

News 848 special



The ultimate 848

► This specially-commissioned £28k '848R' takes the sweetest-handling Ducati of all to a whole new level

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The brilliant Ducati 848 went on sale last year there has only been two versions available – a red or a white one. This is unusual for the Italian firm which has been making higher-spec versions of its sportsbikes since the late '80s. There's no 848S and, while the preceding 749 and 748 were eligible for World Supersport racing, the larger 848 isn't, so there's no homologation-special 'R' version dripping with stronger, lighter, faster and more expensive goodies, either.

Not that it's stopped the creation of the machine you see pictured above. With no sign of an official 848R any time soon, Ducati-mad Gordon Cooper decided to make his own – or rather to commission Ducati Glasgow to do it for him.

He wanted the ultimate trackday bike, with the emphasis on handling rather than outright power, to learn the art of fast cornering.

There was no expense spared, either. With a budget close to £28,000 and the bike set up by ex-MotoGP mechanic Stewart Miller of MPG, this 848 is probably the ultimate example of the breed.

Why build it?

Why you would spend all this money on an 848, when you could get a 1098R for a similar price, or put a hefty deposit down on a Desmosedici RR? Well, Ducati doesn't do an 'R' version of the of the 848, owner Gordon Cooper has a Des and a 1098R Bayliss replica, anyway.

He told MCN: "I wanted to do a project bike for the track. After talking to Martin at Ducati Glasgow, we decided the 848 was a great base to start from. It has just the right amount of power and isn't super-scary.

"We wanted to improve on the 848 package. There has never been an official 848R, so we thought we'd try and move it towards an 'R' spec in terms of the suspension and handling.



Ducati nut Cooper owns the 848

We liked the compact, small 848 engine, and weren't interested in giving it a lot more power, other than putting a new exhaust system on it.

"The project is almost complete, aside from the dry clutch, which we're still waiting to receive from Ducati. I've ridden it a few times now and it's awesome, absolutely fantastic!"

What's it like to ride?

We tested the bike around the tight and twisty Knockhill circuit, near Edinburgh. As on a true race bike, every sensation is amplified, every response sharper and more direct.

The Brembo Monobloc calipers (as used on the 1098R and Desmosedici RR) bite on massive 330mm discs and give more power and a solid feel through the adjustable billet-alloy Ducati Perform-ance levers. There's tons more feedback through the Ohlins TTX rear shock and the Ducati 1098R forks (fitted with an Ohlins FG11 25mm cartridge kit) and masses of solid, unwavering grip from the Pirelli Superbike slicks.

The £2250 BST carbon-fibre wheels yield the biggest transformation over the stock bike. With less unsprung weight, the bike has a much lighter feel and takes minimal effort to turn. The suspension helps it to float over the bumps while giving unflappable stability at full lean, on the throttle and hard on the brakes.



It's more urgent off the corners, faster down the straights and gruntier in the midrange

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Just like the standard version, you have to work the 848's engine to get the best out of it – one of the joys of the smaller Ducati compared to the less involving, lazier-revving 1098/1198.

With another 13bhp at the rear wheel, it makes a true 135bhp and has much less weight to push around – along with the much lighter wheels, there's a booming 70mm titanium/carbon-fibre Termignoni exhaust system, plus carbon and fibreglass race bodywork.

It all adds up to an 848 that's even more urgent off the corners, faster down the straights and gruntier in the midrange. A super-smooth HM quickshifter fitted to the Ducati Corse rearsets lets the Ducati sing up and over Knockhill's start/finish straight. Overall, and in keeping with the 848 philosophy, this special retains the perfect blend of power and handling – only now there's even more of both.

GRAEME BROWN

FANCY BUILDING YOUR OWN '848R'? HERE'S
A RUNDOWN ON HOW MUCH IT WILL COST

Ohlins forks from 1098R	£2792.64
Ohlins TTX rear shock from 1098R	£1517.47
Ohlins 25mm FG11 fork upgrade internals	£463.10
Plus set-up by MPG (labour)	£100
Monobloc brakes from 1098R/Desmosedici RR	£820.84
330mm brake discs from 1098R/Desmosedici RR	£472.00
Carbon BST wheels	£2250
Carbon underseat side panels	£382.65
Carbon air tubes	£357.67
Race fairing	£476.10
Tall screen	£93.62
Full 70mm Termignoni exhaust system including Ducati Performance ECU air filter	£1948.43
Ducati Performance adjustable billet levers	£202.26
Ducati Performance fast action throttle	£149.99
Ohlins steering damper	£250



Carbon wheels give lighter feel

Frame conversion for damper	£155.90
Cost to fit above by MPG (labour)	£50
Ducati Performance neoprene seat	£121.83
Ducati Corse rearsets	£663.01
H&M Quickshifter	£376.81
R&G bungs and fork protectors	£245
Ducati Performance carbon swingarm cover	£171.03
Ducati Performance carbon hugger	£121.05
Ducati Performance carbon front mudguard	£194.45
Race suspension linkage	£308.48
Race subframe	£167.90
Grey Ergal filler plug	£84.06
Labour (estimated – Ducati Glasgow reckon a lot more)	£500
Total	£17,136.29
Plus standard Ducati 848	£10,616
GRAND TOTAL	£27,752.29



Customised Ducati 1098 forks

Specifications



Ducati Glasgow 848 special
£27,752

ENGINE	
Type	Liquid-cooled 849cc (94 x 61.2mm), DOHC, 8v 90° V-twin. Six gears. Fuel injection. Chain drive
Power (claimed)	135bhp
Torque (claimed)	70.8ftlb

CHASSIS	
Frame & swingarm	Tubular steel trellis. Cast aluminium single-sided swingarm
Suspension	43mm Ohlins forks, fully adjustable. Single rear Ohlins shock, fully adjustable
Rake/trail	24.5°/97mm
Wheelbase	1430mm
Weight (dry)	168kg

BRAKES & TYRES	
Front brake	330mm front discs with four-piston Brembo calipers
Rear brake	245mm disc with two-piston caliper
Front tyre	120/70 x 17
Rear tyre	180/55 x 17

LIVING WITH	
Fuel capacity	15.5
Seat height	830mm
Insurance group	17
Contact	www.ducatiglasgow.co.uk

Thanks to:

- Gordon Cooper
- Martin Rees, Ducati Glasgow, www.ducatiglasgow.co.uk,
- Motorcycle Performance Glasgow (MPG) 0141-333-0916
- Niall Mackenzie and Knockhill Circuit, www.knockhill.com

 **Used Ducatis on sale**
www.motorcyclenews.com

Verdict

Gordon's '848R' may not have the aggressive in-your-face power of a full litre superbike, but it's all the better for it. The 848 was already all about big lean, high corner speeds, fast lap times and wide grins – and this special takes all of that to a whole new level.

The unexpected bonus is that there's no real trade-off. The '848R' is still as easy to ride as the standard bike, but it's much more capable, has much more grip, sounds great and puts an even bigger grin on your face.

To top it all, it's absolutely stunning to behold and is loaded with the best goodies money can buy. If you ask me, it's 28 grand well spent.

