

WORDS: BENJAMIN KUBAS-CRONIN PICS: MARK MANNING

Psycho Motos

MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW, BIG BORE SUPERMOTOS ARE SO WRONG THEY'RE RIGHT

When a car driver sees a biker, that's all they generally are to them. It doesn't matter whether it's a scooter, supermoto or sports hack; to the uninformed we're one and the same. Sadly, the general populous of the UK are the great uninformed when it comes to bikes and bikers. But by Jove we're a diverse bunch, led mostly by machinery and purpose.

Take supermotos. Barking fun, but would you really want to go anywhere on one? The hardcore might, but the majority hold more common sense than to even try.

Big 'motos are a breed apart too; far more the 'toy' than constant companion. But in many ways they're as different from their smaller scale supermoto cousins, as they are the same. That's basically admitting that the overall appeal is minimal; the likelihood of anybody selling big numbers in these categories is slim.

The larger versions broaden the spectrum of interest more, because on some you can spend a little more 'me time'. Add in some creature comforts, relatively speaking, and you have a bike that can

do all the thrilling you desire, and still get you home.

The two we have on test are the big dogs of a sub-class blurring the edges of the big naked performance categories – like we needed more to choose from. Both are also the top-spec' versions, and bristling with glamour and shiny bits. So if your wallet stretches far enough and a bike like this is your thing, why not go for the best? So then, KTM's 990 SM R and Ducati's new Hypermotard EVO SP it is. Welsh roads and a hard thrash around Kinsham Raceway is the only way to separate these two. On your marks... ▶

AND YOUR TESTERS ARE

Benjamin 'BJ' Kubas-Cronin
We had to prise Beej off the track on this pair, he absolutely loved 'em. It's not often he misses his obligatory fag breaks, so they must have been good.



Simon 'Rootsy' Roots
We had to prise Rootsy off the roads on them, too. Silly speeds in a motocross lid was the only way we could get the bikes back to the manufacturers on time.





Ducati EVO SP

There's likely a few Ducatisti out there who have groaned after flipping the previous page and seeing the Ducati come up first. Well don't worry, coming second in a test of two isn't a big deal and, more importantly, the EVO SP is breathtaking. It's close to the bike we always wanted the Hypermotard to be. Someone out there is listening!

What the SP boasts for the extra two-grand over the standard model makes all the difference. Most pleasing is the trick, fully adjustable Marzocchi fork, a whopping 50mm longer allowing 30mm more travel. It's nice departure from Öhlins, who supply the rear shock, itself boasting an extra 15mm travel. This is to improve ground clearance, but we also like the resulting extra 10mm on the wheelbase. The bike itself weighs eight kilos under the original Hypermotard, and a single bag of sugar under the EVO variant.

There are other nice touches, such as lashings of carbon, higher bars, Ducati's data-analyser and, of course, a natty paint scheme. The engine produces five-horsepower more than the original Hypermotard, proved when slung on the dyno. It now makes over 80bhp for the first time. But power was never an issue in the first place.

Our biggest problem with the old bike was with the front end. It was far too soft on the initial stroke, and the wheel was raked too far away in the 'motard position to give much front-end confidence. This was true for both the original and the 'S', which the EVO SP supersedes. But pulling out onto Kinsham's tight curves for the first time, the initial thing to really signify progress is that Marzocchi front end.



They were fresh on first thing...



Kneedown on a go-kart track normally means you're on a mini-moto - or crashing

IT NOW MAKES OVER 80BHP – BUT POWER WAS NEVER A PROBLEM

DUCATI HYPERMOTARD EVO SP £10,750



ENGINE

The Desmodue L-twin motor is now 5.2kg lighter than before, with lighter internals. The engine is no wider than the cylinders and increased compression and larger air intake ports fuel a bigger explosion, now with a single spark. The engine also has new cylinder heads, cams redesigned ports and reworked oil baths for improved cooling. Further cooling now comes from an 85% larger oil cooler.

