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MCN

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YEARS OF

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‘Sharing the passion’

As someone with a lifelong passion for motorcycles, technology and mechanical engineering, it is very special and emotional for me to celebrate this important landmark after 35 years with Ducati.

I am proud to have contributed, together with our team, to the development of the company and to see Ducati reach its 100th anniversary in such a strong position. For me, celebrating our history is not about nostalgia or simply looking back at what we achieved in the past. We must continue to develop and look towards the future.

The prestige that comes from our sporting

results in MotoGP, together with the technology we bring to our motorcycles, makes me very proud. It is a great honour. But I am especially proud of the team we have built together and of the extraordinary community of Ducatisi around the world.

At World Ducati Week, when I walk through the paddock, it feels like being among friends. There are so many people smiling and sharing their passion for Ducati. Of everything we have achieved, seeing the happiness of Ducatisi – both here in Italy and throughout the world – is perhaps the most rewarding part of all.

Claudio Domenicali, CEO, Ducati

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Your welcome comes right from the top



**World
Ducati Week**

Every two years Misano is over-run by Ducatis from all over Europe to celebrate World Ducati Week. The next one is in 2028 so make a note in your diary (and maybe buy a Ducati to ride there on, see page 16.)

Riding the road to red

As Ducati host the party of their century at Misano, MCN meets the British riders devoted to desmo

By Dan Sutherland
NEWS EDITOR

With drone shows, star-studded races, prototype unveils and beach BBQs, as birthday parties go, Ducati's 100-year celebration at this year's World Ducati Week is right up there with some of the best. It's little wonder that 118,000 motorcyclists from 94 countries

descended on Italy's Misano World Circuit to take part in the landmark centenary event on July 3-5. The brand hosted on- and off-track action, as well as test rides, Lamborghini experiences, and even an exhibition race pitting Ducati's MotoGP elite against their best in World Superbikes – plus various national championship hitters from around the globe. Add to this a late-night beach party in the nearby town of

Riccione, and a parade ride stretching for 18km of continuous motorbikes – and you've got yourself one spectacular event. Better still, it was heavily attended by the Brits – with around 160 members of the Ducati Owners Club GB visiting, alongside many more dedicated desmodromic enthusiasts, covering thousands of miles to help mark the occasion. MCN was on the ground to meet the riders going the distance.

The party was even bigger than usual at World Ducati Week

DUCATI/DAN SUTHERLAND



'1800 miles on a Hypermotard 950'

Father and son Roger and Tom Stephenson rode from West London – taking a scenic route across some of Europe's greatest riding roads

"It's pretty mad – it's nice seeing so many people passionate about Ducati," 25-year-old Tom said, having ridden to the event on his Hypermotard 950 SP supermoto.

"This is my first Ducati, which I've had about two years now and done about 25,000 miles," he continued. "It's been all over the place. It's been to Italy a few times, and I've been down to Spain on it."

Rather than a direct route, the duo headed through the Ardennes, to the Black Forest in Germany. Then it was onto Austria and over the Alps, before the Dolomites, Lake Garda, and down through Italy.

The route home will see them venture through Tuscany, and into the South of France – tackling sections of the French Alps before finally heading home.

"Watching all the bikes haring around, it really felt like a good atmosphere, so it's great to be here and I really wanted to come for the 100," Multistrada V4 Pikes Peak rider Roger continued.

"I own three Ducatis and we actually both work for Ducati North London. I'm one of the techs and he's one of the sales team, so we keep it in the family. We're big Ducati fans and I love the brand."



'Solo ride to my first World Ducati Week'

Graham Hart took a solo mission aboard his 2012 Ducati Multistrada 1200 to attend – wiggling through 1500 miles of French, German and Austrian roads to reach his first-ever World Ducati Week

"The decision to come initially was to not use any toll roads and go home through Switzerland," the Warrington rider said – joining fellow members of the Ducati Owners Club GB upon arrival. "It's fantastic. The organisation must be just incredible and there's so many people here."

Taking the tunnel into France and staying in the city of Lens, it

was then into Germany before reaching Austria. From there, Graham rode into Italy – taking part in multiple activities as part of the WDW celebration.

"Riding down solo, I bumped into loads of people who have either ridden down, flown in, or even had their bikes shipped," he continued. "I did look at that, but I thought if I am going to come I may as well ride it down."



Continued over

'ABR on the way, WSBK on the way home'

Not satisfied with only attending WDW, Andrew Yarnold left Aberdeen in late June – staying at the ABR Festival first, with plans to camp at Donington Park for the WSBK on the return leg

"Last year I was quite ill with chronic fatigue, and I voluntarily stopped driving and riding, so for the whole of 2025 I never rode a bike," Multistrada 1200 rider Andrew said, having arrived after 1857 miles on the road. "I got back on the bike this year and the plan is to do as much as I can."

"I rode down to Plymouth, took a ferry to Santander, and then I rode across Spain, through the South of France, into Italy, and then here," he continued. "On the way back, I'm going from here up to Bergamo, and I'm spending two days there."

"Then I'm going from there to Stuttgart, the Hook of Holland to Harwich, and onto Donington Park for the World Superbikes, and then I'm going home!"

Amazingly, despite such a lengthy and complex trip, the run was the Ducati fan's first time leaving the UK by motorcycle – with this also being his first visit to World Ducati Week.

Andrew said that covering roughly 3500 miles across the entire trip was definitely worth it: "It's been fantastic. You come here

and you've got a massive group of people who are all linked as motorcyclists – and to a certain brand, and you start talking to people from all round the world and everybody has the same direction and goals. It's brilliant."



'It's a road trip with friends'

Friends and customers of Ducati specialists Louigi Moto in Bristol reunite from across the globe to celebrate the centenary at World Ducati Week – including an Öhlins walking stick and a husband and wife reunion!

For some, World Ducati Week was about more than just celebrating 100 years of a brand – it was a chance to reunite with friends and loved ones from across the globe.

This included a gaggle of riders from the South West of England, who share a friendship surrounding Bristol-based Ducati specialists Louigi Moto and used the Misano event to reunite.

"I've ridden down on a bike, I've come down in the van with the bikes in the back, I've come down in a camper with a trailer with the bikes in the back, and I've come down in the van with a scooter in the back," Louigi Moto Managing Director, Rich Llewellyn said – now on his fourth time at the event.

"The reason I like Ducatis is the engineering," he explained. "I'm an engineer and I took one apart, changed things, and they've proved to be reliable."

He was joined in the van this time by friend and colleague Tom Grzelinski who, following a leg injury, was sporting a rather fetching walking stick constructed using the Öhlins fork leg from a Ducati 749.

"Because it was the centenary, Rich and I hadn't been down here together for 12 years, so we said

'let's do it'," Grzelinski said. "We've done a few road trips down to Mugello for trackdays and we thought 'let's do a road trip'."

Staying in the nearby town of Riccione, they were joined by Paul Willis, who travelled from the Chew Valley on his 2005 Multistrada 1000DS, as well as Exeter-based DesertX rider David Hicks, who broke away from a larger GlobeBusters motorcycle tour from Bangkok to Britain, to meet his friends for the weekend.

"They're a bit like two-wheeled Ferraris really," Hicks said. "It's the theatre that you get out of it like no other bike. Ducatis – first and foremost – have always been race bikes. It's a race team with a factory attached – like Ferrari – so the racing pedigree always comes through the bikes."

Completing the group was David's wife Donna, who decided to fly in last-minute to meet the group, having last seen her husband around three months ago.



'I'm an addicted Ducatista!'

Welsh rider Mike Harper made the trip for the seventh time, joined by his wife and sons, having had his specially converted Monster M900 outfit re-built and re-painted especially for the party

"I've had it for nearly 30 years," Mike said. "It's a 1994 Monster 900, when I bought the bike it was on about 2000 miles and now I've just had the engine rebuilt at about 40,000 and I had the colourscheme ready for the show."

"I had the paint changed for the anniversary, and the decals purely for this. This is my seventh visit, and my family always want to come over with me."

Both of Mike's sons also ride Ducatis, with the event treated as a

proper family summer holiday.

"My wife and I come down with the Sprinter and the trailer with the Ducati, and my boys fly down to Bologna and join us for the weekend," Mike continued. "I have many fans and friends all over the world with this bike."

With a ramp dropping to allow Mike to lock his wheelchair in place behind the controls, he's ridden the outfit all over Europe – using a hand-operated Kliktronic system to change gear.

"I've been all over Europe on it with my friends, but now I'm 71 I've slowed down," he added. "It is not just the motorbike, it's a sidecar, a wheelchair. I'm a big man – so it's working double!"

For Mike, returning to the event was a no-brainer: "I'm an addicted Ducatista. Every week, my friends from Italy and all over the world from my Instagram ask if I'm coming back to WDW. It's a fraternity and I will come until I can't come anymore."

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The moments that defined Ducati

From making a condenser the size of a two Euro coin to leaders in MotoGP, Ducati museum curator Livio Lodi recalls the firm's journey

By Phil West
MCN CONTRIBUTOR

The occasion of Ducati's centenary is undoubtedly a landmark moment for the Bologna brand. Yet 2026 holds yet more significance, also heralding 80 years since the first Ducati engine (the 1946 Cucciolo), 70 since the first Desmo (1956) and 40 since the first four-valve 'Desmoquattro'.

It also marks the 60th birthday of Ducati Museum curator Livio Lodi, who's also coming up to his 40th year at Ducati and began working at the museum in 1998 before becoming curator three years later.

As Ducati's 'living archive', who better to ask for the key moments which defined Ducati's history?

Ducati's radio origins, 1926

Ducati was founded in Bologna – not as a bike company but as a radio component manufacturer – by Antonio Cavaliere Ducati and his three sons, Adriano, Marcello and Bruno, with eldest, scientist and main driving force Adriano inspired by radio pioneer and Bologna native Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of radio in the UK in 1895.

"Marconi was like the Steve Jobs of the time," says Lodi. "Italian radio broadcasting was born in 1924 and radio changed everybody's life – in Italy there were a lot of people who were unable to read or write but could listen to the radio. And in 1926 Marconi came back to Italy. It was like the return of a hero."

Inspired, Adriano and Bruno drove the founding of Società Scientifica Radiobrevetti Ducati (SSR Ducati) and, although initially just a small workshop with two workers and a secretary making radio components such as condensers and vacuum tubes, the firm was a big success.

