

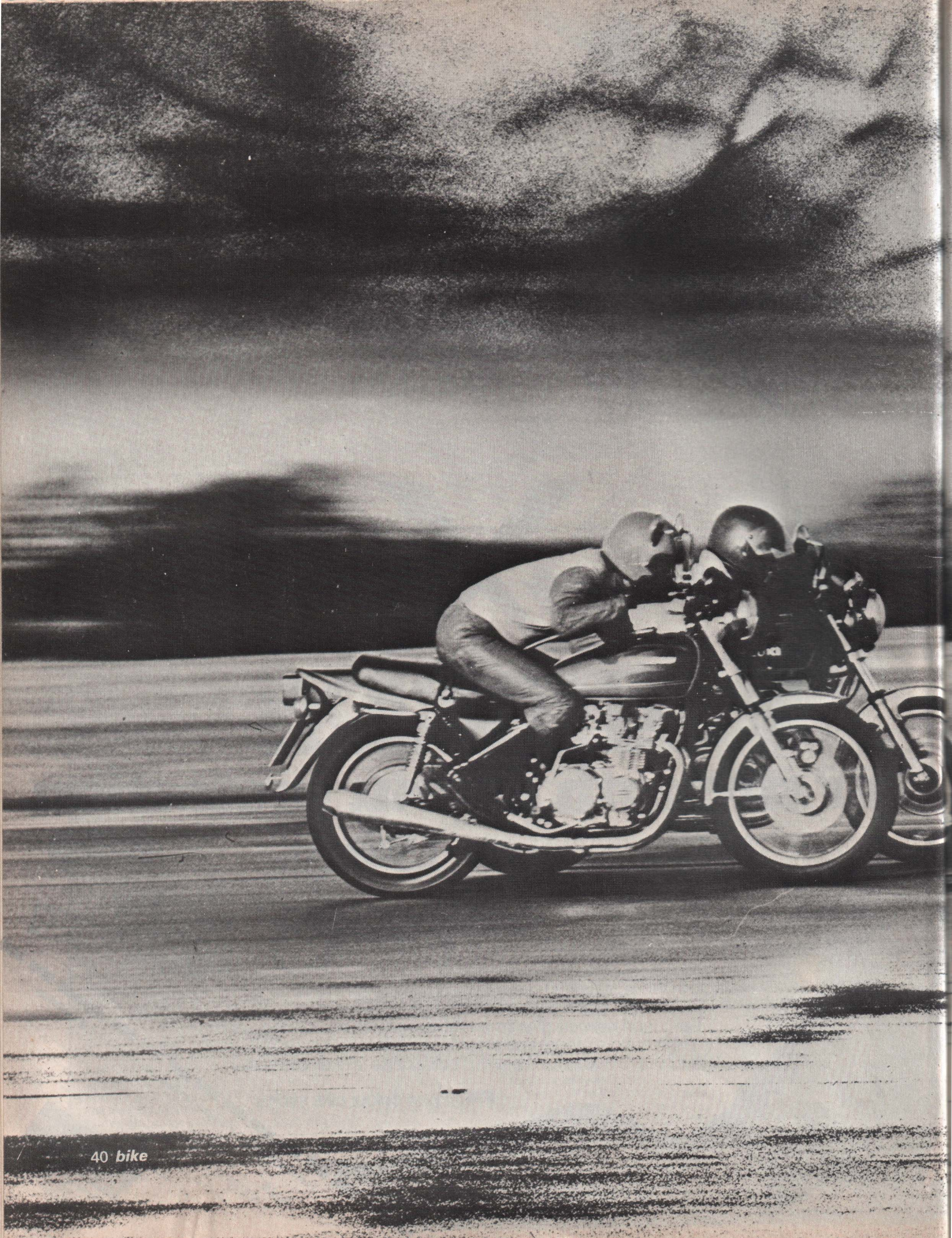
bike

MARCH 1977 40p



**Any number of
cylinders you want
as long as it's four**

**New Kawasaki Z650, Suzuki GS750,
Giant Tested**



Giant Test

Performance is back!

Bored with fours? Kawasaki's Z650 and Suzuki's GS750 could be just the machines to restore your flagging interest. Testers Graham Sanderson/Mike Nicks

DID YOU stifle a yawn when you read last year that Kawasaki and Suzuki were to introduce new in-line fours for 1977? Well, you were certainly not alone, for by now the in-line four is as familiar to bikers of this decade as vertical twins were to our predecessors of the sixties. Not that there's anything drastically wrong with the concept of four cylinders ranged side by side across a bike frame. Sales figures prove that to most riders, the smoothness, power and flexibility of the transverse fours more than make up for disadvantages in added weight, engine width and servicing complexity.

But has it all been done too often before? Admittedly, until last year only two of the Big Four Japanese makers had explored the in-line four route. But Honda, the post-war pioneers of the design in road bike form with the outrageously successful CB750 of 1969, went on to produce scaled-down versions in 350, 400, 500 and 550 cc sizes, as well as improving the tried and tested original. Kawasaki then gave us the in-line four in ultimate musclebike form with the Z-1, and proceeded from there to vary the design as a 750 (never marketed in Europe) and for this year as an amazing 1,000 cc value-for-money performance package.