CHASSIS

Minimal developments to the famous trellis frame helped the weight slashing. The giant 50mm Marzocchi forks, fully adjustable, mounts through a huge triple-clamp. The EVO SP gets 30mm more travel as well as Diamond-like-coating (DLC) and a firmer setup. A fully adjustable Öhlins monoshock suspends the rear with 15mm more travel over stock. Brembo provide the stoppers, and fierce they are f'sure.

Highlights

- ▷ Best Hyper yet
- ▷ More grunt
- ▷ Brembo Monoblocs
- ▷ Carbon goodies
- ▷ 171kg
- ▷ 86bhp

TRACK 7

Make sure it's a short 'un

FAST ROAD 6

Breathless up top

HOOLIGAN 10

This makes hooligan's quiver

NEW RIDER 4

You can calm it, just

DESIRABILITY 10

Full of Italian loveliness

A Hypermotard needs a bit of getting used to; the riding position and how to position your body to use it. At first it feels a bit ungainly, a bit wrong, although time is your ally and you soon acclimatise. The new front makes things easier, mostly because of the far more sophisticated stroke and ride quality. It doesn't bounce up and down when you don't want it to now. For such a naughty machine, this is one bike that behaves. Pirelli Supercorsas provide all the grip you need to push the boundaries of the new envelope and before long soon, we're kneedown on a go-kart track.

Despite similar geometry, the EVO SP is far more composed on corner entry, through mid-turn and on exits. Ride it traditionally or leg out, it still performs. And joy, this continues on the road, where the EVO SP feels far more at home than any of its brethren. Again, it's all down to the front; the confidence it gives and the supple ride. Even when hammering the stupidly powerful brakes (that are utter overkill on a bike like this), the bottom part of the stroke controls

things beautifully. The rear Öhlins is likewise as impressive. It's all gravy.

And the engine is a welcome improvement, too. The extra power is quite noticeable, making wheelies even easier – if that's at all possible. From a standstill it'll lift, and then at any point in the first two gears

on demand. But the curve is more wholesome than before, allowing swifter and smoother progress across the countryside to the air-cooled twin's beat. It's still pretty dead in the upper reaches, but super quick thrashes and superbike

baiting down open A-roads aren't it's forte, so it's a moot point.

Overall, the EVO SP took me by surprise as I didn't expect that such a big improvement was possible, let alone likely. But Ducati has listened, and reacted with big improvements. What-a-bike-a-to-like-a!

Verdict 8/10

This is the Hypermotard we've been waiting for, finally...

- STYLE, BLING, TORQUE, WHEELIES
- STILL A TOY, SLIPPER CLUTCH PLEASE

SIMON'S OPINION



To crudely misquote Samuel Johnson, "When a man is bored of wheeling the cock off a Ducati Hypermotard EVO SP, he is bored of life." I love these bikes, and I love the Ducati. Beej is right, the first version was a hoot, but cornering curbed the fun. Now, the EVO SP rights all the wrongs, adds a bit of power to proceedings and turns even the most mild-mannered rider into a stunter extraordinaire. It may not be the real 'motard deal, but on the right road I think the only bike that'll beat it is its KTM arch enemy. The Austrian machine is the better bike, but can verge on being too hardcore. For shits and giggles the SP is hard to beat. No, I'll revise that, it's impossible to beat.

Simon's Verdict 8/10

Dash panels have moved on a bit since the DT125



DON'T BE FOOLED BY

Age. Apparently it gets better after 40. Nope, we don't believe them either...

KTM 990 SM R

What a big, old thing the KTM 990 SM R looks, parked next to the lithe Ducati. It isn't really, being a trick of perception and a nod to just how skinny that Duke really is. KTM reckon the SM R is the fastest supermotard in the world, and we're not going to disagree with them. One-hundred-fifteen gee gees is a hell of a lot for a bike like this.

