

# Gulf Porsche Vespa

Inspiration for this project came from Steve McQueen's well known movie *Le Mans*. More specifically from the Gulf Porsche 917 which is one of the most iconic sports cars in its own right and the model which gave Porsche their first win at Le Mans back in 1970. The car belonged to an Austrian Team.



**T**hirty-eight years later, another Austrian team comprising of Christoph Wimmer and Bernhard Gander started work on a custom Vespa with said theme. Perhaps most unusually they decided to keep the original 8in wheels of the Vespa VBA but use a modern PX engine which they tuned, naturally. They fitted a Pinasco 177 top end on the heavily ported casings. Being a nicasil plated alloy barrel it provides exceptional cooling capacity and potential for further tweaking. One of their mates, Wolfgang, provided them with a one-off balanced crankshaft. All cylinder ports were then enlarged and the set-up was rounded off with a Malossi reed valve, an OKO carb and a PM EVO exhaust. A long Polini primary drive also had to be installed to compensate for the small wheels. True it is not the fastest set-up in the world but if you take into account the small wheels and the fact that the bike is still on the original brake drums, one is tempted to classify them as mad! On the other hand however it is quite similar to the role model; the Porsche 917 was also known to be faster than its tyres and brakes could handle.

Apart from the engine they managed to install quite a few gimmicks and details that make this design so successful. The lights have been converted to modern LEDs, there is a nice air scoop in the glovebox panel and the engine side

panels opens hydraulically via a rear hinge. My favourite gimmick is however the opening mechanism of the racing seat, which is disguised as the emergency engine kill switch that is mandatory on every race car.

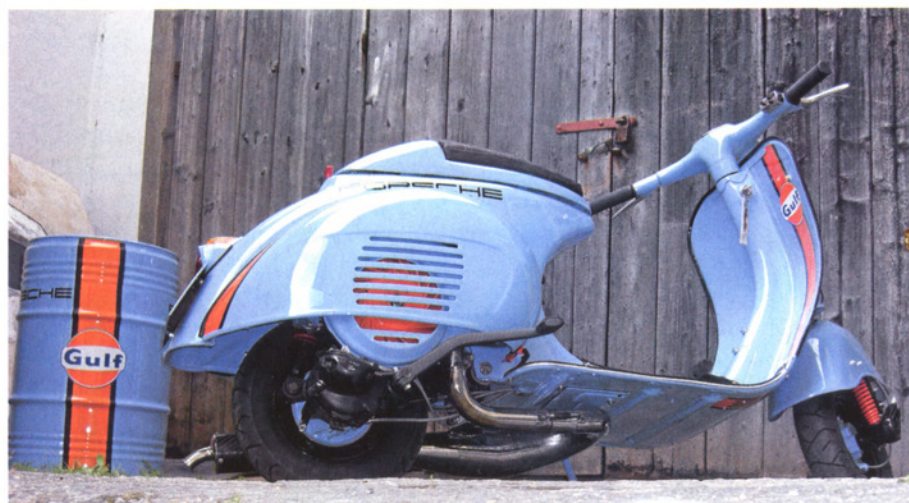
The hardest part of the project however wasn't building it but overcoming the problem that Christoph and Bernhard live more than 150 miles apart from each other. It is therefore quite astonishing that they managed to pull this off in just six months from start to finish. Christoph tells me that Skype did help quite a lot in overcoming the distance problem. The only thing left to do is add a hydraulic front disc brake conversion that works with the original wheel. At this point some people might ask themselves why not just put the bike on 10in wheels from the start. It certainly would have saved a lot of trouble like converting the PX engine to accept the 8in brake drums or developing a one-off disc brake. But then, this has been done over and over before and while the wheels might not be practical they do give the scooter its distinct low, sports car like look.

It is true that we have seen a few Gulf and Porsche inspired scooters over the years but if it is done well – and this one is – it is difficult to grow tired of this classic theme. **SC**

**Words:** Poppa  
**Pics:** Pola







## SCOOTER DETAILS

**Name of scooter:** Gulf Porsche 917 VBA

**Model:** Vespa VBA 150

**Time to build:** 6 months, by Bernhard Gander and myself. While Bernhard did most of the paintwork, I was responsible for the engine tasks and part of the paint job.

**Frame modifications:** The engine side panel pivots via a rear hinge and is equipped with a hydraulic lifter. The seat mechanism opens to rear with a self-made opening mechanism that holds it open when lifted up. Recessed air scoop in the left side panel. All filling was carried out using metal only. Custom built sidestand (all modifications by Bernhard Gander).

**Specialised parts:** The whole lighting was changed to modern LED technology.

**Engine:** Ported PX 125 engine with a Pinasco 177, Malossi reed-valve, 28/30 OKO carburettor, bespoke balanced crankshaft by Wolfgang, cylinder ports have been enlarged, long Polini primary gear, chrome plated PM Evo exhaust.

**Other details:** It still uses 8in wheels!

**Top speed:** Plenty enough for 8in wheels!

**Paintwork:** By Bernhard and myself.

**Overall cost:** About 2500 to 3000€, including purchase of the scooter.

**Hardest part of the project:** The distance between Bernhard and me (about 250km), all planning had to be done by Skype conference. Also the many things that did not fit and had to be persuaded to...

**Anything to add:** A hydraulic 8in front disc brake conversion.

**Favourite dealer:** Stoffi's Garage; a technical authority, happy to provide detailed information and the shop is conveniently just around the corner. Scooter Centre Cologne; has an enormous selection of parts and they develop many new parts and gadgets.

**Thanks:** A special thanks to Wolfgang (68iger), Markus (Pola), Susanne (Jury79) and Roberto (Skifreerider and everybody who I did not mention in particular.

## OWNER DETAILS

**Name:** Christoph Wimmer

**Age:** 33

**Town:** Braunau am Inn, Austria

**First interest in scooters:** Around 1986, at the age of 10, when my brother was hanging around with his scooter friends.

**First scooter:** At 15 I bought my first scooter, a Vespa 50S, and began to rebuild it. I still own it today.

**Favourite model:** 60s and 70s Vespas, in particular the Rally and Super Sport models.

**Favourite rally:** Prinzersdorf No.3, despite the bad weather there was a really good mood, and they had the hottest chilli I have ever eaten!

**Likes/dislikes about rallies:** I like chatting with other petrol heads about our pet theme for hours, meeting like-minded people and good friends. However I'm not a great fan of Ska and Soul music.

**The most useless part ever bought for one of your scooters:** Sava whitewall tyres.

**What part would you most like to see developed for scooters:** A Falc kit for the 200 engine.