BRITAIN'S BEST SELLING MOTORCYCLE MAGAZINE

February 1992 £1.60 USA $4.00

Performance BIKES

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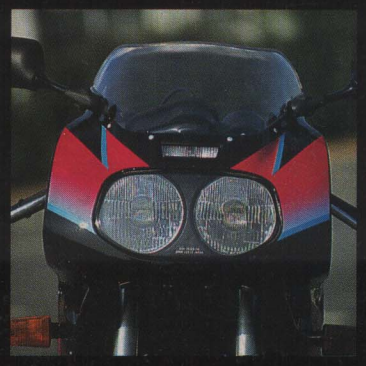
GSX-R750LC



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HOW TO GET IT

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Contents

FEBRUARY 1992

Cover story: following our new policy of keeping all the interesting pics at the back of a dark cupboard, this will probably be a shot of a scooter beside a brick wall

Features

16. MONSTER 3 — the Burns bike hits 195mph, oh sorry, that's next month (see page 13 for conclusive confirmation). Meanwhile this month, Monster meets its motor. I alliterate, therefore I is.

22. SPOT ON — if winter comes can spring be far behind? It can if you've got too much rebound damping.

38. BACK ISSUES — what you've missed. Forever in some cases, but there are still a few copies of some issues left.

40. CENTRES — it takes special talent to do this, for a start you need a road and a ditch and an adult to help you.

46. TDM BITS — sorting out the TDM's suspension, among other things.

58. READER OFFER — ever wondered why hotel bedrooms always have a copy of The Bible? It's because it has more sex, violence and rude bits than any other book. Never take your wife or your mother to a hotel bedroom.

70. SMOULDERING BELLYPANS — the familiar chant which Japanese technicians are taught to say over and over. Forsyth smoulders from Hockenheim.

Dangerous liaisons — Stan's tragic menage à trois with his beloved TDRs, except it wasn't — page 54.

Road tests

8. SUPER MOUTARDE — Gilera Nordwest. This will blow the socks off anything that has got socks on. *PS if anyone knows what Nordwest means, would they please tell Gilera?*

34. EH GRINGO — Wendy "bendy" Burch gives the GSF400 a good greasing. Er, are we allowed to say that? No? How about just thinking it, then?

50. FINS AIN'T WOT THEY USED TO BE — GSX-R-watercooled. No more sexist drivel, this is a real man's machine. Well it was until they lowered the seat height.

54. DANGEROUS BROTHERS — there's more than one way to tune a TDR. And we've got both of them.

Regulars

3. CONTENTS — there is a subliminal message here which can only be revealed by reading this page backwards at twice the normal speed.

4. NEWS — there is nothing subliminal here at all. It is perfectly safe to read this with the naked eye.

13. NEXT MONTH — it is perfectly safe to read this with the naked brain. After all, it was written with one.

14. RESPONSE — judging by the stains, most of this was written in the foetal position, except the one in green ink.

30. THE PB INTERVIEW — Wayne Rainey. Does he favour green ink? Or is he rich enough to have someone write his letters for him? And other probing questions.

43. NEW STUFF — leaky fountain pens. Ah, lad, that takes me back.

78. READER'S SPECIAL — a very beautiful TZR250, underlined in green for emphasis.

BACK ISSUES

To get hold of a back issue just follow these simple steps:
1. Ring 0733 237111 ex 5725 to check which issue you want and whether an actual magazine, or only a photocopy of the specific feature is available.
2. The cost is £2.50 inc. p&p for each issue/photocopy, payable to Performance Bikes. Send to PB Back Issues, Bushfield House, Orton Centre, Peterborough PE2 5UW, with your name, address and the date of the issue/feature you want. We can only deal with orders via the post and sorry, we can't take credit card orders.

