

Making bikes with PLENTY OF PUSH

The Editor describes his
visit to the Motobi factory in Italy
and predicts success for their
powerful new lightweights



Above: Ace rider Tarquino Provini "cuddling the frame of his beloved racing monster"

Left: Centre of attention is the new 50 c.c. Texan Tourist. Left to right are Jack Stocker, Don Richardson, the Editor, Keith Harrison and Tino Sanchioni, Motobi publicity manager

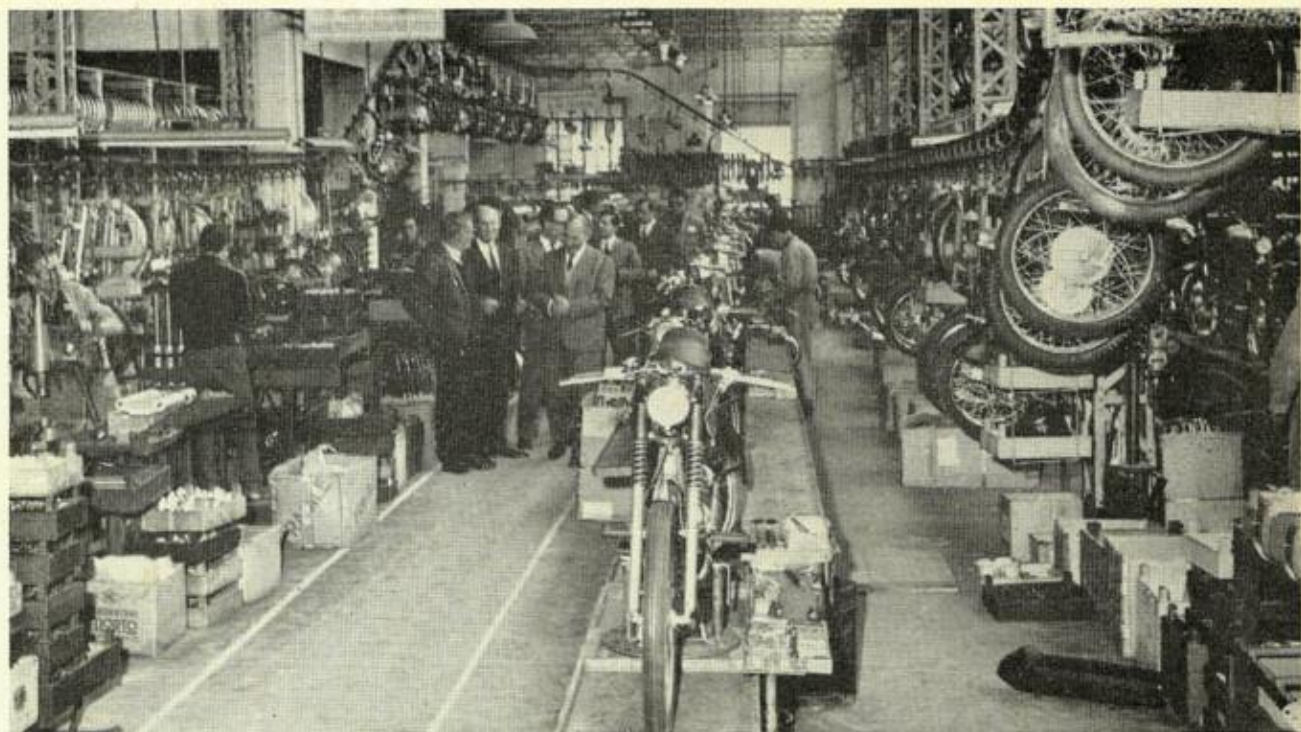
IT is important when dealing in imported machines that the customers, both trade and public, should know what sort of factory organisation is behind them. To report on this and to see and ride the actual machines that will be exhibited at Earl's Court we recently joined a party going to Pesaro in Italy to visit the BENELLI-MOTOBİ factories there.

The group consisted of Jack Stocker,

Chief of Europa Imports, Ltd, the concessionaires for *Motobi* machines in this country, their company secretary, Don Richardson and sales executive Keith Harrison, and three journalists with special interests in this field, Harold Briercliffe of the *Motor Cycle Trader*, Jon Stevens, *Scooter World* and, of course, the Editor of *Power & Pedal*. Altogether we represented a considerable fund of riding experience

lending some weight to the fact that we all came back completely satisfied with all that we had seen in both machinery and organisation.

In 1911 the Benelli brothers started in the two-wheeler business; In 1924 they started winning races and they are still doing it every week end throughout the season; In 1964 Europa Imports put *Motobi* on the British market and in 1965 we expect them to



The press party visit the Motobi line

make a considerable impact here.

Of the original brothers who founded the firm, Sgr. Giovanni Benelli remains active as a full time director and runs the works with the support of two of his nephews, Marco and Luigi, now commercial and technical director respectively. These two branched out on their own to start the *Motobi* scooter factory nearby the main plant but, so far as we could see, the two sections worked as a single organisation for all practical purposes.

If we appear to stress this historical angle it is because we feel that over half a century of continuous and exclusive two-wheeler production by one family is about as stable a background to any machine as can be imagined. They have been around a long time and they are here to stay.

