

## *THE COOLEST BIKE YOU CAN'T BUY....*

**World Exclusive: 2007 Kawasaki Versys First Ride**

immediately reminded me of the old Honda Transalp, blended some sort of KTM.

The Versys is based on Kawasaki's successful 650 Ninja platform, and retains the torquey 649cc parallel twin engine and super cool looking bellypan exhaust. According to KHI the Versys engine offers a lower



How come all the really cool stuff doesn't make it's way Stateside? Are they trying to protect us from ourselves? It happens every model year; something really cool crops up, but for some reason it's only available in Europe. What's even more bizarre is that every now and then you see some of these European gems show up right on your doorstep in the frozen reaches of Northern Canuckistan.

Now, I don't know why the Canookians get preferential treatment for some of these unique one-off models, but they do. This year is no exception with the release of the 2007 Kawasaki Versys. Bikeland had the chance to ride Kawasaki's latest (and probably one of their coolest) offerings at our secret Northern testing facility courtesy Burnaby Kawasaki.

The Versys is a unique looking machine; part dual sport, part motard, part UJM, the styling of the Versys

compression ratio of 10.6:1 vs. the 650 Ninja's 11.3:1 ratio. Unlike the 650 Ninja, the Versys sports 41mm inverted front forks that are adjustable for rebound and preload. The horizontally mounted rear shock offers 13-way adjustable rebound damping and is 7-way adjustable for preload. The digital speedometer and odometer are easy to read and displayed in metric units for our test. Switching the Versys to read in imperial units is only a few button pushes away,





making this bike a shoe-in for a Southerly "migration" to warmer climates and better roads.

The Versys has a seat height of about 33", a couple of inches higher than the 650 Ninja and according to KHI weighs in at 2 lbs less dry than it's 650 Ninja counterpart. Other than that, the wheelbase, rake and trail appear to be identical to the 650 Ninja spare the raised handlebars that make the bike quicker to turn in. Whoever designed the "organic" handlebar riser for this bike must have just come from watching Alien vs. Predator.

It's styling cues like this where (in my opinion) Kawasaki is often trying a little too hard. Looking the bike over you realize that the frame is not a creation of aluminum casting, but instead a steel fabrication hidden with specifically placed plastic bits to mask the spars. Are they embarrassed about using a steel frame? Why should they be?

As a personal criticism I find it odd that one of the things that continues to separate the Japanese OEM's products from those of their luscious Italian and European counterparts (read Ducati, Aprilia etc) is that the non-Japanese OEM's "own" their work. For example, Ducati takes pride in featuring a tubular steel frame, not hiding it. Kawasaki, in their evolution in the marketplace stands to break free from the rest of the Big Four if only they could use their innovative designs as *features* and improve on the build quality instead of hiding welds and non-machined bits with useless pieces of extra plastic bodywork.

With that bit of personal opinion aside, the Versys is super cool. The engine offered plenty of torque low down and carried the front wheel off the ground with the slightest twist of throttle. Whereas the 650 Ninja felt and looked more like an everyday commuter or a reborn UJM, the Versys sports more street cred.

The nuts and bolts are this: the Versys is a refitted, kitted 650 Ninja with way better handling, suspension and looks. The Versys has all the cool that the 650 Ninja lacks, and then some. It's perfect as a commuter but has an extra motardish urban "edge" that (when put side by each) makes the 650 Ninja look like "your parent's bike".

Why you can't buy this cooler, improved version of an already great bike is beyond me.



The Versys is offered in two colors; Ebony (that's "black" in marketing speak) and Candy Burnt Orange (that's "orange") and has an MSRP of aboooo \$8999 Canadian money units (\$8K or so in Greenbacks). If you're interested in securing one of these gems, drop Brian at Burnaby Kawasaki a line at 604 525 9393. Like all great motorcycle stores, they're closed Sunday and Monday.

### 2007 Kawasaki Versys

Model Year: 2007

Engine type: Liquid-cooled, 4-stroke Parallel Twin

Displacement: 649 cm<sup>3</sup>

Bore x stroke: 83 x 60 mm

Compression ratio: 10.6:1

Valve/Induction system: DOHC, 8 valves

Maximum power: 47 kW {64 PS} / 8,000 rpm

Maximum torque: 61 N·m {6.2 kgf·m} / 6,800 rpm

Fuel supply/Carburetor: Fuel injection: ø38 mm x 2 (Keihin)

Ignition: Digital

Starting: Electric

Transmission: 6-speed, return

Frame type: Diamond, high-tensile steel

Rake/Trail: 25°/108 mm

Suspension, front: 41 mm inverted telescopic fork with stepless (right-side) adjustable rebound damping and adjustable preload

Suspension, rear: Offset laydown single-shock with 13-way adjustable rebound damping and 7-way adjustable preload

Wheel travel, front: 150 mm

Wheel travel, rear: 145 mm

Tire, front: 120/70ZR17M/C (58W)

Tire, rear: 160/60ZR17M/C (69W)

Brakes, front: Dual semi-floating 300 mm petal discs

Brakes, rear: Single 220 mm petal disc

Steering angle: left / right 35° / 35°

Dimensions (L x W x H): 2,125 mm x 840 mm x 1,315 mm

Wheelbase: 1,415 mm

Seat height: 33"

Fuel capacity: 19 liters

Dry weight: 181 kg

Complies to EU emission limit EURO 3



