

**TESTS:** Hesketh V1000, Yamaha Venture Royale, Kawasaki KDX250, Yamaha IT250, Suzuki 650M Katana, Yamaha 550 Vision

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# CYCLE GUIDE

## Streetracing, Texas Style

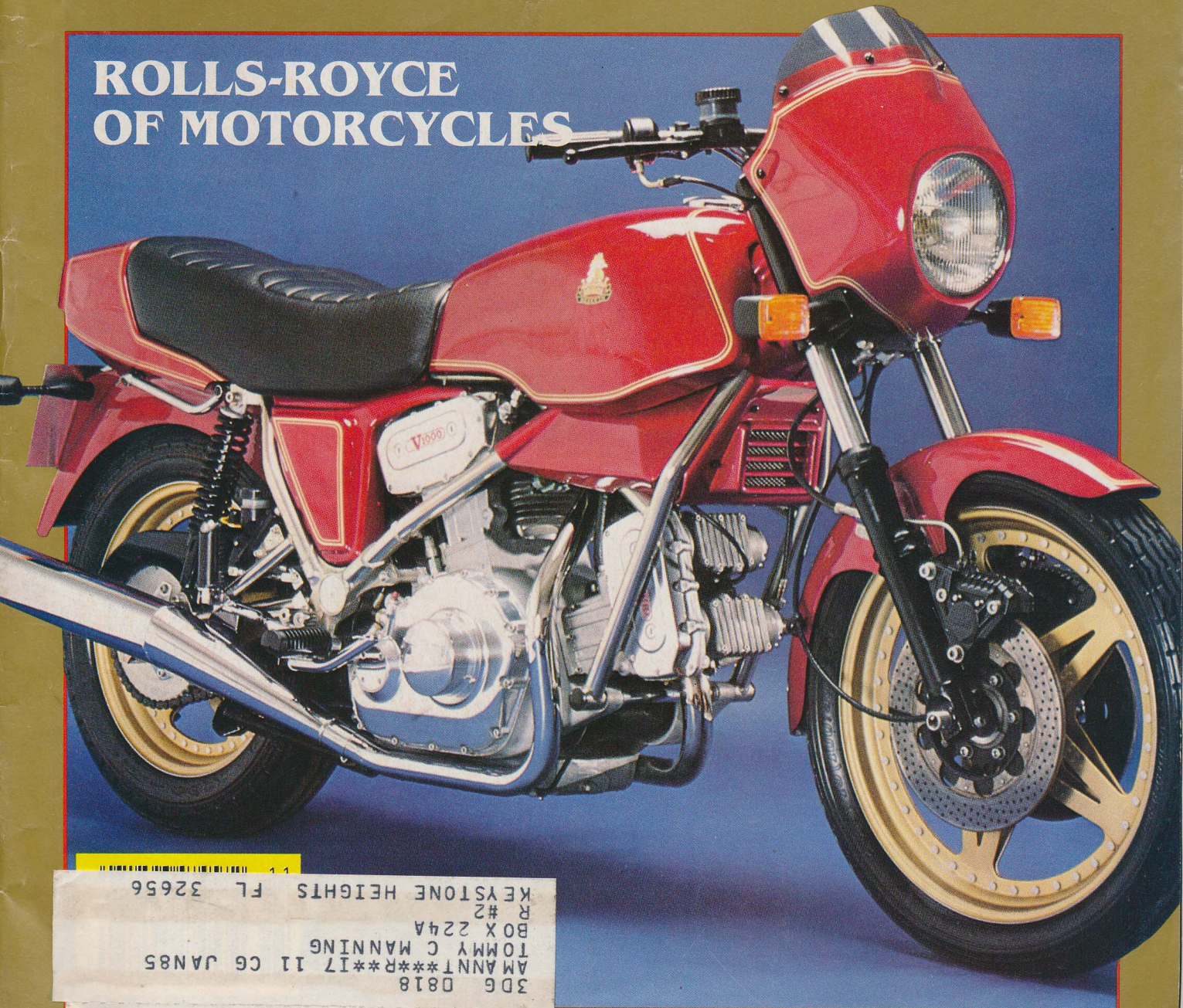
### 250 Enduro Shootout *KDX vs. IT*

\$1.50  
NOVEMBER 1983

EXCLUSIVE:

# HESKETH V1000

ROLLS-ROYCE  
OF MOTORCYCLES



3DG 0818  
AMNNT\*\*R\*\*I7 11 CG JAN85  
TOMMY C MANNING  
BOX 224A  
R #2  
KEYSTONE HEIGHTS FL 32656

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### QUOTE:

"The Lord works in mysterious ways.  
And so too, it seems, to the  
motorcycles bearing his name."

