

# MOTOR CYCLIST

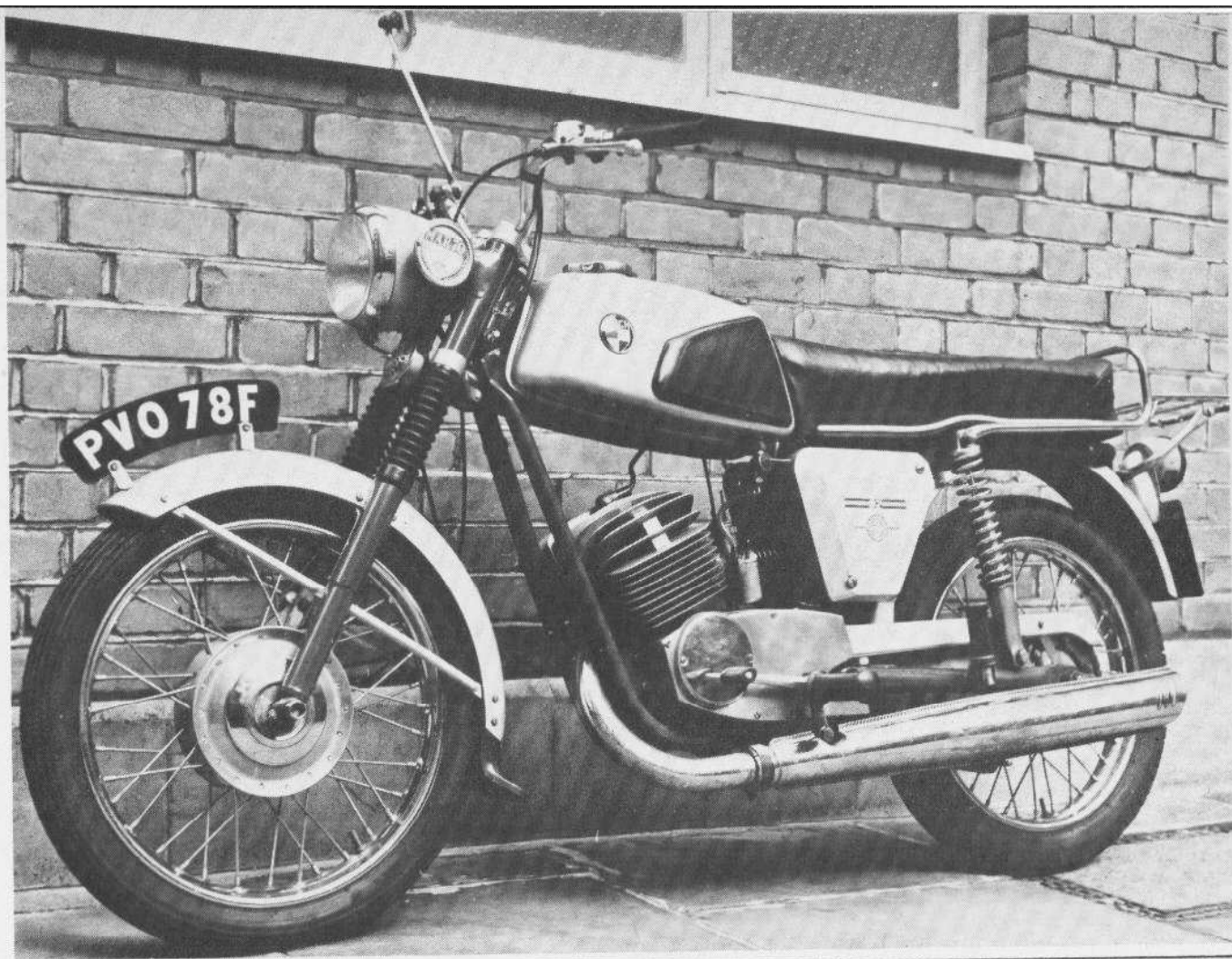
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**OCTOBER**







