

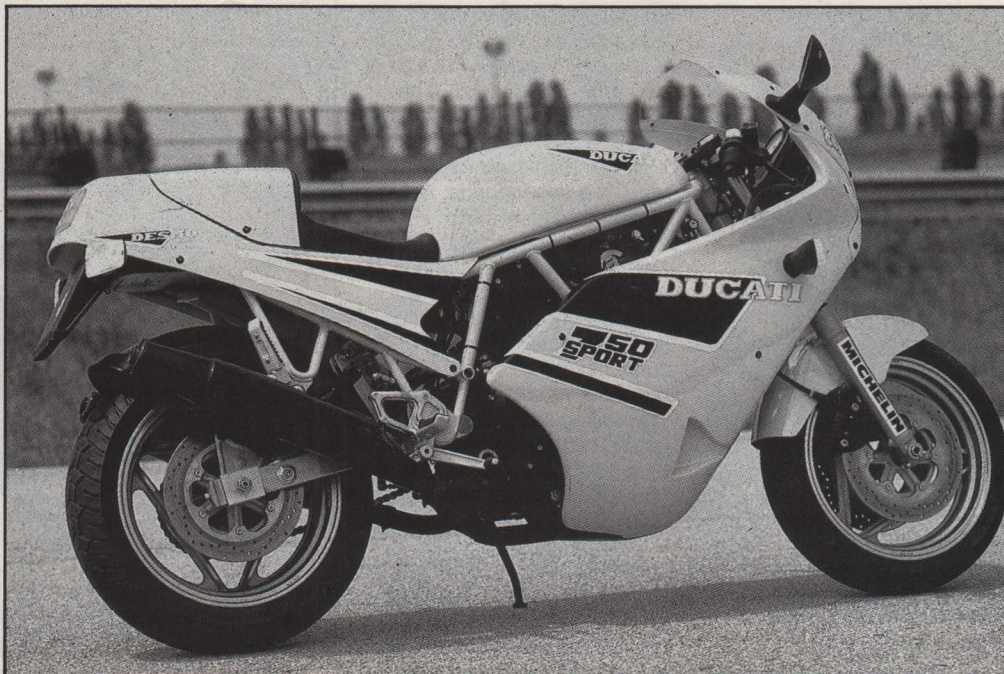
# SPORT OF KINGS

## DUCATI 750 SPORT

**F**aced with the opportunity to thrash round the Misano track on any one of a dozen Dukes during Ducati's recent launch of their new models, you might guess the number one choice of the world's journalists to be one of the new generation eight-valve, water-cooled 851S desmos available in Strada or Kit race versions at untold millions of lire.

The bike we all fought to ride was neither of these, but a humbler surprise that Ducati had kept well up their sleeves. A straightforward, old fashioned, air-cooled Duke in the traditional style, that brought out the baser instincts amongst those of us falling over each other to sample it. The problem was that once rolling, you didn't want to come in, stop and hand it over to someone else. It's that kind of bike.

The name 'Sport' has been carefully chosen, for this is most assuredly a latter day version of the classic bevel-drive Duke of the same name that offered a more practicable and affordable entry into V-twin sports motorcycling than its legendary sister, the race-bred 750SS desmo. Many 'Ducatisti' would say that those were the two finest bikes to come from Dr T. in Bologna. If that's the case then his youthful successor Massimo Bordi has produced a bike that may be even more significant for Ducati, but in a different way. At a time when Ducati's most popular model, the Paso, sells in Italy for 11.5 million lire, the 750 Sport is projected to sell at less than 10 million lire, a price which Ducati intends to ensure is reflected in world markets. In other words, this is a basic entry-level Duke, built in relatively large numbers for what is still a fairly small company. Ducati hope that the 750 Sport will appeal not only to the traditional marque enthusiast who doesn't care for the rather portly Paso and can't afford an 8-valve, but also to someone who hasn't owned a Ducati in a while, if at all, but wants a helping of Spaghetti Bolognese.(?)



