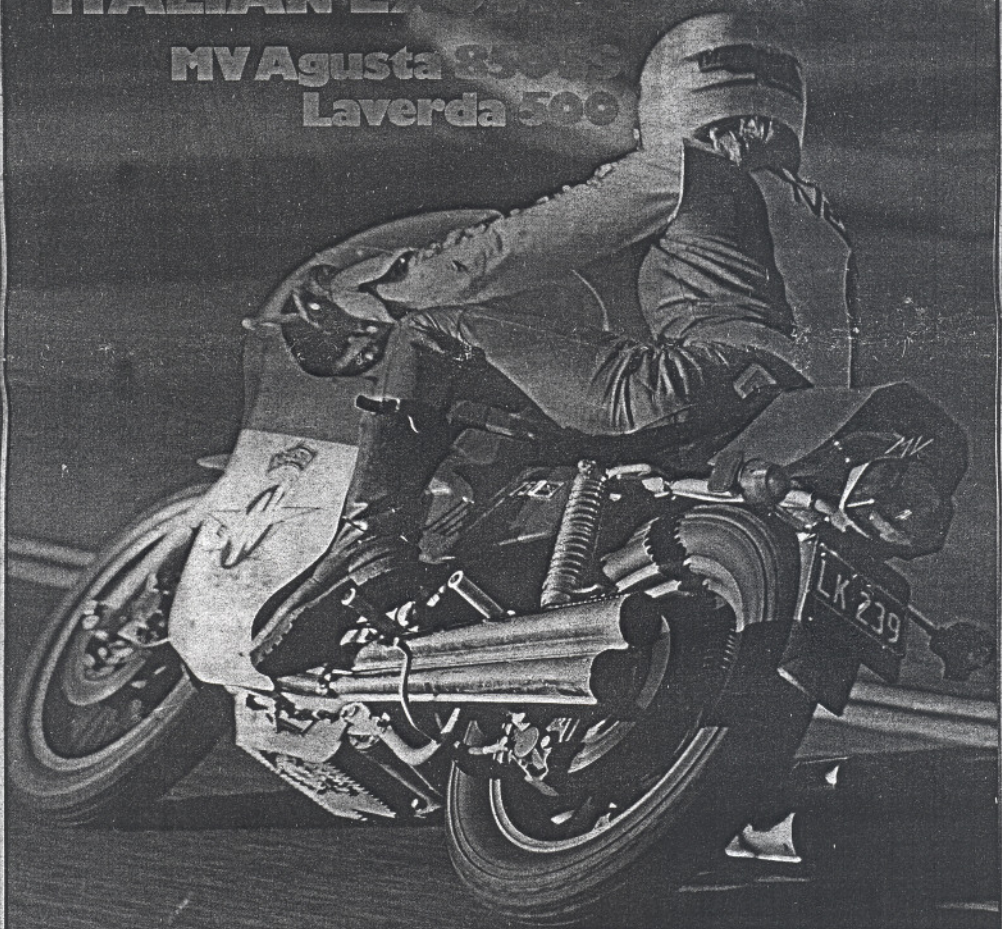


AUSTRALIAN MOTORCYCLE NEWS

ITALIAN EXOTICA

MV Agusta 800SS
Laverda 500



• Ampol round Australia rally
• Mr Motocross Grand Final

The Grand Prix Roadster

It was 6.30 in the morning as I wrenched the garage door open. A few seconds of groping saw me find the switch and the MV appeared.

That was the reason I was there. I'd taken delivery of the machine less than twelve hours earlier and those few miles of night air and the occasional illegal lunge had predicted many miles of thorough enjoyment (the noble bearing of the silver and red bloodhorse does not relate to 'cheap thrills').

But, the restrictive environs of the city, with its four-wheeled obstacles, traffic lights and policemen had emphasised that the MV was intended for greener pastures. Its uncompromising design parameters would not tolerate anything less.

