

MD Product Evaluation: Pirelli Diablo Strada Tires

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When it comes to sporty street tires, we want it all, don't we? We want great traction for attacking the curvy stuff. Great wear for the straight line stuff getting to the curvy stuff and the daily commute in between. Not asking too much, are we? Tire performance is one of the more conflicted and demanding aspects of a motorcycle's dynamic profile - we want great traction for cornering, but we want it to last (much) longer than a typical AMA Supersport race.

Due to urban sprawl, and attention from the local police, the rides to the new favorite roads are getting longer and longer. 100 mile days have turned into 300 milers. Typical AMA DOT-Racing tires wear out at the same rate as a pencil eraser, would probably end up being replaced every other ride, and not work to their potential because the street environment simply is not able to sustain the speeds necessary to build the heat they require. This is not very practical, or cost effective. A better choice are the street sport tires, which sacrifice a little traction for better mileage - an unavoidable compromise. Still, a typical life span for a set of these is around 3500 miles, 5000 miles, at best. With just a few weekend rides, these will be toast as well.

As rapidly as I and many of our readers accumulate mileage, the used tires pile up pretty quickly alongside the garage. More time riding and less time changing tires is what we're looking for, but could you keep the traction level up, please? Pirelli seems to have come up with a tire that answers the call of many modern riders' tire performance needs in the new Diablo Strada. Having just worn out my second set of Pirelli Diablos (see our earlier evaluation of this tire on [October 3, 2003](#)), I was in a good position to make a comparison between them and the new Stradas, so let's take a look at them.

Pirelli calls the [Strada](#) an extended mileage sport (EMS) tire, possessing high grip performance with great longevity. To get this, they use a high grip / high mileage (HGPM) compound, using the latest generation of advanced polymers, high matrix carbon black and liquid silica. Dry grip levels rivaling the Diablo and wet grip that exceeds the competition is the claimed result. Next on the list of acronyms, Ideal Geometry Profile (IGP) purportedly optimizes the shape of both the front and rear tires. All said, the compound and profile combine to provide immediate warm-up from low temperatures, with consistent handling and grip in all weather conditions.



That's what They say, What did I find out? Read on.....

Appearing remarkably similar to the Diablo, you could easily mistake the Strada for its sportier relative, but there is a bit more tread cut into the tire, to aid its wet weather performance. When I

mounted the tires, the carcass was noticeably stiffer, which I find consistent with most tires meant for more miles. Less flex means less heat build up, which in turn should translate to longer life, or at least allow a softer compound without a penalty in wear. The stiffer carcass would likely also require a suspension adjustment to maintain the desired ride quality.

The tires balanced with a minimum of weight, suggesting that material distribution is well controlled, or I got a good set. I'll go with the former explanation, since the Diablos before them were the same. Trying to outguess the stiffer construction, and possibly avoid changing suspension settings, I set the tire pressures at a lowish 32 psi front and 33 psi rear. The initial ride revealed handling traits similar to the Diablos, and while there was no harshness, there also wasn't the feel and feedback while cornering and under braking. Boosting pressures to 35 front and 37 rear, feel and feedback were greatly improved and the bike felt "lighter on its feet", without being nervous. Indeed, these tires have the same calming effect of the Diablos, but now I had to adjust suspension, but only a little.

Scrubbing them in was easy, quick and without drama, taking it step by step, until I got to the edge of the back tire. Time to see if they deliver on Pirelli's claims. I always take a couple miles to get some heat into the tires, but rushed the process for these a bit and experienced no ill effects, as in rashed bodywork or soiled underwear.

Rolling through a set of esses, steering is neutral, yielding exactly the amount of turn-in and lean you expect from your input through the bars. Transitioning from left to right and back requires more effort than some tires, but in turn feel more stable than those same tires.

Roads in SoCal have become bumpier in the last few years, especially after the near record rains earlier this year. The Stradas soaked them up, small to moderate, almost as if they weren't there, whether under acceleration or on the brakes. Larger bumps simply won't be ignored, no matter the tire, but the Stradas lessened their severity as well.

Secure and communicative is what comes to mind when nicking the pegs in a corner. My suspension is far from standard and does not sag like the standard offerings of similar 2001 vintage sportbikes, and the pegs have no feelers, so hopefully, that will give you a better idea of the lean angle these tires are capable of. On the brakes, steering remains neutral all the way to the apex, with no wandering or vague feel. Slides are possible, but only when really trying, and you receive plenty of notice that your ego is about to write a check the tire can't cash. You're more likely to be signing a ticket before you get to this point.

All this talk of warm up, lean angles, esses and trail braking is all well and good, but you're still left asking about wear. I am happy to report that they wear extremely well. The pictures show them at their current 6500 mile mark. Plenty of tread left, while the front looks almost untouched, and more importantly, it isn't cupping or scalloping. Its rounded profile remains intact as well. The rear takes the brunt of my many aggressive launches from stop lights during my short commute on surface streets, a scenario that takes a heavy toll on tread wear and so you see a bit of squaring of the profile, which doesn't seem to affect handling.



I have to say that I think Pirelli is accurate in their description of the Strada's performance and has hit the nail on the head in considering the street rider's needs. The balance of traction and wear is pretty much ideal, offering more than enough grip to make the corners interesting - if you want to go faster than these tires will carry you, get a spare set of rims and / or mount stickier tires and go to a trackday - and provide wear characteristics that will see you riding far and often to those new favorite roads. If you're coming up on a tire change, give these a try, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised - for many miles.