

# Café CULTURE



## SAY HELLO TO SOME RAVING RETRO-SEXUAL MACHINERY

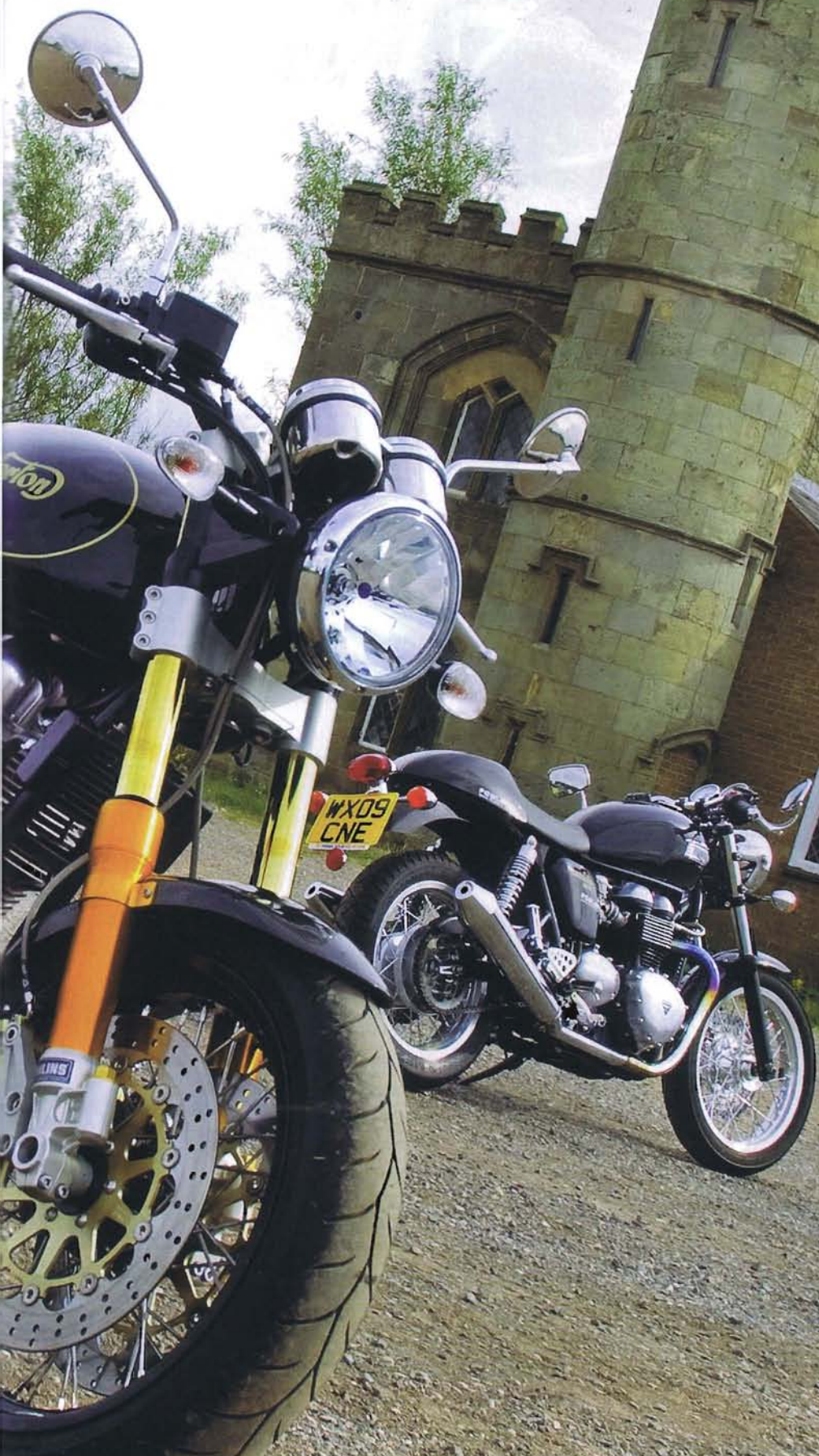
**T**he temptation to do something different is a sign of age. So if you don't care how fast your ride is, you're opened up to a new world of substance and style. In the land of cool, it's the café-racer that lands the ladies. In the UK, Harleys and the like have an almost camp air lent by your average biker. But a nails-hard café-racer is an entirely different story – almost a good enough excuse to risk wearing a piss-pot and immersing yourself in the lifestyle of the classic class.

Modern interpretations of the old-school rule are growing in number, alongside the varied growth of the naked market. For this test we've chosen three out of many, all iconic marques from the past, reborn with modern slants. At the shallow end comes Moto Guzzi's V7 Café Classic, bringing Italian chic to the party and the least exciting spec' sheet. Triumph's Thruxton has been about a bit already, and is much loved by most who ever ride one. It sits in the middle ground.

