

MORINI 250 2C



LITTLE RED ROOSTER

Morini have cultivated more than a cult following for their 350cc and 500cc vee-twins, mainly because of their limited numbers and exotic specification.

Can the new 250cc version keep up the image in the tougher world of quarter-litre biking? *John Nutting* rides a possible new cult hero.

Photography by *Ian Dobbie*.

Like most exotic habits, Morinis are an acquired taste. It takes more than a quick spin around the block to appreciate their deeper virtues and in fact, after a short ride you

would more than likely take a positive dislike to the bike.

They're quirky in a strangely Italian way, not only in their sound but in the manner of their controls. Certainly

they don't conform to current thinking in design of either their engines or ancillary equipment. Morini for example are one of the few bastions of national Italian

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pride that hasn't succumbed to the temptation of fitting Japanese switches.

But up to now any criticism of Morinis has hardly mattered. The Bologna vee-twins have only been manufactured in 350cc and 500cc sizes for the British market and as a result the sort of rider they appealed to had invariably been through the Jap bike treadmill and was looking for something different.

That difference was the pleasant rhythm provided by the in-line vee-twin engine layout. Regardless of the manufacturer, vee-twins always somehow feel more relaxed and smooth in their power delivery. Their engines look more chunky and purposeful than similar capacity parallel twins. And because a vee in-line with the wheels is narrow, theoretically at least the bike should handle better because of its lower centre of gravity.

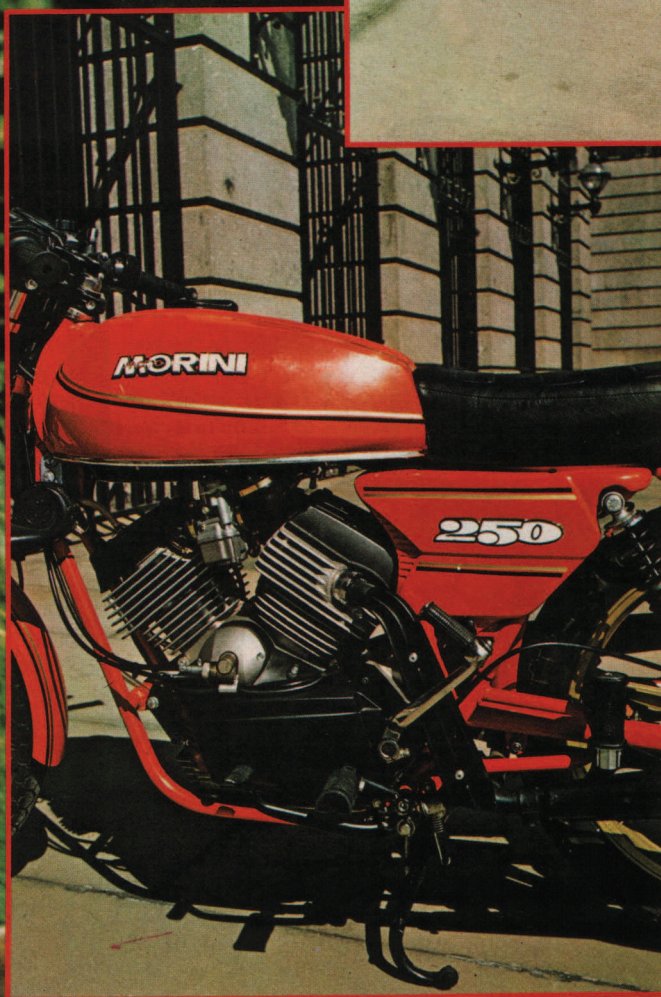
Trouble is vee-twins are expensive to make. Which is

why small capacity versions of the Morinis haven't appeared. But the factory now feel the time is ripe for the 250cc model to appear. Yet it either could be their salvation or disaster. For although the market is more vibrant in the 250cc bracket, the competition is likewise more fierce. And with the new 250cc Morini vee-twin weighing in at £1,275, or about £400 more than yer average Jap two fifty, it's got to have a lot more to offer.

