

Italian flair made in Neckarsulm: the NSU Lambretta

- The scooter was built and constantly reinvented between 1950 and 1956
- The NSU Lambretta became an in-house development in 1956, the NSU Prima
- 150 years of the traditional brand NSU:
Series with classics and one-of-a-kinds from NSU's model history – Episode 5

Neckarsulm, July 26, 2023 – The Lambretta was a famous 1950s scooter with a melodic name and la dolce vita flair. It was not an NSU invention, but a licensed production based on the design of Italian manufacturer Innocenti, which was selling licenses to various manufacturers in different countries at the time. How NSU brought the Lambretta to the streets of Germany in 1950 is the subject of this fifth episode in Audi Tradition's series on NSU's model history.

In the year 1950, Neckarsulm experienced a wave of layoffs when the plant ceased repairing vehicles for the U.S. Army stationed in Germany during the middle of that year. NSU management was desperately looking for ways to fully utilize the plant's capacity – and fortunately, a solution was soon found: Motorized scooters were trending in Germany then, a trend that NSU put its chips on. The Neckarsulm-based company signed a licensing agreement with Innocenti and began building the NSU Lambretta in 1950. The scooter's name referenced its origins; the Italian licensor's headquarters were located in the Milan suburb of Lambrate.

During the years the Lambretta was built, NSU launched two variants: Up to 1954, a scooter with 123cc of displacement and a top speed of 70 km/h (44 mph); then, from 1954, the 150cc version with a top speed of 81 km/h (50 mph). The smaller version had a power output of 4.5 PS, while the more powerful Lambretta reached 6.2 PS. Both variants ran on a single-cylinder two-stroke engine. Between 1950 and 1956, around 117,000 units of both models were built. The scooters came in four colors: lime green, beige, medium gray, and light gray. When the license agreement with Innocenti expired as planned in 1956, NSU decided to keep building scooters – now as an in-house development that could also be sold in other markets. Thus, the Lambretta became the NSU Prima, which was available in four variants. By the time scooter production in Neckarsulm came to an end in 1964, a total of 160,000 Prima scooters had been built. That marked the end of scooter production in Neckarsulm.

Each month until December, Audi Tradition is presenting a different NSU model, including brand classics on both two and four wheels, prototypes, and one-of-a-kind models.

Audi Tradition Communications

Daniela Henger

Spokesperson Audi Tradition

Tel.: +49 841 89-44491

E-mail: daniela.henger@audi.de

www.audi-mediacyenter.com



The Audi logo consisting of four rings symbolizes the Audi, DKW, Horch, and Wanderer brands, which were merged into Auto Union in 1932. Auto Union and NSU merged in 1969 and played a major role in shaping the development of the automobile. Finally, in 1985, Audi NSU Auto Union AG became AUDI AG. Since 1998, Audi Tradition/Auto Union GmbH, together with NSU GmbH, has been maintaining and presenting Audi's extensive and wide-ranging history. The Audi museum mobile at the Audi Forum Ingolstadt is open Monday to Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays. The August Horch Museum Zwickau is open Tuesday through Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. AUDI AG and the city of Zwickau each hold a 50 percent stake in August Horch Museum Zwickau gGmbH. www.audi.de/tradition

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