



CAGIVA W8 125

DIRTY LAUGH

It's a 125cc trailie that costs £1000 more than a DT125R. Is 31bhp, Italian styling, and true off-road prowess worth three grand? "Yep," says John Westlake

IF MANUFACTURERS really wanted their "dual purpose" machines to perform on- and off-road, they'd make them like Cagiva's W8; light, powerful and robust with very knobbly knobbles. You can have as many stickers as you like saying your 200kg trailie with road tyres is a go anywhere, dirt-eating demon machine, but in truth it isn't. Faced with a slippery slope between you and the pub, it would be quicker to turn your Dr Africa Tenere around, go back down the green lane short cut, and blast to the boozier by road. The W8 would be waiting for you in the car park.

From the moment you size up the 36 inch high seat and wonder if you're going to rupture something-vital just getting on the thing, it becomes clear the W8 is more an off-road bike that's been made road legal than a road bike with excess wheel travel and dubious brakes. Admittedly our test bike still had a plastic tank which isn't quite road legal, but a metal one will be standard when the W8 becomes available in March.

Ample ground clearance and those Pirelli Rallycross knobbles (they didn't actually say "for off-road use only" on them so we assume they're legal) mean green lanes, and even brown sloppy muddy ones, can be tackled confidently and, in the right hands, quickly — the race version of the W8 (available from Cagiva's off-road division) is remarkably similar to the road-going model.

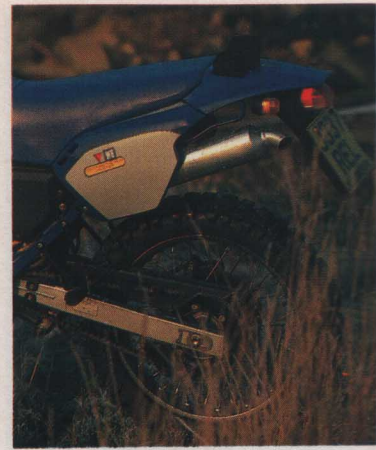
With its off-road bias (stock, the W8 is more than a match on dirt for KMXs, XTs and even KDXs), the on-road half of the W8 equation could have proved troublesome; in fact it just managed to stay inside the terror envelope.

Had the 125 weighed much more than its 120kg, the brakes and tyres would not have been able to cope with stopping in a hurry; had the twin-pot Brembos on the single front disc been any stronger the knobbly would have been in all sorts of trouble; had the two-stroke single produced more than its 31bhp the W8 would have managed speeds not advisable with a thin, knobbly 21 inch front tyre — at an indicated 85mph (chin on tank, tucked in behind the tiny racing-number screen, looking a prat, etc) the front end felt understandably vague; the W8 was not designed for dual carriageway heroics.

At appropriate speeds the bike felt

safe, if a little wallowy due to the suspension being set up to handle loads of stuttery bumps rather than mid-bend undulations. But even when pushed to the point where the tyres felt as though they shouldn't be pushed much further (not surprisingly the tyres were the main limit on road performance), the W8 never felt as if it couldn't be pulled back from the brink — after riding bikes nearly twice the weight, it was easy to take liberties with the Cagiva.

Cagiva claims the W8 engine (from the Mito) has enough top-end poke for off-road experts and on-road blasters, yet has a mid-range capable of making relaxed riding a possibility. The claim is a valid one.

