

Launch: Pirelli Angel GT

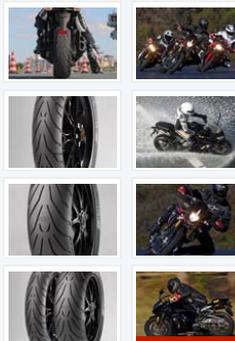


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New tyre designed for improved wet performance and distance, and a great choice for the next time you're in the market for a quality all-rounder

Tyres, eh? They're black and round, as the saying goes. But if you've ever swung a keen leg over a decent motorcycle, you'll know just how important a factor your tyres are in the happy days/shite outcome scenario.

Pirelli is one of the world's most recognisable tyre brands in the world, with a big presence across all forms of motorcycle sport and leisure. Currently it's the second best selling brand in Australia, behind a fat man from France.

The Holy Grail for any tyre company is the all-rounder, a tyre that's all things to all bikes and riders. The wide spectrum of abilities of a good multi-purpose tyre is vast; good stability, neutral handling, good grip (wet and dry) and great mileage. And, because as consumers we're never happy, we want our hoops to handle the odd trackday, too. "Hey tyre peeps, give me a call when you've sorted this magical tyre out..."

The "call" came in the form of an invite to test the new rubber up on the Gold Coast. "Yeah, I think I can make it up to you..."

Arriving at Link International's Yatala HQ (the Aussie importer for Pirelli), a short wheelie from Brisbane, it was clear that the selected media was as eclectic as the selection of bikes chosen to wear the new rubber. From ex-racers to news editors to fast road riders, our test monkeys spanned a decent cross-section of the biking public, as did the wide mix of Euro and Jap bikes. From the cowhorns of Aprilia's Dorsoduro and Ducati's Multistrada, to the punch of BMW's K 1300 R and Suzuki's tyre-shredding Hayabusa to the focus of Honda's CBR600RR. There was even a pair of Husqvarna Nuda 900s, because, well just because. The selection of bikes brought a tingling to the nethers of even the most experienced tester. But before the candy shop got open, there was serious business to attend to.

Two years in the making, the Angel GT takes over from the still-current Angel ST, though the ST range will be downsized to just the most popular sizes. The headline claims for the new GT range are improved wet weather performance and the longest life of the current category. There have been independent tests to back up these sales salvos, which is lucky as outside it's bone dry and we've less than six hours to put the tyre to the test. Distance and wet weather performance will have to wait for another time...

These are the main factors we picked up from the morning: the GT comes in popular 17 and 18-inch sizes, including an 'A' suffix that indicates a two-ply (the rest are single-ply) rear construction. This 'A' is designed for heavier bikes that'll be used predominately for two-up load-lugging. The front tyres are 100 per cent silica, where the dual-compound rears are a 70 per cent mix. The profile's been changed too, offering a beefier footprint from riding upright to downright quick, and there's five per cent more lean angle available when you find yourself on the edges of society. The side grooves of these steel-belted radials are shallower, making the overall construction more rigid.

The price for the new GT mimics those for the ST (which benefit from a \$20 price drop). Fronts are on average \$199 each, while a 180-rear comes in at \$279. But that's enough theory, let's get practical.

Armed with some deft distraction, I manage to secure the services of the Dorsoduro for the road ride. It doesn't take long to disarm the traction control and anti-lock braking systems. Game on. We climbed into the Gold Coast hinterland, observing every posted speed sign, although some of them were a bit more of a blur than others. You use miles per hour in Queensland, right?

Now, anyone that can tell you that they can feel a difference in the tyres from this first ride needs to book themselves in to a bullock excrement cleansing session. Without riding the same section of road on the same bike in the same conditions, the best I can say is that the tyres gave no cause for concerns -- pretty much as you'd expect of top quality new tyres on roads I'd never seen before. For the afternoon session though, feedback was easier to come by.

Rocking up at the Morgan Park race track, just outside Warwick, we were greeted with pretty ideal conditions. The track's long enough to get a wiggle on but compact enough to find the racing line quickly. I guess you'd call it a supersport track. With the tighter corners flowing into each other, I headed out on the same Aprilia. With many second-gear corners, it'd be easy to torture a touring tyre here while exploring the torque limits of the 1200cc V-twin. But the Angel GT's stood tall to the abuse, not wandering under heavy braking or squirming under acceleration.

Straight line stability was as good as a naked bike gets and these traits remained right across the variety of bikes, engine types and riding styles. In a day of decent pace, there wasn't a drama for any of the riders and Link's insurance papers stayed buried with the rest of the paperwork.

Another claim for the tyre is that along with the improved 30 per cent extra mileage from each hoop, the level of performance of each one stays stronger for longer. There's only so much feedback you can garner after a few hours on a set of tyres, but the track ability was a surprise considering that these aren't aimed specifically at the hero market. With many bikes becoming more useful in a variety of situations, it's not surprising that many riders want to take their non-sports bike to a track. And if you have a set of GTs fitted, changing them before the track sessions isn't something that has to be at the top of your list.

So Pirelli's new Angel GT tyre moves the game on. It goes further, grips harder for longer and has better (according to those independent tests) wet weather performance. As tyres are a buy-and-forget item, it's good to know you've made the right choice. My right wrist says you'll not go too far wrong with these...

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Published : Tuesday, 25 June 2013

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