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APRIL 1982

Full Test:
**HONDA
750 V-4!**
One Giant Step

First Test:
**SUZUKI
1100 SHAFT**
**YAMAHA
IT175**
**1982's
10 BEST BUYS**

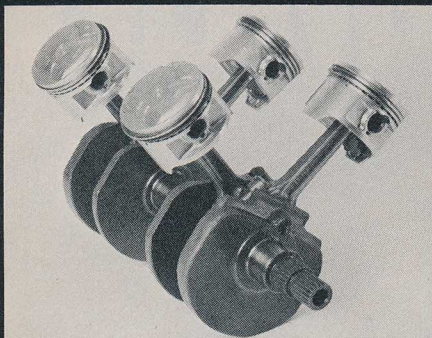


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MOTORCYCLIST

APRIL 1982, PUBLISHED MONTHLY, ISSUE 1018

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If you think that Ken Vreeke had an exciting ride as he piloted the new Honda V45 Sabre around this turn, you should have seen Dexter Ford, Steve Hunter, and Chad Chumpright

as they struggled to focus, aim, and shoot our cover photo while they were thrown from side to side in the back of a speeding pickup truck driven by Krusher Karr. But it was worth it; the new Honda 750 is the most important bike to arrive since the original Honda 750 four changed motorcycling in 1969.

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SUZUKI

GS1000

SUZUKI GS1100G

Quick and Agile, This Big Shaftie Can Do It All

Suzuki has always had a knack for making big shafties into versatile performers. Their first try was the GS850G, which combined all-day comfort with sport-bike handling. A few years back, that machine was good enough to be our favorite big tourer in a two-week coast-to-coast comparison tour against machinery that had considerably more displacement. Later, Suzuki came up with a 1000cc stablemate for the 850; it offered the same virtues in addition to an extra dollop of touring torque to help the miles pass even more effortlessly.

The GS1000G proved to be our favorite shaft-drive sporting tourer. Like the best pure touring bikes, it could carry you in comfort as far as you wanted to go and, unlike pure touring machines, could deliver plenty of fun and thrills on swerving mountain roads. The 1000G struck one of the best big-bore compromises we had ever encountered.

Though there was little to complain about on the GS1000G, Suzuki nevertheless decided it was time for a change. For 1982, the bike incorporates a number of minor changes and, best of all, a boost in displacement. As a 1000, the bike made plenty of usable power, but it couldn't hurt to have a little more, right? Apparently that's the way Suzuki looked at it, so they wedged in an additional 76.6cc.

The new 1100G's engine carries on a bloodline started with Suzuki's original world-beating GS1000. The two-valve chain-drive four was a strong performer and possessed monumental reliability. With the addition of maintenance-reducing shaft final drive, it made the almost ideal touring power plant. The chain-drive two-valve GS1000 is no longer in production, so now only the GS1100G carries on the tradition. In 1980, Suzuki came up with a new four-valve-per-cylin-

der engine design which now powers the sporting Katana, along with the chain-drive 1100s and 750s.

To gain the extra displacement present in this year's big shaftie, Suzuki did the job right instead of cutting corners. It would have been tempting to simply bore out the 1000's 70mm cylinders to get the additional displacement, but that would have resulted in a radically over-square bore-to-stroke ratio not in keeping with Suzuki's current four-stroke design parameters. Instead, the 1100 got a brand new roller-bearing crankshaft that boosts the stroke 1.2mm. Combined with a 2mm increase in bore size, the displacement has jumped to 1074cc. The G-model's bore and stroke dimensions are identical to those of the four-valve GS1100E.

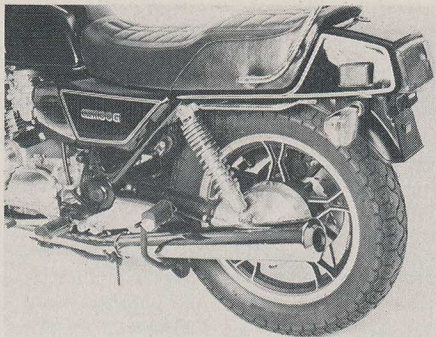
Other changes to the G-model's engine are comparatively minor. The connecting rods have slightly beefier big ends to stand up to the increased loadings brought on by the larger displacement. The second-gear ratio was raised (lowered, numerically), so now there's a bigger jump between first and second and a smaller gap between second and third. The rest of the transmission and drive ratios remain unaltered.

