THE 1300 IN COLOR!

Riding Kawasaki's Monster Six

MOTORCYCLIST

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Yamaha XS Eleven Special

Honda XR185 vs. Yamaha IT175

Battery HowTo • Maico 400 Enduro

son: Detachable Saddlebags

COVER

Yamaha's top 1979 machine features the XS Eleven motor, the styling of the Specials and other goodies as well, including model Dawn Clark. The background pyrotechnics were conceived by photographer Mike Levasheff and executed by Art Director Jervis Hill. The test begins on page 20 with another full-color photo of Dawn. Our special 8-page color coverage of Kawasaki's new 1300cc Six starts on page 48.

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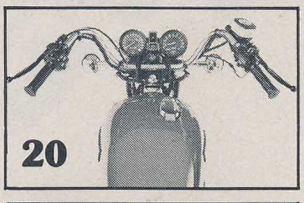
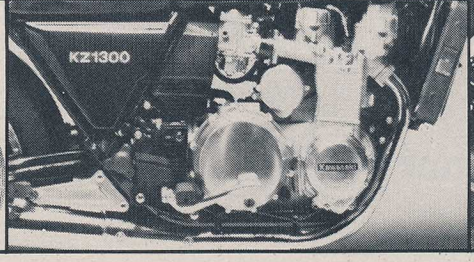
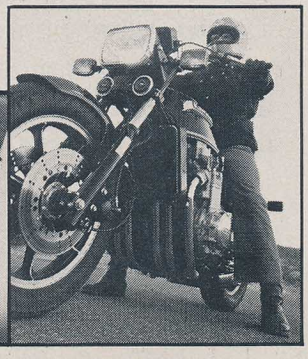
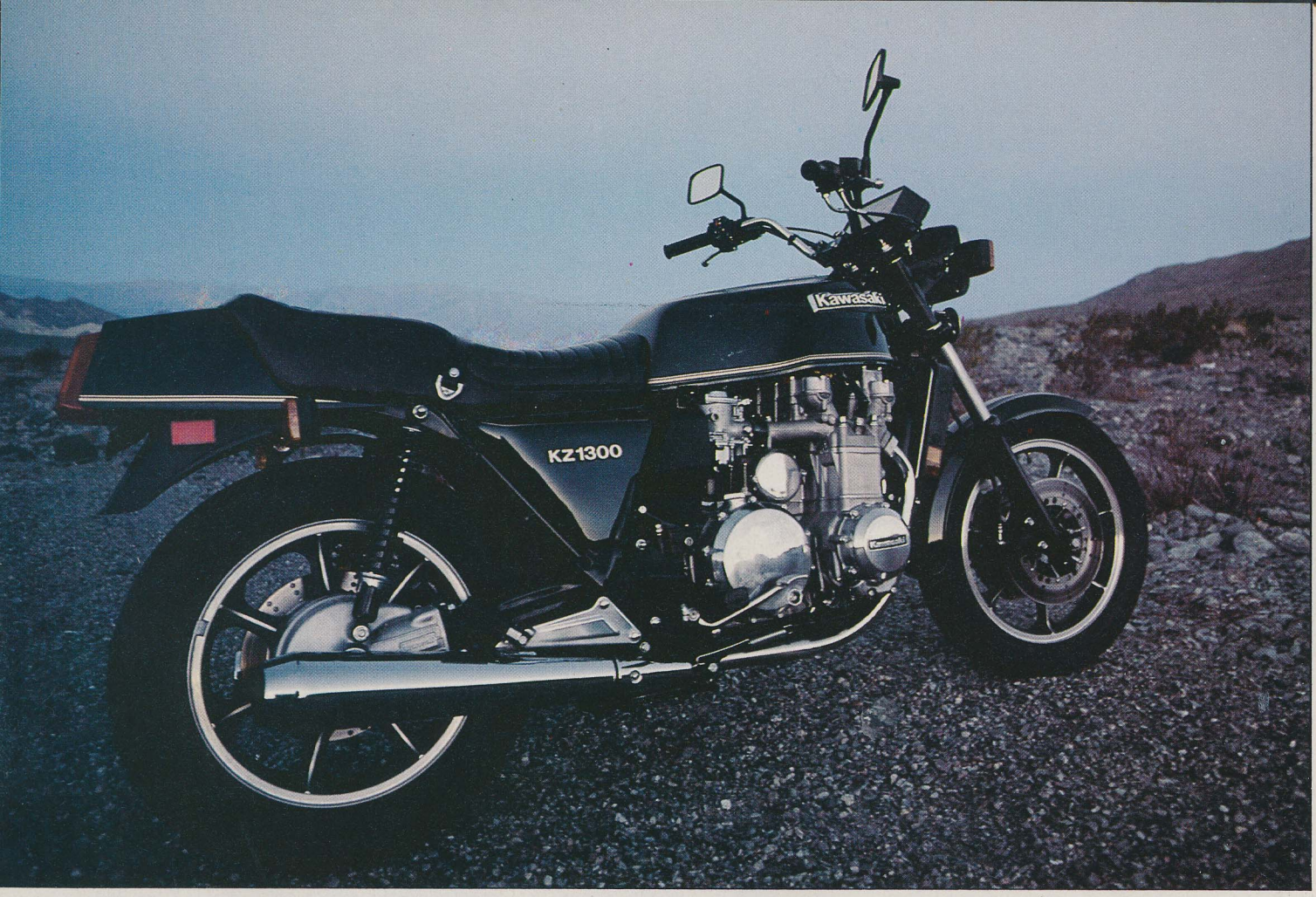
CONTENTS FOR FEBRUARY 1979








Kawasaki
KZ1300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Kawasaki KZ1300 Six

Elegant Touring With Power To Spare

The sun was not yet a glimmer on the wrinkled Death Valley landscape when two heavily dressed figures stole out of the sleeping Furnace Creek Inn to a garage across the road. With a loud click a padlock sprung open and the garage doors were rolled back. Inside the illumination of a single light bulb revealed the remains of a full-dress Honda Gold Wing bent almost in half, the recent victim of one of Death Valley's suspension-confusing dips. But the two men frozen breathlessly in the doorway barely noted this ominous sign. Their stares were locked on another motorcycle which stood deeper in the shadows. The two had already spent several hours howling down nearby highways on this machine, but even with its features shrouded by the dim light, the imposing lines of the Kawasaki KZ1300 Six still riveted their gazes and sent their pulses racing.

One of the riders stepped over to the Kawasaki and turned the ignition key. The garage was flooded with light from the machine's quartz-halogen headlamp. The man pulled the clutch lever in and hit the starter button. Instantly the ancient garage was filled with the engine's smooth, even exhaust note. The big bike was rolled out of the garage and the doors were closed and locked. The two riders pulled on their helmets and, after one final glance back at the Inn to be sure they weren't being watched, rode off down the highway. The water-cooled six-cylinder DOHC engine already sounded crisp and warm, even though it had only been running for less than a minute in the bone-chilling pre-dawn air.