"In 1936, when the new factory was completed in Borgo Panigale, the two workers had become 4000," continues Lodi. "In Italy a lot of

things had happened over that time. Movies went from silent to ones with words, so you need a kind of radio for the voices of the actors."

Everything was booming but there was a darker side, too. Mussolini rose to power and, with the approach of WW2, Ducati, then one of Italy's top radio producers, switched to warfare production.

"The fascists said 'OK, you are the top producer of this and this, you have to turn to warfare production'. You cannot blame the Ducati brothers for this. They had to carry on the lives of at least 4000 workers, which means 4000 families..."

Italy signed an armistice in September 1943 and was broken in two – the south occupied by the Allies, the centre and north, including Bologna, by the Germans. Then, on October 12, 1944, allied bombers executed 'Operation Pancake' whose target, because of its wartime production work, was Borgo Panigale.

Rebirth and bikes, 1946

"After the bombing the world was very different," continues Lodi.

"The question was: 'What production can you do because suddenly radios, cameras etc were useless?'. Plus, there was another problem – mobility, because roads, railways and bridges had been destroyed and cars were not able to get through.

"People used military bicycles that had been abandoned. Lamborghini started making tractors by using discarded military vehicles. Piaggio used to produce bombers and, with what was left, came up with the Vespa.

"The Ducati brothers did the same, but it was more complicated as what was previously made was now unnecessary – you don't need a radio at home, you can listen to it in a bar. But they had to restart production, and it had to be simple so they evaluated, not a motorcycle but a small engine that could be

Continued over

DID YOU KNOW?

Another anniversary for the firm; long-serving MotoGP test rider Michele Pirro celebrated his 40th this year, and coincidentally was born the day after the firm turned 60 – July 5, 1986



The Ducati brothers in the pre-war years

**‘When the factory
was completed, the
two workers had
become 4000’**



Livio Lodi is
a man with a
dream job

Workers at
the art deco
factory

Tune into those
Ducati sounds...



...or just go for
a close shave



BAUER ARCHIVE/DUCATI



Cucciolo...
Italian for
puppy



'Cucciolo production rose from 15 in 1946 to 200,000 by 1952'

fitted on a bicycle. We took a project from a company in Turin and adapted our machinery."

The result, the 48cc Cucciolo, was a big success, effectively saving Ducati, although the company was nationalised in 1948 as the brothers could not afford the massive cost of rebuilding Borgo Panigale. More bikes followed, most notably the Ducati 60 in 1949, its first complete motorcycle powered by the first of many four-stroke singles in a frame from an external supplier. But this success – Cucciolo production rose from 15 in 1946 to over 200,000 by 1952 – led to fundamental change.

"The government management said it was too complicated to manage production of radios, electronics, motorcycles and opticals in the same company, so at the end of 1953 they said 'OK, we'll make two companies.'"

Ducati Elettrotecnica and Ducati Meccanica, both founded in 1954 were the result.

Taglioni and a new identity, 1954

The creation of Ducati Meccanica brought its own challenges.

"We made a few, small, 60 and 65cc mopeds and a huge scooter, the Cruiser, that was a very sophisticated, high technology product but complicated and unsuccessful, and so they decided 'OK, we need someone that can change our life'. In May 1954 Ducati hired the engineer that changed the company – Fabio Taglioni (page 14), whose previous job was engine designer at Mondial.

"Taglioni is the man who developed the early single-cylinder Ducati, the bevel drive Ducatis, up



Cameras were part of the early years



Hailwood on the 1960 250 twin



Taglioni with
the Giro team



Smart's Imola
ride changed
everything

until 1984 when he retired. He developed the Desmo in 1956 and the V-twin in 1971, first for the GP bike which was turned into the 750, which in turn changed into the V-twin 'Imola'.

"Taglioni was hired as consultant – not with a complete agreement – so he had to work one year under this contract and could become a complete Ducati engineer only if the bike was successful.

"The Gran Sport 'Marianna', which won the Moto Giro '55, '56 and '57, was immediately successful, but what made Taglioni was his focus on one engine, the single, with which he then changed the head, first to a single camshaft for the Marianna, then a twin camshaft for the early racers, then the first Desmo, inspired by the F1 tech Mercedes used in '54 and '55.

"How was it possible for Formula 1 technology to come into motorcycles? There was a story about a circuit in Modena,

Aeroautodromo di Modena, near the main airfield that became the test track for Ferrari, Maserati, Lamborghini, Ducati, MV and Moto Morini, and people used to talk and became friends; a kind of modern concept of the ancient Greek Agora where scientists and philosophers used to meet and discuss theories.

"Taglioni developed the Desmo after he became friendly with some of these people, notably Enzo Ferrari himself. I heard this from Taglioni and also from Norina, his wife. One day Taglioni told his wife that he had a very long talk about this Desmodromic system that was developed by Mercedes in Formula 1, explaining that they were using it on an eight-cylinder engine that is quite complicated 'But I have a motorcycle with one cylinder, I'll just change the head!'"

Birth of a superbike, 1972

"This is another story we should remember, because Ducati's general



manager at the time, Fredmano Spairano, said 'I want to defeat the undefeatable.'

By that he meant the all-dominant MV Agusta GP500 ridden by Giacomo Agostini.

"In the 1970s, Agostini was everywhere: he was in the movies, he was in advertising, he was the most famous sportsman that was not a soccer player.

"Ducati's 500GP was specifically made to try to defeat – or at least be competitive against – Agostini and the MV, but MV could be supplied by people who made special parts for Agusta helicopters. They had more magnesium or alloy parts than Benelli, Ducati or any other Italian manufacturer.

"Our bike was not so bad, but it didn't have the Desmo yet because in 1972 Ducati said: 'OK we want to also make the 500GP with the Desmo system'. But then suddenly Checco Costa, the founder of the circuit of Imola, introduced the 200

miles of Imola, the European version of the Daytona 200.

"For the very first time the participating bikes were not pure racing motorcycles but ones derived from production machines, so, if you could win, it would be a massive marketing weapon. It was the opportunity Spairano had been waiting for.

"Now we can be sure that we can defeat MV Agusta,' he said, because although MV could make an excellent racing bike, at that time its production bike was far away from the racing ones. It had a 750 but it didn't have chain drive – it had a shaft, and they couldn't change it. And when we made the 750 Imola it was inspired by the 750 GT whose power was quite good. As Spairano said, 'Now we have it'. It was our chance to make something bigger – and we did it.

"Everybody knows the Paul Smart story, that he was hired at the

Continued over



750 SS: Ducati enter the superbike era



Taglioni took Ducati down the twin route

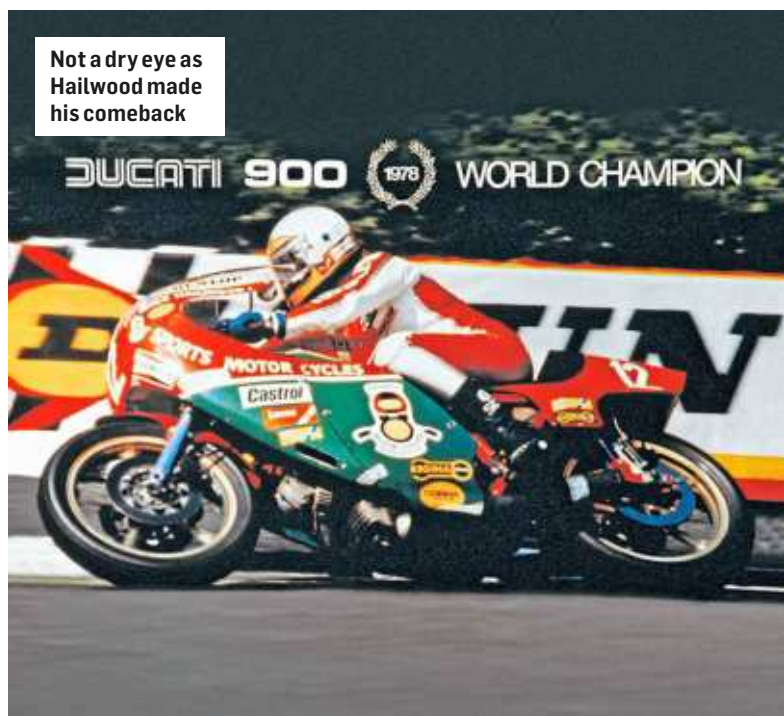




Miguel Galuzzi's Monster saved the entire business



Not a dry eye as Hailwood made his comeback



very last moment because we wanted the brother of his wife Maggie, Barry Sheene. And everyone knows the story of the race, on his birthday.

'Don't forget, there were 87,000 people there. They didn't come to see Ducati win, they expected Agostini to win. We showed there was another team that could beat MV Agusta. For me, that's the story of the bike that changed the whole story of Ducati.

"But it wasn't just about the success of the race. In 1972 Yamaha had started to release its first performance two-strokes. And we learnt how powerful a Yamaha two-stroke could be against four-strokes when Jarno Saarinen won Imola in 1973. The two-stroke GP bikes were the nail in the coffin for the four-strokes. By 1975 there was no reason to carry on making four-stroke GP bikes, so, we chose another road: L-twin superbikes, won Daytona with Cook Nielsen in

1977, and the TT with Mike Hailwood in 1978.

"After 1978, Tony Rutter won four consecutive F2 world titles with the 600TT2. Then Taglioni retired and (in 1985) the Castiglioni brothers took control of the company."

The modern superbike era, from 1987

"It was the Castiglioni which gave the final, shall we say 'asset'... We survived the 1970s with bikes like the 750 Supersport Desmo, an excellent bike.

"We survived into the 1980s with the 900 Replica, but that was famous because it reminded of 1978. But then the Castiglioni brothers said: 'OK we have to renew everything. Enough bevel drive, let's go with the Pantah (belt drive) engine', which led to the 750F1, which helped us survive before the first four-valve, watercooled V-twin arrived.

"We won championships with the



1986: Marco Lucchinelli at Daytona

851 and 888, and don't forget what came at the beginning of the 1990s, when we realised that a bike could not just be fast but must also be pretty (page 24).

"We made the Monster in 1992, then the Supermono but most of all the 916. And all because Castiglioni hired Massimo Tamburini. The style of Tamburini (with Miguel Galluzzi for the Monster) represents the pillars of what Ducati is today.