—Pg. 14

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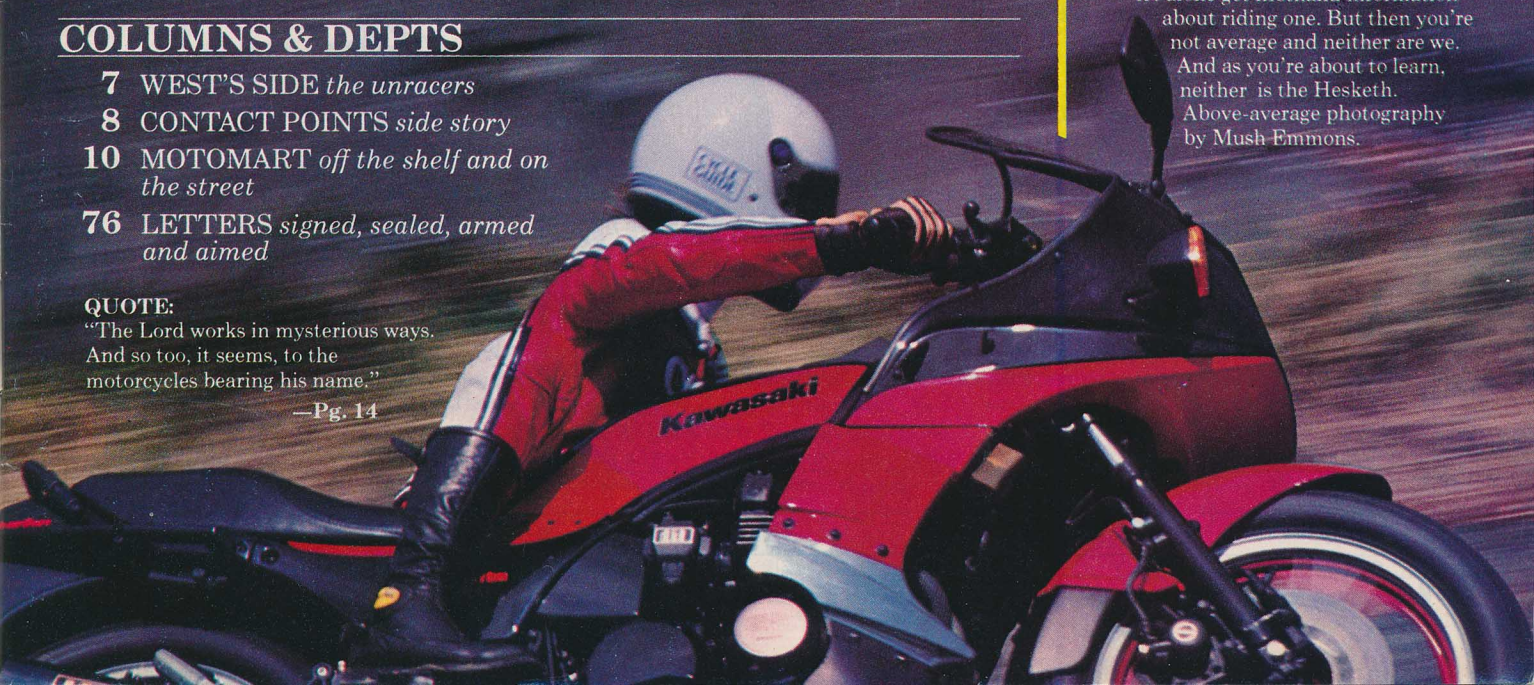
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### ON THE COVER:

Lord knows it's rare for an average  
American to see a Hesketh V1000,  
let alone get firsthand information  
about riding one. But then you're  
not average and neither are we.  
And as you're about to learn,  
neither is the Hesketh.  
Above-average photography  
by Mush Emmons.



If there's one equalizer, one piece of common ground in motorcycling, it's the hunger for performance. The kind of primal satisfaction you get when you grab a hunk of throttle and disappear into the distance. You might have started out in motorcycling for any number of reasons, but if you *stayed*, most likely it's because you acquired a taste for that kind of performance. It's in your blood.

Yamaha understood that phenomenon, that *all* riders, even those who prefer full-dress touring bikes rather than full-on sport machines, have the same hunger for performance—a hunger that wasn't being satisfied by the touring machinery already on the market. So Yamaha's designers endowed the company's all-new turn-key tourer, the Venture Royale, with precisely what its competition lacked: a massive dose of engine muscle.

That could prove a welcome relief, because in the past few years American-style turn-key touring, dominated by Honda's Interstate and Aspencade Gold Wings, has turned away from that soul-rattling kind of engine performance. Instead, the touring goal has been ever-increasing levels of creature comfort and straight-line touring excellence. Each year, the Gold Wing's emphasis was more on accoutrements and specialization—more sophisticated electronics, more entertaining entertainment packages, and

