

TRIUMPH®



955i

DAYTONA

MCN **Bike** RiDE - Road Test Reprints

Jonathan Pearson
Age 27
Height 6ft Experience
Raised on a diet of
funny off-road bikes
since the age of
three, fast-learning,
fast-riding *Bike* road
tester JP currently
takes his pleasure on
a GSX-R1000.

Simon Hargreaves
Age 33
Height 6ft 1in
Experience
Ex-FireBlade owner,
has ridden every new
Triumph since their
rebirth and is a recent
convert to Aprilia's
range of V-twins.
Currently pleased
by a Gold Wing.

Tom Bedford
Age 28
Height 6ft 2in
Experience A quick
and solid road rider,
sometime Bandit 1200
racer and part-time
tester, Tom is currently
displeased by a
Massey Ferguson,
a £500 Ford Escort
and a mortgage.

Bike

the test

WORDS BY JONATHAN PEARSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHIPPY WOOD (ACTION), TOM CRITCHELL (STUDIO)

... roads, high insurance and the odd track day mean sports bikes that are more
ground and less balls-out make lots of sense. Enter Triumph's revamped Daytona
triple, up against Honda's established in-line four FireBlade and Aprilia's aston-
ishing V-twin RSV Mille: three real world sports bikes for real world riding...

Triumph 955i

955cc, £8949
Less weight, more
power, sharper
steering – but can
the new Daytona
cut it as a sports-
bike without losing
its all-round
appeal? First ride
July 2001.

Honda FireBlade

999cc, £9649
Once top track test and
used as a benchmark
for a shadowed, it
lighter, faster tackle on
performance. But is it
still versatile enough
to take on the new
Triumph? Last tested
April 2001.

Aprilia RSV Mille

996cc, £8875
Praised for its civi-
ty and reliability,
can Aprilia's V-twin
take on the new
people's choice
V-twin cause? Last
tested August 2000.



TRIUMPH 955i

Price £8949 power 129.9bhp top speed 167.8mph 0-60mph 3.1s



SIMON ROLLS UP on the new Daytona 955i at the garage forecourt where Tom and I are waiting for him. We're heading for the leafy back lanes of Lincolnshire for a day's riding, and Simon's raving about the Triumph already. "The perfect sports-bike for the road," he says, excitedly. That's quite a claim to make so early in the test, and sounds suspiciously like a re-write of Triumph's press spiel.

For Triumph's stated aim in revamping the 955i is to produce a powerful sportsbike perfectly suited to most road riders' levels of ability. So they've taken the old 955i triple (bit of a bus, in truth), lost 10kg, added 15bhp and sharpened the steering geometry, but shied away from comparisons with R1s and GSX-R1000s. Either the the factory can't build 'em that light and powerful, or they don't want to.

On first evidence, we think the latter is true. Before we take off from the garage, I listen while Simon and Tom (on the FireBlade) compare notes. Tom talks about light weight, power, on-the-edge handling and powerslides. Simon, on the other hand, talks about light weight and power, but also stability and enjoying the ride. Simon sums it up: "The speed of the Triumph suits the speed of my brain. The Triumph lets you think less about how to ride it, and more about how *you* are riding. Infinitely more rewarding."

He's right. There shouldn't be any need to be cautious or scared of your bike's limits, and they should, roughly, match your own. After all, you've got to ride the thing. And, as we pull away, that's my first impression of the 955i's abilities – friendlier and easier to get on with than the FireBlade.



"THE TRIUMPH LETS YOU THINK LESS ABOUT HOW TO RIDE IT, AND MORE ABOUT HOW YOU ARE RIDING. INFINITELY MORE REWARDING"

As we hammer along Lincolnshire's best kept secret (the B1183 from Boston to Horncastle, see p190), I'm pondering the full list of chassis changes from last year's 955i.

For a start the wheelbase drops from 1440mm to 1417mm. Then there's a sharper rake (22.8° from 24°), shorter trail (81mm from 86mm) and the rear tyre shrinks from 190/50 to 180/55 – all of which quicken steering and increase cornering precision. Take away 10kg and the new bike is transformed from unwieldy and cumbersome to nimble, yet stable.

The 955i's excellent four-pot calipers and 320mm discs remain, and work better with less weight to stop. 0-100mph in 4.35 seconds is the best here and equal to an R1 we tested earlier in the year. The feel isn't brilliant though – even on its furthest span, the lever comes back to the bars.

The 45mm forks have revised internals to cope with less weight and sharper steering, and are superbly controlled without being harsh. The rear shock is also new for the bike, with a conventional swingarm replacing the old 955i's single-sider (to save weight). It all adds up nicely to transform the Daytona from an okay bike to a great one.

Having praised it so much there are still a few drawbacks. While the changes in geometry have suppressed the old Daytona's tendency to stand up and understeer every time you brake into a bend, the new 955i isn't as quick or easy to turn as the FireBlade, and the line it takes through a corner has to be worked for.

"Once you've turned in, it feels as though the front is wandering off and you need extra input to hold a proper line,"

COLOUR SCHEMES...
Silver, blue

TRIUMPH 955i



IN THE DETAILS...
(from left): new clocks reflect the 955i's sleeker, sportier image. Plenty of room in there for a party, too. The frame stays as per old 955i – the tubular alloy still marks Triumphs out among Japanese stuff. The four-pot brakes might look a bit weedy these days, but they ain't

says Tom. Simon agrees, sort of: "It'll run wide on the exit if you don't watch it. But, for my tastes (soft springing and progressive damping control) this front end is as good you'll find. In 10 years of testing, I can't remember forks this supple and plush, that are still able to give this level of feedback."

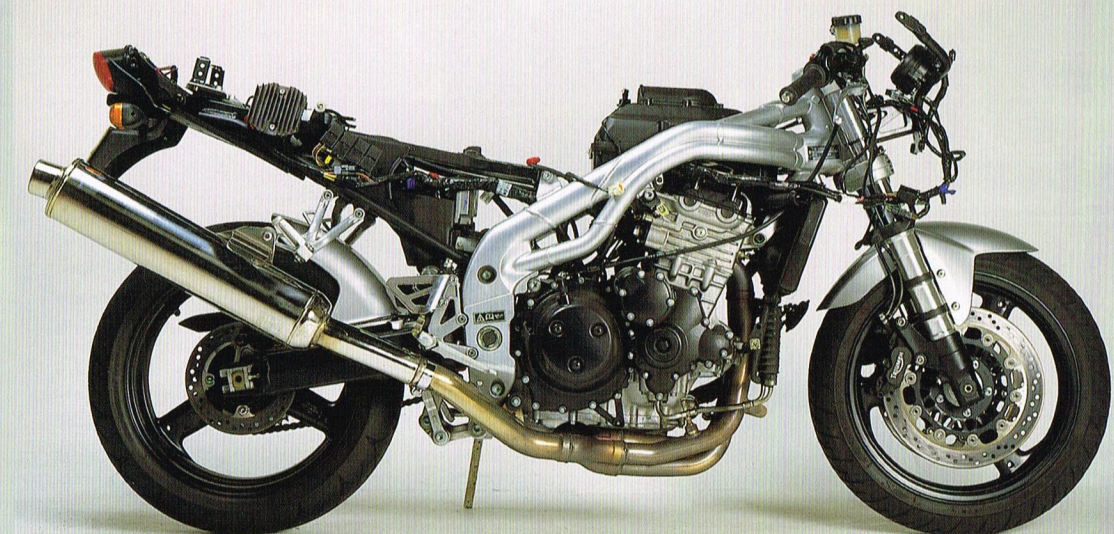
While it might want to push wide out of turns the 955i is the only bike here that doesn't need a steering damper – while the Mille and Blade shake their bars over bumps, the Triumph is relaxed and lets you drive harder.

