

SCOOTER WEEKLY Road Test No. 25

MAICOLETTA

Type: 247 c.c. Two-stroke
Price: £199 19s. 5d. (inc. P.T.)

Concessionaires:
Maico (Great Britain), Ltd.
81a Gloucester Road,
London, S.W.7.

Specification

Engine: 247 c.c. fan-cooled, single-cylinder two-stroke; 67-mm. bore by 70-mm. stroke; c.r. 7.6:1; claimed output 14.0 b.h.p. at 5,100 r.p.m.; Bing carburetter with air cleaner and intake silencer.

Transmission: Four-speed gearbox in unit with engine; positive-stop foot-change; ratios, 4.8, 6.4, 9.1 and 15.5:1; multiplate clutch running in oil bath; primary and final drives by chain.

Frame: Tubular steel chassis with pressed steel bodywork.

Wheels: 14-in. split-rim type carrying 3.25-in. Continental tyres; 6¼-in. dia. brake at front with 5-in. dia. brake at rear.

Lubrication: Petroil; test ratio 25:1.

Electrical Equipment: 6-v., 60/90-w. Bosch flywheel generator and electric starter; 6-v., 11-a.h. battery; 5-in. dia. headlamp; ignition-cum-lighting switch; parking, tail, brake, clock and speedometer lights; ignition warning lamp; electric horn; combined dip-switch and horn button on left handlebar.

Suspension: Hydraulically-damped telescopic forks at front with pivoting forks at rear with coil springs and enclosed hydraulic shock absorbers.

Fuel Tank: Under saddle, 2½-gal. capacity, including 1-gal. reserve; three-position enclosed tap.

Major Dimensions: Overall length, 81 in.; width over handlebars, 25 in.; height over handlebars, 38 in.; seat height, 29 in.; certified kerbside weight, 322 lb.

Colours Available: Black/grey with red seat or black/stone with grey seat.

General Equipment: Kit of tools, dual seat, electric starter, wheel embelishers, centre stand, lockable glove compartment, 100 m.p.h. speedometer incorporating gear indicator, 8-day clock, tyre pump, steering damper, luggage carrier, briefcase hook, cold start lever.

Annual Tax: £1 17s. 6d.

Every Bit as Good as its Reputation



THE Maicoletta has, over the years, become surrounded by an aura of respect which almost savours of awe. Owners of other makes cast envious eyes upon it and Maicoletta riders carry an air of quiet pride. We set out, in this test, to discover just how much of this near-idolatry is justified and how much is mumbo-jumbo. Right away, it can be said that the machine lived up to expectations and left our hands with its reputation even higher than when it was delivered to us.

First Impression

It is fairly obvious that this machine was designed by a man who loves the beauty of well-made machinery and its lines constitute a reversal of the old saw: "If it looks right, it is right." The Maicoletta is right and, in consequence, looks right. But perhaps this is what the original saying really means!

With its fairly large dimensions and a weight of 322 lb., the machine is no lightweight, but the centre of gravity is so placed that no inconvenience is caused.

The controls are conventional by motorcycle standards except that the gearchange control is by heel-and-toe pedals, on the left. The dual seat is very long indeed—more on this later—and the handlebars pleasantly narrow.

It is a machine which the average scooterist will find slightly formidable for the first mile or so but to which the motorcyclist will take like a duck-billed platypus takes to muddy streams.

The paintwork is of good quality and the colours offered quietly tasteful. There is a minimal use of bright metal parts—just enough to set the finish off nicely.

The Stand and Starting

A normal centre stand is fitted. It holds the machine very securely, coming well forward of the vertical position, but one has to give rather more than a light tug to get the machine perched on it. The force required is, however, not too much for a slightly built owner.

Starting is by a 6-volt Bosch "rock-and-roll" electric starter which, in the initial stages, does not turn the motor over but, instead, bounces the piston off compression until enough momentum has been built up to set it spinning.

This device worked perfectly when the motor was hot and just as perfectly when it was cold but, in the latter circumstance, the choke had to be opened immediately the unit fired if "fluffing" was to be avoided.

For cold starts we found the best settings to be: throttle no more than quarter open and choke three-quarters closed.

The Engine

The heart of a scooter is its engine and the Maico unit is peppy, with a good turn of speed and evidently utterly tireless, no matter how long it is driven or how hard.

From about one-third to two-thirds of its revolution range it gives an extra boost of power, the port timing obviously having been designed to give medium-rev. performance. But despite this there is much more power available at low revolutions than might be expected with such a unit.

