

Single Vehicle Approval

The spectre of TuV has been hanging over Europe for a generation now. When we were first concerned about it, custom accessories catalogues were relatively small and back street workshops were busy. We were told that the German TuV test required that anything produced had to be produced in triplicate: one that could be a library copy, one that could be tested to destruction as well as the one that you actually wanted to fit to your bike. It was a terrifying prospect for the custom industry and provided the backdrop for any future euro-legislation.

THEY WERE DAYS OF EXTREMES with immensely competent engineers on the one hand producing pieces of mechanical genius, and back street bodgers on the other, knocking together seminal works with jubilee clips, bits of string and the occasional piece of Meccano, with each group defending the other's freedom of expression, and the concept of a custom bike that was built from a book was anathema. No two bikes were the same and many, many pieces of tortured tin were lovingly worked into shape by the leading exponents of the craft.

Then something changed.

Custom bikes, and especially custom Harleys became big business. The big name builders became brands, and the broader aftermarket catalogues used their kudos to create bigger and bigger ranges of accessories to such an extent that, with notable exceptions, an awful lot of custom bikes today are built up using pre-manufactured bits and pieces.

As the custom industry grew, the TuV spectre came back to haunt all those who wanted to sell their products in Germany, which has led to an increasing number of parts bearing a TuV marking and it's perhaps worth spending a couple of lines here explaining TuV, and also CE markings because they'll crop up time and again.

TuV (Technische Überwachungs-Verein – or Technical Surveillance Association) is actually a voluntary standard in most areas of life, and anything stamped with a TuV GS mark has undergone independent testing in the proscribed form and passed. It applies only to the part that has passed, and not parts derived from the tested parts. It is also subject to continuous product and production surveillance by independent third parties for the lifetime of the license granted – as can its production process. Tough, but reassuring. If a frame, for example, has been stamped with a TuV mark, it is deemed to be safe and needs no further testing.

CE (Conformité Européenne) markings are a different kettle of fish entirely, and are a requirement of anything sold in the EU – which means that anything that does not carry

the CE mark could be restricted, prohibited or forced to withdraw from the EU. Draconian measures, but odd in that the CE mark isn't actually a guarantee of an item passing any sort of testing. It is a manufacturer's self-declaration of conformity, which means they've put their head on the block in saying it is suitable for the purpose – so you've got someone to point at if it doesn't – and any manufacturer who applies the CE mark to goods offered for sale can be held responsible for damages or injury.

This is generally "a good thing" as the bits that go to make up a bike that are on the market are generally safer and significantly more highly developed. But while components had generally fallen in line with requirement, it didn't account for what happens when you bolt all your TuV tested and CE stamped bits together. And that's where our story proper starts.

Mass manufacturers have long been regulated to make sure their machines – whether two wheeled or four – conformed to another couple of standards that send shivers down the spines of right-thinking folk: Type Approval (TA) and Construction and Use (C&U). If you want to know why the new Road King Custom has the full-on mudguard trim compared to the sleek, minimal image in the brochure, look no further: it fell foul of one, other or both of those – probably because the mudguard doesn't have a rolled edge, and the metal isn't thick enough to give a 2mm radius to the leading edge.

European officials and departments of transport have been busying themselves arriving at a single standard for all new models of vehicles that are to be sold for use in Europe, and this came into force on 17th June 1999. It was called the ECWVTA, or European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval, and as of the 17th June 2003 all motorcycles must be approved to either ECWVTA or the national requirements of the member states. No approval, no registration. No exceptions.

The interesting phrase in that last sentence is "national requirements of member states". In the UK a consultation process began with a

view to working out what that might mean for us, and thankfully the motorcycle lobby was well represented within the department that was set up to sort things out.

The alternatives were to do nothing, which would have meant that any ground-up build of a new motorcycle would be subject to ECWVTA; or else operate a single vehicle approval system to cover the relatively small numbers of such one-off builds; or else operate an enhanced version of single vehicle approval to accommodate the commercial interests of grey/parallel importers, because their failure to comply with C&U regulations extend far beyond a speedo calibrated in km/h.

