

Why I Ride What I Ride

I have been asked by several why a 250 and not a 600cc, 1000cc, or some other bigger bike. An honest inquiry deserves an honest answer.

What I find most enjoyable about motorcycling is exploring back roads, particularly a series of tight 20 MPHers, not running speed traps on Interstate highways. Light weight and flickability not horse power, are key with my riding style. We are blessed in Fannin, Grayson, and northern Hunt counties to have a large variety of "twisty" back roads. One such road, FM 697, has consistently been one of the top rated roads in the state by the [Ride Texas Magazine's](#) Top 10 Reader's Poll for the last several years. Additionally, we are only about two hours from the [Talimena Scenic Drive](#) (a nationally known motorcycle road). A small, lightweight, sport bike is ideal for this type of riding.

Motorcycling has become more recreation and ministry than commuting as Joleen (my wife) and I now live half a mile from the school. On a personal level, Joleen has had a Transient Ischemic Attack, suffers from mild vertigo, claustrophobia (which kicks in when she tries on a full face helmet), and has expressed on multiple occasions that she has no interest in riding, pillion or otherwise. Motorcycling with Joleen riding pillion, if it ever occurs, will not likely come to fruition until after Victoria and Nathaniel graduate from college. Little motorcycles make much more sense than one big \$15,000+ tourer for the foreseeable future. It maybe that one or two little motorcycles may suit me just fine until I must use a walker to ambulate.

The Ninjetta II, is one of the prettiest motorcycles I have seen; and, after all, motorcycles are more emotional than practical. Interestingly the February 2008 issue of [Automobile Magazine](#), Robert Cumberford, in an article entitled "Japanese at Last" discusses the emergence of a clear Japanese automotive design philosophy. The distinctive visual cues are smooth organic shapes, crisp flow lines, and particular attention to the manner the wheels interact with the body. A body design philosophy that meshes well with my own sense of aesthetics. If one considers the sport bikes offered from the Japanese big four beginning in the early nineteen nineties a similar design philosophy has been developing within the Japanese motorcycle manufacturing community as well. In fact, it would appear that this Japanese school of sport bike fairing design has become so accepted that even Italian sport bikes (Ducati 1098) have that look.

The Ninja 250R is the only liquid cooled 250 class motorcycle that can travel safely at Interstate speeds. However, the intrepid 248cc engine has not kept up with accepted motorcycle engine technology in that it does not have fuel injection. In some ways this is an indictment, however, I am not convinced that the power and fuel mileage benefits would justify the extra expense. Soaking a lot of money into any purely internal combustion engine propelled vehicle at this point in time makes me a bit squeamish as many automobiles and motorcycles may be hybrids or electrics by the end of the next 10 to 20 years. Additionally, being an old gear-head with a lot of multi-carburetor miles I am comfortable with the 250R's twin carburetors.

Ninjettes are inexpensive to purchase and maintain. It is reliable, fun to ride, and frugal on fuel. For a variety of reasons the industry rush to have bigger, faster, and more expensive rides is wrong-headed. If we can develop little cars that get 50+ MPG, it shouldn't take too much to come up with a 100+ MPG motorcycle that is rideable and marketable. Kawasaki is getting closer to where at least a portion of the industry needs to venture with more purpose. In a free market economy I am willing to put my money where my belief is.

It has been said that "it is not what you ride, but that you ride". In the end I feel I am having as much fun as anyone else, but I am getting 60 to 70 MPG and am not making payments to the bank while having all that aforementioned fun.