

ROAD TEST REPORT

THE BIANCHI FALCO



**Centaur puts a speedy
Italian 3-speeder
through its paces**

FROM a firm whose name is automatically linked with light motorcycles of high performance, the Bianchi Falco moped has obviously benefited from the know-how and experience gained from the development of its big brothers.

Although it is officially described by the makers as a Touring model (there is also a Sports model), it has a distinctive sporty appearance, and its lusty 48.8 c.c. engine is capable of a remarkable turn of speed. Reasonably light of construction (weight approximately 105lb.), and fitted with narrow section 23 x 2 tyres, it handles well without being too sluggish. The rider is amply protected from poor road surfaces by telescopic forks at the front and sprung suspension at the rear. I found that the severest jolt was unable to "bottom" the forks.

Acceleration

Riding this machine is something like being mounted on a particularly spirited filly—the slightest touch of throttle has the same effect as a carelessly applied spur—the Falco simply bounds away. A bottom gear ratio lower than most 3-speeders gives an agreeable degree of flexibility at the lower end of the speed range (from 3 m.p.h. up to 17 m.p.h. without any signs of distress in the engine), and means a really peppy get away from a standing start. The Falco quite easily holds its own at the traffic lights with all but sports cars.

The Falco has a high maximum engine speed of 6,250 r.p.m., and revs. must be kept up otherwise the power drops away very quickly. Gear changes are positive and smooth, and a good selection of ratios, 30.8 for first gear, 19.8 for second, and 13.5 for third, gives good performance at all speeds. The power of the engine is perhaps most noticeable in second gear, which operates between 8/9 m.p.h. and 22 m.p.h. Acceleration in this gear can take one by surprise, and the machine seems to

welcome hill climbing as an opportunity to show its paces.

The layout of the machine is attractive, the engine area clean and uncomplicated—some might say stark—and all parts are easily accessible. It would be necessary to remove pedals and cranks to take off the timing case cover and the clutch cover, but an aperture for inspecting and adjusting the mag-dyno is provided, also an inspection hatch for the gear change apparatus.

Quick release hubs are fitted front and rear and are a boon when it is necessary to take out the wheels. This can be done literally in seconds. Both saddle and handlebars are adjustable for height, bicycle-fashion, a feature I favour greatly.

The handlebars are almost "cowhorn" in shape, and are comfortable to hold on long journeys. Not so the saddle, which is a narrow, almost triangular wedge. It is fine for short trips around town, but on a long journey

I would not be so happy.

Noisewise, the Falco scores low. It wheezes and roars like a whale with a bunged-up blow hole. The unsheltered air-intake and a not-too-effective silencer are responsible, but I certainly would not consider it a major fault. Vibration, too, is quite marked, particularly at the low revs., despite the fact that the engine is mounted on rubber bushes, but it is very noticeable that it ceases abruptly as the exhaust note rises.

If the front brake is rather feeble—which it is—then it is more than compensated by its companion at the rear. This has the effect of a giant hand gripping the machine smoothly but irresistibly. In fact, it is so powerful that gentle application is advisable.

Fine Finish

The finish on the Falco is of a high standard. The colour scheme, pillar-box red with a cream panel on the tank, is cheerful and bright, as might be expected on an Italian machine. Attention has been paid to such details as brake levers and the stand, the latter being a very good design. Deeply valanced guards afford complete protection against spray and are strongly made. Other fittings include a small but serviceable luggage rack, a cylindrical tool container slung under the seat, and a combined dip switch/horn button and cut-out button.

Lighting is provided by a C.E.V. headlamp, and is extremely effective. Due perhaps to the high revving engine, the power supply is sufficient to give a strong main beam which shows the way clearly for twenty or thirty yards. The dip beam is adequately dimmed. The horn is also more powerful than usual, and I noted with satisfaction that at its warning blast pedestrians scurried for shelter, instead of merely ignoring me as they do when they hear the feeble gasp of the average moped horn.

My opinion of the Falco? A first-class mount, lively, and with a better-than-average performance.

Performance

Maximum Speed:
Flying 1/10th mile, 36 m.p.h.
Standing 1/10th mile, 24 m.p.h.

Acceleration:
0-10 m.p.h., 2.5 sec.
0-20 m.p.h., 8.5 sec.
0-30 m.p.h., 18.5 sec.

Economy:
At 20 m.p.h., 128 m.p.g.

Hill Climbing:
Time for hill, 1 min. 25 sec.
Bottom gear (from 2nd) engaged at 0.3 miles.
Test hill 0.5 miles long, max. gradient 1 in 10, average gradient 1 in 10.

Braking:	Front	Rear	Both
At 20 m.p.h.	21ft.	11ft.	9ft.
At 30 m.p.h.	43ft.	24ft.	21ft.

Pedalling:
Maximum pedalling speed, 14 m.p.h.
Comfortable pedalling speed, 9 m.p.h.

Tester's rating: Fair.

Tester's weight: 200lb.

Specification

Engine: Inclined single cylinder 2-stroke, 48.8 c.c.; bore 38mm.; stroke 43mm.; c.r. 1:6.8; 1.6 b.h.p. at 6,250 r.p.m.

Gearbox: Three-speed in unit construction with engine; total gear ratios: 30.8:1; 19.8:1; 13.5:1.

Clutch: Multi-disc in oil bath.

Tank: 2½ gall. capacity.

Wheels and Brakes: Front and rear full width hub brakes. Chromium plated 1.35 in. rims and 23 x 2 tyres.

Equipment: Horn; luggage rack; centre stand; tool kit. Provision for speedometer in headlamp nacelle.

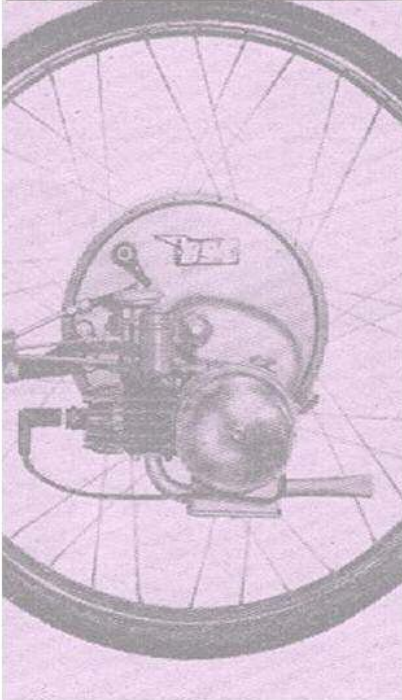
Finish: Pillar-box red with cream panel on tank.

Weight: 105lb.

Concessionaires: Leyford (Automotive) Ltd., 134/136 King Street, Hammersmith, London, W.6.

Price: £79 19s. 11d., inc. P.T.

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