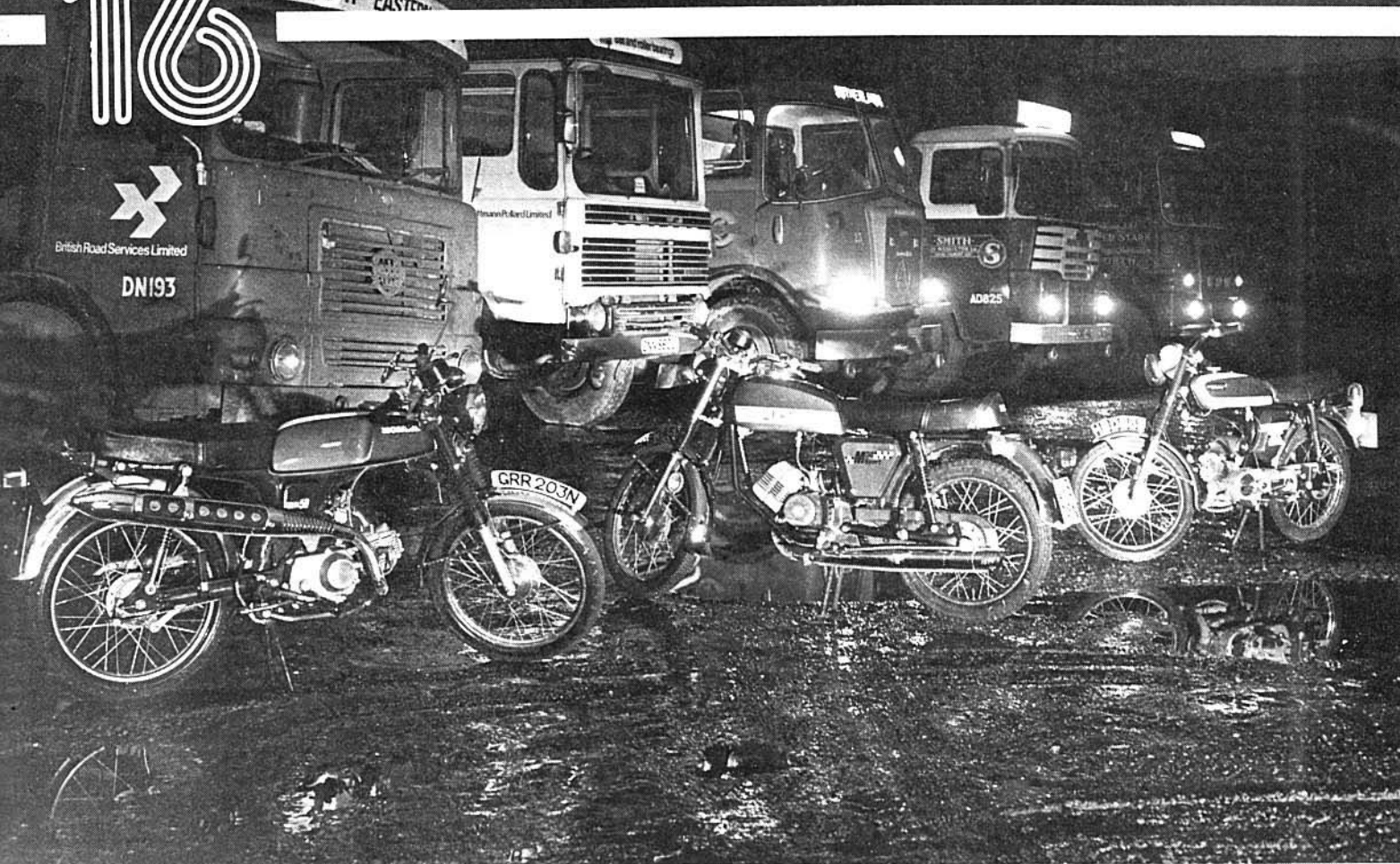


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N giant test



THERE'S something to be said for *Bike* readers: if you take exception to items or developments that appear in the magazine you waste no time at all in letting us know. So the rush of mail that appeared after the two most recent sports moped sessions (Fantic v Gilera v Malaguti, June/July '74, and Batavus v Testi v Giullietta, November '74) contained one very plain message — 'twas time to get round to the big sellers, the Yamahas, Hondas and Puchs of the sixteeners' world.

