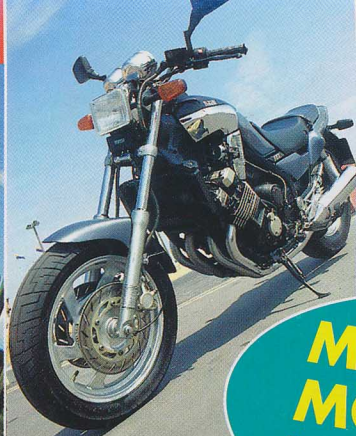


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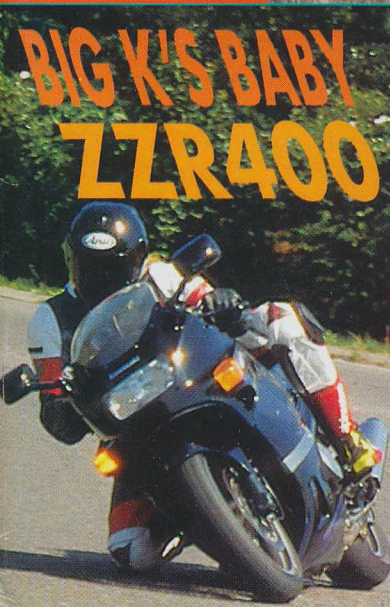


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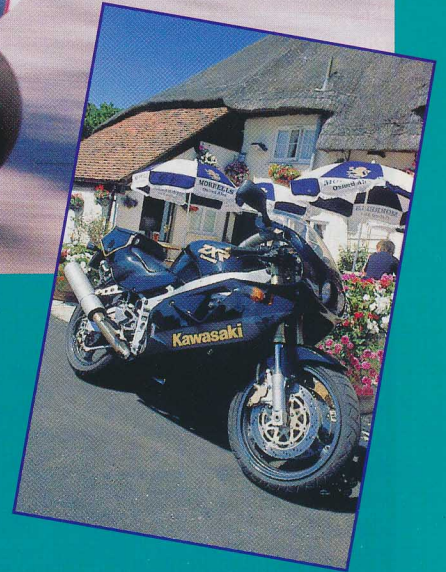


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KEV Racing's GSXR400RRSP in action at Mallory earlier this year.



