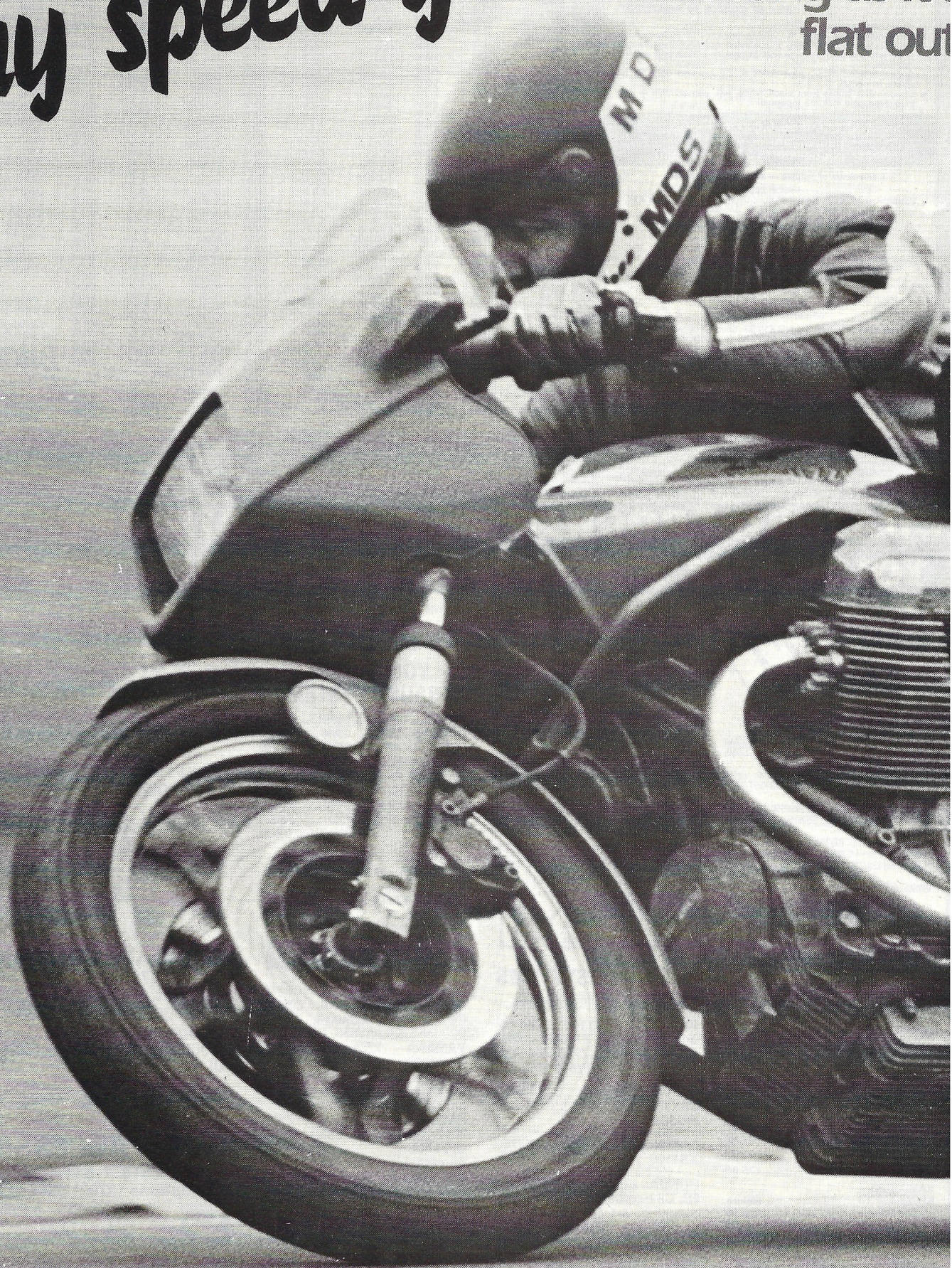


Any speed you like . . .
as long as it's
flat out



Oh Lemon three very pretty
Oh the Lemon's power is sweet
Oh there's something 'bout the Lemon that's
impossible to beat . . .

ANON

Mmm, we've all been wondering how Colin Taylor spends his leisure time. Now we know, he obviously goes to singing and poetry evening classes. Personally, I don't think there's much hope for someone who starts a road test like that. — Ed.

I missed out on a ride on the Mk II Le Mans. I can vividly remember the fun which I enjoyed on a late lamented mate's Mk I though. So I grasped with both hands the opportunity to try the new Mk III. Now grasping with both hands turned out to be the best way to ride the latest style off the Guzzi production line.

