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THE
DUCATI 900
NCR
*Interview
with
a Motorcycle*

By Pat Kilpatrick

Officially the motorcycle is known as a Ducati 900 NCR. Literally, it is 105 horsepower generated at 8800 rpm in hand-made, featherlight fiberglass shell.

Upon investigation, you discover this crafted creature is unlike any other bike on earth. Unique. Rich. Lightning fast. Incredibly expensive. There are bigger motorcycles. The NCR Ducati carries 50-horsepower less than many California-bred monster bikes, but the NCR is a rolling sculpture of speed. The demon da Vinci of cycles.

How long, I ask, did it take to case and machine the intricate handmade parts? What intensity and care went into the creation of the brake and shift levers, cast in aluminum with deeply relieved sections, in order to save a precious ounce or two in weight?

Question: Are you prepared to go to Italy with lira and dollars flowing forth from you jeans? \$11,000 is the pricetag for a machine that transports you into a world of speed few come close to knowing. Above 100 mph, the road becomes a delicate flash of equal parts exhilaration and fear. After 125 mph, the road is a clicking, cinematic blur. At 142mph, the breathless temptation to ease off the knobbed acceleration grip is nearly as powerful as the screaming voices busting from within you....begging to go still faster. At 175 mph...a borderland of terminal ecstasy...

I met with NCR at Ghost Motorcycles, Port Washington, New York. This particular bike is one of 15 such machines that have been customized in Bologna, Italy and then imported to the U.S. I was clearly infatuated. Herewith, our conversation.

Pat Kilpatrick (P.K.): I want to share the 1980's with you. If earthly objects are divine manifestations, you are certainly the God of speed. Mercury Incarnate.

NCR Ducati (NCR): That's my legacy. If you will.

P.K.: You were born Via Signoinine, 16, Bologna. your creators - Franco Fonne, Mario Recchia, Piero Cavazzi, Giorgio Nepoti, Rino Caracchi - did an admirable job. Your first gear alone will take a rider beyond 100 mph. Your top speed is 175 mph.

NCR: You obviously have your sources of information.

P.K.: You are surrounded here by Italians of your class aren't you? You rather like that don't you.

NCR: Yes. The stock Ducatis, the superb Moto



Guzzi - Le Mans 850 and 1000 - fabulous bikes all. I'm in good company. Throaty, intricate, fast and powerful companies.

P.K.: I notice you have no muffler, no lights. The sound of you is as rude as thunder at the Four Seasons.

NCR: I was conceived for Grand Prix road racing rather than street screaming. I'm easily adapted, if you like. A couple of hundred dollars and some headlight, signal lights and muffler kits.

P.K.: The thought of pulling alongside a policeman with you is tintillating.

NCR: Do you find the thought of a tire blowout at 170 mph tintillating as well?

P.K.: Don't be cheeky with me. Besides I'm doing the interviewing. You have only one instrument - a tachometer.

NCR: Yes. With serious speed, the motor rpm is really the only important consideration.

P.K.: You do know what it is to feel like a prince at 130 mph and to get butts in your teeth at 80, don't you? Are you possessed of any particular fears?

NCR: I fear drunkards, oil slicks, glass shards, wet leaves and the hand of God. Of course, each is really just a different manifestation of the last.

P.K.: When the hammer falls, the hammer falls?

NCR: Not exactly. But meanwhile, I'd like to ride to the max.

P.K.: Are you male or female?

NCR: I am neither. Like most objects, I will - to a certain extent - assume characteristics of my owner. But let's say I'm performing in some gender while standing still. The notion of grace, design, sleekness and lightness are most often considered feminine. Now consider me in motion. Cylinders exploding with flame and power. Wicked speed. Throaty sounds. Metal ticking. That's my masculine aura. When it all comes together, you become a creature of Mercury, as you said.

P.K.: You have 40 miles of test-driving behind you, and 750 miles of low-speed engine break-in to come. Are you eager for the incredible speeds beyond that?

NCR: I'm ready.

P.K.: You certainly have the look to it. You have a single aerodynamic seat don't you? That doesn't make for close bodily contact with a