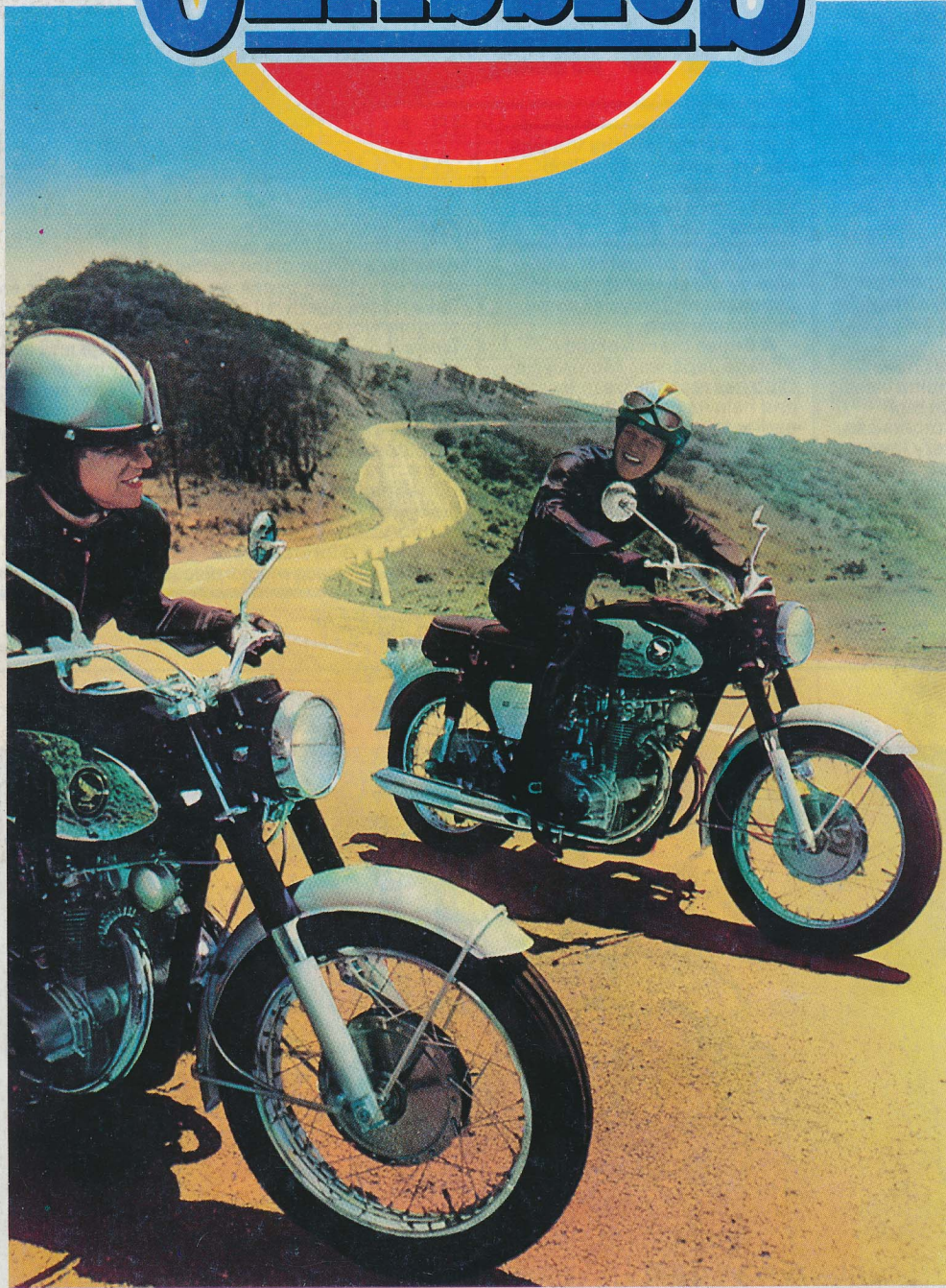


JAPANESE CLASSICS



20 Golden Greats
from the Land of
the Rising Sun
1960-'72

JAPANESE CLASSICS

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