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YAMAHA SRX 250

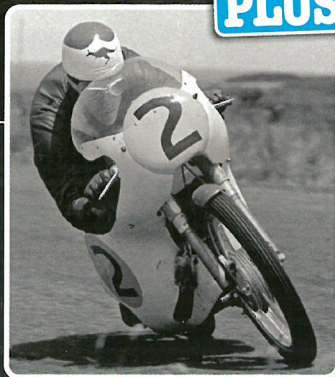
'Eighties good looking



PLUS

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MOTOBI

MOTOBI

or not to be

'To be or not to be' is a soliloquy of Shakespeare's Hamlet and is essentially all about life and death: it means "To live or to die". In the case of Bavarian Motobi collector/racer Sepp Neumeier, it is without a doubt to live, and with as many fine Motobi motorcycles in various iterations in his collection, as time and money allowed him over the years.

Story Uli Cloesen **Photos** Cloesen, Sepp Neumeier archive

Sepp Neumeier was born in the 1950s and his heydays were from the age of 18-25, when he regularly rode to the Salzburgring in Austria on weekends with his mates. All of them had several idols to look up to in their days. Sepp: "We didn't just adore one rider, like it is nowadays, when people adore Marquez, because Marquez wins everything". It was the time of Giacomo Agostini or Bill Ivy, who was apparently always funny and in a good mood and having given willingly autographs, something they much liked. Such former riders are now dying out more and more. Sepp: "Geoff Duke used to hold his cigarettes in a certain way and my mates asked me why do you smoke so stupid and I said that's how Geoff Duke smoked them. I smoked my first cigarette just like he did, despite my friends' incomprehension".

One of Sepp's favourite riders was Australian Jack Findlay. At that time he and his mates could recognise riders by their helmets. Mike Hailwood's helmet had a particular finish, Hugh Anderson from New Zealand had the Kiwi bird painted on it and Findlay had the kangaroo on his helmet, all of which fascinated them. Sepp: "You drove home after a race and immediately cut out a kangaroo out of foil and put it on your own helmet". One of Sepp's race meeting recollections were, that some of these riders had their girlfriends with them, to help out during races, where it was all still primitive in these days, with overnight stays in tents or small caravans, not like today's circus at Moto GP. Some riders were poor dogs, who didn't earn anything. It was true hardship. ➤

RIGHT Sepp racing the Zanzani Motobi 250.
BELOW LEFT The 1970s Zanzani Motobi 250 could be seen as the lightweight version of a Norton Manx in its day. You could rev it reliably up to 11,000rpm.

