

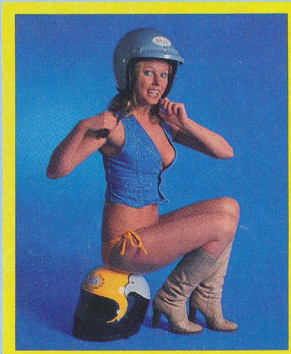
# motorcycle MECHANICS

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LOOK!**



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no sleeping beauty**

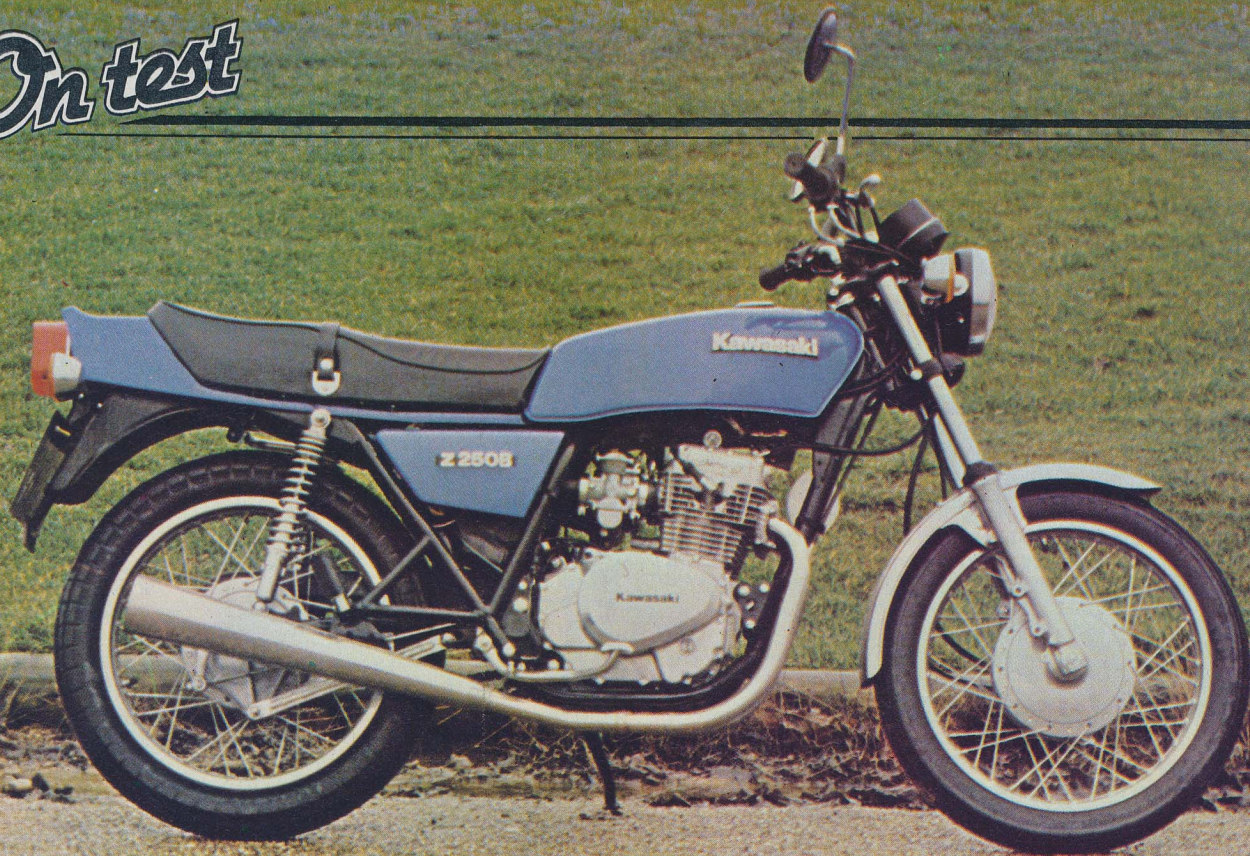
**Honda's little and large-  
which one for you?**



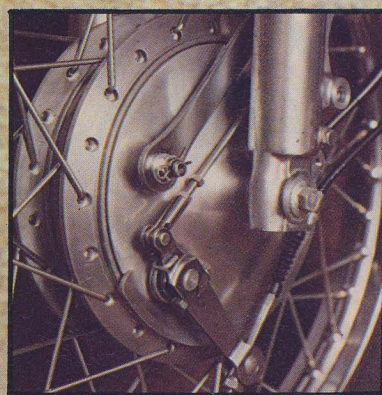
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Sheene's best  
road bikes

*On test*



# Kawasaki Z 250B



MY FIRST — and lasting — impression of Kawasaki's 250B was that it is a basic yet very sensible sort of machine.

