

FIRST TEST:

1976 MV AUGUSTA 750 SPORT AMERICA



Your basic \$7000 commuter special

by the Editors of BIG BIKE

SHAKASHAKASHAKASHAKA—
click.

"Kin I help yuh?"

"Yeah. Gimme the premium
nozzle."

Shung. Clak. Thung. Hmmm-
gurgle.

"Say, whad kina bike is that,
anyway?"

"It's an MV Augusta."

"Whud?"

"MV Augusta."

"Ugm."

Gurglethinkhmmclack.

"Dollar thirty seven. How big is
it?"

"Seven fifty."

Thung.

"Ump. How fast?"

"Ohhhh. Maybe 135. Or so."

"Where's it come from?"

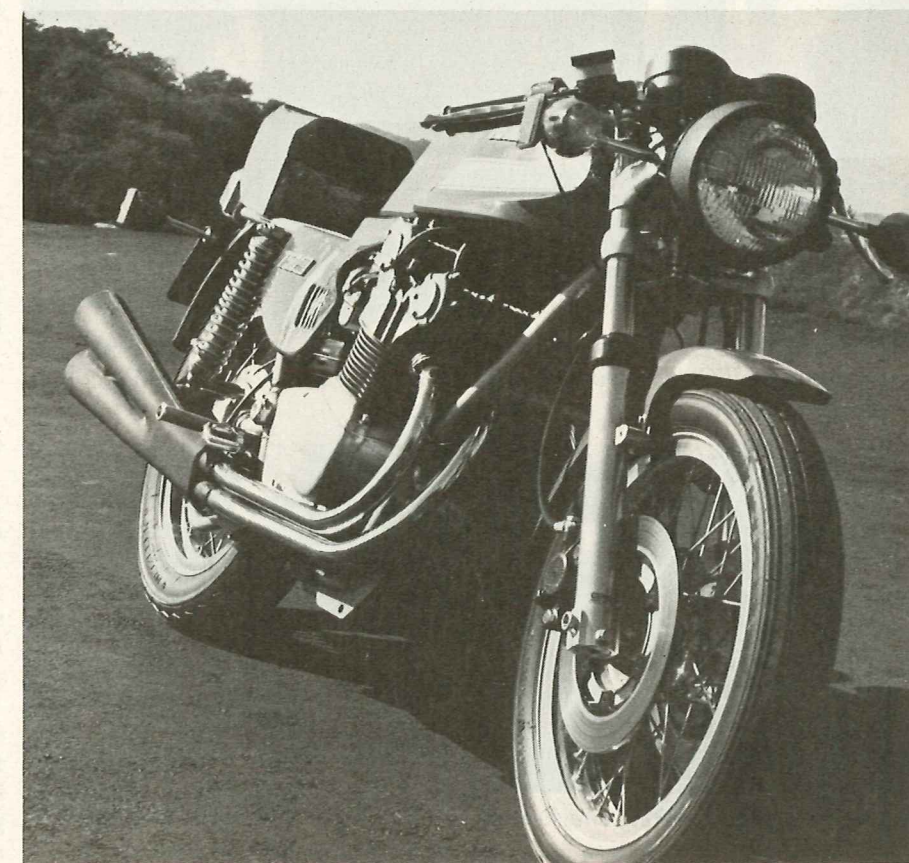
"Italy."

"How much it cost?"

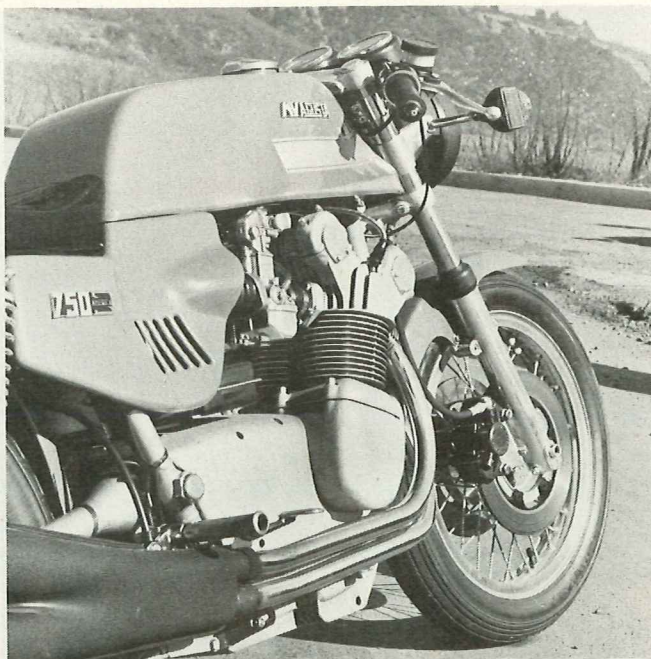
"Uh. Sixty five hundred."

"SIXTY FIVE HUNDRED
DOLLARS! You're kiddin'."

