



Left: The Triumph three-cylinder engine has one of the most winning personalities in motorcycling, with a growling, snarling presence and ferocious acceleration. Although we might wish for tidier hose and cable routing to improve its appearance, we can't argue with its effectiveness. The casual ease with which it floats the front tire from a start makes it the favored bike for wheelie schools, and its latest Keihin EFI offers extraordinary response for precise power control. And its 6-speed transmission is equally good, with slick action and short throws.



Above: The Speed Triple's instrumentation is state-of-the-art. Besides the easy-to-read, large analog speedo and digital tach, it offers a clock, coolant temp gauge, two trips, programmable shift lights (in the vertical row to the right of the tach) and trip computer functions: Instantaneous fuel consumption, average mpg, journey distance, journey time, average speed and maximum speed. But with all that, a fuel level gauge was left off, with just a low fuel warning light instead.



Left: The pilot's seat is actually quite good, but the twin high-mount silencers, which make such a visual statement, place the passenger pegs just 11" below the pillion seat (with the foam compressed). What were they thinking? Bow-legged midgets? Contortionists? The pipes' location also prohibits the use of soft saddlebags—not so brilliant.

Right: Massive gold-anodized 45mm cartridge forks add flash to the front end and work superbly. Note the triple pinch bolts on the lower clamps for rigidity. Nissin radial-mount front brakes slow premium Michelin Pilot Power radials and produced the shortest 60 mph-0 stop MCN's ever recorded, 104.75'. Triumph's stylish flyscreen cleans up the unfinished look and is a \$260 option.



TESTERS' LOG

The Speed Triple is a lot of motorcycle for the money. So powerful, it actually makes you work to keep the front end on the ground, rather than the other way around. And the engine's snarling personality matches its power, unforgettable.

Also, the suspension is top-notch, delivering an excellent ride on surfaces from smooth to gnarly. Although it's fully adjustable, we found it perfect as delivered.

And the brakes...MCN's best stopping distance ever—the mind still reels! But a two inch freeplay between pulling the lever and slowing the bike is way too much and appears designed-in.

The riding position is fine, even the windblast at freeway speeds is tolerable. But the stylists should have to live with a bike before they let it out of the studio—the mirrors are a joke, so far inboard as to be useless, and that's serious. I had a car dive ahead of me where the car-pool lane narrowed and he might've killed me if I'd changed position beforehand. And the high exhausts completely compromise passenger and luggage accommodations. Pipes either much lower or completely under the seat are needed.

Lastly, the horn's plaintive low-volume "bleat" is as ineffective

as the mirrors' rear view. Except for the pipes, the other things can be easily fixed, and are a small price to pay for such a fun machine.

—Dave Searle

The Speed Triple still emits the same mellow-sounding three-cylinder howl from the mufflers, but the high pipes leave little option for the passenger pegs, which are placed ridiculously high and close to the rear seat. And the mirrors are way too narrow to be of any practical use.

Most impressive about the Speed Triple was the stopping—the shortest distance I've ever recorded—without hitting something solid, that is! Excellent brake feel and super grip from the tires allowed for three stops in excess of 1g.

The choice between the Triumph and the Buell comes down to excessive power or adequate power, good fuel mileage or better fuel mileage, a three-cylinder exhaust howl or a V-twin growl, overhead camshafts that need adjustment or maintenance-free hydraulic lifters, and last but not least, a \$500 price differential. Your call.

—Walt Fulton