



# MV Augusta returns

**T**HE sound starts as the tachometer hits 6500 rpm for the first time, and it's quite simply the loudest, most outrageous and most utterly thrilling racket that I've ever experienced on a motorcycle.

Already, the sensation of riding this MV Agusta Magni has been heightened by its glorious noise. The moment the red-and-silver machine fires up, those four deliciously sculpted matt-black Magni pipes emit a warbling, deeply soulful bellow that raises the hairs on the back of your neck. When you pull away, the exhaust note rises in pitch and volume, drowning out the busy whir of the big motor's fast-spinning cam gears. As the revs rise towards 7000 and the bike surges forward harder, its exhaust note is suddenly transformed. The tuneful howl becomes a hard, aggressive, shatteringly loud and almost metallic *waaaaaawaaaaa* that threatens to split your eardrums, especially when they're shielded only by the leather sides of a period-style pudding-basin helmet.

This is a remarkable bike, and what makes it even more so is that this is a totally new machine, not a restoration. It was built by Eiger MV Ltd, a small workshop near Birmingham in England, and run by 53-year-old MV enthusiast David Kay, who has the knowledge and experience needed to transform raw sandcastings into complete MV crankcases and cylinder heads, and to build whole bikes identical to those of two decades ago.

Eight complete Agusta fours have



been built and sold from here already, each one a brand new replica faithful in every detail to an original MV machine. What started out as a hobby intended to help keep the former air-conditioning engineer's own racing MV in parts, has developed into a full-time business making complete machines for sale all over the world.

Kay can build an MV to basically any specification the customer wants.

"If you want a bike you come here, and we get the books out and ask which petrol tank you want, which engine, which exhaust, which frame, which wheels and suspension," says David Kay. "There are three different types of full fairing and three half-fairings. The customer picks what they want, we quote a price and stick to it."

The result, three months later, is a brand new bike with a quality of finish that would rival anything that came out of Gallarate (where the MV factory in

Italy was) 20 years ago.

The machine I rode is more unusual even than a standard MV. It's an 832 cc Magni, based on one of the special-framed, chain-drive machines produced by legendary former MV race-team boss Arturo Magni in the '70s.

It was a treat just to sit on the bike, leaning forward to the narrow clip-ons and taking in the black-faced clocks, the simple pair of warning lights (just high beam and oil pressure), the temperature gauge set further into the cockpit, and the damping adjusters at the top of fork legs which poked through the top yoke. Each of the outer two 27 mm Dell'Orto carbs has a choke lever, so I flicked them on and pressed the tinny-looking switchgear's button. The starter-motor — tacked on below the motor, linked by twin toothless belts and also acting as the generator — hauled the big four-cylinder lump into raucous life.

First gear went in smoothly with a flick up of the right boot (a conventional left-foot change is one of the many specification options), and I let out the fairly light clutch to pull away, immediately impressed by the unexpectedly smooth and tractable nature of the big, fire-breathing powerplant.

This Magni motor is an 832 cc unit, its capacity derived by increasing the original 789 cc MV 750S America lump's bore by 2 mm to 69 mm, and retaining the 56 mm stroke. With a relatively high 10.3:1 compression ratio and some lightened engine parts, David Kay estimated maximum power to be considerably in excess of the 56 kW at 8500 rpm

## ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION

Air-cooled, transverse four cylinder four-stroke with two valves per cylinder	
Claimed max. power	over 56 kW at 8500 rpm
Bore and stroke	68.8 x 56 mm
Displacement	832 cc
Compression ratio	10.3:1
Redline	9000 rpm
Carburation	4 x 27 mm Dell'Orto

## FRAME AND BRAKES

Tubular steel cradle chassis with twin upper tubes	
Fully adjustable Marzocchi 35 mm forks, Koni rear suspension with preload adjustment	
Front brake diameter	2 x 280 mm
Rear brake diameter	280 mm
Front tyre	110/80-18 Metzeler ME33 Comp K
Rear tyre	150/70 x 18 Metzeler ME1
Dry weight	200 kg
Seat height	736 mm
Wheelbase	1400 mm
Rake	27°
Fuel capacity (incl. res.)	19 litres

## TEST MACHINE

Manufacturer	Eger (MV) Ltd, Staffordshire, UK, Phone/fax: (0011 44) 543 377871
Price	£25,000 (\$52,500)

which the MV factory claimed for the America.