*Continued*

## ROAD TEST:

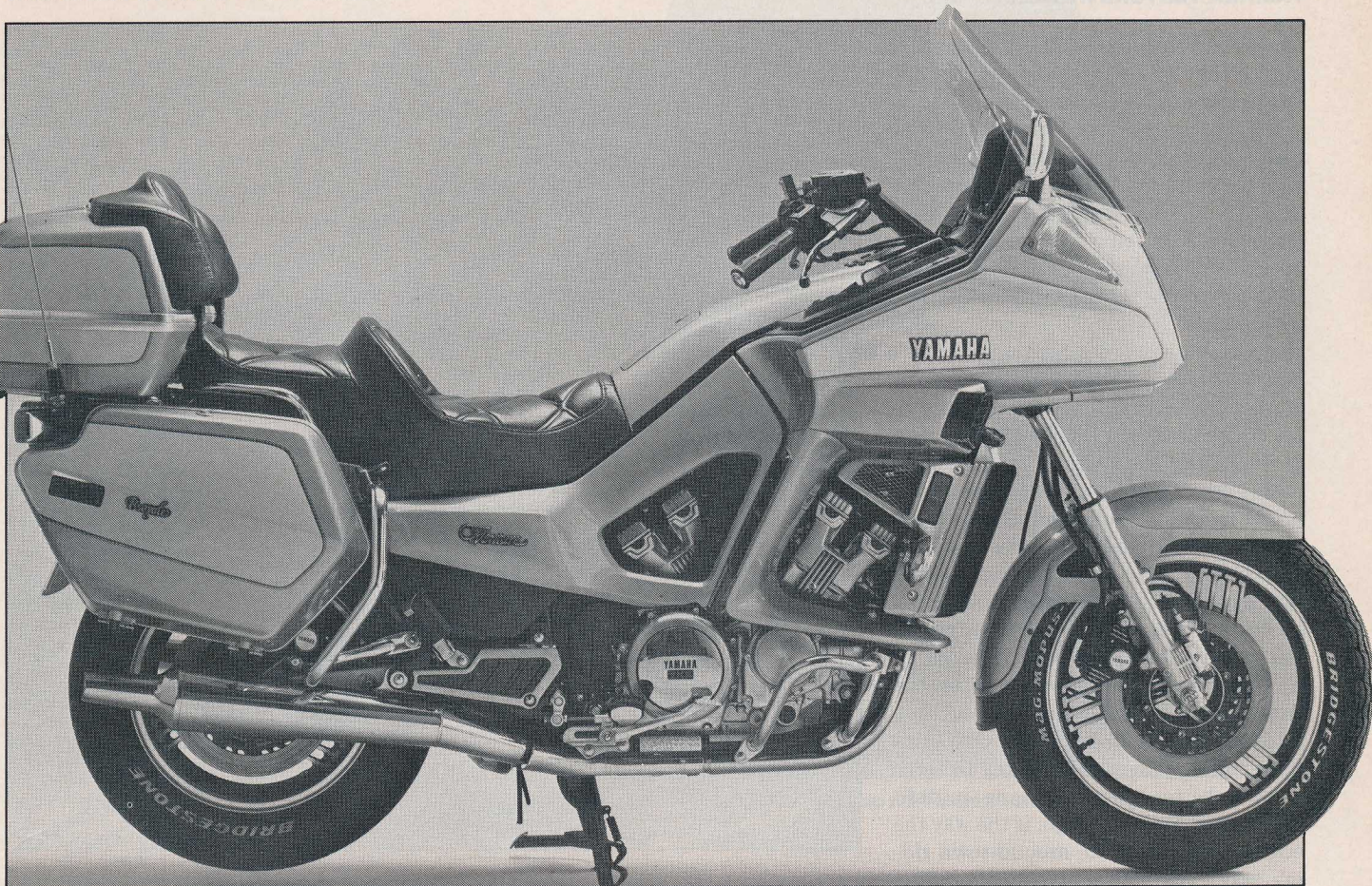
# Yamaha Venture Royale

*In touring parlance, fully dressed never meant wearing a muscle shirt—until now.*

BY LARRY WORKS







inevitably more weight—while the motorcycle underneath the touring gear evolved at a much slower pace. As a result, touring and touring bikes were going to flab. That inimitable thrill of engine performance was being drowned in a sea of gimcracks.

But nowhere is it graven in stone that touring *has* to be that way. And with the Venture Royale, it isn't. Make no mistake about it, though: While the Royale's intoxicating engine power isn't masked, mitigated or otherwise obscured by its touring gear, that doesn't mean this longhauler is short on pure touring *Stuff*. It'll go head-to-head with Honda's Aspencade in that category, from radios to onboard air compressors to sheer, cubic buttons; but more important, it will also out-run the GL, on any road, at any time, as if the Honda's saddlebags were filled with lead.

Granted, the Aspencade *is* a little heavier than the Royale, but the 14-pound weight difference is insignificant on big rigs like these. Instead, the Royale's greater performance is the result of a 113cc displacement advantage, and because its vee-four engine is inherently torquier and was built with performance as its prime goal, whereas the Aspencade's flat-four was engineered more for

---

### **Yamaha's approach to integrated touring style makes the gear seem built-in, not a hung-on afterthought.**

---

high fuel mileage and minimal vibration through lower engine speeds. It's clear that Yamaha used the Aspencade as a role model—but one to beat, and so the Royale was built from the ground up to outperform the Aspencade.

To provide the kinds of power characteristics that Yamaha wanted for the Royale, the engineers configured a liquid-cooled 16-valve 1198cc vee-four, drawing from their experience with another vee, the 550 Vision twin. And although the Venture engine is *not* merely two Vision engines bolted together, there are numerous similarities, like that both motors have 70 degree vee-spreads, and each uses a single, gear-driven counterbalancer to calm any vibrations allowed by its less-than-90-degree vee-spread; and both employ downdraft constant-vacuum carburetors (four 34mm Mikunis

on the 1198cc Venture), in the crotch of the vee between the cylinder banks.

Otherwise, the Venture motor goes off in its own direction, although there's little that's revolutionary or particularly innovative about it. The crankcases split horizontally, with the cylinders molded integrally with the upper crankcase casting. That's a first for Yamaha, but certainly not for the industry. The Venture does, however, have motorcycling's first 180 degree crankshaft in a vee-four engine. (Honda's vee-fours use 360 degree cranks.) The crank itself is one-piece, forged and rides on four plain bearings; the connecting rods also use plain bearings, and each shares a journal with the other rod on its side of the engine.

