

# MOTOR CYCLE WEEKLY

ON SALE WEDNESDAY  
WEEK ENDING 14th MAY 1983

50p

BRITAIN'S  
ONLY  
WEEKLY  
BIKING  
MAGAZINE

**BMF rally preview**  
**V-Twins on test:**  
**Ducati 900S2,**  
**Honda VT250F**

**Reports:**

**Scottish Six Days Trial**  
**West German road race GP**  
**England v USA speedway**



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**BRITAIN'S ONLY WEEKLY  
BIKING MAGAZINE**

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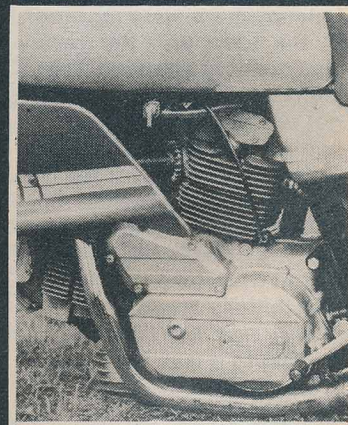
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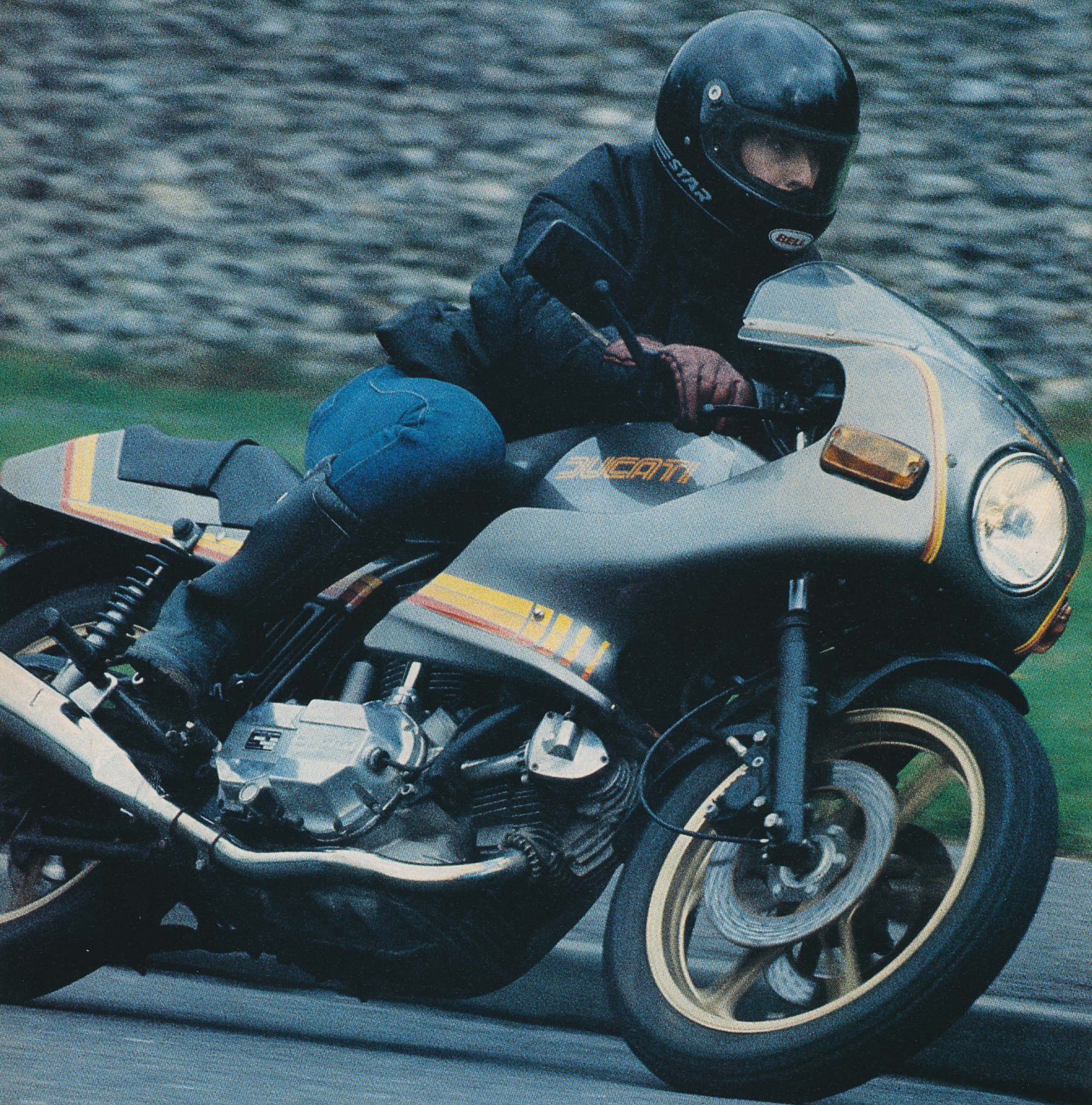
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## IN COLOUR