"A few pages is not enough to define the enormous history of this company. Don't forget, we started



LIVIO LODI'S FIVE MILESTONE DUCATIS

'It's not a coincidence we have it at the museum'

"If I have to reduce everything to a few bikes, it's like being a father of many children and being asked to pick a favourite. But if it's what's been most powerful to the legacy we enjoy, then I go with..."

1 1956 125 Desmo

"My biggest achievement for the museum was when I bought the 125 Desmo. It means so much: it's the perfect example of what Ducati did in the early years with singles, the first Desmo but also one of the best examples of a preserved bike. When I showed Franco Farne the picture he just said: 'If you're not bringing back this bike you are quite stupid!'"

2 1971 750 GT

"In terms of money, a 1973 'round case' 750 Supersport Desmo is worth more. But also the 750 GT, the very first production Ducati V-twin,

is relevant, and it is not a coincidence that we have it inside the museum."

3 1972 Imola 750 Desmo

"The 500GP and 750 Imola Desmo have a story that keeps them together – the beginning of the Desmo V-twin story. Even the Mike Hailwood bike is part of this story because the 1970s is all about the old bevel-drive V-twin."

4 1981 600 TT2

"There was also the age of the Pantah engine and of the tubular trellis frame, so how can you not nominate at least the 600TT2? Or maybe the 750F1?"

5 1995 916 Senna

"We have one 916 Senna but it's the first Edition, I don't have the second or the third. For me it is the bike that says it all. We must have that."



Pure genius: Massimo Tamburini

from making a condenser that was the size of a two Euro coin to now being leaders in MotoGP.

"Since the age of Taglioni, competition has always been the inspiration for our street bikes to give the thrill the customer expects. Of course we have developed GT models, touring models, even weird models, but there will always be that taste of sport technology that makes a difference. Otherwise, you cannot explain why these bikes are still so popular and why people are so obsessed by Ducati." **MCN**

PEOPLE WHO SHAPED DUCATI

Fabio Taglioni

Engineering genius who shaped Ducati's desmodromic identity and laid the foundations of success

For three decades, from Ducati's early motorcycle years to the arrival of the 851, one engineer did more than any other to define the marque. Fabio Taglioni was the father of the firm's desmodromic V-twin and the engineering force behind some of its greatest racing successes.

Born into a motorcycling family, Taglioni studied engineering before joining Mondial in 1952, then Italy's most successful racing marque. Two years later, however, he fell out with the Boselli brothers, who owned the company, after they failed to invite him to a dinner celebrating victory in the Moto Giro.

"The next day, without explanation, I left," he later recalled. "It was undoubtedly, in all the euphoria, a distraction for Boselli – but I'm from Romagna, and with that I said it all."

Keen to stay in racing, Taglioni accepted an offer from the fledgling Ducati. The company had built its first 50cc bike in 1950 alongside its electrical business, established a motorcycle division in 1953 and wanted to move into larger bikes, promoted through racing.

His first Ducati, the bevel-drive Gran Sport 100 'Marianna', won the



The master with a young Bordi

1955 Moto Giro. Spurred on, he developed his first desmodromic machine, the 125 GP – the fastest 125 of its day.

Contrary to popular belief, Taglioni did not actually invent desmodromics, in which valves are mechanically opened and closed without springs, but he was the first to harness the concept successfully in a motorcycle. As he later explained to Italian magazine *Motociclismo*: "The main goal of this system is forcing the valve to follow the timing diagram as closely as possible... While the dissipated energy saved is almost negligible, the performance is more reliable."

By the early 1960s Ducati was booming and its US importer wanted a bike for the American market. Taglioni's answer was the



Tartarini and Monetti lap the world

first Scrambler, a bevel-drive, 250cc trail-style single. It was a big success and spawned street scrambler singles from 125 to 350cc

But by the end of the decade Ducati's fortunes had changed. Ever-larger Japanese machines had risen to dominance and Ducati was absorbed into a state-run entity in 1969. Taglioni was given two challenges: create a 750 using as much existing single-cylinder tech as possible and lead a return to racing, initially in 500GPs.

In February 1970 he presented his solution: a 90° V-twin that was essentially two bevel-drive singles grafted together. Features from the proven singles could be retained, the 90° configuration provided ideal primary balance and the longitudinal layout kept the engine



The man and his Ducati legacy

narrow, allowing it to sit low in the frame while maintaining good ground clearance. It powered the 1971 750 GT – Ducati's first production V-twin.

Taglioni was also developing a desmo 500cc GP V-twin, first raced late in 1970. It was down on power compared with the MV triples and success came slowly, but everything changed with the inaugural Imola 200 on April 23, 1972.

Conceived as a big-money 'European Daytona 200', it prompted Ducati to order a full-scale assault. Seven racing 750 desmos were built in record time using the 750 GT and 500GP machines as their basis.

British racer Paul Smart was hired at the last minute and delivered a Ducati one-two, beating regular

factory rider Bruno Spaggiari.

Smart's victory put Ducati's desmo 750 'L-twin' on the map. A road-going replica, the 750 Supersport, became a sensation and spawned a family of derivatives. Then, in 1978, Mike Hailwood came out of retirement to claim a fairytale F1 TT victory on an NCR-prepared 900cc version. Ducati's superbike signature was set.

Around the same time came Taglioni's final great advance: the 1978 500 Pantah. Its all-new belt-drive desmo engine and Ducati's first tubular steel trellis frame established a template Ducati would follow for the next 20 years. In racing form, as the 600 TT2, it became a world championship and TT winner; its final evolution, the 750F1, laid the foundations for Massimo Bordi's liquid-cooled, four-valve, fuel-injected 851.

The Pantah was Taglioni's final chapter at Ducati. In 1986, aged 66, he retired and handed over the reins to Massimo Bordi. But the philosophy he had established – from desmodromics and racing to the V-twin and Pantah architecture – had shaped decades of Ducati history. Without Fabio Taglioni, none of what followed would have been possible.

RACE THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

'Winning Imola won the market'

Ducati's victory in the first Imola 200 is the stuff of legend. But it was Taglioni's design and approach that resulted in the win that put the firm on the map.

As he said in 1974: "When we won at Imola, we won the market, too." After the announcement of the race, Taglioni travelled to Daytona in March to witness the 200-mile Formula 750 race Imola was modelled on and came back optimistic he could build a racer based on the new 750 GT but with desmo heads from the 500GP bike that was both suited to Imola and



Ducati pulled off a famous victory

competitive against the factory Kawasakis, MVs and Nortons.

"None of them have our engine," he said at the time. "The Desmo

can beat them all..." In just three weeks Taglioni recreated Ducati's racing team, which hadn't competed since 1958 and, with the help of engineer Franco Farne, built seven racing bikes derived from the 750 GT. Right until the last minute there was uncertainty as to who would ride, as many of the leading names were sceptical. Famously, the wife of Paul Smart accepted on his behalf, Smart first tested the bike just four days before the race then led an historic one-two across the finish line in front of 85,000 fans.



Smart was hired at the last minute...

The maestro in action in a pre-CAD era

Fabio Taglioni
1920-2001

Italian, Ducati Chief Designer and Technical Director

Ducati technical lead between 1954 and 1984, Taglioni was the engineer who made a success of the desmodromic valve system and put Ducati on the map with their early singles, stylish Scramblers, race-winning L-twins and laid the foundations for the firm's future.

'None of them have our engine. The Desmo can beat them all...'



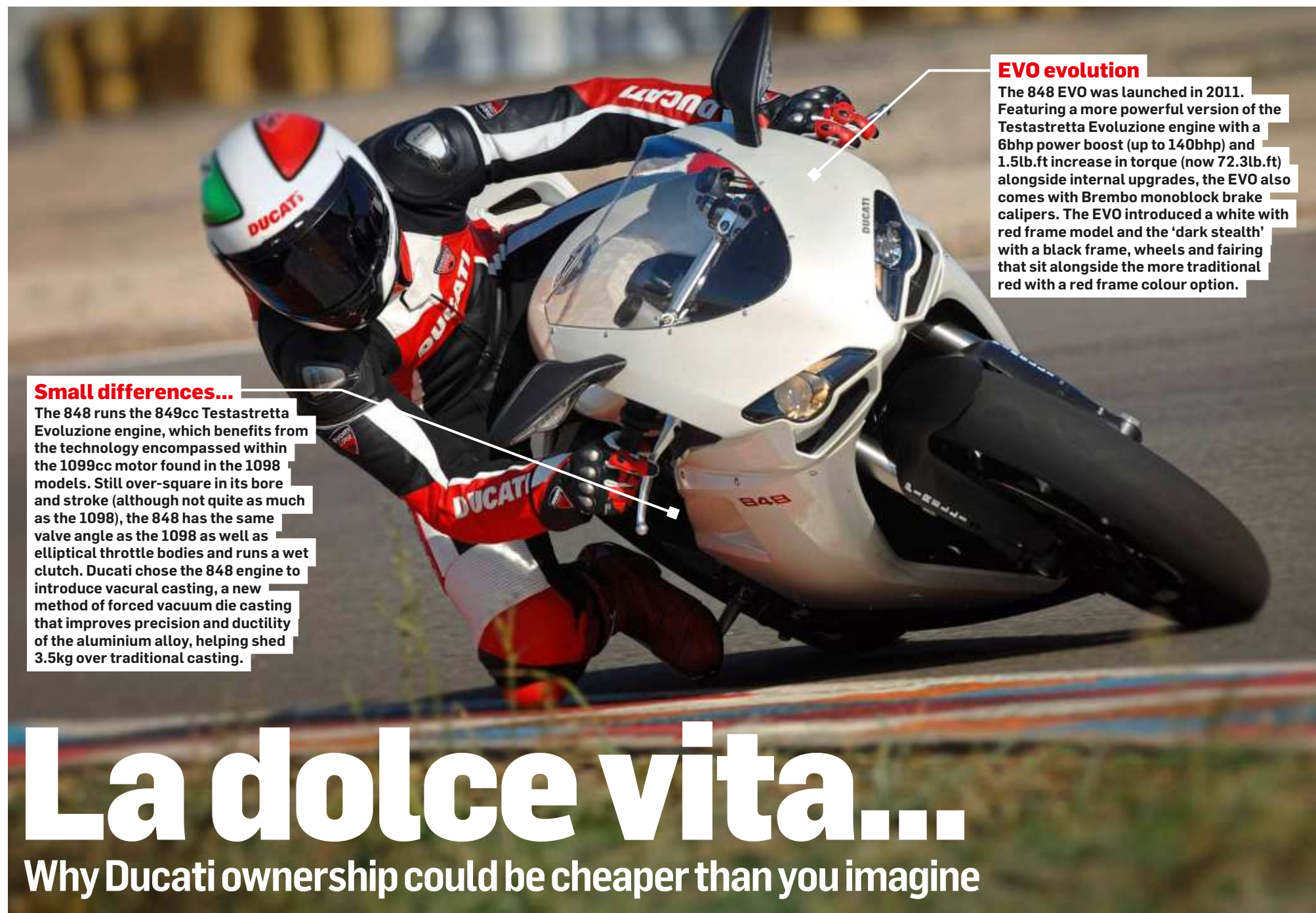
Scrambler took on US market



Showing the 750 GT prototype



The Pantah was a revelation



EVO evolution

The 848 EVO was launched in 2011. Featuring a more powerful version of the Testastretta Evoluzione engine with a 6bhp power boost (up to 140bhp) and 1.5lb.ft increase in torque (now 72.3lb.ft) alongside internal upgrades, the EVO also comes with Brembo monoblock brake calipers. The EVO introduced a white with red frame model and the 'dark stealth' with a black frame, wheels and fairing that sit alongside the more traditional red with a red frame colour option.

