

## ROAD TEST REPORT

# The R.S.I. MOTOBLOC

*A French mo-ped  
of outstanding  
usefulness*

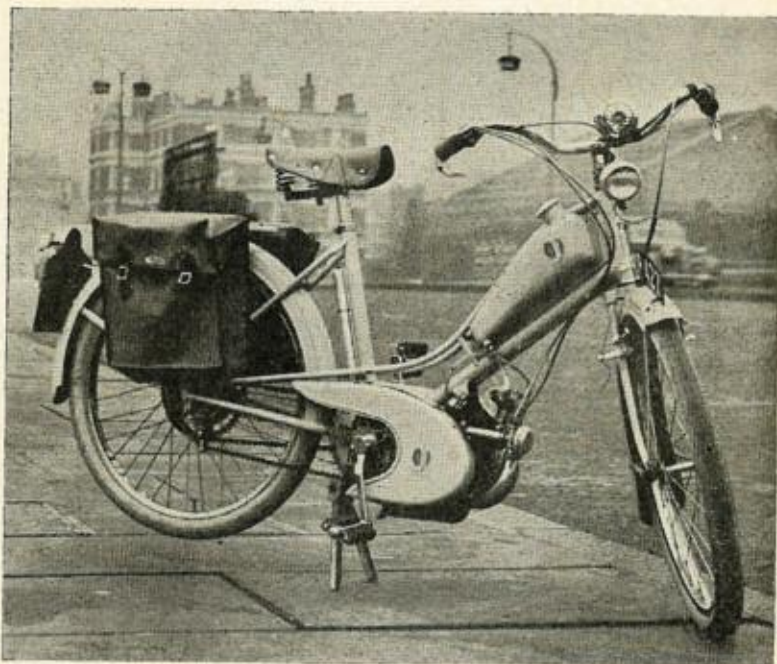
FRANCE is the largest producer of powered two-wheelers in the world and also the original home of motorised cycling as a popular means of everyday transport.

This wealth of experience, both technical and practical, has to be taken seriously in evaluating any machine or type of machine for its suitability for the market and the general trends of French *cyclo-moteur* design are worthy of close study.

One point of note is that the most popular types in the pure personal transport field, those that sell in their hundreds of thousands every year, retain a close affinity with the ordinary bicycles which they have largely replaced on French roads; another is the special interest shown by designers in providing ultra-simple handling by using a minimum of manual controls. The R.S.I. *Motobloc* just tested is typical in these characteristics.

Real interest centres round the transmission which is by automatic centrifugal clutch. This device operates like a normal internal expanding brake mounted directly on the engine shaft. When the engine is stopped the clutch is engaged and can be started by pushing or pedalling the machine. As soon as it starts, the clutch frees itself and the engine can tick over fully disengaged. When the throttle is opened and the revs. go up the clutch engages itself progressively and the cycle moves off. There is no manual control at all and none is ever needed.

For pedalling, either from choice or in emergency, a knurled button mounted on the aluminium main



pulley can disengage the engine completely. Primary drive is by Vee belt and final drive by two independent chains.

### Road Manners

The first noticeable effect of this design during the test was that our road manners at pedestrian crossings became positively angelic. We stopped for every ditherer, smiled benignly on the potential suicides as they leapt before our wheels and thoroughly enjoyed the ease and smoothness of getting away again every time.

On the level or upgrades all that was needed was to open the throttle and the machine just took itself away. Left to itself the acceleration from standstill is slow, for the *Riva-Sport* is still a true bicycle and the pedals are not just foot-rests. Half a dozen "*coups de pedal*" after the machine was moving made that getaway really lively and from about 6-8 m.p.h. with the clutch driving solid the performance was very brisk indeed.

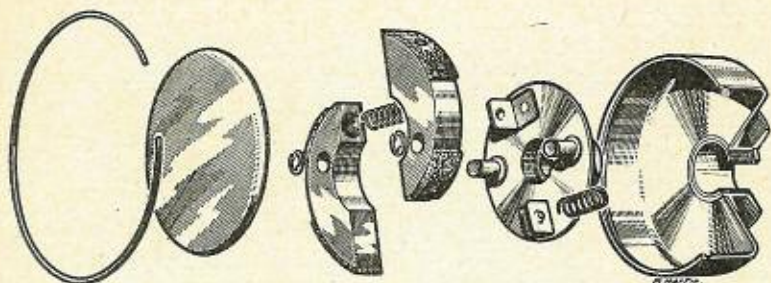
Stopping, of course, has the same casual ease and freedom from fuss;

the twistgrip is cut back, the two cycle type brakes applied and the machine stops with the engine quietly ticking over.

