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dandy  
XJ650



**Kawasaki  
dirt  
spectacular**



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carb tricks**

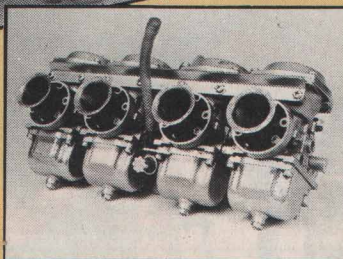
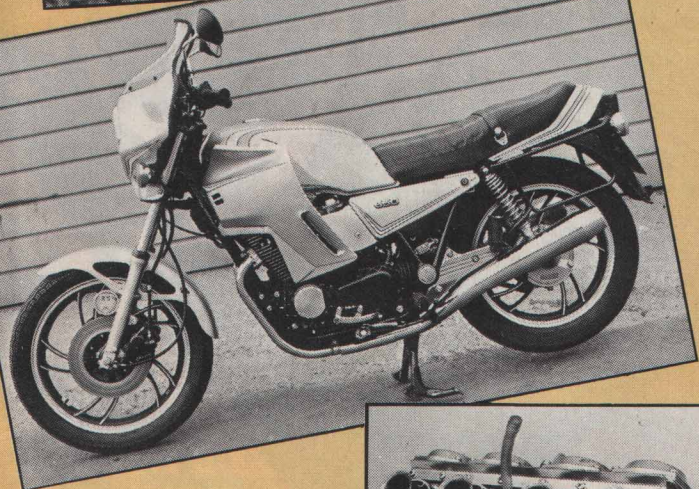
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December 9th-22nd, 1981



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glorious mud —  
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dressed-up XJ650  
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# Kawasaki's pot of gold?



**KH125 test by  
John Robinson  
Rainbow by Samantha**

IT WILL be interesting to see whether Kawasaki change their long-running 125 to suit the power limit in the new learner laws.

This sets a maximum of about 12 horse-power and, up until now, Kawasaki Japan have been claiming a full 14.5bhp for the KH.

The disc-valved, two stroke single does have a healthy spread of power, but when we ran one on the dyno (back in 1979, but the engine hasn't changed) it only gave 11bhp. On that basis the 125 would be well inside the new limit, with a good margin for error.

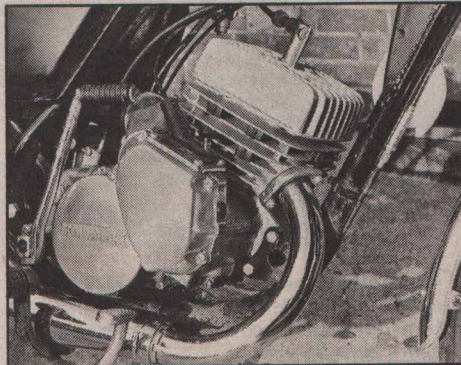
As it happens, the LEDAR dyno test is very close to the ISO standard which the government has used for the new law. So presumably Kawasaki won't have to change their engine, just their method of testing!

As the machine stands at the moment it has a useful turn of speed for a lightweight, but if Kawasaki decide to lop a couple of horsepower off the top it would cripple the open-road performance.

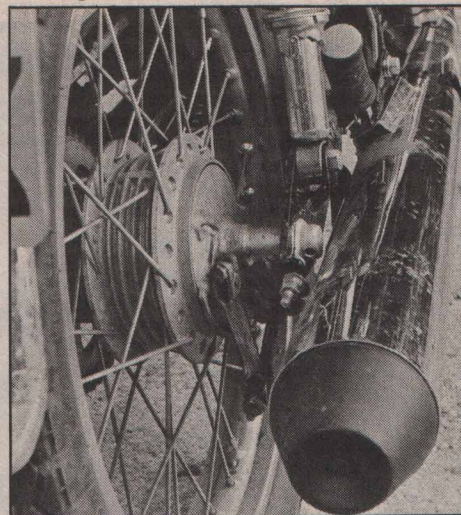
Compared to other 125s the Kawasaki is already at a disadvantage at the top end; maximum speed, at just over 70mph, isn't bad but it is achieved by under-gearing the little motor, causing it to rev into the red whenever the bike gets beyond 66mph.

It means that the engine is screaming uncomfortably to hold a decent speed on the open road and, with the help of a tailwind, it is all too easy to over-rev the little two-stroke. This leads to overheating, which shows up either as power fade or a lot of noise from the top end of the engine.