Small differences...

The 848 runs the 849cc Testastretta Evoluzione engine, which benefits from the technology encompassed within the 1099cc motor found in the 1098 models. Still over-square in its bore and stroke (although not quite as much as the 1098), the 848 has the same valve angle as the 1098 as well as elliptical throttle bodies and runs a wet clutch. Ducati chose the 848 engine to introduce vacural casting, a new method of forced vacuum die casting that improves precision and ductility of the aluminium alloy, helping shed 3.5kg over traditional casting.

La dolce vita...

Why Ducati ownership could be cheaper than you imagine

With Ducati celebrating their centenary, why not make this the year to treat yourself to an Italian thoroughbred? While some view owning a Ducati as an expensive experience, if you buy the right model the running costs are roughly in line with a Japanese bike and you never know, it may even appreciate in value. With such a huge range of options, picking the right Ducati can be tricky but here are five used options that provide the perfect entry point into the world of Ducatisti...

YOUR EXPERT

Jon Urry is MCN used bike guru. He has owned a Ducati 916 since 2008 and is a huge fan of the brand – although not the cost of the 916's fairing fasteners...



£4999 - £8999 (2008-2013)

Ducati 848

An Italian superbike without the hassles



While the 848 was never officially raced, it is still a proper Ducati sportsbike and if you are after a road-going sportsbike to ride and enjoy, this is the bike for you. Beautiful to look at (especially in pearlescent white) and with more than enough road performance, the 848's prices have stayed the right side of ridiculous and it has a solid reliability record. Allow it to stretch its legs and its unflappable chassis and easy-going soulful engine will help you forget your aching wrists.

BUYER BEWARE

- The 848 runs the extended service schedule, so that's yearly oil/filter changes, 7500-mile minor service and a 'desmo service' (valve-clearances) every 15,000 miles with its cambelts swapped every five years.
- Only the 2012 EVO Corse Special Edition has TC and a quickshifter.
- Check the dash for any misting.
- Ducati specialists recommend swapping the fuel pump and ignition relays at every service as they are quite fragile (about £5 each).
- Check the eccentric adjuster on the hub isn't over-tightened (30-35Nm is correct).

How's that for your first Ducati?



**MCN
BEST
BUY**



Quality suspension and fine handling



Check the eccentric chain adjuster

Cool looks and plenty of pep

£3499 - £5499 (2015-2022)

Ducati Scrambler Icon

Cool retro charm with a laid-back outlook



A charming and easy-going retro with bags of flair, the Scrambler range is well worth considering if you are after a machine to enjoy on easy jaunts or use as an urban commuter. The 803cc two-valve air-cooled motor is peppy and its fairly basic nature keeps costs down. With lots of choice when it comes to styling, there is a Scrambler out there to suit any taste.

BUYER BEWARE

- The Scrambler comes in a huge variety of styles including the Classic, Urban Enduro, Full Throttle, Café Racer and Flat Track Pro. The Sixty2 has a smaller-capacity 399cc motor, so is best avoided.
- In 2023, Ducati updated the range with a new chassis and swingarm as well as cornering ABS and TC.
- Thanks to its air-cooled engine, servicing (7500-mile intervals, yearly oil and filter) is fairly cheap. Cambelts need swapping every 15,000-miles or five years.

Want Öhlins? Go for the S

£3999 - £5999 (2009-2012)

Ducati Monster 1100

A last hurrah for air-cooled Monster madness



The Monster 1100 range were the last air-cooled Monsters before the liquid-cooled 1200s. Featuring stylish underseat pipes (aside from the EVO) and a single-sided swingarm, the dual-spark 1078cc air-cooled motor has bags of performance and kicks surprisingly hard through its mid-range, giving this Monster a real bite. And not only that, it even has a dry clutch rattle!

BUYER BEWARE

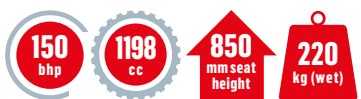
- The EVO model was released in 2012 and features a side-mounted exhaust, Marzocchi instead of Showa forks, traction control, ABS and a slightly more powerful motor. Prices start at £5500.
- Be wary of fluid leaking from the clutch slave cylinder, they are a weakspot. Upgrading for an aftermarket unit is a good idea.
- The 1100 comes in stock or S with the S featuring Öhlins and not much else, the engine and chassis are identical between the two variants.

Four bikes in one, yes really

£3999 - £7500 (2010-2013)

Ducati Multistrada 1200 S

Suspension adjustment made easy



Thanks to its electronic suspension, Ducati championed the Multistrada 1200 S as 'four-bikes-in-one' – a claim that's hard to dispute. Although not semi-active, at the push of a button the Öhlins alters its damping, allowing the Multistrada to morph from soft tourer to B-road blaster. Powered by a Testastretta motor and packing lots of tech, the Multi is a fantastic do-it-all.

BUYER BEWARE

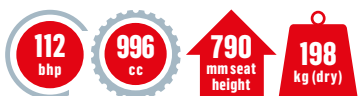
- The S was sold in Sport and Touring formats. The Touring has heated grips, panniers and a centrestand while the Sport comes with carbon covers.
- The stock model comes with Marzocchi forks and a Sachs shock. It has ABS as an option but is otherwise identical in spec to the S. It's worth bearing in mind the Sachs shock isn't rebuildable.
- The 2012 Pikes Peak is a Sport with Termi cans, a carbon screen and sporty Pikes Peak paint scheme.

Live out your WSBK fantasies

£7999 - £12,000 (1999-2001)

Ducati 996

An (almost...) affordable option...



For so long overlooked as buyers wanted the 916 or the more reliable 998, prices are still lower but not by much. Featuring an upgraded version of the Desmoquattro motor, the 996 is visually almost identical to the 916 but has five-spoke wheels (from 2000) and different vents. Older Ducati sportbikes do need a bit of care and attention but the experience makes it all worthwhile.

BUYER BEWARE

- The cambelts should be swapped every two years and the valve-clearances checked every 6000 miles. While being serviced, ensure the alternator nut is done up tight.
- Check the fairing, especially around the fasteners that hold the two sides together under the engine. The plastic is becoming brittle.
- Listen for a squeak on start-up that hints at a damaged sprag clutch caused by a battery that is low on charge. A wiring mod helps direct extra power to the starter.

OR HOW ABOUT THESE?

Even more Ducati temptation

MCN's website has expert opinion and buying advice on hundreds of used bikes, regularly updated and packed with insight. Here are three of the highest rated Ducatis – visit motorcyclenews.com for dozens more.



2013-2014 DUCATI HYPERSTRADA 821

Owner's rating 4/5
Overlooked and therefore often cheap, the Hyperstrada is a kind of practical supermoto that despite being quite compact makes for a fun crossover bike.



2007-2008 DUCATI 1098

Owner's rating 4.5/5
If you can afford one, the 1098 (and even better the 1098 S) makes for a fabulous sportsbike that is reliable, fast and stunning to look at. All ten owners who left reviews online are delighted with their bikes.



2001-2007 DUCATI MONSTER S4

Owner's rating 4.1/5
The first liquid-cooled Monster is powered by a 916-derived motor and can be a bit fickle. Not a great-looking Monster, it rides well but you need to keep on top of maintenance.

Find your perfect partner at: motorcyclenews.com

4V desmodromics...
at the heart of
Ducati's racing DNA

A century of innovation

How Ducati's drive to advance motorcycle
technology has changed the two-wheeled world...

By Jon Urry
MCN CONTRIBUTOR

When the Società Scientifica Radio Brevetti Ducati company were founded in 1926, technical innovation was at the core of this new business. The firm's equipment led the way in the electronics sector but after the Borgo Panigale factory was destroyed in 1944 during an Allied bombing raid, the company were forced to adapt.

Innovating again, Ducati's decision to switch to two-wheeled production in 1946 and use the rebuilt factory to make Cucciolo engines saw the company survive the tough post-war years and establish itself as a motorcycle manufacturer. Since this date, Ducati have continued to push the boundaries of technical innovation to improve all aspects of their production and race motorcycles. Here are a few of the technical innovations that the firm has introduced...

Desmodromic valve system

Fabio Taglioni didn't invent desmodromic valve gear, it had been around since the early 1910s and Mercedes-Benz deployed it in their W196 F1 cars in 1954-1955, but he was the first to successfully make the system reliable enough to put onto a production motorcycle. Initially debuted on the Ducati's 125GP bike (Trialbero Desmo 125) in 1956, the system made it to production in 1968 on the 250 and 350 Mark 3 Desmo models. When the 1973 750 Super Sport became the

first production desmo V-twin (two years after the 750 GT became the firm's first road V-twin and a year after Paul Smart won Imola on the desmo-engined V-twin racer), Taglioni's foresight to use desmodromic valves set the blueprint for Ducati's future. From Desmoquattro to Testastretta, Superquadro, Superquadro Mono, Desmosedici Stradale, Testastretta Evoluzione, Desmosedici and Desmodue they all run a desmodromic valve gear – but not the V4 Granturismo or new V2.