Just why it took us a while to reach the most popular bikes is something there's no real explanation for. Maybe it was a subconscious reaction to those letters that every bike publication gets accusing it of being anti-British, anti-European and pro-Japanese. Such letters, complete with all the usual outworn jibes about rice-burners etc., forget that all the attention to Japanese bikes is just a reflection of what is: an awful lot of people ride 'em, and an awful lot more want to read about 'em. And anyway, if it wasn't for Japanese marketing techniques the biking boom of the sixties and seventies would probably not have happened, certainly on such a large scale, and the entire motorcycle world would be a much more limited place than it is now.

So a Big Three sports moped test it had to be, with two Japanese bikes and one

BIG 3

Giant Test

*Graham Sanderson and Phil Mather
take a look at the three you've all been
waiting for.*

Photographs Ray Gregory.

Austrian fighting it out. The Puch M50 came from the importers themselves, via their affable and efficient PR crew, Murray Evans of Lunnun town. A Yamaha FS1-E came from John Lee, who's to be seen at weekends riding Bultacos in a flurry of mud and curses at trials in the south Midlands, and in between times runs his shop on the A6 at Higham Ferrers, Northants. He even got his men to do a brisk running-in session on the bike, a much appreciated gesture, 'cos when you're a big-time sickle tester who's ideal machine is a double-engined turbo-charged Vincent Black Shadow, boy is it ever boring if you have to "break in" mopeds at a steady 32.5 mph.

And finally, Clarkes Industries of Nottingham, trusting souls who we'd never met or spoken to before, readily agreed to loan a Honda SS50, the only four-stroke sixteenner you can buy, at the drop of a phone call.

There was one other bike we intended to get into this test, to make it a Big Four session, and that was a Garelli. We keep getting these letters saying what a gutsy little device it is, and what have we got against it, as we've yet to ride it. The answer is nothing, and it would have been in this feature 'cept that at the time it was in short supply and neither dealer nor importer could lay hands on one. Another time...

puch

M50S

SIXTEENERS. Tiny prey for rampaging lorries. A source of amusement to sports car drivers. Too good to be called a moped and yet not quite a motorcycle. The In-Betweenies of the biking world. I had always wondered what it would be like to sling a boot across one of these law-beating machines. And just as if the *Bike* hierarchy were mind-readers an editorial finger beckoned me to the nissen hut offices of our beloved mag where the ever apprehensive Mike Nicks handed over a sporty looking Puch M50S.

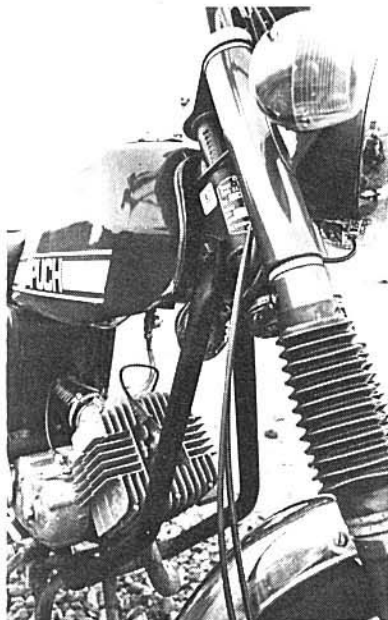
Marvellous. A sixteen-year-old that really does look like a motorcycle with only the tell-tale pedals giving the game away. Neat lines, a nice finish in cherry red with a matt black frame, and just look at the size of those brakes. Are you sure this is a sixteen-year-old, Mike? With a bubbling air of expectancy I leapt aboard ready to have the glories of 35mph biking unfurl before me. This schoolboy excitement soon departed in a haze of oily smoke regurgitated by a nearby Scania. I was horrified how the vacuums created by these monsters drew me so dangerously close to the wheels — visions of wooden overcoats paraded themselves before my eyes saying "Be warned".