Does it come up with the goods? That's the obvious question of course. And one which for the time being we'll sidestep. As we said, Morinis are a matter of taste and the possibly heavily weighted plusses provided by the bike's ancestry and char-



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acter (in the eyes of the Italian bike fan) might overcome everything else.

Looked at from a purely functional point of view, which we have to admit is rather worthless when so many bikes are bought on impulse, it would be easy to pull the bike to pieces. We'll refrain from that and just present the facts and let you decide.

This latest two-fifty is not the first of the capacity produced by the factory. A couple of years ago Morini offered a 250cc single based on the forward pot of the 500cc vee-twin. It was light and fairly smooth thanks to its rubber mounted engine and enjoyed fair success in Italy and France where its 240cc capacity allowed it to be placed in a lower tax bracket. It was expensive though and with relatively poor performance wasn't expected to sell well in the UK by Harglo, the importers.

The 250 2C is altogether a different machine. And though you might think that it is a smaller bore version of the 350 it is actually a new bike from the ground up.

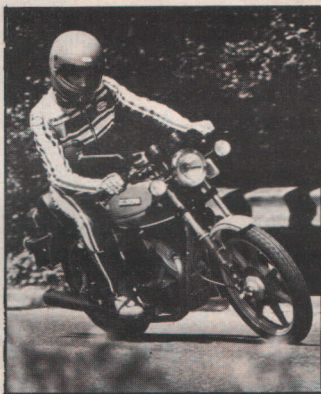
The engine however retains the familiar Morini layout. The two cylinders are mounted with the plain bearing connecting rods side by side on the crankpin. To cut costs the two cylinders are identical, being mounted onto the crankcases with the tooth-belt driven camshaft between the vee and pushrods operating the overhead valves. The angle between the cylinders is 72 degrees — apparently a compromise between having a more unwieldy 90 degree layout and the narrow 50 degree version which would make the use of identical cylinders and heads impossible.

The smaller capacity of 239cc is achieved by shortening both the bore and stroke to 59 by 43.8mm, a move that you'd normally think would provide an even more buzzy unit than the bigger Morinis. The valve gear is similar to the three fifty though, having parallel inlet and exhaust valves set in flat cylinder head faces.

Reason for this, in addition to the ease of manufacture, is so that the combustion area can be accommodated within the piston

crown. Since the combustion space can therefore be compact, a higher compression ratio can be used because the risk of detonation is minimised. However, although this is a similar argument to that used by Suzuki for their new Twin Swirl Combustion Chamber, in the case of the Morini, the pushrod operated valves and the use of porting specifically designed to swirl the charge down the cylinder bore by making the inlet tracts run tangentially to the bore, mean that the revs are limited along with the breathing capacity.

In the case of the two-fifty, this all means that the engine can take a compression ratio of 11.7 to 1 and still run on three star fuel without pink-ing.



The use of such a high compression ratio compensates for the limited revs by providing strong torque at lower regimes. The bike pulls hard smoothly from as low as 2,000 rpm in top right up to maximum power at 9,000 rpm, which is claimed by the factory to be 25bhp (DIN). Nine grand is also the red line, and should you be so inclined to go beyond that you'll find that the valve gear bounces at just under ten, fortunately without harm since there is ample room cut into the piston.

Not that you'll need to buzz the motor that hard. Throttle response from the two 22m-choke Dellorto carbs is fairly good, though the test bike suffered from a slight misfire at about quarter open which was probably due to the needles being too high. The carbs are mounted in improved rubber mountings than the rubber washers of before with more professional looking fittings for the air filters under the fuel tank.

