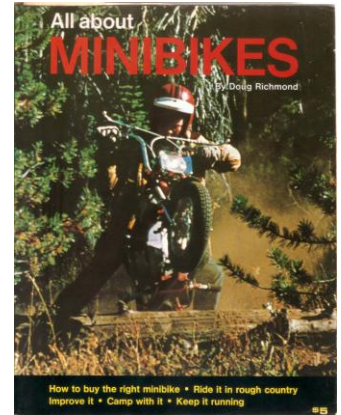


The first book I ever read on mini bikes back in 1973. I got it at the Library. I bought the kids a mini bike for Christmas several years ago, [Sarah loved riding](#) and I got back into mini bikes. Hence, the name of our FaceBook page and Website... "All About Mini Bikes" thought you might get the connection. Thanks for your patronage in our hobby and feel free to write us anytime at Przyojski@Yahoo.Com

Your Mini Bike Friends, Dan & Sarah

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**sometimes,
good things
come in
little packages**



Smallest mini-bike that MBG has ever tested - that's Floyd Clymer's Bambino. A mere 42½-inches in overall length, the Bambino is no novelty, cut-price, half-pint machine with nothing going for it but its tiny size. It is an engineered jewel in the tradition of a dime-thin Swiss watch. It is a complete motorcycle that has been left out in the rain and shrunk. It is complete to the last detail (except for lighting) - just a full-blown motorcycle that has been treated to a dose of "shrink juice" so that it diminished to just about half its proper size.

Of course, "proper size" is a relative thing - and the riders of the Bambino have also taken a dose of shrink juice - or, rather, they haven't yet had their full dose of stretch juice. This diminutive little mini-cycle is intended for the 5 to 8 age group and it appears eminently suitable for any youngsters of this age, and a little bit above and below, whose dad has a spare 266 smackeroots. It might be a good investment, at that, because no child of this age is going to want anything else to play with - and just think of all the five buck plastic throwaway, breakaway, want-something-else-another-day, toys that will save.

On the other hand, no dad is going to want his just-out-of-the-diaper-stage youngster roaring around the place on a sudden-engined mini-motorcycle - so the 50 cc mill on the Bambino has also been given a dose of shrink juice. Outwardly, the Bambino's engine looks just like any other 50 cc two-stroke (like any other Morini, at least) but without the gearbox. And that is what it is, a 50 cc Morini detuned to produce a modest 2 hp. The detuning is achieved by installing a Dell Orto carb with a more restricted throat than the standard model and by plugging up the breather holes on the air cleaner so that the mixture is running rich at all times. This has the engine four-cycling, that is, firing on every other stroke instead of every stroke, as a normally operating two-cycle will do.

The net result of this de-tuning is that the engine is a very tame and, therefore, very safe for the group that will be using the Bambino. The clutch an automatic, two-shoe, centrifugal of the type familiar to every mini-biker and with the engine detuned this way, there is no possibility of unwanted wheelies, no discernable snatch, and with engagement so smooth that it is difficult to detect - except by the movement of the machine. Of course, with the engine four-cycling most of the time, there is a strong possibility of spark plug fouling. However, we ran the Bambino most of the day and the plug still looked fairly clean when we pulled it. No explanation - just magic.

Top speed of the Bambino with an 11-year-old mounted (we couldn't find

an eight-year-old with enough experience to test the machine) was around 12 to 15 mph - and it arrived there very, very slowly. Our 11-year-old test rider probably weighs a few pounds more than the expected market age-group for this machine but it is our guess that the top speed will be about the same - just that a younger (and lighter) rider will get there a little more quickly.