A technical consultation was held in Spring 2003 to canvas the opinions of those who would be most affected by it and, taking on-board a number of concerns from that meeting, the Motorcycle Single Vehicle Approval (MSVA) scheme was set up and was implemented on the 8th August 2003. From that date onwards, any brand new one-off motorcycle will have had to pass MSVA to get a registration document.

Had you heard of it? You weren't alone.

In early December, alarmed by the general lack of knowledge of the test within the custom building industry despite the earlier technical consultation, Simon Letts of Motorcycle Storehouse, organised a seminar to let the team at the Department for Transport's Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) put their case forwards, and to go through the test in detail to an audience of the great and the good from the UK custom bike industry.

So. What is affected by MSVA?

New motorcycles – which is to say a motorcycle made from new parts. This includes build-your-own kits unless those kits have been subjected to ECWVTA, which would be unlikely.

Not existing motorcycles that have been modified, unless the modifications go so far as to require re-registration such as using a new custom frame and selling the old one with its VIN number and documents. The actual

wording is that a motorcycle that has been “substantially rebuilt” must use an “Unmodified Frame (original or new) And two other major components from the original vehicle” if it is to retain the original registration mark, and it offers forks, wheels and engine/gearbox as the pick and mix components – a doddle with a Harley, because they’ll have probably fitted every combination to everything by now.

Not motorcycles made more than ten years ago that are being imported or reimported to the UK and require registration – and that is a rolling ten years, so import a chopped 1993 bike not a 1995 one if you want to by-pass the hassle.

Are there exceptions?

There are always exceptions, but nothing that we’re especially interested in here: vehicles that cannot exceed 6km/h, pedestrian-controlled vehicles, vehicles exclusively intended for use in competitions, agricultural tractors and machines, off-road ATVs and electric, pedal assisted vehicles. A couple we are more interested in are vehicles for use by the physically handicapped – who are defined in section 1 of the Disability Discrimination Act – and when that vehicle is adapted or constructed to enable them to travel in or on as a rider or passenger in safety and comfort. And then there are the aforementioned vehicles that are more than ten years old.

What is MSVA?

A test on the design and construction of a vehicle, much like an engineer’s report, unlike an MoT which is a test of roadworthiness.

It is a test at one of a selected few testing stations, made by officials of VOSA who have an engineering background and training. They will closely scrutinise the vehicle being tested to ensure that it meets the required standard, and that it is likely to hold together in use.

What are they looking for?

Anything that is dangerous for you or other road users. That includes a number of things you are not likely to consider as safety features but the truth is that it doesn’t matter especially what your thoughts are in such matters: a line has been drawn.

Quality of build

A large number of components will now be stamped with the E, GS (TuV) or BSI standard. “E” marked items will be deemed as being built to an adequate standard already, and therefore won’t need further testing, BSI will be useful on exhaust system, but TuV approval actually makes little difference in spite of its testing, as it cannot easily be qualified at the time of testing. Anything that isn’t stamped will be subject to a visual examination.

There are other stamps that are accepted, notably manufacturer’s stamps because they will be deemed to have accepted liability already, but that’s not what they’re looking for. The examiner will be on the lookout for poor quality welding, cracked filler disguising poor quality welding. In short, in terms of build quality, they’ll be looking for the sort of stuff that you really shouldn’t have accepted yourself ... and if you did accept it happily, you need protecting from yourself.

Specific safety issues

A little more complicated. No, significantly more complicated, and a tad contentious in areas. This is stuff that is laid down in law that we got away with for years and a few new bits, but we’ll get there in a moment.

How do you apply?

By filling in an application to pre-book a test. A number of things will be required on the application and I’m going to start breaking it down into bullet points because this is stuff you need to know.

VIN – if you’re using an existing frame that’s not been registered, you’ll already have one of these, if not you’ll still need one – it’s a legal requirement and strictly-speaking a 17-digit VIN is supplied by the DVLA in the event of your not having one. Exactly what constitutes not having one is a moot point, and there must be thousands of bikes out there with VIN numbers dreamt up by their builders, and more than a handful that inherited numbers from frames that were scrapped, to save on paper work.