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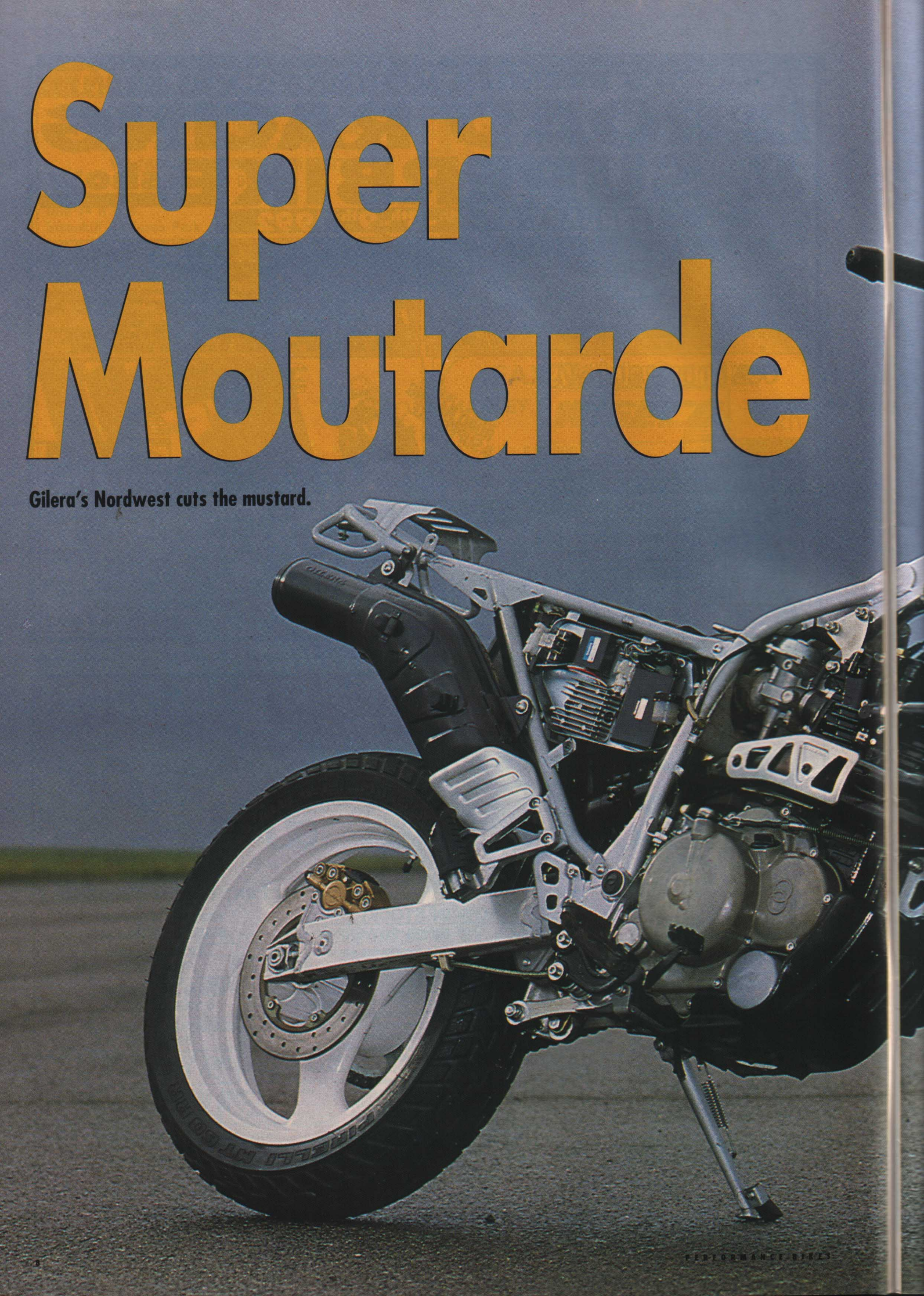
