

to do, so beware if the engine does not spin easily. Once running you know that this motor has something special to offer; a blip of the light throttle rewards with a glorious induction roar from the carbs combined with the distinctive, slightly uneven growl from the twin exhausts – no need for after-market pipes here.

Once on the move the hydraulic clutch and tight gearbox work well to provide the rider with hassle-free gear selection, either up or down, provided a firm pressure is applied by the boot. Even neutral is easily located when required, although the minuscule idiot light sited between the clocks is virtually invisible in strong sunlight.

The bike is not especially nimble in city traffic, as a brief ride through central London proved, with the mirrors being strategically placed at the same height as those of Mondeo man, and the rider's weight falling heavily on the wrists. Happily, the immense



*The towering powerplant may hang from its spine frame in a block and menacing way, but it does provide ample urge. Equally ample anchorage is provided by the Nissin calipers*

torque of the motor meant that it was easy enough to trickle along through the worst jams and then simply wind on the throttle when conditions allowed without the frenetic stirring of the gears needed on smaller machines, the rumbustious exhaust note alerting the car drivers to the presence of the bike.

Once we'd left the city behind we headed out to the more open roads of Kent, and it's here that the bike really began to show its true character. The suspension (on stock factory settings) provides a comfortable yet controlled ride, and only when pushed really hard did the beast begin to wallow slightly

coming out of corners. Dialling in more damping reduced the wallow, but in turn led to a less sure-footed ride under normal conditions, which didn't really suit the torque-laden character of the motor, so the factory settings are about right for the average rider. The brakes, however, lack the initial bite needed to inspire real hooliganism, and are not as progressive as those on the later incarnations, but once accustomed to their slightly wooden feel they are remarkably effective at hauling the bike down from speed, and did not perform noticeably worse in the wet conditions encountered part way through the day.