1958

Impressions of Competition Machines

347 c.c. G3LC Matchless

Increased Ground Clearance for Famous Trialster By GEORGE WILSON

DURING a Scottish Six Days' Trial a few years ago a journalist was riding a five-hundred dingbat-wise down Glencoe. In the course of his dramatic dash, the speeding scribe overtook a three-fifty—a product of a certain Plumstead factory—with High Viney up. That transient episode had its repercussion for thereafter, on the road to Mamore, Viney demonstrated that his three-fifty had plenty of top-end power—equal, easily, to that of many a five hundred. Later, on the climb of Mamore's rock-strewn surface, he gave an exhibition of plonk to take the breath away.

Buzz or plonk—either characteristic can be easily achieved, but producing both from the same power unit is much more difficult. In terms of engine efficiency the latest Associated Motor Cycles' product tested—a Matchless G3LC—showed that nothing has been lost in the years between. From the pilot-jet supply upward, breathing is as clean as a razor's cut. Engine response to sudden throttle opening is instantaneous and full of lusty power. On a full day spent riding the machine over rough stuff, the carburettor didn't spit once.

The 1957 G3LC is bigger than its predecessors. In the search for ground clearance the rear sub-frame has been modified to provide a lower mounting for the top ends of the suspension units. The result is that the rear of the machine is forced upward to provide 8½in ground clearance when the suspension is in the position of static load. When the springing is extended the clearance increases to approximately 10in. The result is a machine that can probably tackle every known observed hill between Dartmoor and Aviemore without once marking its crankcase shield.

Two shots showing (left) the Matchless about to clear and (right) clearing unusually high rock steps

Two allied questions immediately arise when a competition machine with so much air under the engine is being considered. First, does the advantage outweigh the disadvantage of effective increase in top hamper? Secondly, has the saddle been raised to such an extent that the rider cannot foot without difficulty? Obviously, you can't have it both ways. One of the photographs shows the model topping a rock step that would certainly have stopped the 1956 model. It is also, probably, the highest step that could be surmounted by any trials machine. Numerous other rocky hills were tackled during the test and everywhere the result was the same. There is simply no gainsaying the fact that in the quest for ground clearance the design aim has been achieved.

For short riders such as I, it has not, however, been achieved without cost. I found the saddle-height increase and top hamper combined to make my day somewhat taxing. Saddle height is 33in with the machine unladen and about 32in with my 10-stone weight in the saddle. When my tailor runs me up a pair of trousers he makes my inside leg measurement 29½in. I simply couldn't foot at all! As for top hamper, when the machine became frisky it was not easy for me to bring it to heel. Total weight, with the lighting set fitted and a gallon in the tank, was 372 lb. In short, the machine is at its best when being ridden by citizens of Viney build.

I was thrilled by many aspects of the Matchless's performance. With the tyre pressures reduced to the extent that the gauge wouldn't register, the rear wheel found bite to an astonishing degree on loose, sandy going and greasy tracks. Excellence of delivery tune is a feature of all Matchless products. The G3LC was no exception. Handlebar control positioning, cable operation, the degree of finish were all of the very highest standard. The clutch took up the drive positively—so positively that if you did want to slip it on a hairpin you could do so with perfect peace of mind.

As well as being high the G3LC is very narrow downstairs and, indeed, the width across the footrests is a mere 21½in. The narrowness paid off handsomely. It meant that deep gullies could be ridden without fear of the rests digging into the sides. It meant that where a gap appeared ahead you could go for it with all the zest displayed by a spring lamb. Up top, the model is narrow, too—so narrow that after being on its side all of a dozen times in the course of our day out, it displayed no evidence of our misadventures. Maybe I had suffered—but no one could guess it!

DATA.—*Capacity:* 347 c.c. *Bore and stroke:* 69 × 93mm. *Compression ratio:* 6.5 to 1. *Carburettor:* Amal Monobloc 376/5. *Choke size:* 1 1/16in. *Gear ratios:* 21.3, 15.5, 9.6 and 6.5 to 1. *Fuel capacity:* 2 gallons. *Wheelbase:* 54in. *Seat height:* 33in. *Ground clearance:* 8½in. *Weight:* 372 lb with full lighting set and one gallon of fuel. *Price:* £177 (with purchase tax, payable only in Great Britain), £219 9s 7d. *Manufacturers:* Associated Motor Cycles, Ltd., Plumstead Road, London, S.E.18.