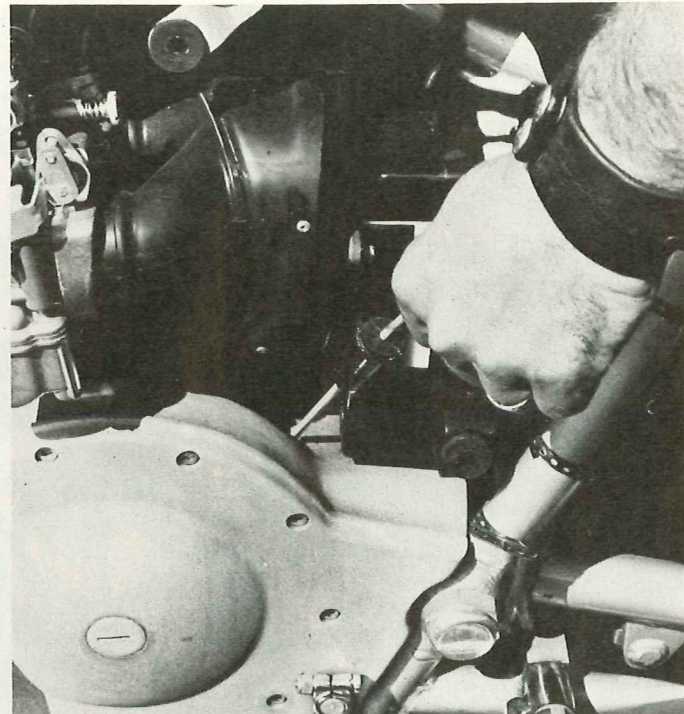
"Nope."



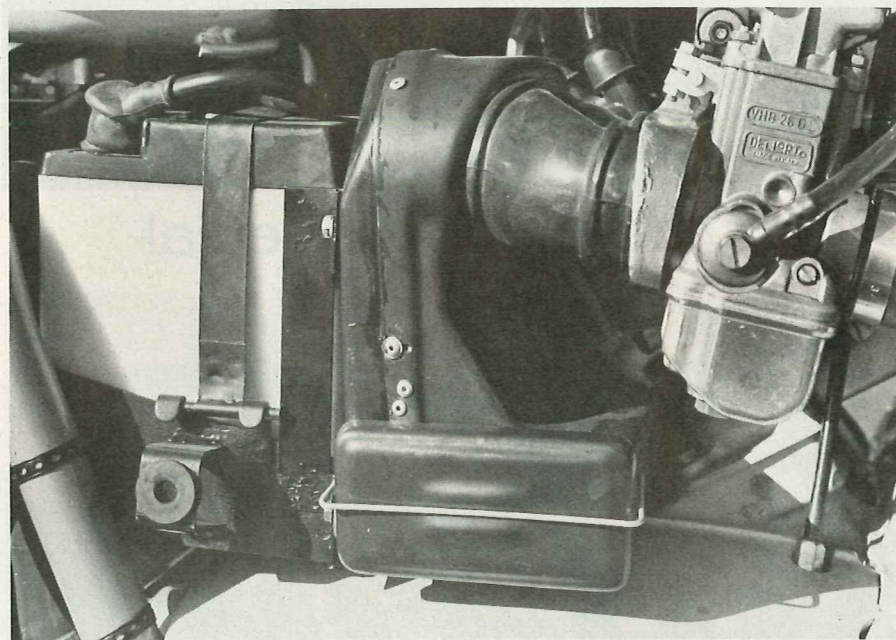
FEBRUARY 1976



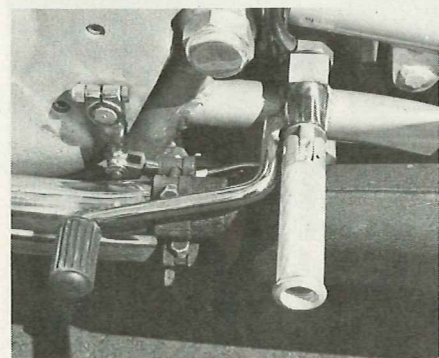
The engine is cast fairly unconventionally — the entire engine mounts to the casting below the barrels, and can be disassembled by removing this unit.



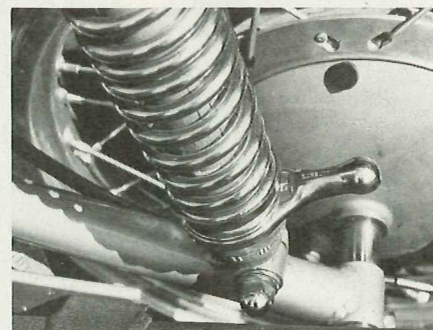
The dipstick is simply a chunk of rod, with a rubber cork.



Four 26mm Dell'Ortos provide the mixture. The battery is a healthy 12-volt, 32-amp/hour item.



Rider footpegs are merely checkered steel items.



Passenger footpegs aren't provided — although the shock adjustment knob can provide a toehold.

"Sixty-five hunnerd . . . Hey, George, c'mere an' look at . . ."

Two days on the 750cc MV Augusta Four, and we understand: Ferrari owners beating to death gas station attendants;

J. P. Morgan telling somebody who asked how much it cost to own a yacht, "If you have to ask, you can't afford it";

Even . . .