## The M125, Puch's game challenger to the Japanese-dominated lightweight market

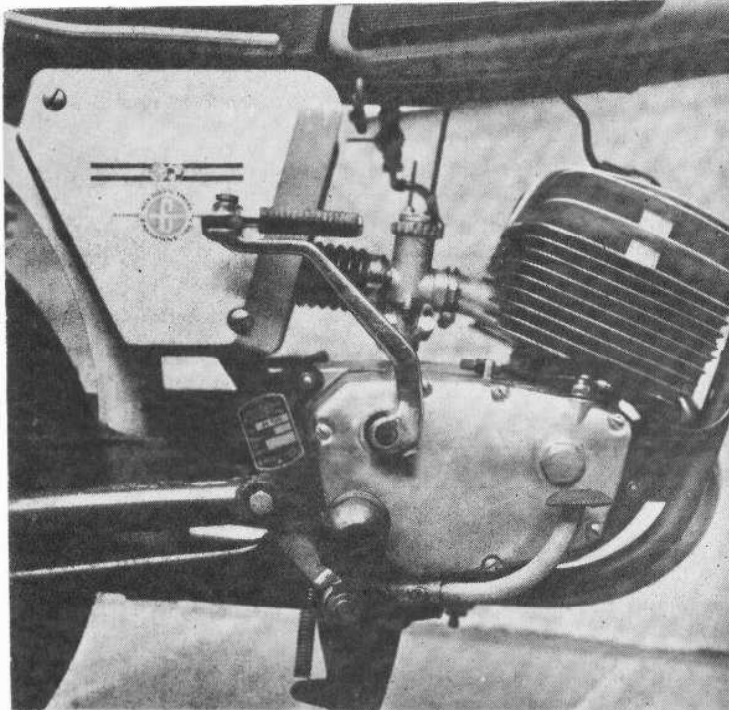
PUCH HAVE broken no new ground on either the production or design field with their new 125 cc motorcycle. Not one single sales gimmick has been included in the specification. Refined is too high-flown a word by miles to describe it, but against that it is by no means crude. Simple maybe, or basic even, much nearer the mark. That sums it up exactly. The M125 is the basic motorcycle. A simple frame; a simple engine; two wheels and a seat.

It is too long a time since I spent any time on a motorbike designed to do nothing more than carry its rider about without anything more than the barest maintenance; that stops and starts without anything more than simple lever-squeezing and asks for nothing more than a measure of commonsense from its rider. There is a certain mental relaxation in riding a machine that one feels will not play any mechanical, or more important, electrical tricks; I suppose it comes from the confidence in presuming that no matter what arises, because the system is a familiar one, it can be dealt with. It was a theme running throughout the bike's construction. Brake and hub fabrication was simple in the extreme; just a single 6.3 in brake operating from only one shoe lever, on front and rear wheels. Lighting and ignition worked perfectly well without a battery; indeed, only one switch existed on the handlebars, and that operated one thing only, the headlamp, main beam and dip (including, of course, the rear lamp); a pilot light was neither incorporated nor found necessary. Even a stop lamp was missing. The gearbox held just four ratios, and the engine used only a single piston, and that controlled the porting without a disc valve

'crutch'. The whole thing whirled around quite happily in an old-fashioned petrol mist; no separate oil and petrol shenanigans on this one. Just one stand, the centre rest; more on such a lightweight would be "padding" for the sake of it. And, although it may sound unkind, slightly out of character with the rest of the spartan little bike, is a big, luxurious dual-seat.

Unlike anything else we have begged, borrowed or stolen (and with some of the more reluctant factories it almost amounts to just that) neither the editor nor I rode halfway across the country with the Puch, simply because we have not had the time. I rode to Ipswich once and covered the 160 mile round trip very comfortably and in a better time than I did in the Mini at a later date. Average speed, without any attempt at scratching along, resulted in a 30 mph, 2 hr 20 min journey exactly; on my reckoning that is pretty good going for a commuter-designed 125. Except for one or two short trips into the country around "The Smoke", it was used as an editorial utility; back and forth to work every day without fail, except once. Intermittent firing suddenly worsened and finally the engine gave out altogether yet despite my attempts to encourage the reluctant spark away from its new, more interesting route, it refused. Points were opening, and appeared clean; I swapped plugs and removed the cap and checked all electrical joints and wires but not a sausage (or even a spark) winked across the plug electrode. Two days later, after their mechanic had spent a short time with it, I

**Test report: DAVE MINTON**



picked up the bike from Rivetts at Leytonstone. He claimed it was a matter of dirty points and maybe it was, but the same thing happened once more, but this time to the editor, and in the pouring rain. Whilst another motorcyclist was attempting to kick the nasty little thing into life the editor discovered the spark's new route. It was breaking through the HT cable's insulation and disappearing into the forest of deep finning on the head. So be warned, Puch owners, swap that Italian cable for some of our own. Except for that, though, and they can happen to the best of bikes, these niggly little irritants, nothing else required adjustments of any sort.