The 955i's engine is Triumph's best triple yet. Compared to the old bike it's free-revving, with a higher rev ceiling (redlined at 12,500rpm), a useful bottom end and plenty of top end (130bhp). It's nowhere near as bloodcurdlingly manic as the

inline four Blade, and it hasn't got the low down power of the Mille. But, waltzing round the Lincolnshire Wolds on undulating A-roads, the three-cylinder motor is a lovely mixture of two and four cylinders. It benefits from the best of both worlds.

The sound is incredible too – the airbox howls with a low-pitched whistle. Apparently it's a deliberate ploy by the factory. Add the aftermarket carbon end-can, and it'd be even better.

If you want to upset Triumph, mention fuel injection – they're a bit sensitive after the mauling the TT600 got over its throttle response. The 955i is a class above that – you can open the taps anywhere and get smooth, glitch-free acceleration. The bike'll even pull top from 1500rpm... but... there's a slight hesitation when you crack the throttle open. At low speeds through busy traffic it becomes annoying because your brain reacts to



the hesitation by saying 'open the throttle slightly more', by which time the fuel injection has responded – only now it dishes double the dose you bargained for. There's no fluffing, it just needs to be more precise. Having said this, Simon never noticed it: "The Triumph's fuel injection is miles better than the Blade."

The gearbox is a vast improvement on the old, uncultured Triumph boxes, but a couple of times it wouldn't knock down into first gear under heavy braking and high revs. And it takes more effort than necessary to change into third and fourth – as if it can't cope with the high revs.

The new fairing isn't as effective as it should be – although there's so much space you can watch the road down each side of the forks, at higher speeds it's hard to tuck behind the fairing. Still, at least the view inside no longer contains Triumph's old

clocks. Gone are the big white dials and red needles, replaced by a digital speedo as per everything these days, and a, er, white-faced, red-needled tacho. Got a clock, too. And a 21-litre, 160-mile tank, useful mirrors and flip-out bungee points under the seat hump.

So that's the new 955i – a bike that sits most comfortably somewhere between too fast and too slow. Which is not a bad place to be, seeing as it's where most of us are at, most of the time. Best sportsbike on the road? Depends who you are and how you ride, but it's as close as it gets..

the test

Performance criteria for *the test* are all out of 20, making a maximum possible 100

ENGINE & GEARBOX 17

Three-cylinder engine revs as much as a four and forgives as much as a twin. Gearbox can struggle to keep up with the revs but good on the whole.

CHASSIS 17

Brilliant front end forgives and forgets punishment from either smooth tracks or bumpy roads. Outstanding ride quality. Will run wide out of corners if you let it...

VALUE 16

It's an old cliché, but there's a lot of bike for your money here. Best Daytona model by far, and should hold a good price second-hand.

FINISH 15

Ain't the best. Looks a bit plain and some of the fixings are brittle and cheap. And as for the tank cut-outs... who has knees up there? Use your noggins, Triumph...

WOW FACTOR 16

It's plainly British, so people will either ignore it or watch it out of the corner of their eye and talk about it with their mates later.

TOTAL 81/100

Not overwhelming... but then that's what Triumph wanted (in a different sense). In these days when tuners are knocking the midrange out of racing GSX-R1000s to make them tamer, the 955i rivals pretty much any sportsbike on the road. Not a bad effort.

ROAD TEST

■ TRIUMPH 955i 93%

The name is familiar, but that's about it

Faster, lighter, sharper, better.
That's the new 955i



SOME rideouts are more than just a quick blast to your local meeting place. Take today, for example. The trip meter has only done 22 miles since I last reset it, but I've just ridden to the end of the world.

In the 14th Century, travellers gathered on the edge of this cliff on the coast of Portugal, near Cascais, and thought they couldn't go any farther. In our wisdom a few hundred years on we now know this rocky outcrop towering above the Atlantic is, in fact, the western-most point of Europe. It's also a great place for the modern bike rider to pull up on the new Triumph Daytona 955i and stick his face in a 20th Century ice cream.

It's a popular meeting place for bikers and is packed most weekends with blokes talking about the same kind of things we do in pub car parks, except – obviously – in Portuguese. And while the view is great, the majority of the roads round these parts aren't. The narrow winding lanes, bike-swallowing pot-holes and gravel-coated shiny Tarmac stretches are more likely to give the locals something to blarney about than speed cameras or over-diligent policemen.

Triumph's new 955i is 19bhp up on the old bike and weighs 10kg (22lb) less than the model it replaces. It feels great on the road, but in these conditions it's hard to give you the definitive

bottom line and get intimate with it on such a brief, red alert ride. Just as well then that Triumph has booked the Estoril GP circuit to properly test the bike. The firm says this 955i has kept the character of the old version, but it has improved handling, a claimed 147bhp, sharper styling and all-round refinement. And you know what? The changes it has made have put it right back up there with the top sports bikes from Japan and Italy.

A 996 would ride round the outside in a corner, and a GSX-R1000 would kill it on performance. But up against a Blade and maybe an RSV? That's a different story, which we'll get to later.

The Portuguese GP circuit is a flash track complex set against the backdrop of mountains and olive trees. It seems only a couple of years ago that I approached the Cartagena circuit in southern Spain to be greeted by a fleet of the original T595 Daytonas. But four years on I am presented with the fresher, big-eyed, more hard-core evolution of the bike that became the 955i.

It's not as revolutionary as the original design four years ago, but it is quite attractive. As a package it looks good. Not truly sexy, but good enough to make you want one. And that's before you ride it. The back end, with or without the optional seat cowl Triumph has fitted for the track, still looks a bit fat, but the tank is lower and slimmer at its base and the nose dominated by those big FireBlade-style foxeye lights is quite aggressive. It's obviously Japanese-inspired, but still fresh, still British and full of deep paint and good graphics plus a colour-matched rear hugger as standard in either the blue or silver paint schemes.

All very nice, except perhaps for the ripped British flag logo

on the tail unit, which Triumph started with the TT600.

The single-sided swingarm has also been junked in favour of a conventional part. Triumph says it cuts weight and means the wheelbase can be much shorter.

The road bike I'd ridden earlier had a standard exhaust, which meant the air intake noise was absolutely awesome. Triumph technicians admit they put the air intakes right next to the seat for no other real reason than the high-pitched whirr and boom of the intake noise as you ride it. It's absolutely addictive, so much so you find yourself changing down to 5000rpm much more than you need just to hear the rush of noise booming up just below your head.

