

Moto Guzzi 1000 SP 1978-1988



Year/model: 1981 Moto Guzzi 1000 SP Owner: Clement Salvadori, Atascadero, California.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE OWNER

Life was good on the shores of Lake Como in the 1970s, and the Moto Guzzi factory was prospering. The first lot of V-twins had been rather ponderous, the Eldorado and Ambassador appealing to the heavyweight-inclined. Beginning in 1972 a new series of sporting models, the Sport and the LeMans, took the hearts of a great many enthusiasts, using a very stiff frame that twitched not a bit in the corners. The engine grew to 850cc for most applications, but was bored out to 949cc to better motivate the power-sucking, automatic-transmissioned V1000 Convert in 1975.

So on one side Moto Guzzi had a good sporting chassis, and on the

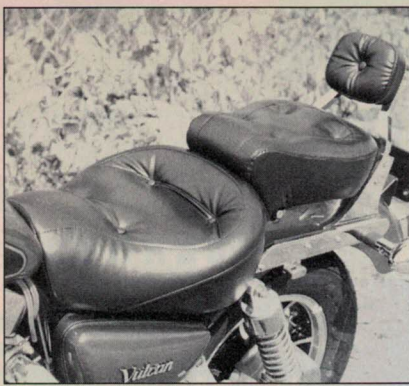


other a torquey touring engine—why not combine the two? Use the Convert engine, with the regular five-speed transmission, in the LeMans frame; bolt a small fairing on and call it a sport-touring model. Ergo, the 1000 SP.

Nobody has ever admitted to understanding the meaning of the letters SP. Some say it was short for SPORT, or

initials for Sport Production, while the English referred to it as a *spada*, Italian for sword. Perhaps we will never know.

The SP did not have a full-on, frame-mounted fairing, like the one that appeared on the BMW R100RS in 1976, but a handlebar fairing with separate, frame-mounted lowers. The Guzzi techs *Continued on page 81*



leather **Wide Regal Touring Seats for all Kawasaki Vulcan 1500 models**, 1988 to 1997. The front bucket sits the rider farther back and lower, and the 15-inch-wide radiused shape offers more support and is angled to keep the rider back in the saddle. The 12-inch-wide passenger seat is internally supported with formed steel wings and extends forward to act as a rider backrest. \$269 to \$289 from Mustang Motorcycle Products, Box 29, Terryville, Connecticut 06786-0029; (800) 243-1392 or (860) 582-9633. **Circle 82 on Reader Service Card** ☐

RETROSPECTIVE FROM PAGE 82

spent the better part of a year in the wind tunnel with their design, and when the SP appeared at the Milan show late in 1977, it was declared a success.

Admittedly, a handlebar fairing is rather an old-fashioned concept by the standards of today, but it was entirely rational according to the thinking of those past years. And don't forget that this was no slapped-on aftermarket item, but a fairing that had been specifically designed for this machine. It was integrated into the overall aesthetic, and felt quite solid at better than 110 mph. The turn signals were built in, and silly little round mirrors afforded a tiny view of whomever you had just passed.

The lowers, the leg protectors, were cunningly contrived to give maximum cooling to the cylinders, and a small amount of protection to the rider's lower extremities. But ride it in even a light rain, or on a wet road, and the rider was advised to put on some rainpants.

The SP motor was a straight

descendant of the 1965 704cc V7, with the cylinders set apart at 90 degrees, the crankshaft longitudinally situated...as opposed to the 90-degree Ducati engine, which has the crank transversely mounted. The SP's twin had a bore of 88mm, a stroke of 78mm. A pair of square-sided, 30mm Dell'Ortos fed the fuel into the combustion chamber through single intake valves, where it was compressed 9.2-fold before being fired by a 12-volt Marelli ignition. Burnt gases escaped through Lafranconi mufflers.

A single-plate clutch fed the power back to the five-speed transmission, and from there via a shaft drive to the bevel gears at the rear hub. About 50 horses were actually turning that rear wheel.

The engine sat in a double-cradle frame with a triple backbone that had been well-tested on the European endurance circuits. At the back were a pair of Futa shocks, with spring compression adjustability, and at the front was a Guzzi-made fork, with 28 degrees of rake. That put the axles 58 inches apart.

The cast alloy wheels were both 18 inches in diameter, with a slightly narrower front tire, 100/90, than rear, 110/90. The brakes were all Brembo, with single-piston calipers squeezing onto iron discs. These brakes used the patented Guzzi "Sistema Integrale" which had first appeared in 1975 on the 850 T3 model; push down on the brake pedal and the proportioning valve would send about two-thirds of the effort to the rear disc, one third to the left front disc. The right front disc was operated by hand. Some purists whined, but most riders came to like the arrangement.

This whole package, with six gallons of gas in the tank, weighed in at about 550 pounds. Add two healthy Americans, packed saddlebags and a tank bag, and that was almost half a ton that the Brembos had to deal with, at upwards of two miles a minute. Which they did, quite handily.

Under the seat sat a very big battery, 32 amp-hours; this was needed to turn over the engine. Turn both petcocks to ON, flick up the single choke lever (one carb was enough to choke), turn the ignition key, press the button, and after half a rotation the engine came to throaty life.

On the dash Veglia instruments indicated speed and engine revs,

bracketed by a quartz clock and amp-meter. Down below were eight little idiot lights, including one that would indicate insufficient brake fluid at the proportioning valve, some sort of an industry first.

It was a long stretch from the saddle to the handlebars, and the short-armed could be inconvenienced by knees bumping up against the lowers as they came behind the jutting cylinder heads.

Once that baby was moving along, it came into its own. The tall, thin tires required a conscious effort on the part of the rider to tilt into a corner, but once on line the frame kept the passage smooth and uneventful. This was a high-speed touring machine, and an all-day ride left you wanting more.

Stopping for a cup of espresso created its own difficulties, as the centerstand was pivoted somewhat aft of the mass of the bike, and needed a hefty pull to get the bike up. While the little sidestand, stuck way up front, was good only when parking sideways on a steep slope in an Italian hill town; it also had a superbly lethal return-spring attachment to make absolutely sure you would never, ever, ride away with it down.

The 1000 SP got some minor improvements in saddle and mufflers over its six-year lifespan. The bike in the photos has a GIVI luggage rack, Stucchi fork brace, a set of factory crashbars, Pirelli Phantoms on the wheels, and aftermarket rearview mirrors.

In 1984 the SP metamorphosed into the SP II, with a 16-inch(!) front wheel and some body changes. That lasted only two years before the factory went back to an 18-inch. Then in 1990 it became the SP III, with a larger frame-mounted fairing, factory bags (by GIVI) and a regrettable stepped seat. The SP vanished from the Guzzi line late in 1995.

However, that original 1000 SP is still seen on the back roads of America, still loping along, or parked in front of an Italian restaurant, with red-and-white checked tablecloths and candles stuck in raffia-covered Chianti bottles.

Those desiring to know more of these machines can contact the Moto Guzzi National Owners Club at P.O.Box 3, Larned, Kansas 67550; or call Frank Wedge at (316) 285-6711. ☐

Clement Salvadori