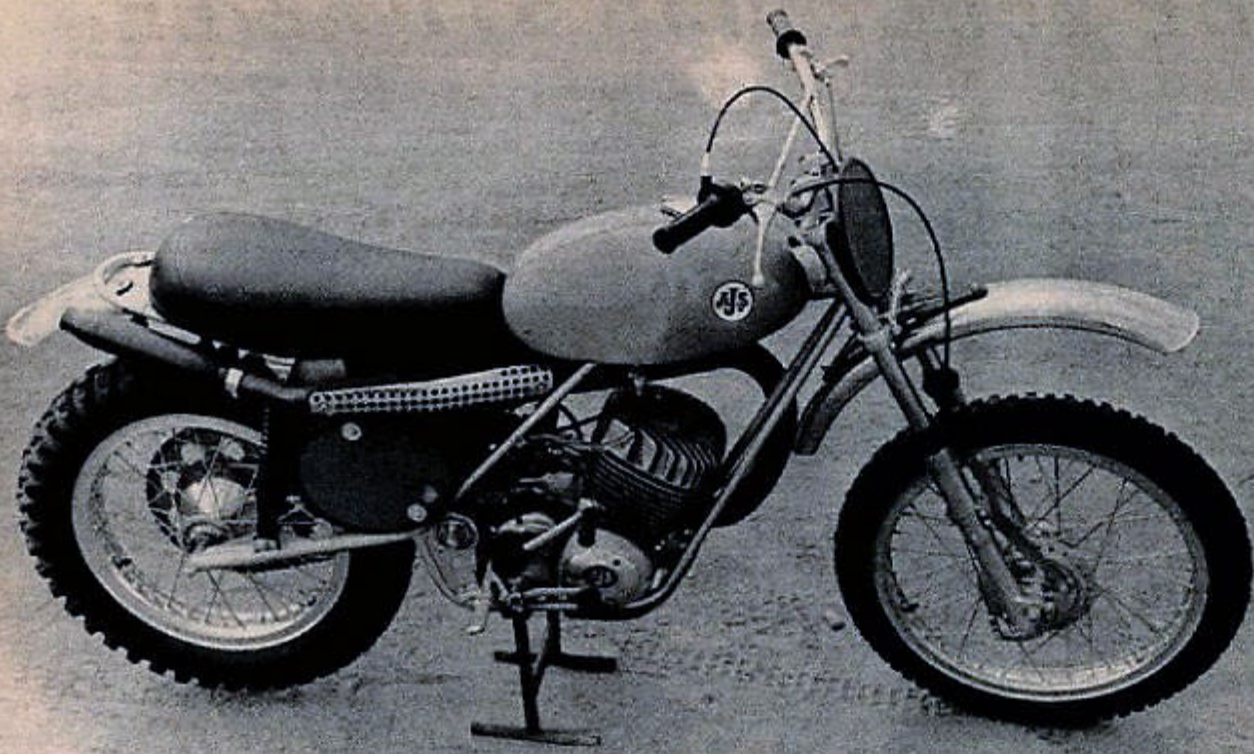


FIELD TEST:



Overall appeal of the Stormer is accentuated by this high angle shot. Looking tall and lean with the Pinnocchio nose front fender. The factory silencer with brackets etc. sells for \$2 0.00 and appears so strong only a wrench twister will ever remove it. No side stand is supplied stock.

GROUP FIELD TEST

For a long time, whenever we have read tests of machines — either in this newspaper or the monthlies — we have always felt that there were always a large group of people who could not identify with the author's views since they represented different backgrounds. With this issue, Cycle News attempts to change that with our first "GROUP FIELD TEST" in which three of our staff members test a machine and give their views. We would like to receive your comments as to how this style of testing appeals to you — for better or worse. Direct your comments to FIELD TEST SURVEY, c/o Cycle News West, P.O. Box 498, Long Beach, Calif. 90801.

For Which It's Made --Tom Culp Handles the Tuff Stuff

By Tom Culp

About this tester: Tom has been racing since 1963 when he rode TTs. He later switched to desert and finally to motocross, where he currently holds an intermediate classification with the CMC and Junior with the AMA. Recently tested a 250 Rickman and loved it so much he wound up buying it. Will he buy the AJS? His wife says she won't let him. . . but that hasn't stopped him yet.