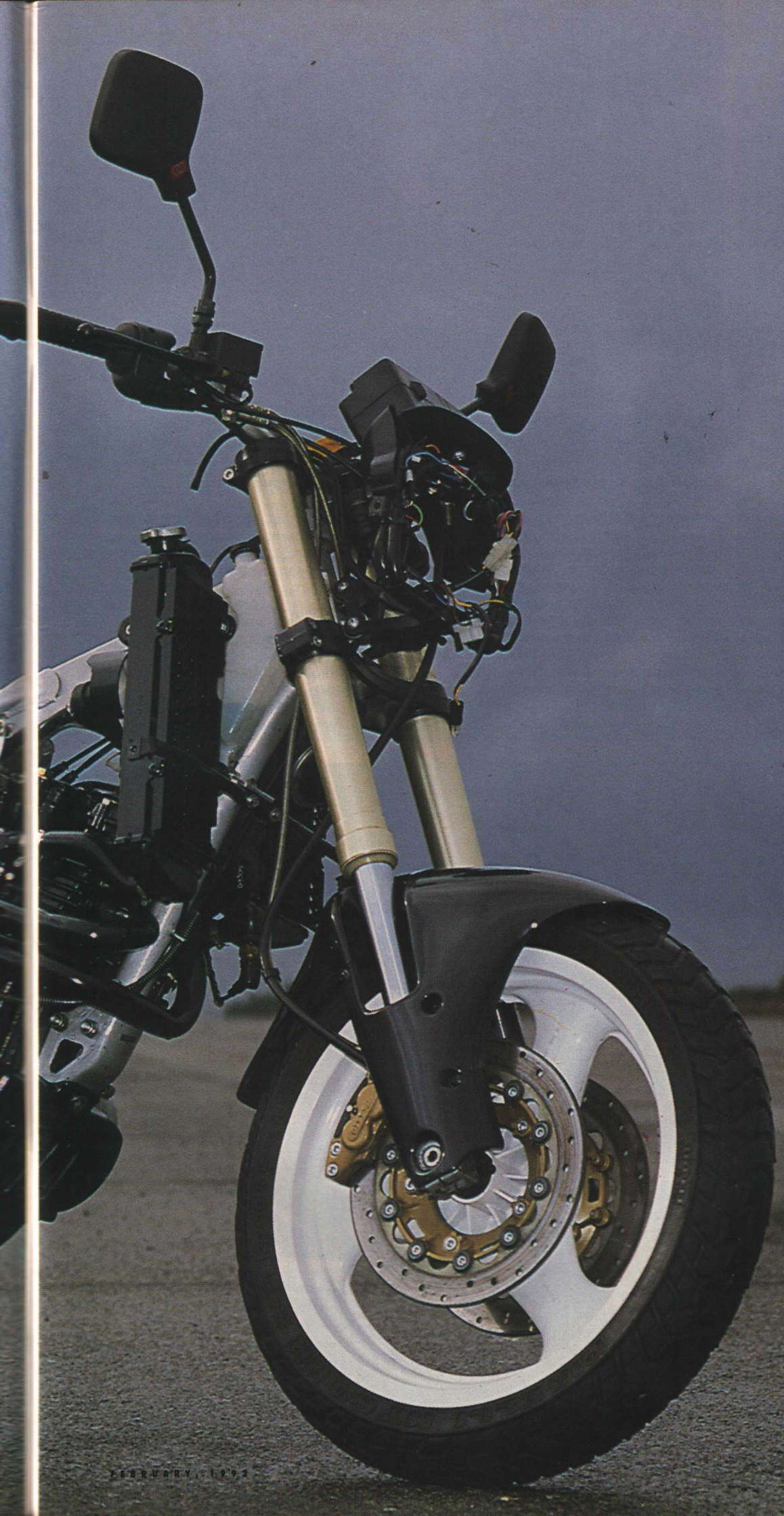
Super Moutarde