Two miles down the road, the pair glanced around again, then turned off the highway and coasted dead-engined into another hotel parking lot. The big 1300 rolled onto the front porch of a small bungalow. One of the riders knocked softly on the door of the darkened cabin. The door opened part way. "Let's go," whispered the rider. "We're all set."

Two more figures emerged from the cabin and, shivering from the desert's piercing cold, opened the doors of a van parked nearby. Inside a huge scale was rolled to the back and then lowered to the ground with a clank. "Shhh," warned one of the riders. "There are people from Kawasaki staying here too. This could be hard to explain. They thought we were just going to take the bike for pictures."

A ramp was produced while someone topped off the fuel tank. The bike was rolled up the ramp and balanced on the scales. One of the men fiddled with the scale for a moment. "Seven-sixteen," he announced. "Almost seven-seventeen. How much does the ramp weigh? Eight and a half? So it's seven hundred and eight pounds. Wow, that's a lot of 'road-holding weight.' What does a Harley Electra-Glide weigh?"

"Seven-seventy-seven, I think. But that was with all the usual accessories, which must weigh at least 75 pounds."

"So this probably is the heaviest. But how fast is it?"

"Unload the XS Eleven and we'll find out. I think you're in for a surprise."

He would be surprised, too. In fact, everyone was surprised about almost every facet of the KZ1300, Kawasaki's new 1286cc double-overhead-camshaft, liquid-cooled six-cylinder touring-sports machine. Its performance, its handling, its appearance, the outward size of its engine, even its very existence in this era of extreme federal concern with all aspects of street motorcycling, are all unexpected.

The KZ1300 was first shown to the world in September 1978 at the Cologne show in West Germany. The American press saw it at about the same time, but our first chance to ride the Super Z came late in November, when Kawasaki invited the motorcycle press on a two-day ride from Las Vegas, Nevada to Death Valley in California and back. The ride's location was presumably chosen because it was reasonably warm—an important consideration in late November—and fairly remote from most regular police patrols.

There were three production prototypes of the 1300 on the tour, along with 12 other Kawasaki street bikes for the 15 press people. Among the others were some KZ1000s in two new versions, a shaft-drive model (the ST) and the Mark II, which has more power than previous KZ1000s. The schedule included about 350 total miles of riding and several technical seminars with Japanese engineers flown in from the factory.

We at *Motorcyclist* were excited and curious about the Monster Six, which we felt was the most momentous new model of 1979. We wanted to know everything we could about the new bike, so the two of us on the tour hogged the bike unabashedly and took advantage of any extra chances to ride it. We also cheated a bit. In addition to the two staffers invited on the ride, we secretly sent two staffers independently to Death Valley in the *Motorcyclist* van. We armed this surreptitious B Team with our official scale—and with our cover-bike Yamaha XS1100 Special for performance comparisons. The A Team and the rest of the official tour was scheduled to stay in one of Furnace Creek's two hotels. The B Team would lay low in the other one, two miles away.

That bit of intrigue detailed at the beginning of this report was the 5 a.m. meeting of our two groups of staffers, where the big six-cylinder was weighed and given some quick external measurements. The climax of that secret session with the 1300 came when we matched the Monster Six against the Yamaha 1100, the reigning champion of the superbike touring class.

All during the previous day our A Team had been learning about the spectacular new Kawasaki from the moment they first laid eyes on it. After deplaning in Las Vegas, shaking several dozen hands and eating lunch, the above-board duo began rearranging their ideas of what the biggest motorcycle ever to come from Japan is all about. It *is* big. The engine is internally huge and externally tall because the stroke (71mm) is so long. But the long stroke allows a skinny (62mm) bore. The narrow bore (2.5mm smaller than the Honda CBX) and liquid-cooling enabled the Kawasaki engineers to carve the 1300's cylinder-block width to 20.5 inches, about 2.0 inches narrower than the Honda six. Although the crankshaft area of the engine is about 2.5 inches wider than the CBX, the cylinder head is about an inch narrower than the Honda's. The slender top-end combines with the KZ1300's styling so that the engine looks like it belongs in *this* motorcycle. The motor doesn't bulge out from under the tank like the CBX's. It appears smaller, more compact and integrated.

The use of three automotive two-barrel carburetors—each considerably narrower than two motorcycle carbs with comparable (32mm) venturis—has also reduced the amount of hardware in the rear of the engine bay. This gives the rider plenty of knee room and also helps keep the powerplant from overwhelming the appearance of the rest of the motorcycle even though it weighs-in at 290 pounds itself. So the 1300's first surprise is the lack of bulk down in the engine room.

Surprise Two was that the engine warmed up quite quickly.

With a long wheelbase (63 inches as we discovered during our measuring session) and a rolling weight of over ⅓ ton, we expected the bike to handle slowly, which it did. But we also expected it to feel heavier and behave much more awk-

PHOTOGRAPHY: DALE BOLLER, RICH COX, ART FRIEDMAN

Kawasaki KZ1300 Six

wardly at low speeds. Once rolling, the 1300 was quite manageable—a pleasant revelation.

Out on the big bike's home turf, the open highway, we began discovering other things. The engine is smoother than a politician's campaign promise. We couldn't feel any vibration at any speed. The colossus motor is silkier than the CBX or the XS1100 and probably even smoother than the Honda Gold Wing. The mirrors don't blur and nothing on the bike buzzes or rattles.

The absence of vibration gives the impression that the engine is never working hard. Even when we revved it past the 8000-rpm redline or rocketed down the road at over 130 mph, the engine felt relaxed. The effortless sensation was heightened by the engine's power characteristics which are as broad and easy-going as an American V-8 automobile's. From below 2000 rpm to redline, the engine just steadily builds power with rpm. Maximum torque is reportedly developed at 6500 rpm and the horsepower climbs to a claimed maximum of 120 at eight grand, but there's no surge of power anywhere from idle to redline.

The trio of carbs incorporate a constant-velocity feature. Each carb's pair of slides is controlled by a single vacuum-operated diaphragm, so the engine can't fall on its face from over-carburetion at low speeds. The carbs also respond more progressively than some CV units. This smoothed-out throttle response, plus an easy clutch pull, a minimum of drive-train lash and a five-speed gearbox which shifts positively and with unexpected smoothness and silence all work to heighten the sensation of unruffled elegance as the big bike hurries you down the road.

