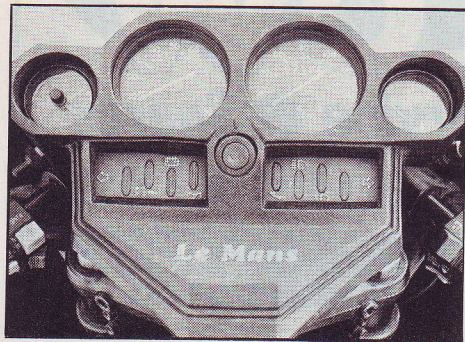


# On test

## Moto Guzzi Le Mans MkII

# The unhappy Townie



**Above:** Instrumentation is very comprehensive with lights for just about everything. The switchgear however, is only just adequate and more attention to the layout would have made it easier to use.

**Inset below:** The knee pads in the fairing were useful for taking the pressure off the rider's arms and wrists but could lead to sore knees on long runs.

WHY do I always get off to a bad start with Italian test bikes? The Guzzi Le Mans Mk II was no exception.

But before listing the defects, let me point out that they probably were not typical of the marque. Our particular test machine showed much evidence of crash repair, damage provided courtesy of a rider from a lesser magazine.

The fairing brackets had broken, been bronze welded, and broken again on one side. The right-hand carb fell off and the petrol tank rattled against the frame no matter how it was pushed around to gain clearance. There was also a knocking from the front end under heavy braking. Although it felt like the head bearings were loose, this wasn't the case.

To add to these troubles the first impressions were less than inspiring. The throttle is heavy and needs at least two big handfuls to find the stop, not that you can give the motor that much gas at anything less than 5,000rpm. It won't take it. Your knees hit the fairing and the gear changed clunked quite badly.

At town speeds the bike just wasn't happy, but then it was designed as a production racer and you wouldn't expect to plod about town without making some fuss. The big heavy flywheel tended to make the bike veer to one side as you pulled away and it took some time to get used to it. Then you steered left without thinking and the drunken sailor impersonation became a thing of the past.

The flywheel had quite an effect on handling too. At a steady cornering speed backing off — or opening up — produced a change in angle of bank. This meant that the bike picked up and ran wider, or felt like it was falling on top of you, depending on which silly thing you did with the throttle. You had to drive it through some corners and the faster you went the better the Pirelli Phantoms seemed to grip.

In fact, this seemed to be the secret of the big Guzzi — you had to ride it fast. The faster you went the better it felt. At speeds over 80mph the bike seemed to tighten up, the engine ran smoother and the gear change improved dramatically. Using full engine revs, and then making clutchless gear changes, the box slipped from one ratio to the next as smooth as silk.



by Dave Walker,

It was the same story with the engine. At low engine speeds the motor would not take much gas. Only when the tachometer reached 5,000rpm could you open up and feel the punch come flooding in. In fact, between 4,500 and 5,500rpm you gained 13bhp!

Like most road race engines the Le Mans gives peak torque, or maximum pulling power, very close to maximum revs. In terms of road use this means that to get the best performance from the engine, or even moderate performance, you have to use the engine revs.

