

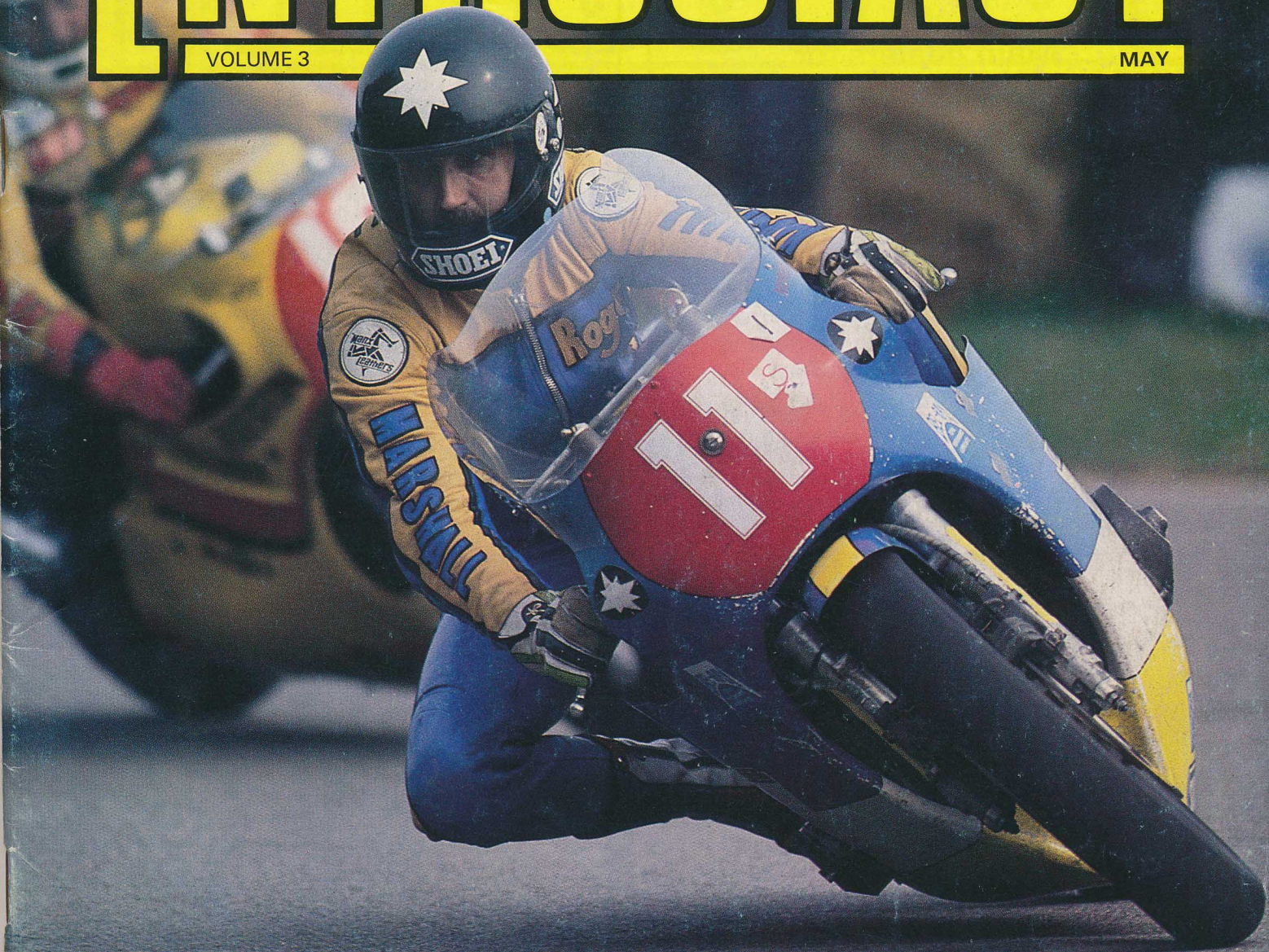
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# ENTHUSIAST

VOLUME 3

MAY



**British Bikes: Beesa pre-unit twins**

**Road tests: Kawasaki Z1100R**

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# ROAD TEST

## Kawasaki Z1100R1

It's really amazing what a different paint job and relatively few modifications can do to a bike.

