



Big British Bikes of the 50s and 60s: Thunder on the Rocker Road

Steve Wilson

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In the 1950s and '60s the British motorcycle industry was at its postwar peak, with its large-capacity high-performance bikes in strong demand all over the world. AJS/Matchless, BSA, Norton, Royal Enfield and Triumph were all making 100mph-plus big twins, with the king of them all, at least into the 1950s, being the mighty 1000cc Vincents, while among the ton-up singles were the BSA Gold Star and the Velocette Venom and Thruxton. In this book veteran motorcycle writer Steve Wilson reviews the top-of-the-line bikes of all these manufacturers, first giving an introduction to the motorcycling scene in the period, with a particular look at the emergence of the Rockers, the black-leather too-fast-to-live-too-young-to-die bikers who developed a culture all their own, inspired indirectly by Marlon Brando behaving badly on his Triumph Thunderbird in the banned-in-Britain 1953 movie *The Wild One*. Then the motorcycle makers are dealt with alphabetically, with their big bikes described in detail and their performance, handling, strengths and weaknesses discussed. In addition to a wide selection of archive photographs, specially commissioned colour photography features examples of the outstanding bikes of the period: AMC/Matchless CSR 650 twins and their Norton Atlas-engined 'Hybrid' siblings, BSA A7SS 500, Gold Star singles, AIO Super Rocket and Rocket Gold Star 650 twins, Norton SS 500/600/650 twins, Velocette Venom and Thruxton 500, Royal Enfield Constellation 700 twin, Triumph pre-unit 500 and 650 twins and unit Bonneville 650, and finally the Vincent 1000 vee-twin.

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