Cover: John Lampkin, high above Kinlochleven, 20 miles from Fort William, attacks the last section of Altnafeadh on the first day of the SSdT. He finished the week in fourth place.







"SHE'S IN a class of her own"... "Dream handling from this elegant Italian"... "She's a real weight watcher".

Headlines from a Miss World contest? Not quite. They all come from Ducati road tests in past Motor Cycle Weeklies and all apply to the latest offering from the Italian factory—the 900S2.

She's an out-and-out road-going speed machine that has all the looks of a Miss World winner—sleek design, low weight and gorgeous curves. A cross between Charles Atlas and a Sun Page Three Pin-up, something no Jap bike can achieve.

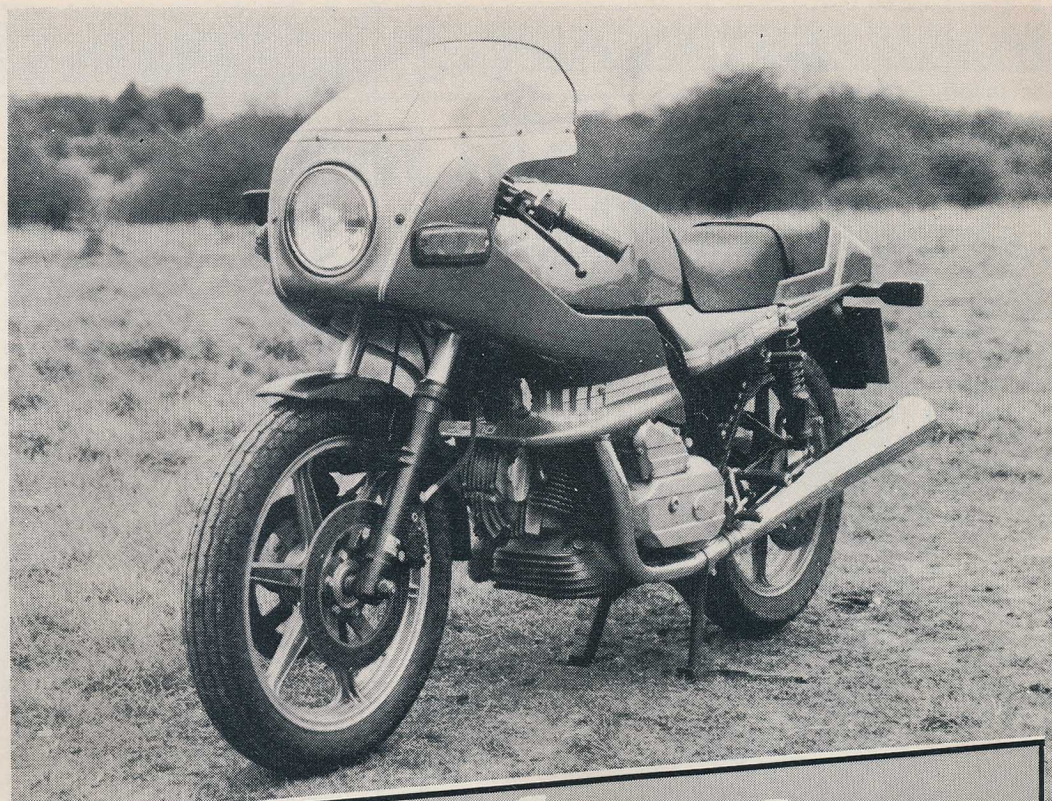
That is not the description I would have applied to the Duke before I had the pleasure of testing it, though: I'd been blinkered by thinking constantly up-dated Jap bikes were the only answer.

