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SupermotoTM Magazine

May/June 2003



Lauren

Plus:
Gas Gas 450SM
Borile B500MT
S1 Champs



Italian Stallions

VOR 530SME v Vertemati S570E



And: Next Season's Motards
What'll They Look Like?



The Young Ones



What do you think is the average age for a supermoto rider? I reckon that most SM pilots are probably in their mid 30s or even 40s. They've been around a bit, done the superbike stuff, got a fair collection of points and the fun was beginning to wane. At least it did before they discovered the intense experience that a well fettled motard gives.

Okay, a lot of older guys (myself included) have also been involved with dirtbikes since childhood, but as the breaks and bruises of several decades of eating dirt have taken their toll, knobblies have finally made way for 17" fat, hot n' sticky rubber. Maybe! Take a look around the SM paddock or the local biking watering hole and I bet you your last Wurthers Original that you would be hard pressed to spot more than a handful of faces in their teens. Yamaha obviously see the potential in youth-motard as they have just launched a new DT50SM this week, but where are the other manufacturers?

The real issue here is just where are the next generation of moto-riders coming from? Well recently it appears that the supermoto craze has captured the imagination of the Playstation generation. Which is probably why the Sony Corporation have backed the S1 World SM Championships with the view to launching an exciting new motard console game. For this youth interest to keep up momentum we need to actually get some kids on bikes. And judging by the hundreds of entries we had for our win a Malaguti Grizzly competition, the need for this is paramount.

The good news is that after speaking to several race and track-day organisers it appears that children's junior supermoto is the next big thing. Eddie Sloane at Trax has a fantastic tarmac/dirt supermoto circuit that lends itself to children's racing and he even has a paddock full of junior motards ranging in capacity from 50 auto to full-on 125s for rental. Both NORAsport and Pro-Supermoto have shown a serious interest in holding kids SM classes and then of course Lucky Devils Racing are already running pay as you go race deals on motard kitted Polini 50s alongside minimoto events. In fact the organisers of the prestigious British Superprix Euro round at Lydden Hill are also actively working on a junior feature race and want your input.

So the future of British supermoto could be extremely bright indeed. More kids coming into our sport can only be a good thing. But obviously it needs to be safe as well as fun. We need to get some form of organised body up and running to make sure that our kids and our sport remain safe. One thing is for sure, now I've retired from racing I desperately miss the buzz of competition and a certain 10-year old with Crasher Junior on his MX shirt is itching for a crack at kiddie-moto.

Move over 17-year old racing sensation Christian Iddon, there's some new kids on the block...

**See you out there:
Dave Cornish**

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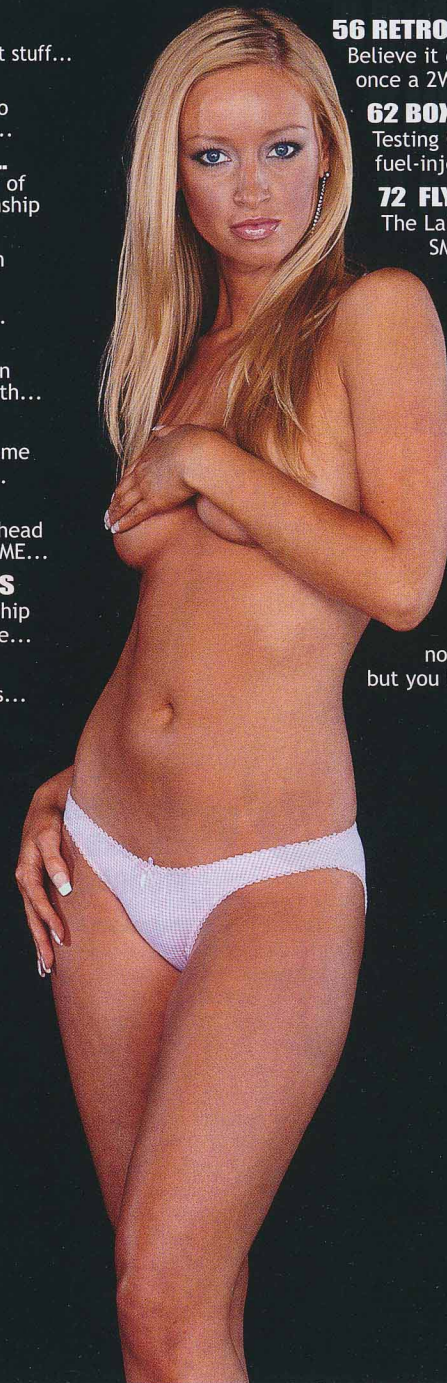
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RETRO- Spective

Continuing our series of blasts from the past, Paul Blez looks back on a two-wheel-drive supermotard that caused quite a stir on the international scene over a decade ago...

Have you ever thought how handy it might be to be able to put your SM bike's power to the ground with both wheels instead of only one, in the motorcycling equivalent of an all-wheel drive vehicle like the famous Audi Quattro rally car? Well guess what, you're not the only one. Back in the mid-Eighties a tiny French racing outfit run by the Savard brothers did just that and what's more they convinced GP star Randy Mamola to ride it.

