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RUNNING & RIDING



MOTO GUZZI

Big Guzzis offer an alternative to Bavarian tourers but can be had for a song Mick Walker

NOW APPROACHING WHAT COULD BE termed old age, certainly by current motorcycling standards, the 850 and 1000cc Moto Guzzi pushrod 90° V-twins have been around for many years. The origins of the large capacity V-twin family of Guzzi motorcycles stemmed almost entirely from the Mandello firm's involvement with Italy's military and civil authorities.

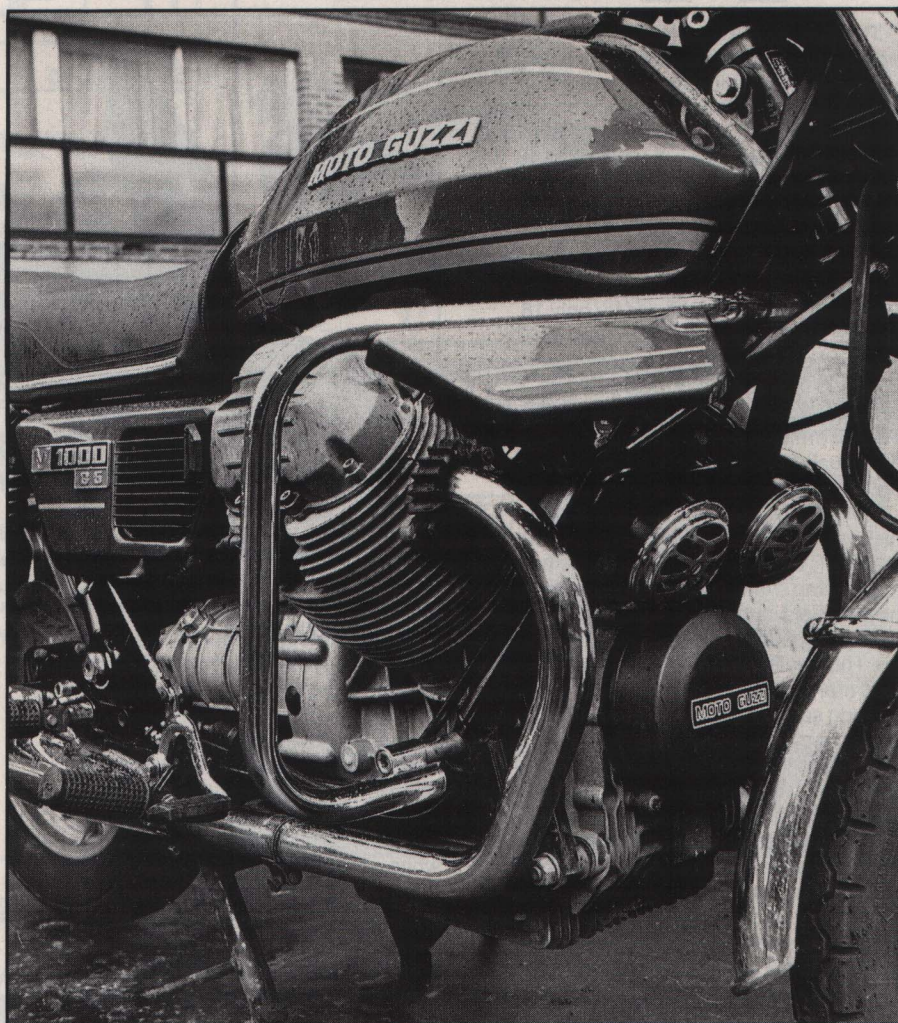
The power unit itself started life as the engine for an extraordinary lightweight three-wheel military tractor for the army. The idea of using this as the basis for a road-going motorcycle was assisted in its infancy by the Italian government's need for a suitable replacement for its ageing Guzzi flat-single Falcone models, used in both military and police work.

The first prototype of what was ultimately to emerge as the V7 was begun in 1964 and was the last design for the company by the legendary Ing Giulio Cesare Carcano, the man behind the various classic post-War Guzzi works racers. Even before the official testing had begun, the factory realised that the machine had the application for use in the wider field of everyday riding, and the first civilian prototype appeared in public for the first time soon after in late 1965 at the bi-annual Milan Show.