Another change to the engine is the use of a wet

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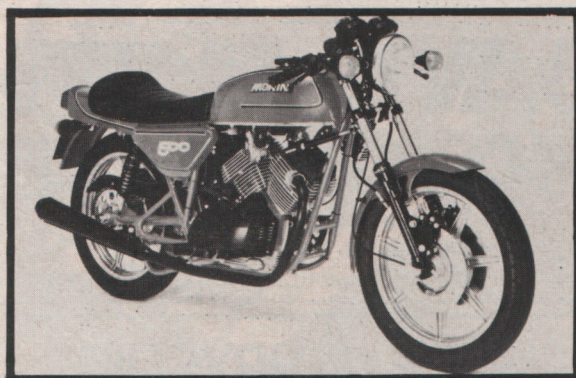
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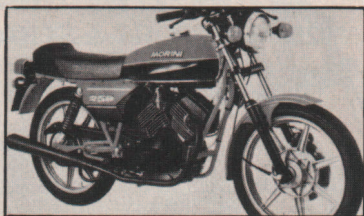
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instead of a dry clutch. Take up is clean but after some town use would begin to drag, making neutral difficult to select when stationary. The six speed gearbox has fairly wide ratios and top gear feels low with nine thou equating to 83mph in top. The factory claim a top speed of 86mph and we are inclined to go along with that figure.

At that sort of speed the bike is pretty stable too, a surprise as it's very light at 282lb dry. The steering is neutral and taut and there's no need to hustle the bike into a bend with deliberate control, it's just a matter of stuffing it in and letting the bike do its job.

The frame is a smaller edition of the three-fifty's with smaller tubing and less complex engine mountings. It's a double cradle type finished in bright red that's strong despite its abbreviated looks. At 52 inches, the wheelbase is short even for a two-fifty so the bike is small and nimble.

When worked hard, the suspension is supple and firm enough to provide wallow-free handling in corners that complements the road-holding of the Pirelli Mandrake tyres. A Paoli fork similar to that used on the bigger Morinis is used up front along with Sebac rear units, not the best equipment you could find in Italy but then the 250 has to be built down to a price.

This shows up in the rough ride the suspension gives. There's enough stiction in the fork legs to render them almost ineffective when you're cruising, a characteristic that isn't enhanced by the overly soft seat padding that allows the rider to more or less rest on the seat pan and vibration that sets in over 6,000rpm through the short adjustable handlebar. The positioning of the footrests is slightly awkward for taller riders too because your knees'll bang the handlebar on full lock. But Morini are stuck with the forward peg position because of the left side exhaust pipe exiting just aft of your leg.

Morini fans will no doubt point out that the handling of the bike more than compensates for any problems with comfort and if you're inclined to put roadholding

