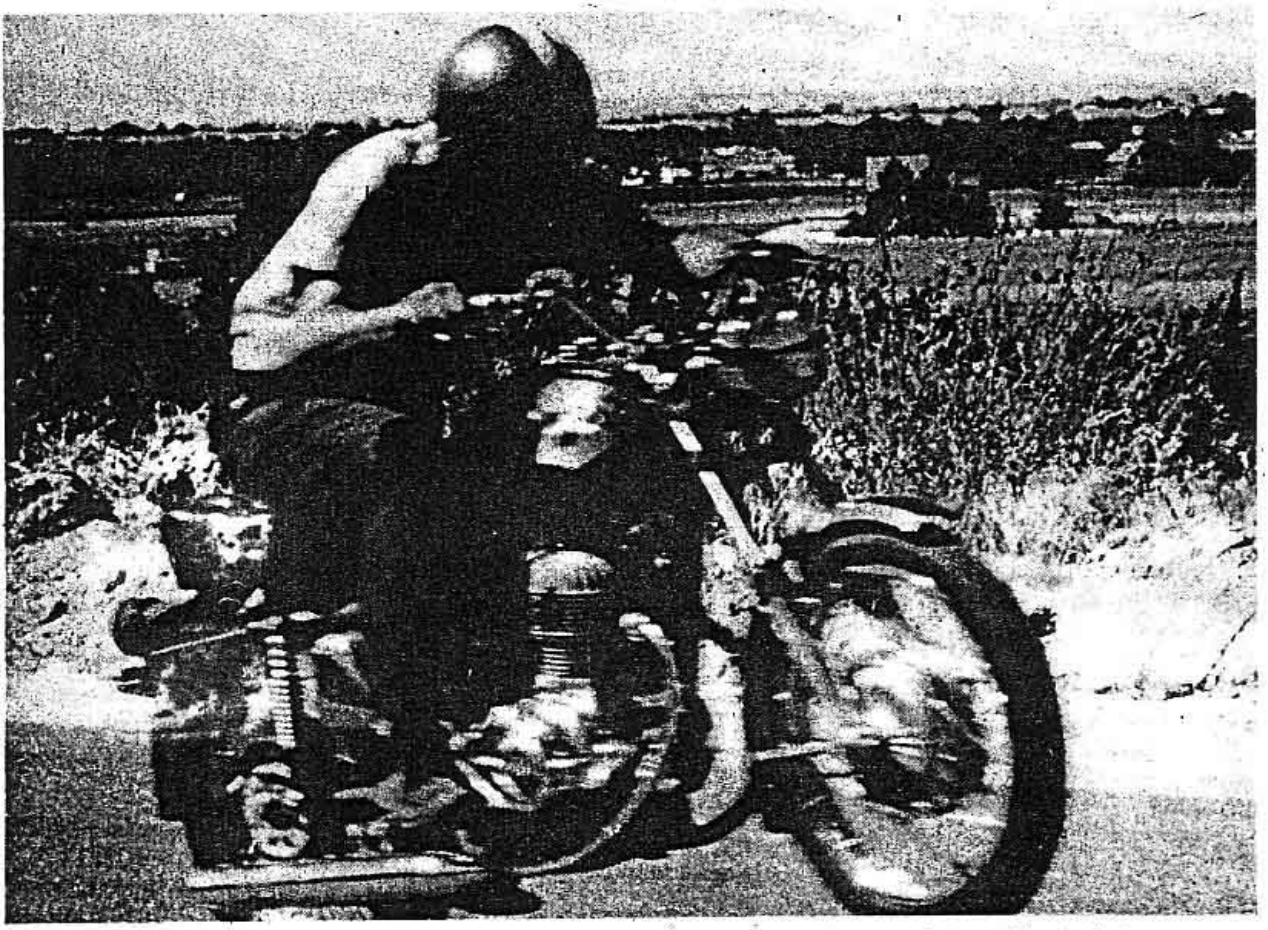
SUPERCYCLE ROAD TEST

250 MV AGUSTA

The sophisticated road bike approach



Popping the clutch on the twin provided some mild wheelie thrills. The 315 pound weight and tall gearing prevented any scorching ¼ mile times.

