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FEATURE ARTICLES:

ROAD TESTS — Kawasaki, Laverda, Moto Guzzi & Yamaha

LOOKING BACK ON THE TT by Mick Grant

TAKING YOUR BIKE THROUGH FRANCE TO SPAIN

VELOCETTE REBUILD

ROAD SAFETY

..... **AND MUCH MORE**

No show without Punch

by JOHN FAIRCLOUGH

And punch is what the Moto Guzzi Spada has plenty of. It comes from an incredibly agricultural lump of a motor which jangles and rattles and feels like something out of a water pump: fine for draining the road, you might think, not flying along it between two wheels.

But first impressions are not what this 949cc motor's about. The rockings and pulsations from the transverse V-twin when ticking over are enough to make the four-across-the-frame brigade reach for their style leathers and depart in a hurry. But stay with the motor long enough, and you learn to love its idiosyncratic nature; it takes on a friendly, familiar air, relaxed, incredibly forgiving. It has things called pushrods (What, Dad?) and won't rev. That it doesn't need to soon becomes evident: by 6,000 r.p.m. it's delivered its gut-wrenching torque (a claimed 62.2lb-ft at 5,200 r.p.m.) and needs to spin no more. The engine's charm is even more noticeable on a mill with 25,000 miles on its bores, untouched, as you'd expect with a Guzzi, apart from routine servicing, and still using the original points.

First impressions of the engine and the machine as a whole are not improved when pulling away from rest. Too few revs and the motor flips the bike from side to side, the clutch grabs, the steering is heavy and the brakes unimpressive. Leaving Motorcycle World in fine L-plate style, I trickled the Guzzi through Bradford's heavy Saturday traffic "bound in to saucy doubts and fears". So was Macbeth, but he'd only killed a king, not borrowed an expensive Italian motorcycle for ten days.

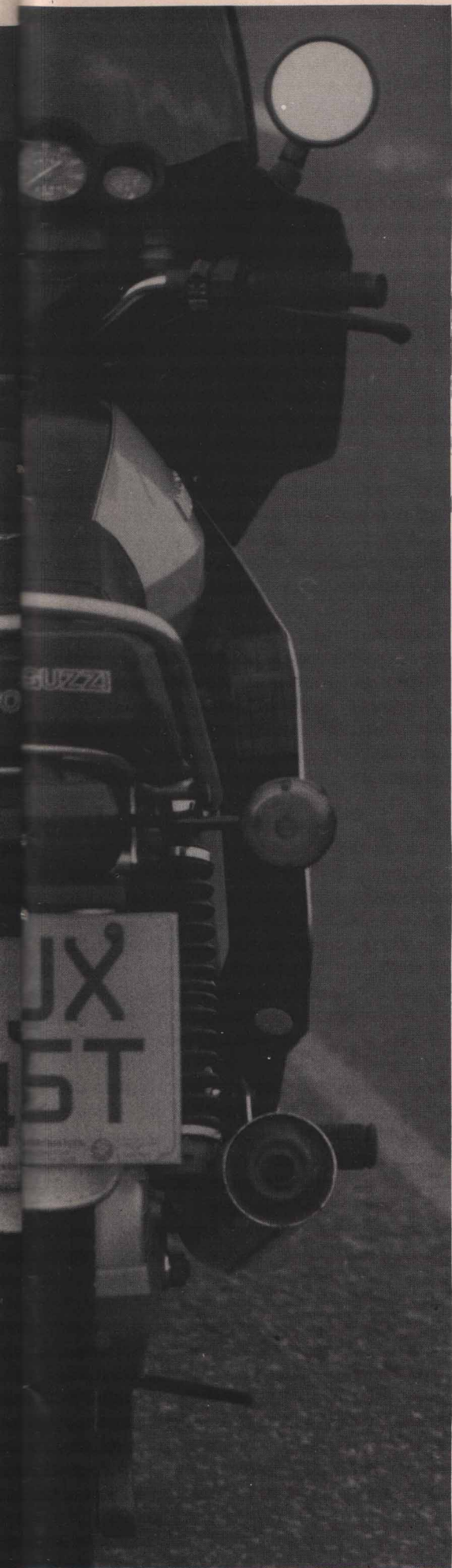
The bike is a real pain in traffic, and after some thirty urban miles. I was

comparing it unfavourably with my own Ducati. Though the engine will plod in top, and even run down to 2,000-3,000 r.p.m., it's rough, lumpy power that's available and the bike wants to lie down when stopping at junctions and traffic lights. On open stretches, quick blasts showed the fairing to be something of a joke. Turbulence is incredible up to 80 m.p.h., though still noticeable at three figure speeds. It's head-buffeting, ear-pounding stuff which only disappears if you crouch uncomfortably and look through the tinted screen. Sitting bolt upright, and as far forward on the seat as you can get, intensifies the blast, but at least it becomes consistent. The footrests seem well placed, but induce aching thighs.

