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AUGUST 1978 **70p**

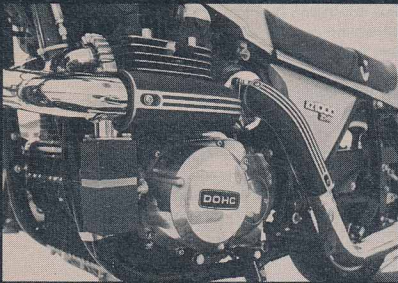
**TESTS: YAMAHA DT175E MONOSHOCKER
CAN-AM 370 MX4, SUZUKI GS750EC
SNAP IMPRESSION: TURBOCHARGED
KAWASAKI ZI-R TC, THE MEANEST Z OF ALL**

**TOURING: WHY WE DO IT, HOW WE PLAN IT,
WHERE WE GO AND HOW WE GET THERE**



Cycle

August 1978 Volume XXIX No.8



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This Month's Cover: Cycle presents its You-Are-There Touring Cover. You're on a Harley-Davidson FLH-80, and yes, you are speeding. Complainers should consider taking it up with St. Joan of Claymore. That's an inside joke, literally, so see page 8. Cycle's touring features begin on page 50. Photographic evidence of our highway perpetration has been provided by Robin Riggs.

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CYCLE ROAD TEST

SUZUKI GS750EC

In two years the Suzuki GS750 has gained recognition as a fast, reliable, good-handling machine.

Built upon that foundation, the EC, with cast wheels, dual-disc front brakes and a stepped seat, takes its place as yet another factory-modified motorcycle.

● IN RECENT YEARS MOTORCYCLE MANUFACTURERS have begun to produce increasing numbers of "variants"—bikes which use special trim, options or specifications to set themselves apart from standard but which do not differ from their respective base models in any significant or expensive way. It's not a new way of doing business—Harley-Davidson built two Sportsters practically from the beginning, not to mention any number of Pick 'Em Glides, and Triumph built more "different" 650 twins than you could shake a dipstick at. It is a fabulous concept: a dealer can sell two or three ostensibly different models but only carry a parts inventory for one; a customer can select between the variants of a given basic unit and buy the one that'll correspond most directly with the kind of riding he likes; and the manufacturer can produce three models for roughly the price of one, and if he's especially lucky he can enjoy three times as many sales.

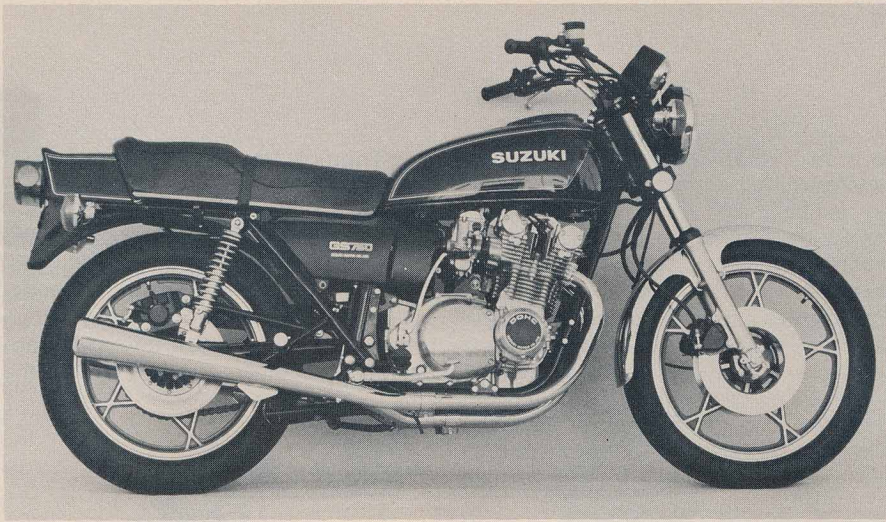
If variants aren't new they certainly are plentiful. A short list: all but one BMW; H-D XLCR Café Racer, Low Rider and Super Glide; the 900 Ducati SS and Darmah; two of the three Honda Hawk 400s; Honda CB750F and CB750A; two Kawasaki KZ400s, two KZ650s and two Zs; one Laverda triple; four Moto Guzzis; one of each of Suzuki's late-model four-strokes;

one Triumph Bonneville; and at least three Yamahas (two of which, the 650SE and the 750XE, are so popular that Yamaha is now very close to Honda in terms of total unit sales). Variants are less plentiful in the dual-purpose and enduro categories, and they're extremely rare among motocrossers; the less important appearance becomes and the simpler the