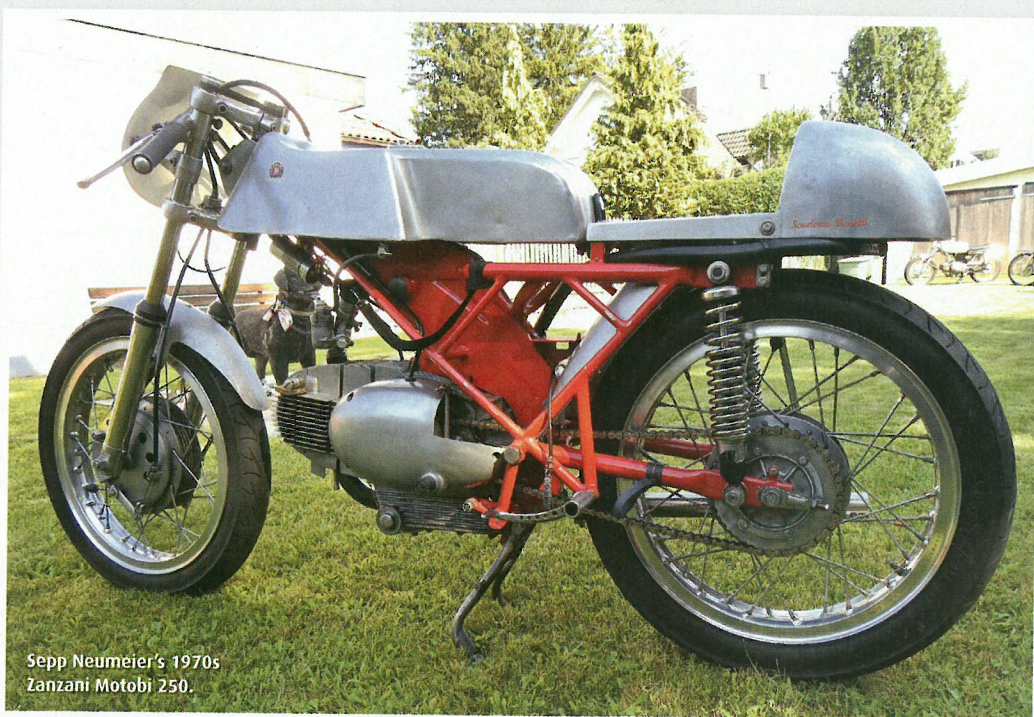




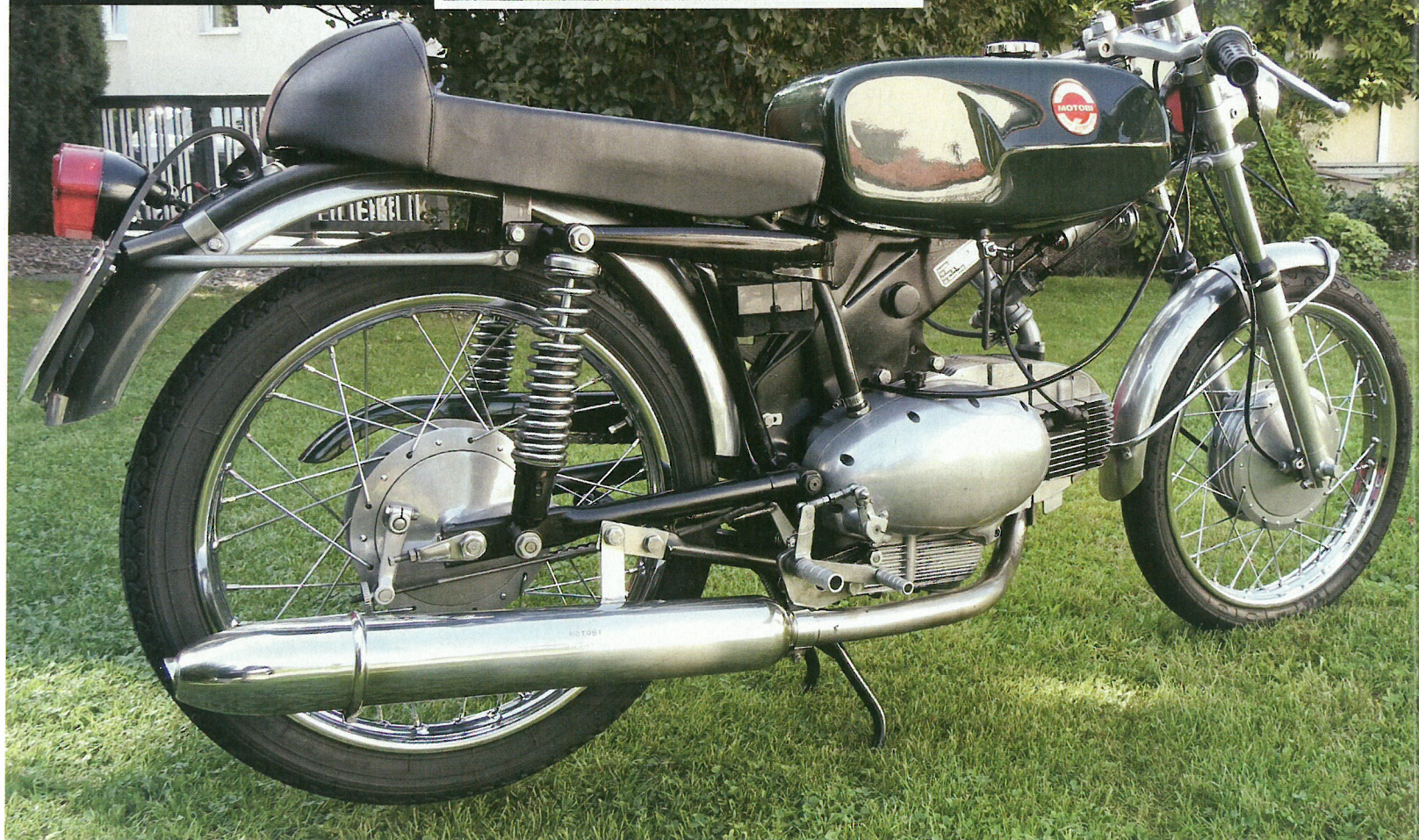
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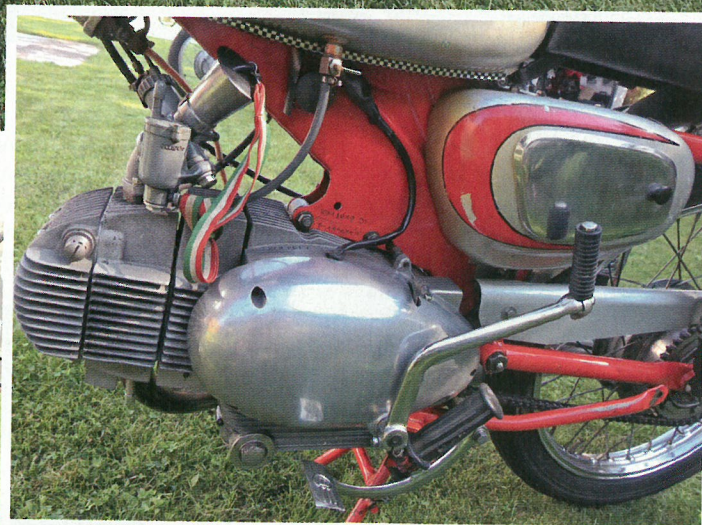
Sepp started tinkering with German moped brands like Hercules, Kreidler and Zuendapp as a young chap in the '80s and recalls older motorcyclists laughing at them, when they arrived at race events with their worn tires, but Sepp and his mates in tow nevertheless liked to listen to their riding tales. Sepp started developing an interest in Motobi around 1975. "Actually only because nobody liked them, all Italians rejected them. This in turn interested me and I thought that was nonsense, because I viewed them as running completely uncomplicated 125cc engines in their basic layout". Their 250cc pushrod engine versions only have a larger cylinder with a larger liner and larger piston. The 54 bore is enlarged for the 250cc to a 74 bore, otherwise everything is the same, even the gear ratio. As a result, the four engine studs then came relatively close to the combustion chamber, where they then lightly oiled when sealing. The Italian domestic market demanded bigger displacements, but a new design was too expensive, hence Motobi's 125cc design was simply made bigger. These 250cc machines were then sold in Italy for 2-3 years, until the customer base looked for something new again. Sepp: "Italian buyers also did this with their clothes or with always wearing nice shoes, until they were thrown away".

