



What Really Didn't Work: The SportVue "Heads Up Display"

We spotted this gadget at more than one motorcycle show and when we were at Laguna we ran into a gent flogging the unit to unsuspecting motorcyclists.

The SportVue is a "heads up" display that you attach to your helmet. It's supposed to give you important data in your field of view like speed, tach, gear position and radar. While at Laguna Seca 2005 we were given a unit to test. We've been biting our lips on saying anything about this product because the people who work there are unbelievably nice, but after reading glowing reviews in some print rags we started to gag and wondered just who was on the payroll?

The nail in the coffin for us was when an old riding friend bought one after I warned him not to... He learned an expensive lesson... so to help save members of this site from getting burned in light of the huge marketing campaign SportVue is putting on, here's the skinny...

It takes several hours to graft this unit to your bike. Unlike other units it's not plug and play, so you'll need to splice into a few key wires that drive your ECU. This was our first indication that there was something not quite right with this product. When we asked SportVue why the unit wasn't plug and play, model specific they told us that it would cost "a lot of money" for them to do that. (egad!) After you've finished splicing wires you shouldn't be messing with, they want you to install the speed sensor. This isn't plug and play either. It's a magnet they want you to glue to your rear wheel or rear rotor much like a bicycle speedometer setup. Specifically this little magnet resides in the very small (and on the 10R it is very small... about an 1/8 of an inch) space between the rotor and the swingarm. We thought this was beginning to push the limits of cheesy as, once again the speedo and pretty much everything else on any modern sportbike is driven electronically and digitally.

I got in there and did as they asked, chopping and gluing on my ZX-10R. Then I focused my efforts on trashing my visor on my Arai helmet as per their instructions. With some emery cloth and epoxy supplied in the kit, SportVue has you go to work sanding a spot on your visor to permanently glue their mounting cleat to your helmet. When you're done you end up with the gadget kinda but not sorta blocking your vision. It's bulky and runs off two AAA batteries that last about 6 to 8 hours so you can count on taking lots of spares if you go on a big trip (read = more than a day). SportVue claims it's waterproof, but that simply can't be true because the battery door is held on with a flimsy clip and continuously fell off the unit. It had no gasket or employed any method of keeping water out of the gadget that we could see.

The audio out of your radar detector plugs into the upgraded more expensive version of the SportVue via a cable you'll have to buy from Radio Shack. Once plugged in you need to find that "perfect spot" for the audio level of your radar detector to trigger the word "RADAR" to be displayed by the SportVue.

This was next to useless.



There was no consistency between the 3 detectors (RX65, V1, X50) we tested and the SportVue, or even between each time you plugged the unit in to the radar detector for the volume level to trigger the display. To top it off, during high-speed riding the gadget would start to display "RADAR" all the time, forcing you to twiddle with the detector to reset the audio level. To make matters worse, the SportVue doesn't collect any "rich data" from the detectors; so any and every signal (from the slightest X Band false to a full on laser attack) displayed the same "RADAR" warning on its screen.

Furthermore your audio jack from your detector is now occupied by the cord connecting it to the SportVue. This means that you couldn't listen to the audio signal from your detector in your helmet anymore... Well, I guess you could buy a splitter from the same Radio Shack and wrap your whole body in wires. The SportVue was totally useless for radar alerts.

Utterly and totally.

You'd buy yourself a ticket counting on this thing, guaranteed.

When we brought this to SportVue's attention they told us that the RADAR display wasn't meant to be your primary indicator of radar and that they had in fact experienced some audio recognition problems, but at the time had only really tested it with the V1.

Getting the SportVue to run right is a scary task. They want you to (get this, because it's no joke... if you don't believe me you can read the instructions for yourself at the end of this review) put your bike on a track stand and run it through all the gears up to speed so it can calibrate itself. I had to read it not twice, but thrice to make sure I wasn't out of my mind. Scared (and rightfully so) I called up XL and told him what they wanted me to do. He thought I was nuts, and suggested that I at least ratchet the 10R down to the stand so it wouldn't launch itself. So I strapped down my 10R, blocked the front wheel with several bags of concrete and got on board. Wicking it up through the gears I saw 150mph (and I wasn't moving an inch). I couldn't take it anymore and simply couldn't bear to bring the bike to its top speed.

This was wrong on so many levels. My dog was scared and ran away from the garage and back to his house. He couldn't bear to watch either.