On the track you don't get that so much as the bikes have all been fitted with the "race use only" carbon cans. Triumph says they only make an extra 2.3bhp, but let the world hear how the factory would really like its bikes to sound if noise regulations would allow.

It sounds much deeper than the old model and it's way more responsive. There's less friction, more power and less weight, plus new fuel injection mapping, Keihin injectors and 3mm bigger throttle bodies. But not just that. Changes which move the alternator and starter motor on to the end of the crankshaft mean the tractor-like old motor is also much quieter and more civilised.

And it's not only the civility of the engine you notice straight away. It feels smaller and the obligatory side-to-side static weight test before you pull off shows it's also definitely a lot lighter.



BY MARC POTTER
PICTURES BY GOLD & GOOSE

ROAD TEST

It would give a Blade a good run around Estoril, and I'm sure there'd be very little difference in lap times



■ The 955i has sometimes been overlooked as a serious rival to bikes like the Blade, but the new one should change all that

The white-faced tachometer, with its temperature gauge nestled among the small R1-style clocks, shows it's time for the off, so I tentatively head down Estoril's pit lane for my first run. I tested the 2000-model FireBlade here in January 2000 and remember it being a tricky track to master.

But straight away the bike is obviously very strong yet really friendly.

The first thing you notice is the way the bike turns. Kicking the back end up and fitting a new aluminium-bodied shock along with a TT600 front wheel (the lightest in its class), a 14mm shorter wheelbase and a 180-section rear tyre has transformed the way this bike handles. The factory opted for Bridgestone's BT010 tyres for their excellent wear rates and good grip in

the wet, dry or on track days.

Bizarrely, Triumph keeps insisting that it's not a race bike, just a very fast road bike. Yet it would definitely give a Blade a good run round here and I'm sure there'd be very little difference in lap times.

After some fluid to keep dehydration nasties at bay in the simmering heat, I head out again. This time I'm more confident, so I can concentrate fully on the bike. As I exit the pit there's a slight snatch at low revs, but nothing worse than a Blade or SP-1, and then it's plain sailing into the first fast right kink.

The track drops away and it's a bit scary, but you can hit it hard and run out to the left. There's a bump in the middle of the

corner, and though the bike grounds out it's not upset even when cranked over.

After that it's run out to the red line at 12,000rpm (the old bike used to run out of steam at 9000rpm) in second gear before a dab on the brakes takes me into an uphill, off-camber right-hander. It should be a nasty corner, but the Daytona lays its footrest in with confidence and lets you get on the power nice and early.

It rips up through the revs, but it's best to hold the same gear for a quick burst up to the next left-hander.

It's hard to get round the corner properly as it tightens up on the way out. But this time I get it right and tighten it up before feeding in

the power. Yes, I know it's a cliché, but the three-cylinder motor really does allow you to get out of corners quickly without upsetting the rear tyre. The shock sags a little and it digs in and you're through the gearbox.

The box itself has been changed for a lighter gearchange and different ratios, but in my mind it still needs a bit more work. It's fine, but could be better and is still a bit reluctant to engage without a good prod sometimes. A B-plus gearbox rather than an A like a Suzuki.

The next bend is a real mind-melter. You know you could probably do it flat-out, but having the bottle is a different matter. This time I manage to find some and keep it nailed in fourth, the bike still accelerating hard up to around 120mph. Aim for the blue and white kerb and keep it on the stop. As the bike tips in the rolling radius of the tyre changes and increases the revs. The noise increases, too, and I

watch the needle drift from 10,500rpm to 11,000rpm and then back down again momentarily as the kinks are taken. Then I'm pushing it towards the exit straight.

Trying not to focus too much on the ambulance parked on the outside of the next corner, I take the advice of Triumph test rider Dave Rawlins and cut across the concrete dust before clipping the first exit. As



■ A new rear shock and less weight massively improves the new 955i's handling

CHARTING THE DAYTONA'S HISTORY



■ The T595, launched in 1997, put Triumph up there in the big league

THE Daytona name has been around since Triumph relaunched back in 1991. It has always been reserved for the firm's sportiest bikes, and started out on the 1000cc four-cylinder and 750 triple. In 1993 the Daytona became the 1200 and 900cc triple until, in 1997, it became the T595 Daytona.

So what did the T595 mean? It was simply the name of the project while Triumph was working on the bike during development. But because the model was actually 955cc, it dropped

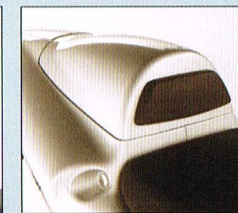
the "T595" tag in October 1998 because it was thought too confusing.

It carried on through various tweaks and colour changes, including more ground clearance and revised suspension when, in 1999, the bike got a new rear shock and some small changes to the engine. In 2000 it was given a 15mm shorter wheelbase and some subtle cosmetic changes, but this is the biggest revamp yet.

EXTRAS, EXTRAS!



■ Expandable tank bag can be yours for £99



■ Colour-matched cowl is £119



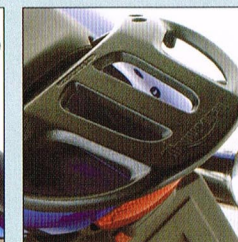
■ Non-road-legal carbon can sounds the business



■ Pillions will appreciate this



■ Throwover panniers take loads of gear...



■ ...or you could opt for the rack

HAVING the latest Triumph Daytona may not be enough for some people. So to make sure you can personalise your bike, there are dozens of original Triumph accessories.

There are two race pipes, one a £299.99 carbon-fibre option and the other a £219.99 stainless steel version. Both are for "race use only".

A seat cowl and seat pad costs £119.99 and is available in either silver

or blue to match the standard colours. Other items include:

- A top rack for luggage: £99.99
- An expandable tank bag: £99.99
- Throwover panniers: £169.99
- A double bubble screen: £89.99
- Thatcham-approved alarm: £299.99
- Grabrail: £89.99
- Carbon-fibre side panels: £149.99

All parts will be available to order from Triumph dealers next month.



■ The Daytona name has graced some bikes in its time, but none better than this

ROAD TEST

It's not another Japanese bike, or a V-twin Italian, and that makes it a refreshing experience

As the bike drifts to the right, ready to be pulled back in for the second apex, it feels really solid in the turn.

The footrest is dragging, but I'm carrying some serious corner speed and it's not getting ruffled. Exiting in second gear, the front gets a bit of a waggle on before I head downhill.

On the power the front wheel goes light in the first three gears and gives a little twitch, but that's it. Just how a quick-turning sports bike should be. Into the next turn the track dips downhill and drops a bit more at the exit, so I use the peg as a guide to how far over it is.

Out of here you can really take liberties with the throttle and I just feel a slight movement from the rear shock as its sits down at the back. Then I keep the power on, clip the next right-hander before banging it down to first and using the amazingly excellent brakes.

It's hard to believe the Triumph-badged four-pot Nissin calipers are the same ones that were fitted four years ago, yet they're still up with the very best brakes around. Loads of power, but just the right amount of feel for you to pin it down from speed.

