

# FROM THE DESK OF SAVVA - 6



## DUCATTI STORY

Most enthusiasts will recall popular radios fitted to early cars being Supersonics. We also grew-up with the name Ducati which is synonymous with motorcycles but did you know they had something in common.

One of the finest early car radios built was the Supersonic radio built in Bulawayo by the Chassis Brothers. In the early fifties car radios weren't imported into the country, unless of course, they were already fitted to an imported car which were very few. Supersonic was therefore one of the only radios available at that time.

Some years ago I wrote an article about early car radios highlighting the virtues of Supersonic. With the marvel of the internet the article was picked-up by a university in Paris, France. They came back to me wanting to know what I knew about the Chassis Brothers, and Supersonic radios. Apparently, they knew virtually nothing about the radios other than that they were built by the Chassis brothers in Bulawayo. We then swapped the information we each had. They gave me what they knew about the brothers and I sent them what I knew about the radios. Needless to say they were fascinated by what had come out of Bulawayo.

What I didn't know was that the Chassis Bros were French and they must have emigrated to the then Rhodesia in the late 40's early 50's.

Here's an interesting bit of information they passed on to me - the Supersonic radios used in those early days used Ducati components. The first being a D1 model. It didn't take long to find a D1 model and tear it to pieces – they were right, many components were marked Ducati.

Being inquisitive I had find out how Ducati, a factory making radio components before the conflict, ended up being one of the world's top motorcycles manufacturers. This seemed to be a "chalk to cheese" situation. It appears that during the conflict with Mr Hitler the Americans must have decided the Ducati radio component factory must "go" as they didn't agree with their choice of customer at that time, the result it was they flattened the factory.

Afterwards, trying to re-establish the Italian factories they saw an opportunity in supplying basic transport so it was decided to manufacture a motorised cycle – and that's how it all started. Apparently, Ducati had developed a 50cc OHV engine that was ideally suited for attaching to bicycles. They manufactured 20,000 which got them going.

Attached is a picture of a variable condenser (tuning condenser) used in the D1 radios. Quality wise, it is stunning piece of precision equipment. It even runs on adjustable ball bearings.

