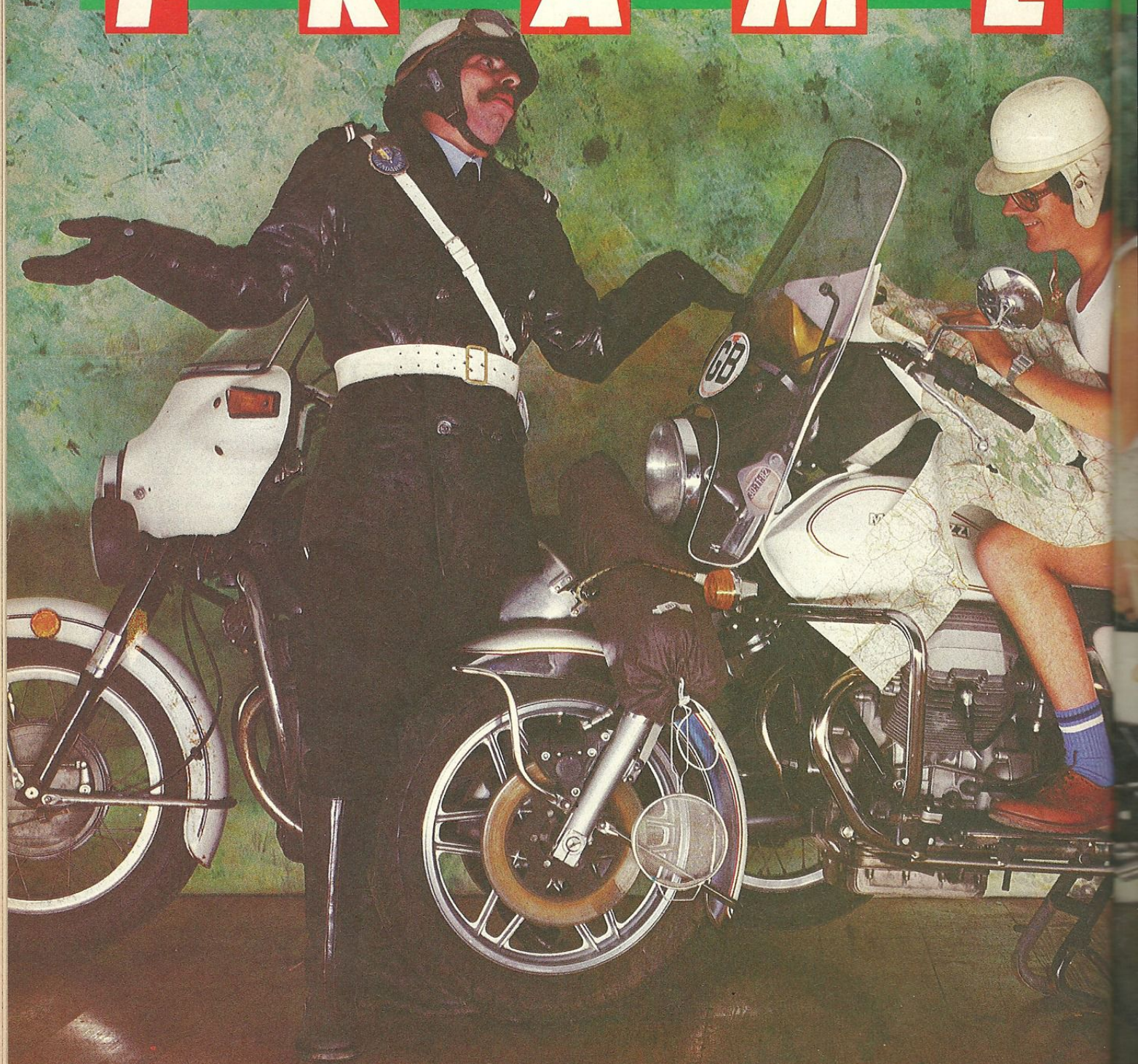


CALIFORNIA FRAME



Ad Manager Jock McBollock sent us this sordid snap from his holiday in the South of France. Fortunately he hasn't returned; though we fear he may have entered the Beaujolais run (on a Cali? — Ed).

N I A N - U P



It's a bit tough trying to establish an objective view of a certain motorcycle when your editor thinks it's a large-capacity Lambretta. Worse still, having owned, cherished, cuddled and cursed an original prototype of the model in question, pretending objectivity is just a bit on the strong side. (Strong as in Limburger, not muscle.)

So here it is, brothers and sisters, time to step out of the closet. I actually own and ride a Moto Guzzi California. It was made in 1972, with the model designation of V7GT850, and was never marketed in Europe. It's an original — yer pukka, no-kidding Los Angeles Police Department tool and was in full porcine spec when acquired by

fed bleedin' great valves. The exhaust system wasn't particularly noisy, but there again, it wasn't that restrictive either.

