OVER THE BIRDSVILLE BY BIKE

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two wheels

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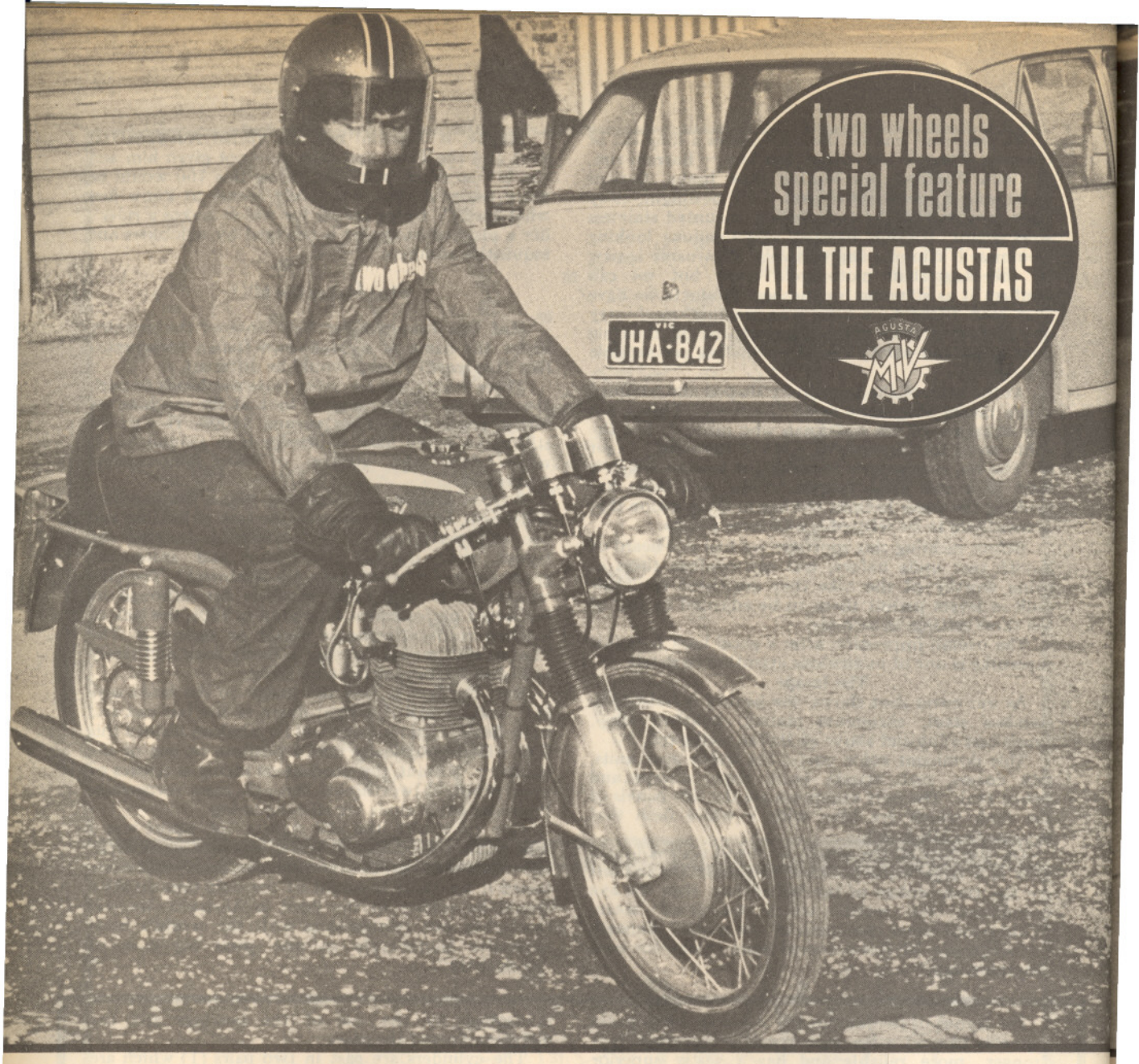
Test Special

