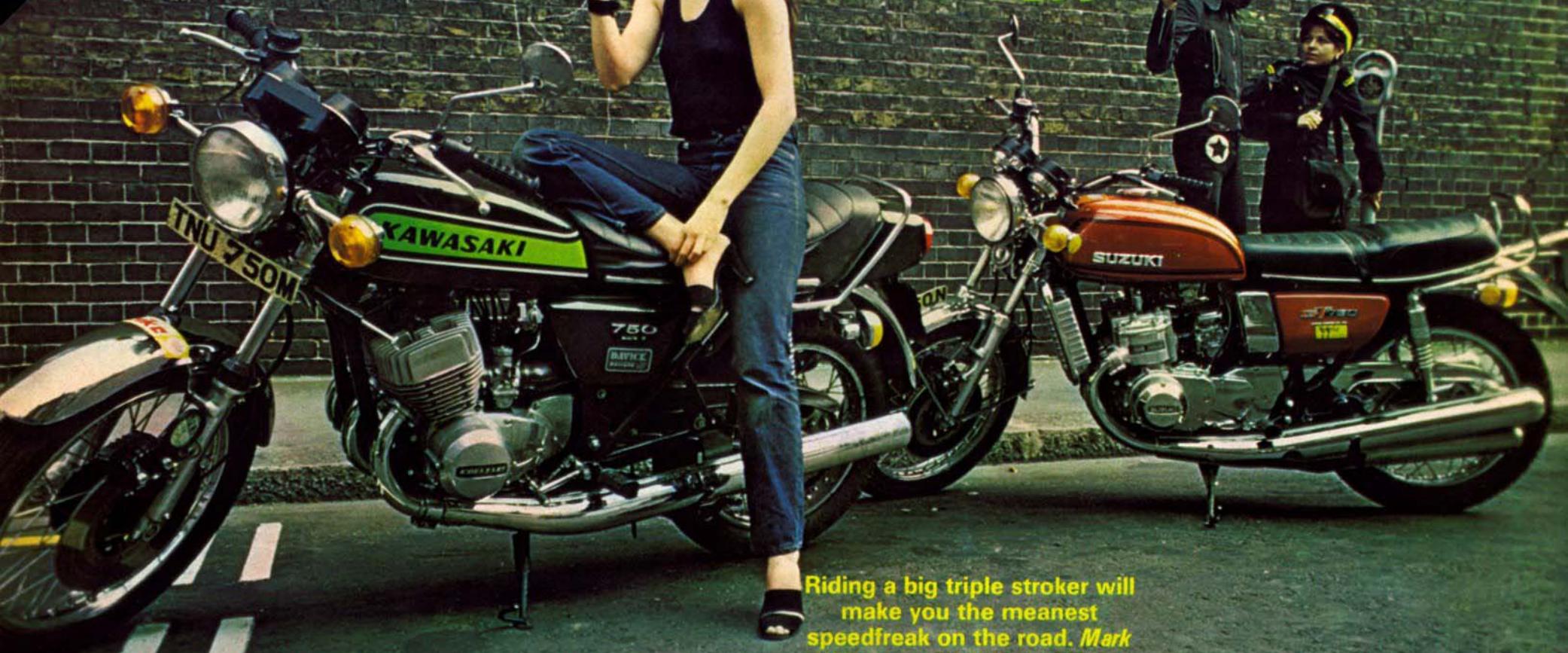


Giant Test

2-stroke triples: nasty business



Riding a big triple stoker will make you the meanest speedfreak on the road. *Mark Williams* and *Bill Haylock* learn why on *Kawasaki's 750 H2* and *Suzuki's 750 GT*.
Photography: *Dick Scott-Stewart*.



IN THE SPRING of last year a curious atmosphere pervaded the old *Bike* offices, situated as they were in one of the seamier parts of Soho. A disparate crowd of goggle-eyed, down-at-heel freaks, plain clothes lawmen and sleazy suited Chinamen gathered at the end of Gerrard Place whenever a dedicated *Bike* staffer mooched into work around eleven-thirty.

Actually, mooched is hardly the right expletive, for at the time Hero Harrison and myself were disporting ourselves aboard a brace of extremely heavy duty scoots: a Triumph Hurricane and a Kawasaki Mach IV H1. There was a definite sense of tension around at the time for both machines offered an almost overwhelming abundance of horses and a sense of aggressive *elan* that just cried out to be used ... or tamed, godamnit. Every excuse to leave the office was an excuse to get out and incinerate rubber; even in central London you can have lots of laughs with a machine that turns the quarter in just over 12 seconds. Harrison and I let a lot of work hang-fire during the few weeks we had those bikes, a lot of people must've gotten awful aggravated by our continual absence from the office, not least Ms. O'Reilly who in between dealing with angry 'phone calls was wondering just which hospital we were going to end up in.

Reckless behaviour was indeed the order of the day and as long as someone else was paying for the gas, I dug every minute of it. So here I am a year later, drinking Mike Volans' Newcastle Brown up at Silverstone and pretending to be dead nonchalant about his offer of the latest H2 750 Kawa, when I'm already making mental notes about cancelling all sorts of silly business commitments during the fortnight that I'm to be let loose with the thing. As if that ain't enough, ten minutes later Twig's trying to lay Apple Motorcycle's 750 Suzuki demo bike on us. Naturally another 750 Giant Test is in the making, and who am I to repress such a notion?

