

# 2003-'05

## BUELL XB12R/S

- ✓ Superb handling and ride quality
- ✗ Cramped, not as lairy



THE half-faired, slicker XBR is less streetfighter-styled, and designed to attract sports bike riders

### MODEL GUIDE

#### 1999

Lightning X1 launched - 1203cc V-twin motor, tubular steel frame and cast aluminium tail section, Showa suspension. Colours: Alloy, yellow, black or red. The M2 Cyclone is a less extreme version of the X1, with proper pillion accommodation and less radical styling.

#### 2000

Updated brakes on X1, minor engine mods on both bikes.

#### 2002

New colours. X1: Black, white, yellow. M2: Blue, black.

#### 2003

XB12R Firebolt and XB12S Lightning launched. All-new aluminium beam frame and bodywork. Six-spoke wheels and 41mm USD Showa forks. Colours: black or red for both models. Firebolt is 'sports' version, with small fairing. Lightning is more stripped-down streetfighter version.

### AN EXPERT SAYS:

**John Towns, assistant service manager, Warrs, Kings Road, London**

"Check to see if recalls have been carried out on early models, like the rear shock. There are no real problems with the XBs, but look for frame damage and dents to the header pipes, both of which are expensive to repair or replace."

- See [www.ukbeg.com](http://www.ukbeg.com) for details of recalls

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## ONE DAY WITH...

### 2006 TRIUMPH TIGER

AS a super-smooth tourer, nimble town bike, or back-road thrasher, the 2006 Tiger is great value for money



## Tweaks make the Tiger ferocious competition

### IT DOESN'T LOOK ANY DIFFERENT!

AS updates go, the 2006 Triumph Tiger is as subtle as you get - re-routed coolant hoses and wiring, and panniers, centrestand and heated grips as standard.

Mechanically, you get an improved gearchange, transmission backlash eliminator and the 1050 engine cases used in the firm's all-new Speed Triple and Sprint ST.

The Tiger has been Triumph's third best-selling model over the last year, but for all its off-road looks, it's simply what Triumph calls 'enduro-styled.'

### SO, IS IT ANY GOOD?

THE long-travel suspension offers road manners which put the BMW R1200GS to shame, while the Tiger is easily a match for most bikes on the twisties, only losing out under braking.

The high riding position is ideal for town use, low speed steering and balance are excellent, while the small fairing takes the force out of the windblast at speed.

The wind noise is severe, though, and some taller riders experience a buzzing turbulence on their helmets.

This aside, the Tiger is outstandingly comfortable - more so than most purpose-built touring bikes - and the 24-litre tank is enough for a 250-mile range.

### ARE THE CHANGES THAT NOTICEABLE?

THE three-cylinder engine lends the bike its unique character, along with plenty of torque, although it does feel as if a bit more mid-range grunt might help.

The backlash eliminator has noticeably reduced vibration (which was never



NEW engine cases, panniers, heated grips... the list goes on

bad anyway), giving the motor a creamier feel. And it's quieter at idle, too.

The gearchange isn't bad - if still slightly notchy - but although the changes are welcome, you wonder why Triumph bothered. The most likely reason is pragmatism: the 2005 model sold faster than expected, using parts stock sooner than planned, so the changes are a consequence of using the crankcases from the 1050cc engine from the Sprint ST and Speed Triple. This saves producing a new batch of older-type crankcases.

A more heavily revised 2007 Tiger is likely to appear in late 2006, probably with the 1050cc engine.

### IT CAN'T ALL BE GOOD...

WHERE it shows its age is in the styling. Its curves go nowhere and it wears a sad, puzzled expression that's a generation behind KTM's and BMW's modern looks.

### IN SHORT, WHY SHOULD I BUY ONE?

YOU get amazing value for money, a great reason to buy

now rather than hang on for the new model (Triumph hold their value particularly well anyway). Compare the Tiger's £6999 on the road price with the 1200GS's £8715 - and the German bike's panniers and heated grips will cost another £800.

So, small but welcome improvements, but the Tiger was holding its own anyway.

In the final analysis, we'd rate the 1200GS higher for its style, braking and smattering of off-road ability, whether you use it or not. Otherwise, the Tiger's comfort and value for money truly kick the KTM Adventure into third place...

