

**Touring: Super Guide for a Super Ride**  
**Tests: Honda CBX, Yamaha IT250,**  
**Maico 450 and Triumph Bonneville**

# CYCLE WORLD®

APRIL 1978

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**Allan Girdler**  
Editor

**Peter C. Vamvas**  
Art Director

**Sally Tatom**  
Managing Editor

**Tony Swan**  
Associate Editor

**Len Vucci**  
Technical Editor

**Ron Griewe**  
Test Editor

**Paul W. Zeek**  
Assistant Art Director

**Henry N. Manney III**  
Editor at Large

**Jean Crabb**  
Editorial Secretary

**Jeanette Parker**  
Readers Service

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Steve Bauer**  
**Bill Neale**

**B. R. Nicholls**  
**Carlo Perelli**

**Volker Rauch**  
**John Waaser**

## EXECUTIVE STAFF

**Richard A. Bartkus**  
Publisher

**Robert J. Krefling**  
Group Publisher

**Richard W. Adamson**  
Business Manager

**Bruce A. Miller**  
Circulation Marketing Director

**John Schug**  
Western Manager  
Advertising Marketing Services

**Lou Johnson**  
Production Director

## ADVERTISING

**Brian Van Mols**  
Associate Publisher  
& Advertising Director

**Jim Hansen**  
Western Advertising Manager  
1499 Monrovia Ave.  
Newport Beach, CA 92663  
Telephone 714-646-4451  
Teletype 910-596-1353

**Dottie Silin**  
Advertising Coordinator

**Dick Barron**  
Midwestern Advertising Manager  
30100 Telegraph Rd., Suite 226  
Birmingham, MI 48010  
Telephone 313-646-7080  
Teletype 810-232-5119

**Joe McNeill**  
Chicago Advertising Manager  
333 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1330  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Telephone 312-726-9880

**Dennis Murphy**  
Eastern Advertising Manager  
383 Madison Ave.  
New York, NY 10017  
Telephone 212-975-7405  
Teletype 710-581-5061

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**HONDA CBX/Photographed by Robert Monkton**



# TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE

Henry Manney Visits An Old Friend And Is Pleased To Report That Real Motorcycles Don't Have To Leak Oil

■ From time to time one comes upon a motorcycle as comfortable as an old cashmere sweater and which gives the feeling of hometown revisited after 20 years. The Triumph is that sort of bike, a nice old-fashioned English Twin full of low speed grunt, offering a refined way of



doing things well developed over the years since the Flood. Those people around the office who were raised on Multis sounding like a coffee-can full of bees don't agree of course but then I suspect they are over fond of novelty. This Bonneville does have novelty (it doesn't leak oil for one thing at the cost of who knows how much sealer), but fundamentally it is the same old banger that Triumph has been making for years except Triumph doesn't make it any more. In one of the paroxysms of industrial

trouble that has marked England's own quiet Revolution, Triumph went out on its shield but surprisingly the workers, who probably caused most of the trouble in the first place, refused to cease operations. After a hand-to-hand struggle we won't go into, Triumphs started rolling out again under the aegis of Meriden Motorcycles Ltd. which, according to a Limey friend of mine, is a fancy name for the local Worker's Cooperative and thus (according to him) redder than the bleeding Bolshoi

