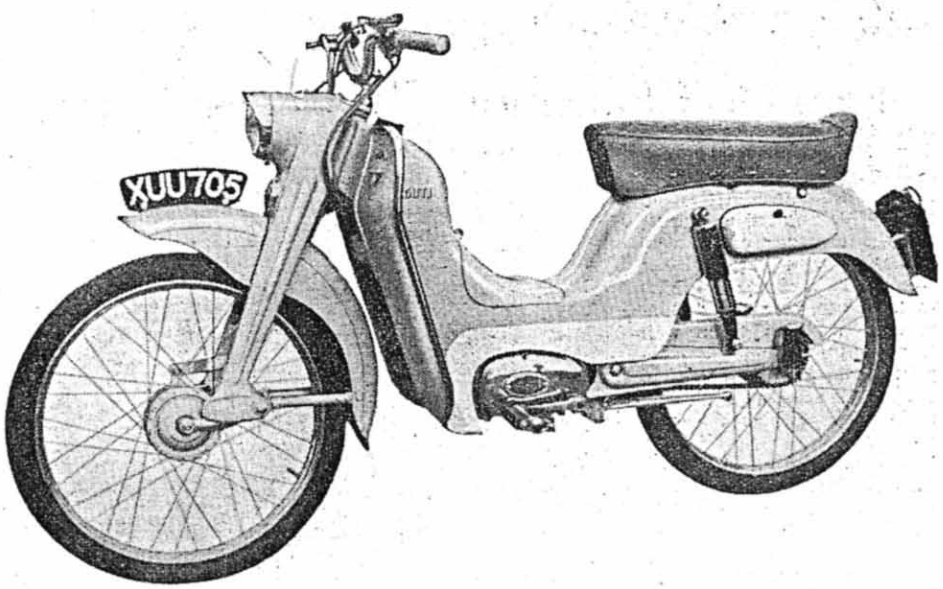
Road Testing . . .

THE MALAGUTI DE LUXE



Centaur puts a three-speed Italian "scooter-moped" through its paces

I TESTED the Malaguti De Luxe within a week or two of hearing about it for the first time, so readers of this page are not far behind me in getting news of this stylish new mount from Italy.

As can be seen from the illustration, "stylish" is the word which describes the Malaguti. Beginning at the faired headlamp and working backwards to the full valanced rear mudguard this description holds true all the way, for there is a minimum of interference to the line of this moped from its "mechanics." Legshields are built into the design and the continuation of the engine fairing into the rear mudguard ensures that spray is trapped where it should be—before it reaches the rider.

In fact, the Malaguti is as near to becoming a scooter as a moped can be. The three-speed gearbox allows the 50 c.c. Morini Franco power unit to be used to the limit of its capabilities and a passenger is provided for, with the fitting of a dual seat and pillion footrests. Due to the rapidity with which I tested the Malaguti I never got a chance to try it out with a passenger. On the other hand I profited by enjoying the greater comforts offered to a solo rider riding a two-man machine. The dual seat allowed me innumerable changes of position and although it was a rather hard proposition, the seating variations compensated for this.

For those who are thinking of using the Malaguti for two-up riding, and are worried by the thought of not ascending hills, the bottom gear should dispel all doubts. My time for the test hill is not a particularly good one due to the fact that I was quickly into bottom gear. Nevertheless I had the feeling as I screamed upwards that that gear would have taken me up a house-side complete with passenger. Its lowness is demonstrated in the acceleration figures, for it is a long time since I did 0-10 m.p.h. in four seconds.

The keynote of the gearbox is ease of operation, and the twistgrip action is one of the silkiest I have tested. At times it was almost *too* easy to use and I went past the gear I was aiming for. But nobody should be put off by this. Within a fortnight of continuous riding, gearchanges will become so instinctive that they will scarcely be noticeable. As it was, I found that within the first five miles I had mastered the action of blipping the throttle to the accompaniment of downward changes.

Low-speed Wobble

Suspension, which is provided by swinging arm at the rear and leading link at the front is excellent, although I did notice a tendency to wobble at lowish speeds. In view of this unexplained defect I decided to "lay it over" as far as possible on the fastest corners I could find. Here it behaved in an exemplary fashion, providing I remembered to keep the pedal on the side nearest the corner at the top of its stroke. Despite the fact that the legshields gave the impression of an obscuring effect when I was taking my line through the corner, the wheels remained where they were put and proved to me that the low-speed wobble only required a little extra concentration at low speeds.

Once again we have a moped in which the designers have had to ponder where to put the rear brake operator. Other designers have installed it under the clutch lever, linked it with the front brake or employed the back-pedal principle. The Malaguti uses a heel-operated lever, something of an innovation. To use this device for the first time requires a certain amount of faith, for the rider is depressing a lever he cannot see. Once this knack has been achieved the advantages are only too obvious. The brake is a very efficient retarder and can stop the moped four feet short of the best distance for the front brake, which, in turn, is no mean performer itself. The greatest advantage, however, comes when using the pedals as kick-starters. Normally, with the back-pedal type of brake, unless the pedals happen to be in just the right position the rider has to go through the rigmarole of moving the moped forward (impossible if the engine has died in tightly-packed traffic) or feverishly change into a positive (as opposed to neutral) gear position, turn the pedals round and then re-select neutral again. The alternative to this is to do a pedal start but since several of the multi-speed mopeds are not equipped for comfortable pedalling this can be a tiresome procedure.