Yup, with transverse fours it was apparently a cut-and-dried case of *deja vu*. Or, if you prefer, we'd seen it all before. However, the announcements of the new Kawasaki and Suzuki multis contained an intriguing promise: they were to be *performance* machines. Could this be the touch that would revive jaded palates? In recent years, as a result of more restrictive noise and emissions legislation and the growing sophistication (hence weight) of bikes themselves, the adrenalin level generated by many models has actually regressed. Also, the Japanese, inventors of instantly accessible good-time biking, to some extent turned tail on this theme and began to tout the *sensible, practical, non-excitabile motorcycle!*

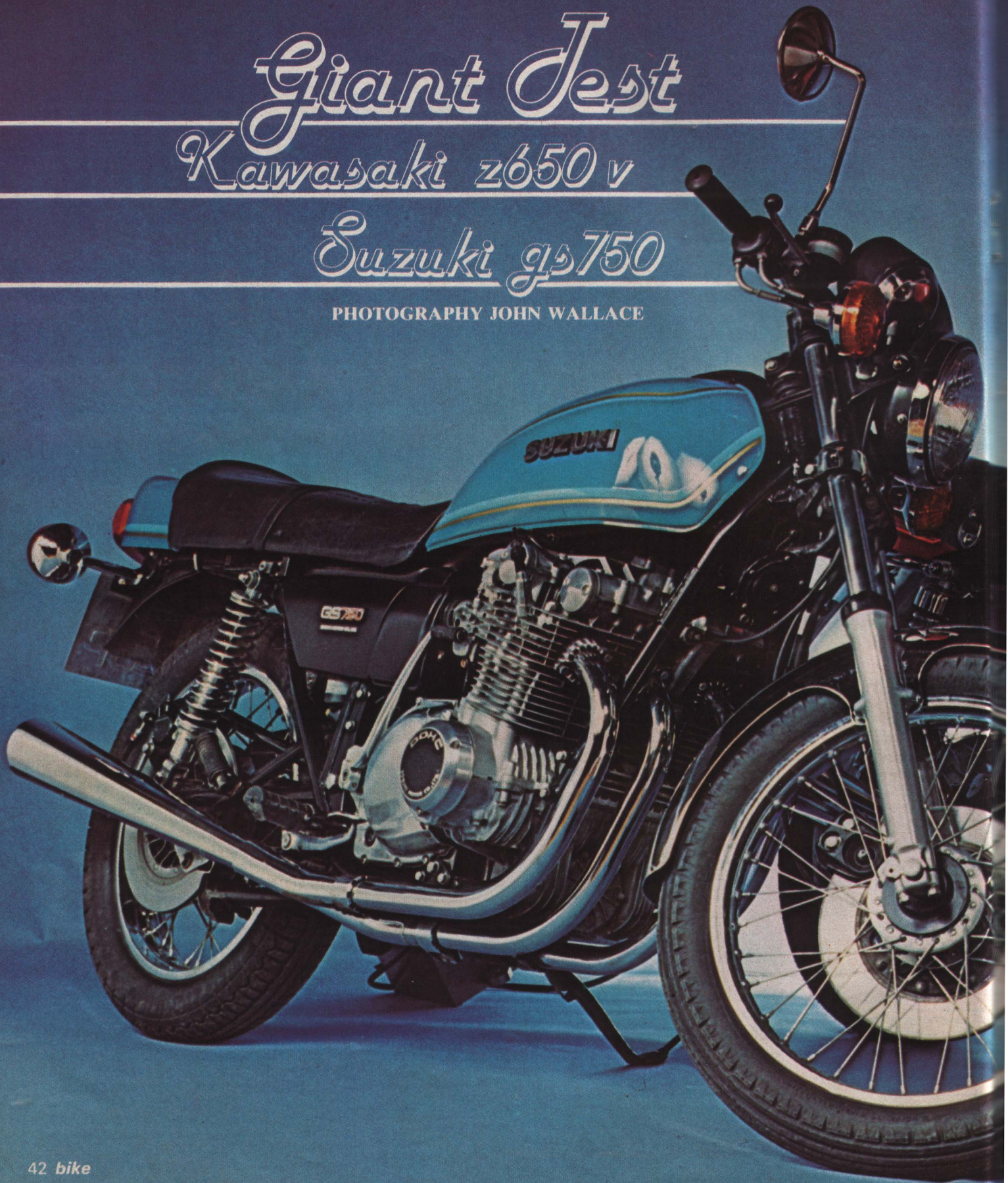
But the Z650 Kawasaki and the GS750 Suzuki newcomers were apparently a return to the roots — free-wheelin' roadsters offering the kind of charisma the original in-line fours were all about. The first of the test bikes we collected was the GS Suzuki. And when Graham Sanderson returned with tales of having seen a disgustingly illegal 128 mph on the speedo on the ride back to base, it began to look like the press releases might have been right all the way.

PHOTOGRAPHY DUNCAN CUBITT

Giant Jest
Kawasaki z650 v

Suzuki gs750

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN WALLACE





KAWASAKI

007

1650

KAWASAKI Z650

BIG-BIKE POWER married to lightweight or middleweight handling qualities is one of those elusive combinations that motorcycle buyers will eternally pursue. It can be done — but usually only at the considerable expense of seeking out exotic custom-made parts.

Kawasaki seemed to have got there with a production line bike, however, if the promotional blurb surrounding the new Z650 could be believed. 'Right out of the crate it will outperform any 750 in the world,' gushed the ads in the American mags. In the UK, the press release for last year's launch of the bike in Scotland labelled the Z650 as 'a sports machine that's more than a match for 750s — and a whole lot of fun to run'. It also promised 12.4 second standing quarters and a top end of 121 mph. As the promo material also stressed that the 650 was intended to be a compact good handler, it looked like a real poke in the eye for conventional 750s, some of which have less than wonderful high speed stability.

