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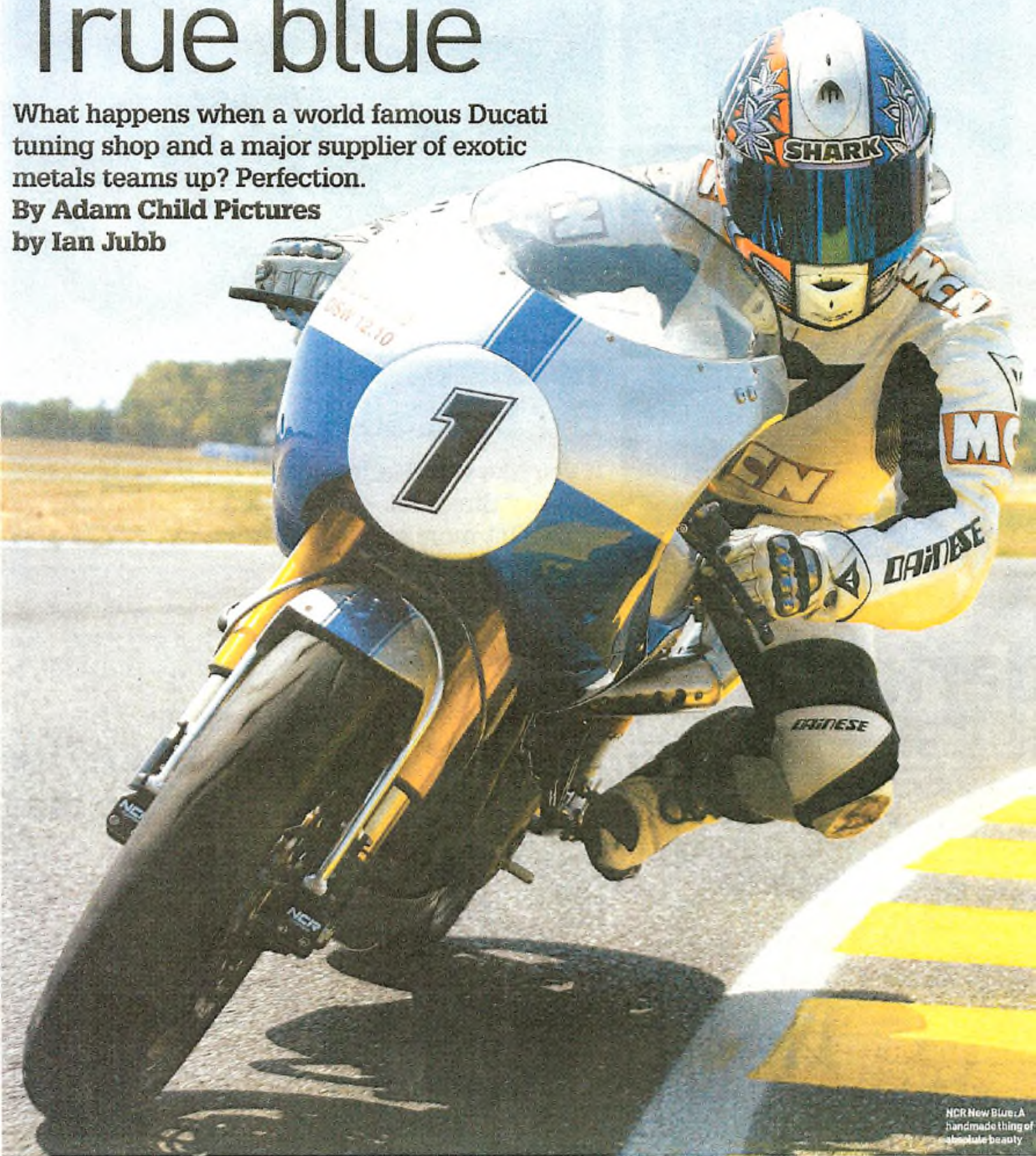
# ROAD TEST

WORLD FIRST NCR NEW BLUE

## True blue

What happens when a world famous Ducati tuning shop and a major supplier of exotic metals teams up? Perfection.