The chicane is a tricky little number that climbs uphill. It's early in before flicking right. The Triumph just gets on with the job. It turns super-fast, but there's no hint of it wanting to drop in. Through the

next right-hand apex you can run off-line and tighten it up with about half the effort you'd need on the old bike. It holds a tight line and you know where you are with it and the way the motor spins round the dial is another world from the old low-revving Daytona.

There's a real kick from 8000rpm to just before 12,000rpm that lets you get on with lapping quickly without constantly hitting the red line like you would on the previous model.

The last corner at Estoril is a fast (like 120mph fast) right-hander with a few undulating bumps on the way out just as you're at maximum lean and want to get on the throttle. It goes a bit wafly on the bumps, but that's it. Then as soon as they're dealt with you can dial in maximum throttle and tuck your bum into the seat cowl down the straight. I hit a maximum speed of 160mph, though Triumph's Spanish test rider, who had been riding the track all week, hit 167mph. But even 160mph is mightily impressive. Remember, it's not a 1000cc four, the burble from the pipe tells you that much, but a 955cc triple.

Yet those speeds down the straight are very similar to the ones I achieved on the FireBlade last year. Food for thought...

The first/last corner is a second-gear turn at about 60mph, yet even in very hot conditions the brakes never fade, even though I

repeatedly tried to brake later and later from near-160mph speeds.

It won't match a GSX-R in a corner, but that's not the idea. Suzuki wants to "own the race track". Triumph wants to evolve the Daytona in to a sharper, faster, lighter road bike that can do the odd track day. But I think they've slightly under-played it.

Translate this kind of light steering to the road and you've got a very quick bike for the kind of roads we go hunting at weekends. It's also a bike which is very easy to get on and go fast straight away, yet it still makes you work just enough so you know it's no Honda. And that's a great place to be.

It's not a Japanese bike, it's not another V-twin from Japan or Italy and somehow that makes it a refreshing experience. Most people reckon a V-twin on full chat is the best noise in biking. As standard, I think Triumph's intake noise and that three-cylinder wail comes close.

Triumph is building 5000 bikes this year, though that was its plan with the original T595 and it ended up building 6500. So they shouldn't be in short supply. And at £8599 the 955i only costs £100 more than the old bike.

There should be demonstrations at Triumph dealers within the next three weeks. Book your test ride now. You'll get a surprise.



■ The user-friendly Triumph is an easy bike to go quick on



■ The noise from the can quickly tells you it's a triple, and oh what a noise

SO WHAT'S CHANGED, THEN?

ENGINE

■ ESSENTIALLY the new Daytona's three-cylinder motor is the same as the old one, but there's a lot of detail changes under the bodywork. It breathes better and is more efficient than the old engine, which adds up to an extra 19bhp – making it Europe's most powerful production bike. The cylinder head is redesigned with 1mm larger inlet valves and 1mm smaller exhaust valves set at a narrower angle. The inlet and exhaust ports are redesigned to improve gas-flow and machined for closer tolerances. New

pistons with lighter conrods are stronger and lighter and the compression ratio is upped from 11.2:1 to 12:1. It revs faster and higher with the rev-limiter set at 11,000rpm, compared to the old bike's 10,500rpm. On the intake side, a larger airbox is also reshaped for improved air-flow and larger 46mm Keihin injector bodies get fuel in faster. They're now die-cast instead of sand-cast, so they're lighter. The exhaust system has new headers and

balancer pipes to boost the mid-range and there's a new silencer which still meets emissions and gives a deeper, sexier tone. The bike's revised cooling system now includes cooling jets for the pistons and more oil now passes through the cooler. The radiator uses a thinner core which increases its cooling efficiency without adding size or weight. Power is up, but torque stays the same at 75ftlb at 8200rpm. In total the engine is 2.5kg (5.5lb) lighter than its predecessor.

CHASSIS

■ TRIUMPH junked the faithful and very cute single-sided swingarm in favour of a lighter and stronger double-sided item. It also weighs 3.3kg (7.2lb) less than the original. The frame is essentially the same, but there are a few different engine mount castings. There's also a new aluminium subframe. To help the bike turn faster, the wheelbase is reduced by 14mm to 1417mm. Turning faster was obviously a high priority and the geometry has changed from a fairly lazy 24° and 86mm of trail to 22.8° with 81mm of trail. To

help steering even more, the rear tyre has been changed from a 190-section to a 180-section. At the front the bike uses a lighter 17in front wheel which saves 450g to cut unsprung weight. The Showa forks are still 45mm, but are revised internally to give slightly less rebound damping on standard settings. At the back a new aluminium-bodied shock with a narrower diameter spring saves 1kg (2.2lb). Not much, but it all helps and adds up to a 10kg (22lb) saving over the old model and a total weight of 188kg (413lb).

BRAKES

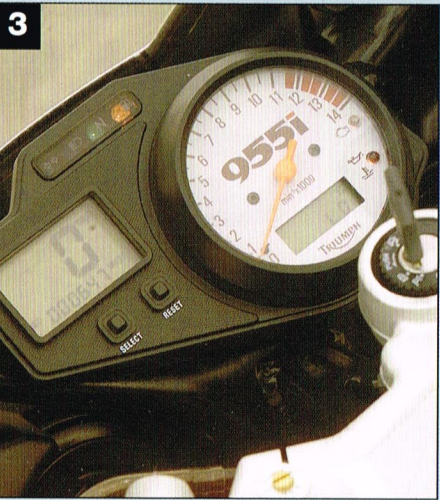
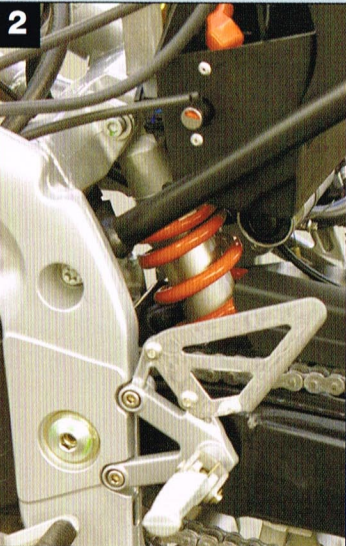
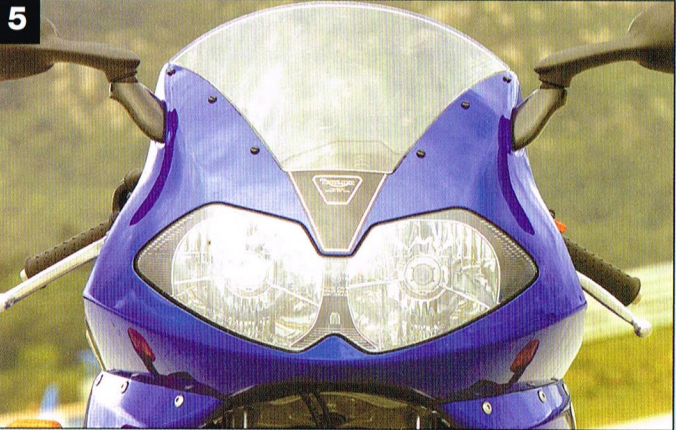
■ THERE wasn't much wrong with the 955i's brakes as they were, so they're basically the same, but use five rather than six mounting bolts. The front retains four-piston Nissin calipers with Triumph logos. At the back there's still a 220mm disc, but there's a new single-piston caliper rather than the original twin-pot. The pedal force has also been modified to improve feel.

