

Moto Guzzi 850 Le Mans

The Le Mans Moto Guzzi is the fastest bike to come from the famous factory by the shores of Lake Lugano in northern Italy. The bike is low, aggressive and very stylish which makes it a centre of attraction wherever it is stopped.

Heart of the beast is a massive vee-twin of 844cc capacity which sits transversely across the equally massive frame. The power output is 81bhp at 7600rpm which gives the bike a top speed of 134mph and enables it to accelerate to 60mph in 4.9 seconds. Such a thumping twin produces a lot of torque, which means that the Le Mans will pull from low speeds in high gears without fuss or fouling and with a great deal of force. In fact, changing

gear is a bit of a clunky positive affair due to the shaft drive and car-type single-plate dry clutch.

The bulk of the Le Mans' weight (486lb) is set very low in the frame which makes for a responsive bike when cornering, and it can be flicked from bank to bank quickly and efficiently without hesitation or fuss and so make riding on twisty country roads a delight to any rider.

The big Guzzi sports three spirally cross-drilled discs which are worked by the company's well known integral system. The right-hand front disc and the rear one are activated by the brake pedal which gives the former 70 per cent of the power and the latter 30 per cent. This means there is

an ideal balance between front and rear at all times so neither wheel should lock up; the left-hand front disc is operated by the hand lever. It is fair to say that the Moto Guzzi system has revolutionised braking in that it has taken from the rider the unenviable task of co-ordinating one hand and one foot precisely enough to stop a wheel locking, while still giving the bike maximum braking.

The saddle is remarkably low at 30.5in above the ground, but that does not detract from the riding position which is quite superb. One leans forward on the bike, café-racer-style, towards the drop handle bars to nestle behind the small screen. It all adds up to a feeling of a proper racing bike

and the machine's optional Italian racing red colour scheme will only enhance that feeling.

One criticism is that the pillion passenger is perched high up at the back in the air stream while the rider is crouched low; it could be a good way of losing close friends!

In all, the Moto Guzzi Le Mans 850 is a big, fast bike and, because of its simple pushrod layout and shaft drive, it is reliable and easy to maintain. It may not have the outright performance of some superbikes but it produces its performance in a more relaxed manner. Anyway, what it lacks in speed, it more than makes up for with its low, racing style looks.



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Engine

Air-cooled, four-stroke, 90° vee-twin. 83mm (3.27in) bore × 78mm (3.07in) stroke = 844cc (51.50cu in). Maximum power (DIN) 80bhp at 7300rpm. Light-alloy cylinder block and heads. Compression ratio 10.2:1. 2 main bearings. 2 valves per cylinder operated, via pushrods and rockers, by a single central camshaft. 2 Dell'Orto PHF 36B carburettors.

Transmission

Wet-multi-plate clutch and five-speed gearbox. Ratios – 1st 11.64, 2nd 8.08, 3rd 6.09, 4th 5.06, 5th 4.37:1. Shaft drive to rear wheel.

Suspension

Front – telescopic fork with springs and dampers. Rear –

swinging arm with coil-spring damper units.

Brakes

Double disc front and single disc rear, with patented coupling system.

Wheels and Tyres

3.50in × 18in front, 40in × 18in rear.

Weight

486lb (220kg).

Tank capacity

4.8gals (21.82 litres).

Performance

Maximum speed 134mph. Acceleration: standing start quarter mile 13.2secs, 0–60mph 4.9secs. Fuel consumption approximately 44mpg.