PHIL MASTERS

Low tech 'basic entry-level Duke' shows the sporting lines designed to appeal to Ducati freaks and newcomers alike

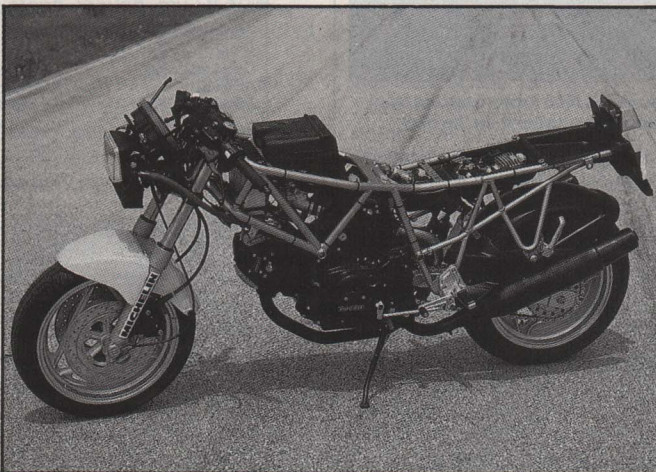
Bordi has concocted this latter day equivalent of Ducati's Yellow Peril by the simplest of marriages between blood relations. His development team led by Franco Farnè, have slotted a Paso engine and exhaust system into the 750 F1 chassis to create a bike that has

This adds a couple of bhp to the Paso engine's output, whose 81 bhp at the gearbox in Sport form is now produced at 8500rpm instead of the Paso's 7900rpm. Maximum torque is still available at 6350 rpm.

The 750 Sport we rode at Misano, then later on a quick blat

rpm redline. Since the engine breathes so easily and revs so willingly, it's perfectly feasible to shoot the needle up to ten grand and beyond on the white CEV recounter while trying (in vain) to keep up with the otto valvole round the fast sweepers on to the Misano main straight. Although the desmo valve gear will allow such liberties, I doubt it would do the plain bottom end bearings a lot of good even though the power doesn't seem to drop off unduly when overrevving the bike. With such a wide spread of power, the five-speed gearbox is more than adequate but the Michelins on the 750 Sport and 8-valvers give such good grip and the 16 inch rims such a low-slung posture to the bike as a whole, that you can't get your foot under the gearchange at full lean to change up while cranked over. Fortunately, the engine has so much torque that short-shifting resolves the problem. While it didn't drag anything, I'd like to have seen 17 rather than 16 inch wheels fitted to the bike.

The ride, like the seating position, is light years away from the bone-crunching jars of the unlamented 750 F1 Replica. The problem with that bike was mainly the unsophisticated and



Modded Paso motor hangs from crisp handling chrome-moly spaceframe

the advantages of both but the drawbacks of neither.

Bordi has altered the 88 x 61.5mm Paso 750cc engine by using a slightly hotter desmo cam offering greater valve duration and lift, plus a small increase in compression ratio planned for production models.

up into the hills behind San Marino, had none of the Paso's carburation faults so maybe the problem really has been cured at last. There is a slight flat-spot on the Sport at around the 3000 rpm mark, but that's perfectly acceptable on a bike with tractor-like torque and a 9000

'A straightforward, old fashioned, air-cooled Duke in the traditional style, that brought out the baser instincts in all of us.'



# ALUMINO

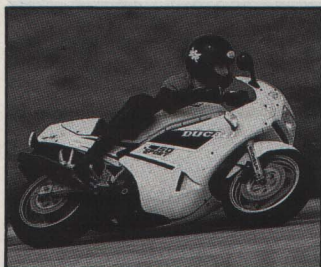
near-rigid Marzocchi rear unit, but the same manufacturer is responsible for the Sport's outstanding ride.

