

F3 is a high-tech screamer



PICTURES BY IAN JUBB AND STUDIO ZAC

MV's new supersports bike performed as superbly as it looks - when we eventually found the right electronic set-up

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**MCN
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TEST**

- ▶ New 675cc MV is focused track tool
- ▶ Fantastic engine
- ▶ Great handling
- ▶ Complicated electronics



Michael Neeves
Senior Road Tester
AT PAUL RICARD

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Riding the £9999 F3 at its world launch around the surreal blue and red-lined track at Paul Ricard in the south of France has left me seriously impressed with MV's first brand new bike since the Brutale in 2002. But with a multitude of different power modes and throttle sensitivity settings to choose from, the F3 can be as frustrating as it is brilliant. More about that later, because we have to first celebrate the fact that never has such glamour, technology and unashamed raciness gatecrashed the cut-throat supersport world, a place dominated by the big four Japanese firms and, of course, the similarly-engined Triumph Daytona 675 from the UK.

The Italian-built F3 is a genuine piece of affordable exotica, which coincidentally costs the same as the bling-tastic R version of the Triumph (the standard Daytona 675 is £8499). It might be built down to a price, but the build quality is still superb, the paint finish deep and the Adrian Morton-designed curves and swoops utterly sensual.

“The riding modes control engine braking, throttle and engine response. Sounds complicated – and it is”

MCN'S MICHAEL NEEVES



“The engine's rasp is similar to the howl of a Daytona 675 mixed with the roar of an F4”

MCN'S MICHAEL NEEVES

Light turn-in and virtually effortless changes of direction make the F3 a joy through the corners

It's specced up to the hilt, with fully-adjustable suspension, eight-stage traction control, a single-sided swingarm, Brembo radial brakes and excellent Pirelli Diablo Rosso Corsa tyres.

There are also a number of different riding modes (see annotations on page 12 for full explanation), which control the level of engine braking into corners, throttle response, engine responsive-

ness, torque and rpm limits. It sounds complicated – and it is – but it offers you the chance to set up the bike for the conditions and the way you ride.

And all this is before you've even thought about setting up the fully-adjustable suspension. It'll be tinkering heaven for some, but confusing hell for others. It's pre-flight checks gone mad. The wide open expanses of Paul Ricard

don't give you much impression of speed on a supersports bike – it's far more of a 1000s track. It's bitterly cold, too, and we start the day in -3.5°C temperatures. Hop on for the first time and the F3 fills you with excitement. It's compact

TURN OVER: Technical highlights of the new F3

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TURN OVER: Technical highlights of the new F3

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News MV Agusta F3

Continued from page 11

and feels light between your legs. A big LCD dash fills your vision and tells you everything you need to know, from revs to speed, coolant temperature, gear position, traction control mode and power map selected. The new MV might be dinky, but the riding position isn't - it's perfectly comfortable for my six-foot frame. The pegs don't cramp your legs too much, there's an easy reach to the bars over the short tank and lots of room to move around on the seat. It's far roomier than MV's F4 superbike.

You need a fair amount of clutch-slip to pull away and get rolling. The super-short-stroke layout and light flywheel effect mean the revs die away the instant you release the twistgrip, and first gear is racer-like tall. It has a ride-by-wire throttle system, which facilitates those fancy power modes and traction control, so there's no physical connection between your right hand and the throttle bodies.

The three-cylinder engine's rasp is similar to the glorious howl of a

11 The revs die away the instant you release the twistgrip and first gear is racer-like tall

MCN'S MICHAEL NEEVES

Daytona 675 mixed with the savage, tortured roar of the F4. It's Italian through and through - but more than that, the din coming out of the sexy trio of stubby side-mounted pipes is pure evil. The F3 is worth the money just for the noise.

Compared to most of the F3's four-cylinder rivals, the MV's engine has more flexibility, so you don't need to keep the engine in its sweet spot for normal riding. But it doesn't have the grunt of the latest Suzuki GSX-R600 or the Daytona 675 at slow speeds.

What was painfully apparent initially was the power delivery was nowhere

near as smooth as a Suzuki or Triumph - the current top two bikes in the superbike class. In fact I was sorely disappointed with the F3 at first. Its jerky throttle response at low speeds and hesitant power delivery further up the revs completely dominated the riding experience, so much so that I couldn't even tell if it handled well. I was worried the old F4 and Brutale power delivery problems had made their way on to the beautiful new F3.

