

Will NVT's new mopeds be the latest in a long line of British two-wheeled disasters? Graham Sanderson checks out the base model in the range against the best known commuter moped, Puch's ubiquitous Maxi.

Photography John Wallace.

*Get your motor running,
Head out on the highway,
Looking for adventure,
And whatever comes our way.**

THE NVT tongue must surely have been held firmly in check when they christened the Easy Rider name for their new range of mopeds. With the exception of the one Easy Rider, has become a household name. The film of the same name impressed all those sixth-form drop-outs a few years back. It represents the epitome of goodtime, carefree, hip living, and to apply the tag to a bunch of mopeds seems a little incongruous. I mean, can you imagine some dude in his original truckin' along the Pacific Coast Highway away from the cops and conformism on a moped? Come to think of it the moped has become so acceptable that it's almost fallen into the Every Home Should Have One category. Mum, dad, sis and granny can all ride a moped without fear of causing scandal in the neighbourhood.

The two machines we assembled for this feature represent the type John Peyton had in mind for sweet sixteen-year-olds when he conjured up the notorious sixteen law while Minister of Transport. The Puch Maxi has changed little since its introduction to Britain back in '68 and has established itself as a standard. The Easy Rider equals and in some areas improves upon the levels set by Steyr-Daimler-Puch, although the Austrian concern are

still ahead of NVT in oil consumption. Comfort is a factor in moped design. The seat was designed with great respect for the rider's nether regions. Not only was it larger than the Puch's seat, but it was also better padded and more forgivingly sprung. In fact, I once ventured 20 miles in one go without damaging my matrimonial prospects. I realise that most moped journeys are but a few miles in length, but even so, it's better to be comfy than to have to grin and bear the spartan Puch seat. Incidentally, both seats are adjustable for height to suit your eight foot brother and your five foot self.

Logically, you would expect the Easy Rider to be a product competitive with the Puch. Doug Hele, the man behind the success of the Triumph/BSA threes a few years back, designed the frame and steering geometry. Bertie Goodman of Velocette fame was responsible for buying in component parts, and Bob Trigg of Norton Commando connections did the styling. The aim was to make a Great British Moped, and the sad irony is that NVT had to go to Italy for almost all the components. That's quite a marked contrast to the self-sufficiency of the Austrian concern.

The Easy Rider engine, for example, is

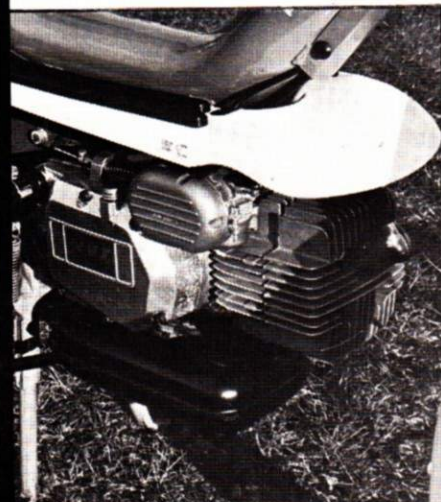
**From the song 'Born to be Wild',
as performed in the film
Easy Rider by Steppenwolf.*

Ballad of Easy Rider



Checkout

	NVT EASY RIDER	PUCH MAXI S
Engine type	Single cylinder two-stroke with automatic clutch, single speed.	Single cylinder two-stroke with automatic clutch, single speed
Capacity	49.65cc	48.8cc
BHP at RPM	—	2.2 at 4,500
Carburettor	Dellorto	Bing
Electrical system	Flywheel magneto	Flywheel magneto
	6v 18/18W headlight,	6v 18/18W headlight
Wheelbase	43.5 ins	42.5 ins
Seat height	Adjustable	Adjustable
Ground clearance	4.5 ins	5.25 ins
Handlebar height	40.5 ins	40 ins
Kerb weight	93lbs	100lbs
Fuel capacity	0.75 gals	0.70 gals
Steering lock	Yes	Yes
Toolkit	Plug spanner	Yes
Others	—	Pump
Tyres (front)	2.25 x 17 Semperit	2.00 x 17 Semperit
(rear)	2.25 x 17 Semperit	2.00 x 17 Semperit
Brakes (front)	3.5 in s/s	3.14 in s/s
(rear)	3.5 in s/s	3.14 in s/s
Estimated top speed	28 mph	30 mph
Fuel consumption	126mpg	130 mpg
Price	£145 inc VAT	£159 inc VAT
Guarantee	6 months/4,000 miles parts and labour	2,000 Miles parts and labour, parts only up to 6 months/4,000 miles
Supplied by	NVT Motorcycles Ltd, Lynn Lane, Shenstone, West Midlands.	Steyr-Daimler-Puch (GB) Ltd, 211 Lower Parliament Street, Nottingham.



disappointment. Welding, particularly around the petrol filler and base of the seat support tube, was very scruffy. And although the Italians must take responsibility for that, the poor paintwork itself is British (Easy Riders are painted and assembled in Britain) and is no match for the better-finished Puch.

Frame-wise, Puch go for the pressed steel variety while NVT rely on a sturdy looking tubular steel type. On both bikes the frame carries the two-stroke mix. With steering geometry by Doug Hele you'd expect precision handling on the Easy Rider, which is exactly what you get. And it was this point in particular that really made the

Easy Rider so popular at this office. NVT have managed to eliminate that wobbly, unsure feeling you get when slinging some mopeds into a bend at a mind-blowing 28 mph. Handling is taut, positive and gives much credibility to the Easy Rider's name. Why, colleagues even sneaked out five minutes before lunch just to make sure they bagged the Easy Rider. It handles so well that I even managed to put a flat on the exhaust tail pipe, yet the machine remained perfectly stable. I'm not suggesting that the Puch was in any way dangerous, it's quite adequate and you may well argue that mopedists don't know or even care about handling, a subject so close to the heart of the motorcyclist. I just hope all that good handling on the Easy Rider will be appreciated by the type of people who will buy it.

Starting both machines was child's play. On the Puch, engage choke, pull in decompression lever, pedal away while the machine is on its stand, release the decompressor and it would fire up. Choke the Easy Rider, pull in the starting lever on the left of the handlebar to engage the clutch to spin the engine once the pedals circulate. Simple and reliable starting all round.

If you want your Puch or Easy Rider to look like a motorised Tesco shopping



Both the NVT and Puch mopeds have handy racks with spring-loaded flaps for securing items such as your favourite reading material.

trolley don't forget that panniers, baskets, wind and leg shields are available for both machines. Sprung loaded rear carriers are standard fittings.

Bike can hardly be accused of going into patriotic raptures every time a British manufacturer (what's left of them) announces a new machine. But if I was going to buy a moped tomorrow I'd head for an NVT dealer rather than a Puch agent. And that's not because the Easy Rider is British but, in this particular instance, we think it's the best of the two machines tested.

We believe the Easy Rider's fine handling, comfort, cheaper price and better guarantee outweigh the Puch's advantages of better finish, slight superiority in speed, and more comprehensive toolkit. The Puch is still an excellent product and worthy of its impressive sales record, but in the Easy Rider it has certainly found competition. ●

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