



No trailer queen here, this 1934 Indian Four is regularly ridden.

# VINTAGE MOTORBIKE SHOW

## 2019 Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix

Story and photos by Dave Ryan

**T**he Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix is truly a “gearhead” event with something for everyone. In its 37 years it has evolved from a vintage race on city streets, with a car show on a bucolic golf course, to an 11-day happening with events including closed course racing at Pittsburgh International Race Complex (a stop on the MotoAmerica calendar), a rally, various exhibitions around the city, a black tie event and more. Over the years I’ve seen everything from a 1930 Bugatti Type 35B GP car (raced at Monaco, twice!) to such marques as Allard, Lotus and Elva. Present have been historic Shelby Cobras, BMW 507s, Gullwing Mercedes, a GTO Ferrari and an AMC Matador — Barcelona edition! Since 2012 there has also been the Vintage Motorbike Show (finally, he gets to the point). It’s the same story as the rest of the shows: an interesting mix, a relaxed atmosphere and lots of fun. I remember walking up the hill to the bikes a few years ago and commenting about a very rare early Buell race bike on display (a RR1000R) only to realize there were a few more — along with Eric Buell himself!

The PVGP is always held in July, seemingly on the hottest days of the year. This year was no exception (July 11-21); shade and hydration were the orders of the event — especially during the

last weekend, when the Motorbike Show is held. For about five years the show was run by Tip Paul, the Western Pennsylvania Representative of the Moto Guzzi National Owners Club. Tip brought two of his impeccable Guzzis; a 1938 Condor and a 1947 Super Alce (Elk). He has no documentation to prove the Condor really is a factory racer, or if it was merely restored to those specifications in Italy where he found it about four years ago. As military bikes are wont to do, the Super Alce drew lots of attention.

The Ohio Valley BSA Owners Club has been very active in the event since inception; particularly the Kubena family (Bud, Barb and their son Kerry). Bud is the club’s vice president, Barb has the role of treasurer (among other duties). The Kubenas brought five BSAs and a Bultaco to the proceedings. The Bultaco is a Factory Flat Track Astro from 1975 (370cc), raced by Kerry in the 1990s. Others displayed included a 1960 Spitfire Scrambler (race ready from the factory); a 1944 military M20 (complete with authentic 1944 saddle bags); and a very tasty original, unrestored 1967 Shooting Star (street model Victor). The build quality on the restored machines is incredible; and they do all their own work. This is most apparent in the last two of their displayed BSAs: a 1964 B40 trials bike and a 1950 Star Twin Flat Tracker. The trials bike is custom built using a correct Otter frame with many home fabricated parts. The detail work is exquisite, the end result so





Clockwise from left: This 1947 Moto Guzzi Super Alce was a crowd favorite with its dual sprung seats; a very clean and apparently original paint Suzuki 500 2-stroke; a 1964 BSA B40 trials bike, with an Otter frame and amazing detail work.



Left to right: a 1944 BSA M20 in period military garb; a 1938 Moto Guzzi Condor, with a "bacon slicer" exposed flywheel.



Left to right: 1950 Ariel Square Four, three model years before the four exhaust pipe redesign; a rare 1960 BSA Spitfire Scrambler.





Still considered by many the Holy Grail, the Vincent Black Shadow.



In 47 years, this BMW R60/2 has never stranded its companion.



A sweet 1975 Bultaco factory flat tracker.

beautiful it's hard to believe someone would actually subject it to trials work — but Kerry has done so successfully. The Flat Tracker was ridden by Will Ahart to the Florida State Championship in 1954. Bud has some great Ahart memorabilia to go with it, including his helmet and kidney belt. This rare factory racer has been painstakingly restored to as-raced condition.

Ken Munz brought his mischievous nature and eclectic taste — evidenced by some Sears Allstate entries (including a gorgeous café'd Sears, *nee* Gilera), a couple of choppers and a fantastic 1960 Matchless G12. Ken says the Matchless "ruined his life" as he went through the four-year restoration process. He found the bike locally in bad shape 30 years ago. At the time, he didn't know what a Matchless was, but he thought it was cool; so, off he went on his adventure. His expertise is evident in all his work.

On hand was a jewel-like 1950 Ariel Square Four restored and owned by Chris Engelsiepen. He recounts years of sourcing parts from around the world to finish the original frame/engine/transmission machine. Chris also brought his 1956 BSA Gold Star. One of these days I hope to get a look at his '39 Ariel.

A star of the show was a 1934 Indian Four owned by Mike Culig. Mike got his love of the Indian brand (along with his 1934 Sport Scout) from his father. He fondly relates stories of riding the Sport Scout through the woods as a kid; and how he only likes to ride handshift bikes — it's what he knows best. The Four was owned by the mechanic that did some work on his Sport Scout over the years. After being rebuffed for 20 years, he finally closed the deal to buy it. Both are ridden regularly, the Four just went through an engine rebuild.

Another longtime ownership story comes by way of Joseph Baird. His 1962 R60/2 has been with him since 1972 when he bought it as a chopper. Hard to imagine he found it with a "king and queen" seat and metal flake paint, including lace and spiderweb effects. Gads. Sounds tasteful. It did still have its Earles forks, so he bought it, swapped seats, painted it and rode it for 40 years. It has since been redone as a rider, so some BMW purists look askance (it's lovely). He also brought his wife Kathy's 1955 R25/3 and displayed them both in a different area of the overall PVGP car show. They also graced another event in a trendy part of Pittsburgh (on Walnut Street).

Typically, Richard Spagnolli (AMCA President Emeritus) brings something from his incredible motorcycle collection, but he was unable to attend the main show. However, he did show his award-winning 1950 Vincent Black Shadow at the Walnut Street event. Sitting next to Mike's '34 Indian, they were quite a pair.

The Vintage Motorbike Show is now being managed by the Pittsburgh Ton Up Club, specifically by Patrick Martin. Patrick is looking to expand the scope of the show; maybe get some vintage racing bikes on one or both tracks. The PVGP benefits charity, raising funds for autistic and intellectually/developmentally disabled individuals in the Pittsburgh area (\$5.5 million since 1983). Most events are free for spectators. See you here next year! On the web at [pvgp.org](http://pvgp.org). **MC**