



**By Liam Marsden**  
WEBPRODUCER

**T**he needle on the minicyle speedo is stuck firmly at 15kmh. It's been there for at least 15 minutes as I ascend this steep switch-back in the Swiss Alps near Lugano. It's not frustrating, it's hilarious. Although it might be hilarious because I've been inhaling thick two-stroke fumes all day. Even if I pedal furiously - my legs a blur like a cartoon - the needle doesn't budge. *Continued over*

# MOPED MADNESS

Need an antidote for the speed and seriousness of modern life? Try a weekend on the utterly bonkers Red Bull Alpenbrevet rally in Switzerland

PHOTOS: JAMES ARCHIBALD AND RED BULL



Those MotoGP boys have got something to learn from our start



The battle for the lead took forever



Liam's not keen on Andy's sausage



Fancy dress policeman pulls us over for some fancy dress speeding tickets



**'I can't remember the last time I laughed so much on two wheels'**

Dani Pedrosa's training programme revealed: Hiding in plain sight behind a pair of mirrored shades



Liam takes the inside line at frightening speed, superbmoto-style, passing Andy

Yes, pedal. This is the sixth Red Bull Alpenbrevet, a Swiss road rally specifically for mopeds. The 80-mile course winds through the Swiss and Italian Alps, up mountains that take longer to ascend than it takes to cook a Sunday dinner, down the other side and around picture-perfect Alpine lakes. Somehow, despite my laughable ascent speed, I've managed to pull away completely from Andy, who's on an identical Tomos Classic XL 45 (available in the UK, if you'd like one for the commute) and photographer James, who is on the 'sport' model. Fully resigned to my 15kmh ceiling, I stop pedalling and just sit there, throttle pinned, in a half-arsed racing crouch, waiting for the gradient to flatten out just a little. Suddenly I'm shunted forward, and the needle rises a little closer to the big 20. A fellow

Alpenbrevet rider has taken pity and given me a shove with his right boot up the hill. We continue up the hill together for a little while as comrades, before he gets bored with the slow pace and clears off. I don't blame him. If the uphill marathons are slow to the point of hysterical insanity, the downhill is the opposite. Pulling out of a sun-baked layby somewhere in Italy with a fistful of throttle it quickly becomes a game of who dares to not let go. There are no sharp bends to start with, and the speed rises all the way to a meteoric 45kmh – almost 30mph! At these speeds the little Tomos mopeds vibrate like bumblebees – every part threatening to shake free of its mooring. But we don't shut off. You never shut off. Approaching the first hairpin is a tense affair as we only have drum

brakes to slow our, by now frantic, progress. We peel in with the inside pedal lifted to stop premature scrapes and inside feet out superbmoto-style as the centrestands gouge the road. A couple of corners down the mountain some Italians have stopped for a break and give out a big cheer as we roll round the corner, scraping stands making a racket that echoes through the valley. Rounding the last corner before entering a sleepy, picturesque village, Andy forgets to lift his inside pedal. It touches down, throws in the towel and bounces up the road. Later in the day my left pedal also ejects itself, although I'm stood up pedalling at the time, and the sudden imbalance in the loss of a pedal on the downstroke sees me veer across the road towards a wall. Luckily I manage to reattach mine.

Unfortunately the weather decides to shake things up a bit as the heavens open and rain drops from the sky, stinging our faces, even at 35kmh. In true Brits aboard fashion we haven't packed any waterproofs. Andy takes the lead and opts to dive into a coffee shop to warm up and dry off. If this was a normal rally, such weak-willed behaviour would wreck any chances of victory, but the Alpenbrevet is far from what anyone would call normal. The winner is the rider who finishes closest to the average time of all competitors – there are no prizes for getting back first – a system in-keeping with the laid-back nature of the entire event. Our Tomos peds are the most standard of the 1200 taking part. There's a moped dressed up as a Red Bull can, one with a sidecar, an entire crew of cafe

racer mopeds complete with white wall tyres and peanut tanks. There are some seriously fast machines, too. Several riders breeze past us on the uphill with ease. They even have to shut off when they get to the corners. Ten hours and 80 miles of inhaled two-stroke fumes later, we return the cheap and cheerful mopeds back to the rental tent in the lakeside city of Lugano, where this mammoth journey began what seems an age ago. Centrestands and pedals are scraped, numberplates bent, and one, of course, has only a single pedal. We've been rained on, endured the world's longest and slowest ascents and been overtaken by a mountain biker. And you know what? I can't remember the last time I laughed so much on two wheels (we'll stop short of calling it a motorcycle). **MCN**

**THE MAN BEHIND THE MADNESS**

Daniel Geissmann is the 'brains' behind the Red Bull Alpenbrevet, but why bother organising a rally for machinery that struggles to top 15mph uphill? "This is the sixth event. When we started we had 800 people enter but this year we had 1200. It's all because people love these little bikes. There are events for everyone in Switzerland – except for these guys, so having their own thing is a big deal. There's a fantastic atmosphere and there's a real sense of togetherness. "A lot of rallies revolve around expensive vehicles, but anyone can buy a moped and enjoy this. We'll be upping the numbers again next year. It will only cost around £20 to enter and all you need to bring is a moped (with pedals)."



Open to all ages, and states of sanity



Moped 'man-turbo' kicks in on the hills



Slight cosmetic modifications, not thought to enhance moped performance



'Morning. Lovely day for a ride,' said the caveman wearing his dinner as a helmet

**TECH SPEC**

**TOMOS CLASSIC XL 45, £1395**  
 Engine: 49cc, air-cooled, two-stroke, chain-drive, automatic, two gears  
 Suspension: hydraulic fork (f) twin shocks (r)  
 Brakes: 105mm drums front and rear  
 Weight: 57kg  
 Fuel capacity: 4 litres  
 Seat height: 780mm  
 Claimed mpg: 110  
 Contact: tomosgb.com



**YEAR-END BURNOUT**  
 LIMITED OFFER  
 MOVE FAST  
 DO IT NOW!

ALL 2015 CRUISERS, BAGGERS AND TOURERS\* - WHILE STOCKS LAST!

**5 YEARS FREE SERVICING\***  
 \*Up to a value of £750

**5 YEAR WARRANTY\***

**LOW RATE FINANCE\***

**RIDE ONE AND YOU'LL OWN ONE.**

**5 YEAR WARRANTY NOW THAT'S PERFORMANCE!**



**VICTORY MOTORCYCLES.CO.UK**  
 Promotional 5 year warranty is valid for all 2014 & 2015 Victory\* motorcycles sold in Europe. Specific conditions apply. Please see your dealer for details.  
 \*Terms and conditions apply, while stocks last. Until Dec 31st 2015