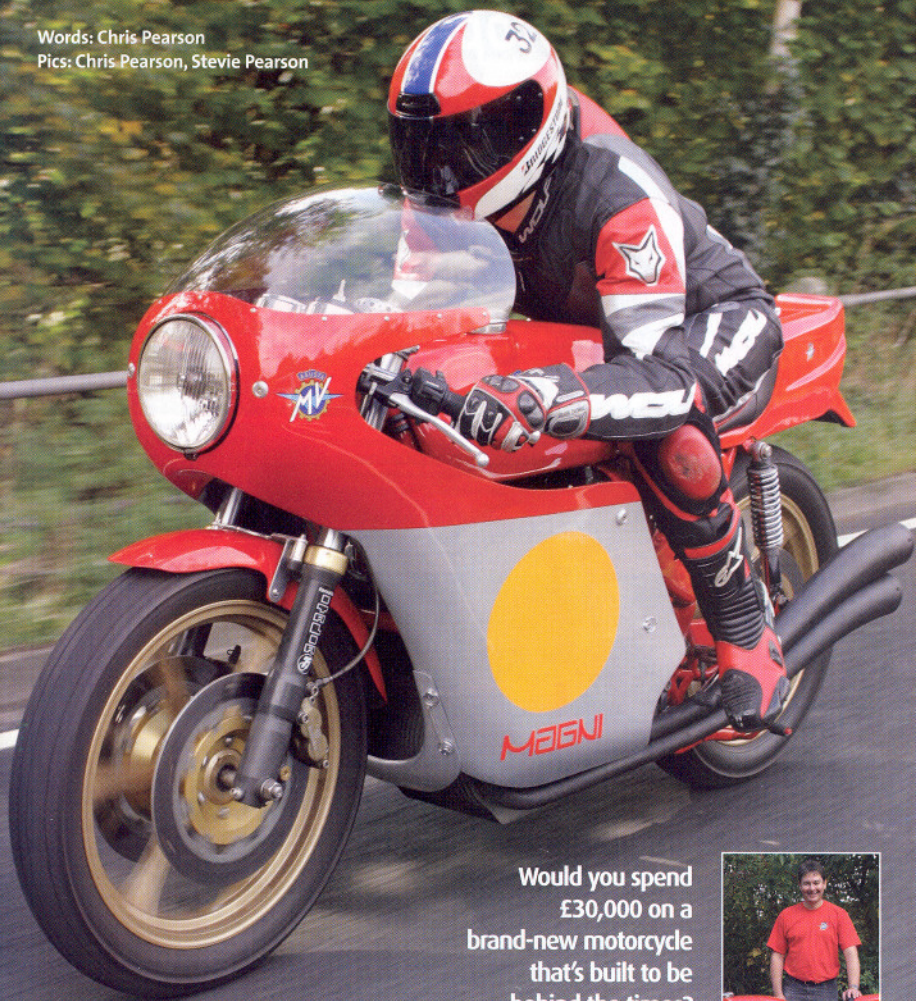


Modern America

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Would you spend
£30,000 on a
brand-new motorcycle
that's built to be
behind the times?
This man just has...



Having been through a not uncommon biking identity crisis, 36-year-old city-based quantity surveyor, Zach Law, who returns to the serenity of his home near Kidderminster, in the West Midlands, at the weekends, now has the enviable task of riding and lavishing care and love upon this beautiful machine. He had owned a succession of sportsbikes, a Monster and others, and felt it was time for a change, so taking a massive leap of faith away from all the modern offerings that claim to cater for a rider's every need and desire, Zach bought a rare hand-built bike, constructed by a father and son double act.

You may recall we visited Dave and Mark Kay's Mechanica Verghera workshops in issue six of *Italianbike*. At that time, there were two Magni specification replica MV Augusta 750s nearing completion, nose-to-nose on the bench, awaiting the finishing touches before being finally released to their lucky owners. We wondered what had happened to those two machines; had they been completed and delivered to their respective owners? Somewhat fortuitously, at a trackday in August, I was chatting to a guy when he mentioned he owned an MV. I had found half the answer to my questions.

