

HEAVY BREATHING

**Le Mans 1000
plus
Rickman Honda 900
equals
260mph**

Hedonism lives. It seems unlikely, but it's true. The oil's running out, we're hemmed in by repressive laws protecting us from ourselves, paranoia is rife, the world is getting bleaker in geometric progression. But somewhere near the fringes of lunacy, there burns a spark of pure pleasure-seeking recklessness; a part of human nature – one of its saving graces – that casts aside considerations of commonsense and goes over the top.

It's this pure and wonderful spirit which causes people to bore Guzzi Le Manses (or should that read Les Mans?) out to 1000cc. There's an amply powerful sports motorcycle, with neat handling and already good for 130mph: enough to show all but the very quickest litre-bikes a view of a disappearing tail-light from its 848cc. So what do they do: they put a damn big-bore kit on. They're driven mad by power and pleasure.

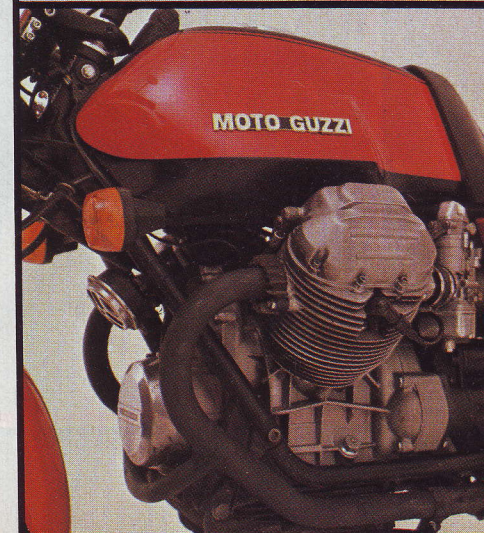
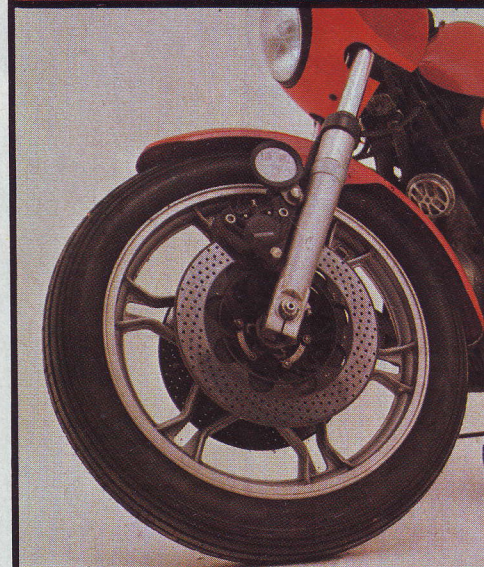
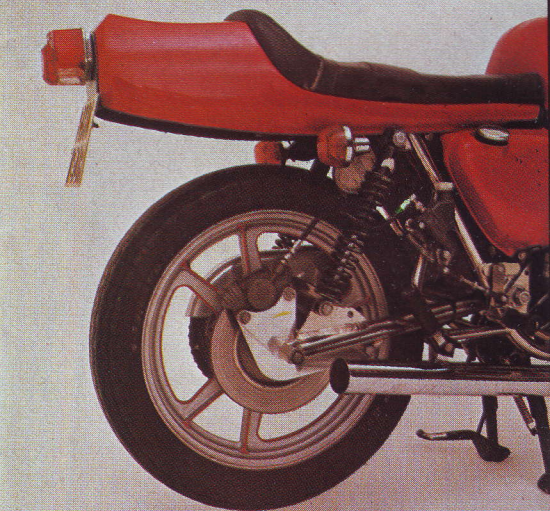
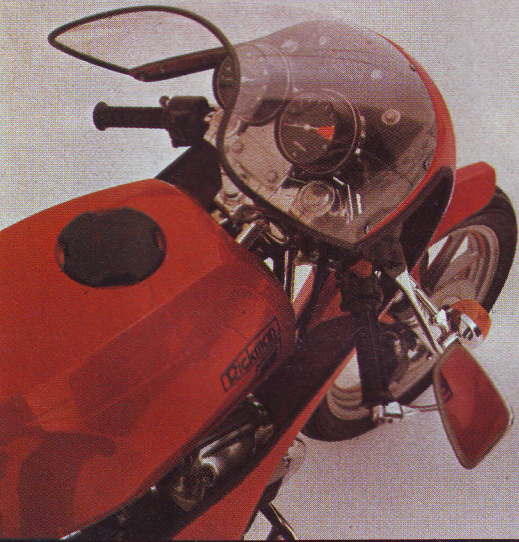
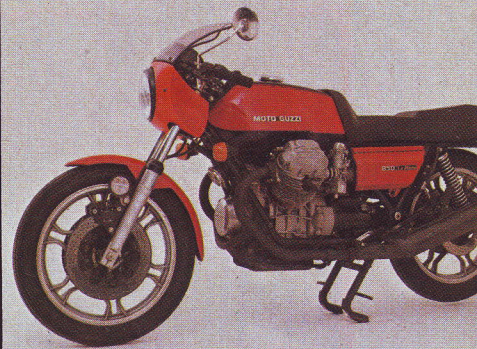
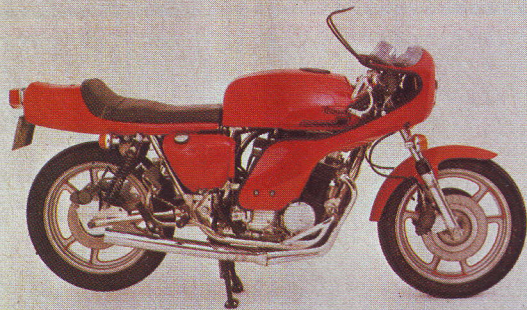
Thank God for them, say I. Such ideas should be fostered and encouraged to the hilt (you could even send me money and I'll buy me one). The Moto Guzzi Le Mans is a good bike to begin with. A 1000cc kit makes it faster, easier to ride and a far better machine.