ALL THE AGUSTAS 750·350·150

BOB SHARP—OUT FOR THE RECORDS



MV AGUSTA 350

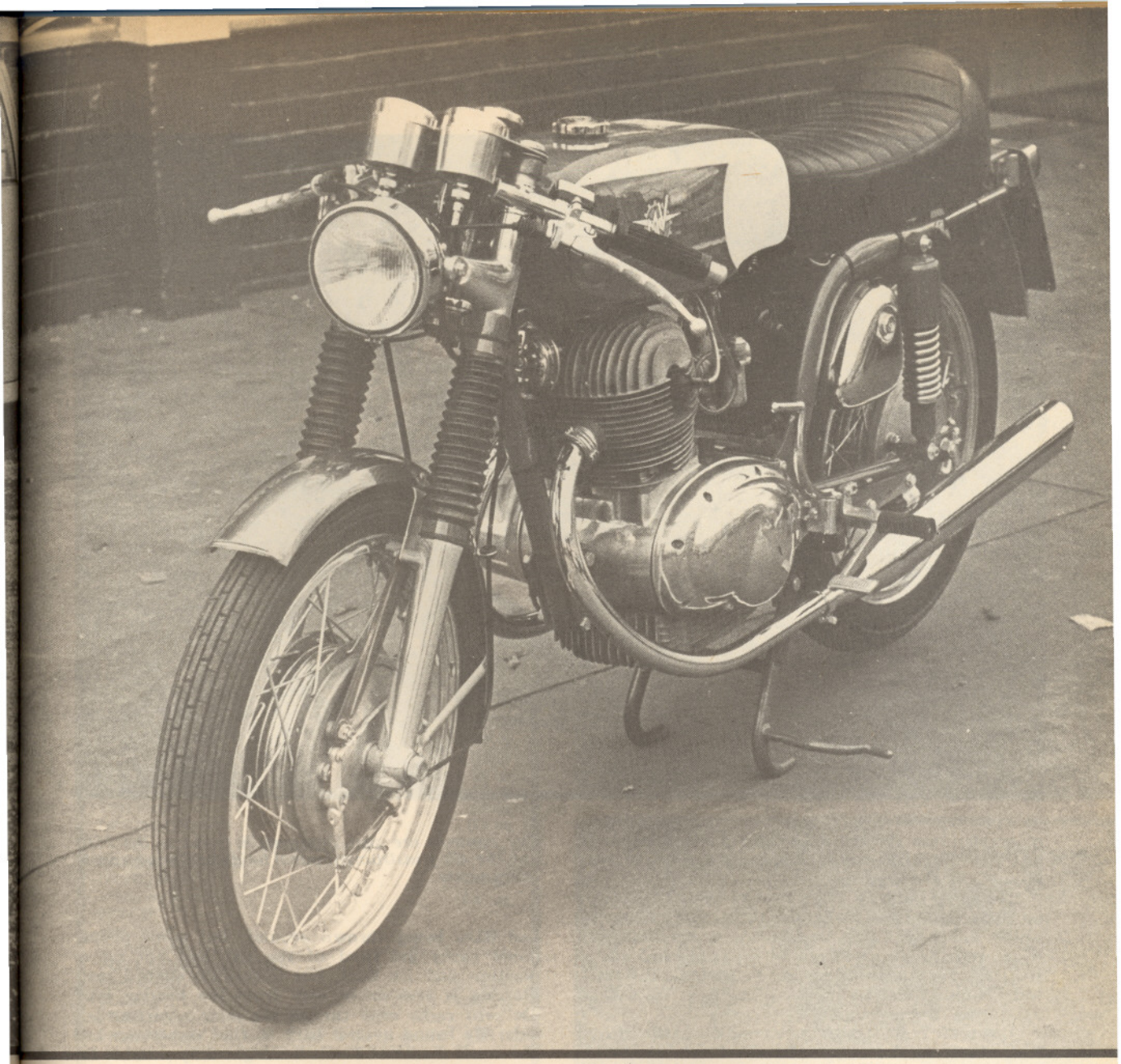
old, but alive!

MV's concept of a sports single is robustly efficient — but does the name make up for the bike and its price?

"OKAY, SO YOU'RE RIDING an MV 350 — and MV do win the 350 world championship, but the bike you paid $1200 for has a frame like a pre-war Velocette and a motor that looks like a split single Jawa two-stroke."

In a way he was correct; the makers do stick their rectangular badge on top of the tank boasting the number of world championships they have won. It may be all right for the glamorous 750 but it is completely out of place on this 350 — a bike as far removed from the modern racing bike design as it is possible to imagine.

The basic machine was designed in the early fifties and apart from the brakes, suspension and pretty trimmings, is unchanged. The motor looks mid-fiftyish and resembles the old Jawa, just as the observer said. The seat, tank and front end look attractive but they do little to alter the basic image. But the fact is that the motor is sufficiently powerful



A four-stroke twin, but by curious co-incidence the powerplant resembles a much earlier two-stroke. The 350 has undeniably racey lines.

and durable enough to last for many years to come, and the frame is certainly stiff enough.

Such is the MV 350; it is a well-built little middleweight with racey lines around an old design that will set you back a cool $1200.

We picked up the bike from Bob Jane's new Footscray shop in Melbourne, and took it straight out on the nearby Geelong Road which is a fast multi-laned highway.

Like the 750, the riding position is strictly racing — but a good racing one for the hand and foot controls are perfectly located. The few miles through the suburbs confirmed what anyone can expect from rearsets and clip-ons — fun for the first few minutes followed by a gradual feeling of discomfort.

