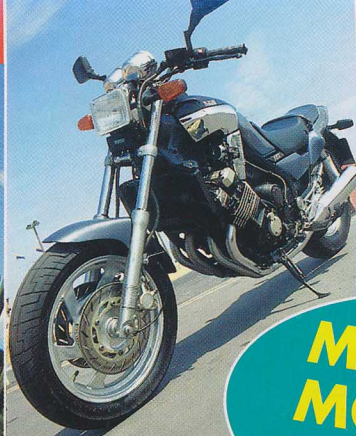


Grey Bike

STREETFIGHTER FZR250 PROJECT



SOMEWHAT
SLIGHTLY
FAZED
FZR250

MORE BIKES
MORE INFO
MORE PAGES

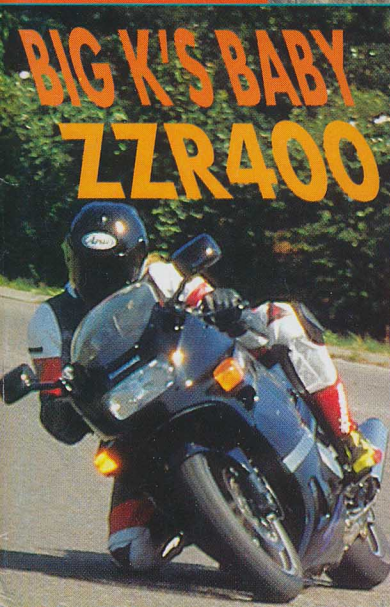


PLUS:
MODEL HISTORY - FZR SERIES
TUNING - NSR250
RACING - NC21 & GSXR400
TECHNICAL - READY FOR THE ROAD?

PLUS: ZXR400

MVX250 ★ XR200

FZR400SP ★ LTD700



**BIG K'S BABY
ZZR400**

SHADOWFAX VT1100C



**PLUS: FULL BUYERS
AND PRICE GUIDES**

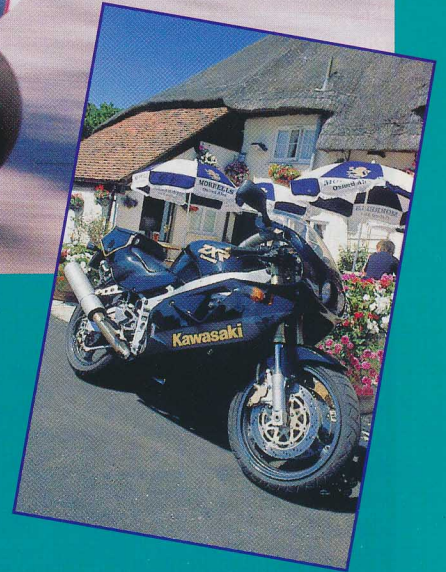


AUTUMN 95 £2.50

Grey Bike More Bikes More Choice More Freedom The Best Buys The Worst Buys And The Bikes You'd Give Your Soul For...



KEV Racing's GSR400RRSP 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

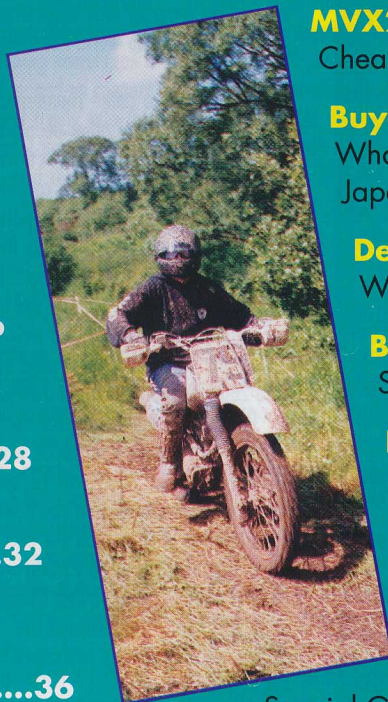
Buyer's Guide 2
Stateside Stuff68

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**
Counting The Pennies - **Sue Smith**
Going On Holiday - **Rodger Attaway**
Hiding InThe Post Room - **LJ**
To Advertise In Grey Bike Contact **Rodger** On 01925 757874
Grey Bike is a figment of the collective imagination of **Plan Z Ltd**, who own all copyright and stuff. UK repro by **SWD & P**, Print by **William Gibbons & Sons Ltd**, Distribution by **COMAG**. All correspondence to: **Grey Bike**, PO Box 122, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 8YA.

VT1100 SHADOW

Why does anyone buy a Harley? Image? Pose value? Fashion? Long-legged comfortable touring machine? Practical motorcycle...?

I waited 21 years to own a Harley; told myself when I was 14 I'd have one one day, after reading about Sonny Barger and the rest of the American Hells Angels in the Sunday colour supplements. I owned it for three years, and I'd never own another one. This is a subjective personal opinion, of course, but Harleys are slow, expensive, unreliable (dodgy electrics mainly, or exploding Sportster gearboxes), poorly finished (white death on the alloy within six months), and wear out quickly (£3,000 engine rebuilds on Sportsters every 40,000 miles anyone..?). They also have the most appalling brakes in the world. Yet people queue up to buy them in their thousands.