Right. Let's start with the basic facts. One 850 Le Mans: out of the crate at the London Motorcycle Centre (since this story, the firm's been plunged into the bedlam of a confusing take-over... see spec panel). Ride, ride, ride... it's all run in. Tinker, tinker, tinker... it's in bits on the floor. Bore, scrape, shove... it's ready for bigger pistons. Screw, screw, gotta have a break. Bolt, bolt, bolt... and it's ready for final tuning on the rolling road. Then give it to *SuperBike* for a thrash round the test track. Good idea, gents.

And there the red Guzzi is matched against a sizzling and even redder four-pot Rickman Honda: given plenty of (expensive) attention for the same sort of hedonistic reasons. The two-fisted thumping vee-twin heavyweight versus the new regime. Which one won? Read on and you will know all.

Right now you must first reach an understanding of the basic animal that is the Le Mans. It's an old-fashioned engine in a modern frame. The basic design and construction of the 90 degree vee-twin dates way back to humbler origins than the dashing sportster. Its components reflect an old-fashioned air of bulky strength. A Guzzi crankshaft for instance, looks like it comes from a diesel truck engine: changing the gears can be reminiscent of throwing the cogs of a combine harvester into mesh. This old-time religion has its advantages. Though I've never owned a Guzzi, I believe they're built to last. Furthermore, it's basically two simple pushrod singles, so minor maintenance at least is easy. And the Guzzi is the only bike with removable frame sections to make dropping the engine simpler. Even fitting an Italian Centre big-bore kit is a straightforward operation, as you shall see. The drawbacks – mainly a crudish feel and an unwillingness to rev are offset by the joys of two-cylinder torque. Brutish full-bellied gutsiness is, after all, usable more of the time than peaky top-rev punch.

In respects other than the engine and gearbox, the Guzzi is modern enough indeed. In the field of braking, it's integral linked stoppers take it several clear steps ahead of the rest of the industry. Its finer points are timeless rather than modern: a fine-handling frame with firm and crisp suspension, and styling with such elegant, aggressive poise that it makes you stand back in wonderment and awe. On looks alone, the Guzzi is a bike to fall in love with.







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It is also a bike of great character. Engine and frame are shared with the Guzzi tourers: the 850T3 and V1000 Convert. Turning it into the sporting Le Mans involved building in a few quirks. Although the camshaft is not madly wild, the carburetion is. Two fat 36mm Dell 'Orto pumper carbs gasp through open trumpet intakes, making hungry sucking noises all the time the engine is running. Basically, though, it's over-carbed. It's fine when the revs get up, but a tiny bit touchy about starting (it insists on full choke even when it's hot... and Guzzis get very hot). It's also kinda delicate about how wide you open the slides at lower revs. Give it too much gasp before it's ready, and it waffles and slurps, spits back and gasses up.

The other modification from the touring mode – apart from an ultra-low profile and a semi-racer riding crouch – is to gearing. The cogs on the Le Mans are high: its legs are very long indeed. Combine a touchy low-rev throttle with a tall first gear, and you see that the standard bike, while quite capable of whuffling around, demands skill and care around town. More important, it also doesn't step off the line as fast as the top speed would suggest (around 130mph, remember?).

Enter the big-bore kit, developed from modified Guzzi parts by the Italian Centre of Wandsworth. As I write this, it's still in the prototype stage: by March they hope to have it on sale at between £250 and £300. Like I said, it's a dead simple nut-and-bolt operation. A matter of stripping the barrels off, swapping the pistons, and putting the barrels back on, with a bit of backroom work in the middle. Simple spannerwork, even for a klutz. Jet up the carbs (part of the kit) and you're suddenly the owner of the first one-litre Guzzi Le Mans on the block.

The bike was waiting for me at the London Motorcycle Centre when I dropped the staff Ducati Darmah off for its second service (nearly run in... good news). Hunched and tiny over its huge alloy engine with its jutting finned cylinders, red and black with a dashing dayglo panel on the front of the silly cowling, it was almost shockingly beautiful. Workshop man John Elliot tweaked the little plastic over-centre switch that serves as the universal Italian choke lever, and thumbed the button. The bike spluttered once, then caught with a gigantic booming throb that echoed in the alleyway like an earthquake. Yeah... forgot to mention that the final mod in the kit is drilling out most of the exhaust baffles as well. The big-bore Guzzi is extravagantly, gloriously loud.