The kind that everyone has always said was needed. All the usual amenities are there but there are no frills or unnecessary gimmicks.

If the lack of flashy trim leaves the marketing people with nothing to get their pointed little teeth into, the B still has one very strong selling point. Along with price reductions for the other 250s and the Z200, the B will retail at £829. That should make it competitive with other makes even from discount shops.

The thinking behind the new model is more difficult to understand. Kawasaki already have four other 250s. It seems that the B is something of an economy model, more of a commuter device than the sportier Scorpion. It is based on the Scorpion, with an identical engine, and the economy image is borne out by the cheaper fittings and the simple paint job.

They have gone to some lengths to make the B as light as possible — bearing in mind that the Scorpion could hardly be described as heavy. The most obvious differences are the 2-1 exhaust and the spoked wheels, complete with drum

brakes. We don't know how much difference these items make in terms of weight but we are assured that they are significantly cheaper than the parts used on the Scorpion.

The engine, which took a few moments of throttle and choke juggling to warm up, felt flat and overloaded at low revs. There was also some chunky vibration. This smoothed out as the motor picked up and at the same time it started to pull more strongly. Above 6000rpm the performance was quite healthy, and the engine would spin on very freely. At the test strip it pulled 92 to 93mph which isn't bad for any 250.

Although the bike — and the steering — is light, it has a firm feel; the steering isn't twitchy and the suspension isn't sloppy. The result is that the handling is precise and positive but the ride could get a bit harsh on bumpy roads. The seat is also firm — and "firm" started to become "hard" after a couple of hours' riding. This was the only limiting factor on the bike's capability as a tourer.

For a small engine it was surprisingly good on long journeys although the optimistic speedo made a happy 60mph cruise look more like 70mph. The only change from the Scorpion engine is the 2-1

exhaust and the B gives virtually identical power. With a prone rider wearing leathers, it will pull peak revs in top gear, but on the road this is just a bit too much for the 250.

The bike finds it a struggle to hold much more than 60mph in the face of hills and headwinds, unless the rider is prepared to buzz the motor through fourth and fifth gears. It will hold quite high speeds and the intermediate gears have the right spacing to keep the motor on peak power. But if the rider wants to leave it in top gear, the speed soon fades away.

Six gears are often too many and get a bit tiresome but the B is flexible enough not to need a lot of gearshifting. If you want to ride it gently it will pull top gear happily. Or if you want to buzz it up and down through the gears, they are there, waiting at the end of a light, slick selector.

Going back to the handling, we have a long-standing argument about whether cast wheels make any difference. I believe that they are more rigid and that this is noticeable on heavy and powerful bikes — although I wouldn't have gone so far as to say they'd make a difference on a lightweight.

But, compared to the inflexible feel of the Scorpion, the 250B is certainly different; accelerating away from corners there was a slight squirming, as if the tyres were a bit soft. We checked the tyre pressures (and the spoke tension) but there was nothing wrong. The only difference between the B and the Scorpion is its wheels . . .

I wasn't so keen on the drum brakes and

# Simple- yet so sensible

By John Robinson



# On test

## Simple- yet so sensible

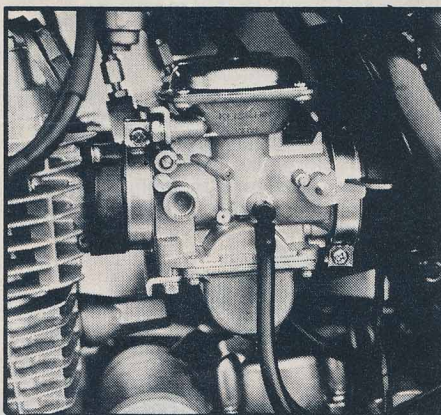
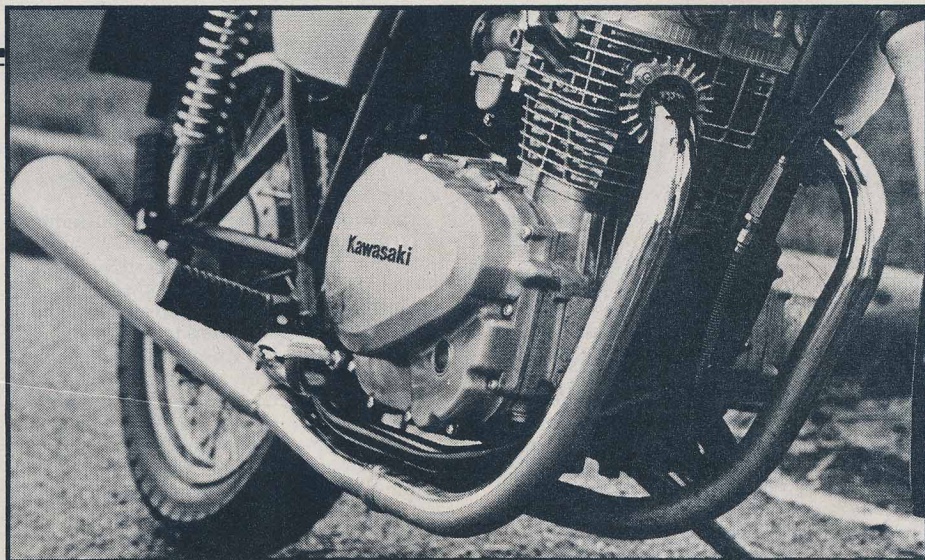
another rider agreed that they lacked the progressive feel of discs. At high speeds they seemed to lack power and then they would bite hard as the bike slowed below 30mph. This tendency to come on hard didn't give the rider much confidence, especially on wet roads. It's been quite a while since we've had a bike with twin leading shoe brakes and it could be that we needed more time to get used to the different characteristics.

