

Very spec



The badge on the back actually reads '200 Special'.



ial 50 Special



I love the Vespa 50 Special – and its predecessor the Vespa 50N – and I am not alone. Back in 1999 Italian band Luna Pop took their ditty, '50 Special', to the top of the charts. Their tribute to many a lad's first scooter had meaning for me, because the Vespa 50 was my first (ahem!) legal scooter. Of course I soon made every effort to make it illegal by tuning it, which by my teenage methodology simply meant substituting its humble 30mph power unit with another engine of twice the capacity and power output.

Over the years, loads of people have tuned small frame Vespas to quite ridiculous outputs and speeds – these motors absolutely love it – but there comes a time when going the whole hog means exceeding the 150cc limit imposed by the maximum bore and stroke attainable without really extensive engineering. When you reach that level the only answer is substitution of the small frame engine with something bigger: preferably many times bigger than standard.

Wolfgang Riehu – known locally as Wolle (and pronounced Voller) – is the proprietor of specialist dealer Scooter & Service of Hamburg, Germany. Wolle didn't start out on small frames, but once on the case quickly came to the same conclusion as many before him: that the ultimate Vespa for performance and handling would combine the power of a tuned P200 engine with the short, stiff and light chassis of a small frame Vespa.

The tuned Malossi 210 motor is really a German specialty, with their results from these kits often exceeding that of the UK tuning houses. The set-up in this machine is fairly typical: a tuned Malossi kit, modified 60mm crank, 21-tooth Cosa clutch, fanless Vespa HP4 flywheel and a JL left-hand exhaust. Where the spec differs is on the induction side, thanks to the use of Scooter &

Service's own downdraught reed block for large frame Vespa motors, and a 35mm Mikuni carb. Wolle designed this reed block himself to put the reeds much closer to the pulses that open them, and to give the gas a much straighter run into the engine. You can see by the dyno graph that it obviously works, because 30.2hp at the rear wheel of a Vespa is pretty impressive. Despite all this, the gearing has been kept quite low for a modest but believable top speed of 135kmph (84mph) and a cruising speed of around 75mph.

The chassis isn't standard either. It has been cut down to accept the large motor, but then stiffened with a central crossbar between the dropped headset and race seat. The rear suspension is by Bitubo, while the Vespa front end has been totally replaced with a modified Malossi race fork originally destined for a Piaggio NRG. This front end takes a 120/70-10 tyre and uses an oversized 220mm disc brake. As if you need to uprate the tiny 50 Special front drum for a 30hp engine!

What I particularly admired was the subtle sheet metalwork to the legshields in order to leave a bit more clearance for the adjustable tops of the telescopic forks. Thanks to this it can now turn in less than the width of a runway.

Ordinarily I'm as keen as a fresh Stanley blade to have a go on a mental tuned scooter. In this instance – when one of the workers from the shop explained that it is so light and powerful as to be virtually unrideable in the dry, never mind two inches of snow – I decided it probably wasn't worth asking. Maybe next time... ■

Sticky

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Modified legshields allow for movement of the telescopic fork top.



The Scooter & Service downdraught reedvalve conversion.