I found the seating position just right, with a slight forward lean to grasp the sensibly shaped bars, and after nearly 200 test miles I wouldn't complain about the padding.

Dusk fell, and after a close shave with a wandering pedestrian I gave the Puch's 6 volt system a chance to prove itself. It failed miserably. I now understand why lighting is measured in terms of candle power, for the output on our little Austrian friend was somewhere in the region of one candle. In fact there was scarcely enough glow from the headlamp to cast an orange haze over the front mudguard. Peering into the murk I slowed to 25 mph lest I should take an unexpected course in dyke diving.

Fiddling about with the rather tinny looking switch produced the desired effect on the front end at least, but the rear light now flickered in protest. My Columbo-nose for detection led me to the conclusion that this machine had an electrical fault. This suspicion was confirmed by another M50 owner who said his lights were always OK. The wipers on our machine worked perfectly throughout the test.

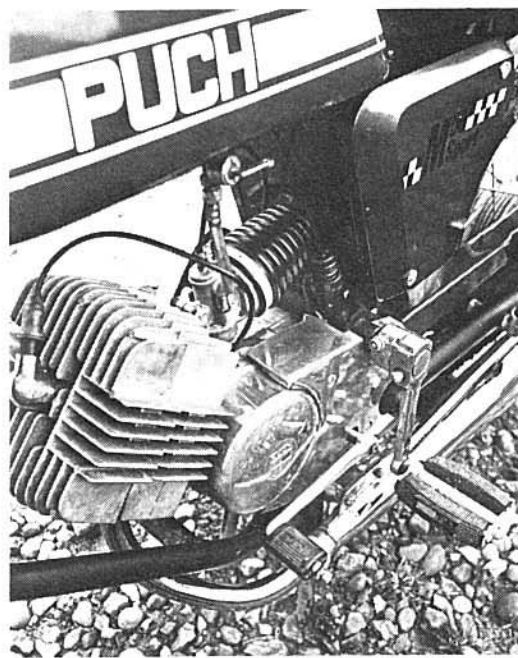
I found the gear-box a little crunchy and



Above left: Front downtubes bolt to headstock ensuring rigid support for motor unit.

Above right: Overall, the M50S was the most "motor-cycle" looking of the three test bikes. A larger capacity engine will fit the chassis.

Right: Pedals hang vertically leaving foot controls just out of reach.



perhaps the gap between first and second is too great for smooth acceleration. Actual riding was more fun than I thought possible with the literally bolted together double cradle frame handling well and the road holding from the Semperit (front) and Continental (rear) tyres never hinting at a breakaway. The sturdy shocks can be fitted to three different positions on the swinging arm and I found the centre position best for my 11-stone frame.

Cruising speed was between 35 and 40 mph but sometimes, for no apparent reason, the bike would slow up as if it was about to seize and then seconds later return to normal. The motor was also reluctant to cut in when accelerating out of bends — a sign that it may have been running a little weak.

Braking was very good although the rear brake would quickly lock while the front end dipped in response to a mild tempered front anchor. Together they were enough to

haul the bike's 185 lbs down in 31 feet from 30 mph. You'll have the last laugh when some sod lets your tyres down too — a tyre pump is tucked away under the petrol tank (snigger).

A well-made tool kit fits awkwardly next to the battery but it was not used in a nearly trouble-free test. What do I mean nearly? Well, the pedal release cable snapped after 50 miles and I had to resort to the pater - of - tiny - feet starting method. No hassle there though. It started after three or four steps, even from cold, with a flooded Bing.

Two serious omissions on a machine costing £265 were the lack of a mirror and a speedometer light.

Fuel consumption was 87 mpg, a figure reached after numerous scratches round town and several 20 mile plus trips. A rider of less erratic nature should be able to attain the 100 mpg claimed by the makers



Above left: Sporty lines of the SS50 contrast strongly with its docile performance.

Above right: The only four-stroke available to sixteeners.

Left: Illumination was one of the Honda's strong points. Indicators are standard fittings.

but if you can afford this tiddler in the first place, scratch around for 87 mpg, you'll enjoy it.

Graham Sanderson

honda

SS 50

THE BIGGEST PROBLEM with sixteen-year-old moped tests is that there aren't that many sixteen-year-old journalists around to write them. In fact, to date I haven't met one. So for my sins I've spent what was to have been an evening of darts and good ale frowning my brow over a barren sheet of paper in the dim glow of the fast approaching midnight oil. And the cause of my quandary? Honda's SS50 "not so much a moped" (more a motorbike?).

I've looked at it this way and that, and for my money it looks good. From the SS

sticker to the short, flat bars to the upswept exhaust it looks like a fast bike — well as far as mopeds go that is, but we're still talking about the low fifties remember. The dark grey pressed steel framework is neat and the stiletto slim tank is a boy racer's dream. Those gangling pedals are a bit of an eyesore but there's enough "motorcycle" about the SS50 for you to almost overlook them ... until it's time to swing the old kickstarter that is.

Try it sitting astride and your right shin gaunches merrily into the arm of the pedal cum footrest. Try it standing alongside, and as you reach the end of the swing the angle of the kickstart lever is such that it begins to fold, slipping free of your foot and launching your by now bruised and battered shin against, yes thassright, the pedal cum footrest. No, this is not a plea for an electric starter, just a kick starter that looks more like a kick starter than a Heath-Robinson convolution.

Starting from cold requires full choke and once the motor fires — you have to

listen carefully for it, it's that quiet — it takes a couple of minutes to warm sufficiently for the choke lever to be released. The ignition switch is mounted beneath the front of the tank on the left hand side and there is a neutral indicator light in the top of the speedo head.

Park your posterior awhile, the SS50 is a comfortable machine. Both footrest pedals are locked in a forward position that is ideal in relationship to the gear and rear brake pedals, and those flat bars fall comfortably to hand. They are a bit on the narrow side though, measuring only 22 inches from tip to tip which, while it doesn't affect the handling or your steering ability, creates silly problems with the rear view mirrors. They just don't stick out enough to give you a clear view of what's lumbering up behind.

Now with an ever increasing number of super-tiddlers that's no problem for, as I've already mentioned, performance-wise they're pretty rapid; enough at least to keep ahead of the lethal bumper-to-bumper urban crawl. But though SS the 50 may be by name, SS it is not by nature. Surprised? So was I; even now I can't figure why Honda have produced such a zippy looking machine, destined at a glance to cut a dash with the best on the market, with such weak and watery performance.

Possibly in the name of economy; you can't bitch about fuel wastage and the shrinking gallon in your tank with this baby. Probably because too many mothers' sons were wrapping their super-tiddler bolides around lamp posts and the cars of other sons' mothers. The Industry seems to be going that way. Shades of Len Setright? Right first time. I don't care how big and bright the rear light is — and it is — and I don't care how big and bright the turn indicators are — and they are — the SS50 just hasn't got the necessary urge. Necessary to get the moped rider out of the gutter where he has been for far too long, and necessary to get and keep him ahead of the four-wheeled grind.

Actually, there is a way out. There is a ridge around the top of the throttle slide which governs the available throttle movement. Cut it off and your Honda will discover something akin to acceleration. Sounds like a good idea after initial running in and a lot of people are doing it, but the official Honda view is a very definite NO WAY. Tamper with the carb and you're not going to have much guarantee bargaining power if the motor blows.

Back to reality — some people will buy the SS50 because it is a Honda and for no other reason. If their ideal is quiet, docile, super-economic biking, then they will be satisfied. If they were seduced by its sporty

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giant test

pretensions, they will be disappointed. Anybody shopping around the sports moped market as a whole would be well advised to consider these two points.

yamaha FS1-E

WHEN *Bike* first took a look at Yamaha's FS1-E sixteen special a couple years back, it was hailed as one of the best ways yet to beat the 16-er ban. Not that it wasn't a great little bike into the bargain, but you may recall passions were still running pretty high over the Peyton controversy. Now, in the light of more sober times, and in the context of an ever-increasing and competitive market, just how does the tiny stroker make out?

Well, it hasn't changed so's you would notice. Sure, all the latest models are finished in "Popsical Purple" (so maybe Huck Hound is working for Yamaha these days), but overall appearance remains the same except for the "FS1-E" decal on the side panels. Comparing the two checkouts, top speed is up on the earlier test, but the difference is only minimal when you consider the latest figures were taken under very favourable conditions. Added to the trafficator mountings there is now a trafficator switch unit on the right handlebar although the lights themselves remain extras at around ten quid a set.

If you're a confirmed flasher these lights are a listed Yamaha extra so there's no reason why you should get ripped-off by fast buck merchants whose prices vary according to the weight of your wallet. The same goes for rear view mirrors; personally I prefer to have one if only to check my DA before making it to the Friday night sock hop. Of course they have been known to save riders from harrowing high speed moments... well, you never know who's creeping up behind, sailor.

Obviously Yamaha are doing their best to keep the price down; when it was raised last year sales stopped virtually dead so dealers were persuaded to take a cut in their share of the loot. Things don't get any better though, and the latest figure of £215 has just been announced. That's an increase of fifty-six quid since the last test for those of you with a morbid interest in current inflation.

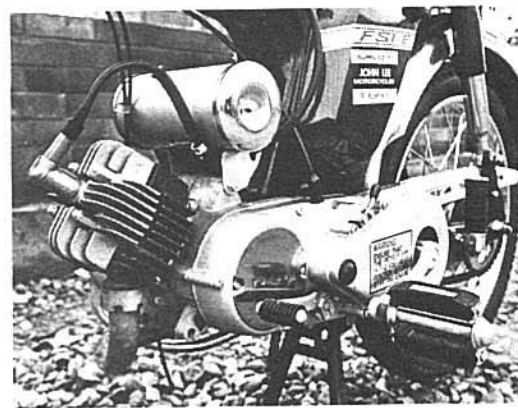
The Yamaha's backbone frame is a pressed steel affair supporting slimline petrol tank and dual seat; a large, chrome speedo sits dead centre of the wide, moto-



Above left: Carb for rotary valve engine nestles behind right hand side cover.



Above right: Moto-cross bars detract from sleek lines but give reassuring feel to the rider.



cross bars. Trolling around, the little stroker is super light to handle, and combined with the punchy power characteristics of the rotary valve engine, those big bars inspire the kind of "I'm riding a motorcycle" confidence found sadly lacking with some machines in the same class.

The four gears are nicely spaced too, making for both swift and smooth acceleration from standstill to top wack in the mid forties. First is low enough to bring the front wheel up around yer ear'oles and unlike the Honda SS50, there's enough throttle movement to wind on some power before shifting the cogs. About the only snag encountered during the test was the placing of neutral at the top of the box. Changing from the other bikes with neutral between first and second produced some interesting, if short-lived, standing starts when an unfamiliar boot persistently yanked the gear lever up out of first in a vain attempt to locate second. Maybe I should stick to Twitter Wombats.

If anybody's still wondering, the tiny Mikuni carb which pumps the petrol is hidden behind the right hand engine cover, and that large cocoa tin atop the motor unit houses a paper filament air cleaner. It is not, as I had often imagined, an afterthought of a tool box. A get-you-home tool kit shares the left-hand frame compartment with a small six volt battery and other assorted electrical gubbins.