Without the usual references of published tests, or even a comparative valuation to go on, Zach was indeed brave to commit – as he did – around £30,000 to such a plaything without so much as a test ride to see if he liked the Kay-built MV. Those who read our profile of the specialists from the outskirts of

Below: Nearly impossible to tell apart from an original 1970s' MV Augusta 750 America, even the paint is identical on the Kay replica

*This could be 1973,
not 2003 – the image
created is every inch
the 1970s' racer*

Birmingham will be unsurprised to hear that the end result is, in many ways, superior to any road machine that the original MV factory ever put out. These were motorcycles that sometimes proved to be little more than poor facsimiles of the superb competition machines upon which their reputation was forged.

Looking around the bike, it is clear to see that the care and devotion that Zach lavishes on it is reflected in its build. The paintwork is flawless, highlighting the curvaceous lines of the hand-formed tank, side panels and seat unit. The perfectly applied fire engine red is bold and loud and contrasts with the silver on the lower fairing, just as on the original, and the yellow number roundel which cries out for a black *numero uno*. This could be 1973, not 2003 – the image created is every inch the 1970s' racer, steering the eyes discreetly away from the more modern filament forks, brakes and electrics.

Zach has completed 1,800 trouble-free miles on this 'new' bike to date, but couldn't enlighten me with any figures or running costs. 'I never record or think about things like fuel consumption,' he quips. Evidence, if any were really needed, of the fact that the bike is so enjoyable and rewarding to own that its running costs are of little consequence to him.

Testing the mixture


Being trusted with a machine that obviously means so much to its owner is rather special



Above: Veglia instruments and beautifully machined MV steering damper knob complete the rider's view beyond the tank

so, when Zach handed me the key to his pride and joy, it was quite an experience for me, as well. That special feeling intensified as I turned the key and pressed the starter button, and a raucous bark emanated from the four curved pipes, just begging for a blip of the heavy-action twistgrip, which reminded me of the stirring of a wild animal. Having established that nothing formidable and furry was actually going to bite me from under the tank, I rocked the MV off its centre stand and we set off. From the outset I felt at home on the well-balanced MV. Its engine is tractable and eminently usable, and my usual first task of





...the four carburettors clear,
striking up an aria...

winding in the lever adjusters to where I would normally have them was forgotten as I set off on the throbbing, yet supremely smooth, in-line four.

The riding position was just about right for my shorter stature, but would be a tight fit for taller riders due to the enforced proximity between the seat and bars. This is due to the compactness of the engine installation, the bulk of which – with its huge sump, sizeable cam box and substantial finning – somehow disappears, tardis-like, beneath the svelte fairing and sculpted tank. The chassis, with its removable frame rails next to the power plant, is quite short – and the clip-ons head north for a few inches before bending back to allow a little more room for the rider's hands.

No matter what you do with your legs, unless fully tucked in under the elbows for

high-speed running, they remain out in the breeze due to the high positioning of the rear-set footrests, faithful reproductions of the Magni originals. But this is a small price to pay for the unparalleled MV experience and is only briefly noticeable before you are overwhelmed by other far more pleasurable impressions.

The hand-built four-cylinder twin-cam engine felt to be run-in nicely, revving freely and sounding silky smooth and sweet. Two handcuts of the throttle are required from closed to fully open – and the low-speed,

conjuring up evocative
images of Phil Read and
Giacomo Agostini

slightly asthmatic gasping gives way as the four carburettors clear, striking up an aria and providing sweet backing for the rock and roll rhythm section of the open megaphone exhausts. Close inspection revealed any internal baffling to be non-existent, leaving just the end caps. There can be no better way to wake up the neighbourhood!

Meanwhile, in front of the rider the period-looking Veglia clocks, which sit almost flat, stare back at you. The tachometer only ever gives an approximation of engine speed as it swings wildly around the white fascia, while the black-faced speedometer does likewise, albeit far less dramatically. It is simpler by far just to let the engine talk to you than to try and chase the agitated rev counter needle around its dial.

Despite conjuring up evocative images of Phil Read and Giacomo Agostini, the MV's ride is surprisingly modern, and it is completely

*Left: Force Italia forks taken from Cagiva GP500 bike, brake calipers by Brembo
Right: Chain drive was common conversion on original MV, Magni pipes anti-socially loud*

Left: Braking is reassuringly positive and the bike's handling is surprisingly agile

practical and reliable in day-to-day use. The Force Italia forks, with their heavy bracing across the top uniting the stanchions inflexibly together, as well as holding the mudguard in place, no doubt help the beautifully crafted chassis to do its stuff. Having apparently been designed and built originally for the factory Cagiva 500 Grand Prix bike of the early 90s, these top specification items are as completely adjustable as anything one might find on any starting grid today – and now prove difficult to locate due to their limited production.

