

# JACK DANIELS DRAGSTER I JACKET

We're surrounded by logos these days as the Branding machine goes into overdrive, and you'll struggle to go an hour round any town in the country without seeing the least fit people waddling around in sportswear, or fashion victims in logos – more often as not from dubious sources – without a concept of what they are supposed to represent just so they can feel closer to their role models as seen in the pages of the pulp press: the adoption of Burberry by Chavs is the tip of the iceberg.

We're as bad in one respect, and a number of us wander round looking like mobile adverts for a certain Motor Company – some more than others – but at least we know what it represents, and we can be assured of the quality of anything displaying that logo because we know they take their name very seriously indeed.

Another brand label that has long been associated with America and sells on its quality is Jack Daniels – and despite the obvious problems in linking alcohol with any form of transport, it's something that has long been associated with Harley-Davidson motorcycles in the minds of riders and drinkers alike: indeed, the origins of American-V came from a drunken conversation over a bottle of Jack many, many years ago.

So it made perfect sense that when searching around for another vehicle to carry the Jack Daniels trademark that bike-wear would be a logical choice: licensed, of course, but to a company who would maintain JD's quality standards, because while they know what they're doing with bourbon, they'll know Jack about leather.

You don't really need to know who Thrill Ride Sport, the licensee, are except to know that they have a good eye for design and the right grade of leather – but then owner Rick Miller is ex-Harley-Davidson himself and knows a thing or two about quality.

The Dragster I Jacket is just one of seven men's leather jackets bearing the Jack Daniels brand – there are another four women's-cut too, which form a small part of a much broader range – all available in the UK through Sussex Cruiser Clothing – and is only a Dragster I to identify it from the Dragster II which is the same cut of jacket but in leather-trimmed canvas, and about half the price.

A single-breasted, speedway-style high-neck jacket, it is made from a slightly distressed mid-weight hide, ideal for the main riding season, which can be bolstered by optional soft "Armourflex" armour that slots into pockets at the shoulders and elbows for added peace of mind. Vented through its front top pocket, with a single, central exit vent to stop it billowing behind you, it's been cool enough for most of the high summer temperatures that we've experienced while I've been wearing it, while keeping the late evening chill out without problem. When the heat has really hit, undoing the zip a few inches is more effective than on a lancer.

I'd be loathe to consider it as a 4-season jacket, if only because it lacks a pull out thinsulate lining, and because the mandarin collar that is so effective as draught excluder on summer evenings, would struggle to cope with any kind of scarf, but when the nights draw in and the rains come down textile jackets are increasingly where the smart money is. The Dragster I would still cut it as a jacket for going out in, without the residual stigma of the classic BLJ.

As a professional destroyer of pocket linings, it'll remain to be seen how long these will resist my myriad selection of keys and clutter, but their size will at least mean they won't be stressed by trying to overload them. The front key pocket is actually a useable size, and the other three are big enough for practical day-to-day use.



It's not short of inside pockets either: one either side that will take a slip-cased CD or DVD without a problem – a useful payload these days – with a tougher pocket sewn onto the lining that looks like it's designed to hold a mobile easily, and it certainly fits my mini-PDA phone perfectly.

As someone who's not especially fond of someone else's name splattered all over me, the Dragster is nicely and tastefully understated in its branding and I don't feel like a walking advert for them. It helps that I am a drinker of Bourbon, even if I'm not quite as loyal as some to the old No.9 brand, but that will only be a cause for raised eyebrows should I be wearing it while asking at the bar for a shot of Wild Turkey or Jim for a change. Amanda, as a lifelong devotee of the brand, was absolutely gutted that it swamped her, having cooed as each logo revealed itself, saving her best reaction for the end when the lining was revealed: the whole inside back is a giant No.7 label.

And with the speedway styling of the jacket, the twin racing stripes that will double as conspicuity aids, aren't too intrusive either.

While Rick Miller might have been more closely associated with accessories in his time at The Motor Company, the attention to detail with the fastenings – every press stud, every zip pull, is high quality and branded – suggests he spent time hanging around the Motorclothes cupboard too, or else had the phone number of Harley's suppliers. And that's probably as good a time as any to mention that there is also a range of branded motorcycle accessories too, also available through Sussex Cruiser Clothing

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