Fuel consumption seemed to be slightly better than the Scorpion. Using the bike "normally" — which included a fair amount of high revs and what we could describe as free use of the gearbox — it gave 54mpg.

During running-in the B gave us 86mpg — a just reward for gentle use, perhaps, but we have to admit that, below, 5000rpm, the Kawasaki was no fun at all. At worst the fuel consumption dropped to something approaching 40mpg.

The three gallon tank, leaving roughly half a gallon in reserve, was usually good for about 130 miles.

The rest of the machine is completely conventional and devoid of all gimmickry. It has Japanese standard controls, an average riding position and a seat which is big enough for a passenger. As part of the weight/cost saving programme the first



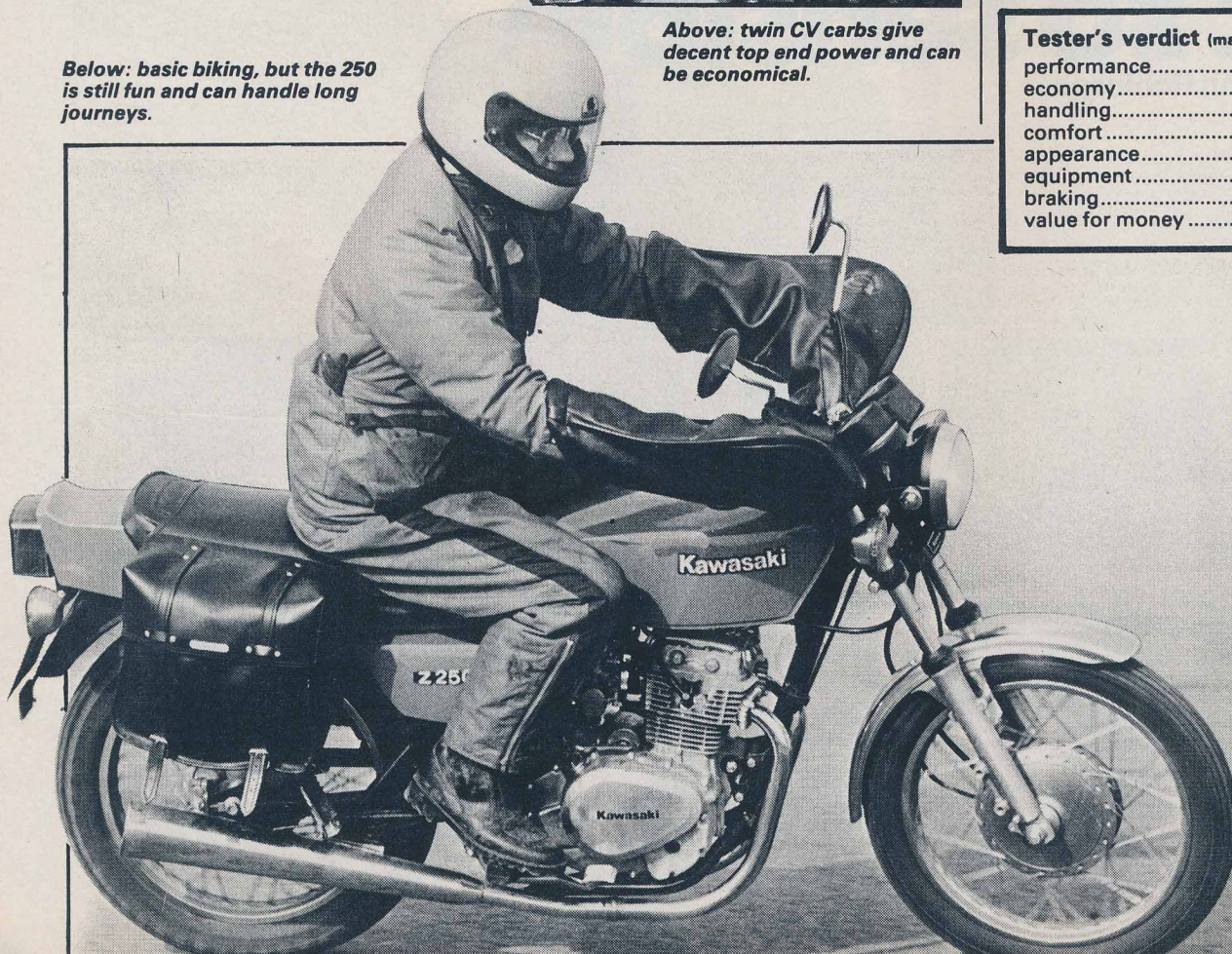
**2-1 exhaust is part of weight/cost saving — power is same as Scorpion.**