The result is that the rider has a choice of steady, deliberate riding with few gear-changes, or much faster progress by accelerating rapidly through the gears.

Two-stroking at tick-over is average and the silencing good.

The Gearbox

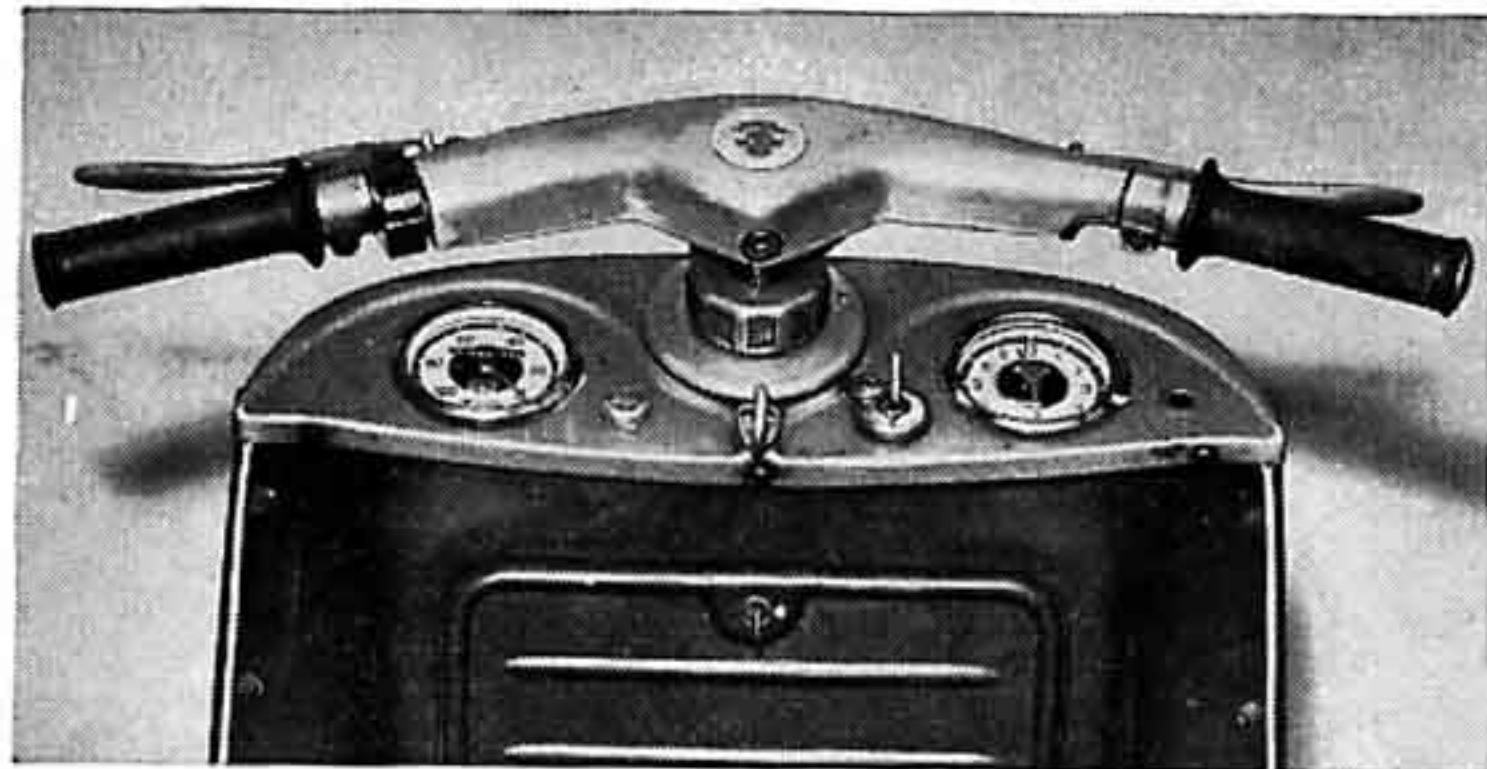
The gears work quietly and their changing is slick; no more need be said on this subject except that a useful gear ratio indicator is fitted on the dashboard. The clutch we found to be rather fierce in take-up on the machine we tested, but this does not seem to be true of all Maicolettas. In any case, the rider soon gets used to it and, indeed, makes full use of this characteristic.