Well, we should have known all along that even dream weavers Kawasaki cannot attain the unattainable. They've oversold the 650, burdened it with claims that it cannot possibly fulfil. For the truth is that the bike is nothing like 121 mph fast, nor is it a 12-second quarter-miler. Our speed trap session revealed a top end of around 110 mph, with the dohc motor red-lining at nine grand in top. And through the quarter, the Z650 is about a second slower than Kawasaki claim.

However, let's turn away from the PR hype, and look at the bike for what it is, rather than as the polymorphic do-all that Kawasaki evidently hoped it would be. The term six-fifty has always held certain implied emotional connotations, dating from the fifties and sixties when these bikes were the hot set-up for the road. Rumbling vertical twins, the beat of their exhausts laid down a message that said, 'Red-blooded biking starts here.' So if it's to succeed in an ever more competitive market, any newcomer to the class really ought to continue the traditions of being a rider's machine.

The Z650 has few problems in this respect. While its absolute top end is no better than the quickest of the old style 650s, it runs at continued high speeds in a way that no Bonneville or Rocket Gold Star ever could. The Kawasaki will hold an indicated 80, 90, even 100 mph for mile after mile without flinching. On a British forty-incher, such treatment all too often

results in split number plates, shattered speedometers, telltale oil mists, loosened bolts, all caused by the vibration inherent in big vertical twins. The Kawasaki just streaks on by, leaving the characteristic graunchy wail of an air-cooled four-cylinder motor trailing in the wind.

The Kawasaki also accelerates one hell of a lot smarter than any oldie 650. Maybe not in the first few yards away from a standstill, when the torque of a twin-cylinder motor will give instant punch while a multi is still consuming clutch slip, but in the distance thereafter when the four-cylinder motor really gets onto its cams. On the test strip it ran a 13.36 second quarter, which is up to a whole second quicker than anything else in the 550/650 class, and level with several 750s. It's hard to understand why Kawasaki felt it necessary to promise a 12.4 second quarter, when the reality of the Z650's acceleration is impressive enough. It might even have gone a tenth or two quicker if the strip had been dry on test day.

On performance, then, the Z650 emerges as what one might expect — better than the 550s, generally a little behind the 750s. Yamaha's excellent XS650 vertical twin, for example, has a top speed of about 107 mph, with a low 14-second quarter mile. From the Honda and Suzuki 550s we tested in November '76, we got 111 and 108 mph respectively on top end, but both bikes were noticeably slower than the Z650 through the quarter, at 14.48 seconds for the Honda and 13.93 for the Suzuki. Honda's 750 F1 four and Suzuki's GT750 stroker triple will both run at 120 mph or close to it, and in the low thirties on the quarter. (This statement in fact contradicts speeds recorded with these two bikes for our April '76 Giant Test, but in retrospect it looks like the machines we had were a little slow at around 113 mph flat out, because other tests have consistently recorded better speeds). Kawasaki's own Z750 twin runs at 108 mph and in the low fourteens on the quarter, and in my opinion is a much inferior machine to the Z650, while costing about the same money. And finally, we have the new king of the 750 class, the GS Suzuki with its 12-second quarters and 120 mph-plus top end.

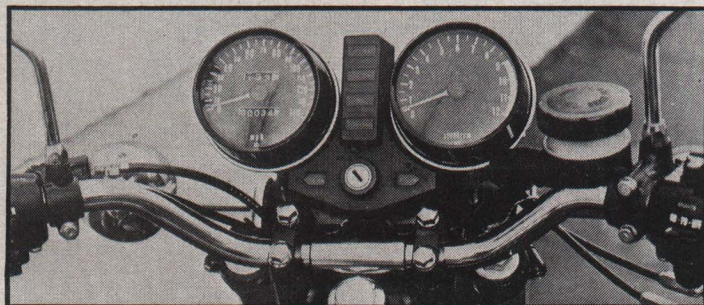
Those are the cold facts of test strip performance figures: how does the Z650 rate on the road? As soon as you swing into the saddle, you feel a reassuring compactness about the bike that tells you a lot of thought has gone into its

design. It's noticeably smaller and less bulky than 750 cc multis, and with a kerb weight of 480 lbs it's well under the 500 lbs barrier, and about 50 lbs lighter than the Honda four, for example. The handlebar is a medium rise item somewhere between the Suzuki's beautifully short, flat bar and the ugly tiller fitted to the Z1000 Kawa. The 3.7 gallon tank is neatly dovetailed in at the rear, so the rider's knees are not unduly splayed apart.

The Z650 has similar Japanese Dunlops to the covers that provided such reassuring grip on the Z1000 we tested last month. In the braking department, it has a single disc at the front and a drum at the rear. The lone front end disc is quite capable of coping with the bike's weight and bulk, and although it requires some pressure for short-distance stops on dry roads, many bikers prefer this set-up to the feeling of imminent lock-up found on over-braked machines. Those without a subliminal death wish will also prefer a drum at the rear to an all-disc arrangement. At least a drum gives some hope of instant retardation in the rain, whereas the wet weather failings of stainless steel discs as fitted to Oriental (and British) bolides are by now etched deeply into the minds of all too many bikers.

