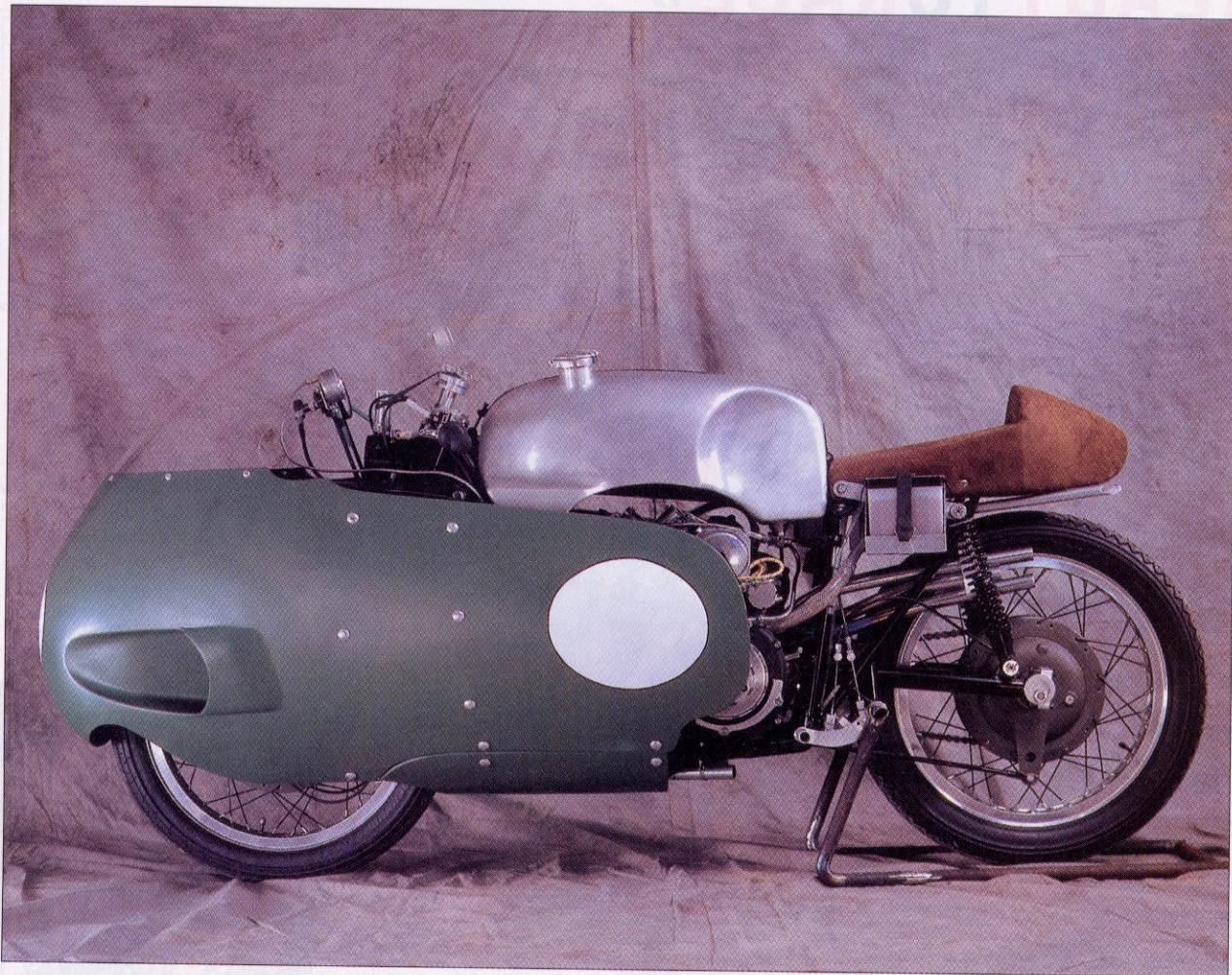


Beautiful Obsession

One man remakes Moto Guzzi's V-8 masterpiece



CLOSE YOUR EYES, BREATHE IN THE ACRID SMELL OF hot cutting oil and imagine the scene: Sebastiano Marcellino, a slightly built Italian man with graying hair and a disarming smile, walks into an engineering shop in Turin that specializes in making engine components for Formula One cars. But he's got old friends working there who are as nuts about classic Italian racebikes as he is.

"*Bonjourno*, Claudio. Any chance of you making a few magnesium-bodied carburetors for my Guzzi?"

"Sure, Sebastiano. How many do you want?"

"Oh, eight will do nicely."

There's only one Moto Guzzi that needed eight carbs, the famed Giulio Carcano-designed 500cc V-8 Grand Prix racer of the late 1950s, and Marcellino has, incredibly, built

his own from scratch.

The 58-year-old was a Norton dealer during the 1970s and Italian sidecar motocross champion in 1977 with an 850cc Norton-Wasp outfit. Why not build a Manx, then?

"I am an Italian," he says. "Guzzi is in my veins."

So when he sold his business in the late 1990s, he first built himself a replica of the Bialbero dohc Single roadracer of the 1950s, also penned by Carcano. After he'd finished that little project, he then moved up a notch to his current endeavor: building a replica of one of the most complex racing motorcycles of all time. As a retirement hobby, it sure beats the hell out of golf!