Inauspicious beginnings certainly. But they served to stress the fact that the Guzzi is not a machine to assess on the basis of a quick blast down the road. As the mileage increased, so did my enthusiasm for the Spada. I learned to accept its faults because it did some things so well, and some of the faults disappeared as the bike let me know how it wanted to be ridden. Its looks charm you. The styling is understated, nicely angular; the cockpit is business-like, and the retroussé Le Mans type silencers (replaced by conventional-looking Lanfranconi mufflers on the current NT) add a sporty touch.

The final outing on the Spada, in company with the Z1000J, left me enthusing over the Italian bike. Away from towns and heavy traffic, the Guzzi is a different bike. Its heaviness goes and the bike's handling, taut and faultless, can be exploited to the full. This Spada handled, in spite of an odd trye combination (TT100 front;





Continental rear), and a fondness for shaking its head somewhat at 100 m.p.h. It's at this sort of speed that the linked brakes' low-speed woodenness is forgotten. This system wipes off speed quickly and does not upset the bike's equilibrium. Using just the foot pedal kept the machine pinned to the road without forks diving or rear end lifting, and so the Spada arrived at corners poised and ready to be 'tweaked' round on the throttle. Using the hand lever in conjunction with the foot pedal gave even more impressive retardation, but used by itself this brake's pads merely nibbled the right-hand disc.

The suspension seemed spot-on. It complemented the bike's handling and braking to perfection, lacking the bone-jarring harshness of some Italian machines, but not wallowing like some Oriental ones. Rushing down the gearbox when in a hurry is definitely out. It's a noisy, clunky procedure and the shaft's positive take-up can lock the rear wheel. In any case, the Spada doesn't mind too much about being in the right gear at the right time. Torque saves embarrassment.

Chassis, brakes, suspension, engine, all contribute to the feeling of safety transmitted to the rider by the predictability of the machine. The whole package encouraged relaxed riding, not of the negative variety, but a smooth, flowing series of movements in harmony with the machine's nature. 'Spada' is something of a misnomer; progress is not in the least sword-like, and yet the folding footrests and Le Mans centre stand (fitted to our test bike) could still caress the tarmac in fine style. It's a deceptive high-speed fool that could stay in touch with the Kawasaki on sweeping main roads and go ahead when the going got really tight, though naturally, on the motoway later, the Kawasaki did the vanishing act. At high speeds the Spada's indifferent gearchange, poor fairing, uncomfortable riding position and not exactly fumble-proof switchgear faded away. The bike, you might say, got its act together; crude, to some extent, like Punch's. Like Punch,

too, the Spada seemed to thrive on hard use.

A SECOND OPINION

by Bob Paterson

My first impressions of the Spada weren't lasting ones. After three days and 300 miles, what at first seemed a crude machine now exuded character.

Probably my first mistake was to try to make the Guzzi go quickly. This you just can't do. The machine encourages precise, methodical riding, and the gear-change, like my B.M.W.'s, cannot be hurried. Ultimately, although you don't feel to be going particularly fast, in reality the machine is making a good rate of progress in complete safety.

I found the linked brakes, like the rest of the machine, took some getting used to. It's strange to approach a hazard, apply the 'rear' brake, and watch the forks dip slightly. But once I was familiar with the system, I wondered how I'd managed without it. However, I was not entirely happy about the possible effects of emergency braking when negotiating a corner, particularly one with loose gravel on the surface. The front-wheel braking you can't help but use with this system could produce front-end breakaway, and we all know the result of that.

Steering and handling were good; however I found the suspension a little too hard for my tastes, though this only became noticeable on really bumpy surfaces. The rear Continental drifted somewhat when negotiating tight corners at speed.

The riding position was a bit cramped for my six-foot frame, but this only became evident on long trips. The top half of the fairing gave adequate protection in rain, and the air flow cleared my visor. Normally however, the blast simply hit me in the face.

The machine doesn't appear to offer any problems for the home



mechanic. Routine checks are easily made, and either wheel can be removed with little trouble in the event of a puncture.

Comparison with the B.M.W. is inevitable, and I think the Guzzi shows up favourably. Its electrics aren't as good, nor is its paintwork, but the engine, handling and braking are better than the B.M.W.'s. My 1979 R80/7 has covered 28,000 miles and its present standard of finish is similar to the Guzzi's. Like the Guzzi, it has had no mechanical problems. However, it is on its third set of silencers and the latest ones are showing signs of corrosion.