Last year's 1000G was somewhat sensitive to fuel quality. When tanked up on the shamefully bad petro-swill commonly available and given full throttle at low rpm, the Suzuki would rattle like a pair of castanets. The pinging was easy to avoid if you kept the revs over about three grand when accelerating, but with such strong bottom-end power available, it seemed a shame to not be able to use it. To reduce the pinging, the compression ratio has been lowered from 9.2:1 to 8.8:1. Our 1100 still pings a little if topped off with a particularly rancid grade of gas, but the situation is much

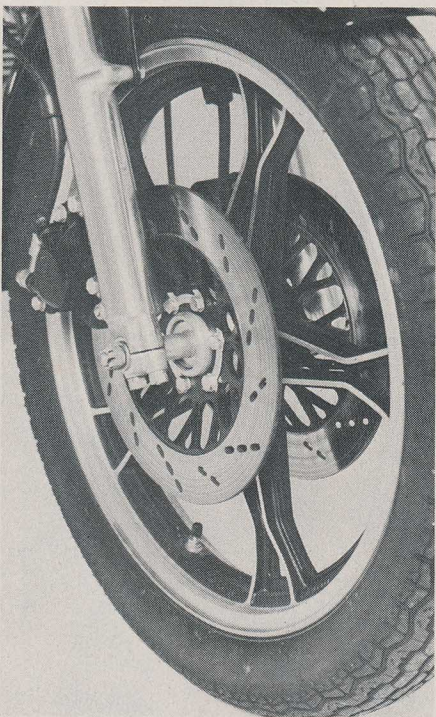
improved over last year's model. With average or good quality gas, the 1100 pulls without a hint of rattle from clear down below 2000 rpm; now you can exploit the engine's tremendous flexibility and power without cringing.

Changes were made to the GS1100's electrical system too. A new starter motor has permanent rather than electromagnets, resulting in a slight weight reduction and reduced current draw. The pointless ignition now incorporates electronic spark-advance control instead of the traditional mechanical advancer with its bobweights and springs. The system also features variable dwell to reduce the amount of current necessary to fire the plugs at low rpm, leaving more juice to run any electrical accessories the rider might choose to hook up. Now you can fire-up your Cuisinart with confidence; the GS has an additional 22 watts in reserve. Does anybody know how much juice a big-screen TV draws?

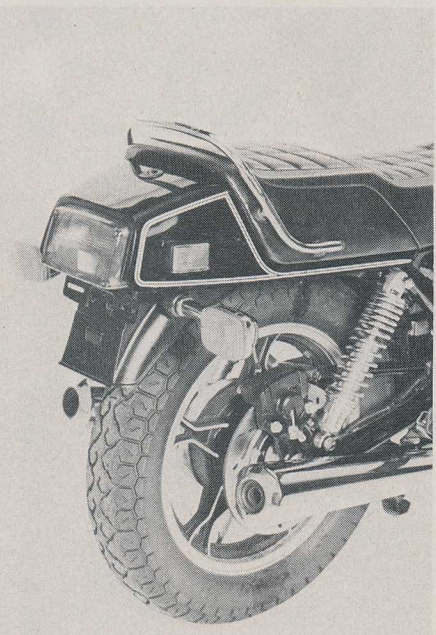
The change in displacement has been accompanied by numerous alterations in the bike's chassis and accessories. Some subtle changes include fractional increases in rake and trail, and 9mm more rear suspension travel. The muffler brackets are now made out of polished cast aluminum instead of tubular steel. A welcome change is a seven-pound reduction in the bike's wet weight; the GS scales in at 589 pounds. The Suzuki is fitted with tubeless tires which carry a lower speed rating. The Bridgestones are H-rated instead of V-rated. We were happy to discover that the GS1100's choke is now operated by a thumb lever on the left handlebar instead of on the carburetors as in the past. Suzuki's clutch interlock requires the clutch to be pulled in for the starter to work, so it used to be a real hassle to jockey with the choke and clutch when starting a



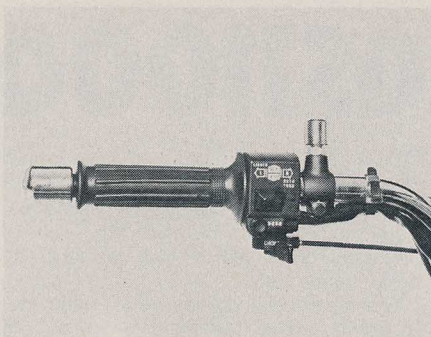
The shaft's layout and ratios are unchanged; its effect on handling is minimal.