bikes came out without centre stands. This was taking things a bit too far and, not to put too fine a point on it, was a damned nuisance especially when any servicing work had to be done. Fortunately Kawasaki have seen the error of their ways and will re-fit the centre stand, making an up-date kit available for the early bikes which slipped through the net.

So there it is. A simple and thoroughly sensible machine. The pundits said all along that this was what people wanted and all that remains to be seen is whether people actually want it enough to pay money for.

**Above: twin CV carbs give decent top end power and can be economical.**

**Below: basic biking, but the 250 is still fun and can handle long journeys.**



### Tester's verdict (marks out of 10)

performance.....	8
economy.....	9
handling.....	8
comfort.....	5
appearance.....	4
equipment.....	5
braking.....	5
value for money.....	8

### ENGINE AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

Type..... SOHC twin  
 Displacement..... 248 cc  
 Bore x stroke..... 55.0 x 52.4 mm  
 Compression ratio..... 9.5:1  
 Carburettor..... two Keihin CV 32mm  
 Ignition system..... battery and coil  
 Lubrication..... wet sump  
 Generator..... 12V, 190W alternator  
 Battery..... 12V 10 Ah  
 Headlamp..... 12V, 50/40W  
 Claimed output..... 27 hp at 10,000 rpm  
 15.2lb.ft at 8500rpm

### TRANSMISSION

Gear primary drive to clutch and six-speed gearbox. Final drive by 530 chain.  
 Primary reduction..... 3.74  
 Final reduction..... 2.33 (35/15)  
 Gearbox ratios:..... 2.60; 1.79; 1.41; 1.16; 1.00 and 0.89

### CHASSIS

Front tyre..... 3.00S 18  
 Rear tyre..... 3.50S 18  
 Wheelbase..... 52.8 in  
 Castor/trail..... 63 deg/3.9 in  
 Overall length..... 79.5 in  
 Overall width..... 27.8 in  
 Dry weight..... 320 lb  
 Fuel tank capacity..... 3 gal

### PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed..... 92.9 mph  
 Standing start 1/4-mile..... 15.9 sec at 80.9 mph  
 Speed in gears at 10,000 rpm redline:  
 First..... 32 mph  
 Second..... 46 mph

Third..... 59 mph  
 Fourth..... 71 mph  
 Fifth..... 83 mph  
 Sixth..... 93 mph

### FUEL CONSUMPTION

Best..... 86mpg  
 Worst..... 40mpg  
 Average..... 54mpg

### Parts prices, inc VAT

Handlebar..... £8.45  
 Front mudguard..... £15.26  
 One piston and ring set..... £12.03  
 Contact breaker (each)..... £3.12  
 Complete exhaust system..... £86.78  
 Engine gasket set: available only as separate items.

List price..... £829 WARRANTY..... 12 months' unlimited mileage. Importer: Kawasaki UK, Deal Avenue, Slough, Bucks.

rpm	bhp	torque lb-ft
4000	8.5	11.3
4500	9.8	11.4
5000	11.2	11.7
5500	12.1	11.6
6000	13.0	11.4
6500	15.0	12.0
7000	17.0	12.8
7500	18.5	13.0
8000	20.2	13.2
8500	21.8	13.5
9000	22.5	13.1
9500	22.6	12.6
10000	22.7	11.7
10500	22.4	11.2

Power at rear wheel and effective torque at crankshaft, as measured on the Heenan Froude DPX3 dynamometer at LEDAR, 10, School Lane, Baston, Lincs.

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