I mention all this because one glance at the VT1100 Shadow tells you instantly what it's blatantly trying to copy. The question is, is the Shadow a

pale imitation of the 'Milwaukee Legend', as the righteous bro would have you believe, or is it actually a better bike?

I like twin cylinder bikes, particularly big ones. Okay, so the last few years have seen me getting into the Jap home market grey stuff, and I've discovered a true affection for 400 or even 250 fours (as my project FZR shows), and smaller bikes in general (I couldn't resist buying myself an SRX250 single which came up at the right price the other day - a very under-rated little bike). But in my heart I've always had a soft spot for big, torquey, tall geared twins. Climbing aboard the Shadow and cruising the hills of North Yorkshire was like meeting up with an old lover and remembering how good you were together..

The 1100 Shadow is a torquey motorcycle; it'll pull from somewhere down near your socks, as each 550cc piston makes its individual presence felt. With so much thrutch available, Honda have decided the

Shadow needs only four gears - a radical but sensible move, as it turns out. That wasn't my first impression, though. I expected to be able to stick it in top and cruise around all day forgetting about gear levers and stuff. But the Honda pulls a well-tall top gear, and you need at least 40mph before you snick into top if you want to avoid shuddering and clanking from the shaft drive transmission. I spent the first twenty minutes thinking 'This bike's a pile of bollocks' before the

intention dawned on me. Around town or low speed back-lane cruising you use 3rd gear. With a useful range spreading from around 20mph to 45/50mph, third

gear has been cleverly designed to be absolutely perfect. You stick it in 3rd and ride round all day, without feeling under-geared, until you hit the open road, then find 4th. The Honda engineers did their homework on this bike, and thought about it. Cruising at 65/70 the bike feels beautifully relaxed, and even a steady 95 on the motorway never feels stressed. The other advantage of a wide spaced gearbox and tall gearing is that lovely sensation of grunt when you shift at just the right time. Kick it up a gear before the motor starts to feel busy, and feel yourself pushed forward on a tidal wave of pure power as

The question is, is the Shadow a pale imitation of the 'Milwaukee Legend', as the righteous bro would have you believe, or is it actually a better bike?

the revs fall back into bulldozer territory and the Shadow's not-inconsiderable bulk is hauled forward by torque alone. Smart.

The transmission itself is solid rather than slick. It takes a reasonable effort on the lever to shift gears, and every shift is accompanied by the audible clunk of large lumps of metal being moved around inside the gearbox. Whether you find this a pain or a reassuring feeling of solidity is up to the individual - to me it felt like a bike that would stand many miles without 3rd gear popping out the back of the crankcases (a nasty habit on Evo Sportsters a few years ago...).

The shaft drive itself felt a little harsh compared to some I've tested, and while it's still infinitely preferable to a chain, given the way any big twin



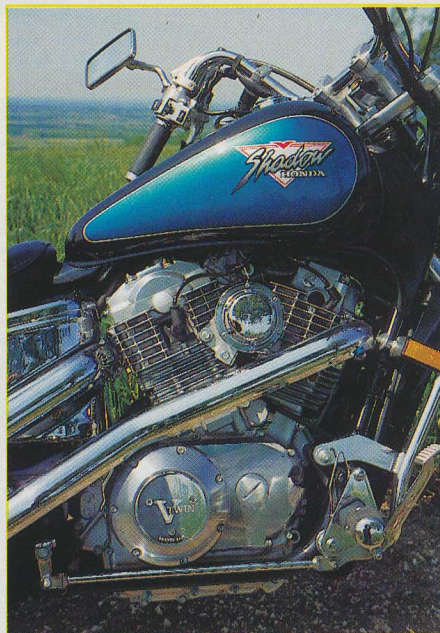
motorcycle will kill chains in no time at all, I couldn't help feeling that a nice big juicy cush-drive somewhere along the drive train would make things that bit more refined.

Like all big factory customs, the handling is a little odd. With so much rake and trail (and weight...), the best way to ride a Shadow is not to try and force it to



behave, but let it find its own pace and angle around bends - this is meant to be a laid back bike anyway. Try and hustle it and you and the bike will get stressed out, so just relax and enjoy the ride, and you'll still make surprisingly quick progress.