RIGHT & BELOW The Germans called the Prampolini-designed 125 cc Motobi engine Kraftei (power egg) due to its particular shape.

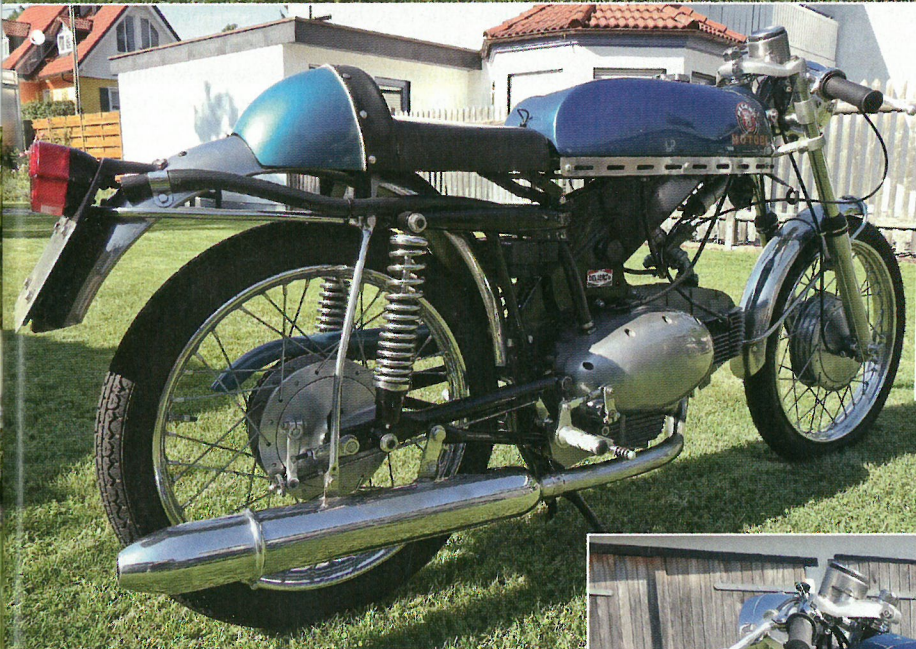


There is no argument that Italians have always had a knack for pleasing designs. The machines Sepp owns span from 125-250cc models, but there used to be also a Catria variant. Sepp: "Yes, it came in 175cc and 200cc versions, where I also have one engine each, sourced on Italian motorbike parts markets, such as on the Imola race track". Sepp used to graze their dealer mile with a self-constructed children's scooter, fitted with a side chair consisting of a wooden box. Fellow shoppers





