



||||||| BORIS MIHAILOVIC |||||

AMAZING GRACE

There's this bloke I don't know. But each time I see him, he makes me smile and shake my head in awe. I run across him from time to time in the meat-grinder that is Sydney's Victoria Road during peak hour, and on every occasion he never fails to bring the chocolates.

He rides what I think is an orange 1973 Ducati 750 Sport – and he rides it with such amazing grace, style and celestial sang froid, it just makes me want to applaud and cheer.

Quite frankly, I am a little envious – but only in a strange and benign kinda way. It is an envy hewn from the stone of appreciation and admiration, and thus doesn't fall under that whole Seven Deadly Sins nonsense the Catholics get all foamy about.

Now you have to understand that I have long viewed Victoria Road to be my bitch. The busiest road in Australia is a challenge at any time, but during peak hour it is something special. I ride it every day, and I take pride in the fact that I do it with a certain amount of kung fu. But this bloke I don't know makes

me look like a bumbling imbecile, and has reduced me to hurtling down footpaths in an attempt to keep up.

Of course, a lot depends on what I'm riding, and there are days and bikes when I can keep him in sight for maybe 10 or 15km. And there are days when I am reduced to frustrated screeching because the Fat Boy/Goldwing/VMAX just won't fit into the gap a 750 Sport Ducati will. A camel will pass through the eye of a needle easier than a Harley will fit between two trucks in Gladesville.

There is no question of my passing him. On the single occasion that I did manage to nail him while I was astride the mirrors-folded Hayabusa, he came back at me and then past me, unmuffled Contis thundering with such venomous contempt I actually stopped and bowed my head in homage as he roared off into the distance.

I think he is in his 40s, wears a flapping bag looped over one shoulder and has a non-descript helmet. On cold days he's got some kinda generic leather jacket on, and on warm days he's all T-shirt and sinews. His bike is vaguely clean, certainly well-maintained and

makes the kind of dark music only 1970s Ducatis make. In truth, I first started chasing him because I loved the sound his motorcycle made, and weaving through traffic at quite frankly ridiculous speeds (I'd tell you, but that would only prompt another frenzy of squawking, flapping and angry letter-writing from the nanny-fools who buy this magazine and steal my oxygen) I get to listen to it sing its angry Italian song. Well, for as long as I can keep up.

I think we may have exchanged a nod or two at traffic lights from time to time. But we have never spoken. It is implicitly understood that traffic lights are the starting grid and there's no talking on the starting grid. There is only watching the lights and waiting for the green so that an effective race-start can be made. I normally win these, because most of today's bikes go rather fast. But every bike is equal when the lane-splitting begins, and that's where he and his 37-year-old motorcycle take me and my flashy modern shit to school.

It takes a modicum of skill to ride smoothly and quickly through very heavy traffic. That is why most inexperienced riders don't do it, preferring to go with the flow, as it were. But now and again, I encounter a playah. And because I am probably a 32nd dan black-belt when it comes to lane-splitting, traffic-bitching and not-perishing-in-a-cartwheel-of-oops, I will play. It's like them dogs that chase cars. I can't help myself. And most of the time I win, and that makes me feel all hot and gooey around my nethers. But when it comes to that wicked orange Ducati, it's all I can do just to keep him in sight.

But what a sight it is! It is certainly worth the effort and the risk. A master is at work. An artisan is practising his craft. A sorcerer is wielding his magic. And I love to watch when that sort of stuff takes place. For those brief few moments when him and I are dicing and slicing and swooping through traffic like barracudas through shoals of idiot fish, we are not of this world. We are in another place altogether. A place of pure clarity and sublime focus. A place where the stakes are high and the rewards vast – but totally meaningless to most people. As I get older, it is a place I don't visit as often as I once did, but that makes it all the more flavoursome when I do. It is the place where I truly live.

And I just wanted to say thanks to the bloke on the Ducati whom I don't know.

Respect, brother. Respect. 🐶

I'm always happy to get your feedback. You can find me at www.bikeme.tv or email amcn@acpmagazines.com.au.

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The perfect lane-splitter?
A Ducati 750 Sport