

# Goodyear's plans for Avon tyres

We've been big fans of Avon tyres over the years here at MSL. Part of that was down to the sheer heritage of this classic British brand, but the Melksham-based firm also made some really decent rubber down the years. Even up against the very best from giant global firms like Pirelli-Metzeler, Bridgestone and Michelin, Avon sold some excellent fitments, particularly in niche areas like classic track tyres and cruiser rubber. And its mainstream sport-touring tyres always did well in wet weather tests (appropriately enough for a firm from the south-west of England).

It's fair to say that the firm hasn't had the best of times in recent years though. It was taken over by the American Cooper Tires firm back in 1997, but the British factory was long

in need of some serious investment to keep up with more advanced manufacturing plants. Back in 2021, Cooper was itself taken over by another American multinational, this time the enormous Goodyear tyre maker, and it was announced in November 2022 that the historic Avon production facility in Melksham would be closing.

We've spoken to Dave Plummer, UK and Ireland sales manager for Goodyear/Dunlop, to find out what the future holds for the Avon brand – and the news is good if you're a fan. The new owners are aiming to maintain Avon as a separate brand, with the best of its existing fitments being produced at the Dunlop factory in the South of France. "The range has been streamlined for

2023," said Plummer. And some of the older designs, such as the 3D-XM Storm, have been discontinued to help with production efficiency.

"Avon production will move to Montlucon in France next year, which is the plant that produces premium Dunlop motorcycle tyres as well as motorsport motorcycle tyres including the Moto2 slicks. Both the Avon and Dunlop brands are renowned for technology that delivers performance improvements with each new generation, whether on-road, off-road or on track. This philosophy will remain and will be key to the future ranges from both brands."

And, from the sound of it, Avon will slot in just below Dunlop in the range, with slightly lower pricing, giving a

great value option for riders. "Avon will always have a different set of performance vs cost criteria compared to Dunlop," said Plummer. "The two brands sit in different positions in the market and development will reflect this."

## The new Avon bike tyre fitment range

**Hypersport:** 3D Supersport  
**Sport touring radial:** Spirit ST  
**Sport touring bias belt:** Roadrider MKII / Streetrunner  
**Custom:** Cobra Chrome  
**Trail/adventure:** Trailrider / Trekridger  
**Classic:** Safety Mileage MKII / Speedmaster MKII  
**Scooter:** Viper Stryke

## Yamaha self-driving bike prototype revealed

Rather like nuclear fusion, self-driving cars have been '10-15 years away' for a while now. But what about self-riding bikes? We've seen a few prototypes from BMW, Honda and Yamaha in recent times, and some of them look pretty slick.

Of course, the nature of a motorcycle means that there's no point in a true 'self-riding' bike. Rather, these projects are aimed at gathering information on how the next level of safety interventions might work – using sensors, algorithms and actuators so that a bike can 'take over' control in the event of an accident, helping the rider avoid a serious spill or collision. Ultimately, when most other vehicles on the road become autonomous, these systems will also help two-wheelers integrate into the so-called 'smart highways' of the future (also 10-15 years away...).

Some of the systems, like this Yamaha Advanced Motorcycle Stabilization Assist System (AMSAS), are aimed at improving slow-speed stability. This test YZF-R25 has a drive system on the front wheel and a steering actuator, which can drive the bike at walking pace without a rider. It's not likely to become part of a production system any time soon, but the feedback from the research will help Yamaha with the next generation of road bike safety systems. Having an 'ACS' anti-crash system as well as the usual ABS and traction control rider aids? Seems like the future to us.



## Bike training firm backs mental health first aid

The main aim of Phoenix Motorcycle Training is getting British bikers through their tests and making them better riders – it's the biggest motorcycle training provider in the UK. But the firm is also looking to save lives in another vital way, by providing so-called 'mental health first-aiders' at each of its 22 training sites.

As with 'normal' first aid, mental first aid is aimed at providing initial support in a crisis, while professional health care is sought.

Mark Jaffe, CEO Phoenix Motorcycle Training, said: "As the UK's largest motorcycle training school, we can see the massive benefit to new and current riders of having access to mental health first aiders in all of our locations. As instructors and bikers, we know that riding motorcycles helps promote good mental health, and through this additional training enabling us to do even more, we can make a difference to riders old and new."