*Maybe it is strange, but we would suggest the kick-starter to be the best-looking of many a machine. Riding position can be altered to suit any rider—adjustable handlebars, footrests, gear and brake pedals.*

Italian cable? Quite possibly, along with the rest of the machine, and I find it all rather intriguing. Remember the last generation Puchs? Germanic, heavily styled and massively well-built; surprisingly fast, quiet and flexible. The nearest thing to a two-stroke BMW it would be possible to find, somehow this new one is out of character with the traditional Puch motorcycle. Of course, factories introduce new concepts into their products, but they always retain a strong hereditary personality that is unmistakably "family"; it is missing from this one, but it is certainly a livelier motorcycle for it. Primarily, it looks Italian; the colour scheme, and the line of the styling. No Austrian had a finger in the square cut tank and side-panel design, I'll be bound; any more than he did in the exhaust note or that stylish little spray flap on the front mudguard. Even the aluminium castings around the bike looked Italianate. Mid-European alloy castings are generally greyer in appearance, and often satin or even sand finished, while these have that brittle, high gloss white surface of the Italian machines. Another giveaway is the external welded seam on the silencer, not the sort of thing that Puch in Austria would construct; while, if not all, then much of the electrical system is by CEV the Italian "Lucas" type company, and the speedometer is Italian in manufacture and performance. Puch are the Austrian Fiat importers and distributors, so they have strong ties with Italy, but whatever else, above all other arguments; The Horn. Nothing could be so Italian as The Horn. It makes a noise like a thousand-year-old, thirsty frog. Press it and the pedestrian you are about to hit suddenly stops to inspect the soles of his shoes to see what it was he just stepped on. Use The Horn in traffic and the well-bred girl in the taxi by your elbow will colour slightly, assuming the noise to be something a little more personal than The Horn.

Musing aside, though (as if it matters where it comes from) it really is one of the most ideal general purpose bantamweights

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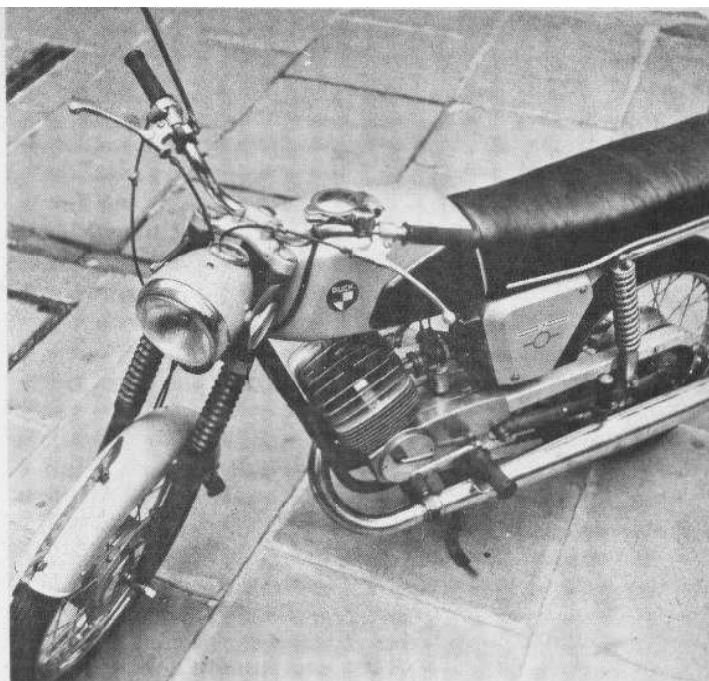
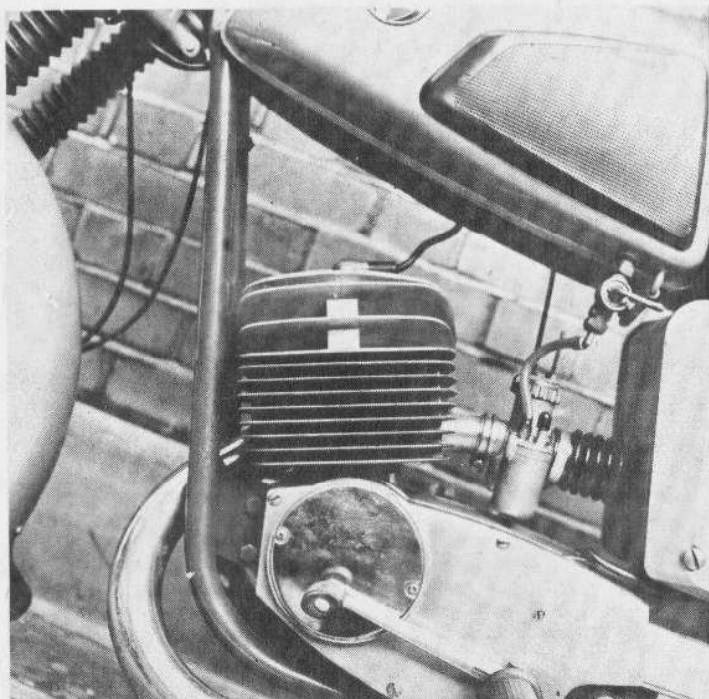


