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## Shoei XR1100

There's nothing like putting on a new crash helmet for the first time. The smell, the fit, the crystal clear brand new visor... Then after a few months use it's just your usual, nicely-bedded-in helmet. But no matter how much you look after it and clean it, it's never quite like that first time. A bit like getting a new car.

I've been using Shoei's all-new XR1100 for a while now and I'm seriously impressed. My usual choice for the past 20-odd years has been Arai, so that's what I'm comparing the Shoei to. And let's face it. If you aspire to buy a top-of-the-range helmet, these are generally your two choices.

The first thing you notice as you remove the XR1100 from its box is how light it is, and the aerodynamic shape that obviously works. I tried the helmet at a Motor Sport Vision track day at Bedford Autodrome recently. Here, every lap my Yamaha R6 hits an indicated 175mph, with my head tucked down behind the screen in the still-ish bubble of air. But sitting up in the 175mph windblast I was really surprised how stable my head remained, without any of the usual buffeting that makes your head wobble from side to side and your neck muscles ache as they try to compensate.

My biggest complaint with my Arai is the excessive wind noise. It's so loud it drowns out the sound of the engine. But with the Shoei the wind noise is so minimal I can hear the motor. That was weird at first – but great.

The visor's clever ratchet system has a lot to do with how quiet the helmet is. The visor goes up and down in a conventional manner. But on the very last click on the way down the visor pulls inwards towards the helmet and seals on the rubber lip, which looks a bit like a car windscreen wiper in profile. With the visor down and all the flush fitting vents closed there was some slight misting, but open the vent on the chin bar and it disappears.

However, I like the vents shut this time of year. So I decided to remove the visor to fit the Fog City insert supplied as standard by Shoei. The visor quickly and efficiently comes away from the helmet. You never get that dreaded feeling you're about to break the mechanism, as I've often done with my Arai! The Fog City banished all misting.

The XR1100 isn't uncomfortable. It's just different compared to my Arai. People always say you're either an Arai or a Shoei head. This usually determines which brand you go for, but not anymore. If the XR1100 doesn't fit so well, then your local Shoei-Assured dealer – mine's Bike Stop in Stevenage – will custom fit the interior to perfectly match your bone.

A few of my fellow MSV instructors also tried the Shoei XR1100. We all agreed it's light, comfortable and surprisingly quiet. In short, it does exactly what it says on the lid.

*Words and pictures: Ian Cobby*