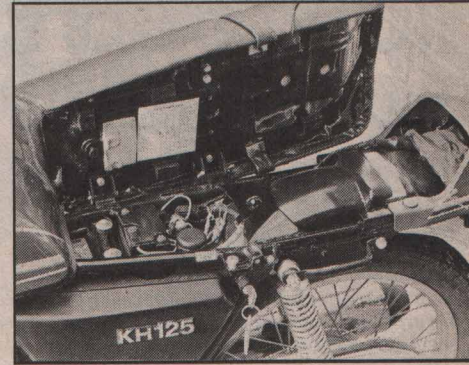
If the rider doesn't ease off fairly promptly, there is a good chance that the piston will seize. Our test bike had a mild piston seizure shortly after making some rattling noises while cruising flat out on a motorway. I should have backed off as soon as I heard it but as I had nearly overtaken a truck and there was another right behind, I decided to hold the power on until I was clear of the



*The neat, disc-valve engine has good low-speed torque and drives through a six-speed gearbox.*



*Rear brake is a drum which, at least, is easy to keep clean. Rear Springs have five pre-load settings.*



*Ease of maintenance is a strong point on small two-strokes and the KH is no exception. Tools are in seat tail box.*

leading truck.

The bike got past and then I felt the power disappearing rapidly — luckily I was able to get on the clutch before the engine seized up and locked the wheel. But, as it coasted quietly to a standstill on the hard shoulder, the piston was locked solidly in the bore and didn't free off until the engine had cooled right down. Then it started and ran perfectly well, although it looked as if a ring had been damaged or was sticking, because there was oil smoke in the exhaust.

All small two-strokes tend to run close to this over-heating limit, mainly because they tend to be driven flat-out to compensate for their lack of power. The KH is taken a few steps closer to the edge by its low gearing.

Ironically, it has better low-speed and mid-range torque than most other 125s, including the rapid Yamaha and Honda twins. This flexibility is emphasised by the use of six gears. It makes the bike particularly easy to use at town speeds, and adds to its agility in traffic.

It also means that Kawasaki could afford to raise the gearing without sacrificing any of the mid-range performance. This would protect the engine from over-revving so easily and would possibly have the bonus of improving fuel consumption.

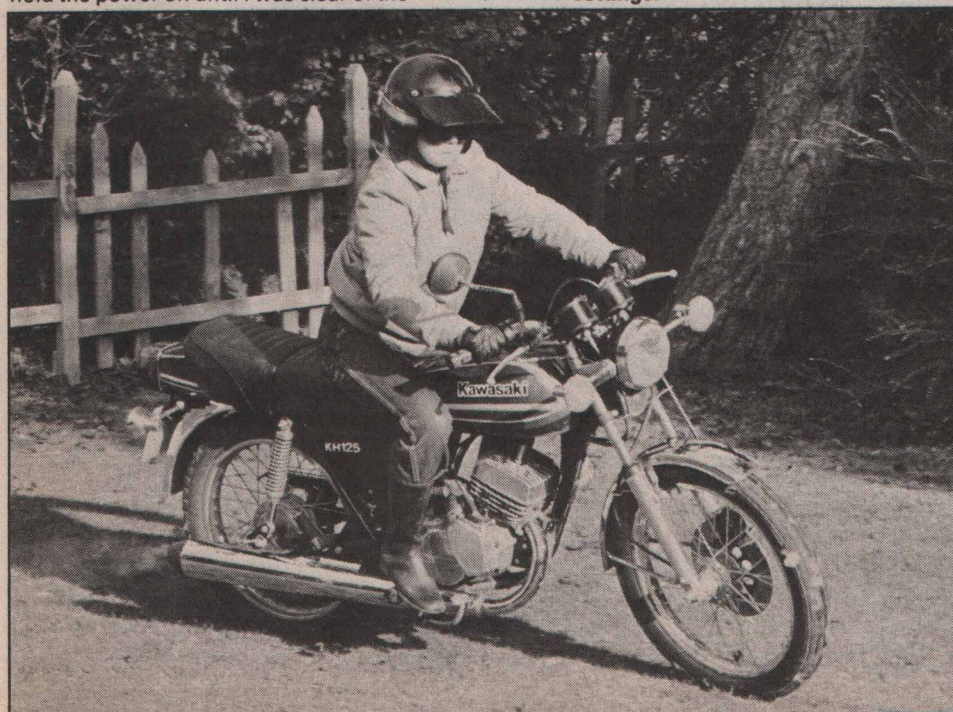
Economy is something that all lightweights should be good at, but the KH was very poor in this respect. It usually ran in the mid-50s, rarely going over 60mpg in conditions where you would expect 70mpg or more. The tank range, up to reserve, was usually little more than 100 miles.

The KH's best points were acceleration, flexibility and handling. Combined together they made it both easy to use and manoeuvre, scooting effortlessly through all kinds of traffic. This should make the bike particularly attractive to a learner and it isn't just an impression. When we ran a group test of 125s we put them all through a series of timed manoeuvres.

In the hands of experienced riders the KH came second to the RD Yamaha, because these riders could make use of the Yamaha's better top end. Even so the KH beat three other 125s, including the more powerful GP Suzuki.