'Ducati have continued to push the boundaries'

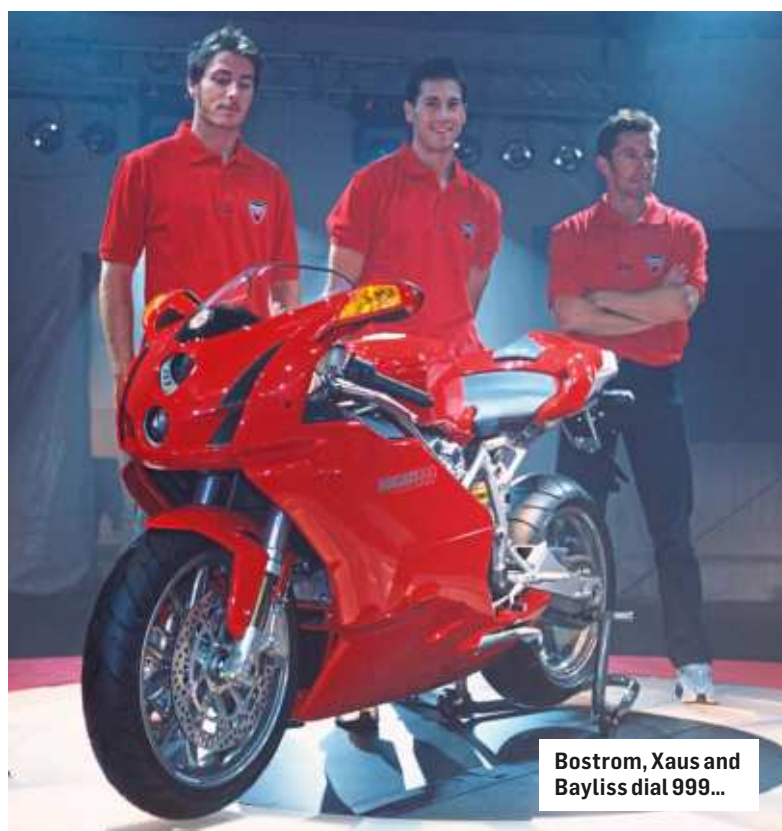


Ducati 250 Mark 3 sported a bevel-drive single

DID YOU KNOW

The Trialbero (meaning triple cam) engine which first used desmodromics featured three camshafts mounted inside a single-piece cambox. The system allowed for higher revs to be used safely.

1960 ex-Hailwood Desmo 125 GP racer as sold by Bonhams



Bostrom, Xaus and Bayliss dial 999...

▲ A connected future

In 2003, Ducati introduced CAN bus technology on their 999. Overshadowed by the furore involving the bike's looks, CAN (Controller Area Network) bus (the wiring) was a world-first for motorcycles, although it had been in the car world since the early

1990s. Allowing the motorcycle's ECUs (Electronic Control Units) to communicate with each other and share information, it forms the bike's 'nervous system'. This communication hub set the path for future developments as it allows complex electronic devices to interact with each other.

▼ MotoGP for the road

Is releasing a MotoGP bike with lights a technical innovation? Who cares as the 2006 Desmosedici RR remains a remarkable piece of engineering – and it was the first road bike to come with Öhlins FG353 pressurised forks. About as closely related to the GP6 that Loris Capirossi and Sete Gibernau competed on in the final year of the 990cc bikes as you can get, the RR's V4 has an identical 989cc capacity

with the same 82mm bore and 42.56mm stroke as the MotoGP bike, not to mention its twin-pulse firing order, sand-cast magnesium cases, titanium conrods and valves and a desmo valve system with gear-driven cams. It is basically a MotoGP motor for the road. The Desmo also came with Marchesini forged and machined magnesium alloy wheels (with a 16in rear), which we think was a world-first but are happy to be corrected.

Bikes don't come much more exotic





▲ Gaining traction

When the homologation-special 1098R was released in 2008, it was the first to feature multi-level traction control as standard (BMW offered the more basic ASC as an option a year earlier). Ducati Traction Control (DTC) was developed in MotoGP and World

Superbikes and uses wheelspeed sensors to determine when the rear has broken traction. If it senses slip, it initiates power cuts via ignition advance and 'spark cuts'. Initially only activated with the race kit ECU and end cans to prevent damage to the catalytic converters, it was rolled out on 1198S a year later.



▲ Electronic screwdriver...

The 2010 Multistrada 1200 was a landmark motorcycle for Ducati as it was the firm's first model to fully integrate all its electronic features – which now included DTC, a ride-by-wire throttle, ABS and variable power modes – as well as DES. The world's first motorcycle to feature electronically adjustable suspension at both ends, DES (Ducati Electronic Suspension) was developed in conjunction with

Öhlins and allowed the suspension's spring preload and rebound and compression damping to be electronically controlled. Not semi-active (BMW were the first with this on the 2013 HP4), DES took advantage of CAN bus to alter all the Multistrada's electronic systems at the push of a button – creating what Ducati called 'four-bikes-in-one' as the bike's complete character and dynamic performance were altered.



▲ Carbon dreams

In 2017 the 1299 Superleggera cost an eye-watering £72,000 – but the fact it was the world's first production bike (BMW's 2017 HP4 Race was track only) to feature a carbon fibre frame, swingarm, subframe and wheels did help

justify its phone-number price. Living up to its name, the Superleggera (super light) weighed a claimed 156kg (dry) where the 1299 Panigale S was a chunky (!) 166.5kg. Only 500 were made and they sold out before Ducati had even officially announced its existence!

► Winging it

Racing breeds innovation and Ducati's involvement in MotoGP has led to what is probably the biggest innovation in design in recent times – aero. After head hunting Gigi Dall'Ingà from Aprilia in 2013, Ducati's MotoGP bike started to sprout winglets in 2015 (they briefly experimented with them in 2010). With the genie out of the bottle, Ducati led the way in MotoGP's aero revolution, a development path that inevitably found its way onto road bikes. True, the 2000 Kawasaki Ninja ZX-12R had aero on its fairing in the shape of very small wings and also the 2015 Ninja H2 and H2R models featured straight-line aero, but the 2019 Ducati Panigale V4 R was the first to use a MotoGP-inspired Aero Pack to improve its handling. Conceptually derived from the wings on the GP16 (before aerofoil shapes were subject to regulatory limits), the R's monoplane single-element wings with their trapezoidal layout and tapered profile are actually more efficient than the MotoGP bike's were, creating 30kg of downforce at 167mph.

Marquez in full aero mode



Far or very far? You decide



◀ Now with added radar

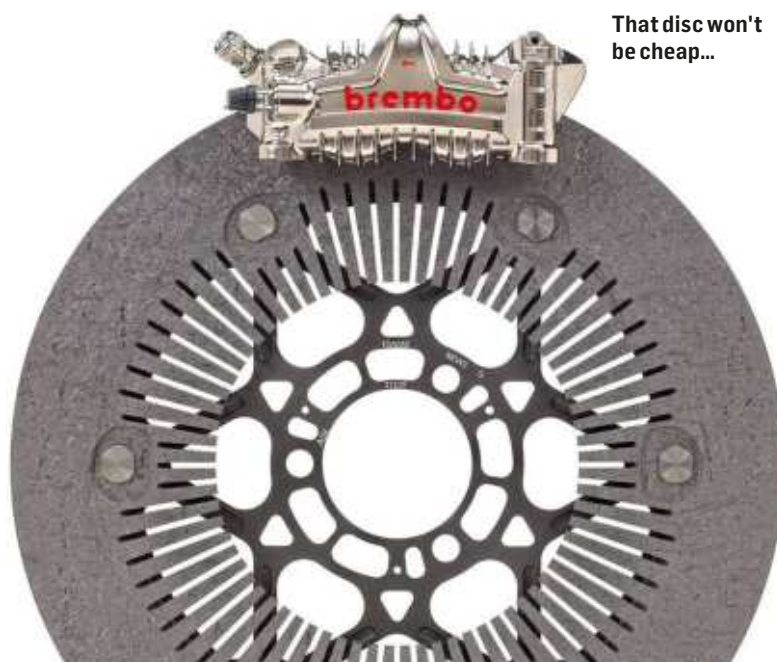
In 2018 both KTM and Ducati announced that they were developing active cruise control but it was the Italian firm who got there first. Produced in cooperation with Bosch, the 2021 Multistrada V4 S had Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) thanks to forward and rear radar. This also allowed the Multistrada to have Blind Spot Detection (BSD), another world-first for production motorcycles.



‘The aero genie was firmly out of the bottle’

► **No stopping us now...**

For their latest innovation, Ducati have returned to the basics. Disc brakes have been on mass-produced bikes since the late 60s, but this year the Superleggera V4 Centenario arrived with carbon-ceramic discs alongside carbon fork uppers. Both world-firsts, the carbon-ceramic discs are similar to those found on supercars and race bikes but they have never featured on a production motorcycle before. According to Ducati, as well as weighing 450g less than a traditional metal disc, they deliver greater braking performance and feel. You really don't want to ask about the cost of replacement. These carbon-ceramic brakes will also be rolled out in WSBK in 2027 with Brembo who become the brake supplier to the production series.



That disc won't be cheap...

THE NEXT EVOLUTION

MotoE: Was it a blind alley?



Where will they go from here?

Ducati tend to look towards racing to drive their road bikes' development, however since they became part of the Volkswagen Group in 2012 a lot of tech has filtered across from the car world too. So there are several potential streams of tech innovation.

In the racing world, it can only be a matter of time until a seamless gearbox arrives on a road bike. It is noticeable that Ducati are one of the only major players not to have an automatic transmission of any kind (BMW, KTM, Honda and Yamaha all do), so maybe this will be their path. Seamless gearboxes have been in MotoGP since the early 2010s, so it is tried-and-tested technology, and Ducati patented a seamless gearbox design for a production bike in 2020.

Most likely there will be a 'sportsbike' one that retains a conventional gear lever and a 'touring' one with an auto clutch, maybe a version of an Audi-type Tiptronic system.

