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Triumph Daytona 1200

Introduced in 1995 in the face of Europe's (non-mandated) 100-hp limit, the 147-hp Daytona 1200 exists as John Bloor's response at being told what to build. Europe's horsepower king for many moons, the Daytona differs from the Mammut and K13 by virtue of its full coverage fairing, but don't let the Daytona's sporty lines fool you. It's a fast tourer, first and foremost, and for that it need not apologize.

The Daytona's specifications reflect Bloor's approach to his newly reformed Triumph. Looking to erase the public memory of leaky old twins that may, or may not run, the 12's wet-weight of nearly 600-lb can be traced to its massively overbuilt/under stressed nature. Those range from the large, Egli-style steel backbone, burly engine castings (note the Chevrolet-sized clutch basket) and other robust castings dotting the Triumph's chassis. Even the Daytona's bodywork is heavier and thicker than it really needed to be, finished well above usual standards and emphasizing Bloor's quest for reliability and quality.

But what really places the Daytona 1200 in the Heavyweight Hall of Fame is that engine. Smooth and geared tall, the machine's ability to lure its rider with deceptive speed became a real issue when the Daytona 1200 was first released. Capable of speeds approaching 160-mph, the 16v, DOHC four might not own the roarty, Lav-like growl owners of the triples enjoy, but the "12" owns the last laugh when the throttles are opened at 100-mph. Handsome in a way only the English seem to be capable of producing, the big Triumph is Peterbuilt durable, well supported, and more affordable than many other modern classics. Forged into reality with guts and skill, the Daytona 1200 is a Hinckley homer that's still in the air. Nolan Woodbury