But understand from the outset that these two bolides, two-stroke triples though they both may be, are birds of very different plumage. The Suzuki is a big, heavy machine with sophisticated engine cooling and electronic circuitry, and very distinct touring pretensions. In many respects it would not be unfair to pit it against a BMW or a Moto Guzzi rather than the nastiest, meanest motorcycle ever to wrench the wrist muscles of the know-it-all biker. Yes, friends, the H2 Mach IV may certainly be a refined version of last season's 750 Kawasaki, but it is still the ultimate machismo street 'cycle.

But *nasty? Mean?* Is that any way to describe an item of ironmongery that's taken half a decade to develop and is already selling by the barrowload in the US of A? Surely not. Well, Kawasaki, who I've come to admire more than any other bike builder for that upfront, performance-at-any-cost principle which they seem to ascribe to, are totally honest about the Mach IV's behaviour in their brochure, starting right from paragraph one:

"The Kawasaki 750 Mach IV has only one purpose in life; to give you the most exciting and exhilarating performance. It's so quick it demands the razor sharp reactions of an experienced rider. It's a machine you must take seriously."

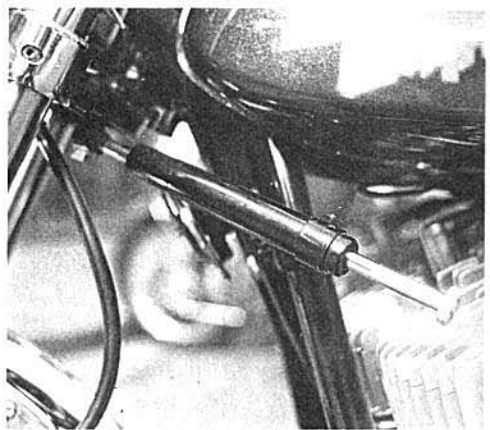
Damn right, you must. If you don't you'll end up in a wooden waistcoat, that's for sure. And all power to Kawasaki Heavy Industries for having the balls to sell a motorcycle on that premise alone.

Like I said, the Suzuki exudes an altogether milder image, but that's not to say it's a pig as our performance figures show. Prior to this test, the only knowledge we had of the standard GT750 came from the lips of some gentlemen from Manchester's 71 M/cycle Club, who invited me along to talk rubbish to 'em one evening. Frightening tales of rear-ends wriggling

round corners and ferocious tank slapping at anything above 80. These stories were reinforced by a gentleman in Wales who invited me to autograph his plastered leg a few weeks later. My own experiences with the handling of the smaller Suzuki roadsters — which I've almost universally found to be incredibly soggy — led me to accept these claims as being quite credible.

So it was obviously going to be an interesting Giant Test, if Haylock and yours truly managed to stay in one piece, that is; the total fire breathing ball-buster versus a computerised kettle on wheels.

kawasaki
750 H2



THERE WAS a recent article in the *Guardian* regaling the reader with stirring tales of the RAF's crack Red Arrows aerobatic display squadron. The hack who churned out this particular eulogistic epistle actually went up in one of the lads' Folland Gnats and, upon reflecting on his evidently awesome acrobatic experience, was at great pains to point out that these highly trained, highly paid wallahs were living on a knife-edge throughout their formation flying sequences.

A smile flickered across my face as I read that. If that particular typewriter artist cared to venture on the pillion of the 750 Kawasaki I was riding at the time (well not *actually* at the time, although Martin Harrison tells me that he had time to complete the *Times* crossword whilst braking for traffic lights aboard a certain Russian motorcycle), he would discover that one neither has to be highly trained nor highly paid to live close to instant karma. One merely has to own a Kawasaki!

I mean here is a machine so utterly and

completely dedicated to completing the distance from A to B in the fastest possible time, that you're forced to consider whether or not there was some truth in the old Triumph Owner's Club joke about "Kamikaze five hundreds, ho-ho-ho." This motorcycle is not a toy, either. Instead it is something between the two, a kind of safe way of living dangerously — if you're ready for *that*?

This bike is capable of hauling ass very fast indeed: about 100 miles per hour in 13 seconds capable, in fact. Such acceleration will satisfy even the most mind-wrenched adrenalin addict. It also handles in a manner strange to those bred on British or Italian vehicles, which is not undesirable once mastered. Further, it has sufficient spread of torque — and this is its distinct advantage over the lower capacity Kawas — to enable it to be ridden satisfactorily at low or high engine speeds, a point which makes it a practical machine to own even if a lot of your riding is in urban conditions.