It was immediately hailed as the star of the Show by motorcycle journalists around the world who saw the new Guzzi as being a machine capable of challenging for sales outside the frontiers of Italy. Bear in mind that this was well before the launch of any other superbikes of the new era – which heralded machines such as the Triumph Trident, Honda 750 four and Kawasaki's infamous Mach 3 triple. That original V7, powered by an engine of 703cc (80 × 70mm bore and stroke) was a big bike by any standards, weighing in at 234kg (516lb). It was also the biggest and fastest roadster ever to have rolled off the famous production line at Mandello del Lario.

However, out where it counted, on the open road, the V7 had little of the sporting performance which Guzzi enthusiasts expected from a marque with its reputation so firmly based on its track successes. Instead the early V-twins were at best moderate, strictly touring performers – at worst heavy, cumbersome and slow. Their superbike tag tarnished by virtue of the fact that almost every British 650 vertical twin of the period would see them off – certainly through the corners.

Through the late 1960s and early 1970s a succession of changes saw the capacity slowly rise to 844cc (83 × 78mm), first appearing on the GT850 Eldorado during 1972. However, the *real* improvement was to the cycle parts following the appointment of Lino Tonti as chief designer. Tonti's first task though had been to enlarge the V7 engine from 703 to 757cc, and then up to 844cc. But his own view was that all of this was of somewhat secondary importance, because in his opinion Guzzi's chassis



The V1000 G5 looked like a Convert, but had a manual (?) gearbox

design was not keeping pace with the development of the engine.

His main problem was the height of the engine between the cylinders. This was due to the position of the belt-driven generator on the top of the crankcase, reflected in the tall timing cover casting at the front. The difficulty was solved by substituting the generator with a Bosch alternator carried directly on the front of the crankshaft. With a suitably recast timing cover this effectively reduced the overall height along the centre of the power unit, allowing the whole machine to be reconstructed in a much lower, lighter and obviously more sporting mould.

The result was to permit the construction of one of the most beautiful mass-produced frames seen up to that date. Also new were Guzzi's own patented internal damper forks.

To illustrate just how personal a relationship its designer had with this development Tonti actually came off one during testing – breaking a leg in the process. How many of his counterparts, at least in modern times, have been that committed to actually get out and ride their own products, let alone actually

test a prototype?

While the 748cc V7 was the first Guzzi to use the new chassis, the 850T benefitted not only from the new frame, but the 844cc engine. This was the forerunner of a hugely successful touring line. It first appeared in early 1974 and together with a development of the V7 Sport, the 750S, was the first Moto Guzzi production bike to feature a hydraulic disc front brake. But unlike the 750S, the 850T used only a single Brembo cast iron disc mounted on the offside.

Proving that the 850T was intended as a sports/tourer, the chrome cylinder bores carried 9.5:1 pistons, and a crankshaft profile which was not only the same as the 750S, but also identical to that used later on the Le Mans! In traditional Guzzi V-twin practice, the piston assemblies were matched to the barrels in A, B or C sizes, with crankshafts and con-rods colour coded either blue or white. Together with 30mm Dellorto square slide VHB carbs, the engine gave 53hp at 6000rpm. This was not only a marked improvement over that of the Eldorado, but with the new, lighter running gear ensured a much crisper performance thanks to improved power-to-weight ratio. ▶

850/1000 TOURERS

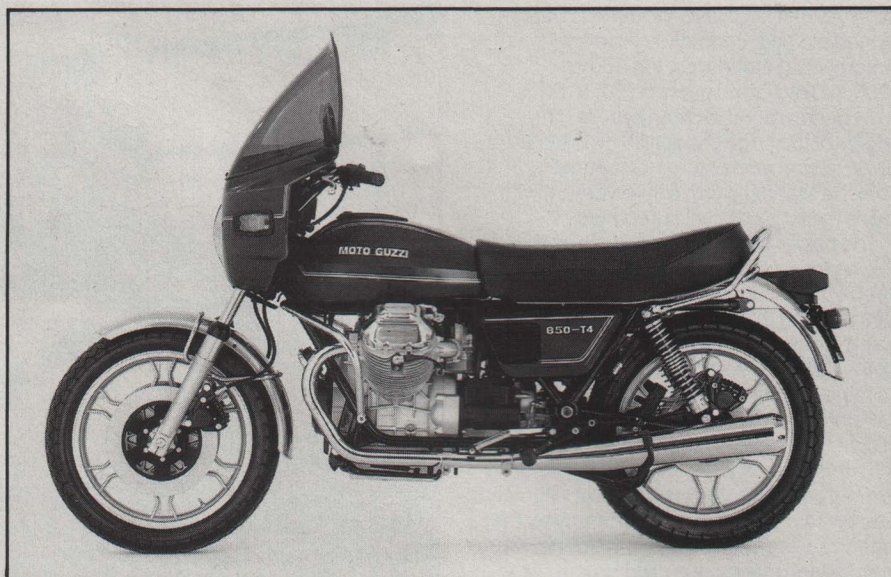
The 850T had a couple of major differences between itself and the later touring models which superseded it. These were its 220mm drum rear brake and single disc front, later models featured linked triple discs. The other was in the engine which, together with the 750S, was the last of the V-twins to employ a wire-mesh oil filtration system introduced on the original V7, so didn't carry the car-type oil filter cartridge used on the later models. Despite being manufactured for only 18 months (1974 and early 1975), the 850T sold well both at home and abroad.