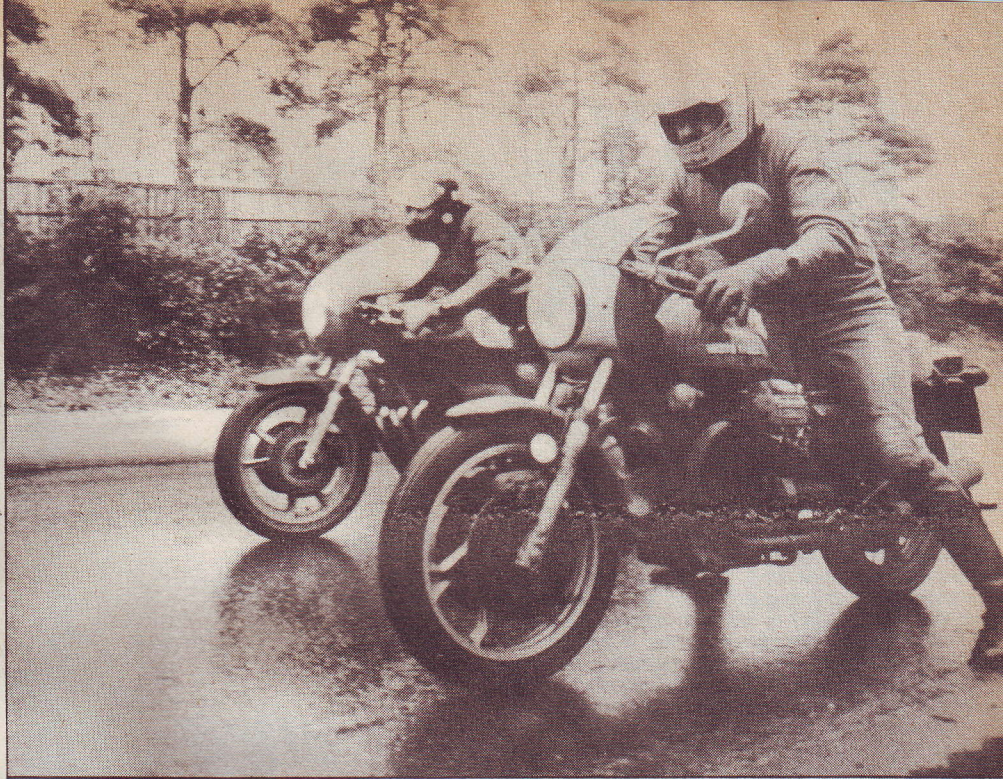
Off down the wet and traffic-strewn South Circular mincing machine in the rain, I simply stayed in first gear. The Guzzi's like that. It'll do over 50mph in first with ease, and still sound lazy and relaxed. The big-bore does it much much better than the standard machine. Torque feels like it's up a good 15 per cent, and no longer does it feel quite so generously over-carbed.

I was heading for a corner of far-flung Surrey, site of *SuperBike's* top-secret test track, where Mighty Mammal David Hamill was waiting for me with his pet Rickman Honda 812. (He wasn't waiting, actually, but I'll get him back.) Once the greasy confines of London trunk roads had magically metamorphosed into the tranquil trees and modest mansions of the stockbroker belt, I could start winding the slides of those Dell 'Ortos open through the gears, and feeding the greedy Guzzi more of the go-juice it loves so much.

The rewards were noisy but lavish. It barely seems to matter where on the clock the rev counter lay: feed on the throttle and the low-slung Italian projectile launches itself with a rush that can only be described as inexorable. The ton comes up quickly on the clock (somewhere before a true 90, in fact, Guzzi instruments are as generous as the styling is stunning) and is soon forgotten. An indicated 130mph is within easy access (comes out at about 115 really), and the top speed I attained on the grubby short straight of the track was 129mph, with more to come in the long-legged top.

When Dave Hamill finally turned up, we were set for a battle royal on the tight (and wet and slippery) test track. In fact, it didn't really work like that. The emphasis of power on the Rickman Honda was so different from that of the big Guzzi that there was really no contest in side-by-side comparison. The Honda's a revvy beast and the gearing had been upped considerably for top speed. The Guzzi has it all much lower down and it's easier to use. So the acceleration test, for instance, was a walkover for the Guzzi. Yay, my bike won...

I explained earlier how the standard Le Mans



suffers a bit on step-off due to its high gearing. It is here that the major benefit of the 1000cc conversion becomes clear. Torque is abundant right through from 2000rpm and no longer does first feel too tall for a quick getaway. You can virtually dump the clutch, and on a wet track I recorded consistent 12.5-second standing quarters, with a best run of 12.35. That is very very fast for a street cycle.

