

1997 BUELL S3 THUNDERBOLT

Base Price: \$11,999

Engine Type: Air-cooled, transverse 45-degree V-twin, OHV, 2 valves per cyl.

Bore & Stroke: 88.9 x 96.5mm

Displacement: 1,203cc

Transmission: 5-speed, cable-actuated wet clutch

Wheelbase: 55.0 in.

Seat Height: 29.5 in.

Wet Weight: 498 lbs.

Load Capacity: 352 lbs.

GVWR: 850 lbs.

Fuel Capacity: 5.0 gals. incl. 0.6-gal. res.

Average MPG: 42.6



Blocky Buell airbox is smaller than before and will clear the knee of most riders.

compression damping settings in the right. The single lay-down WP shock situated under the engine operates like a Harley Softail shock—it extends during compression and compresses on its rebound stroke, the opposite of most other suspension systems. It provides a well-controlled ride once dialed in, and it's a pleasure setting up its seven rebound damping positions and 11 compression settings.

Shifting the high-effort five-speed box takes some finesse and patience, but dragging the Buell down from speed is no problem. Its powerful six-piston caliper clenches a single 340mm cast-iron brake up front that provides savage grip. Stepping on the rear brake pedal feels like stepping on a rock on the sidewalk, with about the same result. It's a high-effort, low-feedback unit. The bike offers an easy-to-use sidestand only.

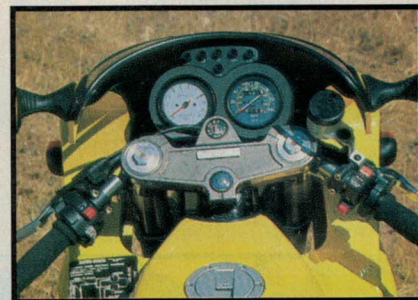
Among our trio the Buell is more hard-edged than the BMW, yet a much more civilized sport than the Guzzi with its less drastic seating position and greater perceived engine smoothness.

Moto Guzzi Sport 1100i

We have covered variations of the other two machines extensively in past issues. Because the Goose is a rare bird of a different feather, we'll concentrate on riding impressions here and devote a sidebar starting on the next page to its technical features.

In true Italian passion fashion the 1100i comes with a very laid-down riding position (though it does have reasonable leg room), so we ordered ours with the "Heli Bar Kit for the Daytona/Sport '97." Available from your Guzzi dealer for \$269, it relocates the grips about 1.5 inches higher, 1.5 inches wider and 1.5 inches farther rearward, though they still attach below the upper triple clamp. Even with the bar kit the riding position borders on the extreme, the hands and knees at approximately the same level, their centers a little more than a foot apart, the rider's body curved into an omega shape. Unless you're a purist or a racer, I strongly recommend the bar kit. Even with it, the rider remains hung out over that long fuel tank, and eventually my pencil neck began to fatigue.

This fuel-injected Guzzi offers a tiny fast-idle lever on the left bar that helps the big V-twin chug

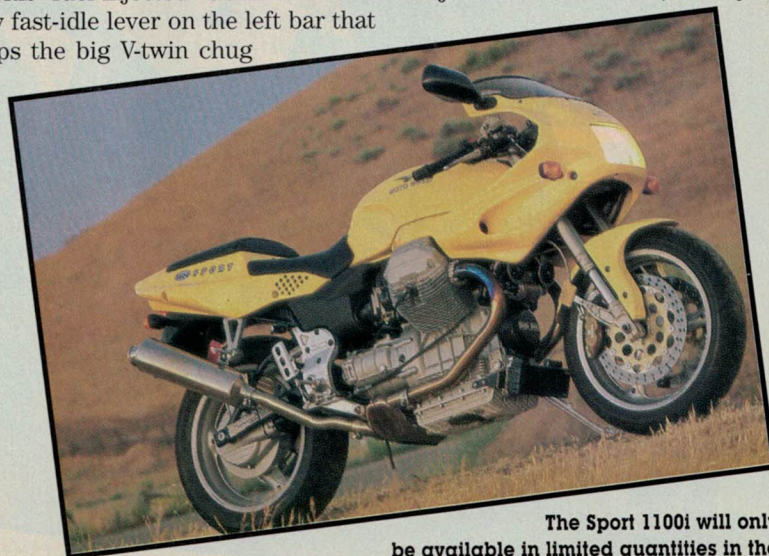


Taller Guzzi riders may not be able to see indicator lights hidden by dark windscreen.

into action with a low, visceral throb. It's a satisfying, EPA-legal sound, but could be an absolute symphony with aftermarket boomers.