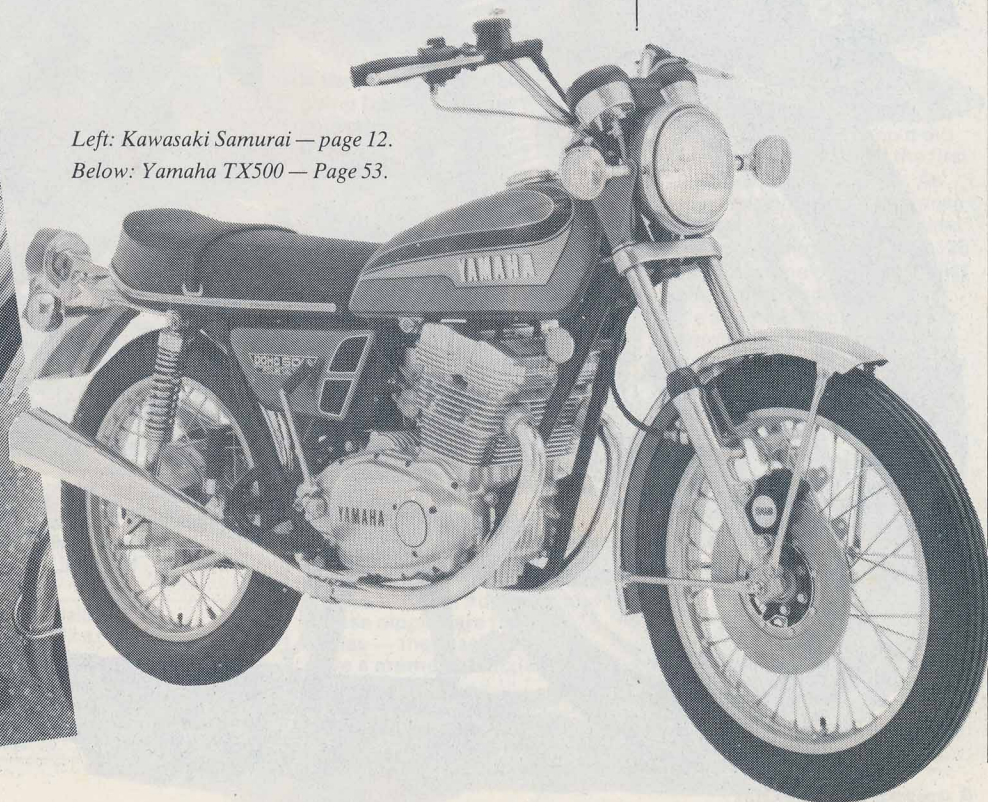
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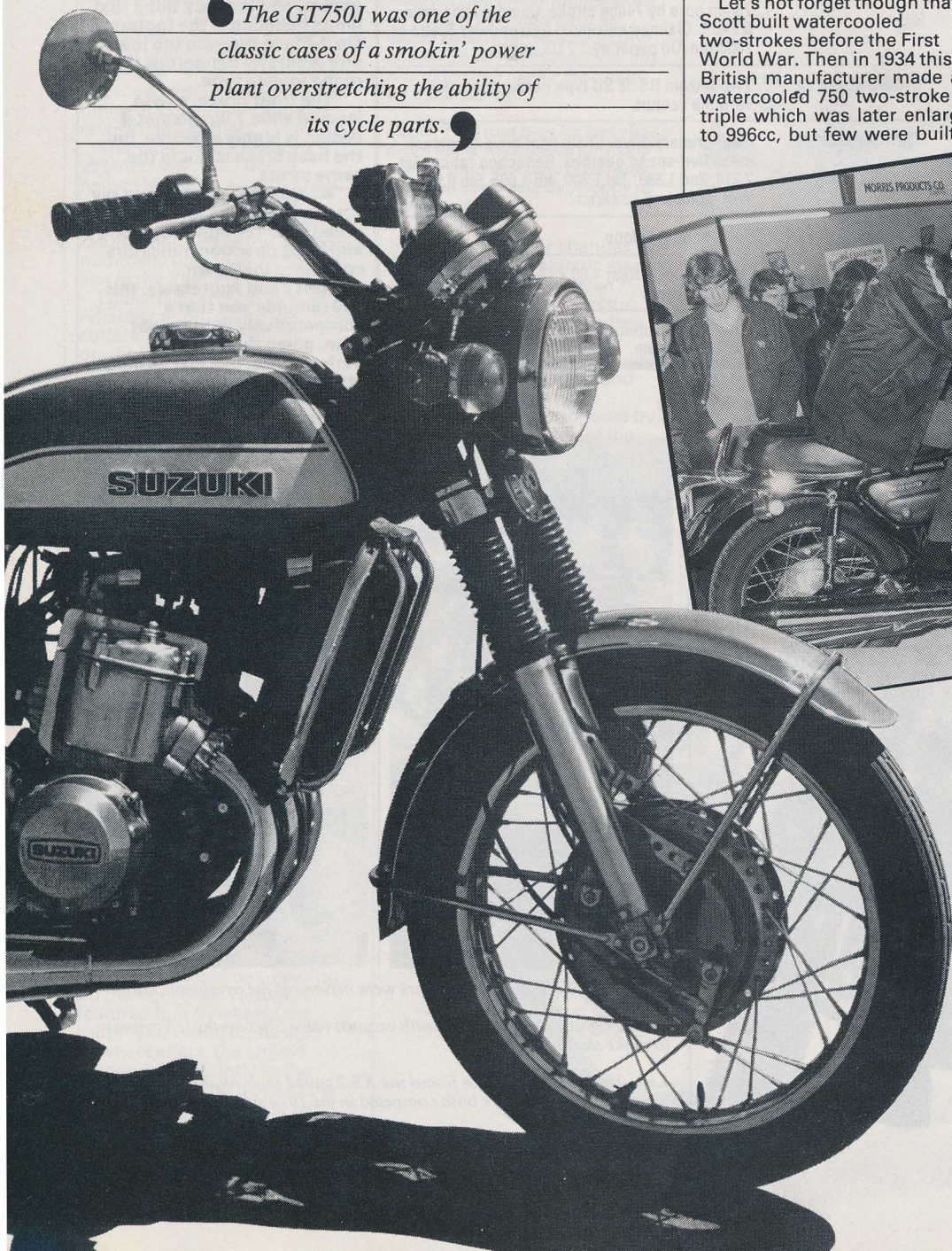
*Left: Kawasaki Samurai — page 12.
Below: Yamaha TX500 — Page 53.*