I've been pleasantly surprised in my first Ducati test to find I enjoyed every moment of it. It's the kind of bike that every rider I met took an interest in, whether they were riding a Suzuki, Lambretta, Puch Maxi or Harley. My initial impression was that it wasn't as nice looking as the 900 Super Sport, but the restyled bodywork, now more like its smaller brother, the 600 Pantah, grows on you.

The fairing has been brought further down around the engine, which protects more of your legs from the nasty elements while still retaining the sporty image. Petrol tank, seat and rear tail piece are also new and look great.

Riding position is an all-important factor to consider before buying this Ducati. I'm of average height but it was still a long reach to the uncomfortable clip-on handlebars, no position for anyone wanting to travel further than the 150 miles I did in one hit. The rearsets were not quite so bad, but did have the tendency to stick up in the fold-away position, and were also set too close to the passenger footrests.

While the riding position is fairly uncomfortable the dual seat was surprisingly good. On earlier models the seat had been cause for complaint, but the new rubber and foam item is much more comfortable than it looks.



## Pin-up for a winding road

The pillion end of the seat, on the other hand, was not quite so good and could easily cost you girlfriends and mates as the miles roll on, and maybe as your mates roll off, since no grab rail is fitted. It's really unacceptable that, on such a fast-accelerating bike, a simple, cheap grab rail is left off.

When I could actually drag myself off the Duke I found I had to use the centre stand because there's no side stand, another simple extra that could be fitted. Easing the bike

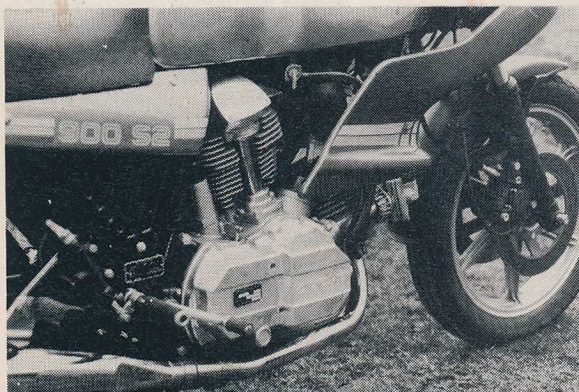
on to the centre stand was facilitated by a small lever that could be folded away after use.

It's a shame that the Duke's engine isn't so much the focal point as before, because of the larger fairing concealing it. Even with this extra protection the engine externals showed evidence of corrosion, the barrels and engine cases both looked much older than they were and the carbs looked years old.

The big 90-degree engine started life back in 1971 as a 750, then in '75 it was completely re-designed,

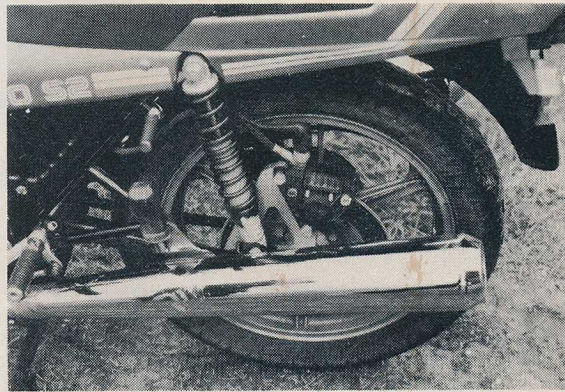
not just overbored, and called the 860. March, 1977, saw the introduction of the 900 Super Sport which still had the 860 engine but lacked an electric start. Now the 900S2 replaces the 900SS and has optional electric start for an extra £70. I think it's worth paying the extra £70 and having the electric start.

The clutch was the normal cable operated type and felt just right, not too stiff like I've found other Italian clutches. The five-speed gearbox was a bit clunky and it was very awkward to find neutral when stopped in first gear. The Duke isn't



**Left:** Big 90-degree V engine isn't so much the focal point as before because of the larger fairing, but still gives off a mean sound.

