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VISIONARY TWELVES

Pierre Terblanche resurfaces with this trio of wild Guzzi concepts

WORDS: Ed Millich PHOTOS: Moto Guzzi

Moto Guzzi revealed a trifecta of concept vehicles at the 2009 EICMA expo in Milan. These prototypes—the V12 LM, V12 Strada and V12 X—are the first fruit of the collaboration between the iconic, 88-year-old Italian motorcycle manufacturer and former Ducati design chief, Pierre Terblanche.

Typical of Terblanche's genre-bending designs—he created both the Multistrada and Hypermotard for Ducati—these new Guzzi mash-up streetfighter, motard and cruiser styling elements and design cues. The red V12 LM invokes the classic sporting archetype of the Guzzi Lemans, while the matte green-and-silver V12 X tends toward motard styling with its beak-like nose and lack of any discernable tail. The white V12 Strada is the most conventional of the lot, with a classic, upright architecture that will appeal to many of Guzzi's traditional fans.

The three concepts share the same chassis, which consists of an organically shaped, cast aluminum "semi-monocoque" frame mated to some variation of Guzzi's unique CARC (anti-reactive) single-sided shaft-drive swingarm. The Strada and X both utilize a traditional, vertically oriented rear shock; the LM gets a novel rear suspension treatment with the rear shock mounted at a nearly horizontal angle within the suspension linkage, a space-saving design that allows a shorter wheelbase.



The X-model gets supermoto-inspired styling, complete with handguards, an extra-long banana saddle, and high-rise suspension.

This new frame design gracefully envelopes the jutting cylinder heads of the recently updated, 1200cc, 8-valve engine. Exhausts on all three are fabricated from Inconel, an exotic, nickel-chromium "superalloy" more commonly found on jet turbines or Formula 1 racers, and all three feature square mufflers aft of the oil sump, a design similar to Giuseppe Ghezzi's "Quat D" exhaust. Air/oil cooling is enhanced by the unique finned cooling elements flanking the steering head. More than just cosmetic touches, these heat sinks extract vapor from boiling liquid to draw heat away from the exhaust valve and improve cooling.

Any one of these three machines could conceivably be put into production with relatively few changes, though parent company Piaggio

The V12 LM initials harken back to the famed Lemans sportbikes of the seventies and eighties—some of the finest machines Guzzi ever produced.



The Strada provides a good view of the innovative LED-type lighting and rear-view video system, with rear-facing cameras on each cylinder head.

made no remarks with regard to any imminent plans. It remains to be seen whether Terblanche's design talent can create some much-needed excitement for Moto Guzzi, or whether Piaggio's ongoing attempts to revitalize the Guzzi brand will position it for future success. So far Piaggio's maneuvering of Moto Guzzi has been less than well received by Guzzi fans. A September 2009 protest organized by the Italian Guzzi group Anima Guzzi (www.guzzisti.it) to highlight Piaggio's supposed marginalization of the Guzzi brand drew over 1500 Guzzisti to the factory gates at Mandello Del Lario. The recent departure of Piaggio Chief Operating Officer Daniele Bandiera, along with these new models, may signal a new direction for the beloved Mandello manufacturer. Let's hope this optimism is well founded. **MC**