

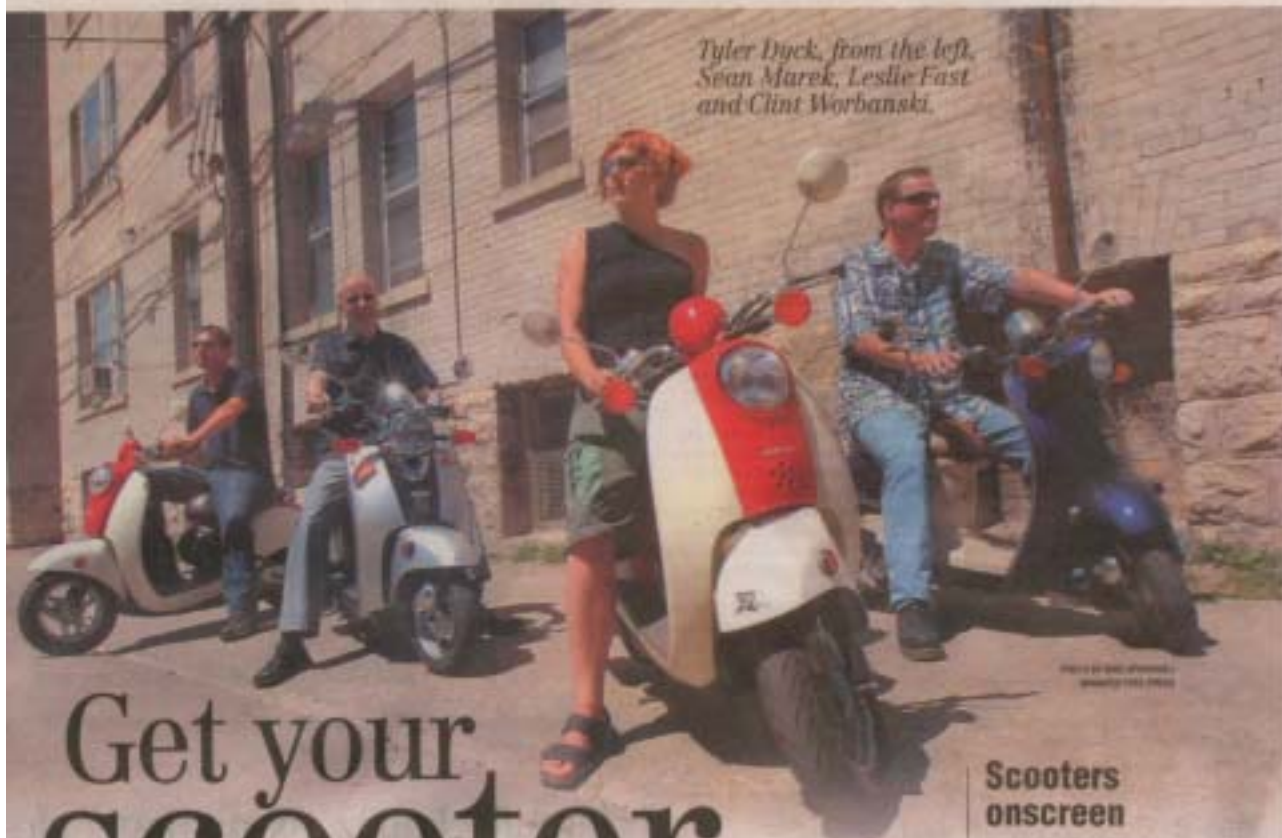
# LIFE

CROSSWORD C5

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Tyler Dyck, from the left, Sean Marek, Leslie Fast and Clint Worbanski.

## Get your scooter runnin

Head out on the city streets with a mod machine

By Donna Lee

THEY look as though they came straight out of a chic Italian movie from the '60s. But at less than \$3,000 apiece, even penny-pinching Winnipeggers can hop on their very own Vespa-style scooters.

"It's a fun toy," says Sean Marek, one of a growing number of young, hip professionals taking to the streets in retro-style scooters.

A chartered accountant by day, Marek, 30, drives his silver Yamaha Vino more for leisure than anything else, although he does ride it to work.

"I have a car, it's not my main mode of transportation," he explains. "It's just for getting here and there and having some fun on it."

The scooter fad doesn't appear to be going away anytime soon.

"Even three years ago, I didn't see any. Now I see them everywhere, and there seems to be more and more of them," says Clint Worbanski, 33, a draftsman who relies on his scooter nearly year-round.

Both Marek and Worbanski bought their scooters after seeing a mutual friend with one several years ago. So did Tyler Dyck, 28, and Leslie Fast, 19.

Their incentive? The price. "Before I got mine, I'd say I gave them very little attention," says Dyck, a recent interior

design graduate. "But when I started to look for an economical source of transportation, that's when it really appealed to me."

