

INVESTIGATION

THE KNOCK-ON FROM KNOCK OFFS

British engineering firms Evotech Performance and GBRacing talk about the wider effects of buying counterfeits



Dan Rack (left) and Chris Vines smile despite the onslaught of counterfeit Evotech Performance products

Genuine Evotech Performance Radiator Guard on right, fake on left – only one of these fits precisely and safely and will last the distance



WSB champion Toprak uses GBRacing kit

'Our loyal customers help us police it'

Their hard plastic protectors have graced the bikes of World Superbike champions, Moto2 supremos and BSB's best, all the way down to the most crash-happy club race regulars – and it all started back in 2007 thanks to Barnet-born engineer Graham Banks' (the GB in GBRacing) love of trackdays.

However, in recent times, the Hertfordshire-based firm has endured its fair share of counterfeiter chaos, as Graham's son, Tim Banks, explains: "The counterfeiters are literally copying everything we produce – our design with our logo on, even our packaging and instructions! It's actually very hard for a

buyer to be able to tell what's genuine and what's not. But the counterfeiters are using cheaper nylon to our patented blend that we've developed, and as such the protectors just aren't tough enough. Our product is essentially designed to protect expensive engine casings and ultimately prevent on-track oil spills, but the counterfeit protectors aren't

good enough to do either of those things.

"It's incredibly frustrating as there's so much that goes into the development of our products; hours and hours of R&D using feedback from the world's top teams, plus we do all our own tooling and production in-house at our factory in Baldock. It's our passion. We're working hard to trademark everything, but even when we do, it's still not enough to tackle to problem because of the copyright laws in China. But luckily, we do have a very loyal customer base who help us police the issue, tipping us off about listings and spreading the word on forums."

● 'We do it all in-house. It's our passion'



Precision engineering by Evotech Performance – all the protection accessories are made at their UK factory

Back in the day, if you wanted accessories for your bike the only place you were going to get them was at your local dealership. These days, there's a whole world wide web of bike-enhancing bits available for you to buy at the touch of a button – some of it good, other bits not so good – but much of it temptingly cheap.

On the face of it, buying online might seem like a cost-effective way of bagging yourself some of those non-safety-critical essentials like tail ties, crash bungs, lever guards and radiator covers. After all, the cynical side of you suspects that it's probably all made in the same factory in China anyway... However, the reality of buying knock-off parts online is that you not only risk potentially damaging your bike, but also the motorcycling industry as a whole, as British biking engineering firm Evotech Performance know only too well.

Dan Rack and Chris Vines are lifelong bikers and time-served engineers who established the brand back in 2003, after Chris had

struggled to get a good quality tail tidy for his Honda FireBlade 954. As the pair were working for parent company, Drury Sheet Metal Precision Engineering, a manufacturer of parts for vintage motorcycles, they both knew a thing or two about creating high quality bits for bikes. Fast-forward 19 years, and the pair of self-proclaimed 'Lincolnshire tin-bashers' now front the highly respected biking brand, making top-spec crash protectors, tail ties, guards and covers that grace the chassis of road bikes around the world, not forgetting the many specialised parts for top level race teams, and it's all produced using state-of-the-art machinery in their factory in Alford, just 15 miles down the road from the motorcycling heartland of Cadwell Park.

'Keeps us awake at night'

"It was 2013 when we first saw that someone had copied one of our designs," begins Chris. "It was a KTM 1290 radiator guard and everything about it was the same – there was a lot of what is called 'design freedom'



If you are unsure if it's the real thing, just give the Lincs-based firm a shout

with that 1290 guard, so that's how we knew they'd copied our part. Design freedom is the part of a design that isn't simply governed by an obvious shape, it's the aspect that takes the hard work and hours of thought. When we design a part, we're thinking of the end user and how to make it as easy as possible for them to fit to their own bike at home. It literally keeps us awake at night! Then to have someone simply copy our design and try to pass it off as their own, it's really upsetting." The effects of counterfeiting are



MCN's Emma talks protection with Evotech Performance's Dan Rack

not just soul destroying for this pair of engineers and their 30-strong staff, there's a knock-on effect for the wider industry too, as Dan explains: "It's a genuine attack on our business. We employ 30 people, we're excellent customers to suppliers all over the UK, we pay our taxes, and even support local community schemes, it radiates out. But that's all jeopardised by counterfeiters." "You can't blame consumers," Dan continues, "because everybody wants a good deal. But the point with

counterfeit parts is that you're not getting a good deal. It might be cheap to buy, but then you'll find that it won't go straight on and you might need to buy extra bits or modify it yourself in order to get it to fit, and before you know it, you've invested more money and more importantly loads of time trying to get it to work, when you could've just got the genuine part and fitted it straight away."

Despite time-consuming and expensive trademark applications, as well as a costly third-party agency to constantly monitor and remove listings for fake Evotech Performance products, the problem of counterfeiters isn't going away, in fact it's getting worse. "As soon as we get a listing taken down, the next day another one seems to pop up," says Dan. "It can be tough for consumers to work out what's genuine and what's fake, because counterfeiters even steal the product images from our website to use in their own listings. The best advice we can give to anyone who's unsure about the part they're thinking of buying is just give us a ring, or drop us an email. We're just a bunch of normal people – bikers – and we're only too happy to help."



Tim Banks says it is an ongoing battle against fakes



A huge amount of R&D work goes into the products