AJS, a brand remembered in past motorcycle history for its fire-breathing single-cylinder 500cc four-strokes, introduced the new AJS's to the U.S. motocrossers in early 1969. Then, it was

only a special, one-off, production copy previewed on the West Coast at the Cycle World Show. Hopes were high for its success in the U.S. market. The prototypes met success in championship motocross in England and on the continent in the two seasons of open development and testing.

The new breed of Ajays echoed the now-familiar notes of a screaming two-stroke. Coming in two er-splitting sizes, 250 and 370, the AJS took to the motocross tracks of the West. Success followed in late '70 placing top American in both the Ascot and Bay Mare Inter-Am's.

Distributed by the newly-established U.S. factory branch of Norton-Villiers here in Southern California, we watched the growth of the AJS. Even though the sounds and piston travel had changed with the times, AJS still had a fire-breathing single. This brings us to the new 1971 AJS-Y40 Stormer.

The aptly named 250 brings to mind the Wild West tales of Pecos Bill, who, so the yarn goes, saddled a twister and tamed it. Well, the Ajay may not be as powerful, but your first ride will have you thinking you're riding one. You'll feel out-of-control, but hold tight and ride it out; you have just to get used to it. The Y40 is not a machine you just throw a leg over and everything feels just like every other motocross model. Even the ruts take on a different feel.

The difference begins with the frame, a frail-looking job accentuated by the heavy-looking Villiers engine. To this, old desert rats conjure up images of Dot, Cotton and Greeves (Square barrel, Starmaker and Hawkstone). That frame's frail look disappears upon closer examination as the backbone is a massive 3½-inch oval tube connecting the small diameter tubing used in the double-loop frame. The whole thing

then finishes off with a plate welded aft, covering top to bottom. Not frail at all, just part of keeping the weight to 222 pounds.

The '71 Stormer is distinguished from the '70 by some very important changes. These changes are, to the eye of the novice, not much, but when



TT'ing the Ajay seemed natural enough, 'though a 19" front wheel would prove better on a smooth surface.

experience is in his fold, he will learn to appreciate what AJS has done:

—The 10-fin head (whoopie, you say); one push from a mile out all seized up, and you'll understand.

—Thicker seat; that gets you right where you can remember.

—Softer fork action; this is a plus in most motocross events, but riders have different tastes.

During the test we used every inch of the 6¼" of travel and I personally liked the action stiffer, but not as stiff as the '70. As I said, it's your own style of riding that determines this. We never got the forks to actually bottom. The heavier spokes, stronger gear selectors, stronger chain guide, improved sprocket attachment, flip-up gas cap, and a host of other beefed-up parts are all very much to the plus side of the '71 Stormer.

The machine we tested was the close-ratio (moto-x) model. I rode the wide ratio (desert) model during the press showing at Saddleback Park. While this is nothing near desert terrain, the wider ratio should top out in the neighborhood of 7-75 mph. Both are four-speeds. This wide ratio also may find a home at some fast open motocross courses.

I chose Indian Dunes as the place to pass final judgment on the Ajay, having ridden at Saddleback and Osteen's on the two previous weekends. The Dunes offered more than just motocross evaluation. A few wide open runs down the wide sand wash gave me a feel of desert terrain. The machine tracks well, the front end is very light and requires full concentration to avoid bringing it

over backwards. With the extra top speed gained with the wider ratio configuration, you will really need to read the ground up front.

The brakes are good and worked even after traveling through repeated water crossings. The bike sits higher than most motocrossers but leans into corners well. You feel as though you don't need to lean it too far as it begins to handle under you.

The overall handling is great, though a bit awkward at first. One thing, it's marvelously void of protruding objects that rub your legs and shins. The high pipe tucks through the frame, making its exit at your thigh, but you never know it's there. Riding through the many water crossings, even those 18 inches deep, at full throttle in third gear didn't cause it to miss a beat. The under-the-seat closed air box is fitted with a Filtron and is next to impossible to get it wet.

Priced right in line with its competition, the Stormer is minus on nothing and plus on plenty. Even in checking the retail price parts catalogue, I found plenty of parts less expensive than other manufacturers'. Also, AJS supplies some of the most-needed parts the first time around. They refer to it as an Emergency Parts Kit.

Remember, the Stormer is no novice's cow-trailer, but a well-designed and well-built motocrosser, scrambler and desert brush-bender. Take the time to get the feel of it and you will know, too, of the feel of riding a twister like "Pecos Bill" Grant — or is it Doug?