By 1975 not only was the 850T now available in quantity, but also the 850T3 and T3 California, neither of which had previously been seen in Britain, and had only just been launched in Italy.

Both the T3 and the California (soon nicknamed the 'Cali') were clearly based on the 850T, but the biggest difference was in the braking system. For the first time, the new models carried the company's exclusive patented integral triple disc set-up. This system was claimed to provide not only more stopping power, but also more braking safety than any conventional system on a production roadster before.

Besides this and the other details already mentioned, there were several other more minor detail changes. The most important of these was that for the first time on a Guzzi V-twin a disposable paper air filter element was used – vitally important for an engine employing chrome-plated cylinders which could not be rebored.

Both the T3 and Cali proved good sellers



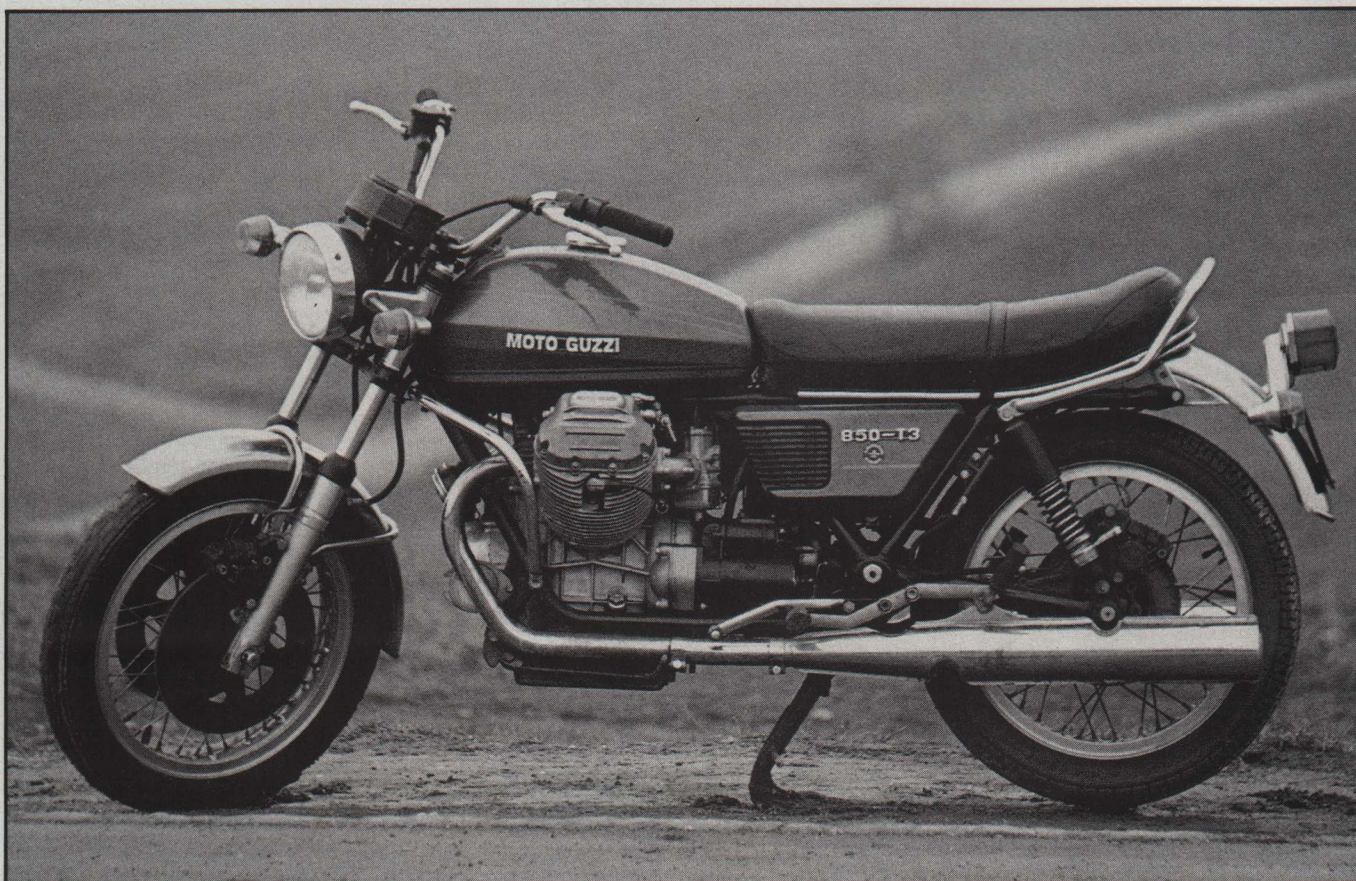
The 850 T4 was similar in appearance to a Spada, but without the fairing lowers

