

AEROSTICH DARIEN JACKET AND PANTS

Serious gear for the best and worst of times

“HEY, SAM, TRY NOT TO HURT YOURSELF, WILL ya?” It was the last week in February, and I could barely cross the office without hearing those words (or some semblance thereof) again and again. Sometimes they’d be offered as a straight-faced warning, other times lobbed as a humorous taunt. The bottom line was, everyone seemed fairly certain that I was going to crash. My colleagues. How I adore them.

Truth be told, everyone had good reason to blather on about my impending doom. You see, I’d just been tapped to attend an off-road school where I’d learn the skills necessary for handling a Buell Ulysses in dirt (see review page 80). I was then to put those skills to use banging around the Mojave Desert. Anybody who’s ever done this sort of riding knows the possibilities for getting tossed are endless.

If I aimed to preserve myself at all, I needed some serious gear. And who better to turn to than Andy Goldfine, owner and soft-spoken sage behind Aerostich RiderWearhouse. I explained my situation to Andy (cold mornings, hot days, dirt, mud, possible rain, probable wipeouts). He suggested a pair of the company’s legendary Combat Touring Boots (\$257), as well as the renowned Darien jacket (\$367-\$587) and pants (\$287). Andy also felt I should opt for the lightweight version of the jacket and pants, sans optional electric liners, as I was going to be in the

desert, not the Sierras.

While the boots are available in a less intense, mid-calf version (Combat Lites), I went full bore and chose the original knee highs, an extremely serious pair of thick, full-grain leather, motocross-inspired stompers designed to tackle the four corners of the earth. Once broken in (and it may take a while), the Combats molded to my feet, and offered me more support and protection than I, hopefully, would ever need.

As for the jacket and pants, both are made of an absurdly tough Cordura/GoreTex combination and feature Viscoelastic TF2 energy-absorbing, removable foam pads that actually get stronger upon impact. For better or worse, during my desert sojourn, I put these pads to the test many more times than I’d care to admit. But my shoulders, arms, elbows, and knees remained fully protected and entirely intact. Viscoelastic TF2 rules!

The jacket has eight pockets, waterproof venting, cinch belt, fixed attachments for additional padding, sleeve-mounted map pocket ... and the list goes on. It’s not just a jacket, it’s a machine. As if that’s not enough, there’s also a very stylish wind-blocking fleece that can easily be worn on its own when your riding day is done.

Honestly, I can’t say enough about the Combat kicks, Darien jacket and pants. Of course, I’m certain there are many dedicated AIM readers out there who will cry that this ensemble doesn’t exactly fit the Harley image, whatever that is. If you fancy yourself hardcore (and plan on ripping around off-road), you should be wearing this stuff — whether you plan on crashing or not.

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SOURCES

Aerostich RiderWearhouse

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