Another point about the clutch was that it was rather heavy to withdraw—more like what one would expect from a 500 c.c. motorcycle. Slight drag sometimes made neutral tricky to locate.

Performance and Brakes

Giving a quickly attained top speed of 68 m.p.h. (speedometer reading 76) with the rider slightly crouched and 63 m.p.h. available sitting straight up, the Maicoletta has a cruising speed performance comparable with the average 1½-litre family saloon, but, as our graph shows, acceleration more in keeping with a good sports motorcycle.

The result is that average speeds on long runs are remarkably high while—bonus point—fuel consumption stays extremely reasonable at 71 m.p.g. A very large fuel tank is fitted—2½ gal.—and the only complaint here was that the reserve of one gallon was a bit



Around the steering column, under the handlebars, is a steering damper—useful for sidecar work.

much for, with human fallibility, a rider could forget he had switched to reserve.

Two-up riding made practically no difference to the performance, such was the torque output of the motor; with a 9-stone passenger, the handling was equally unimpaired.

Hill-climbing was another feature which called for praise and, generally speaking, the rider was never in a position where frustration was occasioned through the motor's lack of ability to do what was asked of it.

The brakes were free from snatch and progressive: that is to say that their efficiency was related directly to the pressure on the operating lever and pedal. They appeared to be quite free from fade and were altogether far better than the cold figures of our data graph can convey. Sudden stops are all right in theory, but a fully controlled stop is much better in practice!

Comfort and Steering

Unusual among scooters in having telescopic front forks, the Maicoletta holds the road and handles like a dream. Even on wet surfaces, it has a sure grip; it gobbles up pot-holes and irons out ripply bends.

Probably, its weight contributes greatly to this feeling of steadiness and, as already mentioned, the handling remains good even when a pillion passenger is carried.

Loading a heavy bundle on the rear carrier lightens the steering somewhat and we would advise long-distance tourists to carry the major part of their luggage in panniers mounted as far forward as possible.

There is ample room for such pannier location because the dual-seat must be about the longest fitted to any two-wheeler: a glance at the photographs will show this very clearly. The result

The handling was delightful: here, one of our testers displays the underside of the machine as he banks it over in enjoyable style. Safety at all speeds was an outstanding feature.



is that both driver and passenger can move about on a long run, so alleviating fatigue and avoiding any tendencies towards cramp.

A little more room for the driver's feet would be appreciated: there is plenty of toe room, but the heels foul the bodywork when using the rearward gear pedal.

The narrow handlebars we have mentioned: these make long-distance work very pleasant, being set at the right height for the average rider and giving a position which makes riding without a windscreen very comfortable.

The "Electrics"