Hey Presto! The California II has an air filter like the lungs of a tuberculosis victim. Bigger 30mm carbs feed midjet valves located in fuel/emission-efficient cylinder heads. The exhausts are probably the least strangled fraction of the whole set-up. It's not surprising that, contrary to Guzzi folklore, the loudest noise when giving the new California full welly is the pipes, rather than the more traditional megagobbling of the inlet tracts. All the same, the compression ratio and stroke have survived development, messing, tinkering, etc. It must be something to do

Willis spills the beans on the California ten year trick — only the frame's been changed to protect the innocent

yours truly. The air-driven, two-tone siren departed after London Metropolitan Bacon got the needle but the bike's still more-or-less the same now.

Ten years later the Moto Guzzi concern is still making the California. The bike has changed in almost every detail except styling but, amazingly, retains an identical character. So much for cultural progress and the modification of desire. Step aside, Guy Debord old mate, you lost. There is, apparently, a reasonable market for Californias. God knows why. *WB?* Technical Editor, El Gimp, had a T-series version which he loved more than his wife (he kept it longer...). Punters still buy 'em.

If I was working for the opposition, I'd tell you, in words of not more than two syllables, what a good touring bike it makes, or what a good posing bike it makes, or how much off-road potential it's got, or how to convert it into a cafe-racer, or, worst of all, how to restore it so that the whole of Milton Keynes will resent you...

What really matters is how it's changed — or hasn't. The heart of any motorbike is its engine, so I'll start there. Despite climbing, via the 850T and T3 limps, from 844cc to 949cc, ten long years have come up with a mere one pony increase in power, coupled with a reduction in useful torque. This sorry bit of *realpolitik* is what, on the technospeak level, emission regulations are all about. The GT850 had a gestural air filter, purloined directly from the Fiat 500 no less, feeding into 29mm Dell'Ortos which, in their turn,

with magic numbers.

The rest of it will never be the same again. The GT's beautifully gear-driven camshaft disappeared years ago, to be replaced by some Mickey Mouse bogchain-powered item, as if it was bleedin' Japanese or some-fink. Instead of the enormous Bosch generator located between the pots and driven by a V-belt up the front of the motor, there's a Bosch alternator tacked on the front end of the crank. So much for progress and good luck to Bosch. At least they haven't lost out.

The current motor does, however, stay close to the time-warp. Guzzi lumps are Guzzi lumps. Drivers of heavy earth-moving machinery will still be familiar with the throttle response below three grand on the tach. Above that point, tonsil-shaking lumpiness smooths out into torque tractability. Guzzis are best at mid-range engine speeds. This is equally reflected in their practical performance. Between 50 and 80 miles per hour, they earn their keep like few other cycles ever made. Sure enough, they are also capable of doing the biz at the top end, but not without clear registration of grievances. After relatively short periods of high-speed abuse, the shop steward steps in and orders an immediate loosening of tappets and voluminous ejection of oil through head breathers. Be warned, their militancy is the product of many years of struggle.

The transmission has weathered the onward march of time, unfortunately, with only trivial changes. The dry clutch survives well in terms of transcon-

tential touring, ie, when I ain't used that much. Typical urban trigger-happy consumption means kissing the plates *arrividerci* at little more than 5000 mile intervals. A new clutch involves dismounting the engine and splitting it from the gearbox.

The only thing different with the gearbox is the ratios. For some perverted reason, all the gearing is lower than in days of yore, despite the claimed increase in power. The unit is still the ancient agricultural pit it always was. Changes are slow, selection is less than positive and neutral is nothing but a piss-taker. The usual Heath-Robinson linkage, deliberately slack to cope with the feeble return spring, guarantees vagueness.

Final drive components, too, remain unchanged, except for a reduction in the massive oil capacity of the old bevel box. Guzzi shaft drive is robust, which is just as well because the factory ethos seems to be that transmission shock-absorbers are for poofers, not for the tough boys in the Kings Road Highway Patrol.

The frame, at first squint, seems to have been totally transformed. The GT had a somewhat artistic double-cradle skeleton with a large diameter central spine. It was curvaceous and sexy, but resulted in embarrassingly poor ground clearance. The Mk II has its own version of the standard, modern, Guzzi bolt-up chassis. This is probably one of the best production frames made, featuring the engine/gearbox unit hanging in a cradle from triangulated struts, on a pair of top rails attached to a massively-braced headstock.