On mid-range acceleration (and on bikes like these, mid-range is from 80 to around 100mph!), there was little to choose between the two: the Guzzi tramping along with an exhaust boom some four octaves lower than the screaming, sizzling Honda. Top speed? Still about equal at some 130mph at the end of the test-track straight, but I'll allow the Honda probably had a handful of mph on the Le Mans.

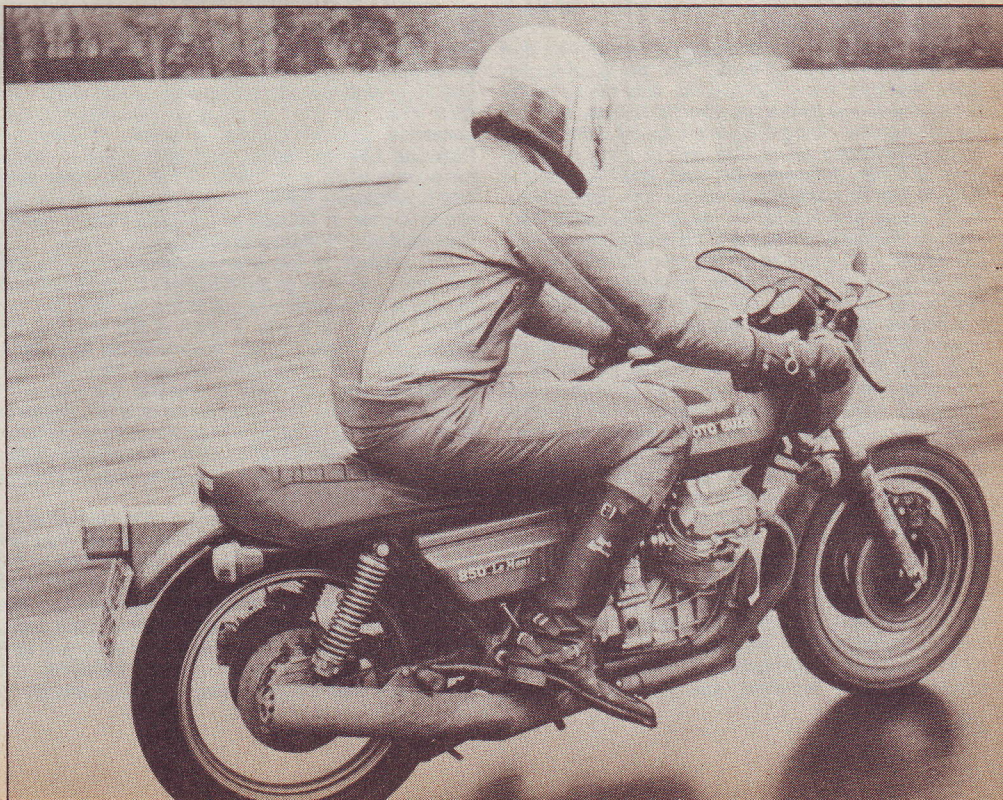
The comparison showed, though, what diverse results you get by the different tuning approaches. The Guzzi relies on simply increasing the engine's size. Apart from exacerbating (no, that's *nothing* like wotsitbating) the Guzzi's already prolific tendency to shudder and thud below 3000rpm, it makes the engine just much much torquier than standard, though probably only a little more powerful at higher revs. The result is a very fast motorcycle that is very easy to ride fast. The Honda has usable torque, but the real power is concentrated between 6000 and 10 000rpm, and it comes in with a rush. To ride it fast, you must stir the gears, keep the revs sizzling:

much more like hard work than simply opening the chokes on the Guzzi.

Some final words: more praise to heap on the large pile already accumulated concerning Guzzi's masterly integral braking system. In slippery conditions, it's a lifesaver. For you two not familiar with the system: the brake pedal operates one front disc and the rear disc in a 70:30 proportion. The hand lever is a bonus, operating the other front disc. In normal riding, you need not even use your hand. Even in slippery wetness, you can stomp on the pedal and the Guzzi squats and stops. Be brutal, and you'll just manage to lock the back wheel for the last few inches. In a crisis, or pushing it on a track, a quick kick of the pucks on the secondary front disc adds enough stopping power to make it a sensation. Cast-iron Brembo discs are superb: and wet or dry the system has a combination of fantastic stopping power, real sensitivity and idiot-proof operation alien to any rider of Japanese machinery. Will the rest of the industry please catch up.

If you can live with the Guzzi Le Mans' (mostly minor) faults, if you can put up with crazy instruments, switchgear that doesn't inspire confidence, finish that chips off; and if your passenger can handle the insecurity of the tiniest seat on any big bike, I can recommend the bored-out Guzzi, Italian Centre style. It's one of the easiest and most glamorous ways to go really fast.

MS



HEAVY BREATHING

Honda Four. The engine that started it all; that tacked the word super on to what had previously been just plain old bike. The one which finally laid the ghost of the motorised bicycle. Honda Four. Sounds sort of right, doesn't it?

