



When Triumph re-launched themselves in the early 1990s, they felt it important to reaffirm their identity while at the same time distancing themselves from their Meriden forebears. A new logo was part of that. Neat job, too

engine problem or better still a reputation for frame failure would be ideal.

The early Triumphs are acknowledged to have been hugely over-engineered, an attempt by John Bloor to quickly establish a good reputation for reliability. The suspension and braking components were bought from major manufacturers and have an excellent reliability record, as do the electrics. The frame is a massive, steel, spine-type device which has proven to be immensely strong. There is an issue with the starter motor, however. Unless the battery is fully charged, the starter sprag clutch has been known to fail, requiring a full engine stripdown and splitting of the crankcases in order to fix. They also enjoy a reputation for consuming fork oil seals, a job which needs special factory tools to fix. Also, in order to change the air filter, one has to remove the carburettors and dismantle the airbox which wraps around the frame, an excellent design fault. Pass, but only just, C+

## #6: Quirkiness

Neo-classics, due in part to their relative youthfulness, are mostly easy to ride and to live with, the truism that there are no bad motorcycles being made nowadays almost certainly applies. The old staples like a dodgy clutch or difficult starting have been utterly banished and so we seek things like unusual switchgear, or strange power characteristics, an odd exhaust note, or best of all, eccentric handling. For example: Suzuki TL1000S *widowmaker*, subject to a factory recall to tame its life-threatening shakes, thrusting it into instant cult status.

The motorcycle must have a certain characteristic that endears itself to the rider and differentiates it from something dull, like a Honda VFR, which will never be a classic, irrespective of how capable it is. If it is a RealQuirky bike it will have a cult following. A test of this would be a website dedicated to that particular model, not just a generic Suzuki or Aprilia site with a sub-section.

The Speed Triple has a fantastically lusty engine which is more than a twin, but isn't as rev-hungry as a four. This gives it great character, but is sadly not enough to offset the general worthiness of the rest of the bike. Although slightly top heavy, due to the spine frame, it handles reliably, with no shakes or drama, brakes progressively and has unremarkable electrics. It does benefit from a very stretched riding position which is best suited to the long arm, short leg stature of rider, but overall a fine, quirk free, reliable bike. A disappointing Fail, D



The flyscreen (black) is an after-market add-on, and the exhaust headers have been polished from the original black. A slightly strange decision...



It is one big (black) lump, is it not? The Speed Triple placed its rider's feet higher and further back than the less sporty stablemates, and showing off the engine reveals how massive it actually is. Tall, too...



The driveside view of the engine suggests that it was never intended to be on view! There are feeble attempts to 'style' away the plumbing, for example. The fuel tap is the most sensible in the world and the oil filler stands out like a large hint...