Make – if it’s a Harley, call it a Harley, but if it’s a one-off feel free to be creative. Recently Harley have taken a dim view of the number of so-called Harleys on the road that have never seen Milwaukee.

Model – again, poetic licence might be called for.

Type – bicycle, or tricycle – you’ll be delighted to know that Morgan-style trikes are now collectively known as carcycles.

Date of manufacture of motor – not necessarily the absolute time and date, but be sensible. They appreciate that the engine might have been built in May 2003, was sold in October 2003 and the bike won’t see the road until March 2004.

Engine type and capacity – hardly rocket science.

Power output – maximum power and the speed at which it is generated. They’re not going to ask you to prove it, but you can be expected to know roughly what you’re putting out, and it is relevant when it comes to the test.

Engine speed – maximum engine speed: tread carefully here because it could come back to haunt you.

Road Speed – we’re not bragging here, this determines the speed rating of your tyres, so if you want your Fat Boy to officially be a 220mph motorcycle, be prepared for expensive tyre bills.

Unladen weight – and design weights if you’re building from scratch. Don’t try to tell them that your big twin is lighter than a Firebolt so they turn a blind eye to your use of the forks from an XS650.

Where and when – they’ll obviously want to know where you want it testing (location of test sites are on the application form), roughly when you’d like to take the test, who you are, and a signature to make you legally liable if they discover you’ve been telling them porkies.

And they’ll want money. Doesn’t everyone? That’ll be seventy quid to you, son. More than an MoT but substantially less than ECWVTA would’ve cost. Should you fail, you’ll be interested to note that a retest within 5 days is free, while it’ll cost you another fifteen quid if you over-run. If you feel harshly treated you can appeal against a failure, but you’ll be in for a full test fee again if it is upheld. You can have as many retests as you like within 6 months: if it still fails, take the hint. Other costs are an additional £20 for an out-of-hours test, and £10 if you need a replacement certificate.

They would hope to be able to test the bike within 18 working days from receipt of the application, but this is subject to demand and could be longer at peak times.

The Test:

So you’ve presented your bike at your VOSA test station, and met the engineer who’s going to test it. Do you go and sit in a nice warm room with a coffee pot while they pull it to pieces for an hour? No you sit with them all through it, because your body is going to form part of the vehicle in certain areas of the test, and they’d rather you dropped it than them when the extended forks slam to one side or the other. The “presenter” doesn’t have to be you, but whoever it is needs to be capable of manhandling the bike and operating the controls.

From here on, we’ll go through the requirements systematically in the order they were presented to us:

Stands:

The prop and/or centre stand must be securely fitted – not one of those bolt-on things that slip round the frame when you put weight on.

- It must support the machine in a stable way – not so upright as to teeter, not so laid down as to let the bike fall over when the stand sinks into a soggy rally site.
- It must retract when the machine is upright, on first contact with the ground or be fitted with an inhibitor, so you couldn’t pull away with it down: don’t tell >>



me you've never done it, because everyone has at some point.

- And it must be securely held up when in the travelling position.

Mirrors:

The regulations are divided into two types: bodied and unbodied. A motorcycle doesn't have a body so we get the "unbodied" category.

- A motorcycle must have two, unless it's a moped.
- The minimum size of the reflective area is determined by the ability to enclose a template that the examiner has, and they must be at least 280mm from the bike's centreline to the centre of the reflective surface – so you can see more than just your elbows – and must give a clear view to the rear and sides.
- They must be secure, but adjustable.
- They must have a convex reflective surface – so "images in the rearview mirror ..." etc, otherwise Gary Larson would be a cartoon short and Meatloaf would have to reduce his repertoire by one song.
- If they are not "E" marked, they will be checked for conformity – it is expected that all "E" marked mirrors will comply.
- They must have a frame round the glass, minimum radius 2.5mm, to protect the pedestrian more than the mirror.