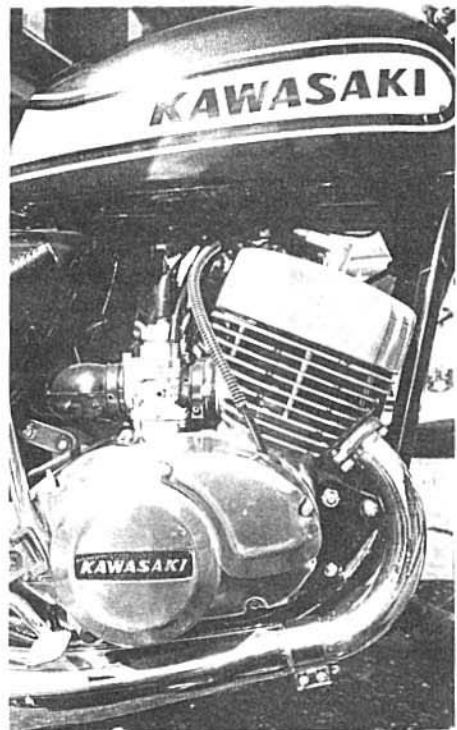
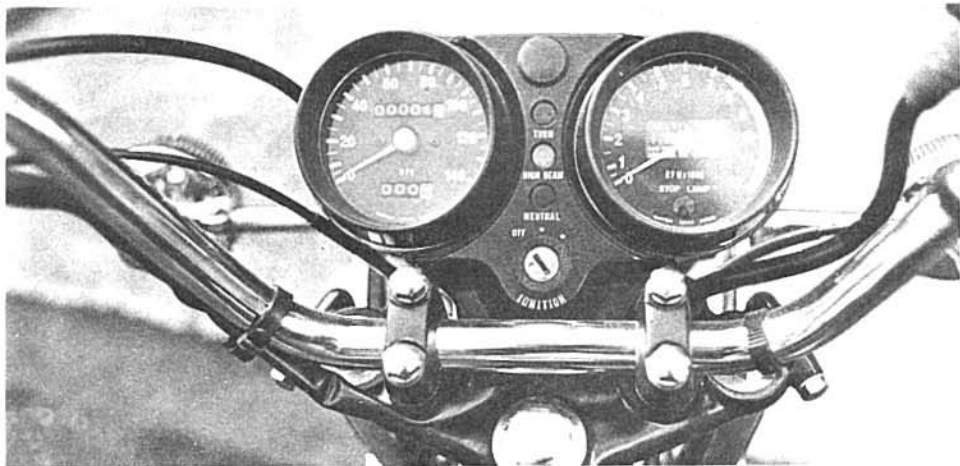
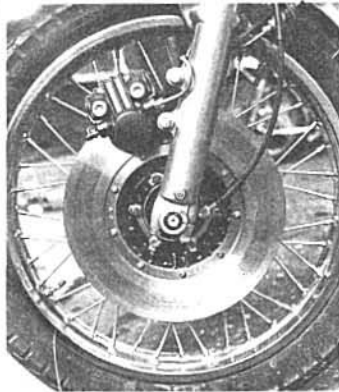
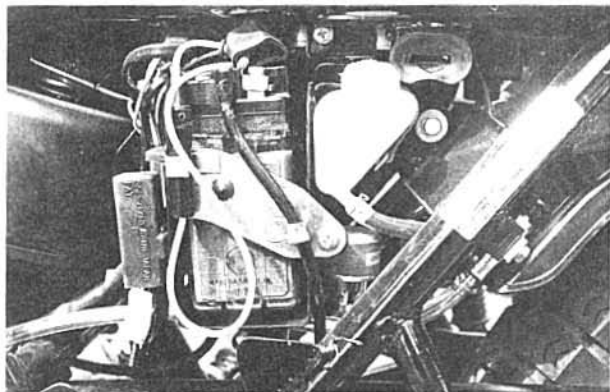
I have prefaced this evaluation with my

conclusion because it's pretty pointless to read about the Mach IV unless you appreciate that it is a totally unique machine.

The Mach IV H2 engine differs from its predecessor in several ways. New oilways have been drilled in the big ends to improve lubing, and oil scavenging has been improved with a resultant reduction in exhaust smoke. Finally, it transpires that the clutch friction plates are now concocted from a new mixture which is supposed to reduce slippage — but more on that later.

These factors which are, I suppose, gestures in the direction of legislative sanitation, contrive to lower last year's bhp figure by precisely three ponies. No matter. The engine response is still as swift as ever, requiring a sensitive hand if you intend riding it on the pipe, for there is a strong surge of energy as you reach beyond the 4500 mark. Below that point, power still lurks but it emerges more slowly and is, therefore, well suited to dawdling through heavy traffic. The H2's solid state CDI ignition system ensures a balanced supply of sparks at all engine speeds, and the sparks are fat enough to fire even the most sluggish bunch of hydrocarbons — providing the correct plugs are used. The bike was fitted with Champion UL 17Vs when I collected it but these proved too hot for trouble free town riding. I then fitted a set of flat-top Champion L-78s (developed, apparently, for two-stroke marine engines) which behaved perfectly under a variety of conditions. A slight mod to the h.t. leads is required to accommodate the L 78s, which feature fixed, rather than screw-on, collars.

Of course despite the engine's low speed capability, its small flywheel bottom end is really there for the benefit of *mucho* revs. Wind 'er up, bang home the gear driven



Slim Kawasaki (top left) is more nimble through the traffic jams. Hydraulic steering damper (left) takes some of the trauma out of the handling. Chain oiler (top centre) lives with the battery behind the side panel. Notice the small white oil tank, and the plunger behind the frame tube. Single disc brake (top right) works as well as the Suzuki's twin disc unit. Instrument display ain't as mindwarping as the Suzuki's, but still glows like a Christmas tree with all those idiot lights. Compact motor/transmission unit (right) contributes to good power to weight ratio.

multi-plate clutch and whammo, you're off and running. Unfortunately the clutch on this particular test bike, after over 6,000 miles of hard riding in the hands of various impecunious motorcycling journals, was developing a bad case of slipping friction that only new plates would cure. This accounts for performance figures that are slightly less than one might expect them to be.

