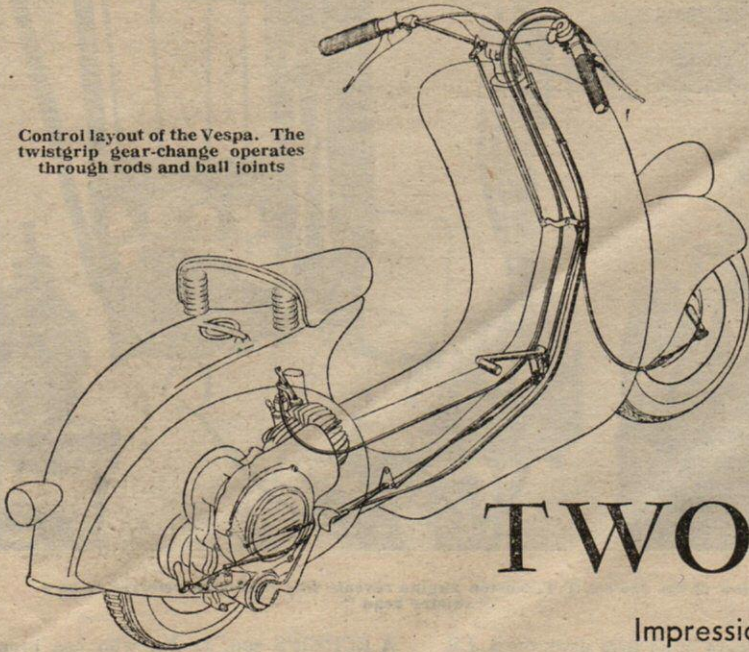


Control layout of the Vespa. The twistgrip gear-change operates through rods and ball joints



practical features of a runabout have not been sacrificed. You park the machine by letting it fall—it rests on the edge of the footboards on either side, which are wide enough apart for the machine to be perfectly stable though at a considerable angle from the vertical. The front mudguard is highly effective, and the weather-shield is so wide that the rider does not have to tuck in his knees to miss the draught. Above all, the height of the saddle in relation to the wide handlebars, and the natural position of the legs when one's feet are on the footboards, make one feel at home and, indeed, completely master of the machine within the first yard of road experience.

I have yet to ride a machine with very small diameter wheels which did not have a slight tendency to roll, usually at walking-pace speeds. The Vespa has it, but in small degree. Once

TWO UNUSUAL

Impressions of the Italian Vespa Runabout and the

FOR a long time I have had a hankering to ride a Vespa. The attractive appearance and novel design of these little runabouts have caused a fair amount of comment during the last year, particularly among Servicemen who have seen Vespas in various parts of Italy and in the Middle East.

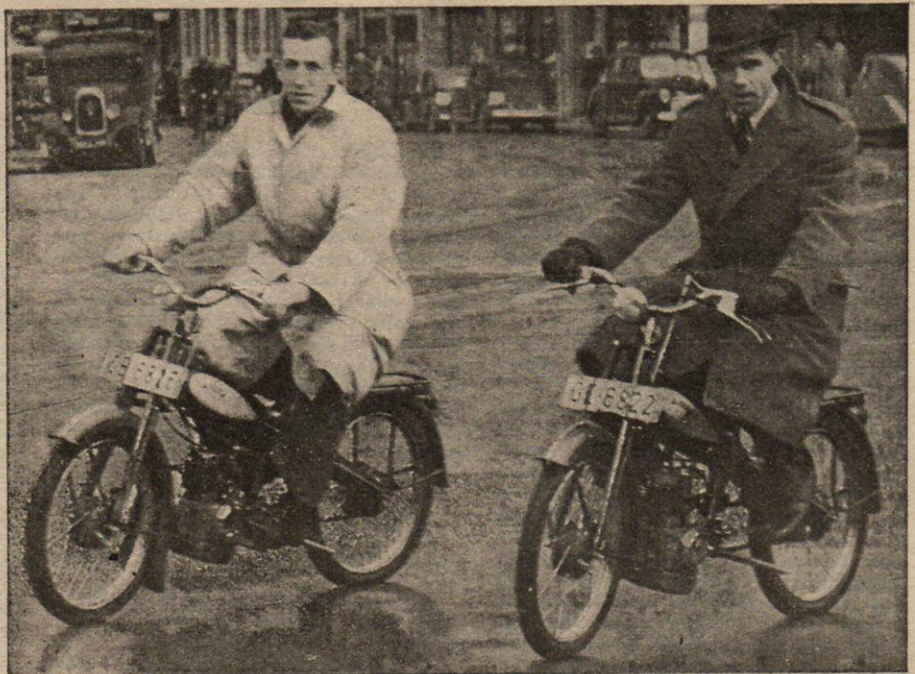
A description of the Vespa appeared in *The Motor Cycle* last October. In brief, its features are a pressed sheet-steel frame, front-wheel suspension by a bottom-link controlled by a flat "clock" spring, rear-wheel suspension by a single arm anchored in rubber to the frame, an engine-three-speed-gear unit mounted beside that arm and directly connected to the rear-wheel axle, and pressed-steel wheels which, mounted on stub axles as distinct from spindles, can be detached sideways after the removal of four nuts, as in automobile practice.