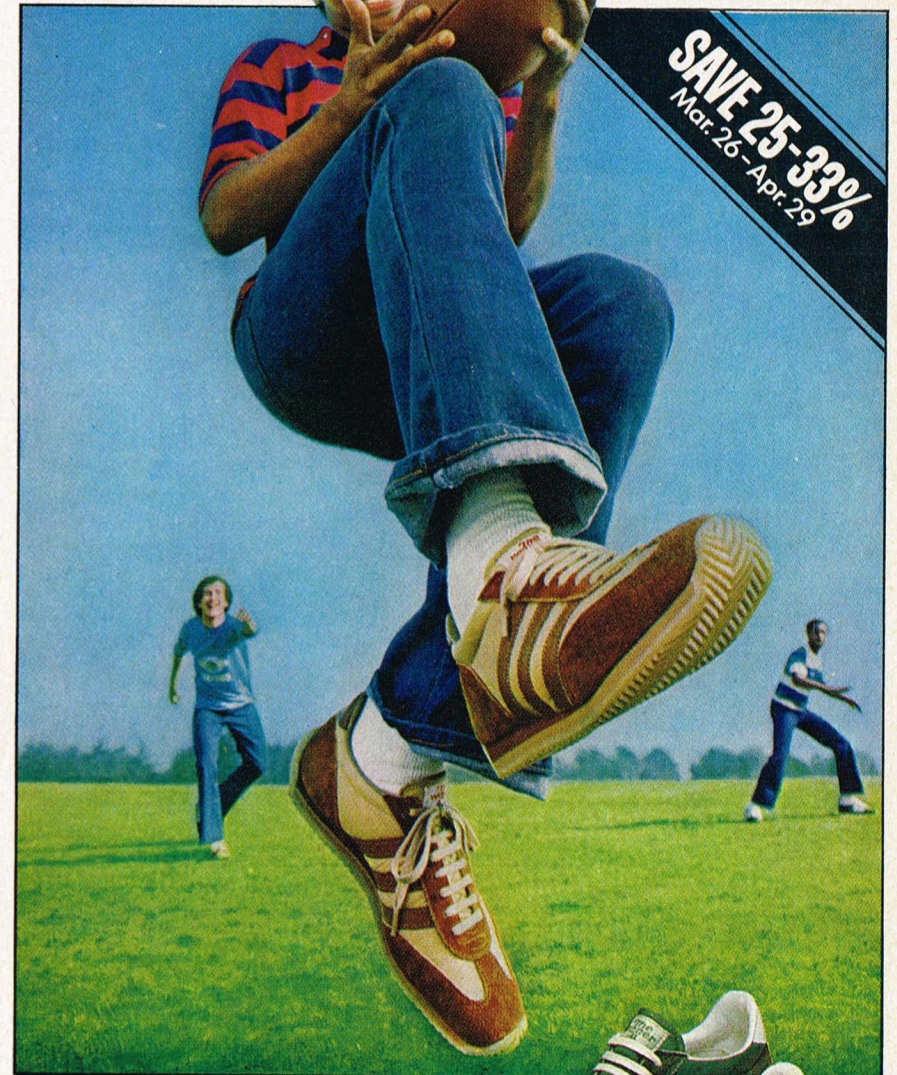
# 750

Theatre. Be that as it may, the most revolutionary committees have a way of turning out dead conservative (see the Russian automobiles) and the Bonneville is about as conservative as you can get, but nicely so.

A quick view of the data panel will show that Triumph has not forsaken the 'tween-wars long-stroke engine which gives such satisfying results in easy, low-down torque. The engine department hasn't gone overboard on high compression ratios . . . fortunately, in view of today's "premium" which is often yesterday's "regular" . . . wild valve timing, or icebox styling. What Triumph has produced is more of a big-bore Speed Twin, really (especially the >



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# TRIUMPH

single-carb version) with gigantic flywheels and a refreshing lack of fussiness. Concessions to modernity include disc brakes and five speeds while ties with the past include superlative handling, not surprising in view of Triumph's long racing history, and the ability to pull a high top gear at moderate rpm. Further Englishisms include a rock-hard seat, even stiffer ride as the roads are all smooth in Limeyland, Triumph's quaint idea of American handlebars, a peanut tank good for about 100 miles and the dreaded positive-ground system that should have gone out with the Druids. Furthermore, it is as well to state at this point that whereas the somewhat antiquated pushrod Twin will give a good account of itself on any twisty road requiring medium-range power, you can forget about catching the Japanese Multis on the straight. The power just isn't there anymore in stock form, thanks partially to the Naderized convoluted intake plumbing.

