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**AUGUST 1990**

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# Two Wheels

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**DUCATI F3**

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# Cut an





# ed Thrust Duke



Down in size but high in enjoyment, this privately imported F3 Ducati is a real weapon. TERRY MUNRO stabbed the shutter button and MICK MATHESON spoke to the lucky owner.





**A**USTRALIA'S motorcycle market has a lot of beautiful machinery to offer the average rider. But it's by no means a good indication of what's available. New Zealanders are pretty well off when it comes to a huge selection of models but Japan, Europe and the USA would make many of us envious come bike buying time.

Most of us can't complain though. Our distributors pick our tastes very well on the whole. But for Tony Rich this wasn't the case.

When the faithful old 1964 Bultaco Metralla 250 (Spain's answer to the Duke singles) was retired after 16 years of inspiring service Tony's only solution was to import a Ducati F3 himself. He'd tried the 750 F1 and decided the smaller 350 cc version would do very nicely, thank you.

"Being a little bloke," said Tony, "I find riding small, light bikes easier and more fun, which is why I chose to buy something sporty, small, unusual and European. So unseen (or ridden) I organised Bill McDonald to slip one in a consignment of his from Italy."

Bill, of Ducati Queensland in Brisbane, happily went to the factory and bought a 1986 model Japanese market racing version for road-racer Tony. By the time it landed here, Tony had to pay \$8000 but when it's the only way to get your Right Bike that's not a huge concern.

What was a concern was the lack of compliance plate. At the time it was still possible to register a non-homologated model if you could persuade Queensland's registry dwellers that it was a legitimate machine. However, most of the components are identical to those on larger Dukes so by making direct

comparisons with the bikes in Bill's shop in the presence of a bloke from the registry office, writing a few letters and signing stat docs, Tony managed to get everything sorted out.

Finally the big day came. Tony donned riding clobber and pointed the little Ducati into the hills. But the euphoria was short lived: "I found it was a real slug."

### Let it breathe

At first he put it down to new bike tightness but after 3000 km there was no improvement. Even though Tony's 350 is a race version with a hot engine and close ratio gearbox the incredibly restrictive measures necessary for Japan's rego laws were strangling it. So Pipe Masters of Brisbane made a new exhaust system after which Tony changed the jetting and did a careful tune-up. He also replaced the original 41-tooth rear sprocket with a 45-tooth from the F1.


"I ended up with a real weapon," he says. "When it's considered it is only a 350 it's quite an amazing little bike."

That last statement is an understatement — Tony claims the 'only 350' Ducati will easily pull 210 km/h! That's a touch more than the RGV250L and not far short of the Japanese 750s...

If that sort of speed seems a bit much,

**You mightn't believe this, but..**  
**some bastard (and his mates) said,**  
**"I didn't know you had any of those."**  
**We were stunned, what can we say?**  
**Well we have...**

Little pistons, big pistons, valves, valve guides, camshafts, racing camshafts, clutch plates, competition clutch kits, gears, complete gear boxes, brake pads, suspension bits, sprockets, floating discs, racing fork assemblies, fibreglass parts, nuts, bolts, lights, competition tachos, Contis, aluminium oil filter covers, 4 piston calipers, fairing screens, oil filters, carburettor kits, con-rod assemblies for all sorts of Ducatis, great long crankshafts to make Pantahs BIG, spoked wheels, footrest rubbers, T-shirts and more other things than would fit on a dozen pages.

 **GOWANLOCH DUCATI**  
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consider that the already lightweight F3 has all the factory's go-fast bits in the engine as well as a 10,000 rpm redline and Tony's lowered final gearing. The motor is based on the 600 cc version and retains its 66 mm bore but has a considerably shorter 51 mm stroke (which allows that extra 2000 revs before redline). Combine that with a 10:1 compression ratio and you end up with quite a respectable power output.

The frame is basically 750 F1 equipment. Tony found he had to shorten the spring pre-load spacer in the Marzocchi forks and put lighter oil in them. But otherwise he's more than happy with the F3's road-going style.

Despite the machine's blinding top-end, it's also surprisingly tractable, developing usable power from halfway up the rev range at 5000 rpm. That suits Tony fine because, as he says, "If I want to go fast I do it on the track." A comfortable highway cruising speed is about 125 km/h with the engine just getting into stride. The only worry is the killer riding position which is too much for more than about three hours at a stretch.

