

THE HORN SECTION

Wolo Full Blast / Bad Boy / Big Bad Max
www.valkmotive.com

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that our fellow road users have never been more distracted by their gadgets or lulled into a false sense of security by technology that will save their life, but will do damn-all to preserve ours.

There's even stronger evidence that an audible warning device is a good way to make sure they are paying attention, and, in the absence of loud pipes, the more audible the better.

It needs to encourage headphone-wearing pedestrians to step back onto the pavement, car drivers to hurriedly drop their phones and tired ones to wake up, and with the best will in the world, some oem horns won't do that.

Why? Because they are typically single note horns, and even if they've got a trumpet to amplify the sound they produce, it will be a single horn tuned to a specific note, so it will cut through some noises but not all. Also, its volume level will be constrained by Constructions and Use regulations which require that a horn is 'not strident'. To save you remembering the precise definition that means not loud or harsh, which might explain why some could be described as simpering. These aren't.

There are two basic types, electric and air, and we'll start with the simplest.

The majority of standard horns are electric because they're simple, cheap and tick the right box on the type approval form, but they can be tinny or they

can bellow. Unless there are two of them, however, they will never realise their true potential, which is to up the ante from "Excuse me, but I was here first" to "GET OUT OF THE WAY". If you ever doubted that noise plus noise equals a louder noise – I confess I thought the louder noise would drown out the quieter one until I was told to think of them as waves – try listening to both horns in the Full Blast range individually and then together: significantly louder and much more penetrating. These mirrored horns are also pretty conventional looking – the sort of thing you'd expect to find under the bonnet of a sixties Jag – so won't look out of place if you've got the space to mount them: each is about the size of a Harley cowbell.

And then you've got air. Not "La

Cucaracha" or "Dixie" in this case – although they

are available – but a compressor blowing air at speed through a diaphragm and trumpet. Nothing new there either: Amanda is running the twin FIAMM air horns from my brother's Triumph 2000 that have been cluttering up various workshop drawers for at least thirty-five years – never let it be said that Amanda isn't strident – but compressors have come a long way, and trumpets can be twisted and wrapped into very compact shapes.

You can hear Amanda's compressor winding itself up before giving voice, but these modern devices give an instant response and clear, crisp tones.

You need to be aware that the wiring of an air horn is more complicated than an electric horn, because the electrical load of the compressor is much more than will have been accounted for in the original harness and switch, or any fuse associated with it. Instead of the horn push completing the horn circuit, it triggers a fused solenoid – which is supplied – that draws power straight from the battery to drive the compressor.

Wolo's compressors feature copper windings to minimise the current demand, are totally maintenance free – running on self-lubricating brass bearings – and have been designed to be watertight to survive wet conditions.

The Bad Boy is a compact, one piece design comprising two trumpets and the compressor in a single body. The two horn exits are clear enough – different lengths and diameters generating different notes which combine to produce 118db of strident – and tracking them back reveals the twin power chambers which aren't obvious unless you're looking for them. The Bad Boy comes in black or chrome finishes – the chrome version getting an extra cap on top of the compressor – but it isn't what you'd call classically attractive in a Harley-Davidson context, but could be tucked away on a touring model very easily.

And then there's the Big Bad Max. A classic nautilus shell trumpet with a gaping maw to let the Jericho-crumbling 123.5db out.

Wolo say it used to require a 50cm trumpet to get the volume and tone of this truck horn soundalike, and while it's only one tone – a deep resonating 320hz PAAARP – it is loud enough to get its point across. You might get a few startled rabbit impressions as people look for a lorry – an experience that will be familiar to Buell owners – but they'll have instinctively have got out of the way first. It isn't a lot bigger than the Bad Boy, but is a more conventional, better looking piece of kit that you could make a feature of, on the right bike, or in your Dodge RAM or Harley special edition F150.

I've posted a quick track that shows how they compare to the Shovel and the Vegas' stock offering, as well as each other – scan the QR code or go to <http://youtu.be/Pv-tn60CebU> – and if you're looking for something simpler, you can always check out the other options on Valkmotive's site. /Andy



FRANCE IN AMERICA

A 21,000 mile USA discovery on my Harley-Davidson

Gary France

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Hardback: £49.50 UK / \$79.50 RoW

Many people reading this will have it in their head to make that epic road trip across America; to see the wonders of that vast country first hand, and from the saddle of a motorcycle: Gary France did, and he did it in style. He took early retirement from the business he'd helped build up, and set about making up for many years watching his contemporaries doing what they pleased while he threw himself into a career to support first his mother and then his own family.

And not content with living off his memories, supported by a thousand photographs, he then published a 12"x12" coffee table book of the journey that runs to more than 400 pages.

It's very much a personal journey that takes America at face value – as seen through the eyes of an outsider – which is supported by a wealth of beautifully reproduced images that he modestly passes off as some

reasonably good shots and others that are no more than snaps, and it makes for a book that can't help but inspire others to follow in his wheeltracks.

Averaging over a thousand miles a week over the course of twenty weeks, there's no massive sense of urgency about his journey which he records in a very matter of fact way, in clear English with a good use of language without being showy – presumably calling upon the blog he kept throughout to fill in the gaps in his memory – and offering snippets of historical background where appropriate without turning it into a history book.

It's a disarmingly simple travelogue, and you come away feeling as though you rode with him, which is helped by a conscious decision to anchor the many pictures in the corresponding text, removing the need for captioning which could otherwise have broken the flow of the narrative. And it's a relentless narrative – which is only fitting in terms of the scale of his undertaking – but is well-paced.

It doesn't just allow, but positively encourages you to dip in and out, state-by-state, sharing his regret that he didn't have chance to spend as much time as he would have liked, and ultimately concluding that there could easily be another two or three books on this scale followed by a series covering each state.

Add to all that a wealth of video footage, referenced in the relevant sections, and you haven't so much got a book as a franchise ... and a permanent resident on your coffee table.

/ Andy