What about electrics? Why Ducati chose to compete in the MotoE World Cup from 2023 to 2025 remains a mystery but you have to assume the V21L prototype is waiting in the wings to be put into production. Could it be Ducati's first electric superbike? Currently it seems like they are wisely choosing to proceed cautiously as electric motorcycles haven't taken off.

It is hard to see where the next physical assist from the car world will come from as bikes now have semi-active suspension, active cruise control, etc. but connectivity in bikes will certainly evolve. In a future full of autonomous cars, bikes need to be seen both visually and digitally by other traffic and that will require advanced computing power as we move to software-defined vehicles. This is where the Volkswagen Group's expertise and research in the digital side of things will be invaluable and also a guide to the future direction.

Auto clutch patent appeared last year

PEOPLE WHO SHAPED DUCATI

Massimo Bordi

Visionary engineer and General Manager who transformed Ducati from niche manufacturer to world beater

Ducati's long story has been shaped by many great engineers, designers and racers, but few have had an impact to rival Massimo Bordi. Creator of the modern Ducati superbike engine and driving force behind the World Superbike-winning 851, he also founded the firm's racing arm, Ducati Corse, was technical chief when the Monster was born and played a fundamental role in the creation of the 916, Supermono and the succeeding Testastretta V-twin, as well as sowing the seeds for the dual-sport Multistrada.

It's difficult to imagine the modern Ducati without his contribution. As current CEO Claudio Domenicali once said of Bordi: "The most important man in the history of Ducati. It was thanks to his work that Ducati turned into a high-tech company capable of competing with the main manufacturers in the 1990s."

With hindsight, Bordi's genius should have been obvious before he even joined the company. Born in May 1948 in central Italy, he graduated in mechanical engineering at the university in Ducati's hometown of Bologna, where his prophetic 1973 thesis was a design for a four-valve head with



Bordi in the Ducati race workshop

desmodromic control.

But his path to Ducati was not immediate. Bordi initially became a teacher, then worked for a specialist steel maker before joining Ducati in 1978 after serving an internship. His first job was not developing exotic racing motorcycles, either, but working on the company's lesser-known diesel engines, produced for the likes of Fiat.

Then in 1980, Bordi was promoted to oversee the technical direction of Ducati's motorcycle division. Then, in 1985, following state-owned Ducati's sale to the Castiglioni brothers' Cagiva operation and the semi-retirement of engineering chief Fabio Taglioni – who wasn't himself a fan of four-valve designs – Bordi was handed the task of redefining Ducati's entire motorcycle range.



Today he is Vice Chair of MV Agusta

Shaping the future

His first project was based around Ducati's then most advanced V-twin, the air-cooled, belt-driven Pantah, culminating in the 1986 750F1. But it was the bike that followed which would begin to reshape Ducati's fortunes.

The 750F1 was superseded by the liquid-cooled, fuel-injected 851, which placed second in the first race of the new WSBK series at Donington in April 1988. It claimed its first crown in 1990 before evolving into the 888 and then the 916 – creating a superbike bloodline that would become central to Ducati's modern identity.

For Bordi, however, the 851 was only the beginning. Promoted from technical chief to Ducati General Manager in 1992, he presided over a golden era of growth that saw

production balloon from just a few thousand motorcycles in the late 1980s to more than 40,000 in 2000.

Key models created under his watch included the revived 900 and 750 Supersports, the original Monster – which, although the brainchild of Miguel Galluzzi, came to fruition during Bordi's reign – and the single-cylinder Supermono racer.

His time as General Manager also showed that Bordi was more than a visionary engineer. He proved to be a skilled businessman, too.

Growing sales, sparked by advanced new models and fuelled by racing success, were accompanied by rising profits. Component standardisation, improved production methods and tighter cost control all played their part, while allowing Ducati to command greater price premiums.

Yet that growth also played a part in Bordi's eventual departure. The need for funds led to the sale, in 1996, of 51% of Ducati to private investors Texas Pacific Group. By the end of the 1990s, Bordi dreamed of creating a dual-purpose Ducati to emulate the success of the Scrambler of the 1970s. TPG resisted and Bordi resigned in 2000.

He did not leave, however, without laying one more vital

foundation stone. Before his departure, Bordi helped establish the basis of the next generation Desmoquattro: the narrow valve-angle Testastretta engine that would sit at the heart of nearly all Ducatis for the following decade. The Multistrada all-rounder he had envisaged would eventually appear in 2003.

Leaving Ducati wasn't the end of Bordi's influence on Italian motorcycling. After a nine-year spell as CEO of tractor manufacturer SAME Deutz-Fahr – diesel engines and agricultural machinery being his second love – he was approached in 2010 by Claudio Castiglioni to manage the return of MV Agusta to Cagiva following its three-year ownership by Harley-Davidson.

With that task complete, and MV's presidency passing to Castiglioni's son Giovanni, Bordi's contract was not renewed in 2013. But retirement still didn't stick. Following Timur Sardarov's takeover as MV CEO in late 2018, Bordi returned as Vice-Chairman.

For Ducati, his legacy had already been written. From the 851 and the superbikes that followed it to the Monster, Supermono and Testastretta engine, Bordi's ideas helped transform the company into the Ducati we recognise today.

FATHER OF THE DUCATI SUPERBIKE

'It was a totally new concept'

Massimo Bordi is an engineer at heart and his initial project, the four-valve Ducati Desmo engine, which was also the subject of his degree thesis in 1973, is the accomplishment for which he'll be best remembered.

"When Castiglioni bought Ducati in 1985 he asked me to do something to recapture the technological leadership of Ducati engines," Bordi recalled years later. "My idea was to produce an engine based on the same architecture as the Pantah – a 90-degree V-twin – but with a



Bordi's genius was the 4v head

totally new concept."

That new concept was not just the Desmo four-valve heads of his thesis, but also liquid cooling and

fuel injection. While four valves have the potential for more power, it was the liquid cooling which made it work. With air cooling, the angle between the inlet and exhaust valves had to be wide to prevent overheating, making the combustion chamber too deep for four valves to have any advantage. Bordi adopted liquid cooling modelled on the Cosworth FVA Formula 2 car engine, which had a 40-degree valve angle.

First seen as a prototype racer at the 1986 Bol d'Or in the hands of Juan Garriga, Marco Lucchinelli

Lucchinelli on the 1988 851



and Virginio Ferrari (it retired after 15 hours), the first production 851 'Tricolore' was unveiled in 1987, it won the second WSBK race in

1988, and its first championship in 1990, before its successors, the 888, 916 and 996, won eight of the next 11 titles.

Massimo Bordi

Italian, 78, engineer and businessman

Bevagna-born Bordi is the man behind Ducati's legendary four-valve, liquid-cooled, fuel-injected Desmoquattro V-twin, which paved the way for all modern Ducatis.

'The most important man in the history of Ducati'

He's the man who shaped modern Ducati

The 851 was a turning point



Few bikes are as revered



Racing genius in its purest form





DID YOU KNOW?
Tamburini's 916 is regarded as the most beautiful of all motorcycles. It was even displayed at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York as a masterpiece of industrial design.

Exceptional then and still a special bike

By Michael Neeves
FORMER CHIEF ROAD TESTER

The 916 is as special now as it ever was. It has the gift of eternal youth – a sign it was a superbike light years ahead of its time. There's no denying the 916 is still a beauty. Its gloss red lines are smooth and subtle, while beautiful details abound. There are Dzus fairing fasteners, analogue dials, a horizontal tank-mounted steering damper, wonderful old-font decals and that famous twin-piped rear. You could say the only area where the 916 shows its age is at the back. The wide '90s tail makes the 190/50 x 17 tyre look spindly, and this is a bike that needs to be numberplate holder-free to look its best. Moving a 916 around, it feels top-heavy and weighty – these were the days before the term 'mass-centralisation' was coined. Ducati quoted 187kg dry back in the

MEET THE FAMILY



Ducati 916 Strada, 1994 to 1998
● 916cc ● 109bhp ● 195kg
The Strada was the first 916 model to hit the streets. There were no pillion provisions, instead the single seat unit was painted red with intent.



Ducati 916SP, 1995 to 1996
● 916cc ● 123bhp ● 195kg
The first Ducati 916 homologation special was launched a year after the 916 Strada road bike. Meanwhile on track Foggy had taken the 1994 title and was set to repeat it.



Ducati 916SPS, 1996 to 1998
● 996cc ● 134bhp ● 192kg
The second homologation special from Ducati and the first of the SPS models was launched to directly benefit the World Superbike team with Foggy champ in 1998.



Ducati 955, 1996
● 955cc ● 122bhp ● 182kg
One of the rarest Ducati models ever, this machine was built purely to homologate the larger engine capacity for Ducati to take part in American AMA racing.



Ducati 996 Biposto, 1999 to 2002
● 996cc ● 112bhp ● 198kg
The first Ducati model to carry the smaller model logo, a move introduced by Ducati's new owners Texas Pacific Group.

Riding the GOAT

In 2026, MCN readers voted **Ducati's 916** the greatest bike of all time – former Chief Road Tester Michael Neeves knows precisely why...

day, and with a full tank there's inevitably more heft to deal with. But the Ducati 916 will always be special to me. I owned one in 2001. It was a '96 Biposto with the Agip logo on the fairing flanks, and firing up a 916 still brings the memories flooding back.

Riding on instinct

The 916 was the bike that led me to a road testing career at MCN and the first bike I was fit enough to ride after a road bike accident seven years previously. I sent in a photo of me riding it at Lydden circuit when I entered, and later won, MCN's Road Test Idol competition. I reluctantly sold it to fund my move away from life in Ramsgate to live the dream riding bikes for a living. I still miss my 916 to this day.

Engines didn't have to pass Euro3 laws back in 1994, so the 916 motor is loud and brash. The noise is mechanical and raw, and you can

almost hear the suck-squeeze-bang-blow of the 916's 94mm-bore pistons bopping up and down.

Instinctively, I still go for the little plastic button in the back of the 916's throttle housing. It holds the revs high enough to tick over when cold – a small ritual from another era. I also reach for the front brake span adjuster, common on almost every bike now. The 916 has one, but it's buried away and you need a flat-blade screwdriver in order to turn it.

Out on the road, the 916 remains a strong package. There's a wide, smooth, guttural spread of V-twin power all the way through the revs. They build from nothing and with every increase in rpm the exhaust note gets harder and angrier. The 916 makes peak torque at 6850rpm and it's still plenty quick enough for the road.