Settle into that wide, firm seat and head out for your favorite curvy road, as this is where the Guzzi is focused. Its five-speed transmission shifts with long but easy, positive throws, and it's geared very high. You may only want to use the lower three cogs below 60 mph, and unlike the Buell rider, the Guzzi pilot will have to shift only occasionally in the twisties. The bike is barely breathing hard while cruising back roads in fifth gear at an indicated 80 to 90 mph.

In the upper rev ranges the Guzzi engine is reasonably smooth, but below 5,000 rpm the rider feels a major amount of throb, mostly in the



The Sport 1100i will only be available in limited quantities in the United States in 1997.

grips. Attacking the twisties will be an exercise in keeping the engine singing between 5,000 to 8,000 rpm to take advantage of its sweet spot.

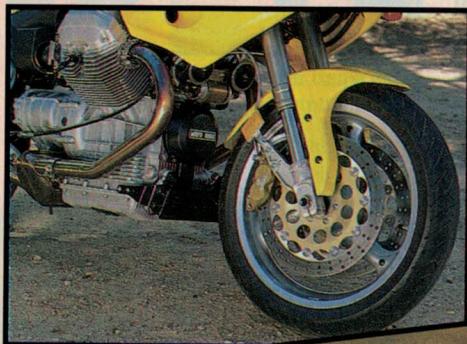
The male-slider WP fork provides multiple adjustments, and can be set up quite satisfactorily, though always biased toward smooth, firm control. Likewise the firm WP shock offers 11 rebound and seven compression damping controls. At speed in the curves it all works superbly together, the Guzzi always firm and well planted on its wide Pirelli MTRO 3 Dragon tires, a 120/70-ZR17 front and a 160/70-ZR17 rear. With their rounded profiles the tires roll easily into turns, and at brisk

speeds provide a very secure feel.

Complaints? Other than overall comfort, the pair of front disc brakes with their four-piston calipers are strong, but the brake lever has too much initial travel. The single rear disc with twin-piston caliper does its job adequately, however. Finally, only a scary, self-retracting (spring-loaded) sidestand is provided.

Of our three bikes, the Sport 1100i is the most focused, and requires the most accommodation from the rider. And like the beautiful man or woman you fantasize about in the movies, this is the beauty that could get you into the most pleasant kind of trouble.

Today there are about 110 Moto Guzzi dealers in the United States, and perhaps 15 additional service shops. For the location of the dealer nearest you, call (800) USA-MOTO. ☺



Marchesini wheels are new this year, as is injection on the new Moto Guzzi 1100i model.

Guzzi Sport 1100i Moto Tech

Dissecting the Goose.

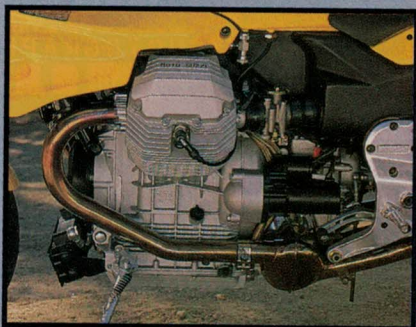
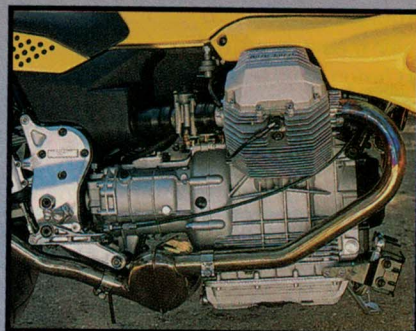
Any long-term rider knows of Moto Guzzi—sort of. Begun in 1921 by designer Carlo Guzzi and two friends, the marque celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1996. By the time Moto Guzzi left racing in 1957 it had claimed 3,329 victories in various categories, and had established its reputation for handling and reliability. Many of us fondly recall the 500cc Falcone four-stroke singles with their engines laid nearly horizontal, exposed valve gear clattering and exposed flywheel churning. Tourers came to know and love the line of 700 to 750cc V-7s introduced in 1968.

A company willing to try new things, Moto Guzzi pioneered such innovations as integrated braking, in which the foot pedal actuated the rear disc brake and one of the fronts, and the handlebar lever actuated the other front disc. And the Convert carried a torque converter so clutching and shifting were automatic. The rider could select low or high range and never have to shift again. By the mid '70s Guzzi was offering the 500cc V50 in this country, plus the touring 850-T3, the sporty 850 LeMans and the 1000





Above: Twin mufflers provide plenty of ground clearance. The large casting at right is new for 1997.



The 1,064cc engine is throbby below 5,000 rpm and under acceleration, but acceptably smooth for distance riding.