Spash! It felt good on a hot day. The bike never missed a beat, either.



Our novice rider gets the front end up with ease. He spent all day repeating, "Did you see that?!"

THREE VIEW THE 250CC AJS STORMER

Sideways:

2-Stroke Scrambles Ed Drechsler's Mind

By Ed Drechsler

About this tester: Ed is 32 years-old, and been involved with motorcycles since 1953. Only recently, however, did he turn to competition. Among well known events he has competed in include the Dirt Diggers All State Scrambles (1970), Four Aces GP at Willow Springs (1970), the Elsinore GP ('71) and Viewfinders GP at Indian Dunes ('71). He is a District 37 TT Novice currently ranked 53rd in Dist. 37 point standings.

When asked to participate in the field test of the AJS 250 Stormer, I felt that here was another chance to prove to myself that the four-stroke is still king. I ride a highly-competitive BSA 441 Victor which now has a wet weight of 235 pounds. The 2-strokes that I had rode in the past all seemed to exhibit the same type of problems: gear shift on the wrong side, radical power band which was impossible for me to control, a general lack of "feel" when decelerating under compression, inadequate brakes, foot pegs too high and too far to the rear for TT riding, front end too light, etc. The entire list is

too lengthy to print. I was convinced that if I ever did switch to a ring-a-ding that it would take me many months and many crashes for the change-over.

The first time I mounted the test machine was at Orange County's Saddleback Park. After memorizing the shift pattern (1 up, 3 down on the right), I rode a slow lap on the TT course for familiarization. The machine's balance, handling, and natural feel of controls and gradual power curve convinced me that I could go faster, so I opened it up. The course was not in "rac-day shape" but I was able to knock a full five seconds off my fastest Victor time for the same course. (Time available upon request.)

I stabbed into corners faster than ever and came out in shape. I had never been able to take that off-camber left turn after the jump, but with the Ajay I was passing on the inside or outside with ease. On the short straight before the jump I could choose the groove I wanted and even was able to change grooves at will. Never before had I been exposed to such controlability.

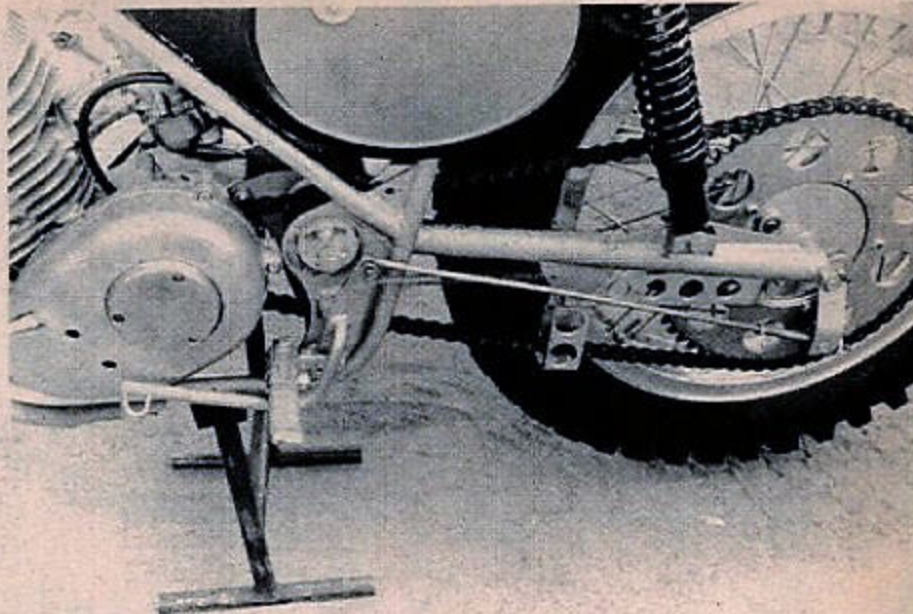
The gear shift pattern, while awkward at first, proved to be natural to me that I am now in the process of reversing the shift plate on my Victor. The close-ratio gear box seemed to be designed for TT-type courses such as Saddleback.

The brakes were more than adequate and provided as much stopping power and feel as my own Barnes hydraulic disc brake.