ONE OF THE things that has always fascinated motorcyclists is the superfine engineering displayed in many bikes. Tiny engines that really turn up and huge racing-type brakes have a fascination that appeals to many. And when some superb workmanship is added, the plot becomes appealing beyond description.

The subject of this test report is one of those bikes that exudes delicate workmanship and a technically advanced design. The total package adds up to one of the most refined little bikes that we have ever tested. We're talking about the MV Agusta 250cc twin, a new model that is making its first sashay into the American market. MV is well known all over the world for their tremendous grand prix road racing machines, of course, but this is the first time that the Italian concern has made a serious attempt to court the lucrative American market.

The idea behind the MV was to produce a sophisticated highly refined 250cc roadster that would run forever and provide better than average performance. The cost in building such a mount is great. But MV obviously feels that a market exists for a well engineered 250 that offers a degree of class not usually found in the lightweight size bikes.

The engine is a beautiful thing and is so refined that the most experienced of bike riders pause to behold its excellence. The basic layout is an overhead valve vertical twin with a full roller bearing lower end. The crankshaft comes apart, since the rods are solid. Large bearings on each end give a hint that MV expects this plot to run for a long time.

The cylinder has alloy fins shrunk on cast-iron liners and the finning is quite generous. The alloy head is also covered with deep fins, so that engine cooling is ultra-efficient on this rig. The absence of oil lines and gasket surfaces lets the mill run very clean.

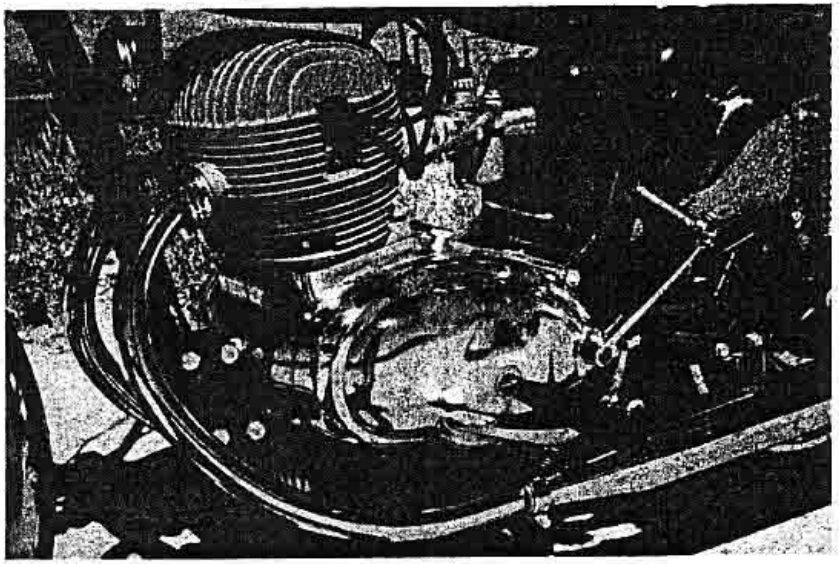
This attention to detail is obvious

a healthy heave every time we parked the twin. A side stand would certainly make life a little more pleasant here.

After a leisurely tour we decided to run the MV up and down a winding road to test the brakes and handling. During this portion of the test we always twist a mean grip. We soon discovered that the mill tended to vibrate a little all through the rpm range. Norm Ellison, a top flight mechanic who was along for the test, felt that a top engine mounting bracket would cure the problem since the MV has nothing to anchor down the top half of the mill. Norm's reasoning is that an engine balancing problem usually manifests itself over only a narrow part of the rpm range, whereas an engine mounting problem causes a vibration over a wide engine speed range.

In this road racing part of the test we discovered that the MV has an exceptionally strong set of binders. The rear wheel would lock up with moderate foot pressure and the front tire could be made to squeal with little hand pressure. Yet lockup was easily avoidable.