The best way to try motorcycles of course is to go out for a drive which we did in company with Mr. Editor Girdler as everybody else was watching some football game or another. In common with most Triumphs, getting under way is a matter of tickling both float bowls (one of ours leaked; be sure to shut off the tap at night, but they weep a little too) breaking loose the clutch by one kick with lever drawn in, and then giving a mighty boot. That's right, Virginia, there is no electric starter nor, come to that, primary kick, as the Bonneville is a gent's bike and not a poofdah-cycle. However my baby daughter could start it with ease and it even fired once on the clutch-freeing prod so beloved of English manufacturers. There is a vintage choke lever down on the left-hand carb but we didn't need to use it.

While warming up, it is well to look around the bike and see what is about to fall off such as the tank, which jiggles about in engaging fashion. Instruments are quite restrained even if the even numbers (20, 40, 60 etc.) have been modernized on the 150 mph speedo so you can't read them, the 10 thou rev counter has no redline marked on it (presumably sine waves appear in the pushrods before anything bad can happen) and the instrument lights in both units aren't really up to the job. I liked the fat grips even if some other members of the staff didn't. What looks like the ignition keyhole in front of you is in fact the steering lock, there is a giant red blade/kill switch on the right-hand assembly which is sure to get tripped off at the wrong time, and controls fall easily to hand. The front brake-cum-clutch levers are those hollow pressed steel ones with ball ends familiar to me from my old Matador; they are in fact unbreakable and can be pounded back into shape when bent but it is open to discussion whether a roadgoing Twin is the place for them.>



# Bassani is on the Street

For years Bassani Manufacturing has been designing and producing quality exhaust systems for street machines. Yet many people just think of Bassani as the famous maker of "quiet pipes" for dirt bikes. It's true that Bassani produces a complete line of two- and four-stroke off-road exhaust systems, but that's only the half of it. Bassani has the finest quality 4-into-1 and 4-into-2 collector systems as well as SMR's (standard muffler replacements) to slip over your stock head pipes and high performance silenced expansion chambers. Systems are available for two- and four-stroke Honda, Kawasaki, Yamaha and Suzuki motorcycles.

When you select a Bassani system for your street machine you get the ultimate in balanced performance with a deep, throaty but quiet tone. You'll have a system that's easy to mount and fits perfectly the first time. Many models allow full use of the centerstand and make oil and filter changes easy. But most important, you'll have a Bassani system—the finest quality hand built exhaust systems you can buy anywhere.

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Vucci complained that his fingers couldn't reach the front brake handle v well but then he could reach the Harley's and I couldn't, which proves something. Anyway, everything is nice and neat and clean; speaking of cleaning because of the unseasonable rain here I had occasion to wash the bike a few times and found it a chore as there are so many crevices full of odd nuts and bolts. American sizes I might add. The rear brake also goes away after it has been washed but the engine does start, more than I can say for my Triumph 500. And while we are talking about the wet, I did ride it around in the rain and brakes worked as did the engine. The narrowness of the Bonnie and its low c.g. probably contribute to the phenomenal balance this bike has in the wet while the vintage rear fender means that you don't get skunk stripes up the back. The equally vintage front fender is less successful, at least where the feet are concerned. Get out yer Wellies. And watch out kickstarting in wet conditions; bad enough that the kickstarter is placed rather awkwardly and that the side cover will give you a nice bruised knee, the rubber covered pegs are diabolically slippery and you know what happens when you slip off, don't you? Of course the center stand is admirably easy to operate and the job can be done from there but I always hate teetering back and forth like a sparrow on a phone wire.

