

Centaur road tests the H.M.W. SUPERSPORT

A sporting model with excellent handling from Austria

THE trouble about making public pronouncements is that time often makes them rebound on the pronouncer. Politicians suffer most from this phenomenon, of course, but journalists must run them a close second. Even Centaur finds himself in this position, on occasion, and the road test of the H.M.W. Supersport proved to be just such a case.

In the past I have tended to be highly critical of the "sporting" moped. This opinion was derived from experience of a number of cramped machines which aped the small racing motorcycle at the expense of the riders' comfort. This would not have been quite so paradoxical had the performance measured up to that of a peppy "50" but alas this was not often the case.

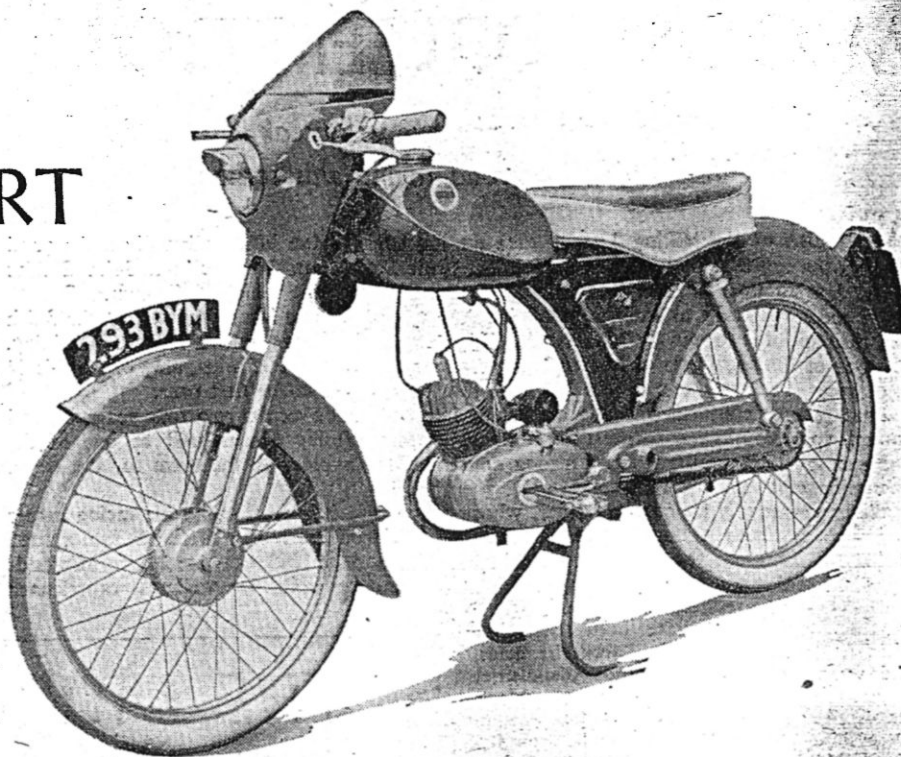
The H.M.W. Supersport is in fact what might be termed a "sporting" moped, but in this instance the description is not critical but factual. In performance and comfort the Supersport was the equal of many conventional mopeds and had several worthwhile points of its own.

A major feature which is entirely in the Supersport's favour concerns its handling. Many motorcyclists tend to feel uncomfortable when riding the conventional "open frame" type-of moped. Cornering has to be re-learned since there is little or nothing between the legs and the rider is deprived of that feeling of solidity when he heels his mount over to pass through a corner. The Supersport scores heavily here, and I found myself deliberately forcing it through familiar corners as fast as possible, because of the confidence which its frame design engendered.

The handlebars are low and straight admittedly, but this did not induce the usual wrist and back strain which such bars tend to cause. Riding position was entirely suitable for my 6ft. 1½ in., 220lb.-plus build and I felt no fatigue after a number of journeys which took me through thick London traffic. Suspension also was satisfactory for all but the very worst conditions—I got a shaking when I descended a cobbled ramp into Paddington station on one occasion, but I think this would have shaken up a hearse. There are no pillion footrests and the springing seems well designed for solo riding.

The dual seat is both narrow and hard, but I was not unduly uncomfortable. I fancy that like certain bicycle saddles, once I became used to the Supersport's seat, I would find it difficult to move to anything more luxurious.

The engine is a willing source of power and churns out the revs all the way up to its limit. Starting was slightly complicated in that the machine could not be ridden away immediately the crankshaft was turning, as this caused it to stall. If, however, a fast tick-over was maintained for 10 to 15 seconds with the moped stationary, this tendency



disappeared. On the other hand, starting was ridiculously simple and was aided by a feature I always like to see—a spring loaded tickler on the carburetter.