PHOTOGRAPHY: DON PHILLIPSON, DAVE HAWKINS

SUZUKI GS750EC

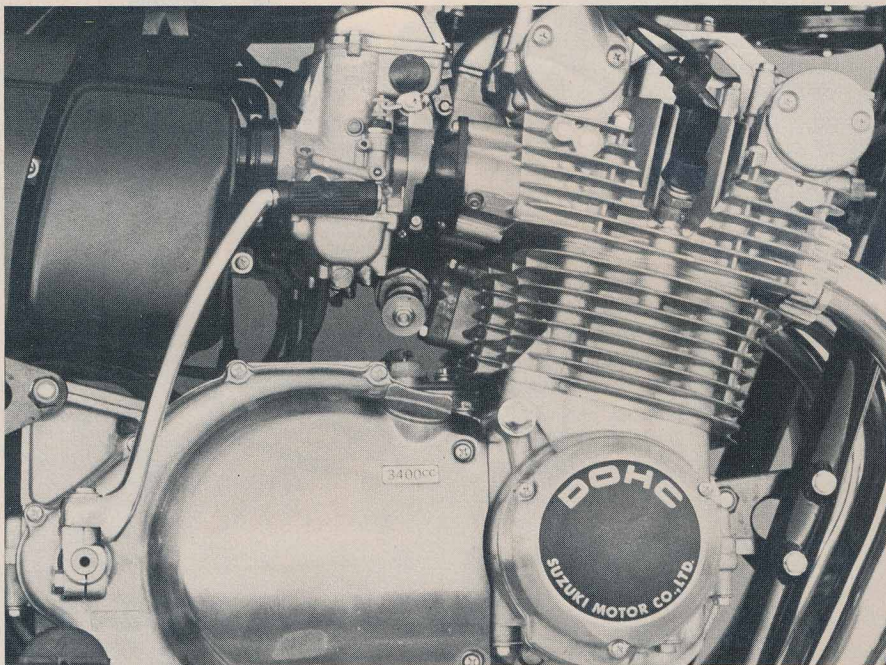


objective, the more impractical the variant concept is.

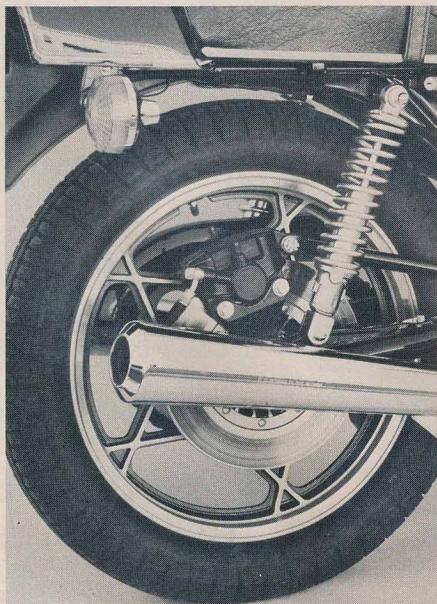
What comprises a successful variant? First, the basic model should be sound, or popular, or both. Second, the variant should function no worse than the standard model—although some very successful variants have; third, the bike should anticipate the needs or desires of the market (“needs” works better; “desires” sells better); and fourth, the variant should carry a price tag which reasonably reflects the value of those parts which make it special.

