

Aprilia SXV 450 and 550

By George Tranos



Having never ridden a super motard before, it's hard to compare the Aprilias to other brands. I had a chance to sample both the SXV 450 and 550 during a West Coast Super Moto class. I spent most of my time aboard the 450. My first impression was that it was tall and light. The suspension was cushy without being soft. After settling in, I was able to get both toes on the ground but the feeling of it being too tall disappears as soon as you ride off. Getting going is easy too with its electric starter - just push the button and go.

The 450 engine revs willingly and has enough torque off the bottom to get you moving. Vibration is minimal and never really intrudes on the riding

experience. The front end feels light and with sticky tires (Dunlop 208's on my bike), turn-in is almost instantaneous. As I got more comfortable, it was easy to trust the stability of the front wheel as it tracks true through the turns.

The transmission shifts well although I didn't use it much especially at first. While I didn't get above third gear on our small course, I can say that second is good for about 60 mph. I got to use third only briefly before having to squeeze the front brake for the tight hairpin turns. Clutch feel is good and progressive with a decent range, unlike some other bikes with on/off light switch clutches. The brakes are strong and didn't fade. With the right settings, the suspension compresses properly and not too quickly and doesn't rebound very quickly either. This leads to a feeling of confidence in the motorcycle.

The 550 seems to have all that the 450 has and more. Torque is noticeably stronger especially at the low end of the rev range. The motor seems to want to rev too, so it's really the best of both worlds. Both of these bikes are quick and the 550 feels quick too. While I felt more comfortable on the 450, the 550 was not intimidating at all and I quickly adapted to its additional torque and minimal weight increase. If you're an expert rider, you'll probably gravitate more to the 550. Novices and intermediates will be just as happy with the 450, maybe more so because of its lighter weight and confidence inspiring handling.

I didn't get a chance to try either bike on the dirt but with the street-oriented tires, I'm sure it would have been difficult. However, on the street (with appropriate street legal turn signals and lights) or on the track, both Aprilias produce a

huge fun quotient that equates to a big grin whenever you ride them. And isn't that the point of motorcycling anyway? Either the SXV 450 or SXV 550 will make a great addition to your garage.



The author demonstrating his riding skills aboard the SXV.