Despite its limitations, the Shadow is much easier to steer than, say, the SuperMagna tested in GB2. It rides much more like a 'normal' bike, with less of the front end 'flop' on slow corners, and any lack of razor-sharp handling is due more to the Shadow's mass and soft suspension than any inherent geometry problems. The springing is lovely and compliant, with perhaps the softest front end I've ever come across, and a passably soft and comfy rear end, despite the shortish travel twin shocks. Fashionable chunky short-travel shocks are *de rigueur* on a bike like this, but the Honda technicians have again shown design forethought, by mounting the shocks well forward on the swingarm and giving the rear end far more travel than appearances would first suggest. Clever. The bike is typically under-damped, as you might expect, but is such an unbelievably smooth ride you can forgive it those shortcomings. In a straight line it floats along like a hovercraft, and even at speed it isolates the rider from the crappy tarmac we



bars do bring the mirrors unnervingly close to your face, and they're also quite a way out from your line of forward vision, necessitating a deliberate shift of focus to check them out. But they do give you the best rearwards view you'll ever have unless you ride your motorcycle backwards. My only complaint is those ridiculous forward footrests. Now, I admit I had forward footrests on my 500 Triumph chop, but that was in 1971 and I was 17. Why anyone these days wants to ride round looking like a half unfolded penknife is beyond me. I kept wishing my feet were a good 8 or 9 inches further back, to take the weight off my spine and make the bike even more comfy (the seat thankfully provides excellent lumbar support), and at speed you get the usual problem of the wind trying to lift your feet off the pegs. Slavish adherence to custom fashion can be taken too far.

And it's custom fashion that spawned the Shadow

SPEC:

Engine: V-twin SOHC four stroke
Bore & Stroke: 87.5mmx91.4mm
Capacity: 1099cc
Weight: 245kg
Power: 60ps/5,000rpm
Torque: 9.7kgm/2,750rpm
Fuel Capacity: 13 Litres

- it is an obvious Harley copy. On the whole the styling is pretty good, it's a nice clean bike, with only the great bundles of wires and cables around the bars looking cluttered. Honda have also made a good attempt at giving the impression of an air-cooled motor, with lots of cylinder finning and the radiator well tucked away between the frame downtubes. In fact, it takes a motorcyclist's eye to spot the difference between the Shadow and a Harley - something the gas station attendant couldn't do as I tanked up. Whether through design or convenience, though, Honda have blessed the Shadow with its own unique exhaust system, the swept back front pipe having become something of a Shadow trademark, and providing just enough individuality to let you know you haven't bought just another Harley copy.

Although the Fatbob-style tank looks cavernous, a lot of its space is taken up by the airbox, and it actually only holds three gallons. No matter, I was averaging a respectable 55mpg from the Shadow (albeit in a less throttle-happy fashion than my usual manic test riding), so a range of 150 miles isn't too shabby.

Taken as an overall package, though, I really liked the Shadow. It's a nice ride, with a surprising degree of character and individuality, and an undeniable presence. Its mass is carried lowdown and never makes the bike unmanageable, the motor isn't a gutless, emission-controlled fartbox that needs endless aftermarket parts to make it perform, the unusually tall-geared four-speed box is actually an intelligent design feature, it poses well without being glitzy or ostentatious, and it's equally at home chuffing around country lanes or making deceptively quick progress across country. It also stops when you put the brakes on. The Shadow performs so well in many areas you tend to gloss over any slight inadequacies in other departments, and its only real drawback is the price.

Six grand is a lot of money for a custom style V-twin. Then again, so is 12 grand, and there are lots of people who seem willing to pay that for a bike that isn't as good - they must be mad. Other than a vastly over-rated Harley, the Shadow's competition comes from the two official UK imports, the 1400 Intruder and 1500 Vulcan. The Vulcan is as ugly as a bucket of Whitworth bolts, so doesn't even get past the starting blocks. The Intruder is a nice looking bike, more individual than the Shadow's Harleyesque profile. It can

be picked up considerably cheaper, and isn't that far behind in the performance stakes, but it doesn't have quite the same air of quality about it. And there are plenty of them about, whereas as a limited grey import, a Shadow will bring you more exclusivity than even the bike it imitates. You put your hand in your own pocket and you make your own choices, but I'm still back to my original question - why on earth would anyone buy a Harley...?

Kick up a gear before the motor starts to feel busy, and feel yourself pushed forward on a tidal wave of pure torque as the revs fall into bulldozer territory.

laughingly call roads in this country. On reasonable surfaces it'll also bend swing at 70 or 80 no problem, but try and ride it hard around bumpy bends and it'll buck and wallow and weave akin to riding a 25 stone tart on amphetamine - a sensation which at best is an acquired taste, and not one for the faint-hearted at any time...

The brakes are a similarly efficient package on the Shadow. Both the rear drum and the big single front disc require only minimal effort to use, and are more than capable of slowing down that substantial rolling mass - you'll already be stopped while the Harley rider goes sailing past white-knuckled and teeth clenched, praying he'll come to rest eventually. Not that they use their brakes much in America, which is where the Shadow is built and sold, but Honda obviously thought a job worth doing was worth doing well, and it shows.

Given that it was designed as a bike for a country with distances we can hardly imagine between towns and cities, you'd expect the Shadow to be tireless to ride, and it is. The riding position is good, with a very plush and comfy seat, and although at first I thought the bars a little narrow, they do give enough control, and your arms fall into a nice muscle set for all day riding. The pullback



Odgie



Model - VT1100 Shadow. Year - 1993(L). Mileage - 4,606. Price - £6250. Test Bike Supplied By Hesketh Imports.