

features

tants. That many of those who idolize it are admirers of vintage machines is no surprise. The Desmo is built with less compromise than any other licensed motorcycle.

To quote one staffer after his first exposure: "This is the soul of motorcycling. I couldn't believe it could be so different."

And as we said in the June 1975 issue after a day with a 750 Super Sport. "The 750 Desmo is as much a state of mind as a motorcycle. It is lean, light and noisy and demands the highest level of emotional involvement of any production motorcycle known to man.

"Our standards of comparison have been permanently redefined."

Some things get better with age. The 900 is not just a terrific handling tool, but is also much quicker than the 750. In the form in which we tested it, i.e. -- hairy, its midrange power is enormous. Riders who had experienced the XS Eleven, GS-1000 and other megabikes were astounded by how quickly the Ducati accelerated once on the move.

Its hump-back solo seat is a worthwhile addition, for a change.

Adhesion of the new Pirelli Phantom tires is also superb. Not a word of complaint was heard. They're motorcycling equivalent of the Pirelli P-7 which even Porsche considers adequate for its blockbuster 265km/h Turbo.

The Ducati's drilled iron discs made not a squeak of complaint after hammering around Shannonville. The Suzuki's were bright blue, heavily scored and had to be overhauled after the track session. Later, they began squealing so much we relied on the back brake in town.

Despite that, both Duff and Duhamel rated the Suzuki's brakes better on the track. On the street in the rain, the Ducati was better, no question.

For more normal riding purposes, the Suzuki is the unquestionable winner. The Ducati's riding position is a back-breaker if you're going very far.

It's appropriate to mention that after our track test, the Ducati was entered in a road race while the Suzuki embarked on a week-long tour.

The blue, white and black Suzuki is too pretty to trash around a race track. The stunningly elegant but more sober Ducati is born to the job.

The Ducati's heart is on the race track, and its manufacturer is making its first serious effort in European events in several years. Mike Hailwood's TT win last year and second place in 1979 have put the Duke back into the race fan's vocabulary. Long may the brand shun wretched excess.

Whether Suzuki will continue the sporting line inaugurated by the 1000S is yet to be seen. The 50 in Canada have already achieved minor status as collector's items. The factory is reported to be losing interest in grand prix racing from which the Sport takes Suzuki's team colors. And North American tastes favor chopper styling over cafe.

You can still savor its compliant suspension and astonishing power in the standard GS-1000, then deck the halls with sporting bolt-ons for less than the \$4,850 of our test machine. However, you won't likely achieve the integrated wholeness of the factory-built machine.

But if ultimate roadworthiness is your goal, the choice is clear. Spare, slim and light wins over big and heavy and complicated.

Emphasis on road manners by Japanese manufacturers has increased to a comendable extent, yet obstacles remain. Four cylinders and electric starting place the Suzuki under a 50 kg burden in the handling stakes.

You can no longer say it's no contest, but Italy still rules the twisty roads.

The Ducati 900 Super Sport stands at the pinnacle of what motorcycling is all about.



SCORING

1—TRACK TIMING (50% of total)

| | DUCATI | | SUZUKI | |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Mike Duff | Yvon Duhamel | Mike Duff | Yvon Duhamel |
| Fastest lap | 58.30 sec. | 55.99 | 58.47 | 58.06 |
| Average over 10 laps | 58.66 | 56.41 | 58.99 | 58.65 |
| Average over both riders | | 57.54 | | 58.82 |
| SCORE | 50 | | 49 | |

(50x57.54/58.82 = 48.91)

2—RIDER RATING (50% of total)

| | DUCATI | | | | | SUZUKI | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-----------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| | Duff | Duhamel | Cycle | Canada | Staff | Duff | Duhamel | Cycle | Canada | Staff |
| 1—Straight-line stability | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 10 |
| 2—Stability in corners | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| 3—Braking in corners | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 9 |
| 4—Behavior during transition | 8 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| 5—Responsiveness | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 10 |
| AVERAGE SCORE | 47 | | | | | 41 | | | | |

OVERALL SCORE

| | DUCATI | SUZUKI |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Track timing | 50 | 49 |
| Rider rating | 47 | 41 |
| Total | 97% | 90% |

DUCATI WINS