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APRIL
1981

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BIKER

- The Suzuki 400s
- Bodie on biking
- British dirt thumpers
- DIY visors

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Harley's wide one

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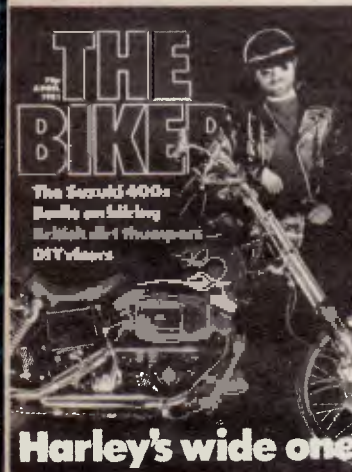
GOODYEAR EAGLES

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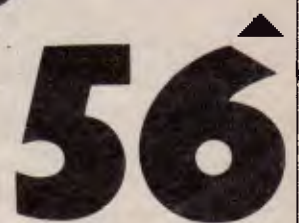


Cover: Harley-Davidson's 1340cc Wide Glide photographed by Michael Bailie. Schott jacket £85 from ABC Clothing Centre, London SW5. LA Police Dept helmet £38 from CC Cycles, 19 Royd Street, Wilsden, West Yorkshire

The cutest trike you've ever seen is Keith Baker's Suzuki GS750 powered three wheeler. It took Best Engineering at the Olympia custom show, of course



Why buy a 250 single when Suzuki will sell you a 400 for less? Thumping down the road on a GN400T



Four-stroke trials magic at the annual Talmag Trial — it gets better every year

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Lewis Collins' TV image as tough guy Bodie of The Professionals hides a keen biker. Discover what sort of heavy metal turns him on

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APRIL 1981

THE BIKER 3

AND NOW, A SHORT COMMERCIAL BREAK ABOUT SOMETHING EXCESSIVELY DULL.

Probably the last thing you want to read about right now is revising for your 'O' Levels.

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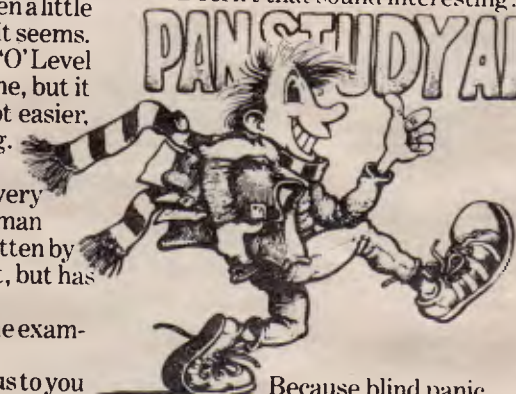
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FEEDBACK

XJ650 fan

Dear Editor

● I would like to congratulate you and your magazine on an excellent test of the Yamaha XJ650, a marvellous machine of which I am a proud owner. It was purchased from B R Trott of Totnes, Devon, in December and after a thousand miles of motorway work I am unable to find fault, bar a squeaky front brake and Japanese tyres. It's one of the few 'superbikes' that I can safely ride (due to short legs). I traded in an R90S BMW for the XJ650 and I feel sure that I shall be as pleased with it after 10,000 miles as I am now!

A note of interest is that my father owns the XJ's predecessor, the XS750 with a Squire sidecar attached, which has done several thousand trouble-free miles, which includes two or three trips with passenger to the South of France.

O G Williams
Glos

Gear for girls

Dear Biker

● In answer to Helen Constantinou of Sheldon (Problems, February) I would just like to let Helen know that I was in the same position myself. I am all of 5ft 2in myself and take a 3½-4 shoe.

You say that you cannot get a pair of motorcycle boots in size four. Well you can (Waddington's are the best bet).

I went to various shops and they told me it wasn't worth them keeping a four in stock, so I decided to look in Newport (Shropshire). The first shop I went to was not helpful and the sale representation was of a poor standard. So I went to another shop where the sales representation was first class. They had a size four in stock but the only problem I had was that the boot leg was too narrow, and I could not get them fastened (my legs aren't that fat).

The man at the shop took them to the cobbler and he put an elastic gusset in each boot and added an extra piece of leather on the back of each boot.

Now they are fantastically comfortable. As for clothing, Belstaff do a range from S-XL and leather jackets range from 32-36 chest (girls).

I don't live far from the Belstaff company and sometimes they have a sale; perhaps you could catch a train from Birmingham to Stoke?

So Helen, if they try to fob you off with some out-dated story don't listen just keep trying.

I hope I have helped.
Mandi Key
Eccleshall

Nit picker

Dear Biker

● With reference to the January issue of *The Biker*, I would like to comment on two articles.

First, about your Tour de Force. You began by saying how difficult the choice of machines was, but that you finally opted for the Goldie and Bee-Emm. Well the Goldie's alright if you like that sort of thing but lets turn our attention to that masterpiece of German engineering, the BMW R100RS, referred to in your article, along with the Gold Wing, as 'an answer to the serious touring man's prayer'. Surely if serious touring is the case then the machine to use is the BMW R100RT, with the upright touring screen on a wider fairing, which would reduce the head buffeting. The Police seem satisfied with this type of fairing and all they do is ride about all day.

Still, enough said on that. My next grumble is that the Biker Buys item about the paint sprayer you referred to *Iron Horse* as being a Toyota van, but underneath is a picture of a superbly painted Ford Escort van. Who is the imposter?

Oh, by the way, I think your mag is the best buy on the shelf and is always interesting, so I forgive you for the tiny mistakes.

On a final note, where can I get a jacket the same as John McDermott's at a reasonable price? I would like to advertise your mag.

Ian Sanders
Worcs

PS How about some sponsorship? I am starting to race a radio-controlled VW Beetle, and

the way I drive its usually on two wheels — the back ones.

We couldn't get an RT, the pic wasn't Iron Horse (sorry), which of McEditor's many jackets are you referring to? and because it took me half a day to sort out all your questions, no we won't sponsor your Bug. So there.

Triumph pukeoc

Dear Ed

● I've just finished reading Customs in your February issue — pretty good. Thought I'd drop you a line though, before Mr Nagy (nag, nag, nag) sees your pukeoc. His tasty low, black and simple pride and joy happens to have a Triumph T140V mill.

Anyone who knows his/her Triumphs will tell you that it's a 750, not a 650 as stated (who's Helen Norman, eh?) If Nag, Nag's bike is so good what happened to the pix?

Anybody in the Bradford area having trouble getting training is welcome to ring us for details of our training methods and charges.

Thanks for a great mag!

Dave Rosbrook
c/o XS M/C Riding School
Bradford
Tel: Bradford 393782

To Oz by Yam

Dear Biker

● As yours seems to be the most serious mag with touring in mind I'd be very pleased if you could give the following letter some space.

I have a Yamaha XS850 and find it perfect for really long distance, very fast touring two up.

This is OK in Europe, but my next trip in a couple of months is to Australia, slowly. The original route was through the near east — but the climate doesn't seem too hospitable to foreigners these days so instead I'm planning to follow the Nile, on down to Kenya, and on down to South Africa.

I'm the first to admit that the 850 might not be exactly ideal for

the dirt track roads I'll be encountering — or is it? What I'd like to know is if any of your many readers has experience of, touring in Africa, and what were the main problems encountered? Also, what fairings and tyres have riders found most compatible with the 750 and 850 Yams (mine has a 750 headlamp shell on it at the moment). I'll be pleased to refund postage to all replies.

Personally, I'm surprised the XS850 hasn't received more acclaim. Coming from a Norton I was worried about the handling once I really started scratching — but she's turned out to be the only Jap bike I've ever ridden that handles as well as the Norton (RIP — a lovely bike) used to.

Cheers,
David O'Neill
642 Wilmslow Road
Didsbury

Rotax on the road, please!

Dear Biker

● The Up Front for February. Nice to see us British doing something, thank you Armstrong. Their refreshingly fast looking 250s are just the thing to inject that much needed life blood into the sport.

Now Mr CCM and Mr Spondon, think ahead and think of us road bikers. Take the Spondon for example, de-tune the engine, add a nice air filter and road exhausts, soften the seat up and put good lighting on. Now look what we have, the only 250 or 350 tandem twin on the road; eat your heart out Ducati. Add a nice fairing and adjustable bars, rear seats etc and we have our own version of the Ducati Pantah. Makes your mouth water doesn't it. OK, CCM, its up to you and the others. Who will be first?

Terry Stoe
BFPO 44

Sad

Dear Ed

● After reading the letter about girls in ads I looked right through the mag. There wasn't one in it! Scott Dalglish
Walkerburn



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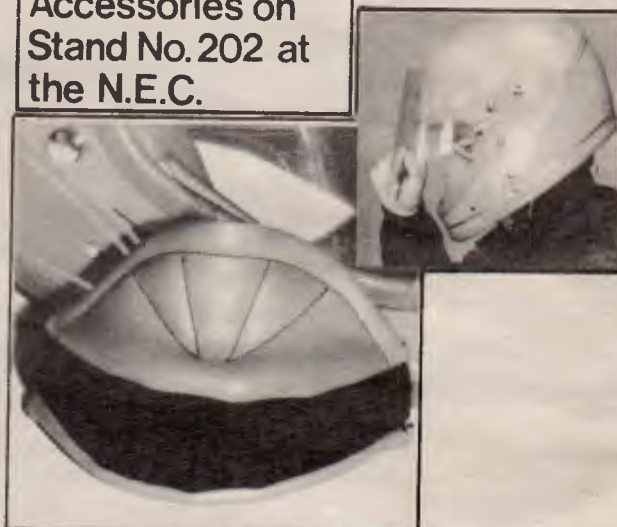



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EDITORIAL



DON'T know why I'm smiling because this is a sad moment for me. Having been 'ead' itter of *The Biker* for the first year of its life, I'm leaving. But before you start applauding, let me say that I'll still be around lurking in the shadows and leaping out at you once in a while. I have been appointed American Editor and that's a job that cannot be done from the office in London. It was a difficult decision, swapping Waterloo for California, my rusty Alfa for a Corvette Stingray and weekends in Battersea Park for visits to Mexico, Las Vegas and the Pacific Ocean but, as you'll appreciate, someone has to do it. I guess I'll just have to grin and bear it.

The man who takes over as cruel supremo of the punishment block known as *The Biker* office is Peter Watson, he of the blue and white leathers, smoky visor and bravery that could only be surpassed if Jimmy Carter booked himself into the Holiday Inn, Tehran for a fortnight. Any man who rides test bikes at the MIRA circuit these days is of unquestionable fortitude, but when he takes lunch at the cafeteria there two days running, my admiration is boundless. You'll be in good hands.

My job will be to swan around the USA looking for interesting bits and pieces to write about — and there's plenty over there. The current craze for factory customs shows how much that place across the pond influences motorcycling world-wide for starters. And when it comes to more original customising, restoration of antique bikes, huge rallies, well

organized clubs, new gizmos and up-and-coming racers, few other places can rival the north American lands. It must be worth a few pages each month and I hope it adds another dimension to the magazine.

One thing I would like to do while I'm over there on the sunny West Coast is put together a couple of tours for readers of *The Biker*. The roads of Southern California, Nevada and Arizona have to be seen and ridden to be believed and it would be great fun to introduce you to a biking holiday out there where petrol, food and motels are cheap. So one of the first things I want to do is put a package together so you can come out and ride with me through the deserts and forests of the Western States. I'll let you know about cost, dates, schedules and so forth through the pages of the magazine as soon as I have them but if you think it's the kind of vacation you'd like, why not drop me a line now to *The Biker's* Waterloo Road address? If you enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope I will send you details as soon as I have them. Give me a month or so to work it all out and I'll send the gumpf explaining everything. Then you can make up your mind if you want to come over and take a two week ride with me on my new patch.

The Biker will celebrate its first birthday with next month's issue and the past year has been tremendous fun for all of us on the magazine. When we opened shop an awful

lot of people said we'd never make it, that there was no room for another motorcycle magazine. Yet we are now the top-selling monthly on the market, for which I have to thank you. No doubt, with Pete in the chair, the magazine will be different — and I have a sneaky feeling that he's going to make it better. If he does I'll cancel my subscription straight away and never talk to him again (except maybe to grovel and plead that he runs more of my stuff in each issue).

It only remains for me to say thank you again for buying us and reading us and, by way of suggestions and criticism, playing your part in the construction and success of *The Biker*. Now, have I got everything...? Passport, air ticket, suntan lotion, put the milk bottles out, switch the gas off at the mains...

See you soon?
John Underwood

The Virginian saves you a packet.



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UP FRONT

All the latest news from the world of two wheels



Tramp with his superb Triumph lowrider



Julieann and Gerry with his mean RC Honda

The Show Must Go On

TEN years of Custom Car Shows, and at last the bikers got a decent deal at Olympia as January gave way to February. I knew it would be worth setting fire to Alexandra Palace all along.

Yet if the bikes were properly displayed there wasn't all that much to get excited about. A neat '62 Matchless 650 CSR twin lowrider with back-to-front head threw a few people, and for sheer cheek Roger Guest and Stephen Studd's '48 Panther 250 digger stole the show. It cost £235 to get together and the Bury St Edmunds pair also displayed three more machines — 600cc Norton 19S and Ariel 350 NH singles as well as a

Honda 250 G5 chop. Let's hope they keep it up, for the Panther was a miniature gem, with Puch Maxi headlight and FS1-E fork.

Our particular show favourite was Tramp's Triumph lowrider. It features a high-ride motor in a P&D lowrider frame with Smith Brothers & Fetrow fork. Crankcase is '59 pre-unit machined to take a 750 Bonnie top end. Both the gearbox and primary case are Commando, with belt-drive.

Tramp was virtually still building the bike as we spoke, but it should soon be rumbling around Hounslow. In among all the chrome and gold plate you may spot a superb deeply finned timing cover. That was all the man's own work. Thoughtful road

machine details include C&G wheels, S&W fork damper and an hydraulic steering damper. Worth a careful examination if you spot it at another show.

Skirting a somewhat bilious CBX custom called *Pure Magic*, we lighted on something to warm any street racer's heart. Gerry Speechley's 900 Honda four has been taken out to 1100cc courtesy of Russ Collins and it now lives in an owner-designed cantilever chassis rolling on Dymag wheels. Black, shiny and evil-looking, it made a great change from all the Harleys and those four-across-the-frame lowriders which surrounded it.

Gerry was quite willing to pose with his bike, but kept insisting

that Julieann Willett, his girl, would look a lot better. Just then she showed up and she did. I spotted her heading in the direction of the quaintly christened Custom Car/Olympus Cameras Readers' Tarts photographic studio. Ho, hum.

With around 50 custom and drag bikes on display the tenth anniversary CC Show pretty well buried all those 'raw deal for bikers' stories. So it might seem a little cheap to quibble over the £2 entrance fee and that 50p for a so-called Showguide. It was fun. But if the show looks like moving back to Ally Pally for '82, look out for a warm glow in the sky shortly after Christmas.

Peter Watson

Below: the Bury St Edmunds Panther 250 digger



Below: Skid's back-to-front Matchless CSR



UP FRONT

All the latest news from the world of two wheels

The Katanas Are Coming

● Although the main attraction at Suzuki's new model dealer launch was the trio of silver spaceship Katanas — eight-valve 550, the similar 650 four-cylinder shaft and sixteen-valve GSX1100S — there were plenty of other goodies on show. At £1149, the superb little GSX400F 16-valve four, with its Katana-like black tank and black chrome exhaust system, should make a few friends. There's also a stock version of the 650 shaft called the GS650GT; it will sell for £1525.

Those of you who've fancied a GSX400E now have more choice: there's a cheaper, £899 version, coming in with wire wheels and a semi-custom look. It's called the GSX400T, and should stimulate 400 twin sales. Custom kidz get a £409 fifty with stepped seat, high bars, cast wheels and ZR50L on the side.

With no price yet available for the 1100 Katana, here in July or August, the 550 will be £1420 and the 650 £1595. They'll be in the shops — along with the other new models — in May. Roll on Spring

Right: Suzuki's new semi-custom GSX400T



Radically-styled GSX1100S Katana



1100's instrumentation

Back with a bang

● When we previewed Kawasaki's new flagship, the fuel-injected GPz1100, back in December we knew it was going to be fast. The Big K is making a real effort to re-establish the Z1 derivatives as the top performance machines. At 201b (9kg) lighter than last year's Z1000 Mk2 and with 108bhp on tap it should scare a few GSX1100s. Now the really good news; it's cheaper than last year's fuel injector at £2299.

The rest of the range is also competitively priced. The Z1100A1 comes in at £2199 as the replacement for the Z1000ST. Again it's lighter and gets air suspension front and back. The latest Z1000 is the J with a capacity of 998cc and an output of 102bhp; it costs £2049. The only other 1000 is the LTD with a softer 92bhp motor and all the usual pseudo-custom trappings. It will sell, amazingly, for the same as the GPz1100 — £2299.

In the middleweight stakes the GPz550 comes over like a mini 1100. Hardly any chrome, a black engine plus black chrome pipes and 58bhp for £1499.

Probably the most significant new models from Kawasaki are the Uni-Trak AE and AR mopeds and 80cc bikes. As described in our February issue, they look really sharp in either trail or roadster versions. The mopeds are priced at £419, the 80cc versions at £459.



Honda's sporty 900F2 with stock fairing

Honda Extravaganza

● Honda's 1981 line-up, with 23 new or updated models, was shown to dealers early in February at the Wembley Conference Centre in London. These new offerings are: mopeds — NX50 Caren £287; NX50M Caren (electric start) £314; PA50 Camino £250 approx; PX50 no price yet. Commuters/Learners — CB125T £695; CG125K £525; CD200T Benly £709; CB250N Super Dream £920; CB250N Super Dream DeLuxe £959; CM250T Custom no price yet. Trail bikes — XL100S £575; XL125S £670; XL185S £715; XL250S £945. Sports machines — CB400N Super Dream £1125; CB900F £2175; CB900F2 £2399; CBX no price yet. Touring machines — CX500 £1385; GL1100 DeLuxe Limited Edition (includes fairing,

panniers and top box) £2999. Off-road trikes — ATC70 £395; ATC110 £650; ATC185S £850; CT125 Farm Bike no price yet.

Honda's new policy of pricing

their machines means that all prices shown include delivery charge and VAT, a move that was applauded by all dealers who attended the Honda Extravaganza.



Illustrated on the XS250 Yamaha is the Type 14 fairing, a sporty looking style that retains standard handlebars and features a driving mirror and double curvature screen as standard. Also shown is the front safety bar, carrier and 23 litre Alpine pannier set which is available in either standard or quickly detachable form. An interesting graphic design and rear reflector makes this an extremely attractive pannier at a sensible price.

