

AUSTRALIA'S NUMBER ONE

NDD

MAY 1990

\$3.95 (NZ \$5.95 incl. GST)

# Two Wheels



## FZR1000W VS GSX-R1100L

Twisting Reality?

## PASO VS 900SS

Put Up Your Dukes!

*Plus*

## BMW SHOOTOUT

## BIG COMPARO ISSUE!



9 312966 123596



**STUART KENNEDY**  
threw Ducati's Paso  
and SuperSport  
heavyweights into  
the ring to see which  
bike would come up  
trumps.  
Talk  
about a  
judge's  
decision . .





*put up your*  
**DUKES**

DUCATI 900SS V DUCATI 906 PASO







## DUCATI 900SS

V

## DUCATI 906 PASO

**T**ake a Ducati 906 Paso and a new Ducati 900 SS to the Sydney end of the swervy Putty Road. Find two riders of equal craziness, dump one in the saddle of the Paso and the other on the SS. Instruct them that whoever is first to roll into Singleton gets to keep the bike.

Putting aside foul play, jailings and the likelihood of being hamburgered under an errant semitrailer, the 900 SS punter would nearly always become an SS owner in the above scenario. For the pure sports rider the choice is simple — Ducati's 900 Supersport is lighter, quicker, more forgiving and better braked than its Paso stablemate.

Point-to-point madness is all very well but what about month-to-month ownership? Below ga ga speeds the







**Left: Look-wise it's a choice between the purely-for-function bare frame 900SS or the ultra smooth flowing lines of the Paso. Finish on both bikes is very good, with few of those niggly problems that plagued earlier Ducatis.**



performance differential is slight and the Paso is better appointed than the stark Supersport. If I had \$13,000 free of school fees, mortgages and speeding fines to spend on a new 900 Ducati the choice would bring on a few sleepless nights.

But it would be mighty pleasant insomnia, because framed in the middle of both bikes is my favourite engine, a big V-twin. And, as both bikes offer more soul, style and charisma than a sea of Japanese fours this is one of life's choices where it is impossible to really lose.

Either way you get a 904 cc 90-degree V-twin engine with a six-speed gearbox. The bottom-end comes courtesy of the mighty 851. With the SS you get to see the oil cooled motor behind the skimpy sports fairing while the Paso's water-cooled donk is forever shrouded by its luscious bodywork. Ducati lists the Paso as putting out 65 kW at 8000 rpm while the SS has to make do with 61 kW at 8400 rpm. The difference probably lies in exhausts, valve timing and air cleaners.

While the Paso supposedly has the goods on the dyno the SS weighs 25 kg less than the Paso's 205 kg and clears out on the heavier bike once the revs clear 6500 rpm. The 900 Dukes might be 20-odd kW short of a hot Japanese 750, but power delivery is wonderful, with long flat power curves running from 3000 rpm to the 9000 red line and beyond. And they feel good, with low frequency vibes and a loping gait helped by the healthy flywheel effect. Vibes are slightly lighter through the Paso's frame.

The 900 desmo twin is a deceptive engine which shoves rather than whips the rider into the rarefied regions above 200 km/h. What it loses in warp drive it makes up for in good natured tractability — once the carb gets it act together.

Big bitch in the engine bay is the 44 DCNF Weber carb which suffers from severe indigestion and possibly a bowel problem or two. The big, two-barrel carb has difficulties getting the fuel/air mix out of its own way at low revs, especially around town. Above 4500 rpm it can suck and blow with the best of them but the thing detracts from the easygoing nature of the V-twin engines around town, causing them to load up at traffic lights (a real pain on the SS with its high first gear) as well as hunting on steady throttle and stuttering through throttle transitions. Ducati should fix the damn thing or fling it in favour of fuel injection, fast.

### SS discipline

At gung ho speeds on Australian roads the SS will forgive where the Paso can sting. The Supersport is tauter than the Paso and a more natural steerer although it likes to be told rather than telepathed through corners. You've got to keep the power on at all times with the Paso, to retain directional stability — back off in bumpy corners or start mulling over lines with a trailing throttle and the bike will start to buck, weave and steer wide. It will also start sliding and wallowing earlier than the SS. This revelation came as a fear-inducing shock to me following SS-mounted assistant editor Mick

## SECOND OPINION

**D**UCATI'S 906 Paso has been one of my favourite bikes since I first sampled one last year. It's a good sports-tourer with comfort, style and ability, despite a few minor flaws. Happy to lope along at 110 km/h, it'll also tackle a winding road though the slight understeer and the habit of standing up under brakes mid-corner means a little care has to be taken.