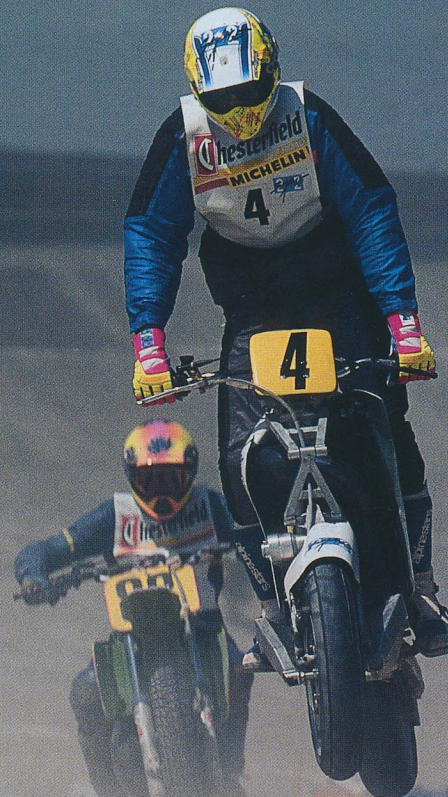
Savvy Savards

I first saw the Savard 2x2, as it was called, racing at the Monthlery speed bowl near Paris in the Spring of '89. The event had the bizarrely Franglais title of 'Le Biker' but it was the biggest supermotard event in the world at that time.

There were classes for all types of supermoto racer and the Savard was competing in the four-stroke category with a tuned Yamaha TT600 motor. It was an impressive looking device with its front wheel drive operated by two chains which crossed from right to left via a beautifully

crafted hub-centre-steering system. It was sponsored by the French bikers' insurance company La Mutuelle des Motards and being ridden by a keen young lad by the name of Yann Sinet who took it to seventh place in the four-stroke final.

This was pretty good considering that it had naff-all steering lock and that the course, though spectacular, had very little of the loose surface on which the 2WD system could best be exploited. I spoke to Sinet afterwards about what the bike felt like to ride but in a mastery of



'Nothing like the Savage 2x2 has been seen on the supermoto circuits before or since...'

understatement all he would say was that 'there's a bit of a knack to it'.

It wasn't until several years later, after a long conversation with British 2WD bike designer David Watts, that I appreciated just how much of an animal the Savard must have been to ride. Watts had been introduced to the Savard brothers via their mutual association with Yamaha and had been horrified to discover that the French machine,

unlike his own, had no constant velocity joint and no sprag clutch, so that on anything other than a loose surface the two wheels were constantly fighting each other under power.

Golden Showers

Les freres Savard must have listened to what David Watts had to say, because the next time I saw their machine six months later, it pulled off one of the most spectacular racing coups it has ever been my privilege to witness. The event was the first ever Guidon d'Or, or 'Golden

RETRO- Spective



Handlebars' supermoto meeting at Circuit Carole, near Charles de Gaulle airport just outside Paris, which was run over a whole weekend in October.

The first few Guidon d'Ors were unique in bringing together - at vast expense - the best riders in the world from road racing, motocross, enduro, rallying and the new sport of supermotard itself. In short the organizers, Alain Brochery and Philippe Vassard, succeeded in recreating the spirit of the very first made-for-TV 'superbiker' events

in America which had spawned the whole sport a decade earlier and have been the inspiration to the French ever since.

Anyway, as luck would have it, the conditions were wet and slippery for the Saturday's final and this gave the 2x2 machine an advantage over the conven-

tional bikes which simply didn't apply in the dry, since the circuit was 90 percent tarmac. The Savard was being ridden by 42 year old Serge Bacou, a legendary Dakar racer, but certainly no supermoto expert, against the likes of Peterhansel, Pidoux, Chambon, Wayne Gardner and

newly crowned road race champion Eddie Lawson.

Riding a very trick Honda, powered by Dave Thorpe's championship winning CR500 motor, Lawson was more than a match for every rider there - except for Bacou on the

Savard. I watched the two of them enter the never-ending 240 degree 'parabolique' corner together, and gasped in amazement as the old man on the Savard just romped away from the most talented rider on the planet, pulling out a good 50m by the time he came

'As luck would have it the conditions were wet and slippery for the Saturday Final...'



onto the back straight.