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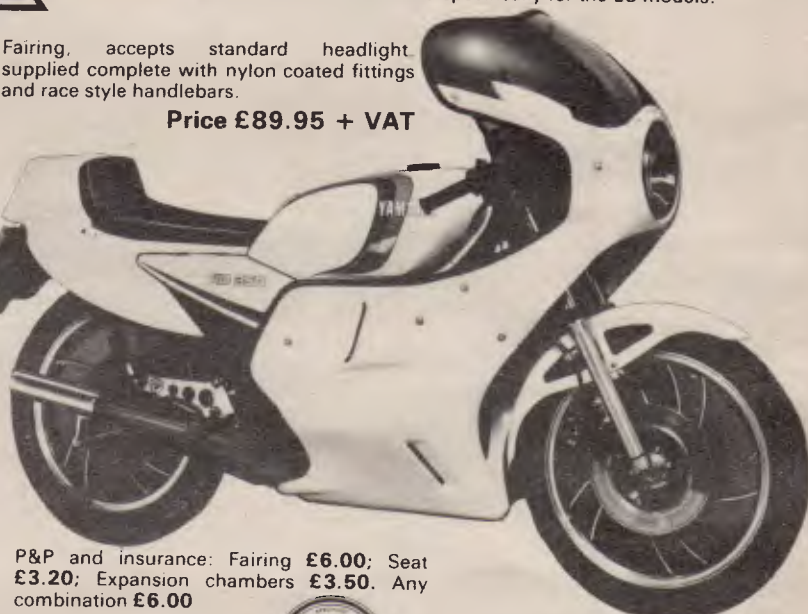
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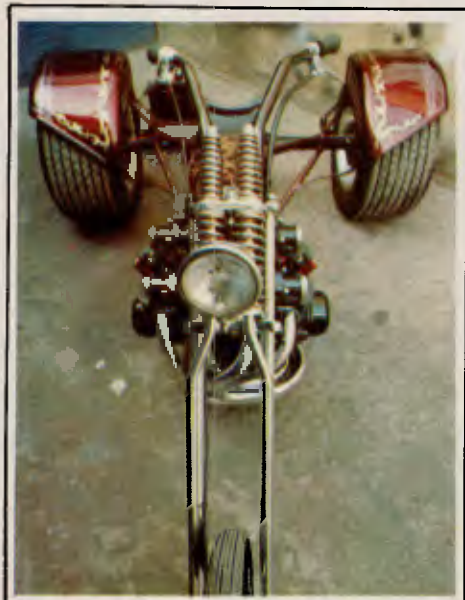
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Front end is very street digger



Pilot's view; handling should be fun



Fender supports feature moulding

CUSTOMS

Julian Ryder encounters a British designed and built trike

NE thing you don't see a lot of in the UK is good quality custom trikes. There's the odd imported Stires or Wil-Mac kit using VW engine, but when did you last see a really original example of the customiser's art with three wheels keeping it off the deck?

If you passed through the doors of the Olympia show reported on page 9 of this issue you'd have seen one — Keith Baker's *Pearl Turkey*. A self confessed Harley fiend, Keith used a Suzuki GS750 motor in a totally original chassis plus American fork and front wheel and a back axle from, of all things, an Austin A40 to produce the stunning shape you see in Michael Bailie's photos.

Starting at the front, Keith used a 21 inch C&G front wheel with mini drum and a set of six inch over springers from California Cycle Works. CCW, by the way, do a lot of machining work for Arlen Ness, which probably explains the resemblance between their fork and Mr Ness's item. To add a classy touch the springs were gold plated by Action Plating.

The tank keeps the street digger styling going, but it's at the back end that things start to get

really interesting. A local scrapyard was deprived of an A40 rear axle for the princely sum of £5. Two inches were taken out of each half shaft and the nose shaved off the differential. A slot was cut in the housing to allow the chain to pass through and small plates welded either side to keep things nice and stiff.

As the whole bike is a bit of an experiment (more of that later), when he tried to line up the sprockets Keith found that he should not have kept the rear axle symmetrical. You can't win them all. Nevertheless the whole thing is properly lined up overall, but Keith'll know better next time.

The fenders are standard flat steel items with extra sections welded in. Take a look at the flowing lines of the fender stays and the rear of the frame. Like something out of a Roger Dean record cover aren't they? Keith keeps a baseball bat handy in case anybody tries to sit on them. The rear wheels are 10 x 15 inch AREs carrying 50 profile BF Goodrich radials. Very impressive.

The curvy pipes were fabricated by Mike the Pipe in Sutton and sundry other parts like the Jammer Products footpegs

came off the shelf at Southern Cycles, the bike offshoot of Calbrook Cars who also happen to be the UK importers of Metalflake paint. Keith happens to manage Southern Cycles and be an accomplished paint sprayer.

Naturally he applied the paint himself. It's a Metalflake UK mix called Black Cherry. There are quite a few vehicles running around wearing that shade at the moment. In fact Keith was getting a little hacked off with spraying it all the time when we were down to see him. Nevertheless, it's a beautiful deep colour set off brilliantly by the pearl highlights and gold leaf, which Keith also applied himself.

Even though Keith hadn't got final details such as the chain tensioner and chainguard on the trike when we called just before the Olympia show, he got things together to take the Best Engineering award in the bike section. Well deserved too, I'd say.

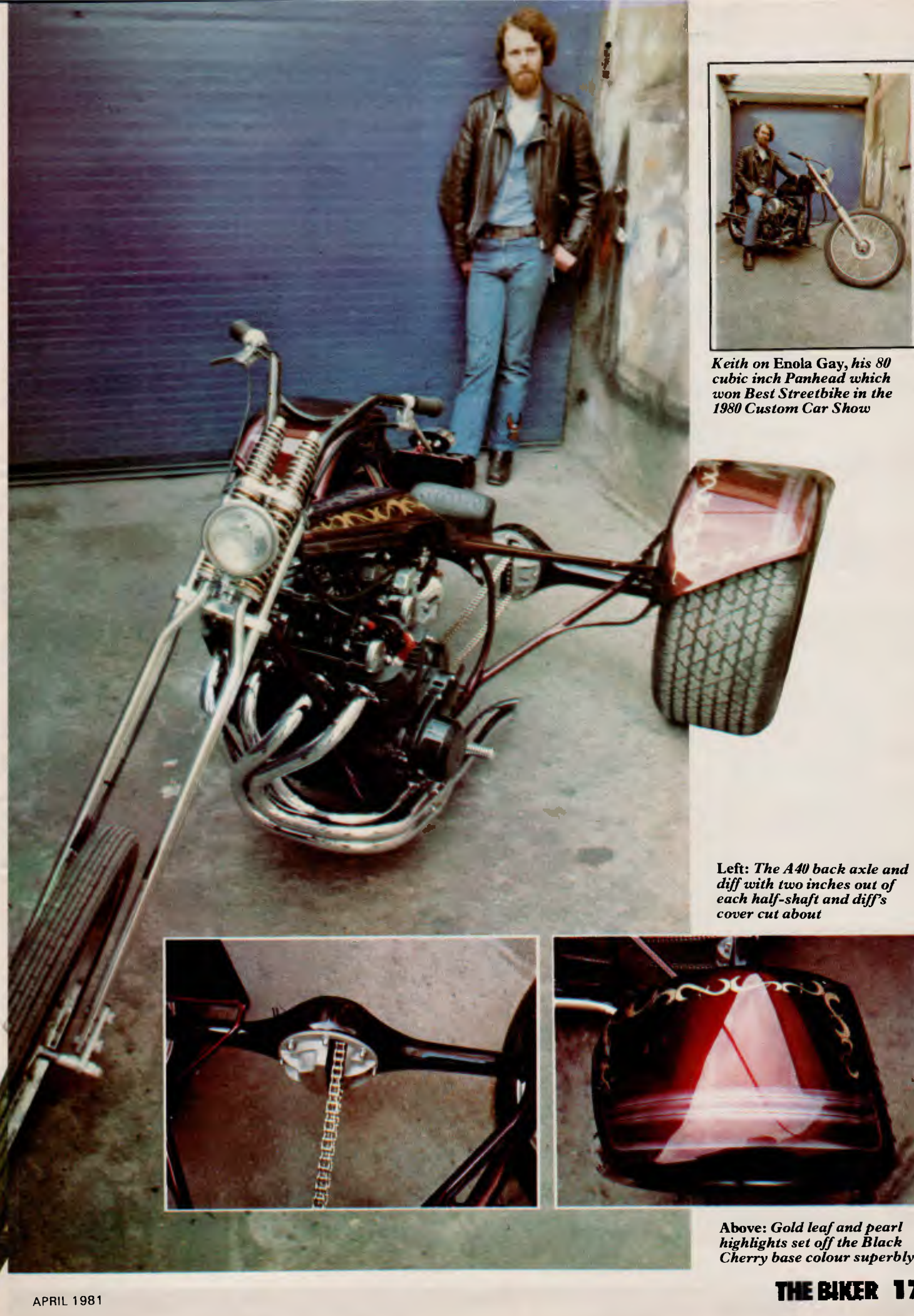
More good news is that Southern Cycles, in the persona of Keith Baker, are going to be building trike chassis for sale based on the experience gained putting *Pearl Turkey* together. The plot is that for around £230 you'll be able to buy a chassis.

Haul in your own engine and axle and Southern Cycles will cut the diff around and shorten the halfshafts to suit. Keith reckons on about £60 for that work.

There will be one significant difference between the production frame and *Pearl Turkey* — rear suspension. Leaf springs and lever arm shock absorbers will be used. The shocks are used on Morris Minors and only cost a few quid brand new but pennypinchers can go back to the scrapyard.

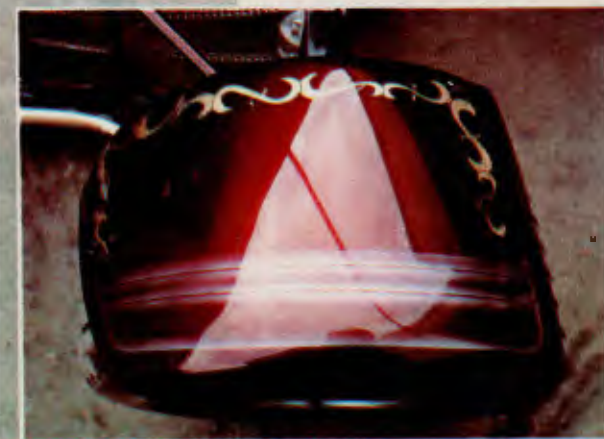
Again, Southern Cycles will do as much or as little of the work needed as you want. If you can't wait, *Pearl Turkey* is up for sale. Ring Keith on Leatherhead 78000 and mention a figure in the region of £2500. Not a bad price seeing how something like five months' work, a lot of it from first principles, went into the trike.

If you fancy a trike or some imported bits for a Harley write to Keith Baker at Southern Cycles, Commerce Estate, Kingston Road, Leatherhead, Surrey. Keith stocks Jammer parts, is planning to manufacture frames for bikes as well as trikes and of course he can take on most paint jobs you'd care to mention.

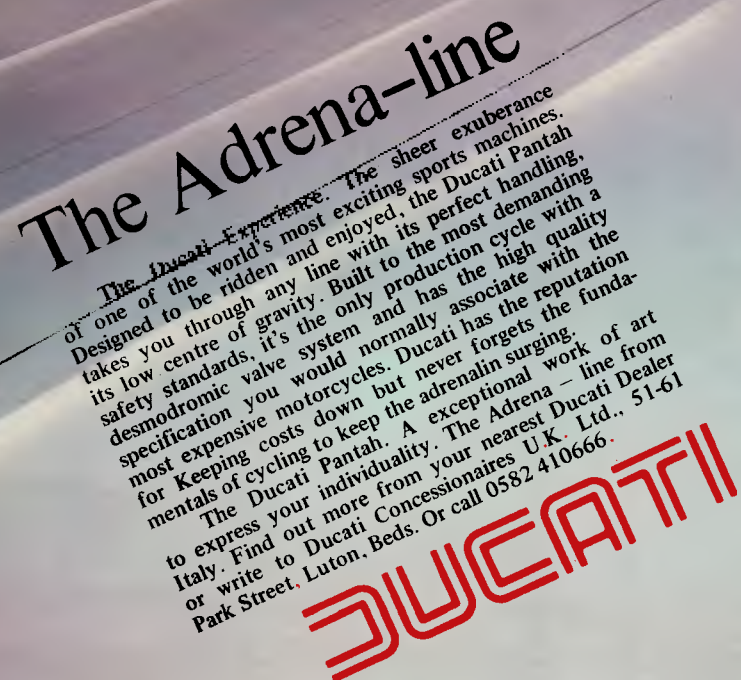


Keith on Enola Gay, his 80 cubic inch Panhead which won Best Streetbike in the 1980 Custom Car Show

Left: The A40 back axle and diff with two inches out of each half-shaft and diff's cover cut about



Above: Gold leaf and pearl highlights set off the Black Cherry base colour superbly



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If you've got a technical problem you can't solve through your dealer or the manufacturer, write to The Biker's Technical Correspondent Alan Ross at 117 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UL and we'll try to help. It would greatly help us, and ensure that you get your reply quickly, if you send a self-addressed envelope with your query

I have a gold 'P' reg Yamaha RD200. It is a super little bike — very nippy and reliable but there's one problem; it is very difficult to start. After dismantling and examining the cylinders, spark plugs and exhausts, I had the latter burnt out with an oxy-acetylene torch.

The problem remains but I think I have isolated it to the left-hand cylinder or rather exhaust. The engine starts easily with the left silencer removed, or even if the castle nut is simply loosened and pushed up the exhaust pipe. The obvious answer is that the silencer or baffle is blocked — though, as I say, both have been burned out and are still clear. It has us all, er, baffled.

Geoff Buckingham
St Albans

● I think it is just coincidence that the bike starts easily with the baffle removed, and the fact you have discovered this may be leading you astray. Try to forget about the exhaust system for the moment and concentrate on the usual service items.

Start by checking the air cleaner element. If it is in the slightest bit suspect, replace it, as a holed or dirty air cleaner can have a drastic effect on carburation that may be offset to some degree by removing the silencer baffles.

Check the carb float levels. They should be 20mm with the gasket removed and the measurement taken with the carbs inverted. Then make sure that the carbs slides are perfectly synchronised.

These Yamaha twins are a little touchy about ignition timing; the pistons should be 1.8mm before tdc with the ignition fully advanced. Use a dial gauge to get the measurement absolutely perfect. Check the condition of the point faces and ensure that the gap is 0.35mm fully open.

If you are still having problems after this then it may be that the coils or pressure caps are defec-

Could you please help me with my BSA 175cc D14/4 Bantam (1969).

I intend fitting a 17 tooth gearbox sprocket, one tooth bigger than standard.

I also intend fitting an expansion chamber. Could you please tell me whether I would have to fit a larger main jet in the Amal carb and if so how much larger. Also would the engine be able to cope with the extra strain?

Neil Farrow
Nr Elv

● Fitting an expansion chamber can have a drastic effect on the performance and carburation of a 2-stroke, much more so than fitting a performance system on a 4-stroke machine. And the effect can be unpredictable.

This is basically because a 2-stroke engine is a pretty crude device and its performance depends greatly on the shape and design of the exhaust system. Fitting the expansion chamber may well reduce bottom end power and make the engine more peaky, and it is more than likely that both needle and jet changes will be required. Exactly what these changes are I cannot say, but whoever you are buying the expansion chamber from should be able to advise you. As a precautionary measure, increase the main jet size by five and raise the needle one notch. Then test the carburation thoroughly. Most likely, the carburation will then be too rich and you should weaken accordingly, but it is wise to start off too rich rather than too weak.

Raising the gearing one tooth may allow you to take advantage of the more peaky motor, but test the bike on the standard gearing first.

The Bantam is a fairly rugged motor and should be able to cope with the modifications you suggest. But check out the little end, big end and especially the mains before starting.

I once read in some magazine that there is an insurance for non-drinkers. I did not take much notice at the time as I had just paid my insurance. But now I would be very grateful for this insurance.

I am writing to ask you if you know the name and address of any type of company.
David Wilson
Stockport

● Sounds like a wonderful idea but I very much doubt it exists. After all, how would you prove to the insurers that you were a non-drinker, sit in front of a tempting variety of alcoholic beverages for three hours without so much as a sympathetic salivation? Insurance companies have to take a lot on trust, and this would be one more detail that they would have to accept without sending the inspectors in. On the other hand there is no logical reason to expect a non-drinker to have to pay higher insurance rates to meet the excesses of those who drink and drive. But neither should those who drink, but don't drink and drive.

I don't know. Perhaps it does exist. Can anyone out there enlighten myself and David Wilson?

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PROBLEMS...PROBLEMS

Poor starting

During February 1980 I purchased a Yamaha XS250. The motorcycle now has 1600 miles on the clock.

Since I purchased the bike I have experienced constant starting problems (this model has electronic ignition). It is very sluggish to start and, more often than not, has to be bump started.

I have returned the bike to the dealer I purchased the bike from four times and they insist that nothing is amiss.

I have since heard that this particular model is a bad one, especially when it comes to starting. Can you tell me if this rumour is true and can you give me any advice regarding this problem?

I would be most grateful if you could help me on this problem because all the usual parts which cause starting problems, ie plugs, seem to be OK.

Melvyn Allison
Burnley
Lancashire

There are an enormous number of reasons why a bike won't start, from rider error to an incorrectly set up bike. Some bikes are notoriously difficult to start, but the XS250 is not one of them. If you are using the electric start then make sure that the battery is fully charged as it may well be difficult to get the engine moving if the battery is low.

Generally speaking the XS is only reluctant to start if either the ignition timing is out or the carbs are out of synch. So make sure these are spot on. To check the

timing, use a dwell meter. First warm the bike up and then keep it ticking over at between 1150 and 1250 revs. The dwell meter should give a reading of 23½ degrees after connecting it up to the points. The back plates can be moved until the 23½ degree reading comes up on the dwell meter. This method is more accurate than setting the timing statically. Also make sure that the points gap remains at 0.35mm.

Finally make sure that the carb slides are lifting together when you open the throttle, and that they rise by the same amount.

Faulty Fizzy

I have recently bought an 'N' reg Yamaha FS1-E, and had it serviced. So far, so good, until now. The problem is that after about three kicks, it starts but fails to pick up enough revs to pull away. I thought it might be the points but they are brand new. I have checked the gap over and over again but there's no difference. I would

be most grateful if you are able to help with my slight problem.

M J Kirkby
Kent

Unfortunately you do not really give sufficient information to pin-point the exact cause of the problem. Did it occur immediately after the service, or more specifically after the points were put in? If so, remove the points lower and clean the point faces. The points are often stored in a silicon grease packet and this is designed to keep them in good condition. If the preservative is not removed you do not get a good quality spark or even a spark at all.