The lights of the test model were adequate for fast cruising

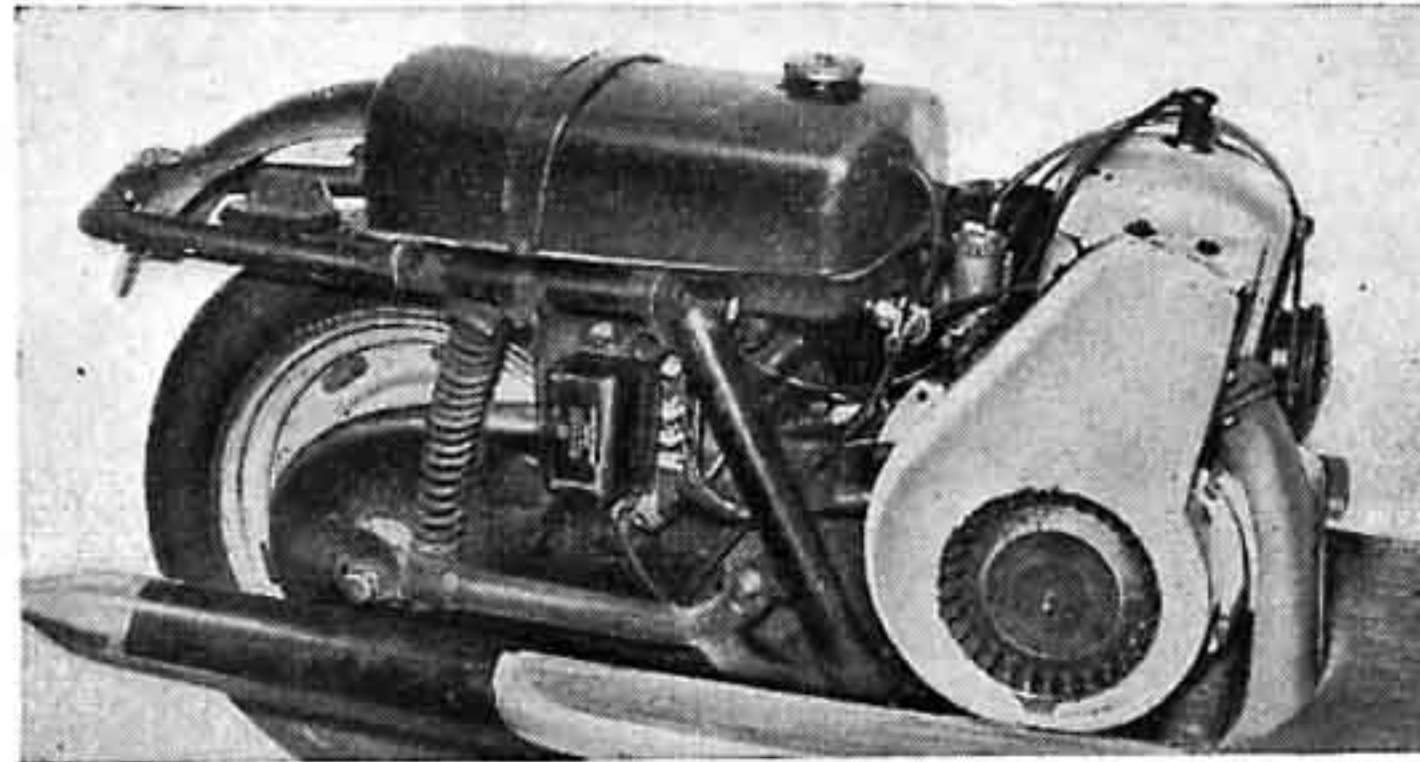
without being outstanding, but the machine had done a considerable mileage and the battery seemed to be rather the worse for wear—or, to be accurate, sulphation.

The beam pattern was good, both on main and dip and a main-beam flashing switch was an absolute boon for overtaking in the dark. Would that others...

is the better. It is very simple to do in any case.

With the body removed, engine accessibility is good. All cable adjusters are within close reach and transmission servicing is easy to carry out.

The fuel filler cap is under the seat and the orifice it closes permits a good view into the tank.



Of particular interest in this view is the very large fuel tank. Note also the stout frame construction.

Our tester's notes read: "The horn had bags of honk," a phrase which, although vaguely reminiscent of a sack-load of geese, sums the thing up quite well. It was a good 'un.

Although we found no actual cause for complaint we rather tend to agree with Maicoletta owners who sigh for the day when the 6-volt electrics may be replaced by a 12-volt system. It is nice to have a little extra in hand.

Accessibility

For working on the Maicoletta engine, the owner has the option of poking about through a trap-door on the nearside and changing the plug under the hinging seat, or removing the complete rear bodywork, and for any task other than that mentioned, or fiddling with the carburetter, the latter course

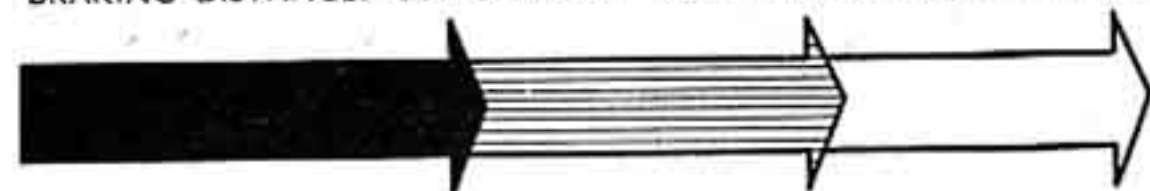
The fuel tap is reached through a porthole in the body side but is rather too far in to be operated without a slight amount of difficulty.

When a machine has been in production for seven years with hardly any modifications worth mentioning and when it continues to be accepted—nay, worshipped—even more at the end of that period than when first introduced, then that means that it is a quite outstanding design. Even more impressive is the fact that this popularity has been achieved largely by owner recommendation.

Most remarkable of all is the fact that confirmed scooterists and motorcyclists alike admire the Maicoletta. That makes it a rare bird indeed!

PERFORMANCE IN A NUTSHELL

BRAKING DISTANCES ON SMOOTH TARMACADAM FROM 30 M.P.H.



BOTH BRAKES 37 FT. FRONT 57 FT. REAR 74 FT.

