



FEATURE ARCHIVE

FEATURE ARCHIVE FROM CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS MAGAZINE ON-LINE

FEATURE INDEX

From issue:

You are currently in the on-line feature archive. Past edited features that have appeared on this website are stored here for your enjoyment.

No. 189 - JULY 2003

CLASSIC RIDE - Ducati Paso
The first Oriental Duke?

IN THE MAGAZINE



Purchase this issue on-line [Here](#)

- IN THIS ISSUE**
- EDITORIAL**
- ARTICLE 1**
- ARTICLE 2**
- ARTICLE 3**
- NEWSDESK**
- PROBLEM SOLVER**
- CLASSIFIEDS**
- NEXT ISSUE**
- MAIN INDEX**

ARTICLE 1

The first Oriental Duke?

ONLY ON-LINE

It's all-encompassing bodywork was a bold departure for the Ducati brand but it set a trend for later motorcycle design. Chris Pearson takes the reins of a Paso dressed in tasty 'Info Strada' graphics of the World Superbike team.

- VIDEO FEATURES**
- USEFUL LINKS**
- CONTACT**



BOOK / BUY / SELL

- ADVERT FORM**
- PROBLEM FORM**
- BUY THIS ISSUE**
- SUBSCRIBE**
- BACK ISSUES**
- GIFT SHOP**
- DIGITAL ISSUES**

DON'T FORGET:

- BINDERS**

OFTEN derided for its strange looks and quirky behaviour, the Ducati Paso was largely responsible for a new surge of world-wide interest in the Ducati brand. But to achieve that status did the Bologna concern abandon the very essence of what makes a Duke?

Everyone has an opinion, positive or otherwise, about the Paso. Nonetheless, the sleek and totally enclosed bodywork has since spawned countless others in its wake.

Named in honour of Renzo Pasolini, who strangely never rode for the company, the Paso was planned to be the first Ducati 'world' motorcycle in an attempt to revive flagging sales with its radical styling. Its quieter exhaust note also enabled it to pass the stringent noise regulations of several countries not previously able to officially import Dukes.

With the aircooled, bevel head, Mille engine coming to the end of its development, attention turned to the belt-driven cam Pantah unit. The potential of that particular engine design was great. In the mid eighties the vee-twin desmodromic unit was easily capable of producing in excess of 70 bhp in its standard 750cc format, eventually becoming the basis for the 851 and in turn the current crop of 916 machines.

The Pantah engine was continually developed - way beyond its initial conception - by talented engine designer Massimo Bordi, eventually producing 78 bhp for the 750 Paso and much, much more for the race bikes it powered.

Following on from the ground-breaking GPz600 of the last issue, the Paso is arguably the bike that gave us the 'sucked sweet' look copied initially by the CBR600/1000 and many others since.

The Paso was the first complete machine to emerge from the marriage of Cagiva and Ducati, clearly evident from the many elephant logos around the machine, and was the brainchild of ex Bimota boss, Massimo Tamburini. The radical Paso, first seen at the Milan Show of 1985 and released for public consumption the following year, was partnered by a 350cc version which thankfully only saw active service in the Italian market.

The overall styling of the Paso was a bold move forwards from the conventional-looking F1, which had seen fairings getting sleeker and much tighter around the standard Ducati power plant. For the Paso, a clear screen disappeared completely leaving a bulky-looking front end and a darkened instrument cluster area.

Looking back, perhaps several aspects of the Paso were influenced by the Honda NR500 of the '79/'80 race seasons just like the 916 series of machines were heavily inspired by Tamburini's personal bike of the time, the Honda RC30.

The world's press lauded the new sports tourer although, like the modern-day 999, the customers were a little bit more reluctant to greet the new machine with open arms. The low and sleek Paso was, in reality, the production version of the Pantah-powered Bimota DB1, a machine commissioned by Cagiva and once again designed by Tamburini. The FJ1100 perimeter chassis (also a Tamburini design) became the inspiration for the Paso frame and marked a radical departure from the long-established round steel tube trellis chassis that had made Ducatis instantly recognisable the world over. Unlike the Big Yamaha however, the Paso engine was a semi-stressed member of the perimeter frame with the swingarm attached directly to the rear of the gearbox casings.

