

FAST BY

Ferracci 944SS

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO THE AIR-COOLED DUCK



HAS THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEW 916 SIGNALLED THE obsolescence of all pre-existing Ducatis? Well, for 900SS owners, at least, perhaps it's not time just yet to make room in the garage for the latest liquid-cooled Italian art piece. Fast By Ferracci (1641 Easton Rd., Willow Grove, PA 19090; 215/657-1276) has the parts and services capable of breathing new life into the popular air-cooled Twin.

When Eraldo Ferracci and the boys at FBF assembled this 944cc rendition of a late-model Super Sport, their goal was to create a machine that would offer substantial performance gains, without degrading the bike's civil street manners. Standard hot-rodding boosted power output of the SS's air-cooled V-Twin a good deal; that, combined with a host of chassis enhancements, means that the FBF 944 gobbles up corners and straights with the bravado akin to its eight-valve brethren. But such gains don't come cheaply. Outfitting a 900SS with all the bells and whistles found on this particular FBF 944 would cost in excess of \$13,000—bike not included.

At the heart of the pumped-up V-motor is FBF's 944cc piston and cylinder kit, offering 40cc more displacement, higher compression and Nikasil-lined cylinders. FBF used Carrillo steel rods—a standard insurance policy—and their own exclusive Stage 3 cams, which through increased duration, extend the powerband up top while still being streetable—this bike idles. Headwork includes 1mm-oversize intake valves, recessed valves and porting. Stop here and you've only spent \$3700. Add a \$1150 FBF billet clutch assembly with lightweight aluminum hub and basket, and you'll notice quicker revs with reduced engine braking and clutch chatter. An ultra-trick magnesium clutch housing was also installed, mostly for visual impact, along with a vented clutch cover. The bike's beautifully crafted Termignoni exhaust (\$1650!), much lighter than stock, uses stainless-steel, large-diameter

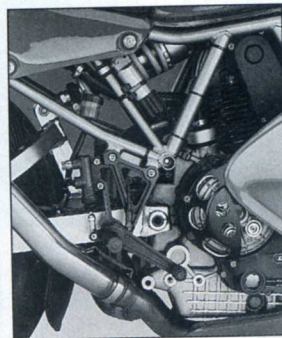
tubing and high-swept carbon-fiber canisters. The system employs the crossover design developed on the dominant FBF World Superbikes in '92.

Keihin FCR 41mm carburetors replace the stock mixers; the kit includes throttle cables, velocity stacks, manifold and airbox adaptors. The stock airbox lid was removed for increased flow through the K&N filter. Cold starts require a few twists of the throttle to squirt raw fuel down the ports prior to cranking the motor and a hand attending the throttle while the engine warms up.

On the CW dyno, the 944 produced 87.5 peak rear-wheel horsepower at 8500 rpm with a broad torque curve. We ran a stock Ducati 900SL on the same dyno, getting 75.5 horsepower at 6750 rpm. The 944 showed a 10-horsepower-plus gain throughout the rev range, and it buries the stocker in top speed, posting a 143-mph run compared to 130 for the 900.

While the 900SS chassis is a solid enough platform, it leaves room for improvement. FBF fitted a fully adjustable Öhlins shock with hydraulic spring-preload adjustment, and bolted on a Bitubo gas-pressurized steering damper to the