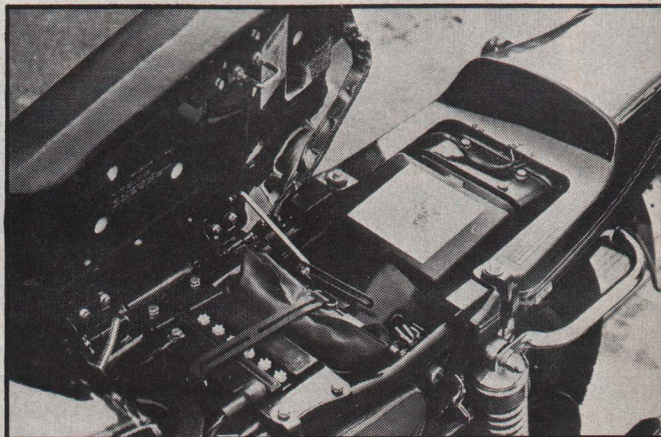
Z650 handling is good without being outstanding. The compact feel of the machine is reflected in the easy way it can be chucked into corners, and the effortless manner it threads through urban situations. Rough roads expose the limitations of the suspension, though, and no way does the Kawa approach the Italian and German ultimates in the areas of ride control and damping. The frame is a smaller version of the double cradle design used on the Z1000, and it knits front and rear ends together in a way that will satisfy the requirements of most owners.

The 64 peak horsepower of the 652 cc engine are delivered at 8,500 rpm, and maximum torque arrives at 7,000. But Kawasaki's cam designers and engine men have done a remarkable job of putting together a versatile motor, because it's certainly no top-end screamer. Power feeds in from as low as 2,000 rpm, which means you can drop to 25 mph in top without having to change down. But even more impressive is the skilful way they've matched the gearing, torque, power and overall weight of the machine so that instant zap is available in the higher gears at the kind of road speeds that you really need it. Twist the throttle of the Z650 at 50 mph in top and it moves out: no hesitation, no need to scabble down through the box. The real performance lies above six grand, when you need one eye stitched to the tachometer to avoid straying into red-line county in the lower gears, so fast do the revs rise. But you don't need 8,000 rpm to get past traffic on the 650.



Above: Column of warning lights is set between easily readable speedo and rev counter.

Right: Lifting lockable seat reveals toolkit and rider's manual compartments. Familiar Kawasaki tailpiece is now blanked off and cannot be used as stowage area.



What helps here is that the bike's overall gearing seems on the low side. At 70 mph in top the Kawasaki's mill is spinning at 5,600 rpm, whereas a 650 Trumpet would be pulling only about 4,250 rpm at the same speed, and that from a four-speed gearbox. At medium speeds on the Z650 the inherent mechanical whir of a multi's complexity of pistons, chains, and gears adds to the general feeling of busyness, and you often have to tap the gear lever just to check that you have in fact reached top. At high speeds, when wind rush drowns engine noise, it's a really carefree ride. But if Kawasaki wanted to impress the market with a higher top end from the bike, it seems it would definitely pull taller gearing, although this would naturally take something from the searing acceleration.

The engineers who gave Kawasaki the original Z-1 also evolved the 650, so it's no surprise that the smaller bike has something of the feel and style of The King. But in fact there are major internal design differences. The one-litre four demanded a pressed-up crankshaft running on needle roller bearings. A forged one-piece crank turning on plain bearings works well enough for the 650. Power take-off from the crank is by gear on the Z1000, but the little one uses a one-inch Hy-Vo chain with the drive sprocket located between the centre cylinders. This spins a secondary shaft between the engine and the transmission, an arrangement that is claimed to reduce mechanical noise and facilitate maintenance — the clutch housing can be removed without