There are radical variants—the BMW R100RS, the Kawasaki Z1-R and Z1R-TC, the Honda CB750A—and there are mild ones. The Suzuki GS750EC is mild. It is also a paradigm of all those things which practically guarantee market success. The EC is for those who want a combination sporting and touring machine, and one which is stylish but not gaudy. The basic GS750 has proven to be the best sport-tourer in its class, a fact which automatically places the functionally identical (and only slightly heavier) EC at the top of the heap. Stylistically, the EC's modifications—an all-black paint motif, a stepped seat, cast wheels and a dual-disc front brake system—are very subtle and should appeal to both sporting and touring riders. The EC is different, but not terribly special. Happily, another related factor must be mentioned here: price. Few modifications result in only a slight price increase. The EC retails for \$2349, compared to \$2199 for the 750C. Considering what you get, the EC is a bargain.

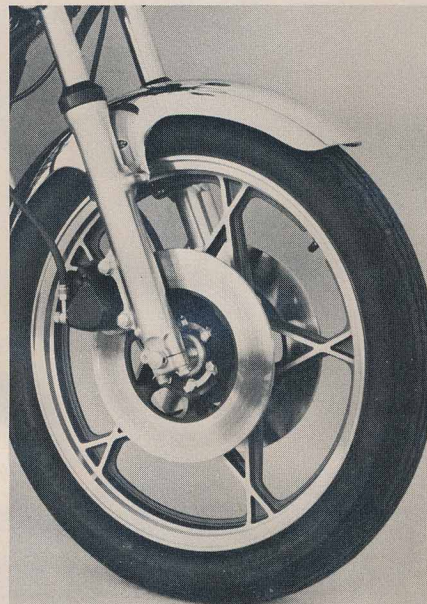
The power characteristics of the GS750EC result in excellent performance whether the bike is used for touring or sport riding. From just above idle to 5000 rpm, the engine is supple and clean. Around-town riding consequently is hassle-free and completely enjoyable. The top-of-the-range powerband, though, is definitely for the thrillseeker. In this neighborhood the GS nearly doubles its horsepower, increasing in output from 30 to 60. The GS turns a 12.72-second quarter-mile elapsed time, certainly quick enough for a pleasurable acceleration high—and incrementally quicker than last year's standard GS. It's possible that this tiny improvement in acceleration performance came from the factory refiddle of the carburetors. Because the EC is a 1978 model produced after January 1, its carbs have been tightened up for emission control. Comparing this year's EC to last year's B-model, the needle jets are slightly leaner, and the slide cutaways provide a slightly richer transition from the pilot jets to the needles. While the rest of the carburetors' metering systems remain dimensionally the same as they were last year, assembly and quality control have been improved, and manufacturing toler-



GS engine has proven to be very reliable. Carbs have altered jetting and slide cutaways to meet EPA standards.



Smaller diameter disc—reduced from 295mm to 275mm—offers more progressive response at the foot pedal.

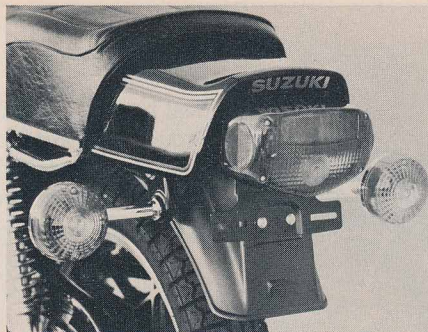


Standard GS uses single disc brake; EC has dual discs that are one millimeter thinner than standard model's.

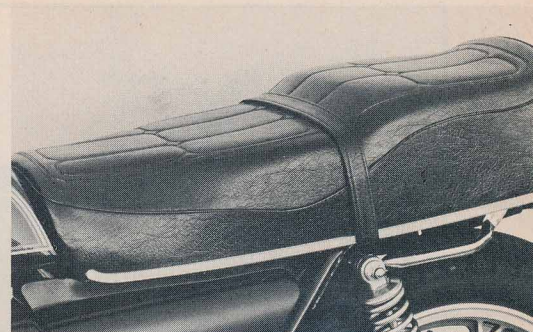
ances for the relevant internal carb parts have been more carefully pinpointed.

