

MINI-BIKE TEST: RUTTMAN GT 250

FLASHY LOOKING MOUNT

Inglewood Kart Shop in Los Angeles provided our test mini-bike from Ruttman Cycle Co. of Dearborn Heights, Michigan. IKS set up the Ruttman 250 for testing and as befits one of the leading small engine tuning shops in the country, the engine ran like a dream.

The first impression of the Ruttman 250 is one of richness - everything, except the engine, is covered in a gleaming coat of chrome. It is fairly obvious that the complete frame is dipped before the running gear and engine are installed. In its shiny beauty, it almost seemed a shame to ride the 250, especially as we were not planning any parking lot tour for the test.

Our test machine came equipped with a Briggs and Stratton 5 hp engine and, considering the relatively small size of the mini-bike, this seemed like more than enough power. As though to confirm our first impression there was, hanging from the rear axle, a "wheelie-bar". Now, a wheelie bar is like

a plow in reverse, a piece of steel that hangs out behind the rear wheel about four inches and cantilevered from the rear axle to the rear loop of the frame. Presumably its job is to stop the mini-bike from rearing up too far when the power is poured on. Pretty scary!

However, we needn't have worried. The Ruttman bike seemed to be geared too high for much action in the way of wheelies - although it had lots of poop for higher speeds on the top end. To our way of thinking, wheelies are accidents that happen when the throttle is hit too hard and have nothing to do with good riding. Deliberately trying to stand wheelies is like burning rubber away from a stop light, it proves nothing. We admit that it takes a certain amount of skill to ride around on the rear wheel

for any length of time, as the guys at the Inglewood Kart Shop did. But for most of us, trying to do wheelies usually results, in the end, in getting dumped.

Perhaps another reason that we couldn't get any extended wheelies out of the Ruttman was the excellent frame geometry and weight distribution. The main frame loops to the rear at the bottom about four inches past the upper seat-bearing members. This means that the driver's weight is well forward of the rear axle. Combined with the more than 30-pound weight of the large Briggs engine, this tends to keep both wheels firmly on the ground. That's much more important than wheelies.

The large kick-up on the tuck and rolled saddle also tends to keep the driver's weight toward the front. The



ABOVE - The very tight, power-on, turning circle of the Ruttman GT 250 is demonstrated in this photograph.

LEFT - Compressed condition of the seat, the sole form of suspension, (apart from the tires), can be seen in this shot as the Ruttman GT 250 passes over a rut.

RIGHT - Up, up and away, flying high on the Ruttman GT 250. The surprised (scared?) look on our test rider's face comes from having just taken the same jump with a suspended mini-bike, barely leaving the ground.





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saddle, incidently, is one of the best that we have seen on a mini-bike. It is a full 19-inches in length, 9-inches wide and three-inches deep in soft, cushiony, foam.

It is just as well that the Ruttman 250 has a good seat because it has no suspension. The standard size 11-inch tires do not contribute more than the usual cushioning and, if it wasn't for the deep-foam saddle, things might get a little bumpy.

The Ruttman mini-bike is in the "fun" tradition of our little machines and is not meant for rough terrain riding. It has a very sleek look, low to the ground (about three-inches clearance), but large, back-country, bumps would probably find it "hung-up". And it has fixed footpegs, which are not suited to rough country usage. In the fun tradition, it is a very agile machine with a turning circle of about six-feet. It is very solid feeling and has little of the squirrelness associated with the smaller mini's.

The high-rising handlebars (chromed, of course) sport soft, non-slip, handlebar grips with a large motorcycle type brake lever and accelerator twist grip. The brake is the band-type that activates on the outside of the clutch drum, braking through the chain to the rear sprocket. There is no jackshaft so this system is positive. On our test machine the brake lever travelled almost down to the handlebar grip. Adjustment involved removing the large, chromed, chain and clutch guard (through two self-tapping screws in a bracket attached to the engine block). No big thing but a little annoyance, and we have doubts about the heat dissipating capabilities of this system - although we experienced no trouble in this regard.

Workmanship on the Ruttman 250, in general, was excellent with solid welds and smooth operating bearing surfaces. As a fun-oriented mini-bike it more than does its job. The question of power is one for the individual to decide but the five-horse Briggs seems more than enough. Certainly, with its chrome cladding, this test bike is one of the best looking in the field. However, the model one step down the line, with painted frame, steel wheels and the 3½ hp engine seems to make a lot of sense - and saves some \$40.



PRETTY - The gleaming chrome frame and excellent finish are seen in this photograph.



PRETTY MUDDY - The beauty of the finish is marred by mud after we had finished testing.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Ruttman Cycle Co., 26732 Ford Road, Dearborn Heights, Michigan 48127

Model: 250

Price: \$199.00

Engine: 5 hp Briggs and Stratton four cycle

Finish: Chrome Plated

Gear Ratio: 5-1

Drive: Automatic centrifugal clutch, direct drive to rear sprocket

Mudguards: Steel-front and rear.

Fuel Capacity: Three quarts

Accelerator: Motor-cycle twist type

Ground clearance: 3-inches

Tires: 11-inch knobbies

Wheels: 5-inch chromed cast aluminum

Wheelbase: 31½-inches

Suspension: None

Length: 42½-inches

Height: 30-inches (handlebars)

Width: 23-inches (handlebars)

Weight: 80-lbs. approx. (wet)

Cost/efficiency index: 7.50

(on a scale of ten, a subjective evaluation of all pertinent factors)