Engine and chassis work in perfect harmony. But it's not all plain sailing. In traffic, the 916's

heavy clutch soon makes itself known, along with the graunching noises it sometimes makes when pulling away. The riding position forces you into an uncompromising race crouch, too.

Pegs are high, the sloped seat pushes you into the back of the 17-litre fuel tank and the bars are wrist-crunchingly low. The tiny cockpit makes sense when you're riding the 916 hard, but for the rest of the time it's like you're in a straitjacket.

But you forgive any discomfort the 916 may dish out for the simple fact that, after all these years, it still makes you feel special. The wider public seem to instinctively know this rumbling red object of V-twin motorcycling desire is something exceptional. Everyone looks. The 916 has proved itself to be as good a road bike as it ever was. But most of all, it remains one of the most special motorcycles ever produced.

VIEW FROM THE INSIDE



The birth of a biking dynasty

'The start of something new'



Ducati's Director of Quality, Andrea Forni was involved in the 916 project from the very start, as a young Test Department Manager. Here he recalls his first encounter with a fully formed 916:

"I still remember the moment I saw a complete bike for the first time; I realised this was the start of something completely new. I was 36 at the time and I knew everything that had gone before now meant nothing.

"I wasn't involved in the first test on the road. That was Massimo Tamburini (the bike's designer) and two test riders who took a Ducati 888SP, Honda CBR900RR FireBlade and the 916 out onto the roads around San Marino. There was no need to disguise the 916 back then as no one had camera phones.

"Our testing started when the first seven bikes were delivered to Bologna. Two went straight to Ducati Racing so they could get to work on them and we took the others. From the very beginning it was clearly a big step forward over the 888; it was more agile but had the same stability and it was the first Ducati with 100bhp at the back wheel.

"A second set of prototypes called 'Pre-Series' were made in the middle of 1994 and on these there were some refinements to improve reliability. We changed the subframe attachment and also the way the fuel tank was fixed in position.

"When I look back to those times, I can honestly say we thought we were all doing our best. It's still a pleasure to me to see a 916 and I think we all appreciated immediately what this bike was all about."



Ducati 996S, 2000 to 2002

● 996cc ● 123bhp ● 198kg

The first S model was aimed at bridging the gap between the ultra expensive SPS models and the base Biposto bikes. A very shrewd move by Ducati.



Ducati 998, 2002 to 2003

● 998cc ● 123bhp ● 198kg

The 998 was the first mass-produced Ducati to use the new Testastretta engine. It made the kind of power required for Ducati to keep up with the Japanese twins.



Ducati 998R, 2002

● 999cc ● 139bhp ● 183kg

The final 916-style R model is, according to many, the best Ducati motorcycle ever made. Period. On track Bayliss took second in the WSBK standings.



Ducati 998S, 2002 to 2003

● 998cc ● 136bhp ● 187kg

The 998S offered the same overall performance levels as the 996R from 2002 (see left) but in a machine that costs considerably less.



Ducati 998S Final Edition, 2004

● 998cc ● 136bhp ● 187kg

The last machine in the 916's ten-year dynasty Built to celebrate (or commiserate) the 998 being replaced by the 999.

10 RACING HIGHS

From Superbike to MotoGP, the love of competition has driven Ducati to greatness

BY MICHAEL GUY, SPORTS EDITOR PICTURES.GNPIX.COM

1 A match made in heaven

Ever since the birth of World Superbikes in 1988, Ducati have played an integral part in the championship. During the early days the Bologna factory campaigned the 851 – an 851cc V-twin competing against a raft of inline 750cc four-cylinder machines from Japan. Fred Merkel became champion in 1988 onboard his Rumi Honda RC30 while Ducati could only manage fifth spot and weren't even the top Italian manufacturer. That accolade went to Bimota who not only won the first ever

WSBK race, but finished third overall thanks to a certain Davide Tardozzi who's now the long-standing factory Ducati MotoGP team manager.

Merkel took the spoils again in 1989, but Ducati closed the gap, finishing third overall thanks to hard-charging Frenchman Raymond Roche before opening the floodgates for the small Italian factory. Winners in 1990 thanks to Roche, Ducati launched the new 888 and in the hands of the immaculate riding American Doug Polen the next two back-to-back titles.



Roche (centre) on the 888

2 The Foggy era

By the early 1990s the World Superbike Championship was gathering serious traction around the globe as it entered what is still widely regarded as series' heyday. Intense rivalries, big bucks manufacturer involvement and above all no-holds-barred, all-action racing at a time when 500GPs were largely processional and under the spell of the

dominant Aussie gladiator Mick Doohan and his Honda NSR500.

WSBK's popularity, especially in the UK, was galvanised by Carl Fogarty who captured the imagination of the British public to a level not seen since Barry Sheene in the 70s. Foggy had it all and after coming agonisingly close to the title against the equally brazen American, Scott Russell, on his

screaming Muzzy Kawasaki ZX-7R, kicked off the second chapter of Ducati domination. King Carl won back-to-back crowns in 1994 and 1995 before two more titles in 1998 and 1999. With Australian Troy Corser winning for Ducati in 1996, it meant five titles in six years despite HRC throwing everything they had at it with their 750cc V4 RC45 and big-name riders.



Foggy is King of the World



Bayliss puts
Ducati on top

3 Bayliss kicks off the post-Foggy chapter

Such was the level of Ducati domination, Honda and later Aprilia adopted the mantra of 'if you can't beat them, join them' with HRC dropping their flagship RC45 and building a 1000cc V-twin of their own, the VTR1000 RC51 SP-1. Proving Ducati didn't have the monopoly on building fast race winning V-twins,

Honda won in 2000 and again in 2002 thanks to American Colin Edwards after the famous final round showdown at Imola against the irrepressible Troy Bayliss. Ducati weren't fazed by Honda's bar raising SP-1 and despite a fraction of the resources of the world's biggest motorcycle manufacturer, the Italians pushed their V-twin technology

even further, with the 996 and 998. Bayliss took his first title in 2001 before Brit Neil Hodgson picked up for the baton for Ducati to win the 2023 title with the all-new 999. James Toseland replicated Hodgson's win, with MotoGP returnee Troy Bayliss making it three titles in four years for the largely unloved 999.

4 Staying on Corse...

While Ducati have always been perceived as a 'racing' company, the now legendary Ducati Corse division was in fact only set-up in 1999. At that time they were kings of the world in WSBK thanks to Fogarty while they were also top dogs in BSB with Australian Troy Bayliss.

The timing of setting up Ducati's dedicated racing division coincides with the then rumoured switch from 500cc two-stroke machines in Grand Prix. In what would become arguably the biggest overhaul of the class 990cc four-stroke machines took over from the 500cc two-strokes and MotoGP as we know it was born.



'Foggy captured our imagination like nobody since Sheene'

5 Playing with the big boys

In 2002 the 500GP championship became MotoGP with 500cc two-strokes and 990cc four-strokes going head to head. With the two-strokes having reached the end of their development cycle, the four-strokes quickly took over with Valentino Rossi securing the title in 2002 on the exotic V5 Honda, finishing on the podium in all 16 races; winning eight of them. It opened the floodgates and in 2003 Ducati joined the party with their GP03 with Loris Capirossi and Troy Bayliss. And it's fair to say they arrived with a bang, taking on more established Japanese rivals. They may have been the new kids on the block, but their inherent understanding of racing and deep-seated culture of performance took the paddock by storm.

Capirossi secured a podium in the opening round and took Ducati's first victory at round six in Barcelona.



There's only
one King Carl...
seen here in '99

6 The Stoner effect

Despite their competitiveness in the fiercely contested class, Ducati were unable to match the pace or consistency of Yamaha and Honda. Capirossi secured race wins but was unable to fight for the title, but that all changed in 2007. New technical regulations, in a bid to slow lap times, saw a reduction in engine capacity from 990 to 800cc. The new regs disrupted the status quo with Ducati letting rip with the mind-blowingly fast GP07 and

in the hands of insanely talented Casey Stoner, they became winning machines. Rumour has it that the fast but unproven Stoner had signed on a low salary but cleverly negotiated a very generous win bonus. He won an incredible ten races to take Ducati's first MotoGP title, finishing ahead of Dani Pedrosa and Valentino Rossi.

The title success stunned the Japanese as it wasn't only Stoner's pace, but the speed of the GP07 which was a step above their rivals.



Raking in those win bonuses

Marquez to Ducati, the best signing in recent history

7 Dovi: A true Ducati great

Ducati continued to run at the sharp end thanks to Stoner, but were unable to replicate the glory days of 2007. The drought of titles wasn't through a lack of trying or budget with the Italian manufacturer signing two world champions to their factory team, Nicky Hayden and Valentino Rossi no less. Despite Rossi and then crew chief Jerry Burgess claiming they'd be able to fix the Desmosedici's turning issue in a matter of minutes, the longed-for breakthrough never materialised.

As the years ticked by, Yamaha and especially Honda regained their stranglehold of the series thanks to a

certain Marc Marquez but from 2017 to 2019, Marquez's biggest challenger was Andrea Dovizioso on the ever-improving Ducati. With hindsight, looking back at the races in which Dovi pushed Marquez to the title, we should arguably hold the mild-mannered Italian in higher regard than maybe we do. During those three years Dovi won a total of 12 races and pushed MotoGP's man of the hour to the limit.

The arrival of technical guru Gigi Dall'Igna at the end of 2103 was undoubtedly a major factor in the improved results and ushered in the success we are now accustomed to in both WSBK and MotoGP.

Only Dovi could rival Marquez





Italian champ,
Italian bike...

