



PRO RIDER

I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW...

Words: Mark Jones/Pro Rider

I can see clearly now the rain is gone.
I can see all obstacles in my way.
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind.
It's gonna be a bright (bright) sunny day!



Aotearoa NZ likely didn't feature in Jimmy Cliff's thinking when he penned this familiar tune, but he could well have been singing about our emergence from an all too long winter. Anyhow, just as he says, it is pretty obvious that we, as safe riders, need to be able to see all obstacles as we traverse the fine roads of our land this summer. Achieving this means keeping our eyes in good nick so they will do that job well into our old age with as much efficiency as possible. So let's just consider these vital sense organs helping keep us on the straight and narrow in a vast range of lighting and fast moving conditions.

The eye detects light and sends signals along the optic nerve to the brain. Our peepers are valuable sense organs giving us the ability to see, including differentiating between colours and depth. They are relatively small, but a very complex thing picking up reflected light from objects around us. Focusing is done through a lens, projecting onto a film of nerve fibres (retina) at the back which then shoots impulses off to our brain, converting them into images we recognise from memory. They have a 200-degree viewing angle and can see 10 million colours and shades. One alone would be nifty, but having two enhances depth perception plus the ability to judge distance as we encroach and focus on objects. Clever as. All in all, a neat package that comes in very handy to a bike rider, and one we need to protect. ➤

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The eye comes with its own protective cover – the cornea – but the original design brief didn't include blasting along the highway

at 100km/h with the low-pressure zone generated in front of us dragging in all sorts of crap ranging from big stuff like wasps to smaller granules of pollen, dust or what have you. We need to add to our eye's limited ability to protect itself when installed in the head of a biker.

This may seem really obvious, but a helmet visor actually in the closed position, goggles for trendy Royal Enfield riders, or even just plain old sunnies all work well here. Limiting

riding time with visor popped open or goggles dangling around necks in an ever so cool Steve McQueen way, will protect that cornea. Given the cornea is stuffed full of nerve fibres, we know when we have failed here as even a grain of sand or a tiny insect whacking into our eye will cause a minor injury. These are generally referred to as corneal abrasions and heal up by themselves in 2-3 days but take that extremely irritating feeling as due warning your attempts at eye protection need to be improved. Resist the urge to rub the eye causing concern, as you run the risk of bugging up the cornea even more. Just squirt some sterile water in it from the First Aid Kit you always carry with you on a ride (??!) or failing that, bathe it in some water from the tap in the nearest café / petrol station. Remember – NO RUBBING! If it doesn't get better head off to see your GP.

Like most things in life, prevention is better than cure and if you ride without eye protection, have a good think why that is. Visor steaming up? – get an insert fitted or use one of the many proprietary products out there that create a water vapour resistant film. Goggles hurting your head? Loosen them or get a new

pair, though the option of a full-face helmet with visor you should have had in the first place may work too.

As for sunnies, and this goes for regular specs too, think about what they are made of. Glass should be an obvious no no, unless you want a specialist ophthalmology person plucking shards out of your eyeball after a kamikaze bee has done its thing. Go for polycarbonate and whilst those nice tapering metal arms holding them on your head may look the biz, have a wonder how they might feel skewered into your skull post-crash. Yep, we should be looking at shatterproof plastic of some sort here too. Don't be shy wandering into your local 'I should have gone to...' place or posher optician with your lid and asking for advice and trying on sunnies and specs while actually wearing the helmet.

And just a word about contacts. Hopefully, nobody has the clunky old hard versions anymore – the very flexible daily or short term use ones are the way to go. They may be a pain to put in and take out but won't be punched into your eyeball should your ride come to an abrupt halt of the unforeseen type.

Remember – until transplant or A.I. tech improves, our allocation of eyeballs is a one-off deal. So look after them and don't forget the shades if it really is gonna be a bright (bright) sunshiny day!

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