### Bend blurring

Ah, but that's not the point, is it? Swinging through the bends on a mountain road is where Tony indulges in the little Duke. Weapon is the right



word for it — with its race-bred handling and nimbleness there's no doubt it could put many a big bike to shame. Nor is there any doubt about its ability to make Tony's heart sing . . .

The Ducati has been doing its stuff for Tony for 15,000 km now. The only trouble has been with the starter button which was drowned in this year's deluges. If anything major were to go wrong there won't be many of the

problems usually associated with one-off imports because of the parts' interchangeability with larger models.

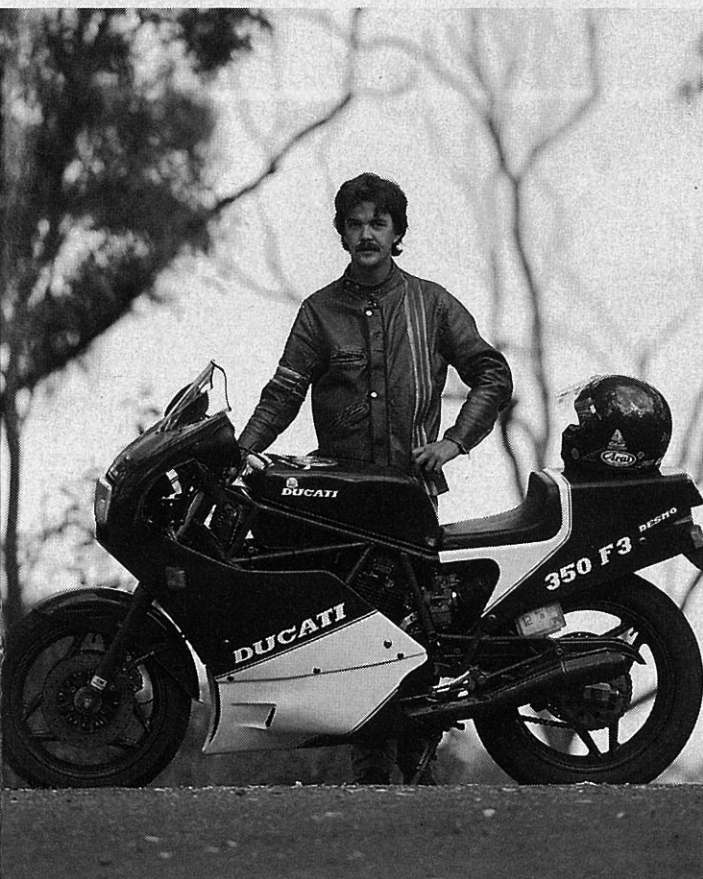
There's no point making Tony an offer on the bike. It's probably the only one in Australia (he'd be interested to know of any others if this isn't the case) and for a bloke who confesses to liking 'unusual' bikes you can't get much better than this one.

However that doesn't mean Tony pampers the 350. If he's not putting it to good use on the road, it'll be doing something like marshal's duties on a Ducati Club racetrack day (under some other lucky so-and-so's bum!). After all, what's the bike for if it's not to be enjoyed as it was meant to be?

Tony plans to keep the Ducati in the condition it's in now. "It's just right the way it is," he says. "It handles like it should and makes for a good combination on a long mountain road.

"Every home should have one." **D**

*Tony, who used to race modern and post-classic bikes and now pre-'62 machines, reckons the F3 is just about perfect. It's basically a scaled down F1, but with the factory race kit it really flies! Are there any others in Australia?*



### ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION

Air cooled V-twin with two valves per cylinder operated desmodromically. Belt-driven single overhead camshafts. Five speed, close ratio gearbox. Chain final drive.

Bore and stroke ..... 66 x 51 mm  
Displacement ..... 349 cc  
Compression ratio ..... 10:1  
Carburation ..... 2 x 30 mm Dell'Orto  
Ignition ..... CDI

### FRAME AND BRAKES

Welded, tubular steel trestle frame. Marzocchi 35 mm front forks. Marzocchi rear monoshock. Triple disc brakes with Brembo twin-piston calipers.

Front brake diameter ..... 280 mm  
Rear brake diameter ..... 260 mm  
Front tyre ..... 120/80 x 16 Pirelli  
Rear tyre ..... 140/80 x 18 Michelin

### MANUFACTURER

Ducati Mecchanica SpA, Bolgna, Italy  
Landed price (1986) ..... \$8000