The SM R is based on the original SM we first saw in 2008. A real classy headbanger, to be sure. Aside from sharing the raucous LC8 engine, the SM R has a stock of tasty assets to distinguish it in terms of style and performance. 10-spoke Marchesini wheels save almost two-kilos, while suzzies are provided by KTM's latest acquisition, WP. Fat, fully adjustable 48mm forks grace the fore, while a high/low speed adjustable WP shock



DON'T BE FOOLED BY
What you get for the extra cash here. The stock 990 SM's just as mad and just as good

SIMON'S OPINION



If the Ducati is the frivolous option, then the KTM 990 SM R is the thinking nutter's machine. The EVO SP can't quite live with the hard edged KTM, meaning that the SM R will be first to the pub every time. That's not really the point with these bikes, because you're going to be pulling wheelies and stoppies galore, but it's always nice to have a bit of performance in your back pocket, should a sneaky sportsbike want to show you who's boss. If that's the case then the KTM has every weapon in its armoury to fend off everyone on everything, except if you happen to stray on the TT course mid-race. Choppy throttle aside, it can do the sensible thing better than the Ducati, too. Shame on you!

Simon's Verdict 9/10



One arse-biscuit from Roots can flaw even the biggest foe

KTM 990 SM R £11,125



ENGINE
The 999cc motor is basically the same unit as the one used in the base SM model and the 'T'. The ECU has been remapped for a softer delivery off the bottom. The motor uses Keihin injectors and is equipped with a cold starting system and electronic idling control system. The 'T' version has a glass oil sight instead of a dipstick like here. Cats and secondary air systems are identical across the range.

Highlights

- ▷ Bonkers...
- ▷ ...and then some
- ▷ Brembo Monoblocs
- ▷ WP suzzies
- ▷ 189kg
- ▷ 111bhp

TRACK 7
Brands Indy would be a blast

FAST ROAD 7
Yes, it is. Beware of wheelies...

HOOLIGAN 10
Defines the very word itself

NEW RIDER 5
Mmm, best not to really

DESIRABILITY 6
Devastating rather than sexy

CHASSIS
The frame is a high spec tubular space frame made from chromium molybdenum with an alloy subframe. The brakes are radial monobloc calipers from Brembo, while the ten-spoke light-weight wheels are from Marchesini and the top quality suspension from WP with twin-speed adjustment on the shock. The paint scheme is far more exciting than the stocker, too. Awesome Pirelli Supercorsas complete the package.

suspends the rear. Complimenting these are Brembo Monoblocs, the real deal, as seen also on the EVO SP.

But as the KTM's turn on Kinsham's Tarmac arrives, the initial impression is of a big softy. Ridden directly after the Ducati, there's a lot more dive from the fork, and a seeming lack of accuracy. It's a testament to how different these bikes feel from each other, in all areas. The SM R is a tad heavier than the EVO SP, and in this arena you really feel it. Once more it's just a case of getting used to it, and fairly soon a steady, fast pace is introduced, tempered only by the big power.

Where the Ducati gives it all up low down the range, the SM R is exactly the opposite. It's hardly lacking in torque, but there's a distinct lag before it explodes in a frenzy, with a top-end the 100cc larger Duke can only dream of. What this bike really wants is a bigger track to let loose upon, or some flowing country roads.

Heading out into Wales, the KTM is instantly more comfortable and enjoyable to live with. The Hyper' never strays far from its mock supermotard heritage, where the SM R becomes almost a normal bike when you're sat in traffic. The more

pliable fork and shock, or rather the particular set-up on this bike, suddenly makes a lot more sense. When the going gets fast and bumpy, they soak up imperfections with style and allow a modicum of grace if you get things slightly wrong. A big help here are the Monobloc brakes, which are as powerful as the Duke's, but with a less aggressive initial bite. This makes the WP fork's job easier, and gives you more time to concentrate on corner entry. However, when you start to really push the SM R it does get a little bouncy. It never threatens to go wrong, depending on how much of a dick you're riding like, but a little more composure would be nice on stock settings.