The real pleasure, apart from ease of handling, lies in the fact that this engine cannot be stalled. Treat it as roughly as you like; stop and start violently (if you can) and ride it to a standstill on hills, deliberately or accidentally and the engine goes on running. If the hill is too steep for unassisted climbing on the single direct gear pedal assistance will take it up easily at any speed from standstill up. The clutch is designed to slip just as a brake will be slipping going downhill and this clutch slip acts instead of another gear, a gear that requires no box and no control. The idea takes some getting used to but it really works.

In traffic the driving is physically easy and the embarrassment and exertion of restarting with a dead engine after a stall is completely eliminated. Light weight and definite "bicycle feel" add to this suitability for town work considerably.

Maximum speed is in the neighbourhood of 28 m.p.h. with the



smoothest cruising found at about 24 m.p.h. on the flat. Over-revving downhill caused no distress either to engine or rider and 35 m.p.h. was maintained for long stretches on favourable grades.

The engine is too noisy for modern standards when running on over half throttle, but most of the noise seemed to be coming from the air intake and the use of an air-cleaner silencer as fitted to the dearer model-L might well improve things considerably. The only other criticism of the machine is that the saddle is too small and hard for comfort. Now that British made mo-ped saddles are available at reasonable prices this could be easily rectified.

Apart from the saddle, comfort is good provided the tyres are not over-inflated. Both seat and handlebar height are adjustable and a natural riding position without stretch can be found by a rider of any size. Steering and road-holding are good and a crash stop under both the powerful brakes at once found the machine straight and upright without risk. The calliper front brake with studded blocks proved a very good brake indeed on performance but inclined to squeal when used hard. The smoothness and silence of the transmission, primary belt and both engine and pedal drive chains, was much appreciated.

#### According To Plan

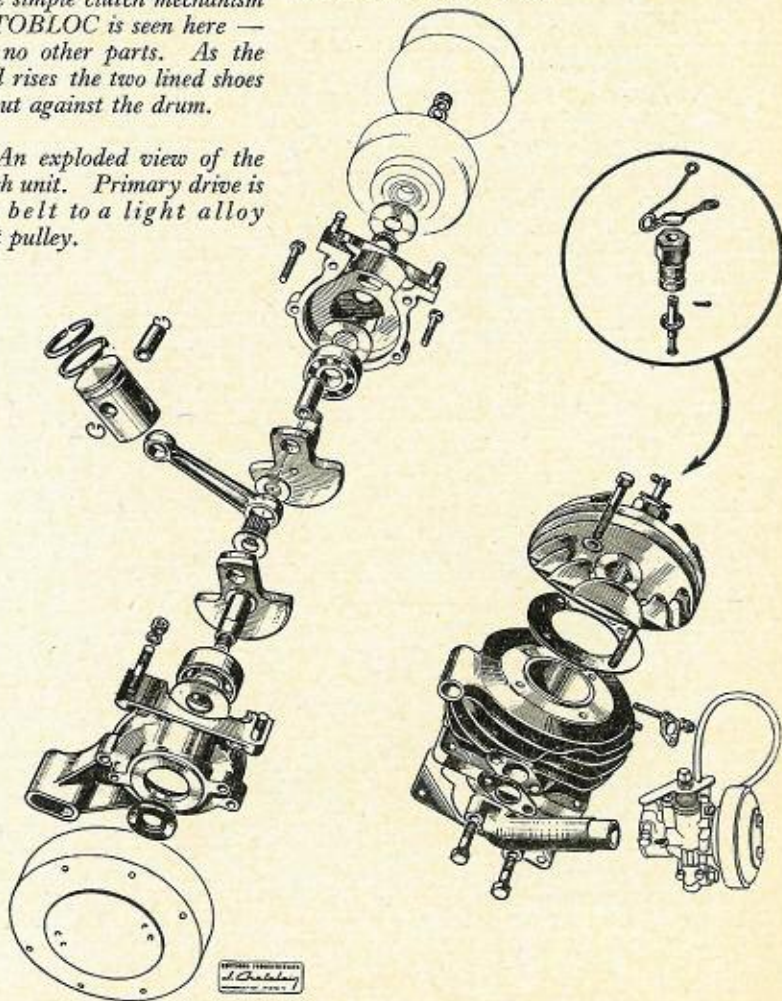
Any machine should be judged by how it does what it was meant to do and by this standard the R.S.I./Motobloc takes full marks.

This is what motorised cycling was meant to be—cycling with the work taken out of it, with the handling simplicity of the pedal cycle retained and additional speed and comfort thrown in.

