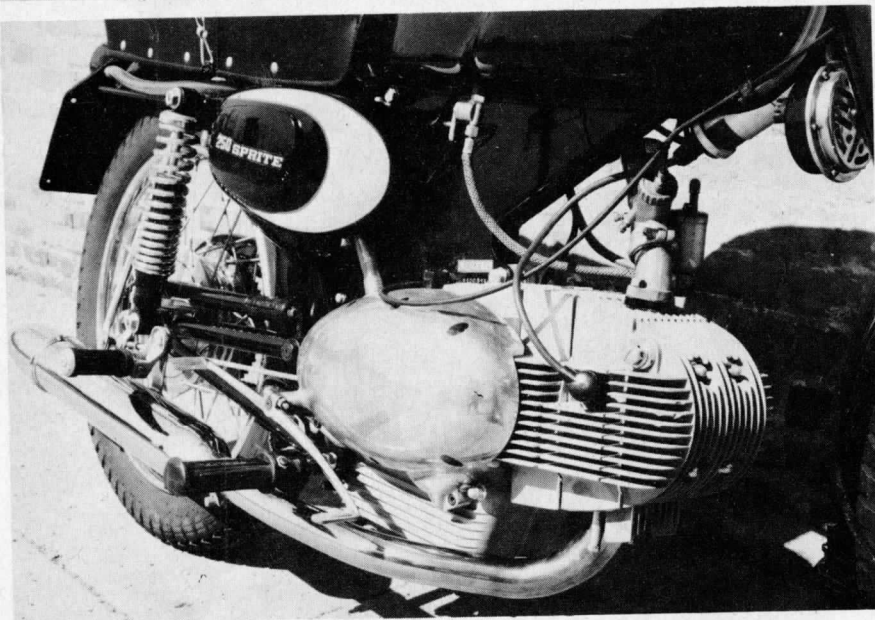
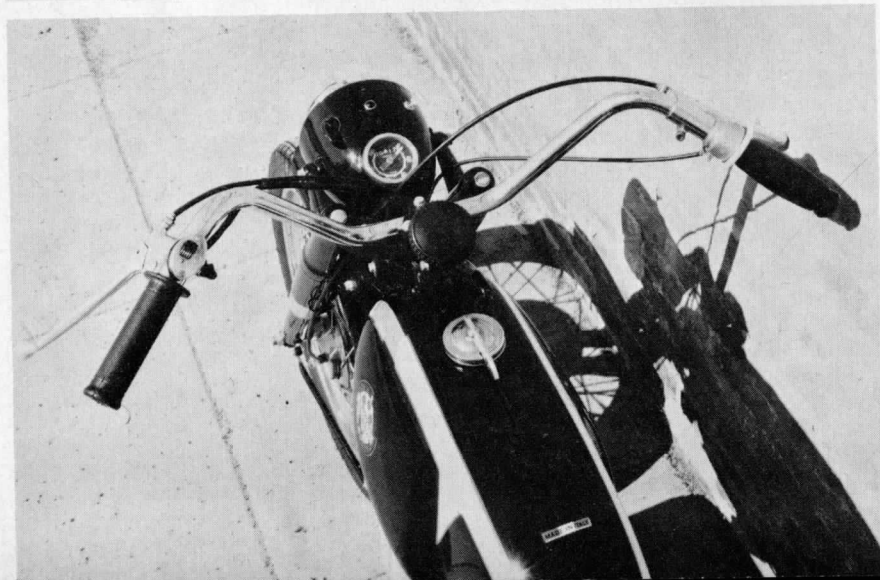