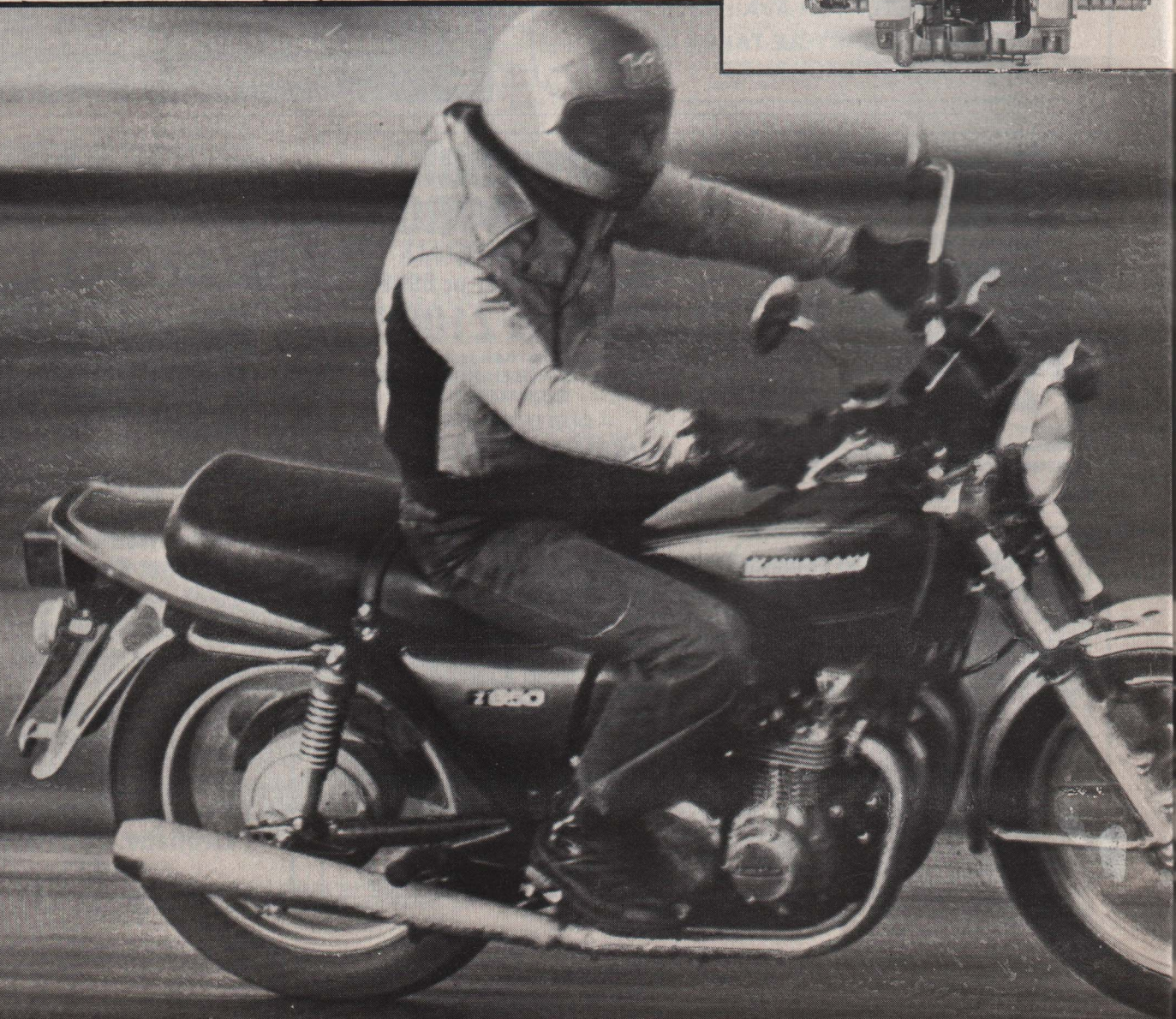
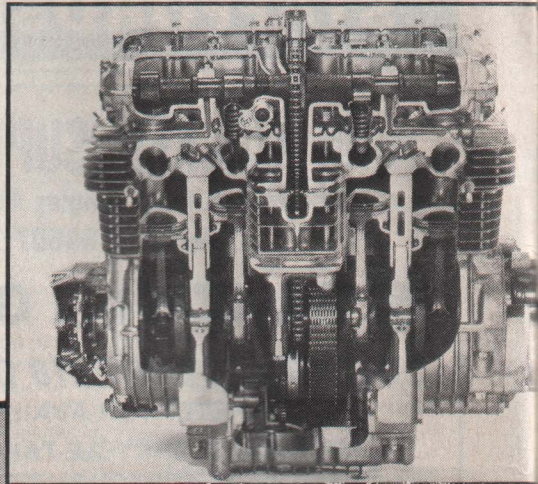
splitting the crankcases.

One change that will not appease biking's numerous Keep It Simple philosophers concerns the valve gear. The shims that provide for valve clearances are placed under the tappets on the 650, and thus the camshafts have to be removed from the engine if adjustment is required. The Z650 owner is urged to leave this task to his Kawasaki Specialist Dealer (as he is if the endless final drive chain needs replacing), although those more familiar with a toolbox may wish to invest in a workshop manual instead. According to Kawasaki (UK), valve adjustment may be required on the 650 at intervals of about 10,000 miles. The aim of relocating the shims on the engine was to reduce noise and to avoid the possibility of them being unseated at consistently high revs, but to many this will merely seem like taking one step forward and a smart shuffle backwards.

Quoting Kawasaki's PR release again, they openly admit that the Z650 was intended to fulfil several functions — long distance tourer, sports bike, and commuter. They've succeeded almost entirely, but naturally there are a few flaws. The riding position, for instance, turns out to be fine for urban conditions, but for prolonged high speed use the footrests are set too far forward — a common fault with Japanese bikes. Consequently, the rider feels akin to a sail on motorway runs, whereas the GS Suzuki declines to compromise in this area — it's a sports 750 and its riding position is tailored to fit. It's also a pity

that the Kawa doesn't have really useable rear view mirrors. Their stalks are not spread wide enough, so you get a monotonous view of your elbows and not enough of the road. The mirrors also blur badly at speed, so they're useless at the very times when they're most needed. Still bitching, the test bike blew a rear light and a headlamp dip beam. The Z1000 we had just before the 650 also went through a headlamp filament, so it seems that Kawasaki have not entirely eliminated this problem from their fours.

They have, however, put much effort into largely unnecessary 'safety' equipment, including the hideous bleeping indicators that any self-respecting biker will want to disconnect before



he becomes the laughing stock of his town. The other safety fittings are the brake light failure warning lamp — which doesn't blink on for rear light bulb malfunction! — and a switch that cuts out the starter motor until the clutch is pulled in. This device is even effective when the transmission is in neutral.

