

The fox is in the henhouse as CB Track Editor Oliver Jervis jumps behind the controls of a Kawasaki Concours 14 Police Special on public streets and on the proving grounds of the Vancouver Police Department's motorized training camp.

PONDERING THE

By Oliver Jervis
Robert Smith photos

REALITY



The Kawasaki Concours 14 Police Special was starting to work on me. I was beginning to feel ... powerful. Trippy. Different than others. These were strong psychological effects, ones I'm quite sure that police departments worldwide train extensively to inhibit. After all, they're professionals with difficult jobs, who can't afford to let the highly-symbolic trappings of their occupation overwhelm their better judgments. Yet riding this bike, assembled by Beaudry Motorsports of Hayden, Idaho, made me feel all these things. Beaudry is the largest builder of factory certified Kawasaki police bikes in the United States, and their treatment of the Concours 14 is currently being considered by the Vancouver Police Department as a

fleet asset of its motorcycle section.

In the meantime, Beaudry Motorsports floated this out to us: Would we care to sample the Kawasaki in its police specification while the VPD weighs its options? Would we? Hell yeah!

And from the VPD we received this invitation: Would we like to bring said unit to Vancouver to participate in a typical motorcycle police training session? Would we? Hell yeah!

So, everything seemed quite orderly and squared away, but now I'd be lying to you if I didn't admit a slightly exaggerated sense of self while operating this motorcycle. I became keenly aware of any infringements around me. In fact, from my perch astride the "Peacemaker" (my nickname for the bike) it took

all my willpower to leave the siren and lights alone. Invariably though, better judgement prevailed—the charges for impersonating a police officer are understandably quite severe. Still, I became too aware of how little attention people pay to their surroundings while driving. At one point, some driver actually bumped into me from behind while I was waiting for a light. True story. Scratch your head, like I did, and try to imagine how it's possible to rear-end a police bike? Dude, what were you thinking? Here's a highly visible bigger machine with lights and the like on it. I was left speechless. The poor sod who hit me didn't know what to make of the situation but I did enjoy asking for his ICBC insurance papers.

PEACEMAKER



of 90-degree switchbacks. Trust me folks, it's not easy. In fact, though it's hard to admit this, if I had to rate myself on how I fared, I would have to say I failed miserably. It's a good thing I wasn't applying for the job either because the look on Don and Adrian's face told me all I needed to know.

It seems I brought way too much baggage with me from my racing experiences. Despite my best intentions of coming in with a clean slate and being 100 per cent open to their teachings, the routines and knowledge that have always served me well on the roadrace track only did me a disservice here. Funny how my "good" habits were now "bad" habits in this arena.

I crashed the Kawasaki more times in three hours than in the same number of years of roadracing. Hilarious. It's a good thing the bike comes with protective guards. But in the hands of the trained officers, the Concours 14 Police Special acquitted itself with far greater competence.

Police work is perhaps the most demanding role a motorcycle can ever play. Imagine your bike running in sweltering heat for several hours while powering a full array of accessory lights. How would it do? Imagine having your clutch in a constant state of half engagement. How would it handle that? Imagine dropping your bike several times a day. How would you handle that?

All these questions and more will be

ics. But motorcycle attributes and the riding skills police value are all extremely specific to this demanding profession.

Moreover, police forces around the world have been very fond of their Harleys for an extraordinarily long time. Given all that, it will take a special bike indeed to win over the hearts and minds of members.

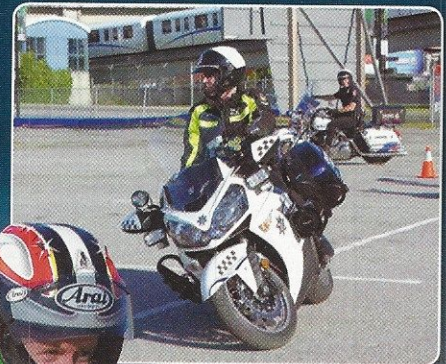
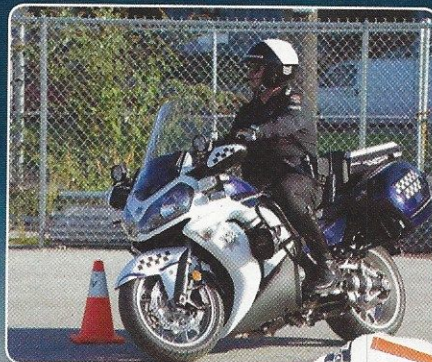
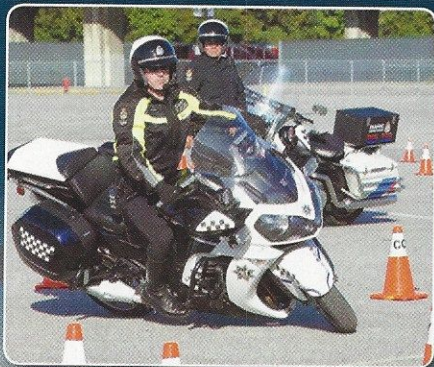
I know the VPD will have strict criteria to ensure the bikes meet their de-

"Simply put, an officer has to demonstrate complete control and confidence while navigating exceptionally tight patterns."

asked and answered as the VPD makes its final decision on what models will replace or augment the current fleet.

