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MOTO GUZZI FALCONE 1950 - 65

The "Sport" and the "Tourismo" models (not "Nuovo" post-'66 models)

Over the years, a significant number of Falcons which started life in "Tourismo" format were converted to the more fashionable "Sport" specification, usually when repairs or replacements became necessary. No surprises there and, you might say, nothing wrong with that - except perhaps that today, some forty or fifty years later, a prospective purchaser knowing he must expect a hefty premium to be asked for a genuine "Sport" could end up paying well over the odds for some sort of hybrid, albeit a very functional machine, but possibly not "as per catalogue".

At the time of writing (2002), U.K. prices for fair condition Falcons start at a minimum of £6,000.00. Models in good condition are quite a bit dearer and really fine examples of the "Sport" model can fetch in excess of £10,000.00 especially with correct documents / provenance etc. All things being equal the "Sport" commands a much higher price than its touring counterpart - maybe two or three thousand pounds. The really high prices are paid for "Falcone" models manufactured from 1950-52 which are prized because of their true period looks and specification. (*Prospective buyers should note that prices in Italy (2002) are now significantly higher than those in the U.K.*).

When upgrades from 'basic' to 'sport' have been really well executed and are complete to within 99% of the catalogue spec., only the purists would then want to quibble about machine number "suffixes" and "prefixes" and correct spark plug caps and all that. For many private owner/riders whose primary interest is to ride and enjoy a beautiful machine a "Sport" is just that if it conforms to type in all important respects especially with regard to performance and ride quality.

Having said that, for many people, the price differences are such that there is now a real need to sort out the genuine from the 'not quite'. The difficulty arises because the two Falcone models do look very similar - unlike, say, the DBD34 BSA Gold Star and its softer touring counterpart, the B33 where the differences in appearance are unmistakable.

Most of the differences between the two "Falcone" models may be easily recognised by most Guzzi single cylinder owners but some aspects may not be obvious to someone about to make a first acquaintance with this truly remarkable bike. Some of the "Sport" specification was visible and - *in theory* - easily checkable (i.e. chrome instead of paint on the petrol and oil tanks, flatter handlebars, alloy wheel rims, toe-operated rear brake, different gearchange lever, linkage and pivot, ribbed front tyre, SS 29 mm racing carburettor etc.) but there are other important differences which are neither immediately apparent nor easy to check.

Here are a few examples of those 'hard-to-spot' differences .

- The cylinder heads are not identical. Port shapes and sizes most definitely differ.
- The 'Sport' model exhaust valves are very slightly larger.
- 'Sport' model pistons are the domed-crown variety giving an enhanced (though still quite low) compression ratio.
- 'Sport' model con-rods were made from superior material – so the factory claim.
- The "Sport" camshaft is listed as a separate item, presumably with a 'hotter' cam form.

There are quite a few other hidden differences and, all in all, there are some 61 items listed by the factory which are exclusive to the "Sport" and all of them are identified with a clear asterisk (*) in the parts book. As might be expected some of these are relatively trivial items but the majority are important components. Conversely, the factory parts book also lists 62 items which are exclusive to the "Tourismo" model

The reasons why some owners go for upgrades usually came down to two basics - either a useful performance gain or an improved re-sale potential. The plain fact is that some machines originally supplied with a "basic" spec. are now passed off as "Sports" with varying degrees of success. Many of these could easily have started out in government service because thousands of "basic" Falcons were sold to the Italian Customs, Police, Army and so on during the bike's fifteen-year run as successors to the GTV and the Alce. On a smaller scale, but obviously with much greater sums at stake, this practice continues to be employed to re-create the very desirable competition models e.g. "Condor", "Albatross", and "Dondolino". These over-the-counter racing machines with full documentation are now very, very expensive and much rarer here than their English counterparts. At the time of writing, you can be asked to pay in excess of £60,000.00 for a top quality "Condor" - Dondolinos and Gambalungas are in the £70 to £80 thousand bands.

THE TWO BASIC 'FALCONE' MODELS - ENGINE NUMBERS

The early Falcone, developed from the GTW/Astore line, was conceived of as a "Sport" machine. Its spec. in 1950 was very modest by today's standards but right from the outset and for the first two years of production (1950-51 and 1951-52) there was only the "Falcone" *albeit in Sport trim* ... there was no designation "Sport" as such, and certainly no "Tourismo". Unusually, the Tourismo model was derived from the "Sport" and not vice versa. (Compare British machines where 99% of all sport spec. bikes were developed from the earlier 'cooking' versions)

All early Falcons with manually operated magnetos had engine numbers beginning with **F**. From late 1952 with advent of the "Tourismo" model, the engine number prefix changed to **FS** to signify "Sport" but - in typical Italian style - continued with plain **F** for the new "Tourismo" variant where, logically, one might expect to have seen **FT** . Confusing isn't it.