Rolls Royce charging \$120 for a replacement Flying Lady grille ornament.

We understand.

We think.

The MV Augusta is, without question, the most expensive, exotic and bizarre motorcycle that has ever filtered around our inexpensive, exotic and flat-freako offices. Ever.

We were offered the first test on the production version of the MV export model by its importers, The Garville Corporation (if you want one, contact them at 200 Clearbrook Road, Elmsford, New York 10523. Don't wait for ads in your local phone book).

There will be about 50 of them imported every year. Adequate spare parts will be available from the importer. And, yes indeed, they'll cost you at least six and a half grand. Plus tax and license.

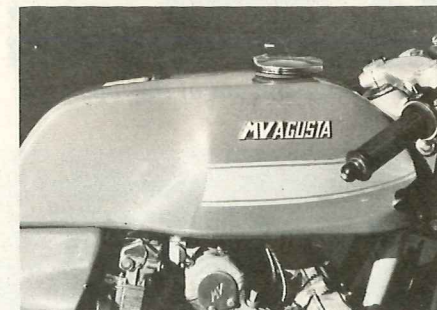
Why, in God's name, a bike that expensive?

That's ridiculous.

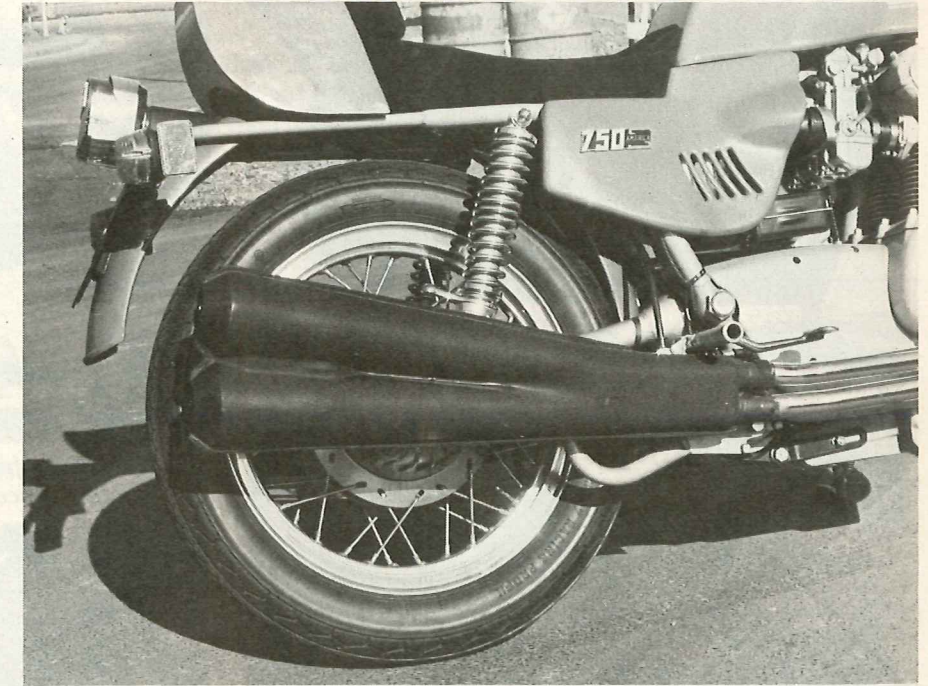
Maybe.



This is handmade fiberglass. Obviously. Gawd. What's the matter with mold lay-ups, anyway?



Five gallons of fuel rest inside the fat guppy tank.



The exhausts keep the note legal. An option from the dealer are chrome loud pipes.

If success in 1984 required Doublethink, success in understanding the existence and marketing of the MV requires another odd form of head:

Richthink.

The importer said, flatly, "This is a rich man's toy."

So it is.

Maybe that is the best place to start.

America is too much a money culture. Something which costs two grand must be better than something costing a single thou.

True.

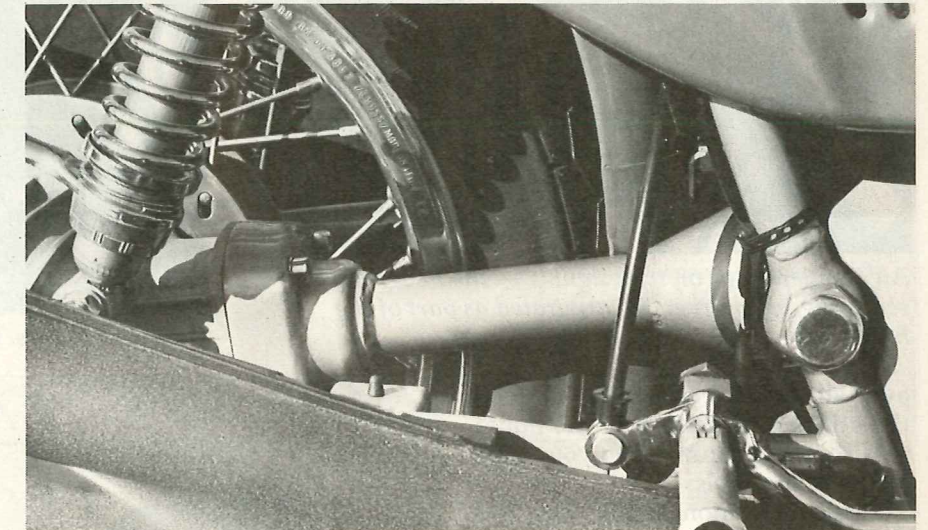
But that doesn't explain the continued success of a number of things. Is the new Rolls Royce going to be worth — whatever the hell worth means — fifty-five thousand dollars more than a Cad Seville?