SUZUKI GT750

MAY I SEE YOUR PILOT'S LICENCE?

‘The GT750J was one of the classic cases of a smokin’ power plant overstretching the ability of its cycle parts.’



THE PICTURES alone of this machine tell the story. Immense. Raygun exhausts. Enormous dials, Radiator. Smooth finless barrels.

No-one had ever seen anything like it. The motor cycling equivalent of a jet liner, it was typical of the explosion of power and size that closed the '60s and opened the Superbiking '70s.

Wide-eyed looks of amazement greeted its unveiling at the 1971 Tokyo Show.

It completely blew the lid off any remaining preconceptions that there was an upper limit for two-stroke motor cycles.

Gargantuan in size, this affordable, incredible machine was even available in a colour which you could describe as halfway between pink and purple!

Many riders were intimidated by its sheer size. Put it up against a Kawasaki Z1300 today and it doesn't look so big. But then it was regarded as colossal. And it was a two-stroke. And it was watercooled!

Let's not forget though that Scott built watercooled two-strokes before the First World War. Then in 1934 this British manufacturer made a watercooled 750 two-stroke triple which was later enlarged to 996cc, but few were built.

No-one else has troubled since then until Suzuki blasted the bike scene with this three-cylinder projectile dubbed the Le Mans for the American market.

Climb aboard the high seat. Check out the instrument panel. Press the start button. Watch the rev needle and the water temperature gauge rise. You almost felt as though you really did need a pilot's licence to set a GT750 in motion.