"I've also been into the geek chic," adds Fast, a university student. "But I didn't know if people actually drove them, especially in Winnipeg. Winnipeg's pretty much a car city."

Still, even in Winnipeg, Shakespeare in the Ruins' recent urban rendition of Romeo and Juliet featured Juliet's nurse zooming into a scene on a scooter.

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Originating in Italy, Vespas are becoming popular again in North America, thanks to appearances in recent films and music videos.

Vespa and Lambretta scooters were made popular by the original "mod generation" in Britain in the '60s. Since then, they have come back in mod revivals in the '70s and '80s, as well as among Britpop fans.

Brand-name Vespas have not been sold new in Canada since 1994. Because they are imported, new Vespas cost at least \$5,000 Cdn plus shipping.

In Winnipeg, two dealerships — Wildwood Motorsports on Pembina Highway and Birchwood Motorsports on Regent Avenue — sell the next best thing: Brand-new Yamaha and Honda scooters modified after classic Vespas, but which sell for between \$2,300 and \$2,600.

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### Scooters onscreen

Caught the scooter bug? Check out these scooter-prominent flicks:

**American Graffiti (1973):** In the early scenes of this '60s-set George Lucas movie, Terry (The Road) Fields (played by Charlie Martin Smith) nearly has an accident riding a scooter at Mel's Drive-in.

**Roman Holiday (1953):** Many moviegoers instantly recognize the scene in this Oscar-winning classic in which stars Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck ride around Rome on a scooter.

**Quadrophenia (1979):** Also set in the '60s, the Brian Eno-pitched a mod of motorcyclists with a clique of mods on Vespas and Lambrettas (another popular brand of scooters). Based on an album by The Who.

**Octopussy (1983):** Roger Moore races in a Vespa car in this scooter-heavy James Bond flick.

**Absolute Beginners (1986):** Vespa and Lambretta figures prominently in this splashy musical directed by Julien Temple.

Since scooters are much more widely used in Europe and Asia, expect to find them in many Italian, French and Bollywood movies, among others. For starters, try the 1960 Federico Fellini classic *La Dolce Vita*, the 1995 Oscar-winner *Il Postino*, and the 2003 Italian release *Raspiro*.

And to round out this partial list, movies with scooter appearances in them are: **Dumb and Dumber (1994)**, **Roseanna's Grave (1997)**, **Austin Powers (1997)**, **American Pie (1999)**, **The Little Missy Movie (2003)**.

For a larger list, plug the words "vespa movies" into your favourite search engine.



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Tyler Dyck (front) and Sean Marek cruise on Corydon.

## Scooters

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"The investment is low," says Don Turner, a Yamaha salesman at Wildwood. "In six months, what you'd save on fuel versus a sports vehicle would make your payments. So in a couple of years, you've got a bike that's paid for."

All you need to ride a scooter is your Class 5 driver's license. A motorcycle license isn't required.

Two bucks can fill a scooter's gasoline tank for 120 kilometres. Three bucks if you use the fancy gas.

"I always buy the best gasoline available," Marek says. "I just filled up the other day and it was \$2.91. This summer, I filled it up twice so far and that's it."

As for insurance, an MPI spokeswoman notes that actual fees vary depending on an individual's driving record, where they live, what they drive, and whether they'll drive it for work or personal use.

But scooter drivers have reported their insurance fees range between \$70 to \$300 a year, depending on how much coverage they want.

"A guy on a Harley pulled up beside me — big biker guy," Worbanski recalls. "I asked him, 'How much do you pay for insurance?' And he said about \$600 a month.

"And I went, 'Cool. I'm paying \$200 a year.'"

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Like motorcycles, scooters are not meant to be driven in the winter, although Worbanski says he was able to drive his Vno through springtime snow.

But 140 below outside on a

scooter? I think I'll pass."

Speed hogs may be turned off by the fact that scooters can only run up to 40-50 kilometres an hour — maybe up to 70 if you tinker with the engine.

The slower speeds, coupled with the scooter's quiet engine and smaller size, make the vehicles nearly invisible in city traffic.

"They haven't been accepted by the motorists yet," Turner says. "They're treating them more like bicycles... if you're not taking enough of your lane up, they'll try to squeeze in through with their vehicle."

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Wildwood has been selling scooters for the past three or four years, but Turner says there's been a significant increase in the past two years.

"The way it's going, I imagine next year's going to be bigger yet," he says. "We sold quite a few of these in southern Manitoba. It's more than just Winnipeg."

Wildwood has sold 40 Yamaha Vinos this year alone.

Birchwood, which sells the similarly styled Honda Jazz scooter, has sold 12 this year and only has one left.

Turner says the Vno buyers he's seen are of all ages and backgrounds, from students such as Dyck to seniors eager to relive bygone Vespa cruises.

Marek has observed a trend especially among young, recently graduated professional workers.

"People in their late-20s, early-30s, who have a bit of disposable income to have some fun on a bike," he says.