The engine-gear unit is a normal two-stroke with an aluminium alloy cylinder head and a cast-iron cylinder. Cooling is by a fan and cowling, with the fan carried on the flywheel magneto. The main "body" over the rear wheel embraces the petrol tank and mounted on top is the saddle. A bulbous flaring on the right-hand side shrouds the engine, and a similar flaring on the left-hand side is a toolbox-cum-"boot" for parcels.

There is artistry in the lines of the Vespa, and the finish in colour and chromium plate is elegant and of first-class quality. At the same time, the essential

above about four miles an hour it handles beautifully and hands off is no daring accomplishment.

When I rode the Vespa at Geneva I lost no time in finding the worst roads in the city because I was particularly anxious to test the suspension. After traversing potholes and corrugations on a tar-macadam road and some hummocks on a piece of waste ground I am fairly certain that the Vespa is the most comfortable lightweight I have ever ridden; both front and rear suspensions give adequate movement and, in addition, one sits on a normal-size saddle such as would be expected on any average 500 c.c. machine of British manufacture. On wet and slimy surfaces and over tramlines the Vespa proved to have a high



Two Motoms in Geneva. The riding position is better than average for an auticycle

degree of stability and never felt as if it might skid.

Engines of 98 c.c. and 125 c.c. are used in these little machines. Only models with the larger engines are exported and the machine I rode was so fitted. Broadly speaking, acceleration and maximum speed are what one would expect from a comparable engine of British manufacture. The makers of the Vespa claim a maximum speed of just over 43 m.p.h.—I should think that would be possible in favourable circumstances. More to the point is that the Vespa is capable of keeping up with average town traffic.

Gear-changing is by the left-hand twistgrip connected to the gear box by ball-jointed rods. On the grip is the clutch lever, so that one raises the lever, moves it through a short arc and then releases it in very quick time. On the model I rode there was no perceptible lost motion in the linkage and gear-changing was so easy and positive that I found myself changing gear at the slightest excuse just for the fun of it. In my view the Vespa has definitely

"I am fairly certain that the Vespa is the most comfortable lightweight I have ever ridden"



LIGHTWEIGHTS

Swiss-Italian 48 c.c. Motom By HARRY LOUIS

got something in this gear-change—a foot-operated positive-stop change would be no quicker, and would, I imagine, be less convenient. Twistgrip gear-changes are not new, but the Vespa is a winner because it is positive and the grip requires only a short movement.

Other points about the Vespa that impressed me are that the exhaust is pleasantly subdued, and that both brakes are light in operation and very efficient. My criticisms concern low-speed carburation (I think), which resulted in cold starting being difficult and in unreliable idling; another adverse point is a certain amount of whine in all three gears.

I took the opportunity of riding the Motom because of its interesting frame construction and because I wanted to find out how much pull there was in a 48 c.c. overhead-valve engine.

Neat Beam Frame

The Motom was briefly dealt with in our description of the Swiss Show. The beam frame is most unusual and is certainly neater than a normal cycle-type tube frame. So far as I could judge during a run round Geneva the frame is perfectly rigid and stable at the speeds of which the Motom is capable.