Original examples are incredibly rare—only four were built, and perhaps two exist today as complete, running

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B e a u t i f u l O b s e s s i o n

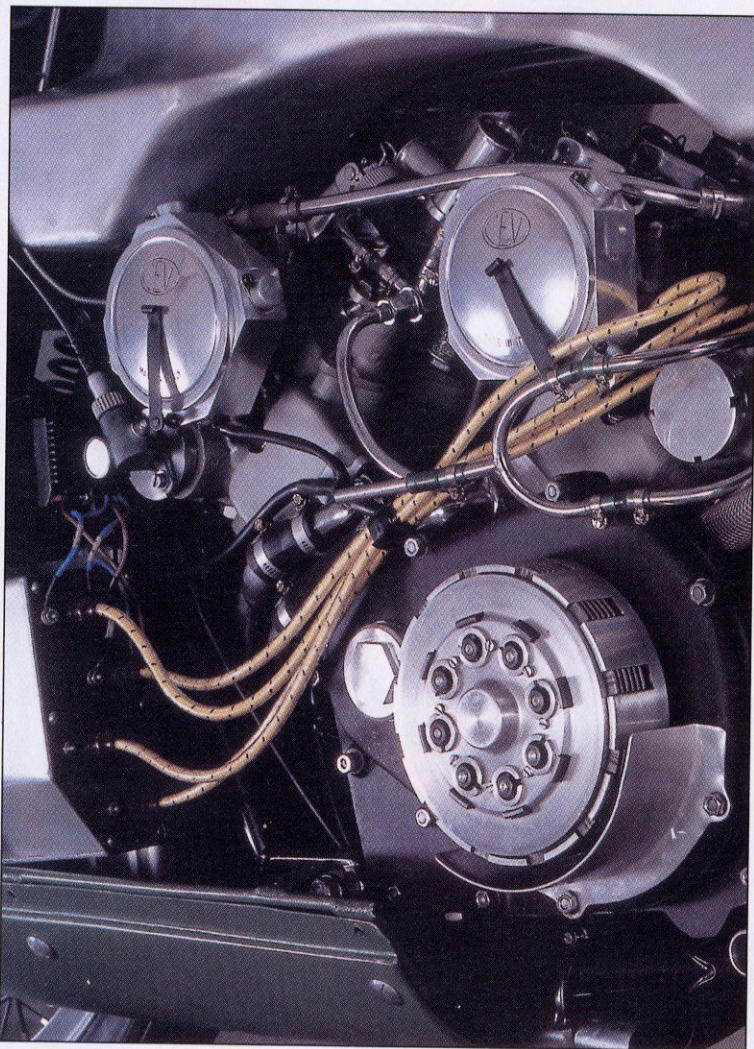
bikes, including the one Sammy Miller rode at the Goodwood hill-climb. So, for Marcellino, who is not a wealthy man, owning one was an impossible dream. Unless he built his own.

Marcellino still lives in Bagnolo, where he was born. This village is about 50 miles from Turin and its huge automotive industry. "My friends were able to slip small precision machining jobs in between official work they were doing on high-tech machines," he explains. "Pistons, rods, valve gear, carburetors, frame, fork, brakes... everything has been made in Italy.

"I started the project eight years ago, making drawings from original parts I was able to borrow. My drawings were done the old-fashioned way," adds Marcellino, "with pen and ink, not computers."

The factory provided no assistance to Marcellino, and parts borrowed were returned to the owners, many of whom got the pieces as tokens from the Guzzi factory back when M-G withdrew from racing. "I would not use original components in my replica because I will not risk them breaking at race speed. I want my V-8 to be ridden as hard as it was when Bill Lomas rode it in the championship years," says Marcellino with obvious pride.

As raced, the diminutive powerplant was less than 20 inches wide, and by 1957, the last year the bikes were campaigned and the year Guzzi killed its racing program, it ultimately made 80 horsepower, revving to 14,000 rpm. With a dustbin fairing, it was enough for 180 mph, but not enough to ever win a Grand Prix. Moto Guzzi's fabulous V-8 often led races and frequently set the fastest lap—before it broke.



So why didn't Marcellino want to modify the bike to make it more reliable, and perhaps incorporate the frame modifications that he knew would make it handle better?

"If I did that, it would not be an honest replica of the original," replies Marcellino. "I have used an electronic ignition system so that I can get the bike running, but this is a temporary measure. Soon, I'll be fitting eight sets of ignition points."

Now there speaks a man who enjoys spending time in his garage.

In addition to the carbs, the crankcase, engine covers and brakes were all cast in magnesium. The fairing, like the fuel tank, is hand-beaten from sheet aluminum. But the most difficult part

of the project was making the crankshaft assembly.

"Machining the components for the pressed-up crankshaft and the one-piece rods was the biggest challenge. But I am very pleased with the result because it revs so smoothly," beams Marcellino.

Without the Italian passion for everything connected with motorsport, the V-8 replica would still be a dream. It took Marcellino two years to actually make the pieces, and another year to assemble the bike from finished components, with the rest of the time being spent on drawings and parts collection.

It's been a huge undertaking and quite an expensive project, even with all his hands-on work and help from kindhearted friends, so Marcellino plans to make two more V-8s to recoup some of his costs. If you want one, it'll cost you about \$180,000, and he says he can deliver the completed replica within six months of your order. Contact him at 011-39-017-534-5986—and practice your Italian.

—Phillip Tooth