Everything else about the 750 four-cylinder remains as before. Although the engine is only in its second year of production, it behaves like an old sweetheart that's been around forever. Except for Suzuki's patented automatic cam-chain tensioner, the GS750 engine strolls right down the middle of Ordinary Avenue: a carb for each inlet port, double overhead camshafts with timing figures identical to those developed in 1972 for the first Kawasaki Z-1, 30mm and 36mm exhaust and inlet valves, a roller crankshaft and a points-type ignition. We have but two complaints: first, the carburetor return springing is still too stiff for mortal right wrists, and second, it's time Suzuki abandoned an old convention in favor of a new one and switched over to some form of pointless ignition.

Suzuki started caring about street bike frames before any other major Japanese manufacturer. The GS's, the second of three big bike chassis thus far drawn up by Mr. Hisashi Morikawa (the RE-5 came before; the GS1000 after), is a beauty. It weighs 36.75 pounds, produces a wheelbase of 59 inches, and has mass and strength in all the right places—like under the fuel tank and between the rear axle and the swing-arm pivot. As a sporting



Inside the tail section is plenty of small item room.

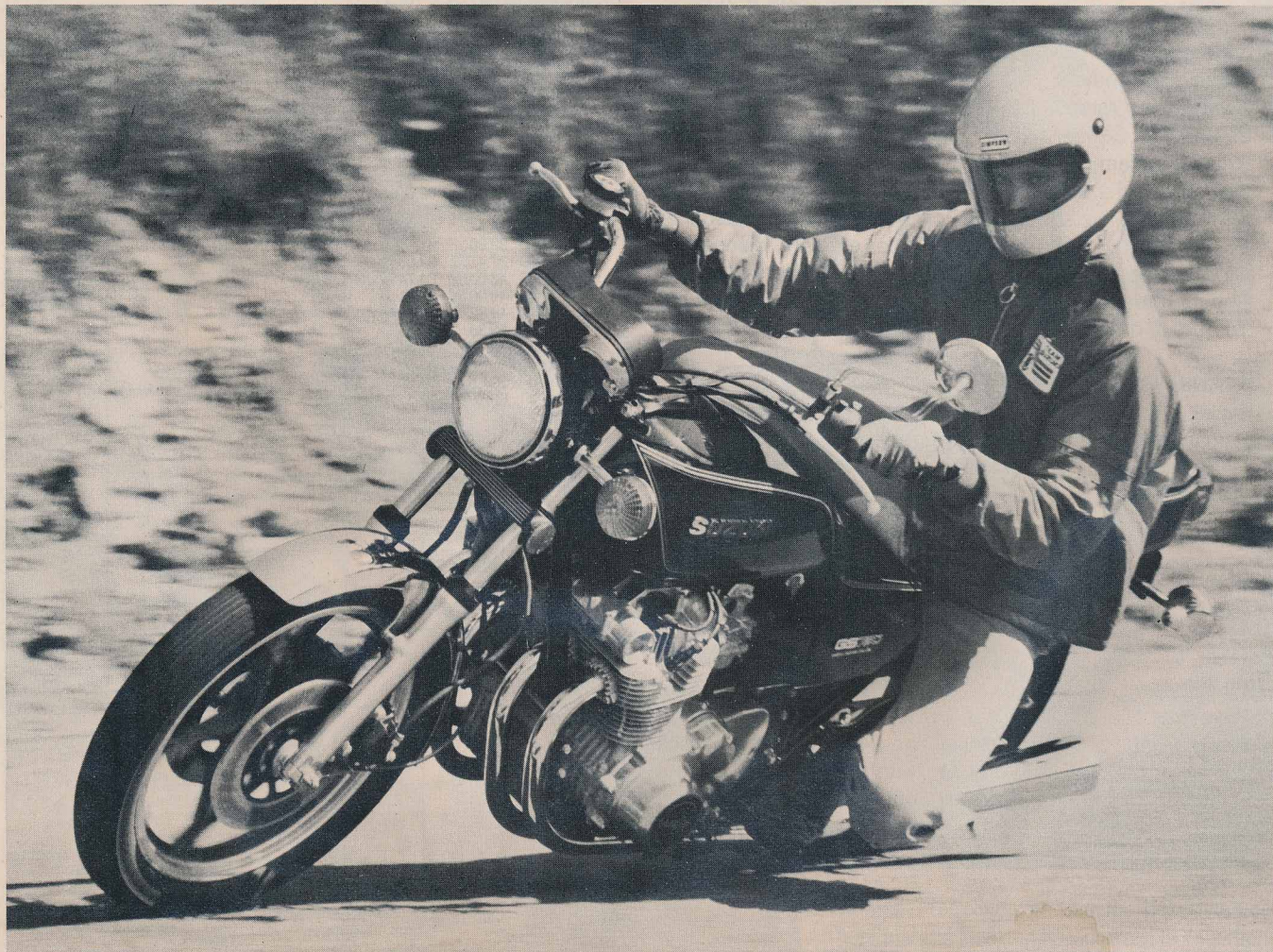


Comfortable seat uses less dense foam than last year's.

motorcycle the 750 Suzuki handles almost as well as the best 1000cc Superbikes now coming out of Japan—and those are pleasingly close to the hotsy-totsy high-performance European bikes. The 750 is stable in all but the most wide-open, close-your-eyes-and-pray corners, and despite its wheelbase the bike feels neutral—if not totally and instantaneously responsive to steering inputs. The additional unsprung front-wheel weight imposed by an extra caliper and rotor (even though each rotor is smaller and thinner than the one used on the standard model) gives the bike's front end a detectable harshness over bumps, and that was not present on last year's GS. This harshness, however, has no direct influence on cornering behavior.