The controls of the Bambino are as simple as the standard mini-bike with the exception of the kick-start (which looks like becoming more popular on regular mini-bikes). There are no gear shifts to be made as the automatic centrifugal clutch drives an internal jackshaft arrangement with a primary reduction gear. As the handbook on the engine is in the original, untranslated, Italian, we have no way of telling what the overall gear ratio is, however, the final drive (through a lovely No. 40 roller chain) is about 3 to 1. We assume the primary reduction gear is about 2 to 1 - giving an overall 6 to 1 ratio. (If Floyd Clymer continues to dream up these interesting machines for the mini-bike field, we are going to have to learn to read Italian - handbooks lose so much in the translation, you know. Like "Il Controllo Del Livello", which we assume is the lively accelerator, or "Lo Scarico Dell'Olio", which probably means, Lo, the scared oil.)

But we digress. Back to the Bambino. Whatever the overall gear ratio, it is far from lively and far from producing record-breaking speeds - which is how it was designed.

In all other respects, the Bambino looks and handles just like a motorcycle. It has telescopic front forks that don't need to be dropped from a cliff before they will telescope. The upper forks are constructed from 1-3/16-inch tubing and the lower forks from 1-inch tubing - so they are, actually, heftier than the normal mini-bike forks. At the rear are swinging arms cushioned by real, honest-to-God, 9-inch shock absorbers with external springs. These shocks provide, perhaps, the only deviation from the design premise - they are obviously (at least, fairly obviously) stock, off-the-shelf, items and seem to be a little too stiff for a 60-pound youngster to compress very much. Nevertheless, they help in the suspension department and certainly contribute to the overall motorcycle appearance.

Another big step forward in this appearance area are the 8-inch spoked wheels with the front and rear brakes (that's right, front *and* rear) contained in the hubs. Of course, the length and frequency of the spokes are less than on a motorcycle but, still, the feeling is there. The 2-inch chromed rims are mounted by 13-inch diameter Pirelli universal tread tires with the normal rounded profile of motorcycle tires.



Above the front forks are miniature motocross handlebars with dinky little hand grips at both ends. The brake levers mounted on the handlebars are a joy to behold - real motorcycle design with knurled cable tension adjusters and knobbed ends on the levers. The mounts are welded to the handlebars so that they cannot get out of wack - neither can they be adjusted for position. The twist-grip accelerator reflects the quality of the brake levers and follows the same motorcycle design. The steering head is a fat son-of-a-gun with ball bearings top and bottom and a triangulated bracket welded between the head and the frame, providing a lock-to-lock stop for the steering.

There really isn't too much frame to the Bambino but what there is, is a single backbone member with a near 90-degree angle behind the gas tank providing the base for the engine mount. To the rear is hung a box section that provides the upper anchor point for the rear shock absorbers and a place to put the small, therefore in proportion, seat - a mere 10½-inches long by five inches wide in naugahyde covered foam rubber.

The engine is mounted forward from a box section welded to the down member of the frame. Additional support is given by a bracket hung from the bottom of the nicely shaped metal gas



TOO BIG - Our 11-year-old test rider appears too big for the Bambino, which is intended for 5 to 8-year-olds. In line with the intended age group, the machine has optional training wheels - a nice touch.



tank. On the right hand side of the engine is a beautiful, fancy, upswept muffler fully protected by a sturdy heat shield. The tiny nozzle of the expansion chamber exits just behind the rear shock absorber. Attached to the engine mount bracket are two easy-operating folding footpegs and a strong kickstand. Just under the seat, on the left hand side, is an ignition kill button. The kick start pedal, on the right side, provides us with our only serious complaint - the foot section does not fold back out of the way when the machine is being ridden.

Finish on the Bambino is excellent and the color scheme is bound to appeal to every youngster (and, for that matter, oldsters as well). The frame, chain guard, seat and miscellaneous parts are black enameled, the gas tank and pressed steel fenders are in brilliant yellow, set off by chromed sections such as the wheel rims, handlebars, muffler and so on. The only part not conforming to this color scheme is the white number panel (to make the rider really feel like a hot shoe) mounted in front of the steering crown.