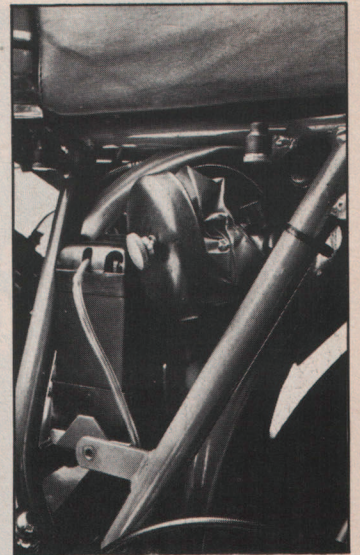
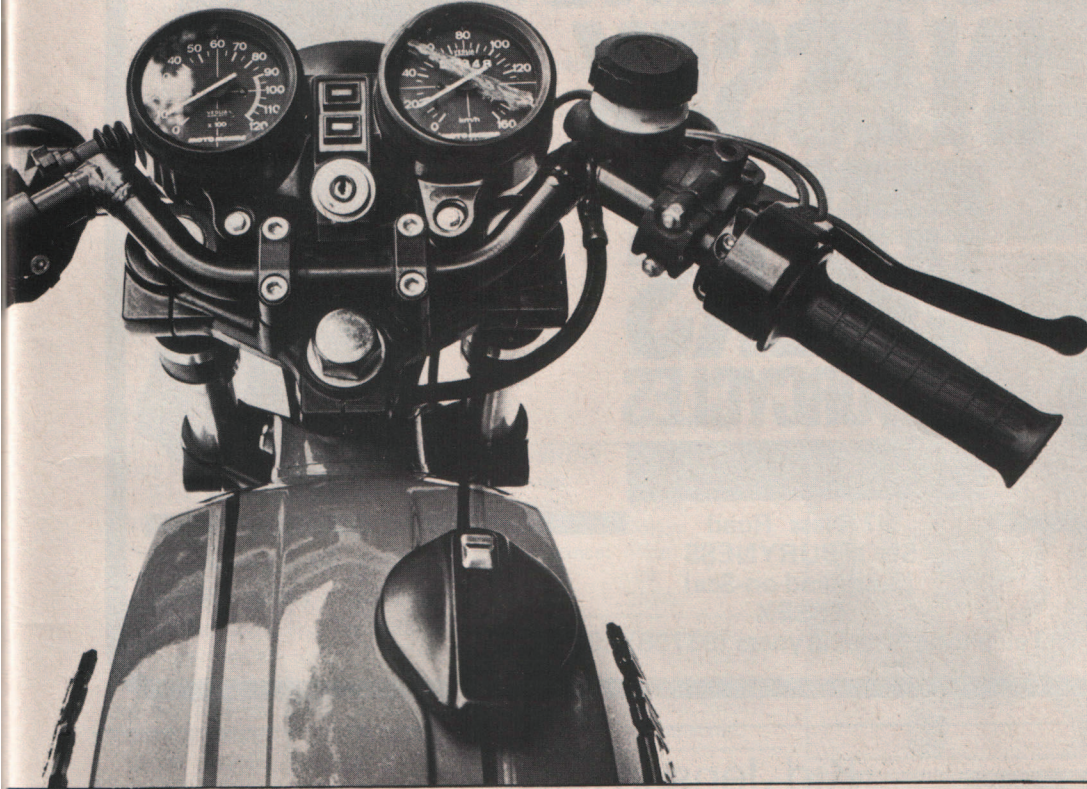
above all else then you'll not be disappointed with the two-fifty.

But then the whole message of the Morini is in its manner of performance delivery and handling. It looks the part of the garish roustabout and when you treat it as such it responds in kind. Powering out of bends and under hard acceleration the engine delivers a resounding drone from the twin air filters under the fuel tank that almost drowns the exhaust note from the twin black-chromed exhaust pipes.

