



Metzeler Roadtec Z6 Interact

AS IT RELATES to sport-touring rubber, the catchphrase these days seems to be “dual-compound tires.” This technology, however, isn’t new. In the late 1980s, Bridgestone developed a bias-ply tire with “Dual Tread Construction” that improved mileage and grip by using a wear-resistant compound down the center tread and a softer compound on the shoulders. This appealed to sport-touring riders who demanded grip and longevity from the rear tire and precise steering and feedback from the front.

But interest in and development of dual-compound *radial* tire technology seemed to lag behind until Michelin launched its Pilot Two Compound Technology (2CT) series in 2005. Every tire manufacture has since jumped on the multi-compound bandwagon. All, that is, except Metzeler, which is trying to achieve the same results by taking a completely different approach.

With its newest sport-touring radial,

Metzeler Roadtec Z6 Interact

Price (MSRP): Front \$163.95
Rear \$215.95

Contact: Metzeler, 100 Pirelli Dr., Rome, Georgia 30161-7000.

IBMag Recommendation: No

the Roadtec Z6 Interact, Metzeler uses a *single*, high-hysteresis compound. In conjunction with a continuous, zero-degree strand of tensioned, braided steel wire, Metzeler says that this manufacturing process permits the tire carcass to “interact” better with the road while providing exceptional wear. Intrigued by this design, I decided to buy a set of Roadtec Z6 Interacts for my 2008 BMW K1200GT.

The Good News

Metzeler appears to have found the right balance between performance and durability. Over a two-week period, I logged a little over 9,800 miles on a fully loaded bike; *e.g.*, top case, saddlebags and rear seat bag. The pavement varied from neglected asphalt on two-lane country roads to recently paved interstate highways, and in temperatures that ranged from 45 to 115 degrees; including a 350-mile stint on I-40 through Arizona and California where the temp never dropped below 110. Throughout the entire trip, the front and rear tires were exceptional with respect to handling and I was never in want of more grip in the twisties. And even though the rear tire began to square and the front showed signs of cupping, steering input remained light, predictable and neutral. With 4/32 tread remaining, there is also plenty of life left. As a matter of fact and according to my calculations,

I should get another 5,000 miles out of them.

The Z6 Interacts did a great job of maintaining air pressure too. During one four-day period where I covered 3,500 miles, the

Facing page from left: I anticipate the rear will last for 14,000 miles in spite of it squaring. However, I suspect the more it wears and squares, the earlier it’s likely to hydroplane in the rain. I never was in want of more grip or had a concern with the front Z6 Interact hydroplaning because of the excellent tread design and rain grooves. As you can see in this side-by-side comparison with the Pilot Road 2 CT (right), there aren’t any rain grooves in the center tread of the Z6 Interact to channel water away from the contact patch.



rear tire did not lose any air and the front only lost 2 psi. It doesn't get much better than that.

The Bad News

Metzeler says that the Z6 Interact's "underlying layer, cap & base technology, enhances...all-weather performance." I did not find this to be the case. While riding at 70 mph in the rain on I-44 in Missouri, the rear of my bike hydroplaned on two occasions forcing me to reduce my speed in order to maintain traction. Interestingly, this did not happen to my traveling companion Greg Roberts, who was riding a Kawasaki Concours 14 shod with Michelin Pilot Road 2s. Upon closer inspection, we noticed that the rear of the Z6 Interact does not have any rain grooves radiating out from the center tread to channel water away from the contact patch. But the Michelin's do, which explains why Greg's bike didn't become unsettled in the rain. As a result, I lost all confidence in these tires on wet pavement.

The Bottom Line

It appears that Metzeler focused on providing exceptional wear resistance and dry pavement grip at the expense of wet weather performance. In spite of their claim that the Z6 Interacts are "all-weather" tires, the tread pattern suggests otherwise. Therefore, they are probably best suited for sportbike or track riders rather than sport-touring or long distance motorcyclists who frequently ride in the rain. ●



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