Riding with the now calibrated SportVue was equally pointless. Getting used to your "new" field of vision took some eye training, but the display did end up "floating" in the middle of the road. It doesn't do this with any magic, but simply tricks your eye the same way you need to train yourself to look cross-eyed at

those fake 3D blotch pictures that were so cool back in 1988.



Eventually, while on my way to Sportbike West the gadget died. I was running head to head with SilverD on an open stretch.. the speedo clicked past 130 kmh ... 140 kmh.. 140 kmh... 140 kmh... and there it stuck... 140kmh. After about 15 minutes of it displaying 140 kmh it randomly reset itself, and then promptly did it again in about an hour. I changed the batteries... no luck. That night I checked all the connections... it was all fine... still more batteries and still the gadget would work for a while and die. The SportVue lasted all of 3500 miles. A total waste of time, a trashed visor and a hacked up wiring harness was my reward.

I boxed it up and punted it back to them with a polite "thanks but no thanks" letter. Before I sent it away freek begged and pleaded to try it. Since I'm his friend, I didn't cave. That's what friends are for! I couldn't stand by and let him torture himself.

Everyone who saw the SportVue agreed it was a great "concept" but the execution in it's current state is atrocious. We sent them a long list of problems we encountered with the product, and asked if they perhaps had a revised or newer version we could try that didn't suck so much. According to SportVue what we saw was what we got. Pretty sad considering they are such nice people. (Seriously). We hate to have to write this, but members need to know, so sorry SportVue. Until SportVue can come up with a far better version this gadget gets a giant two thumbs down.

If there ever was an example of a way for you to gauge whether or not a rag has been paid off somehow or that they simply don't care to check on the reviews that have been submitted to them, just look for a glowing review of the SportVue. It's today's weathervane for honesty in the industry.

The SportVue heads up display: "N.P.S.P."

"Nice People Shitty Product".

The SportVue MC2 retails for \$349.00 and if you don't believe us you can click here to order one and try it for yourself.

Verbatim (without permission) from the Installation Guide for the SportVue Heads Up Display

Gear Ratios

Caution: Training the MSU for gear position is best done on a rear wheel pit stand or center stand, outside, and with the help of a friend.

1. Place your motorcycle on a flat, smooth surface on a secure rear or center stand with no obstructions in front of you.
2. Turn the motorcycle ignition to the **On** position.
3. Place the helmet on your head so that you can see the display, and turn the HMD Unit on. Confirm the display shows "**0**" and "**N**." Spin the rear wheel (or sensored wheel) by hand a few revolutions until you confirm "**SPEED**" in the display.
4. Make sure the motorcycle's neutral indicator shows **N** and start the engine. Rev the engine a few times to confirm RPM's in the bar graph. Shut the motorcycle engine **Off**. If no RPM, check your connections.
5. You will see both **SPEED** and **RPM** in the display and you are now ready to begin to **LEARN** the gears.
6. With the motorcycle ignition in the '**Off**' position, push and hold the **B** button on the MSU while turning the ignition to the '**On**' position. After a brief moment, release the **B** button.

IMPORTANT- DO NOT START THE MOTORCYCLE

7. The display will show the word '**SETUP**,' then it will show the word '**GEAR**' (see figure 28.)
8. Push the **B** button again. The display will show '**LEARN**' (see figure 29.)
Push **B** again, and the number 1 will begin to flash on the right side of the display. The MSU is now ready to learn your motorcycle's gear ratios, but will not start the learning program until it detects wheel movement.
9. Make sure the motorcycle's neutral indicator shows **N**, and **start your motorcycle**.

IMPORTANT: If the MSU loses power when you start the motorcycle, press and hold the B button during startup. Continue from step 7.

10. The gear indicator should be flashing a "**1**" on the right side of the display. Pull in the clutch and put your motorcycle in first gear. Let the clutch out slowly and increase the RPM. You will then see the speed indicator increase.

IMPORTANT: The RPM bar graph will not be visible.

IMPORTANT: The motorcycle should be moderately accelerating from 30%-50% of the maximum RPM during the gear learning program. If the motorcycle is coasting or decelerating when sampling occurs, inaccuracy in the gear indication can occur. If the gear learning does not seem correct, repeat steps 6-14.

11. The gear indicator will **flash** and then SportVue will begin data sampling to learn this gear.
12. When SportVue has finished learning this gear, the display will indicate the next gear.
13. Now shift up to the next gear. The gear indicator will be flashing "**2**."
14. This will continue through **6** gears. If your motorcycle only has **5** gears, simply leave it in top gear when you are asked to switch to sixth gear. After a few seconds, it will show the word '**DONE**.'