Although our 11-year-old test rider was a little cramped on the Bambino it was still not an impossible situation. It would have been impossible, however,

for our regular test rider - and no fair analysis of the machine could have been given under these circumstances. So we compromised. The youngster testing the machine, being the publisher's son, has had plenty of opportunity to ride various mini-bikes and can handle himself very well in just about any riding situation. So, within the limits of size (in fairness to the designers, it should be pointed out that we were unable to lay our hands on a younger rider with sufficient experience), we were able to wring out the Bambino pretty well. First of all, it is no hot performer and was never intended to be such. It starts very easily although we imagine that the younger riders will have to give it everything they've got - unless dad gets it going for them. The carburetor has an automatic choke device that releases itself, after being manually choked, once the throttle is turned full on. Very nice as it prevents the youngster from having to grope around the engine once he is under way. However, with the engine being permanently choked by reason of the restricted air intake, we question the necessity of the choke, at all - although we did use it.

Once started and warmed up, riding the Bambino is simply a matter of twisting the throttle when the rider wants to move and pulling on the brakes (preferably the rear one first) when he wants to stop. The brakes work just fine, no surprises, no lock-up - just easy, progressive, reduction of velocity. On the other hand, velocity is hard to come by. The Bambino, at first, doesn't seem to want to wake up but gradually the centrifugal clutch comes in with no juddering and no sound - and it is rolling steadily along. When everything is nicely warmed up, it is a little more lively but still no ball of fire. Grades should be gentle and well packed - rough ground is too much for the machine to take in the engine department but the suspension seems well suited to the bumps.

Handling is just about perfect and, our test rider reported, a real thrill in the turns. He was laying the machine well over with the throttle cracked wide open (doing about 13 mph) and there was no indication of the rear end breaking loose nor the steering becoming squirrely. And it is handling ability that determines whether or not a machine is safe.

Altogether, the Bambino more than lives up to its appearance and proved to be ideally suited to the age group for which it was designed. It is exceptionally strong, excitingly finished, and its performance is such that it is no threat to life and limb. An indulgent parent who wanted to make his child a once-in-a-lifetime gift (and at the same time provide him with an educational hobby) could do much worse than the Bambino. It's a little engineering jewel - and as such it is diamond tough.

SPECIFICATIONS



Importer:	Floyd Clymer Motorcycle Division, 222 North Virgil Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90004
Model:	Bambino
Price:	\$266.00
Engine:	50 cc Morini two-stroke (S5.K), 2 hp
Transmission:	Auto. centrifugal clutch, primary reduction, direct drive
Gear Ratio:	Final drive ratio 3 to 1 (primary not known)
Tires:	13-inch diameter, 2-inch universal tread Pirelli
Wheels:	8-inch spoked, chrome rims
Suspension:	Telescopic front; swinging arm, shock absorber, rear
Brakes:	Front and rear internal expansion, hub mounted.
Weight:	57 lbs.
Overall length:	42½-inches
Wheelbase:	29½-inches
Heights:	Handlebars, 26-inches; seat, 18½-inches
Ground Clearance:	4-inches
Miscellaneous:	Full coverage, pressed steel, fenders; full coverage chain guard; number plate; cam-type chain adjusters; folding footpegs; kickstand; ½-gallon shaped saddle-type gas tank.
Cost/Efficiency Index:	Eight and a half (a subjective evaluation on a scale of ten)



place in the 6 to 8 years old, 1 - 3 hp class as this shot shows. Dave Lamb is in the lead with class winner Bobbie Tryon pushing hard

106 entries. These entries included a large contingent from the Hi-Jackers mini-bike club of Concord, California, nearly 500 miles from Saddleback, and a lot of guys (should we dare to call them a factory team?) wearing Bonanza colors from almost as far. We did see one Volkswagen with Missouri license plates supporting some Mavericks, but we don't know if they came for the Championships or whether they moved to California permanently to be near Saddleback.

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