The final factor in making the Kawasaki feel so untaxed is its tall overall gearing. AT 60 mph the crankshaft is turning less than 3500 rpm in top gear, and this makes the engine sound like it's breathing quite lightly. Unfortunately, the high gearing also represents a sacrifice in the KZ 1300's usable performance. During our first session on the bike, we pulled up to another rider on one of the quick new KZ1000 Mark IIs. A fifth-gear acceleration contest from cruising speed was arranged in sign language, and it was the smaller bike which got the jump and pulled away until 80 mph. Then the 1300 began to close up to pass at about 90 mph. At first we wondered if the other rider might have picked a lower gear, but later when we were able to duplicate the contest with our own riders on both bikes, the same thing happened again.

Even more telling was our clandestine sunrise showdown with the Yamaha XS1100 Special the next morning. The Eleven not only pulled away from the "Thirteen" in fifth-gear throttle roll-ons at cruising speeds, but also got the jump in first-gear rolling starts. In both cases the Six ran down and passed the Yamaha at 95 or 100 mph, which indicates the 1300 would have quicker quarter-mile times (about 11.8 seconds) and much faster terminal speeds (around 118 mph). The situations where the Kawasaki excels—quarter-mile figures and high-speed (over 80 mph) accleration—are fantasyland performance categories. The most useful acceleration areas in real life are, first of all, from cruising speeds and, secondly, low-speed sprints, such as when leaving a stoplight in heavy traffic. In both of these situations the 1300 loses ground to the smaller bikes we compared it with. In passes from normal highway velocities, the passing is all done before the big, bad 1300 can reel in the smaller bikes.

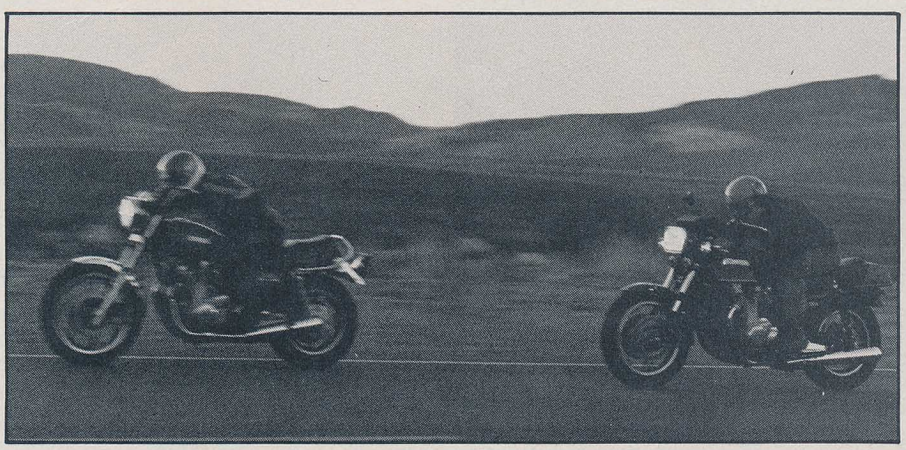
Lower gearing would provide the KZ with more acceleration at real-life speeds, but at the expense of fuel mileage, some additional engine wear, top speed and that relaxed engine sound. Of course, nobody suggested that the Big Six isn't quick enough—especially when you have to stretch to find a logical reason for why it's as quick as it is. But the Kawasaki just doesn't have that awesome last bit of urge that a 1300cc six would be expected to deliver.

If the Super Z's domesticated sprinting strength was unexpected, its handling was a pleasing, almost shocking surprise. Keep in mind the fact that you're riding a long, heavy motorcycle with rear shocks that claim no particular refinements, and the handling of the Monster Six may amaze you. The slow steering that goes with the stretched wheelbase never disappeared. However, slowness and stability go together, and the 1300 was always stable and steady, even at twice-legal velocities in the same dips that turned the Gold Wing mentioned earlier into scrap-yard fare.

Of all the surprises we had in about 300 miles of riding the 1300, none matched that of the titan's handling in corners. It couldn't be flicked into a bend or make sudden changes in line like a 400 twin. But the big Kawasaki didn't require an inordinate amount of effort to make it turn, and it certainly didn't buck, bobble, shake, wander, drag or wobble the way we predicted a heavy shaft-driven 1300cc six would. It was steady, pretty accurate and had more cornering clearance than we expected from a bike whose manufacturer lists "touring" before "sports" in its designation. The Dunlop tires stick to the limit of the KZ's cornering clearance, and the usual rise and fall of any shaft-drive bike under acceleration and deceleration didn't create any particular problems. The total package is amazingly forgiving.

The bike behaves so well because Kawasaki *made* it handle well. The 41mm fork stanchion tubes are the largest we've ever seen, and they make it impossible for the fork to flex. The double frame downtubes are 34mm in diameter with 2.3mm walls and a patented double-wall construction near the steering head for max-

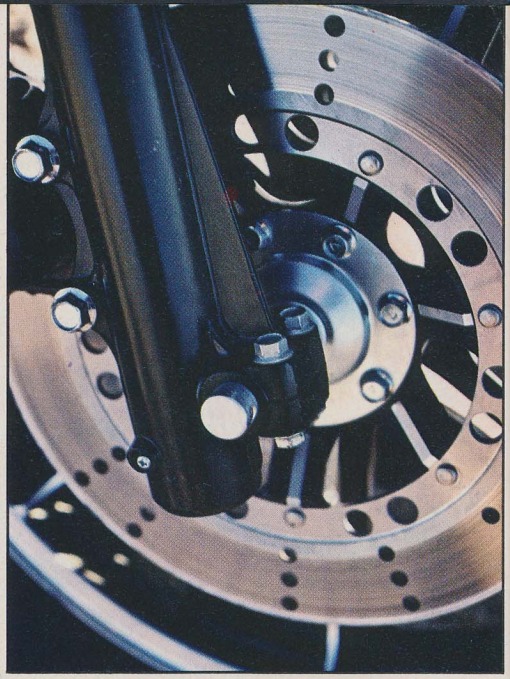
Sunrays bathe the KZ1300 in violet pulses of refracted light, perhaps to infuse it with some sort of ethereal power, a possibility not discounted by anyone who has twisted its throttle. Open-highway miles melt away serenely and high-speed turns don't generate the heart-stopping antics one might expect from a 708-pound monster. The KZ1300 ran perfectly from below sea level deep in Death Valley to snow shrouded mountain passes in Nevada.