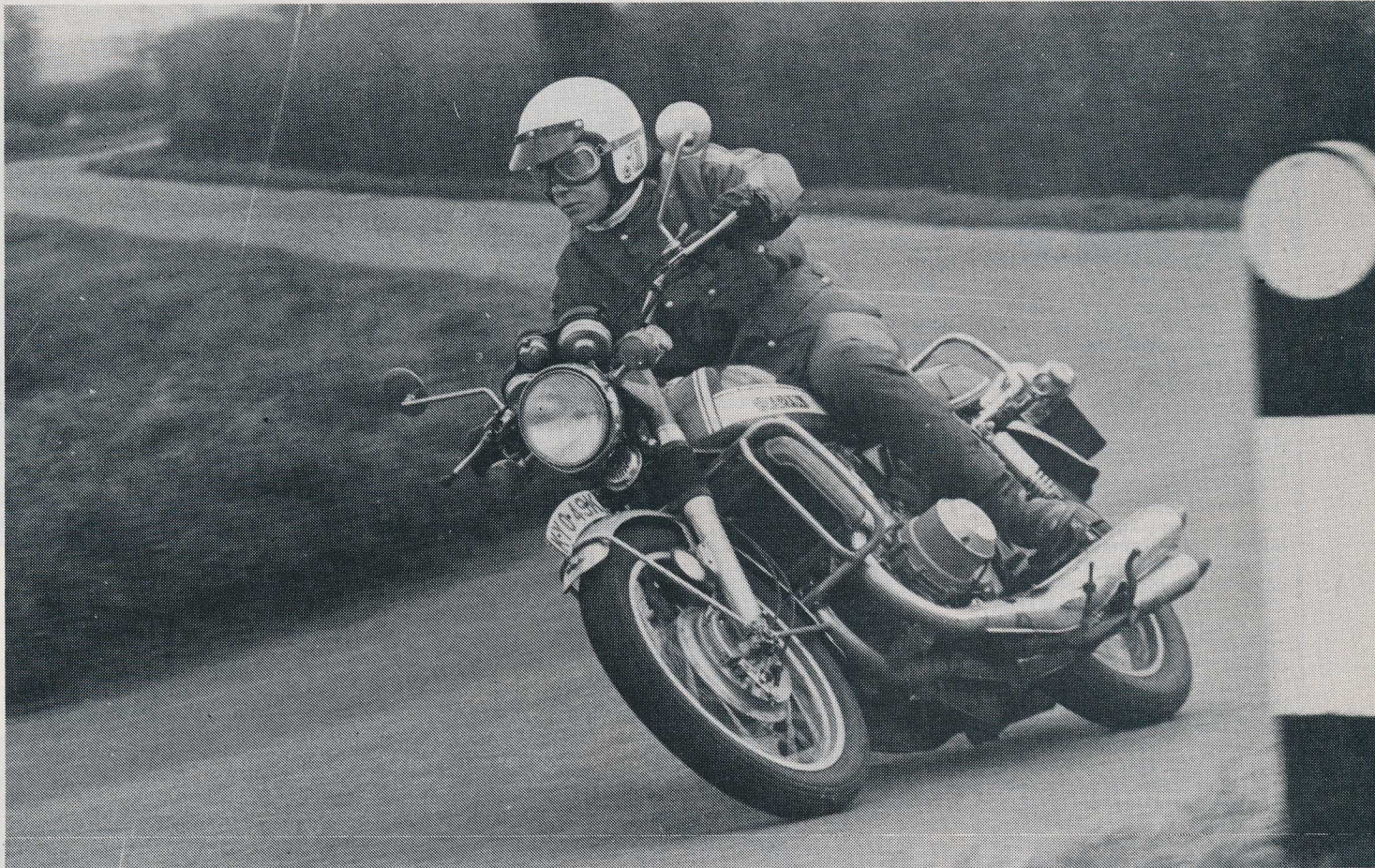
Inherently smooth — the two-stroke triple being similar to a four-stroke six in this respect — riding the GT750 was a somewhat eerie sensation at first.

It did vibrate and tingle, but the motor sounded different because it was so quiet thanks to the watercooled cylinders.

Some of the American testers praised its handling. Indeed, the



Above: Recognise the lad on the GT750 at the 1972 Racing and Sporting Show? It's none other than Barry Sheene whose rapid rise to popularity was mainly from race successes aboard the TR racing version of this machine. He won the FIM F750 and MCN Superbike titles in 1973 on one, and again took the MCN Superbike title in 1974. Stan Woods was second that year also on a TR750. Shown extreme right is works Suzuki road racer of the time and Barry's brother-in-law Paul Smart.



Mike Nicks sweeping round country road bends on the awesome GT750J.

big Suzuki must have been very comfortable for easy cruising on the U.S. interstates. But British riders, used to the nimble precise handling of Triumphs and other European machines, soon proffered much in the way of criticism.

The GT750 felt top heavy. It wallowed and lacked ground clearance. There were reports of violent speed wobbles.

Because of the engine's amazing wheel-spinning torque, owners were going places much faster than before, occasionally getting themselves into tight spots.

It was a time when engine development ruled. Chassis development followed later in an attempt to harness the massive energy from the big roadsters emerging from Japan.

The GT750J was one of the classic cases of a smokin' powerplant overstretching the ability of its cycle parts.

Even so, it was a magnificent machine. Such an eye-popper with its bright paint work and shiny aluminium engine, no-one could walk by and ignore it when it was parked in the street.

The watercooling system involved an impeller driven via the crankshaft, radiator (with thermostat) mounted across the front downtubes, and thermostatically controlled fan which switched itself on if the water temperature reached 221 deg F (105 deg C).

The crank was carried by four

SPECIFICATION IN 1972

■ ENGINE:	738cc three cylinder two stroke, with sleeved alloy cylinder block and alloy head. Bore 70mm by stroke 64mm. Water cooled with impeller thermostat and electric fan. Crankshaft in four ball bearings. Caged needle rollers for big and small ends. Throttle controlled pump for lubrication of three main bearings, cylinders and big ends. Fourth oiled from transmission. Compression ratio 6.7 to 1. Claimed maximum power 67bhp at 6,500rpm. Revs at 30mph in top gear 1,850.
■ CARBURATION:	Three 32mm Mikuni VM carburettors. Cold start jets. Paper element air filter.
■ TRANSMISSION:	Helical gears primary drive. Wet multi-plate clutch. Five speed gearbox. Ratios 14.9, 9.1, 7.14, 5.9 and 4.84 to 1. Final drive by 5/6th to 3/4th chain.
■ ELECTRICAL:	Twelve volt ignition with 14 amp hour battery and three coils. Charging by 280 watt alternator through rectifier and voltage control unit.
■ CAPACITIES:	Petrol 3.7 gallons, including six pints reserve. Oil, 3.2 pints.
■ TYRES:	Bridgestone, 3.25 x 19ins, ribbed front, 4.00 x 18ins rear.
■ BRAKES:	Twin 8 1/2ins diameter ventilated double leading shoe front. Single leading shoe 8ins rear.
■ DIMENSIONS:	Ground clearance, 6ins, seat height, 32ins, wheelbase, 58ins. All unladen.
■ WEIGHT:	545lbs with 1.9 gallons petrol and oil tank full.
■ PRICE:	£766.50