**Right:** What more could you ask than Pirelli tyres, Brembo brakes, and Marzocchi shocks; and all are standard. Note the small lever to help pull the Duke on to the centre stand.



## Paul Carroll tests Ducati's 900S2



# ROAD TEST READOUT

**MACHINE:** DUCATI 900S2

**PRICE:** £3,369 (less £70 for kickstart-only model)

**WARRANTY:** 12 month unlimited mileage

## PERFORMANCE

**MEAN MAXIMUM SPEEDS:** Rider prone: 123.0. Rider upright: 116.0

**BEST ONE-WAY SPEED:** 123.94mph

**MEAN QUARTER-MILE:** 13.34secs/100.84mph

**BEST QUARTER-MILE:** 13.14 secs/101.89mph

**MAXIMUM POWER:** 57bhp at 7,400rpm

**MAXIMUM TORQUE:** 6.38kgm at 6,000

**FUEL CONSUMPTION:** Overall: 43.9. Best: 49.2. Worst:

37.8. Average fuel tank range: 130 miles

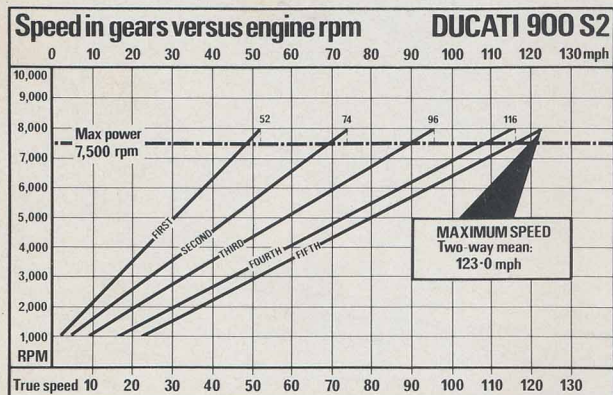
**BRAKING DISTANCE:** None due to seized gearbox

**SPEEDO ACCURACY:**

Indicated mph: 30 50 70 100

Actual mph: 27.14 47.56 67.78 95.49

Test conditions: Machine tested by 11 stone rider in leathers at Motor Industry Research Association track, Nuneaton.



## ENGINE

**CAPACITY:** 864cc (86 × 74.4)

**COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9.3:1

**CARBURATION:** Two Dell 'Orto 40mm carbs with accelerator pumps

**TRANSMISSION:** Helical primary gears. Wet multiplate clutch and five-speed gearbox. Final drive by chain

## ELECTRICS

12V 14Ah battery, 200 alternator and voltage regulator. 6.5in headlight with 55/60W bulb. Indicators, headlamp flasher, engine cut out and electric starter

## CYCLE PARTS

**FRAME:** Duplex cradle type

**SUSPENSION:** Marzocchi rear shocks and front forks

**WHEELS & TYRES:** Six spoke light alloy wheels. Tyres: Front

## COMPARISONS

	Capacity cc	Price £	Speed mph	Fuel mpg	St ¼ mile, sec/mph
Ducati 900S2	864	3,369	123	43.9	13.14/101.89
Honda CB900F-C	902	2,625	126.31	1	12.25/110.00
Moto Guzzi Le Mans	844	2,899	125.65	41.1	12.89/104.34
Suzuki GSX1000S	998	2,750	137.19	44.5	11.34/120.09
Kawasaki Z1000R	998	2,559	131.54	40.0	11.83/111.14

Test Machine provided by Colburn & Hughes, 53-61 Park Street, Luton, Beds.

the kind of bike that likes travelling along at 40mph in fifth gear; it wouldn't pull top gear at anything less than 65mph.

Although the V-twin engine is low revving, the minimum non-scratch speed was around 1500rpm thanks to the high gearing. Third gear is the main cog for town running. But with accelerator pumps fitted to each of the 40mm Dell 'Orto carbs every twist of the throttle injects more petrol, making a mockery of the above-average long-distance fuel figures of slightly under 50mpg and bringing the town riding mpg down to 39mpg and the overall mpg to 43.