Take the new Z1100 R1, when we tested its forerunner, the Z1000 R2 in the October 1983 issue it was our testers opinion, that although basically a well constructed and reliable mount, it was nonetheless a rather staid, somewhat dull one litre Japanese multi — like many others already being turned out by the competition.

It is evident that Kawasaki felt this too, their 1984 replacement, the Z1100, is neither dull, lacking style, or simply an over-bored last years bike. In fact it achieves exactly what I'm sure Kawasaki set out to do in the first place with the R2. This was to satisfy the demand made by riders impressed by Eddie Lawson's race winning rides in the USA during 1981 and in 1982, on a 1023cc version of

Kwacker's lime green tarmac racer, before switching to a works Grand Prix contract with Yamaha as Kenny Roberts number two in 1983.

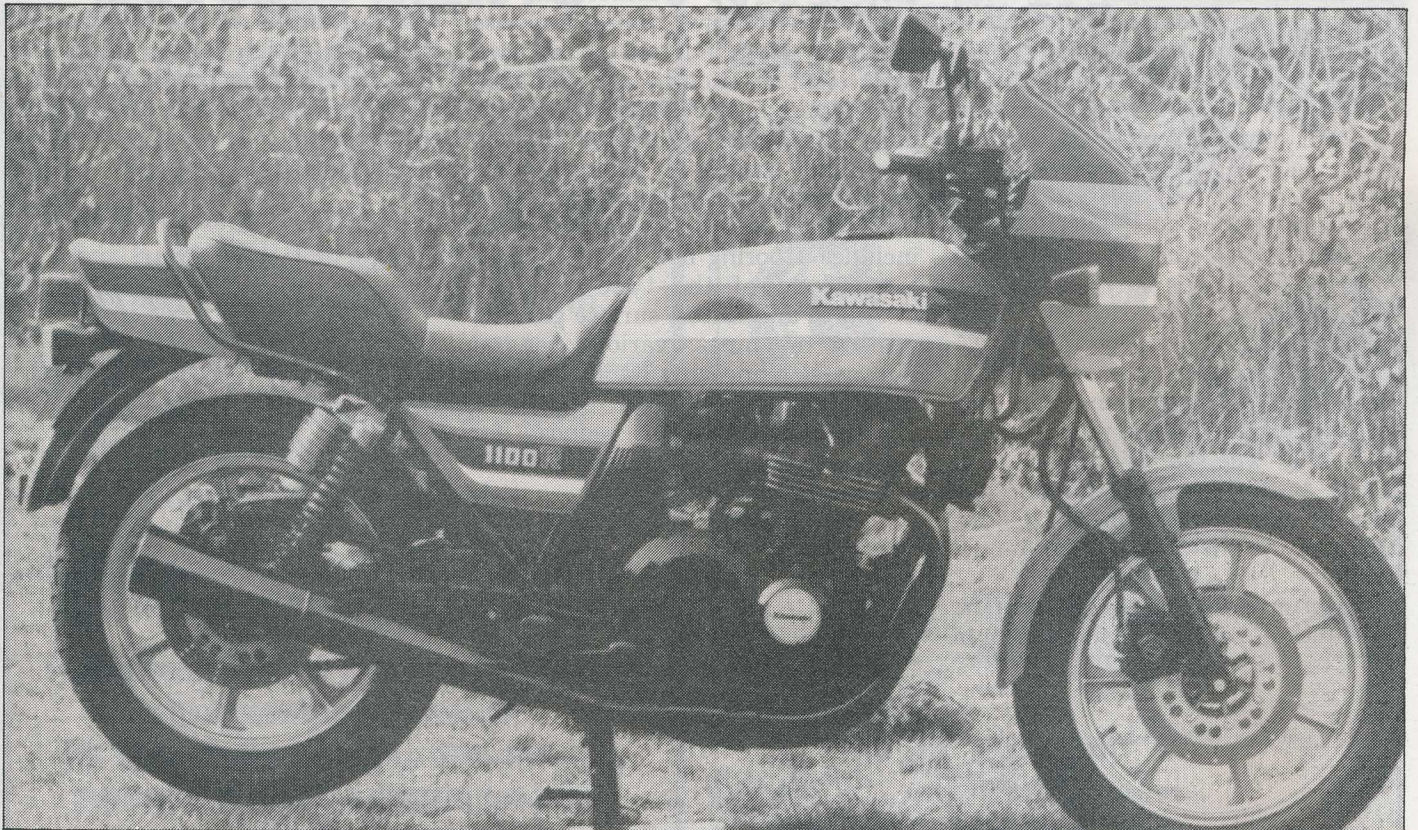
In 1982 Kawasaki rightly decided to cash in on Lawson's success by offering, Stateside, a street version of the AMA 1000-class Superbike winner, this was called the KZ1000 R and was finished in the marques traditional racing colours. In America this Lawson Replica received high acclaim, with quotes like "Lawson Replica KZ1000 R — everything but Eddie" and "From street to track and back, the Eddie Lawson Replica looks like a Champion Superbike".