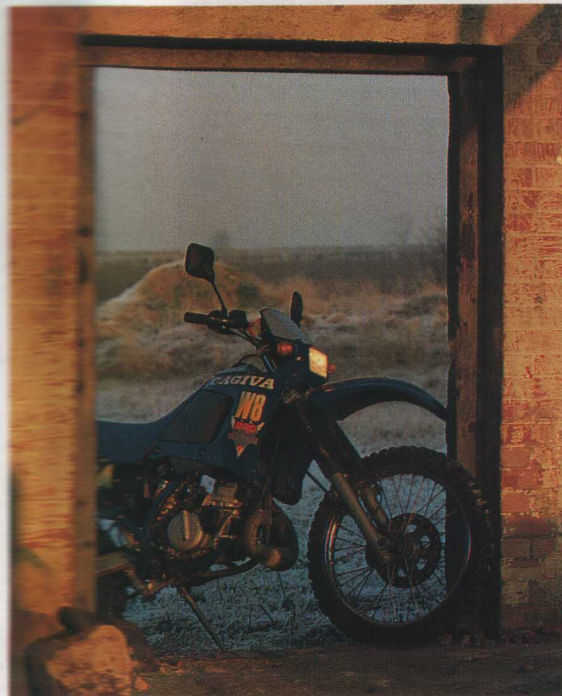


Pirelli Rallycross tyres survive roads and will slaughter trails

general finesse of its cockpit, but the layout of the idiot lights was superior; the neutral light didn't actually work, but what the hell, it adds to the feel that you're riding a pukka off-road beastie. This feeling is maintained by the mirrors, as they might as well not exist for all the good they do. It's not vibrations — these are surprisingly subdued — but the mirrors' position; stick your elbows out, like all the proper motocross boys do, and with a bulky jacket on you can see naff-all behind.

Being young and impressionable, most learners place the looks of their bike above all else, which is where the W8 could suffer. Although not an ugly bike, it looks a bit spindly and pales into dullness beside stunners like the Super City, Suzuki's new RG125 and Aprilia's Futura, which are all around the same price, if not cheaper. A valiant attempt to spice it up with stickers shouting "PRO Action", "Discover the new Frontier" and "Sport and Nature" (ironically this one is right by the single spannie which belches thick black smoke on choke), doesn't quite succeed.

The real reward for W8 ownership arrives when you present your full licence to the dealer and he removes whatever Cagiva stuffed up the exhaust to restrict the power (a 10 minute job). You can then keep the W8, go out and buy a ZXR400 to blast around on when it's sunny, and have a superb off-road machine to go green laning when the fancy takes you. A cunning plan, you'll agree. If only... □



Electronic powervalve on ex-Mito engine gives W8 a useable mid-range and a healthy surge at 7000rpm

At 7000rpm there's a burst of power that is well worth chasing up and down the slick six-speed gearbox. The powerband is not as harsh or exciting as the Super City's (Cagiva's 34bhp pose version of the W8), but the mid-range is far more useable. An electronic powervalve, rather than the mechanical variety used on full monty off-road machines which accentuate the powerband, means you can bumble through town knowing that another 4000 revs are not needed before you consider overtaking. It's all relative of course, because the W8 is no FJ1200 and as with all 125 two-strokes the quickest way to get anywhere is to rev its nuts off.

Under braking the 260mm front disc is capable of producing rapid dive from the 40mm forks and a scraping noise from the front tyre as the knobblies complain they haven't anything to get their teeth into, but braking is nowhere near as sharp as the Super City. The 220mm rear disc was powerful and progressive enough to get you into the habit of using it just as your CBT instructor told you (the Super City front brake was so strong that the rear brake was all but redundant).

Once the restrictors have been stuffed up the exhaust to limit power to 12bhp and speeds to the high 40s, the brakes will be perfectly adequate for learners not bent on doing stop-

pies at every set of lights; if they get bored they can always shift their weight back, slip that clutch and go for wheelies.

For swinging around town with the girls watching, or negotiating cones with the CBT examiner watching, the W8 is the business. Loads of steering lock, a slim cross-section, and that tractable engine mean weaving through obstacles is simple. But beware ye of little legs — the performance will be marred if you pull up and fall off because you can't get a foot down.

Switchgear is almost worthy of a 125 expected to cost around £3000. The W8 lacked the temperature gauge of the Super City and the

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Price	£3000-£3250
Engine	Liquid cooled, reed-valve single
Capacity	124.6cc
Power	31bhp
Torque	n/a
Dry weight	120kg (264lb)
Availability	Via Three Cross M/C from March, 0202 824531