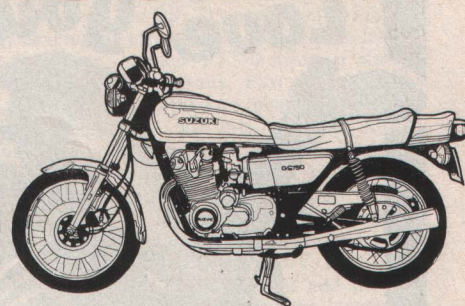
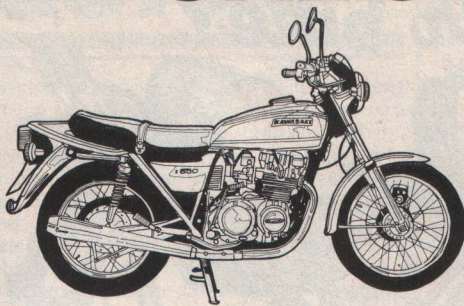
So efficient is Kawasaki's 1977 road test programme that we even got offered a choice of colours when we arrived to collect the test bike. We preferred the bike with the deep red tank, side panels and tailpiece, although emerald green is also available. That tailpiece, incidentally, for so long a Kawasaki trademark, is a dead area on the 650 and no longer acts as a stowage compartment for minor personal effects.

After initial anti-climaxes when the sham concerning the performance figures was discovered, I really got to like the Z650. It's competitively priced, and represents excellent value as a quick and manageable sports/tourer — but therein may lie its problem. The GS Suzuki's appeal is strong and clear-cut, but because the Kawasaki is intended to mean many things to many bikers, it's the one most likely to be dismissed as 'just another Japanese four'.

Mike Nicks

Cutaway engine photo shows central chain drive to overhead cams, and one-inch Hy-Vo primary chain. Crank is a one-piece unit turning on plain bearings.

CHECKOUT



KAWASAKI Z650

Engine	DOHC 4-cyl 4-stroke
Bore x stroke	62 x 54 mm
Capacity	652 cc
Compression ratio	9.5:1
Carburation	4 x 24 mm Mikuni
BHP @ RPM	64 @ 8,500
Max torque @ RPM	41.9 ft/lbs @ 7,000
Primary drive	Hy-Vo chain
Clutch	Multi-plate, wet
Gearbox	5 speed
Electrical system	Alternator
	12v 10 ah battery
Lighting	45/40w headlight

SUZUKI GS750

DOHC 4-cyl 4-stroke
65 x 56.4 mm
748 cc
8.7:1
4 x 26 mm Mikuni
68 @ 8,500
44 ft/lbs @ 7,000
Straight-cut gear
Multiplate, wet
5 speed
Three phase AC generator
12v 14 ah battery
50/40w headlight

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	56.5 ins	59 ins
Seat height	31.5 ins	31 ins
Overall width	30.5 ins	30.5 ins
Ground clearance	6.25 ins	6 ins
Kerb weight	480 lbs (inc. 1 gal. fuel)	504 lbs (with 1 gal. fuel)
Fuel capacity	3.7 gals	4 gals

EQUIPMENT

Trafficators	Yes	Yes
Electric starter	Yes	Yes
Trip mileometer	Yes	Yes
Steering lock	Yes	Yes
Helmet lock	Two	Two
Headlight flasher	Yes	Yes
Others	Lockable fuel cap and seat, audible indicators, twin mirrors	Twin mirrors, visual gear indicator, lockable seat and fuel cap

CYCLE PARTS

Tyres		
(front)	3.25 x 19 Japanese Dunlop	3.25 x 19 Bridgestone
(rear)	4.00 x 18 Japanese Dunlop	4.00 x 18 Bridgestone
Brakes		
(front)	9.6 in disc	11.5 in disc
(rear)	7.0 in sls drum	11.5 in disc

PERFORMANCE

Top speed		
(prone)	109.89 mph	121.95 mph
(sitting up)	104.53 mph	116.27 mph
Standing ¼ mile	13.36 secs (wet track)	12.98 secs
Speedometer error		
at indicated 30 mph	27.19 mph	25.35 mph
at indicated 60 mph	55.86 mph	51.45 mph
Fuel consumption		
(overall)	45.5 mpg	44 mpg
(ridden hard)	40.5 mpg	38 mpg
Braking distance		
from 30 mph	n.a.	28.5 feet
from 60 mph	n.a.	138 feet
PRICE	£1,075 inc. VAT	£1,260 inc. VAT
Guarantee	6 months/6,000 miles parts and labour	6 months/6,000 miles parts and labour
Supplied by	Kawasaki Motors (UK) Ltd., 748/749 Deal Avenue Trading Estate, Slough, Berks.	Heron Suzuki GB Ltd., Beddington Lane, Croydon, Surrey.

SUZUKI GS750

THERE's a thousand and one things to do on a train journey. Like holding loud and disturbing conversations with fellow travellers who don't want to talk, munching an over-priced and tasteless cheese wad, and swilling it down with an equally extortionately priced can of fizz which fronts as beer.

Alternatively, you can sleep, gaze mindlessly at the passing scenery — or read other journalists' road test reports of the latest two-wheel offerings. In this case, tests of the Suzuki GS750.

The more I read the more intrigued I became. Scarcely was there a disparaging word about Suzuki's first serious venture into the four-stroke market. From Australian through American to Brit mags, adulation and biking clichés were scattered in profusion. The best ever 750, they said. But then again foreign receptions for creations such as Honda's Gold Wing and the Wankel-engined RE-5 Suzuki had been a sight warmer than the welcome those bikes received in Britain. So I was suspicious about the GS750 from the start. After all, there's nothing new in overhead cams (even if there happen to be two), four cylinders mounted transversely across the frame, and disc brakes front and rear. Wasn't this just another large capacity Japanese multi?

