



MOTO GUZZI CALIFORNIA: THE HISTORY OF THE MOST AMERICAN ITALIAN.

1968 - 1969:

THE V7 POLICE IS INTRODUCED FOR THE LAPD.

The California's history began in 1968 and the major players were the **Moto Guzzi V7**, the powerful **American importer Berliner** and the LAPD, **Los Angeles Police Department**. Brothers Joe and Mike Berliner strongly believed in the **potential of the new V7** and were convinced that the best strategy for attacking the American market would be to start with **winning contracts** to supply the **Los Angeles Police Department** with motorcycles. After various attempts and overcoming the initial hesitations, in February 1968 the Berliners convinced top brass in LA to try two slightly modified Moto Guzzi V7 700 bikes. In no time the *policemen* learned to appreciate the superior features of handling and acceleration that the Italian bike provided, while the mechanics and service engineers were enthusiastic about the **advantages that the transversal 90° V architecture had to offer** which, because of its accessibility and mechanical rationality, **drastically reduced routine and extraordinary maintenance** times.

Having earned the approval of both riders and mechanics, **Moto Guzzi became one of the very few motorcycle manufacturers to be invited**, in November of the same year, to participate in a selection to **commission a batch of ten units**.

The small order did not discourage the engineers from Mandello who outfitted a V7 with an **oversized 750cc engine, equipping it with a windshield, bags, supplementary lights, a radio and a siren**. And so the **V7 Police** was born which, during the rigorous selection tests **trounced the national, English and Japanese competition**, winning a contract which had historically gone to the national manufacturer from Milwaukee.

The small legion of **ten units** was outfitted at Mandello under the watchful eye of **sergeant Scotty Henderson** from the TED (*Traffic Enforcement Division*) section, sent from Los Angeles to supervise the production which underwent some modifications, such as the side stand which could be operated from a position astride the bike, the left hand shift lever and the bullet proof windshield made in *Lexan*. The sergeant commented on this experience: *"At Mandello I was given carte blanche for ideas on how to make the motorcycle. They literally designed a bike right before my eyes"*. In the summer of **1969 the Moto Guzzi V7 Police** joined the fleet of more than **four hundred police bikes in Los Angeles**, quickly becoming the favourite among the younger cops, a sign that the Berliner brothers' strategy was beginning to bear fruit, both through the shower of new orders from American police departments, starting with the **California Highway Patrol**, and through the curiosity that these new bikes began to arouse among the Yankee bikers.

1970 - 1972:

FROM V7 POLICE TO V7 750 CALIFORNIA

Echoes of the contract that Moto Guzzi had won in America arrived in Europe through the specialised press, consolidating the **successful public image of the V7**, which had been recently revamped with the **750 Special version**. This was enough to stir up the curiosity of enthusiasts and dealerships who began insistently to request information on these **"American" V7** bikes, so much that management decided to launch the V7 750 California in the Spring of 1970. **There were many aesthetic changes** compared to the V7 Special: **from the fuel tank to the instrument cluster, from the footrests to the "bullhorn" handlebars, from the saddle to the stand**. From a technical point of view, the **California differed from the Special with the presence of the steering damper, conical torque (8/37 instead of 8/35) and "barrel" silencers**. In short, the new V7 inherited the aesthetic



outfitting of the V7 Police which, thanks to the growing numbers on the streets of California, sustained sales of the **V7 Ambassador**, a version of the California built for the American market

1972 - 1974

V 850 CALIFORNIA, THE DIVA.

At the Milan Cycle and Motorcycle show of **1971 Moto Guzzi introduced the V850 California**. The new California was equipped with **all of the technological advancements designed by Lino Tonti** on the V7 Sport engine, such as the reinforced crankcase, but with a **displacement increased to 844.05 cc**. In this configuration the twin cylinder from Mandello reached an impressive sixty-five HP at just 6500 rpm, making it the new reference point in the category for power, performance and reliability.

From the **V7 Sport the V850 California also inherited the five speed transmission, dual brake and front drum, as well as adjustable shock absorbers**. The bike, which had a distinctive aesthetic personality as well as a technical one, would have great **success in all the markets, from the United States, where it was sold under the name Eldorado 850**, to Germany and France, reaching the record in **1974 of more than twelve thousand sold**, four thousand of which were in America.

These were numbers that helped to overcome an economic situation complicated by the energy crisis, the rise of Japanese motorcycle manufacturers and the decline of the English motorcycle industry.

1975 - 1980:

T3 CALIFORNIA, THE RENEWER.

In 1975, **after more than 100,000 units had been produced between the V7 and V850**, Moto Guzzi launched the new 850 T3 range – **850 T3 California**. This was the first California introduced under the **new De Tommaso management** and it became famous for its innovative **“integral braking”**, a **Moto Guzzi patent** which allowed braking distances to be reduced and stability in braking to be improved. The engine became more powerful and ecological: its **power rose to sixty-eight horses** and, almost twenty years ahead of European regulations, it was equipped with a **recirculation system for the gases which weren't combusted in the engine**.