The real truth was of course something less, with the actual performance never quite matching what had been expected, even with a Kerker 4 in 1 exhaust system fitted. Various American testers achieved maximum speeds in the region of

133-134mph, but in virtually every department, except fuel consumption, performance was down on Suzuki's 1000 Katana.

What is it that promises to make this years bike an improvement over last years offering and is this enough to haul it back up the Superbike league tables? The answer is yes, the new bike appears to have more power, more style and more sales potential.

What makes all the difference then? The answer lies in a list of carefully thought out modifications. First, the engine. This now has a capacity of 1089cc instead of the former 998cc, a gain of 91cc. The stroke remains unchanged, but the measurements are now more oversquare, with an increase in bore size, up from 69.4mm to 72.5mm. Compression ratio has been raised to 9.5 to 1 from its previous 9.2 to 1. Taken together these changes boast



Kawasaki's new Z1100R1 with many worthwhile improvements over its smaller brother the Z1000R2



by Mick Walker

power output by 10bhp, to 114bhp. Maximum rpm remains unchanged at 8,500. Another important factor is, besides the increase in outright bhp, torque has been improved from 9.1kg — at 7,500rpm to 10.2kg — at the lower revs of 7,000. The final major engine improvement centres around the transistorised ignition system, which for 1984 has an electronic advance.

To cope with the extra power the cycle parts have seen considerable development. The front wheel size is down from 19 to 18 inch. Castor angle has been increased from 27.5 to 28 degrees, whilst the trail is also increased, this time from 98 to 114mm. The wheelbase is longer by 20mm, to a total of 1540mm. The tyres now feature a new lower profile, the front has been altered from 3.25 V19 to a 110/90 V18 and the rear from a 4.25 V18 to 130/80 V18. On our test bike both were tubeless Japanese Dunlops, F 17 front, K 427 rear.

Although another 10bhp is on tap, the weight has only increased by 2kg to 238kg, this represents a significant improvement in power to weight ratio. To cope with the extra performance the drilled brake discs have had their effective diameter increased by 4mm, (front 250mm, rear 240mm). Kayaba rear shock absorbers are still employed, but these are now of a different type with 5 pre-load settings and 4 damping positions. (On the Z1000 R2 the pre-load was stepless via screwed thread adjusters.)

The Z1100's other change is to its colour options, gone is the Polar White and in its place are offered finishes in either Lime Green or Stardust Silver. Quite frankly in my opinion there's just no contest, the Lime Green makes the bike look every inch a sporting Kawasaki in the best tradition, whereas with the Stardust Silver the machine reverts back into the trap which the Polar White Z1000 R2 fell into, lack of identity!

The bike we used was not one of Kawasaki UK's 1984 test fleet,

because at the time they had only just begun to assemble them and the new Z1100 R1 was not among the bikes available.

Where then did it come from? It was in fact one of the first sold in Britain, in early February, by Cambridge Kawasaki dealer Freddie Mayes to one of *Enthusiast's* readers, Mark Horsman, a 20 year old merchant seaman from Melbourn near Royston. Why did Mark buy the bike? Having owned several Kwackers, including a Z900 A4 and Z1000 J2 he still wanted another Kawasaki, but said Mark "something different — GPZ's are too commonplace" and although only just out of his teens Mark "did not go much on the outrageous swappy lines, preferring instead something which looks like a proper motorcycle", — his words, not mine.