Just lately *Mechanics* have been testing some real arm-stretching rice grinders so the

occasional bike which looks and sounds a lot different is not only a welcome change to ride but it attracts a lot of attention to boot.

It's fair to say that the majority of the Occidental bike makers try to attract their customers by emphasis on style, handling, comfort or fuel range, leaving the Orientals to zap our minds with digital this and Turbo that. Well the Guzzi makes little pretence for comfort. It majors on style and handling with sufficient performance to allow you to enjoy yourself if you are prepared to work for it.

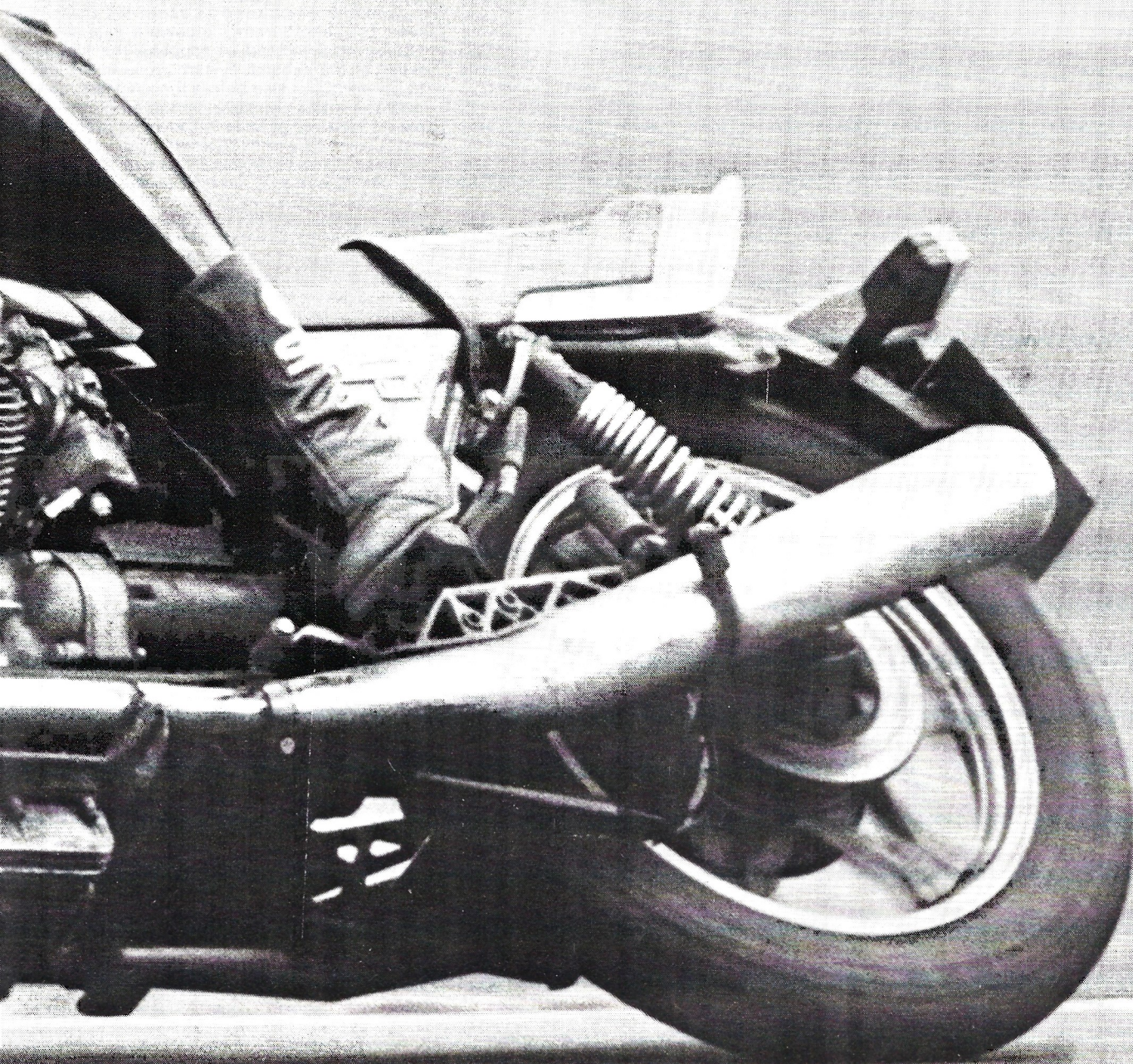
The owner's handbook suggests that the machine is aimed at the sporting type rider. The racing type carburettors, with accelerator pumps, require it to be ridden in a racing manner! Says the book.