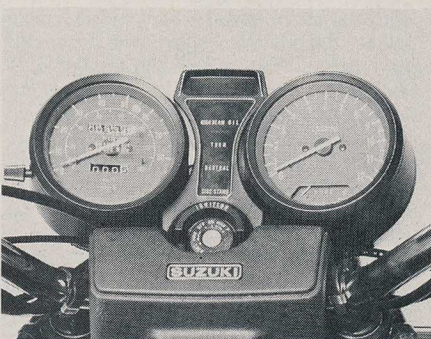
The Suzuki's twin discs deliver plenty of power; they stop new-style cast wheels.



The rear end's styling is little changed, but the seat is more heavily stepped.



The choke control is now located on the left bar; bar end weights quell vibration.



Separate tach and speedo are angled to cut glare and make them easier to read.

cold engine. Now you can operate both at once with little difficulty.

Most of the alterations built into the GS are pretty slight; the only one that is sure to catch your eye is the new styling treatment from front to rear. The old unitized instruments have been replaced by separate items; they might be a little harder to clean, but there's less to replace should your 1100 tip over. The tank has been restyled and has more of a teardrop shape than last year's chunky item. The capacity is still the same generous 5.8 gallons (6.0, if you're willing to top it up slowly). The seat has felt the touch of the stylist's pen too. It's a shame, since the old saddle was the finest stock seat in motorcycling. The new seat is thinner and has more rounded edges to make it easier for shorter riders to get a firm footing at a stop. As a result, it provides less insulation from jolts, and doesn't support your thighs as well as the older seat did. The final aesthetic touches to the GS are the restyled cast aluminum wheels.

Last year's GS1000 was the the most versatile big tourer you could buy. Does this new 1100 follow suit? It looks that way, provided the new models still to be tested don't steal the Suzuki's thunder.

OFF THE RECORD

There's no arguing the fact that the GS1100G is a *nice* motorcycle—and fast and fun and all those good things. But I'm not sure there is a place for it in my ideal garage full of motorcycles. There's definitely a G-model Suzuki included in such a dream list, but it's not the 1100. I'd much rather have a GS650G. It's just as comfortable, handles much more lightly, and has every bit of the performance I need for touring, even two up. In fact, because of its slightly smoother engine and cushier saddle, the 650 may even be a bit more comfortable. And if I had to think about boring things like money, the lower price, insurance rates, and fuel bills of the 650 would give it a terrific edge.

The only reason I could find for picking the 1100 over the 650 would be if you were intent on going the full-dress route, right down to the last radio and heated water seat. In that case, I would tend to think the Honda GL1100, with its adjustable air suspension at both ends, would be superior, although we'll have to see for sure when Suzuki introduces their full-dress GS1100G later this year.

And the L-model? Even though it had a surprisingly comfortable seat, its awkward bars and smallish tank quickly put it on my that's-okay-but list.

—Art Friedman

Just about every motorcycle I ride stirs some emotion within me: excitement, fascination, mild euphoria, delight, respect, disgust, embarrassment, rage, fear. You name it. After all, motorcycles are more than just simple motorized locomotion. They are sup-

posed to trigger emotion. They are designed to embody an individual's personality, and not every bike is going to get the same reaction from every person.

The GS1100 does for my senses what novocaine does for a root canal. It just kinda numbs my emotions. When I returned from a long ride on the GS, I had no real feelings one way or the other. I suppose it's because the GS1100 does nothing outstanding and nothing really bad. It's fast, but others are faster. It's sort of sporty, but others are sportier. It's comfortable, but others are more comfortable. Get the picture?

But maybe that's exactly what makes a good touring bike: one which allows your senses to savor the open country without interference, one which almost disappears but for a muffled hum beneath you. Maybe it's not meant to distract from the sensation of the road. Maybe that is where the real beauty of the GS1100 lies.