But when we let some inexperienced riders have a go and took an average of all the times, the Kawasaki appeared as a clear winner.

Comfort, riding position and general ease of control all play a part in this and generally the KH seemed to be more comfortable and to steer more precisely than most other



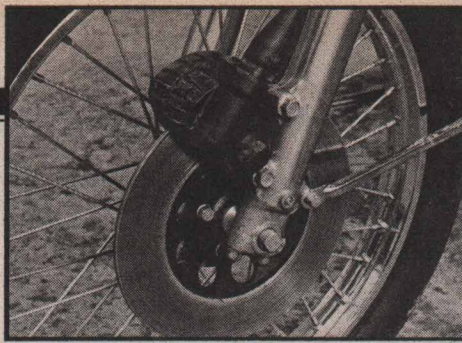
*Ease of control is the KH's strong point, as our 11-year-old tester demonstrates. Routine maintenance is also kept to the minimum on this simple, single cylinder machine.*

## Kawasaki's pot of gold?

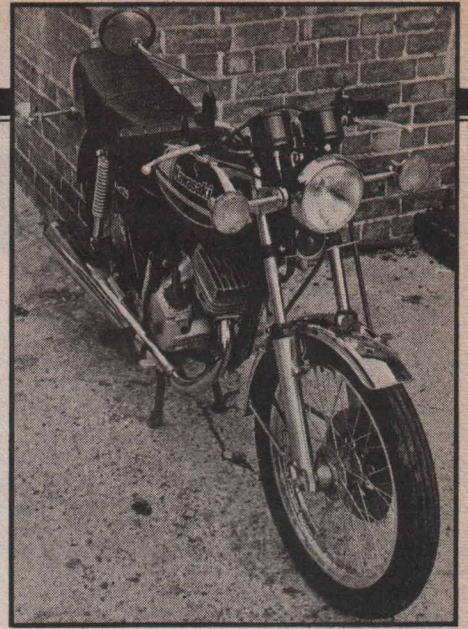
lightweights. The only complaints were that the cable-operated disc brake could be heavy to use and the six-volt lighting was not up to the demands of dark country lanes.

Brakes on lightweight bikes never seem to be so powerful or to have the feel that you get from bigger bikes. The Kawasaki's brakes weren't bad, but they could only be described as good in comparison to other 125s.

Overall it is a more pleasant bike to ride than its paper performance would suggest. The RD Yamaha has a better specification and top-end performance but also costs



Front disc is cable operated, with a fairly heavy action although it worked reasonably well.



more. I think the GP Suzuki probably has the edge over the KH in most respects, although from our experience Kawasaki offer a better spare parts service.

For a new rider, or someone who travels mainly in town, the KH ought to be high on the shopping list. □

### Kawasaki KH125

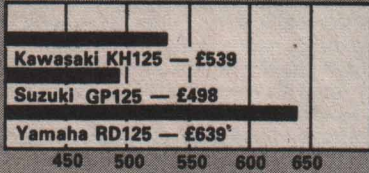
#### Test specifications

Recommended retail price, inc taxes..... £539  
 Warranty: ..... 12 months' unlimited mileage  
 Availability: ..... immediate  
 Service interval: 500 and 2500 miles.

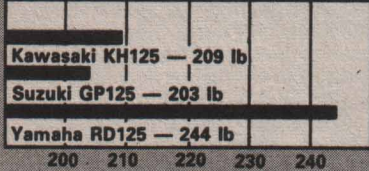
#### PERFORMANCE

TOP SPEED (prone)..... 71.5 mph (115.1 km/h)  
 Standing start ¼-mile (estimated) 18.5s at 65 mph (105 km/h)  
 30 mph top gear roll-on ¼ mile (estimated) 21.5s at 54 mph (87 km/h)  
 Speed in gears at 8000 rpm redline  
 first — 20mph (32 km/h), second — 31 mph (50