The 900SS handles effortlessly but falls flat as a tourer. Riding position, suspension and gearing are pure sport, and in this role it's hard to fault.

I found myself going from one Duke to the other, each time thinking 'Yep, I prefer this one' until the road changed and I'd want to be on the other. Overall the SS became the bike I wanted to be on but only because the roads tended more towards the SS's territory. The Paso was slightly slower because the road was only vaguely familiar, meaning a degree of caution had to be maintained. The SS carved through regardless, not once getting upset at all. But gawd my wrists ached at the end of the day! It's not really a practical bike, unless you're into sportsters, full stop.

The Paso is a practical bike — but beside the SS its shortcomings are shown up. So I'm going to cop out and say my choice as the best buy goes to a non-existent bike — the 'SS-Paso' if you like. That bike has the ergonomics, motor, bodywork and suspension of the Paso with the SS's 17-inch wheels, four-piston brakes and steering geometry — basically a Paso with good brakes and faultless steering. It'd have to be one of the best sports-tourers around.

That seems to me to be the obvious way to go with the Paso. Who knows, maybe Ducati will do it? It wouldn't cut into the pure-sports SS market too much and would probably increase sales of the Paso. But today there isn't such a beast.

The difference between the Paso and the SS is significant — far more than just different styling. The Super Sport is as its name suggests and the Paso is squarely a sports-tourer with the trade-offs that tag implies. The scratcher should choose the SS; the bloke who likes variety in his riding should opt for the Paso. The SS takes out the award for the better bike, though, because it fulfils its role almost perfectly.

What Ducati has done with the SS has blown my attitude of 'put up with the Paso's minor quirks'. I really do hope the factory will mix and match the bikes to make the perfect Paso — the sort of motorcycle that dreams are made of. My dreams anyway . . .

— Mick Matheson



# DUCATI 900SS V DUCATI 906 PASO

Matheson into the world of nine tenths through a classic set of 35-65 km/h corners.

I believe much of the SS's superior poise lies in its 17-inch wheels which cut the line perfectly between speed and stability. The ancient twin-pot Brembos on the Paso are satisfactory whereas the four-spot jobs on the SS are sublime, giving all the legendary feel of Brembos along with speed-shredding power. When the Bologna parts bins run out of two-pot brakes and 16-inch hoops the Paso will become a safer, better handling motorcycle. While the SS wins on fine control the Paso has more supple, comfortable suspension with its plush,

adjustable M1R forks and true rising rate rear end sporting a Marzocchi Duoshock. The SS makes do with single setting forks and a simple monoshock rear.

## Plush Paso

The Paso is much better equipped than the SS and far more comfortable with its fat, cushy seat and roomy sports touring riding position creating a more pleasant mile guzzling environment than the SS's crouch. The Paso carries four litres more fuel (22 litres vs 18 litres) than the SS and has side and centrestands (the SS spring loaded side-stand is a joke). Its dash wears a clock, temperature gauge and a reasonably accurate fuel gauge where the SS has just a foam-mounted speedo and tach augmented by eight idiot lights which

are invisible during daylight. The Paso's headlight is quite good while the average birthday cake throws out more illumination than the SS's headlight.

Mirrors on both bikes are silly. The Paso's blinker/mirror ears are well styled but offer only passable vision solo and nothing when two-up. The fairing mounted numbers on the SS have a narrow field of view and shake like crazy. Pillion bums will get an easier time on the Paso's rear end but neither bike has any provision for mounting luggage.

Both motorcycles make my eyes smile. The Paso is the best looking full bodywork bike ever made — afternoons can be spent polishing and exploring all the subtle curves while the SS is a lithe, red, exquisite cafe racing tart. I love them both dearly. Give me the Paso for a wife and the SS for a mistress.

## 900SS

## 906 PASO



### ENGINE

Air and oil cooled, 90 degree V-twin four stroke. Belt driven double overheads camshafts. Two-valves-per-cylinder, desmodromic operation. One-piece crankshaft with roller main and plain big-end bearings. Wet sump lubrication with oil cooler. Gear primary drive through dry multi-plate clutch to constant mesh, six speed gearbox. Final drive by chain. Claimed max. power.....61 kW at 8400 rpm  
Claimed max. torque.....Not available  
Bore and stroke.....92 x 68 mm  
Displacement.....904 cc  
Compression ratio.....9.2:1  
Maximum engine speed.....9000 rpm  
CarburationTwin throat Weber 44 DCNF