Is a Ferrari "worth" almost thirty grand?

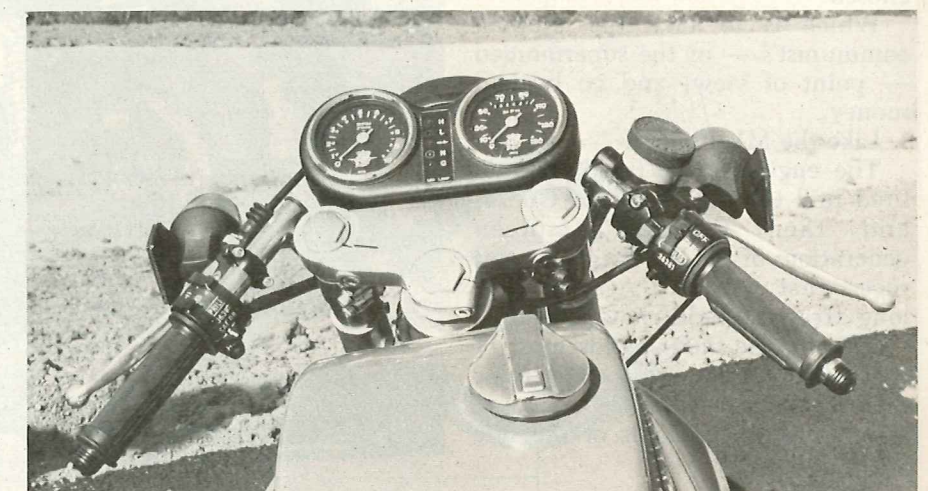
Is Pollack's "Blue Poles" worth three million dollars?

Money, at a certain income level, ceases to have a dollar reality. You cannot assign a value level to some things. If you do, you will be puzzled by the continued existence of Rolls, Ferrari, Tiffany's, and a thousand other companies who cater to the monied.

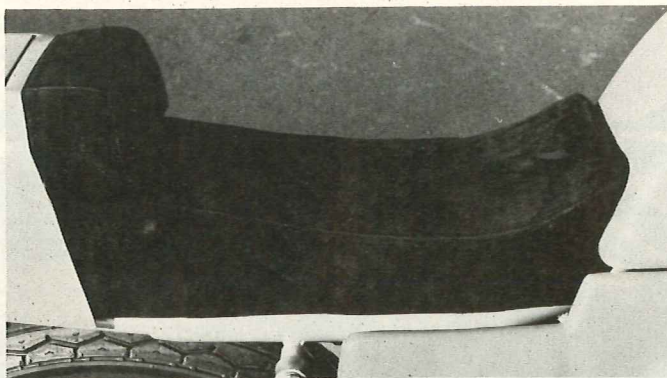
It's entirely too easy to take the ArchieBunker point of view and just say, "Aw, dem people is fools. And all those companies are just ripping them off." Sure. Those people who



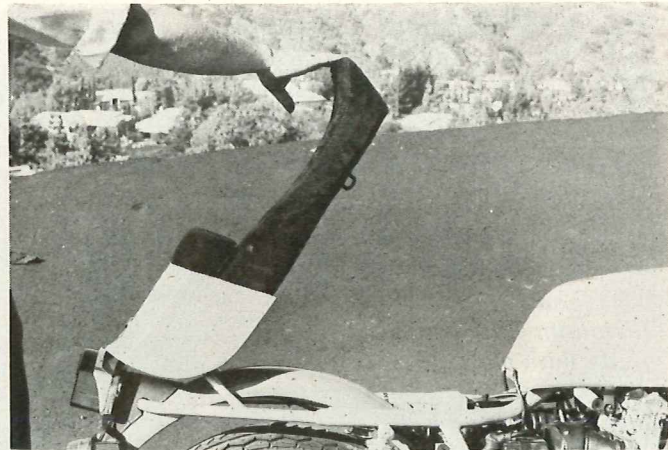
The driveshaft is the left swingarm. It contains seven separate bearings. At its juncture with the frame is the swingarm tension adjuster.