What does have an influence is the bike's cornering clearance—or lack thereof. For reasons which escape us, the 1978 EC model does not have quite as much banking clearance as the 1977 GS, and the GS needed a bit more as it was. The EC, even with rear spring preload adjusted to maximum, dragged both sides of its centerstand, one right-side exhaust-pipe clamp and the side stand. In view of the EC's generally excellent handling stability, and progress made recently by other manufacturers with respect to cornering clearance, we feel that Suzuki should take a close look along the flanks of their 750s and 1000s and then improve the bikes' cornering clearances.

Generally, the GS's suspension works
(Continued on page 114)



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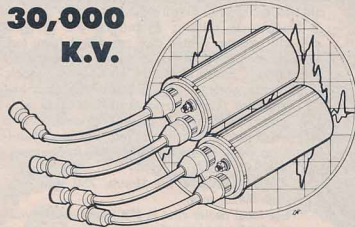
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SUZUKI GS750 Continued from page 36
a comfortable and controllable ride. Around town, the fork exhibits some stiction—initial resistance to movement—over small bumps. At high speeds or in hard cornering, however, the suspension limbers up and works nicely. Solo freeway cruising at 55 mph without luggage draws the same comments as around-town riding; smaller bumps do not work the suspension; larger road irregularities are completely absorbed. With luggage or two-up, the suspension is compliant and allows comfortable long-distance riding.

Compared to other 750s, the GS is not as plush as a Yamaha XS750 but is easily as comfortable as, or more so than, any other bike in its displacement category.

More than any other aspect of the GS's fit and feel, its roominess deserves mention. Riding solo, the GS rider can move all over the bike to stretch muscles on a long jaunt. But other characteristics of the 750's seating position are not as praiseworthy. The handlebar sweeps back too far and prevents the rider from canting into the wind, and it has been built with an awkward bend which twists the rider's wrists inward. Suzuki spokesmen explain that this particular handlebar, which was the subject of some criticism on last year's 750, has been retained on the GS because it is especially comfortable when a fairing is mounted and an upright riding position is preferred. Designers of the GS seem to have drawn another compromise between sporting and touring riders with the placement of the footpegs: sport riders felt the pegs should be a couple of inches rearward for more comfortable non-faired riding.

