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Dice with Death Machines' custom Moto Guzzi 'Airtail'

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This wonderfully minimal Moto Guzzi 'Airtail' was built by Death Machines of London - a company with a refreshingly no-nonsense approach to building custom motorcycles...

Airhead?





For a company building motorcycles, Death Machines of London struck us as an alarming name. But fear not. It actually originated many years ago, when founder James Hilton foolishly told his father about a trip he'd taken on his uncle's motorcycle. "They're death machines, son," came the reply – a warning that clearly didn't resonate with young James as, over 30 years later, he established a business dedicated to the two-wheeled 'terrors'.

This is the company's first custom bike. It's based on a 1981 Moto Guzzi Le Mans Mk2, and has been built with 'clutter reduction' firmly in mind. After forensic inspection of the entire motorcycle, warts and all, it was rebuilt utilising a raft of custom features including a new aviation-inspired instrument binnacle with the main switch from a Spitfire, and a lightened, polished and balanced engine. Most distinctive is the 'airtail' – essentially a skeleton tail section adorned only by a single rear light, taken from a Land Rover Defender, no less. Coupled with a de-lugged frame and drastically reduced switchgear, the bike's overall character is one of minimal elegance, yet retains the poise and purpose of a classic Guzzi. We for one are happy that James paid no heed to his father's advice...

Photos: David Clerihew and James Hilton

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