

my cool scooter.

an inspirational guide to stylish scooters

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PAVILION



introduction

cherished

vespa 90
mother's
silver
lambretta grand prix
heinkel tourist
the unknown vespa
bond p3
nsu prima
ednetta
honda spacy
il mio amore
lambretta li 150
lambretta 150d
start me up
lilly
lucy in the sky

new originals

unknown pleasures
the in-crowd scooter club
london fields rideout
broomstick
reincarnation
the rabbit
warhorse
lambretta turismo veloce
harlow
double denim
vespa cosa 200
wally
his and hers
greyhound 240
hotel navarra
form and function
loggy
copper

hotwheels scooter club

roller coaster

m'lord

authentic

lambretta li 125

100 per cent

lambretta tv175

triumph tigress 175

patience

goggo roller

r. agius scooters

precious

zündapp bella

eel and pie rideout

pretty green

lambretta sx225

waterloo sunset

clacton

iwl pitty

lui

moto rumi

the heirloom

sourcebook

credits

acknowledgements



introduction

The scooter: so much more than a stopgap between owning a bicycle, motorcycle or car. Instead it was a form of mobility born out of necessity in a Europe ravaged by war. The scooter picked the best elements of existing transport and bundled them with flair into an agile, low-cost package – ideal for narrow, rutted and congested roads. More importantly it gave the majority, not just the well-off few, the mobility they'd craved for so long. What unfolded was nothing short of a phenomenon, surpassing the envisaged form of transport for the masses and becoming far more. Riding a scooter became synonymous with freedom and a symbol of a positive lifestyle in what were harsh times. Inevitably such a romance made its presence felt in cinema and print, further cementing its place in social history. The scooter, without question, takes its place among the most significant icons of the 20th century. Of course scooters existed, in various guises, before the austerity of post-war Europe. However, these first-generation pioneers were scarce and the scooters were often floored by high purchase prices and unwieldy designs. It was left to the second generation of scooter designers to pencil the familiar form we see today.

The question of what exactly makes a scooter a scooter is one that is much debated – is it the steel through chassis, the rear-mounted engine, the small wheels? But wherever you draw the line, the classic Italian scooter is unmistakable. And the catalyst for what so many admire today was steel tubing manufacturer Ferdinando Innocenti and his foresight in seeing the burgeoning market beckoning for a cheap motor scooter. He approached Corradino D'Ascanio (an Italian aeronautics engineer), who found himself unemployable after the Second World War due to Italy's restrictions on researching or manufacturing military or aerospace technology. D'Ascanio tasked himself with the job of designing a simple, economical, robust, unisex, easy to ride, affordable scooter with partial weather-protection and a space for a passenger riding pillion. And all the ugly mechanics hidden away for the majority who cared not how it worked – just that it did.

However, when D'Ascanio and Innocenti's company fell out over Ferdinando's canny insistence on utilising steel tubing in the construction of the frame (thereby boosting his fledgling pre-war company), D'Ascanio took his preferred aeronautical-inspired spar frame to the more sympathetic ears of Enrico Piaggio. The new allegiance helped Piaggio take the lead in the scooter race by developing and manufacturing D'Ascanio's original concept in the form of the Vespa 98 (*vespa* being Italian for wasp), launched in 1946. The Innocenti Lambretta Model A, designed by Giuseppe Lauro and named after the Lambrate district of Milan where it was first produced, followed one year later. Thus started the rivalry between marques that exists, albeit good-naturedly, between loyal followers even today. However, one advantage shared by both manufacturers was the edge they had on their soon-to-emerge rivals.

Italy's seemingly overnight adoration for the scooter left the world looking on with wide-eyed wonder. Potential customers reacted to this new form of imported social mobility with curiosity, while manufacturing entrepreneurs were all too eager to have their slice of the booming scooter market. The

far corners of the globe began turning their hands (often eccentrically) to scooter design. Some succeeded, many failed – most eventually fell prey to the automobile as it became more affordable. By the early 1970s road users had fallen out of love with scooters, and they were afforded a level of respect that those of a sensitive nature choose not to dwell upon.

Although scooters can be pinned to other youth movements, the predominant one remains that of the mod era, and the pages that follow naturally reference both the mod explosion of the 60s and its revival in the late 70s, and the influences that music, fashion and scooters had on people's lives. Impressionable teenagers on both occasions, when mod culture was in full stride, were deliberately and wholeheartedly swept along with it, absorbing the forward-thinking modernist vibe. Thus began the constant teenage battle to keep one step ahead when expressing themselves via the appearance of their scooters as well as their own. Despite the decades that have passed, little has changed; even now an owner's personality is projected onto their scooter with an array of lights, mirrors, emblems and even sign-writing – all with the aim of being distinct.