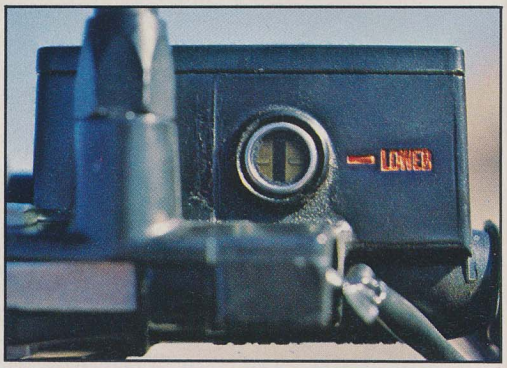


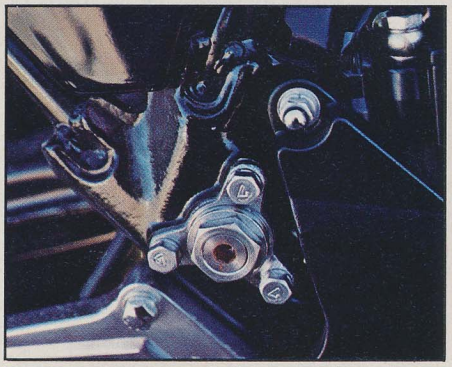
Surprisingly the Yamaha XS Eleven Special pulled the big Kawasaki in most throttle roll-ons, especially those beginning in third or fourth gear at mid-range revs. Downshifting the Six gives it an edge over an unshifted Yamaha.

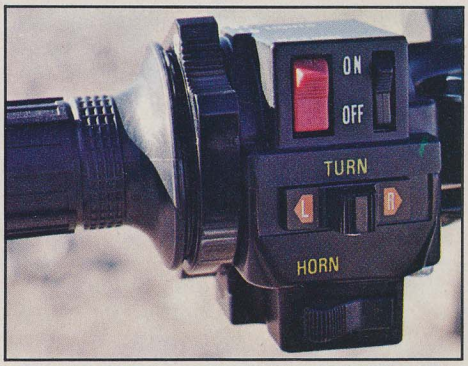
These men are secretly weighing the Big Six at dawn in a motel parking lot in Death Valley National Monument. The scale reads 708 pounds with a full tank of gas. Headlights from a van brighten the scene.

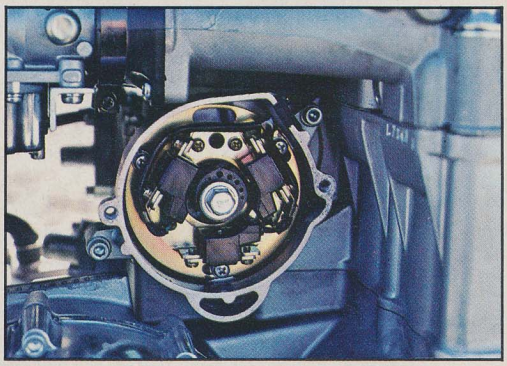
Kawasaki KZ1300 Six

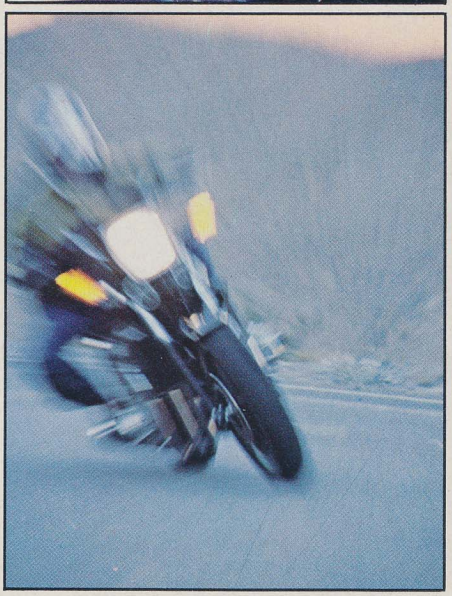


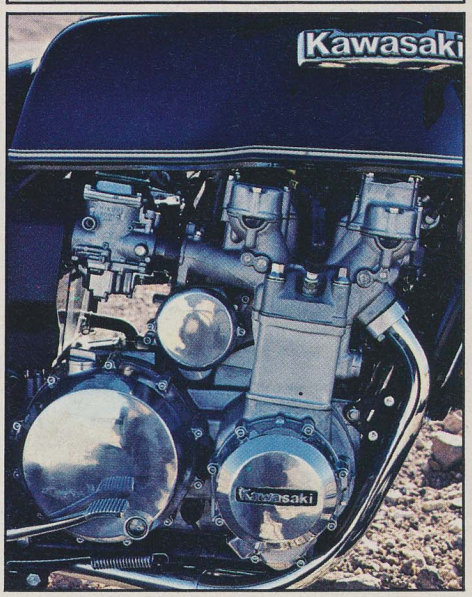


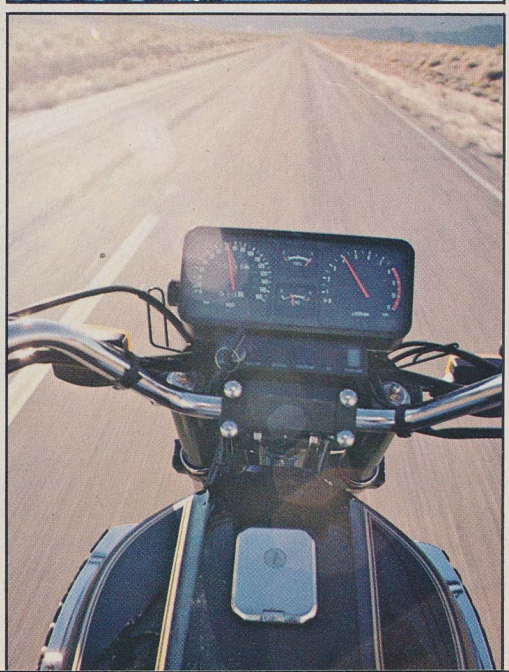












imum strength in that important area. Everything on the frame looks brawny and unflexible, and the box-section swingarm, which rides on double needle bearings, is also massive.

The leading-axle front fork has air caps in addition to its springs, so it may be "blown up" to give it a more progressive action or accommodate added weight. Although the fork showed a little stiction, its compliance to small bumps was generally good, and this isn't affected by increasing the air pressure for improved action during fast cornering. The leading-axle feature permitted Kawasaki to get 7.9 inches of travel from the fork to soak up big bumps. Although the rear shocks were slightly taut—which improved cornering clearance and stability—none of us felt that they were too stiff to rob significantly from comfort.