The style, developed on the V7 Sport frame, **was more modern and compact** compared to the previous V850 California, with **integrated fuel tank and saddle**, as the stylistic trend for the period demanded. However, the market was attracted by performance and the Japanese sport bikes, so the **T3 California**, despite being an excellent bike, did not enjoy the success of its predecessors, with production stopping at about **four thousand units**.

1981 - 1986

CALIFORNIA II: THE RISE TO 1000.

The relaunch of the **T3 California** took place with the **California II**. The engine size **rose to 1000cc** (948.8 cc) and with this the **layout of the head guards became square**. Compared to the T3, the **California II** was also different due to the **alloy wheels, the front mudguard, the side panels and the instrument panel**.

The California II enjoyed excellent success in sales with more than ten thousand units produced, thanks in part to the excellent value for money ratio.

In 1981, at a **price of 6,075,000 Italian Lire** (€3,142) the California II was the least expensive 1000 cc bike on the Italian market.



1987 - 1993

CALIFORNIA III: THE METAMORPHOSIS.

The design concept changed radically with the **California III**. The new model had no more stylistic ties with its T3 and California II predecessors, but it **introduced a clearly custom line** which played on the **new twenty-five litre tear-drop fuel tank** with connected side panels and the separated double saddle, equipped with a passenger backrest.

The **flat footrests** also returned, absent since the days of the V850, as well as the chromium finishing, enhanced by the black painted engine. A bike which was undoubtedly more **refined and expensive than the previous California II**, it was also outfitted in an **integral fairing version** which transformed it into a comfortable Granturismo, while in **1991 a special version was outfitted for the Moto Guzzi 70th anniversary.**

1994 - 1996

CALIFORNIA 1100: ANOTHER RISE.

With a balance of **seven thousand units sold**, the **California III** passed the baton to the new **California 1100** (1064 cc), an engine size which **represented the peak of this extremely popular model's pedigree**. The new version maintained the style of the California III, **slightly modified in the headlight assembly, the silencers and the graphics**, while the engine exceeded **seventy horses to reach a top speed of 200 kph**. The combination of performance, comfort and stylistic personality made it the leading model of Moto Guzzi production for more than a decade, generating numerous outfitting configurations and versions up to present day, including the inevitable special version made to celebrate the seventy-fifth Moto Guzzi anniversary.

1997 - 2005

CALIFORNIA EV: 360° EVOLUTION.

In **1997 the EV version made its début**, an abbreviation which accented the evolution which had taken place in the engine, now equipped with **new connecting rods and, above all, electronic injection**. The California EV could be distinguished by its **more rounded valve cover** compared to the carburettor versions, the **tubeless spoked wheels** and the **new fork with 45 mm stanchions**.

In 1999 the **EV Special made its début**, a plainly more “cruiser” version of the EV which **introduced some stylistic innovations** such as the rear “eagle's beak” mudguard, the saddle divided into two separate sectors for rider and passenger, **new footrests, new light clusters and a new license plate holder**.

Subsequently, starting from this stylistic base, more simplistic outfitting configurations such as the **Stone** and the **Jackal** were developed, or more luxurious versions like the **EV 80**, a special Moto Guzzi eighties commemorative series outfitted with **bags, saddle covering and handles in Frau leather**.

The final act of the California EV was the Touring version which was introduced in 2003, **equipped with hydraulic tappets, three way catalytic converter with oxygen sensor and pistons cooled by oil jets**. In all, production of the California EV range rose well over 20,000 units.

2006 - 2012

CALIFORNIA VINTAGE: HOLLYWOOD, PRESIDENTIAL AND ROYAL STYLE.

The **California Vintage** was unveiled to the press at Mandello del Lario in **March 2006** on the occasion of the new Euro 2 range launch. The bike was clearly **inspired, with its rich chromium and livery, by the 1972 V850 California**. This graphic style was joined in 2008 by the version in **pearl white, a customisation which Scotsman Ewan McGregor**



had requested, delivered during the **World Moto Guzzi Days 2007 edition**. Dating back to the same year are the **twenty-four Moto Guzzi California Vintage units with Corazzieri outfitting** which replaced the veteran California 1100 units in the service of the President of the Italian Republic since 1994.

The “Aquila Nera” (Black Eagle) was the news for 2009, a simplified outfitting that came alongside the Vintage, while two years later, on the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary, the day of the **California 90** arrived. Introduced during the **World Moto Guzzi Days on 15 September 2011**, the California 90 was a special, limited edition version of the **dual symbolic value tied to the anniversary celebration and to it being the final production of the California**.

The career of the **California** came to a close as it began, with a version for a truly **special police corps: the King of Jordan's personal escort**.

They were twenty-four authentic custom-built units, equipped with a **never before used fuel tank** and painted in a flashy *burgundy*, customised with royal decorations and delivered in **January 2012** during an official ceremony at **Hamman** in the presence of **King Abdullah II of Jordan and Roberto Colaninno, CEO of the Piaggio Group**.