To clean the points, soak a hard cloth in petrol and draw it between the point faces a number of times. Then double check the points gap which should be 3-4mm and reset the ignition timing which is 1.8mm before tdc with the points just opening.

You could also check that the choke is not sticking on, that the float bowl is not full of water and general crud, and that you are using the appropriate grade of spark plug which is set for the correct gap at the electrodes.



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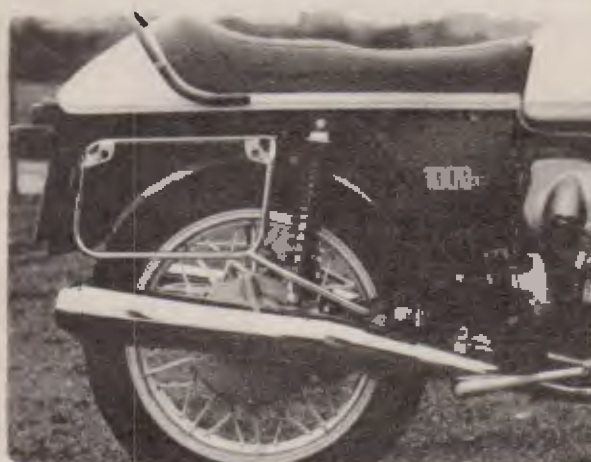
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BIKER BUYS

What's new on the motorcycling market place this month

LATEST helmet from Kangol is the Apache, an ABS full-face with an interesting visor design: no press-studs are used, so it can be operated with one hand.

Flush-fitting when closed, the visor is opened by moving it away from the face and then upwards. Pivot friction is adjustable and Kangol claim the visor can be held in any position. A positive stop mechanism should prevent scratching when fully open.

The Apache complies with BS2495 and comes in black, white, red, blue or yellow. Recommended retail price is £28.75.



RIDING with a misted-up visor is definitely not to be recommended, and a handy way to avoid it is to use this Dependence anti-mist spray from Ken Cobbing Ltd.

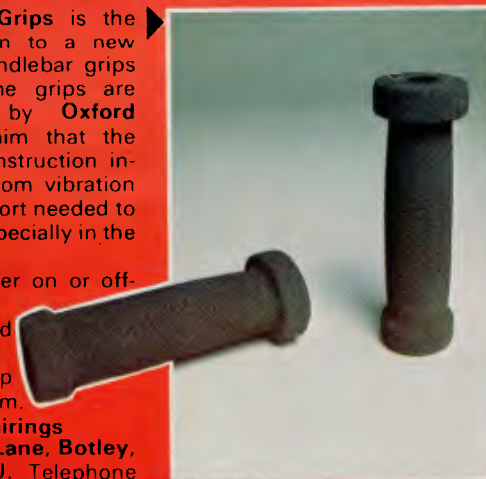
Dependence comes in three sizes of aerosol; large (80g) at £1.72½ medium (50g) at £1.31 and pocket-sized (15g) at 83p.

In addition to demisting, the spray is claimed to repel dust and to reduce scratching. It's available from most accessory shops; information from Ken Cobbing Ltd of Waltham Cross in Hertfordshire.



GRAB On Grips is the name given to a new style of handlebar grips from America. The grips are being imported by Oxford Fairings, who claim that the synthetic foam construction insulates the rider from vibration and reduces the effort needed to control the bike, especially in the wet.

Available in either on or off-road forms, Grab On Grips are priced at £3.97. If your local accessory shop doesn't stock them, contact Oxford Fairings at North Hinksey Lane, Botley, Oxford OX2 0QU. Telephone Oxford (0865) 727222.



In order to concentrate on new racing developments and on production and frame building work, Tony Foale has arranged to appoint a retail distributor for his range of chassis and ancillary equipment for road bikes.

Bikes of Brighton, 72 Lewes Road, Brighton, East Sussex, are now handling all such sales and can arrange for a complete building service to incorporate a customer's engine, etc., into a Tony Foale frame. For more information contact Chas Thomas at Bikes, phone 0273 607635.

NOTHING ruins a restoration or rebuild so much as having to use modern shock absorbers with their exposed springs. But now help is on the way from Bri-Tie Motorcycles of Swindon who produce both top and bottom covers in stainless steel to hide the springs on Girling's gas shocks. Ideal for hiding that new technology on your classic.

On the classic rebuild front Bri-Tie also sell BSA plunger unit covers (stainless and enamelled) as well as covers for Norton plungers, BSA, Triumph and AJS/Matchless Girling units of the oil-damped variety. AMC fans also get the lower Jampot covers in stainless.

Considering the material used, prices aren't too painful: those Jampot covers are £10.50 per pair and the A/B/M BSA model plunger covers in stainless are £9.78 per pair.

You can also replace those chromed steel fork covers on the AJS and Norton's long Roadholder fork with stainless components, which certainly beats re-chroming. For more details — and Bri-Tie will quote for one-off items — contact Bri-Tie Motorcycles at 1 Armstrong Street, Swindon, Wilts SN1 2AA or phone 0793 31518.



RECENTLY introduced into Britain is the SK range of lubricating and rust-preventing sprays. They vary from a fine penetrating oil and water dispersant (SK1) to a heavy-duty rust inhibitor (SK3), so there should be an SK spray for any lubricating job you're likely to come across on your bike.

SK3, which is claimed to give four years of rust protection, can also be used as a chain lube but the range does include a specialised chain oil (SK7) as well as a cleaner/degreaser (SK5) and a brake parts cleaner (SK6).

The sprays are available from accessory shops; further details from Imbach (UK) Ltd, 28 Brearly Street, Birmingham B19 3NR.



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Kiwi may only be a three-year-old company, but they're full of good ideas. By 1983 they plan to be making GRP shells on a fully automated production line. After that: semi-rigid shells made from the new generation of polyurethanes. Look out for the KB, and keep an eye on Kiwi.

Peter Watson

Suitable for most big bikes from Suzuki, Kawasaki and Honda, the Lemoto gear is available in a choice of five colours.

A yellow and white Yamaha motorcycle is displayed in a museum. The bike is a racing-style model with a white upper fairing and yellow lower fairings. It features a large front wheel and a smaller rear wheel. The engine and mechanical components are visible. The motorcycle is mounted on a dark platform. In the background, there are wooden walls and other exhibits. A small sign is visible on the wall to the left of the motorcycle.

The firm also offer a cantilever frame conversion, com-

prising a box section swinging arm and de Carbon shock, for £325. More details from **Mel Lemoto, 38 Magpie Hall Road, Chatham, Kent.** Telephone Medway (0634) 47730.



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DOWN AT THE CLUB



Velocette gets religion

THE Old Chapel at Huncote, in Leicestershire, a mere dead dogburger throw from Mallory Park race circuit, has seen some strange tenants. Built in 1874, since 1930 (obviously a depressed time for religious observance as well as employment) it has hosted a light engineering firm, litho

heating system. Outside there is now new guttering and new doors have been made. As you walk in through the front door you notice a small room which will become the club's reference library. Ahead is the main room, a small hall that could perhaps seat 120 or more. A job lot of chairs going cheap was snapped up by another club member.

Through a door and up some stairs you'll find the spares storeroom and counter of Veloce Spares Ltd, the club's manufacturing and spares sales company. I dropped in on the last day of January after a cold ride through patches of thick fog. Despite this disincentive no less than 60 people turned up to buy spares before lunch. It was the club's second open day at Huncote; mail-order business accounts for the rest of their trade in spares.

Since plenty of specialist Velocette dealers — as well as the marque's owner Matt Holder of the Aerco Jig & Tool Co — are making or having parts made,

Fitting security screens to the downstairs windows

printer and hosiery company to name three. Now it is owned by the Velocette club; they were on their knees when I called.

Actually, they weren't praying, just putting together some security screens for the ground floor windows of their premises. The club has owned the chapel building since July last year and already it is shaping up into an excellent clubroom/library/spares shop complex. Faced with £1000 a year rent for spares storage in Alcester near Birmingham, the £17,000 chapel was a snip. It was located by a club member who's also an estate agent. Accumulated membership fees, donations, a bank loan — repaid within three months — and a number of three-year, interest-free loans from members produced the money. The club has 1600 members throughout the world.

A good deal of work has gone into renovating the chapel, which already had a central

heating system. Outside there is now new guttering and new doors have been made.

The village people have really taken to us, says the club PRO Eddie Faulkner. And I'm certain that the landlord of the local Everards pub is keen on so much new custom. The chapel is a few thirsty steps away from his front door.

As usual, most of the work has been done by a small band of club members. The spares sub-committee is five-strong, and chairman Vic Pratley and helpers have dragged in fathers, brothers-in-law and friends to help with everything from joinery to reviving obsolete cen-

tral heating boilers. Good work.

You can only buy spares at an open day — held about every sixth weekend — if you're a club member. Membership currently costs £7.50 a year (plus a £1 joining fee); write to Pat and Ray Thurston at 7 The Laurels, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Bucks.

It's good to see a club thinking and planning so far ahead, for both the spares business and the Old Chapel will help to ensure that Velocettes keep on rolling. 'It's a riders' club,' says Vic Pratley. Their latest move should keep it that way.

Peter Watson

Club News

Wisbech & DMCC meet every Monday evening in a private clubroom with pool table, jukebox and a bar. This year they will be running a cheap bus trip to the Dutch TT and will be organising the marshalling at several road race meetings. They're looking for new members so if you're interested give Dick Tyler a ring on Wisbech 65817.

More news from the **Christian Bikers' Association**. They have opened a new branch in Preston and will welcome new members whether you're a Christian or not. Write to Terry Bullard at 14 Acre Samlesbury, Preston, Lancs PR5 0UR for more details or give him a ring on Houghton 3048. During the year new branches will be opened up in London, Birmingham and Northern Ireland.

The **Association of Independent Motorcyclists**, supported by *Bike* magazine (that'll cost you a pint Dave), are organising an event to be known as the Roman Ride 81. It's a long-distance, road-riding event and each entrant will be required to complete five 75-mile sections of Roman roads (or their modern equivalent) and provide photographic evidence that they have done so. The riders have between April 1 and September 30

to complete the sections. An entry will cost you £7.50 but the event does offer you the chance of winning a CX500 Honda. The rules and regs surrounding the event are far too detailed to give here so if you're interested write for an entry form to: Roman Ride, 88 Beacon Road, Coventry CV6 4DQ. The organisers would appreciate a stamped addressed envelope.

The **Averon MCC** meet at 7pm every Tuesday at their clubhouse which is situated three miles north of Alness in Ross-shire. New members would be very welcome and should contact Alan Black, Leawood, Obsdale Road, Alness, Ross-shire for details.

The **Antelope MCC** meet every second and fourth Monday of each month at the Antelope Pub, Eaton Terrace, Belgrave, London SW1 (there's posh for you) and welcome new members.

The **Graduates MCC** was formed by a group of riders who, having passed their IAM test, wanted to keep in touch. Their aim is to encourage bikers never to stop learning. They are based at Edmonton in north London and more details are available from Graham Ferry, 87 Linden Gardens, Enfield, Middlesex.

Business was brisk at the spares counter upstairs

the club concentrates on producing hard-to-find items. Such things as chainguards, dynamo belt covers, number plates and a range of stainless steel replacement parts are in stock along with KSS and Valiant pistons and spindles and bushes for

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SACRED COWS

Peter Rae, a director of the British Motorcyclists Federation and former editor of Motorcycle Rider, replies to John McDermott's February editorial on the use of headlamps as a safety aid in daylight

The use of headlights in broad daylight by motorcyclists is fast becoming one of the most controversial issues facing riders in Britain today. And the Government's plans to make day-riding lights compulsory on all new motorcycles from 1983 is bringing the whole debate into much sharper focus.

John McDermott's editorial in February's issue of *The Biker* questioned the vocal opposition of the British Motorcyclists Federation to the use of headlights in daylight and reflected his own view as an experienced rider that riding with lights on is a positive safety factor. I respect John's opinions more than most, but his enthusiasm for lighting up in daylight is also reflected in the calls by many people — whose anti-motorcycling stance is a matter of public record — for headlight use to be made compulsory. These are the MPs, road safety officers and coroners whose chief concern is to be seen to be 'doing something' about road safety.

On the face of it, it is reasonable to imagine that any vehicle with its lights on will stand out from the crowd in daylight and thus increase its chances of being seen by other road users. One might therefore expect the accident rate for motorcyclists to be lower in those states or countries where bikers must ride with lights on at all times. But this simply has not happened.

In America, for instance, where many states have had lights-on laws for more than 10 years the case of Indiana has been cited by lights-on advocates as the prime example of their success. They claim that the fall in the accident rate in that state between 1966 and 1969 was due to the newly introduced

lights-on law. But what they fail to point out is that this trend was mirrored almost exactly in the neighbouring state of Illinois, which did not enact a lights-on law until 1970. Therefore the drop in accidents in Illinois could not be attributed to daytime use of headlights in Illinois, and certainly not to the lights-on law in Indiana. The authoritative American magazine *Road Rider*, which John quoted, concludes quite correctly that the reduction appears to be due to other variables present in both states. Other American states quoted by lights-on advocates as success stories — Montana, Oregon and Wisconsin — actually showed a downward trend in motorcycle accidents before daytime lights were made compulsory; the same trend merely continued

speed of approach of motorcycles with headlights on was underestimated and the headlights-off speed slightly overestimated. The researchers concluded that a motorcyclist is better off *not* using his headlight in daytime as drivers would allow a longer gap before pulling out.

Our own Transport & Road Research Laboratory carried out its own research into daytime headlights and conspicuity in general and found that it takes a 12 volt, 40 watt headlight to equal the conspicuity value of a simple fluorescent jacket. Given that a million of the 1.3 million motorcycles registered in this country are under 250cc, it is quite clear that in most cases their lights are just not powerful enough to make any difference

ist's responsibility to look out for bikers to motorcyclists. We must make ourselves visible to him: he doesn't have to look out for us. Already several motorcycle insurance claim forms carry the question: 'Was the motorcycle headlight switched on before the accident?' If the accident was in broad daylight there is no reason why that should have any bearing on the case whatsoever. And since a bike's headlight is usually the first thing to get smashed in a head-on accident the rider will always be open to accusation by the other party that 'his headlight wasn't on.' This would be hard to disprove and could become sufficient reason for culpability in an accident.

Other reasons quoted by the BMF included: the headlight could reduce the effectiveness of headlamp flasher, indicators and stoplight; using headlights in daylight could give less experienced riders a false sense of security, leading them to believe they will always be seen; small bikes and mopeds have such small lights that their value is minimal in daylight; a rider cannot know if his headlight has failed in daylight; the practice causes undue irritation to other road users and may mislead them as to a motorcycle's rate of approach.

What it all adds up to is this: if a rider decides to switch on his headlight in daylight he should be aware that it may not make any difference whatsoever to his chances of having an accident and may in fact increase them. He should therefore ride defensively in the knowledge that many road users will not see him simply because they will not be bothered to look.

And there is one more study worth bearing in mind. The Greensboro Experiment in North Carolina tried to find out which police vehicle had the most noticeable effect on driver behaviour: a marked car, an unmarked car and a police motorcycle. Guess which was noticed the soonest and altered driver behaviour most significantly? That's right: the bike! Which all goes to show that motorists have no difficulty in seeing a motorcycle as long as they want to see it. Daytime headlights and riding lights won't achieve that; more Think Bike advertisements on television just might.



afterward. In fact, during this period virtually every American state noted similar downward trends in accidents although only relatively few passed lights-on laws.

Eventually even the notoriously anti-motorcycle National Highway Traffic Safety Administration admitted that 'there is no significant difference in the percentage of a state's daytime head-on motorcycle accidents among those states that have headlight laws and those that do not.'

Other studies show similar results. An Australian government research project found that using *dipped* headlights made no significant difference and called for *main* beam to be used instead! The much-talked-about study at the University of Dayton, Ohio, found that the

— even if the value of daytime lights were taken for granted, which it should not be. The TRRL also pointed out that it took two so-called 'dayrider' lights to beat the conspicuity value of a headlight. And Peter Watson (no relation to the Peter Watson!), who led the TRRL research team, said: 'The best that riders can do to improve their conspicuity is to wear fluorescent jackets.'

But all this is only one half of the argument against using lights as a serious aid to staying alive on the roads. The BMF came out with several reasons for its opposition to daytime use of lights in normal visibility back in 1979, and they are as valid today as they were two years ago. The principal argument is that if the motorcyclist is to be expected to use his headlight in daytime it transfers the motor-

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YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT

Whether you want a weekday workhorse or a Sunday sprinter, Suzuki's GSX400E should fit the bill



BACK in the good old days when, supposedly, men were men and pansies were flowers, motorcycling was a much simpler business than it is today. For example there were very few capacity classes. Somehow all the manufacturers seemed to agree that 125s, 250s, 350s, 500s and 650s were right. Anything else wasn't.

Then along came the Japanese with their all-singing,

all-dancing marketing policies and suddenly we had all sorts of crazy capacities. I mean, what the hell kind of bike is a 185? Or a 370? It's neither one thing nor the other but the irony of it is that the Japs can sell as many of them as they make.

One of the odd capacities that does seem to have caught on in a big way is the 400cc class. You can now get 400 fours, twins and even singles and every one of the big four Japanese manu-

facturers has at least one representative in the category.

At the beginning, however, Suzuki seemed reluctant to get involved directly in the 400 class, preferring instead to market a two-stroke, three-cylinder 380 (now there is an odd capacity!) but even they couldn't resist and in 1976 they launched the twin-cylinder, four-stroke GS400. As a bike it was nothing special; its handling and performance were adequate

but not startling and perhaps the best that can be said about it is that it was rather a pretty little motorcycle. Having dipped their toes in the 400 class, however, Suzuki suddenly went berserk and started peppering the market with all sorts of variations such as the uprated GS425 and eventually the GS450. Watching from the sidelines one began to wonder whether the marketing guys back at Hamamatsu were maybe smoking too much



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of something they'd rolled themselves. For the buying public, Suzuki's unpredictable new model launches caused something of a headache. Guys buying GS400s suddenly found themselves with obsolete bikes as they were superseded by the 425s. The GS425 owners in turn found themselves with collectors' items on their hands. Even the GS450 is now a rarity because it has been withdrawn from the British market in favour of yet another new bike which Suzuki hope will rationalise the situation — the Suzuki GSX400E.

Suzuki's explanation for its decision to concentrate on the GSX400 is that this particular model is fitted with Suzuki's patent Twin Swirl Combustion Chamber heads thus bringing it into line with the other four

strokes in the Suzuki family which use the TSCC system.