A few minutes out of Wimbledon at Beddington Lane Halt the aforesaid train journey ended and shortly after legging the last 200 yards to Heron Suzuki's HQ I began to realise why everyone was going zonk over the GS. It had nothing to do with the fact that Suzuki had shipped representatives of the world's bike press to preview the machine on its home territory, nothing to do with the GS reflecting a reorientation in Suzuki policy away from two-strokes towards four-strokes. It was because the GS is an emphatic reminder that the true performance motorcycle is far from being stifled by ever more restrictive emission laws.

There's no single factor which for my money puts the GS at the top of the entire Japanese four-cylinder pile from 400 to 1000cc (although we've yet to test the large capacity Yamaha multis). The GS is such an almost - perfect machine because it's a combination of improvements and refinements on a tried and proven basic concept.

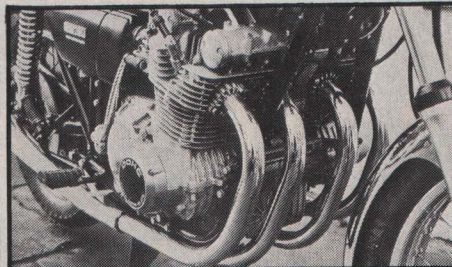
Suzuki have demonstrated conclusively that you don't have to be different to be best and anyway, there's no reason why they should've settled for second place. History freaks may know that Hamamatsu engineers first produced small capacity four-strokes in the fifties, that it's eight years since Honda announced their, and Japan's, first modern multi, the CB750, and that Suzuki are the last of the Big Four Jap manufacturers to switch to the multi - cylinder, four - stroke concept. With the market tested by Honda and Kawasaki in particular, there could be no excuse for the GS being less than excellent.

A couple of minutes in the saddle prove that Suzuki have matched their predecessors in multi-cylinder engineering. Acceleration to the ton and beyond in less than 13 seconds over the standing quarter is rapid. Flat out, the GS will exceed 120 mph, but it's just as willing and happy at 20 mph in top gear. There's no disturbing jarring during acceleration from carburation flat spots or drive-line snatch. A double overhead cam engine threatens to be tall, and making sure that the cylinder head could be removed with the motor remaining in the frame

meant that the chassis top tubes would be a long way from the ground. All of which points to a high and therefore unwieldy centre of gravity. But Suzuki not only met the challenge, they annihilated it. The seat height is still a tall 32 inches but the combination of a frame strongly braced round the steering head, a heavily gusseted needle roller swinging arm, and well matched suspension front and rear, provides handling to match the GS's quite phenomenal performance.



Dials in the neat and unusual speedo/tacho console are illuminated by red lights, aircraft instrument style.



Bridges between cam boxes direct cool air onto the GS's upper cylinder head. Welding on the strong cradle frame is neater than on previous big-inch Suzukis.

Rather than employing radical concepts in the engine design Suzuki have adopted well tried principles. For example, the motor is similar to the Kawasaki Z1/900 in several areas. Its valves are Big K size, 36 mm inlet, 30 mm exhaust, and the valve timing is also identical to that of the Z1. Bore size at 66 mm is also Z1, but with a reduced capacity the GS needs only a 56.4 mm stroke to the 66 mm of the Kawasaki.

The crankshaft is a nine-piece pressed-up roller affair also supported by a ball bearing on its right-hand side. The camshafts spin in unbushed cylinder head recesses and their lobes work directly against steel shims. The shims can be replaced with the aid of a small C-shape spanner without disturbing the camshafts, a la Z1.

The motor houses few technical innovations, but Suzuki are justifiably proud of their cam chain tensioner which should never need the attention of human hand. A spring - loaded tensioner presses against a long shoe which is in contact with the cam chain. A bevel has been cut at the other end of the tensioner and at right angles to this slope lives another mechanism comprising a ball and a second spring - loaded shaft. When the chain wears or stretches the ball slides along the bevel accordingly as pressure from the other spring - loaded shaft maintains perfect tension at all times.

Learning another lesson from a mistake made by Kawasaki, Suzuki have designed a clutch basket incorporating a large centre spacing gear,

which makes the clutch a QD component — with the appropriate puller, of course.

It wasn't only the engine which had to be a masterpiece on the GS. Try as they might in the past, developing attractive styling for a machine like the water - cooled GT750 triple, it always looked fat and ponderous. Fast and smooth, too, but still obese. Make no mistake, the GS is a hefty machine at 504 lbs, but with subtle styling they've succeeded in making it appear gracefully slender, even if the 4.5-gallon tank still remains something of a slab when viewed from above. Up front there's the tastily curved, tyre hugging mudguard — not a strut in sight and simply anchored to the fork legs. The Europeanised handlebars are flat and narrow and the four - into - two exhaust system is upswept enough to look racy and prevent dragging in the turns, and yet doesn't restrict passenger leg room. The slim matt black side panels lie flush with the frame tubes, subtly camouflaging electrics and air filter. Everything is tucked well up and in, but at the same time vital components remain accessible, and the seat tailbox incorporates a provocative flip more usually associated with the all - conquering RG500 road racer.

The petrol tank suffers from the imposition of a cheap looking flap covering the filler cap, but apart from that, a gear position indicator, and a speedo / tacho panel which lights up red like an aircraft instrument console, there's refreshingly little gimmickry. Even the paint job is a toned-down affair, an attractive blue tank and seat unit with slim contrasting gold and light-blue stripes. It's not sombre, but modest styling which is still bright enough to catch the eye.

