

Le Mans endures

WHEN LOUIS MORIN bought his '81 Moto Guzzi Le Mans CX 100 in '92, he had no intention of modifying it. The Guzzi was slightly worn, but the plan was to restore it to original condition. He had once actually called a friend with another Le Mans a traitor and a social misfit for installing a set of loud pipes.

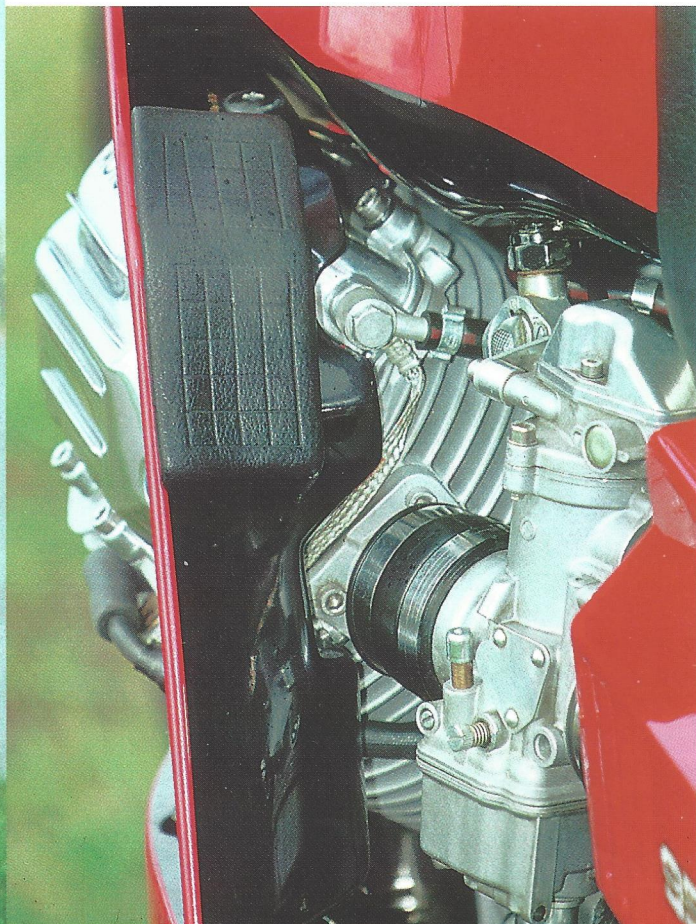
That was before he took his friend's bike for a spin. "When I came back, I had to have a set of pipes for mine," says Morin. Browsing on the Internet, he found a Le Mans race kit for less money than he had intended to spend for the exhaust alone, which led to a more ambitious approach. The still-new kit contained an exhaust system, a set of 40 mm Dell Orto "tickle" carburetors and camshafts. The next step was to disassemble the engine, and in the

meantime the frame was sent to be nickel plated. Jurg Seeger, a Concordia University retired engineer, started the engine work by removing seven pounds off the flywheel with a CNC mill. After that, the crankshaft was balanced and polished, and Carrillo connecting rods were installed. The cylinders have been replaced by a new sleeveless set with Nikasil-treated bores.

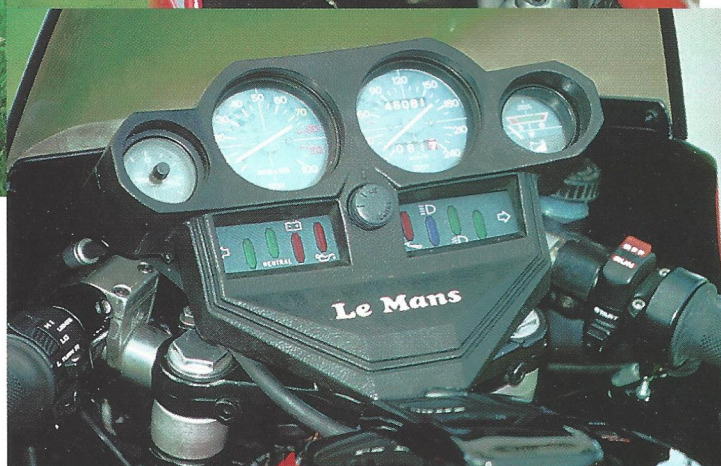
John Parker is responsible for the precision work done on the cylinder heads. The compression ratio was raised to 9.5:1, from 9:1, and valve guides and seats were modified to accept larger stainless-steel valves. On the exhaust side, modified Nissan 300 ZX Turbo valves were installed. Morin seems reluctant to unveil all of Parker's ingenuity, but when Parker finds his work satisfactory, he signs it—this Guzzi's heads each have his tiny 10-karat gold signature.

Ignition and cam timing had been difficult to maintain precisely because of the inconsistent chain tension of the

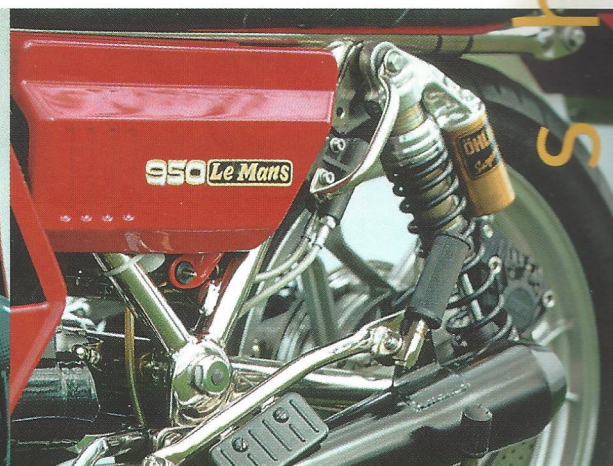
By Martin Proulx



Morin once called a fellow Le Mans owner a traitor and a social misfit for installing a set of loud pipes. That was before he took it for a spin. Now Morin's race-kitted bike has its own musical arrangement.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN PROULIX



drive, so Morin converted the system to gear drive using an Italian aftermarket kit.

The exhaust system's interior was coated with a ceramic layer, a technique Porsche uses on its 911 Turbo to improve thermal efficiency. Originally, Morin's Le Mans produced a meagre 49 hp at the rear wheel, but by the time it was put back together, the bike was producing a healthy 72 hp.

Morin is a regular at the annual Ducati Owners Club motorcycle week-end at Mosport, where other European brands are welcome, and he's not reluctant to ride his bike: "Shame on the trailer queens," he says.

He's also made a few modifications to help the Le Mans serve as a daily ride. The original 35 mm fork has been

replaced with a sturdier 38 mm Marzocchi unit that came from a Le Mans III, and the rear suspension is much improved by fully adjustable Ohlins shocks. Morin replaced the electrical connections, and switched to a more efficient coil and a set of Nology sparkplug wires. He upgraded the controls with Honda switches, and installed a Corbin leather seat. The Le Mans also sports a pair of bar-end mirrors. Serviceability has been largely improved by the machining of an oil-pan spacer, which now gives access to the filter without having to take down the pan and its umpteen bolts.

A convert to Italian operatics, Morin doesn't find his Le Mans to be loud—it's musical: "Now when I come to a stop sign, I make Harley riders envious." **CC**