One starts the machine either by using a pedal as a forward-acting kick-starter and then driving away on the clutch or by operating a dog clutch and adopting a "drop-clutch" start as with a British autocycle. I found the latter method easier because the machine I rode was tricky to start and was inclined to fade out as one let in the clutch from stationary (unless I am much mistaken this trouble was due to poor low-speed carburation, as with the Vespa).

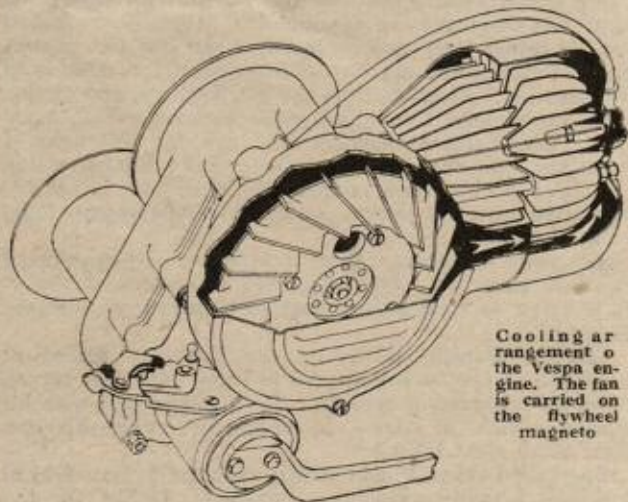
Once on the move, the Motom is more nippy than I imagined it would be, provided the engine is kept revving; that is, the three gears have to be used and the grip twisted to an extent unnecessary with a two-stroke. Providing one drives the engine in this way—drives it "hard" really—the performance is altogether surprising.

A twistgrip gear-change with clutch lever on the grip is employed on the Motom. I should have preferred a smaller arc of movement to be necessary and for selection

to be more positive. Below the clutch lever and also on the grip is the front-brake lever—it is so positioned that it can only be used comfortably when the machine is in top gear.

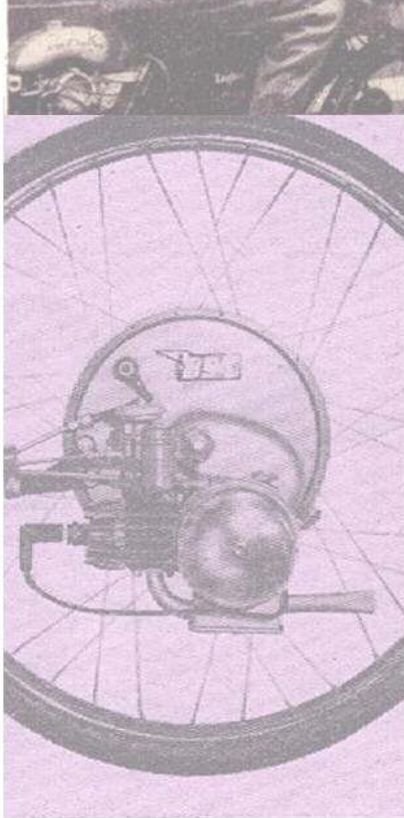
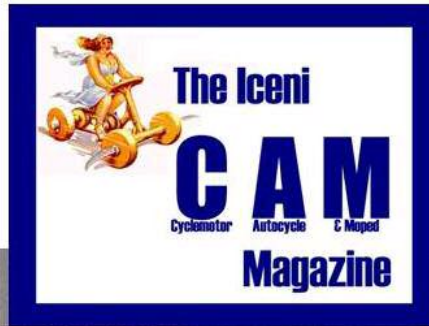
Riding comfort is better than on the average autocycle. The pedals are placed so that one can apply full force on them and the feet are in a comfortable position when the engine is driving. The saddle is very well sprung and has a long, soft action; fork action is light, though inclined to hammer over potholes.

My conclusions on the Motom are that for a 48 c.c. machine it is by way of being remarkable. But, personally, I do not see how the engine can escape being over-driven by the average owner. Yet I could well be wrong; the manufacturers gaily market a trailer which in itself weighs 55 lb—22 lb less than the machine—capable of carrying a load of 330 lb. Equipped for this sort of work bottom gear is about 50 to 1 and top 19 to 1. If the engine will stand that sort of treatment, then my fears are groundless.



Cooling arrangement of the Vespa engine. The fan is carried on the flywheel magnet.

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