
1939 Indian Other

Stafford, 17 October

Lot sold	USD 27 277 - 40 915 GBP 20 000 - 30 000 (listed)	Condition	Used
Year of manufacture	1939	Location	
Engine number	FCI 1080	Motorcycle type	Street
		Colour	Other

Description

1939 Indian 45ci Dispatch Tow Trike

Engine no. FCI 1080

- * Iconic three-wheeled commercial vehicle
- * Restored condition
- * Netherlands registered

Indian's famous Dispatch Tow trike resulted from a demand from the neighbouring Packard dealership for a collection/delivery tow vehicle for its service department. Whereas two employees had been required to collect and return a customer's vehicle (the second to drive the other car required) the Dispatch Tow was cleverly designed to enable this task to be carried out by a single mechanic, thus saving time and money. A towing yoke was attached to the axle of the trike's front fork, the forward end of which would be clamped to the car's rear bumper. Thus the mechanic would ride the Dispatch Tow to the customer's home or office and tow the trike back to the dealership using the customer's car. After being serviced, the car and trike made the journey in reverse and the mechanic would then ride the Dispatch Tow back to the workshop, the towing frame being carried vertically and parallel with the fork legs.

The Dispatch Tow's designer was Indian's Chief Engineer, Charles Franklin, who had formed part of the successful works team at the 1911 Isle of Man TT, finishing in 2nd place. Designer of the Scout and Chief models, Franklin used the 45ci (750cc) 101 Scout in creating the prototype Dispatch Tow, which was fitted with a low-compression engine and a chain-driven car-type rear axle complete with

differential, above which was mounted a box body.

Launched in 1931, the Dispatch Tow was a runaway success, with some 400 being sold in that first year. A chauffeur's uniform was available for the operator at a price of \$25. Indian advertised the Dispatch Tow as 'the only means of getting the hurry-up job... the cheapest means of getting any job.' It not only proved popular with auto dealers but was also used by businesses in need of a lightweight delivery vehicle. The fact that the box body could carry advertisements was no doubt part of its appeal: 'Advertising your progressive services all the way' as Indian put it.

Imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery, but Indian cannot have been best pleased when rivals Harley-Davidson produced a blatant copy the following year in the form of the Servi-Car.

This restored Dispatch Tow is offered with Netherlands registration papers and Automotoclub Storico Italiano certificate.

Bonhams 1793

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