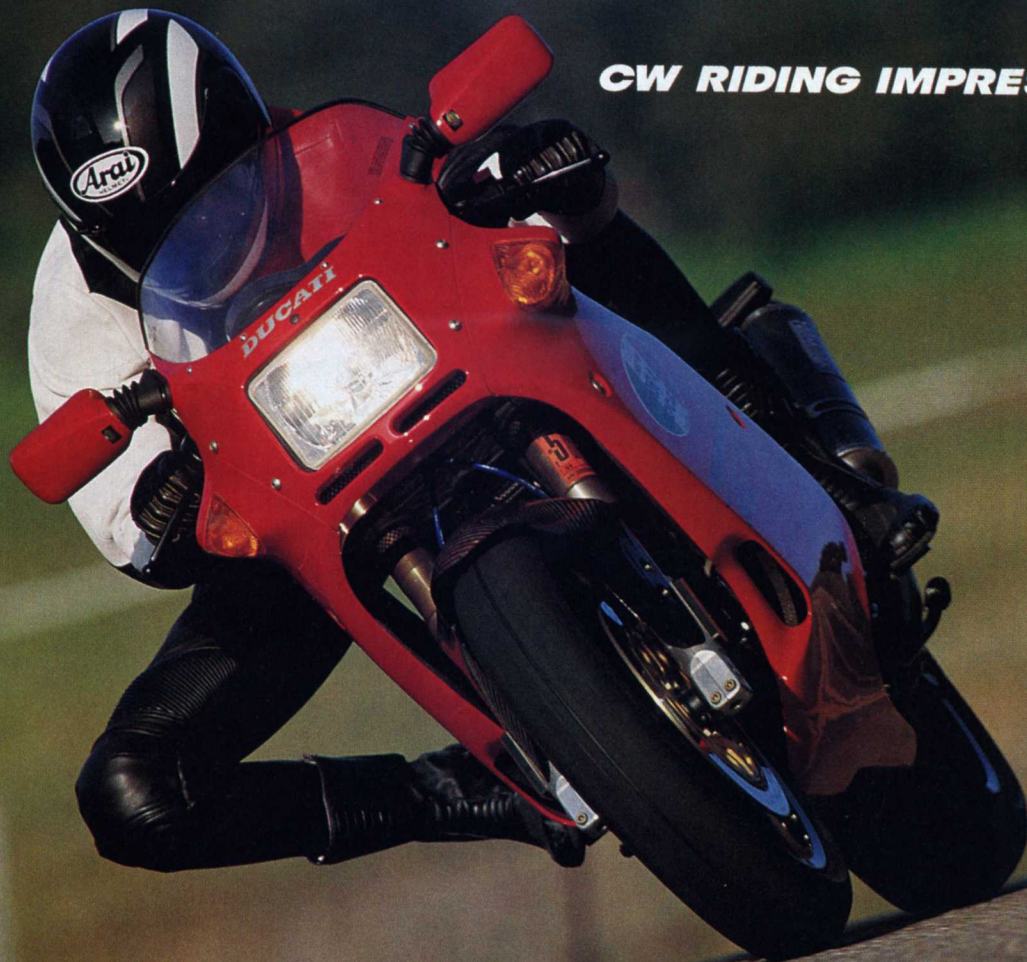
FBF aluminum-billet rearsets incorporate an eccentric cam design that allows footpeg adjustment in any direction. The \$489 kit comes with shift rod and rubber-tipped levers.



unaltered fork to quell potential headshake. Seventeen-inch Marchesini cast-magnesium wheels replace stock hoops of the same size, shedding a combined 10 pounds of unsprung weight while costing a cool \$1600 for the pair. The front-brake system was also upgraded with Brembo full-floating cast-iron rotors and Fren tubo Kevlar brake lines, combining to deliver a substantial improvement in feel and stopping power over stock.

Final detail touches were made to spruce up the SS's good looks. A factory-painted European 900SL solo seat kit





(\$795) gives the look and style of an 888 Superbike, as do the FBF carbon-fiber front fender, rear inner fender and dash assembly. An FBF high-rpm tachometer takes the place of the stock component, and ProGrip Superbike grips are fitted to the stock bars. Completing the package: a Frentubo Kevlar clutch line with anodized aluminum fittings to match the brake lines, and a gold-plate DID racing chain driving a hardened-aluminum Sprocket Specialists rear sprocket.



Brembo cast-iron rotors bolt directly to the front Marchesini magnesium wheel shod with Dunlop Sportmax GP-compound rubber. A special fabric weave gives the FBF carbon-fiber fender a unique striped appearance.

The FBF 944 is not a quiet machine. But if you must make noise, there is simply no finer mechanical clatter than the sound of a hot-rod Ducati. A myriad of tones emanate from the engine bay, the full-fairing forming a kind of acoustic amphitheater where a miniature six-piece percussion section beats out its rhythmic tune backed by the deep bass of the dual exhaust. Pull the clutch lever and the open-air dry clutch joins in stage right, its plates jingling like a slender Signorina wielding a tambourine at the hip. Magical stuff. But one man's music is another's noise, and the neighbors may not

be so fond of your early Sunday-morning warm-up.

Short-shifting the 944 about town—trying not to draw unwanted attention—you soon find that the engine likes to cruise above 3000 rpm. Although there is plenty of torque in the basement, there's also a bit too much drive-train snatch as the motor chugs through each power stroke. On the racetrack or during backroad blitzes, the 944 is best kept between 6000 and 9000 rpm, where it pulls like a workhorse. An FBF Quickshifter electric shifter, allowing clutchless full-throttle upshifts, makes the task of keeping the engine in the peak powerband very simple. At the dragstrip, the 944 turned in an 11.00-second pass at 124.48 mph—the 900SL took 11.74 seconds with a 113.78 terminal speed to cover the same distance. Pretty impressive gains, though partial credit goes to the 384-pound dry weight of the FBF 944, 25 pounds under the stock 900 Superlight.

Sinking this kind of money into a 900SS is a tough move to justify—only a few thousand more buys a new 916. But think of the Fast By Ferracci 944 as a rolling showcase of available products, a kind of ultimate SS wish list on wheels. It's up to you to decide which parts you can afford to wish for.

—Don Canet



Upswept FBF/Termignoni racing exhaust system blends well with the solo seat kit, giving an 888SPO look to the 944SS.