Of course, it's made worse partly by the engine, which is bananas. It's bonkers enough to rip the front wheel skywards exiting a turn, in third gear. Get on the gas, feel the power thundering in around 8,000rpm, push it upright and wham, up she goes. I gotta say, it's bloody addictive and a whole heap off fun. Much like the entire bike, really. Winner.

Verdict 9/10

It is the world's maddest supermoto, indeed...

- + THUMPING MOTOR, CHASSIS POTENTIAL, BLING
- BIT SOFT OUT THE CRATE, SATAN'S THROTTLE



IT'S BONKERS ENOUGH TO RIP THE WHEEL UP ON EXIT. IN THIRD

TECH DATA

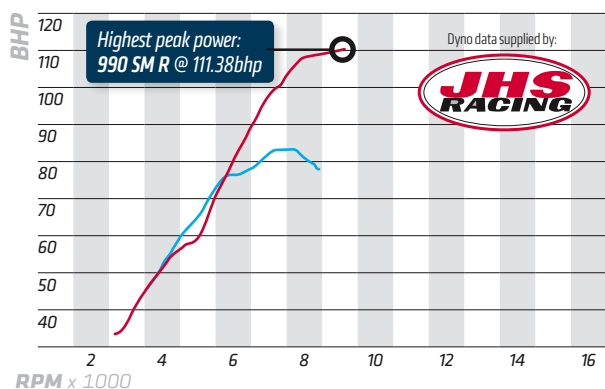


	KTM 990 SM R	Ducati Hypermotard EVO
ENGINE		
Type	999cc v-twin	1078cc, air-cooled, 4v, L-twin
Bore x Stroke	101 x 62.4mm	98 x 71.5mm
Compression	11.5:1	11.3:1
Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic Fuel injection
Tested Power	111.38bhp @ 9,450rpm	85.79bhp @ 7,750rpm
Tested Torque	94.92Nm @ 7,250rpm	92.95Nm @ 5,750rpm
CHASSIS		
Frame	Chromium-Molybdenum trellis	Tubular steel trellis
F Suspension	58mm inverted fork, fully adjustable	50mm fork, fully adjustable
R Suspension	Monoshock	Öhlins monoshock, fully adjustable
Front Brakes	Four-piston caliper, 305mm discs	Four-piston caliper, 305mm discs
Rear Brakes	Two-piston caliper, 240mm disc	Two-piston caliper, 245mm discs
DIMENSIONS		
Wheelbase	1,510mm	1,465mm
Seat Height	875mm	875mm
Dry Weight	189kg dry	171kg
Fuel Capacity	15L	12.4L
PRICE		
Price	£11,125	£10,750
From	KTM UK 01280 709500 KTM.co.uk	Ducati UK 08451 222 996 Ducatiuk.com

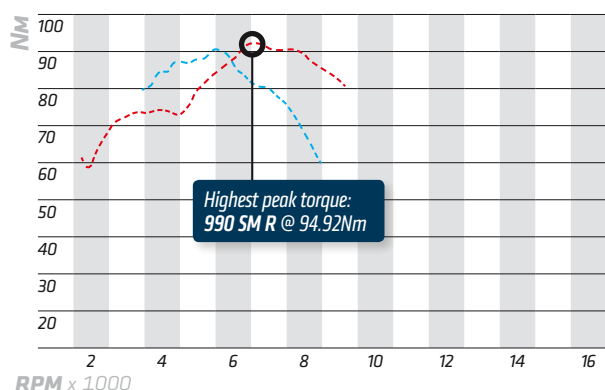


The KTM 990 SM R will always be just in front of the EVO SP on the road - but only just