"Revolutionary" also does not describe the valve adjustment method, which is by shims located above the bucket atop each valve stem. Again, nothing new, but the shims themselves are unique to the Venture and won't fit any other Yamaha. Nor is the drivetrain typical of recent shaft-driven Yamahas: There are no jackshafts before or after the transmission. Straight-cut primary gears directly drive the gearbox mainshaft, and the power takeoff for the final drive is directly off the countershaft. Thus the engine was able to be kept short, fore to aft, allowing

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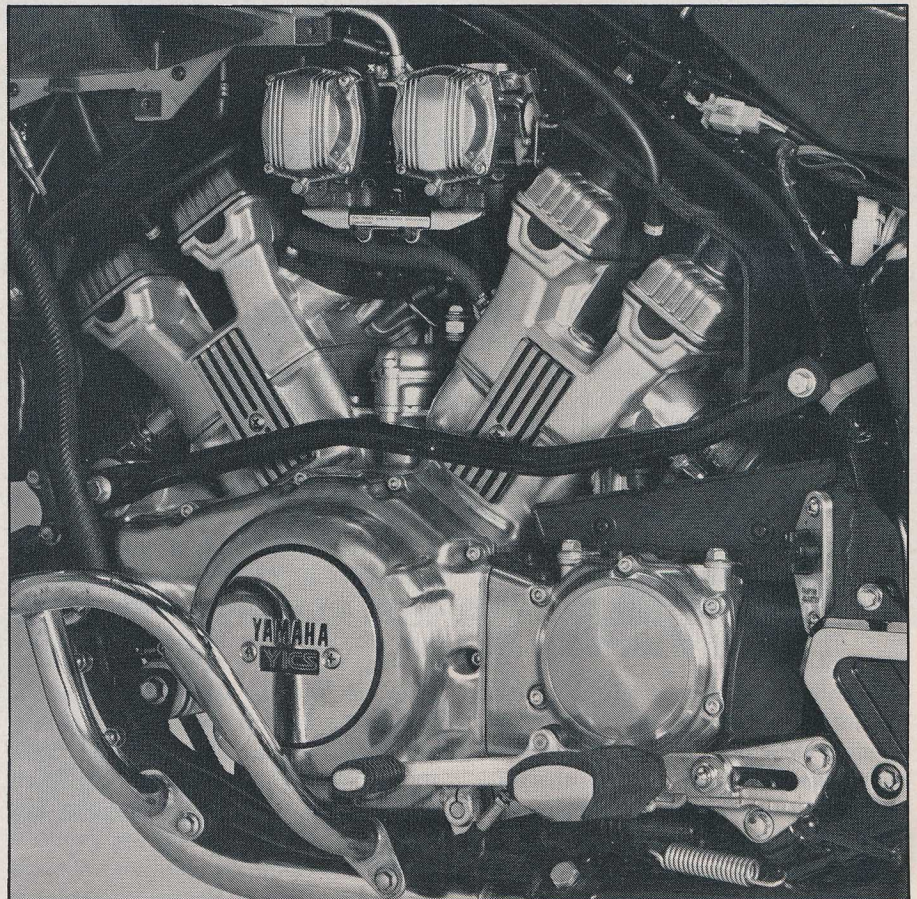
for a relatively long swingarm that helps reduce the "chassis-jacking" usually associated with shaft-drive motorcycles.

If that description conjures images of a bland, unspectacular engine, the notion vaporizes the first time you fire up the bike. The 180 degree crank gives the Royale a deep, throbbing exhaust note that's not unlike a huge vee-twin's—and that is distinctly different from the flat monotone emitted by Honda's vee-fours. By comparison, any other touring bike's exhaust seems wispy and week-kneed.

And the promise of that muscular exhaust note is borne out by the Royale's performance; the engine starts making usable power just about when the starter motor kicks out. You can lug the engine down to 2000 rpm in top gear and whack the throttle wide-open, and the Royale just motors away—no chugs, lurches or chatters. Horsepower builds strongly all the way to redline (Yamaha claims 90 hp), so grabbing a big handful of throttle from 4000 rpm on up thrusts you back into the seat more like you were on a hyperbike than on a big-rig tourer.

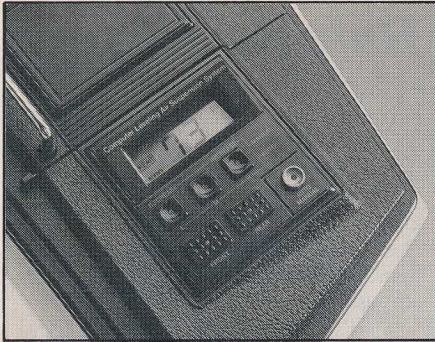
Even better than indulging in full-dress speed antics, though, is the way the engine works to make around-town riding easy. The hydraulic clutch's pull is light and its engagement is never abrupt; and the abundance of power right off of idle means you don't have to ride the clutch, regardless of how much of a load the bike is carrying. Neither do you usually have to work the gearshift lever to negotiate a fast pass; two-up, with touring gear loaded to the brim, all that's required to summon brisk acceleration is to rotate the throttle. Overall, the Royale's accelerative abilities—from just about any rpm in just about any gear—is nothing short of breathtaking; it redefines the limits of touring performance.