Clutch action itself is as stiff on the H2 as it was on its predecessor, although I only really found it tiresome after extensive stop-start urban scooting. Like the gearshift pattern — neutral at the bottom, then five up — the heavy clutch is a peculiarity that one presumably learns to live with. 'Course if you're blessed with exceptionally puny wrists, it's not beyond the realms of possibility to engage gear without the benefit of the exotically lined clutch plates. But naturally I wouldn't practice such butchery with a Davick test bike. The gearbox itself feels as though the ratios are fairly closely spaced, and I actually felt first was a bit too high for calm about-town riding ... but then I didn't do very much *calm* riding.

The motor bopped along faultlessly and all the H2 owner has to do is decide whether he's going to ride it with an iron glove or a limp wrist. There was, however, a modicum of vibration which I understood Kawasaki were supposed to've overcome on the H2 by virtue of rubber engine mountings. They even boast about it in their brochure, but the fact remains that there's a definite tingle in both 'bars and footpegs above 5000/5250 revs. Even on a long (100 mile plus) run it was annoying rather than numbing, but things might be different in winter conditions.

Now the roadholding of Davick's test bike was slightly non-standard inasmuch as they'd fitted an English TT100 to the rear, whilst Japanese rubber shod the front wheel. How much this differs from the stock arrangement I wouldn't like to guess because there have been refinements to the frame geometry over the H1 model which inherently improve the manners of the basic bike. The wheelbase has increased one inch to 56.5 ins., due to alteration in the steering caster angle, which facilitates a reduction in horrorshow tactics when belting through fast corners and also lessening the 750's proclivity for instant wheelies and other such amusing idiosyncracies. We are also told that front and rear suspension components have been updated, but quite frankly they seem to me about typical for a Jap big bike — just on the hard side of mushy.

Anyroadup, the bike actually *handles!* That is, its cornering abilities match the power characteristics of the machine admirably and leaves it to the rider to judge where the boundaries of the power/handling equation lie. No, I'm not trying to say that the H2 is safe and predictable. Instead I'm endeavouring to point out that as this motorcycle is probably a lot faster than anything most of us have ever ridden, we must appreciate that bounding up to and

exiting from corners at speeds faster than we're normally used to means accepting a little less innate security than we demand from slower vehicles. And *that's* what I meant about living on the edge — it's fun when you get used to it.

Fortunately the front disc brake is so good that if you do find yourself trotting into a situation that you're not really sure you can handle, a quick jab on the anchors will bring you down to a reasonable speed in very neat fashion, and in a very short space of time. And this was largely true even on wet roads — how different from last year's plot! Even the twin discs of the admittedly heavier Suzuki failed to improve on the braking figures donated by the single caliper unit fitted to the Kawa.

In short, fast roadwork was a joy marred only by the awful fuel consumption. I returned to London from Davick's by diverse minor "A" roads which eventually led me to the A1 along which I cruised at a comfortable ninety to a hundred per. I had to fill up twice before I got home! An average of 21.6 mpg was the reason for this — and when I can average 25/26 mpg in my four wheeled Alfa cruising at similar speeds, I begin to wonder whether or not Kawasaki have done all they could to maximise engine efficiency.

However, East Midland Allied Press were paying for the juice and in enjoying that privilege I spent many happy hours squirting around both town and country tarmac. Yes, if you can afford the fuel, the surging Kawasaki Mach IV is a very good machine for safe, aggressive driving. Chainwear was considerably less of a problem than on other big torquers, largely due to the manual chain oil pump situated just to the rear of the near-side rear subframe strut. From its little plastic reservoir it releases enough oil to apparently lube the chain for 500 miles each time you lift the knob. Just

to be on the safe side I tended to pull it every 100 miles, or even less. Still, a neat little device — now you know why I fitted one to my Yamadale!

Electrics, from the CDI system downwards, were exemplary. The stop-light, for example, was considerably more sensitive than those on most other bikes I've ridden, requiring only the proverbial butterfly's kiss to illuminate the blasted great rear lamp, and the headlamp threw a well proportioned beam of an intensity well suited to 70 mph night-riding on unlit highways.

Warning indicator lamps were not as prolific as on Suzuki's electricians' special, but you can nevertheless glance down and discover whether or not your stop-light, trafficators, and main beam are doing what they should be, and whether you've succeeded in finding neutral. Switchgear and attendant tarradiddles are okay, if a bit fussy — something common to most Nipponese products these days. The left 'bar carries choke (which required only minimal use throughout the test), horn/headlamp flasher, main/dip switches and a mirror all in one moulding, whilst the twistgrip collar holds the emergency kill switch and an on/off lighting switch. All these functional trinkets are finished in matt-black alloy, as are the helmet/seat lock and headlamp nacelle. This sets off the high quality metallic dark green and lime tank 'n' seat hump very prettily (deep red and bright red is the other optional colour scheme), and demonstrates just how nifty the Kawasaki stylists can be.