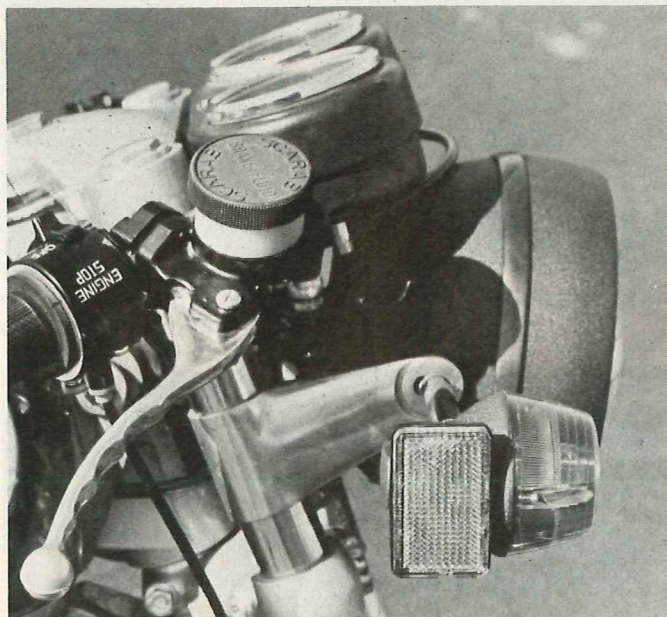
The lights between the speedo and tach are LED items.



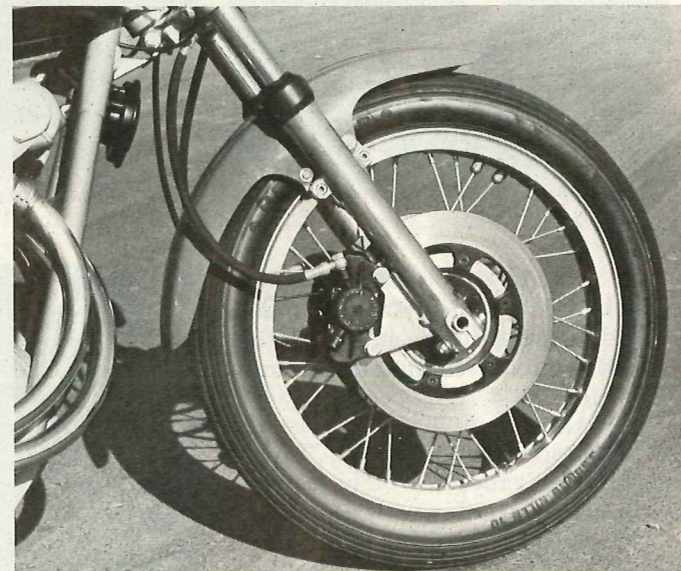
Suede. Real Suede. Comfortable.



The entire seat/fenderlet hinges up out of the way for disassembly or access.



An excellent idea on turn signals — the Federally-required side markers incorporated as part of the blinker.



Dual disc brakes. Of course. Lockheeds. Of course.

own all the oil companies, most of the utilities, 98 percent of the liquid wealth in this country and yours and my asses are fools.

Logical question: How, then, did they get there?

So, another framework has to be chosen.

Which is to take the utopian communist's — or the supermonied — point of view, and go beyond money.

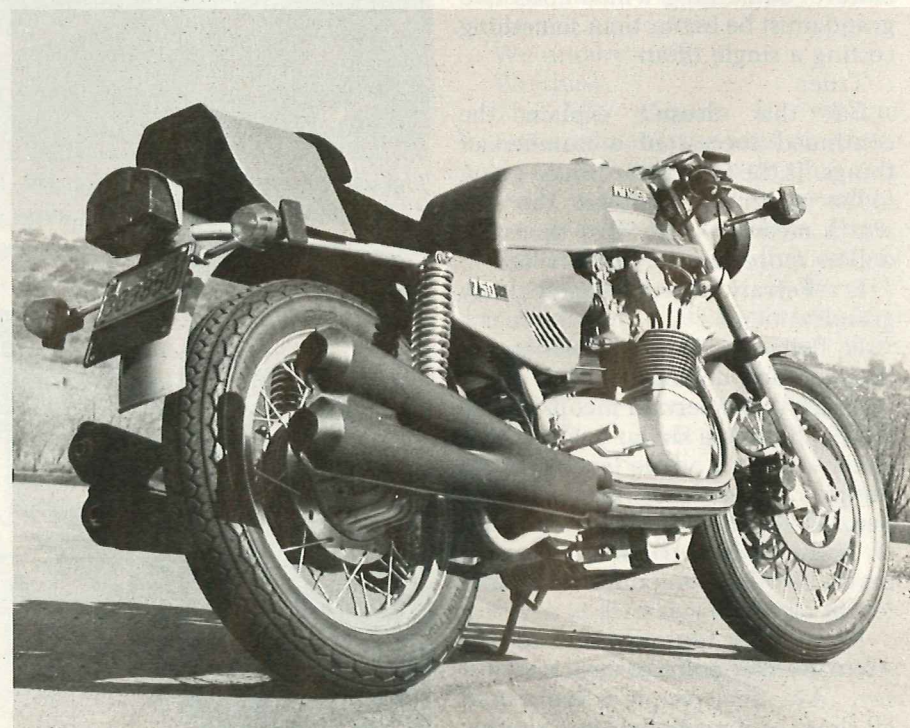
Like the MV Four.