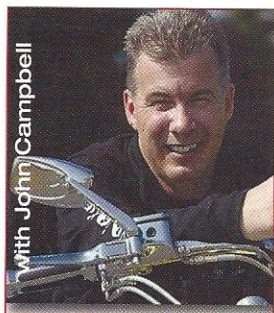
On paper, you'd assume the Kawi idifers greatly from the Harleys in terms of engine, suspension, braking and electron-

mands. From my perspective the bike didn't betray any shortcomings. And as for the motorcycle officers themselves, behind the controls of every police bike is an exceptionally competent rider. Much respect. **CB**



Motorcycle cop for a day

To gain a deeper appreciation for the men and women who serve on the motorcycle police forces of our communities, all you have to do is spend a few hours on their bike.



The Kawasaki Concours 14 on pages 36-39 would have been an excellent motorcycle anyway, even before the police specification and livery. With the traction control system Kawasaki calls K-TRAC, locking panniers, and a ferocious 16-valve 157-hp engine, the shaft-driven Concours is situated well up in the elite sport touring class. And with a combined braking system in

which the front and rear binders are applied in differing amounts depending on which one is hit first, the Concours stops as good as it goes. But by the time it was kitted out according to police department specification, it was something else again. I call it the single most charismatic motorcycle I've ever ridden, and I've been on a few.

What makes it that? The lights, the siren, the service-duty horn? Maybe the pronounced checkerboard-on-bone white scheme with generic but instantly recognizable badging?

All I know is, the attitude of my fellow motorists was instantly changed when I rolled into their midst on it. Presumably, that's the idea—to be immediately visible as a peace officer's vehicle, and to be able to impose yourself psychologically into any given situation. We all know that police officers face many "situations" throughout their day.

I had picked up the bike from Oliver Jarvis and was shuttling it to the office, but changed my mind and went for an afternoon spin instead. (Oh, like that's a bad thing.)

I was enjoying the ride and, like Oliver, was just itching to push buttons and touch things. I wanted to hear that big ol' siren and fire up that famous blue-and-red light bar. I was even playing with the notion of pulling over a friend or two, just to see the looks on their faces.

Of course that would have been monumentally stupid. To say nothing of totally illegal. Needless to say, I didn't pull anyone over, or in any way deliberately represent myself to the public as a police officer. As I said, that would have been illegal ... and had I been caught performing such an act I would have been rightfully punished to the fullest extent of the law. The fullest extent.

Okay, now that we have that out of the way, I will admit to testing the lights and the horn—in a closed course situation—because I felt it was my duty to do so. It was a standard safety inspection. I can report that the lights and horn worked very well.

Terrifically well. Though it did take an anxious moment or two before I realized that the violently loud honking siren function is disabled by pushing twice on the same button that enabled it.

Same with the lights.

But the sheer joy that came from activating these devices that are otherwise forbidden to civilians was nothing compared to the effect I was having on ordinary and hopefully innocent citizens when I simply rode into the streets among them. It took me a while to realize, but then it dawned on me: They think I'm a cop!

It occurred to me that I was even (sort of) dressed the part in my half-shell helmet, big dark shades, black leather jacket and black, full-length gauntlets. With the bold deputy star on the Kawi's bodywork, what I looked like would have more closely resembled the stereotype of a southern motorcycle cop as seen on TV. But most motorists,

Canadian or otherwise, have watched enough television in their lives that certain bits of information have been processed at a subconscious level over the years. On a first cursory glance, their initial instinctual reaction would have been: "Shoot, there's a cop."

A closer inspection of this "cop" would have revealed nothing more than another goofball with a loopy grin riding a bike that wasn't his.

But by then the psychological impact would have already hit. How many times did I see people fall further behind me in my rear-view mirror?

How many times did I see them tromp on the brakes or otherwise modify their speed in my presence?

After a few episodes like this, my own behaviour began to change. I was getting increasingly offended. How stupid do they think I am? Do they really believe I'm falling for that?

I was getting pissed with Joe Public and I hadn't even been "on shift" for half a day. Pretty soon I was actually alert to malfeasance. My head was on a swivel: Officer John was hunting for villains and wrongdoers. Geez. Talk about easily-influenced. There's no doubt in my mind that "real" police officers, the actual professionals, train rigorously to cope with the many psychological inputs they encounter.

Otherwise they'd be basketcases in their first week on the job.

I've often wondered why an otherwise perfectly sane person would want to be a cop. The stress is phenomenal. Think about the role of first responders at a highway crash involving minivans and soccer teams. The abuse is outrageous. Ask any member who has ever been called to break up a family spat. Guess who the "bad guy" is nine times out of ten.

There's the possibility of more physical danger in one shift than you and I are likely to experience in a lifetime. Remember Mayerthorpe?

Cops have a tough job. And if you don't believe that, you're nuts.

Oliver's story, "Pondering the Peacemaker," offers insight to the intense training and challenges faced by the men and women who "serve and protect." Give it a read. **B**