There do not appear to have been many changes chassis wise. The inverted rear shocks are provided with adjustment for preload in five positions. The ubiquitous cam operated spring tensioner is employed to stiffen up the ride. Damping is by air cushioning with a coupling tube to keep the pressures

equal in each unit. The front end is suspended on telescopic forks which are also air filled. The rear suspension units are bought in by Guzzi, the name on the front forks suggest that they are made 'in house'. Not to decry them though as they seem to work jolly well and must contribute a deal to the positive handling.

The handling is just the same as Guzzi's always seems to be . . . terrific. I'm not one to make comparisons with the unapproachable lightly but I must say that the Mk III Le Mans does feel rather reminiscent of my trusty (not rusty) Manx Norton. With a balls out top speed of nearly 130 mph I guess the kellylike handling is not the only similarity either.

Seating comfort is poor both for rider and pillion alike. As you wind on the power you do tend to slide backwards along the seat. Martyn whose normal super standard of photographic workmanship illustrates this epistle will vouch for that. Whack on the brakes and the same happens but in the opposite direction. It's quite easy to bang your knees on the rocker ►



◀ covers but it always has been on the Le Mans and it's hard to see a simple way round that problem.

Now I'm not a big lover of the coupled brake system that Guzzi use but it is essential to admit that you can stomp hard on the brake pedal that operates the rear and one front Brembo and the bike really does 'anchor up'. It does take some getting used to though. It could be that as the bike's main braking system is operated from the pedal, that some more mechanical leverage would be of benefit. It did seem to me that rather heavy pressure was needed on the pedal. But stand on it hard and you'll certainly stop ... and how.

I did try extremely hard to get the wheels to lock up under braking but it was very difficult to do. Perhaps a number fourteen bus pulling out in front of me might have made it easier but it did seem that it was possible to get the rubbers to shriek a little as their treads were

tortured but actually locking up the wheels was hard to do. A good thing that is too for it seemed that such rapid retardation of the rate of forward progress without recourse to locked wheels would be hard to equal.

Whilst mentioning the tyres, as supplied the bike had some Metzeler on. They seemed just fine — you could try to wop the Jap mounted boys with no fear of the treads letting go. However the rear tyre did develop a nasty centre tread cut and so a Pirelli Phantom was fitted. The bike's ever secure steering did not seem to be affected by a German boot on one foot and an Italian boot on the other.

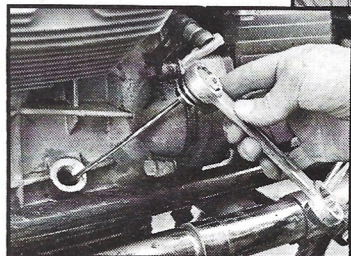
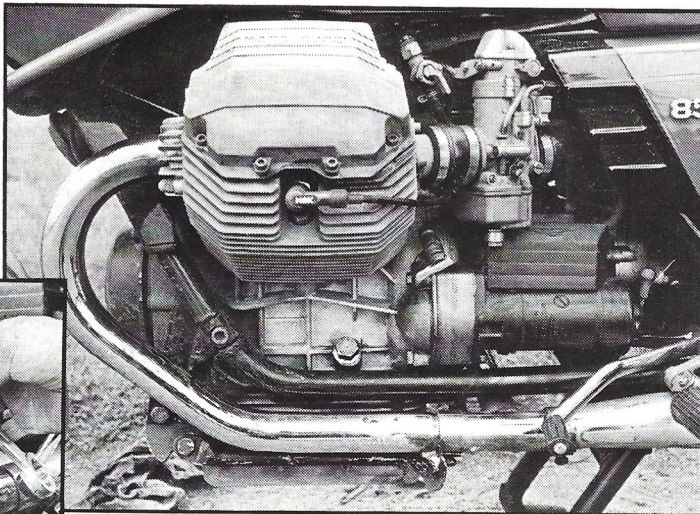
Keep the motor on the boil, over 6000 is where it's at, and riding is really quite a lot of fun. You'll have to keep working at the gear-shift to keep the needle in the fun zone but playing at racers is rather good really!

A few modifications have been made to the III, some to appease the legislators, some for style reasons. Intake noise has been stifled

Top. The instruments are dominated by the rev counter.

Centre. More angular finning and only one balance pipe on the exhaust set the three apart from the two.