in the year after their launch. Several of the T3's supplied to the British importers during '75 and '76 were in reality models destined for the USA. These had several minor differences to the electrical system, including a sealed-beam headlight unit. Later in '76 an economy version of the California was introduced. This 'cheap' variant, known as the California Rally, had white painted mudguards (in place of the original polished stainless steel items) and a large speedometer, with no rev counter.

These last two features were also to be seen on the V1000 Convert automatic

model. Although launched in a blaze of publicity, this model never caught on, proving once again that in many ways the motorcyclist will *not* always follow successful four wheel trends. Together with Honda, Moto Guzzi found to their cost that quite simply riders didn't want automatics, even if drivers did.

However, besides its expensive Sachs torque converter there was another feature of the V1000 which was noteworthy. This was its 958.8cc capacity. In this the cylinder bores were increased from 83mm to 88. And unlike the chromed bores of the earlier V-



The 850 T3 – the Guzzi in its most basic, and some say best, form

twins the pistons of the V1000 ran in steel cylinder liners. Except for these features the machine was almost a larger version of the T3, with a screen. The first V1000s went on sale early in 1976, following its debut at the Milan Show the previous November.

The next significant move in the evolution of the T series was the introduction of the fully faired 1000SP (known as the Spada in Britain) in the spring of '78. Designed to compete with BMW's R100RS, the 1000SP flagship used the capacity of the V1000, including the steel cylinder bores, but offered almost 55 instead of 50hp. Other major differences, apart from the comprehensive weather protection, were the use of cast alloy wheels and upswept silencers. During 1978 not only had the range been joined by the new SP, but a manual version of the V1000, the G5, which also sported cast alloy wheels.

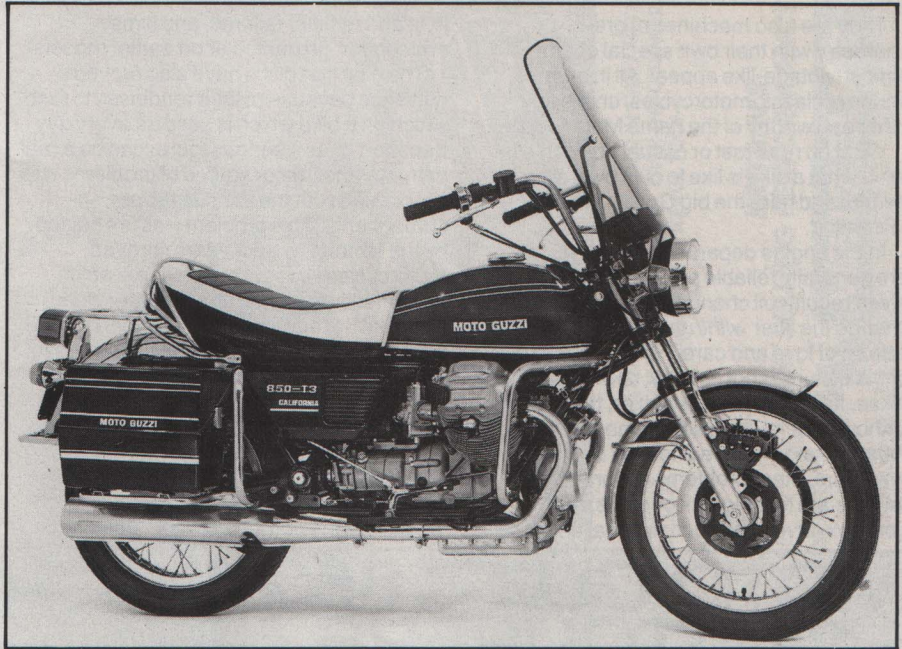
The following year saw cast alloy wheels for the T3 (and some Californias) plus CEV headlights and improved switchgear in place of the previous Aprilia units. And a British importer's de Luxe version of the SP—the Spada Royale.