The Stormer was fitted with a stock AJS silencer which cut the noise down to a tolerable level. Even so, the power of the machine was unreal. The Ajay pulled everything on the course except a pesky 405 Maico which would slide onto the track, out-ride me, and disappear off the track as I was nipping at his heels.

The only problem that I encountered occurred on the motocross course at Osteen's Park and in the sand at Indian Dunes. The carburetor loads when the engine is lugged. This loading is directly attributable to rider error, but it still is somewhat bothersome.

I also was able to ride this machine over terrain representative of any to be found in Southern California. I rode Grand Prix type areas, sandwashes, rocks, and water. In some areas I went faster than I had ever been before, and in the remaining areas my speed was equal to my past performances. The natural handling ability and gradual power curve allowed me to ride "balls out" on three separate days without throwing me to the ground one time. I have never been so impressed by a machine before. What impresses me the most is the fact that this machine is



The familiar Villiers lower end unit construction leaves a little to be desired for riders who change gearing as clutch case and housing must be removed to change the counter-shaft sprocket. The sturdy brake lever is a plus along with the cam-type chain adjuster. Note that position of the shock mounting to swing arm is farther forward than most.

produced in conservative England. And to tell you the truth, I personally never expected anything competitive for

motocross or TT to come from our cousins across the sea. I believe that I will buy one.

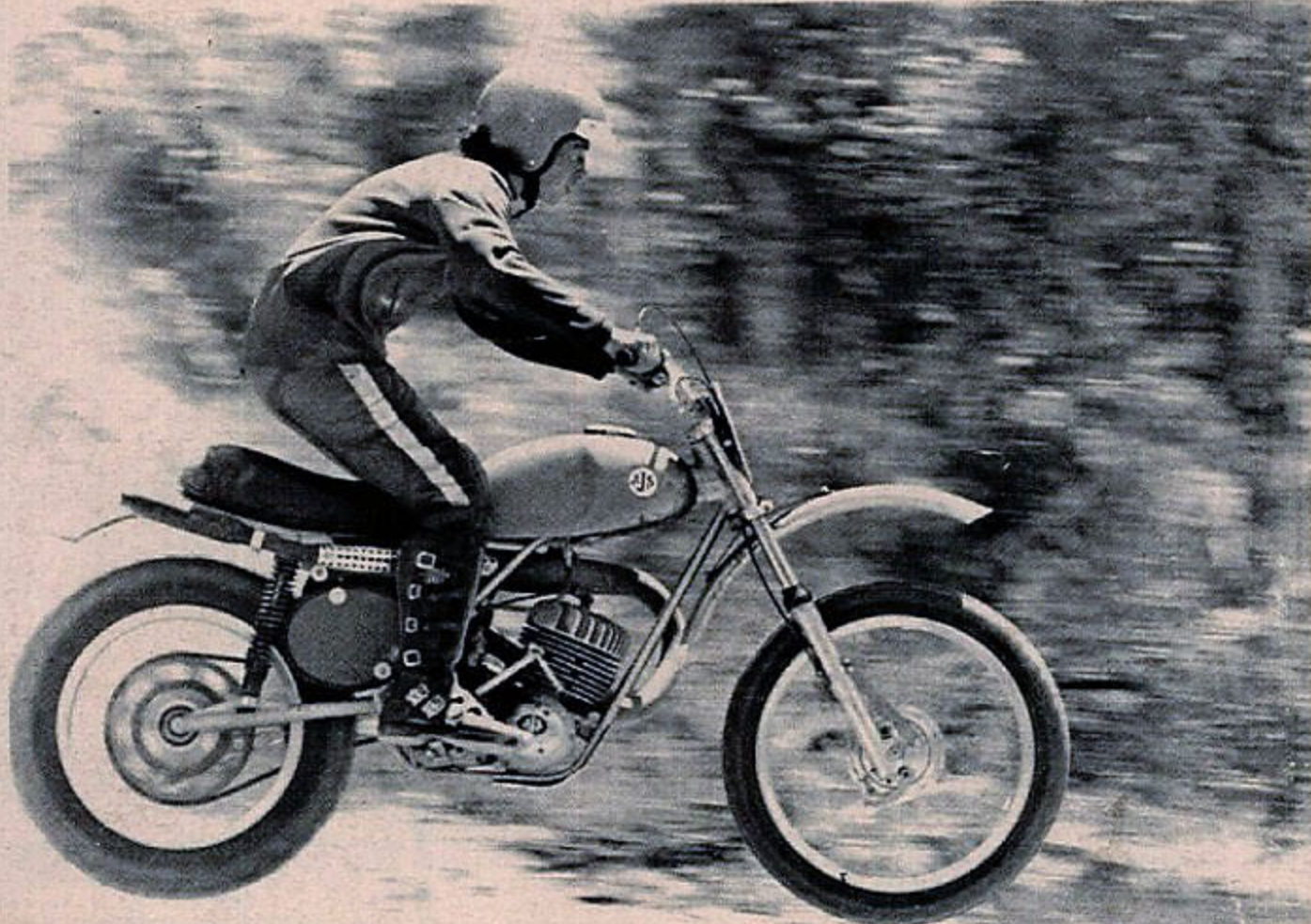
AJS 250 STORMER SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	AJS air-cooled single cylinder two-stroke (247cc).	
Bore	2.676" (68mm)	
Stroke	2.676" (68mm)	
Com. Ratio	11:1	
BHP, Rear Wheel, sea-level	Over 25 at 6000-8000 rpm	
Max. Torque	22 lbs/ft at 5750 rpm	
Clutch	All metal-wet	
Gearbox	Wide ratio	Close Ratio
4th	1:1	1:1
3rd	1.255:1	1.255:1
2nd	1.66:1	1.51:1
1st	2.53:1	2.00:1
Ignition System	Flywheel generator with external coil	
Carburetor	Amal concentric 32mm	
Gastank	Strong glass reinforced plastic; 2 1/4 gal.	
Front Suspension	Teledraulic fork with revised damping 6 3/4 travel	
Brakes	Extra wide drum front and rear incorporating unique AJS piston ring seal in lightweight conical hubs.	
Footpegs	Forged steel, spring-loaded, folding; splined mounting providing a range of adjustment.	
Fenders	Light alloy front and rear	
Dimension and weight:		
Wheelbase	55.5"	
Length	.89"	
Saddle height (rider seated)	.30"	
Ground clearance	9.5"	
Weight (dry)	222 lbs.	
Tire size	Front	2.75 x 21
	Rear	4.00 x 18

