

Vincent Egli 1967

VINCENTS from the 1930`s to 1955 were known as the ‘Fastest production machines available.....”A fact, not a slogan”.. Vincents 998cc engine produced more horsepower than all its British and most of its foreign rivals. It was sought after for both road and competition use. In **1967** a Swiss engineer, **Fritz Egli**, observing the rise of Japanese multis, decided to extend the competetiveness of his racing Vincent by reducing weight and improving the cycle components. He designed and made a motorcycle which became a legend. Its roadgoing derivative sold on the Continent and in the UK, through dealer Roger Slater. However, the Vincent company had ceased business in 1955 & the limited supply of Vincent engines in 1967, meant that less than 150 Eglis were made..

Fritz designed a ‘space’ frame with a large diameter top tube for oil, and a simple but robust triangulated rear section carrying conventional shock absorbers.. He introduced Italian 4 leading shoe brakes and to some, a mechanical Campagnolo disc brake. These he assembled inside alloy rims made by Borrani. The forks were mostly Italian, and later, Eglis were fitted with an Avon Michenall bikini fairing..

Characteristics of his championship winning design include the ‘ banana’ tank, nickel plated chrome moly frame, a 5 inch Shadow instrument, and long conforming front alloy mudguard having two stays.

This machine was built in about 780 hours over a period of three and a half years. The build is to Fritz`s pattern using original components where possible from around the world **to achieve his essential 1967 features**. It has an improved Black Shadow 1150cc engine rebuilt, with Robinson Mk2 cams, improved flow heads and some frame components from Terry Prince...once Fritz`s assistant. Like the original, Italian designed brakes, forks, and rims are used. Clutch is V2,with control lever necessitating half the pull force of say a Triumph clutch. The gearbox has a 5 speed John Surtees cluster. With a compression ratio of 9.5 to 1, reliable kickstart has been retained and presents no problems once mastered.

Sourcing rare components and finding long lost skills to replace others, were the main build challenges. The machine is not a reproduction. As many original parts as could be aquired were used. It has been registerd consequently with the Roads and Traffic Authority in NSW, Australia, as an Egli Vincent.

Modern materials and manufacturing techniques allowed sympathetic improvements to roadworthiness, handle-ability and finish. The front wheel for example, is 19inch instead of 20, because only 19inch tyres were available in an appropriate speed rating at the time of build. The front brakes, designed by Daniele Fontana are of Yamaha competition origin as they are the largest reliable 4LS drum available. (A mechanical & genuine Campagnolo disc brake was tried without success). Tyres are Metzeller (not Avon) as appropriate sizes, profiles and speed ratings were available at the time of build.

This long narrow machine has a mass of about 180kg and is suited to a medium to tall rider with reach. Its characteristics on the road are summed up in the word 'stability'.

It is unflinching into and powering out of corners and best suited to wide curves or taxing climbs. The engine having that characteristic beat and broad high torque permitting very high cruise speeds - famous in Vincents. The flat slide Gardiner type carburettors when used naked emit from their contoured bellmouths a roar at large throttle openings; sounding piquant and deliciously in tone with the emission from the long reverse cone alloy silencer. Power is spread evenly from about 2300 to 8000rpm.

The machine is highly rewarding for a Cromwell helmeted rider with experience and capability.Although the experience is a lonely one. No other classic bike can get anywhere near it on a run.

February 2010