Gilera's Nordwest cuts the mustard.





The two things that big singles have always needed are more power and tyres built like racing wets. Gilera's Nordwest was constructed specifically to answer this prayer. It has more power. (Well, more power than a Dominator.) And the tyres you can see for yourself.

Gilera decided, wisely, that what any big trail bike needs is cast alloy 17-inch wheels. Pirelli sportingly developed some huge, radial versions of their MT60s to fit them and we are assured that the resemblance to racing wets is no more than coincidence. (Well, not much more than coincidence.)

Include some good suspension, powerful brakes and lightened running gear and you have a very nice bike. Except you wouldn't have, because part of the deal is a plastic fuel tank which evades the letter of the Construction & Use regs and is at least part of the reason that Heron, the formal importers of Gilera, don't bring the bike into this country.

This is no dilemma for Benjy Straw, proprietor of WeeVee, and now grey importer of Nordwests and saviour of those who would be street-motards. Speaking from his underground bunker in Croydon, Benjy admitted to being carefee and figless on this subject. The man who is famous for his roadracing philosophy ("There's no point in hurrying a good race.") has brought the same withering logic to bear on outdated bureaucracy. Hooray for B. Straw. I agree entirely; the plastic tank passes EC tests and the one bad thing about it is that it only holds 12 litres.

So we have a bike that, instead of being just another big trailie, actually looks like it can do something. And it handles as good as it looks. The suspension — Paioli at the front soaks up everything, Boge at the rear flattens what's left — is brilliant. Over the several miles of joined-up bumping that constitute our suspension test course, the Nordwest was faster/less painful/more controllable than anything else in recent memory *(which in JR's case is at least several minutes — RP)*.

In ordinary corners, the suspension loads up, the bike feels taut, then you open up the power, the back squats slightly and... drives. As a roundabout racer, the

Super Moutarde

An Italian bike better than any comparable Jappo may go against everything we've learned over the last decade, but it's true.

Nordwest is untouchable. The radial MT60s work well, especially in the wet, but they don't grip quite as much as the appearance suggests they might. They only *look* like racing wets. However, the wise choice of 3.50 and 4.50 rims means that anything from racing slicks downwards can be fitted and there has to be something to suit all tastes. And what are homologated tyres when the rest of the bike hasn't been homologated? Tests in *Moto Journal* and *Moto Revue* had the Gilera fitted with Michelin Hi-Sport radials and Metzeler ME1 respectively — either should give ample grip for a 45 horsepower, 310 pound bike. *Moto Revue* said that it wobbled so much they couldn't do prone top speed tests, *grandes chemises des jeunes filles* that they are.

On the Pirellis, the steering was getting nervous. At low speeds it was quick but accurate and often ran out of lock. There were many times when it was up against the lockstop and still turning. At high speeds it stayed light and after a handlebar nudge at 100mph, the steering would take about six wobbles before it settled down. That it should weave badly on Metzelers — one of the most stable tyres — seemed odd, but Benjy knew the answer. It probably wasn't the tyres at all, but a bit of friction at the steering head caused by inadvertently nipping a dust seal while adjusting the head races. They had the same trouble on a couple of bikes and it took a *long* time to find the cause.

Its top speed was about 104mph — which it reached well into the red, into the teeth of a fairly stiff breeze. This is about the same as the Dominator, even though the Nordwest has 7 or 8 horsepower more and should be able to manage close to 110 on the right gearing. Having it undergeared at least makes sure that the rest of the road performance is lively — where it scores over most big singles is at 70 to 80 in top; when you open the throttle (a) there is still some left to open and (b) you can feel the bike respond.

The computer also thought that the Nordwest's 43/14 was on the low side of optimum. A 43/15 would see it up to 110mph without losing too much in the way of acceleration, in fact it would improve first gear traction because the bike was restricted by wheelies on the lower gearing.

After the road test, Benjy brought the bike back to Bruntingthorpe for a day with a 15 and a 16 tooth gearbox sprocket. On a wet track it spun its wheel with the 15T and gave the same quarter mile times as the 14T in the dry. With the 16T it got maximum traction and gained half a second, 13.7 seconds for the quarter mile. It also reached 116mph on both sprockets, but only with some strong wind assistance. 110mph is a more realistic top speed, which it would reach in neutral conditions using the 15 tooth gearing which also gave it a more long-legged feel on the road. 41/14 sprockets would split the difference nicely.

The power curves don't really relate the way the bike felt. On the dyno it was difficult to run below 4,000 because the motor snatched so badly. This happened on the road at 30mph in top, which was not much above 2,000. The smooth spread of torque doesn't relate to the way the motor chimed in around 6,000 with a big surge that sunk the needle into the red on the straights and kicked the back wheel out if the Gilera had any amount of lean on.