Suzuki has reduced the seat's foam density on both the EC and the standard 750 to give a plusher ride. The EC uses a stepped seat—the standard model has a single-level design. Though the foam in each seat is still of one-piece construction, the change in density has vastly improved the feel.

In response to suggestions from consumers and motorcycle magazines, Suzuki has refined the GS brake systems. On the B model, the rear disc brake began to chatter with only light pressure on the lever. The problem was especially noticeable when the rider downshifted at the same time. On the 1978 750s, the rear-brake disc has been reduced in diameter from 295mm (11.6 in.) to 275mm (10.8 in.). This reduction has completely eliminated the rear-brake touchiness.

The EC uses a dual-disc brake system up front with the calipers mounted behind the sliders. The front stoppers are very controllable when dry and become moderately less effective when wet. The standard model still uses a single-disc front brake, which was perfectly adequate on the GS750B. Construction of the discs has also been changed. The GS750B unit consisted of a center piece with the disc riveted on. Both the EC's front discs are

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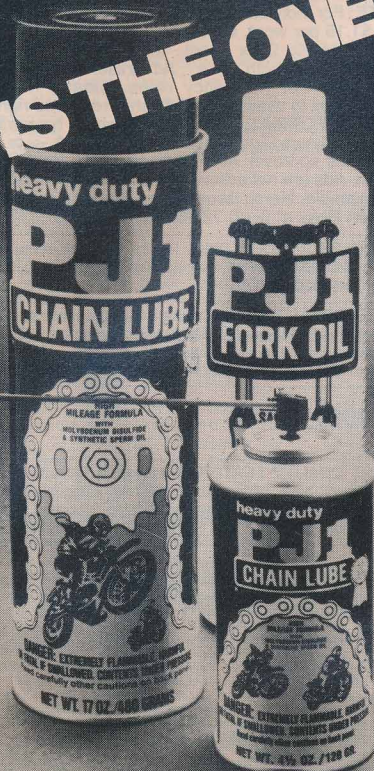
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one-piece units identical to the rotor used on the 400. The EC still uses a riveted two-piece unit for the rear disc-brake system.

Previously, the rear brake-fluid reservoir attached directly to the master cylinder. This design had the reservoir dangling half-naked from beneath the right side cover. In the interest of esthetics, Suzuki detached the reservoir from the cylinder and relocated it completely under the cover.

All of the Suzuki's bits and pieces are functional but some specific complaints are in order regarding the basic designs. Opinions varied about the glowing orange instrument faces: some testers thought they were a bit distracting at night; others found them quite entertaining. Through a curious oversight in the design process those same instruments, which are canted toward the rider so he can better see them, nearly blind the rider when he has the sun at his back; they reflect the rays directly into his eyes.

Another detail item, the helmet holder, is annoying for several reasons. First, the seat must be raised to reach it, necessitating the removal of any strapped-on bungee cords. Next, there is a metal clip which the helmet-strap ring slips past. The clip prevents theft of the helmet when the seat is locked but also prevents easy removal by the owner when the seat is raised. Finally, the GS has only one holder, leaving either the rider or the passenger to gamble with his helmet.

On the positive side, switches for the turn signals, high beam and horn are all half a thumb's length away; the grips and levers are comfortable; the mirrors vibrate only marginally; the choke is accessible; and the gas cap is large, has a locking cover and doesn't leak.

The Suzuki 750 four-stroke was a brilliant motorcycle when it was introduced in the fall of 1976; it still is, almost two years later, whether presented in the form of GS-ordinaire or GS-especiale. The EC is not only a successful variant—it is a successful motorcycle, predominantly because nothing that's been done to make it special has hurt its function. In either form, standard or EC, the GS750 is still the best 750 motorcycle you can buy. ●

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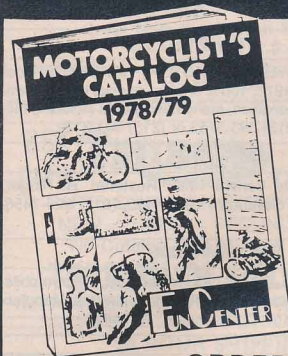
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