Below. The dipstick needs the spanner to remove it.



with the fitting of some sound (and power?) deadening filters in lieu of the velocity stack bellmouths which used to adorn the Dell'Ortos. The afterburning pipework has been altered also. Instead of coupling the header pipes of the exhaust system close to the exhaust ports and also before the silencers, now only the lower coupling pipe is employed. It makes for cleaner lines to the system. Silencing is taken care of by mufflers from Lafrancconi. They do seem to cage more of the dBa's than the Contis ever did but half the fun of the Le Mans used to be the occasional broken window pane. Still the throbberob is still there albeit a trifle more subdued than it used to be.

The Eagle eyed will also have spotted a few cosmetic alterations to the finning of the barrels and heads, there's a smaller steering head cowl/bikini fairing than the II wore. I preferred



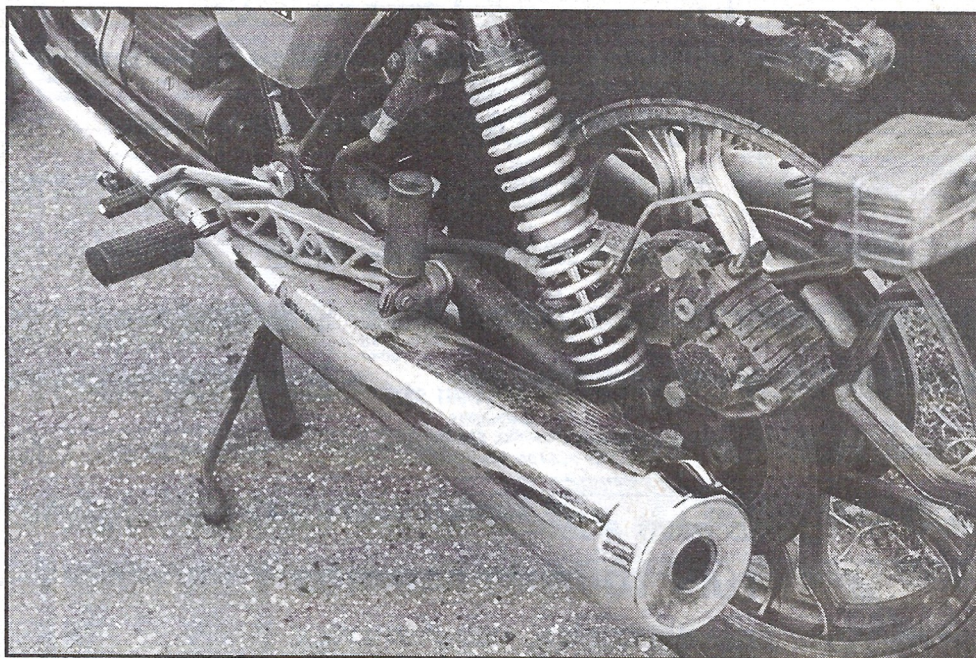
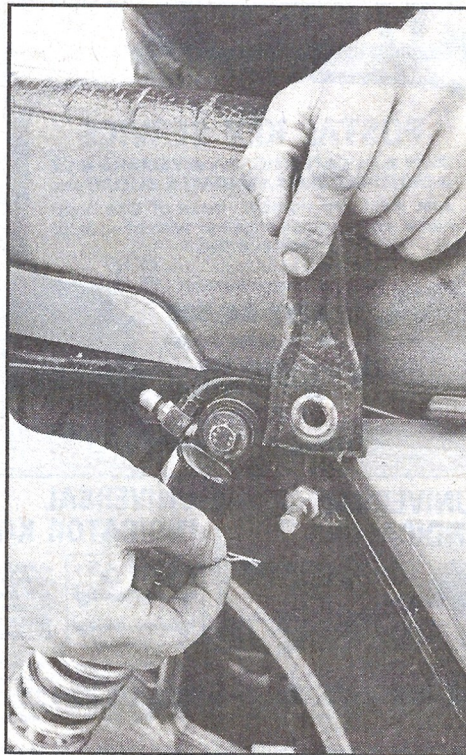
◀ the bigger wind shielding of the II, to look at that is. This little screen is not really for crouching behind but its 'kick-up' shape does divert some of the wind and airborne insects over the rider's head.

Ride it like a boy racer and it's quite thirsty. Consumption in the order of the high twenties (in miles for the gallon, not litres, that is) will be the result. If you can resist the temptation to take the tach needle near the red zone in the gears you can achieve closer to fifty to the gallon.

