

**TRIUMPH'S
NAKED 675**
Street Triple launch report

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TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE



The Street Triple eats Alps near Lake Garda, Italy: 'There's more 675 in this bike than just a bit of branding and some brochure bull'

WHO ARE YOU CALLING A BABY?

Speed Triple style meets 675 chassis and engine. So is Triumph's new offspring another watered-down sportsbike for beginners? You must be kidding...

By Martin Fitz-Gibbons Photography by Gold & Goose

TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE

Winding up though endless hairpins around northern Italy's stunning Lake Garda, two things strike me about Triumph's Street Triple. First, it's probably the most instantly, instinctively fun bike I've ever ridden. As a poor old Fiat struggles against the gradient, I click down to first, pull out, yonk on the throttle and honk past in the traditional one-wheeled salute. Pointless, hilarious and oh-so-easy for a first attempt.

I line up the next ridiculously tight uphill turn. Strong front brakes do their thing and the well-sprung forks dive just the right amount. Letting off the lever, one of the most agile, light-steering chassis I've ever felt tips us in with near-zero effort.

"I click down to first, pull out, yonk on the throttle and honk past in the traditional one-wheeled salute. Pointless, hilarious and oh-so-easy..."

And that's when the second realisation hits: what a huge shame it is that so many riders whose adrenal glands would be beautifully tickled by the Street Triple won't ever ride it.

You probably think you've seen this kind of thing before. Take one supersport motor (in this case, Triumph's 675cc triple), knock 10-15% off its peak power, and plonk it in a cheaper chassis with no fairing. Swap the clip-ons for higher bars, stick an appealing price tag on it and bingo: one brand new bike appealing to the recently-qualified demographic. It's simple, effective marketing and it has been happening for years. But it's never been done as well as this.

There's more 675 in this bike than just a bit of branding and some brochure bull. The aluminium frame, for example, is the same as the Daytona's, minus a few needless fairing mounts. The swingarm's exactly the same too, albeit mounted 2mm lower to relax the steering geometry every-so-slightly – the rake is increased by less than a degree; the trail by less than 10mm. And apart from the new cams –

which reduce valve lift and overlap, taking peak power down to 107bhp – the entire engine has been carried over, with exactly the same gearing.

Wheels and brake discs are from the 675, too. In fact the bikes even share the same engineering team – when the 675 was finished they got straight on with the Street Triple, rather than twiddle their thumbs with satisfied glee in Hinckley.

Driving out of today's 83rd first-gear hairpin, past a sign announcing we've reached 1500m above sea level, I'm reminded of everything that makes the 675's motor feel so superb. It pulls harder from near-tickover than you could ever dream, with spotlessly clean fuelling and a huge eagerness to rev. It's as if the pistons have been filled with helium, such is the desire and ease with which the revised engine soars to its marginally lower

12,650rpm redline. And then the LCD panel on the 675 clocks shows the honest truth: that was actually second gear, not first. Middleweight torque? Believe.

But given the Street Triple is £1850 cheaper than the 675, what's the catch? Obviously not everything could be carried straight over – the suspension and brakes are different (and cheaper), but they're more than up to the job. Though the Street Triple's Kayaba suspension can only be twiddled for preload at the rear, don't confuse 'unadjustable' with 'bad'. They still retain Triumph's recent trend of balancing composure with ride quality.

All the way up the hill I never once wanted to adjust a thing. It's the same story with the brakes: apparently cheapo sliding two-piston calipers have replaced fancy radial four-pistons, but in practice they have loads of stopping power, plenty of feel and no grab. Maybe the fashionistas won't approve, but look deeper and you'll be satisfied.

And this is probably where the problem lies. We've seen what happens when you hear the words 'detuned engine', >

THE BIG QUESTIONS



IS IT A BABY 675 OR A BABY SPEED TRIPLE?

Sort of neither and both at the same time. There are elements of both the 675 – the feel and delivery of the engine, the light weight, tiny size and incredible agility – and the Speed Triple – the bike's image, its naughty streak and desire to pull huge wheelies everywhere. But it's also its own machine, and doesn't deserve the derogatory 'baby' tag.



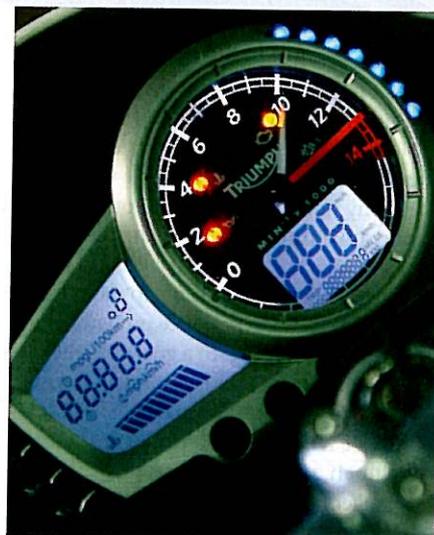
COULD I TURN IT INTO A PROPER NAKED 675?

Well, you could, but the expense would far outweigh the gain. You'd need cams and an ECU for the engine, as well as 675 brakes, forks and rear shock. You'd need to move the swingarm 2mm up in the frame, fit Daytona pegs and a few other things too. Really, honestly, not worth it. It's plenty good as it is.