What's more, this machine was no mere mortal MV. It was one of three MV Agusta 850SS machines which had been made under 'special order' for Australian customers (read bonafide motorcycle enthusiasts).

The 850SS is based on the MV 750 America; however, it is produced and built in limited batches in the ex-MV race workshops under the supervision of former MV Race Team manager Arturo Magni. Magni has been involved in all of MV's world road racing championships.

So there I was. I'd managed to talk myself into four days with the machine and I was going to make the most of it.

Wrestling the tailed MV backwards through the doorway quickly reminded me that MV are not afraid of weight when it comes to building road machinery. A thirty-five point turn confirmed my doubts about the narrow lock to lock of the race styled machine.

Rolling the machine backwards onto the centrestand, I prepared for the cold ride ahead. The last areas of unprotected skin were covered with gloves and balacava before I pulled on the helmet.

Nudging the machine from the centrestand, I paddled it down the drive and onto the hill which would take me enough distance to risk starting the machine.

Snicking the lever up on notch and easing in the clutch brought the first few gasps of life from the motor, followed by a distinctive snarl from the four sports mufflers.

The 'Boxer', as it is known in several European countries, simply refused to work at anything less than 3000 rpm so for several miles I used the lower limits of the rev range to give the gear-driven overhead cams a chance to lubricate themselves adequately. The MV snorted and surged its way down the road, almost sensing the coming opportunity to stretch its legs.

Countryside is the only place for machines of the nature of the MV. The four open carburettor bellmouths, the clatter of the chainless motor and the resounding exhaust noise make it exceptionally loud in built-up areas.

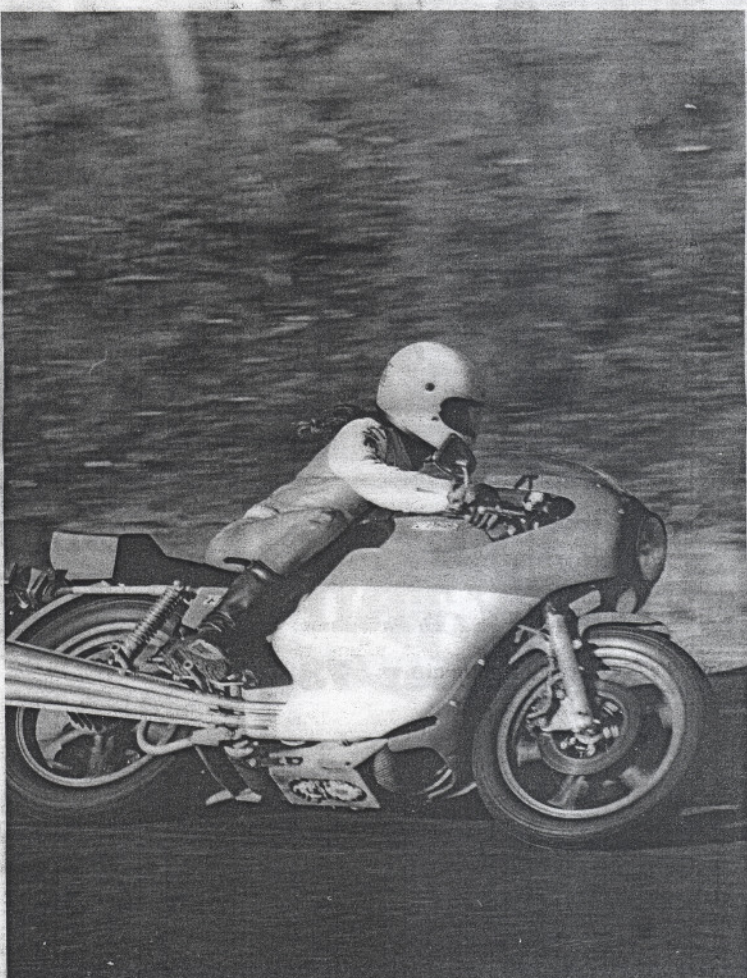
To some, the Boxer would appear a beast; a single-purposed monster designed with illegal intent.

