, vent effectiveness, longevity ● **AGAINST** Noise (but it is a race lid)

ALPINESTARS SUPERTECH R

BOOTS

Six months, 7000 road miles and a season's worth of club racing and I still enjoy putting these on. Made of an inner and an outer boot, I love the ritual of slipping on the inner, lacing it up, zipping up the outer, and then ratcheting it tight against my leathers. They're a simple outer design, with none of the bells, whistles and sticky out bits you see on other boots. The idea is to let the boot and the rider slide, rather than gripping and tumbling. I've only had one proper crash in them so far and they stood up very well. These are the most reassuring, safest-feeling boots I've used. Feet sit in total comfort, surrounded by protection on all sides; Supertechs can't help but give you confidence. Suedette instep means they are kinder to sidepanels than most.

● **PRICE** £230 ● www.alpinestars.com ● **FOR** Comfort, crashability, confidence ● **AGAINST** They don't exactly set you apart from the crowd

WOOLWORTHS

HEADTORCH

A headtorch sets you free. I was given mine as a present to allow me to go running at night, but it spends more time in the garage. I haven't got mains electricity in my garage and need a 50-metre extension lead to get power. Even then I only have a light at one end of the garage, meaning that everything gets shrouded in shadow. Donning the headtorch means I can actually work in the dark or in the back of a van at night. It eliminates shadow if I'm working on the bike in the gloom. It was inspired by watching a head-torch-wearing surgeon on Holby City. Those enforced nights in aren't always a waste of time, after all...

● **PRICE** £4.99 ● www.woolworths.co.uk ● **FOR** Usability, battery life ● **AGAINST** Makes you look like a sensible-shoe-wearing, tent-loving virgin. Or a psycho

DAINESE CHEST

PROTECTOR

I love the idea of a chest protector, but I hate the way that they can restrict movement. Every chest protector I've used has made me feel in my leathers like I do on Christmas afternoon when I've just come back for thirds of turkey and sprouts – there's just too much jammed in there. This is much better, being flexible and thin enough to let you move about. My physics GCSE tells me that the thinness of the protector means that its impact absorption shouldn't be brilliant. But I took a whack in the chest when I lobbed a KTM Duke at about 80mph and I wasn't even winded [Actually, Matt, you were wearing *my* chest protector – TT]. Whatever this unscientific test proves, there is no disputing that wearing one of these is a much better idea than not.

● **PRICE** £39.99 ● www.bikestop.co.uk ● **FOR** It protects your chest ● **AGAINST** But by how much?

RACELOGIC PERFORMANCE BOX

DATALOGGER

I used to hate the Performance Box. When we first acquired it on test from Racelogic it was so unreliable that after another abortive trip to Bruntingthorpe for speed testing I wanted to leave it in the take-off path of a nearby taxiing Vulcan bomber. For a while my life was a nightmare of loose connections, lost satellite signals and having to revert to the stopwatch for timing bikes. But then we got to the root of the problem. The datalogger was powering up and down randomly thanks to a couple of loose connections. One was where the Ni-Cad battery connected to the power lead, the other where the power lead connected to the unit. The problem was that the Performance Box was initially designed to work suckered to the windscreen of a car, not rammed into a bumbag. The solutions were simple. A computer-engineer uncle of mine hard-wired the power lead to the circuit and I closed up the female connectors on the battery to a tight interference fit.

There have been no problems since, and now we can see the benefits of the box. A 10hz GPS datalogger, the Performance Box records time, distance, speed, G-force, track position, track height, lap times and split times. The constantly-updated software included allows us to easily work out figures for top speed, acceleration and braking tests. It is the mainstay of most of PB's road tests and features. It's very easy to use, and provides accurate, repeatable data. It is cheap and useful enough to make sense for club racers who want to get more out of their practice days. Racelogic has just launched a tougher billet alloy version of the Performance Box, with better connectors and more logging channels. I'm in love, in a geeky kind of way.

● **PRICE** From £280 ● www.racelogic.co.uk ● **FOR** Great value, superb software ● **AGAINST** Needs work to make it perfect for motorcycles

VISORVISION HELMET

CARE KIT

Life doesn't get better than an idle evening applying potions and lotions to one's helmet followed by some vigorous buffing. This neatly-packaged kit is one of life's pleasures: V2 Visor-cleaning sponge, lining sanitizer, helmet and visor polish and anti-mist solutions make a grimy lid feel and look like new again. A perfect, lint-free polishing cloth buffs it to a shine, while you don the included white gloves that ensure no fingerprints are left behind. This pack is great value at £15 and everything included earns its place by working well. Even the Fog Tech anti-mist solution is effective.

● **PRICE** £15 ● www.visorvision.co.uk ● **FOR** Pleases those with OCD ● **AGAINST** Encourages those with borderline OCD

WD40 IN A

BOTTLE

My winter survival kit. I'm paranoid and cover my bike in it through the cold months. I'm sure there are better anti-corrosion measures, but this works for me – PB's 17,000 mile R1 was ridden right through the winter and regularly doused in it, and looks like a bike that has done half the miles. But it's not just the way that it dissipates water that I love. I still haven't found anything better for cleaning brake dust and lube from wheels or for making black-painted parts of a bike shine. And it is even better when it isn't mixed with the aerosol propellants you get when you buy it in a can. This is pure, uncut WD, and I'm addicted to the stuff. I love the smell as it burns on exhausts and evaporates off cases. It lasts forever too. I bought a five-litre tub and this dispenser two years ago, and I still have about half left. Bargain.

● **PRICE** £20 off eBay ● **FOR** It works, great value ● **AGAINST** You try cleaning five litres of spilt WD40 off your garage floor