A real show-stopper

Braking is supplied courtesy of Brembo four-pot calipers that pinch the 300mm floating discs and effortlessly haul up the machine from any speed. The brakes are nothing short of superb, with the rear brake, in particular, working better than many a modern machine, thanks to the single piston, low-slung, Brembo caliper mounted on the left-hand side of the wheel which, in turn, grabs a large – by modern standards – iron disc. When the brakes are applied, there is a reassuring feeling of sure-footed stopping and the chassis seems to dig in, a testament to Magni's original chassis design theories.

Even braking while cranked over is not the



Right: What's the hurry? Pearson and the raucous-sounding MV make good their getaway before someone complains – the bike sounds awesome, unlike Chris's jokes...

usual dramatic episode; the chassis simply held its intended line with no sitting up and heading for the side of the road. Meanwhile, the rear end is well-controlled by a pair of Koni adjustable shocks that work as well as they look, and keep the hefty steel box-section swing-arm in check.

Quite amazingly, all of this precise, even benchmark handling is achieved using narrow 18-inch cross-ply rubber – just like the old days. The smaller rolling friction, courtesy of the small contact patch, combines with the modern front suspension set-up, making agility another positive aspect of this contemporary MV. Certainly, the original shaft-driven America was never as composed around the corners as this more modern one.


The overall impression is rather like that of the aged and benign racer who has seen it all before; why rush this experience? Learn to have your fun at a more sedate pace. The Kay MV is more satisfying than any 150bhp megabike, as all and sundry take a longing, wishful look at the Italian stallion.

It is not just when you are riding that the world sits up and takes notice, either. When we stopped to take some photographs, not

one person passed the MV without giving it a glance. Some would have recognised it, but everyone knew it must be something very special. Indeed, those who took a closer look would have noticed stunning attention to detail. Every part of the MV shines and sparkles, and little parts – such as the faux steering damper knob in the centre of the top yoke, for example, like so much of the machine, actually hand-made by Mark Kay – typify the bike's uniqueness and justify the at first seemingly high price.

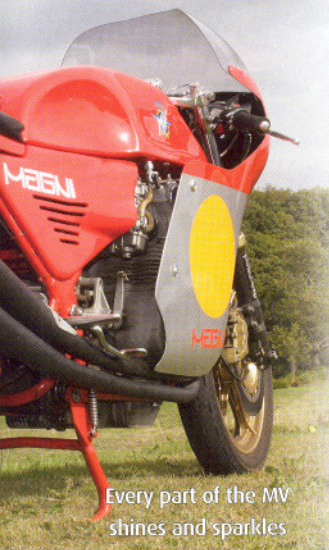
A great job has been done all round and the Kay remake of the Magni 750 MV is a beautiful machine. The popular chain conversion endows it with a much less harsh power train than the shaft drive of the original

America and other MV roadsters, while the hand-crafted chassis is a joy. Owner Zach is delighted with his acquisition and, having ridden it, I can confirm that his investment has been a prudent one. Is it value for money? No question about it, a resounding 'yes'.

Presently, two replica Giera fours are languishing on the benches, awaiting final assembly before being despatched for a life of serious track use. Watch this space... 

Want one? Contact:

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www.mv-agusta.co.uk



Every part of the MV
shines and sparkles



Kay Magni-MV 750 America

Engine	Four-stroke, air-cooled, four-cylinder double overhead camshafts, gear-driven
Bore x stroke	67 x 56mm
Capacity	832cc
Compression ratio	10:1
Carburation	Four Dell'Orto PHF 30 carburettors
Transmission	Five-speed
Clutch	Wet multi-plate
Frame	Steel tube
Suspension	Front: 40mm Forcella Italia telescopic forks, adjustable rebound and compression damping Rear: Koni dial-a-ride, adjustable pre-load and damping
Braking	Front: Twin 300mm discs, four-piston Brembo calipers Rear: Single 280mm disc, twin-piston Brembo caliper
Wheels	Front: Six-spoke cast magnesium alloy 3.5 x 18in Rear: Six-spoke cast magnesium alloy 4.25 x 18in
Tyres	Front: 100/90 x 18in Metzeler Rear: 120/90 x 18 Metzeler
Wheelbase	1390mm
Dry weight	218kg