The engine is the familiar race-bred mill that came off of Gilera, and then through umpteen generations of the MV Augusta road racers that propelled Agostini to a long array of world championships.

MV, by the way, builds most of the helicopters in Europe. So their motorcycle trip is sort of a casual thing. The lightweights of the line make money.

The 750 is for . . .

Well, maybe the 750 MV Augusta



Almost seven grand. Sigh.

is for you and I, could we but afford it.

The engine is a straight ol' transverse four-banger. It's got a 67mm bore and a 56mm stroke, with a compression ratio of 9.5:1

It's rated at 75 horsepower, DIN — which works out to about 82 SAE — which is what everybody in this

country uses. It develops 47.8 ft./lbs. of torque at 8500 rpm, which means the thing is never going to be a dragstrip screamer.

The engine is a dual overhead cam setup.

Four 26mm Dell'Orto carbs are used to feed the beast its premium — on which it'll get around 42 mpg.

It has a five-speed, close-ratio gearbox of conventional design.

All in all, so far as general specifications, the engine looks to be more or less conventional. It is.

Where — if anybody out there is still counting dollars — it starts looking exotic is in the specifics.

Continued on page 52

SPECIFICATIONS

Model & Year: MV Augusta 750 "America" — 1976

ENGINE

Engine Type Air-cooled, DOHC four-cylinder four-stroke
Displacement 790cc (48.2 cubic inches)
Bore & Stroke 67mm x 56mm
Claimed BHP Horsepower at RPM N/A
Claimed Torque at RPM ft./lbs. 47.88 ft./lbs. at 7500 rpm
Compression Ratio 9.5:1
Carburetion Four 26mm Dell'Orto VHB26DD
Ignition Battery/coil
Electrical System 12-volt, 135-watt generator
Starting System Electric only
Air Filter Dry paper element
Recommended Fuel High octane premium
Lubrication Method Wet sump, pressure feed

CHASSIS

Color Solid red
Frame Double cradle, tubular steel
Forks Hydraulic telescopic
Rear Suspension Adjustable dampers
Front Tire 3.50x18 Metzeler
Rear Tire 4.00x18 Metzeler
Brakes:
Front Dual hydraulic discs (250mm diameter)
Rear Single leading shoe (200mm diameter)
Curb Weight 235kg (517 pounds dry weight)

CAPACITIES

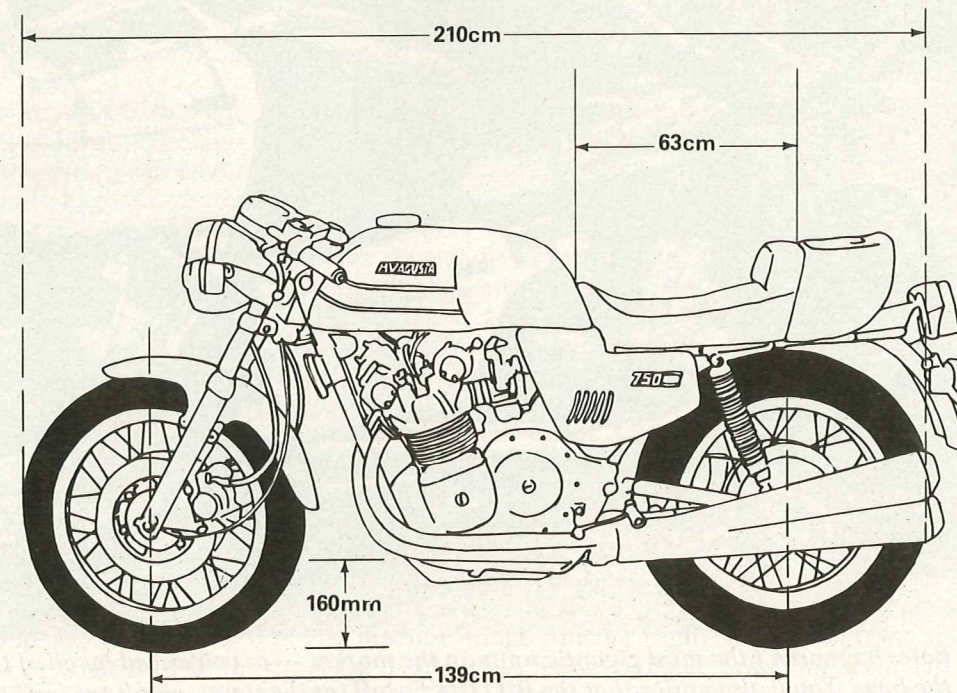
Fuel 19 liters (5.0 gallons)
Engine Oil 4kg
Forks N/A

PERFORMANCE

Weather Conditions 70—75 degrees
Top Speed 218 km/hr (135 mph)
Braking at 40 mph N/A
Front Only N/A
Rear Only N/A
Both Front and Rear N/A

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch Wet, multi-disc
Primary/Ratio 1.066:1
Transmission Five-speed, constant mesh
Ratio 2.38, 1.69, 1.29, 1.09, 1.00
Sprockets None (shaft drive)



The entire lower chunk of the case is a one-piece sandcasting. To get a curved casting like that requires a high degree of skill by the factory — and, knowing sandcasting, probably a very high rejection rate.