The TSCC design has been around long enough now for me not to have to go into gory detail as to its workings. Basically it means that the GSX's eight-valves are encased in combustion chambers which have effectively been divided into two. Viewed from below the head looks as though its been scooped out with a spoon on either side of the spark plug. The theory behind all this is that the contours of these hollowed-out combustion chambers allow the fuel mixture to be swirled round in a pattern designed to create optimum combustion efficiency. It seems to work too, because the GSX with TSCC (sounds more like a secret formula for washing powder) is a lot quicker than the older GS model. The old GS,

which admittedly only had four valves, had a top speed in the region of around 98mph while the GSX is good for at least 105mph. It's also a lot quicker over the quarter mile. We managed a time of 14.85 seconds for the 440 yard dash, whereas the older machine took 16 seconds at least.

The GSX is noticeably more peppy on the road as well. The GS was as bland as a speech by Sir Geoffrey Howe but the GSX has a lot more punch, particularly in the upper rev range as it gets into the power band. This occurs at around 6000rpm and between then and the red line at 9500rpm the power come rushing in like a dam that's burst its banks. In some ways the GSX has a split personality because at the lower end of the rev range the bike is totally tractable. Rid-

ing around town is a complete doddle: there's no need to slin the clutch and the engine is remarkably smooth for a twin. The only time the engine imposes on the rider is around the 5000rpm mark when a buzzing vibration sets in. It clears around 5750rpm and it isn't particularly serious, but is noticeable particularly as the bike is so smooth the rest of the time.

Some months ago we tested the GSX's little brother, the GSX250, which, by and large, we weren't particularly impressed with. Fortunately the 400 version is a much more acceptable machine. It's nowhere near as highly strung as the 250 and doesn't need the same kind of sustained, aggressive revving to keep it on the boil. The 250 also had an amazingly light and sloppy throttle and

clutch action which proved intensely irritating after a while. This seems to have been over come on the 400; the clutch is still tight but it is much more pleasant to use while the throttle is much firmer and responsive. There was a time during the 250 test when I was convinced that TSCC actually stood for Terribly Sloppy Clutch Control but as Julian Ryder has already done a fairly effective hatchet job on the 250 I shall resist any more rude remarks.

Having just mentioned TSCC let's go back for a closer look at the 400's engine because the motor is what this bike is all about. If we — and Suzuki — were totally honest about it we'd say that the specifications for the GSX400 are pure technical overkill. I can't believe that a 400 middleweight commuter /



Instruments include digital gear readout and ignition lock



Side cover and duck's tail seat make for messy styling

cruiser needs twin cams, eight valves and six speeds. Let's face it, the GSX400 is a drawing board special, a marketing tool based around the philosophy of giving the customer what he thinks he wants. Don't get me wrong, I'm not decrying the efforts of the Suzuki engineers; far from it. The GSX motor is a little jewel from a company that is particularly good at building four-stroke engines. Bikers who are technically minded and who appreciate a good engine will really enjoy using the GSX power plant. For one thing the specifications are truly impressive. I've already mentioned the eight valves and twin cams but with 41bhp on tap it actually produces as much power as the GS450 it supplants. The engine itself breathes through two 34mm Mikuni carbs and has a compression ratio of 10 to 1. Primary drive is by gear while gears also drive the balance shaft which is so effectively responsible for smoothing out the twin's vibration rough spots. Even visually the engine is impressive, carrying all the hallmarks of engineers who took an obvious delight in being allowed free rein to design more or less what they liked.

Suzuki's spirit of design freedom also appears to have been extended to the styling department although here the results don't seem to have been quite so successful. If the engine is a good reason to buy the GSX400 then the styling will probably be the reason most people give for not buying the bike. Styling is a matter of taste, of course, but I've yet to find anyone with a good word to say about the physical appearance of the TSCC family range. I'm not an art expert, and I can't quite put my finger on the problem, but something is aesthetically wrong with the styling creations coming out of Hamamatsu these days. The tank on the GSX, for example, is a mass of odd ang-



Nice engine, shame about the styling



Single front disc works perfectly

les, both rounded and knife-edged. There's no flow. The seat on the other hand flows all over the place, eventually ending up in a sort of demented duck's tail at the back. The horizontally slatted side covers clash with the lines of the engine finning which is tilted slightly forward. Suzuki might have succeeded in creating a range of machines which are identifiable as a family but I don't believe they've won many friends with the results. The irony of it is that it was Suzuki who were responsible for such styling successes as the GS550 and GS750 of recent memory. Those bikes, and even the aforementioned GS400, were endowed with classic lines of such simplicity and balance of form that it's hard to believe they come from the same factory. Perhaps the styling department people are smoking the same stuff as the marketing guys.

If I've been somewhat harsh about the styling it's because I believe it devalues an otherwise top class bike. For instance, the handling of the GSX is excellent. Quite simply it is the best handling bike in the 400cc class that I've ever ridden and that includes the Kawasaki and Honda fours. You can get away with things on a GSX that you

wouldn't dare try on, say, an RD400 Yamaha. The frame is a duplex cradle of exceptionally sturdy manufacture and features a heavily braced central pressed steel spine at the top. The telescopic front fork is rather softly sprung for someone of my weight but caused no real problems. The rear suspension is by means of the traditional swing-ing arm and five-way spring pre-load adjustable dampers. When we first got the bike it tended to weave and roll slightly at low speeds, but this we discovered was down to tight steering head bearings. Once that had been sorted out we began to appreciate more fully the finer points of the Suzuki's handling. Actually, the virtues of the GSX are somewhat understated and tend to creep up on you unnoticed over a period of time. The brakes — a 10.5 inch disc up front and a 6.5 inch drum at the rear — are so good that you don't even notice them until the first time that you have to pull up hard. The electrics are also first class. Ignition is electronic and the starter motor invariably punches the engine into life first time every time. The engine doesn't particularly care for being started from cold, however. The choke is operated by a button on

the left-hand carburettor but the engine will only start with the button half out and simply refuses to pull until it has been thoroughly warmed up.

Another little irritation was the indicator switchgear on the left handlebar. The indicator switch doubles up as the dip and headlight flasher switch; you flick it sideways for indicators and up and down for dip and flash. But just try it at night when you've got mitts on and you find yourself flashing when you want to be indicating and dipping when you want to be flashing.

Apart from the indicator switch the rest of the switchgear and instrumentation is excellent. The 400 has a combined ignition / steering lock which is a great boon and there's also a digital gear readout. It isn't totally necessary on this bike but it is quite useful at times to know what gear you're in.

At a price of £999 the GSX400E represents very good value for money. It's the quickest 400cc twin around at the moment and it's near-as-dammit as fast as the Kawasaki 400 four which costs £150 more. It handles well, returns about 60 miles to the gallon and is beautifully finished.

Mike Winfield

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed	104.98mph
Standing ¼ mile	14.85sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Overall	59mpg
Best	64mpg
Worst	53mpg

ENGINE

Type	DOHC twin-cylinder
Bore & stroke	67 x 57mm
Capacity	399cc
Compression ratio	10.0:1
Carburation	2 x 34mm Mikuni
Claimed bhp at rpm	41 at 9000
Claimed torque at rpm	27.6ft-lb (3.46kgm) at 7500
Transmission	Gear primary drive, wet multiplate clutch, 6-speed gearbox, chain final drive
Electrical system	12V, 12Ah battery, alternator, 35/35W headlamp

CYCLE PARTS

Frame	Duplex cradle
Suspension	Telescopic front fork, pivoted rear fork with 5-way adjustable hydraulic dampers
Wheels	Ten-spoke cast aluminium alloy
Tyres	3.00 x 18in Bridgestone front 3.50 x 18in Bridgestone rear
Brakes	10.75in (273mm) disc front 6.5in (165mm) drum rear

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	55.1in (1370mm)
Seat height	31.5in (800mm)
Overall width	27.7in (700mm)
Ground clearance	6.5in (165.1mm)
Weight (with 1 gal fuel)	415lb (188kg)
Fuel capacity	3.2gal (14.5 litres)
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BODIE ON BIKES

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Lewis Collins, Bodie of The Professionals, is a man who likes to play hard and fast. No surprise therefore that he gets a lot of fun from motorcycling.

John McDermott talked to him about bikes and other things

HE came down the stairs looking as if he could handle anything that might be thrown his way. The hair was short, marine commando fashion and ungroomed. As if he'd just showered and forgotten to towel it dry. Bodie paused, took a hand from deep inside his threequarter length coat and extended it, introducing himself as Lewis Collins.

'What shall we do first — take the pics, do the interview or go for a drink?'

We went for a drink, passing

two BMW R100RSs parked on the street outside.

'The gold one's up for sale. Know anyone who wants to buy it?' I said I could probably introduce him to a hundred thousand plus potential buyers through the pages of *The Biker* so he bought the first round; large, large whiskies.

Lewis Collins is a biker from way back. Born in Birkenhead 35 years ago, it was on the pillow of his father's bikes that he first got the taste for motorcycles and motorcycling.



'You've met my old man?' I nodded an affirmative. 'Well, he's what I call a thoroughbred motorcyclist. A real enthusiast so I was in company with someone who was a genuine biker right from the word go.'

'We used to go everywhere on his bikes and, once a year come the first week in June, it was TT time. I remember travelling over on the ferry one year and seeing a very young Mike Hailwood squirting a water pistol over everyone. That was a magic era, people like Minter, McIntyre, King, Surtees, Duke and all those legendary TT aces. I'll be there again this year.'

'By the time I was old enough to ride I knew how to do it instinctively, just by the feel and sound of it. I just made the bike do what the old man had done with his, so I had a head start I suppose.'

We talked about his father for a while. In the '60s he was a producer and promoter for *The*

Apple Corps, the company owned by The Beatles.

'Do you know that in 1968, when he was 52 years old, John Lennon and Paul McCartney voted him Hippy of the Year? He wore this leather jacket and long grey hair down to his shoulders. But I digress. He's still a bloody good rider. When I broke my ankle parachuting at Brize Norton he came over — he's now in his mid 60s — and rode the BM home for me. How many 65 year olds would you trust on your RS?'

I couldn't think of any so I kept quiet. We had another slug of Scottish comfort. I asked what his first bike was.

'A BSA Bantam. A 125 — but by the time my test came round I was on a 175. Heavy stuff, eh? That test was a giggle because the day I went for it, it was snowing. I had to bounce the thing — you know, bump-start it to get it going — and to the great alarm of the examiner I broad-





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BODIE ON BIKES

sided on the emergency stop. If he hadn't jumped out of the way he would have been killed. I ran over his clip-board, parked up and said 'You stupid great @&*!!, fancy jumping out like that.' And you know what? I got away with it, I passed!

We talked about other things for a while, for Lew Collins is one of those guys who feels compelled to cram as much into his life as possible. At the age of sixteen he was a brown belt judoist. He now finds that the original jiu-jitsu form of self-defence is more up his alley.

'It's pure street fighting' he said as Mike Bailie came over with some well-timed refills. Collins is also a member of 10 Para TAVR, a red beret good at throwing himself out of airplanes, charging over assault courses carrying a 60lb Bergen on his back, and qualified to use weapons ranging from a 9mm Browning automatic all the way up to mortars and anti-tank missiles. I wondered for a while whether I was talking to Collins or Bodie but decided there was no difference either way.



'I part-exchanged the Bantam 175 for a Zundapp 250. That was a superb little bike. Great acceleration, good handling and everything else but I went through a period of tear-assing around about that time. I wrote off four bikes — and that was despite all I'd been taught by my father. You'd have thought I'd had more sense. The exuberance of youth and all that... There were no training schools then but he showed me exactly how to do it. What to do and what not to do. I still made my mistakes but without that guidance I'd have been dead long ago.'

I commented that it was unusual for anyone involved in multi-million dollar film production (The Professionals, while shown on television world-wide,

is an all-location film production) to be allowed to ride motorcycles because of contract exclusions.

'They must have overlooked that because while I'm not allowed to go skiing, parachuting or horse riding — but we'll say no more about those things — my contract does not stop me riding. Martin Shaw — he plays the part of Doyle — has a BMW too and it must give them nightmares when we both arrive on location on our bikes.'

The conversation changed to mental and physical fitness. Lewis is an eager student of *Ki*, one of those obscure Oriental arts that can be slotted into the 'mind over matter' category which allows him to live at the pace he has chosen. He also works out with a great mate of his from Merseyside, ex-light-heavyweight champion of Planet Earth, John Conteh.

'Yes, we work out together. I've even sparred with him but he's like a lion playing with a cub when we're in the ring. If he stopped pawing the air and closed his fist to give me a good smack, it would be 'Good-night Lew'. Can you imagine?'

Gratefully, I could not. The thought of being caressed by a leather-clad Conteh knuckle is something my mind would rather not comprehend. So the subject turned to bikes again.

'I'm not what you could call a one-hundred per cent biker because to me those guys go everywhere on bikes. They talk, eat, sleep and dream bikes. And at the weekend they fiddle around with them until they feel sure they've done something new and better with it. I'm not a fair-weather biker either, because if I fancy riding my bike I do so.

Come rain, snow or whatever. I had a Triumph once, a Tiger 100. That was great but it broke down a lot. I remember going off to the Continent on that with a girlfriend one year. We went to Hamburg and then toured Germany, notching up about 6000 miles all told. That was a camping holiday and we got back with these ominous rumblings down in the crankcase, the throttle cable over my shoulder so she could operate it and what happened? Half a mile from home — fortunately at the top of Hampstead Hill — we ran out of petrol!

'Marion and I, she's my fiancée, went off on the gold RS last year for a tent holiday in Cornwall. That was great.'

I think we had another drink at that point and we both made 'phone calls to summon chauffeur assistance to get us home. Which called for refills.

The talk after that was about his time as bass guitarist for *The Mojos*, a pop group who scored a Number Three hit back in the late '60s; the period he taught deaf children in Glasgow and Red Indian kids in Canada. Various other motorcycles came into the conversation.

'The BMW is my ideal bike. But since I was a teenager I have always wanted a café racer so I have a Suzuki-engined Harris Magnum on order. You should see it, it's incredible.'

At which point I observed that three bikes was more than enough for any man.

'That's why the gold RS is up for sale' he said, 'now what about this 100,000-plus readership of yours? If any of them want to buy it, it's done under 5000 miles, is in terrific nick,

never been used in anger (as you'd expect, Lew Collins is an Advanced Motorcyclist), has Krausers fitted and I can let them have the dual-seat and the humpy-backed single seat to match.' I said I'd mention it if I could find the space. 'Hey, I like the magazine' he said, trying not to sound patronizing. 'No, really. It's a good read.' I said that this interview would soon change that, our chauffeurs arrived so we had one for the road and started talking bikes again.

'I don't know what I'd do without motorcycles. You can have a car capable of 900 miles an hour and it still doesn't give you the same feel as riding into the breeze at 80. Listen to this... this will amuse you... Martin and I were doing some filming down at this warehouse place. We'd both brought our bikes along and... The evening came and went and the stories got far too vulgar to record in print. And still not a single photograph was shot. I had to go back with Mike Bailie to do those three days later, when my head had cleared. And do you know what?'

He came down the stairs looking as if he could handle anything that might be thrown his way. The hair was short, marine commando fashion...

Oh yes. If you are in the market for a gold BMW R100RS that has had one Professional owner, call Bill Watson on 01-455 7487. He looks after Lew Collins' vehicles. And if ever you bump in to me at some racetrack or other, ask me to tell you about the time I tried to interview Bodie and came second. Three pages of *The Biker* isn't enough to tell the whole story.



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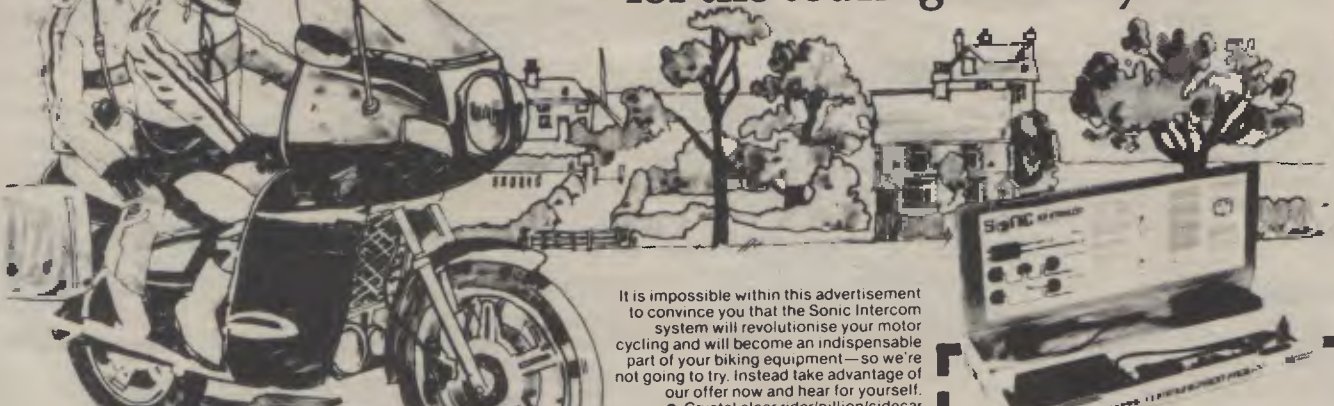
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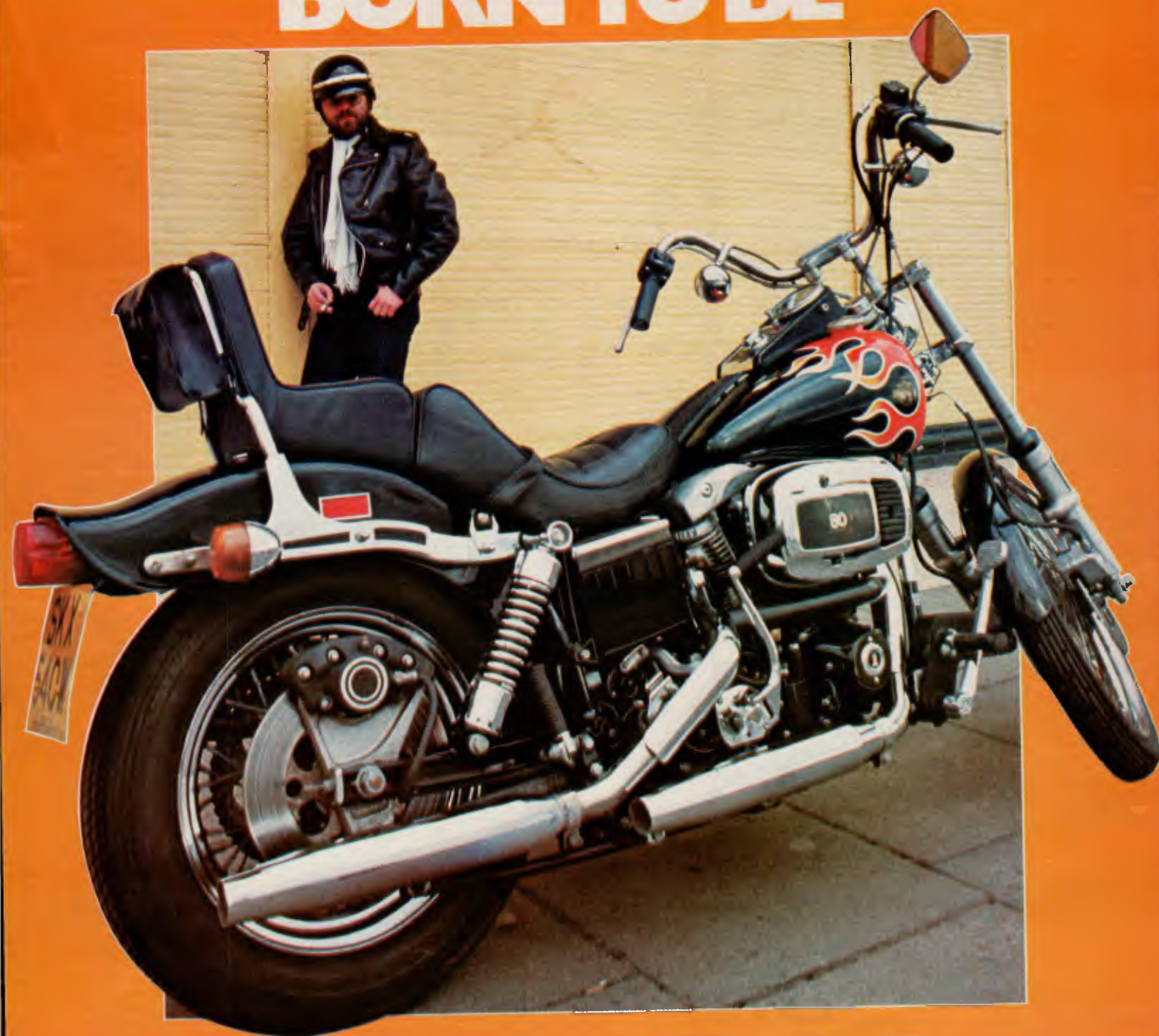



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THE BIKER 43

BORN TO BE WIDE



It isn't long since the word 'custom' applied to motorcycles meant one thing and one thing only — Harley-Davidson. The whole thing started with people ripping extraneous metal off their Harleys and Indians and then it grew into a whole subculture that crossed the Atlantic to take firm root in Europe.