Early 1980 saw the appearance of the 1000SP-NT. In truth this was hardly a new model, NT merely stood for New Type. The original bike had simply gained new more restrictive silencers, Nickasil bores in place of the steel liners and the V1000's more comfortable dual seat. In 1981 the 850T3 was replaced by the T4. This used the top section of the SP fairing, cast alloy wheels, SP-NT silencers and the thicker seat—in fact it is best described as an economy version of the Spada NT, with a smaller engine.

By now the sales of the venerable V-twin were beginning to slide—a reflection not so much of its age but of a world wide drop in overall motorcycle sales. Late 1981 saw the California II—with its engine capacity upped to 948cc and the square head and barrel castings of the Le Mans III, windshield, western bars, deeply valanced chrome plated mudguards and Spada NT silencers. The result was much fatter in appearance, more akin to the earlier V7 tourers.

Mid-1983 saw many of the models discontinued: the T4, V1000 and G5. At the same time the 850T5 was introduced. This was a machine designed by De Tomaso's stylists in Modena rather than a product from Mandello, and it showed. It featured a mini fairing (no screen), 16-inch wheels, triple 270mm discs, twin air horns, square fin barrels/heads and a 22.5 litre tank. It proved unpopular, not only because of its different style (which didn't appeal to many traditional Guzzi customers), but worst of all suffered from poor ground clearance, which didn't go unnoticed in various press road tests.

Nineteen-eighty-four saw the Spada II introduced based on the 850T5, but with larger 948cc engine, SP three-piece fairing and an 18-inch rear wheel. At the same time the T5 itself was updated with an 18-inch rear wheel and a modified fairing, which now sported a small screen. There have been many calls from Guzzi enthusiasts for a return to 18-inch front wheels and this has now been done by the factory with the new



An early model T3 California—screen, high bars and panniers as standard

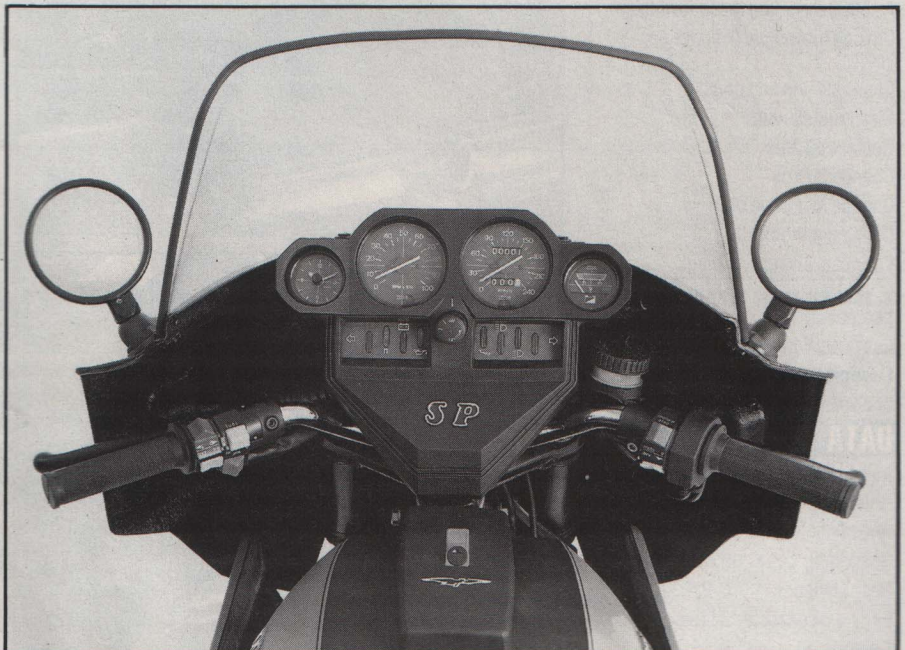
California III and the Mille GT (an updated T5).