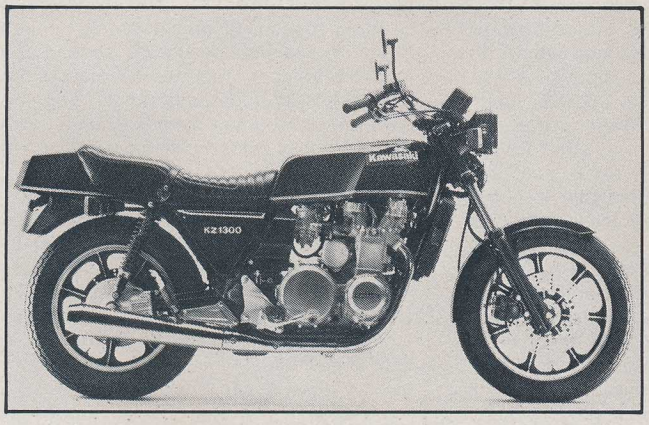
Comfort is one of this motorcycle's most impressive credentials. The two-tier seat ranks with the very best we've ever enjoyed, and the riding position is ideal, though taller riders may find the pegs an inch too far forward. Even on rides of over 500 miles a day, we expect there is nothing on this leviathan to grind you down or fatigue you. The 1300 is smooth, quiet and unobtrusive. There's nothing to disturb its efficiency.

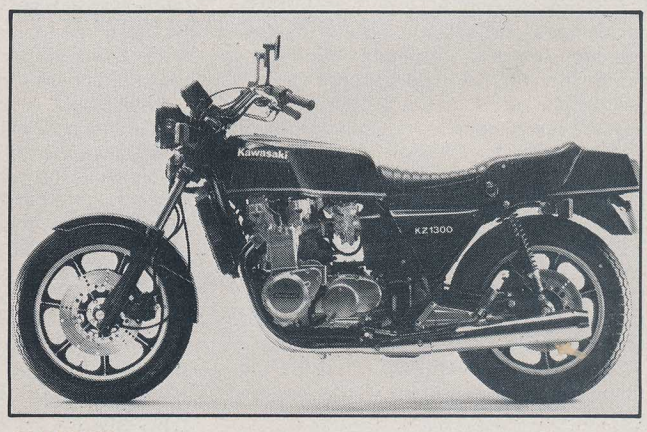
Touring was unmistakably a prime goal of the KZ1300's designers from the beginning. Back in June 1973, when the rest of the motorcycling world was trying to get used to the idea of the Kawasaki 903cc Z-1, its builders were already thinking about an even bigger machine. Dubbed Model 203, this motorcycle was to be a 1200cc with shaft final drive. The decision to build such a behemoth wasn't without objections from those who felt the Z-1 was already all anyone would need. Although several configurations were studied, an in-line six was finally selected for its inherent smoothness and because it was felt that this layout could most benefit from Kawasaki's developmental experiences with in-line fours. Six cylinders and their strong marketing appeal were also a new concept to motorcycling at the time.

With the decision to build the straight six came a commitment to liquid-cooling in order to narrow the engine. Water-cooling also had other advantages for a tourer—reduced mechanical noise, improved cooling for the center cylinders, minimal power loss when the engine is hot and extra reliability and life. However, water-cooling carries the drawbacks of increased weight and complexity. The components for a liquid-cooling system also increase bulk and require added space.

Kawasaki came up with a novel solution to one part of this last problem. Behind the 1300's all-aluminum radiator is an electric fan with a tiny little print motor. This motor uses copper plates instead of wire windings and is less than an inch thick. Kawasaki claims that this innovation enabled them to shorten the machine's wheelbase by 2.8 inches. The fan turns on automatically when water temperature reaches 207-degrees F (which happened several times during our testing). A valve to an

An irregular pattern of holes in the disc helps prevent squeaking and improves wet-weather performance. Note the double pinch bolts which secure the axle. New styling on the front-brake master cylinder is an example of the many designs exclusive to the 1300. The unique swing-arm pivot mounting (seen at middle left) facilitates access to the driveshaft. Switch module includes dimmer, horn, turn signal, hazard flasher and a manual override switch for turning off the self-cancelling turn signal system. CDI pickups nestle behind their own round sidecover. The instruments feature steady needles and communicate only the essentials. This motorcycle needs no gimmicks.





KAWASAKI KZ1300 SIX

Suggested retail price	Approx. $4400
Warranty	N.A.
Number of U.S. dealers	1170
Cost of shop manual	N.A.

ENGINE

Type	Four-stroke DOHC six
Displacement	1286cc
Bore x stroke	62 x 71mm
Compression	9.9:1
Carburetion	3 two-barrel, 32mm CV Mikuni
Ignition	Transistorized, pointless
Lubrication	Wet sump
Battery	12V, 20AH

DRIVETRAIN

Primary transmission	Two link-plate chains and jackshaft, 1.84:1
Clutch	16 plates, wet
Final drive	Shaft 2.65:1

CHASSIS

Fork	Showa, 41mm dia., 7.9-in. travel
Shocks	Showa, wheel travel N.A.
Front tire	MN90-18 Dunlop tubeless
Rear tire	MT90-17 Dunlop tubeless
Rake/trail	29.5°/4.01 in. (102mm)
Wheelbase	63.0 in. (1600mm)
Seat height	32.2 in. (818mm)
Ground clearance	5.8 in. (147mm)
Fuel capacity	5.6 gal. (21.3 lit.)
Wet weight	708 lbs. (321kg)
Colors	Dark blue
Instruments	Speedometer, tachometer, odometer resettable to zero, fuel and temperature gauge.

PERFORMANCE

Quarter-mile	11.81sec., 116.88 mph
Mileage & approx. range	38.2 mpg., 214 miles
RPM @ 60 mph in top gear	3457
Speed in gears @ redline (8000)	1st 57 mph; 2nd 78 mph; 3rd 101 mph; 4th 120 mph; 5th 139 mph.

Kawasaki KZ1300 Six

overflow reservoir opens at 244 degrees. Any overflow from the 3.2-quart cooling system is held in the reservoir until temperature drops again. Then the coolant is returned to the radiator.

The 1300's top end is not particularly complicated. There is one 34.5mm intake valve and one 29.5mm exhaust valve per cylinder. Valve lash is adjusted with shims, which sit on top of buckets at the end of each valve stem. The two one-piece camshafts are driven by a single link-plate chain. Each cylinder is fed by its own carb throat through a long intake manifold. Kawasaki's Air Suction System insures a hydrocarbon-free exhaust as the escaping gases exit through a pair of three-into-one exhaust systems. The bike's compression ratio is a tight 9.9:1.

The bottom end's complexity makes up for the top end's relative simplicity. The plain-bearing crankshaft is driven on its left end by the starter motor through a series of gears, and the alternator is mounted on the crank's right end. From there back it gets pretty busy. The original Model 203 prototype had everything driven by gears, but that was too noisy, so at about the same time that Kawasaki decided to boost the displacement from 1200cc to almost 1300, they also converted to link-plate chains (often called Hy-Vo silent chains) to connect most of the transmission shafts. The primary disadvantage to the link-plate system was that it required the crankshaft to be slightly longer than it was with gear drive.