With characteristic modesty, Massimo Bordini says the rear end design is nothing special and retains the cantilever layout of before. However the 750 Sport has a much more refined suspension unit specially designed for the bike. It offers a 50mm stroke and 91mm total excursion to full bump – practically identical to the rising-rate 8-valve. The 40mm forks, unadorned with anti-dive, are also Marzocchi. Again identical to the 851S is the 280mm diameter of the front brakes. The 750 Sport claimed to weigh 180 kg dry, the same as the water-cooled 851S Strada but it was possible to shoot up the inside of the bigger and in my opinion heavier 8Vs under braking at Misano – even with Brembo black calipers fitted.



The 750's front end has no anti-dive and 'old fashioned' black calipers. There is no way that an air-cooled Pantah as lean and lithe as this one scales any more than 165 kg. Either that, or the 851S is heavier than claimed.

The Sport is exhilarating to ride. It has a taut, precise feel that encourages hard riding. It's a 'partner bike' – one that seems to adapt itself to the rider's style and intent, rather than requiring you to make the changes to suit it. It has an alluring mixture of traditional and modern qualities: you can still see enough of the frame and engine even with the full fairing, hear enough of the engine even with Paso mufflers and feel enough of the spirit of the Sport to recapture the essence of motorcycling of a decade ago. The 750 Sport is such a civilised, comfortable and sociable machine that you could imagine riding every day to work and for fun at weekends. There haven't been many Ducati sports bikes in the past you can



The Sport encourages this sort of behaviour

honestly say that about. Thanks to the use of the Weber carb and its butterfly throttle, the twistgrip action and hydraulic clutch is smooth and light, light years away from the stiff, tiring controls of the old Pantahs. The slightly modified, chrome-moly trellis spaceframe gives the same fast steering and precise handling that made one ignore these and other faults to be found on belt-drive Dukes of even comparatively recent vintage. With the introduction of the Sport, that sort of compromise isn't necessary any more.

This may be an entry-level Ducati, but it may also be their best bike for many years, and one whose volume sales will be far more vital to the company's continued well-being than the sale of a few hundred highly-priced, low-profit, 8-valve flagships. Commercially and qualitatively, it's an important model for Ducati, made finer by the reasonable price Ducati's importers will sell it abroad. Well done, Massimo – Dr T will surely approve! **Alan Cathcart**

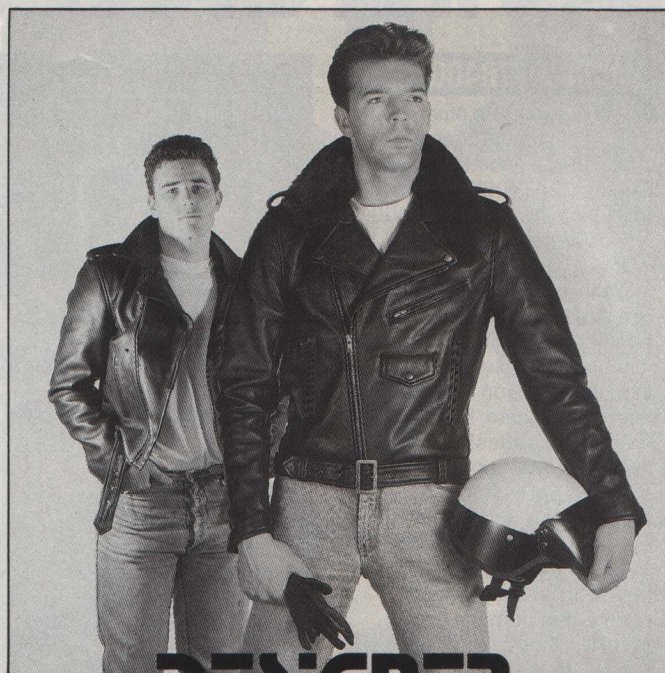


An air-cooled Ducati in the traditional spirit of the marque

## DUCATI 750 SPORT

<b>Bore x stroke</b>	88 x 61.5mm
<b>Capacity</b>	748cc
<b>Power</b>	81bhp
<b>Torque</b>	70Nm
<b>Carbs</b>	1 Weber double body 44 DCNF 113
<b>Front tyre</b>	130/60 VR 16
<b>Back tyre</b>	160/60 VR 16
<b>Weight</b>	180kg

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