

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS . . . Continued

Shop in Glendale. I ride one hour each way just to be sure I'm getting the best service, I just cannot say enough good things about these people!

The only problems I've had were minor, i.e. slipping clutch, broken clutch cable, and a chain which wore out in less than 5,000 miles.

I've had good luck with my 130/80 Michelin M48 rear tire, and plan to try an A48 on the front. I also plan to buy a larger gas tank and replace the shocks, which are a trifle under-damped, probably with S&W's. Conti pipes are nice, but expensive. Maybe for Christmas!

Since the Darmah SS seems to have been discontinued, I would either replace mine with a standard Darmah, or a 600 Pantah.

My bike has 5500 miles on it in 17 months. Mostly weekend rides and "sport-touring."

The thing that I like best about my Darmah SS is that it never fails to leave me smiling.

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"ROCK STEADY . . . GOOD FOR A CHUCKLE, PENALTY BOX HARD. . . ."

As for your Darmah survey, here is some info for your file: I purchased a new 1980 Darmah SS in March, 1981. The price was \$4,800 out the door. The dealer was Brooks Cycles in San Jose, California. My previous mount was a '76 BMW R90/6.

The Darmah is driven daily to work which consists of a 10 mile roundtrip. I've had the bike de-smogged by T.T. Motors in Berkeley. The work on the valves has been done by me along with other minor modifications. The machine now has 4500 miles on the clock. It is rock steady, much quicker, has vastly superior brakes and gets more attention than a whore in church compared to the BMW. At this point, it's smoother (noisier too) than the BMW. The passenger accommodations like a hockey penalty box. Mechanical finish is excellent but the paint work is good for a chuckle. I'll repaint the 'shark blue' soon.

It is regrettable that one has to tinker with a \$5,000 bike. No wonder people buy Japanese hardware. Mass produced and disco styling and all they still put together an excellent package. I was awed by the way some dealers showed their Ducatis on the floor — scratches, dent, dings, poorly aligned panels and fairings, and full price, no deals for freight damage. I almost bought a new red Darmah SS (non factory paint) until I learned the bike had sustained freight damage. The dealer thought it would look nice in red and tacked on an extra \$250 for custom paint. The thing I was most surprised with, though was how special I now feel owning one of these bikes. It is hard to park it on the street without several people-gathering round.

Soon after I bought it I dropped it in a 50 mile right-hander and waited over two months on Berliner before calling Laidig's Cycles in Ohio. They got my parts in about three weeks.

Take care and thanks for the time to express my views.

Fred Maggiora,
San Francisco, CA

MORE DARMAH COMMENTS

I own a new 1980 Darmah SS. I traded a custom 1200cc blown Kawasaki Z-1 show bike for it. I traded the Kaw for the

Duke from Verns Kawasaki in Allentown, Wisconsin. I suffered a substantial loss in the transaction, but I'm very happy with the Darmah.

I think the best part of the Ducati is the engine. It is smooth, very responsive and has a very good power band. I've equipped my bike with Contis and 36mm Dellortos.

As a comparison, I also own two Moto Guzzi Lemans and a 1000 SP with a Watsonian sidecar for the family. I've noticed the Ducati seems more responsive and accelerates harder than the Lemans, but this is not the case — in a roll on contest, drag race and top end runs the Lemans is quicker and faster.

In comparing the ride and handling qualities the Duc feels more stable at high speeds, while the Guzzi is more agile, feels smaller and is easier to maneuver, it also has more steering lock. Both bikes compare equally as far as braking ability, fuel mileage and comfort go, except for the Duc's hard seat and the clip-ons are too low.

I own a small motorcycle repair shop and build flat track bikes so I do all my own maintenance and repairs. The only problem I have experience with the Ducati has been with the charging system. The battery never goes dead, but the systems function seems to be quite erratic. So far I have not had any expenses in repairing this bike.

Would I buy another Ducati? You bet!! I'd buy two or three more if I had the chance. I don't know if I would recommend a Ducati to other people though. I don't think Italian motorcycles in general are the right bikes for the average rider. Now, find a person who appreciates fine machines, a man who has been around bikes for awhile and can appreciate what a motorcycle's fine points should be, and that man is Ducati material.

The overall finish on the Darmah SS looks good but isn't very durable. The paint chips and scratches easily and the decals fall off — no big deal.

I have also noticed that the engine has several oil leaks and it weeps and seeps here and there. This can be very annoying on such a nice bike.

All in all comparing the Ducati with the Moto Guzzi, the Guzzi seems to be the more practical motorcycle of the two. It's a little more comfortable and doesn't have the demons of the Desmo valve adjustment when it comes time to adjust the valves. Now that I think about it I didn't buy the Ducati to be practical.

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DUCATI ENTHUSIASTS AND THEIR MACHINES

Since I began this Newsletter I have had the pleasure of corresponding with Ducati owners that have interesting collections of Ducati machines. Starting with issue No. 32 we will begin a series focusing on these individuals and the story behind their collection of Ducatis.

We would like all of you that have a nice collection of Ducatis, whether they are all twins or all singles or mixed to put together a small autobiography about your collection along with pictures etc. For instance, a small history about each bike, things you've done to it, interesting anecdotes, who does the work, why you collect Dukes etc. If you need help in putting your article together drop me a note and I'll answer your questions.

For our first guest in the series and starting with issue No. (Continued on Page 15)