Machine minded

Inside the works modern high precision machinery and modern line assembly methods are utilised with most unusual flexibility that facilitates the production at economic prices of a very wide range of machines. Actually we found that no less than 32 models between 50 and 250 c.c. could be listed although many of these, of course, are clever combinations of common components.

The Benellis are machine minded; They love the things, and some of the plant we saw operating seemed almost too good for the job. Standards are very high. For instance, we saw Solex gauges set to limits so fine that merely holding a steel mainshaft sleeve in the hand for fifteen seconds raised its temperature and expanded it outside the limits.

Some of the machine tools had been made in the factory itself, including a five-head boring tool that worked out the bores, ports, stud and bolt holes of a complete cylinder in 90 seconds flat. Ingenuity in small tools was instanced in two neat Benelli-produced gadgets for fitting ready lubricated roller bearings into cages and individual balls into gearbox mainshafts. All machining of internal parts is to very fine limits and automatic gauges culled ruthlessly any parts that failed to meet the exacting standards of the works.

Part reason for this obsession with quality of workmanship lies in the strong and continuous interest of the senior members of the family with the traditions of racing. The famous four cylinder *Benelli*, although temperamental, is one of the fastest 250's in the world on its day and it is sufficient to remark that the firm's retained rider

is Italy's top star Tarquino Provini. He, incidentally, was at the works to meet us and we photographed him cuddling the frame of his beloved racing monster as though he feared to be parted from it.

One of the original founder brothers, Mimo, is still in charge of the racing and experimental department. In the entrance hall of the factory is a bronze bust of another of the brothers, Tonino, who was killed while racing in 1932. His son, Paulo, is now with the company.

Riding

Testing is an important part of the production schedule. Behind the works is a banked track where every machine that comes off the line, from the cheapest mo-ped upwards, is tested, whatever the weather. That, Mr. dealer, is why you sometimes complain that the tyres of your *Motobi* machines are soiled!

In addition to this, random selections from each batch of models are tested on the road with the accent on hill climbing at which these machines excel. Here the British party joined in with zest. These EUROPA IMPORTS men are no armchair concessionaires. They all ride and enjoy it and between them and the three journalists we

tried all the mo-peds and scooters and a couple of 50 c.c. motor cycles, of which more anon.

After burning up the track a bit we all went out to the test hill, some three miles of steady climbing with its later section averaging 1 in 6½ and topped by a three hundred yard stretch of bumpy path some 18 inches wide between deep ditches. This was a test of handling as well as sheer climbing and we ordinary mortals went up steadily with full appreciation of the pulling power of the lusty *Motobi* engines.

The irrepressible Mr. Stocker, however, was not satisfied with this. He took a long run, hurled the little "Economicca" rigid fork mo-ped flat out at the bumpy path and ascended most of the way *senza pedali*, accompanied by loud cheers and shouts of "Motocross, motocross" from the assembled Italian testers.

We took the same machine up slowly and pedalled steadily all the way, but at least it proved that it could be pedalled up a very steep slope without undue effort, despite our advanced years, which is more than can be said of most modern mo-peds. This was good fun as well as good testing and we stayed until darkness forced us to give up.

Next morning the journalists took three of the scooters, two "48's" and a "125" from the test line to San Marino, the historic little republic that perches on top of a mountain a dozen miles west of Rimini.

Here it was climbing all the way with the last five miles a really steep succession of hairpin bends. It rained all the way which renders the cobbled road slippery and kept us from rushing the bends, so that most of the time we were in second gear with the blower cooled engines revving mightily. We were wearing only normal town clothes, a raincoat, unlined gloves and no hat or goggles, and finished the climb in wet cloud and feeling rather cold. But the little scooters kept all the rain and road spray off our legs and feet and we arrived at the top of the climb in the fairy story little town with our shoes drier than our collar.

The machines

Such testing as we were able to give this whole range of machines is an unusual opportunity for any journalist and we feel that we can express judgments with more than customary confidence.

One of the motor cycles we saw and rode was a model designed to Jack Stocker's specification for the American market and called the "Texan Tourist". It has the same engine, 4-speed foot change gearbox, frame, forks, wheels and brakes as the "Sport" model already seen here, but it has also braced handlebars and a real single saddle affording a most comfortable and controlled riding position, deep valanced mudguards, carburation modified to provide low speed guts at the cost of some top revs, built-on crash bars and a most attractive black and chrome finish.

All of us rode it and liked it, so Jack was persuaded to bring it over in addition to the existing range. It will sell at 99 guineas and we are more than sure that it will sell.

The 50 c.c. scooters frankly amazed us and the only problem we can see to selling them in quantity is simply convincing dealers and public that all this power is real. In the main we were riding machines not only untuned but not even run-in, straight off the production lines, but they climbed like cats, revved freely and put up performances that would not have disgraced machines of double the engine capacity. The same goes for the mo-peds. The 3-speeder, of course, will go anywhere the wheels can grip, but to see that single speed, automatic clutch model soaring up mile after mile of real hills without ever turning a pedal was to appreciate just how far and fast 50 c.c. engine design has developed.

