

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Dice with Death Machines' custom Moto Guzzi 'Airtail'](#)

Lead

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

Gallery

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