

Speed Triples

« A pair of old tubs, parked up. Oh, and some nice boats in the background, too

triple worked best. Again, the engine came straight from the Daytona, running a 10.6:1 CR and breathing through 36mm Mikunis to produce just short of 100bhp. As contemporary 600cc fours were beginning to get close to the same output, this was no great achievement, possibly. In compensation the Triumph offered oodles of midrange torque and a unique sound. Unlike a screaming 600, the British bruiser always seemed to be going more slowly than it was. And thanks to the low bars, a respectable cruising speed could be held in comfort. It could have been even more relaxing if Triumph hadn't seen fit to include only five ratios in the gearbox, an idiosyncrasy that was rectified for the next model year.

When introduced the Triple cost a cool £7400, a lot of money for a naked bike. As production was limited to 1400 for the first year, selling them wasn't a problem though.



« The Triple's finest feature. That motor, of course, not the best metal piping!

Triumph played safe. They didn't want to continue the Meriden reputation for fragility and oil leaks!



layout as before, achieving the target weight of 200kg meant fighting flab everywhere. The rather undistinguished fours were out, because enough power could be wrung out of the more compact and characterful threes.

Triumph played safe with their original engines, deliberately 'over-engineering' throughout – what they didn't want was to continue the Meriden reputation for fragility and oil-leaks! Having learned and listened, the weight-paring programme covered all aspects: thinner-wall castings, slimmer crankshaft and balancer shaft, lighter pistons, etc. Further savings were made by using magnesium alloy for the side casings (not a new idea, incidentally - Honda's XL250 had them in the Seventies).

Looking to the future of ever-tightening emissions standards, fuel-injection was used. Sagem was the company responsible, a familiar name in the car world, but less well known to motorcyclists. Ironically, this French firm had recently taken over the fuel-injection division of Lucas, based in Birmingham. Maybe saying the T509 and 595 relied on Lucas electronics wouldn't have gone down very well with the target market?

While the engine borrowed from the previous range, the chassis was entirely new. Alloy perimeter frames were *de rigueur* on all sports bikes (with the honourable exception of Ducati), so Triumph had to follow suit. It wouldn't have mattered if the old steel spine frame had been the lightest, most rigid ever >>

Before the new T509 came along in '97, the price of the original, now with gold brake callipers and that useful extra gear, had gone up by a grand. By then the Speed Triple had become something of a cult bike, having spawned its own race formula and attracted a devoted band of followers.

But even by the time the first Speed Triple was hitting showrooms, plans for the next generation were being hatched. The success of Triumph and a production figure of around 15,000 per annum meant that the modular approach could be abandoned. Discrete new models would be made, starting with a couple of genuinely sporty mounts.

No prizes for guessing that the two in question were the T509 and T595, aka Speed Triple and Daytona. Although the engines conformed to the same general



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