### FRAME AND BRAKES

Tubular section, chrome moly steel trestle frame. Rectangular section swing-arm mounted to engine. 40 mm telescopic forks with no adjustments. Single rear spring/damper unit with pre-load and rebound damping adjustments. Twin 300 mm front disc brakes with four-piston calipers. Single 245 mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Claimed front suspension travel.....Not available  
Claimed rear suspension travel.....Not available  
Front tyre.....130/60 x 17 Pirelli radial  
Rear tyre.....170/60 x 17 Pirelli radial  
Dry weight.....180 kg  
Seat height.....620 mm  
Wheelbase.....1450 mm  
Fuel capacity (inc. reserve).....18 litres

### TEST MACHINE

Manufacturer.....Ducati Meccannica SpA, Bologna, Italy  
Test Machine.....Fraser's Motorcycles, Homebush, NSW.  
Price.....\$12,995  
Warranty.....12 months/20,000 km

**Best points:** Gorgeous looks and sound, spiritual engine. Fine road-holding, braking and handling.

**Worst points:** Cheap suspension, stupid side stand, dodgy mirrors, no reserve tap, dodgy headlight.

### ENGINE

Water cooled, 90 degree V-twin four stroke. Single overheads camshafts driven by belt. Two-valves-per-cylinder, desmodromic operation. One-piece crankshaft with roller main and plain big-end bearings. Wet sump lubrication. Gear primary drive through dry multi-plate clutch to six speed, constant mesh gearbox. Final drive by chain. Claimed max. power.....65 kW at 8000 rpm  
Claimed max. torque.....Not available  
Bore and stroke.....92 x 68 mm  
Displacement.....904 cc  
Compression ratio.....9.2:1  
Maximum engine speed.....9000 rpm  
CarburationTwin throat Weber 44DCNF

### FRAME AND BRAKES

Perimeter-type, chrome moly frame. Square and rectangular section frame tubes. Rectangular section aluminium swingarm. Marzocchi M1R forks adjustable for air and rebound damping. Single rear spring/damper unit adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping. Twin 280 mm front disc brakes with twin piston calipers. Single 270 mm rear disc with twin piston caliper. Claimed front suspension travel125 mm  
Claimed rear suspension travel..80 mm  
Front tyre.....130/60 VR16 Michelin  
Rear tyre.....Michelin 160/60 VR16  
Dry weight.....205 kg  
Seat height.....780 mm  
Wheelbase.....1450 mm  
Fuel capacity (inc. reserve).....22 litres

### TEST MACHINE

Manufacturer..Ducati Meccannica SpA, Bologna, Italy  
Test Machine.....Fraser's Motorcycles, Homebush, NSW  
Price.....\$12,495  
Warranty.....12 months/20,000 km

**Best points:** Comfortable, good handling, responsive sports-tourer. Exotic. It's a V-twin!

**Worst points:** Dodgy carburation, ageing brakes, 16 inch wheels, silly mirrors.

## SUMMARY

900SS ●

906 PASO ○

### RATINGS

	Poor	Below Average	Satisfactory	Good	Outstanding
<b>ENGINE</b>					
Top gear responsiveness from 100 km/h				●	
Vibration					●
Bottom end power					●
Mid range power					●
Top end power					●
Fuel economy					●
Starting					●
Ease of Maintenance					●
Engine braking					●
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>					
Clutch operation					●
Gearbox operation					●
Ratio suitability					●
Drivetrain freelay					●
<b>HANDLING</b>					
Steering effort					●
Steering precision					●
Cornering clearance					●
High speed cornering					●
Tight corners					●
Cornering stability					●
Straight line stability					●
Stability on rough roads					●
Bumpy bends					●
Changing line					●
Braking in corners					●
City traffic					●
<b>SUSPENSION</b>					
Front					●
Rear					●
Adjustment accessibility					●
Range of adjustment					●
<b>BRAKES</b>					
Resistance to fading					●
Stopping power					●
Braking stability					●
Feel at controls					●
<b>CONTROLS</b>					
Overall layout					●
Switches					●
Instruments					●
<b>TWO-UP SUITABILITY</b>					
Passenger comfort					●
Two-up handling					●
Grab rail					●
<b>GENERAL</b>					
Quality of finish					●
Gear carrying					●
Fairing effectiveness					●
Seat comfort					●
Riding position					●
Touring range					●
Headlight					●
Other lights					●
Stands					●
Rearview mirrors					●
Horn					●
Toolkit					●
Value for money					●