PERFORMANCE

■ MAXIMUM SPEED:	112.5mph (at 7,000rpm in top gear).
■ QUARTER STANDING MILE:	13.69 secs.

main bearings, and fired via three sets of contact breakers at 120 deg intervals.

Gear primary drive was taken between the centre and right cylinders, and the alternator was situated at the right end of the crankshaft.

Cylinder casting was one-piece with cast-in iron liners. They were non-removable but pistons in two oversizes were available.

As you might have expected bore x stroke was the same as that on the air cooled Suzuki 500 Cobra. The water cooling on the GT750 was claimed to reduce temperatures by 30 per cent compared to two-stroke aircooled engines.

Testing included rides along the lines of the Equator in 115 deg F heat to see how the watercooling would cope, and an overall test programme of 180,000 miles.

Because of the watercooling tighter piston to cylinder clearances were possible. This increased efficiency and cut down on piston slap noise. Suzuki were able to claim the motor would put out 67bhp and hold it rather than fade.

The exhaust system with split centre pipes incorporated a primary balance pipe which Suzuki claimed further cut noise and increased torque by 20 per cent at 2000rpm.

Also to suppress noise, attention was given to the air intake system to reduce induction roar.

Though I can only claim to

SUZUKI GT750

MAY I SEE YOUR PILOT'S LICENCE?

have ridden pillion on the first drum-braked J model 750, I did ride the later twin front disc braked version.

I speed trapped it at 120mph and found it consistently ran 13-sec standing quarters. Handling was spooky and not at all forgiving.

The torque would spin the rear wheel readily on damp roads with very light throttle openings. Fuel consumption at an average of about 40mpg was better than expected.

A friend who has owned and run a "kettle" for several years rates the machine highly overall.

Once you come to terms with the handling it is quite acceptable, he says. Obviously not designed for scratching round back streets the GT750 is an open road tourer which has proved it can give reliable high mileage service.

Now let's see what *Motor Cycle News* tester Mike Nicks had to say about the GT750J when he sampled it in the spring of 1972.

IF YOU have £766.50 to spend, you can say goodbye to the old ping-pang exhaust note of two-stroke motor cycling.

For with Suzuki's new GT750, a two-stroke manufacturer has used water cooling on a road bike for the first time since the classic Scott design was launched in 1909.

And the benefits achieved by the water jackets around the Suzuki's three cylinders are immense.

They cool the engine more effectively and thus allow closer tolerances between barrels and pistons. The engine

works more efficiently, and so uses less fuel.

And the racket of the familiar two-stroke ring-ding is smothered, along with the jerky four-stroking action on the overrun common to most "stokers".

But the 738cc Suzuki is more than just smooth and quiet. Riding it brings a sensation unique among the entire range of motor cycles on the British market.

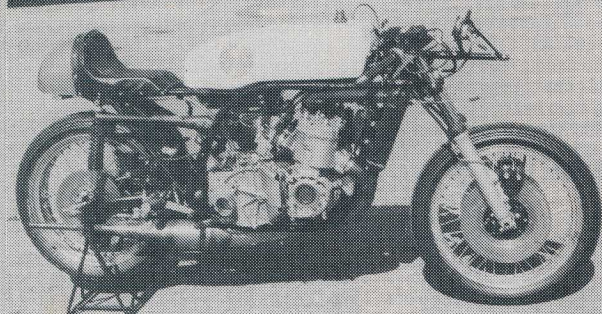
Suzuki claim a peak output of 67bhp at 6,500rpm for the 750. But the bike seems to have power everywhere in any gear.

It pulls cleanly from 25mph — about 1,500rpm — in top gear, and the third of the five ratios can be used for rounding slow right angle turns in city back streets.

But the depth of the 750's power was rammed home one rainy afternoon on a twisty

Above right: Suzuki won the Maudes Trophy in 1975 after riders took GT750, 380 and 550 models non-stop round the coast of Britain three times.

Right: Unmistakable raygun styled exhaust pipes of the GT750. Shocks were De Carbon type sealed gas units with five-point spring preload.



