



Harley Davidson 350cc Peashooter AA (1927)

The lightweight powerhouse for off-road racing

Model	Years	Engine	Suspension	Power (bhp)	Notable Features
Model AA	1926 to 1934	350cc	Girder-type forks (front) with a rigid frame (with no rear suspension)	Over 70 mph	Single-cylinder engine with overhead valves, 3 speed gearbox, lightweight frame and single exhaust pipe.

The Harley Davidson 350cc "Peashooter" was introduced in 1926 as a response to the growing popularity of simpler, smaller motorcycles, particularly for racing and exports. The "Peashooter" nickname comes from the distinctive "pop-pop" exhaust note produced by its high-performance single-cylinder engine.

Harley Davidson was founded in 1903 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, by William S. Harley and the Davidson brothers: Arthur, Walter and William A. Davidson. By 1920, Harley Davidson was the world's largest motorcycle manufacturer.

The 1927 Peashooter AA models featured a single-cylinder engine with overhead valves (OHV) built on a lightweight chassis with a magneto ignition, making the bike more powerful and favoured for competition. Only 321 model AA's were produced.

Racing history

The Peashooter was especially suited to dirt and board track racing, where it became dominant due to its power-to-weight ratio and reliability.

The bike was stripped down to essentials for racing—often lacking brakes and lights, with drop handlebars and minimal bodywork. It was popular in the United States, England, Australia, and New Zealand and was a favourite for speedway and early scrambles (motocross).

In Australia, many speedway riders on 350cc Peashooters defeated riders on 500cc machines—a testament to the bike's competitiveness and performance, taking their Peashooters to race in Britain.

In the late 1930s, Les Clinton was the outstanding rider to emerge in the Harley Scramble held at the Rope Works in Mosman Park, Western Australia. Clinton won his first Harley Scramble in 1939 at age 17, successfully defending his title in 1940. Then after World War II, and a five-year break, he won two more events in 1946 and 1948 for a record fourth time – amazingly all on the same 1000cc Harley Davidson machine.

Four of the five Clinton brothers (Wally, Fred, Les and Roy) competed in the Harley Scramble on Harley Davidson motorcycles in the 1930s and 1940s, with Harley's winning 10 out of the first 16 events - mostly on 1,000cc and 1,200cc engines. In 1940, the youngest brother Roy for the first time contested the Harley Scramble on the 350cc Peashooter on display.

Restoration

In earlier times, bikes had nick names sign-written on their petrol tanks, similar to fighter planes during World War II. Roy Clinton's 1927 350cc Peashooter was nicknamed "Calypso Joe", a bike he owned for over 50 years.

In 1985, Alan Auburn from Perth purchased the Peashooter from Roy, who served in World War II and, on return, worked as a motorcycle salesman with Mortlock Brothers in the City for 33 years.

After buying the Peashooter, Alan overhauled it mechanically, while preserving its original, as-raced appearance. The bike is a regular exhibit at the Motor Museum of Western Australia at Whiteman Park.

Photos: [Left to right] In 1940 Roy Clinton contested the Harley Scramble on this 1927 Harley Scramble Peashooter, which he called "Calypso Joe"; Roy racing the bike at the Rope Works circuit in Mosman Park; and Alan Auburn purchased the Peashooter from Roy in 1985.

