



this issue

Where is the new Norton? P.1
Norton Dealers P.2
Norton expansion P.3
Accessories news P.4

Where is the new Norton Commando?

The question on everyone's lips continues to be "Where is the new Norton Commando? And "When is it coming?"

Since its inaugural display at the 2009 Toronto motorcycle show Norton enthusiasts across the country have been awaiting the return of the iconic Norton Commando in its new format with the 961 power plant.

So the question on everyone's mind is; "Where is the new Commando?"

Unfortunately there is no short answer to this simple question.

As with many new ventures, the program to re-introduce the Norton Commando has experienced a number of challenges. So why don't we have a look at these in sequence to understand where we are today.

One of the underlying concepts behind the Norton Commando resurrection and its return to the UK includes a revival of on-shore British manufacturing capabilities and British motorcycle production. Unlike other British motorcycle manufacturers, who have chosen to source much of the product from the Orient, Norton are committed to revitalize and source as much of their product as practical within the UK. This results in relationships with such iconic brands as Menard, Spondon, Mills CNC and King Dick Tools.

NORTON Canada FAQ's

Q.) When will the Norton Commando's be available for sale?

A.) Following Canadian government certification, which we are targeting for the first quarter of 2012

Q.) When will dealers have them in their showrooms?

A.) Dealers will have a Commando by the beginning of the 2012 riding season for display and sale.

Q.) Can I buy a Norton off the floor from a dealer?

A.) Commandos will be in very short supply. While dealers may keep stock, most customers will undertake book purchases, deciding on colour, seating and extras before the bike is built.

Where is the new Norton Commando? cont'd

To that end, Norton undertook to build as complete an English motorcycle as possible using as many parts and skills as were available in the country. As a result the engineering team, the development team, the design team, the production team, and the assembly teams were comprised of English engineers and technologists.

Norton owner Stuart Garner has discovered sourcing British made products has been easier said than done. Whilst there is still some extremely high end, expensive and specialized production capability (an example would be Formula One development), it is the higher volume, cost effective capability required for motorcycle applications which has declined. This has resulted in capacity, skills and commitment being lost in England. Norton is leading the effort to rejuvenate those industries within the UK and thereby be able to live up to the Norton history of "Made in England".

As a result Norton has experienced production delays, engineering redesign requirements and in some cases quality challenges that have all had an impact on the production cycle and time-to-market for the Commando's.

The first and most glaring example of this was the original power plant design. Following Kenny Dreer's first attempts, Norton UK had to commission world-renowned engine producer Menard Competitive Technologies [MCT] to redesign and produce initial power plants for the 961 commando. MCT is the company behind some of the most innovative and prestigious automotive and motorsport engine projects in the last twenty year. It is well known for its design of the Superleague V12's and the design of Formula 1 engines. Despite its standing as a world leader in design and production of racing engines, MCT attempted to expand its capacity into ongoing engine production with the Norton project. As a result MCT provided a unit price and timeline to Norton upon which prices, production and delivery time lines were built.

However, when it came to volume production, MTC was not able to meet its timelines or price points. Delivery faltered, which was unsustainable for Norton. As a result of the difficult executive decision required, Stuart Garner directed Norton's small design and engineering team to

undertake construction of the power plant in house. This required providing space and resources, training, source components and construct build processes for the production of the power plant at the Donington Park facility. Using some of MCT's suppliers, other power plant manufacturing options had to be sourced within the United Kingdom in a difficult environment. Obviously these challenges were never envisioned and constituted a considerable setback in the project timeline and ultimately, delivery of product to customers.

An additional aspect of having a race background company build the product is that racing and real world use environments have different goals. A race engine will be used to its maximum with frequent maintenance whereas a motorcycle engine such as the 961 unit will rarely be used to capacity but has to exhibit longevity with minimal maintenance. As a result, during the environmental testing the Commando is currently undergoing, a design flaw was identified that required some re-engineering and a re-commencement of the environmental test process. All of which has added to the delay in bringing the new Commando to the North American market. The upside to this is that the engine unit has had a complete shakedown and will come to us absolutely 'bulletproof'.

To some extent, the Norton Commando has also been a victim of its own success, with thousands of Norton enthusiasts hoping to acquire this spectacular new motorcycle. This demand, coupled with the requirement to build the power plant and other parts internally has resulted in an increased manufacturing load at the Norton facility which stretched their existing capabilities.

As a result Norton has had to commit to an expansion and engine building program that was never envisioned at this time in their original plans. This, coupled with the introduction of a new design office headed by Pierre Terblanch has placed a tremendous strain on the available space at the Norton facility. As a result Norton is now committed to the design and build of the additional production capacity at the facility at the Donington Park.

However our challenges haven't concluded with the building of new capacity and space at



Peter Howes, President—Norton Motorcycles (Canada) Ltd. at the Norton factory during the build of a Commando 961SE.

Norton Dealers across the country.

British Italian Motorcycles

1764 Powell Street
Vancouver, BC
V5L 1H7
Ph: 1 (888) 420-7315

Wild Cycle

2475 Pegasus Road
Calgary, AB
T2E 8C3
Ph: 403-250-3113

Echo Cycle

15311—118th Avenue
Edmonton, AB.
T5V 1C3
Ph: 1-877-438-3246

Kahuna Powersports

5243 Steeles Avenue West
Toronto, ON.
M9L 2W2
416-743-3117

Bro's Cycle

61 Morison Drive
Windsor, NS
B0N 2T0
Ph: 902-798-8145

Check the Norton web site at
www.nortoncanada.ca for the most
current listing of dealers in your area



The fit and finish of the new Norton Commando's continues to distinguish the bikes for owners and enthusiasts alike.