Speedometer

It must have one.

- It can be digital or a dial, or both.
- A dial must show miles per hour at increments not exceeding 20mph (currently there is a requirement in the C&U to display in km/h too but it is not an MoT failure in GB, although it is in Northern Ireland). Those increments must be permanently marked on the dial face – so no sticking stickers on the glass, or even engraving it – and it must both be in view at all times, and illuminated at night.
- And you must be able to show how it works – a speedo cable or a wire for electronic ones.

Audible warning

It's not enough to shout "Get out of the bloody way!" at the top of your voice, and you won't get away with a bulb horn, bell, gong or siren.

It must be securely fitted to the bike, it must be in working order, it must be "loud enough" and it must emit a continuous uniform sound – not La Cucaracha or Dixie. A few years ago that might have been seen as compromising your freedom of expression, but against a backdrop of ridiculous ring-tones, it's probably a blessing.

Lighting

A picture is worth a thousand words so check

out the picture for heights and stuff, but there's more ...

There are compulsory lights, optional lights and there is a new requirement for symmetry.

Compulsory lights:

- Headlamps – dipped and main beam, both white; the dip pattern must be either kicked up to the left, a flat beam or else an alternative beam that "does not dazzle". Specifics as to how they should be adjusted are still being debated, but that relates more to fairing-mounted headlamps than ones that you can tilt up or down by pivoting them on their mounting bolts. There is a maximum of two dipped headlamps. If not sharing a common reflector, the main beam lamp must be within 200mm of the dipped beam lamp(s).
- Position lights – one or two white sidelights at the front even if you've got daytime running lights – which isn't a requirement – in case of bulb failure. The normal taillight suffices at the rear. There needs to be a tell-tale so you know when they are on, but this could either be an idiot light on the dash, or else the instrument lights.
- Brakelight – red. Operated from all braking controls, so both front and rear brake levers need to be wired.
- Indicators – amber. Front and rear: bar end bi-directional lamps, beloved of our continental cousins, meet the criteria for the front indicators but not the rear as they are too far forward so they won't be enough on their own. Moreover, if fitted, the rear-facing lens must be blanked off as it is in contravention of the regulation so that'll probably be the last we see of them here. Otherwise, there must be a minimum of 240mm between front indicators, and 180mm between rear indicators – but with 160mm tyres being commonplace now, you'd struggle to fall

foul of that. You must have two indicators at the front (one each side), but you can have four at the rear – all of which must be within 300mm of the rear of the bike.

- Trikes must be able to use the indicators as hazard warning lights too, or have a separate circuit.
- Number plate lamp – white. This can be incorporated in the taillight if it shines a white light in the right direction. If the plate is too far from the taillight, it needs to be a separate lamp.
- Reflectors – red. Not strictly a light, except that sometimes the rear lens incorporates one. This must be a prism-type reflector, not tape, and must be more than a single triangular element. In terms of shape, the reflector must NOT be triangular as that is now reserved entirely for trailers.

Optional lights:

- Front and rear foglamps, side reflectors and reversing lamps on trikes. They are not required, but where fitted they must be within positional requirements, and they must work.
- Side reflectors again must not be triangular, minimum height 300mm, max 900mm and, if fitted, not obscured by the rider or passenger.
- Front fog lamps must be yellow or white, and sixties scooter riders will be pleased to hear there is no stated maximum. They cannot be more than 400mm from the outermost edge of the vehicle – more than a metre ... should be able to manage that. They can't be lower than 250mm, or higher than the highest point of the dipped beam headlamp.
- Rear fog – red. No lower than 250mm, no higher than 900mm and at least 100mm from the stop lamp. A rear fog lamp must have an idiot light on the dashboard.
- Hazards – amber, must conform to the same positional requirement as indicators, and must have an idiot light on the dash.



Symmetry:

The biggest bone of contention at the Motorcycle Storehouse seminar, and the proof that in defining laws common sense can sometimes go out of the window.

