

# LETTERS

D.J.: About a year ago, a friend of mine who owned a 750SS asked me if I would be interested in buying it. He had fallen on it two or three times and it had been sitting for one and half years-still with the mud from the last crash. With a great deal of trepidation I gave him a tentative yes - if I could get it started. I had heard all the Ducati horror stories ("a buddy of mine used to have one.") and I was somewhat reluctant to say the least.

Now the only justification for owning a 750 Desmo is 1) you are rich enough to buy it and just look at it or, 2) race it. Since I was definately not wealthy the only way my wife would let it in the garage was if I sold three Hondas and raced it. She wasn't real crazy about the racing either.

It took us two days to get it started! The carbs were full of sludge, the glass tank leaked faster than you could pour gas in and the electrics were generally FUBAR.

The bike had about 2400 miles on it with no attention to the valve train. But none of us know how to shim Desmo valves so we ran it anyway. They were still OK if somewhat loose.

The first race was April 10 in Gainesville, Fla. I managed to beat a BMW and get a 3rd in class. By the end of the season the Duke had finished every race it entered (14) and carried me to 1st in the 750 production class in the FGPR.

Now that the year is over there are some observations I would like to make about Ducatis in general and the 750 Desmo in particular:

The electrics are not as bad as everyone says. All you have to do is solder all the connections in the fuse box taking care not to melt it. Also hold the fuses in with duct tape and rubber bands to make good contact.

The valve train is awesome to contemplate and the first time you pull the heads it is scary but about twice with someone who has done it before and it really is not that big a deal. Believe me the easiest way to go is pull the motor out! It only takes 20 minutes anyway and saves time in the end.

A good supply of shims is a necessity, an expensive necessity, but in a pinch you can cut a little off the valve stem or the opening shim. We set the valve after the 4th race and before the 14th. It took about 12 hours the first time and about 4 the second time around. We also did a valve job - replaced one exhaust valve and cut the seats. Bill Epley of E&H Motors tells me they average one valve adjustment per year (midseason) on their 750 Desmo.

It is a temptation to cut a piece of feeler gauge to adjust the openers but it is not a good idea. It has a tendency to flatten out, also the burrs give you inaccurate readings.

I have heard how lousy the coils and points are also how difficult to time these things are. We replaced the coils with K-Mart specials before we started. The points are the originals and are still OK. Ian Bay, a friend of mine, can time my bike in five to eight minutes. But it hasn't needed timing in six races. It does not get out of time like some I have heard about. Who needs electronic ignition? They cost too much and you can't repair them. Coil and points are fine for me.

After riding this bike for a year, I feel that the Desmo twin are the finest example of a production racer ever built. It is flawless in handling, mine is not tempermental, it is forgiving of mistakes, it

is smooth and it is fast.

We have learned a lot about Ducatis in the last year but not all alone. The people at Syds Cycles in St. Pete, Fla. and E&H in Spartansburg are very helpful but I couldn't get it to the tract without Jeffs Cycle in Daytona.

By the way, Ducati earned more top awards in amateur racing in Florida this year than any other make. Sixteen, I think was the number. They must be doing something right!

One more thing, I figure it cost me \$65.70 each time I went to the track- if nothing broke. And nothing did except one throttle cable - all year! A whole year of racing and not one thing broke! Beat that Kawasaki!  
Best regards to all, Ben Rawls, 127 E. Mason, Daytona Beach, Florida.

## MONDAY MORNING BLUES

Well its monday morning and here I am attempting to recover from this past weekend at Sears Point. If you haven't heard yet, Paul Ritter won again.

Oh, please accept this as my application for membership. Enclosed is a check for \$10.50. I think we drank a lot of beer and I can't really get going.

I just bought a Darmah and after two weeks of riding and working everyday Monday thru Friday, I have put over 1,000 miles on this fantastic motorcycle. I just read the newsletter I was sent and the comments made by owners of 900SS's. Since the Darmah has the same motor I would like to comment about my new Darmah. In a little over 1,000 miles I have ridden it, I found it to be fast, 0 to 120 mph against my friends Z-1. I was three bike lengths behind. I pull him to 80 then he catches up and just creeps away. His Z-1 is slightly modified, my Darmah is as stock as stock can get. I owned a Z-1 myself and had the frame braced all new suspension, mags etc. It handled fairly well, but was heavy. So my Darmah will probably not remain stock, ie. Imola cams Conti Exhaust, 38mm

## DUCATI and MOTO GUZZI SALES · SERVICE · PARTS

DUCATI · 1978 MODELS · MOTO GUZZI  
IN STOCK

TRAINED SPECIALISTS FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE  
AND TOURING RIDERS

PORTING SERVICE— OUR OWN SPECIAL VALVE GUIDES  
AVAILABLE (DEALER INQUIRIES INVITED)

PARTS AND ACCESSORIES— FEATURING MICHELIN P22,  
AVON AND GOODYEAR TIRES, KONI AND  
S&W SHOCKS, KENDALL OIL AND MORE!

LARGE SELECTION OF EARLY DUCATI SINGLE PARTS—  
MAGNETOS RE-MAGNETIZED

## WOODS MOTOR SHOP

525 W. COLORADO STREET  
GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA 91204  
(213) 246-9748 COD ORDERS WELCOME