

# MY bike



## '90 906 Paso

**MAL SHERRINGTON HAS** owned his Paso from new, and has put up 17,000 km. In general, he's happy with it – and his girlfriend prefers the pillion position to either the YZF or the K75S BMW he had before. Mal reckons it took a while to get the hang of riding it: it needed a fistful of revs to get off the line, and it didn't like a tentative approach to corners: "If you backed it off in a corner it would go straight on."

He found that tyre pressures were very critical. He now runs them (A59 and M59 Michelins) on 38 psi; if they drop below 36 psi the handling suffers dramatically.

Mechanical problems have been few, engine problems zero. "A big blob of plastic" blocking part of the airbox was removed early on, and improved breathing enormously. Some Pasos had tank cracking problems, but not Mal's. One pitfall he mentions – corrected on later models – is that the hydraulic clutch actuator keeps bad company. It sits right in front of the engine sprocket and wears a film of filth and grit which eventually ruins the seal. This takes about 5000 km. Mal says if you keep the actuator clean the seal expires sooner, whereas a good glob of greasy dirt may protect it. "It only takes a 20 cent O-ring to fix it," he reports, "but it's a nuisance."

**Philip Blake**

When Cagiva acquired Ducati in 1985, they approached Massimo Tamburini, the ta in Bimota, to design a new chassis for the Pantah. He called his new design the Paso, in memory of Benelli GP racer Renzo Pasolini, who was killed at Monza in 1973. Departing from more recent Ducati practice, Tamburini's cradle didn't use the engine as a stressed member. It had much more sophisticated suspension than any previous street Ducati with Marzocchi M1R forks and a rising rate rear suspension system, and had wide 16in wheels front and rear. Changes to the 750 engine included turning the rear cylinder so both inlet manifolds faced each other. Both cylinders could thus be fed by a modified Weber twin-choke carburettor. Carburation was the source of many complaints despite factory jetting revisions. Problems with an off idle and mid-range flat spot, backfiring when hot, and throttle lag notwithstanding, the factory persevered with the Weber until 1991. They at last got the new engine right with Mikuni carburettors.

The Paso also suffered from excess weight at 195kg dry. Testing one in company with an F1, the Paso was a disappointment. It understeered badly and wasn't particularly confidence inspiring. Throttle response was poor compared with that from the 750F1's Dell'Ortos.

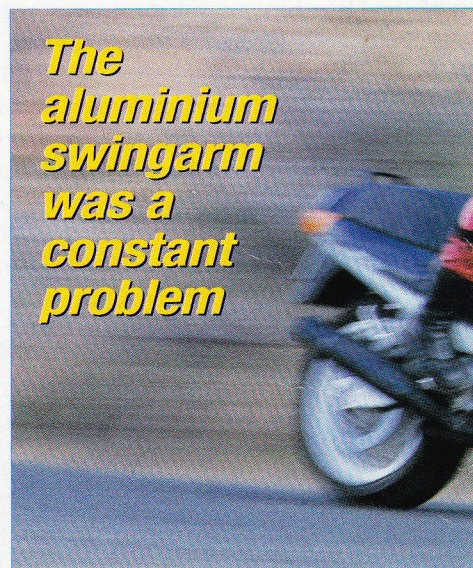
But the Paso was Ducati's bid for a share of the mainstream market and the factory persisted with it until 1990, by which time it was being heavily discounted.

Its importance came with the ideas that accompanied it. For the first time there was a commitment to ease servicing. The new frame design helped access to the rear cylinder head for valve adjustment, and a simplified rocker layout, incorporating a spring clip on the opening rocker shaft, allowed the rocker to be moved sideways easing shim removal.

By 1989 the 750 had evolved into the 906. Most changes were to the engine, which now drew heavily from the new 851. It used the 851's six-speed gearbox and became known as the 906 – 6 to indicate six speeds. Actual capacity was 904cc. It shared the 851's 92mm bore but was stroked from 64 to 68mm. Primary drive and clutch also came from the 851. The disadvantage of all this extra engine sophistication was increased weight, to 205kg.

The 906 lasted until 1990. It wasn't one of the factory's most memorable products, having only a two year production run, but was destined for higher things when developed, for the 1991 season, into the fuel injected 907IE. Before that though, there were two other Weber carburetted bikes, the 750

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Sport and 900SS.

The 750 Sport was aimed at those enthusiasts who remembered the superb yellow round case 750 Sport. By combining ingredients from both Paso and 750F1, Ducati hoped to recreate a classic, and lure back their traditional customers.

This nuovo 750 Sport was essentially the Paso engine in a modified 750F1 chassis. The steel swingarm of the F1 and F2 made way for aluminium but the 16in Ocam wheels and Brembo brakes came from the Paso. The aluminium swingarm was a constant problem, suffering cracks and even complete breakages.

More basic suspension was used to keep costs down, with non-adjustable 40mm Marzocchi forks and a Marzocchi rear shock. In many respects it was a step backwards – the Paso

handled better. Engine changes were minor – one oil cooler instead of two – and didn't extend to replacement of the Weber carb. Released in mid 1988, the new Sport failed to live up to its earlier namesake, and by 1990 had gone.

With the introduction of the 906 Paso during 1989 it seemed logical to put this larger engine in the 750 Sport chassis and

resurrect another classic, the 900SS. But to keep the spare lines that set the 750 Sport apart from the Paso, the 904cc engine that was installed in this traditional Ducati style space frame lacked water cooling. This engine used oil-cooled cylinders and heads and, as with the 906, the crankcases and six speed gearbox were shared with the 851. The Weber carb remained.

The new 900SS was considerably lighter than the 906 (180kg versus 205). The frame was from the 750 Sport though wheels, brakes and suspension were upgraded. Four-piston Brembo brakes and wide 17in wheels came off the 851. Fitting larger wheels, however, resulted in a tall motorcycle, and with weight biased towards the rear, handling was less than perfect.

With the centre of gravity raised and the rider too high, the agility of the earlier model was gone. Steering was also very slow. Clearly a bike that needed further work.

After years of complaints, the Weber carburettor was finally dropped for 1991 and on the new 907IE replaced by Weber Marelli fuel injection from the 851. The fitting of 17in wheels also eliminated the idiosyncratic handling of the earlier Paso.

After a series of crankcase cracking problems in racing, new crankcases appeared in 1991 with more extensive webbing and ribbing around the cylinder base.

The 907's brakes were also an upgrade from the 906, with four piston Brembo calipers. Finally, 17in wheels cured the odd handling of earlier Pasos.

Now and for the first time, Ducati had a machine that could actually take on the Japanese in both performance and practicality. At last the Paso was right.

