

Riding position is spot on; power delivery and handling faultless. Styling has little to do with coffee bars of the sixties, but is interesting enough to stand out from bland modern machinery

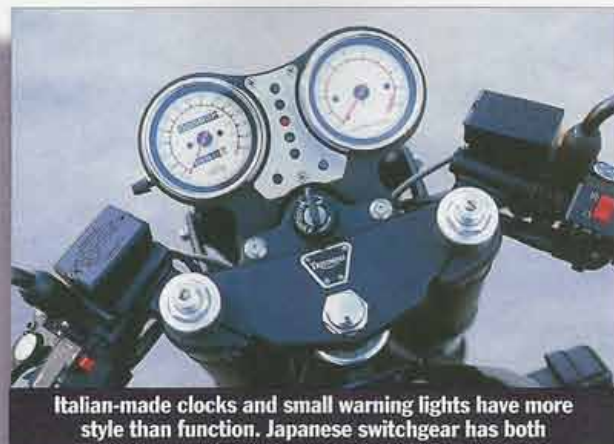


CAFE RACE CASH-IN

Sceptics may think Hinckley Triumphs are abusing their heritage, a shadow of former glories concocted from a mixture of oriental parts. Others with more first hand knowledge will tell a different story. The new generation of three and four cylinder machines are superb all-rounders. And the Speed Triple in particular can wear its badge with pride.

Opinion on the street is divided. Ask about the new Triumphs in classic circles and you'll hear plenty of 'Well, they're not real Triumphs, are they?' and 'You know they're all made in Japan, don't you?' Partly true, but so what? Triumph never set out to make an all British bike, an impossible feat nowadays — if sticking to a competitive price is your goal. Factory sources claim instead to have built a bike with its own character using parts from Japan, Germany and Italy, as well as home grown produce.

Most expensive components on the Triumph have been imported. Already researched and developed parts like carbs, braking system, piston and clutch assemblies, electrics, rear shock and switchgear are Japanese. Indicators, clocks and Brembo wheels are from Italy. The crankshaft was forged in Germany but finished in Britain. Similarly, the fuel tank is German in origin. Frame, swinging arm, crankcases, camshaft, radiator, plastics and exhaust system are all British.



Italian-made clocks and small warning lights have more style than function. Japanese switchgear has both

That means in terms of cost, 50 per cent of parts are foreign. But counted overall, 82 per cent of parts are British. Confused? Does it matter? Sourcing equivalent foreign parts in Britain is impossible, accord-

ing to Triumph.

A capable all-rounder perhaps, but the idea that the Speed Triple is a cafe racer, however, is a misnomer. Clearly some marketing man has dreamt up the naked, aggressive image — promotional shots show the bike next to a chained Rotweiler — desperate for a unique selling point. In reality, the moody black roadster is much the same as other Triumphs. As a token gesture, forks have been dropped an inch or so in their yokes and the Speed Triple has a five speed 'box in place of the six-speeder used by the remainder of the range. All other changes have been made in the styling department.

That's no bad thing if you like the modern unfaired look. I don't think it's quite there. The short, flat headlight and wide radiator combine with a tall engine to make the bike appear squashed, almost as if it's had a front end shunt. The triple looks like it was designed with a fairing that has been discarded at the last minute.

Some sort of weather protection would have been welcome during the test, when some 400 miles were covered at high speed on fast A-roads and motorways. I used my own in the shape of a tank bag. Because the tank is high in relation to the seat, I could rest my chin on the bag and revel in the comfort of