BODYWORK

■ TRIUMPH'S designers basically liked the look of the original Daytona, but knew they could built on it. They seem to have done the job well, apart from some criticism of the slightly fat rear end. This is partly due to the bike's bigger pillion seat. But it's a fine line between comfort and style. The rest of the bike has been restyled for a leaner, more aggressive look. The bodywork itself, built in Hinckley, is thinner than the old Daytona and saves 1.2kg (2.6lb) in weight. Other weight-saving improvements are a digital

console that is 2kg (4.4lb) lighter and includes two trip meters, a clock and a lighter aluminium bracket. So you can sit in the saddle longer, Triumph has taken feedback from owners and the handlebars are now slightly higher. The footrests are the same, but the knee cutouts in the tank are narrower despite the tank's capacity being upped from 18 litres (4 galls) to 21 litres (4.6 galls). The seat is also narrower. The headlight is replaced with a bigger twin-style headlamp with a stronger, wider beam.

TRIUMPH 955i



- 1 New front end has won many plaudits, but the back – with its conventional swingarm – has been less well-received
- 2 Aluminium-bodied shock and new spring cuts weight and jacks up the rear more than the old bike to help quicken the steering
- 3 All-new dash and mounting brackets save a staggering 2kg (4.4lb) over old version
- 4 Air intake creates such a seductive sound that you can't help changing down to make the most of it
- 5 Redesigned headlights provide a better beam as well as a more aggressive nose

THE FACTS

TRIUMPH DAYTONA 955i

£8599
Availability
June 2001
Triumph: 01455-417000
Colours
Blue/silver
Main updates for 2001
19bhp more power, 10kg less weight, bigger 21-litre fuel tank, restyled bodywork
Insurance group
Group 17
Specification

Engine: Liquid-cooled, 955cc (79 x 65mm) 12v dohc, four-stroke in-line triple. Fuel-injection. Six gears
Chassis: Tubular alloy perimeter
Front suspension: 45mm inverted forks, adjustments for pre-load, compression and rebound damping
Rear suspension: Single shock with rising-rate linkage, adjustments for pre-load, compression and rebound damping
Tyres: Bridgestone BT010; 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear
Brakes: Nissin; 2 x 320mm front discs with four-piston calipers, 220mm rear disc with single-piston caliper

PERFORMANCE

Power and torque Claimed
147bhp, 75ftlb
Weight, power to weight ratio
188kg (413lb), 0.78bhp/kg
Top speed Estimated
165mph
Geometry
Geometry
22.8°, 8.1cm, 141.7cm
Fuel consumption
Average mpg, tank capacity, range
36mpg, 21 litres, 165 miles
Spares costs
Combined cost of 13 standard items
n/a
Running costs
Depreciation + insurance + servicing + consumables
£1500 + £905 + £225 + £325
TOTAL: £2965
(Based on 1 yr, 5000 miles, 32-yr-old, no recent convs/claims, urban, Comp)

OUR VERDICT

Engine
91% Same torque, more top end
Handling
93% Lighter, faster, sharper
Braking
93% Still brilliant four years on
Comfort
88% It's all relative
Grin factor
94% The noise just tops it off
OVERALL
93% Right up with Blade



TRIUMPH DAYTONA 955i

Definitely more road than track, but Triumph's latest triple is a superbike contender.

ESTORIL is a gorgeous circuit. The surface is perfect, the corners are flowing, there's no-one coming the other way... a rider's dream. I couldn't think of a better venue for Triumph to launch its new Daytona 955i.

But as the day passed, no fewer than six animals wandered out in front of me. A couple of scruffy Portuguese dogs pottered over the hairpin, a cat streaked across the straight, a game bird (the feathery sort, not a frisky girl) darted out near the chicane and a few other suicidal furry friends sauntered onto otherwise perfect curves. This unpredictability made it almost like being on

the road where stability counts for more than fast steering and track tools can be too much. So it's a good thing that Triumph is pitching its latest superbike towards road rather than track use.

That said, the new 955i is far sharper than the outgoing model. Weight is down 10kg, claimed power is up 19bhp to 147bhp at the crank and the tubular alloy chassis has been honed for sharper steering. Triumph says this bike isn't going head-to-head with techno-missiles like Suzuki's GSX-R1000 and Yamaha's R1, but it's the

closest thing to a top-class contender in the UK firm's arsenal.

Unofficial Triumph sources are claiming 134bhp at the back wheel; just three behind an R1 tested on the same dyno. Add the Daytona's extra weight and you get a bike that doesn't accelerate quite as rapidly as an R1 or GSX-R1000; but it's not

far behind and without running them side-by-side it's hard to be sure. Don't imagine for one second the Daytona is short on speed, but really go for it and you'll find yourself with the throttle against the stop a little more

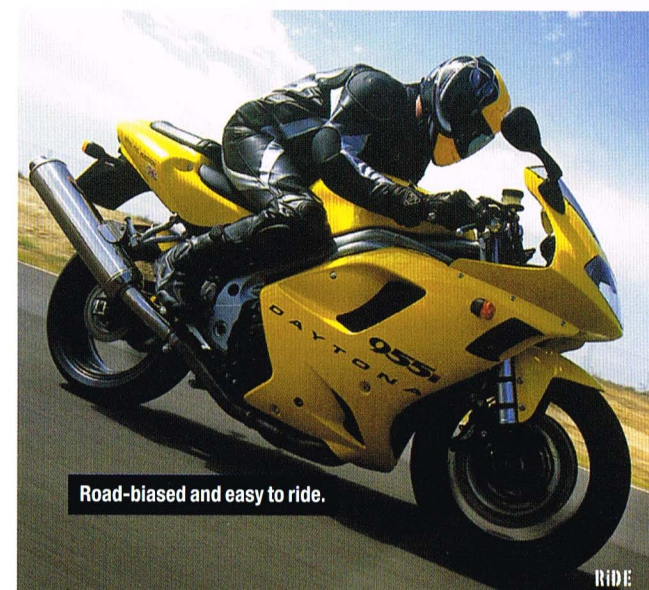
often than on one of the oriental expresses.

Compare the Daytona to the "characterful" European hotshots such as Aprilia's RSV Mille or Ducati's 996S and the Triumph should match or beat them on straightline speed – it's the most powerful production superbike made in this continent.

The three-cylinder engine has never been short of shove in the midrange, but the new bike saves its best for the top of the tacho. Power delivery is muscular and torquey. Ninety per cent

of its claimed 74ft lb peak is available from 4500rpm right through to the 11,500rpm redline – making going fast easy. The three-cylinder configuration combines many of the advantages of twins and fours; gutsy grunt at low revs, a rush to the redline and a glorious, distinctive burbling sound. Mods to the alternator and starter motor have reduced the clatter from inside the

"Power is up to 147bhp."