PORTING on the GT750 was adapted from Suzuki's moto cross 250 to give a broad power spread. Effectively the motor was in a soft state of tune.

The TR750 racing version (above) first pictured in MCN in 1972 was said to give 100-105bhp at 8000rpm!

This amazing amount of power was enough to cause dubious handling because of frame flexing, and the machine earned itself the nick-name of the "Flexi Flier".

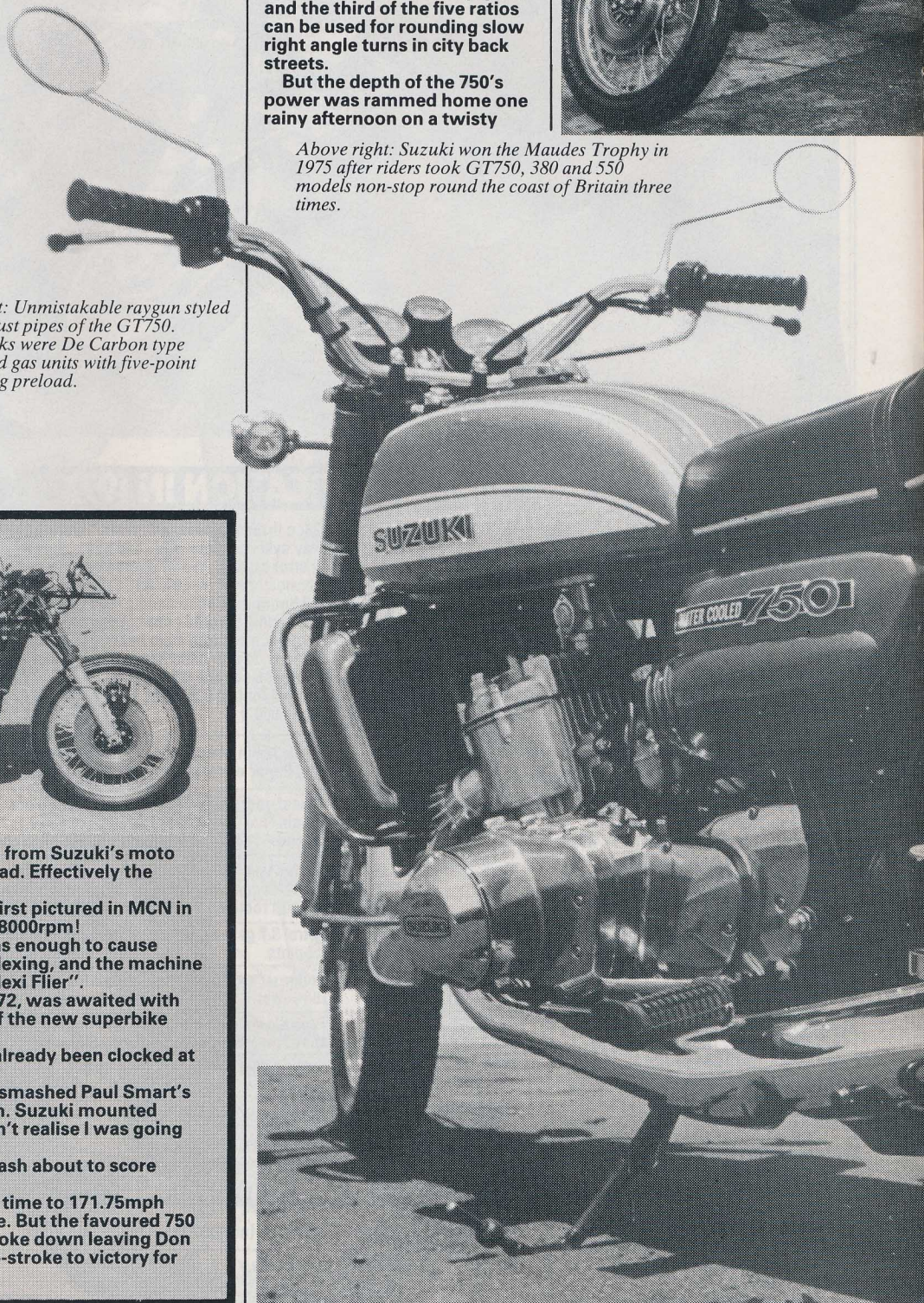
Its race debut at Daytona, USA, 1972, was awaited with mounting excitement as the battle of the new superbike breed gathered gale force impetus.