If one event more than any other accelerated that process it was the release of the film *Easy Rider* over here. All of a sudden Harleys weren't just overweight land cruisers or police bikes, they were the raw material for an art form. An entirely new area of biking opened up to the British public. The Yanks, of course, had been into it for years. So much so that even their street bikes wore high bars and fat rear tyres.

It's this fashion that gave birth to the 'factory customs' — there's a contradiction in terms for you — that the Japanese factories have been inflicting on us recently. Harley, one would have thought, would stand aloof from all this. After all, apart from the Electra Glide, Tour Glide and Classic, their range consists of bikes that most customisers on this side of the pond would have difficulty beating.

Even the Yanks stick to buying some Drag Specialties bits and getting the odd part gold plated. Why should Harley lower themselves to even acknowledge the existence of cloned customs from Japan? I, for one, don't know. But seeing how they have done, why didn't they go for a custom style that's been in vogue sometime in the last ten years? I don't know, but if someone could enlighten me I'd be grateful.

Getting back to *Easy Rider*, remember that Peter Fonda rode a really radical chop with way over-stock front fork, peanut tank, skinny front wheel and high, wide pull-back bars. His less enigmatic sidekick, Dennis Hopper, was on another Harley but with just highway pegs, flat drag bars on short risers and a flame paint job on the tank.

Basically, this is the style that H-D have chosen with which to attack the factory custom market. And please don't tell me that the factory isn't attacking it; just take a look at the ads in the American magazines. Quote: 'They (the Japanese) talk low. They talk custom. Now, maybe they'll stop talking. Here it is. A factory custom from one factory that knows what the word means. A pure, righteous California Classic.' Unquote.

That ad refers to the FXWG Wide Glide, the bike you see on these pages as well as on the front cover. Like the Low Rider, Classic, Electra Glide and Tour Glide it uses the latest Shovelhead motor, the 80 cubic inch 45-degree, pushrod V-twin. It's the biggest capacity engine ever to come out of Milwaukee. The late sixties custom styling is most radical at the front end; the back gets standard Harley treatment of a bobbed rear mudguard, king 'n' queen seat and a neat but useless little stash pouch on the back of the seat.

But it's at the front that the really interesting stuff lives, primarily in the steering and suspension departments. Harley's designers have achieved that raked and stretched look in quite an ingenious manner. Normally the amount of trail produced by a raked steering head makes steering very floppy at

low speeds, but the Wide Glide's top and bottom yokes are not parallel. Although the steering stem is way out front with the forks raked at 34.4 degrees the trail is exactly five inches (127mm). This is due to the offset yokes.

They work too; at low speeds and around town there is hardly a trace of the flop you'd expect just from looking at the geometry.

So far so good: the looks of a chop without the heavy steering.

The FXWG takes its name from the width of those fork yokes. At 10 inches (250mm) centre to centre, they carry really hefty 41mm (1.6in) diameter stanchions and modified Electra Glide sliders. The effect is weird. Looking at the bike head on you get the impression of chrome scaffolding dwarfing the headlamp, wheel and tyre. They make the risers and handlebar look pretty insignificant, too.

Mind you, it's not really surprising that the wheel disappears. A 3 x 21 inch item isn't exactly going to overwhelm the styling of a moped. The contrast between the skinny little tyre and the chunky metalwork of the fork is further emphasised by the front mudguard, a vestigial item in black that clings so tightly to the tyre that it all but disappears.

Another component that does a very good disappearing trick is the headlamp. Not only is it small, but the legendary Harley vibration kills off filaments with amazing regularity. During the two weeks I had the bike it went through five bulbs. And those were the expensive, quartz-halogen type that give a surprisingly good spread of light for the size of the headlamp. In the end I resorted to an old fashioned



Tiny front calipers are as effective as they look



Camouflaged balance pipe hides engine's lines



New caliper really works, looks good too

tungsten filament bulb with an improvement in longevity but a decrease in illumination. On average it took thirty miles of main road riding at night to see off a dip filament in the QH bulbs. For some reason main beam seemed to last better. Such is the vibration set up by 1340cc of 45-degree V-twin.

Following through the chopper styling, the Wide Glide is the only production bike from Harley, or anyone else for that matter, to be fitted with highway pegs and forward mounted foot controls. The Roadster has highway pegs, but retains a set of conventional footrests with controls in a more normal position.

As a result the riding position is like nothing else I've ridden. It's quite comfortable — up to a point. That point being about 70mph or 40 miles travelling, whichever comes first. Up to the legal limit it's like sitting in the proverbial armchair. After that, hanging on to the bars and trying to stop your feet dancing off the pegs becomes too much like hard work. The position of the rests makes for an interesting gearchange linkage. Starting from the heel-and-toe pedal, the movement is delivered to the selector mechanism via a chunky chromed arm inboard of the pedal pivot, a couple of elbow linkages and finally changes direction again at the gearbox. As the box wasn't the smoothest piece of kit to start with — in fact it wouldn't be out of place on a 1930s tractor — the resulting action is horrific. The only time you'll get a smooth, noiseless change out of this

gearbox is first thing in the morning when you put it into first from neutral. After that it's clunk, crunch every shift.

The back brake pedal and its effect have much more going for them. Even though the pedal is at a horrible angle to what could be considered normal, I found it easy to use and it's attached to a brake that actually works. This is a bit of a novelty for an H-D and is due to a new, 1981-model caliper.

In contrast to the previous calipers from the states, this is a hefty piece of work finished in black crinkle and remained free from the sloppiness that afflicts earlier models. I even managed to lock up the back wheel in one moment of panic.

Unfortunately, the front calipers are the old type. After 2000 miles on the test bike they were so loose on their mounting bolts that shaking them by hand produced an audible clunk. Applying the front brake gently at low speed gave rise to graunching noises as the caliper body moved on its pivot bolts. Truly horrible.

In braking tests at the MIRA test track it took me 153ft (46.6m) to stop from 60mph. An AMF handout quotes a distance of 170ft! Both figures are disgraceful. Once or twice in town I was convinced that I'd end up tailgating a car that had pulled up sharply in front of me. More by luck than judgement, I didn't.

Interestingly, the 1981 model dressers are fitted with the new caliper front and rear, whereas the custom-style bikes only have

it at the back. Perhaps with a skinny, three-inch section tyre, with a contact patch the size of a beetle's bum on the tarmac, you can do without efficient stoppers when bringing over 600lb (272kg) of H-D to a halt from over the ton.

Certainly that thought crossed my mind as I set off down the MIRA straight on the first of the top speed runs. The thought of locking a front wheel and sliding down the track in the company of a Wide Glide was not comforting. At the end of my first run through the lights I grabbed the lever and watched the fork dip, felt nothing else happening and promptly stamped the box down into third and stood on the back brake. It stopped, but I've pulled up quicker from 120mph with a sight less trauma than I did from 105 on the Wide Glide.

I can't give you an engine speed to go with that figure because no tachometer is fitted. In true chop style no instruments clutter the bars. Instead the speedometer and idiot lights live in the centre of the tank, which is borrowed from the Electra Glide. In fact it's two tanks with the instrument console in the centre and is joined by balance pipes.

Either side of the choke knob on the console are two of the most idiotic idiot lights I've come across. They're for the indicators. As you have to keep a thumb on the indicator button to make them work anyway, the lights are totally surplus to requirements.

But the tank itself is a good size, over 4.1 gallons. Trouble is, the vibration gets at it as well.

First the rubber trim between the two halves at the rear of the tank flies off. It's held on by small patches of double sided sticky tape. Then the mounting bolts for the tank halves start to unscrew themselves.

The most eye-catching feature of the Wide Glide, as far as the general public is concerned, is the paint on the tank. Good old flames in red and yellow on black. In customising terms it's years out of date but it sure does get you noticed. Just like every other Harley it makes people talk to you or acost you in the street as you're parking it. Two bikers called me a poser as we waited at some lights, a bike cop passed comment to the effect that I looked after it well, women smiled and winked when I stopped to let them cross at zebras. A real ego trip.

That, of course, is what this bike is all about. It's not a custom, it's not a statement of its owner's skill or individuality, it's a prop for an over-inflated ego.

Nevertheless, it has to be said that like most Harleys it is enjoyable to ride within its limits. The fact that those limits don't come anywhere near what the average biker expects from a machine less than half the size and price is beside the point. For blowing the minds of the bourgeoisie it's ace, for posing along the Kings Road it's great. Come to that it's great for doing a steady 55mph on the freeways it was designed for. And if you do decide to up the speed for a while, or for as long as your body can take the strain, then it tracks and corners surprisingly well. Even when being

pressed hard it declines to weave in the way the Sportster does, or wallow in the way a Glide will. And with that endless supply of torque on tap you can beat most things away from the lights.

One thing that did surprise us — and the importers — was the fuel consumption. At an average of 37mpg it was way down on what is normal for this motor. The plugs looked as if the carburation was on the rich side, but still the consumption was not in line with other bikes with the same motor that have been through our hands. Consumption of oil was, though. The Wide Glide drank a litre every 300 miles. It doesn't leak, it just seems to digest the stuff. The only clues as to where it goes were the great clouds of smoke blown out of the pipes after a cold start. The only leak was a weep from a rocker spindle on the rear pot.

The styling work is down to one of the direct descendants of the original D in H-D, William G Davidson. He is not a professional stylist, nor is he exactly a young man. These two facts may account for some of the oddities that adorn the Wide Glide. For instance, William G decided that it was a bad thing to see cables running down the front fork. So the speedometer is driven by a cable taken from the gearbox. This leaves just the brake hoses running down the fork legs. Mind you, they look pretty odd with tightly curved metal tube clamped to runs of ribbed rubber hose. It was also decided to retain the kickstart, although the electric starter



Console contains speedo, choke knob and idiot lights

worked every time (except once) provided the twistgrip was given a couple of twists to pump some juice into the inlet tract before the button was pressed.

If profiling is what the Wide Glide is about and you want to use one to impress chicks down the high street, you may be in for a disappointment. Once the lady in question has travelled more than a few miles on the pillion she probably won't want to know you any more. For starters, the pillion footrests are on the swinging arm, but the main problem is that good old vibration. It attacks a passenger through the seat backrest with the result that she feels like her kidneys are being scrambled.

The flame paintwork on the test bike is one option that the factory is pushing. If you want a Wide Glide but can't face the 60s paint job the choices are black, brown, red and blue. With the plain colours you get matching mudguards and some tasteful pinstriping. As yet, the UK Concessionaires are only importing the flame paint job, but some of the independent Harley specialists could probably sort something out.

But what does the customer get for his money? There's that legendary motor with its endless supplies of low down torque — and vibration — there's a riding position that is crippling at over 70 and which sings the insides of your thighs in town. Above all it gets you noticed, and not just by other bikers.

But in terms of street credibility (© M Nicks 1980) I'm afraid it misses out. If I wanted an individual, custom Harley I'd go for a Roadster or Sportster and spend the extra at my local custom shop. Born to be wild? Sorry, no. Born to be wide? Fraid so: wide of the mark.



READOUT

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed	105.24mph
Standing ¼ mile	14.53sec/89.49mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Overall	37mpg
Best	43mpg
Worst	31mpg
Average full tank range	154 miles

SPEEDOMETER ACCURACY

At indicated 30mph	28.18mph
At indicated 60mph	56.38mph

BRAKING DISTANCE

From 30mph	43ft (13.1m)
From 60mph	153ft (46.6m)

ENGINE

Type	OHV 45-degree in-line V-twin
Capacity	1338.6cc
Bore x stroke	88.8 x 108mm
Compression ratio	8:1
Carburation	Single 38mm Keihin

Claimed bhp at rpm	60 at 4800
Claimed torque at rpm	67 ft-lb (9.26kgm) at 3600
Transmission	Duplex primary chain, wet multiplate clutch, 4-speed gearbox, chain final drive

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

230W alternator, electronic ignition, 50/40W headlamp

CYCLE PARTS

Frame	Duplex cradle
Suspension	Telescopic front fork, pivoted rear fork with 3-way adjustable dampers
Wheels	Wire spoked
Tyres	3.00 x 21 inch Goodyear Sport Rib front, 5.00 x 16 inch Goodyear Speed Grip rear
Brakes	Twin 10in (255mm) discs front, single 12in (300mm) disc rear

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	65in (1650mm)
Seat height	27.5in (700mm)
Overall width	28in (711mm)
Ground clearance	6in (152mm)
Weight (with 1 gal fuel)	632lb (287kg)
Fuel capacity	4.16 gal
PRICE	£4369

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Top left: ZP1 single seater and MZ 250. Top right: Bonnie and ST2. Above: swoopy new SL1 attached to a Kawasaki Z440 twin

THE SQUIREARCHY

Peter Watson spends an interesting — and sometimes hairy — day with the men from Squire Sidecars and four of their very varied combinations, including the latest wedge on a wheel single seater

ASK Peter Rivers-Fletcher of Squire Sidecars what machines are best for sidecar haulage, and he just smiles. 'Anything,' he says. 'If a bike's selling well, people want a sidecar fitted.' They've produced fittings for such unlikely models as Honda's CB400F and RD400s. Anything is possible, providing you don't own either a Laverda or a CBX. 'We looked at the CBX,' he recalls mournfully, 'but there

was just no way we could do it properly.' His favourite is the Kawasaki Z1000ST. 'Cruise at 90 all day: lovely bike.'

So how is business for Europe's largest — excluding the Czechoslovakian Velorex factory — sidecar producer? 'People talk about a sidecar boom,' says Peter, 'but for us it's just been a case of steady growth.' In 1974 Squire produced less than 100 units, but by 1980 that had risen

Continued on page 52



Mike Williams-Raahauge (left) and Peter Rivers-Fletcher



Squire PV1 and Vespa 150 scooter: very, very slow

to 2000. In fact sales dipped last year and the Bidford-on-Avon workforce has been cut back from 25 to 13 recently. Export sales take care of 40 per cent of production: a strong pound and the recession have taken their toll. When the Velorex factory were unable to supply Jawa-CZ, Squire produced over 2000 budget-specification Javelin single seaters to mate with the 350 two-stroke twin. Now that regular business has gone — Velorex are back on the British market — but Squire have fresh plans and new models coming up. As Peter Rivers-Fletcher says, they've seen new sidecar producers come and they've seen them go.

As a small sample of their wares — seven basic body/chassis variations — Squire had lined up four combinations for us to sample. They ranged from a humble, yet remarkably rapid, MZ outfit, through more sporting Z440 and Bonneville powered three-wheelers to a Vespa scooter device. This last chair has sold well in Japan, no less, where Vespa ownership suddenly became chic last year. The weirdness of it all is rather appealing.

Apart from the new wedge-shaped SL1 tied to the Kawasaki, I was most interested in the ZP1 MZ single seater. MZ used to produce a superb combination — complete with hydraulically-actuated side-car wheel brake — in the days of the banana tank and Earles-type fork. But the Supa 5 has a twin-tube spine frame which poses obvious problems for sidecar chassis attachment. I was dying to discover how Squire had solved the riddle and examine their strange articulated arm attachment that runs from the rear of the swinging arm to the sidecar chassis.

The ZP1 chassis features four-point fixing to the MZ frame,

with an enormous double clamp on both the main spine tubes just aft of the steering head and under the fuel tank. Then there's another cranked arm which spreads its loading on to the MZ frame via a plate and three fixing points: one is to the swinging arm pivot another to the footrest mount. Further back is a large clamp on the frame rail under the seat. The articulated arm employs rubber bushes at each end and moves in one plane with the rise and fall of the swinging arm, attaching low down on the sidecar chassis. It's there to reduce the loading on the swinging arm pivot bearings via flexing of the rear subframe and suspension.

In practice this set-up works extremely well, producing a satisfyingly rigid three-wheeler. Peter Rivers-Fletcher hurled the outfit through a left-hander with the sidecar wheel held high in the air. As the passenger during this escapade I remained impressed. At the controls myself I was startled by the performance of the MZ and ZP1, whether loaded or without human ballast. The chair adds a mere 100lb (45.4kg) to the bike, and with a 17 instead of 20 tooth gearbox sprocket it pulls superbly up to an indicated 60-65mph. The sheer torque of the little rubber-mounted 250 two-stroke single is surprising and the handling — with a friction steering damper fitted — is safe as long as you remember that the sidecar is very, very light. £420.90 to you including fittings, hood, tonneau cover, delivery charge and VAT. Worried about the MZ's left-mounted kickstart? The knack — and bruising — is easily acquired.