In suspension as well, the Venture takes existing touring standards and shoots them all to hell. The fork, admittedly, is a fairly conventional air-spring Kayaba unit with 40mm diameter stanchion tubes, a brace integral with the front fender and one of Yamaha's anti-dive units on each slider leg. The Kayaba rear suspension, however, is a YZ-style Monocross system that breaks with touring convention. It consists of a single deCarbon-type air-spring shock with four damping adjustments controlled by a needle valve. The shock mounts directly to the frame at the top, and to the swingarm via a twin-piece linkage system at the bottom, yielding rising rates of springing and damping. The shock's positioning, right at the swingarm pivot, is



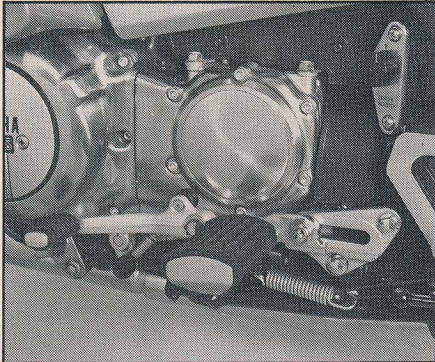
**Vee-four's design is straightforward, with a claimed 90 hp and 75 ft.-lbs. of torque**

*Making other big-rig engines seem like tourists in the high-performance world.*



**Suspension adjusts at the touch of a button**

*Truly air suspension with CLASS.*

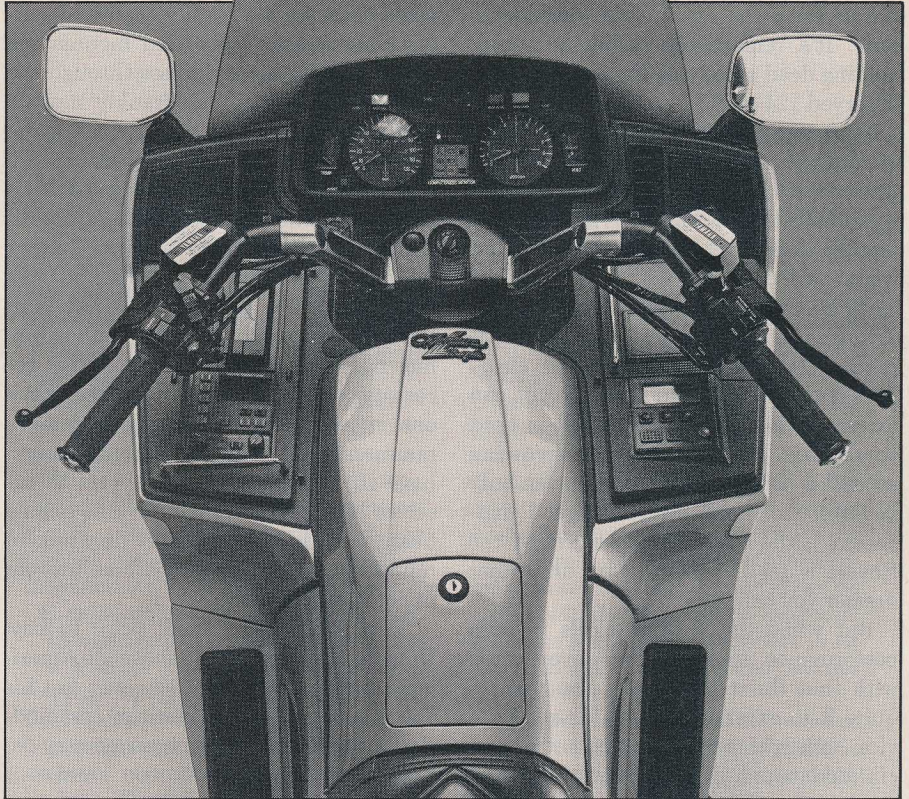


**Foot controls allow fore/aft movement**

*And sometimes, unwanted rotation.*

made possible by the use of two short pivot shafts rather than a single long one; and the absence of side-mounted dual shocks allows the saddlebags to be tucked in closer to the rear wheel, where their effect on handling—especially when they're loaded to the gills—is less noticeable.

Heavy touring loads also require suspension readjustments, which are as simple on the Royale as pushing a few buttons. Air pressure for both the shock and the fork is set by the air compressor located under the travel trunk. With the ignition key in the accessory position, the control panel for the Computer Leveling Air Suspension System (CLASS), located on the right side of the fairing, is activated, and the suspension can then be



**Commanding view from the Royale throne includes AM/FM stereo and cassette player**

*A different meaning to tuning your bike.*

pumped up or bled down. Both fork and shock can be adjusted for preset Low, Medium and High settings when the CLASS is in Auto mode; and with the control set on Manual, the air-pressure levels can be individually adjusted up or down in one-pound increments. Setting the shock's damping is just as easy, since the adjuster knob is located just below the left sidecover and can be turned with no tools. All of which means you can adjust both fork and shock when the Royale is at rest—including shock rebound damping—without ever leaving the bike's comfy seat.

Setting the suspension to full-soft mode, however, produces a spongy ride and premature bottoming, and the Royale will track an imprecise line through

medium-speed corners. Full-soft settings also accentuate the Royale's tendency to follow rain grooves. With the suspension thus set, suspension action at both ends reveals some seal friction, and small-bump compliance is only good, not exemplary, by touring standards.

Raising the suspension settings to the middle of the adjustment range (14 psi front, 42 psi rear and damping on 2nd-3rd stiffest) doesn't seem to reduce the Venture's suspension compliance, and it has the added benefits of raising the bike on its suspension for better cornering clearance while allowing cleaner lines through corners. And at full-stiff suspension (17 psi front, 71 psi rear and stiffest damping), the Royale starts to display how—besides in engine performance—it

## COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Yamaha Venture Royale-'83	12.662/102.73	124	738	153
Honda GL1100 Aspencade-'83	13.515/96.05	152†	752	131
Honda GL1100 Aspencade-'82	13.227/98.79	139†	724	145
BMW R100RT-'82	13.862/95.13	126†	523	148
Harley-Davidson FLH Classic-'82	15.467/82.04	101†	752	180
Honda GL1100 Interstate-'82	13.309/99.55	139†	697	NA

†indicates a calculated top speed

*Continued*

differs from the rest of the touring parade. It's remarkably stable at speed, holding dead-steady all the way up to an observed 124 mph.