—Ken Vreeke

If someone told me I had to leave for Bangor, Maine, tomorrow, I think I'd take the GS1100G. I'd toss a clear fairing and a set of soft saddlebags on it and hit the road. No other bike I know could carry me as comfortably across the open vistas of the West, launch over the Rockies without a hint of strain, and still be real fun to ride through the tight twists of Eastern back roads. The GS1100G can do it all.

For specific riding chores I have other favorites which are built to excel at a particular type of riding, but only the Suzuki can do everything with reasonable competence.

—Jeff Karr

The Big GS doesn't excel at any one type of riding, but it does all things with such competence that no motorcycle in its class can outdo it overall.

The GS1100G starts easily when cold and will pull smoothly after about 30 seconds of warm-up. It's best to leave the choke partially on for a mile or two until the engine is warm enough to respond smoothly and idle evenly. Around town, there's plenty of power to keep you happy and to make quick starts at stoplights. Even when riding two up, you never need to exceed about 4000 rpm in any gear to get all the power or acceleration you can sanely use. You can save the upper portion of the powerband for times when you want to get your blood pumping or are interested in discussing speed limits with police officers.

You'll never mistake the GS for a 550 when snaking through traffic, but it does feel more nimble and responsive than its 589-pound bulk would lead you to expect. The steering is light and precise, and the control efforts required by the rider are reasonably low. Our test bike's front brake had a somewhat mushy feel, but there was plenty of power to lock the front wheel, even when very hot. Careful bleeding of the brake lines probably would have eliminated the slight sponginess. The clutch has a moderate lever pull and a wide engagement point. It chattered lightly during easy starts at low rpm or while creeping along, having the clutch slipped during parking-lot maneuvers. The chattering disappeared during harder starts at higher rpm.

When you pull off the city streets and onto the highway, the GS shows you one of the things it does best: cover distance easily and comfortably. The ride is responsive without being mushy. Both ends work well on small lips and bumps, and have plenty of firmness in reserve to absorb big jolts without excessive bottoming. There's a slight buzzing through the handlebar, but at cruising speed it is never intense enough to cause any discomfort. The rider's pegs are buzz-free, but the passenger's footrests transmit quite a powerful high-frequency tingle that can put the passenger's feet to sleep within half an hour.

The riding position is the traditional Suzuki setup. It would be nearly ideal if a fairing were installed, but with the stock bare-bike configuration, the handlebar is too high and swept back to be really comfortable. It sits you up into the wind, so you have to use your arms and shoulders to hold your torso steady. A handlebar that was an inch or two lower and farther forward would lean you into the wind, improving comfort. The seat, though not as cushy in the long run as last year's couch, is still among the best we've tried. It gives you plenty of room to move around and get comfortable. You can sit on it all day without developing a case of battered buns or gouged glutes.

GS1100GL

The GS1100GL is Suzuki's entry in the shaft-drive Super Cruiser class. It shares its basic frame, engine, and drive train with the conventionally styled GS1100G, but is laid out in a flashier touring-for-burgers style.

The differences between the G and the GL are all derived from the divergent styling approaches used with each bike. Like its nearly identical sister bike, the GS850GL, the bucket-seat 1100 carries a 16-inch rear wheel and a slightly extended front fork assembly to tilt the chassis back in the typical Low Slinger manner. The power train and gear ratios of the L are exactly the same as those on the G model, but the smaller-diameter rear tire yields shorter overall gearing.

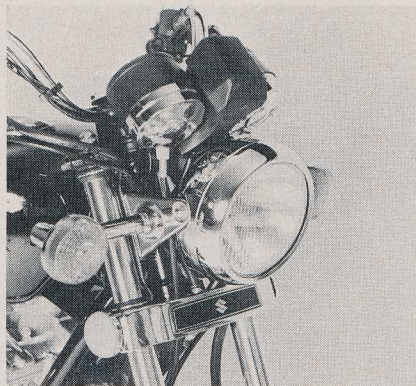
On the road, the L shows the basic strengths that make the G such a pleasant machine for the long haul. The engine is smooth, flexible, and seems to suck up highway miles without perceptible effort. It churns out all the torque any sane man could need, and the gearbox does nothing to interrupt the orderly transfer of power to the rear wheel: every shift we made was light, smooth, and positive.

The shaft seldom intrudes on the rider's consciousness. Only under hard acceleration in the lower gears was there any torque reaction felt, and even then it was not an annoyance.