There are no tricks getting under way as Triumph has done a redesign job on the gearbox while moving the shift over to the left side. There is no CLUNK and the short shifter operates beautifully; in fact a Triumph-owning friend of mine raved and tore his shirt about the bike as the best Bonneville he had ever ridden. Mixed opinions were found in the office, however, as tech. ed. Vucci couldn't get to the shifter without moving his dancing slippers off the peg, but then, Vucci owns and cherishes a Bonneville and I suspect he would find fault with any shifter not on the right side. Mr. Editor Girdler allowed as how the distance might be a bit short while I didn't even think about it in my size 11s. That problem is complicated by a high peg location in the classic Queen Juliana riding position (otherwise known as sit-up-and-beg) as the pegs are pretty far forward already. Passenger pegs can be resorted to for earholing but then you can't get to the controls, can you? Another subject of discussion was what one staff member referred to as the Emming Effing neutral. Riders of Suzuki 185s as well as sundry other Japanese bikes know all about this but the problem is pretty rare on Triumphs, judging by the ones in my experience. I didn't have much trouble but then it gets to be a matter of knowing when to fish for it as well as holding the mouth right. The whole bike was very tight and stiff indeed so matters will probably sort themselves

out; in any case there didn't seem to be much difference whether the clutch was hot or not. There is no neutral light, incidentally, but a red oil pressure warning light instead.

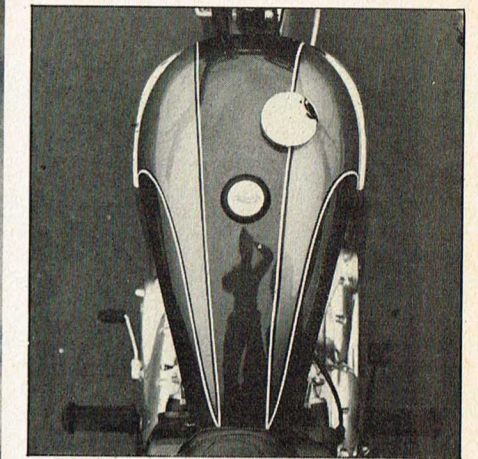
As we said, there are no tricks getting under way even in spite of the rather high bottom gear as clutch lever pressure is reasonably light and the clutch itself smooth and progressive. The Bonneville has more usable power low down than even my Yamaha Thumper, not unusual

when you think of British traffic conditions and their miles of 30 mph limits, and the rider feels free to shortshift if he desires. Even with two carbs the big Twin is very flexible so you can go rumbling about in top with that authoritative bass exhaust note. This particular bike was set up a tad on the rich side (not unusual in test bikes to keep CW's demons from sticking the pistons) so there was a marked Amal flat spot off idle and it did spit once in a while, this richness undoubtedly being reflected

in the performance figures. When the traffic thinned we also moved out to find that there was a slight increase in cam effect around 3000 but nothing terribly noticeable. Acceleration is by no means sluggish but the general broad powerband of the Bonneville makes progress deceiving; none of that rowing along with the gearbox although the shifting is so sweet (upper gears don't seem to need the clutch) that playing a few tunes is encouraged. There is a certain amount of vibration, enough to

make the mirror image only a vague form at any speed, but the vibration is more or less constant up the rev range. When the Triumph is pulling hard under the collar up a hill it does tend to get a little clattery but at least you know you have a motorcycle under you and not a golf cart. I rather like a little vibration as it exercises the livah, old chap.