SO WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO BEAT?

The 'naked middleweight' class has now split in two: the more 'beginner/budget' oriented segment (see p176 for a group test) and the faster, more expensive, 'luxury' class (Honda Hornet, Kawasaki Z750, Aprilia Shiver). The Triumph definitely belongs in the quicker class – and that group test promises to be an absolute riot.



The clocks have shift lights, gear indicator, lap timer, fuel consumption...

Flyscreen (£120), bellypan (£140) and seat cowl (£90) – just some of the accessories



Incredibly agile and confident in corners at all speeds

Style cues from both parents are clear: 675 tail-light meets Speed Triple exhausts



'unadjustable forks' and 'budget brakes'. You get bikes like Yamaha's FZ6, Suzuki's Bandit and GSR600, and even Kawasaki's Z750. They appeal to plenty of riders, but they don't truly satisfy someone who's spent any significant time exploring a sportsbike's chassis. The assumption is that any bike built down to a price can't be anything more than a stop-gap model, something to get experience on before moving up. It's a path to a goal, not the goal itself. The exception, Honda's Hornet, proved a budget 600 could be very good; the Street Triple proves it can be brilliant.

At lunch, somewhere near the top of whichever mountain I've just climbed, I pause for some tagliatelle ragu – but my stomach's too full of butterflies for meat and pasta. I would have been happy if this bike was as much fun as a Hornet. The fact

"I would have been happy if this bike was as much fun as a Hornet. The fact that it's as thrilling as a 675 or Speed Triple is almost unbelievable

that it's as genuinely thrilling as a 675 or Speed Triple is almost unbelievable.

But it's so much more besides. Seat height is an entirely reasonable 800mm, new pegs sit an inch lower than the 675, the handlebars an inch closer than the Street Triple. The ergonomics are not just comfy, but designed to suit riders put off by the size or height of those other bikes.

Dry weight is a claimed 167kg – a few kilos more than the 675 (put down to the Speed Triple-inspired exhausts), but still lightest in its class by a healthy margin. That's six kilos less than a Hornet, and a whopping 36kg lighter than the new Z750. It's so slim, so light and so easily manageable, with a light clutch and flat

torque curve. Once you've discovered and accepted that the steering lock is god-awful, there are no hidden surprises waiting to catch out new riders.

So what we have is a bike with genuine appeal for a huge spectrum of abilities, from Direct Access graduates right through to experienced thrashers and wheelie merchants. It'll probably be seen as a step-up bike for those with Speed Triple or 675 aspirations, but the truth is it's actually a viable alternative to both.

Apart from the steering lock, there's not a whole lot to criticise. The almost non-existent bar-ends and solidly-mounted pegs make the Street Triple slightly buzzy. And the toolkit – a single allen key under



The ridiculously contorted body position is optional. Wheelies, fortunately, aren't

the seat – was clearly a bad boardroom joke by a Triumph employee that went too far. The narrow seat (sculpted to further aid shorter riders) feels like it could get uncomfortable fairly quickly, though there's always an optional gel seat.

I suppose the styling could be considered a little disappointing – it's virtually identical to the Speed Triple, rather than being given its own individual look. Those twin stubby underseat pipes look the same, and the bug-eye headlights are the very same units used on the 1050. Well, blame the Italians – they buy naked in frightening numbers and love how the Speed Triple looks, so the Street's final image was never in question from the start.

By now I'm back on the bike and continuing onwards, down the mountain

through a set of faster corners – and the bike's supreme agility is mesmerising. Look, nudge, tip, flick, grin. Even with Dunlop Qualifiers replacing the near-slick Pirelli SuperCorsa tyres on the 675's rims, at my humble pace the handling's beyond complaint.

At that's when I realise the Street's most impressive quality. Having spent plenty of time on them, I love both the 675 and the Speed Triple. But right now, coasting back down into town after a fairly intense day, I wouldn't have taken either of them over this new model.

And if you add in the difference on top – nearly two grand in cold, hard cash – logic suggests the humble Street Triple is actually the best bike in Triumph's already impressive range. Make sure you don't overlook it. ■

THE SPEC SHEET TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Price | £5349 |
| Top speed | 135mph (claimed) |
| Power | 106.5bhp @ 11,700rpm (claimed) |
| Torque | 50.9 lb.ft @ 9100rpm (claimed) |
| Engine | 675cc, 12v, dohc, in-line triple |
| Bore x stroke | 74.0 x 52.3mm |
| Compression ratio | 12.65:1 |
| Fuel system | fuel injection |
| Transmission | 6-speed, chain |
| Frame | aluminium beam twin spar |
| Front suspension | 41mm usd telescopic forks |
| Adjustment | none |
| Rear suspension | monoshock |
| Adjustment | preload |
| Front brakes | 2 x 308mm discs/two-piston calipers |
| Rear brake | 220mm disc/singe-piston caliper |
| Front; rear tyres | 120/70 ZR17; 180/55 ZR17 |
| Dry weight | 167kg (claimed) |
| Wheelbase | 1395mm |
| Rake/trail | 24.3/95.3mm |
| Seat height | 800mm |
| Fuel tank | 17.4 litres |
| Insurance | NU14 |
| Colours | green, black, white |
| Available from | Triumph, 01455 251700 |