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Brutale beats Streetfighter

► World exclusive test ► MV Agusta Brutale v Ducati's Streetfighter ► Why we should be excited by MV again

Adam Child | Senior Road Tester
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This is the test that proves we should take MV Agusta seriously again. And with the legendary Italian firm's all-new F4 superbike just around the corner, it also hints that there could be more surprises to come in a 2010 superbike class which has already been rocked by BMW's new S1000RR and Aprilia's RSV4-R.

In short, this all-new Brutale 1090RR is a massively significant bike. It's no mere tweak or update like all Brutales since the exotic roadster's original launch in 2000. This is the first product of the completely re-invigorated MV regime under Harley-Davidson ownership.

Troubled Harley has now put MV up for sale, but the level of investment and reorganisation at the Italian firm over the last 18 months has resulted in a feast of imminent new machinery.

The new Brutale is the first. The F4 is next, due in February, and there's a new three-cylinder middleweight due next year.

So how does the new Brutale measure up? Is it all show and no go? Can it possibly justify its £13,699 price tag? And, most importantly of all, how does it compare to the current king of the supernakeds, Ducati's Streetfighter S? We pitted the two bikes, head-to-head in Ducati's backyard in Bologna, Italy, to find out...

Brutale wins on looks

When you're paying over £14,000 for a naked sports bike, looks are high on the agenda. Being in its home town gave the Ducati an obvious advantage and around Bologna the Streetfighter attracted the most attention. But then riding an expensive Ducati around Bologna is like walking around Liverpool with Paul McCartney and wondering why people are staring.

The Ducati also had the advantage of the loudest snarl from its twin exhausts as the 1098 derived water-cooled V-twin echoed around the city streets. The new Brutale has a distinctive bark, too, but on sound alone the Ducati sings the loudest.

But the new Brutale is still my winner in terms of looks and style. The MV is so much neater. Its smooth, flowing lines of the Massimo Tamburini-penned original Brutale have moved it on, scaled it up slightly (for comfort) and tidied it up. For example, they've replaced the old clocks with new, bang-up-to-date multi-functional items.

Don't get me wrong – there's nothing wrong with the Ducati. In fact, in some respects, it's even higher spec than the MV, with Ohlins suspension in place of the MV's Sachs shock and Marzocchi forks. But it's the fine detail that lets the Ducati down slightly. There's too much wiring and plumbing on show and the large black heat shield over the exhaust is ugly and scratches easily – which is not what you expect from a £14,000 plus bike.

Brutale's big step forward

But beyond looks, bikes like this have to be usable and fun without being scary or twitchy – which is where the old Brutale fell down. The old version may have been quick but it suffered erratic fuelling and was uncomfortable (almost unbearably so on a long ride) with both suspension and seat that were way too hard.

The new version, however, is a huge improvement. The Brutale no longer feels like a radical, extreme bike – in fact it's almost Japanese-like. On board, you immediately notice the difference: with a larger tank, plush seat and suspension that actually moves, the ride is lovely. Where on the Ducati you'd stand up on the pegs in anticipation of potholes and the like around the old city streets of Bologna, the MV took everything in its stride.



MV haven't diluted the Brutale's character. There's still enough power to scare the bravest

ADAM CHILD

Now you can feel the Brutale's suspension working even at slow speeds (before you had to be breaking lap records to make it work). Admittedly, we couldn't push either bike to their handling limits on the winter roads around Bologna, but even so it was clear the new MV was a pussycat, where the old version would have been scary, ready to claw your eyes out at any opportunity.

By contrast, the Ducati is now the more radical, extreme machine. Its pegs are higher, bars lower, it has more of a racing stance. You're so far over the front of the Streetfighter it takes a little getting used to.

Traction control on MV

But although the Brutale's comfort has been improved, thankfully MV haven't diluted the character of the bike too much – there's still enough power to scare even the bravest rider despite losing a few bhp due to revised, cleaner fuelling.

The new Brutale still lifts the front in the first few gears easily enough, it's just that now it's more controllable thanks to the much-improved fuelling. That said, for sheer, instant bite, the Streetfighter is the one, ripping your arms out of their sockets from virtually zero rpm. Give the Ducati a handful of throttle in the first few gears and it has the bite of a great white shark.