With a little attention to engine silence and a change of saddle it will be the ideal machine for many

*Top. The simple clutch mechanism of the MOTOBLOC is seen here — There are no other parts. As the engine speed rises the two lined shoes are forced out against the drum.*

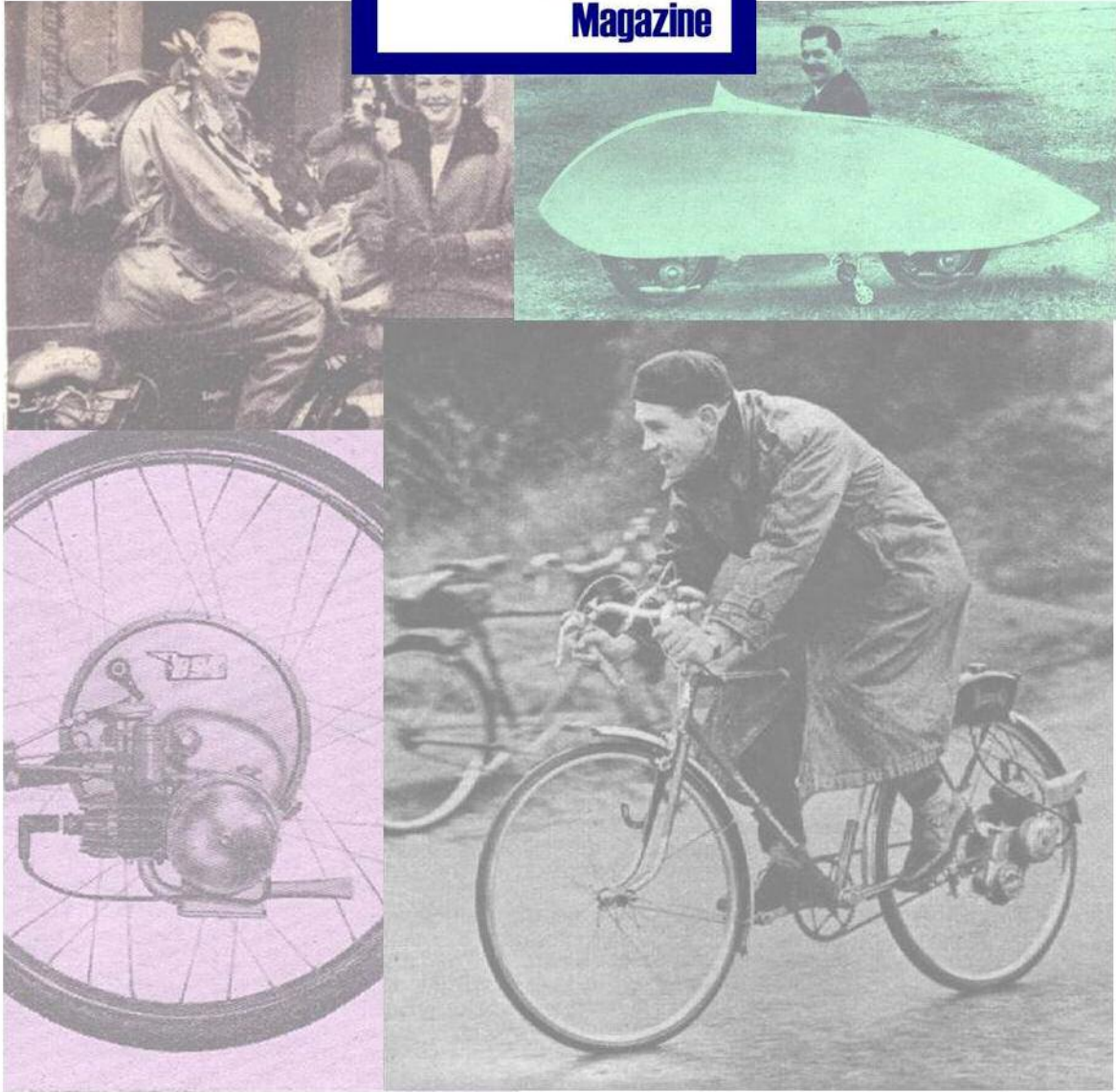
*Below. An exploded view of the engine/clutch unit. Primary drive is by the Vee belt to a light alloy countershaft pulley.*



thousands of riders in this country who are not at present catered for by the two-speed mo-peds. It is a great pity that the hefty protection of import duties and purchase tax keeps the price over £50 and we feel that the exporters might study ways of getting a few pounds off this, perhaps by using some home produced components. We can heartily recommend the machine as the answer to most people's transport problems, especially the active cyclist who needs more performance with less effort.

Apart from the machine itself we must regretfully note that the instruction book is badly translated and remarkably uninformative, but so simple and reliable a machine is unlikely to need much rider attention anyway.

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