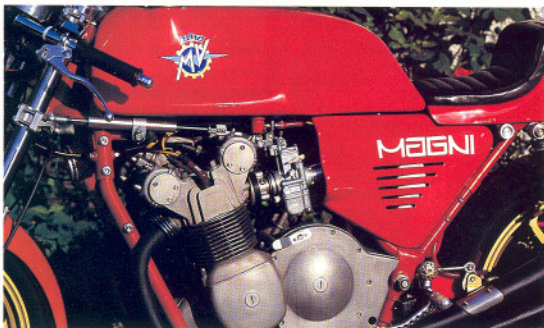
There was certainly enough power to make for strong acceleration, even without getting the Veglia tachos's needle towards the 9000 rpm redline. Carburation was crisp down to below 3000 rpm, and the MV gained speed with a smooth and steadily increasing force in the midrange. The five-speed gearbox was good.

At 6500 rpm the bike suddenly pulled harder, as its came on the cam with that ear-splitting sound. No doubt the din made the bike seem even quicker than it was, but the flat-out Agusta certainly gave a mindblowing impression of speed and excitement. With enough space it would probably have approached 220 km/h. This bike's speedo cable came loose early in the test, but before that the bike scorched through the 160 km/h mark with plenty of performance to come.

Despite their expense and racetrack heritage, MV's roadster fours did not handle particularly well at high speed, partly due to the heavy shaft-drive apparatus. But Magni's chain conversion cured that problem. And the old maestro's frame, with its twin top tubes instead of the conventional MV single spine, gave some welcome extra rigidity.

This was still a pretty long and tall motorcycle, with old-fashioned steering geometry and a rather high centre of gravity. But overall weight was a reasonable 200 kg compared to the 235 kg of a standard MV.

Low-speed steering was predictably slow by modern standards, and scratching round country lanes required a fair bit of effort at the clip-ons, but the Agusta went where it was pointed. Even in faster curves only the odd slight wobble got through to the 'bars, though I'd



PHOTOGRAPHY BY OUI TENNENT

have been glad of the damper on a really fast and rough bend. Suspension at both ends was very firm, particularly the rear Konis. On a couple of bumpy high-speed straights I ended up taking my weight on the footpegs while the bike bucked beneath me like a runaway toy car.

Thankfully the braking power from the twin front discs and four-pot Brembos was reassuringly modern, though the large rear disc locked at the hint of left-booted pressure. Grip from the 18-inch Metzeler Comp Ks far exceeded anything that an MV pilot would have enjoyed 20 years ago, too. It was just a magical experience to come screaming up to a bend, blip the quick-action throttle a couple of times as I braked and hooked back a couple of gears, force the bike into a bend and then wind open the Dell'Ortos to go howling off again.

Every motorcyclist should have the chance to do that just once, though

inevitably the bike's sky-high price makes that impossible for all but a fortunate few. MVs were always hugely expensive, even when being produced in relatively large numbers. Recreating just a handful, with all the investment in machinery, parts and time that requires, makes them even pricier now.

An Eiger-built Magni like this one would cost about \$52,000 (£25,000), with the cheapest and most basic MV model going for about \$38,000 (£18,000). That's considerably more expensive than a clean secondhand Agusta. But in this case you're getting a bespoke, brand new, lovingly hand-assembled machine that can be ridden hard without fear of 20-year-old parts failing. It's registered as an MV, too, because Kay has formed a company called MV Meccanica Verghera Ltd.

It's great to see these magical machines back in production.

— Roland Brown