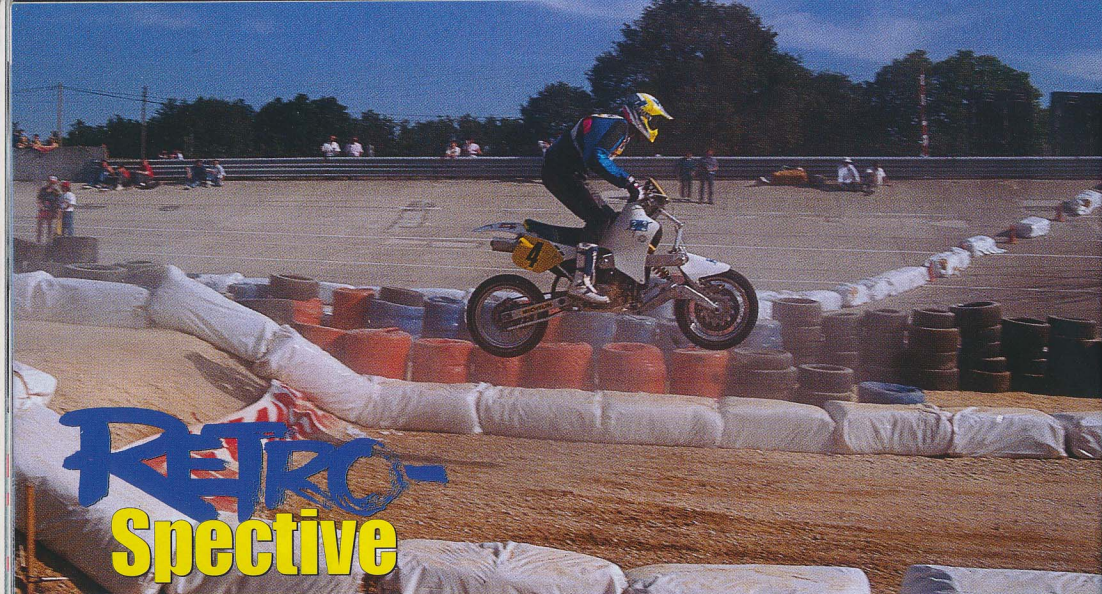
Bacou went on to win the race to rapturous applause from the French crowd. Lawson admitted that in the conditions, he just couldn't get enough traction to stay with the 2x2. Next day in the dry, 'Steady Eddie' won the main event and the Golden Handlebars trophy, while Bacou struggled to make the top ten. But anyone who witnesses the Saturday race will never forget his classic demonstration of the advantages of two wheel drive in slippery conditions.

Mamola Marmelized

By the following year's Guidon d'Or the innovative brothers had changed their allegiance from Yamaha power to

Husqvarna and redesigned the whole front swinging arm to a 'banana' shape to provide their bold riders with a bit more steering lock. Yann Sinet was still competing in the French national supermotard championship, but for the end of season crowd-pleaser, the link with Husqvarna and therefore Cagiva (not to mention some serious start money) had got none other than Randy Mamola onto the 'Savage' 2x2 as it was now called.

Unfortunately the supremely talented American, who had been hanging the back end out all season on Cagiva's 500cc road racer, just couldn't get on with the quirky 2WD machine, which demonstrated the appropriateness of its new name by dumping him on his 'ass' four times in the course of the weekend. He told me, 'It keeps chucking me off in the dirt sections - after 18 years racing rear wheel drive bikes, it's kinda hard to get used to racing something so completely differ-



ent'. He managed to qualify tenth for the grand finale but fell off on the first lap and consoled himself and the crowd by pulling monster wheelies for the rest of the race. (Wayne Rainey beat Stephane Peterhansel to the win).

Poum Poum Power

By this time les freres Savard had spent something like £200,000 developing their machine over the previous three years.

'By 1991 the Savard brothers had spent £200,000 developing their machine...'

For 1991 they picked up some serious sponsorship from a chain of butchers which enabled them to hire the king of the thumpers to ride their bike - the

legendary Laurent 'Poum Poum' Pidoux.

I saw him ride the machine twice that year, at the Rouen docks event and at the Montlhery Biker meeting. At the scarily dangerous riverside Rouen course - where a mistake could put you either into the Seine or a solid brick archway - the machine unfortunately broke down, but I got a chance to get closer to it than ever before with the tank and seat removed and noticed for the first time that it actually had a steering damper mounted on the right hand side.

At Montlhery a few weeks later the

jolly French giant was back in fine form, flying high over the jumps with the best of 'em. And he went on to win the whole Eurobiker supermoto championship on the two wheel drive machine, which culminated in a win over motocross world champ (and legend) Georges Jobe in the final in Barcelona. Boy, do I wish I'd been there for that one!

Sadly, this was to prove the swansong for the innovative French machine because the money dried up the following year and nothing like it has been seen on the supermoto circuits since. Historians will probably conclude that the Savard was an overly-complicated machine which was trying to develop too many things at once - both two wheel drive and hub-centre steering - and that ultimately it was a technological cul-de-sac.

The modern approach to all-wheel drive bikes using a fluid-drive developed by Ohlins/Yamaha (but not invented by them) seems to be the way forward. And by winning the Rally of Sardinia with a 2WD TT600R, they have certainly proved that their system works. Just don't let anyone tell you that the Ohlins/Yamaha was the first 2WD bike to win anything. The Savard 2x2 supermoto racer was glorious while it lasted - and bloody successful to boot. And I for one won't forget seeing it take on the best in the SM world and win convincingly! **Paul Blezard**

Supermoto Mad Man

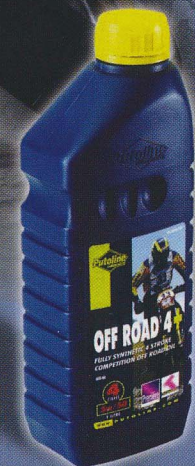


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BEGIN!



Ady Smith

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