Odds, Sods,
and an Importer's Tale.....4

ZXR400
Pricey Scratcher8

VT1100 Shadow
Better Than a Harley?12

Tech Stuff
Sortin' After
Standin'18

ZZR400
Black and Bulky ..22

Reader's Race 1
NC21 at the Manx
Grand Prix26

Reader's Race 2
Roundy Round
GSXR40028

XR200
Oddie Endures All.....32

FZR Series
250/400 Full Model
Histories36

FZR250 Project
A Mini Streetfighter40

FZR400SP
Tom Tries A Tankin' Tool.....46

Survey Results
We Tell You What You Told Us ..50

VFR Survey
Now Tell Us Some More.....51

Fazer 750
Genesis Lump, V-Max Styling54

MVX250
Cheap Triple Stroker.....60

Buyer's Guide 1
What To Buy From
Japan.....62

Dealer Listing
Where To Find Greys.67

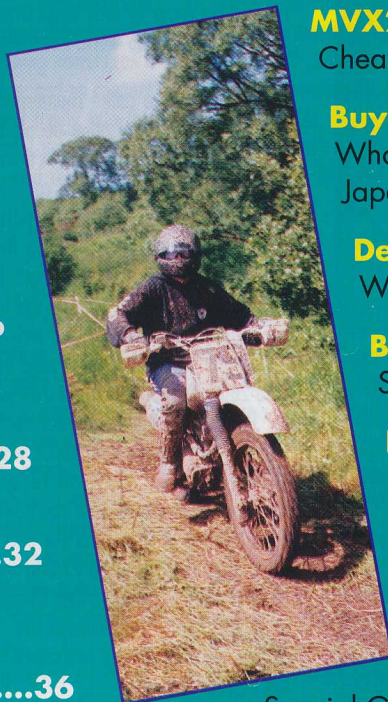
Buyer's Guide 2
Stateside Stuff68

Price Guide
How Much It'll
Cost You.....70

Tech Info
NSR250 Tune Up72

LTD700
Special Guest Tester
Tries Cruising.....74

Letters
Words From The World
Of Greys78



Pretending To Do Important Things - **Oddie**
Doing Real Important Things - **Annie**
Causing Traffic Jams - **Tom Isitt**
Drawing Lovely Pictures - **Mark and Rich**
Attacking The Establishment - **Nick Culton**
Sending Useful Stuff - **Ian Dwyer, Ago, Colin Jones**
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700 LTD

Grey Bike gets guest tester! Allen Burton from MAG tries out Kawasaki's funky 700 LTD



I was sitting there in my home-cum-office doing all sorts of MAG National Communications Officer type things, when the phone rang and Oddie asked me if I could take a day off from my MAG work and do a bike test for Grey Bike. The idea of actually riding a bike for a day instead of campaigning to protect them by driving an office desk was too good to turn down. The bike to be reviewed was a 'factory custom', a US imported Kawasaki LTD 700. Just for the crack I looked up those two words in my pretend-to-be-literate dictionary, and thought that the result just about summed many of the bikes of the genre up.

Factory: "...a trading settlement abroad..".

Custom: "...frequent repetition of the same act..".

I set off for Southend's Bikeworld on board my loaned GSX600F (thanks to Nick of West Coast for breaking the three year spell of 'no way' that I have received from the official importers when asking for help to stay on the road), and I realised that I really do subscribe to the theory that the bike you are riding seri-

ously influences the way you ride. I was riding like Mick Doohan, well, nearly losing it on some of the corners anyway, and I wondered, as I blatted towards the Londoners' premier seaside town, how the LTD would affect me.

As Ron and I wheeled it out the first thing to hit me was that seat and sissy-bar, great for your pillion perhaps, but aesthetics? What we had was effectively a GT750 engine, sans any satin black, made down to 700cc, and jugged into a 'righteous' configuration. (there is some debate over the reason for 700 cubes, the popular theory has it that 700cc was an insurance breakpoint Stateside during the mid-eighties, the other theory is much more dramatic. It is believed that Harley-Davidson applied a little pressure in certain quarters to ban the import of anything as large in capacity as the H-D Motor Company's smallest,

which at the time was 750. Pick your favourite theory...).

My discerning but far from expert eye took in the first few details, shaft drive, air shocks front and rear, twin disc stoppers up front, I was warming to the machine already. The four-into-two exhaust terminated with the coolest looking pair of silencers I have seen in

some time, and that little tail unit, pure class! She started up fine and the note from those silencers was absolutely gorgeous, not over loud, but the term 'fruity' springs to mind if fruity still has any literary currency (*no, it doesn't, you're showing your age*

and a mis-spent youth reading Motorcycle Mechanics. Oddie). Once on board another pleasant surprise was that both of my feet were flat on the deck. Being somewhat challenged in the height department this was a real