AND A THIRD

by Tony Sykes

The first few miles were a disaster! The louvres on the fairing bashed my kneecaps and the handlebar fairing was too close to the controls: a most uncomfortable riding position, which I never got used to.

The Guzzi coped in town, but the engine was harsh and the controls heavy. On the open road the bike showed itself a serious tourer for the long-distance rider.

The gear-change bothered me. It took me a week to get any sort of

silent change either up or down, but the Spada was the first shaft-drive machine I'd ridden.

I thought the linked brakes provided as much stopping power as I would ever want, but I would prefer more control over front and rear braking.

Handling was good; a slight weave appeared at high speed, but this could have been the result of the odd tyres fitted.

My verdict? Mixed feelings, I'm afraid. Initially I admired it (Well, it does look good), hated it after three days' riding, and began to like it again by the end of the test.

LOOK BACK IN FONDNESS THE OWNER'S VERDICT

The Spada's former owner is Stuart Saddington who lives near Dewsbury. His 25,000 miles were put on the machine between purchasing it from Motor Cycle World in March 1979, and trading it in there for a new Spada NT in September 1980. It was his first large-capacity machine, bought on the basis of its showroom appeal, relatively low weight, and low seat height. It also had that indefinable something called 'style'.

Stuart used the machine for daily commuting (30+ miles), holidays in Germany, Austria, France, and a couple of T.T. visits. He also likes touring his home county, which he must know pretty well.

He found the Spada utterly reliable, liked its torque, handling and linked brakes. The latter he described as "utterly fabulous", though admitted they were not outstanding in the wet. He didn't care for the quality of the fibre-glass fitments, the too-narrow fairing, and the rear flasher arms which vibrated off on two occasions. Like some other owners, he covered the front fork stanchions with gaiters to reduce pitting. The matt black (Le Mans type) frame finish was deemed impractical (though it's lasted well) as were the infuriating self-adjusting mirrors.

The bike was taken off the road for the winter of 1979-80. The owner found the Spada "really frightening" in ice and snow. Hasty throttle closure locked the rear wheel, and the linked brakes' inherent compulsion to transmit some of the braking effect on to the front wheel spelled disaster. Anyway, with his Suzuki DR400 available, there was no necessity for Stuart to use the Guzzi in bad conditions. As he put it, "It's too expensive to drop."

Apart from the odd puncture, a duff headlamp flasher, and a broken centre stand, the bike needed no more than routine maintenance and normal replacements. The current tyres fitted were rated less satisfactory than the original Pirelli rubber.

Stuart is happy with his new NT, though he thinks its motor is a little rougher (at 5,000 miles) than the old model's. A better and wider fairing with taller screen (plus 'lip'), lower footrests, and gloss paint on the frame are welcome modifications, but the wider seat is not.

TAILPIECE

Riding the Spada was an interesting experience for those members of the magazine's staff who threw a leg over it. The bike always provoked

comment, not necessarily favourable, but then it's not the sort of machine that can be dismissed with an indifferent shrug of the shoulders.

Its general condition was excellent considering the mileage, and it was not disgraced standing next to new Spadas when returned to the showroom. Anyone wanting a high-speed tourer that's running nicely, has been well looked after and is delightfully different, should head for Bradford now. And I haven't been paid to say that. Why don't I buy it? I'm still dreaming of a black and gold Le Mans.

BRIEF SPECIFICATION :

Engine :	<i>948cc (88 x 78mm) o.h.v. transverse 90 - degree V - twin (compression ratio : 9.2 to 1)</i>
Lubrication :	<i>Wet sump. 5.3 pints</i>
Carburation :	<i>Two 30mm - choke VHB Dellortos</i>
Transmission :	<i>Primary : helical gears Final : bevel gears and shaft Clutch : dry, multi-plate</i>
Frame :	<i>Duplex cradle with removable r/hand bottom tube</i>
Suspension :	<i>Moto Guzzi telescopic front fork. Cebac rear shocks</i>
Brakes :	<i>Brembo Discs : twin 11-8 in front; single 9.5" rear, utilising linked system</i>
Wheels :	<i>FPS cast light alloy</i>
Tyres :	<i>Pirelli Gordons (standard equipment)</i>
Weight :	<i>470 lbs (approx.)</i>
Seat Height :	<i>32"</i>
Maximum Speed :	<i>105-110 mph</i>
Fuel Consumption :	<i>50 mpg (overall)</i>
Oil Consumption :	<i>Negligible</i>