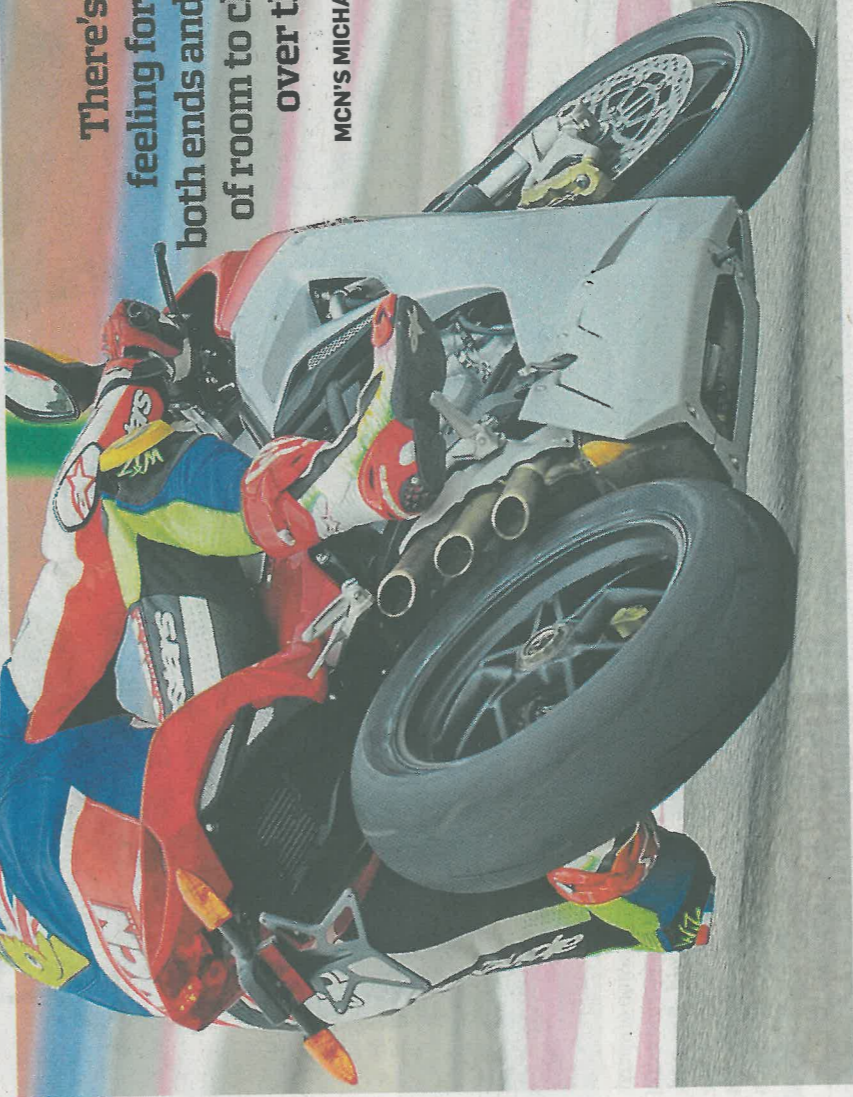
Fortunately they haven't, it's all about what electronic riding mode you choose. We started with the bike set on its 'Sport' mode, which has an ultra-aggressive throttle response. It would be fine on a track with lots of fast corners where you're up in the revs, or a summer day where you can carry more corner speed, but in some of the slower turns at Paul Ricard, it's impossible to meter out the power you need. The throttle would be too instant for the road in Sport mode.

After the first session on track, I was

TURN OVER: Verdict, specs, MV boss interview

11 There's a good feeling for grip at both ends and plenty of room to clamber over the bike

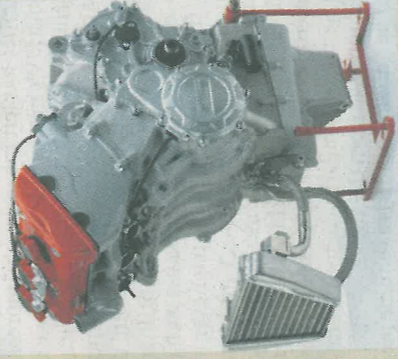
MCN'S MICHAEL NEEVES



F3 TECHNICAL HIGHLIGHTS

1 ENGINE

The ultra-compact super-short-stroke inline three-cylinder 675cc lump, complete with counter-rotating crankshaft, cylinders integrated into the crankcase, titanium inlet and exhaust valves and a combined water and oil pump, has the smallest overall dimensions of any supersports engine. Breathing through Mikuni 50mm throttle bodies, MV says it's the most powerful, too, producing 128bhp at the crank. The engine weighs just 52kg and has a 79 x 45.9mm bore and stroke. It's rev-hungry and produces all its power at high revs, but there's still some midrange there compared to a four, thanks to its three-cylinder layout.



2 TRACTION CONTROL

Eight-stage traction control system works with the new ride-by-wire throttle system, using crank-speed data. It's set by toggling buttons on the dash, with level one the least intrusive and eight most intrusive. The TC logo on the multi-function LCD dash has up to eight dotted lines surrounding it, which signify which level you're currently using. The system works well and intrusion is very subtle. It's more effective than the system on the current F4 and Brutale, but not as advanced as the Aprilia APRC, R1, S1000RR or Panigale systems, which also use lean-angle and wheel-speed sensors.

3 ELECTRONIC RIDING MODES

You can select between a choice of Sport, Normal, Rain and Custom riding modes. Within each of the first three, there are predetermined levels of throttle sensitivity, engine torque, engine braking, engine responsiveness and an rpm limit. Then there's the 'custom' mode which allows you to dial in your own settings for these parameters specifically to suit you

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