



the back of their bikes, wrapped a sleeping bag in plastic and tied that on as well, and hit the road – touring on their 250s.

Greg Wilkinson was not even into motorcycling back then, but he has been flat out catching up over the past five years. At age 48, he was tired of spending \$90 or more a week to keep his Nissan Mistral 4WD in diesel so he could commute from his home north of Upper Hutt to his business in Petone, a round trip of 70km. This was way before the big fuel price hike.

**FIRST STEPS**

So what did Greg do?

He went out and bought himself a Suzuki TU250 Volty.

Don't think that Greg is a 'born again biker' though – nothing could be further from the truth. He'd never ridden a motorcycle before he bought the Volty,

# WHEN GT REALLY MEANS GRAN TOURISMO

**WORDS:** Michael Esdaile  
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If you are thinking that 134K sounds like a lot for any motorcycle, you'd be correct. But we are not talking about dollars. Rather, it's the kilometres that have rolled under the wheels of one man's Hyosung GT250. Michael Esdaile has the story...

Doubtless there are quite a few KR readers who started out in motorcycling on a 250cc (or smaller) Japanese bike in the 1970s when Baby Boomers took to motorcycles in droves. They were heady days when owning a Japanese franchise in a major centre was virtually a licence to print money.

There were plenty of those Baby Boomer riders who finished university, got a job, married, bought a house and gave up the bikes. But there are quite a few who got really hooked and have been riding regularly since the 1970s, some of the KR crew among them. Many will remember the days when they strapped a pup tent on

much less owned one, but being a diligent fellow, he progressed through his Learners and Restricted Licences on the Volty while the Nissan languished in the driveway.

In his first month on the Volty he clocked 5000km but eventually he decided that whilst the Suzuki was okay, he had learned enough after another 10,000km to know he wanted something more.

"The other reason was that the Suzuki had done 55,000km and needed \$1500 spent on it, so I decided it was better to put the \$1500 into a new bike."

That was when the yellow Korean at TSS Red Baron caught his eye. He sat on it, it fitted him so in short order a trade was done which saw Greg riding home on a brand new GT250 Hyosung. That was in July 2006 and not long after he got his full motorcycle licence. Since then, the roads of the lower North Island have been his oyster.

**EXPLAINING HIS HORIZONS**

Commuting on his Hyosung more than 400km a week gave Greg the bug to go further afield. Quite a lot further actually, which is how he has managed to clock up the equivalent of three and a third times around the earth's equator on his Korean V-twin, or if you'd like a comparison closer to home, almost seven laps of that wide



Greg Wilkinson and his high km Hyosung GT250 (main pic) plus two 'odometer grabs,' one when the tumblers having just clicked over 99,999km, the next 100,000km (back to zero). How many of us get to take photos like that?



Greg's bike (when this piece was written) had 134,000km on the clock. Yet most people would take a quick look at his 2006 Hyosung GT250 and think that it was almost brand new... Greg has personalized 'his' GT to make it better over longer distances with a Givi screen, Ventura rack and either Ventura or Rjays bag as well as Oxford heated hand-grips

brown land next door.

After the Volty, the GT250 V-twin felt very sporty, so much so that sometimes Greg's return 'home' from work got to be quite a ride.

"Sometimes I'd end up in Martinborough," he laughs.

For those unfamiliar with the geography, Martinborough is way over the other side of the Rimutaka Hill from Greg's home.

"I can't explain it, the Hyosung just seems to want to keep going some afternoons," he says.

So here is a bloke who parked his Nissan 4WD (since sold because it was cluttering up the driveway) because of the price of diesel, and now here he is adding an extra hundred or so kilometres to his ride home.

But it's not just Martinborough. One weekend Greg got an urge to ride the Hyosung GT250 to Auckland – in the middle of the 2007 winter.

"There was snow and sleet on the Desert Road and the cross wind was gusting to 130 km/h I found out later. That was a hairy ride," he says.

Most times his weekend rides take him to his other house, in Taihape, and sometimes that takes him on a journey of six hours as he investigates other roads. He's been over to Taupo and on to Napier on occasion so it's clear he's enjoying his Korean V-twin which has more kilometres on it than many 'touring' riders would manage in a decade.

How many? How does 134,000km in three and a half years grab you?

### LIVING WITH THE GT250

So we figured Greg would be the ideal bloke to tell us about living with a Korean model.

"At 9,990km the CDI unit failed, and by then the rear shock had lost its damping. So I had both replaced under warranty," Greg says.

Understanding that the secret to a machine's longevity is obeying the maintenance schedule, Greg had the Hyosung serviced at his local Hyosung dealership, TSS Red Baron, after its first 1,000km and then at every 4,000km interval since.

After looking after his numerous cars over the years, Greg says he now prefers to leave the servicing to TSS Red Baron, so he can concentrate on riding. They use Total semi-synthetic oil at every oil change.

To reduce wind pressure Greg has

fitted a Givi handlebar-mounted screen. He says he removed the screen once to see what it was like without it, and quickly bolted it back on.

To make carrying a bit of gear easier, a good old Kiwi-made Ventura pack rack is on the back, and for weekends away he swaps the Ventura bag for an expandable RJs item.

Although he's almost six feet tall, Greg says he's used to the fairly high mounted foot pegs and for the first three years his long trips didn't cause him any bother.

But after a recent 4200 kilometre 'long weekend' (five days), he found he was starting to feel a bit cramped on the last day and is now investigating seat options.

"I was stopping every 200km on that last day to walk around a bit, and by the end of it I was stopping every 75km!"