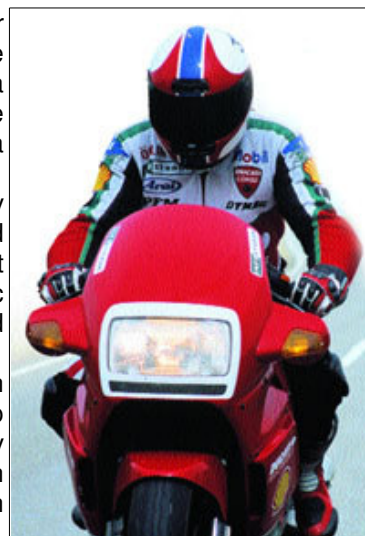
Concessions were made, for the first time on a production Ducati vee-twin, to enable access to the rear cylinder head with the rear pot standing well proud of the upper frame tubes. The rear head was actually turned by 180 degrees to allow the exhaust to exit to the rear. The single-bodied Weber carb, feeding both inlets, sat between the two cylinders. The lower rails of the Japanese-style frame were detachable to facilitate engine removal while the rear sub frame was a permanent part of the structure - meaning a complete chassis replacement should this small part ever be damaged.

Such is the total enclosure of the Paso's bodywork that, with the exception of the swingarm mount, none of the square-section frame is visible when fully assembled. The downfall of this is the poor quality of the fastenings and casings. When the plastics are removed, severe corrosion is all too evident and probably unavoidable.

Cost effective riding

THE example seen here is owned by former bike mechanic Dave Ashlin. He has owned the Paso for three years and found it to be a cost-effective and reasonably trouble-free machine, having only needed to replace a starter motor and perform basic maintenance. Dave's bike was part of a job lot originally intended for the American market but imported into the UK - hence the wrap-around rear light which would have housed the US-spec indicators. The small stubby items were added afterwards.

The batch found its way to these shores when the entire Stateside order was cancelled due to lack of sales. Dave now runs a courier company and often uses the Paso for the odd local run when the weather is favourable, although



anything that involves heavy city traffic is avoided due to the clutch overheating problems common to the type.

The original Silentium silencers have long gone to be replaced with gloriously-sounding aftermarket Lazer items intended for the 900SS. These replace the almost silent purr of the



original system into the classic desmo roar that every Ducati should have.

Emulating the new booming sound, the machine now wears more modern 'Info Strada' race-style cosmetics courtesy of a bike thief who made off with the Paso only to dump it soon after with significant damage to the standard paintwork.

The machine was a write-off but Dave bought the Paso back from his insurance company and, while the thief spent three months courtesy of Her Majesty, set about a more lengthy task to bring it back to its former glory.

The fetching Info Strada scheme and graphics came about thanks to Extreme Paintwork and it looks the business, especially as on the day we also had a superb matching race suit in the car courtesy of GTS racing of Telford.

Poor throttle response and low-speed running on standard Pasos is mainly caused by the Weber twin-choke carburettor which feeds both cylinders. The fuel pump is not capable of supplying a constant pressure to the float chamber and the fluctuating level results in poor running, particularly low down. It seems strange that while the ignition and electrics in general were taken care of by top-notch Jap items, Tamburini and Bordi left the all-important carburation out of that equation with disastrous results.

Many owners have since resorted to either fitting a pair of Dell'Orto carbs or a pressure relief valve between the fuel pump and the float needle to correct the temperamental fuelling low in the rev range. The throttle feel is incredibly light at the twistgrip due to the single cable only twisting one butterfly valve instead of two individual items or even heavily sprung slides.

In keeping with early Eighties race track thinking, and available rubber, both wheels are 16 inchers with the wider profile and contact patch creating a slow-handling machine at low speed, not at all in keeping with Ducati's family tree.

Purchase this issue on-line [Here](#)

real not retro

• All content is © 2006 *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* / Mortons Media Group Ltd.