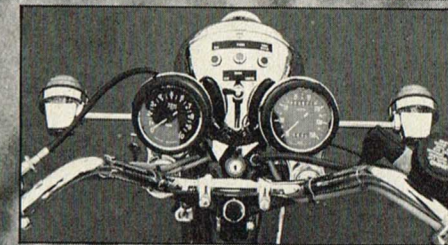
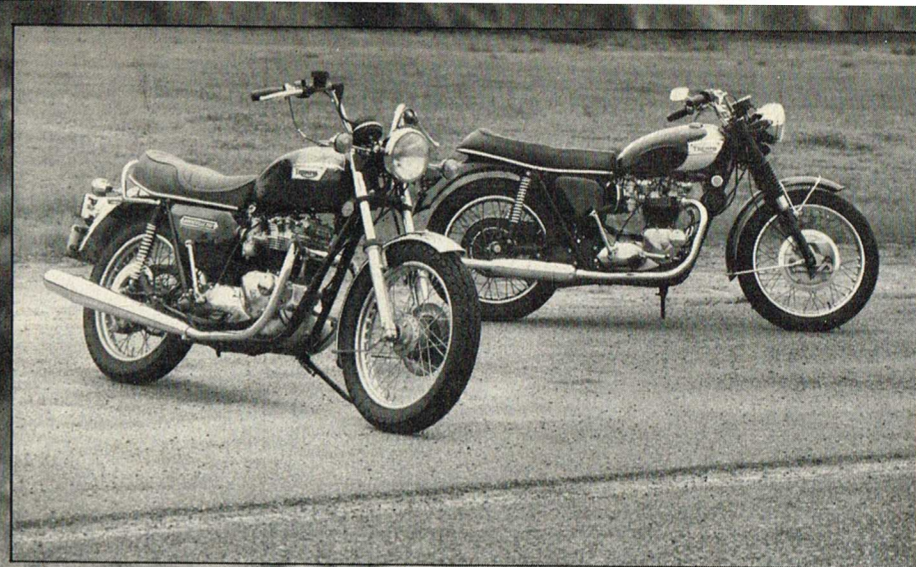
Freeway cruising is no problem although Girdler said it was a windy bike, probably because he has been doing his rounds



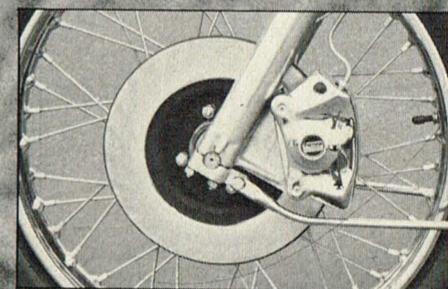
Teardrop tank is classic, albeit not large enough for runs beyond 100 miles.

behind a fairing. The modified ape-hanger bars turn out to work a lot better than they look, the rather hard seat fits the anatomy as well as providing a useful shelf for the bum in scorching position, and although Vucci complained about the front Dunlop on rain grooves I didn't find it very avoidy. Suspension, however, is punishingly hard; flexibility improved in both suspension and engine toward the end of our test but riders with tender backs are going to get the seat re-stuffed. Mountain work also was a piece of cake as the Bonneville didn't seem too particular what gear it was in roadholdingwise; handling itself was impeccable except that the bike feels too heavy to be flicked about and the line is best picked out in advance, especially since a footpeg grounded once or twice. The front end didn't do any funny tricks, the brakes worked well even if the rear puck wasn't well seated, and a mark of stability was that the bike felt the same whether the rider was way up front or shoved well back. As an added extra attraction, we piddled around at night and found that the low beam works v well but the high beam, besides being rather feeble, apparently has an English unit as most of the light goes to the left side, not right where it is needed here. The three-position light switch, incidentally, operates independently of the ignition and thus can be the prey, along with your battery, of idle finger-flickers.

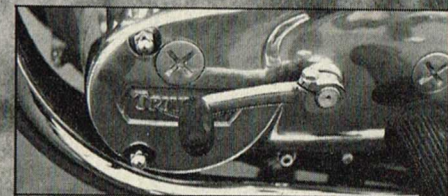
Um. I certainly would have one, even rather the blue version than our pong-brown, as it is certainly relaxing snoring along on a big bore Twin. At 60 mph the Bonnie isn't working v hard, the valve train doesn't make much racket even if the primary chain tensioner chitters a bit, and barring the slightly increased maintenance for separate primary, tappets, etc it is worth touring on a bike that had all the evil habits worked out of it (or its ancestors) on the Isle of Man. Triumph has a reputation and a good one; would you rather go see Makarova do Swan Lake or a 19-year-old student? No contest. >



Instrument design is traditional. Key above steering head is the fork lock. Ignition key is at left of speedometer.



Triumph-Lockheed disc brake works well, with progressive action. Chrome-plated calliper is actually a calliper cover.