POWER

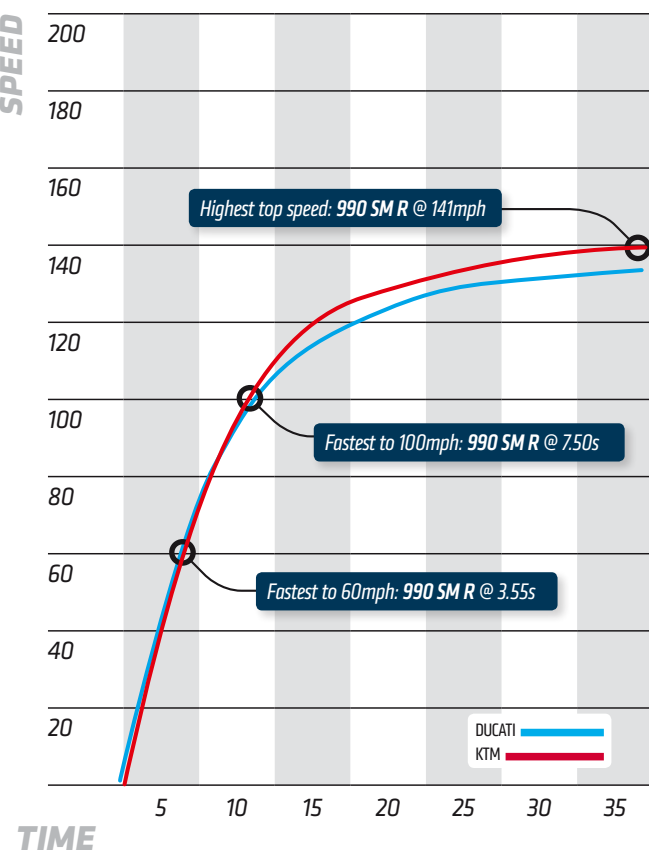


TORQUE



	KTM 990 SM R	Ducati Hypermotard EVO
SPEED		
0-60	3.55s	3.69s
0-100	7.50s	8.84s
0-120	11.67s	16.05s
5th 1/4 Mile	11.67s @ 120.16mph	12.20s @ 111.49mph
Standing Mile	31.99s @ 136.96mph	33.61s @ 132.09mph
Top Speed	141mph	134mph

SPEED DATA



SPEED TEST NOTES

- KTM 990 SM R**
Easier to launch than the Duke, but wheelies through the first three gears like a maniac, mild instability at top speed due to soft setup
- DUCATI EVO SP**
Bloody hard to launch due to first and second gear wheelies at full throttle, more stable at top speed than stock EVO, but much slower than the KTM

THE VERDICT



Being a big supermoto is a tough old game, especially when you cost over ten large. That's right, if you hadn't noticed the price yet, they really are that expensive. But the question remains; are they worth more than their cheaper, plainer siblings?

In the Ducati's case the answer is yes, with cherries on top. The difference between the EVO SP and the stock EVO is palpable to say the least. Most significantly, is that the EVO still suffers from that front-end malady we've berated in many tests, whereas the EVO SP has all but banished it. In my book, that alone makes it more than worth the extra cash. But despite the SP's new found impetus and improved road manners, it's still more toy than real motorcycle. I can't imagine myself ever doing distance on one, or wanting to. This is for Sunday thrashes with the boys, or for the inner-city vanity parade. It's not a bike you'd likely ride every day, and that's what keeps it behind the KTM.

The KTM 990 SM R can do more than the Hyper', simply put. In fact, the stock SM would do almost as well. Getting caught out on a long ride won't hurt half as much; though remember both have small fuel tanks, so fill up regularly. Yes, the SM R's throttle is as shite as any we've tested from KTM, but we've almost got used to it now. What the KTM has in its arsenal is potential, and here it has the Ducati truly pegged. Everything I moaned about can be fixed with screwdrivers, as KTM send the bike out in a more forgiving mood. If you want to go on track, then you can adjust to



Knee-down or foot-out, the SM R is the outright winner

suit and the SM R will be your bitch. It's faster, and thus, even more fun, but there's one remaining issue to consider. A brand new Honda Fireblade is cheaper than both of these bikes. Is the exclusivity and leftfield approach worth dismissing one of the best sportbikes on the planet for? Unless you've got spinal issues, we'd have to conclude that no, it isn't. But some may disagree, in which case go and give an SM R a good razz. You'll be grinning for weeks. ☑