With this good fuel consumption on high-speed, long-distance rides, you can expect close-ups of the petrol pumps every 140 miles or so. Our test model didn't like being on reserve one bit; on two occasions I had to push the Duke to the local petrol station after it had gone on to reserve on the way home and wouldn't start the next morning.

The engine did sound quite mechanically noisy and the deep throaty sound from the Silentium exhausts turned heads everywhere, not to mention waking the neighbours up every morning. Vibration was minimal; the only thing to shake loose was the mirror, which was secured by an allen bolt. Was the right allen key in the toolkit? No it wasn't. Fitted to the handlebar end, the mirror wasn't really of any use at all, giving a good view of my right arm. It would be of more use fitted on to the fairing, where it would also considerably reduce the overall width of the bike. On one trip up to MIRA through London's rush hour I had to twist the mirror round to avoid scraping cars.

The top speed we could achieve on the Duke was 123.94mph. One of the reasons for this low top speed was that only after four runs the screw holding the gear selector came out, locking the gearbox in first. The second reason was that because the Duke is so long-legged it was still accelerating through the timing lights. By the way, after the screw was replaced the box was as good as new. This problem also stopped us from getting any braking figures.

Not that we had to prove the excellent Brembo calipers and discs would stop the bike quickly, as they are known to be the finest around. The three fitted to the Duke were very progressive and never locked up at any time, making wet weather riding quite safe. Stopping from high speed was exceptional, whereas when riding two-up poodling around town they felt rather spongy unless big handfuls were applied—a feel that's the opposite to most Jap brakes.

The discs were made of cast iron and drilled to disperse heat and rain water. The main problem with cast iron discs is their ability to collect a coating of rust overnight, although this never made any difference to the brakes themselves over the short period I had the Duke. In time, as happened to our long-term test Moto Guzzi, the calipers could clog

up with rust, and the pistons seize.

Ducatis are well known for their good handling and it's all true; you can zoom into any corner at ten mph faster than you would on any other bike and feel twice as safe. The bike is so rigid, you definitely see life at different angles on a Duke.

Helping to keep the Duke stuck to the road are a pair of Pirelli Phantoms. These have been fitted on Dukes for many years and are excellent boots, perfect for this bike.

They are fitted to a pair of gold-coloured six-spoke wheels that are now made by Ducati. Past Dukes have used Speedline wheels and Campagnolo wheels.

Drive to the rear wheel is by chain which, over the two weeks I had the pleasure of riding the Duke, never needed adjusting. Both mudguards were made in black plastic and looked quite good, unlike the cheap and nasty appearance these have on some other bikes.

## Restricted

The rear suspension felt a little hard. Marzocchi shocks are used, but not the top of the range Stradas, just the basic type. Also made by Marzocchi, the front forks are very good but did on one or two occasions bottom out under heavy braking. A relatively low weight of only 478lbs (with oil and one gallon of fuel) made the Duke easy to throw around and also somewhat negated the effect of the terribly restricted steering lock. Three-point turns are the order of the day, unfortunately.

In front of the handlebars are all the usual instruments. The speedo was fairly accurate, recording 95.49 at an indicated 100mph. On this model the odometer and trip meter were calibrated in kilometres. The row of warning lights made their own minds up whether they were going to work or not; one trip down the motorway saw the generator light on full, the light switch flickering and the clock lights not working. It was like Piccadilly Circus and the electrics are not up to scratch, even though they have been replaced in recent years by Nippon Denso components.

The 6.5 inch headlight was exceptionally good, considering it wasn't the halogen type, just a normal 55/60 bulb. Back and front lights and the indicators all worked well despite the warning panel lights. Directly underneath the instruments is the choke, which is operated by a cam. There are no multi-positions, just on or off, but it gave no trouble and was easy to reach. A toolkit that includes a real pair of pliers is housed in the tail-piece. Four different keys are used on the Duke, one for each keyhole. Why not just have one key for the lot?

At a price of £3,369 the Ducati is by no means cheap. For less cash you can buy a faster machine, but if you want a bike that's different from the crowd, a bike that everybody admires, the Ducati 900S2 is for you.