The engine is a smooth little short-stroke which revs cleanly, gets a bit chunky at low speed and makes nice noises as per its single cylinder contract. It is Gilera's third generation 600, based on the four-valve motor which won the Paris Dakar production class. In this version it has work done to the head, with bigger valves, bigger carbs and higher compression. It also leans fairly heavily on Japanese big-single technology, with a gear driven balance shaft, Nippon Denso ignition and two-choke TK carburettor.

Unlike on most Japanese machines, you can hear a healthy crackle from the exhaust; there's none of this namby-pamby 72-decibel nonsense. Pedestrians don't step out in front of the Nordwest. Even if they did, the steering and the brakes give you several more options.

The castor is variously quoted as 26° or 27°. I prefer to believe it is about 24° because that is what it feels like, although the light, very flickable steering probably comes from the rigid front forks and the light, alloy handlebars. Add this to a 310lb bike and a 55 inch wheelbase and you have something that not only can turn but turns very willingly. Perfect in traffic and for rapid changes of mind.

For such a light bike the suspension is astonishingly good. The upside down Paioli forks carry the sole spring and bump damping inside the left leg, with rebound damping in the right leg. It works mostly, we guess, because of the same rigidity which gives the Nordwest such good steering. It makes the bike comfortable and allows a riding position which gives good low-speed control, even if it is a bit upright for good high speed cruising. The stubby screen and top-half fairing do enough to

The anti-bend, anti-twist forks exhibit GSX-R750L/M levels of excellence and, like bats, enjoy being upside down.

TEST SPECIFICATION

Gilera Nordwest

Price	£4,595
Colour options	black/red
Warranty	12 month, unlimited mileage mechanical breakdown insurance
Importer	WeeVee, The New Stores, Rear of 237 London Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 2RL (081 684 2869)

Engine

Type	liquid cooled, DOHC four-stroke single
Bore × stroke	98 × 74mm
Displacement	557.9cc
Compression ratio	10.5:1
Fuel system	TK E30 PV-2A
Ignition	Nippon Denso electronic

Transmission

Primary drive, ratio	gear, 2.33
Final drive, ratio	chain, 43/14
Gear ratios	2.385; 1.556; 1.143; 0.913; 0.76

Chassis

Front tyre	120/70R 17 Pirelli MT60
Rear tyre	160/60R 17Pirelli MT60
Rim widths	3.50 - 17 and 4.50 - 17
Tyre options	Pirelli MT60RR, Michelin TX11/23, Metzeler ME1 comp K
Front brake	twin 270mm discs
Rear brake	single 240mm disc
Front suspension	Paioli upside-down 41mm forks, spring and compression damping in left leg, rebound damping in right. 160mm wheel travel
Rear suspension	Power-Drive swing arm linkage with single Böge shock, 150mm wheel travel
Castor/trail	26°/not known

Performance

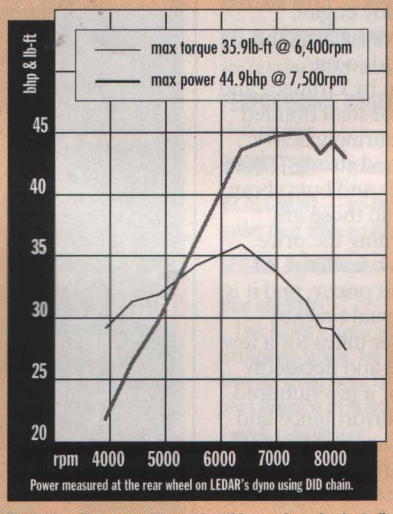
Maximum speed

rider prone	104mph* *[116mph*]*
rider upright	100.5mph
SS¼ mile	14.25 sec *[13.72sec]*

*slight headwind 14T sprocket *[*large tailwind/15T sprocket]*

Fuel consumption

best	51mpg
worst	41mpg
average	45.6mpg
rpm @ 70mph in top	about 5,000



Power measured at the rear wheel on LEDAR's dyno using DID chain.

Singles aren't supposed to rev but this one does. Look at all that power between 6,400 and 8,000.