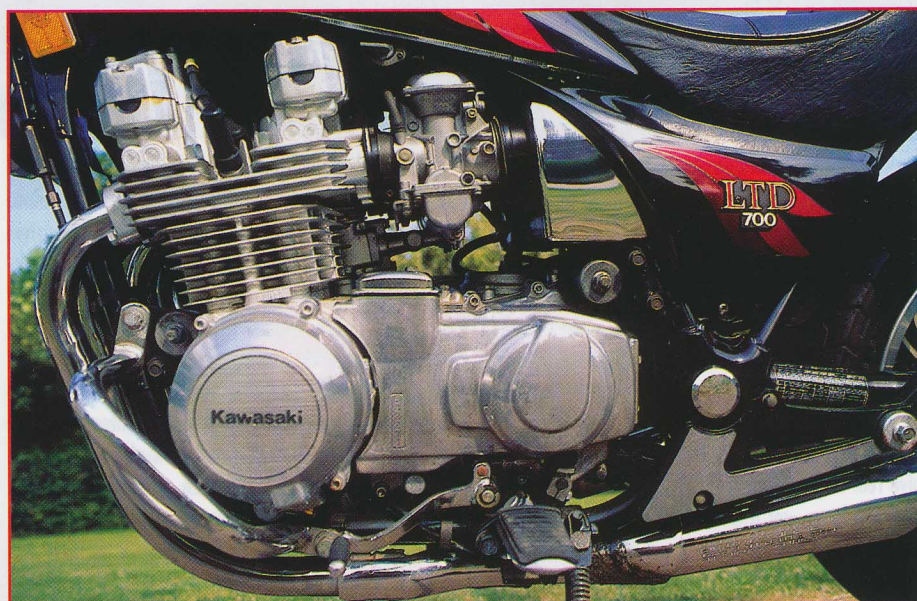
The tank was full, the sun was shining, and we went off in search of that nice round white sign with the diagonal black stripe...



treat as I'm often on tip-toes when I come to a stop. The pegs were not forward control style thankfully, and the riding position felt spot-on, upright and arms going straight forward, well cool and laid back man.

I rode gently and carefully away from Bikeworld and went to fill up with four star, 'cos I didn't know if it ran on unleaded and forgot to ask when I took it back, sloppy eh? (All Jap bikes since the mid-seventies can run on unleaded, with very few exceptions. Oddie, er, again). Full tank, the sun was shining, and off we went in search of that nice round white sign with the diagonal black stripe. I very soon noticed one of the advantages of those high wide bars, I could actually see the road behind me in the mirrors, instead of just my own elbows. Opening it up a bit on the first stretch of dual carriageway showed that the delivery of power was perfect, not nutter turbo wallop and pints of adrenaline, but smooth and consistent without flat spots or even a particularly noticeable power band. Up through to top (fifth) gear in a very short space of time, and with the clock reading 70 (good old mph, not that confusing kph) the revs were perfectly happy at a vibration free 5,000. A quick blip and it was 100 mph at 7,000 rpm, 'Wow,' thinks Al, 'Loads left before the red line,' and we upped the game a little, until we went over a cats eye whilst laying over a bit taking a long rolling curve. It is true that the sphincter muscle is directly connected to the fear generating area

of the brain. To say that the front end was unhappy would be an understatement, to say that the forks felt like they were made of rubber would be exaggerating. In later discussions back at Bikeworld we all agreed that the USA fitted, several years old tyres were not exactly a helpful factor, but hey, the LTD isn't really the sort of bike you would want to consistently whack around on at a ton plus. If you did, I would imagine that a fork brace and





some better rubber would cut down quite a bit on your laundry bills.

We played on the fast roads for quite a while and there were two more surprises in store for me. Surprise number one was the apparent lack of wind blast wanting to push the helmet round to the back of my neck and dislocate my shoulders. I tried at the same speed in both directions on the same piece of dual carriageway to rule out the prevailing wind as a factor, nope, no difference. In the end I had to put it down to the



large plastic chrome thingy that was wrapped round all the instruments acting as if it was a fly screen. Surprise number two was that the twin disc stoppers should really be called twin disc slowers. A fairly hard squeeze on the lever had the effect of gradually slowing down the forward momentum, adding a portion of rear brake had the slowing down process aided slightly. Two things had slipped my mind, brake technology has moved on some in the decade that the 700 had been sitting basking in the Californian sun, and I really should have learned to ride a bike within the limits of its brakes by now.