The rev counter is centrally mounted in the instrument cluster, it's bigger, by far, than the speedo. On the bike we borrowed the speedo was calibrated in metric and it broke to boot! The boys at Guzzi obviously realise what's what though, hence the size differential of the tach. After all that's what you'll be looking at most on this bike.

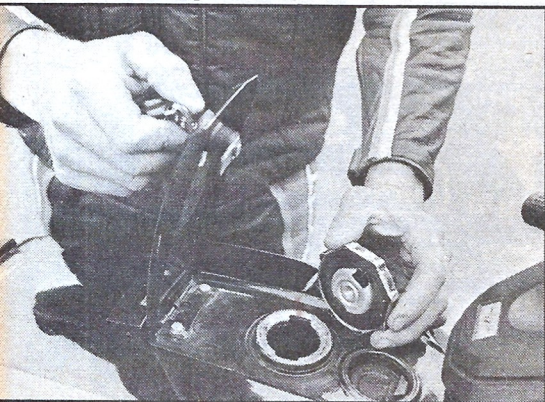
Something needs to be done about the watertightness of the cover flap which is fitted over the fuel filler cap. The latter is housed in a recess in the tank which the key opened flap exposes. Water gets in and there was even evidence of the dreaded Ferric Oxide and this on one so young. Either a drain hole to allow the water a way out or a more sophisticated cover would stop this problem.

While I'm moaning, the twistgrip is a little heavy to operate but it's not that bad and what else is your right arm for? You can't drive off with the side stand down on this bike no way.



Top. The saddle strap has to be removed to allow you to swing the saddle up for access to the tools.

Below. The fuel tank filler is under this flap. The cavity by the delicately manicured second finger fills with rain.

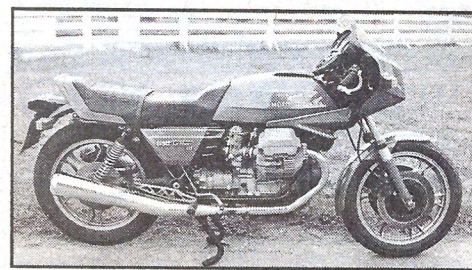


Above: Rear brake is by Brembo, as are the front two. One front disc and the rear one are operated from the pedal.

The retraction is automatic with springs. It flies back like a rat trap. The chokes should be moved to a more realistic place of operation. It's not that convenient to shut them off on-the-move. They're on the left side of the engine at present, the handlebar would be a more sensible place for them to be operated from.

Scratch one if you can! whilst everyone else builds bikes which are much the same it's kinda nice to find one that's been different for quite a while and although it's had to change a bit to stay alive, not all its naughtiness has been curbed and it still seems quite easy to live with and not that easy to live without.

Colin Taylor



MOTO GUZZI LE MANS MK III

Recommended retail price incl. VAT £2,899
Warranty: 12 months unlimited mileage

PERFORMANCE

Top speed — upright	119 miles per hour
— prone	127.5mph
Standing start 1/4 mile	12.72 @ 109.4mph
Fuel consumption — worst	29.7 miles per gallon
— average	39.5 miles per gallon

ENGINE

Type	90 'v' twin overhead valve push rod
Bore and stroke	83mm x 78mm
Piston displacement	844.05ccm
Compression ratio	9.8:1
Fuel system	2 Dell 'Orto PHF 36B carburettors
Ignition system	Coil and contact breaker set

TRANSMISSION

Gears	Five
Clutch	Dry
Primary drive	Gear
Final drive	Carden Shaft and bevels
Primary reduction	1.235:1
Final reduction	4.714:1
Gear ratios	2:1, 1.388:1, 1.047:1, 0.869:1, 0.75:1

ELECTRICS

Generator	14 volt 20 amp
Battery	12V Ah
Headlamp	55/45 Watt

CHASSIS

Front suspension	air/oil assisted telescopic
Rear suspension	Paoli coupled air/spring units
Trail	N/A
Castor	N/A
Front tyre	Metzeler
Rear tyre	Metzeler and Pirelli (see text)
Front brake	Brembo 300mm discs
Rear brake	Brembo 240mm disc
	Petal operates one front disc and the rear disc. H/bar lever operates the other front disc

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	1505mm (59ins)
Length	2184mm (86ins)
Dry weight	454lbs
Fuel capacity	28 Litres

IMPORTER

Coburn & Hughes,
51-61 Park Street, Luton

TESTER'S VERDICT

Good points	Boy racer
Bad points	Comfort
Performance	Workable
Economy	Achievable
Handling	Superb
Comfort	Uncomfortable
Braking	Differently excellent
Equipment	Sparse
Value	Pricey

MECHANICS