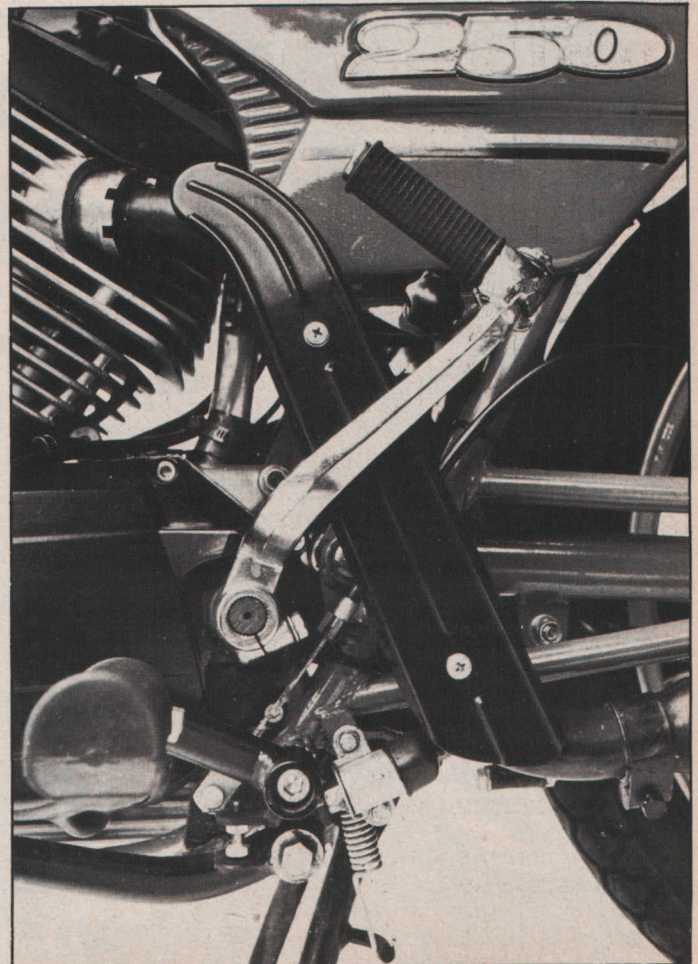
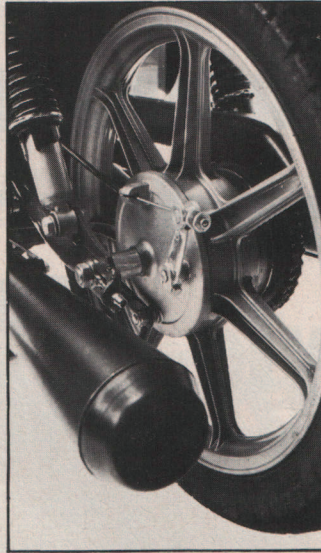
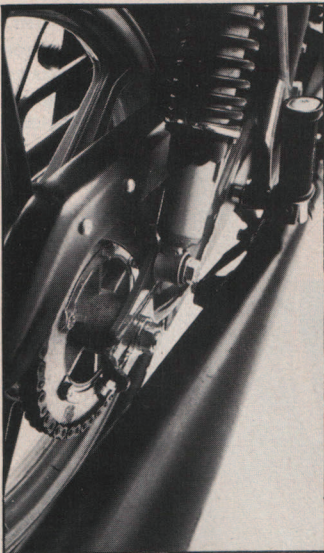
In day to day use, the Morini 250 is a lot better than we've experienced of the marque in the past. Starting is still by a kick lever on the left hand side, but the electronic ignition fires up the motor from cold immediately at the first prod provided either of the cold start levers on the carbs are lifted. The engine warms up quickly, suggesting that the idling mixture is on the rich side.

Normally Morinis are very economical to run because of their high compression ratios and torquey power curves.





Left: Here's the view a Morini 250 rider will get when he's ready to roll. The handlebar is slightly adjustable and switchgear pretty good for Italian work. You've probably noticed the cracked speedo glass - we thought it must've been Roger's work 'cos he's crashed everything he's touched in the past few days. Fact is the glass was broken in the crate - too bad. Above: Removing the toolkit is very exasperating. Below left: Chain has two guards for both runs. Below middle: Wheels are classy gold. Below: Morini hallmark - the left side kickstart lever.



Morini in fact claim that the 250 will return 80mpg, but probably because of the aforementioned carburetion fault, the test bike wasn't as good as expected. The best figure we obtained was 61 mpg and ridden really hard the consumption dropped to 51mpg.

Instrumentation is vastly improved on earlier Morinis. The Veglia speedo and rev counter have bigger faces

than before and the rev counter needle is far more steady thanks to the cable drive from the end of the camshaft. The ignition key conveniently fits between the dials instead of under the tank.

We wish we could say the same of the foot controls. The right-hand-side gear lever is connected by a linkage to the box and gives too much movement in addition to the change's notchy feel. The rear

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drum brake was far too sensitive. You only had to think about using it for the thing to lock on. Not so the 10¼-inch Grimeca disc front brake. It was progressive and powerful with a perfect lever reach due to the use of dog-leg levers.

Electrically, the Morini could have benefitted from more power all round. The flywheel generator only pokes out a maximum of 80watts and the six volt lights offer only marginal illumination at best. We didn't like the took-kit and its awkward screw top lid either.