More to the point—though high-speed touring is an experience not to be missed—is that with the suspension adjusted full-firm the Royale can be pitched into turns with an abandon that would have other touring bikes twitching, yawing and generally protesting with every means at their disposal. Its steering is precise, there's excellent ground clearance for a large rig, and although you can extract a wallow from the Royale in hard cornering (the physics of throwing around a 738-pound touring rig can only be stretched so far, even with good engineering), the backroad potential of the Royale is far beyond that of any other dresser you can buy.

But while the Royale excels in high performance, touring riders, even those with that thirst for power, also will require it to excel as an over-the-road device—one with a full complement of specialized touring gear. And from the forward tip of its integrated-look fairing to its styled saddlebags and travel trunk, the Royale has the right stuff. A rundown

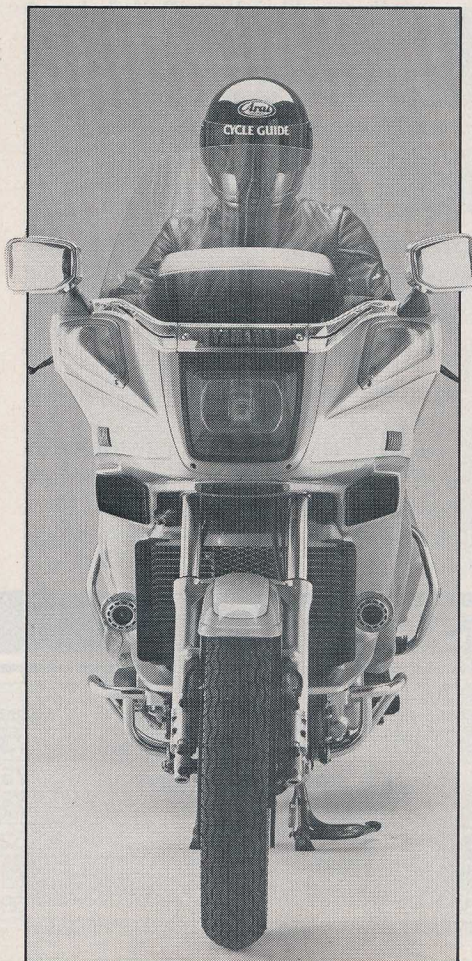
**The Royale's fairing so effectively shields the rider that, despite air vents, engine heat can become a major hindrance to comfort.**

of its standard features looks almost as if Yamaha had been working from the Hondaline catalog. For the Royale's \$7599 price, you get a signal-seeking AM/FM radio with handlebar-mounted controls for mute and turning, a metal-tape-compatible cassette deck, a digital clock and unified braking. The Royale doesn't match the Aspencade piece-for-piece, however, because although there's a provision for a CB and intercom system built into the fairing, those units aren't expected from Yamaha's accessory division until early 1984.

Still, in spite of those accessory shortcomings, in the saddle of the Royale you're equipped for the long haul. And despite the Royale's performance proclivities, that haul should be a comfortable one. The saddle is of the all-day variety, and vibration is negligible. What

vibes do make it past the engine's counterbalancer and rubberized mounts are minor, low-frequency pulses through the bars and pegs that are frankly more a soothing reminder of the engine's presence than an annoyance. Further, the compound handlebars are adjustable in two planes and offer several useful positions, and both rider and passenger footpegs adjust forward and back in slotted tracks. The fairing offers excellent weather protection with only minor helmet-buffeting (Yamaha offers higher accessory screens), but it also points out the one major flaw in the Royale's highway manners. Although the fairing lowers have adjustable vents, the lowers themselves block off so much air that engine heat, even on trips of short duration in mild weather, can turn the bike into an uncomfortable sauna.

That might be a small price to pay, though, if you're one of those all-American touring types who has never lost his thirst for that most American commodity: all-out, unbridled horsepower. No price is too great—or too small—if there's only one source of supply. And right now, anyway, for high-performance touring rigs, the Venture Royale is it. ●



**Ride Review**

• Close is only supposed to count in horseshoes and hand grenades, but that old saw might include touring bikes as well, because although Yamaha's Venture doesn't quite equal Honda's venerable Gold Wing in every area, it comes close—very close. And in engine performance, the Venture's big vee-four easily surpasses the Wing's flat-four.

That's all well and good, but if a touring bike is short on creature comforts, all the power in the world won't make up for it. On the Yamaha, for instance, hardly a breath of air reaches the rider from the fairing's vents, and summertime trips will broil you like a chicken. And the Venture's suspension compliance falls short of the GL's. Certainly, Yamaha got the basic package right, and it comes close to replacing the Gold Wing as my favorite tourer—but not quite close enough. —Charles Everett

• Every muscle in my body was braced for resistance, but eventually I surrendered to the inevitable. I was forced to concede that the Venture Royale really is a better touring rig than my long-time companion, the Honda Aspencade.

It just seemed that Honda's heavy-weight flagship would be able to blow any attempt at competition right off the pavement. But the Venture has more horsepower, better thought-out accessory positioning, and styling that enables it to push the 'Cade right out of my life. The points that Yamaha gives away are minor: a mushy shift lever and a fairing that makes for warm rides on hot days.

There still will be a lump under my Apple Warmer when a 'Cade pulls beside me on the freeway, but that lump will be easy to swallow when I open the throttle and watch the Honda get smaller in the rearview mirror. —Ron Lawson

• The factories have got it all wrong: This is a cruiser. I realize the Venture is built to cover hundreds of miles a day on the Interstates, but as good as it is for that kind of duty, that's not the Venture's forte. This bike is at its best cruising the avenues, rumbling through late-night traffic with a Pat Metheny tape stuffed in the cassette player. In one evening a Venture can get more approving nods than a dozen Viragos will get in a year.