Emergency Parts Kit: Throttle cable, clutch cable, spark plug, rear chain split link, set of contact breaker points, set of piston rings, .015" and .018" feeler gauge, and timing tool.



The narrow double-loop frame makes the engine look massive. Expansion chamber protrudes out quite a bit although it was not of any consequence during test — just funny-looking. Skid plate is tuck and could be wider for better side case protection. There's lots of room under tank to change plug; even the desert tank has room.



The Ajay in full flight. Handling is excellent over the choppy stuff.

Novice Thrills & Spills ...or, the Ajay Takes Dave Swift for a Ride

By David Swift

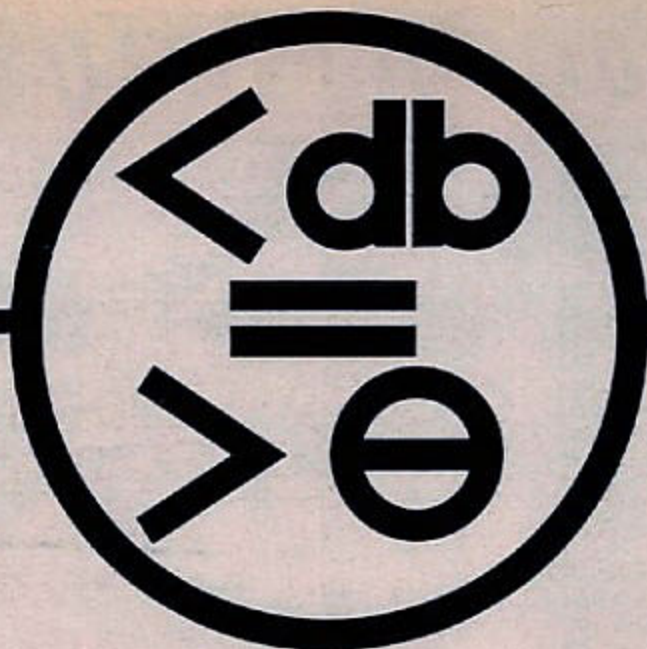
About this tester: Dave, (22), has been a street rider for five years and is currently rebuilding his Yamaha 350 with hopes to go into Production Road Racing. He is quite familiar with many of the asphalt machines going but is a Novice-Novice tracker on the dirt; or, as he says, "A super Novice who has never raced in his life."