This braking test revealed one other item about the MV that we did not like and that was the weak front fork. The Ceriani front fork is a small one that would be suitable for a 60 mph 125cc machine. But the 315 pound MV is just too much bike for this fork. A fierce application of the front binder would cause the front end to dip and wobble something terrible, sometimes so bad as to be frightening. We would recommend to Count Agusta that he either put stouter set of Cerianis on the twin or ship us bikes with his own huskier front fork.



The alloy engine is deeply finned. A lack of joints means a clean running machine.

Bend swinging on the twin was great fun until we began pushing through the corners really hard. Then the weak front fork began to wobble and flop around. Handling was light and delicate and the MV seemed quite small for a 250cc twin. With a stouter front fork we are sure that the MV could be hurled into corners with the best.

Out on the open road we cruised the MV at 50 to 60 per with ease. But at 70 mph the bike was beginning to require a good turn of the right wrist. The 5-speed box worked well for hills or passing with fourth gear having a lot of muscle for such things. Fifth cog is not an overdrive on the MV and it feels about right for maximum top end.

On top end blasts, we noticed that the heel end of the Italian-type gearshift lever pressed into the heel of our shoes. If the bike were ours, we would take a hacksaw to the rear part of the cog-swapping lever.

The last part of the test was the full bore blasts through the traps. By then we felt that the MV might surprise us with its high revving mill. The 315 pound weight is a little too much to expect great things from only 250cc at the dragstrip. But for top end we had a hunch that the twin might perform respectably.

On the quarter mile runs we could uncork the mill to eight grand and pop the clutch with safety. The fairly long wheelbase and tall gearing prevented any wild wheelies. The tire would let out a screech and then bog down for about ten yards until the

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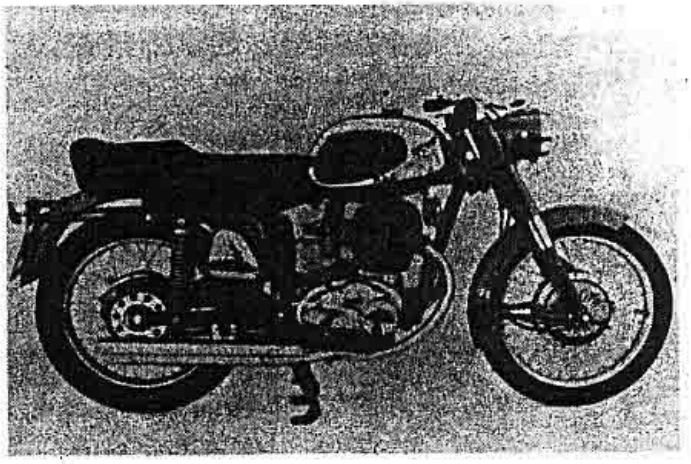
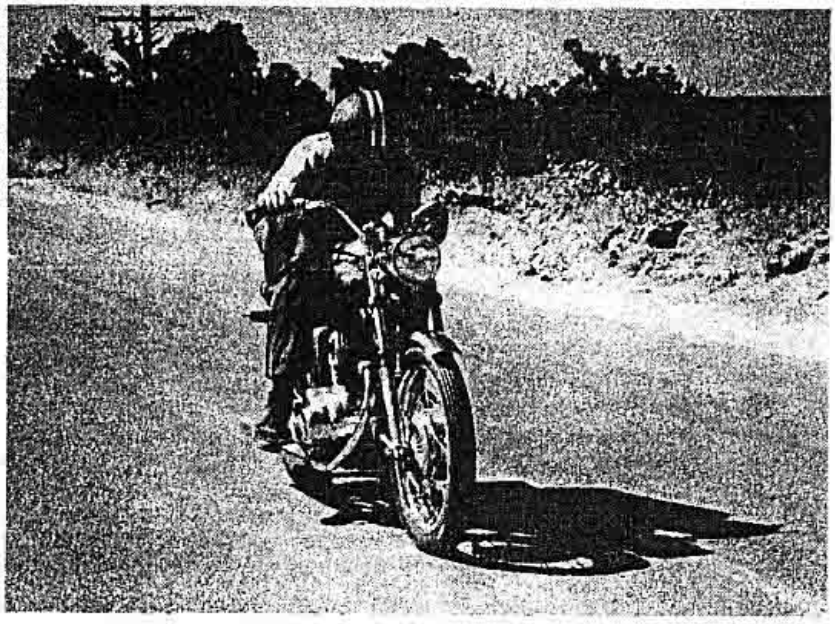