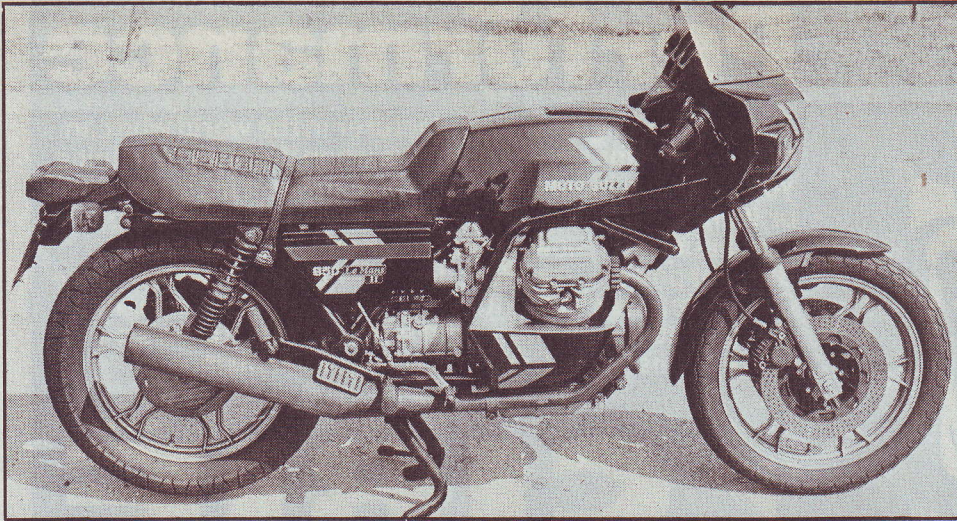
Vibration at low speed took some getting used to but at a steady 80mph (indicated) the motor felt very good, just a gentle vibration which kept the circulation going.

The seat was comfortable and the footrests were high enough to spread the load between arms and legs, avoiding to a large extent the broken wrist effect of clip-on bars.

The small fairing was also very effective, keeping wind pressure and rain off the rider at high speed. Stability wasn't all it might have been, but then this could have been put down to the previous crash which may well have left something slightly out of line. At speed on smooth corners, the bike had a tendency to weave which didn't encourage the rider to become too adventurous when testing the handling.

I didn't think the Guzzi was in the same class as the Ducati and a Darmah rider confirmed this belief by out cornering the





The Guzzi Le Mans is undeniably one of the best looking Italian bikes around. The Mk III version has just been announced but unfortunately, the most useful change, upgrading it to 1000cc, has not been made.

# The unhappy townie

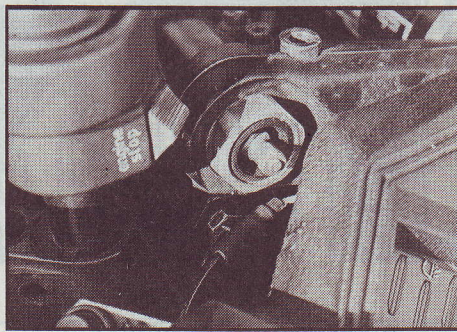
Le Mans in a series of tight roundabouts. A determined rider can certainly corner quickly, but then given enough effort, anything can be hustled round a bend.

Just after we booked this test of the Moto Guzzi Mk II, the Mk III was announced. This new model has several cosmetic changes, less fairing being one of them. The motor also pushes out more power, claiming something like 6bhp more than the Mk II. They aren't the changes I would have made. This bike would be much better at 1000cc which would improve tractability and offset the effect of the oversized valves and carbs making the machine much nicer to ride. The flywheel could also do with slimming down by a couple of tons! Spares 'n' Repairs at Watford do a big bore kit, but the flywheel is probably best left alone.

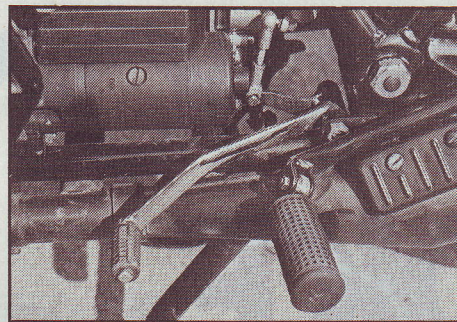
Well known to Guzzi enthusiasts is the linked braking system. One front disc and the rear are linked together with the pedal-operated master cylinder. The front brake lever operates the second disc on the front. I've never been really sold on this system although it is probably just a case of getting used to it. You couldn't argue about the results even if you didn't like the feel.

