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Mid-life crisis on a Multistrada

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WE say life, for a man, begins at 40. It's also a number associated with a man's mid-life crisis. A sage said a man's life does not start until he has dealt with his mid-life crisis. That would be one which can take many forms, which are not necessarily backed by substance.

There are men who go religious and leave behind their wayward life, some opt for yoga, others retain the coke and quit the JD. Some change jobs for new careers, some switch addresses; others get themselves a pick-up truck and insist they should go for the Linkin Park concert. More typical are those who crave for Harley, and Hurleys.

In my case, the Ducati Multistrada was my excuse (or was it the reason) for a mid-life crisis - the gun metal grey, not the too-flashy Ducati red.

Dug deep into all pockets and emptied the ever-modest content of a journalist's savings book for a down-payment for one of those two hot wheels of the Multistrada (which means, literally, "various roads").

There was a moment of hesitation, a moment when I thought I was being hasty or foolish, or both, that I had not ridden in 15 years and needn't start again, but that moment was all too brief.

Justin Loong, the ever-polite young sales master for the Ducati's local distributors, said only five units of the Ducati Multistrada have arrived from Italy.

"Abang, if you don't put some money as a booking fee, someone else will, I guarantee," he said. So I did. Was it because he called me "abang" instead of "pak cik"?

That set things in motion. The people at AmFinance not only made dreams achievable, they give you the impression that they enjoy doing it.

I was thinking, as I signed pages and pages of those loan papers in front of Oon and Azman, that while the foreign banks may have bigger bucks, service is something they would have to match if they want to pose a serious threat to our local banks come Afta.

In any case, at the same time someone other than my editors is reading this article, I would probably be high up in the mountain passes of Bukit Tinggi or Awana, enjoying a great Sunday burning rubber on asphalt.

Later, after getting my full licence, the Strada and I shall go farther, to Tasik Banding, Bukit Putus, Kota Tinggi and other bikers' routes. See the sights, enjoy the ride.

The Multistrada also means I am now one of some 6 million Malaysians who own motorcycles for one reason or another. The majority of these people - those with bikes and scooters smaller than 150cc - recently had an unexpected good news when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced they no longer have to pay road tax. It was a big gesture aimed at the small man, I thought.

My sister and brother-in-law, my two brothers, my pak langs and mak ciks back in the kampong will benefit from this. The whiners are never satisfied, of course. One cabbie scoffed at the road tax present, saying that he has to spend about RM50 more a month on cigarettes and beer.

I do not feel for the likes of him.

But I do feel we can do a little bit more to promote the use of bikes in the country, especially among the young and the city folk. Perhaps we should organise a biking week, or hold a two-wheeled tourism campaign, or a scooter carnival for the young (and the young at heart dealing with their mid-life crisis).