A motorcycle is a single track vehicle, and it needs to be identified as such by its lighting if we are to satisfy the authorities. This means that all lights must either be on the centreline of the vehicle, or else symmetrically balanced between the left and right hand side.

I've got a lovely "build your own chopper" feature from a 1972 issue of "Motorcycle, Three Wheeler and Scooter Mechanics" which shows how you can make your rear number plate bigger and brighter. It looked bloody awful but then so did the rest of the bike, to be brutally honest, and its like has not been seen since. Thankfully, I doubt the MSVA requirements will reawaken that trend, but it is the nasty bit in an otherwise well-thought out, and flexible set of requirements.

What's the problem? Side-mounted number plates, with their attendant lights.

It's not that you can't have them, but just that if it hangs off the left-hand side of the bike, it must be matched by one on the right, number plate and all. There is some sense here in that it's possible to have a bike that cannot be seen at night from the unlit side, either because of solid wheels, skirted rear mudguards or lamp positioning, but you can take it too far.

Something which didn't quite come across at the seminar is that the number plate too must be symmetrical, because there is already legislation on the books governing the visibility of number plates, and to pass MSVA you're going to have to meet that.

The final word on sidemounts is that if you want one, you'll need two: one per side. It is inevitable that some builders will remove one of them after passing MSVA and then it is down to how well the law enforcement community know the law, or the MoT testers to interpret it three years hence as to whether they, or you get away with it, but at least you know the position.

Immobiliser

This was a big issue when the MSVA Technical Consultation was held, but has been rationalised now. A motorcycle needs a means of preventing unauthorised use, and that can be either:

- Mechanical inhibitor in steering (steering lock) or transmission
- Electrical – like an ignition switch or an in-line battery immobiliser – or an electronic immobiliser

It's not especially complicated, even with the caveats that are applied:

- An immobiliser cannot act on the braking system – so don't go developing a system

that applies the brake levers because they could ultimately damage the hydraulic seals, or stretch your cables, and compromise your roadgoing safety.

- An immobiliser must not be able to jam when in motion – for obvious reasons
- A shackle type steering lock is perfectly acceptable BUT if using that method, the lock that passes through the shackle must be attached to the machine somewhere, somehow, and not in your pocket

Projections

A motorcycle is a blunt instrument, but there are a number of sharp or pointy bits that could cause more damage than would otherwise be the case to an unwitting third party, or yourself, so:

- Don't stick the ignition key where you might head-butt it, or where a pedestrian might be caught by it.
- Don't put spikey filler caps on your nice smooth tank, because it may be you that slides up and impales a tender part of your anatomy on them – the rules say spherical at the rear, and sticking up no more than 15mm.
- Stock handlebar levers already have ball end, and any such balls must be more than 7mm radius.
- Front mudguard leading edge must have at least a 2mm radius – which will be fine with most rolled edges, but apparently not for the new Road King Custom.
- Upper edges of screens, for bagger builders, must also be radiused.

Side projections are identified by rolling a plastic-coated metal pillar down the side of the bike, representing an upright citizen. Anything that contacts the pillar – called "PAT" – will be identified as a "grazing" contact or a "collision", and further broken down into being either a "stem" or a "plate", with plates being further broken down into "edge" and "corner".

Common sense will prevail here to a great extent.

Starting at the front – considered to be the wheel spindle of the vehicle – and with the "presenter" sitting on the bike in a riding position as they will form part of the test, PAT will first make contact with the spindle and then run down each side of the bike, finding:

- Axle – don't be tempted to fit one with a point at either end, because it won't pass.
- Mudguard mounting bolts – ditto.
- Handlebars – it is anticipated that the bars will move back to full lock, so they will not strike PAT square-on, but you'll still need to account for those bits of lever and switchgear that will cause an impact and make sure they are radiused.
- Forward controls – the control levers would ordinarily be the first point of

contact, but as the presenter is in the riding position, their feet would ordinarily cover the main controls, and it's not expected that you'd move your feet off the footrests in the even of an accident.