He does quite a bit of night riding so he replaced the standard headlight bulb with a Superplasma GTX one which throws out a bluish purple light.

"It's rated at 60/55 Watts but it's the equivalent of a normal 155 Watt light and it throws a good spread and depth of light."

### FUEL ECONOMY

The big question is, how does the GT250 Hyosung compare with the old Nissan diesel on the fuel economy stakes, since that was the reason he gave his wife for buying it?

"Well," says Greg, "I regularly get 400km from a tank, and when I fill up it generally takes about 15.5 litres."

That works out at a super frugal 3.87 litres/100 km, or 25.8 km/litre. Another way of looking at it is that he cut his weekly fuel bill from \$90 for the diesel Nissan to \$25, and even after the savage price gouging the oil companies are embarking on today, the weekly fill would amount to \$34.

"They say the tank holds 17 litres but I ran it right out of petrol once, and only got 16.5 litres into it," says Greg, sounding a tad short-changed. Heck, he'd get another 13 km out of the missing half litre...

He's also found something rather interesting about different fuels.

"Using BP Ultimate (98 octane) I could regularly get 450km from a tank in commuting. That's a daily mix of 110-120 km/h motorway riding, two kilometres in a 50 km/h speed zone, five kays of 70 km/h and another five of 80 km/h. With Shell V power 95 octane it gets 400 to 410 km and



I get around....Greg and his Hyosung certainly do, getting out of their Hutt Valley home as often as possible

using 91 octane I scratch to get 375 km from a tank."

In the first 100,000 km, the average fuel consumption worked out at 27.15 km/litre.

### TYRES

The Hyosung GT250 comes standard with Shinko tyres and after wearing them out, Greg decided to try the then new Continental Road Attack rubber.

"I was happy enough with the Shinkos, until I discovered they weren't so great in very wet conditions."

He got through three rear Continentals and a pair of Conti fronts after that.

"But when it came to fitting another set of Contis, the price had jumped quite a bit so I was talked in to trying the Michelins. Not only were they cheaper, the rear one lasted 27,000 km while the best I'd got from a Conti rear was 17,000. So I'm very happy with the Michelins."

### INCIDENTS

With almost 70,000 km on the odo, Greg had a nasty shock in June 2008 when an impatient motorist suddenly change lanes – from right to left – leaving Greg to take

evasive action on the Hutt Motorway, but he clipped the left rear of the car and went down.

Apart from a serious fright and bruising, he was OK, thanks to his riding gear.

But the insurance company was talking about writing off his beloved Hyo, so to tip the scales in favour of having it repaired so he could keep it, he agreed not to have the very lightly scuffed muffler replaced.

"I'd landed underneath it, so it was barely scratched!"

So with new handlebars, the Givi screen replaced, a new headlight and shell, he was back on the road. Not something you'd contemplate with a full-dress tourer...

### ENGINE NOISE

Just when he was thinking he'd achieve 100,000 km without anything major going wrong, at 95,094 km, things took a turn for the worse.

"I noticed a noise from the engine, which started to get louder, so I took it in to TSS, they listened to it, and decided the motor had to come apart," he says. But his fears that the entire crankshaft would need replacing proved groundless. TSS Red Baron took the engine of Greg's Hyosung apart in August 2009 and discovered one of the main bearings was on its way out.

"The big-end bearings were perfectly ok though. However, while the engine was apart we decided to replace the pistons and rings. The cylinders still had the original honing marks on them but the pistons were a bit discoloured around the ring lands so we decided to replace them. Second and fifth gear were also showing a bit of wear, so I had them replaced as well," he adds.

Since then he has racked up another 34,000 trouble-free kilometres and was well on his way to his second 100,000 when he decided to add to his Hyosung experience, buying a new Hyosung GT650 efi in June 2010.

The GT250 is still on its original wheel bearings and steering head bearings but the rear shock linkage bushings were replaced when the new shock was put in at 66,000km.

Since the 650 was acquired, Greg has clocked up 'only' 19,000km on it, he admits almost apologetically. The reason is due to his decision to quit the printing business and set himself up in a garden and lawn maintenance business. Starting a new business involves a lot of time and energy so lately Greg has been suffering from withdrawal symptoms. **KR**

## GT250 CONSUMABLES

Here is a list of all of the parts Greg has used on his GT250 since he bought it:

**Front brake pads:** changed at 11,982km, 44,090km, 60,299km, 84,214km, 107,000km (5 sets).

**Front disc:** replaced at 107,000km

**Rear brake pads:** 36,224km (still on 2nd set).

**Chain (DID):** 11,982km, 35,792km, 61,497km, 84,214km, 109,000km (6th chain).

**Rear Sprocket:** 35,792km, 64,212km (still on 3rd sprocket).

**Front Sprocket:** 64,212km (still on 2nd).

**Clutch cable:** 37,743km, 116,061km (on 3rd).

**Air Filter:** 44,090km, 80,087km, 116,06km (on 4th).

**Spark Plugs (NGK):** 35,792km, 47,847km, 75,515km, 112,088km (5th set)

**Rear Shock:** 9900km, 66,000km, (3rd rear shock)

**Rear Tyre:** changed to Conti Road Attack from the Shinko at 28,536km; 2nd Conti at 45,742km, 3rd at 69,031km. Changed to Michelin PS2 at 88,401km, then another at 116,000km (still using)

**Front Tyre:** changed to Conti Sport Attack from the Shinko at 34,769km, another Conti at 60,279km, then changed to Michelin PS2 at 88,401km (still using).