

# SINGLES SPOT

relatively cheap Ducatis, which, without an adequate spares back-up, badly supplied their reputation in this country. On the other hand, the 350 Sebring's cheapness made it popular with club racers. In standard tune, with flat-top piston and small valves it would only reach the mid-eighties, but it offered plenty of scope for tuning. One race-timed Sebring motor lapped in the Isle of Man at 92mph.

But the British market just couldn't absorb such an influx of Ducatis in that period of depressed sales. By 1972 400 of them were still unsold, until Mick Walker bought them to strip for spares, helping to lay the foundation of his now renowned Ducati spares service.

At the end of 1968, to counteract the effects of the Hannah operation, Vic Camp began importing the new desmodromic roadsters. In '72 he brought in some new model 450 MkIIIs with the Desmo-type frame but with high bars rather than the Desmo's clip-ons. Also that year came a mere handful of Desmos finished in metallic silver and with Marzocchi forks and a Grimeca double-sided front drum brake instead of the earlier Ducati parts, together with the odd one or two SCR 'street scramblers'.

In addition, between 1971 and 1973, Vic Camp imported around 150 Ducati 250s built under license in Spain. Although it looked very similar, this Spanish built version was a very different animal compared to the genuine Italian Ducati. It was called the 24 Horas--cashing in on Ducati's victory in the 250 class of the 24-hour race at Barcelona. However, after the experience of some less than satisfied customers it became better known as the 24 Horrors. It was perhaps the least successful of the Ducati singles seen over here, with unreliable ignition and soft cams that wore away rapidly.

The history of Ducati in the UK took another dramatic turn in 1973 when the concession was taken on by the Coburn and Hughes group, based in Luton. They began by importing Ducatis in relatively large numbers, but with a more rational range that included the first V-twins--the 750GT and Sports. At the same time Mick Walker became UK concessionaire for Ducati spares, creating a more comprehensive parts service than had ever existed before.

The singles imported by Coburn and Hughes were originally just the MkIIIs; 250, 350 and 450 models that looked virtually identical, with the same blue and gold paint. But after Mick Walker brought a 350 Desmo back from Italy for his personal use in 1974, Coburn and Hughes started bringing in the sleek yellow sportsters. They were mostly 250s and 450s; only six of the late-type 350 Desmos were imported by the concessionaires.

Just as the singles' individual character, performance and phenomenal fuel economy were beginning to create a great demand for them in post fuel-crisis Britain, the Bologna factory decided that it was un-economic to continue producing them and began to concentrate on the new parallel twins and the vees. But that wasn't quite the end of the story. In order to satisfy some of the British demand 100 or so singles were brought over from France. These have a capacity of 239cc, intended to evade French tax laws which penalised bikes with a capacity in excess of 240cc. Roughly three-quarters were MkIIIs and the rest Desmos. And very good and rapid bikes they are too. Finally about 35 of the 450 Street Scramblers, designated KkIV, appeared on the British market. In the short time that Coburn and Hughes had been importing singles approximately 2,000 had been sold in this country.

So, of the many diverse models that have found their way to Britain, what are the best buys if you want a good example of these unique Italian classics? The bikes that most truly reflect the proud heritage of Ducati are undoubtedly the uncompromising total performance sports modes. Like the Mach I; or if

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