A good deal more impressive in a different way was the ST2 luxury spec single seater and 750 Bonnie. Very sensitive to sudden power on/off changes, it

could be hustled up to 70mph in no time. The ST2 is a very comfortable sidecar which shares its leading link, rubber in torsion suspension with the rest of the Squire range. It also features a perimeter chassis and roll bar, large luggage compartment with locking lid and an alloy wheel wearing a 5.20 x 10in Mini-sized crossply tyre. Later versions will feature a forward-hinging screen for easier access and conversion kits are available. The whole deal weighs 185lb (84kg) and costs £757.85 complete.

I found Squire's latest sidehack, the SL1 wedge, to be a very comfortable chair indeed. The sensibly shaped screen folds forward — there's an over-centre clip at each side — and the seat back comes out for easy access to the luggage compartment. We liked the styling, but that's a matter of personal taste, and despite the lack of an all-round chassis rail to protect the superb glass fibre it felt very secure. Like the ZP1, it runs on a 4.00 x 8in scooter-size tyre.

Almost ideally matched with the Z440, the SL1 and Kawasaki seemed to peak at around 70mph. Side draughts, always a problem with Squire's original ST1 single seater, don't get to an SL1 passenger and there's a small dash moulded to accept a radio or tape player. At £484 complete it should sell extremely well. Again, it is very light and you need to take every care on tight left-hand bends. The speed with which our photographer Michael Bailie vacated the SL1 seat says everything you'd want to know about my skill as a sidecar driver.

Attached to a Vespa 200 I'm sure that Squire's dinky little PV1 would burble along quite nicely. With a mere 149.5cc at

my disposal and Peter Rivers-Fletcher in the chair it droned to 40mph and finally struggled up to a mind-blowing 45 miles an hour. Frankly, the Japanese (and anyone else for that matter) are welcome to it. If such is your bent, £442.75 is the size of the dent it will make in your wallet.

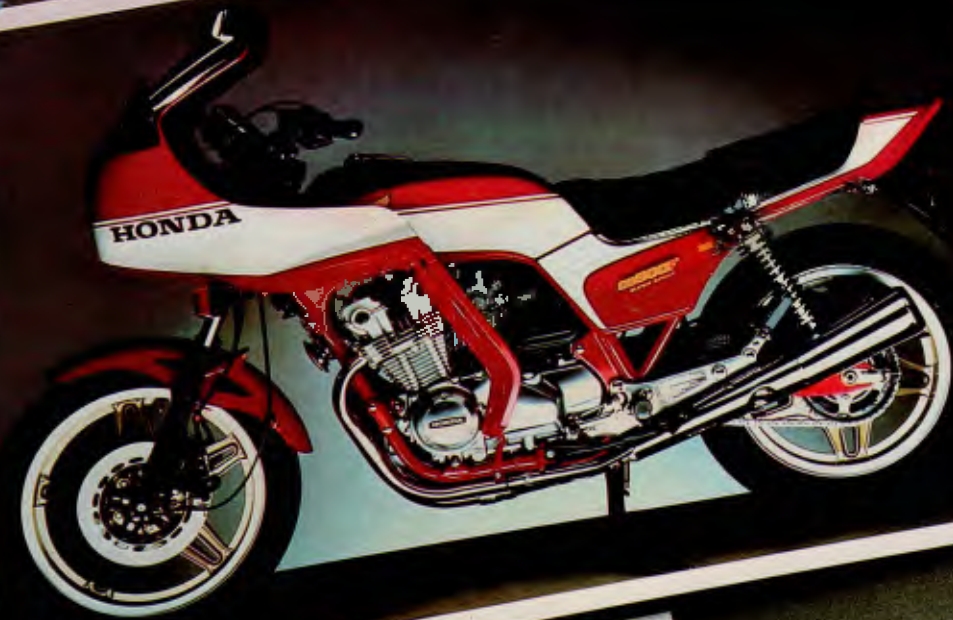
Back inside the Squire factory, which covers a well-filled 7,500 square feet, we were able to examine the production line. Bodies are moulded by no less than four outside suppliers and the quality is second to none. Domestic cooks make up an array of stove-enamelling ovens, but the spray booth is rather more modern. All welding is by the MIG process and Squire has a rig on which it can test new chassis/fitting combinations dynamically, rather than let their customers discover where it's going to break.

Peter Rivers-Fletcher and his partner Mike Williams-Raahauge — don't let the double-barrelled names fool you; these guys have dirt under their nails — have plenty more sidecars planned. To augment their current range they have a very nicely styled double-adult enclosed saloon chair coming up. This will increase their 'family' market coverage; the RS1 child-adult model is Squire's only one designed to carry two at present.

With their new model and current range Squire seem poised to do well when the economic going gets better. Until then, they'll just have to ride it out. On three wheels, of course.



Three-wheel drifting on MZ 250 and Squire ZP1



CB 900F2



CB750F



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Specifications	CB750F-B	CB900F-B	CB900F2-B
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Power Output:	79ps at 9,000 rpm (DIN).	95ps at 9,000rpm (DIN).	95ps at 9,000rpm (DIN).
Ignition System:	Fully transistorised.	Fully transistorised.	Fully transistorised.
Gearbox:	5-speed constant mesh.	5-speed constant mesh.	5-speed constant mesh.
Seat Height:	31.78 ins.	31.78 ins.	31.78 ins.
Kerb Weight:	553.35 lbs.	557.76 lbs.	586.42 lbs.
Fuel Capacity:	4.4 galls.	4.4 galls.	4.4 galls.
Colours Available:	Black, Silver and Red.	Black, Silver and Blue.	Silver/White or Red/White.
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A 1952 AJS in the special test; competitors were timed over a double loop on a loose, sandy surface



Clive Dopson and his father's lovely Norton 500T

A THUMPING SUCCESS

Julian Ryder down among the big singles at the four-strokes only Talmag Trophy Trial

There are very few places and events nowadays where you can see and hear over 200 four-stroke engines being used in competition. If you add to that a requirement for the machines to be built before 1965 there are even fewer.

Just about the only sport in which you can see British single-cylinder thumpers being used over the same sort of ground as they used to be is four-stroke trials. Quite often they're being used by the same people who used to ride them when British machines were pre-eminent in every branch of two-wheeled sport.

Four-strokes only trials are run fairly regularly, but there is one event which stands head and shoulders above the rest, both for the variety and quality of the bikes and its friendly atmosphere — the Talmag Trophy Trial. This year's event was held late in January on Army land at Hungry Hill just outside Aldershot. It was blessed with fine weather and clear skies. Too much rain on the predominantly sandy sections would have ruined things; who

wants to look at beautiful old machinery when it's covered in a four inch layer of clinging mud?

The sections themselves weren't too demanding. No way would any clerk of the course ask people who've spent years lovingly restoring a classic trials bike to risk wrecking it on sections designed to penalise the aces.

As is usual practice at the Talmag there were several classes, the only common factor being that all engines had to be four-stroke. The first class was for pre-1965 machines under 300cc and comprised mainly BSA C15s and Triumph Tiger Cubs plus a handful of 250cc Royal Enfields.

Then there were pre-1965 bikes over 300cc with no rear suspension. The rest of the classes were for machines over 300cc with unit construction engines; for girder forked bikes and two sidacar categories, pre and post '65.

In the over-300cc classes the bulk of entries were mounted on Matchless, Ariel, AJS or Royal Enfield with a sprinkling of Nortons and BSAs. The unit-

construction entry was mainly of B40s and Triumphs.

There was no dearth of interesting bikes this year. The oldest machine was a 1930 248cc Ariel Colt ridden in the girder fork class by Terry Costigan. Also in the girder fork class was a very pretty 1938 350cc Levis. In amongst the Cubs and C15s in the under 300cc class was one real oddity. A Cub chassis housing a twin-cylinder engine as used to power the Triumph Tigress scooter. Not a machine to excite the purist, but owner L Noble from Sheffield was getting it up the obstacles as well as most others in his capacity bracket.

Wandering around the parking area — there is no such thing as a paddock at the Talmag — looking at the big bangers soon blunted the senses. So many nicely restored 350 and 500 Ajays and Matchboxes. I didn't realise Royal Enfield made that many trials bikes, let alone that so many people had spent a lot of time and effort rebuilding them. Then there were the Ariels. Sammy Miller was there

continued on page 61



Section six defeated most machines, in this case a 1959 350cc AJS



A 1957 500cc Ariel HT exiting a typical Talmag section



A typical Talmag hat sported by the rider of a 1949 Douglas 350



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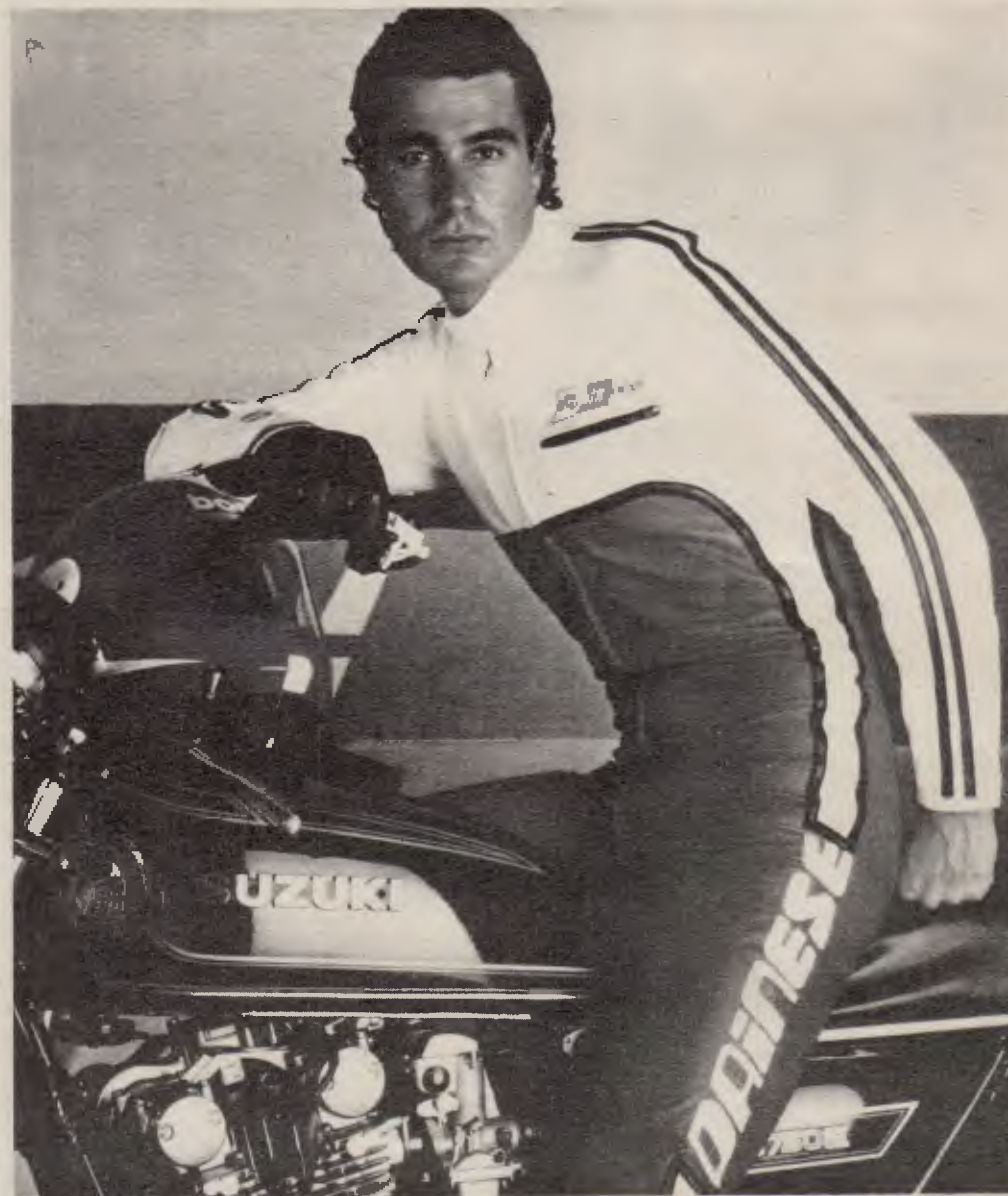
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Messrs Devonshire and Free keep their Ariel on an even keel



Sammy Miller heading for his only dab of the day

A THUMPING SUCCESS

on a 500. A quick check of the rear guard revealed that it was not that most famous of Ariels, this one bore the lettering NOT GOV 132.

It doesn't take long before an immaculate Matchless G80 or Ariel HT isn't worth more than a cursory glance. Only when confronted with something like a beautiful Norton 500T or nice Gold Star did my brain register envy.

Clerk of the course John Allaway reckons that about half of the classic bikes there are only used in anger once a year, at the Talmag. Inevitably this leads to some less than professional attempts on the sections and the occasional muttered comment to the effect that if the bloke can't ride it he shouldn't be allowed to own it. But for most riders the Talmag is a social occasion, a chance to gallop the bike you've spent perhaps years restoring over some not-too-tricky obstacles.

Winning is not what it's about. After all, with Sammy Miller and ex-works rider Tony Davis in the field, the average clubman is not really in with a shout. So it's nice to be able to report that competitors treated observers with every courtesy, there was a minimum of hanging about before attempting sections and, above all, everyone was obviously enjoying themselves.

John Allaway had laid out the course with the intention of letting one competitor from the three major classes go round two laps of 15 sections clear. A timed special test would decide ties. At the end of the day his skill was

amply illustrated by the fact that Tony Davis had gone through the day clear in the unit construction class on his B40, Clive Dopson was clear in the over 300cc rigid rear section, but nobody cleared the whole course in the over 300cc with rear suspension class.

Of all people it was Sammy Miller who lost out with one dab on section six during the first lap. Although most of the sections were gentle, the sixth was not — a full bore climb up a very steep gully with a tricky exit. After a few machines had been up the surface was reduced to a mix of large stones and loose earth. Those who got through without losing five marks did so by staying over to the left as far up the bank as possible before they had to cross the loose surface and exit right-handed. Miller dabbled when his front wheel lifted.

If you were looking for an overall winner, then the special test showed Clive Dopson was quicker than Tony Davis. However, neither was quicker than grass track ace Julian Wigg whose 500 Royal Enfield seemed to spend a lot of time with its front wheel off the deck. Dopson, 24, a graduate of the Surrey schoolboys trials club, rode an immaculate 500T Norton restored by his father.

Around 3000 people watched the Talmag this year, more spectators than are usually seen at a trial anywhere. If you like watching trials machines that bear a strong resemblance to road bikes — especially old British bikes — in competition, you'd better be there next year.



Penny Page hops her Triumph Tiger Cub over a log



S Lambert aims his Douglas up the approach to section six

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308 TRACKSTAR

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153 COSSACK

A Lancer-front jacket lined in nylon featuring three front zip pockets and waist adjusters. From stock: sizes 34" to 44" chest. Colours: Black, Royal, Blue and Red. Other colours to order. (Quilted lining optional).

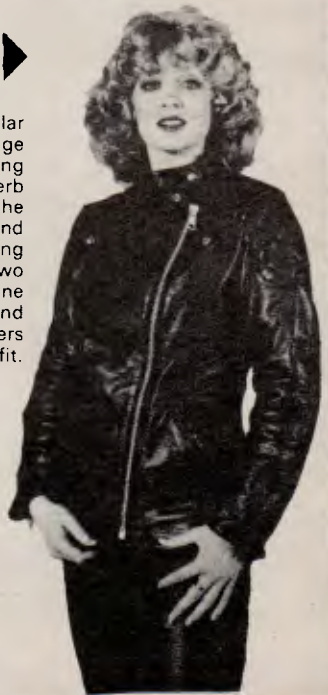


292 "MONACO" ONE-PIECE TOURING SUIT

Features heavy-duty two-way zip, padded elbows, hips and knees and quilted padding from the shoulders to the neck. Twin arm stripes standard. One inside pocket. Nylon lined. From stock: sizes 34" to 44" chest. Maximum height: 5' 11". Colours: Black and White, Red and White, Royal Blue and White.

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252 ROAD RACING BOOTS 11"

Lightweight, non-slip soles are the feature of these superb boots made in Northampton. Made from soft hide. To ensure a good fit two buckle adjusters and gear lever pads are incorporated. From stock: sizes 4 to 12. Colours: Black, Red, Royal Blue, White, Light Blue, Green and Yellow.

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SECOND SKIN

Speedman



Speedman Italian-style one-piece suit. Fourteen colours available, cotton or satin lining. Priced from £145 inc VAT



Speedman Niagara jacket. Sizes 34 to 44 or made to measure. Priced from £74 (sheepskin) to £85 (cowhide) including VAT



Speedman Touring jeans. Padded at hips and knees. 26-36 waist, leg length to measure. Priced from £68 including VAT

Kershaw



Kershaw two-piece touring suit. Suit zips together at waist, jacket features elasticated back panel. Price £135 inc VAT



Kershaw Chevron jacket. Padded shoulders, two zipped pockets at waist. Made in sizes 36 to 44 or to measure. Price £68 inc VAT



Kershaw (Kawasaki) motocross jeans. Padded at knees and hips. Also available in other colours. Priced from £64 inc VAT



ONCE upon a time a set of leathers was something only racers used. Not any more. Road riders have come to appreciate the protective qualities of leather and sales of leathers are on the up. Cowhide is by far the most popular material available but sheepskin is also used as is goatskin and even horsehide. When buying leathers there are four priorities to consider — price, quality, fit and usage. A set of leathers is an investment that should last a long time but remember that you get what you pay for. Quality costs. Although many manufacturers carry a reasonable stock, most of them will make a suit to your measurements so take care to get the right fit. Also, do you really need a one-piece suit when perhaps a two-piece outfit, or even a set of matching jacket and jeans, might not serve you better? Posing is all right if you have the bread but practicality pays better in the long run. So, sit back and have a good look at what's available. A full list of manufacturers is on page 67.

