

HIS HEAD, HER HEAD -Bill and Susan Dragoo

➔ Bill and Susan go head-to-head over Arai and Shoei dual sport helmets

You want me to do WHAT?

Take it apart.

Why? I just want to wear it.

So you can truly appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into such a fine piece of protective gear.

I already appreciate it. Destroying it won't make me like it any better. What's that you are wearing?

Shoei.

Gesundheit!

Not funny, Sweetheart. It's a Shoei Hornet DS and it is probably the best all-around helmet made.

I beg to differ.

The question is, are these helmets worth the cost? After the experience Susan and I have had with ours, I would argue in the affirmative.

Arai has long been considered one of the most comfortable helmets made. Shoei has shared the same sentiment among men and women who spend a lot of time wearing a lid. The Shoei Hornet DS and Arai XD 3 weigh almost the same, 3.6 and 3.66 pounds respectively, according to scales at the local post office. Light, considering they have a shield and visor, plus they can both accommodate goggles as well. By comparison, the HJC CL X5 weighs exactly the same as the Hornet (without goggles) and the Nolan flip-face N 102 is slightly heavier at 3.78 lbs. Goggles will add a quarter pound to typical dirt bike helmets without a shield.

Once disassembled, both helmets even further stand out from the competition. Ventilation is superior in both the Arai and Shoei. Susan and I each could feel the airflow across the crowns of our heads, right where that infernal itch sets in on long, hot rides. Shoei's Cross

Vortex ventilation system has six operable vents including the chin vent. All can be shut off or opened with a touch. Arai has five operable vents in addition to other fixed ports. The Arai vent system is a tad easier to work on the fly than the Shoei. But the secret to both is the design of their crown padding and molded vent channels. Where less expensive helmets have a blanket effect on top, Arai and Shoei each use a unique support system which enhances both comfort and airflow.

We think of safety as almost a given when it comes to helmets. Either we have one, thus are safe, or do not and are leaving our lives to chance. Shoei's "AIM," their multi composite shell construction and EPS (Expanded Polystyrene) liner system, insure that the rider is protected by a helmet that easily exceeds Snell and DOT design standards.

Arai utilizes a highly evolved fiberglass process for its shell, which is also reported to exceed Snell and Government standards. In addition, the XD 3 has an emergency removal feature to its cheek pads which causes less stress on the neck in the event the helmet must be removed after an accident.

The best part about both is their versatility. Each helmet sports both a removable visor and a removable shield. Shoei's shield has four distinctive positions and Arai's Twin-Cam system seems to help the shield stay put even between its fully opened and closed positions. Some buyers might prefer more color options than Shoei and Arai currently provide.

Are they worth the money? Either helmet can set you back over \$400. Which is best? You will have to decide for yourself. But when I was a kid, a popular helmet company had a motto that said it best. "Got a ten dollar head, buy a ten dollar helmet." These days ten



bucks still won't get you much, but the Arai and Shoei class helmets are worth considering. And style is more important now than ever, too. The Arai XD 3 and Shoei Hornet DS certainly have the looks that adventure, super-moto and dual sport riders want. As to which is best, you decide. ▀

I met Ken Wahister, CEO of Bike Bandit, last May at the American Adventure Rider's Challenge in Costa Rica, California. Ken is what we call the real deal. A business man second, Ken is first and foremost, an adventure rider. He is also a generous soul as evidenced by Bike Bandit's sponsorship of the AARC. Ken along with a handful of other great Dual Sport product suppliers, manufacturers and vendors lavished gifts on the winners, taking much of the sting of bent handlebars and busted turn signals away from the top finishers. Bike Bandit represents the kind of business we need among this close knit group of men and women who like to keep on going long after the pavement ends. Thanks to Bike Bandit and Ken Wahister for supporting motorcyclists and providing the latest in high end products for Adventure Motorcycle to test and abuse.