Dimensions

Wheelbase	1415mm (55.7in)
L × W × H	2070 × 800 × 1180mm
Seat height	870mm (34.3in)
Dry weight	141kg (310 lb)
Fuel capacity	12L (2.6 gal)

Tester's verdict

Good points	style
Bad points	tacky plastic
Performance	bit slow really but doesn't feel it; anyway quicker than a Dominator
Braking	oh yes, plenty of that
Handling	that too
Value	sounds better in lira

Spares prices

Front brake lever	£29.75
Oil filter	£11.97
Piston ring set	£24.64
Cambelts	£22.81
Clutch cable	£14.03

Quick comparison

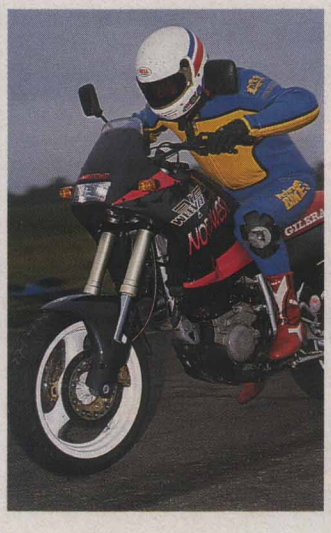
bike	top spd	SS ¼	av mpg	price	issue
Nordwest (new gearing in brackets)	104 (116)	14.3 (13.7)	45.6	£4,595	beep
KLE500	108.5	13.8	44.8	£3,470	Aug 91
TDR250	113	13.7	32.5	£3,199	May 90
Dominator	105.5	14.8	40	£4,052	June 89
CBR600	146.5	11.7	42	£5,108	April 91

Super Moutarde

Ah, God this bike's fun. Even our gout-ridden Design Editor says he wouldn't mind one.

deflect air flow around most of the rider, so it isn't necessary to cling on against an 80mph air blast and it is possible to shift a long way up and down the motocross-style seat padding, getting into the most comfortable position or shifting for maximum low-speed manoeuvrability.

The seat padding and plastic bodywork enclose virtually all of the plastic tank; the only drawback to this is that its size is therefore restricted and 12 litres doesn't get you much further than 100 miles. The fuel tap is just as bad, on the right side of the tank and stiff enough to make it tricky to use without stopping the bike first.



The choke button, on the side of the carb, is buried deep enough to need a good deal of practice at finding.

The bodywork itself is in easy-to-break plastic, and varies from being quite sensible and easy to fit at the front, to being very awkward at the back, which was obviously designed by two other people. (*Didn't I see you in Cape Town last year? — No, I've never been to Cape Town. — Neither have I, it must have been two other people.* Yes, those two.) The light weight is helped by detail design — the plastic tank, magnesium alloy engine casings, alloy swing arm and handlebars, and so on.

Brakes, made by Grimeca and featuring lots of steel braided hose, are reassuringly heavy, very positive and strong. There are very few ifs and buts about this bike — and those are mostly concerning the price, rather than its useability. At £4,500 it is a bit pricey, and it is also in an unusual bracket — there are bigger bikes for a few hundred more and decidedly lesser bikes for a few hundred less. Similar performance and big trail bikes are up to £1,000 less — the bark of the Nordwest, the satisfying grunt, the sweet handling and its rarity value make up for a lot. On balance I'd say it was just about worth it. **JR**

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	NS 125AR – 180cc	£190.00		RD 50 MX – 75cc £68.00
	MTX 50 – 75cc	£85.00		TY 50 – 75cc £68.00
SUZUKI	TS 50ER – 75cc	£57.00		DT 80LC – 100cc £90.00
	TS 50X – 75cc	£87.00		BWS 50 – 75cc £70.00
GILERA	125 RV & RX – 175cc	£170.00	APRILLIA	AF1 50 – 80cc £140.00
CAGIVA	125 AL Rossa – 175cc	£170.00		AF1 125 – 180cc £235.00

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	X7/RG 250 - 275cc	£125		LC 350 - 375cc £160.00
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	RG 500 - 570cc	£300.00		

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