And at the steep end is the new Norton Commando 961SE, which comes in different guises depending on your wallet. The Norton's got all the gold bling and attitude to make it seriously worth your consideration. But there's more to this test than just performance, judging them simply on how fast they go would be missing the point. This is about having a whole load of fun... ►

# Time

WORDS: BENJAMIN 'BJ' KUBAS CRONIN  
PICS: FLOW IMAGES



## AND YOUR TESTERS ARE



### Benjamin 'BJ' Kubas Cronin

Regards a club classic as an old skool choon with at least 160bpm to its name. As such, he may struggle to adjust to these more gentele machines



### Simon 'Rootsy' Roots

Can almost remember these bikes first time round, and went on all test about 'when he were a lad'. Forgot the pudding basin - Al was making a cake





It's hard not to immediately fall head over heels in love with it



No wonder everyone who has taken a test ride has bought one...

# TECH DATA



ENGINE

CHASSIS

DIMENSIONS

PRICE

⚙️ Moto Guzzi V7 Café

🔴 Triumph Thruxton

🟡 Norton Commando 961SE

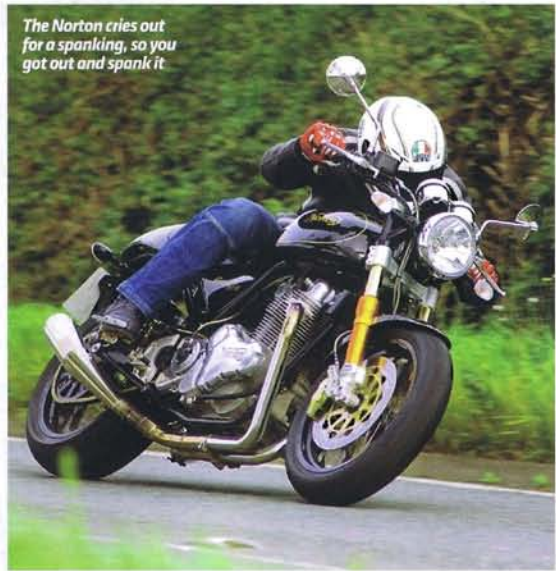
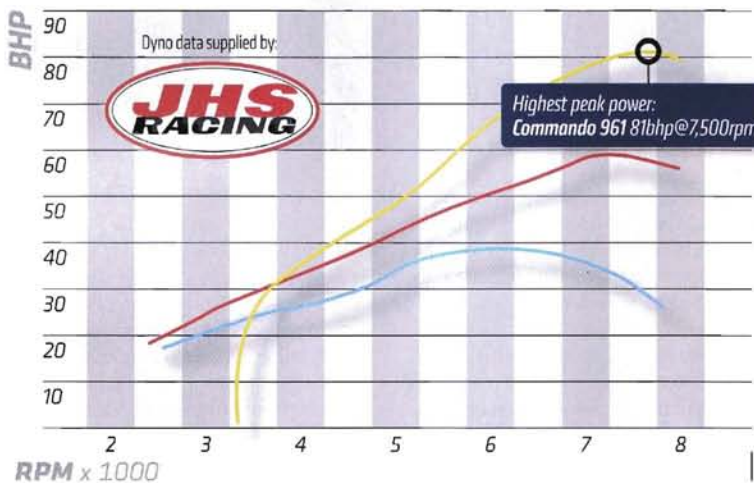
Type	744cc, air-cooled V-twin	865cc, air-cooled parallel twin	961cc, air-cooled parallel twin
Bore x Stroke	80 x 74mm	90 x 68mm	88 x 79mm
Compression	9.6:1	9.2:1	10.1:1
Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection
Tested Power	38bhp@6,800rpm	60bhp@5,800rpm	81bhp@7,500rpm
Tested Torque	52Nm@3,000rpm	62Nm@7,400rpm	82Nm@6,500rpm

Frame	Tubular duplex cradle	Tubular steel cradle	Tubular steel
F Suspension	40mm fork	41mm telescopic fork, preload adjustable	43mm RWU fork, fully adjustable
R Suspension	Twin-shock, preload adjustable	Twin-shock, preload adjustable	Twin-shock, fully adjustable
Front Brakes	Four-piston caliper, 320mm disc	Two-piston caliper, 320mm disc	Four-piston calipers, 320mm discs
Rear Brakes	Two-piston caliper, 260mm disc	Two-piston caliper, 255mm disc	Two-piston caliper, 220mm disc

