

# FASTER TORNADO

More power, more speed. Revived Benelli release a pumped-up version of their Tornado

By Roland Brown Photography by Roberto Carrer

Look familiar? It should do – all the 1130's changes are under the skin



## BENELLI TORNADO 1130

This could be a painful mistake. Cranking the Tornado 1130 through the Misano circuit's fabulously long, unwinding left-hand turn on my first lap, I've gone to shift up a gear but changed down instead. Oops. Unsurprisingly, the Benelli engine screams in complaint, the bike twitches, slews... and fortunately recovers, rather than high-siding me into orbit.

My excited left foot had prodded the lever as if working a reverse-pattern race shift. In my defence, mistaking the new, uprated Tornado for a racebike is an easy error to make – in this latest guise the Italian triple is a seriously rapid motorcycle. While it may look almost identical to the previous Tornado, underneath its slinky bodywork the three cylinder engine has been enlarged from 898cc to a bulbous 1130cc.

Extra capacity is not the only change. New cams give more lift and duration, intake valves are 1mm bigger, ports are reshaped, and there's a new three-into-one exhaust that helps the Tornado pass Euro 3 emission standards. The Benelli also has a new injection computer and a dry clutch. Max output is optimistically claimed to be 163bhp – 20bhp up on the 900, and only five horses down on Benelli's 2001 World Superbike racer.

That power increase is clear when you tweak the loud handle. The Benelli storms out of the long turn onto the back straight at a rate that would have left a following Tornado 900 pilot with a fast-shrinking view of the cooling fans in its tailpiece.

Throttle response, not always the 900's strong point, is excellent. The bigger motor pulls crisply if not dramatically hard from six grand, stays smooth as the revs rise, and is still accelerating at an indicated 160mph. And when it's time to brake, the blend of radial Brembo calipers and Pirelli Diablo Corsa tyre is almost enough to have me somersaulting over the low bars.

Faults? Well, the Tornado's not the lightest sports bike, but its glued-together steel-and-aluminium frame is rigid and its blend of 50mm Marzocchi forks and Extreme Tech rear shock cope well with varied bends on track.

The test bike's gearbox is stiff too, probably because the bike was barely run-in (the box is unchanged from the reasonable one in the 900). The Tornado's extra capacity and performance mean that on paper it's back in the game as an open-class sportsbike. And if the idea of a stylish Italian triple appeals, the Benelli is quick and capable enough to hold its own in the real world too. The main drawback is that at £10,349 it's not cheap – especially when you consider the Tornado 900 is still available for £6349. ■

## THE BIG QUESTIONS



### SO, IS THIS TORNADO WORTH THE EXTRA COMPARED TO THE OLD MODEL?

If you have to have the latest and trickiest bike, and money's not a big problem, then this Tornado is undoubtedly faster and better – and just over ten grand's not outrageous for a classy Italian superbike. But at less than two-thirds of the price, the remaining 900s have got to be better value.



### WILL BENELLI ENTER WORLD SUPERBIKE WITH THE NEW TORNADO?

'We would like to go racing again but it depends on the rules, because at the moment it's not possible to be competitive in World Superbike with a triple,' says Pierluigi Marconi, Benelli's technical chief. 'It depends on the FIM's decision regarding the capacity limit. If we can be competitive with a triple, we will enter.'



### WHAT ABOUT THE REPORTS THAT BENELLI IS PLANNING TO ENTER MOTOGP?

'The MotoGP rumours are not true,' Marconi insists. 'Superbikes have a direct link with products that customers can buy. But MotoGP is very expensive, and in order for it to be worthwhile Benelli would have to have a full range of bikes, not just a few models. Maybe in five or ten years we will enter MotoGP, but at the moment it's just a dream.'

## THE SPEC SHEET BENELLI TORNADO 1130

<b>Price</b>	£10,349 on the road
<b>Top speed</b>	170mph (est)
<b>Power</b>	163bhp @ 10,500rpm (claimed)
<b>Torque</b>	94lb.ft @ 8000rpm (claimed)
<b>Engine</b>	1130cc, 12v, dohc triple
<b>Bore x stroke</b>	88 x 62mm
<b>Compression ratio</b>	12.4:1
<b>Transmission</b>	6-speed, chain drive
<b>Frame</b>	aluminium and tubular steel
<b>Front suspension</b>	50mm Marzocchi usd forks
<b>Front adjustment</b>	preload, compression, rebound
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Extreme Tech monoshock
<b>Rear adjustment</b>	preload, compression, rebound
<b>Front brakes</b>	2 x 320mm discs/4-pot Brembo radial calipers
<b>Rear brakes</b>	240mm disc/2-pot caliper
<b>Tyres</b>	Pirelli Diablo Corsa
<b>Front; rear</b>	120/70 ZR17, 190/50 ZR17
<b>Dry weight</b>	198kg (claimed)
<b>Wheelbase</b>	1419mm
<b>Seat height</b>	810mm
<b>Fuel capacity</b>	n/a
<b>Insurance group</b>	NU17
<b>Colours</b>	silver/black, green/silver
<b>From</b>	KJM Superbike 01257 451656

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