- Once past the rider there are fewer bits to hit – make sure your pillion footrests are retractable if you want to avoid them being tested, and obviously there'll be an issue on sidemounts.
- A final catchall is that the engineer is looking for any protruding, pointed or sharp bits that are likely to create or worsen injuries will cause the vehicle to fail, so be realistic: you're building a custom bike, not a weapon of war.

The tester will have a radius gauge with them, to check that everything conforms, but a good rule of thumb, is to ask yourself whether you'd like to be hit by that sharp edge at 20mph and then get your file out.

Registration plate space

There is no requirement for the bike to be registered – indeed it cannot be registered without an MSVA certificate – so there will be no registration plate actually on the bike, but it must have a space allocated to hold one in the proscribed place, which really should be the rearmost point and visible from all angles. You can take a chance and interpret that as you like, as long as you know that you may be called upon to qualify your location if the examiner has other ideas, and are prepared to go back for a retest if they don't agree.

Hand holds

If there is provision for a pillion rider – determined by the seat and NOT the presence of pillion footrests as there is no requirement to check for those (!?) – the bike must have hand holds. This can be a strap across the seat, or grips – either a single in front or behind the pillion, or else symmetrical grips either side of the seat. They must be within easy reach, strong enough and on the bike – not belt grips on your jacket.

Design and construction

The examiners, as already mentioned, are competent engineers, and will spot a frame made of conduit or Meccano from a hundred paces. They will fail a machine, or any part of it if they believe that it has been inadequately designed or constructed, or made from inadequate materials. If any parts adversely affect the control of the machine – such as cables that are too short, fuel lines in regular plastic tubes that run across exhaust pipes – that sort of thing. They will also fail it if it poses a threat to its rider, passenger(s) or members of the public – which is above and beyond what PAT might have reckoned as it

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glanced down the side of the bike. This also encompasses:

Tyres:

Must be:

- Approved – capital E in a circle means UN approved, little e in a box means EU approved, DoT means US approved and JIS means Japanese approved.
- The right size for the rim – diameter and width – and don't laugh, it has been seen.
- Within their load capacity
- Within their speed ratings
- Correctly matched – you can't mix tyre types willy-nilly. From the front to the back: crossply, belted, radial (CBR), so crossply/crossply, crossply/belted, crossply/radial, belted/belted, belted/radial and radial/radial are all acceptable – although I wouldn't endorse every one of those combinations. Anything else is an automatic failure.
- Suitable for road use, correct fitment for front or rear, and spinning the right way.

We did a full tyre tech in issue one, which is also on-line in the tech section. If you want more details on this, go to american-v.co.uk

Brakes:

Bikes need two independent braking systems. This can incorporate linked systems whereby the rear brake operates one of two front disks, as long as there is still a second independent braking system.

Trikes, like cars, use the handbrake as the second system, and a handbrake is a requirement.

Apart from that, brakes must work, be correctly fitted, complete and secure. Brake fluid levels must be easily checked either by a sight glass or by using tools held on the bike (and a toolkit with a permanent place to keep it is acceptable in a way that a spanner in your pocket isn't). And they must be suitable for the application, so don't stick the high-tech cantilever rim brakes from your mountain bike onto your new build, and if you've used a XT500 front wheel and drum brake in your big-twin custom, you might be called upon to produce evidence that it's up to the job. Evidence-based support can be submitted.

Brake checks are similar to the MoT roller brake test but with a higher efficiency requirement – so do yourself a favour and design in a surplus at the beginning.

They:

- Mustn't stick.
- Mustn't bind.
- Mustn't grab.
- Mustn't judder.
- Must be balanced on a steered axle – which is only relevant if you're building the aforementioned carcyle.

Radio Suppression

HT Systems should be suppressed so's not to interfere with TV and radio. All the evidence you need for that is given on plug leads and suppressor caps – as is the failure to comply.