### TRIUMPH TIGER

★★★★☆

COST: £6999  
POWER: 104bhp  
TORQUE: 67ftlb  
WEIGHT (claimed): 215kg

Available: Now  
Chassis: Blue, silver, black  
New for 2005: Revised gearbox and other engine modifications, panniers, heated grips and centrestand now standard  
Info: Triumph, 01455-251700 or [www.triumph.co.uk](http://www.triumph.co.uk)

### TECHNICAL SPEC

Engine: Liquid-cooled 955cc 12v four-stroke triple  
Chassis: Tubular steel frame, 43mm forks. Single rear shock, adjustable for preload and rebound damping. 2 x 310mm front discs with twin-piston callipers. 285mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres 110/80 x 19 front, 150/70 x 17 rear.



### MCN SAYS:

- ✓ Excellent road manners, practicality
- ✓ Unique character, value for money
- ✗ Aged styling, turbulence at speed
- ✗ Transmission and drive now lacking

# R/S

### OWNING

Adam: "I had an XB9, but the engine grenaded after 3000 miles, so I got a deal on an XB12, which has been reliable. A problem with the top eye on the original M2's rear shock should have been sorted by now. Parts aren't particularly pricey, but trying to get hold of them isn't easy, and the dealer service is abysmal. I only go to them for warranty work."

Maz: "The 2001 X1 tubular frame bike is the best in terms of owning and maintaining. They'd ironed out all the nigging problems and you can tell it was built with the might of Harley-Davidson dollars behind it. The XBs are pretty much bulletproof and are very competent, although aftermarket exhausts need beefing up to handle all the vibes. The tube-frame bikes are much easier to work on as it's easier to access things like spark plugs and exhausts."

Ben: "The XB has 5000-mile service intervals opposed to 2500 on the M2. In five years with the M2, I suffered a

bottom end gasket failure, ignition unit failure, leaky fork seals, cracked manifold, numerous exhaust mount failures and a duff sidestand switch. And the faults increased with age - which was a factor in changing it. The XB12 has had no breakdowns."

### VERDICT

Adam: "The M2 really is the daddy of streetfighters and once you've got one fertilised properly they're excellent. The XB12 is a tad sanitised but more reliable and easier to get on with."

Maz: "The older bike appeals more to enthusiasts who don't mind doing their own maintenance. The XBs are a bit small, although the ride and handling is better. I'd take a tube frame model every time."

Ben: "Both bikes are a great hoot and I'd recommend them both. After 1500 miles thinking I'd made a mistake on the XB, perseverance is paying off."

- Thanks to the UK Buell Enthusiasts Group for their help: [www.ukbeg.com](http://www.ukbeg.com)

more rider input making them more involving and rewarding to ride. The XBs are brilliantly engineered and have loads of innovative features, but I still prefer the old tube-framers."

Ben: "I enjoyed a test ride on an XB12 Lightning so much that I bought one. The first 5000 miles were an absolute nightmare as the snappy handling I'd enjoyed on the demonstrator was absent from mine. The supplier made no effort to match suspension set-up to my weight and it was down to another dealer to rectify it to make it rideable. I'm 90% happy with the handling, but it meant adjusting it myself - not my forte, but you live and learn. By comparison, the M2 never needed any adjustment."

BUELL'S XB12 has more trick bits than Paul Daniels and the motor is now super reliable



### 1999-2002 BUELL X1 AND M2

COST NEW IN 1999: £7495 X1 (£6495 M2)  
USED PRICES: 1999-2000: £2075-£3495 (£2465-£4125 - M2) 2001-2002: £2650-£4395 (£3160-£5275 - M2)

Insurance group: 15 (of 17)  
Servicing: £250 main, £100 minor

TECHNICAL SPEC  
Engine: 1203cc, 45° V-twin  
Power: 83.7bhp (measured)  
Chassis: Tubular steel  
Weight: 180kg (197kg - M2)  
Top speed: 134mph (130mph - M2)  
MPG/range: 42/175 miles

### 2003-2005 BUELL XB12R/S

COST NEW: £7745  
USED PRICES: 2003-2004: £4900-£2000 2004-2005: £5500-£1600

Insurance group: 15 (of 17)  
Servicing: £240 main, £95 minor

TECHNICAL SPEC  
Engine: 1203cc, 45° V-twin  
Power: 95bhp (measured)  
Chassis: Aluminium beam  
Weight: 179kg  
Top speed: 135mph  
MPG/range: 39/160 miles