Even the layout 'neath the comfortable side-hinged seat is extremely well ordered. The perspex topped plug carrier with its three spares is easily accessible, as are the battery, tool-kit (strapped into the rear hump along with your dope stash — a mere joke m'lud), the CDI boxes and air filter cover.



Bike's destruction testing team at it again. Four or five drag starts for the standing 1/4 mile plays havoc with clutch adjustment. The Suzu survived but it was all too much for the Kawasaki, who's clutch gave up the struggle the following day.

Overall finish is fairly whizzing, but I'm sure the chrome exhaust wouldn't emerge rust-free from a British winter without much recourse to elbow grease and Solvol Autosol. Kawasaki don't, thank Jehovah, coat their porous alloy engine cases with translucent gunge, mainly because they don't use 'orrible porous alloy! Almost as good as the British variety, no less. But the frame welding is only marginally better than on some of the more tawdry Oriental scoots, even if Kawasaki cover it up with a goodly coat of black enamel.

And so it goes. As I think you may understand by now, the performance potential of this bike is so vastly superior to most other two wheeled products that if poke is your main criterium, such things as riding position, economy and durability are things you'll learn to live with or adapt to your secondary requirements. And at £829 the price is a great compensation for those contemplating other 750 exotica.

Mark Williams

SO YOU THINK being a journalist on *Bike* is an easy touch, huh? A life of eternal bliss, always burning free gas along sun-drenched highways to exotic places on fabulously expensive machinery someone else has paid for?

Well, forget it. Sad, but it ain't like that. Writing and other dull editorial duties keep us shackled to office desks most of the time. Apart from frantic bleary-eyed dashes to and from the office and a quick round of the pubs in the evening, we don't get in as much biking as we'd like.

But when there's a couple of particularly rapid hunks of metal standing silently outside the office it gets difficult to concentrate on a typewriter keyboard. It all gets too much, even for the editor. He starts cursing the telephone and muttering about work "getting on moi troipe", whatever that curious West Country expression may mean.

The heavy metal that proved so distracting this time was a 500 Kawasaki and the Suzuki GT750L. An editorial conference

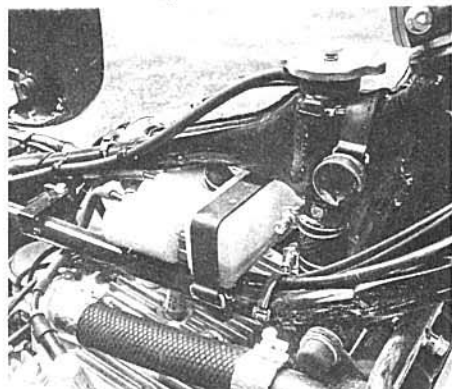
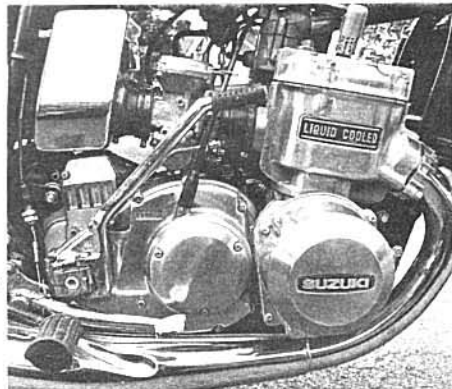
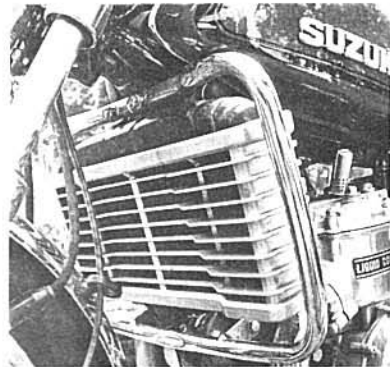
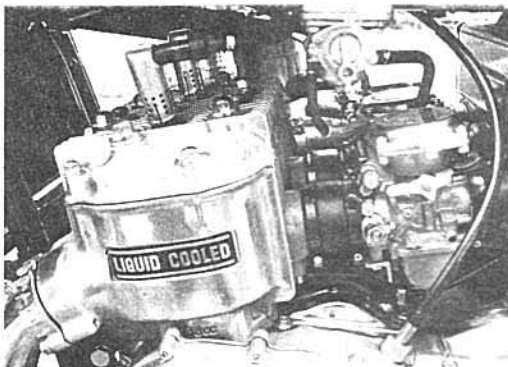
decided we should take a day off for the purposes of road testing and ale tasting in the West Country. Well when the boss suggests that sort of thing you don't kick a gift horse in the teeth, do you?

Ah, the freedom from the daily office drudgery, it almost began to feel like we were living that jet-set dream, 'cept it was the South of England we were headed for, not the South of France. The sun was shining, the air was balmy and the Northamptonshire country roads were deserted. Even the fact that both bikes were still running in didn't spoil the fun too much. We could hit 80 mph, and the fun of swinging round those convoluted country lanes made up for the lack of high speed kicks.