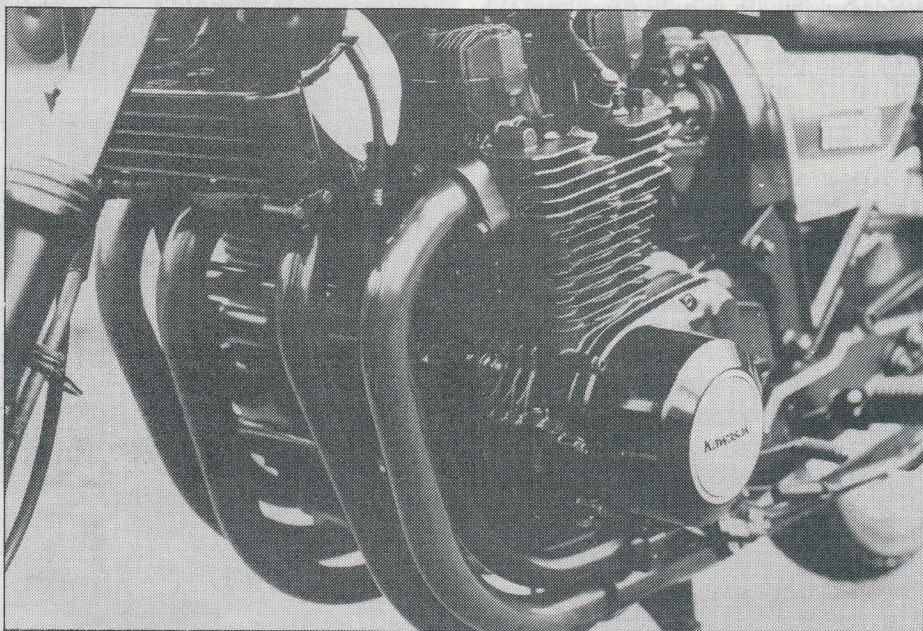
His preconceived ideas about the Z1100 R1 were that it would be similar to his last bike, the Z1000 J, but with more power, a lower seat and improved handling with the smaller front wheel.

So much for preconceived ideas,

what was it like in practice? Starting, it fires up straight away on the button, but takes longer than usual to warm up, the choke lever was mounted as a push/pull button on the near side carburettor, this has four notched positions and from cold with the choke on full, the engine runs at 3-4,000rpm before it can be pushed in one notch after its initial warming up period. If the choke lever position was moved to the handlebar area, it would speed things up considerably, making it much easier to ride the bike when the engine is not fully warmed up.

Unless the prop stand is fully retracted, if the clutch lever is released with the engine in gear it will activate a cut-out switch — a good idea this, as anyone who has seen a rider with his prop stand down will testify.

Clutch action is light and is assisted by the dog leg control levers. The gearbox action from cold, is very clunky in the lower gears, but at least it's positive. No judder or other nasties are felt when releasing the clutch and once under way it is



An increase in capacity 1089cc gives 10bhp more power and a useful increase in torque

# ROAD TEST

instantly apparent that the larger engine has a noticeable increase in torque, being quite happy to run down to 25mph in top gear and pull away again without snatch (provided of course one is sensible).

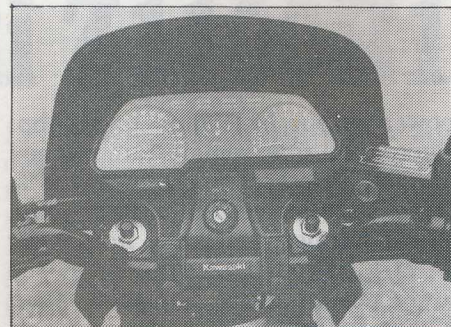
The riding position is best described as "sit-up-and-beg" and in solo use is extremely good, except at very high speeds, when progressively the rider finds it more difficult to hang on, even though the bikini fairing does stop a certain amount of wind reaching the riders chest. Two up it is almost as good, but to start with it takes some getting used to, as the pillion passenger is mounted considerably higher than oneself. The actual seating position was comfortable both for solo or pillion use, even with a 6'3" rider. The only criticism, besides the handlebars effect at high speeds, concerns journeys of 100 miles or more when a slight neck ache sets in, a change of bars might cure both these problems.