The cases don't split as, say, for a Honda Four.

The crankshaft is carried on six separate supports, which are bolted to the upper case — a fairly small unit around the barrels.

This, of course, means that complete disassembly of the upper and lower ends can be done without disassembling the engine — another part of what other companies are pleased to call "race-bred tradition."

Now is when things start getting interesting.

There is not one single plain-bearing on the entire engine.

Not one.

Everything on the mill is either caged ball, needle bearing, or caged roller bearings.

For example, the connecting rods.

Honda Fours, for example, have a

standard bushing — a babbitt-type bearing — on the inside of the connecting rods.

Not MV Augusta.

Each rod has a caged needle bearing set between the rod and the lower end. The lower end is a fairly conventional press-together unit.

The crank is supported at every point across the engine in caged roller bearings. Each end of the crank rides in a caged ball bearing setup.

No chain drives the cam — the cams are driven by three straight-cut gears. No adjustment — ever. No slop. No accident.

The cams themselves have, again, ball bearings on the ends of the shaft. Between each cylinder is a cam support shaft. The shafts all have caged needle bearings.

The cams work directly on the valve cap. Adjustment is handled through shimmming.

The crank connects to the transmission by a gear — there are no chains anywhere on this motorcycle.

There are, by the way, needle bearings on the drive gear.

Transmission gear shafts ride in caged ball bearings.

The driveshaft alone has seven — seven for Gossakes? — bearings.

The electrical system is sort of interesting. It's a generator/starter hookup. When the starter button is depressed, the generator reverses its polarity, drawing current from the battery.

That makes it a starter.

When the button is released, the generator then re-reverses, and begins putting out current. This is a system used on some small bikes, but hardly on any of the conventional large road machines.

The generator provides power to the coils, and from there to a distributor. Firing order is 1-3-4-2.

The exhaust pipes are fairly conventional side-tuck items. They exit in a huge, wrinkle-black double set of mufflers on either side, cast as a single entity.

Oil is measured in pounds (pounds?) — 8.8. The only approved oil, according to the book, is Elf Sportigrade SAE 20W50. Where the hell do you get that?

A neat touch — the drain plug is a

magnetized item, which is something that's available only as an accessory on other machines.

The frame is a pretty conventional double-loop item. The swingarm doubles as the driveshaft. An interesting thing — the swingarm itself is adjustable for tension, with two bolts and a lockbolt on either side of the frame.

Tapered roller bearings are used on the steering head.

The front end is a normal set of 38mm Ceriani road racing items. Conventional in design — but MV is the only manufacturer offering them stock.

Front brakes are double Lockheed disc items.

The rear brake is a straight old drum unit. It's pretty soggy — deliberately. European and racing styles dictate that a rear brake serves only to keep the machine in a straight line, and does nothing to stop the machine. Garville offers softer linings for those American customers who disagree with that theory.

The bike is, of course, set up in semi cafe racer styling, with clip-ons, fat tank and small seat.

The tank is an unusually styled item, which complements the bike to a high degree. As with the seat and sidecovers, the part is fiberglass.

A word here about different styles of thinking. The glass is all hand-laid-up.

Evidently the factory feels that the hand lay-up should be noticeable. Because the fiberglass looks very much like it was constructed either by incompetents, trainees, or the handicapped. The polite word which we grew accustomed to in the old motorcycle magazine days was "cobby."

Maybe so. We prefer crappy.

It is truly appalling.

But somehow, nobody minded that fact.

Same thing with the decals, controls and switches. Rough, not aligned and (in the case of the decals) falling off.

So what?

The seat, by the way, is one of the neatest ideas going. First of all, it's upholstered in suede. Suede? Suede.

The rear of the fenderlet unlocks. Inside there is room for tools, or whatever. Also inside there is access to wingbolts. Unfasten them, and you can slide the fenderlet on the frame rails.

Slide it up to make it a single-passenger racy looking item. Slide it back for your lady to have a place to sit. The seat is very, very comfortable.

One note — at one point in the test, the seat key wasn't included with things. A tester picked up his lady at work, and she rode home sitting on the fenderlet, carrying a bag of Vermicelli and a gallon of Chianti with no evident damage. The glass may be junky looking, but it seemed particularly well laid-up.

Footpegs are cross-hatched steel. Controls are the usual rear-sets — with the rear brake being cable-actuated. We hate that.

Passenger seating, by the way, is sort of interesting. There may be a passenger seat under the fenderlet — but there are no passenger footpegs. A rider carefully tucks his toes on the shock setting knobs.

As with most cafe racers, everything disassembles in short order. The seat hinges back, the tank lifts off, the sidecovers snap free, and so forth.

No trouble working on anything, or getting to anything on the machine.

Enough inspection. Riding.

It is, without question, one of the weirdest sounding bikes ever built, particularly with the quiet exhaust pipes (a 96 dbA set is available — sshhh, don't tell — from the distributor).

Punch the button, and the bike starts.

Always.

No choke.

Punch it and she starts, faster than any other bike we've ever seen.