Each to his own. Full appreciation of the Boxer's character can only be had with an integral knowledge of race history and engineering.

The Grand Prix circuits of Europe serve a two-fold purpose to most manufacturers. They present an opportunity to parade their latest technological advances, to flex their muscles in public and gain a quantitative measurement of their superiority or lack of.

Which leads to the second purpose. Success on the GP circuits guarantees sales. Failure reflects accordingly. So before each manufacturer dare steps into the arena it must be confident of the depths of its armoury and the ability of its development engineers.

History has shown that raw money is no substitute for engineering finesse on the Grand Prix circuits.



MV Agusta has always raced with a totally different philosophy to the other manufacturers. Its race efforts were not as much a commercial venture as a hobby for a wealthy Italian Count. Only in the latter years of MV's race effort did it begin to produce race machinery in commercial quantities.

During 20 years of racing MV Agusta survived assaults by all of the Japanese giants and in so doing, it honed its motorcycle building knowledge to near perfection; MV has now quit the race circuits, mainly due to the four-stroke choking FIM noise restrictions and the cost of continuous

four-stroke development; two-stroke technology comes far cheaper than four-stroke.

The same knowledge which built those world-beating GP racers is evident in the design of the MV four-cylinder motor. The 850SS and SSS benefit even more so from the MV race heritage.

Everything about the 850SS radiates precision. The motor has been designed to have an extremely long lifespan. Maintenance and repairs are easily effected thanks to the thoughtful design of the powerplant. The gearbox, for example, is accessible by the removal of a plate under-

neath the motor.

The 'Boxer' also boasts several performance extras over a standard 'America.' Engine capacity has been increased from 750cc to 830cc using 69 mm forged pistons, revised cylinder barrels and a modified crankcase housing to accommodate the larger barrel spigot area.

The standard cylinder head has been retained as it is very efficient in its original form; however, Magni has installed the exhaust camshaft timing on the inlet to give better performance characteristics.

The standard 26 mm carbs from the America have been replaced with 27 mm

And precision was again the way to describe the MV's handling and roadholding. The 850SS was comparable in weight to the heavy megabikes yet it handled speed with contemptuous ease. Fast sweepers were the Boxer's forte. Peeling off at 140 kph any desired point on the oncoming roadway could be traversed with little more than mental input.

Coupling this with the howl of the motor and the full race riding position, it became hard not to fantasize about some imaginary GP battle.

The joys of riding the MV are almost endless in the right circumstances. On a country road the MV could scorch away to its and its riders content. In the city it became a lumpy beast. With the wind pressure off your chest, the MV riding position became immediately uncomfortable, the clutch lever heavy and the exhaust note attracted more than its share of policemen; all were understanding, I might add.

The one high point of city riding was the

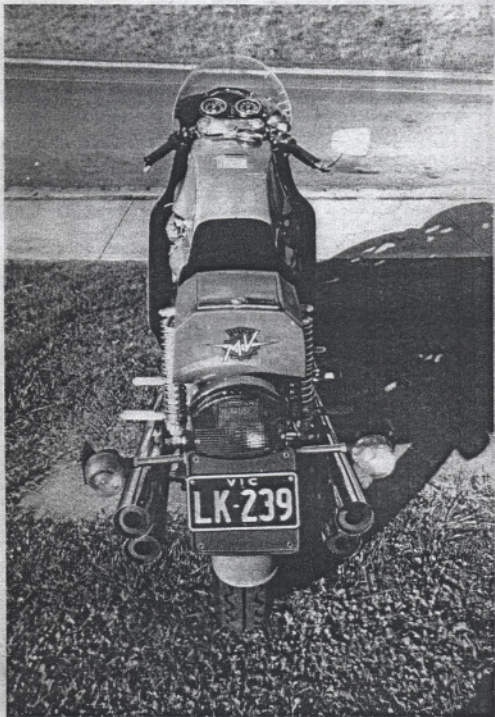
recognition the machine attracted. The MV is far too aristocratic to be passed off as a punk boy racer.