Nor is the Ducati completely fearsome, thanks to the safety net of its eight-way traction control. Set on maximum it can be a little too intrusive, especially for wheelie show-offs, but it can be turned down or off completely via the handlebar-mounted switch. And in the same vein, although the MV has new clocks, they're still not on a par with the multi-functional console of the Ducati.

Of course, the MV has eight-way traction control, too, but it never gave me the same level of confidence as the Ducati. A big handful of revs and a dumped clutch could still get the rear spinning on a damp road.



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**MCN
WORLD
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TEST**

New MV Brutale (left) and the Ducati Streetfighter go head-to-head in Italy

IAN JUBB



Streetfighter drew most looks but this is home ground in Bologna



The Brutale (left) has a distinctive bark but the Duke has loudest snarl

'Promise fulfilled'



OPINION

Phil West
Executive Editor

It's a tragedy that MV has come so far – as exemplified by the new Brutale, imminent F4 and pending triple – and yet it could all still count for nothing.

This new Brutale, thanks to Harley investment, is finally what MVs have long promised to be, but somehow never delivered: glorious, fast and beautiful, but now also manageable and, in the light of Japanese price rises, almost justifiable, too.

It would be an immense shame, then, if that good work couldn't be continued. Harley has already killed off Buell and is struggling to sell MV.

Let's hope H-D's failings don't spell the death of MV, too

TURN OVER: Is it worth shelling out £14,000?

News Brutale v Streetfighter

WHAT YOU'RE GETTING FOR £14K – IS IT WORTH IT?



Muscle bike styling and blistering 155bhp performance



New Brutale is easier to live with – and costs £700 less

Ducati Streetfighter S

- ▶ V-twin liquid-cooled engine is stolen from the 1098 and produces 158bhp.
- ▶ Brembo radial brakes, these are identical to the Brembo radial items on the MV.
- ▶ Ohlins suspension front and rear, fully-adjustable with ride height and low and high-speed compression on the rear.
- ▶ Lightweight Marchesini wheels, covered in grippy Pirelli Corsa 3 rubber.



Brembo radial brakes, 330mm discs



Fully adjustable Ohlins USD forks

MV Agusta Brutale 1090RR

- ▶ The 1078cc, in-line, four cylinder has the same basic layout and capacity as the old 1078RR but is 2.5kg lighter and has a slipper clutch as standard.
- ▶ New lighter frame has a 20mm longer cast aluminium swingarm.
- ▶ The new steering damper is very unusual – a mechanical radial steering damper just below the clocks on the headstock.
- ▶ New Magneti Marelli engine management system.



Brand new comprehensive clocks



Mechanical radial steering damper

VERDICT

You have to give MV credit for the new Brutale. It's a huge step forward over the old bike. The racy, lunatic, MV of old has grown up and is much easier to live with without losing its character or appeal.

Which makes choosing a winner, with both bikes priced similarly, very difficult. Ducati's Streetfighter S is racy, slightly more radical than the MV, but still easy to live with.

It has soul, character and the combination of Ohlins suspension and 1098 engine make it formidable on road and track. But the new MV Agusta Brutale 1090RR is arguably more exotic still, remains frighteningly fast, yet is now no longer a pain to live with 90% of the time – in fact, quite the opposite.

With the new Brutale you CAN have your cake and eat it and that's why it's our winner and that's why we're so excited about the prospect of the F4 to come.

 **Tell us what you think**
www.motorcyclenews.com

THE FACTS

MV AGUSTA BRUTALE 1090RR	DUCATI STREETFIGHTER S
£13,699	£14,295
Engine Liquid-cooled, 1078cc (79x55mm) DOHC, 16v, in-line four. Six gears, fuel injected.	Engine Liquid-cooled, 1099cc (104 x 64.7mm), desmodromic 8v, 90°, V-twin. Six gears, fuel injected
Power 142.2bhp	Power 158bhp
Dry weight 190kg	Dry weight 167kg
Fuel Capacity 23litres	Fuel Capacity 16.5litres
Insurance 17	Insurance 17
Contact www.mvagusta.co.uk	Contact www.ducati.com

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