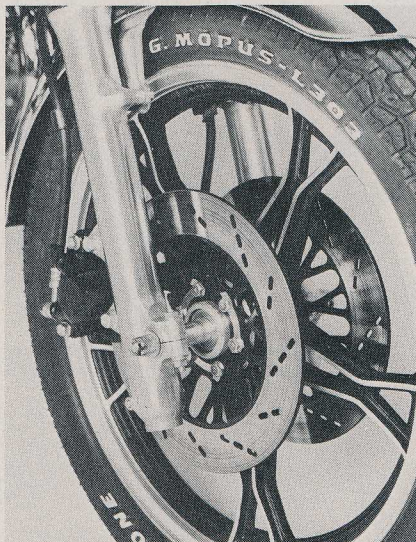
The longer front fork, with its low-friction bushings, delivered excellent ride quality out on the freeways. The level of seal-and-bushing-induced stiction was low enough to tame expansion-strip pogo-sticking very nicely. The adjustable rebound damping in the shocks makes it easy to tune the rear end for differing loads, road conditions, or spring preload settings, and the 16-inch rear wheel helped to keep road shocks from ever getting to the rider.

The L-model's chassis attitude compromises the machine's cornering capabilities a bit when compared with the G; but the L is still a very competent motorcycle when leaned over. The longer front end and shorter rear give the L a little more rake and

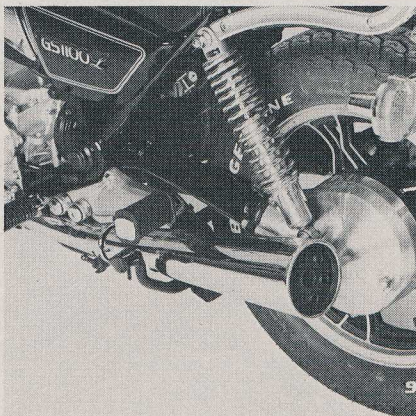
fractionally less trail, yielding slower overall steering response. The L grounds its undercarriage more easily than the G does, though there is more than adequate clearance for normally spirited riding. The extended fork adds a noticeable amount of flex and imprecision to the steering. Hard high-speed cornering revealed a gentle ten-



For styling purposes, the GL has a smaller-diameter quartz-halogen headlight.