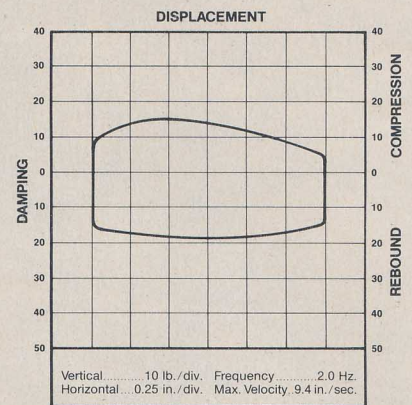
Neat left-hand gearshift is outward sign of reworked shift mechanism. Some of the staff wished it was a bit longer.

# TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE 750

## SPECIFICATIONS

List price	\$2099	Brake loading (160-lb rider)	3.8 lb./sq. in.
Engine	ohv Twin	Wheelbase	56.0 in.
Bore x stroke	76 x 82mm	Fork rake angle	28.0 deg.
Piston displacement	744cc	Trail	4.47 in.
Compression ratio	7.9:1	Handlebar width	30.8 in.
Carburetion	(2) 30mm Amal	Seat height	31.7 in.
Air filtration	gauze	Seat width	10.3 in.
Ignition	battery/points	Footpeg height	12.5 in.
Claimed power	na	Ground clearance	6.7 in.
Claimed torque	na	Curb weight (w/half-tank fuel)	425 lb.
Lubrication system	dry sump	Weight bias, front/rear, percent	44/56
Oil capacity	4.8 pt.		
Fuel capacity	2.5 gal.		
Recommended fuel	premium		
Starting system	non-primary kick	<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Electrical system	12v 120w alternator	Engine speed @ 60 mph	3992 rpm
Clutch	multi-disc, wet	Power/weight ratio, (160-lb. rider)	na
Primary drive	triplex chain	Fuel consumption	42
Final drive	# 525 chain	Speedometer error:	
Gear ratios, overall:1		30 mph indicated, actually	31.7
5th	4.70	40 mph indicated, actually	40.8
4th	5.59	50 mph indicated, actually	50.9
3rd	6.58	60 mph indicated, actually	61.3
2nd	8.63	Braking distance	
1st	12.25	from 30 mph	31.0 ft.
Suspension, front	telescopic fork	from 60 mph	126.0 ft.
Suspension, rear	swing arm	Standing start	
Tire, front	4.10-19	1/4-mile	13.86 sec. @ 93.36 mph
Tire, rear	4.10-18	Speed after	
Brake, front	9.7-in. disc	1/2 mile	103 mph
Brake, rear	9.8-in. disc		
Total brake swept area	156 sq. in.		

## FRONT FORKS

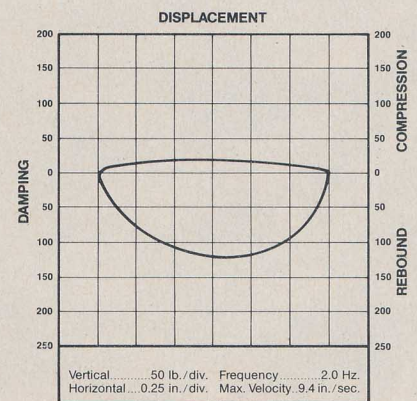


### Triumph straight-leg fork

Fork travel	6.4 in.
Engagement	4.1 in.
Spring rate	27 lb./in.
Compression damping force	14 lb.
Rebound damping force	18 lb.
Static seal friction	33 lb.

The Bonneville's fork is very stiff, not from spring or damping rates, but because of high seal friction. Install a set of aftermarket seals for a substantial improvement in suspension compliance and comfort.

## REAR SHOCKS



### Girling gas shock

Shock travel	2.9 in.
Wheel travel	3.3 in.
Spring rate	107 lb./in.
Compression damping force	20 lb.
Rebound damping force	120 lb.

Damping rates of these gas-charged Girlings are spot-on. The 107-lb. spring rate, combined with the spring effect of the shock's gas charge, however, results in a ride which is a bit on the firm side. If a less harsh ride is desired, progressive springs with a 100 or even 90 lb./in. initial rate should be installed.

Tests performed at Number 1 Products