Exhaust and Noise

- A motorcycle must be fitted with a secure adequate exhaust system.
- The exhaust system must be fitted with a silencer.
- The silencer must be marked as per MoT requirements with the manufacturer's name: either the manufacturer of the bike or the silencer.
- The exhaust must pass a static noise test, and generate no more than 99dB(A). This is measured by a noise meter with the engine running at 50% of its maximum power if the engine's maximum power is generated at more than 5,000rpm, or 75% if maximum power is generated at less than 5,000rpm – which is why they need the maximum power declaration on the application form.

The testers will account for running in procedures providing you tell them, and provide evidence – like the running-in procedure supplied with the motor. By comparison, the drive-by test is nearer to 80dB, and every additional 3dB represents a doubling in the amount of noise generated.

Emissions

- Moped, rotary engines and "amateur-built", "rebuilt" and "vehicles using parts from a pre-registered vehicles" using engines that predate 1st January 1993 are subject to visual checks for excessive smoke or vapour only.
- 2-stroke engines are subject to visual checks only for now.
- All others must meet a 4.5% CO limit at idle, which is about the same as late seventies/early eighties cars would be expected to meet.
- There is no hydrocarbon or lambda check as yet.

Masses and dimensions

- Mass (weight) will have been declared on the application form, but it will be verified for the brake test – only expect a problem if you're clearly outside what you declare, because it suggests that you haven't designed it with the final weight in mind, which has implications for all sorts of other things.
- It mustn't exceed maximum dimensions of 4 metres long, 2 metres wide and 2.5 metres high – so you'd best go and cancel that sissy bar.
- There is a maximum weight of 1000kg on

trikes, but no limits on bikes – except the practical limit of what you can wrestle upright from a sidestand.

At the end of the examination

If you've passed, you will be given a Ministers Approval Certificate, which you can use to register the bike, otherwise, you'll get an MSVA30 which lists the faults – and if you're unhappy you can ask the examiner for an explanation, and there are appeal and complaints procedures in place.

Free retests are available within five days providing brake, noise and emissions testing equipment are not required, and for up to three items in sections 8 and 9 – which will be clear if you have the MSVA30 to cross-reference them against.

Any clearer? I hope so, because I'd hate my head to hurt this much for no good reason.

At the end of the day, the MSVA is little more than the old engineer's report that was undertaken previously, with a few more requirements, a few clarifications and greater reliance on the discretion of the examining engineer.

It is a one off test to qualify the design and construction of newly registered vehicles and is not intended as a replacement for the MoT, but allows you to register your vehicle as a new vehicle and therefore safe from an MoT for the first three years of its life.

It is not designed to keep custom vehicles off the road – in fact VOSA go out of their way to accommodate custom builders. If you need any proof of that, be aware that you can even present your final dry build and get that tested before committing to the final paint, which will make it easier to fix anything that needs fixing, as well as removing any possibility that PAT will scuff your nice new paintwork.

When you consider what we might have had coming our way, we've got away very lightly so the next generation of custom builders can breathe a collective sigh of relief.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Simon Letts of Motorcycle Storehouse for having the presence of mind to arrange the seminar in the first place, and to Simon Griffiths of VOSA for taking the time to check that this article correctly represents the MSVA test and the presentation that he, Meg Price and Chris Corker gave at the beginning of December 2003, and further qualifying elements that I hadn't picked up on.

Words & Pic: ANDY HORNSBY

If you need any further information relating to the MSVA, or an application form which fills in a lot of the holes that I've left, check out www.vosa.gov.uk

UK SVA Contact Details

If you need detailed technical advice on these regulations you can call 02380 335372 and ask for the motorcycle specialist. One is named Chris Corker and there are others available to take your enquiry.

Motorcycle Single Vehicle I section Manual

To obtain a copy of this manual(It is strongly recommended you get a copy before you start building) you can write to:

VOSA
PO Box 12
Swansea
SA1 1BP

Or call 0870 6060 440 and specify you want the motorcycle manual(there is also one for cars)
They will accept payment by credit card

Periodically updates will be issued which they will charge you for. It is advisable to get the updates as any change in regulations might have an effect on how you build your bike and the parts you are about to purchase or have already purchased.

These regulations only apply to the United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Please ask us if you need any help or advice