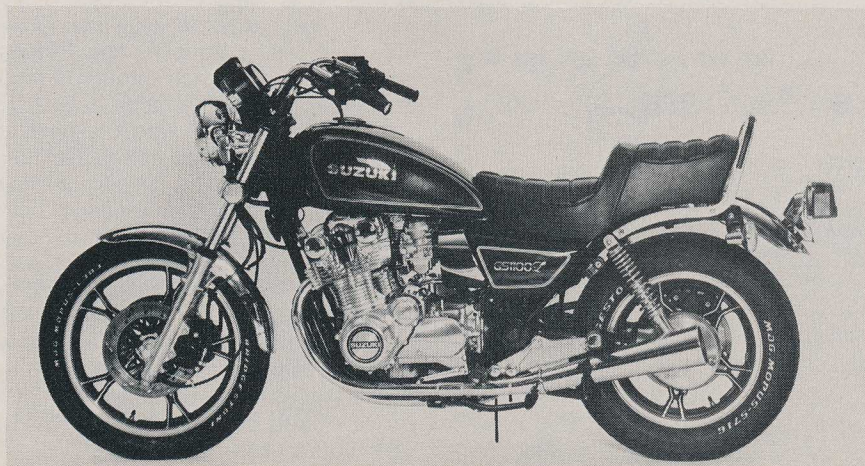
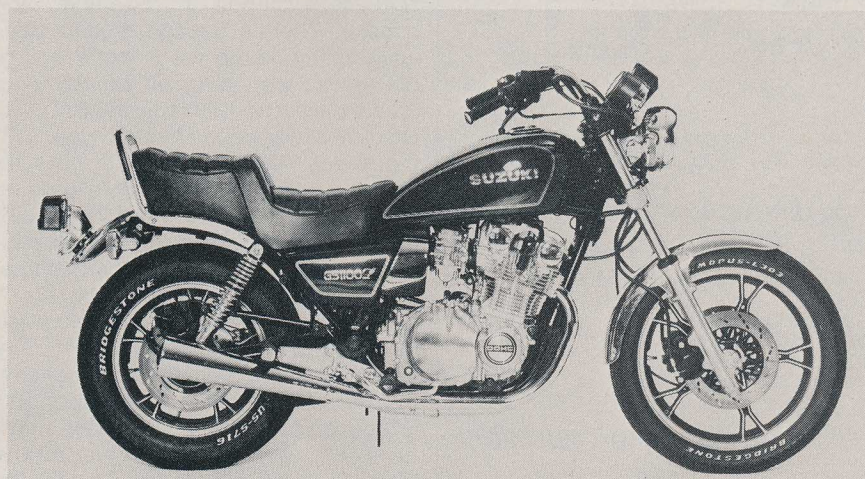
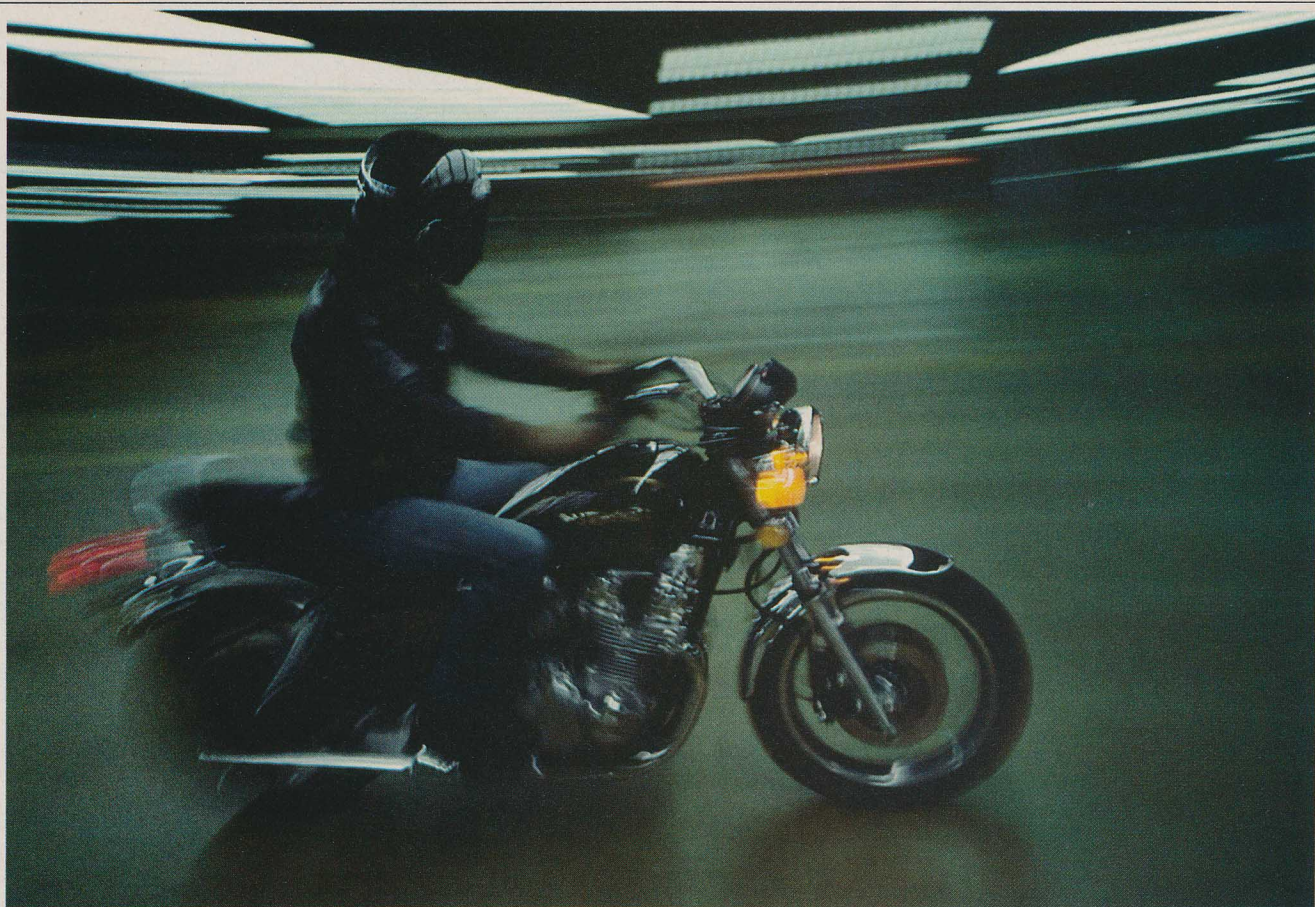


The leading-axle front fork provides a good ride, but flexes in fast turns.