Kett



Kett Contour 5 one-piece suit. Available in five different colour schemes. Elasticated back panel. Price approx £111 inc VAT



Kett Contour 5 two-piece touring suit. Also available in ladies' style. Zips together at waist. Priced from about £120 inc VAT



Kett Utah 445 jacket. Features stand-up collar and padded shoulders. Sizes 34-44. Black, red or blue. Price £71.95 inc VAT

Manx



Manx Motorcycle Leathers two-piece touring suit. Zips together at waist. Colours and styles to choice. Priced from around £170 inc VAT

Dainese



Dainese Toga one-piece racing suit. Elasticated back panel. Available in several colour styles and made to measure. Price £150 inc VAT



Dainese Brix jacket. Black only. Sizes 36-42. Flap collar, three front pockets. Waist belt. Price around £85 including VAT

Damen



Damen Bonera one-piece suit. Only available in red/black. Sizes 38-44. Inside chest pocket. Price £150 including VAT



Damen Motoski two-piece. Features built-in waistcoat. Available in two colours and in men's and ladies' sizes. Price £170 inc VAT

h



Lewis leathers K16 one-piece racing or touring suit. Sizes 34-44. Cotton lined. Three stock colour styles. Price £150 inc VAT



Lewis Leathers Super Monza 445 jacket. Sizes 34-44: yellow, med blue, navy, red or black. Quilted lining. Price £92.95 inc VAT



Lewis Leathers K16 jeans. Waist belt, two pockets. Price £71.95 inc VAT. Matching K14 jacket also available at £89.95 inc VAT

BMW



BMW two-piece touring suit. Zips together at waist. Available in grey/white or blue/white. Price £260 including VAT

Schott



Schott 620 jacket. Detachable fur collar. Available in sizes 38-44. Priced at £95 including VAT. Manufactured in the United States



JBW Bikestyle two-piece suit. Available in red/black only, in sizes 36 to 44. Zips together at waist. Priced at £95 including VAT

John Brown Wheels



JBW Bikestyle Ruffa B5 jacket. Available in black only in sizes 36 to 44. Padded shoulders. Priced at £64.95 inc VAT



JBW Bikestyle casual leather jeans. Black only; waist has loops for belt. Sizes 30-36. Price is £29.95 including T

TT Leathers



TT Leathers Kenny Roberts Replica one-piece suit. Rounded collar, elasticated back panel. Sizes 36-44. Price £137.91 inc VAT



TT Leathers Eagle two-piece touring suit. Zips together at waist. Sizes 36-44 or made to measure. Price £148.26 inc VAT

Belstaff



Belstaff Buxton jacket. Made from sheep nappa in red, black or blue. Two hip pockets, rounded collar, zipped cuffs. Price £55.18 inc VAT



Belstaff Cossack jacket. Made from cowhide. Three colours (red, black, blue) with matching stripes. Price £56.70 inc VAT

Furygan



Furygan Furybest one-piece suit. Sizes 38-42 or made to measure. Price £225 inc VAT (add 10% for made to measure outfit)



Furygan Furyroad jacket. In black or black with orange detailing. Isothermic lining. Price £90 (black) or £95 (black/orange)

Goldtop



Goldtop Trophy Patrol J706 jacket and matchmated T2 jeans. Jacket has quilted thermal lining, 34-44. £90 (jacket), £60 (jeans)



Goldtop Trophy Patrol Ladies' jacket and Ladies' T1 jeans. Jacket and jeans specially tailored for ladies. £80 (jacket), £50 (jeans)

BEATING THE VISOR RIP-OFF

Can't afford to replace that scratched helmet visor? Peter Watson may have the answer to your problem

I BOUGHT a visor for my helmet last week. It wasn't a genuine Bell item, but even so it cost me £2.50. A weekend's hard riding and 650 miles later it's fit for the dustbin, so badly scratched as to be positively dangerous at night. Now that's an expensive hobby. It's also annoying, because we reckon that your average visor costs about 20p to make.

So why not make your own? A friend of mine has been doing just that for years and says that as long as you have a helmet fitted with a visor stamped out of polycarbonate or acetate sheet and can locate a supply of the right size press studs, it's simple. If you own a Kiwi, Nolan or Nava lid with their moulded polycarbonate visors, then you're in trouble.

First, however, find your sheet

of clear polycarbonate. We bought a sheet of 0.75mm Lexan polycarbonate measuring 49 x 25 inches (1245 x 635mm) from Visijar Plastics of 1 Pegasus Road, Croydon Airport, Surrey CE2 4PR (01-686 6341). Visijar have branches in Manchester, Birmingham and Gainsborough in Lincolnshire. The sheet we bought cost £5.42 including VAT, and is the thinnest available. You could choose to use the slightly stiffer — and more expensive — 1mm, 1.5mm or 2mm, but 0.75mm sheet is quite adequate.

It's in locating the right size press studs that you may come unstuck. While the majority of helmet manufacturers — and certainly all the British firms — use the size also common to most riding suits, the odd one doesn't. Yes, Bell use a slightly smaller one which we found very hard to buy in small enough quantities. You don't want 1000 do you? That's the minimum quantity that Durable Fasteners in East London will sell you.

The larger studs — complete with a die and punch needed to fit them — can be obtained most cheaply from D Lewis Ltd at their shops in London, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester and Burnley. Their kit, at 75p, makes a lot of sense, although you also get the male stud which you don't want.

If you want a better quality hand tool set comprising punch and two dies then Durable Fasteners of 138-146 Cambridge Heath Road, London E1 (01-790 0638/9/0) will sell you a Maun set for £6.50 plus VAT and postage. At the Creech Coachtrimming Centre, 45 Anerley Road, London SE19



Tools of the trade: Lexan sheet with (left back) Lewis kit punch and die, Maun punch and dies (left front), press studs and snips (right)



G-clamp and wooden block are useful to make sure sheet is held still while you're drilling holes.



Holes can be trimmed up with either a file or Stanley knife



Securing two-piece press stud. The die (bottom) acts as an anvil, while punch must be held upright

(01-659 4135) you'll also find a similar set for £4.50. Creech also sells the large-size, two-piece female studs for 12p each.

So far we've spent a minimum of £6.17, but you need something to cut and drill the sheet with. We bought a pair of cheap 'cuts anything' snips at the local hardware store for £2.20 and then discovered that a pair of good quality household scissors — such as the Finnish-made Wilkinson Sword type — will do the job just as effectively. However, if you don't already own a pair they'll cost you £5.95.

For drilling the sheet we recommend a hand brace, as most electric drills run too fast. But since our workshop think

that hand tools equal hard work we fell back on their low-revving electric drill and stand.

As a first effort I selected a colleague's Britax helmet. It's about three years old and he can't get a visor for it anywhere. So, taking pity on the poor bloke, I set to.

First I placed his old visor firmly on the sheet of Lexan — there's paper stuck to both surfaces — and drew round it and inside the four holes using a felt-tip pen. Then I used the snips to cut out the main shape. This was surprisingly easy, and I produced some fairly smooth curves.

With four oval holes to make in the shape I'd produced I had to drill eight holes and then dress the results into shape with a file. Even if your pattern visor hasn't got elongated holes where the studs go, I'd recommend that you use them since they'll

accommodate any errors on your part.

Fitting the two-piece studs is simple. You place the half of the stud with the protruding shank into the die, slip the visor over the shank and follow it with the other half of the stud. Now fit the punch squarely on to the shank and — making certain that the punch remains perfectly upright — tap the punch smartly with a hammer. As the tubular shank deforms and burrs over so both halves of the stud come together, sandwiching the visor between them.

Now strip off the protective paper from the polycarbonate and offer up the visor to the shell and fittings. We had to relieve the pivot holes slightly with a file and Stanley knife, but otherwise everything fitted. It had taken me just half an hour to make my first visor.

We reckon that you should be able to get 15 Britax-type visors — a fairly large variety — out of that sheet of Lexan. So adding the cost of the Lewis press stud kit and the snips — but not a brace and drill bits — each visor would cost just under 56p. Using the Creech tool, studs at 12p each and the same snips and Lexan sheet would raise that to just under £1.05 each, but this doesn't account for the saving you'll make from visor number 16 on, having already written off your tooling costs.

So what does all this mean? It means that you could save yourself as much as £29 on 15 visors (or at least 18 months' supply) by producing them for roughly 22 per cent of the shop price.

And if there are any budding entrepreneurs out there reading this, why not check out the market for a pack containing punch, dies and 50 press studs? You could be surprised at the response.



The finished article: not bad

Smooth corners are fairly easy with either snips or scissors

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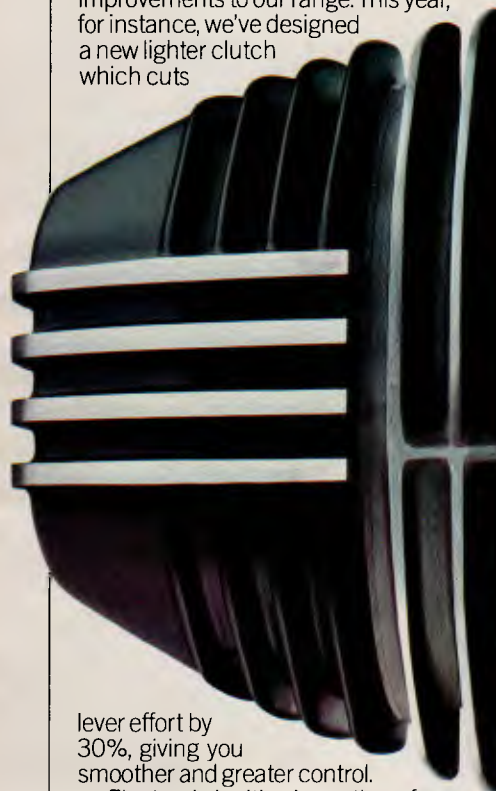
It was that aim which inspired Max Friz, the original BMW designer, to produce his revolutionary horizontally-opposed BMW R32.

And we've been in debt to him ever since, although we've far from rested on his laurels.

If we had, you'd still be pottering along at 56 mph, the maximum speed of the R32.

IMPROVEMENT, NOT COSMETIC CHANGE

While other manufacturers are trying to perfect the "in vogue" machine, we are concentrating on making genuine improvements to our range. This year, for instance, we've designed a new lighter clutch which cuts



lever effort by 30%, giving you smoother and greater control.

Electronic ignition is another of our recent innovations.

It produces a stronger spark, gives you better economy and needs hardly any looking after.

Our engines too, have been improved. Each one will now have linerless aluminium cylinder barrels with 'Galnicel' plated walls.

This will increase the engine's life in three different ways.

It reduces bore wear, disperses heat three times more effectively than normal cast-iron, and reduces oil consumption.

And that's not all.

As the engines are now lighter, the moment of inertia round their roll axes (which is already some 30° better than many a transverse 4 cylinder in line engine) is still further improved.

As you can imagine, the handling benefits accordingly.

DETAILS THAT MEAN A LOT

Not all this year's improvements are set to rock the motorcycling world.

Some just make the whole enjoyable process of motorcycling a lot easier and a little safer.

The choke lever and brake fluid reservoir are now mounted on the handlebars.

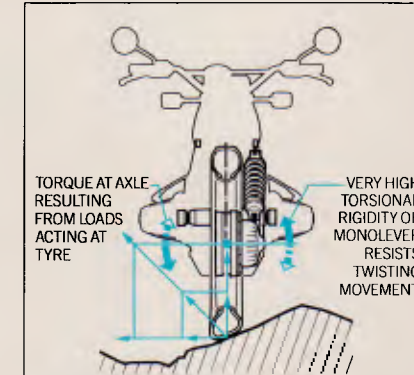
Air intake volume is increased with our new plate-type air cleaner which cuts noise and makes cleaning and renewal easier.

And to make our motorcycles safer and stronger, we've enlarged the oil sump, boosted oil circulation to reach all points when the engine is working hard and strengthened the crank case.

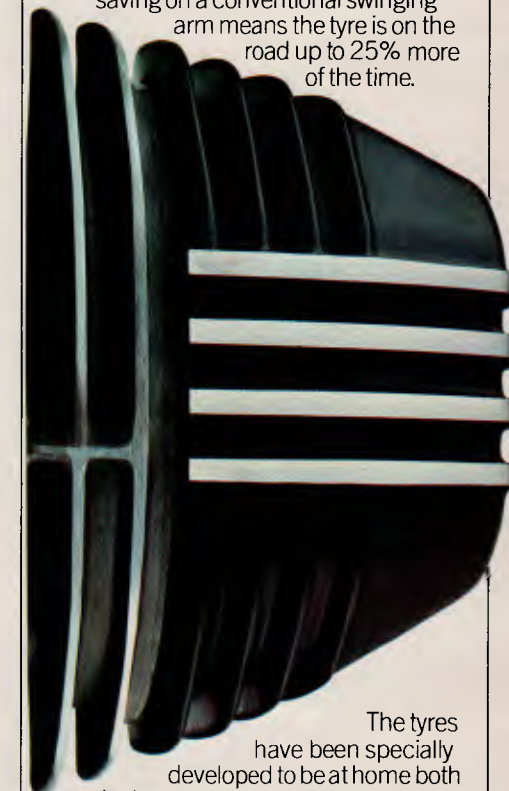
We've also fitted new semi-metallic pads onto the fixed-caliper front brake which improves wet weather braking by up to 40%.

aperitif to riding the R80G/S, but there are some figures worth mentioning.

Weighing a meagre 368lbs it has a "Monoshock" rear suspension which has been exclusively designed for BMW.



This breakthrough gives 50% greater torsional rigidity and the 4½ lbs weight saving on a conventional swinging arm means the tyre is on the road up to 25% more of the time.



The tyres have been specially developed to be at home both in the rough and on motorways and they're rated for speeds up to 106 mph. As well they might be; the R80G/S is easily capable of over 100 mph.

THE PHILOSOPHY WHICH HASN'T AGED

Philosophising about motorcycling can be overdone. The practice is what counts and that's the standpoint from which we've always wanted to talk.

Max Friz knew this when he started the process and that's why his theories haven't become outmoded.

But why should they?

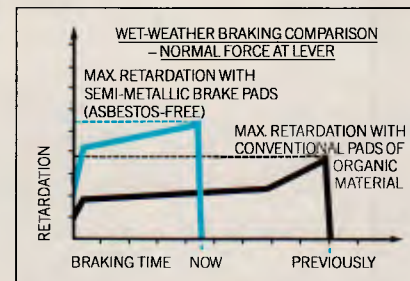
After all, the wheel evolved a long time ago, and it's been through a few refinements.

But it's still round.



THE ULTIMATE RIDING MACHINE

WHEN SOMETHING IS RIGHT IT SHOULD NEVER BE CHANGED. ONLY IMPROVED.



VARIATION ON A THEME

Anyone who thinks that sticking to sound engineering principles means standing still, should cast an eye over the new BMW R80GS.

It is, of course, a shaft-driven flat twin. It's also a one-bike revolution.

In fact, despite its cross country looks, it has already been dubbed one of the world's most responsive road bikes by the European motorcycling press.

Bare facts and figures can only be an



MICK FINDS KONI'S SUPERB ROADHOLDING SECOND TO NONE

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SINGLED OUT

Suzuki's GN400T is so closely related to the company's dirt singles that it even features six volt electrics. Peter Watson ponders the wisdom of this cost-conscious approach and concludes that at £795 you can't afford to argue against it

If you have a weakness for big, single-cylinder four-stroke road machines — or wish to sample this antique configuration — then you're faced with a very limited choice. Despite the fact that three of the Japanese gang of four have been producing similar off-road models for some time, none of them but Yamaha has exactly rushed into getting a road version on showroom floors. Indeed Honda, who produce what is arguably the best engine in this class, still appear to have no plans for a CB500RS.

Shame on them, you say, and I agree. But their reasons for this strangely dilatory display aren't hard to fathom. Joe Public expects to pay a lot less for a 400 or 500 single than he does for a multi of similar capacity, despite the fact that a single isn't a great deal cheaper to produce. The Japanese are interested in making motorcycles, but they're also quite keen on making money. Suzuki seem to have come up with a solution that satisfies just about everyone. It's called the GN400T, and it means that you get a cheap bike — at £795 it's over £250 less than the Yamaha SR500 — while Suzuki keeps its profit margin on the right side of hari-kari.

The trick is quite simple: change as little as possible in

making the SP/DR400 into the GN, and then equip the result as cheaply as you dare. The GN's 396cc engine is finished in polished alloy instead of being painted black, it has a 36mm Mikuni CV carburettor like the SP400's where the DR has a 33mm slide carb from the same manufacturer, and its overall gear reduction is naturally taller, with a slightly higher fourth gear ratio. That's the sum total of mechanical change.

Having failed to read the specification sheet kindly supplied by Suzuki, I discovered the GN's six volt electrics almost by accident. Looking for the battery — with which I hoped to warm my hands via a pair of Glo Gloves — I discovered the awful truth. Removing the right-hand side panel my eye was struck by the 6V, 4Ah pocket-sized unit common to the two trail bikes. Then I realised why I'd thought that Julian Ryder had been pumping the rear brake pedal a couple of days earlier when we rode up to test the GN's performance at MIRA; the rear brake light had dimmed and brightened regularly. In fact he'd been indicating and the primitive flywheel magneto charging system just couldn't cope with that much electrical activity. Indicating also dims the digital gear display, a gizmo obviously so

dear to the hearts of Suzuki designers that it has been, um, *improved*. No longer do the figures 1 to 5 appear superimposed on each other. Now they read left to right across a more imposing display betwixt speedo and revcounter. It's real Buck Rogers stuff: discovering that you get this and six volt lights — a hazy 35 watts up front — is like getting on Concorde and being asked to help wind up the rubber band.

We don't mind the wire spoked, chromed steel rims now almost unknown in this capacity class, but primitive trail bike lighting systems mar an otherwise sensible cost-cutting exercise. Naturally ignition is by Suzuki's PEI capacitive discharge electronic system, but that tiny battery, poor headlight and pulsing rear light nagged at me every time I came to consider the bike as a whole. Like an aching tooth, it wouldn't go away and I kept reminding myself that if I bought a GN I'd be stuck with six volts for good, or, more likely, ill.

Superficially, the GN shares the SP's chassis layout in a conventional semi-duplex cradle with a tubular pivoted fork at the rear. Trail, as well as the steering head and castor angles are naturally different. The headstock is heavily gusseted and there are



tapered roller head bearings here as well as needle roller bearings at the swinging arm pivot. The GN's suspension is unremarkable: a straightforward oil-damped fork at the front and the conventional, short-lived units at the rear.

Despite this humble equipment it handles well, aided partly by its weight — a refreshingly lightweight 338lb (153kg) — and partly by the somewhat curious riding position. At first glance this looks decidedly odd, but it works. There's a tear-drop tank, stepped seat and then — instead of the high-rise custom item you might expect — a fairly flat handlebar. It makes for a commendably low seat and a comfortable arrangement of your arms. You actually feel as if you're sitting 'in' the GN and what a pleasant sensation that is.

A custom version of the GN — codename GN400L — does in fact exist, and I recently spotted one at Heron Suzuki HQ. It has cast wheels, high-rise handlebar, fancier seat and grab rail, leading-axle fork and other bits of expensive frippery. Passed over for the British market in favour of the cheaper T version, I think that the right decision was made despite the success enjoyed by Yamaha's SR250 custom and the Z250LTD Kawasaki (which is actually a little more

expensive than the GN400T).