Of all the various models covered in this article, without doubt the long running T3 was sold in the largest numbers, at least here in Britain. On the road the T3 offered a similar performance to the 850T but was a better balanced machine—if only for its superior braking performance. Like the T, it had a true maximum of 117mph (the factory claimed 124mph). Having owned a couple of T3s and having ridden all the other large-capacity Guzzi's, I honestly feel that although they neither had the crowd pulling power of the California or the street racer lines of the Le Mans, the T3 was the best of the bunch. Certainly of all the 850s and this includes the later T4, which on paper might have appeared to be superior.

The T models possess the combination of

a comfortable ride, safe roadholding and superb braking found on very few other genuine touring mounts, even today. They are also a worthwhile alternative to the BMW flat twin. Again, in my personal opinion, they are more fun to run even if they lack the finish of the German marque (particularly the earlier models).

Another star feature of the big Guzzis is fuel economy, and I often achieved 60-plus to the gallon on a regular basis. This, allied to a comfortable riding stance and the ability to cover large mileages thanks to large capacity petrol tanks (over five gallons on the T3), make them supremely practical touring mounts. They also have a suspension system which can soak up road surfaces better than any other Italian bike—which in general are infamous for their hard ride.



The cockpit of the Spada is comprehensive and clear, fairing very efficient

They are also machines of great character with their own special charm, almost vintage-like appeal. All in all, a series of classic motorcycles, unlike any other and worthy of the name Moto Guzzi.

What no road test or casual ride can ever tell is what a bike is like to own over a long period, and here the big Guzzis are very rewarding.

In the engine department the big Guzzis are generally reliable provided that they are given regular oil changes (don't forget to change the filter *within* the sump) and just a little bit of love and care. However, the rest of the picture is not so rosy. Like all other bikes, Italian ones in particular, they are not without their faults. Besides the finish, which must be said improved notably over the last few years, other problems suffered by owners are leaking fork oil seals, rear gearbox drive seals, occasional universal

joint and rectifier failures, and flimsy switchgear (in particular on earlier models).

The cast iron discs have also proved a nuisance because of their readiness to rust, which on a bike which is used as every day transport or as a serious tourer can be a real pain. Another major source of problems was associated with the various rubber components. This problem was not helped by the factory, who for years sprayed motorcycles with a preservative – which also effectively *rotted* all the rubber work!

Unlike the earlier V7 and V7 Sport range which had helical gears in the timing chest, the T series (like all later Guzzis) have the cheaper-to-produce sprockets and timing chain. It is recommended that a new timing chain is fitted after 35,000 miles.

None of the T series Guzzis command such high prices as the Le Mans sportsters which is to the potential owners advantage,

as quite often you get the chance to pick up a machine for a much more favourable price. The V1000 Convert for example can be purchased very cheaply. I've seen one of two recently in superb condition for only £500-£600. Early T and T3 s are also to be had cheaply, however many of these are by now suffering the combined ills of poor finish and high mileage, so beware. Post 1980 machines are probably the best buy – at the right price £1000-£1500 for a good example of say a T4 or Spada.

A new T5 is today around £4000, but it's possible to pick up a pristine two-year-old example for £2500, although many of these are the original 16-inch rear wheel examples. Californians command perhaps the highest prices of all the touring Guzzis – at least for their year. But don't forget that these are more for show than serious long distance touring.

MOTO GUZZI 850/ 1000 TOURERS

SERVICE CHART

Every week

- Check engine oil level.
- Check battery electrolyte level.
- Check tyre pressures and conditions.

Every 3000 miles

- Change engine oil.
- Check brake pad wear.
- Check brake fluid level.
- Lightly moisten with oil contact breaker cam felt.
- Check clutch adjustment.
- Check spark plug gap.
- Check valve clearances.
- Check gearbox oil level.
- Check rear drive oil level.

Every 6000 miles

- As 3000 including the following:
- Change brake fluid (or once per year).
- Check all nuts and bolts.
- Clean fuel system.
- Replace oil filter.
- Change fork oil.
- Change rear drive oil.
- Change gearbox oil.
- Lubricate swing arm pivot.

In addition every 12,000 miles or two years.

- Lubricate wheel bearings.
- Lubricate speedometer drive gear.
- Lubricate steering head bearings.

