

## 2 Cost considerations

– affordable, or a money pit?



Compared to most other motorcycles, all the Big Twin Moto Guzzis are relatively cheap to run and maintain. As they don't produce much power they are also quite easy on brakes and tyres. Most models also feature 18-inch wheels with moderate tyre sizes that are considerably less expensive than the super wide tyres on modern Superbikes. Shaft final drive also contributes to ease of servicing, and carburettor and valve adjustment is simple. Oil changes are required relatively frequently and can be quite time-consuming. The most awkward servicing is the ignition, but maintenance-free electronic ignition systems are popular. When it comes to cost of ownership, an older Moto Guzzi Big Twin takes a lot of beating in terms of value for money.

### Spares prices

1969-71 V7 Special (new or reproduction)

- Air filter ●x10
- Battery ●x88 (Odyssey)
- Carburettor set ●x200
- Clutch cable ●x16
- Clutch plate ●x46
- Exhaust downpipe ●x70
- Forks seals ●x8
- Front brake shoes ●x40
- Front wheel hub ●x105
- Fuel filler cap ●x25
- Fuel tap ●x34
- Handgrips ●x13
- Handlebar ●x30 (Police ●x42)
- Headlight rim ●x29
- Ignition switch ●x32
- Rear shock absorbers ●x192 (Hagon)
- Silencer (cigar shape) ●x385
- Solo seat ●x195
- Starter motor ●x120 (reconditioned)
- Steering head bearings ●x18
- Tail light with bracket ●x65
- Wiring harness ●x97

1997 California 1100 EV (new parts)

- Air filter ●x7
- Battery ●x133 (Odyssey)



**Brake discs and pads on early Moto Guzzi Big Twins are not expensive to replace.**



**Tyre wear is not a serious problem.**

particularly crude – very heavy, with virtually no damping. Non-adjustable sealed dampers graced early Tonti-framed bikes but later forks came with superior adjustable Bitubo dampers and air assistance. They also had beefier fork tubes. Stock shock absorbers are generally much better quality, and adjustable Koni P7610s appeared on nearly all Guzzis between 1985 and 1993. While most Guzzis have wheels in standard 17- or 18-inch sizes, in the mid-1980s Guzzi followed the dubious fashion of installing a 16-inch front wheel to the Le Mans and T5. This provided weird steering and uninspiring handling, particularly on rough roads.

High mileages are not a problem if the maintenance schedule is adhered to. Often a regularly and well-maintained machine is preferable to one that has been sitting for long periods unused. The Dell’Orto carburetors in particular tend to go out of tune and synchronisation when not used regularly.

Assuming the maintenance is not a burden, will the riding experience match the hype? The good news is that it will. Get these bikes out into the environment for which they were designed (open roads) and a Guzzi will become addictive. Moto Guzzi Big Twins have been around long enough now for a huge fund of knowledge to have built up, and there are plenty of owners clubs and web forums (see chapter 16 of this book for details) out there with fellow owners willing to help out.

There is something else that makes the Big Twin Guzzis particularly appealing. They are particularly tough and long-lived bikes, able to run high mileages with only routine maintenance. As they have been produced in reasonably large numbers over a long period of time, there will always be something available at a reasonable price. And you will be buying something different and distinctive.



**Big-twin Guzzis can be modified to impressive café racers.**

## Front forks

Most Big Twin Moto Guzzis have an in-house supplied telescopic front fork, which were generally inferior to other Italian-produced forks. The loop-frame models had an extremely heavy fork, with steel triples clamps, lower sliders, and solid steering stem. There is also no positive fork tube clamping in the top triple clamp and they have no damping other than a cone that slightly slows movement at the point of full compression. They are also difficult to take apart as they require special tools that are generally unavailable. But don't be deterred, as if they are straight and true these forks will perform adequately given the loop-frame bikes are not particularly fast and powerful.

With the V7 Sport Moto Guzzi introduced sealed dampers. Although the concept was years ahead of its time, unfortunately the execution left a lot to be desired and soon a range of vastly superior aftermarket dampers were available. If the model you are looking at has sealed dampers, ask if FAC or Bitubo dampers have replaced these. On a test ride, whether the dampers have been replaced will be immediately evident by the ride quality.

Another problem with older Moto Guzzi forks is they were generally undersprung. Apart from later 40mm forks versions with externally adjustable spring pre-load, most standard springs are too light and the forks will benefit from progressively wound aftermarket springs. Some models also came with air adjustment but when used in conjunction with the standard cartridge damper, these provide minimal effectiveness as the air volume is very small.

A common modification with older Big Twin Guzzis is replacement of the



**The front fork on loop-frame Big Twins is an archaic design and difficult to service – but the fork is strong and durable.**



**Aftermarket fork gaiters may not look particularly sporty but do protect the fork legs and make seals last longer.**



**Some models have air-assisted front forks, but, because the fork still has a cartridge damper, adjustment range is limited.**

**The V7 Sport front fork was the first with a sealed cartridge damper. These dampers were rudimentary, and the small diameter stanchions were another weak point.**

entire front fork with an accessory type. This doesn't come without problems, as replacement forks generally have larger diameter stanchions, can be longer, and possibly have wider tube spacing. This will require a replacement axle, mudguard, and even steering stop modification, and if longer could affect overall handling balance. They may also be designed for different brake calipers and larger diameter discs. On the positive side, accessory forks are expensive, especially with upgraded brakes, and it is unlikely the seller will recoup this.

Look at the condition of the fork stanchion. Some models suffered from

**As they offer a functional improvement, accessory forks are a common modification, though not a simple one. These Ducati Showa upside down forks necessitate replacement brakes, front mudguard, and specially machined triple clamps.**



# 15 Problems due to lack of use

– just like their owners, Big Twins need exercise!



Like any piece of engineering, Moto Guzzi Big Twins deteriorate if they sit doing nothing for long periods. It is better to buy a properly maintained, higher mileage bike than one left sitting with old fuel. Carburettors clog, fuel lines deteriorate, and batteries go bad. All of which means a lot of work for a prospective new owner.

## Rust

If a bike is put away wet and/or stored in a damp garage, the paint, metal and brightwork will suffer. Ensure the machine is completely dry and clean before going into storage, and, if you can afford it, invest in a dehumidifier to keep the garage atmosphere dry. Exhaust gas contains a high water content, so exhaust systems corrode very quickly from the inside out when the bike is not used. Steel fuel tanks can rust if stale fuel is left in for a long period.

## Seized components

Brake fluid absorbs water from the atmosphere and should be renewed every two years. Old fluid with a high water content can cause corrosion and pistons/calipers to seize (freeze), and also cause brake failure when the water turns to vapour near hot braking components. Cables are vulnerable to seizures too: they should be thoroughly lubed beforehand and levers applied regularly.



**Carburettors can become problematic if left sitting for a long time with stale fuel.**



**Check wheels for corrosion.**

## Tyres

If the bike has been left on its sidestand, most of its weight is on the tyres, which will subsequently develop cracks and flat spots over time. Always leave the bike on the