Donington Park. To be available in the Canadian marketplace, motorcycles must complete their environmental testing and compliance with federal Department of Transportation requirements prior to importation authorization being granted. While this process is underway the above noted design challenges have protracted this process beyond its original timelines. As of the time of publishing this article, we are looking at a further 90 days of testing prior to the issuance of a certificate by the testing labs for environmental compliance. Beyond that we have requirements for submission of test results to Environment Canada and Transport Canada to assure them that the new Commando meets all Canadian regulatory requirements.

So while a new facility at Donington Park will assist Norton in meeting their global capacity for production, the question for Canadian purchasers is "when will Norton be here in Canada". Peter Howes, President of Norton Canada, was recently meeting with Norton president Stuart Garner, who has committed to ensuring that an allotment of Commandos for the Canadian market is provided prior to the commencement of the 2012 riding season.

We recognize that we are well beyond the time in which we all hoped to see the Commando's appear on the road in Canada. However, as all Norton enthusiasts are aware, this is not simply a reintroduction of the bike, but part of the rebuilding and rejuvenation of the British motorsport industry. In the coming years, new and innovative designs will flow from Norton and world enthusiasm will grow with a new Norton race team. Norton owners will not only ride a Norton, they are part of this effort. They through their enduring dedication and support of the Norton product and its image, contribute

to this rejuvenation which has repercussions across the entire motorcycle industry, across the British manufacturing sector and the euro zone economy. Every Norton owner is a part of this process, and the projects' success is inextricably linked to your commitment.

Norton expansion

Three things can be said about Stuart Garner when it comes to business; visionary, hard-nosed & frugal.

Stuart is a high energy visionary businessman. I don't mean high energy in that he is in the office early and stays late, or that he appears "peppy" at the office. I mean high energy in that he is "on" all the time. Norton is his focus. If he is not at Donington Park, he is travelling internationally to develop the business and promote the brand. He is always working on ways to reduce costs for the customer, develop production capacity within the UK and enhance the image of Norton. He never stops. Ever!

Accessory news

What's new for you and your bike

Pillion seat versions for Sport and Café Racer's in 2012.

Although there was a good deal of engineering and frame redesign work involved, Norton has developed a two seat (pillion) version of the Sport and Café Racer versions for 2012. Norton purchasers will be able to select their seating preference when ordering their new bikes.

Exhaust upgrades will be available.

The Commando 961's will be shipped with the stock exhaust (to comply with Federal import regulations), Norton has sourced a number of exhaust options for the 961 Sport and Café Racer. Owners who would like a different exhaust (shorter sport exhaust for a "throatier" sound) we will have several options available from dealers.

Chrome and Blackout packages to be available for 961 Commandos.

Norton customers will be able to have their book ordered bike customized with the options of a chrome or blackout package outfitted during production in 2012. Norton dealers will be able to provide pricing and more details in the future.

Norton first to receive ExEFG loan in UK

Norton Motorcycles (UK) Ltd received a Government backed trade loan to support the doubling of production of their hand-made bespoke motorcycles. Business Secretary Vince Cable visited us here at Donington Park yesterday (Aug. 1st) to make the official announcement.

The loan has been granted under the Exports Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme, one of four trade finance schemes promised as part of the Trade White Paper. High Street lender Santander has lent £625,000 to Norton under the scheme. It is the first loan of its kind and the funding will support the company to double staff numbers to around 60 by 2012 and also benefit their supply chain, the majority of which are British based.

Vince Cable Business Secretary said:

"Trade and Investment are essential to driving our economy and encouraging small businesses to export more is at the heart of that. This innovative company is a prime example of the innovation that British businesses have to offer and I hope that many more companies are inspired by what Norton is going to achieve through this funding.

"I would encourage all companies to take a closer look at what products are on offer that could support their business goals." Norton plans to increase their staff levels and their planned factory expansion is extremely encouraging in the current climate.



Upcoming Events

Norton dealer expansion continues as we seek to provide the best in dealer location and availability for our customers.

The Norton team will be in eastern Ontario and Quebec this fall. Check our website www.nortoncanada.ca for updates to advise of the time, date and location when the Norton Commando 961 Sport Edition will be on display at dealerships in these regions this fall.

So when many managers may have lightened up on the reins, or opened up the fiscal taps, Stuart was coming in early, staying late working weekends and leading the Norton team, at the same time putting pressure on suppliers to do better, demanding better quality, driving for improved timelines and negotiating better prices. He has been ceaseless.

So when the company has hit big bumps in the road, like the need to develop an internal engine build capability, the company and the production team don't stumble or fall, they get to it and get the job done.

Now being frugal is always a double edged sword, it usually results in short term pain for longer term gain, and in the case of Norton, Stuart has managed to wring every last penny out of his available space at Donington Park. Norton headquarters is not a spacious and palatial site, it is a working office and factory with only a total of 30 staff. Stuart's office is right above the Norton Technology Centre while the engineering and design studios, where are right above the assembly floor. However, after all your space is used and you need more space, you have to expand, which is what Norton is doing now.

The success of the company has lead to much investor interest, along with export support from the UK Government and major financial institutions, in this case Santander PLC. This has in turn allowed Norton to expand their export production to meet the growing global demand for Norton motorcycles.

An additional production facility is now in the design phase and construction is expected to begin this year. While this growth will help with capacity, the product will continue to be assembled by hand, by British engineers who are committed to Norton, and you the Norton rider.

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