DATA

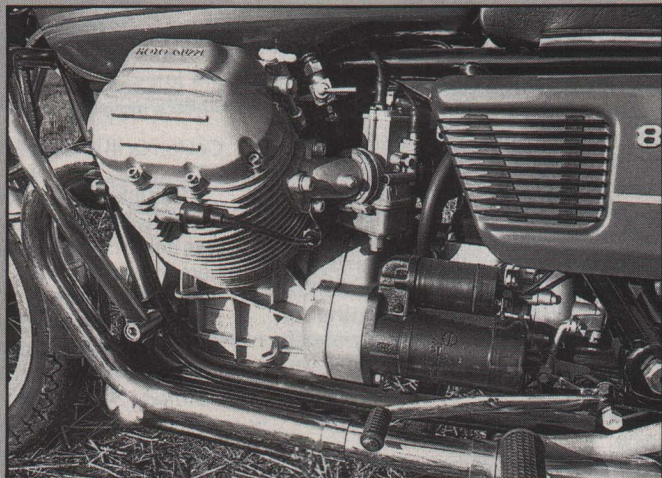
Valve clearances	
inlet	0.22mm
exhaust	0.22mm
Spark plug gap	0.40mm
Rear drive box	0.230 litres
Engine oil capacity	3 litres
Gearbox oil capacity	0.75 litres

COSTS

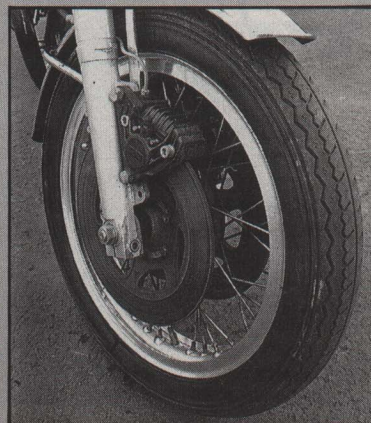
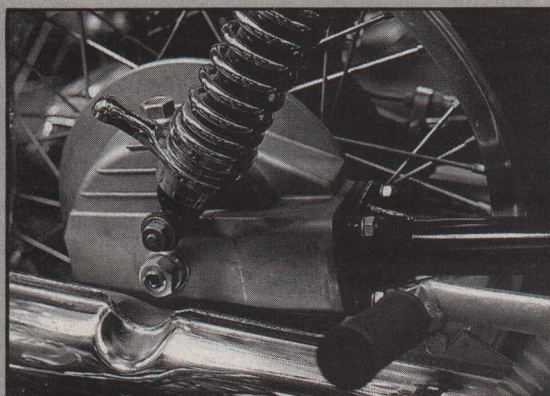
Service Items	(inc VAT)
Oil filter	£3.96
Air filter	£3.60
Brake pads (pair)	£6.30

Spares

Indicator complete	£6.75
Lever clutch	£7.95
Front brake lever	£11.25
Fork stanchion	£38.50
Front wheel	£128.00
Silencer	£53.00



The big V-twin will go on for ever with regular oil changes and TLC, but Dellorto carbs are prone to getting out of balance. Shaft reaction is agricultural although rear shocks give a smooth ride



T3 models were the first Guzzis to get the excellent linked braking system, activating one front disc and the single back disc via the pedal

Useful addresses

Cagiva Ducati Spares GB, 1 Walpole Rd, London SW19. (01) 543 5929.

Moto Mecca, Unit 302 Woolsbridge Industrial Park, Three Legged Cross, Wimborne, Dorset. (0202) 823453.

Moto Guzzi Owners Club, 1 Hogmoor Rd, Whitehall, Hants.

Goodridge UK, Collins Rd, Totnes, Devon. (0803) 862007.

Venhill Engineering, 21 Ranmore Rd, Dorking, Surrey. (0306) 885111.

Keihan Systems, Unit 4 Dunlop Rd, Hunt End, Redditch. (0527) 46860.

JT Morgan, C22 Brookfield Industrial Estate, Crumlin Rd, Belfast. (0232) 757720.

Andy Ball, 63 Woodfield Park Rd, Emsworth, Hants. (0243) 372107.

Moto Cinelli, 13 Midland Rd, Olney, Bucks. (0234) 711179.

Italsport, 8-14 Chester Rd, Manchester. (061) 832 7067.

Kernwood Motorcycles, 15 Prescott Place, London SW4 6BS. (01) 627 0561.