That will no doubt be familiar to Morini owners and they will be prepared to accept the inconvenience. In an era of 200w generators that can power 60-watt halogen lamps the Morini's electrics aren't too hot.

What can't be disputed is that the Morini is a good looker with its red tank, seat and frame. The cast wheels are finished in a dull gold, the fork legs in black. For gazing at while you're resting with a cool drink under a tree after a brisk country ride you couldn't buy a prettier picture. Even at £1,275.

MORINI 250 VEE-TWIN

Price inc. VAT: £1,275

Warranty: 6 months/

4,000 miles

Engine: Ohv 72-deg vee-twin

Capacity: 239.5cc (59 x 43.8mm)

Lubrication: Wet sump

Comp.ratio: 11.7 to 1

Ignition: Electronic

Carburetion: Two 22mm Dellorto VHBZ

Max.power: 25 bhp (DIN)

@ 9,000rpm

Max.torque: 15 lb-ft @ 6,950rpm
Primary drive: Helical gears
Clutch: Wet multiplate
Gearbox: Six speed
Final drive: 428 (½ x 5/16in) roller chain

Mph/1,000rpm: 9.17 in top
Electrics: 6v 9ah battery, 80w alternator 35/35w headlight

Fuel capacity: 2.9 gallons
Frame: Duplex cradle
Suspension: Paioli telescopic fork (f)
Swing arm with 5-pos. spring pre-load adj. (r)

Tyres: Pirelli Mandrake MT15
2.75 x 18 (f)
3.00 x 18 (r)
on cast alloy wheels
Brakes: 10¼in hydraulic Grimeca disc (f)
6.3in drum (r)

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase: 51½-52in
Seat height: 30¼in.
H'bar width: 26½in
Grnd clearance: 7½in
Rake/trail: na
Dry weight: 282lb.

EQUIPMENT:

Turn signals, 12, 000rpm rev counter, 160kph speedo, toolkit, centre stand,

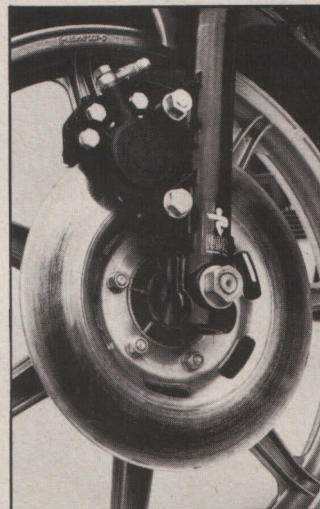
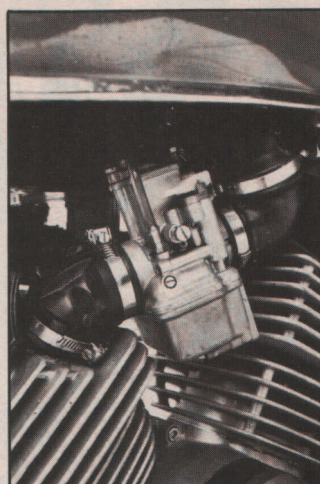
PERFORMANCE:

Top Speed: 85mph
Speeds in gears at 9,000 rpm: 25mph, 39mph, 54mph, 65mph, 75mph, 83mph.

St. ¼-mile: 17 secs approx.
0-to-60 mph: 11 secs approx.

Fuel consumption: 51-61 mpg.
Range: 150-188 miles
Importers: Harglo Ltd.

462 Station Rd., Dorridge, Solihull, West Midlands



Top left: Dellorto carburetors are mounted on rubber inlet tracts. Above: Tank striping is hand finished. Left: Grimeca brake is grippy but fork sticky in action. Below left: The Morini has classic lines resulting from the symmetrical layout of the 72-degree vee-twin engine. Camshaft is belt driven from the crankshaft in between the two cylinders. Air filters are under the fuel tank. Below: Lock it up! The only way you'll hang onto a tasty little job like the 250 2C.

