



*A triple-set of Mikuni carbs lurks behind British heavy metal; the headlamp is naked and unshamed, and the clip-ons and rear-sets are as ache-inducing as tradition demands!*



1991 was a special year for the British motorcycle industry, as in July the first mass produced bikes bearing the famous Triumph badge since 1982 emerged from the new, state of the art factory at Hinckley, Leicestershire.

The demise of Triumph at Meriden is a well documented, a sorry tale that brought large scale manufacture of motorcycles in the UK to an end for nearly a decade. So, ten years since its rise from the ashes, have Triumph yet managed to make a bike that in another ten years time will be sought after as a 'true classic' in the spirit of its illustrious forbears?

Happily the answer is a resounding yes! But wait a moment before you all rush out and purchase a new Bonneville, or even a Thunderbird, for neither of these is the model in question (are you just a little curious?). You can also forget the present range, technologically advanced though it undoubtedly is.

You may be surprised to learn that, in my biased view at least, the real star of the last ten years is in reality nothing more than a variation on a theme, and not an entirely new theme at that.

Triumph's original Speed Triple ploughed a different furrow (cue tractor jokes) to the other models in the range when it was released early in 1994. The Trident, Daytona, Trophy, and Tiger models all borrowed names from the company's past, yet in reality the bikes themselves bore no resemblance to the earlier machines. With the Speed Triple it was the style of the bike itself, not the name, which took its cues from the past. The clip-on bars, large single headlamp, seat hump, and retro white faced instruments all harked back to the days of the café racer, yet for all the traditional styling influences this was no 'all



show and no go' pastiche; here was a bike that was more than the sum of its parts (or should that be parts bin?).

Triumph themselves recognized the bike's potential exploiting this with their very successful one-make race series, appropriately named the Speed Triple Challenge. Although the bike's natural home is not on the track the race series did provide valuable publicity for the marque as a whole, culminating in the international challenge at the Bol d'Or in 1995.

The Speed Triple shared its steel spine frame with the other models in the Triumph range of the time, as it continued the modular construction concept the factory had adopted from the outset. This approach allowed for greater economies of scale during production, which was so vital during the early years, yet cleverly resulted in a broad range of machines utilising tried and tested mechanicals.

The 885cc three cylinder motor is a real gem, and again was shared with other models in the range, it