Remember what it was like in the days before multi cylinders, overhead cams and oil seals which do just that became the norm? Roadside repairs? Dismal little workshops where grubby mechanics coaxed, prodded and bullied equally grubby parallel twins and singles back to some semblance of life? The puddles of oil which marked the biker's lonely passage through a largely hostile world? Biking was a rather masochistic pursuit, confined to foolhardy, uh, "enthusiasts", or people who couldn't get the bread together for anything more upmarket.

In many ways 1969 was the beginning of the end of all that. Enter Honda Four, stage left in a blaze of lights. Enter the era of the mechanic as technician - with white coat that stays that way - stage right. The motorcycle as a high technology consumer durable; hardware to be marketed, merchandised and made socially acceptable, was born. Honda's brainchild gave biking something it had never had before; fashionable acceptability.

Since those heady days, a lot of four star petrol has flowed through a lot of quad Keihin carbs, and the Four has become something of a commonplace. I mean, you don't see gaggles of awestruck onlookers gawping reverentially at them as if they'd seen the Second Coming these days, do you? In short, the Four ain't no spring chicken nor, come to that, is it even a summer chicken. The pace of Japbike development has speeded up with such fearsome rapidity that '69's winner is '78's also ran. Double overhead cams, watercooling, four valves per cylinder, shaft drive; these are the new technological status symbols, and one litre is just the starting point for superbike status.

The foregoing doesn't necessarily mean that the Four is about to curl up and die. Even in stock form it can push F2 and K series bikes to speeds well in excess of the ton; showing a clean pair of heels to many more modern, more expensive machines into the bargain. And then, if you want more, why you could always arrange for chassis and engine to part company, truck the latter along to your friendly local tuning shop, have them work a touch of mechanical magic and drop the resulting sizzler of a motor into a chassis that can keep all that muscle where it belongs - on the ground.

That's exactly how the second of our demon duo of ultrabikes came into being. The plot goes something like this: Ken Dunmall, 31 and doing quite nicely-thank-you in the transport business, has this hankering after being King of the Street. Fine, we all have daydreams about that sort of thing at some time or other. Difference between you and me and Ken, is that Ken actually goes out and does something about it. A list of the class motorcycles he's had the pleasure of owning in his time is impressive. He began with a Beeza C11G, somewhere back in the mists of time, and then progressed up to a Norton Big Four single. After a Shooting Star 500SS - a Rocket Gold Star, as featured in many a biker's nostalgia-laden reminiscences. "Went into lamp-post after three years", is the laconic postscript to my notes about that one. A couple of Triumphs next, just to kill time, and then a customised '59 Triumph TR6 in pink and green, with copper plated detailing, no less. After a Triton - with racing cams, an ARE big bore conversion, a four plug head and 32mm carbs - the big changeover came; a Japanese bike.

Not just any old Japanese bike mind you. Come to that, a Dresda Honda 900cc cafe racer's got more British parts than the current, ahem, 50cc flagship of our sole surviving manufacturer, so I guess it gets in under the tape as an honorary native of these shores. Anyway, I digress. The Dresda "didn't have very pleasant brakes", so it was sold and replaced by the Rickman. Inasmuch as any Rickman can be considered bog standard, this one was. Tired of



building his own bikes from the ground up, Ken bought a brand new rolling chassis and engine, fully set up, courtesy of Read Titan in Leytonstone.

Trouble was, it didn't quite have the performance to match those handsomely menacing looks because the engine was completely stock, just the way it came off the production line at Hammamatsu. A remedy to this dilemma was soon found via the pages of that weekly biking rag, which only ever gets read for the small ads. Turned out that someone was interested in selling a very hot Rickman CR, and splits, part exchanges or what-have-you were welcomed. A few telephone calls and a somewhat lightened wallet later, Ken was the proud owner of 900ccs of gung-ho Honda power, the result of a PX deal with his original engine.

OK, enough of this everyday-story-of-biking-folk shit. Let's move on to the bit where I roll up at Ken's house, and he takes me out to the lair wherein *The Beast* lurks. There it is, a shaft of red piercing the gloom of a garage that's otherwise as innocuous as every other suburban garage. You can like Rickmans, you can hate Rickmans, but you can't ignore Rickmans. The impression of latent power in large quantities, confined in an amazingly compact frame and gift-wrapped in slim, streamlined glass-fibre, is invariably what lingers on in people's minds the first time that they see one.

Sitting on such an uncompromising cafe racer for the first time's a trifle disconcerting though. You feel as if you're all arms and legs, a simple turn in the street becomes a six point effort with the restricted steering lock, your throttle hand begins to feel like lead after a while because clip-ons strain your arms, and 50 miles is enough to make your back feel as if a red hot poker's been thrust between the vertebrae. Least that's the way the things always hit

me, and the Rickman was certainly no exception.

Just keeping the thing going was a chore until the engine warmed up properly, and then there was the down-for-up reversed gearchange to master. When you're used to riding touring bikes most of the time, getting on a cafe racer is like relearning a language that you've all but forgotten. Nice thing is though, you soon become fluent. After a day or so of banging your shins on the fairing, feeling like an asshole in city traffic and cocking up gearchanges, the whole thing suddenly falls into place and you become almost a part of the machine. Riding stops being a series of disconnected jerks and starts, and you, the rider, are the dominant voice in a fluid dialogue between man and bike.