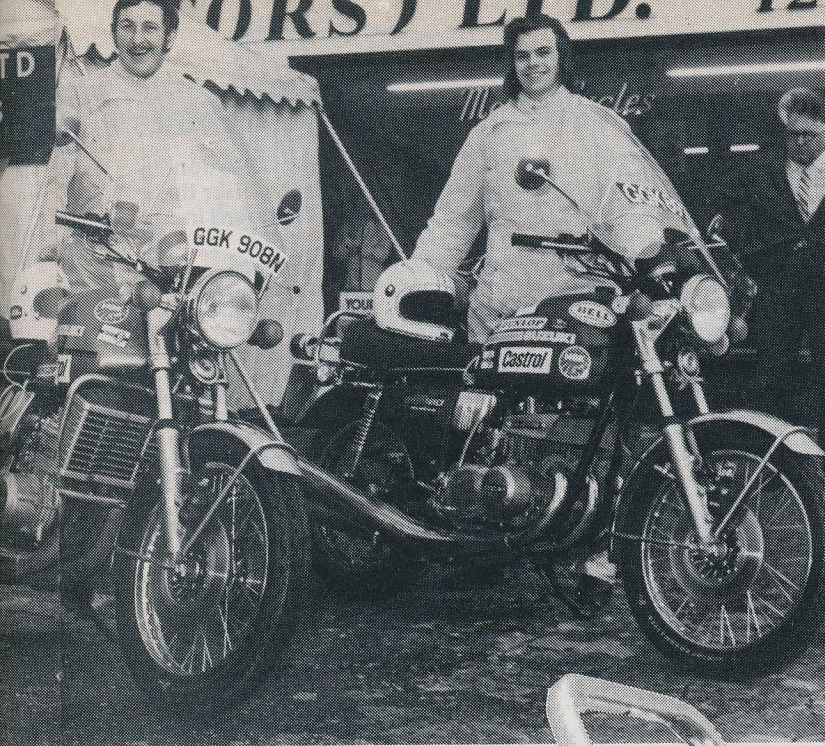
Weighing 352lb early models had already been clocked at 175mph in Japan.

At the March classic Art Baumann smashed Paul Smart's qualifying speed record on a Triumph. Suzuki mounted Baumann upped it to 166mph. "I didn't realise I was going so fast," said Baumann afterwards.

Was the Suzuki in its first titanic clash about to score Japan's first Daytona victory?

Baumann increased his speed trap time to 171.75mph round the speed bowl during the race. But the favoured 750 Suzuki and Kawasaki two-strokes broke down leaving Don Emde on a 350 Yamaha to take a two-stroke to victory for the first time in the Daytona classic.





Northamptonshire road.

Accelerating out of a slow right hander at 30mph, the revs suddenly rose and the rear tyre spun on the wet tarmac. If I had gassed it hard in first or second, the wheelspin would have been expected. But at a leisurely 3,000rpm in third gear on a two-stroke?

As the damp miles rolled by the Suzuki revealed itself as an evil handler on any kind of wet or greasy surface.

The Bridgestone tyres accept most of the blame. In the dry they were fine, but in the wet they gave you the feeling that you were riding on brittle plastic.

Someone at the Suzuki factory must have a light conscience to allow such a

heavy and powerful machine to go out equipped with such flimsy tyres.

The brakes are also sadly inadequate. They are quite simply incapable of halting the Suzuki's bulk in any kind of emergency situation.

There is no excuse really, for the front brake is a four leading shoe, twin sided affair, 8.5in. in diameter.

Two other complaints: the centre stand scrapes too easily on both left and right hand bends, and the indicator switch is confusingly located among a tower of four finger controls on the left handlebar. It's too easy to hit the lights switch or the horn by mistake.

