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WORLD EXCLUSIVE

LOTUS SUPERBIKE RIDDEN

It's real. It's brilliant. And it's only the beginning **p4**

THE ONLY ONE IN THE

MCN gets exclusive first ride of £70k Lotus C-01 superbike in Germany

By **Andy Downes**

SENIOR REPORTER

When Lotus first showed computer-generated designs of a long, low bike clad in carbon-fibre bodywork sculpted by celebrity designer Daniel Simon, many dismissed it as a PR folly that would never reach production.

But it has happened – and MCN has ridden the prototype.

The version we rode may yet be the fully-enclosed, custom streamliner we revealed in January, but it is the same bike that will live underneath the sleek fairings.

As the reporter who broke the story of the Lotus' existence at the turn of the year, I was given the chance by the company to be the first person outside the factory to ride the C-01, let loose on the bike with no restrictions other than having to return it, preferably in one piece, several hours later.

It was firmly impressed upon me that this test bike, which has no bodywork, is the only functioning bike. In the world.

On this bike the ignition key is hidden at the front left of the KTM RC8R V-twin engine, while production versions will have keyless ignition.

The riding position is long and low, but it's no more uncomfortable than any superbike – the rider is just slightly nearer the ground with feet a little further back.

The KTM RC8R engine is muffled just enough to pass strict German noise tests, but still emits a great noise. Customer bikes will have a road-legal exhaust as standard but Lotus will also include a titanium exhaust system from an as-yet undecided manufacturer.

Once on the move, the bike does feel long, no surprise with a 1652mm wheelbase, and the big 19in front wheel is always in view while riding. At lower speeds there's a lack of steering lock, akin to a race bike, which makes tight turns a balancing challenge. U-turns are not going to happen easily but the

low seat height takes away any drama.

As I leave the town for the countryside and open the throttle, the rear Continental Trail Attack 2 tyre starts to spin and leaves a long, black smear of melted rubber on the road and the bike leaps forward like a cat caught in the icy blast of water from a hosepipe.

Taking into account the wheelbase and 19in front wheel, I'd been expecting a custom bike. But when the 175bhp KTM V-twin was deployed everything screamed superbike.

We took the C-01 to a section of public road which is also used for a local car and bike hillclimbs. I was concerned the C-01 would struggle to cope with the twisty ribbon of Tarmac that weaves through a pine forest, but I needn't have worried. The long, low machine flowed with ease through the sinuous bends.

The Brembo brakes are as strong as you could need on the road and work well with the very firm, but well-judged, set-up of the inverted Sachs fork and twin rear Öhlins shocks. I was quickly able to start pushing on with confidence, and despite some fairly committed riding, I never ran out of ground clearance.

Having covered 50 miles on the C-01 my only question mark was over the current choice of tyres. The Conti Trail Attack 2 is more than capable of looking after an adventure bike such as a BMW R1200GS, but at times they struggled with the performance from the C-01's RC8R motor. This is something the firm is currently looking into.

Lotus boss Gunther Holzer told MCN: "This bike is about us bringing our own philosophy to a motorcycle. It needed to look right but equally important to us was the way it performs and handles. This is the first of a few bikes. We will build 100 C-01 machines and follow up with a C-02. We want to set this company up as a long-term manufacturer of motorcycles."

Almost all of the 100-bike initial production run for the C-01 is now sold, and the first bikes will be delivered to their owners in September.

Custom looks, married to superbike levels of power and handling



Lotus' Gunther Holzer celebrates getting his bike back intact from MCN

WHO ARE LOTUS MOTORCYCLES?

German firm Holzer Group has a 10-year licence from British sportscar company Lotus to use its name for motorcycles. Holzer Group is itself part of the Kodewa company and its subsidiary firm, Motorcycle Performance Company, will build the bikes. Kodewa employs more than 800 people and is involved in all manner of motorsport, including

the FIA World Endurance car championship, where it races under the Lotus name. Kodewa' also owns Kalex, which manufactures chassis for bikes in the Moto2 and Moto3 world championship classes. Kalex and the Motorcycle Performance Company has now been brought under the same roof at an all-new complex near Munich.



Work is underway on welding the C-01's cro-moly steel frames

WORLD - RIDDEN

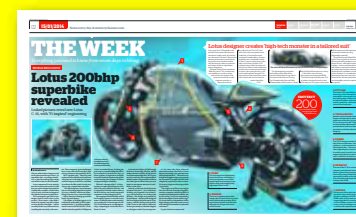
MCN
WORLD
EXCLUSIVE

MCN rides the new
KTM-powered
Lotus C-01

THE STORY SO FAR - MCN'S LOTUS EXCLUSIVES

JANUARY 2014:

MCN breaks the world exclusive news that Lotus plans to make a motorcycle, and shows two leaked images of the new C-01



FEBRUARY 2014:

Lotus comes clean, and releases official images of the C-01 design, plus technical details of £100,000 KTM RC8R-powered limited edition



JULY 2014:

Another MCN world exclusive; a snatched image of a naked C-01 test mule being put through its paces on the road in Germany



Lead engineer Thomas Burkhardt finalises CAD work on the Lotus C-01

'I PLACED MY ORDER AS SOON AS I COULD'

While MCN was at the factory a customer who will be taking delivery of one of the first bikes was paying a visit from America.

Daniel Ikajevs, 33, lives in Florida, USA and was one of the first to put his £70,000 where his mouth is and buy a Lotus C-01.

He was finalising some specification details and making sure his 6ft 7in frame fitted on the low C-01. With some adjustments to the footrests on the test

mule, he was able to get comfortable.

He told MCN: "I saw the bike online and started doing a little bit of research and then placed my order as soon as I could. I consider the bike a piece of art but I will also be riding it as much as possible. We have a lot of events where motorcycles and cars get together in Florida and I will enjoy riding to these. "I wanted to meet the team behind the bike and see where mine will be built. I am really happy now."



Daniel Ikajevs is expecting delivery of his Lotus C-01 later this year