A shock for one used to the differences between Japanese and Italian bikes was the rear end, where the new shock absorbers on their harder settings felt more like a set of Marzocchi's than a normal Japanese pair, as they were very stiff. Going round some of Cambridgeshire's back roads (which are very bumpy) saw the bike jumping over the undulations,

not moving off line, just jumping. Later, with softer settings they showed their parantage, reverting more to what one would expect from Japanese suspension units, a much softer ride. On motorways, main A roads and other similar surfaces no problem was encountered with the suspension set either hard or soft. In fact I would rate the roadholding and handling above most other Japanese bikes with conventional twin shock suspension.

Unfortunately, one thing let the side down — the tyres. Even in dry conditions I found the front susceptible to losing adhesion and breaking away far too early. In the wet both tyres were really bad and I would advise prospective owners to seriously consider changing them for something different before even taking delivery. With wet conditions the tyres reacted adversely to manhole covers, white lines and changes in surface.

During the running-in period, it was found that the comfortable cruising speed was 62mph at 4,000rpm. Compared to other similar conventional across the frame fours, the Z1100 did not feel so top heavy and was therefore less of a handful around country lanes and roundabouts, this is possibly the reason for changing from a 19 to an 18 inch front



## Comprehensive instrumentation includes an electronic tachometer

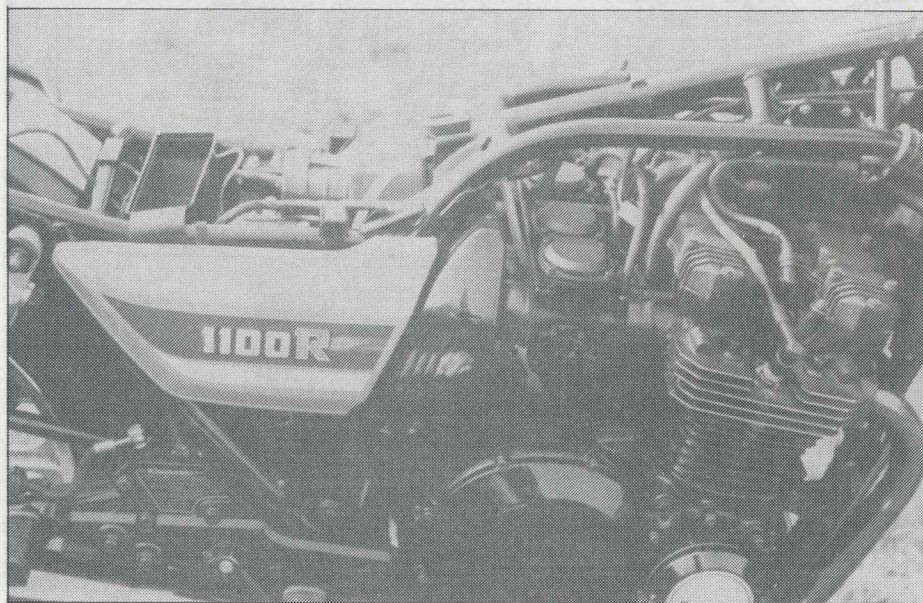
wheel, as the front end tended to "fall into" corners more easily than with the Z1100 R2.

Braking, this can only be described as excellent, matching the bikes weight and performance perfectly. I just can't fault the bike in this area at all, both front and rear lever actions are progressive and positive — full marks Kawasaki. Even in wet conditions braking is much improved over the disc brake systems of yesteryear and the front forks do not dive down like many others when the front brake is applied, even though they are not fitted with an anti-dive system.

Another star point was the engine. Except for a slight tingle around 4,500 to 5,000rpm, which was not painful or annoying, the rest of the time the rubber mounted dohc four shows superior mid-range punch than similar Japanese designs, making the bike far more usable and therefore enjoyable to ride. Once warm and in the higher ratios the gearbox is far less clunky, allowing the rider to make full use of the power. Besides its torquey top gear performance, the power in 3rd or 4th harnessed on the open road is superb, no ifs and buts, just tremendous power. Overall gearing seems just about perfect, no need for owners to have to purchase alternate sprockets to get it right.