Researching this book has not only been an opportunity for Lyndon and myself to develop a deeper appreciation for the aroma of two-stroke engines (not a welcome addition to everyone else's nasal passages, as Lyndon was told in no uncertain terms more than once), but yet again a welcome chance to explore a subject by way of research, photography and narratives. All of this has been made an even greater pleasure by the enthusiastic demeanour of the scooter owners. It's been a joy listening to their varied and fascinating anecdotes about how they came to own their scooter and, at times, about how it's changed and enriched their life. I hope their passion is suitably reflected in the personal commentaries that accompany their photographs.

It's often the case that the best design is the first design – and it's hard to argue that isn't the case with the scooter. However, with the few machines featured that don't herald from Italy, I hope to enlighten existing or aspiring scooter owners to these often unsung heroes, who are fully deserving of the moment in the limelight. I hope you will concur that this book covers a sympathetic mix of scooter marques and styles, and in part will help dispel the stereotypical opinion that anyone with a classic scooter is from the 'lights and mirrors' brigade. To everyone involved, thank you – it's been a blast.



cherishe



In what has become an expensive pastime, it's refreshing to have been given the opportunity to explore why the owners within this chapter hold their scooters in such high esteem, and to explore their reasons for purposely avoiding the temptation to profit financially from the demand for the sought-after design icons. The same praise can be attributed to the majority of owners within the book, but these individuals deserve to be singled out for their steadfast loyalty to the cause.

These are 'cherished' scooters for many varied reasons. On occasions it's the already lengthy term of ownership that has secured the scooter's future – fond memories from the owner's life or that of a loved one. Or maybe it's something else: how they came to possess their scooter – through a lucky find or by gaining the trust of the previous owner before a sale could take place; how scooters steered one owner from trouble and brought a semblance of order into his life, which resulted from a chance encounter; or perhaps the many years of observation and waiting before a bond between owner and scooter was established. Family heirlooms, extreme levels of workmanship and more will be found within this chapter.

There's often much more than meets the eye when it comes to owning a scooter – external appearance is just a part of it. Seldom will two owners share the same reasons for cherished ownership, and my intention is to show just how it came to pass. I hope you enjoy this chapter's selection of sometimes inspiring stories as well as beautiful scooters.





‘People from a certain generation get very nostalgic about small-frame 90cc scooters such as mini many having probably experienced their first taste of true independence on something similar comments fine art lecturer Adam, who shares an appreciation for mid-century design with his partner Louise. ‘We don’t attract the same attention that showcase scooters command, but there is a minority that is overwhelmed by our scooter’s originality – especially these days when time capsules like our Douglas Vespa 90 are becoming far less common. It was sheer beginner’s luck in acquiring the scooter; it started with what can only be described as a modest mid-life crisis. In unison we decided just get on with the things we talked about – as the stars seldom align to create the perfect moment in life when everything is harmonious.’

Adam continues: ‘We began to browse scooter outlets and swooned over the models on display. However, since this was the first time we’d dipped our toes into the world of classic mobility (unless you count an old hand-me-down Skoda as a classic), we decided to take a smaller entry-level step into scooter ownership, broadening our search to a hopeful online bargain. We succeeded when I spotted a classified advert moments after it was posted online. The owner explained that the scooter had been in her family since it was bought new in 1966 by her father, recollecting the day he bought it and how it had been her task to choose the colour. Her father rode it for several months before the scooter became surplus to requirements and was stored in an outbuilding for 10 years or more.

‘It was then her husband’s chance to use it for a short while, before he too returned the scooter to its resting place for another 10 years. It saw the light of day again only when their son used it while at university in the 80s. Then it didn’t get an airing for a further 25 years, before reluctantly being offered for sale – necessitated by a move to Scotland.

‘Since the Vespa was in London, I asked Niall at Retrospective Scooters to give me his opinion, which was: “You’ve found a good one!” That was all the reassurance we needed and soon after the scooter, along with original paperwork – log book, etc. – was ours. The scooter is very desirable, with a traceable provenance. Apart from a bit of polishing, we’ve done, need to, or plan to do little else – it would be sacrilege to restore it. We’re rather attracted to its sedate pace, allowing us to fully appreciate the experience. Like myself, it has its cranky moments, probably due to the fact it’s not accustomed to being used so much. It’s about ready for another hibernation, which it won’t be getting any time soon.’