Road-biased and easy to ride.

engine and Triumph has tuned the exhaust to boom not whine. Even the airbox intake has been turned around so it faces backwards and drenches the rider with shuddering induction noise. Marvellous.

Triumph hasn't had to do much to the brakes to cope with the extra power. They were always good and Triumph's weight cutting makes them feel even better. The front set-up is virtually unchanged – 320mm floating discs with Nissin calipers (badged as Triumph). Their initial bite is controllable, but even a moderate squeeze on the lever rubs speed away fast – ideal when a rogue squirrel tries to bury his nuts in your apex. The only difference between the front brake on this and the previous bike is that the discs are now held with five, not six bolts; part of Triumph's Slimfast regime.

The rear brake has more power and feel than before – achieved by going from a twin to single-piston caliper and modifying the pedal ratio.

Dry weight is 188kg (413lb), down 10kg and significantly lighter than Honda's SP-1, and the handling feels all the better for it. The Triumph is still heavier than a GSX-R1000 or R1, but on bumpy Tarmac those extra pounds can translate into stability and a smoother ride.

The front suspension has been tweaked to give slightly less rebound damping on standard settings. The rear shock is an all-new lightweight unit. And the single-sided swing-

arm has been ditched for a lighter, double-sided item – not as pretty, but you can't have everything. Wheelbase is down 14mm and the steering geometry has been steepened. Other tweaks include a slimmer 180-section rear tyre; chosen with rapid steering rather than fashion in mind.

The result of all these changes is a sporty but stable bike. One long, fast turn (110mph knee down if that tickles your fancy) with a slightly bumpy exit made the bars shake gently, but illustrated the Daytona's excellent

"Gutsy grunt at low revs and a rush to the redline."

compromise between the steering and stability camps. At no stage did the handling feel flighty or sluggish. Up the pace on the track and the pegs and brake lever will scrape if you don't hang off – but it's never a problem and should be fine on the road. Bridgestone's BT-010 tyres are well up to the job, give decent

wet weather performance and last well for sticky rubber.

Leaving the other journo's on the track and sampling grotty Portuguese streets revealed a glitch that wasn't apparent before. Triumph's Achilles' heel – the fuel-injection – still isn't quite spot on despite the factory having more big bike injection experience than its Japanese rivals. Open up in first and the engine feels harsh; you almost feel like the chain is loose. Slipping the clutch gets around the problem and the system is far better than earlier Triumphs but still can't match the GSX-R1000.

Ride off with a cold engine and the power comes in unexpected lurches at first. But thanks to injection jiggery-pokery, the engine starts without choke (there isn't one) and warms up quickly without attention from the throttle. Gearboxes have been another Triumph problem area. Previous incarnations of the Daytona have had a reluctant set of

cogs which needed the clutch and a firm shove. The new bike has a revised change mechanism (like the 2001 Triumph Tiger) and it's better, but still not perfect. Clutchless changes are tricky and a couple of false neutrals at the track left me crunching a cog into action when I should have been concentrating on my riding (or dodging the wildlife). The gearchange action may improve as the miles rack up.

Triumph has listened to criticism about the old bike's riding position. The handlebars are angled back more steeply which makes the riding position feel more natural. The rear of the fuel tank and the seat are narrower which brings you closer to the bike; wrapped around it like a pistol grip giving an encouraging 'at one with the machine' feel. The pillion pegs are set high – not as radical as an R1, but not exactly comfortable. And you'll struggle to squeeze more than a compact set of waterproof trousers under

SWING-ARM

Internally braced, double-sided aluminium item replaces the previous single-sided job, saving 3.3kg (7.3lb).

CHASSIS

Distinctive aluminium alloy frame is retained. Steering geometry has been sharpened up.

BODYWORK

Restyled panels save 1.2kg (2.6lb) and give the Triumph a sharper new look.

FUEL TANK

Up three litres to 21 litres (4.6 gal). It's also narrower at the rear, making more room for your legs.

FRONT BRAKE

320mm floating discs are held on with five mounting bolts, one less than last year's bike.

SILENCER

New can helps improve performance and has a noticeably deeper tone than the previous one.

ENGINE

Revs higher and runs cooler than before. Size is unchanged at 955cc but the cylinder head, pistons and conrods have been redesigned.

FUEL-INJECTION

46mm throttle bodies squirt in fuel. Air temperature, water temperature and exhaust gasses are all monitored and the information used to optimise fuelling.

FRONT WHEEL

From the TT600 – lightweight 17in item saves 450g and improves steering.



the minimal rear perch. There is a greater step between the two seats than before; adding to the aggressive new looks.

Like all Triumphs, the Daytona has a decent range of official accessories. Along with racy silencers, flip-up screens, luggage and more is an alarm designed to plug straight into the wiring loom. This should eliminate most problems from shoddy fitting, but the predictable location may prove a security weak point.

Triumph has priced the bike at £8950. That's only £150 more than the previous model

which has already sold out in the UK

– largely thanks to discounts and finance deals. Triumph is also promising cut-price insurance for anyone over 25 with a garage and at least two

years' full licence experience. Recent Triumphs have a finish that will survive the UK winter better than most and the paint on the new 955i looks the same quality. Sensible stuff.

And the Daytona is a sensible superbike; well, as sensible as an obscenely-rapid, tight-handling motorbike can be. It might not

a match a GSX-R1000's power delivery or a Ducati 996's handling. But the result of any dice on road or race circuit (despite Triumph's protestations about the 955i not being a track bike) would be more down to rider skill than the tiny differences in performance. More importantly, the Daytona is crammed with character, has a raucous, soulful engine and an exotic British cachet all its own.

Verdict: ●●●●●
Best sporty Triumph yet. Every inch a Superbike A-list machine, but not too OTT.

"A sensible superbike."



SPECIFICATIONS

Price	£8950
Engine	12v l/c in-line triple, 955cc
Claimed power	147bhp @ 10,700rpm
Claimed torque	74ft lb @ 8200rpm
Chassis	alloy perimeter tubular frame
Dry weight	188kg (413lb)
Seat height	815mm (31.8in)
Fuel capacity	21litres (4.6gal)
Tyres	120/70 ZR17 front, 180/55 ZR17 rear
Availability	now
PERFORMANCE	
Top Speed	185mph (est)
Fuel consumption	n/a

FIRST RIDE
Launch report

Triumph Daytona 955i

■ Engine 955cc, in-line triple ■ Price £8949 ■ Insurance group NU15 ■ Top speed 165mph (est)

A lighter, sharper, more stable British sportsbike for the 21st century

WORDS BY STEVE WESTLAKE PHOTOGRAPHY BY GOLD & GOOSE, PHIL MASTERS

TRIUMPH CAN'T QUITE BELIEVE ITS luck. When the lorries trundled off from Hinckley for the launch of the new 955i, they were packed with enough spares to mop up the inevitable spills that go hand in hand with test riders, racetracks and new motorbikes. But the inevitable just didn't happen. The 955i appears to be uncrashable.