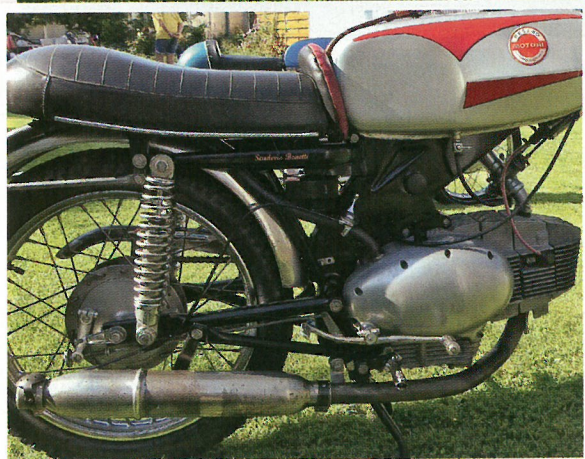
TOP & ABOVE The 250 1970 Motobi (Benelli badged) had a power output of 16.5hp, which netted it a top speed of 140km/h.
LEFT & BELOW Motobis are lightweight machines. This 1970 250 Motobi with its Silentium mufflers tops the scale at 102kgs.



often liked this construction and would have easily bought it off him, if he would have sold it on. "Some punters on the way to these sorts of markets drove to Italy and just before Imola went to a supermarket, got a shopping cart, threw in one euro and then loaded the cart into their car and drove to the market and when the parts market was over, these stolen shopping carts were littered everywhere". A second market was in the region of Reggio Emilia, between Milan and Bologna and was actually the stronghold of the motorcycle scene. The towns of Forlì and Faenza are close by and also Rimini and Cesenatico, where Sepp went as a 10-year-old child with his folks for holidays, >



LEFT & ABOVE The 125cc Motobi Sport Special with its Dellorto U822BS carburettor produced 10hp @ 9000rpm, resulting in a top speed of 120km/h.



Guzzis are not standing around as much anymore, as they used to be".

Sepp bought all his Motobis at Italian parts markets, some of it as scrap, at least pretty run down and battered. He then rebuilt them at home with a lot of love. None are like the other. They were probably all utility

motorcycles, so they have no history. There is a lot of information about the characteristics and structure of the ingenious engine in a book by Ernst Leverkus. Sepp's relatively large number of Motobis is due to the fact that there are no longer any original parts available, so Sepp has created a spare parts warehouse at home.

after Germans went back to Italy again in the '60s. Sepp's father always timed their vacation in such a way that motorcycle races were also taking place in Rimini and Cesenatico simultaneously.

Bike racing usually started by 10:00 in the morning, followed by a lunch break, then leading to roller skating events and in the afternoon, all classes of motorcycle racing kicked in. One could watch Agostini and Pasolini and their contemporaries in action. "In Reggio Emilia is also a Fiera, an exhibition area, where you had to go on foot because everything was a little closer together". Sepp states that the biggest market every year in November and April is in a huge exhibition centre in Novegro, right next to Milan's old Linate Airport. There you could find everything, so much so, that you could even meet visitors from Japan and Thailand or buyers from all over Europe to look for a fender for an old Honda or the like. The market was/is segmented, where visitors from Hungary bought a lot of moped stuff, whereby something more modern like Cagivas was popular with Polish buyers. "Over time, the year of construction of vehicles has become younger from year to year, to the point where, say, old



BELOW & INSET The silhouette of the 16 litre Zanzani Motobi's fuel tank cries out racing, with its streamlined form, nicely complementing the shape of the horizontal "power egg" single cylinder engine.



Motobis were also used in racing. In 1957, Primo Zanzani took over the Motobi race shop, tuning engines, fitting close ratio gearboxes and strengthening the chassis and swingarm among other improvements. When Giovanni Benelli's Motobi firm amalgamated with Benelli again in 1962, some models were sold under both names, according to demand. Zanzani >

MOTOBI



left Motobi when the race shop closed in 1970, but continued to work on Motobi racers in his own shop in Pesaro.

When they drove to such markets with a Citroen 2CV in the '70s, they didn't know that something like this could be worth a lot of money in the future. At that time they were totally floored by everything that was there, a time when they were mainly interested in Guzzis, which weren't available like this in Germany. Sepp also took a lot of photos back then and when he looks at these Guzzi pictures 30 years on and sees what was lurking in the background of those Guzzi images, "Oh my god, bikes from Moto Parilla, Mondial and so on". On the other hand he points out as a collector, that you have to move about what you have collected, because damage caused by standing is worse than damage caused by riding, where seals and rubber hoses on bikes corrode over time.