The small rear wheel lowers the gearing, improving roll-on performance.

Front tire	100/90-19 57H Bridgestone Mag. Mopus L303
Rear tire	130/90-16 67H Bridgestone Mag. Mopus S716
Rake/trail	27.45°/4.05 in. (103mm)
Wheelbase	59.4 in. (1509mm)
Seat height, unladen	30.5 in. (774mm)
Fuel capacity	4.5 gal (17.25L)
Wet weight	575 lb
Fuel consumption	34 to 53 mpg, 43.6 mpg avg.
Average touring range	196 miles
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	11.93 sec, at 111.1 mph
200 yd. top gear acceleration from 50 mph	81.4 mph terminal speed
RPM at 60mph, top gear	4165
Calculated speed in gears (at redline)	(9000) 1st 50 mph, 2nd 72 mph, 3rd 90 mph, 4th 111 mph, 5th 130 mph



dency of the machine to wallow, even with the shocks dialed to maximum rebound damping and maximum preload. With five pounds of air inside, it is quite possible to bottom the fork under hard braking; 10 pounds of air lessened the problem and helped, but did not eliminate, the fast-cornering mushiness.

The brakes, like those on other big shaft-drive Suzukis, provided more than enough power to haul the machine down from triple-digit velocities, but lacked the precise feel of some of the better systems available on production bikes.

Most custom-styled production motorcycles give up in rider comfort what they gain in looks; the GS1100GL is a welcome exception. The pulled-back handlebar complements the low, high-backed seat very well—the riding position worked well at legal speeds for testers in a surprising range of sizes. The step in the well padded, two-tier seat is located far enough back to supply a generous amount of room for long hours on the road, and those testers tall enough to be pushed back into the step found it gave a useful amount of support to the lower back. Only at high speed or in a head wind were the bars too high. Obviously, Suzuki has spent the time and effort required to make their big-bore cruiser at least as much fun to sit on as to look at.

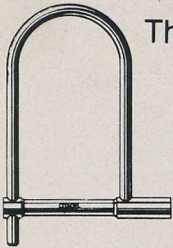
Our test bike was painted in a subdued pattern of black with maroon inner panels and gold accent stripes. Styling is in the eyes of the beholder, but for our tastes, the L comes off a little plain looking next to the higher flash-quotient examples offered by some other manufacturers. In performance, though, the big boulevard bomber from Suzuki looks very flashy indeed. **M**

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There's plenty of power on tap to deal with any open-road eventuality. The GS has strong roll-on power, so you rarely need to downshift for hills, head winds, or passes—unless all three occur at once. If you *do* want more snap, there's 11-second quarter-mile horsepower waiting to be unleashed just this side of the 9000-rpm redline.

Should you decide to tour on roads that are more serpentine than straight interstates, the 1100G won't disappoint you. Even with the adjustable suspension set at full soft, the bike is a stable handler. There's enough ground clearance for moderate cornering. If you go faster, or are riding on bumpy back roads, the suspension adjustability of the GS will easily accommodate you. With the shock spring preload up near the maximum, and the adjustable rebound damping notched up to the third or fourth position, there's much more ground clearance and enough damping to keep the bike steady at speed. The Suzuki can be hustled through turns at near-racing speeds without undue difficulty. There's enough ground clearance for all but the most fanatic peg-scraper. The GS doesn't wobble, even in fast bumpy turns; only a slight wallow lets on that the bike is working hard. The Bridgestone Mag. Mopus tires stick well enough for hard-core play racing. No other big shafty equaling the Suzuki's power output can slice through a piece of curvy road with the same ease.

The old GS1000G was the best all-around shaft-drive ride going. Take that machine, add an extra serving of meaty power and subtract a slice of seat foam, and you have the GS1100G. It isn't quite as comfortable as its smaller predecessor, but it *is* faster. And it displays all the versatility that made the old 1000 so hard to beat. There are more narrowly focused motorcycles that pack more excitement than the GS, but no big shafty we've ridden can surpass the Suzuki GS1100G's ability to do everything with such competence.

M