available today, for not only is the performance enough to head the daily road race to the office, but the complete motorcycle is a decent enough size to make two up riding comfortable; in fact the dual-seat is the longest I have yet to discover on any machine, regardless of capacity. Fully kitted up for bad weather, two men had enough room to move about on the seat, so preventing discomfort setting in; it makes so much difference on a long run. The seat construction was typically Continental. Please, please, please, British manufacturers buy one and copy it exactly, for you certainly cannot design a comfortable one yourself. Maybe I suffer the disadvantages of an over-generous bottom (but shouldn't that be better, not worse?) but the only really comfortable *dual-seats* I have used on long journeys have been BMW, Ducati and, although I have not ridden very far on this one, I can tell from its firm resilience that it is a good one. Springs, just below an inch of firm foam rubber, ensured even support, and whatever bumps found their way through the rear suspension stopped short at the seat. It makes me so sick to read that everyone else (apparently) finds a slab of two-inch thick over-soft plastic foam on a steel pan comfortable. I'm blessed if I do.

Keeping in the simple theme of things, Puch have bolted the pillion rests through the swinging fork, which at introduction seems to be an odd idea; but pillion riders, unless told of the arrangement, never seem to notice, so it must be good, and it does keep riders' and passengers' feet apart from each other, for so often on large machines as well as lightweights, it can be the devil's own job to get the passenger's leg out of the way after the engine has stalled, ready for the kick-start swing. Sensibly, the footrests are positioned just in line with the nose of the seat, so coupled with the handlebar placing the relationship between legs, arms and seat is just right. Good big slabs of rubber either side of the flat-walled fuel tank ensure no paint is removed by the continual chaffing of leggings. The finish itself seemed to be quite good, especially the red-finished frame, apparently stove-enamelled. The side covers were plastic, and held in place by two, large conventional screws with coin slots. One compartment held the very large paper air filter, and the other the tool kit, a small enough set of tools but ample for all minor servicing.

After a few weeks with the M125 (pity it has no name, it deserves one; something nippy), it was easy enough to realise why

*Accessibility was as good as could be wished for; the heart of the electrical system was behind the chromium cover on the side of the crankcase.*



*Accent on comfort; the seat was gigantic. The fuel tank cap doubles an oil measure—it was good and big and easy to use.*