The tinted mirrors detract from the smooth running of the engine by being blurred at speeds above 4,000rpm (62mph) and, to add insult to injury, are the type where one sees more of the rider's shoulders than what is behind.

Protection offered by the bikes mudguards is spoilt by the amount of



The top frame tubes curve around the 1.1 litre power plant

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spray that is allowed past the (large) plastic rear two piece unit, this reaches the pillion passenger and is also thrown 10/15 feet to the rear into the path of following traffic, the steel front, in contrast, although a sporty looking item protects the rider and engine quite well, much better than a lot of machines.

The electrics were reliable throughout the test period, this traditionally is a strong point on most Japanese bikes. Lights were powerful, with the front allowing the rider to travel at almost any speed. The twin horns did their job, warning other road users with a suitably loud blast. The switch gear was big, bold and clear, it could even be used with 3 pairs of gloves — I know because I tried! The only thing amongst the whole electrical installation which could be faulted was the solidly mounted flashing indicators, one knock and they would need replacing.

Other detailed points of the machine are a 4-tier Nippon-denso oil

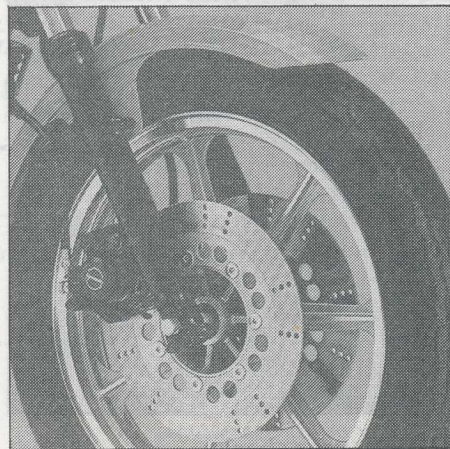
cooler, mounted between the two horns, both stands are easy to use and as already mentioned the side one has a safety device to prevent the bike being ridden away with it left extended. Additionally, both stands are tucked well in and indentations into the nearside silencer allow for more ground clearance than would otherwise be possible.

The black chrome 4 into 2 exhaust system appears to have a similar durable finish to that of the Suzuki XN 84, tested recently, this it may be recalled was pristine, even with over 8,000 miles on the clock.

The general finish of the Kawasaki is high, with only the poor frame welding letting it down. Against this the 7 spoke cast wheels are the best I have seen to date on any Japanese bike, both in style and quality.

The petrol tank paint finish and that of the black coated engine in particular are both of an excellent standard.

Cleaning was easy in some areas,



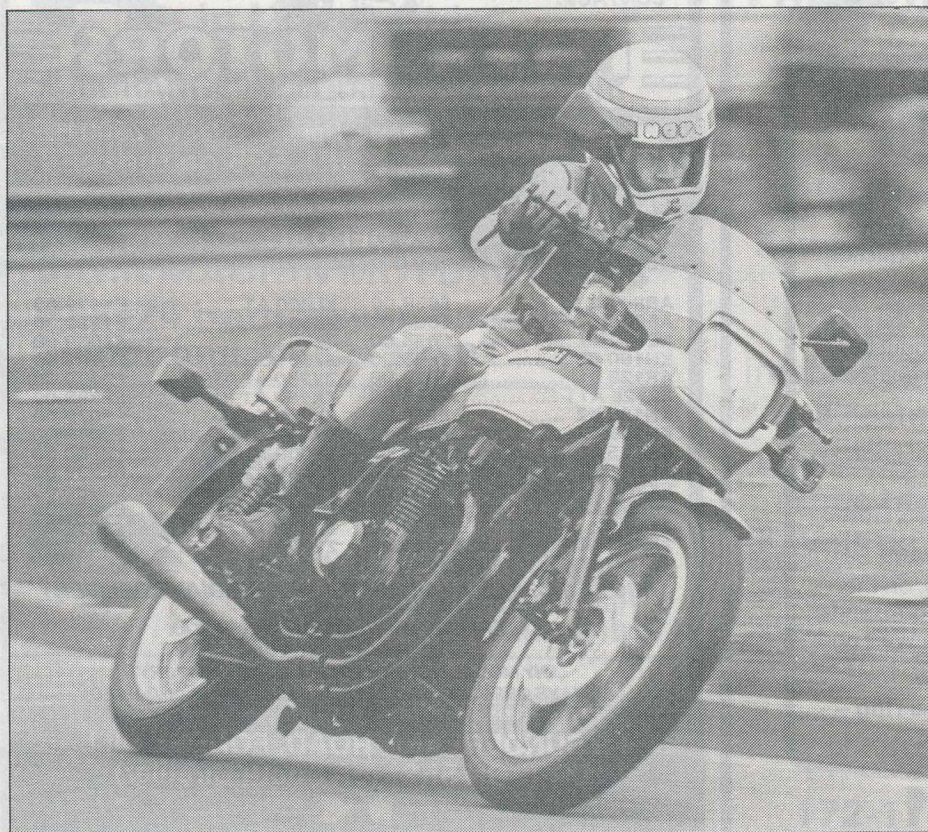
**Front forks although not anti-dive behave well, while the wheels and disc brakes earn praise**

