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Managing the year ahead

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Andrew Morris, Founder, Icon Motorcycles



Andrew Morris founded Icon Motorcycles, makers of the Icon Sheene, billed as the world's first ultrabike. A tribute to racing legend Barry Sheene, it's the most powerful and most expensive production bike in the world. Morris has been a member of the IoD since January 2010

How did the Icon Sheene project come about?

I run a number of successful shipping companies and one of them was shipping the boats for the rowing race that James Cracknell and Ben Fogle did in 2005. When someone didn't pay for one of the boats, I decided to take their place. It was while rowing across the Atlantic that the idea for a new sort of motorcycle formed. I've always had a passion for motorbikes and Barry Sheene was a hero when I was younger. The connection between this, the ultimate bike, and Sheene was obvious.

Why launch such a high-end, expensive luxury product in the middle of a recession?

Having had the idea in 2005 it took an age for it to come to life. We weren't in the age of austerity then. So by the time we got to launch the economy was in a different place. But this isn't a profit-making venture. It's about doing something unique as a tribute to Barry. The reason the bike is priced at £107,000 is because it costs almost that much to make.

What lessons can directors take from Sheene's approach to life?

Although he only died in 2003, Barry was really from a different era. It was a carefree age and he is stuck in the popular memory as someone whose can-do attitude seemed to defy logic. He suffered so many injuries and broken bones but always seemed to be smiling. He was charismatic and carefree. He taught us that you don't have to conform. He let freedom, spirit and imagination come to the fore and those are good qualities for anyone running a business. He followed his own path and was revered for it.

Why did you decide to build the motorbikes in the UK?

This sort of low-volume, hand-built luxury is something the UK is still good at. But this product has the involvement of a lot of people who were close to Barry during his life, including his family and team manager and people like Steve Parrish who rode with Barry and were his friends. There was no way it could have happened anywhere else. But we also have a fabulous depth of heritage and expertise in motorsport in this country. The whole of that F1-inspired hub around Silverstone and Northampton is a real powerhouse in the sector.

Why have you limited production to just 52 bikes?

For symbolic and practical reasons. Barry was 52 when he died, so there's one for every year of his life. But the amount of work involved in building each bike – all of which will be bespoke and made to fit the buyer – means it has to be limited.

Who do you expect to buy these bikes?

I hope that some end up owned by people who really loved Barry and want to own a part of his legacy. But they are practical bikes, the first motorbike with a turbo charger that works. It may have 250bhp, but it's as at home driving up the King's Road as it is going around a track.

Which aspects of your IoD membership do you find most useful?

Director magazine provides a useful update and is an interesting read without being too heavy, and the Pall Mall facilities are amazing. Next year we might also make use of the hot-desking facility.

IoD News

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