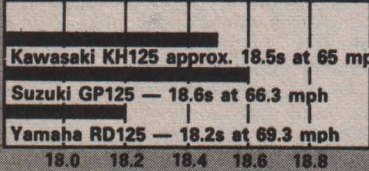
#### PRICE



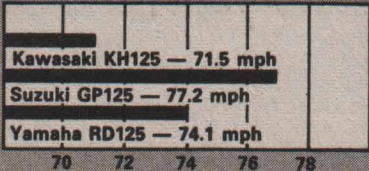
#### WEIGHT



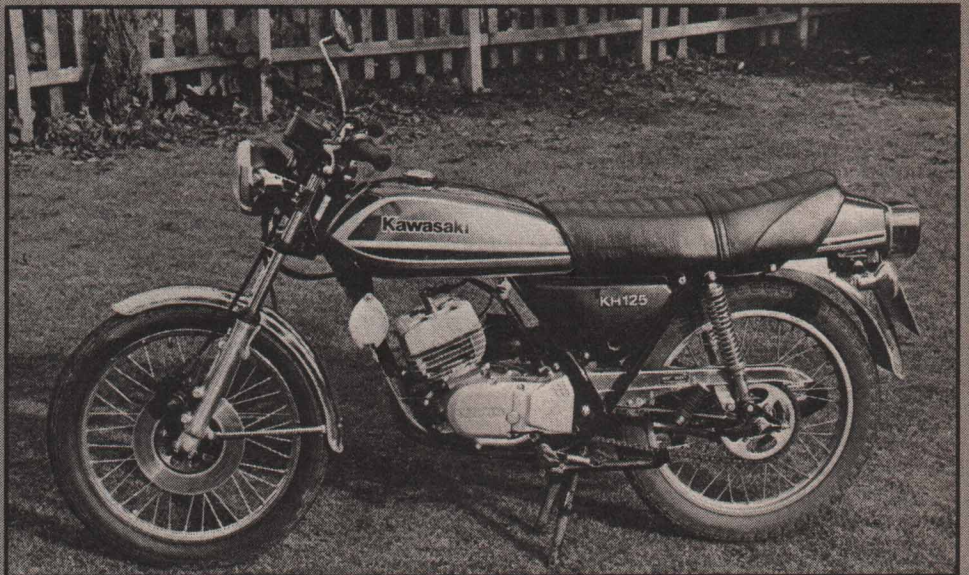
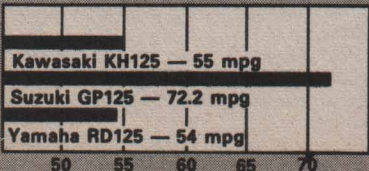
#### ¼ MILE



#### TOP SPEED



#### AV FUEL CONSUMP



Short bars give a good riding position. The KH could use better electrics and a resettable trip-meter.

km/h), third — 42 mph (68 km/h), fourth — 50 mph (81 km/h), fifth — 58 mph (94 km/h), sixth — 66 mph (107 km/h)  
 Engine rpm at 60 mph (97 km/h) in top ..... 7272 rpm  
 Fuel consumption:  
 best — 59 mpg (20.9 km/litre), worst — 49 mpg (17.3 km/litre), average — 55 mpg (19.5 km/litre)  
 Average tank range..... 139 mi (224 km)  
**ENGINE**  
 TYPE: disc valve, two-stroke single.  
 Bore and stroke ..... 56 x 50.6 mm  
 Piston displacement ..... 124 cc  
 Compression ratio ..... 7.0:1  
 Fuel system ..... Mikuni VM 24SS carburettor  
 Exhaust system ..... 1 — 1  
 Lubrication ..... automatic, separate tank  
 Starter ..... primary kick

#### TRANSMISSION

Gears..... six  
 Clutch..... wet, multiplate  
 Primary drive..... gear  
 Final drive..... chain  
 Primary reduction ..... 3.14  
 Final reduction ..... 3.36 (47/14)  
 Gear ratios: 2.60; 1.69; 1.25; 1.05; 0.89 and 0.80

#### CHASSIS

Type: single down-tube.  
 Suspension, front — telescopic fork, 4.3 inch (110 mm) stroke rear — swing arm with 2.8 inch (70 mm) stroke.  
 Front tyre ..... 2.75 — 18  
 Rear tyre ..... 3.00 — 18  
 Front brake ..... 190 mm cable-operated disc  
 Rear brake..... 110 mm sis drum

#### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase..... 48.6 inch (1235 mm)

Length..... 74.8 inch (1900 mm)  
 Seat height ..... 30 inch (762 mm)  
 Ground clearance..... 6.7 inch (170 mm)  
 Dry weight ..... 209 lb (95 kg)  
 Fuel capacity..... 2.5 gal (11.5 litre)  
 Oil capacity..... 0.29 gal (1.3 litre)

#### ELECTRICS

Generator ..... 6V alternator  
 Battery ..... 6V, 6 Ah  
 Ignition..... contact breaker  
 Headlamp ..... 6V, 35/35W

#### INSTRUMENTS

Includes: speedometer, odometer, tachometer, warning lights for neutral, high beam, turn.  
 Other equipment:  
 steering lock, rear view mirror  
 Colours: Blue or red.

#### Importer

Kawasaki UK, Deal Avenue, Trading Estate, Slough.

#### TESTER'S VERDICT

Good points..... handling manoeuvrability  
 Bad points..... fuel consumption, weak lighting  
 Performance..... reliable  
 Economy..... poor  
 Handling..... good  
 Comfort..... one of best lightweights  
 Equipment..... basic  
 Braking..... good for 125  
 Value for money..... unchanged for long time, should keep secondhand value.

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