Hill climbing was excellent and the Supersport was able to tackle a surprising variety of shortish gradients in top gear. Once on the flat, with wheels barely rolling, top was accidentally engaged and after a slight shudder the engine quickly picked up and was soon cruising round about the 30 m.p.h. These facts seemed to indicate that the engine was a little undergeared, and this theory was emphasised in the course of any downhill running when the motor screamed in protest. Bottom gear was certainly too low for any but the slowest traffic dawdling, and second was nearly always quickly engaged for comfort. Certainly the top speed of 31 m.p.h. might well be improved with a little experimentation with the "cogging."

Gear Changing Was Erratic

Some improvement could also be made to the actual twist-grip gearchange. In good light, and exerting a certain amount of concentration, gear changing could be achieved silently both up and down.

However, it is not always possible to devote so much concentration to gearchanging alone, and the Supersport was often ridden at night when the gear indicator could not be seen. On these occasions changing was erratic and it was often almost impossible to find second gear.

Braking was first-class. I do not find I use the back-pedal brake too readily, but when I tested it I found it to be more than adequate. The front brake was an admirable "stopper" and quickly brought me to rest, albeit with a good deal of squeaking which would most probably be due to dust. Used together at a registered 20 m.p.h. on the speedometer, they stopped me in just under 12ft.

Lights were just better than average, although nobody could wish for a more conspicuous red beacon than that provided by the rear lamp. In really dark conditions, the headlamp provides quite a cheerful spread of light, but when there is already a modicum of light, the beam often loses itself, although it is, of course, more than sufficient for indicating the moped's presence to oncoming traffic.

The speedometer had a clear face and was easy to read. It was further protected by a tiny fairing which sweeps back from the headlamp and gives the Supersport a very distinctive look. The tool box is handily located in the frame beneath the dual seat but the pump position could be changed to advantage. Situated as it is on the horizontal member of the rear fork, it invites grit and spray, as well as possible loss from an accidental kick. A decompressor facilitates starting if the pedals happen to be in the wrong place.

In brief, the H.M.W. Supersport is a stylish little moped which lives up to its styling in performance and comfort.

SPECIFICATION

Engine: H.M.W. two stroke; 38 mm. bore, 48 mm. stroke gives 49.8 c.c. Output 2.2 b.h.p. at 1,600 r.p.m.

Gearbox: 3-speed, two plate cork-lined clutches running in an oil bath, enclosed primary chain.

Frame: Steel welded, swinging arm rear and telescopic front suspension.

Tank: 2.2 gallons, including reserve.

Wheels and brakes: 23in. x 2.25in. white wall, 25lb. p.s.i. front, 33lb. rear. Aluminium full width hubs, spindle type containing 0.78in. width front and rear linings, cable front, pedal operated rear.

Lights: Flywheel magneto generator, giving 6 volt 17 watt, feeding front and rear.

Equipment: Speedometer, tools and pump.

Finish: Black and red, chrome.

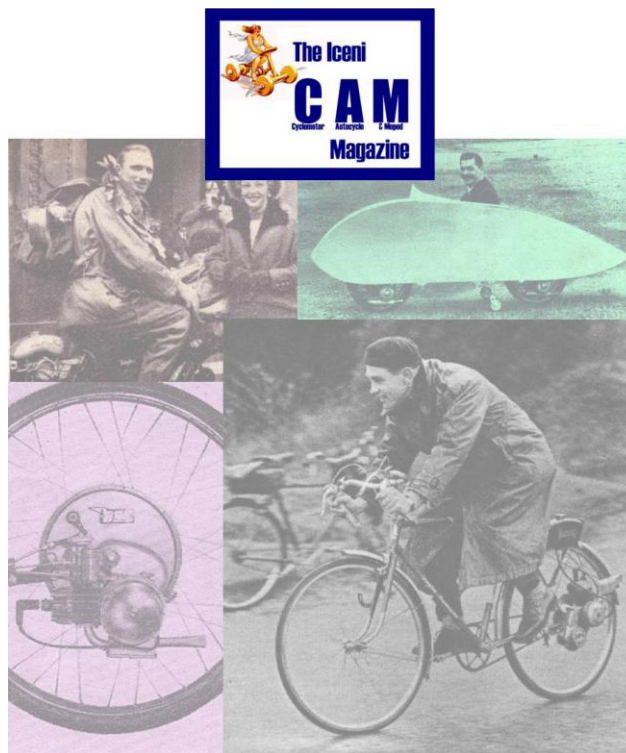
Weight: 117lb.

Concessionaires: Atlas Motor Co. Ltd., Atlas Wharf, Berkshire Road, Hockney Wick, London, E.9.

Price: £72 12s. 3d. including £13 4s. tax.

Extras: Legshields and windscreens should soon be available from the concessionaires.

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