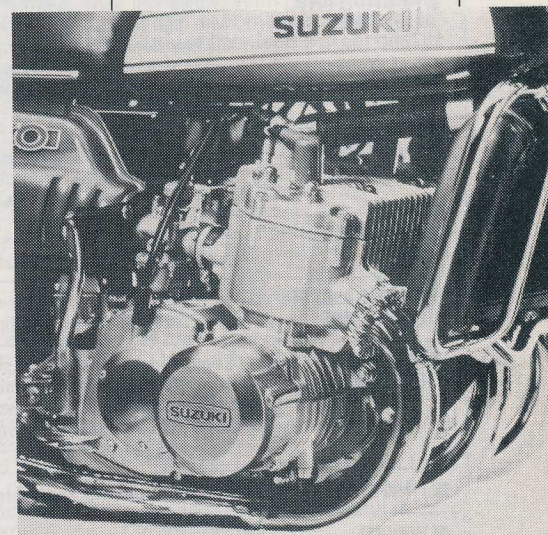
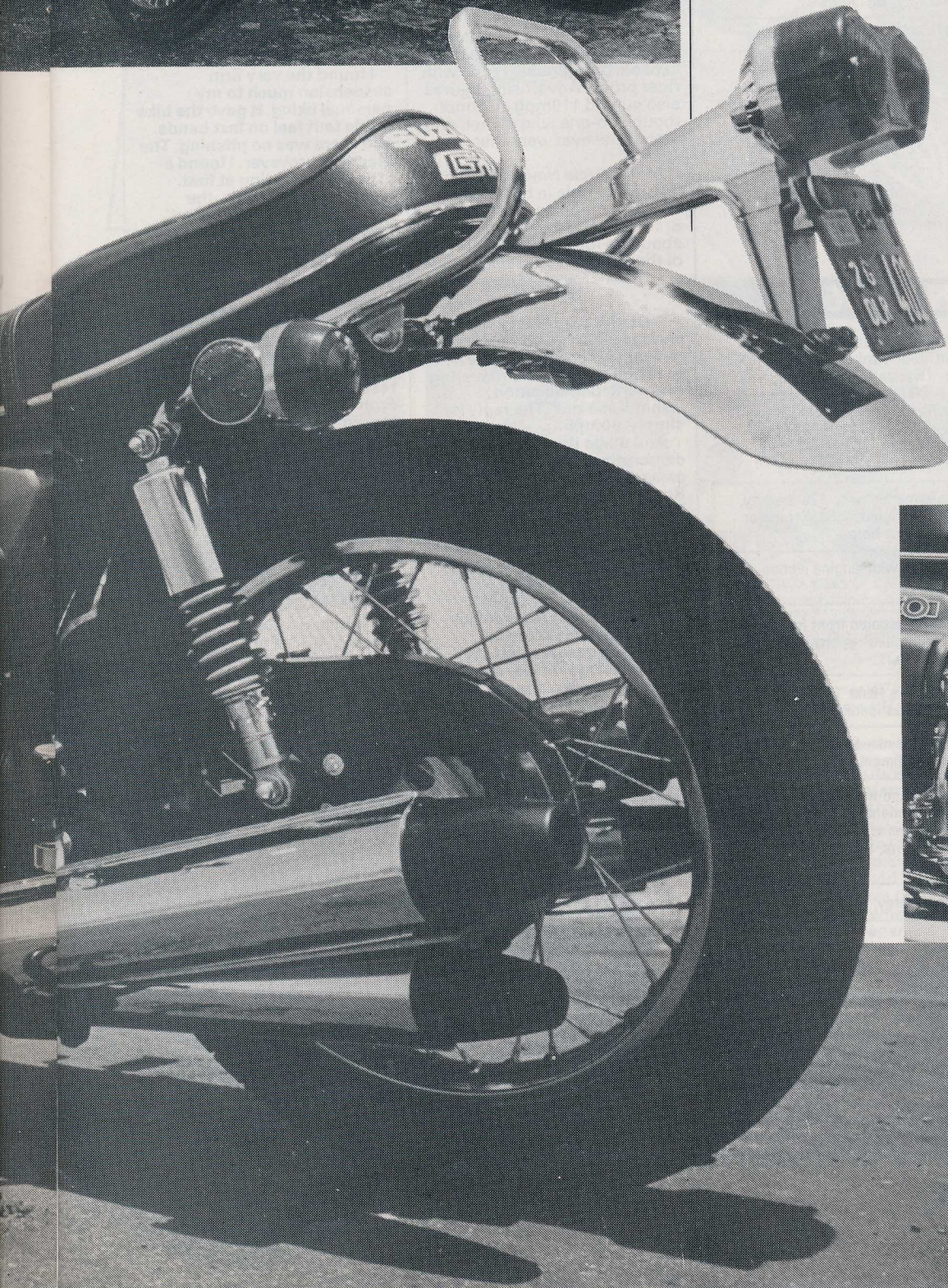
Suzuki claim that the dry weight of the GT750 is 472lb. Ha ha! When we weighed the bike, full of petrol and ready for the road, it came out a mighty 560lb.

The weight is apparent when you attempt to haul the bike on to the centre stand and when you ride it quickly down a really bumpy road. Then the suspension gets into trouble, and bike begins to weave itself into knots.

But otherwise the huge outside dimensions of the bike — surely the largest motor cycle in the world, apart from the Harley-Davidson Electra Glide? — cause no problems.

When you straddle the big dual seat, you begin to feel like the captain of a Boeing 747. In front of you are three dials — speedometer, rev counter and water temperature gauge — 11 hand controls, and two rear view mirrors.

The engine spins smoothly to indicated speeds of 36, 58, 75 and 90mph at peak revs of



7,000rpm in the four lower gears. If anything, the bike is undergeared, because at 100mph you have only 750rpm in hand.

On a 100-mile run, fuel consumption worked out at 46.4mpg, an astonishing figure for a high performance, multi-cylinder two-stroke, and proof once again of the advantages of water cooling. □