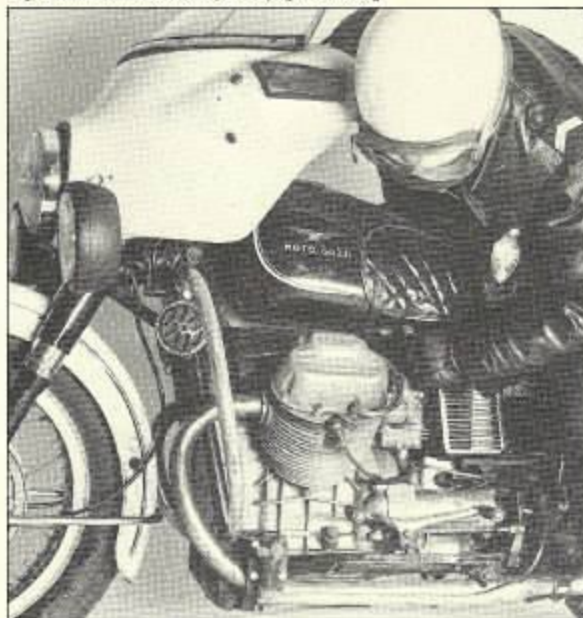
The fun starts when industrial archeologists like me spot that today's clever item is made on exactly the same jig as the antique 1972 frame — all the reference points match up. Bearing this in mind, it becomes easier to comprehend why the Mk II feels almost exactly the same as the GT once it's rolling.

There is, however, something to be gained from a decade of running on the spot. Chucking the Mk II California into bends always made me flinch, expecting the usual amount of ground-clearing as centre stand, footboards, etc, gouged up the Queen's pristine tarmac. It never happened. The tidier underside profile of the new frame makes a substantial difference. The old Cali handled well within the limits imposed by its kiddie wheels. The new one just handles well.

The brakes have changed completely, but the systems fitted represent the best available for each generation. My old crapheap has a gigantic double-sided, twin-leading-shoe front gripper with a single-leading-shoe drum at the back. When adjusted properly, the front drum will stop a small lorry,



Big Screen entertainment for in-flight cruising.



Frog Fed fumbles fettleing the fuel.

which is after all a fair description of the bike. The Mk II has the highly-esteemed Guzzi linked braking system operating Brembo calipers onto cast iron discs.

Getting down to the nitty-gritty, the new model is stylistically honest to the image created by the GT, although it varies in detail. The GT's armchair-like upholstery is perfect for one, which was what it was designed for. The Mk II has a comedy compromise dedicated to giving arse-ache to two closely-related individuals. Both bikes have full dodgem car equipment in the

screens. Mudguards, which for the sake of form we'll call fenders, are *de rigueur* large, deeply valanced, decorative. Unfortunately, ten years of production economies mean that they are made out of thinner steel now. Paint peels off 'em where once stove enamel chipped.

Despite all the differences, the improvements and flaws, the Mk II V1000 California is basically the same bike as the GT850 California. While the Japanese rarely seem to turn out any particular model for more than ten months, one section of the Italian industry seems to have got away with the same brew for over ten years. All I can say is more power to the Guzzi elbow. But you don't have to take any notice of me, I'm prejudiced. Roger Willis

Model	Moto Guzzi California II
Price inc tax	£2,899
Warranty	12 months/unlimited mileage
Customer contact	Moto Guzzi Ltd, Ltd, 53-61 Park Rd, Luton, Beds, Tel: 410666

ENGINE

Type	Ohv, 4 air-valve, twin
Capacity	999cc
Bore/stroke	88x78mm
Lubrication	Wet sump
Comp ratio	9.2:1
Carburation	2x30mm Dell'Orto
Ignition	Coil & cbs
Power (bhp)	65 @ 6,200rpm
Torque (lb-ft)	55.7 @ 5,200rpm

TRANSMISSION

Primary drive	Gear
Clutch	Down, two-plate
Gearbox	Five speed
Final drive	Shaft and 50/100 gears
Overall ratios	11.6, 8.1, 6.1, 5.1, & 4.1:1

ELECTRICS

Power source	Bosch 280W alternator
Battery	12V 24Ah
Headlamp	60/55W quartz

CHASSIS

Frame	Full frame, bolt-up duplex cradle
Front susp	Telescopic fork
Rear susp	Swing arm with twin shocks
Front brake	2x300mm Brembo discs
Rear brake	42mm Brembo disc
Front tyre	Pirelli 120/90R18
Rear tyre	Pirelli 120/90R18

CAPACITIES

Fuel tank	3.5gal (7.5 litres)
Oil	3 litres

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	61.0in (1565mm)
Seat height	35.0in (890mm)
H-bar width	6.9in (175mm)
Rake/trail	24°/4.1in
Dry weight	351lb (250kg)

EQUIPMENT

Elect start	Yes
Wind deflector	Yes
Speedo, tach, fuel gauge, clock, car mirror, tool kit, etc	Yes
Lock, fuel tank	Yes

PERFORMANCE

Top speed	110mph (Ged)
Speeds in gears	44, 63, 83, 100 & 116mph
Fuel mpg	6, 100/100
Range	30mpg/275miles