250 MV Agusta

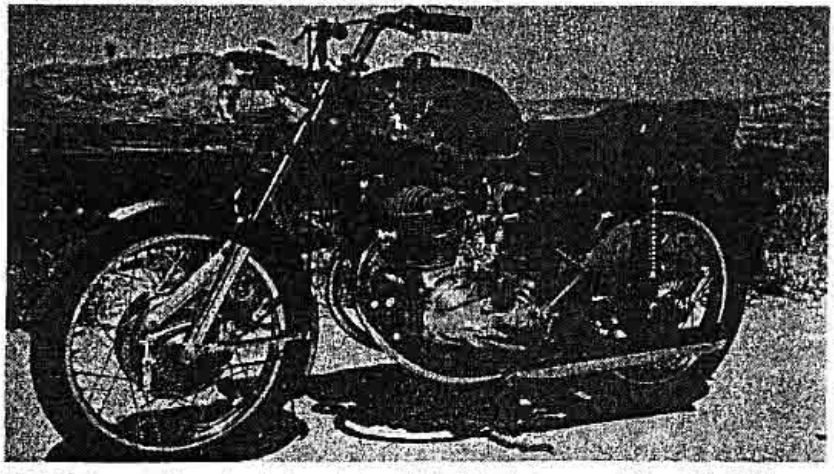
Base Price	$895
Engine Type	OHV vertical twin
Bore and stroke	53 x 56mm
Displacement	247cc
Compression ratio	9.5 to 1
Horsepower	23 at 7500 rpm
Carburetion	Two 22mm Dellorto
Transmission	5-speed footshift
Clutch	Multi-disc, wet plate
Primary drive	Gear
Brakes	Drum
Tire size, front/rear	2.75 x 18/3.00 x 18
Lubrication	Wet sump
Fuel capacity	3.5 gallons
Dry weight	315 pounds
Wheelbase	51.0 inches
0 to 60 mph	10.8 seconds
Stand. start, ¼ mile	17.2 seconds/75.30 mph
Top speed	85 mph



Bike seemed stable at speed but it didn't come close to factory's claim of 93 mph.



Close ratio cog box provides boss acceleration out of corners.



MV Twin has a totally modern design and a beautifully finished appearance. Bike sells for $895.

bike.

The finish of the MV is superb with flawless welds and meticulous assembly being especially notable. The fenders, gas tank, headlight and some other small parts are stainless steel. The paint scheme is a pale blue. The only thing we did not like was the fuel tank; which resembles the Japanese makes of a few years back with its hump-in-the-top shape. We feel that the tank is ugly and detracts from an otherwise perfect appearance.

The exhaust system consists of two low level pipes with large mufflers that emit a soft and endurable note. The fenders are the narrow sports type while the bars are upswept and very comfortable for most uses. The Italian version for home country use has low bars and deeply valanced fenders. The seat on the MV is a two level affair that allows the passenger to see over the rider's shoulders. But no rear footpegs were fitted on the model we tested.

When it came time to wring out the little twin, we really didn't know what to expect since very few models have reached our shores and virtually no data is available on the bike. The literature furnished us did state that the twin would spin to 7500 revs and churn out 23 hp which should provide respectable performance. The bore and stroke is rather long which often indicates that the torque can be more substantial than the peak horsepower indicates.

Starting the MV was no chore at all. A light prod or two on the kickstarter brought the mill to life. Mechanical noise was very light. Once warm, the twin idled smoothly and reliably. We have always preferred a right side kickstarter but the MV was the most convenient left side starter that we have ever used.

The next step was a tour about a park, which revealed that the MV had an especially comfortable seat and a good set of handlebars for about town riding. The gear ratios on the 5-speed box are well spaced and first cog was not so high that we had to slip the clutch to get underway. Handling was light and very responsive and the suspension was soft and smooth over the usual bumpy streets. The gearbox was a delight to shift. Crisp, short dabs of the toe was all that was required and the absence of gear crunching or clutch hangup was immediatly noticeable.

One negative thing that we found was the absence of a side stand for the bike. The center stand required

in the valve cover, a one-piece affair that is deeply finned—a move that provides a minimum of oil seepage and a maximum of cooling.

The MV mill was designed to run strong but smoothly. So a pair of 22mm Dellorto carbs are used in conjunction with a pair of moderately sized valves. This combination provides good low speed draft and easy starting, since the carbs are not really large. Yet the volume is there to spin the mill tight enough to churn out some fairly good sized horses. The cam appears to be healthy but not radical, so that the overall performance is both docile yet spirited. The accent is on producing a bike that goes well but still has gentlemanly manners. MV appears to have succeeded admirably at producing such a bike.

The ignition system consists of a dynamo and battery setup. The lubrication system is the wet sump type with a finned sump case beneath the crankcase, which is a popular approach for Italian designers. The advantages are a lack of oil lines and a quicker warming up of the oil. The disadvantages is less engine cooling by the oil compared to a dry sump system.

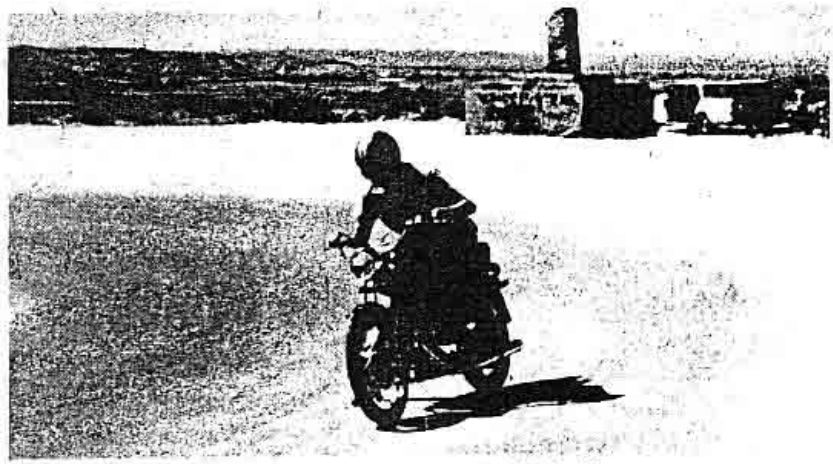
The power transmission system consists of a set of helical gears from the engine shaft to the gearbox with the multi-plate clutch running in oil. The gearbox is a five-speeder with a heel-toe shift lever on the right side. The kickstarter is mounted on the left side.

The frame is a single loop type that utilizes the crankcase as the bottom frame section. The rear frame is an arced affair and an orthodox swing arm is used. The shocks have progressively wound springs that are chromed and exposed but they do not adjust for varying load.

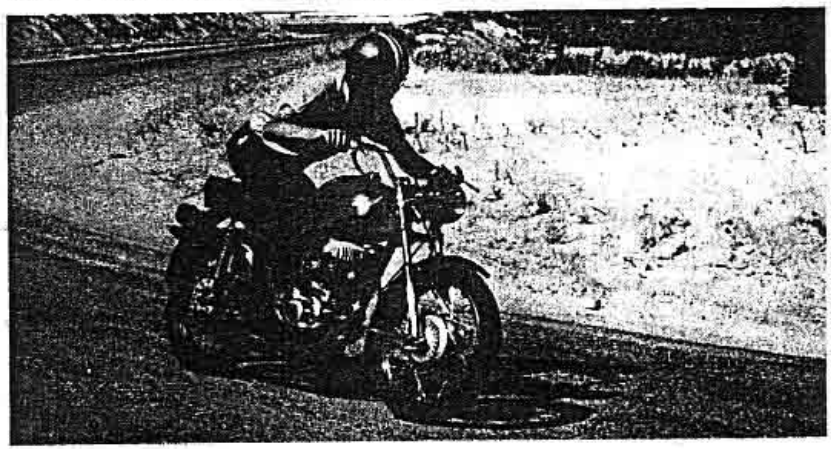
The front fork is a small Ceriani. In Italy a larger standard MV fork is used. Perhaps the MV people think that U. S. roads are rough and the added travel of the Ceriani fork is needed.

The wheels are 18-inchers with a 2.75-inch rib tire on the front and a 3.25 block skin on the rear. The speedometer is driven from the front wheel, which is more accurate than a rear wheel speedo due to the absence of wheel and clutch slippage. We also noticed that MV has put a small brake light switch on the front end in the event that only the front binder is used to slow things down a bit.

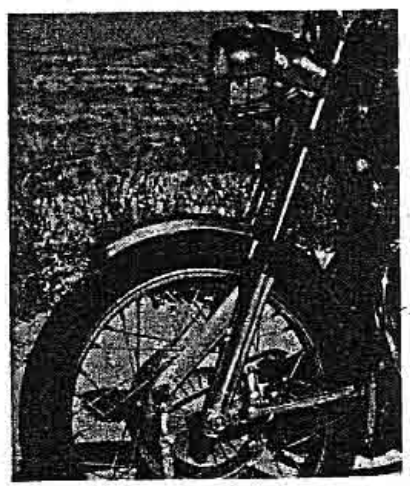
The brakes on the MV are huge and more than sufficient to handle the weight and speed involved. The front binder measures 1.2 x 8.0 inches and it is of the twin leading shoe type that provides immense braking power with only moderate hand pressure. Both hubs are of alloy and finned for cooling, so brake fade should never be a worry on this



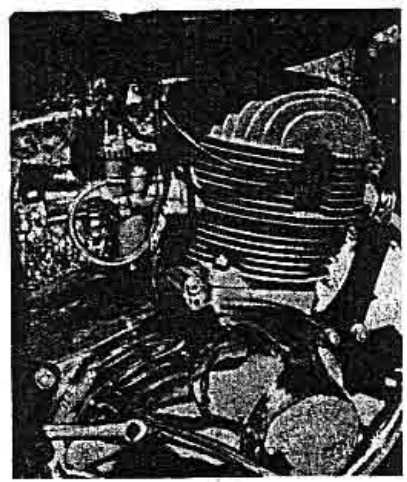
MV offers a comfortable ride, smooth shifting gearbox and nimble handling.



Roadtester plays road racer on a tight turn.



Ceriani front fork is not nearly stout enough for the 315 pound bike.



A pair of 22mm Dellorto carburetors provide the draft for the 7500 rpm engine.

MV AUGUSTA

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mill got to buzzing. From that point on the MV was on its way to 17.2 second quarters at around 75 mph.

For top end, fifth cog seemed about right. A wee bit of jet changing on the two carbs soon had the MV buzzing its game little heart out. We ran in the low 80 mph range consistently and even recorded one 85 mph blast when really tucked in *à la* road racer. The factory claims 93 mph, which might be possible under perfect conditions. But we really doubt if the bike will go that fast.

After we had finished with the speed tests, we could not help but notice how clean the MV had run. The cases and covers had not seeped a drop and only a few drops of oil found their way to the rear wheel. We would rate the MV very high in this respect.

At $895, the 250 MV Agusta isn't the cheapest 250cc machine around. But the bike does have watchlike precision and refined manners. And class. For snob appeal at a reasonable price, it's a bargain.