difficult in others. The wheels, for example, including the discs (which are retained by large allen screws) are simple, the most awkward place was the swinging arm loop and rear of the engine, both almost inaccessible.

With a potential maximum speed of around 140mph and fuel consumption which averaged throughout the test 42/45mpg, albeit including running in, the Z1100 R1 compared favourably with any other big bore Japanese multi, whilst the price of £2,749 including taxes, represents excellent value for money. At this price it is in direct competition with the latest hi-tech 750s and only £100 more expensive than the Z1000 R2, which at present is still currently listed by Kawasaki UK. For my money the extra is well worth it, because with the 1100, Kawasaki have made a genuine attempt to improve several major items, in the process making the whole bike considerably more attractive to potential customers.

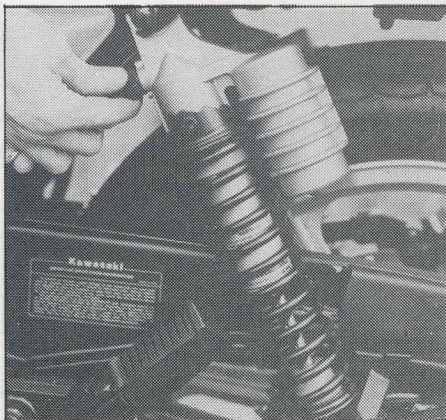
As a Superbike to use every day the general smoothness and tractability are impressive, here is a machine which not only looks sporty, but can perform a dual role of touring or sportster, how many other bikes in its class achieve this so successfully?

Another point in its favour was the acceptance by owners of other large Japanese hardware, not just Kawasaki owners, as several of its admirers included Honda, Suzuki



Although an "1100", the new bike has a lighter feel due to the reduction in the front wheel size

# ROAD TEST



**Kayaba rear shocks**

and Yamaha owners. It should be remembered that in the Z1100, Kawasaki have only its appearance and honest rideability to rely on, it hasn't any technical innovations such as rising rate suspension, a turbo

charger, six cylinders or even anti-dive front forks.

As the big son of Kawasaki's original Superbike, the Z1, today's Z1100 R1 is directly descended from the original's 903cc powerplant of 12 years ago. Perhaps herein lies its secret.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine: 4-stroke, 4 cylinder, air cooled dohc with two valves per cylinder and shim set tappet adjustment

Displacement: 1,089cc

Bore and Stroke: 72.5mm x 66mm

Carburettors: 4 x Mikuni CV 34mm's

Ignition: Transistorised, electronic advance

Gearbox: 5 speed

Tyres: front - 110/90 V18, tubeless,

rear - 130/80 V18, tubeless

Brakes: front - dual disc, 250mm, drilled, rear - single disc, 240mm,

drilled

Frame: Double cradle, round tube swinging arm, with twin Kayaba shock absorbers with external reservoirs featuring adjustable preload and damping