I've always wanted to ride the Ajay. Being a long-time street enthusiast, Nortons have represented some sort of ultimate in superbike-dom, and now that my interest has spread into the bod-pummeling world of off-road riding, the Nortons' brother naturally stirs more interest.

Norton-Villiers has managed to avoid England's reputation for "traditional" engineering in the past few years but most of the pit gossip at the local races is unfavorable towards the AJS. Few racers own one so there is little chance that the Ajay can be defended. Still, gentle Mike Jackson is always unafraid to stack his product, silencer and all, against anyone else's, because he's convinced that "they handle better".

Better than what? Well, despite the fact that I've ridden a handful of out-of-the-crate racers, I'm not afraid to say that the Y-40 offers more in performance than most riders are capable of demanding. The

(Please turn to page 8)



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(Cont'd. from page 7)

characteristics are simply described: the faster you go, the better it handles.

I mounted the machine and mosed up a trail. The bike felt clumsy at low speed, thus sapping what little confidence I had. A mind game took care of that; I remembered that in recent years surfboards have evolved from a pig shape to an ultra-sophisticated dart of about half the size, making them incredibly maneuverable for the expert but impossible for the beginner. Could the Ajay be too sophisticated for the beginner who plugs along, afraid to shift out of first?

My thoughts proved to be correct. Upon applying a liberal amount of throttle, all those scary-looking rocks, whoops, and ruts sort of seemed to disappear, leaving me to go my merry, quick way. And after finding out what it's like to go fast in the dirt, I'll never be the same.

Now a few thoughts about the bike:
—It loads up. The power band pulls and pulls and pulls from X rpm, but if you let it fall under that reading, the chamber is flooded with petrol. Mikunis, right?

—The shift pattern is the best in the business. Being so unique, one up and three down, most people including myself hated it at first. After a bit of use I, like Ed, concluded that it is the best for both quick up- and down-shifting. All others seem like afterthoughts, now. Try it yourself, to be sure.

—The Ajay tranny never malfunctioned. Older models had a weak shifting paw that always broke, but this one didn't. If I didn't break it, no one can.

—We had to fix a flat in the rear, and, except for the rimlocks and heavy lip, it was simple.

—At first, the front end seemed to be hard to pick up, but body English proved to be the answer. You have to work, but it always responded and never reacted.

—I found it easy to fall off all the other bikes I rode except the Ajay, and I pushed myself much harder on it than any other dirt bike I've ridden.

—During the length of the test we had to adjust, tape, tighten, loosen, lubricate, straighten, hammer, or curse at nothing except the Amal and the flat. Absolutely amazing.

—The silencer is sugar-sweet. Folks everywhere approved wholeheartedly of the music.

—The handlebar levers should be replaced because they are brittle. I broke them off during the latter part of the test and here's how:

A bunch of accomplished riders went cowtrailing one day and I decided to tag along. There were enough steep, rocky trails to get me lost several times. They were playing but I had to beat the hell out of the poor bike to keep up. I've never abused a machine so, and I kept waiting for it to break. We crossed a highway and a Patrolman jumped from a blind spot and started to chase us. Being the last in the pack, I figured I would be the first to be caught. We finally ditched him and I lost it on a fire road at about 45. It was a tidy spill that broke off the front brake lever. I was unscratched.

Later, I got *really* lost. The sun went down. Figuring I was on a familiar trail, I bombed into a gully. Crash. The clutch lever was broken but still hung on by a slender thread of metal. The only trails leading out were steeper, rockier, and hairier than any I have ridden. I started to set up camp until the Spirit of Mike Jackson permeated my pride. I chose the most vertical route and sat on the rear wheel for traction. The Ajay pushed, bounced, shoved, clawed, elbowed, and somehow conquered the oppressive hill to show me a paved road that would carry me home. All I did was sit there with the throttle wide open; the superb Stormer did all the work, flawlessly.

I have yet to ride some of the other biggies (CZ, Maico, Husky, etc.) and am looking forward to it. But, I really learned to love the Ajay. I became more in tune with it than any machine I've ridden, street or otherwise. The Ajay might be the machine for you, and it might not. But you really ought to give it a chance.

**NOISE: The sound
that kills the sight.**