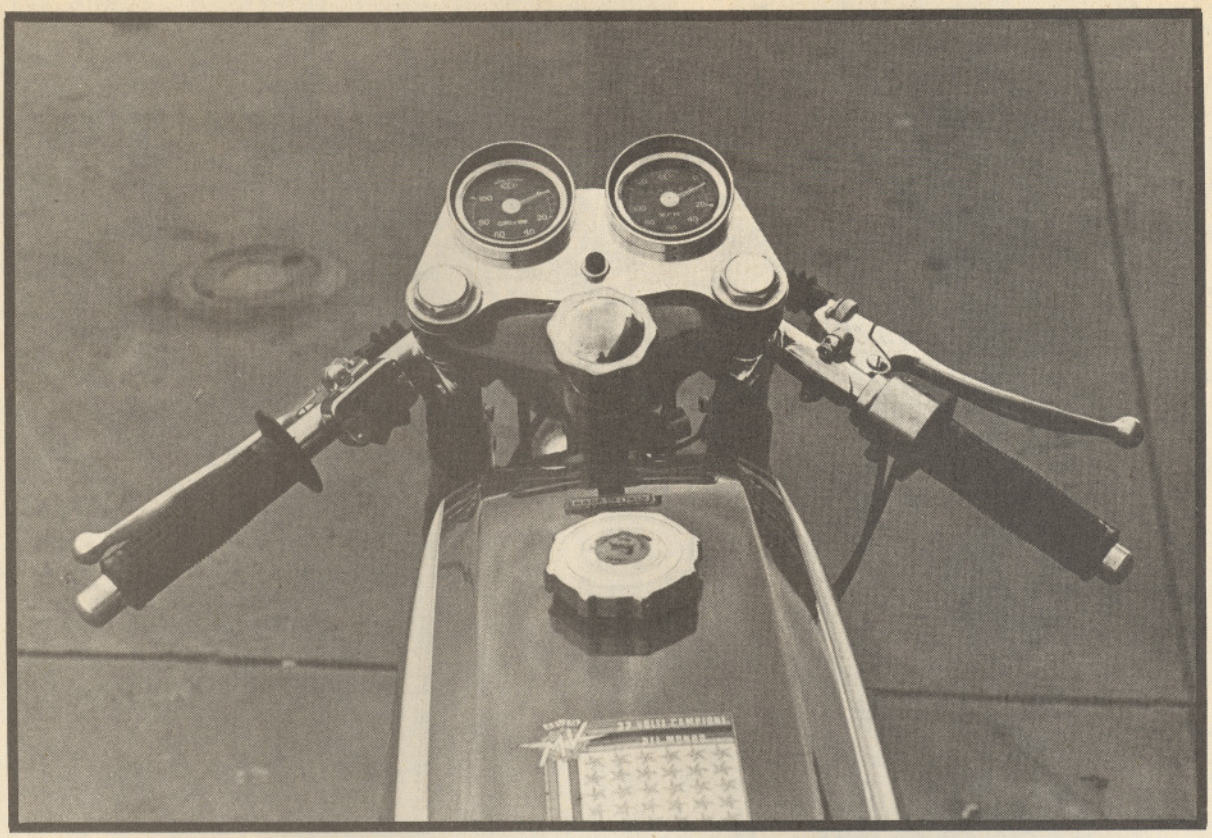
Mixing it with the fast-moving, inter-city, highway traffic lifted the weight from the wrists and the 70 mph ride became enjoyable. At this speed a fair amount of vibration can be felt through the pegs and bars. It won't worry riders, but it murdered the little CEV instruments. They're the size of 20 cent pieces, and their lack of accuracy is laughable. Not only are they plus or minus accurate readings at any time (as our speed trap proved later) but they are slow to react.

At the end of the morning with more than 100 miles of city and highway riding completed we arrived at Calder Raceway to run performance figures.

Revving the engine to eight grand produces lively acceleration through the close-ratio gears. Down the long straight and into Repco corner the braking was left quite late — a mistake not to be repeated!

The front stopper is a grabber of the first order when the lever is pulled hard. There is not a trace of progression, just one almighty dig-in of the front tyre as the forks slam down to full movement. Presumably the only way to cure this (although we didn't get the opportunity to prove it) would be to taper the leading edges of the brake linings.

Leaning it deep into Repco showed the clearance to be good and the quick burst up through the gears along the back straight soon brought us into the esses. After taking the righthander and making a short bit



The controls are also Tommaselli (same as the 750) but the alloy instrument panel holds badly inaccurate instruments.

of acceleration for the next bend the throttle could just be closed to utilise surprisingly good braking effect from the engine.

Throwing the bike down into the only left hander of the circuit caused one almighty scrape from the centre stand, causing involuntary straightening up which put the bike well off on the right hand side of the track for Gloweave corner. It needed a full track wide S movement to approach the next right hand bend from the correct angle.

Down the main straight again and on to the second lap, where a rider could rest the front part of his bucket helmet on the tank cap to achieve the excellent streamlining this 350 offers. We soon forgot the clutch and going up and down the box merely became a few short but firm prods on the lever to maintain the revs between six and eight thousand. Under these conditions the bike returns just under 50 mpg and even after many laps no oil could be seen from any of the engine joints.

Though the machine lapped the circuit quite fast for a 350 it did so only because of its light weight. The actual pick-up is quite sluggish by modern standards and it takes some time before the full 28 horses can be used to their full advantage through the 300 pound bike.

We are surprised just how stiff the frame is, but the makers could have obtained the same amount of rigidity by using modern double loop, small diameter, light wall tubing in a triangulated layout. The result would be a substantial weight saving as well as looking a bit more contemporary than the existing configuration.

Admittedly a single front tube looks alright but the huge swinging arm mounting plates and those large unsightly boomerang-cum-banana oval tubes up to the top of the units are not really acceptable nowadays.

As an about-town ride the 350 S is certainly lively and likes being thrown around, but some people could easily get tired of the out and out racing position and its hard, but beautifully-shaped seat. Starting is reasonably easy from the touring type Del'orto carbs even though the lever is on the left side. We found neutral hard to find sometimes and the small diameter 6 volt headlight only suitable for lit roads.

On the mechanical side the bike should last a long time because it is hand-built out of substantial components. The front end is exceptionally strong with efficient forks holding the big 8 inch brake, Sanremo alloy rim, stainless guard and those immaculate Tommaselli controls.

That old-looking engine could give its best for many years if an owner fits air filters on the twin carbs.

The chromium plating on the exhausts is thin and the bracket that holds the silencer on to the frame will rust up inside a couple of months. However, this would be the only complaint about the quality, as the remainder of the welds, fittings and deep and extensive red paintwork is excellent.

The bike attracted a fair bit of attention whenever it was parked. Why, we were not too sure — was it the unusual lines or the distinctive red paint? So we used some black masking tape to cover the MV badges on the tank and the "Champion of the World" rectangle by the filler cap.

It became just another bike in the parking lot, which just happened to be red with clip-on bars. No one bothered our rider with questions about MVs and their prices, no one even took any notice of the machine — must be a moral there somewhere. *

RIGHT:
The front brake is powerful — but a desperate grabber. Quite a different performance from when we tested the 500 Guzzi (same system) a few months ago.

SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE . . . . . **MV**
MODEL . . . . . **350 S**
PRICE **$1199**

ENGINE: 349 cc ohv parallel twin, all-alloy motor. Gear driven from all roller crank to rear positioned single camshaft. 63 mm x 56 mm bore and stroke, 9.5:1 compression ratio developing 28 bhp at 7600 rpm.

TRANSMISSION: Gear drive to wet multiplate clutch. Five-speed constant mesh gearbox. One up, four down.

FRAME: Single tube, top and front using engine as stressed member.

SUSPENSION:
Front: Telescopic fork (one way damping).
Rear: Swinging arm (non-adjustable units).

BRAKES:
Front: 8 in. twin leading shoe.
Rear: 8 in. single leading shoe. 18 in. wheels.

CAPACITIES:

Fuel tank	3½ gal
Oil tank	4 pints
Transmission	4 pints

DIMENSIONS:

Weight	315 lb
Wheelbase	52 in.
Overall length	83 in.
Overall width	26 in.
Overall height	39 in.
Seat height	33 in.
Ground clearance	8½ in.

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION:

0 to 60 mph	7.4 sec
Standing ¼-mile	15.8 sec

SPEED:

Maximum	94 mph
Comfortable cruising	45 to 75 mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION:

High speed	51 mpg
Cruising	82 mpg

BRAKING:

From 30 mph	20 ft

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE

Change plugs	1 min
Remove rear wheel	6 min
Adjust contact points	9 min
Check transmission oil	1 min
Check tappets	25 min
Adjust brakes	10 min
Adjust chain	8 min
Top up battery	8 min

HOW DO THE FINER POINTS SCORE
(out of 10)

Instrumentation	4
Seat comfort	4
Tool kit	5
Quality of finish	9
Vibration	6
Lighting	6
Positioning of controls	9
Spares availability	3

CENTRE RIGHT:
The four-stroke twin is quite lacking in the angular proportions of modern design. It is very strongly built — but would last longer with filters.

RIGHT:
Robust, oval-sectioned tubes reach from the swinging arm to the rear suspension's top anchorage, but triangulation would offer the same rigidity with less weight.