‘The scooter was purely a practical form of mobility, as opposed to a fashion statement or craze. It followed few trends; even a certain four-piece band from Liverpool eluded my recognition. Scootering at the time was very much encouraged as a lifestyle choice,’ explains Audrey, who purchased her Lambretta Li 150 new in 1960. ‘My new-found freedom was exciting yet overwhelming at the same time – certainly a step up from my bicycle. It enabled me to spread my wings, even, along with a friend, touring northern France and Holland.

‘I also used it to commute to work in Sloane Street, London, where I worked as a dental nurse which, incidentally, is where I met my late husband, Michael. He was a patient and I was captivated by this fascinating man. I even took it upon myself to check his notes, and found he was educated at Cambridge University. A Sloane Ranger he wasn’t. He’d arrive on his trusty and rusty motorcycle in a jacket so covered in grease that it would stand up by itself. He was a maverick, some might say eccentric, lawyer with very high morals – few escaped his judgement. However, his disillusionment with the legal system led him to author a revolutionary how-to book about bypassing a solicitor who specialised in conveyancing.

‘Our relationship blossomed and the scooter served us well on many a long-distance trip. Once we were married, Michael commandeered the scooter in order to commute into London. The scooter received little more than lackadaisical maintenance, was never cleaned or pampered. To him it was a practical, incognito form of transport, but to us all (including Michael) it evoked a curious form of love. Legal associates grew accustomed to seeing him on the Lambretta, often laden with books and paperwork bungeed to the scooter rack. On one occasion, while his fellow graduates arrived in Porsches and Jaguars to a reunion in Cambridge, he arrived on the Lambretta. He used it daily until the day he died, by which point the scooter was rather ratty-looking. Passing ownership on to my son, Guy, who was heavily involved in the scooter scene, was the best action to take.’

Guy continues: ‘I set about restoring the scooter to its former glory. Scooters are in my DNA and this one is an intrinsic part of the Joseph family. I’m the current custodian; but it will eventually be handed down to my eldest daughter. However, it has always been – and always will be – referred to as “Mother’s scooter”.’







'I'm comfortable being deemed a hoarder. Hard to deny it when at one stage owning 26 scooters explains Simon, who started scootering on a 125 Vespa at the age of 17. Maybe his father was trying to relive his own youth upon a scooter – who knows? – but whatever his motivation for bringing home a sorry-looking Lambretta in need of renovation, he did not have to do much to persuade Simon to join him in a father-son restoration project.

'Every penny earned from my part-time job went towards finishing the Lambretta. Saturday was payday and the ritual, which continued for twelve months, was to visit the scooter shop for the new part on my list. Once finished, I used it for several months before the untimely death of my father. This changed my perspective towards the scooter, as it was a tangible connection to my father. Such is the sentimentality assigned to the scooter that since 1986 it has resided in my lounge, never to be used again.

'It's not the rarest, nor the most attractive scooter I own, but another with a sentimental label is my 1959 Lambretta Li 150, due to the part it played on the first date with my girlfriend, a romantic yet high-revving Sunday afternoon ride through the countryside.

'As with many of my scooters, this acquisition was the result of an online auction. I bid, won and soon after made the journey to collect it. Now, like many, I'm up for a bit of haggling – especially when something has inadvertently been missed from the seller's description. This was not such an occasion. I was greeted by a shaven-headed goliath of a man. Filling every inch of the door void, he turned sideways, stooped his head and shoulders beneath the frame and made fleeting eye contact with me. He ushered me towards the garage and muttered, "There it is. You won it for a good price – no haggling!"

'I graciously accepted his offer of a test ride. However, instead of the characteristic nippy acceleration, the scooter limped forward as if tethered to a bungee cord. The seller yelled, "Give some revs!" Sure enough, after seemingly revving the hell out of it, the lacklustre performance gave way to lightning acceleration! Upon my return I timidly questioned the iffy start. He explained that the scooter's gearing had been modified so it was capable of pulling away with him and the missus. This left me mulling about what this poor scooter had been enduring, especially when his wife made an appearance. The scooter most likely gave a huge sigh of relief the day I rode it away. I've done little to it since. The gearing and even the heavily worn springs in the front saddle, which offer little no comfort, remain – all testament to its previous valiant service.'

lambretta grand pri



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