The unusual engine layout of the scooters with the engine on one side of the wheel exactly balanced by the gearbox on the other ensures almost perfect weight distribution, all low down, and this with the big wheels makes for excellent handling at all speeds. The use of common parts for all three models makes for more than adequate strength factors on the light-weights and few spares and service problems.

At the time of reporting we do not know whether a "Stockerized" version of the "Economicca" will be brought over in time for the Show, but if it does (and this is a matter of price) it could be a popular buy. It has a horizontal engine of exceptional flexibility, is light in weight and very easy to handle.

The verdicts

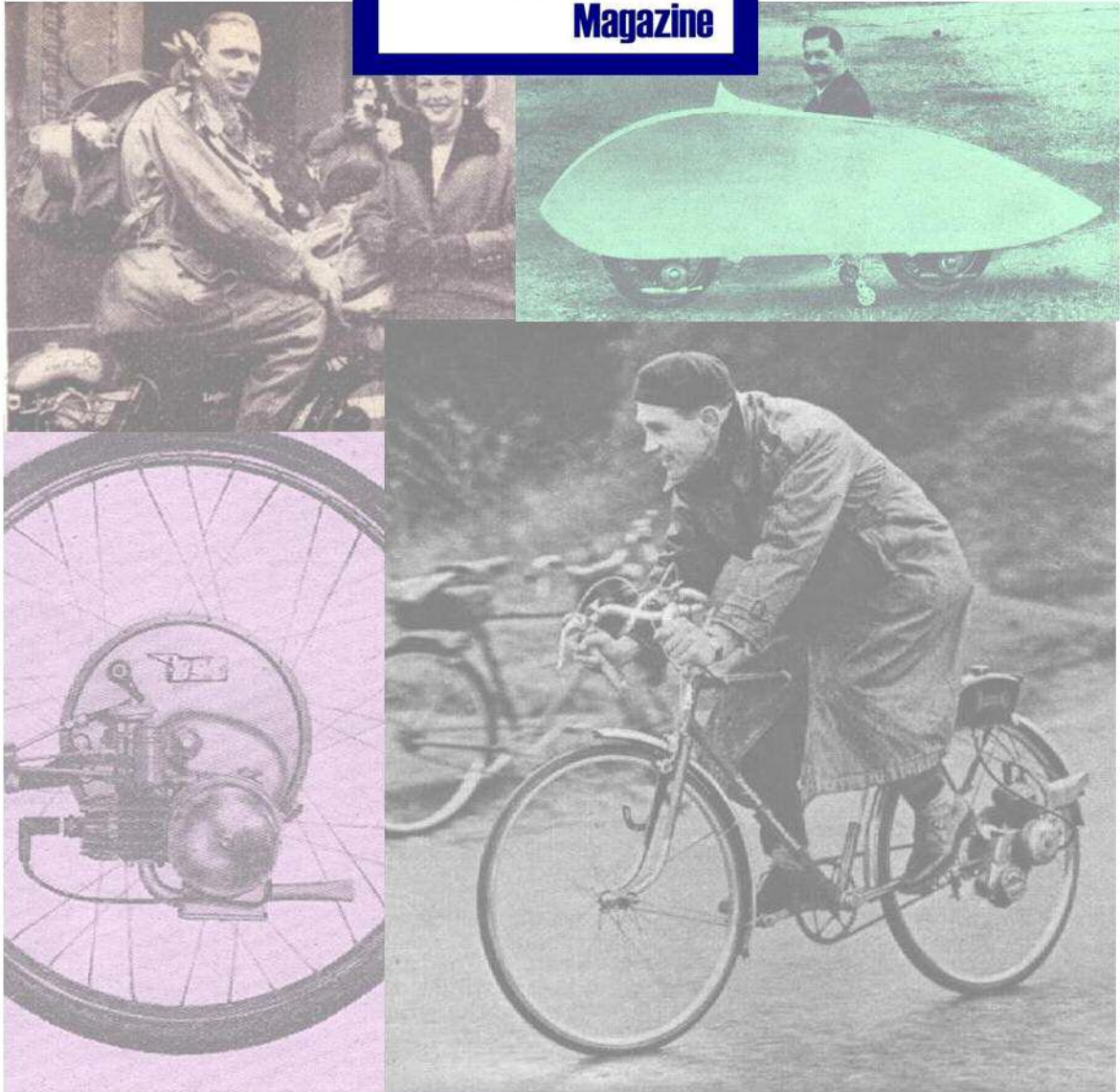
Normally we would not presume to guess at what other journalists will say about machines we have tested, but in the case of this *Motobi* range we are confident that all three of us who went on this test trip are agreed that they are very interesting machines with quite exceptional performance characteristics, especially on hills. The appearance of the scooters is somewhat unconventional, but they have definite advantages. They are tough and safe and reasonably priced.

With the BENELLI name behind them they are a range with a future. (*Motobi* models are shown in our Motorcycle Show guide elsewhere in this issue).

This Show Number replaces the December issue

Your next "Power & Pedal"
will be out after Christmas

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