Sepp and his partner Erika are also regular competitors in classic race events. Alongside his Motobis, Sepp also campaigns a Rudge Ulster race bike. He

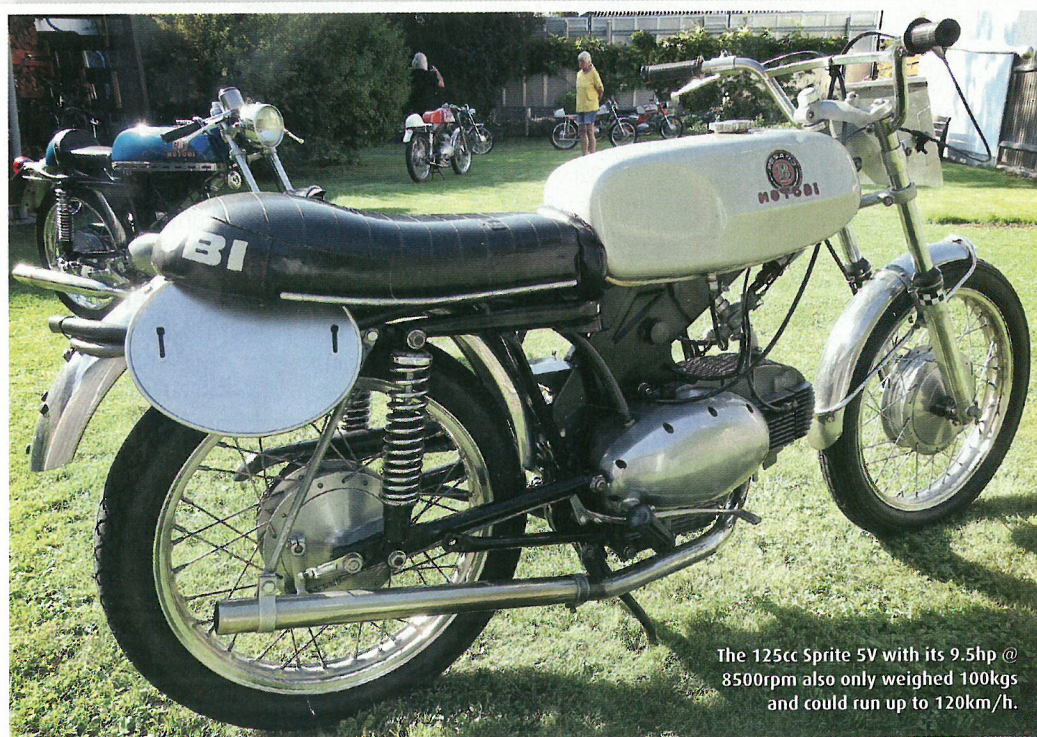
RIGHT Erika with the 125cc Sprite 5V.



recalled the Bavarian Kampenwandhistoric meeting in 2018 in Aschau in the Chiemgau region, a municipality and a village in the district of Rosenheim in Germany. Sepp shook hands with former great Dieter Braun at the award ceremony, when Dieter reminisced how racing was like at the Sachsenring in his days, with apparently 1 million spectators looking on, something nowadays unimaginable.

Sepp and Erika race their bikes in Bavaria, Italy, Nals in South Tyrol, then every two years the mountain race in Aschau, the German Friedrichshafen circuit near Lake Constance, the St Wendel circuit, Auerberg Klassik or the Jochpass Memorial in Bad Hindelang. They also raced at the Großraming Grand Prix in the Austrian Styria and the Goesern Classic. Lastly, they also campaign their bikes every two years in Ferleiten at the foot of the Großglockner in the County of Salzburg, Austria. Some bikes of his Motobi collection display the name Team Bonatti on them. Sepp: "This relates to Scuderia Bonetti, a Guzzi sidecar team from the Austrian Vorarlberg region".

Sepp's partner Erika Stadler started riding motorbikes from the age of 50. Erika got her driver's license before 1980, which subsequently allows her to ride a 125cc bike. When Sepp first met her and drove with her in the car, he told her very quickly to drive a little slower, since she drove like an executioner. "I thought if she rides a motorbike like she drives a car, it wouldn't go well. But it turned out good (smiling)". The couple not only ride on race tracks, but also on public roads Sepp: "We only prefer small country roads and of course we also have the foothills of the Alps on our doorstep, but we ride as little as possible on federal roads". They have two little Suzuki 250s, which were very cheap to buy, yet seem very reliable. "You can take them anywhere and if they ever break down, you literally could just toss them down a hill without losing any money. But so far, nothing has gone wrong with them". ■



The 125cc Sprite 5V with its 9.5hp @ 8500rpm also only weighed 100kgs and could run up to 120km/h.