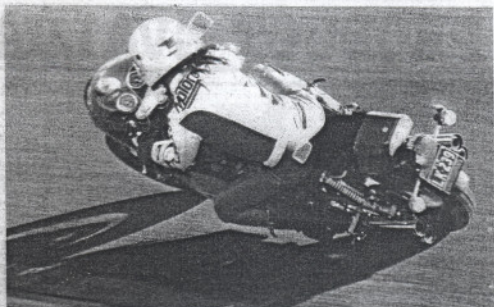
Another trick aspect of the MV's character is its ability to carry two people. The distinctive MV tail section can be slid back to allow barely enough room for a female passenger (two males is pushing things a bit far). That suede seat certainly had its points, so long as it didn't rain.

In summary, the arrogant lines of the MV Boxer contain equally as many subjective reasons for sports riding as does the Harley-Davidson for its market . . . and with the Japanese Yen suffering from a bad case of obesity the exclusive MV Agusta could soon have a relatively non-exclusive price tag. Dellortos and the air cleaner has been dispensed with.

A twin point distributor is used in conjunction with a resistor coil. This unit is obviously of racing origin and would be extremely expensive to manufacture.

— Mike Hanlon





A sports exhaust system has replaced the restrictive America mufflers and even more astounding is the choice of wheels on the "Boxer."

The alloy wheels are exactly the same as those used on the Grand Prix racing MVs and are manufactured to exacting standards by EPM (Elaborazioni Progettazioni Motoristiche).

The brakes are to be treated with the utmost respect being Brembo racing units with a rear disc conversion; the America ran a drum rear brake.

As the MV warmed up the city slowly thinned out and the gearchanges, thankfully, became less frequent. Whilst accelerating, the gears would snick home easily without the use of the clutch; however, the downward changes required hauling hard. MV is not concerned with ergonomics in the least. Its main concern is that each part of the motorcycle meshes perfectly with the next producing a flawless drive chain of unquestionable durability.

As speed increased the MV's power spread became evident. Usable power began at 3000 rpm and began a steady climb upwards until, at 7000 rpm, with the exhausts emitting the fearsome MV war cry, the motor begins a locomotive-like surge which continues until at least 11000 rpm.

The 850SS is rated at 95 bhp and non-streamlined condition is capable of 145 mph. Our test machine came with the standard factory race shell and would have been capable of at least 155 mph.

Although our test period was eventually extended to three weeks we did not attempt any performance figures. Melbourne businessman Kevin Donnellan, the owner of the machine, has seen 10,200 in top gear. By our calculations that works out to 150 mph.

The previously mentioned precision was not confined to the motor.

The Brembo brakes were equal to any we have ever tested, including the plasma units fitted to the Seeley Honda (AMCN August 18). The lever required little pressure to bring the wheels to locking up point. The first time I used the brakes I almost locked the front wheel, being used to the normal stainless steel Japanese items. Once accustomed to the ferocity of the brakes, the bike could be hauled to a halt in surprisingly short distances with extreme confidence.

The firm suspension squatted on application of the brakes and the required speed could be dialed in with precision. Even after quick stops one had the feeling that far quicker stops were easily within reach.

MV Heritage

To buy an MV, today more than ever, means to take part in a programme, to be involved in the MV heritage, the 37 Grand Prix victories and through ownership, be a participant.

And of course, if you are a person who understands this heritage, who feels they would love to join this programme, you would understand that the best is well worth waiting for.

Stocks of new MV Agusta motorcycles will be available late November and covers all models.

MV 125 Sport

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One only MV 870 magni-special and a very limited number of MV racing replica mini bikes.

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