A chain from the center of the crank drives the all-important intermediate jackshaft, set just behind the crank. Another link-plate chain driven from the middle of this jackshaft, turns both camshafts. Cam chain slack is controlled by Kawasaki's new automatic tensioner.

On the left end of the jackshaft is yet another chain which drives a shaft located just above the jackshaft. On the right end of this upper shaft are the moving pieces for the transistorized ignition. Bevel gears in the middle of the upper shaft drive at right angles another shaft which runs straight forward between the center cylinders to power the water pump mounted on the front of the cylinder block.

There are four shock-dampers in the drive train. The first, a metal-on-metal ramp type, is located in the intermediate jackshaft between the chain from the crank which drives the jackshaft and the ultra-wide link-plate band which runs from the right end of the jackshaft to drive the clutch. A rubber shock damper is located in the 16-plate clutch, and the second metal damper is placed in the transmission output shaft. The last shock damper is a rubber one located in the rear hub. The final driveshaft is driven by bevel gears on the right end of the transmission output shaft. The driveshaft was on the left side of early prototypes, but locating it there prevented placing the footpegs where Kawasaki felt they belonged. Moving the driveshaft to the right solved the problem.

The KZ1300 is the first big bike from

Off The Record...

Before I ever laid eyes on the Monster Six, I anticipated it with a mixture of amusement and scorn. I figured that we needed another corpulent, ponderous tourer the way we need peach fuzz on a grapefruit. After seeing pictures and reading specifications, my initial reaction was to write this bike off as having too much of everything—weight, bulk, complexity, width, maybe even too much power. After all, Kawasaki made "speed-wobble" a household term with bikes which were much leaner and more controlled-looking than this 700-pound giant. I quickly realized that I had badly misjudged the 1300 as soon as I rode it. After spending several hours on the machine, I came to regard it as the very best of the super-tourers.

I've ridden coast-to-coast seven times, so I have pretty respectable credentials as a long-distance road rider. As a rule, I've tried to avoid big, heavy shaft-driven machines for my long hauls. The big plush shafties are just fine when I'm droning down the Interstates. But when I leave the super-slab to savor those meandering country roads, I don't like to be burdened with the sloppy handling that is part of most big bikes, especially shaft-driven ones. Instead of a Gold Wing or an XS Eleven, I'm apt to pick a GS1000 for its steady back-road manners. If I wanted a shaft drive, I'd pick something smaller like a BMW 800 or a Honda CX500.

The KZ1300 is the first shaft-driven super-tourer to fit my style of touring. In addition to providing motorhome-like comfort and luxury, the bike handles well enough to please me while I'm weaving up some pass in Colorado or making time on a back road in New England. Other big shafties have been Cadillacs, beamy and spongy. The Monster Six is a Mercedes, immense but efficient. However, if Kawasaki's projections are right, I *would* be concerned about the rear tire surviving a long trip.

I still might choose a GS1000 for my next transcontinental voyage, but at least now I have a choice. —*Art Friedman*

I only rode the KZ1300 once, and never in a straight line. I piloted the Six during our 45-minute, three-photographer, near-freezing temperature, sunrise photo session. Dale handed me the rare KZ cautioning me to "stay on," and mumbled something about my old desk job. So with frosty fingers and only the memory of a warm body, I hopped aboard and made 50 or 60 brisk passes at 60 to 80 mph through a wide sweeping corner in Death Valley's Funeral Mountains. Even at high speeds the wrath of the legendary Kawasaki wobble never surfaced; instead, I felt a certain "piece-of-the rock" stability, smooth and easy handling. Moving from side to side and fore and aft like a roadracer I met no resistance. I am one of those who can't justify returning a test bike without beveled pegs at least, and although I managed to scrape the centerstand, the pegs remained asphalt virgins.

During the session the powerful triple-disc brakes worked flawlessly in stopping the 708-pound behemoth, never once fading in over 100 hard stops to turn around for another pass in front of the cameras.

The KZ1300 was fun to ride even though it doesn't have the shoulder-stooping torque of Yamaha's XS Eleven. As a handler it doesn't suffer the writhing antics of the CBX and will leave Honda's Gold Wing bashing its undercarriage miles behind. —*Ken Vreeke*

Contrary to what many Kawasaki fans expected, the Six does not chew up and spit out the CBX in a bold reassertment of performance-superiority. We all expected Kawasaki—the company with the performance reputation—to produce a snorting, bellowing monster which made the dragstrip its home turf. Instead the machine exhibits priorities devoted to the open road. Its quite satisfactory dragstrip performance comes from the sheer size of the engine rather than unrelenting attention to its output.

For the first time a Kawasaki owner can experience the true comfort afforded by a genuinely successful saddle, unsurpassed smoothness and an almost perfect seating position. At present the bike has unperfected suspension and unproven reliability, but it still beckons you to take it from Maine to California in four days. I have never ridden a motorcycle cross-country. I prefer short doses of intense sport riding on twisty roads. Push hard, scrape the pegs, experience the physical sensation of being deep in a corner at speed. My idea of touring is in a Boeing 747 with a glass of champagne and a Faye Dunaway movie. Motorcycling for me doesn't include long hours on an Interstate or limiting luggage to what can be secured by a bungee cord. But the way this Kawasaki works on the open road has me intrigued. After riding it 200 miles in Death Valley I wanted to continue East for another 2800, just to see if it stayed as good as it felt at the moment. No other machine in 15 years of riding has ever tempted me to keep going in a straight line if there were no twisties waiting at the end.

Possibly more intriguing is that this very big motorcycle, if confronted by a treacherous section of winding road, could handle it without instilling the fear of god into a rider who finds difficulty in repressing his sporting instinct.—*Dale Boller*