Hold on. Sorry to interrupt my own reverie, but why do I suddenly find myself getting hot, sweaty and bad tempered in the middle of Lewisham High Street? Ah yes, there I was, on my way over to impress my girlfriend, when my fluid dialogue was rudely interrupted by the complete and utter refusal of the clutch to disengage when I pulled the lever in to change down. In heavy, slow moving traffic, with an electric start which only operates in neutral, and a none too healthy battery, that's bad news buddy. Sho'nuff I managed to stall, and God, is it a hassle trying to look cool and kickstart a Rickman with a circle of inanely grinning schoolkids ogling.

I highlight this incident because: A) it shows that living with a high performance engine isn't all wine and roses; and B) it turned our expected battle of the giants on the test track into something of a non-event. Whatever the reason, from that moment on, the clutch was on its way out, and under anything stronger than gentle acceleration it slipped hopelessly. Hence, no acceleration figures.

Before we move on to the test session, a brief

look at the internals of the engine that was to be pitted against Italy's finest. Hadleigh Custom in Brighton were the people responsible for the package, and for starters, they hogged out the bores to give a capacity of 900 meaty centimetres. Work on the head was farmed out to S&S Performance, whose ability to extract every last ounce of power from multi-cylinder Jap engines is nigh-on legendary (for the lowdown on S&S, cop a load of Steve Brennan's feature on their Turbo Suzuki on page 30). If Ken's engine ever suffered from blocked nasal passages, it doesn't now, thanks to the Stevenitt and Savory patent miracle cure. The head was given a complete porting and polishing job, with the inlet tracts opened up from 28 to 32mm diameter. Filling the holes are a set of oversize valves with special guides, and racing springs to ward off valve bounce until well after the 10 000 rev mark. Ken describes the cam as "semi-racing; a fairly sharp grind", and it's driven by a racing cam chain. According to Hadleigh though, that cam's the real, pukka racing item.

To make sure the bottom end's as bulletproof as the top end, Hadleigh replaced the stock conrods which have something of a reputation for breaking, with Honda's own steel racing specials. The pistons themselves are fairly modest 8.5:1 compression ratio jobs, machined to clear those oversize valves.

The equation adds up to one mammoth job lot of potential power in search of a source of fuel at one end, and a drivetrain at the other. OK, we'll take it from the top, where the stock Keihin carburettors - admittedly upjetted with the needles set on notch number five, and breathing easy through racing bellmouths - are entrusted with pouring fuel into the cylinders. With those widened inlet tracts, 28mm is a bit on the restrictive side, which probably accounts for an occasional and very slight hesitancy on the part of the engine. Nothing major, just the odd splutter here and there, which is almost lost in vast surges of raw power which threaten to put throttle-happy riders clean into orbit. Ken knows all about the problem, and he knows all about the solution too; a set of ultra pricy (£280 each, last time he asked), super-trick, super-temperamental racing carbs. Not surprisingly, he's leaving as is.

I think that I've already said enough concerning the clutch, so I won't bore you further by letting you know that it's stock Honda, 'cept for the addition of racing springs. We weren't the best of friends, but all that's past history now, because Ken's installed a heavy duty unit since I rode the bike.

If I mention the word Quaife, all you boring *cognoscenti* out there will be able to tell your not-so-knowledgeable friends that my left foot had the pleasure of juggling around a set of best close ratio cogs that money can buy. Ken got into the close ratio habit with his British cafe racers, and admits that his five speed cluster's something of a luxury. Still, what's life if you can't spoil yourself? Apart from neutral, which never seemed to be around when I wanted it, the gears were right where I wanted them to be, every time. Even first, which was admittedly a bit long-legged for trolling around London, wasn't the clutch-slipping pain that we've come to associate with, say, Italian performance bikes.

Ken's mighty Honda sounds like a high-performance bike motor *should* sound, not like some environmentally conscious committee would have it sound. None of your superannuated vacuum-cleanerlike apologies for exhaust notes; just an almighty growl rising to the sort of banshee wail that's only usually let loose on the race track. The instrument responsible for this virtuoso performance is a Piper four-into-one exhaust, "with holes drilled out here and there", says Ken.

And so to the test track, where long suffering Mike Scott's been waiting for me at least eight double-spaced sides of copy. Mike took the tourist route through the back lanes of Surrey, you'll remember. Well I was in a hurry, so I was content to simply blow the doors off everything that moved on the M3; alternating great dollops of brute power on the open road with rapier thrusts through traffic, using the Rickman's taut, responsive and super-rigid frame to full advantage.

On-track, the Rickman just seemed to get steadier and steadier as the speedometer crept past 90, 100, 110 and on up to the occasional 130. Maybe I was just more used to it, but the bike seemed more surefooted at these sort of speeds than the Guzzi, which is a legendary handler itself. The only flaw in this scenario was the triple Lockheed disc-brake setup, which was hard pressed to curb some of the wilder excesses of an over-zealous throttle hand.

