

## Son of Hooligan, The Aprilia SXV450 Supermoto on test

Written by: Neale Bayly Charlotte, NC – 1/9/2008



Heading toward turn 11 at Carolina Motorsports Park, my brain is attempting to override 30 years of my personal motorcycle evolution. Fighting the desire to chop the throttle at the first brake marker, I lock my sights on the yellow GSXR 750 in front of me. Blitzing past the first mark, the tension is almost unbearable as my feeble mind wrestles with the right wrist control circuit. Battling everything I know to be true, I hold it longer before rolling off and brushing the front brake lever. Simultaneously stabbing the rear brake and grabbing a bunch of down shifts, we easily make the turn. Cursing my lack of minerals one more time, I twist the go handle back to wide open exiting the turn, having gained a few more yards on the [Suzuki](#) up ahead.

Pecking away like this for the next few laps, I begin to reel him in. This dance goes in a predictable pattern of him making distance out of the corners, with the SXV 450 making it all back and more into the turns, as I nibble away at his advantage. Running the [compact](#) V-twin to 12,500 rpm before clutch less up shifting, with only 60 horsepower at my disposal, one missed shift is going to end this dual in a heartbeat. Tucking in to try and get out of the wind on the straights, the diminutive Aprilia hits 106mph



A track-day side by side battle on the SVX 450. (Photo: Neale Bayly and Cindy Castano)

on the digital speedo and that's it. Knowing the Suzuki is capable of topping 130mph at these moments, only makes the abilities of the four-piston Nissin caliper mauling the 320mm waver rotor seem more incredible. Stopping a machine that weighs less than 275 pounds, it allows the most ridiculous late braking it's beyond insane. And it's because of this that we are able to pass the GSXR a few laps later and pull enough advantage through the tight, technical section before the front straight to hold him off for a while.

Without the yellow tail end as a target though, I lose [focus](#) and on the long back straight, he motors passed me. Although by this point I have eased off some with the end of the session approaching. Running with the advanced group my first time out on the Aprilia, I had run someone down and passed them while giving up over 60 horsepower and a massive amount of top speed, so was feeling pleased with the result.

Originally when I had taken delivery of the Aprilia 450 SXV, I was disappointed to find that this 2007 model wasn't technically street legal. Of course, in the interest of objective journalism, I had to run down to my local coffee shop to see how the bike performed on the road. Finding it initially hard to start, I wondered if I was doing something wrong. There is a fast start button on the right handlebar, but it still took an act of Congress to get the beast running. This was a situation that never improved during my test, and while it did get frustrating, the bike never failed to fire after a bit of judicious fiddling.

Leaping on for my first ride, the 36-inch seat height and Kate Moss width seat immediately jumped to my attention. To call it narrow would be an understatement, but let's just say once I got each butt cheek comfortable on its relevant edge of the seat, things were better. Revving up hard and fast with the aggression of Ricky Hatton squaring up to Floyd Mayweather in his recent fight in Vegas, the engine is totally evil. Encouraging a bunch of unnecessary blips to hear it rip and roar, I left my apartment complex in a rather abrupt manner, laying long, dark strips up to every stop sign, before departing on the rear wheel toward the next turn. Holy smoke we're going to jail!



Handling, and the ability to brake extremely late, allows the Aprilia to catch bigger and more powerful bikes through the corners. (Photo Neale Bayly and Cindy Castano)

Acceleration isn't mind blowing compared to an open class liter bike, but it sure is vicious. And, carving between lines of poor cage-bound commuters, it was time for a committee decision to pull over at my local coffee shop before my license received any additional facts and figures. Working on the theory that they give stimulants to children with ADD, I was hoping a strong cup of Joe would maybe calm me down. Honking toward home on the back wheel, banging clutch less up shifts as the engine neared its power peak, I failed in this mission, but I did get myself pumped up enough to find the next track day and not to pass go before signing up.

As the son of the world's most famous motorcycle hooligan, the Aprilia Tuono, it's no surprise that the multi-platform approach is employed with the SXV. Coming in two forms, with and without race pipe and chip, it also comes in a 550cc enduro version called the RXV550. With this claiming 70 horsepower, I am not sure if I have what it takes to ride this monster in the dirt, but if I get a chance you'll be the first to know.

Using a unique 77-degree V-twin engine, the [compact](#) motor is cradled in tubular-steel, trellis frame rails, fitted to pressed aluminum side plates. It uses a braced, box-section aluminum swing arm in the rear that holds the most beautiful spoke 5.5-inch wheel. On my test, unit this came wrapped in a nice sticky Dunlop Sportmax tire, and features the sweetest looking 240mm wave rotor and miniscule two-piston brake caliper. Like everything on the Aprilia, the swing arm is pure mechanical artwork. Just realizing the exhaust pipes double for an inner fender, and looking at the intricate welds and bends as it ends up exiting the tailpiece, is enough to take any motor head's breath away. Up front, a Marzocchi fully adjustable 48mm fork holds an equally stunning 17-inch spoke wheel. Sporting the aforementioned wave rotor, it has to be the most attractive piece of braking tackle on the market to date.

Taking a peep inside the engine reveals each cylinder getting four titanium valves per cylinder operated by their own single, chain driven camshaft. With the bike capable of revving to 13,000rpm, the valves earn their money. And to date, reliability has not been an issue with the 450 engine. Down lower there is no counter balancer on the single piece crankshaft, but vibration is not a major problem. Fuel makes its way into the cylinders through hefty 38mm throttle bodies, and there are no glitches to report in the

system. The bike is peaky, with not too much to be gained by letting the tachometer fall below 6,000 rpm, and to be honest once above 10,000 rpm it begins to feel somewhat redundant also. It is almost as if I held the throttle well into double digits just to allow the bike to gain more top speed.

Lights, turn signals and switchgear are all Italian boutique style, with the emphasis heavily on style. Having not ridden the bike at night, I can't really comment on the headlight, but it doesn't look as if it would be too effective. The instrument pod is small, but gives all the information you need and is easy to read at speed on the track.

Ideally, I would have tested the bike on a Supermoto track, which is the only other place I have ridden one. Here all the bike's attributes make most sense, but it can definitely be ridden and enjoyed on the street where it provides silly amounts of fun if your license can handle it. The SXV also makes for an incredible track day bike, and with another day to figure out the braking points, how best to position my body in the corners, I feel positive I could have been passing more than the one bike in my group. It is such an alien riding position compared to a sport bike though that I don't think one day was really enough to fully figure it out. Thanks Aprilia for at least letting me get a taste.



The SVX comes in two forms, with or without a race pipe and chip, and also in the 550cc Enduro version which claims 70 HP. (Photo: Neale Bayly and Cindy Castano)

With the brand having suffered here in the States over the last few years due to bad management, I have to say the Piaggio takes over is a good thing. Touring the factory in Noale, outside Venice recently, I

am happy to report Aprilia is forging ahead with many new projects. You will have seen some of these in the media recently, and there are some I can't talk about yet. [Dealers](#) are popping back up here Stateside, and Piaggio is working on fostering better relationships after some of the problems in the past. With Moto Guzzi and Vespa also under this umbrella, the future is looking bright for this unique and fascinating brand. Priced at \$8,399 it ain't cheap, but the quality of the components is worth the price of admission. Throw in the serious hooligan, fun factor, and it becomes an extremely attractive package if you have the readies. Catch one if you can.