By Adam Child Pictures  
by Ian Jubb



NCR New Blue: A handmade thing of absolute beauty





**EXCLUSIVE VIDEO**  
See Adam Child put NCR's New Blue to the test on the Hungarian test circuit

motorcyclenews.com/ncrivd

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**I**N 1977, Cook Neilson, an American motorcycle journalist and seasoned racer rode his racing Ducati 750SS to victory at Daytona in the AMA Superbike Series.

It was a huge feat for Neilson and 'Old Blue', Neilson's bored to 883cc Ducati. It was also a big step for Ducati – the Italian factory's first big win at Daytona opened the door for road bike sales far wider than it had ever been. To celebrate Neilson's success, 30 years on legendary Ducati specialist NCR has built 'New Blue', a machine so precise and perfect in its build quality it could rival a MotoGP bike for its ride brilliance and exclusivity.

I count myself very lucky to be the first European motorcycle journalist to ride this rare and delicious race bike.

Hungary is in the middle of a heatwave and I'm bang in the middle of it at the Panoniar race circuit. With sweat running along every furrow of skin, I try to act cool while chatting with Michele Poggipolini, executive officer of NCR and family member of the Poggipolini Group behind NCR. By way of showing what Poggipolini does – and does well – he points to a billet-hewn titanium bolt which holds an Ohlins shock in place on 'New Blue' and takes a deep breath.

"My grandfather, one of the founder members of the Poggipolini factory, still works hard in the factory. He's 81 and makes each one of the four bolts that hold on the twin shocks by hand, from a block of titanium. It takes him around 25 minutes per bolt. We keep asking him to retire but he never will



Superb brakes and light weight make high-speed corners a scream on the New Blue

and carries on making every one of those bolts by hand. He even engraves the company signature on to each one." I can tell Michele shares the same passion in the family's commitment to quality.

Sure enough, on closer inspection, there is a small logo expertly placed on the titanium bolt's head. In fact every bolt on the bike is titanium and all carry the Poggipolini logo.

Based on a Ducati SportClassic Sport 1000S, the finished machine is festooned with perfection in its detail. The seat is made in Modena, by Schedoni using the same leather you find in Ferraris – a matching bag of the same leather can be had from Harrods for a mere £2000. New Blue's paint is specialist lightweight paint as used by the Ferrari F1 team and a perfect match to the original 1977 race bike.

The Brembo one-piece billet brake calipers are crafted from Avional, an aerospace-spec alloy as used in F1 to reduce weight. Carbon-fibre wheels, designed by

NCR, are one-off and rely on the strength of the supporting hub so the rims can be as light as possible to again save on unsprung weight.

A work of art, the Italian-made titanium Zard exhaust weighs in at 4kg compared to the bulky 12kg original pipework. As titanium is difficult to form, Zard spent much time welding together small sections of pipe to make the required, free-flow bends. The usual screw-together oil pipe connectors are replaced with quick release items, a first for a bike, designed in partnership between Poggipolini and Ferrari F1.

Mind-blowing, absolutely mind-blowing and it gets better... New Blue is no show bike; it has not been built to slowly revolve on a spot-lit plinth at bike shows. Make no mistake, this is an all-out race bike.

NCR technicians remove New Blue's baffles so I get the full effect of the race system. The twin-valve 1100cc Desmo motor fires into life with help from a remote

starting wheel and gives out a stimulating soundtrack. Hands hold the bike steady as I settle on to that leather seat. The position isn't far removed from the donor SportClassic but the info-loaded race dash gives the game away that New Blue is a race bike that just happens to be stunningly conceived.

### 'Something so beautiful shouldn't be punished'

Race shift gear pattern means toeing up for first gear. I've got to take it steady to get to know this track. I'm also changing some 500rpm before the redline as this bike is due to be raced tomorrow and wrecking any of those four hand-made titanium valves wouldn't go down well.