Despite my prejudices, I was getting to like the Suzy. The sheer grossness of its heavy carcass hadn't endeared me to it when I first saw the bike. I mean, it looked fat and smug with about as much grace as a women's shotputting champion. But just as many a hefty female can prove to be a nifty

SUZUKI

GT 750L



The 115 mph steamroller (above left). From any angle the Suzuki looks a real hefty hunk of steel. Get those huge new diaphragm carbs (top centre). "Liquid cooled" it says, just in case any ignoramus hadn't already guessed from the rad stuck in front of the mill (top right). Instrument panel (above centre) would make a Jumbo pilot feel at home. Flap on the front of the tank lifts to reveal the radiator cap. When the tank is removed (bottom right) you can see why it doesn't hold as much juice as you'd expect. Space is taken up by cooling system overflow tank and the three ignition coils.

Checkout



KAWASAKI 750 H2



SUZUKI GT750L

Engine	3-cylinder, piston valve 2-stroke	3-cylinder piston valve water-cooled 2-stroke
Bore and stroke	71 x 63 mm	70 x 64 mm
Capacity	748 cc	738 cc
Comp ratio	7.0:1	6.7:1
Carburettors	3 x 30 mm Mikuni	3 x 32 mm Mikuni diaphragm type
BHP @ RPM	71 @ 6,800	67 @ 6,500
Primary Drive	gear	gear
Clutch	wet, multiplate	wet, multiplate
Gear ratios overall		
(1)	12.77:1	14.92:1
(2)	8.65:1	9.09:1
(3)	6.53:1	7.14:1
(4)	5.41:1	5.89:1
(5)	4.76:1	4.48:1
Electrical system	CDI electronic ignition, alternator	12v 280w alternator, battery & coil ignition
Lighting	35/35w headlight 5/21w tail/stoplight	50/40w headlight 8/23w tail/stoplight
DIMENSIONS		
Wheelbase	56.5 ins	57.8 ins
Seat height	33.5 ins	32.5 ins
Ground clearance	6.3 ins	5.5 ins
Handlebar height	46.5 ins	45 ins
Weight	451 lbs (dry)	554 lbs (with 2 galls of fuel and 3 pints of oil)
Oil capacity	3.6 pints	3.2 pints
Fuel capacity	3.7 galls	3.7 galls
EQUIPMENT		
Steering damper	Yes (hydraulic)	No
Trafficators	Yes	Yes
Electric starter	No	Yes
Trip mileometer	Yes	Yes
Steering lock	Yes	Yes
Helmet lock	Yes	Yes
Headlamp flasher	Yes	Yes
Kill button	Yes	Yes
Toolkit	Yes	Yes
Spare parts	3 spark plugs	—
Other		Mirrors, gear position indicator
Tyres (front)	3.25x19 Japanese Dunlop	Yokohama 3.25 x 19
(rear)	4.00x18 Japanese Dunlop	Yokohama 4.00 x 18
Brakes (front)	11.65 in. disc	twin 11 in. discs
(rear)	7.9 in. sis drum	9 in. sis drum
PERFORMANCE		
Top speed	113.2 mph	114.9 mph
Standing ¼ mile	13.456 secs	13.39 secs
0-30 mph	2.5 secs	2.7 secs
0-60 mph	5.8 secs	5.9 secs
Speedometer error		
At indicated 30 mph	28.16 mph	27.70 mph
At indicated 60 mph	58.29 mph	52.66 mph
Fuel consumption		
(average)	—	37.7 mpg
(driven hard)	21.6 mpg	30 mpg
Braking distance		
from 30 mph	31 ft 2 ins	31 ft 8 ins
from 60 mph	115 ft	118 ft 6 ins
PRICE	£829 inc. VAT	£882 inc. VAT
GUARANTEE	6 months/6,000 miles parts and labour	6 months parts & labour
Supplied by	Davick Motique, Northfield Ave., Sawley, Long Eaton, Notts. NG10 3FH.	Apple Motorcycles, Lower Bond St., Hinckley, Leics.

mover, the Suzuki was no sluggard. Grabbing those ultra-wide bars for the first time gives you the impression you're trundling a wheelbarrow, the great slab of a tank, and fat, comfy seat all give a paunchy feel to the bike, but it's a nice feel. It's solid and utterly secure at the ton and comfortably relaxing in the way that only a heavyweight cruiser can be, but it's also perfectly manageable trickling along at walking pace. The only time it's 550-odd pounds become embarrassing is when you try to heave the thing onto the centre stand. Suzuki should include advice from Charles Atlas in the riders' handbook.

But the way that deceptively docile motor can shift five cwt. of bulk with indecent haste comes as quite a surprise. Even keeping the revs well below the red during running-in you begin to suspect that behind the image of the sedate, inoffensive tourer, lurks something of a mean streak. And when the motor's nicely bedded in and the three pots begin to scream purposefully through the gears you just know you needn't be ashamed in the company of bikes with racier pretensions. Jeez, the obese Suzy even stole the lean 'n' hungry Kawasaki's thunder at the Snetterton test session, although to be fair the H2 was a little off colour.

A bike that can turn 13.39 in the quarter ain't slow, and when that motor's dragging quarter of a ton of sophisticated mechanical and electrical gadgetry, then it's pretty amazing.

