

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 SPEEDOMETER

Lenses split for no apparent reason on early examples. There's no rev counter fitted to any of the carbid Monster 900s.

2 WIRING HARNESS

On some bikes, moving the handlebars from left to right could 'concertina' the wiring loom. If this happens, eventually one or more of the wires will fracture – a frustrating and inconvenient fault when you're 50 miles from home on a cold, damp night.

3 CAMBELTS

Replace the cambelts every 12,000 miles or two years, whichever is the soonest. Always replace the cambelts on any bike that has been stood unused for any length of time. The belts degrade with age regardless of whether they've been used, so don't bother keeping spares on the shelf.

4 CLUTCH SLAVE CYLINDER

Often fails on early models – either leaking fluid or packing up completely. It's down to muck from the gearbox sprocket getting sprayed directly into the cylinder housing. Ducati modified the slave cylinder on later Monsters, but an aftermarket item like the Oberon on our test bike cures the problem.

FRAME/ENGINE NUMBERS

Prior to year 2000 models, dealers do not have access to frame and engine numbers. They are not listed in the official parts books or service manuals. All they are given is the frame number from where a particular part alters specification. Frame numbers should start with ZDMM900M, but that is the only available information.

5 ENGINE PAINT

Flakes off at the first sign of British weather and is hard to match. Most readily available high temperature silver paints are too light or shiny compared to the original finish. A professional match might be the only way to get the colour right.

6 TUNING

You can get a big-bore kit to take the M900 out to 944cc. Keihin FCR carbs will give you a leg up in the power stakes too, but a kit for the M900 will set you back around £850 and you lose the choke with race carbs.

7 GEARING

Stock gearing is too high for comfortable town riding. Swapping the original 15-tooth gearbox sprocket for a 14-tooth one will improve matters considerably.

8 ELECTRICS

Not bad, as a rule, but the main relay under the seat that operates the entire electrical system when the ignition is turned on can fail without warning. Many owners carry a spare (about £20).

9 CYLINDER HEADS

Later (generally, 1997-on) Monsters have smaller valves and are a little torquier. The trade-off is less top-end power.

10 LUBRICATION

Always use a good quality fully synthetic oil in a pre-'99, dry clutch M900. Later bikes with wet clutches need semi-synthetic oil. Frequent oil and filter changes are one of the keys to engine durability.

11 PARTS SUPPLY

Excellent, according to Ducati Coventry's tech guru, John Burrows. Everything you'll need to keep your M900 Monster in top fettle is still readily available.