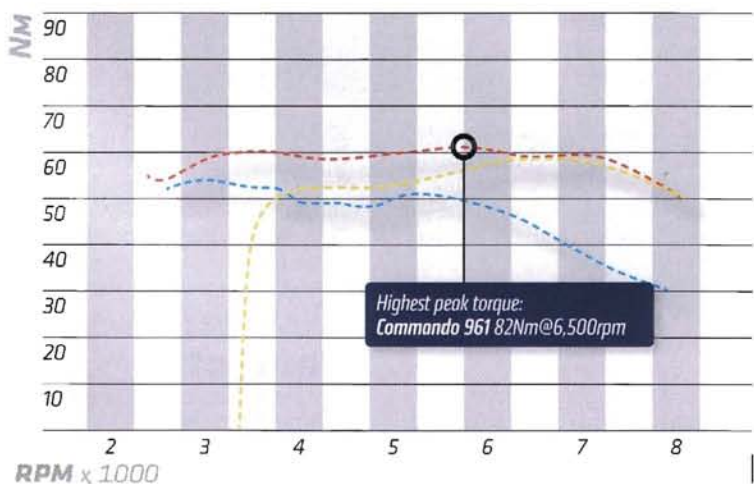
Wheelbase	1,449mm	1,490mm	1,420mm
Seat Height	805mm	820mm	813mm
Dry Weight	182kg	230kg (wet)	188kg
Fuel Capacity	17L	16L	17L

Price	£6,724	£6,699	£15,995
From	Motocorsa 01202 822511 <a href="http://Motocorsa.co.uk">Motocorsa.co.uk</a>	Fowlers 01179 725505 <a href="http://Fowlers.co.uk">Fowlers.co.uk</a>	Norton Motorcycles <a href="http://nortonmotorcycles.com">nortonmotorcycles.com</a>

## POWER



## TORQUE





*They're not made for the track, but both the Triumph and Guzzi will give it a go*

*It may look an oldie, but the Triumph motor is packed with 21st century thinking*



## THE VERDICT

As mentioned in the introduction, placing these in a traditional Fast Bikes order isn't really fair. However, life isn't fair, and we'll always fall back on our performance roots as a starting point. So, the Guzzi is the slowest and Norton fastest, with the Trumpet a fine British meat in an Anglo/Latin sandwich/panini.

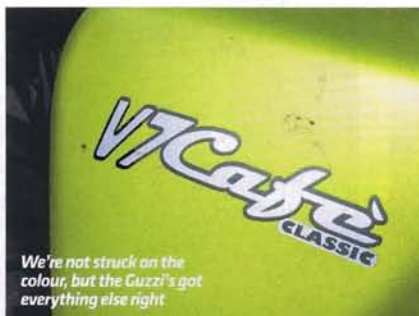
Getting into the nitty gritty; the Guzzi handles better than the Triumph, but not as good as the Norton. The Triumph edges out the Guzzi for stability, yet loses the same battle by a mile against the Commando. The Norton loses out on absolutely nothing to the other two, until you get to the bill. It's almost double the price, the higher spec' versions are almost three-grand more. That buys USD Öhlins and carbon wheels, but I reckon the RWU fork and wire-wheels are more in keeping

with the overall vibe. And don't forget the exhausts on the test bike aren't free either, leaving you at least a further half a bag of sand short.

This is where the Triumph and Guzzi kind of win, as they're within financial reach. If you consider the monetary differential as some sort of bonus, a couple of grand spent brings them much closer to the Norton in terms of performance and more importantly, presence. And you'll still have a lot of change spare, too. Either way, they're both crying out for a set of roaring open pipes.



*Roar into the sunset (or rain, as it happened) with a very big smile on your face*



*We're not stuck on the colour, but the Guzzi's got everything else right*



You also buy one of these because that's the bike you want. Most people buying Moto Guzzi metal do it because it's their thing, their passion. The Guzzi inspires you in unusual ways that even the Norton can't match – unless power and pace is everything to you. If you want a fast Guzzi go and find an MGS-01, if you can. If you are willing to open your mind to a different experience though, look no further than the V7.

The same goes for the Thruxton; people rarely dip in and out of these brands, most Triumph owners are as fanatical as the Harley-Davidson brigade – and nearly as loyal. You only have to look at the recent Triumph LIVE event to see this; the place was rammed with people from all around the world, for a one-day show! The thing that really excited us about the Thruxton is potential. A quick Google unearths images of these with smaller front wheels and full systems, all of which inspire to fiddle. As is, it's still a great bike, but one we just wish would lose a few pounds and an inch off the front wheel.

But if you can make the stretch, give the Norton a try. Be warned that every single person who's tested one has opened their wallets immediately afterwards. It could be the friendly, close feeling you get when you talk to the bloke who actually built your bike by hand. Or that you're welcomed at the factory like an old mate, staff striving to make sure that at this early stage, no customer goes away unsatisfied. But it's mostly because of the bike itself, a rip-roaring success. Yeah, it's expensive, but the truth is it's actually worth every penny. ☑

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*The world is a better place thanks to the new Norton*

### Thanks to:

Bags and bags of thanks to Moto Corsa (01202 822511) and Fowlers (01179 770466) for the use of their V7 and Thruxton respectively. And to Norton ([nortonmotorcycles.com](http://nortonmotorcycles.com)) for the chance to give the Commando a good thrashing.



*In reality it's not this close, the Norton romps it in the battle of the Brits*