CYCLE WORLD ROAD TEST



BENELLI 250 SPRITE



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BENELLI 250 SPRITE

SPECIFICATIONS

List Price	\$639
Frame type	pressed-steel backbone
Suspension, front	telescopic forks
Suspension, rear	swing arm
Tire size, front	3.00-18
Tire size, rear	3.25-18
Engine type	horiz. single, ohv
Bore and stroke	2.92 x 2.24
Displacement, cu. in.	14.9
Displacement, cu. cent.	245
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Bhp @ rpm	24 @ 8000
Carburetion	24mm (.946") Dellorto
Ignition	flywheel magneto (external coil)
Fuel capacity, gal.	4.0
Oil capacity, pts.	4.0
Oil system	wet sump
Starting system	kick, folding crank

POWER TRANSMISSION

Clutch type	multi-disc, wet plate
Primary drive	helical gear
Final drive	single-row chain
Gear ratio, overall:1	
4th	7.2
3rd	8.6
2nd	10.9
1st	18.0

DIMENSIONS, INCHES

Wheelbase	50.5
Saddle height	31.0
Saddle width	9.0
Footpeg height	10.0
Ground clearance	6.0
Curb weight, lbs.	245

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION

0-60 mph, in seconds	11.3
Standing 1/4-mile	17.9
Speed reached	74



AT LAST, the Benelli has grown into a full-fledged 250. Remarkable, in a way, because back in the days when it carried the name "Motobi" it originated as a 125. The 125cc engine had bore and stroke dimensions of 54mm, and these have been altered in successive steps to raise the displacement first to 175cc, and then to 200cc, and finally out to 250cc.

To the best of our knowledge, all this has been done without any major changes in the rest of the engine. The stroke was increased to 57mm for the 175, and as that is only an extra 3mm, it could easily be accommodated with the original flywheels and connecting rod. The bore, increased to 66.5mm for the 200 and now to 74mm for the 250, has required some fattening of the cylinder, but not enough to be noticeable. Actually, the only external clue is the 250's 24mm carburetor.

Where performance is concerned, the enlarging of the engine has been all to the good. The rest of the motorcycle has not been changed appreciably, so what was once a somewhat over-size and over-weight 125 has become a compact and very light 250.

Of course, it is still no ball-of-fire. Claimed engine output is 24 bhp, but it does not correlate very well with the recorded performance, if you introduce such factors as weight and overall gear ratio. In this connection, it is interesting to note the factory claimed only 14 bhp for the 200, while the importer gave us a figure of 20 bhp. If we assume a straight-line increase with displacement, the factory figure for the 250 would be about 17 bhp. That is about all one should expect, considering that the valve timing is fairly mild, the carburetor small, and the compression ratio low enough to handle fuels of uncertain octane as often found in Europe. It is, in all respects, intended primarily for reliability rather than speed.

Handling is one of the Benelli's strong points. It is a bit tautly sprung for maximum comfort, but goes around corners in an ultra-tidy fashion. We did not object to the stiffish ride, because the bike would not handle as well with softer suspension. But, a softer seat does not affect handling, and would increase riding comfort considerably.

The old 175 and 200 Benellis were quite smooth; the 250 shows somewhat of an increase in vibration. Despite what appears to be a rather mundane performance, the 250 outperforms many machines larger in displacement, and its 74 mph quarter-mile makes the Sprite a most pleasant and useful all-around touring machine, and even competitive in traffic where escaping the great mass of four-wheeled sheet metal is often the motorcyclist's only hope.

We would prefer the Benelli with lower handle bars, as we have said before; those supplied as standard appear to be the Italian's notion of what Americans will like. CYCLE WORLD's staff represents a good cross section of opinion. To the man, each of our riders would have liked the bars lower and narrower. A minor criticism regardless, they are easy to replace if desired.

Benelli, as few of our readers would know, is the largest producer of motorcycles in Italy. Conversely, it is almost the only motorcycle factory in Italy CW's Publisher/Editor hasn't visited, an error he intends to correct next year. Machines are shipped to the U.S. in company owned ships; our road test model was especially air-freighted to our offices so that the 250 version could be tested before its appearance on dealers' showroom floors. If this sounds like they mean business, you're right. ■