And the sound?

Well . . .

Picture 27 speed-crazed squirrels, all chasing walnuts around a small aluminum barrel.

Do you have the picture?

Have you considered seeing a doctor lately?

You do, even if you're a little strange, have a pretty good idea of what the MV sounds like.

Love it. Hate it.

It really doesn't sound like anything that you'll be familiar with.

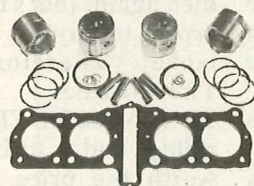
The clutch is a conventional-feeling item. Not so the transmission.

Continued on page 54

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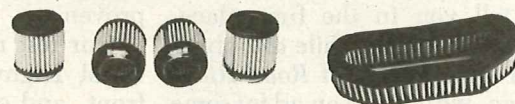


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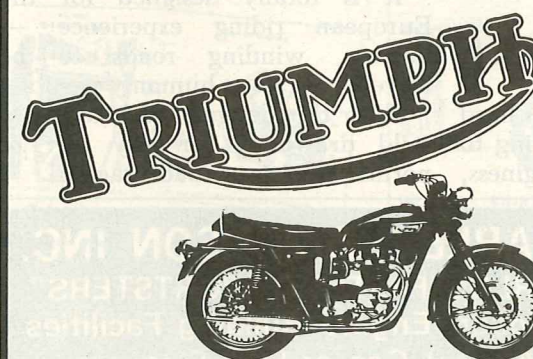
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There is no sort of click, clack or klunk when a gear is engaged. The dogs simply put another gear into place. The MV's box is simply the smoothest transmission we have ever seen — smoother than any hand-prepared, shaved and balanced setup around.

The final drive on our test machine was quite high — so high that the bike required a certain amount of clutch feathering to get off the line. Fortunately MV offers an assortment of drive gears, and any street machine should have a lower setup installed.

Traditionally European performance engines are designed to be wound up. This is especially true with the 750 Four. From zed to about four grand, performance is distinctly unimpressive. From four to the redline at nine, things begin happening. The clatter turns into a powerful churn, and the bike just wants hard.

Again, this is not a machine that is simply putted around, with no attention paid to gears. It is built for the rider — for the person who is interested in staying on the machine constantly.

Especially through corners.

Because here is the MV's strongest point.

The bike will simply lean as hard and as far as the rider is willing to take it, with no feeling of edginess,

or control-edge approaching.

Without having ridden one of the super-handlers, it's almost impossible to describe. Generally you think that this is a chunk of performance most riders simply won't get into.

They'll move at the same rate of speed whether they're on a Ducati or a Sportster.

With the MV, it simply isn't so. The rider, very quickly, finds himself cranking through corners at a speed that would have been previously inconceivable.

All without thinking about it.

The bike handles so superbly that it encourages the rider to push it hard.

You feel quite as much at home at 45 degrees as you do straight up and down.

The large, chubby Metzeler tires offer an almost infinite amount of cling.

And the bike simply won't scrape.

During a photo session, the machine was shot while cornering very hard — so hard that the exhaust pipe scraped. This, with everything tucked up as far as it is, is quite a ways. But the bike didn't present any particular feeling of impending doom before scraping — it just went on leaning.

It is totally designed for the European riding experience — narrow, winding roads to be traveled as fast as humanly possible.

With this design, the bike has a mild drawback for any sort of normal American road usage.

The steering head has a minimum amount of rake. This near-vertical fork angle means that the bike requires constant attention. On a tight, winding road, this is an essential. But on a freeway, the rider finds himself paying an inordinate amount of attention to the machine. Ride it — all the time. Sit back and gather wool, and you'll have wandered over half a lane before you realize it.

The bars aren't conventional clip-ons — they're raised just slightly. This height gives close to the best of both worlds — you're sitting very close to optimum performance riding position, yet not so far as to break your back.

The longer you spend on the bike, the more you understand the European Nature of Motorcycles — to build a machine as mechanically sound as possible, with the finest available parts. Expense be damned — we want a machine that is perfect.

With the total usage of ball and needle bearings, the 750 mill should comfortably outlive any rider's desire to putt the machine. A normal reservation of limited-performance machinery is, of course, the reliability. But with the MV, we wouldn't hesitate to take the bike coast-to-coast.

It performed superbly in every manner we could think of (save, of course, the quarter-mile. With its gearing so high, we didn't bother to run it — figuring that the thing would run through in the high 13s — hardly an impressive figure).

So, back to the bottom line.

Six grand and then some. Seven by the time you get it out the door.

After a few hundred miles on the bike, that didn't seem like an exorbitant figure.

Possibly we've lost sight of the reality of money.

But to our way of thinking, the MV Augusta would have to be rated as an excellent buy.

Expensive, admittedly. But you get a package that is not only guaranteed to turn heads — but keep the rider satisfied for as long as he rides the machine.

And that's got to be the only reason that anyone rides a machine bigger than 300cc.

So, the MV Augusta 750 Four.

It surely is a rich man's toy.

But the rich man is getting one helluva toy for his money.

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