After six days of testing at the Estoril circuit in Portugal, not one Daytona had gone down. That might not sound such a big deal, but bike launches are open season for crashes, especially when held at racetracks. Someone else's bike, someone else's bill, someone else is going faster than me, are all pungent ingredients in the recipe for disaster. Imagine the carnage of six track days run on those terms.

Add in the perceived need to 'test the bike to the limit' and it's almost a foregone conclusion that someone's going to treat a shiny new fairing to a pebble-dash finish. On the launch of the latest Kawasaki ZX-9R 18 months ago, nine bikes went down in one day. That smash count was exceptionally high but gives some indication of how surprising Triumph's clean sheet is.

It could be that the law of averages doesn't apply in Portugal, but it's more likely that the new Daytona is a bike that's easy to push hard without pushing over the edge. That's certainly how it felt to me.

It's a pretty hefty face lift that Triumph's given the 955i for 2001. Engine, chassis and cosmetics have all been hacked about to give Hinckley's flagship sportsbike a fresh zest for life. 'The new 955i is Europe's most powerful production sportsbike'

trumpets the press blurb, backed up by a claimed at-the-crank power figure of 147bhp. (If that 147bhp sounds familiar, it was the same as that claimed for the four-cylinder Daytona 1200 in 1993).

If that's not too much of an exaggeration then we'll be looking at around the 130bhp mark at the back wheel, which plonks the Daytona in among the Japanese big boys – bikes like the Honda CBR900RR FireBlade, Yamaha YZF-R1 and Suzuki GSX-R1000. You'd think Triumph would be delighted to be mentioned in that company, but jabber too many consecutive consonants at the Hinckley staff and bets become severely hedged. "It hasn't been designed to take on the Japanese," says a Triumph spokesman as he studies the fingers burned in the blaze of publicity surrounding

TT600. "It's one of the world's most exciting sportsbikes, but the Daytona's personality shines as brightly as ever." So they don't want the 955i pitched against the best of the rest, even though they must be hoping it can hold its ground.

The outgoing 955i, originally called the T595 when it was introduced in 1997, does have plenty of personality. A torquey three-cylinder engine which bellows fruity harmonies and delivers quick and entertaining progress. And the bike has a solid, planted feel, never giving the impression it's going to get out of shape.

But there are downsides too. The gearbox is atrociously clunky and prone to missed changes, the engine runs out of puff as it just seems to be getting into its stride and slow steering is the price paid for that reassuring stability. By modern sportsbike

standards, the 955i was certainly feeling porky and a bit ponderous.

The 2001 updates have fixed that – 10kg has been shed, about 10bhp has been gained, and the geometry has undergone a severe revision to sharpen up the handling. Shorter wheelbase, steeper steering angle and the bare minimum of trail sounds like the kind of alterations that could make the Daytona into a serious piece of racetrack kit, and a nervous handful on a bumpy road. Around Estoril the 955i feels like, well, a brand new bike. And a proper sportsbike at that. Handling on the track is nothing less than brilliant with the Daytona diving into corners with the kind of speed and precision that brings its little brother, the TT600, to mind. We've described the TT6 in our road tests as the best handling production bike on the planet,

Is it a GSX-R beater?

No, it's not going to compete on outright performance with the GSX-R1000. But it's probably going to feel livelier than the Gixer because it doesn't have a steering damper. In fact, it's likely to challenge the top handling Honda FireBlade.

Why no single-sided swing-arm?

It comes down to weight and dimensions. The single-sided item looked trick, but was necessarily longer and heavier than the conventional swing-arm now fitted.

How come Triumph can make bikes that handle so well?

Handling's a matter of taste of course and there's a constant trade off between quick steering and stability. Triumph seems to favour quick steering for its latest sportsbikes, and it's down to the skills of the firm's chassis designers and veteran test rider, Dave Rawlins, that they're stable too.



(left to right): the Daytona handles superbly, along similar lines to Triumph's TT600; clocks save 2kg over the last model – that's 20 per cent of the total weight saving; more powerful twin headlights and restyled front end



Daytona shares a similar feel, defined by light, eager steering. No need to muscle the bike up to the apex, the Daytona chops in with the smallest of twitches from the cockpit. And once there, enough tyre talk gets wired back from the Bridgestones to allow you to hit the throttle early and squeeze it all the way out to your chosen exit point. Plenty of comfortable lean will get the pegs scraping and tyres squirming, but the whole affair feels so controllable that the usual trepidation is replaced by cautious joy. After a 20-minute track session, in which I knew I was pushing my limits, I returned to the pits in a calmer state on the 955i than I've ever done on any other bike. No sweat, literally.

The updated engine is far from calm. A redesigned cylinder head and new fuel injection has completely changed the focus of this engine. Where the old version would blossom promisingly in the mid-range and then croak a slow, ugly death well before the needle hit red, the new one saves the best till last, hitting peak power at 10,700rpm just before the rev limiter rings the bell at 11,000rpm. Those extra revs proved priceless

in Estoril's endless, increasing-radius right hander which must gyrate through at least 720° before firing you out down the pit straight at well over 100mph. With knee buried firmly on the kerb and throttle twisted as much as I dared, there was no way I wanted to change up before that exit kerb was well in view. But the pull from right down in the guts of the rev range meant that one cog was all I needed. And the sound?

When I was on the phone to picture researcher Luke, who also happens to be the office race-geek, he said, "Is that a GP bike?" as a distant Daytona creamed around the track. And there is a two-stroke quality to the bark from the engine as it really comes to life from around 7000rpm. On the road ride, such was the mid-range snarl that I had to look round at the silencer to check I hadn't been sent out with the race can fitted. Full marks to Triumph for the noise reflectors they've fitted on the airbox – on song the 955i sounds fantastic.

But our road ride was too brief and stilted by traffic to get a good feel for the 955i's real world manners. The handling retained the quick-steer-

ing easy-peasy feel from the track, but the really interesting thing would have been to discover if the steering geometry, which is about as radical as production bikes get, would throw the Daytona into a flap when the going got rough. A few bumps on a fast corner would have given a fair indication of stability, but none were available and that test will have to wait for another day.

Comfort seemed fine on the brief foray away from Estoril. The standard screen was about perfect for a five foot niner, but more elongated riders might do well to fit the double bubble screen that features on the usual Triumph aftermarket parts catalogue (including carbon silencer, seat cowl, grab rail, luggage rack, tank bag, panniers and carbon-fibre side panels). The hugger comes as standard.

Haven't mentioned the gearbox yet, and it's a vast improvement on the old version. There's still a slightly uncultured clunk into gear, but nothing compared to the derailing train feel you got from the old box.

The fuel injection feels odd at first because Triumph seems to have worked in some subtlety as the throttle is opened, which can feel like hesitation. At full chat it's imperceptible and works well, but Triumph hasn't cured the pottering-speed jerkiness that all fuel-injected bikes (with the possible exception of GSX-Rs) seem afflicted with.

The front brake, which continues its affiliation with braided hoses, remains as sharp and strong as ever. For my tastes, it's a bit over the top – I like to feel as if I'm giving the lever a good pull and you don't need to on this bike – but that really is splitting hairs. The rear brake has been improved from the old model, which means it actually works.