Factors that will make the GS an almost certain success in European markets are its superb performance and handling characteristics. There's no power band as such, although the rev range splits conveniently in two depending on the amount of performance you're seeking. Below 6,000 rpm the engine feels quite docile, but it's so damned quiet and efficient you hardly realise you're up there exceeding motorway speed limits. This is the more economical end of the rev scale, too. Trucking along at a steady 75-80 mph returns 51 mpg. But give the machine its head and you'll be lucky to stretch one gallon to 38 miles. From six grand upwards to the red line at 9,500 rpm the GS rapidly gathers momentum as an additional 20 hp is dialled in between 5,500 and 7,500 rpm. At an almost ordinary 100 mph the tacho reads only seven grand, and there's still 2,500 revs to go. On one stretch of the A1 while riding back to Brick City the speedo nudged 128 mph. Yet even after miles of 100 mph cruising the Suzuki just as easily settles into 35 mph back-road dawdling.

And it's so tractable too. You can travel miles on A roads negotiating roundabouts, hills, traffic, while scarcely needing any gear but fifth. Acceleration from 20 mph in top is like acceleration anywhere in the rev band in any gear: fast, responsive, eager. The five ratios themselves are perfectly spaced, although the quietly anxious whirring from the motor sent me footing for a sixth gear on more than one occasion.

For a hefty motorcycle the handling is surprisingly light and easy, requiring less physical effort to manoeuvre than other big-inch musclebikes I've ridden. The footrest position eases the rider comfortably forward to grab the handlebars. With a long wheelbase of 59 inches there's room a-plenty for rider and friend, and the handling is superb — not quite in the Laverda Jota class, but very impressive. The well supported swinging arm ensures there's no hinged - in - the - middle feeling when chasing hard through swer-

very. The fork sliders dip and extend over bumps without throwing the machine off line, although the Bridgestone tyres were disturbed by raised white lines and other man-made road imperfections and caused the odd heart - stopping slide. A series of ripples and small bumps taken in quick succession were always a little more than the front suspension could cope with. It seemed that the forks were unable to compress and rebound quickly enough to smooth the road out. But plodding across more pronounced irregularities like road hollows, the suspension felt soft, almost to the point of mushiness.

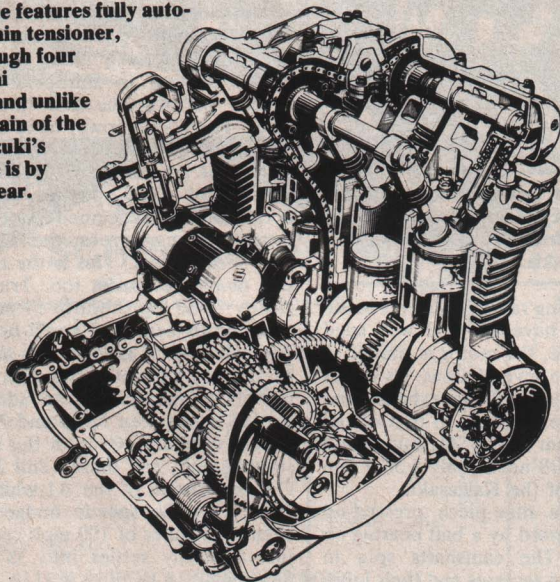
It goes fast and handles well, so what about stopping? I wondered if single discs front and rear were enough to haul the mighty GS to a rapid standstill. Well, they are. You can squeeze the front brake without fear of locking the wheel, but the rear brake is the source of my only major complaint about the GS. The designers have over-cooked the rear unit by fitting a double - piston caliper as opposed to the single - piston unit of the front brake. Too much pressure through the insensitivity of a heavily booted right foot will send the back wheel kangarooing over the blacktop. It's either on or off, with no in-between feel.

The GS is unobtrusively styled, fast, a good handler, comfortable, refined without being futuristic, and almost perfect. Some people will say it's a damned good first effort. I'd say it's simply a brilliant motorcycle.

Graham Sanderson



The GS engine features fully automatic cam chain tensioner, breathes through four 26 mm Mikuni carburetors and unlike the Hy-Vo chain of the Z650, the Suzuki's primary drive is by straight-cut gear.



SUMMARY

THE Z650 and GS750 represent a testimony to the razor-edge competition which now exists in international motorcycle markets. Major manufacturers, particularly the Japanese, are now operating in similar areas of research and development and production techniques. So with companies like Honda, Kawasaki and now Suzuki being heavily involved with the in-line four-cylinder concept it's difficult for one manufacturer to forge ahead of competitors.

Extensive development of this design during the past eight years has ensured that the Z650 and GS750, the latest in a long line of fours, are excellent machines. The Kawasaki, whilst not living up to its projected PR image as a machine to outperform all 750s, is exciting enough to carve itself a niche in the market without relying on the performance reputations of its larger capacity stablemates past and present for support. The GS is smoother, faster on accelera-

tion and top speed, and more than equal to the Z650 in handling, comfort, styling and finish. Not surprisingly it costs £185 more.

Now, there are in-line fours in a capacity range from 400 cc to one litre, and one can't help wondering whether the Kawasaki and Suzuki represent the summit in development of their concept. Indications are that a new breed of machine, such as the rumoured Honda V-twins, are about to break the four cylinder monopoly.