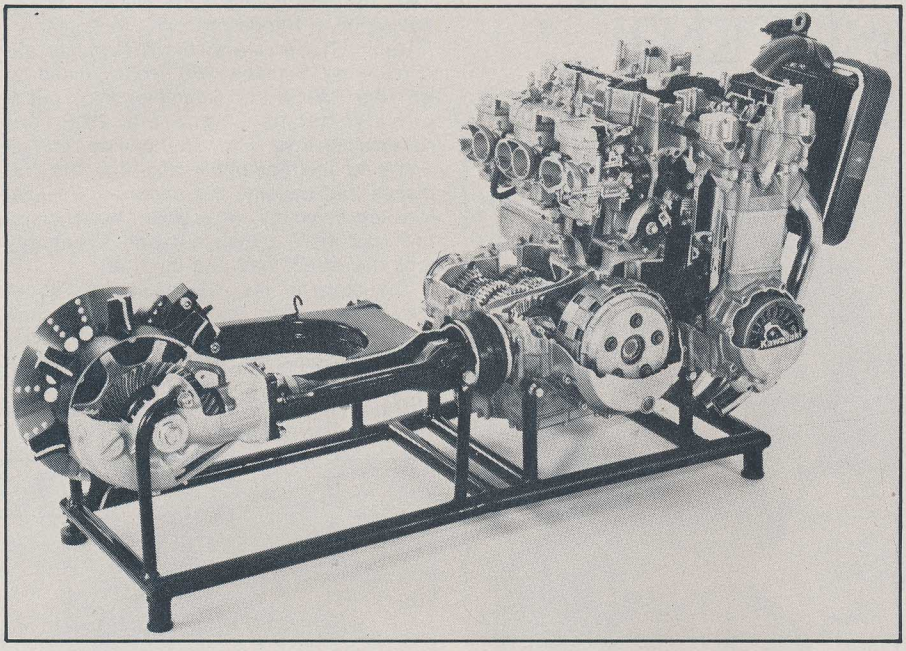
Japan with an 18-inch front tire instead of a nineteen. Like the six-ply-rated MT90-17 rear tire, the front is a tubeless Dunlop mounted on a cast alloy wheel. Kawasaki projects a 6000-mile life for the rear tire which means that a rider going coast-to-coast and back would need a new tire en route.

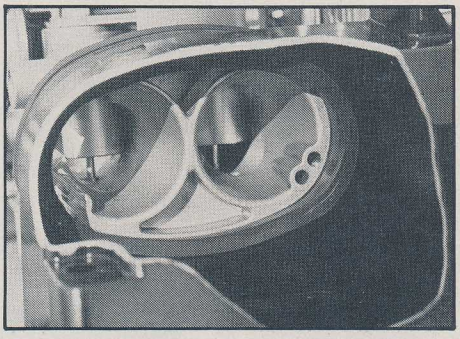
The discs for all three brakes are drilled with holes set in radial lines. These lines of holes are spaced at irregular intervals to prevent them from setting up any regular high-frequency rhythm which could cause brake squeal. The brakes are plenty powerful, which is exactly what's required to stop a machine which can easily crest the half-ton mark when fully laden. On the other hand, neither brake is over-sensitive.

Kawasaki resisted the urge to do anything pretentious with the 1300's styling. The fuel tank has a squarish profile which meshes with the rectangular lines of the QH headlight, instruments, radiator, mirrors, turn signals, brake-fluid reservoir and dual-bulb taillight. Even the fenders are squared off. The 5.6-gallon fuel tank is quite wide at the front, but the rear is narrowed to permit the rider to place his knees in a natural position. On our return ride from Death Valley, we checked gas mileage on two different machines. We averaged just over 38 mpg in a combination of highway cruising, a blast or two over 130 mph and a very little bit of stop-and-go. Touring riders who hold themselves to near-legal speeds can expect to average over 40 mpg, so the tank should provide at least 200 miles range.

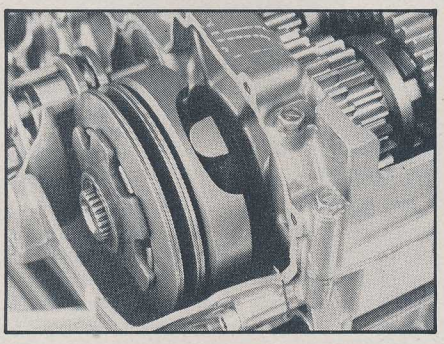
The Big Six is loaded with nice little features. Kawasaki finally has a combination ignition switch and fork lock; the fork lock is activated when the key is turned counter-clockwise one notch past the Off position. In addition, the cleverly concealed seat lock also contains an ignition shut-off

continued on page 69

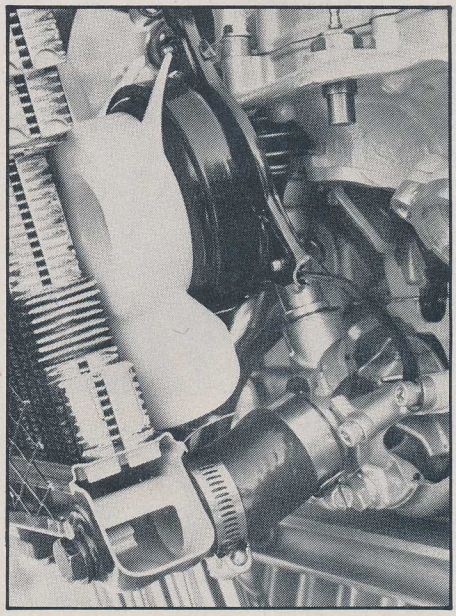




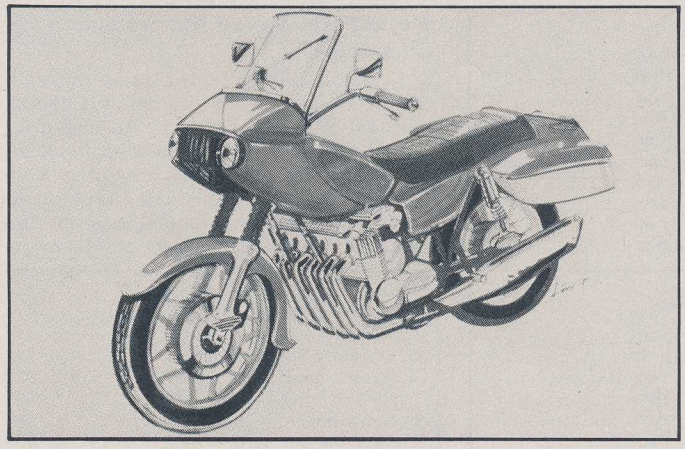
No Japanese bike has used two-barrel carburetors until now. Three constant vacuum Mikunis serve the Six and deliver just over 38 mpg.



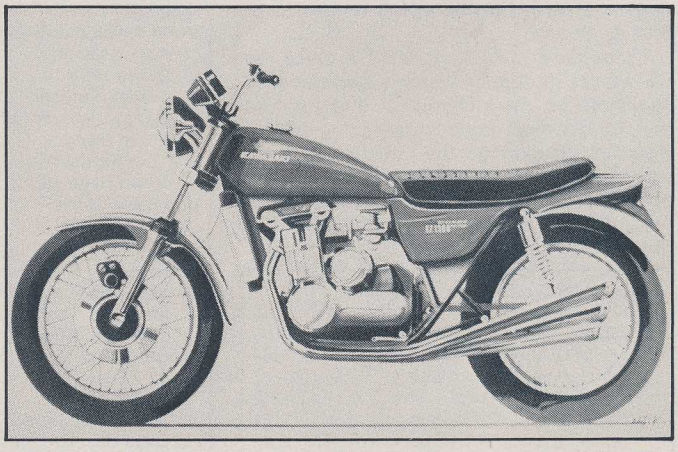
This is one of four shock absorbers between the crank and rear wheel to help control drivetrain snatch. Two are metal like this, two are rubber.