Especially culpable was the rear brake, which locked up at the slightest excuse but didn't seem to do much else. Definitely a big minus there, especially up against the Guzzi's superlative linked braking system of which Mike has sung praises.

Which was the faster of the two? Hard to say, given the restrictive straights of our test track and the lousy condition of the tarmac surface, plus of course that shot-to-pieces clutch. I've got to admit too that my courage and skill tend to run out some time before Mike's, so in actuality, the Guzzi had a winning edge. All things being equal though, I reckon that the Rickman could have just piped the Le Mans, by a nose. 'Fact, while we're on the subject of anatomy, I'll stick my neck out and opine that an all-out banzai run on a long, straight road would take the needle up to between 138 and 142 mph.

The engine had a fairly wide spread of power and torque, but it definitely had to be revved hard to

make the most of its potential. With close ratio gears, this is no problem, and you can scream your way around at 8500 revs the whole day long if you want to. The restrictive size of the carbs might be the reason why that's the effective red-line, even though the rest of the engine should be capable of making solid power right up to the 10,000 mark. With uprated carburation though, God only knows how fast Ken could tool around the North Circular.

It takes a certain brand of dedication, not to mention a healthy bank balance, to own a Rickman, especially a projectile like Ken's. All that nickel plating and chromework wouldn't take too kindly to salty winter roads, and after our wet and muddy test session it took Ken two painstaking days to get it back into pristine condition. Not a bike for day to day use. But if it's ultimates you're after, and you aren't too bothered about the hassles, there ain't many better ways to fly than Rickman. **DH**



RICKMAN HONDA CR

£2500 (approx)

MOTO GUZZI LE MANS 1000

£2099 plus £250-£300 big-bore kit

PERFORMANCE

Maximum Speed -
Standing Quarter Mile -
Fuel Consumption -

142mph (est)
n/a (see copy)
33mpg

137mph (est)
12.35secs
36mpg

ENGINE

Type -

air-cooled transverse in-line four-stroke four; single-overhead-camshaft
Hadleigh Custom big-bore kit, Honda steel con-rods, full-race cam and chain, S&S Performance gas-flowed head

air-cooled longitudinal 90-degree vee-twin four-stroke; push-rod overhead valves
Italian Centre big-bore kit; cam, valves and heads remain standard

Modifications -

Displacement -
Power Output -
Bore & Stroke -
Compression Ratio -
Induction -

898cc
85-90bhp (est)
67 x 63mm
10:1
four 28mm Keihin slide carbs with throttle pumps
Piper four-into-one

949cc
est 10bhp gain on standard 80bhp
98 x 78mm
9.2:1
two Dell'Orto 36mm slide carbs with throttle pumps
twin tailpipes with balance pipe, baffles and outlet enlarged
wet sump
battery and coil

Exhaust -
Oil System -
Ignition -

dry sump
battery and coil

TRANSMISSION

Clutch -
Primary Drive -
Final Drive -
Gears -

multi-plate wet with racing springs
duplex chain
3/4in. chain
five-speed Quaife close-ratio

dry single-plate diaphragm
direct shaft
five-speed

RUNNING GEAR

Frame -

Rickman duplex cradle, nickel-plated
Betor tele forks, 5.5ins travel
swinging arm with Girling gas shocks
58.5ins
31ins
480lbs
3.5galls
Dunlop Red Arrows, 4.10 x 18 front, 4.25 x 18 rear
Rickman discs with Lockheed calipers, twin 11ins front, single 10ins rear

duplex cradle with detachable bottom tubes
tele forks
swinging arm with adjustable spring-shocks
57.9ins
30.5ins
488lbs
5.8galls
Metzeller, 3.50 x 18 front, 4.10 x 18 rear
triple Brembo discs with Moto Guzzi integral braking system

Front Suspension -
Rear Suspension -

Wheelbase -
Seat Height -
Weight (wet) -
Fuel Capacity -
Tyres -

150mph speedo with trip;
11 000rpm rev counter, red line at 8000rpm; warning lights for high beam, indicators, neutral, oil pressure, generator

160mph speedo, no trip;
10 000rpm rev counter, yellow line at 7000rpm, red at 8000rpm; warning lights for neutral, lights, oil pressure, high beam, generator