With the Malaguti the rider just back-pedals until the pedals are in the correct position.

Accessible Engine

Although the engine is more or less fully enclosed this does not mean that it is inaccessible. A small trap-door opens just above the carburetter and if anything this makes things even easier to reach. The fact that the Malaguti provided the means for the simplest and most unhindered consumption test I have ever experienced may not be of interest to the average rider but at least it is symptomatic of the way things are laid out.

Incidentally, moped fairings are often a weak spot when it comes to vibration. At peak revs. any unsecured panels tend to oscillate wildly and cause an acute whining and twanging noise superimposed on the engine note. Not so with this moped. Vibration might be expected in the deep valances over the rear wheel but the thickness of the metal (which must surely lead to long life also) prevents this.

In brief, the Malaguti, though rather on the expensive side, is an excellent example of the multi-speed moped and should appeal to riders of both sexes.

Performance

Maximum speed:
Flying 1/10th mile, 29½ m.p.h.
Standing 1/10th mile, 16 m.p.h.

Acceleration:
0-10 m.p.h., 4 secs. 0-20 m.p.h., 14 secs.

Economy:
At 20 m.p.h., 151 m.p.g.

Hill climbing:
Time for hill: 2 min. 26 secs.
Second gear engaged at 0.3 miles, first gear engaged at 0.4 miles.
Test hill 0.5 miles long; max. gradient 1 in 10; average gradient 1 in 16.

Braking:	**Front**	**Rear**	**Both**
At 20 m.p.h.	28ft.	24½ft.	16½ft.

Pedalling:
Maximum pedalling speed: 12 m.p.h.
Comfortable pedalling speed: 6 m.p.h.
Tester's rating: Fair.

Tester's weight: 220lb.

Specification

Engine: Morini Franco two-stroke; 38mm. bore x 42mm. stroke = 47.6cc.; c.r. 7 to 1; 1.8 b.h.p. at 5,000 r.p.m.
Gearbox: Three-speed twist-grip operated; overall ratios 5.4, 8.2 and 14.6 to 1.; helical gear primary and chain final drive; pedal or kick starting.
Frame: Welded up from steel pressings; leading link front forks and swinging arm rear.
Lights: Head and tail lamp fed direct from flywheel magneto generator.
Wheels and brakes: Both brakes internally expanding in full-width finned alloy hubs, rear brake heel operated; chromium plated rims; 24 x 2.00 Pirelli tyres.
Equipment: Centre stand; pump; two built-in tool compartments; built-on legshields; dual seat, pillion footrests; electric horn.
Finish: Azure blue and cream.
Weight: 110lb. approx.
Concessionaires: S.T.L. Accessories Ltd., 107 Worship Street, London E.C.2.
Price: £89 5s. inc. P.T.; windscreen, £5 5s.

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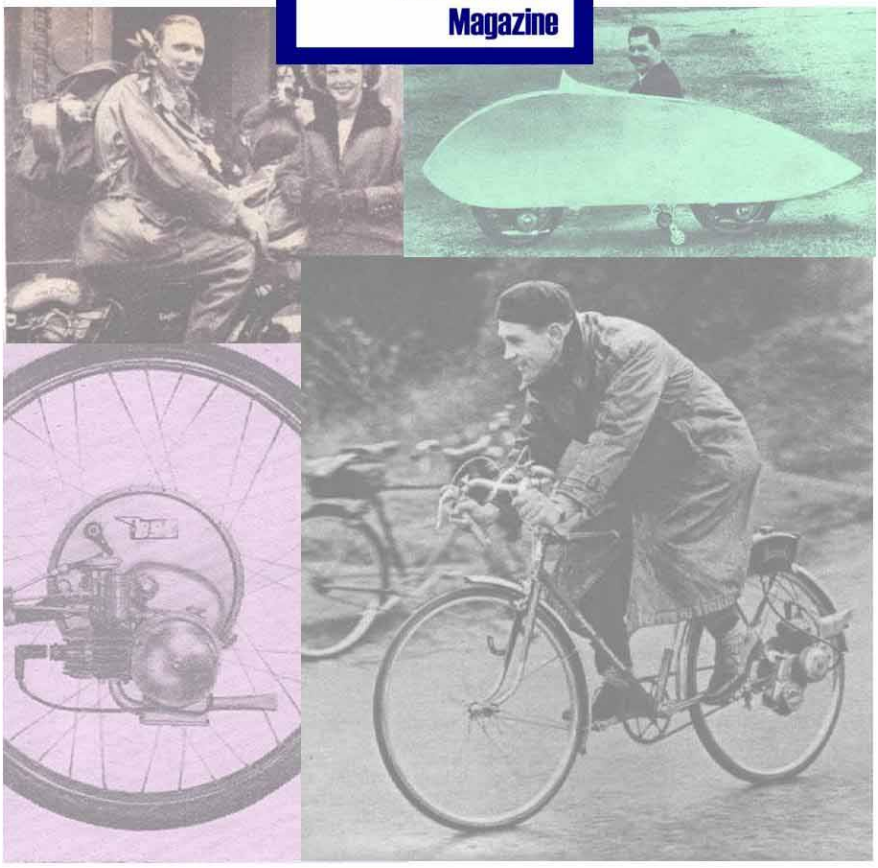

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