Convert with bags and windshield.

Since then the big shaft-drive, 90-degree V-twin has been the mainstay of the Guzzi line, which has evolved over time from the long-lived but stodgy tourers to the exciting sports available today. For a number of years Moto Guzzi was part of De Tomaso Industries, Incorporated, an American group, but eventually Alejandro De Tomaso withdrew. In August of 1996 the firm changed its business name to the Trident Rowan Group, Incorporated.

New for 1995, the original Sport 1100 was a carbureted model intended as a little softer-edged version of the Daytona RS, an all-out sport with four-valve heads, 10.5:1 compression ratio and a displacement of 992cc. By contrast the two-valve engine in the 1100 Sport displaces 1,064cc and offers a compression ratio of 9.5:1.

The Guzzi remains an air-cooled, pushrod twin, its camshaft driven by a chain with automatic tensioner. The dry clutch hooks to a very high-g geared five-speed transmission that Guzzi claims allows the Sport 1100 to run a top speed of 143 mph. The engine hangs suspended from a chrome-moly steel backbone frame that uses it as a stressed member. For additional strength the oval-tube swingarm is bolstered with a round-tube steel brace.

Since its 1995 introduction the 1100 has been substantially upgraded. Most significantly, for 1997 the 1100 is offered with a Weber Marelli electronic fuel-injection system, and given the designation 1100i (the carbureted model is still available). Pull the mini cold-start lever by the left grip and the bike immediately shudders into a happy idle. It also received a stout new WP male-slider fork in

which each fork cap carries screw-type adjusters, with 35 compression damping controls in the right leg, and 31 rebound settings in the left.

The reservoir-type WP shock was an update for 1996, providing seven compression damping settings easily accessible on the reservoir. Accessing the 11 rebound settings on the lower shock body means removing the rider's portion of the seat, and the computer box.

The 1997 model also received an industrial-strength oil cooler, provided on all '97 Guzzi models with the exception of the California. The sump has also been redesigned so that it is no longer necessary to drop the oil pan to change the filter. The hollow three-spoke Marchesini wheels are also new, and the rear incorporates a cushion drive. Also new are the large, polished castings that hold the swingarm.

Though it no longer offers integrated brakes, Moto Guzzi has not neglected the stopping department. Up front is a pair of dual, drilled 320mm floating Brembo discs with four-piston calipers. The rear 282mm disc is likewise drilled, and utilizes a twin-piston caliper. A four-position wheel adjuster allows the rider to easily position the front brake lever relative to the grip.

Other than that there's no trickery here from the company willing to try

1997 MOTO GUZZI SPORT 1100i

Base Price: \$11,990

Warranty: 12 mos., unlimtd. mileage

Engine

Type: Air-cooled, longitudinal 90-degree V-twin

Displacement: 1,064cc

Bore & Stroke: 92.0 x 80.0mm

Compression Ratio: 9.5:1

Valve Train: OHV, pushrod actuated, 2 valves per cyl.

Valve Adj. Interval: 3,000 miles

Carburetion: Weber Marelli Electronic Fuel Injection

Lubrication System: Wet sump, 3.6-qt. cap.

Transmission: 5-speed, cable-actuated dry clutch

Final Drive: Shaft, 1:4.125

Electrical

Ignition: Digital Electronic

Charging Output: 350 watts max.

Battery: 12V 12AH

Chassis

Frame: Chrome-moly steel backbone, rectangular section

Wheelbase: 58.0 in.

Rake/Trail: 26 degrees/3.5 in.

Seat Height: 31.5 in.

Suspension, Front: Male-slider w/ 40mm stanchions adj. for rebound & compression damping

Rear: Single shock adj. for spring preload, rebound & compression damping

Brakes, Front: Dual floating discs w/ opposed 4-piston calipers

Rear: Single disc w/ opposed 2-piston caliper

Wheels, Front: Cast, 3.50 x 17 in.

Rear: Cast, 4.50 x 17 in.

Tires, Front: 120/70-ZR17

Rear: 160/70-ZR17

Wet Weight: 523 lbs.

Load Capacity: 477 lbs.

GVWR: 1,000 lbs.

Touring Performance

Fuel Capacity: 5.0 gals. incl. 1.0-gal. res.

Average MPG: 38.0

Estimated Range: 190 miles

Indicated RPM at 60 MPH: 3,300

new things. No anti-lock brakes. No rubber engine mounting. No ground-breaking framework or suspension. Just an alternative twin that in any of its black, red or yellow versions is sure to draw attention, and a broad grin while you're hunkered down over the gauges on a winding road. ☺