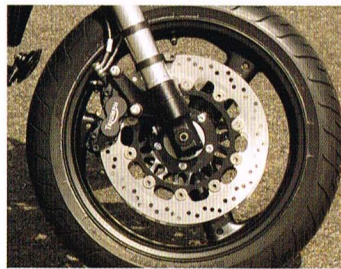
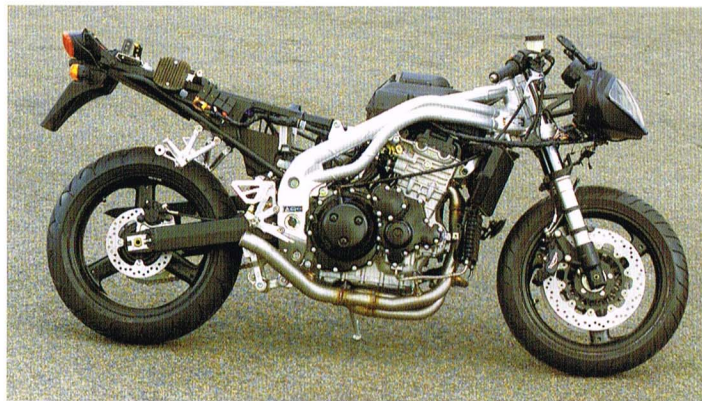
Styling is the only real disappointment. The Daytona looks sharp and purposeful enough, and retains the classy, single-colour finish. But I reckon the newly enhanced performance demands more aggression and pizzazz from the arty lot in the design salon.

But at least those looks remained largely unaltered by human error at the launch. A couple did fall off in the wet on the last day to prove that the 955i is a real motorbike, but it was still an impressive showing, and Triumph can go home with a pleasing array of untouched spares. That's more thanks to judgement than luck. ■



"THERE'S NO NEED TO MUSCLE THE BIKE UP TO THE APEX, THE DAYTONA CHOPS IN WITH THE SMALLEST OF TWITCHES FROM THE COCKPIT"





(from top, left to right): shorter wheelbase, more acute rake for sharper handling; now conventional, double-side swing-arm; proof that three-into-one will go; brakes – sharp, strong, braided

TECHNICAL

Where does the extra horse-power come from?

The cylinder head has received major surgery. The angle between the valves has been reduced and the combustion chamber revised to give better squish and an increased compression ratio, from 11.2 to 12:1. On the intake side, the airbox, throttle bodies and intake valves have been made bigger to allow quicker gas flow into the cylinders. Exhaust valves are smaller, the ports have been redesigned and there's a new, rather crude-looking, balancer pipe on the downpipes (see left) to improve mid-range.

The electronic brain for the fuel injection is still made by Sagem, but the throttle bodies and injectors are by Keihin. The switch from Sagem is apparently nothing to do with the problems Triumph experienced with the TT600's fuel injection.

To cope with the heat produced by the extra power, the oil cooler is bigger and better.

Where did the weight go?

The revised engine is 2.5kg lighter. And the heavy, single-sided swing-arm from the old model has been

dropped in favour of a lighter (by 3.3kg), shorter conventional version which has helped with the 14mm reduction in wheelbase too. The front wheel is the same as that used on the TT600 and saves 450g. The fairing panels are 1.2kg lighter and the new instrument console is a staggering (if you were trying to carry the old one) 2kg lighter. The shock's 1kg lighter too.

That's already more than Triumph's claimed 10kg saving, but who believes manufacturers' weight figures anyway?

What's changed the handling?

Wheelbase drops from 1440mm to 1417mm, rake is sharpened from 24° to 22.8 and trail is trimmed from 86mm to 81mm. That alone should speed up steering, but it's helped further by dumping the 190/50 rear tyre in favour of a 180/55.

The forks are the same as before but have reworked springing and damping to suit the new geometry and weight. Rear wheel suspension travel is reduced from 146 to 130mm thanks to a new shock and linkage ratio.

In a nutshell...

The best Triumph yet – light, fast, and quick

- + Quick steering, brakes, engine
- Unrefined gearbox, fuel injection

Price	£8949
Top speed	165mph (est)
Engine	955cc, 12-valve, in-line triple
Power	130bhp @ 10,700rpm (est)
Torque	70lb-ft @ 8,200rpm (est)
Bore x stroke	79 x 65mm
Compression	12.0:1
Fuel system	fuel injection
Transmission	six-speed
Frame	tubular aluminium perimeter
Front suspension	45mm fork
Adjustment	preload, compression, rebound
Rear suspension	rising-rate monoshock
Adjustment	preload, compression, rebound
Brakes	f: 2 x 320mm discs/4-piston calipers;
	r: 220mm disc/one-piston caliper
Tyres	Bridgestone BT-010
	f: 120/70-ZR17; r: 180/55-ZR17
Dry weight	188kg (claimed)
Wheelbase	1417mm
Rake/trail	22.8°/81mm
Seat height	815mm
Fuel capacity	21 litres
Fuel consumption	38mpg (est)
Insurance group	NU15

In the market for a big-bore sportsbike? Consider

Honda FireBlade
£9049, 166mph, NU17

Aprilia RSV Mille
£8875, 166mph, NU16

Suzuki GSX-R1000
£9349, 176mph, NU16

■ Thanks to Windy Corner (01455 842922) for the loan of the outgoing 955i, ridden for comparison purposes prior to the launch.



BIG SAVINGS WHEN INSURING THE DAYTONA 955i



The Triumph Rider Insurance scheme offers significant savings on motorcycle insurance premiums. The Daytona 955i in particular offers huge savings over its major competitors in the sports bike sector. The scheme ensures a generous no claims discount (up to 45%) and further premium reductions for low annual mileages, fitment of security devices and for successful completion of rider training courses. A further 15% discount is given to all members of the Riders Association of Triumph, the factory's official owners club.

TYPICAL EXAMPLES

Age and status	34 yrs male	38 yrs male	35 yrs male
Clean License	Yes	Yes	Yes
No claims bonus	3 years	5 years	5 years
Sole rider	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region	Dorset	Ealing W5	Altrincham
**TRIUMPH RIDER INSURANCE premium	£269.15	£465.50	£419.30

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GENUINE TRIUMPH ACCESSORIES



Part No	Description	Part No	Description
■ A9708040*	Seat cowl	■ A9518012	Throwover panniers
■ A9708055*	Air intakes	■ A9510023	Sports tank bag
■ A9600010**	Carbon silencer	■ A9758034	Grab rail
■ A9708050	Aero screen	■ A9758035	Top rack
■ A9728001	Frame protectors	■ A9728008	Carbon infill panels
■ A9728007	Carbon side panels	■ A9600011	Stainless steel silencer

*All painted parts are available in Caspian Blue (JD) Aluminium (MH) and Acidic Yellow (FD)

**Note: This product does not conform to EPA noise standards. Use on motorcycles subject to EPA regulation constitutes tampering and is a violation of federal law. This product is designed for closed circuit competition only.

Dealer Stamp

TRIUMPH[®]