The moment I brought the right wrist urge under control, the little factory custom came into its own. We swooped through traffic with rake-aided grace and did roundabouts with the knee well and truly up, that lovely exhaust note sounding content not to be thrashed. How I regretted not having an open face lid and aviator shades, sad isn't it? The rest of the day was spent riding a mixture of country lanes and playing with the traffic in town centres. The bike and I had settled into a rhythm, it isn't a race rep and I didn't ride it like one, it isn't a Harley so we didn't pose, we just got on with the business of riding and enjoying it. My earlier musings of

The little factory custom came into its own, we swooped through traffic with rake-aided grace and did roundabouts with the knee well and truly up.

machine-influenced riding styles came to mind and yes, I was riding it like it was designed to be ridden and was enjoying it more with every mile. It had an excellent mix of attributes, that suspension was a dream, firm enough to give real feel and cornering confidence, yet it soaked up every irregularity of road surface apart from the speed-humps on Southend seafront. Even the King and Queen sit-on thing became

more acceptable because it was so bloody comfortable. Although the whole bike seemed so low the clearance was fine, it went down to angles that would have knackered silencers and the jiffy stand of any stock Harley Sportster. We played a few good games like, 'Can we pull away in top?' and after the fruitless and slightly embarrassing first attempt, yes we could. Not exactly a major asset for a motorcycle to have or a question from page one of the novice road testers handbook, but fun. It really highlighted the joyful midrange of the bike, put it in third and there would be no real need to ever change gear in suburbia if you felt that way inclined.

I pulled up in front of a seafront pub for a much needed pint (shandy Ron, honest, dehydration not alcoholism) and sat looking at the bike. It is not an unattractive machine apart from that seat, but your yardsticks (and mileage) may vary. Three pavement voyeurs all came to talk bike, only the first was from the silver generation doing the 'Used to have a four-square Ariel when I was younger, back two pots used to keep seizing-up' routine. The other two were

current bikers with a genuine interest in the Kwak's pedigree and the grey import scene in general. If having your bike noticed is important to you, the LTD 700 wouldn't let you down.

It was time to top up with juice and start heading back to Bikeworld. When I'd finished topping up, it was out with the Casio and I discovered that fuel consumption had been a very creditable 45 mpg even with the stop start thrash blip cane riding that had been going on. That got me thinking about running costs, if I was going to buy this, how much hassle would it be to get it insured and how many of my hard-earns would it take? I went to the next payphone and phoned (prepare for gratuitous plug) Magic Insurance and asked for a





quote. All went smoothly and then the voice said, 'Make and model of the bike sir?' I swallowed and replied, 'Kawasaki LTD 700.' To my amazement there was not even a pause before he asked what type of cover I required. I double checked and he confirmed that he was indeed quoting cover for an LTD 700. From what I had discovered, even in the States in the mid-eighties, rocking horse poo would have been a good analogy for this particular model, but there it was sitting on the brokers screen just waiting to be quoted. Brilliant! Now I reckon I'm not an odd case, thirty something, SP 30,

one accident, four years without a claim and a resident of the fair county of Essex. Third party fire and theft was my choice, £76 was their rate, whoaaa!

I mentioned the brakes to Graham at Bikeworld at the end of the day and it turned out that company policy is to not just to inspect their imports, rather they give them a full valet and service, and replace anything that is past its useful life. That includes goodies like chains, sprockets and yep, you've guessed it, brake pads. 'It's called bedding in Allen...'

Getting back on the Suzuki to go home I really

found it quite strange readjusting to the arse-up wrists-down riding position after a day of being in the Fonda posture. It was kind of nice to have the race-rep riders waving and nodding again because for that entire day riding the LTD, I was ignored by Harleyists, Blade'ers and Bro's alike, the only wave I got was from a guy on a Virago; funny old bunch aren't we?

Allen Burton

Model - Kawasaki 700 LTD. Year - 1985(A). Mileage - 26,090. Price - £2395. Test Bike Supplied By Bikeworld.