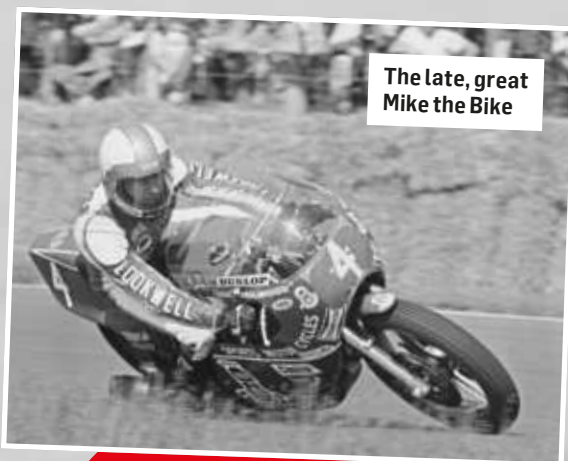
8 Pecco becomes No1

Although Dall'Igna is often credited with Ducati's turnaround, it was certainly not a quick fix. With his first full season being 2014, following his defection from Aprilia, it wasn't until the end of 2021 – seven years later – that Ducati had actually produced a bike capable of winning consistently. It also coincided with the development and nurturing of 2018 Moto2 champion, Pecco Bagnaia who

was brought through Ducati's satellite team before promotion to the factory outfit. His performances, combined with Ducati's on track superiority, saw him become two-time MotoGP king and Ducati's first Italian champion. Battling the outstanding Fabio Quartararo, Bagnaia was sixth in the title race after Germany with a monster 81 points deficit, a gap that he overcame by winning five of the final ten races along

with two further podiums.

Ducati's glory days continued into 2023, with Bagnaia wrapping up back-to-back titles and even better there was strength in numbers with satellite Ducati teams dominating the season, locking out four of the top five championship positions with only Brad Binder and his KTM causing any resistance in fourth. In fact Ducati won 17 out of the 20 GPs of the season.



The late, great
Mike the Bike

PAVING THE WAY

While our ten defining moments have focused on 1988 to date, Ducati's history is a heady mix of exotic machinery, legendary riders and plenty of success. Paul Smart gained a cult status within Ducati by winning the Imola 200 in 1972 as did Cook Neilson when he won Daytona in 1977. But arguably their most famous rider was Mike Hailwood who among other achievements won the 1978 Formula One TT onboard the 900cc Ducati after coming out of an 11-year retirement.

9 WSBK domination

Despite Ducati's prevalence in MotoGP, they continue to remain synonymous with World Superbike glory. From the 851, 888, 916, 996, 999, 1098 through to the Panigale V4 and V2 they have been a constant in the production-derived series. And as a result of their commitment they've been habitual front-runners. None more so than in 2026 where factory man Nicolo Bulega has won every single race of the season so far, as this Ducati special supplement went to press ahead of the

Donington WSBK weekend. It's a level of dominance that has never been witnessed before and is testament to the bar-raising new V4 R which is also dominating in British Superbikes. With no sign of letting up, Ducati are the absolute masters of the class. There is talk of the bike being restricted, but the V4 R operates within the technical regulations of the class so put simply, it's not their fault they are winning. The question now is whether their rivals have the appetite and ability to step up and take on Ducati?



Bulega is just
unstoppable

10 Only the best will do

Thanks to Pecco Bagnaia, Jorge Martin and Marc Marquez, the last manufacturer to beat Ducati in the final standings in MotoGP was Yamaha with Fabio Quartararo in 2021. During this time Ducati have become utterly dominant by flooding the grid with bikes along with stellar rider signings... none more so than Marc Marquez. Marquez's initial move from Repsol Honda to Gresini Ducati sent

shockwaves through the paddock while his move to the factory team in 2025 at the expense of newly crowned champion Martin was controversial. But Ducati's decision was vindicated with Marquez completing what is widely regarded as one of the greatest comebacks in the history of motorsport to win the MotoGP crown six years and countless operations after his final title with Honda in 2019.

As it stands Ducati are currently playing second fiddle to the hugely impressive Aprilia squad who at the time of writing have been the dominant force in 2026.

But the season is long and only at its half-way stage and with riders including Marquez, Bagnaia and Fabio Di Giannantonio onboard the GP26, Ducati's fifth consecutive MotoGP crown remains firmly on the cards.



The comeback of
all comebacks

PEOPLE WHO SHAPED DUCATI

Claudio Domenicali

From a hands-on race engineer to the man steering Ducati into its second century...

Claudio Domenicali's influence runs through almost every part of the modern Ducati. Over 27 years, the motorcycle-mad engineering graduate has risen from being part of a tiny racing department to the top of the company, helping mastermind the GP project, leading R&D and, since becoming CEO in 2013, overseeing Ducati's expansion into new markets and new types of motorcycle without abandoning the values he believes best define the brand: Style, sophistication and performance.

The company Domenicali joined in 1991 was very different from the one he would eventually lead.

"Ducati was such a small enterprise at the time, just three engineers – now we have more than 300 – and the company had no money, we even rented our truck," the CEO told MCN.

"It was an artisanal style. I was doing everything, working with my hands using my passion. One of my first jobs was on the Supermono. I did everything from designing the frame, to engine development, to data acquisition at the race truck; it was an adventure. Now it is more professional, but the spirit and the passion is the same."

Domenicali rose through Ducati's ranks, masterminding the MotoGP



Flowing lines return... the 1098

project and becoming head of R&D before taking overall charge in 2013. Under his leadership Ducati has expanded beyond its traditional sportsbike heartland into scramblers, café racers, adventure bikes, cruisers, motocrossers and supermotors, while placing ever greater emphasis on technology, design and sophistication.

Domenicali believes that willingness to evolve is essential to Ducati's future. "Nostalgic firms say 'it has always been like this' and don't change things, but we need to keep evolving. We want Ducati to be a brand that has a strong history but looks into the future, while keeping core values of style, sophistication and performance. As long as we keep with those three values we can do many different things."

He sees greater scope for personalisation and factory customisation, alongside a closer



Domenicali is an engineer at heart

relationship with owners.

"We are focused on having a relationship with the customer which is unique, offering them experiences, and inventing something new every year."

For Domenicali, that relationship runs deeper than a conventional manufacturer-customer transaction. "When you see all the Ducati riders you feel responsible for them. For good or for bad, what we decide at Borgo Panigale affects them. They understand us and they know that we do it all for them."

"Sometimes we do well, sometimes we make mistakes, but they are forgiving. It feels like a family. And like a family, you know that other family members trust you, even if you make a mistake."

As Ducati has expanded, Domenicali has pushed engineering and design to work more closely. His benchmark remains the 916.



Dovi was part of the GP transformation

"The bike that I admire the most is the 916. It changed the whole industry and made them think about design as not only being related to the fairing but all the mechanical components."

"In the years between 2000 and 2005 we were a little bit distracted. The engineering and design didn't have a good balance; the bikes were heavier than necessary and the design was cold."

"Perhaps the company was trying too hard to be different and we lost a little bit of the Italian touch and sports style. Italian style should be wide surfaces, not too many edges, a kind of flowing line, like Ferrari. But from the 1098 onwards we came back with engineering and design working together."

That combination remains fundamental as Ducati confronts perhaps its greatest technical challenge: how a brand so closely

defined by its engines and performance should respond to alternative fuels and power sources.

"We are investing a lot in different technologies in order to build the competence, to learn how to do it and to test the boundaries of what it is possible to achieve with the current state of the technology," Domenicali said.

"We are developing different alternative fuel products, even if there is no plan for production models. It is expensive because we are testing things where we do not know if they will end up in production because of either future legislation, or because the result is not good enough."

Synthetic fuel is another area of interest. "Our responsibility is to be as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible. So synthetic fuel is something we are very interested in. MotoGP will be 100% non-fossil in 2027 – and that will make us learn a lot in terms of what you can achieve with synthetic."

The approach reflects Domenicali's philosophy: Explore, experiment and accept that not every idea will succeed.

"We will all make mistakes, but hopefully they will not be too big to compromise the company. The risk of standing still is stronger than the risk of trying. If you stand still you will die for sure."

RACING'S RED REVOLUTION

'Gigi pushed the tech boundaries'

For anyone that follows MotoGP today, Ducati Corse General Manager Gigi Dall'Igna needs no introduction and is the man credited with ending Ducati's title drought and turning them into the current kings of the premier class.

Headhunted under Domenicali's leadership from Aprilia in 2013, where Dall'Igna had enjoyed huge success in 125 and 250GP with riders including Valentino Rossi, Marco Melandri, Jorge Lorenzo and, of course, Max Biaggi, he began an overhaul of Ducati's MotoGP project.



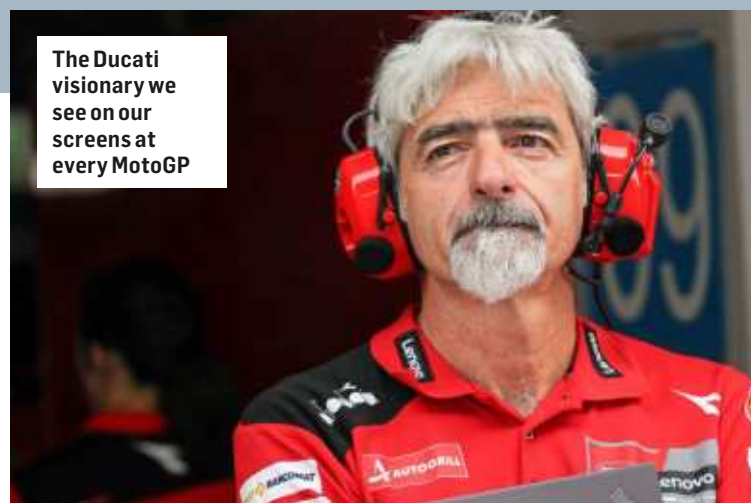
Ducati's Bulega is dominating WSBK

Starting at the end of 2013 his success was by no means instant and it took until 2017 before Dall'Igna had built a genuine title

contender with Andrea Dovizioso pushing Marc Marquez and the Honda RC213V to the limit.

As the man setting the strategic and technical direction of both Ducati's MotoGP and WSBK projects, he has been the instigator of some truly gamechanging new technology, with Gigi garnering a reputation as the man that pushed the regulations to the limit while introducing technology that rival manufacturers had no choice but to copy. His list of next-generation tech includes winglets, mass damper, holeshot device, ride

The Ducati visionary we see on our screens at every MotoGP



height device, ground effect aero and the use of artificial intelligence for machine learning utilising his six bikes on the grid.

As a result of his foresight and engineering genius Ducati remain the racing company by which all others are judged.

Claudio Domenicali, Ducati CEO

Italian, 60

Engineer turned leader who went from helping create the Supermono to leading Ducati Corse and R&D, to ultimately forging the direction of present day Ducati



Domenicali has been pivotal in shaping Ducati

Always looking to the future



Racing is key to the passion



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