It's an outstanding touring bike, too, though I'd have a hard time choosing between a Venture Royale and a Honda Aspencade. I like the Venture's engine and power, but I don't like the heat. And the Venture's fit and finish don't come close to an Aspencade's. But for an evening cruise on the avenue, the Venture gets my nod—I like its sound system better. —Jim Miller



# The System

• Engine performance might be the common ground for motorcyclists in general, but long-haul riders in *particular* have another shared interest: touring performance. A touring rig has to do more than simply haul you around, however competent it is at that task. It must also be able to haul your *things*, and to keep you in relative comfort—a term that's come to include entertainment in the form of an onboard sound system.

And so the Venture Royale, Yamaha's top long-hauler, is equipped with amenities designed to make long distances seem shorter (its stablemate, the Venture, lacks the Royale's radio, cassette player and air compressor, and has a different shock and color choice). Its standard equipment includes a signal-seeking Mitsubishi AM/FM radio and auto-reverse cassette player locked into the left side of the ABS plastic fairing. The radio unit (available for other Yamaha models) can be pre-set for five stations, and also allows rapid up/down station-scanning. Overall, it's remarkably similar to the Clarion unit on Honda's 1983 Aspencade. But the Royale's sound system goes the Honda's one

better, by including an ambient noise sensor that lets you set the system to increase sound volume as surrounding noises increase.

The Yamaha's system has one other advantage over the Honda's: accessibility. The Royale's radio can be reached more easily while you're riding. But while the Yamaha's sound system is well-placed, its LED frequency readout (located down on the unit itself) requires the rider to look away from the road to check the channel. And the unit's controls are too close together for precise manipulation if you're wearing heavy gloves. Nevertheless, the fidelity through the fairing-mounted speakers (headphones, an intercom system and a CB radio are not yet available) is good.

In addition to providing theme music, the Venture Royale fulfills the other touring requisite: haulage. In fact, the Royle's styled luggage system—saddlebags and travel trunk—is rated to carry up to 60 pounds of gear without overloading. The bags are sturdy, and use tongue/groove closures with rubber gaskets to seal out moisture. In keeping with the turn-key aspect of touring, each

bag can be removed with nothing more than the ignition key and a few tugs. But despite the cases' easy removal, they fall short in convenience, since their mounting projections make for awkward carrying, and can be snagged on clothing.

The ignition key also must be used each time one of the bags is opened or closed, which can mean stopping/restarting the engine with each minor change in the load. That situation is exaggerated, since the Royale's storage is limited to its three bags; the fairing's compartments are filled with the radio/cassette unit and the CLASS control panel. The Aspencade, in many ways the Royale's role-model, offers no such inconvenience. Its luggage latches can be worked without keys when unlocked, and it has a storage compartment in its fairing, as well as two zippered pouches on its travel trunk.

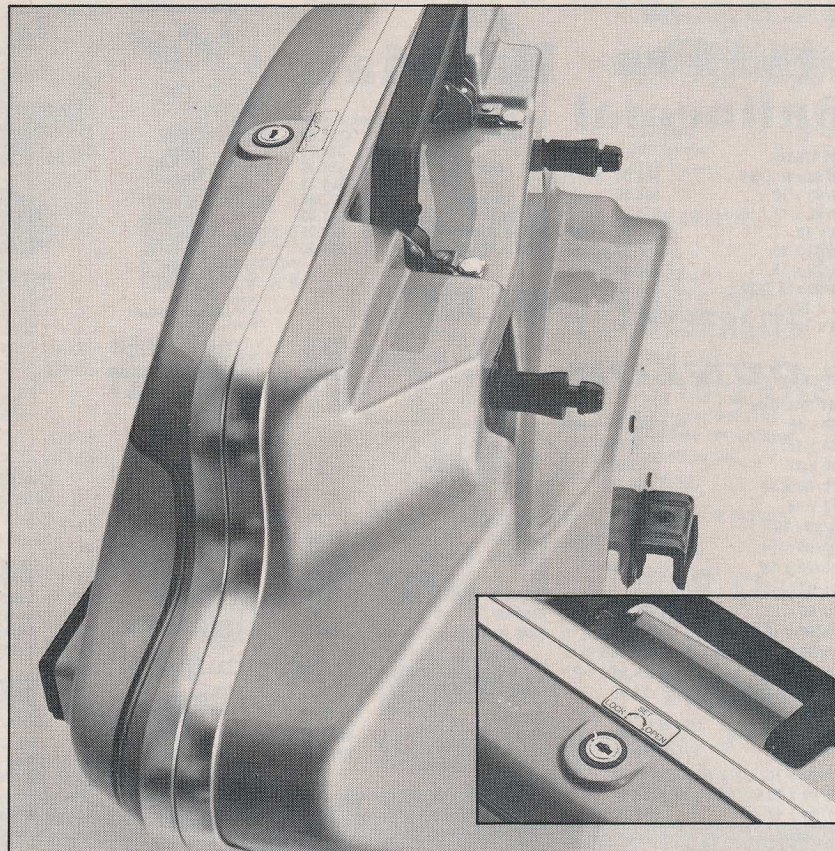
It's in those fine points of convenience that the Royale shows a few rough edges. As a first-year effort it is remarkable, but while it set new standards in engine performance for touring bikes, it doesn't quite equal existing standards for outright touring opulence.