Rear Chain: Sealed 'O' ring 540

Wheelbase: 1,540mm

Seat Height: 785mm

Dry Weight: 238kg

Fuel Capacity: 21.4 litres

Maximum Power: 114bhp at 8,500rpm

Maximum Torque: 10.2kg-m at 7,000rpm

Maximum Speed: (estimated) 140mph

Colour Options: Lime Green or Stardust Silver

Price including taxes: £2,749

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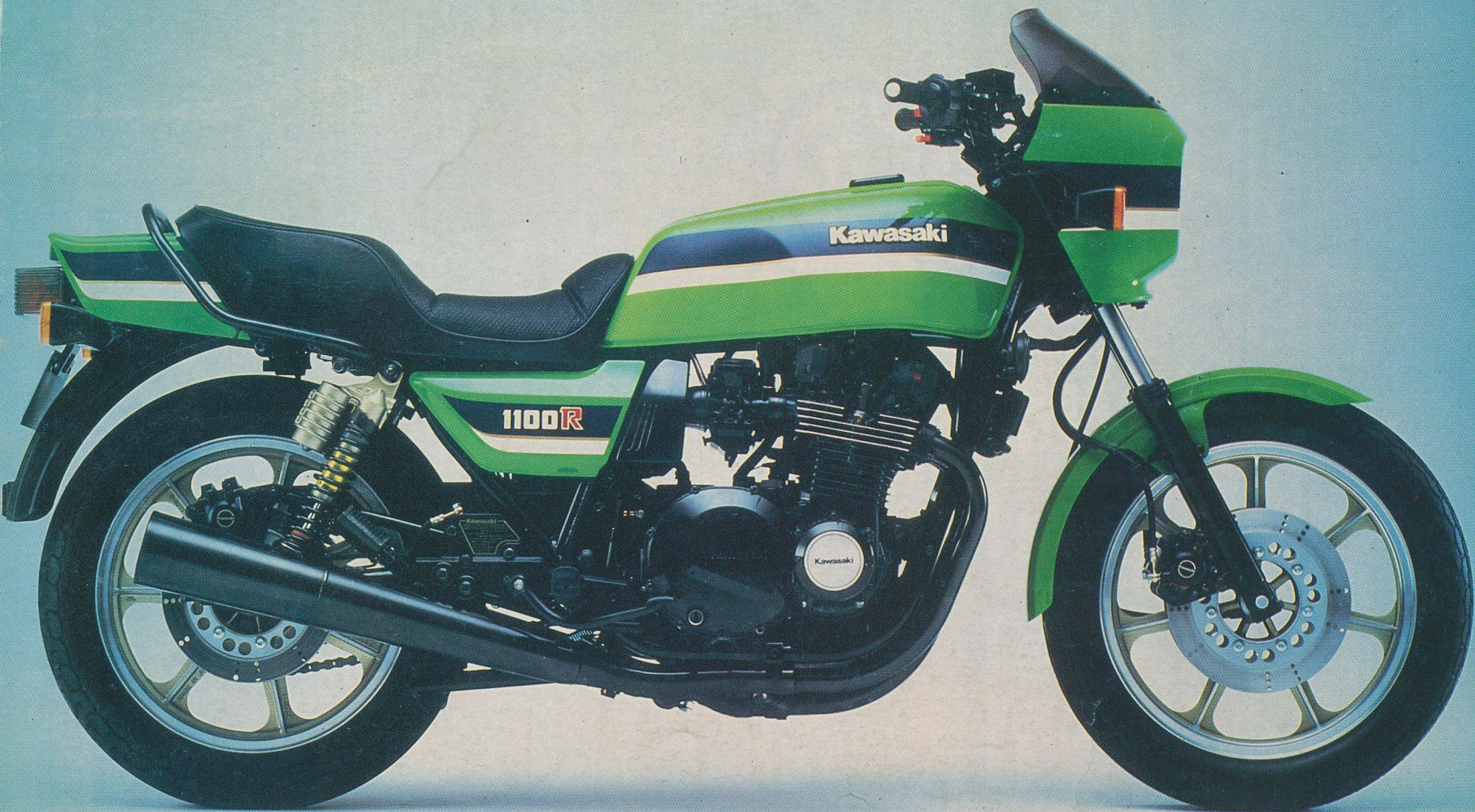
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**Kawasaki Z1100R, road tested in this issue**