Stopping power was very good by any standards although putting the anchors on half way around a corner tended to lift the bike more than most. Another unwelcome lifting sensation was experienced when pulling away. For years people accepted this as characteristic of a shaft-driven machine. Then the Japanese started making shaft drive bikes that didn't do it?

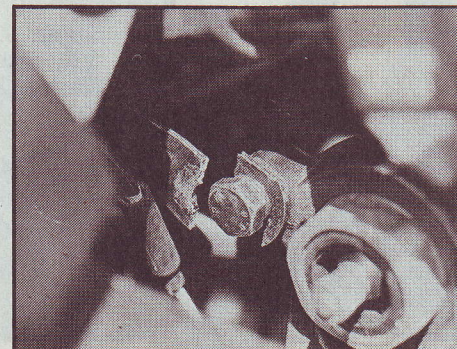
The Moto Guzzi was probably summed up by a Mk I-owning friend: "It's the sort of bike that you had to know you wanted before you got it. Then you loved it no matter what it turned out to be like."



Air caps on the forks are little more than a concession to current fashion. The tiniest amount of air alters the pressure in the legs dramatically, making accurate adjustment a tedious task.



The gearshift took some getting used to before crunchless changes were possible every time.



Ah that notorious Italian character Michael the Mouse had a hand in the design of this fairing bracket which cracked up in the test.

## Specification

### PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed .....	120.04mph
SS ¼ mile .....	13.58/101.89mph
30mph top gear roll-on .....	15.09/79.16mph
Fuel consumption:	
Best .....	61.1mpg
Worst .....	31.6mpg
Average .....	45.4mpg
Claimed power output .....	72bhp @ 7,300rpm

### ENGINE AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS

Type: 90 degree V twin	
Displacement .....	844cc
Bore x stroke .....	83 x 78mm
Compression ratio .....	10.2:1
Fuel system .....	two Dellorto UHF 36B(D)
Ignition .....	cb and coil
Lubrication .....	wet sump
Generator .....	280W alternator
Battery .....	12v 20A
Headlamp .....	12V 45/40W

### TRANSMISSION

Twin driven plate dry clutch, five speed gearbox with final drive by shaft.	
Final reduction .....	4.714:1
Gearbox ratios: 2, 1.388, 1.047, 0.869, 0.750.	

### CHASSIS

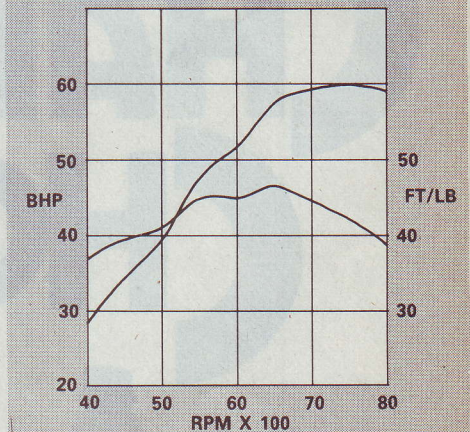
Telescopic front forks with swinging arm rear, adjustable rear dampers.	
Front tyre .....	100/90H18
Rear tyre .....	110/90H18
Wheelbase .....	58.4ins
Overall length .....	86ins
Overall width .....	24ins
Dry weight .....	431lbs
Fuel capacity .....	4.9gals
Oil capacity .....	3ltrs
LIST PRICE inc VAT and car tax .....	£2,999
Warranty: 12 months unlimited mileage.	
IMPORTER: Coburn & Hughes, 53/61 Park Street, Luton, Bedfordshire.	

### TESTER'S VERDICT

**Good points:** whole machine built for high speed use.

**Bad points:** whole machine built for high speed use!

Performance .....	good
Economy .....	can be very good
Handling .....	good, not brilliant
Comfort .....	not built for town use
Equipment .....	average
Value for money .....	poor
Braking .....	good



One upmarket gadget was the hazard flasher gear pointed out here by the grimy finger of the roadtester Dave Walker.