**Travel trunk rated for 20-pound capacity**  
*Or two helmets with room to spare.*



**Ignition key locks sound unit in place**  
*The radio locks itself on channel.*



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1983 DAVID DEWHURST

**Without external latches, Royale's cases project an image of smooth style**  
*An image that lasts until the cases are off the bike and ready to be carried.*

# CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

## Yamaha Venture Royale *touring*

**IMPORTER:** Yamaha Motor Corporation USA, 6555 Katella Avenue, Cypress, California 90630

**SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:** \$7599

**ENGINE**

Type ..... liquid-cooled four-stroke  
 70-degree tandem vee-four  
 Valve arrangement ..... double overhead camshafts,  
 four valves per cylinder  
 Bore and stroke ..... 76.0mm x 66.0mm  
 Displacement ..... 1197.6cc  
 Compression ratio ..... 10.5:1  
 Engine redline ..... 7500 rpm  
 Carburetion ..... four 34mm Mikuni oval-venturi downdraft  
 Air filter ..... disposable paper element  
 Lubrication ..... wet sump  
 Starting system ..... electric only  
 Ignition ..... transistorized breakerless  
 Charging system ..... 12-volt; 420-watt alternator,  
 voltage regulator/rectifier, 20-ampere-hour battery

**DRIVETRAIN**

Primary drive ..... straight-cut gears; 1.776:1 ratio  
 Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate  
 Transmission-to-driveshaft drive ..... spiral-bevel gears;  
 0.778:1 ratio  
 Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel drive ..... spiral-bevel gears;  
 3.300:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.600	11.849	6.33
II	1.773	8.079	9.28
III	1.348	6.142	12.21
IV	1.069	4.871	15.40
V	0.906	4.130	18.16

**SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL**

Front ..... Kayaba air-spring, 40mm stanchion tube diameter,  
 brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/  
 5.4 in. (138mm)  
 Rear ..... single Yamaha air-spring shock,  
 4-position adjustable rebound damping/  
 4.3 in. (110mm)

**BRAKES**

Front ..... dual double-action hydraulic calipers,  
 11.7-in. (297mm) effective disc diameter  
 Rear ..... double-action hydraulic caliper,  
 11.7-in. (297mm) effective disc diameter

**TIRES**

Front ..... 120/90-18 Bridgestone  
 Mag Mopus L303 tubeless  
 Rear ..... 140/90-16 Bridgestone  
 Mag Mopus G508 tubeless

**DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES**

Weight ..... 739 lbs. (335.1kg)  
 Weight distribution ..... 46.1% front, 53.9% rear  
 Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) ..... 1168 lbs. (530kg)  
 Load capacity (with full fuel tank) ..... 396 lbs. (180kg)  
 Wheelbase ..... 63.5 in. (1614mm)  
 Seat height ..... 31.8 in. (808mm)

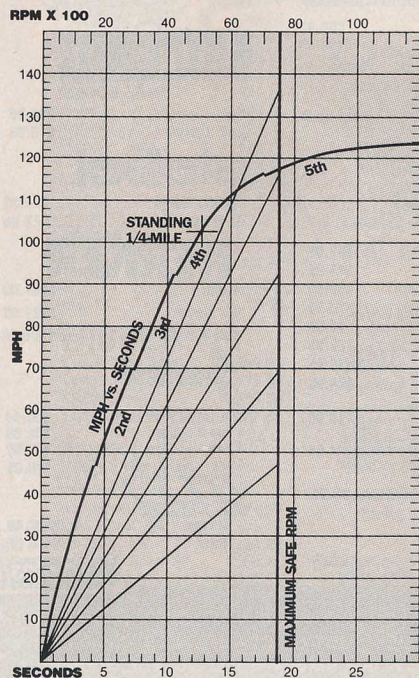
Handlebar width ..... adjustable from 23.5 to 34.1 in.  
 (598 to 865mm)  
 Footpeg height ..... 12.0 in. (304mm)  
 Ground clearance ..... 5.6 in. (142mm), at centerstand feet  
 Steering head angle ..... 28.5 degrees from vertical  
 Front wheel trail ..... 4.92 in. (125mm)  
 Frame ..... tubular mild steel, double front downtubes  
 Oil capacity ..... 4.8 qt. (4.5l)  
 Fuel tank ..... steel, 5.4 gal. (20.5l), no reserve  
 Instrumentation ..... speedometer, odometer, tripmeter  
 resettable to zero, tachometer, temperature gauge,  
 voltmeter, LCD monitor system, LCD clock,  
 LCD suspension-pressure readout,  
 LED radio-frequency readout

**PERFORMANCE**

Fuel consumption range ..... 29 to 44 mpg (12 to 19 km/l)  
 Average fuel consumption ..... 38 mpg (16 km/l)  
 Cruising range, maximum ..... 157 to 238 miles  
 (253 to 383km)  
 Cruising range, reserve only ..... no reserve capacity  
 Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated ..... 29 mph actual  
 Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated ..... 52 mph actual  
 Best 1/4-mile acceleration ..... 12.662 sec.,  
 102.73 mph (165 km/h)  
 Top speed (observed) ..... 124 mph (200 km/h)  
 Stopping distance from 30 mph ..... 36 ft. (11.0m)  
 Stopping distance from 60 mph ..... 153 ft. (46.6m)

**WARRANTY:** 2 years, 24,000 miles on engine and drivetrain;  
 1 year on everything else

**AVAILABLE COLOR:** Two-tone Gold only



All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty