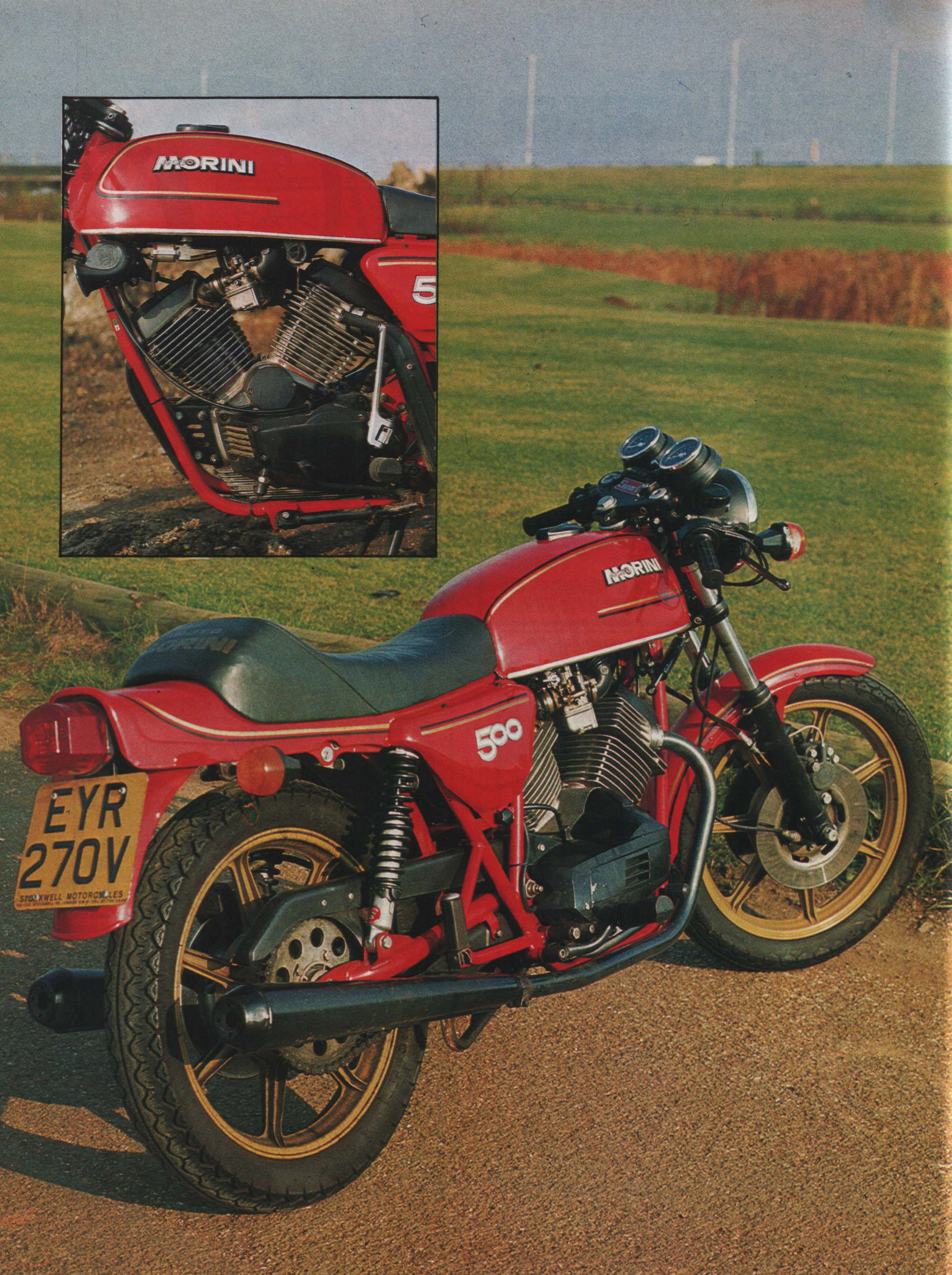
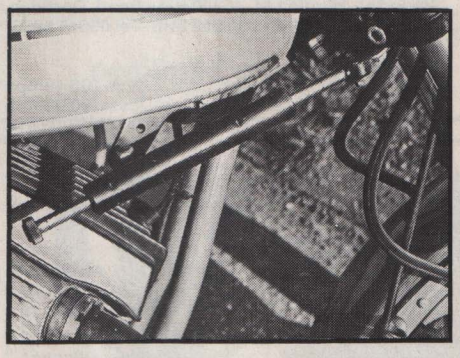
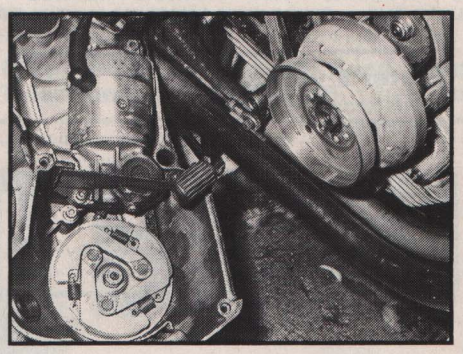
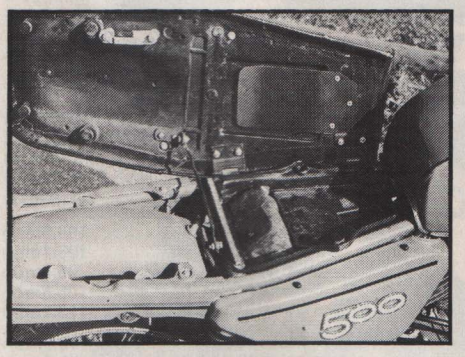
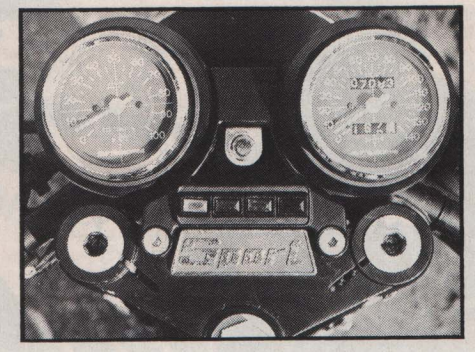

MORINI
MORINI
500
EYR
270V

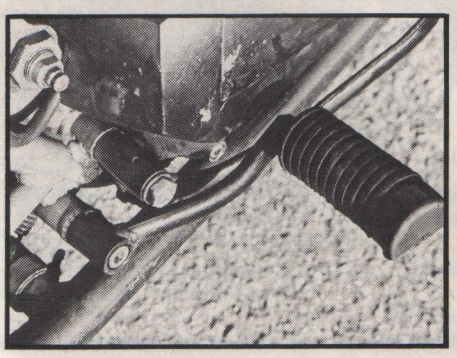
Morini's off-key Maestro











Top left: Hydraulic steering damper is standard. Another nice touch are plastic chain guards over top and bottom runs.

Top right: Centrifugal start motor.

Above left: Poor quality toolkit is housed under seat. Mudguards are steel and sidepanels glass fibre.

Above right: Rubber mounted Veglia instruments work well. Tacho is electronic. But there's no neutral light. CEV headlight.

Left: Footrests are adjustable but non-folding. Rearsets are needed. Sidestand on other side is spring type.

IT's GOOD to see bikes like the 500 Morini Maestro on the market. It's one of three V-twins from Italy. Throw in the Honda CX500 and we have a choice of four 500cc V-twins.

That makes the 500cc category the biggest V-twin fan club. Just over three years ago there were none for sale on the British market.

In addition to broadening the 500 V-twin choice Morini have also given us a 250 V-twin (tested in Motorcycle Mechanics Jan. 80) and the now well established 350 V-twin.

The Maestro heads the cast from the Morini factory in Bologna. It looks extremely sporty with its silk black clip-ons and red frame. And it has the sound and feel of a true sportster.

But it's not all red roses. Unless it's kept clean the dynamic red frame soon begins to look grubby. The gold finished Grimeca wheels fall into the same trap.

What a picture, though, when the Maestro emerges from the spit and polish routine. The many black finished parts, almost to the complete elimination of chrome, add to its moody intensity.

Keeping the Morini clean becomes even more important when you discover that neglect leads to rust blisters on the exhaust system, particularly on clamps.

Neat frame welding and good covering of paint give the frame first class protection. It's a shame the pinstriping is so amateurish.

On the outside the Maestro looks very similar to the "3½" (tested in Motorcycle Mechanics Dec. 74) in respect of engine and frame. But it's not just an overbore unit. The stroke has been lengthened by 7mm to 64mm.

Both machines have a single throw shell bearing crank, Ducati Electtrotecnica electronic ignition and belt driven camshaft working the valves via pushrods.

They also have Herron heads — flat surface heads with the valves dropping vertically into the combustion chamber formed by a dished piston.

In addition the 500 has 26mm carburettors, 1mm larger than the 350, and an electric starter.

This is housed behind the right engine cover. The starter motor is connected by chain to three bob-weights with friction pad edges which when in operation engage against a steel drum connected to the crank.

It makes quite a racket compared to more usual geared starters. Lamentably the Morini became a bad starter. Most of the time I ended up kickstarting or pushing the bike to get it going.

Gordon Colley, mechanic for the importers, had told me full choke from the handlebar lever was needed. I tried it every way, mostly without success.

One morning persevering with the start motor flattened the battery. The kickstarter is not too brilliant. It moves half travel before engaging. But it fired the engine.

The battery was recharged. Still no go and the battery quickly drained itself again. So it was kickstart or push from then on.

On test Morini 500

Just to add to the suspense the Morini would on a rare occasion light up on the first kick.

The bike had 7000 miles on the clock when collected and the Bosch battery (usually a Fiamm) may well have been discharged several times since it was all too easy to switch on the parking lights when turning off the ignition. Two cells were later found to be faulty.

I had been warned about this and took care not to override the switch. Located under the left side of the fuel tank it operates a solenoid switch to automatically open the fuel petcock. The tap under the right side of the tank is for reserve.

The engine has a long-legged easy feel about it. Pulling away feels like a second gear start, and a little clutch slip is required.

With torquey response the engine feels quite powerful at first. It's not until you get used to it that you discover the Maestro is quite tame. Running the machine on the LEDAR dyno proved this to be the case.

Yet the machine is still capable of over 100mph which makes it respectable. It clocked 106.49mph when speed tested with a strong tailwind. This was on the same day our Suzuki X7 project bike hit 118.7mph.

Some throttle lag had me wondering if the carburettors were out of synchronisation. I made a slight adjustment with no improvement which led me to conclude that carburettors with pump jets might improve throttle response.

Vibration wasn't a problem until 5000rpm at 70mph was exceeded. At that point the motor felt that it was working rather than loafing.

Morini have fitted clip-ons yet not complemented them with rearsets. This gives a cramped riding position. Surely Morini know enough about cafe racer styling not to forget rearsets.

Worse. You don't get a rear view mirror as standard equipment. Because you are cramped forward you can't turn your head enough to look over your shoulder.

You find yourself letting go of the heavy throttle, sitting up and then turning to look behind. This aggravation is ridiculous when you consider the cost of a mirror against the £1775 tag.

When Japan started the trend to left foot gearchanges Morini resisted. Their one-down and four-up change on the right has been winning them sales from riders who never wanted to get used to Oriental style.

Trouble is once you've submitted, going back to the old style requires a little concentration. I found the back disc to be too fierce. Operating it with my left foot and having the footrests too far forward made it worse.

The front twin Grimeca discs required a lot of pressure from the big lever and then came on suddenly. And in the wet they were terrible. A big shock, since Italian brakes usually work well in these conditions.

Taut handling felt good. But a hard ride on bad surfaces could give the kidneys a pasting. The hard seat did little to ease the situation.

Morini's Maestro is playing one of our favourite cafe racer tunes, but it's a semitone flat.

Brian Crichton

Tester's verdict

Points scored out of ten

Performance	7
Economy	8
Handling	8
Comfort	5
Appearance	8
Equipment	6
Value for money	6

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type	aircooled 72 deg V-twin
Displacement	478.6cc
Bore x stroke	69 x 64mm
Compression	11.2
Carburetters	two 26mm Dell'Ortos
Ignition	electronic capacitive discharge
Lubrication	wet sump
Battery	12 volt/18Ah

FRAME

Forks	Marzocchi telescopics
Rear suspension	swinging arm, five point Marzocchis
Front tyre	100/90 V18 Pirelli Phantom
Rear	3.50H18 Pirelli Gordon Supersport
Wheelbase	56.9in (144.5cm)
Overall length	84.1in (213.5cm)
Claimed dry weight	368lb (167kg)
Fuel capacity	3.52gal (16lit)

TRANSMISSION

Helical gear primary drive via dry multiplate clutch to five speed gearbox, chain final drive. Primary reduction 2.03. Gearbox ratios: 2.23, 1.47, 1.10, 0.91 and 0.79.

PART PRICES inc VAT	£
Handlebar	10.93
Front mudguard	27.03
Speedo cable	6.33
Exhaust system complete	109.25
One piston, gudgeon pin and rings	27.03
List price	1,775.00
Delivery	22.00

Warranty: six months unlimited mileage.
Importer: Harglo Ltd, 462 Station Road, Dorridge, Solihull, West Midlands B93 8HB. Tel 05645 5835.

PERFORMANCE

Max speed at MIRA	106.49mph
SS ¼-mile	14.78sec/90.90mph

Speedo error: true 106mph at 110mph indicated
Fuel: average 56.6mpg, best 58.9mph, worst 53.4mpg
Max power on LEDAR dyno .. 30.3bhp at 6550rpm
Max torque on LEDAR dyno. 28.4ft-lb at 4650rpm.

POWER FIGURES

rpm	bhp	torque ft-lb
4000	20.0	26.3
4500	24.2	28.0
5000	26.2	27.6
5500	28.5	27.4
6000	29.7	26.0
6500	30.0	24.3
7000	29.5	22.0

HOW IT COMPARES

PRICE:	Morini 500	£1775.00
	Moto Guzzi V50	£1329.00
	BMW R45	£1950.00
	Honda CX500	£1299.00
	Yamaha RD250LC	£1030.00
TOP SPEED:	Morini 500	106.5mph
	Moto Guzzi V50	105.1mph
	BMW R45	95.8mph
	Honda CX500	105.5mph
	Yamaha RD250LC	103.2mph
SS¼-MILE:	Morini 500	14.8s/90.9mph
	Moto Guzzi V50	14.5s/89.1mph
	BMW R45	16.2s/80.6mph
	Honda CX500	14.4s/NA
	Yamaha RD250LC	14.51s/91.7mph
DYNO BHP:	Morini 500	30.3
	Moto Guzzi V50	31.5
	BMW R45	NA
	Honda CX500	42.0
	Yamaha RD250LC	31.0
AV MPG:	Morini 500	56.6
	Moto Guzzi V50	55.0
	BMW R45	52.0
	Honda CX500	50.8
	Yamaha RD250LC	34.0