the engine has become so popular with trials machine builders; it produces power at low speeds out of all proportion to its capacity. Actually the rest of the bike gives the impression of having developed from a trials iron, it is so manoeuvrable, but that is the wrong way round. Isn't it? . . . Maximum power is developed at 7000 rpm, about right for a little engine of this performance, but maximum torque—a far more enjoyable characteristic—must come out way below that, so once the lights change to green the little Puch leapt ahead of the rest without any howling revs and clutch slipping. From my first moments on the thing I tended to regard it as something more than a 125: probably something to do with first impressions and the massive, hemispherical head and barrel finning, and then the engine performance. Irrationally, I expected the power flow to continue for ever; well, it started off so well, I saw no reason why it should behave like any other engine and start begging for mercy once it was running too hard. Mere gear speeds cannot convey the method of getting there, but just for the record: first (24.77) 20 mph; second (12.09) 41 mph; third (9.41) 54 mph; and top (7.35) 65 mph. Every one of these speeds could be improved upon, but over-revving is so unnecessary on this machine that acceleration is not improved. Top speed was obtained in heavyish riding gear and sitting upright, so I have no doubt that a youngster in a slick riding outfit would not find it so very difficult to wring another five mph from the Puch. An output of 12 bhp is claimed by the makers, at 7000 rpm. Compression ratio is 10:1.

Gear changing was good without being faultless, the only criticism perhaps in the slow, longish pedal movement, but it certainly never required any mastering, or a knack to operate properly. The ratios were spaced in a manner I love, bottom gear being way below the others for easy traffic riding and quick take-offs, and the other three just comfortably spaced apart for useful and easy gear-changing once on the move. At one end of the crankshaft was the flywheel magneto and lighting coils, and on the other, the offside end, was the clutch, running wet, in the primary helical gear oil. Unusually, the operation of plate separation is carried out through the outer cable, the inner one holding fast to crankcase and cable adjuster. It functioned perfectly.

Strange as it may seem, to fill the tank of a two-stroke with petrol was quite a novelty. Who else uses such a system these days? Puch recommend a 25:1 mixture, but we both found it was rather rich, so daringly, I reduced the amount of oil by one tank cupful; this brought the recommended amount of oil down to 33:1. Carburation itself was correct; plug readings saw to that, but with a trail of smoke behind the bike it became an embarrassment, especially when accelerating. Anyway, once the silencer had dried out, smoke was cut to a faint two-stroke level of respectability, and nothing seized or rattled. It is not recommended that private owners

carry out lubrication experiments; we did not own our motorcycle; it is our job to experiment; leave yours to the factory.

Roadholding was excellent without any faint-hearted wavering at hard bends, and nothing grounded, but it could have been better had the front fork springs been a little softer. As it was, it needed a good old bump to set things sliding up and down, so unless a corner was taken at speed enough to force it to work, or bumpy enough to do the same, the front end, over-sensitised by the bouncing tyre, rippled gently.

Braking was one of the best points of the bike; they contained the very best characteristics of s/s units with none of the sometime suddenness of t/s devices. Although they were sensitive and smooth at lower speeds, a good fistful of lever at high speed had the Treleborg tyres squealing. Both tyres were good in wet weather.

After a few night journeys with a direct lighting system as good as this, I wonder why we make such a fuss and palaver of batteries, current control, diodes, complicated switches and wiring harnesses. On very rare occasions, parking could possibly become a problem at night but a dry battery and wee parking lamp could overcome that easily enough. The second the engine sang into life, the headlamp beam blazed out at full power with the engine revs at no more than 1500. It was all so beautifully simple.

Much of the easy starting credit must go to the 1/2 in. Bing carburettor. It never spat back and always gave a steady, reliable tick-over, but the cold start device (never used) jammed soon after the machine was collected. Fuel consumption worked out at 74 mpg overall, but used more carefully than it was, generally over 80 mpg was quite feasible.

It is not a perfect motorcycle and has its rough edges—hard forks, smoking and The Horn, but it is one that I am sure will soon find itself with a loyal bunch of riders in much the same manner as the BSA Bantam, who would not dream of using anything else. Its attraction lies almost wholly in its manageability, both riding and maintenance, and costs only £179 19s; one of the last inexpensive motorcycles available.



*It costs £64 19s and can be bought for as little as £10 19s down and eight payments of £7 11s; or £21 19s down and 24 at £2 6s. Puch make this delightful little moped which—despite the skirt length of the lady—is called the Maxi, and which is currently outselling anything else in the same market. We rode one at Brands Hatch and in the Isle of Man (not competitively, we add) and found it to be as smooth and silent-running as a sewing machine. Fully automatic, it can be—and was—ridden by the simplest-minded of folks at a cost claimed to be equivalent to that of a cigarette per every five miles. Unless you smoke Special Hand-made Export Kingsize. And riding position is optional.*

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