To forget the hardship and painstaking hours taken to build this bike is difficult – something so beautiful



Zard exhaust weighs just 4kg – a third of standard system

shouldn't be punished on a race track just because the bike entices me to ride it like a race bike. On the second lap I'm in the groove. The track is flat, long but relatively simple without any blind crests so I can start to wring the throttle harder.

Very quickly I realise I've got to forget what the bike looks like and what it is based on; this is *nothing* like a SportClassic. The handling is more nervous with the quick steering of a SuperSports 600. It steers so quickly it catches me out a few times – knee-slides like the brunt of rapid turn-ins and acute lean angles.

Revised Ohlins forks, as used on Ducati's 1098S, dip in time to the stopping power of the Brembo radial brakes. These stoppers are fearsome and I manage to brake far too late at several corners.

A measured 116bhp at the back wheel may not get sports bike blood boiling but don't forget that's more than a modern road going 600 and the NCR bike weighs considerably less with masses

of midrange torque on tap. You can be really lazy with gear swaps because the bike's torque will pull it cleanly regardless of being in the wrong gear.

Twin Ohlins rear shocks translate clearly what's happening at the back end. As we hit the apex it's easily time to nail the throttle – the shot of drive isn't vicious, just instant and very linear so I can feel the tyre dig for grip.

The New Blue riding experience could be even better if I get aggressive with it.

But always at the back of my mind is a vision of an 81-year-old man making every bolt that keeps this Ducati together; a man so full of passion I wouldn't want to destroy his lifetime's work.

On the right track with its true rider onboard the New Blue would hold its own against a 1000cc bike and, according to NCR, it often does. Like 'Old Blue' of 30 years ago, it's the result of years of experience. Experience I can only dream about.

See video of this test at [www.motorcyclenews.com/ncrivd](http://www.motorcyclenews.com/ncrivd)

### VERDICT



**'It's as if microsurgery has been applied'**

AN impressive machine on so many levels, firstly the attention to detail. It's as if the fine art of microsurgery has been applied – and with love. Everything is handmade, not just the little touches but the yokes, calipers and much more, I love it.

Then there's the lack of weight and loads of useable power and torque – an altogether perfect combination, NCR could get even more power out of the Ducati mill with a 1200cc conversion (watch this space, as they say) and reduce the weight further still with a one-off titanium swingarm and carbon-fibre bodywork. But it will add up to an even heftier price tag.

With NCR you order the bike to be built to a specification you can afford – money is something most twins rarely have the luxury of. At the moment the basic spec bike is 40,000 euros (£26,750). That's a lot of money but it is a lot of motorcycle and only 50 are earmarked for production.

### NCR NEW BLUE IN DETAIL

The bolts that hold the shocks in place are handmade by an 81-year-old expert. And that's just the start...



Dash is loaded with race bike information



Titanium bolts all bear NCR's logo on head



Exhaust pipes are meticulously welded



Leather seat, as found in Ferraris

### SPECS

#### NCR NEW BLUE

★★★★★

Cost:	£26,750
Power:	116bhp
Torque:	97ftlb
Weight:	145kg
Available:	New
Colour:	Blue
Info:	<a href="http://www.ncrfactory.com">www.ncrfactory.com</a>

#### TECHNICAL SPEC

Fuel: 15ltr Res. Rakas 22.5"  
Fork: 41/5 Seat height: 845mm  
Wheelbase: 1400mm  
Engine: Air-cooled 1078cc 6Bc  
71.5mm bore four-stroke 4/50° V-Twin  
Fuel injected, 54 gears  
Chassis: Tubular steel frame frame  
Overs 43mm USD front forks, fully adjustable. Ohlins twin rear shocks, fully adjustable. Brakes 2x300mm wave front discs with four piston dual Brembo rear disc Brembo calipers 200mm rear wheel lock 448mm disc two piston caliper  
Tyres: 120/70r 17 front 180/55r 17 rear