Brakes -

INSTRUMENTS

Test bike supplied by

Ken Dunmall

London Motorcycle Centre,
51 East Hill, Wandsworth,
London SW18

Tuning Modifications by

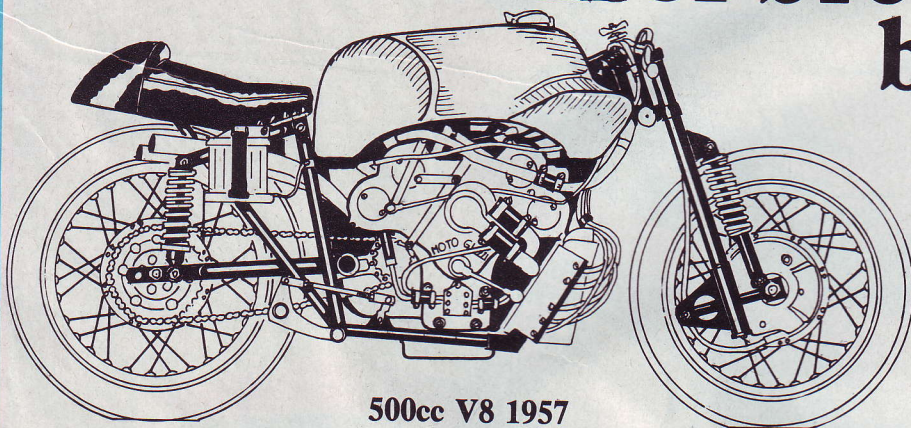
Hadleigh Custom, 75 Westborough Road, Westcliffe-on-Sea, Essex
Rickman Bros (Engineering) Ltd, Stern Lane, New Milton, Hants

STOP PRESS: As this copy went to press, the LMC was taken over by Three Cross Garage, Ringwood, Hants. The London firm's future is uncertain.

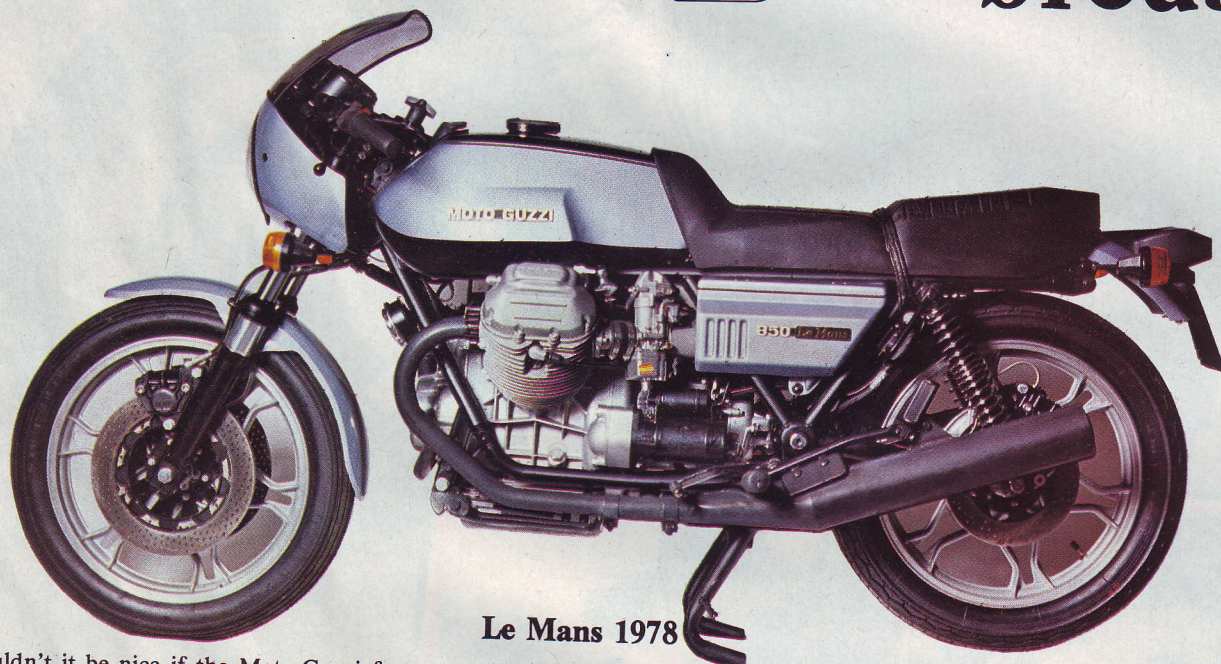
Rolling Chassis by



It takes years of breeding to build the world's finest Thoro'-breds



500cc V8 1957



Le Mans 1978

Wouldn't it be nice if the Moto-Guzzi factory could mass-produce their range of powerful sporting and touring V-twin motorcycles? Then it would be possible for more motorcyclists around the world to enjoy these machines of quality. The only trouble is, some changes in engineering design might be required to make them more suitable for mass-production. It might also be necessary to change some items, like the front forks and rear suspension units which play an important part in the superb handling qualities of the big Guzzis, or even change to steel instead of cast-iron brakes because new suppliers of these items would have to be found to cope with the increased production. Then slowly new machines would be designed by accountants and cost-clerks instead of people that love and understand what a real motorcycle is.

No — come to think of it, perhaps it is best to continue slowly building small quantities of fine quality motorcycles. After all somebody has got to teach these computers the difference between a real motorcycle and a two-wheeled product. After all if Moto Guzzi had not produced an integral brake system and did not fit cast-iron brakes (many professional road racers acknowledge that this is the safest braking system on any motorcycle) the steel disc would still be thought of as acceptable. If road testers could not ride a bike like a Guzzi every now and then, they might not know what a good handling bike is really like. The Moto Guzzi Le Mans not only won the Avon production race series last year, but filled three of the first four places. Moto Guzzi have made successful motorcycles for over 50 years. understandably they still do it a lot better than most.



Recommended

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