Taking my life in my hands I chatted to a number of youths actively engaged in thrashing a variety of "sixteener" machines through the metropolis. The FS1-E came out equal first with the three or four Minarelli engined Italian bikes at present available, and if you've been shopping around you'll already know that they are well up at the wrong end of the price range. Could be that the FS1-E is going to be with us for some time to come.

Phil Mather

SUMMARY

AS WE'VE SAID before, judging from the amount of mail we receive concerning sixteen specials the market would appear to be going from strength to strength, and this being the third successive teeny Giant Test in recent memory, there's probably something in the rumour that certain members of the *Bike* staff are mellowing to the buzz of these tiny whizzers.

This time around we turned our attentions to a pair of machines that must rate at the top of the moped popularity poll, the Honda SS50 and the Yamaha FS1-E, and Puch's up-market contender, the M50S. As it happens, our selection proved as wide a cross section as we could have hoped for.



Of the three, the Puch M50S has the most "motorcycle" look and feel about it — in fact, a larger 125 cc engine will drop straight into the existing frame. It has many of the refinements you would expect to find on a modern bike combined with the financial advantages of running a lightweight.

On the other hand, Honda's SS50 is something of a sheep in wolf's clothing. Obviously there's no reason why it should look like a mid-fifties motorised bicycle just because it hasn't the punch of a Kawasaki Z-1, but in the light of current high speed fifties, don't be fooled by those sporty lines.

And finally the FS1-E, Yamaha's reigning best-seller and our favourite of the test trio. It has the looks of an exciting lightweight and that tireless two-stroke motor delivers the performance to match. You only have to run an eye down the checkout panel to see what we mean. ●

Checkout

	PUCH M50S	HONDA SS50	YAMAHA FS1-E
Engine	Puch 2-stroke	Honda ohc 4-stroke	Yamaha 2-stroke
Bore & stroke	38 x 43 mm	39 x 41.4 mm	40 x 39.7 mm
Capacity	48.8 cc	49 cc	49 cc
Compression ratio	11:1	8.8:1	7.1:1
Carburettor	Bing 17 mm	Keihin 12 mm	Mikuni 16 mm
BHP at RPM	4.2 at 8,000	2.5 at 8,000	4.8 at 7,000
Primary drive/clutch	Gear/multiplate wet	Gear/single plate wet	Gear/multiplate wet
Electrical system	6v flywheel magneto	6v AC generator	6v flywheel magneto
Lighting	18/18 w headlamp 18/3 w stoplight/tail	15/15 w headlamp 18/5 w stoplight/tail	24/24 w headlamp 24/5 w stoplight/tail
DIMENSIONS			
Wheelbase	48.8 in	46.5 in	46 in
Seat height	31.1 in	30 in	30.5 in
Ground clearance	5.9 in	7.5 in	5.75 in
Kerb weight	178 lb	176 lb	154 lb
Fuel capacity	2.2 galls	1.5 galls	1.5 galls
CYCLE PARTS			
Wheels and tyres			
(front)	Semperit 2.75 x 17	Nitto 2.50 x 17	Inoue 2.25 x 17
(rear)	Continental 3.00 x 17	Nitto 2.50 x 17	Inoue 2.50 x 17
Brakes (front and rear)	140 mm SLS	110 mm SLS	110 mm SLS
PERFORMANCE			
0-30 mph	7.63 secs	19.38 secs	8.6 secs
Top speed	47.02 mph	39.37 mph	50.28 mph
Fuel consumption	87 mpg	144 mpg	84 mpg
Braking distance from 30 mph	30 ft	32 ft	31 ft
PRICE	£265 inc VAT	£210 inc VAT	£215 inc VAT
	Supplied by Steyr-Daimler-Puch (Great Britain) Ltd, 211 Lower Parliament Street, Nottingham	Supplied by Clarkes Industries Ltd., 27-31 Carlton Road, Nottingham	Supplied by John Lee Motorcycles, 8 Market Square, Higham Ferrers, Northants.