Phil Irving — a gentleman with whom I would be foolish to argue — remarks in his book *Motor Cycle Engineering* that the advantages of a single cylinder engine (compactness, simplicity, light weight and so on) reach a balance with the disadvantages of this configuration (basic imbalance, vibration, piston speed impediments) at around 350cc. I must admit that personal experience has always seemed to confirm this dictum, so that perhaps the GN's somewhat curious capacity makes sense in this context. Certainly it is quite amazingly smooth, and more so than the big Yamahas. Vibration only begins to intrude right at the top of the GN's rev range near its 8000rpm redline; there's no discernible vibration period before this stage, unlike so many fours. And since 6000rpm is roughly equivalent to 70mph you might usefully use this as an economical and legal rev limit. Above 80mph the engine begins to feel a trifle strained and prolonged full-bore running makes the tappets click audibly where before they snickered quietly away.

Those of you accustomed to the massive inertia of a British single's flywheels will find the GN quite a shock. It has none of the ponderous 'plonk' of years

SINGLED OUT

gone by and must be revved fairly hard around town. To this extent it hardly feels like a single at all, and is uncharacteristically gentle with its final drive chain. It makes an ideal commuter bike, and I found myself putting in some remarkably fast runs across town because the GN is so nimble and slim. Several have found their way into the hands of despatch riders: this is great value-for-money hack that's far from boring to ride. At 93mph flat out, it's about 4mph down on a good SR500, while giving away over 100cc. And unlike the SR, which in stock form is liable to weave nastily at over 70mph, its high speed stability is excellent.

Like all modern singles, the GN feels choked by its attractive looking silencer. This soon displayed a pair of livid burn marks through the chrome, testifying to some untypically Japanese localised hot spots. In addition, the GN has a habit of backfiring — the noise resembles a discreet fart — on the overrun. This seems to be something which afflicts singles with CV carbs, since the 250 Kawasaki single I sampled at Donington Park last year did the same thing. 'Yeah, they all do that,' I was informed.

From a maintenance and overhaul point of view the GN offers no terrors. The wet-sump engine's only oil filter is a simple barrel-shaped gauze strainer located in the bottom of the crankcase. A single bolt in the centre of a small round plate drains the oil; remove three more bolts and the filter drops out. It's a cheap and effective system that should only cost you oil and a little time.

Adjusting the screw-in tappets is unexpectedly tricky. Unlike the SR and XT500, which have generously-proportioned valve caps secured by a pair of Allen bolts apiece, the GN's are small screw-in items which reveal one end of each rocker arm and a tappet, far below. You'd need to bend a right-angle in any feeler gauge; Suzuki's neat little special tool looks like more of a necessity than a luxury here.

The cam box is quite a complex casting secured by no less than 11 bolts and on our test machine this is where we discovered a slight oil leak. You can, however, as you cannot on an SR500, remove the cylinder head while leaving the rest of the motor undisturbed in the frame.

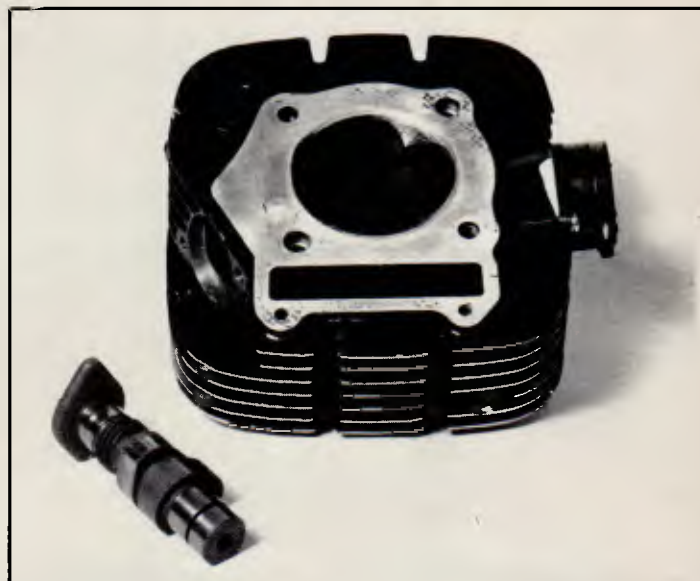
Unlike the XT and SR, the Suzuki's camshaft runs in plain bearings machined directly into the head casting. This calls for a

more copious supply of fresh, clean oil than is necessary with a camshaft supported in a pair of ballraces, but at least the extra lubrication should also stave off rocker, tappet and valve stem wear (a sore point with SR500 owners). The GN — like other big four stroke singles — puts some high loadings on rocker arm spindles and tappets. Despite this, it remains a commendably quiet engine.

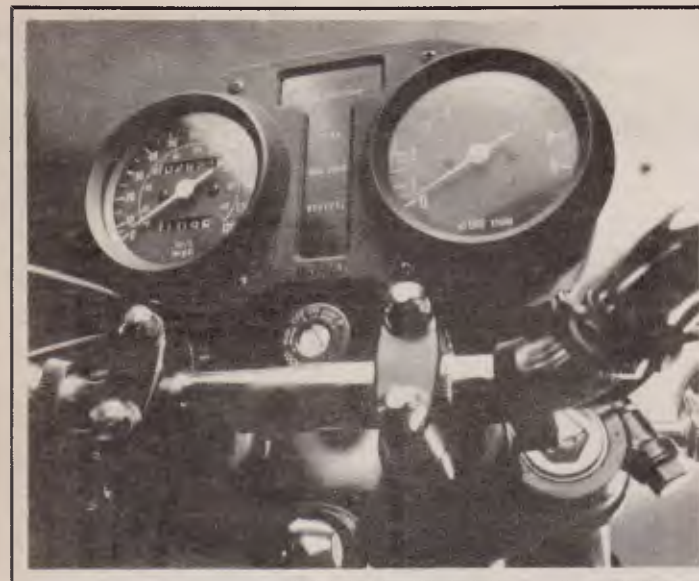
Although the GN's valves, as you can see from our photograph, appear to occupy most of the space available, they're quite a bit smaller than those fitted to the SR500. The GN's inlet valve measures 42mm across, while the SR's is a hefty 47mm; the exhaust items are 36mm and 39mm respectively. For the rest, the GN's combustion chamber and ports are fairly unremarkable. The 'scooped out' look round both valves is the result of machining expediency and has no other significance; a small weir in the inlet port is there to promote turbulence in the incoming charge.

All the big Japanese four stroke singles have had their tuning potential assessed by people interested in single cylinder racing. From this it has emerged that the four-valve Honda XL500 goes very well indeed and can be made to go even better; the XT and SR are virtually untunable; the SP/DR/GN unit can be tweaked but you've got to be careful. 'A very fragile little motor,' said one man who did a lot of work for Alf Hagon. The engine's weak point is the cylinder/crankcase joint. There is precious little metal around the four main barrel studs and just a couple of short bolts across the cam chain tower. Ask too much of the motor and the barrel lifts in a suitably dramatic fashion. Cam drive is by a narrow, single row chain, by the way.

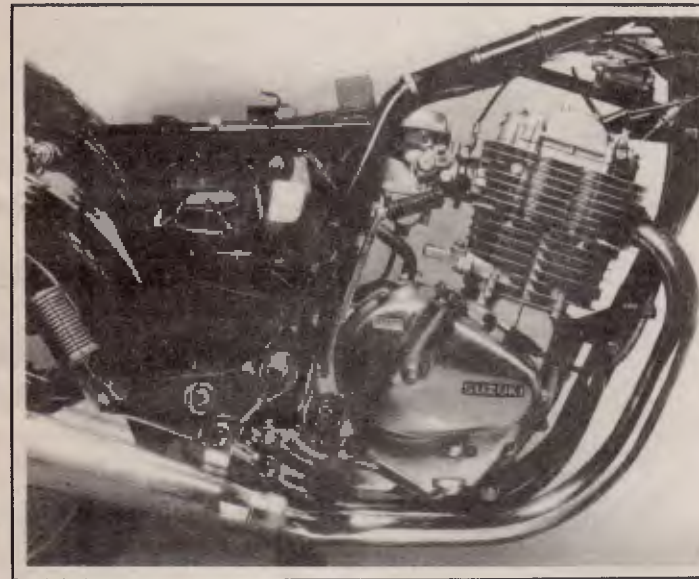
Primary drive is via substantial helical gears to a massive, six-spring, eleven-plate clutch. This last provided Julian Ryder with an intriguing and novel experience. While negotiating Trafalgar Square he changed gear, let in the clutch and was rewarded with a minor explosion and a mixture of oil and metal all over his right boot. One of the six clutch spring bolts had vibrated loose and, fired out through the side case like an unsuccessful ad rep by the clutch, it disappeared. So if you recently had brain surgery to remove an impacted clutch spring bolt... can we have it back please?



Above: Valves are about as large as possible; the cam runs in plain bearings machined direct into head casting
Below: for such a rev-happy unit, surprisingly hefty flywheels. Crankshaft is supported on massive ball and roller bearings



Above: instrumentation includes rather silly electronic gear indicator. Note combined ignition/steering lock
Below: head comes off without removing motor from frame. Note tiny 6V, 4Ah battery on left; electrics are primitive for road use



Although they're not exactly massive, the GN's steel flywheels are surprisingly weighty for such a free-revving engine. Its dimensions are usefully oversquare at 88 x 65.2mm, but it lacks massive bottom-end punch, as we've said. The built-up crankshaft is supported on two massive ball and roller main bearings, with a roller bearing big end, a 20mm plain small end and three-ring piston: all highly conventional.

Many people — quite wrongly — accuse the Yamaha SR500 of merely being an XT500 in a road chassis, which is something well removed from the truth of the matter. The two machines are related, but by no means identical. Yet this is very much the case with the SP, DR and GN Suzukis. It certainly looks like the best solution from production, profit and spares viewpoints.

But what sort of biker buys a big four stroke single in the first place? In the case of the Yamaha, a guy who isn't afraid of a kickstart. Early in its life my SR500 developed a cussedness unequalled by any Norton, Velocette or BSA singles. Originally, Suzuki used the same dab of paint on the cam and a window to show the ignorant when it was time to kick. Now they have a neat valve lifter which locks on and then clicks out when it's time to lunge downwards, and I found that it rarely failed me: unless you have a wooden leg you'll find a GN no bother. But why didn't they fit an electric starter? Even the *Sanglas* has one of those, but I suppose it would have jerked the price upwards and meant fitting a proper generator.

If you're looking for a good

all-round commuter machine, the GN fits the bill. I mean, if you've passed your test why buy a 250 when you can get a 400 for more or less the same price? Like £35 more than the Yamaha SR250 custom.

However, if you're into pan-galactic touring at mach speeds then we'd recommend you look elsewhere. The GN400 is not a super-sportster in the middle-weight four mould. Despite its modern looks it remains a big single, with all the virtues and all the traditional drawbacks.

What attracts me to it above all is its obvious honesty, for it makes no pretence to be something other than it is. It's light, nimble and cheap to run. If you can't get a regular 50 miles out of every gallon then you aren't trying hard enough. We must confess to caning the poor thing rather hard merely because it was such good fun. And 93mph — despite all those gilded memories of 100mph Gold Star singles — is going pretty quickly for a 396cc single. We were highly impressed by its speed away from the lights: a standing quarter time in the 15 second bracket means that it is no slouch.

What remains to be seen is where the big thumpers go from here. As times get harder they will continue to beckon, offering performance biking on a tight budget. Honda cannot, one hopes, hold out on us for ever.

One thing's certain: despite our keen reservations about trail bike electrics on the road, Suzuki have got it right with the GN. All objections are overturned by the simple fact that it's a quite remarkable bargain. GN400T: an awful lot of motorcycle for the money.

READOUT Suzuki GN 400T

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed 93.14mph
Standing ¼ mile 15.63sec/83.33mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Overall 57mpg
Best 60mpg
Worst 50mpg

Average full tank range 143 miles

SPEEDOMETER ACCURACY

At indicated 30mph 28.25mph
At indicated 60mph 56.51mph

BRAKING DISTANCE

Wet track

ENGINE

Type SOHC single
Bore x stroke 88 x 65.2mm
Capacity 396cc
Compression ratio 9.2:1
Carburation 36mm Mikuni
Claimed bhp at rpm 27.6 at 7200
Claimed torque at rpm 21.4ft-lb (2.95kgm) at 4000
Transmission Helical gear primary drive, wet multiplate clutch, 5-speed gearbox, chain final drive

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

Flywheel magneto, 6V, 4Ah battery, electronic ignition, 35/35W headlight

CYCLE PARTS

Frame
Suspension

Wheels
Tyres

Brakes

Semi-duplex cradle
Telescopic front fork, pivoted rear fork with 5-way adjustable dampers
Wire spoked chrome steel rims
3.00 x 18in Bridgestone Mag Mopus front
3.50 x 18in Bridgestone Mag Mopus rear
Single 11in (279mm) disc front
7.25in (184mm) sis drum rear

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase 55.2in (1410mm)
Seat height 30.5in (775mm)
Overall width 31.5in (800mm)
Ground clearance 6.5in (165mm)
Weight (with 1 gal fuel) 338lb (153kg)
Fuel capacity 2.5 gal (11.5l)

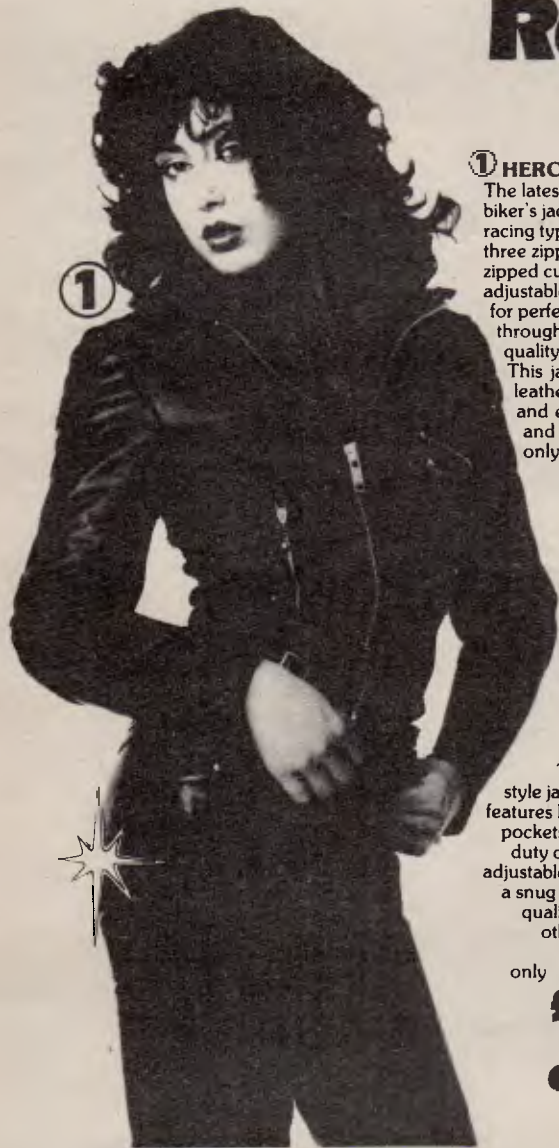
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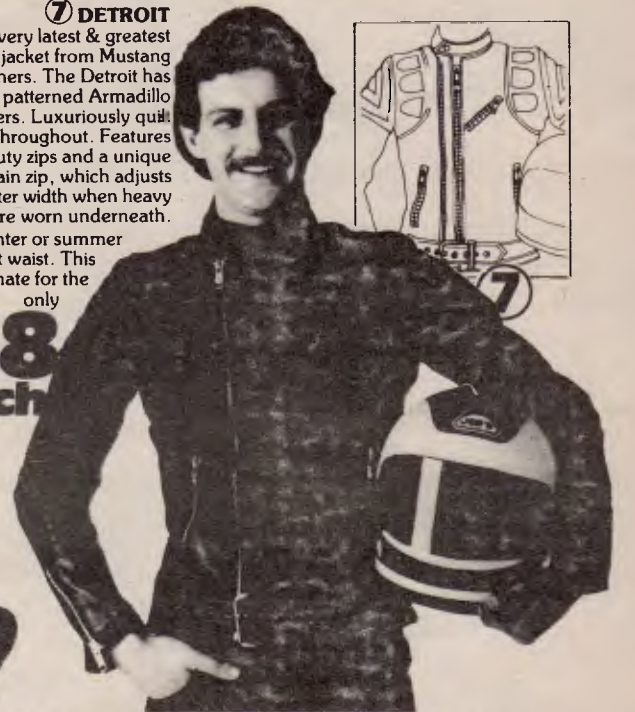
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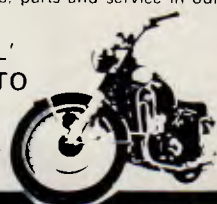
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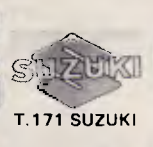
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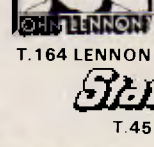
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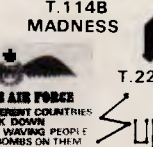
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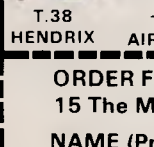
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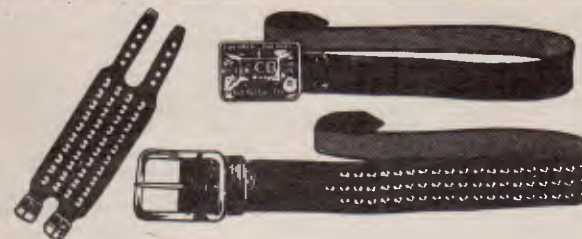
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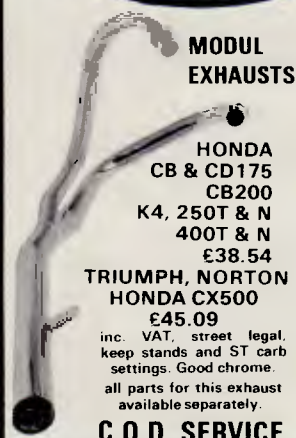
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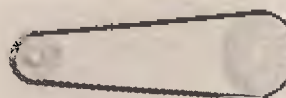
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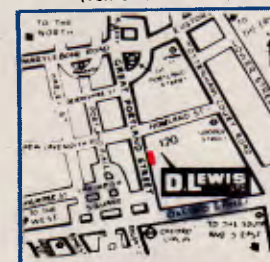
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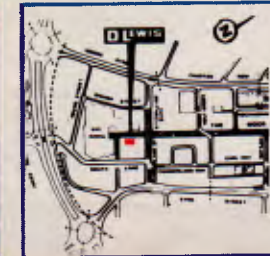
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