But as we weaved our way down to Exeter, I still hadn't tried the full potential of its performance. I was more taken first of all by the comfort and smoothness of the bike. For this kind of long distance jaunt it's ideal. Another item that impressed me as we hurled the projectiles around the snaking bends on the B4525 to Banbury was the front brake. Originally fitted with a double twin leading shoe device, the GT750 was reputed to be underbraked for its weight and performance. But the twin 11-inch discs introduced on the L model do a remarkable job of retarding that formidable weight. As light and pleasant a disc brake as I've ever come across, it was also reassuringly powerful. The fact that the twin discs even the loading on the front forks also keeps the bike stable under heavy braking.

As we really got into the bend swinging on that fantastic biking road from Northampton to Banbury it became evident that the designers' efforts to improve ground clearance with new upswept silencers hadn't been completely successful — the exhausts still touched down when bumps compressed the rear suspension. Stiffer dampers would make a great improvement to the bike's scratching capabilities, if you want to forgo some creature comfort.

Not that the handling's that bad anyway. The old kettle looks such an ungainly brute it's difficult to imagine stuffing it into bends fast and surviving, much less enjoying it. But the Suzy's secret seems to be excellent weight distribution. For a product of a

Japanese factory, it feels beautifully well balanced, and can be flicked from side to side with surprising agility.

Sure, it gets a bit of a twitch on at the back end on fast bumpy bends due to the already mentioned infamous Nipponese failing — inadequate damping. But the Suzuki's handling can't be all that bad I thought, keeping a wary eye on the hair-raising path the rear wheel of the 500 Kawasaki was following towards Exeter. Evidently those strange oscillations worried me more than Mike Nicks. While I cringed and reflected on how inadvisable it would be to run over one's editor every time the Kawasaki started following ever decreasing arcs, the said editor later exclaimed he'd been enjoying it immensely. Must be that every Kawasaki rider has a death wish or something.

After Banbury we hit some "A" roads at last, down to Chipping Norton and out over the undulating Oxfordshire countryside. Nice biking country with wide open roads, fast, sweeping bends and pleasant rural landscapes which we hardly noticed because the bikes felt good, the sun was still shining, and the roads were nearly empty.

That's the sort of territory where the Suzuki feels right at home, and a steady eighty began to feel slow, except when we zapped past the odd bunch of traffic. The motor is so smooth and unobtrusive it began to feel like I was being towed along in the Kawa's slipstream. There's no noise except the wind, no vibes, and the hedges in the mirrors recede unblurred into the distance.

Pampered by unaccustomed comfort I became hyper-critical of any vibration that appeared in the rev range, and low frequency shakes come in noticeably at 2,000 rpm and below. But it's not as uncomfortable as a high frequency buzz, and anyway it's easy just to swap cogs and keep the revs above that level. That also helps to eliminate the annoying two-stroke characteristic of four-stroking at low throttle openings, which results in uncomfortable transmission snatch in the Suzuki.

Stopping to fuel up the Kawasaki every 60 miles or so got pretty tedious. The Suzuki was covering 40 miles to the gallon and could have gone twice as far as the Kawa without stopping. But even that sort of range isn't good enough for a long distance hauler like this. Trouble is, the slab-sided tank that contributes much of the bike's chunky looks is deceptive. A huge recess underneath, hiding the cooling system reservoir tank and three ignition coils, reduces the capacity to 3.7 galls, the odd 0.7 of which is reserve.

Apart from the fuel stops and a halt for fish 'n' chips, eaten at the roadside in best biker's style, we made good time right down to Ilchester. But there we caught the London holiday traffic oozing along the A303. Wriggling through the jams was the only time the Suzuki's bulk bothered me, and then it was mainly due to the psychological effect of its width, rather than the weight. I just breathed in and hoped no idiot stuck

his head out of a car window. It was a pretty tight squeeze.

So five hours after leaving Peterborough we rode into Exeter, most favoured city in the land, where the maidens are fair and the boozers open at five in the afternoon, according to Mike Nicks anyway. You might just have realised by now that he happens to be a native of these parts. To demonstrate the veracity of his enthusiastic claims about the Utopian licensing laws in the town we rode into the yard of a riverside pub on the dot of five. Sadly, the worthy landlord of said hostelry didn't share Mr Nicks enthusiasm for five o'clock opening time and so we leaned against the door until he relented and let us in.

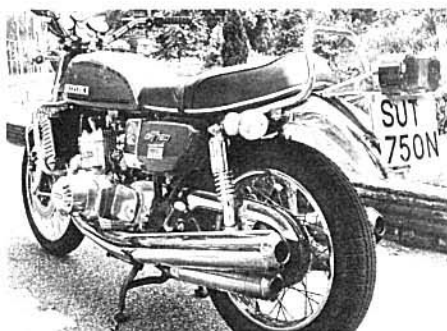
After parking the bikes for the night we embarked on a tour of the town as Mike nostalgically re-visited the iniquitous haunts of his mis-spent youth. He got quite melancholic relating stories of amazing happenings in steamy, beer soaked bar-rooms before those sinister subverters of public good times, the big brewers, took them over and "improved" them. Now most of them are those neon-lit sanitised beer supermarkets where silent people lean on plastic bar tops and stare vacantly in front of them as they sip fizzy chemical brew of dubious alcoholic content. Didn't even see a good fight or anyone throwing up while we were there.

We left for home with thick heads in the morning, but it's amazing how quickly a dose of adrenalin clears a hangover. The sun was still shining, and as the bikes were just about run in now we were keyed up for a bustling return journey. There was still plenty of holiday traffic about, but I got a real kick from jolting the somnolent drivers of family saloons out of their reveries with the banshee wail of the Suzy's three screaming cylinders red-lining past. No doubt about it, these big triples bring out the worst in you.

First time I tentatively opened the tap right out, the Suzuki choked and coughed approaching the ton, but she soon cleared her throat and was pulling healthy and strong. I kept a close eye on the temperature gauge, mounted atop the instrument panel between speedo and tacho, in case the motor should still be a bit tight. But no fear, the needle never went over halfway across the dial.

Suzuki have discovered, in fact, that the water cooling is so effective that the radiator fan fitted to earlier models was redundant, in European climates at least. It was driven by an electric motor and thermostatically controlled, but the coolant never got hot enough to switch the fan in. Without the fan, and with a new plastic grille, the radiator looks slimmer and less obtrusive than on the previous models. And even held up in traffic the needle stayed in the lower half of the temp gauge.

Another change on this latest model concerns the carbs. The GT750 is now fitted with three huge Mikuni "Automatic Variable Venturi", that's to say diaphragm type, instruments. They're claimed to improve



Four into three don't go — or does it? Just so's Suzuki owners won't suffer an inferiority complex in the company of Honda four riders, the exhaust pipe from the centre pot branches into two and feeds the lower, smaller pair of silencers.

fuel economy and reduce exhaust emissions. They also give smooth and instant response to the throttle.

Cruising homewards a sight faster than we'd travelled in the opposite direction. I found those high, wide bars which helped low speed handling became pretty shoulder wrenching. So I shifted back on that huge, fat seat and crouched forwards. It's in the BMW class for comfort, with the inertia of all that weight helping to iron the bumps out.

A few days later, at Snetterton for performance tests, the mild-mannered Suzuki's urge proved an embarrassment to both the 500 and 750 Kawasakis. It more than made up for its weight handicap with the kind of slugging torque you just don't expect from a two-stroke, although it got out of shape once or twice on the standing quarters as I dropped the clutch too quickly and got the rear tyre spinning furiously. It's interesting that the standard GT750 turned a faster time than the Dresda Suzuki we tested in the June/July ish, despite carrying more than a hundredweight extra. The Dresda was significantly faster on top whack, but its lightness made it a handful getting off the line. The GT750's weight actually helped by keeping the front wheel on the deck.

Another do-or-die dash followed, this time in company with Mark Williams and the big Kawasaki, down to London for a photo session. Again the psychological effect of the Suzuki's bulk bothered me in traffic, or was it that Mr Williams suffered similar suicidal tendencies to Mr Nicks as soon as he straddled a Kawasaki? Anyway, he knew the roads and I didn't, well that's my excuse.

Posed together for the pix, the Suzuki didn't look too photogenic alongside the Kawasaki's racy lines. But after enjoying the riding so much, somehow it didn't seem so ugly as it had at first. The chunky appearance is quite impressive by virtue of its sheer bulk, and the shining alloy water jacket around the cylinders is an eye-catching lump. Finish is generally good, apart from some poor chrome on the crash bar surrounding the radiator.

The Suzuki suffers the usual Japanese failing of messy welding and cheap 'n' nasty pressed steel frame gusseting. The silvered plastic grille over the radiator is perhaps a bit too fussy, but it is valuable protection, and being non-corrosive, is easy to clean. The array of gadgets produced either gasps of wonder or sneers of derision from onlookers. To a hard-riding Kawasaki freak who's only interested in how fast he's going, it must all seem a bit superfluous. And I doubt the value of gimmicks like the digital gear indicator, which lights up the number of which ever ratio you're in, on a little display unit on the instrument panel — while watching with fascination as the numbers flash up and down, chances are you could ride smack into the back of a truck! Still, all the lights and dials and things let you know exactly what's going on and they're all clear and easy to read. And besides, they impress people who don't know any better.

Although I haven't mentioned the lights till now, they deserve special praise. Not that they're any better than they should be, it's just that the usual standard of motorcycle lighting is so abysmal it makes you feel like cheering when you come across a bike that even approaches an acceptable standard. Main beam on the Suzy is a penetrating 50 watts, and a well shaped dip beam of 40 watts means you no longer have to grope through the murk in the face of oncoming traffic.

When I reluctantly returned the bike to the Apple emporium at Hinckley and caught the train back I felt really low. Crammed in a carriage full of sweating humanity, I realised, ain't the way to travel when a heavy road pounder like that has got into your blood. It poses something of a problem. Am I going to buy a Suzuki after I've got my Ducati 450? Or before I lash out on a Harley Sportster? Anyway, it's one of the rapidly diminishing number of desirable motorcycles my limited resources are likely to stretch to one of these days. I mean, watercooling, fantastic brakes, good electrics and comfort for £882 must make the Suzuki the best value for money going in the 750 class.

Bill Haylock



The Kawasaki looks positively lean an' hungry compared to the comfortably obese Suzuki. It makes no compromises in fulfilling its role as an all action street racer.