The black disc is a new-technology electric motor which drives the radiator fan. Its incredible thinness cuts the bike's wheelbase 2.8 inches.



The fairing and bags in this early styling exercise imply a strong commitment to touring. Here the radiator is concealed neatly in the fairing. Note windshield wiper.



This obvious sporting version strongly reflects its Z-1 heritage in looks. At this time (1974) a shaft drive and rear disc were not clearly a part of the design concept.

Kawasaki KZ1300 Six

continued from page 55

feature. When leaving the bike, the rider may turn the lock an extra click to activate the second ignition cut-out. This feature, aimed primarily at the amateur bike thief, is intended to double the time and effort a thief or joy-rider will require to sabotage the locks before riding away.

By flipping a switch, the rider may activate or deactivate the self-canceling turn-signal system. The switches for the turn signals, self-canceling system, four-way flashers, dual horns and high/low beams are all grouped on the left handlebar, where they should be. Unfortunately, they are arranged in such a way that we always seemed to hit the four-way flashers when we wanted the high beam.

A tray under the seat contains a large assortment of high-quality tools. All that is missing is tire-repair equipment. The tool tray lifts out to permit access to the battery. A compartment in the seat back has enough room to store many small items.

Kawasaki couldn't give us a clue as to the bike's price, but something in the $4000 range is a reasonable bet. The first units should reach dealers in late spring. You can also look for a pure touring version in 1980 which will include a full array of touring accessories and perhaps other changes.

We're not sure why there should be another version of the Big Six. After two hard, concentrated days with the Kawasaki KZ1300, we're convinced that it's the new ruler of the open road. It's faster, more comfortable and handles better than a Honda Gold Wing. The Yamaha 1100 can out-accelerate the 1300 under normal conditions and has a slightly more compliant suspension, but Kawasaki's colossus has a slight edge in overall comfort and braking and handling. The Honda CBX is considerably faster in all-out acceleration, more nimble and has greater cornering clearance, but it can't come close to the Monster Six for comfort—and we also feel the 1300 is steadier during high-speed cornering. The Suzuki GS1000 handles better than the 1300, might surpass it for usable acceleration and comes close for comfort, but tourers may miss the big bike's shaft drive, electronic ignition and six-cylinder smoothness.

Even though the KZ1300 didn't turn out to be the raging powerhouse that a 1300cc six should be, it came across with every bit of creature comfort that a two-wheeled limousine should have. Perhaps most importantly, it provides handling and controllability to a degree that we never could have predicted. Those good things are more valuable than a couple more pounds of thrust or a few nano-seconds shaved off a drag-strip e.t.

The KZ1300 is unquestionably the most important new motorcycle of 1979. From now on all machines discussed as tourers must be compared to it. Just as the Z-1 came out of nowhere in 1972 to become performance king, the Big Six arrives as the King of Touring. Magically, and without effort or foreboding, it delivers the tranquility of the perfect tour. *M*

KAWASAKI JAPAN TALKS ABOUT THE BIG, BAD SIX

A few weeks before we first straddled the KZ1300, *Motorcyclist's* Feature Editor C.D. (you can call him "Seedy") Bohon visited the Kawasaki factory. Primed with a briefcase full of questions, some of them a bit cynical, about the KZ1300 he met with a group of project engineers and managers, headed by Ichiro Tamura, Senior Manager of the Motorcycle Engineering Department. Here are the highlights of that conversation.

Who made the decision to build the KZ1300 and when was development begun? "The decision to build the bike was made mutually between KMC (Kawasaki Motor Corporation) America and KHI (Kawasaki Heavy Industries) in Japan," responded Mr. Tamura. "Development was begun about five years ago. Originally our plan was to build a machine to compete with Honda's GL1000."

Why did you go for a straight six and water-cooling? "We considered a square four and Vee configurations, but we decided on a six because that cylinder arrangement provides minimal vibration—and also because we thought at that time that six cylinders would be a new feature. As for water-cooling, of course the GL1000 had it, and since we were aiming at the touring market, where long life and reduced maintenance are important, as well as quiet mechanical operation, we felt it was necessary."

Why is the KZ1300 so heavy? Tamura passes this question to Takeshi Egawa, another Motorcycle Engineering Department manager, who looks uncomfortable fielding the question. "Of course we know light weight is desirable," he says hesitantly in English. "But we don't think it is too heavy as a six, with shaft drive and watercooling. We designed it as a tourer . . . ." He looks around at the others then back at Tamura.

"The Harley-Davidson weighs more than our bike," picks up Tamura. "Weight is not a problem."

Does that mean the Six is intended to compete head-to-head with the Harleys? "No, I don't think so. The 1300 can be used as a sporting machine. It has a larger banking angle. The handling is better than the Harley. It will sell to a completely different segment of the market.

"You magazine people are always comparison-testing motorcycles," continues Tamura, "but only for performance. You never report on the durability of a motorcycle. Sure the CBX is lighter than the KZ1300, but how long will it last? If the KZ1300 is heavy it's because each part is made strong. There are many ways to make a motorcycle light. Less robust gears in the transmission. Thinner crankcase walls. Lighter frame tubing. There are many ways. You comparison-test the 1300 with any other motorcycle for 12,000 miles and then see if it's too heavy." He sits back in his chair and crosses his arms with the air of a man who has gotten something off his chest.

How much horsepower does *your monster produce, by the way?* Tamura turns to Egawa. Hundred and twenty-five, isn't it, he queries in Japanese. Egawa ruffles some papers. No, I think it's 120. Not 125? Tamura sounds a little disappointed. I thought it was 125, he says. No says Egawa, it's 120. He points to a mimeographed sheet. "Well," Tamura finally answers in English, "He says," he points at Egawa, "it produces 120 horsepower."

Then he goes back to his complaint about magazines and weight. "You know, we have our own test criteria. We cannot explain in detail what they are, but the KZ1300 has passed them all. We have selected heavier gears and structural components compared with Honda and Suzuki. Our dealers know very well Kawasakis give less trouble than other makes." He shrugs and produces a wry smile, as if to say, what can you do when customers are so easily seduced by the meretricious?

Although nothing was ever said about possible methods of lightening the KZ1300 which don't affect reliability, we learned two things: Kawasaki is aware that at least some riders appreciate low weight, and that these gentlemen know the KZ1300 is heavy. For a reason.