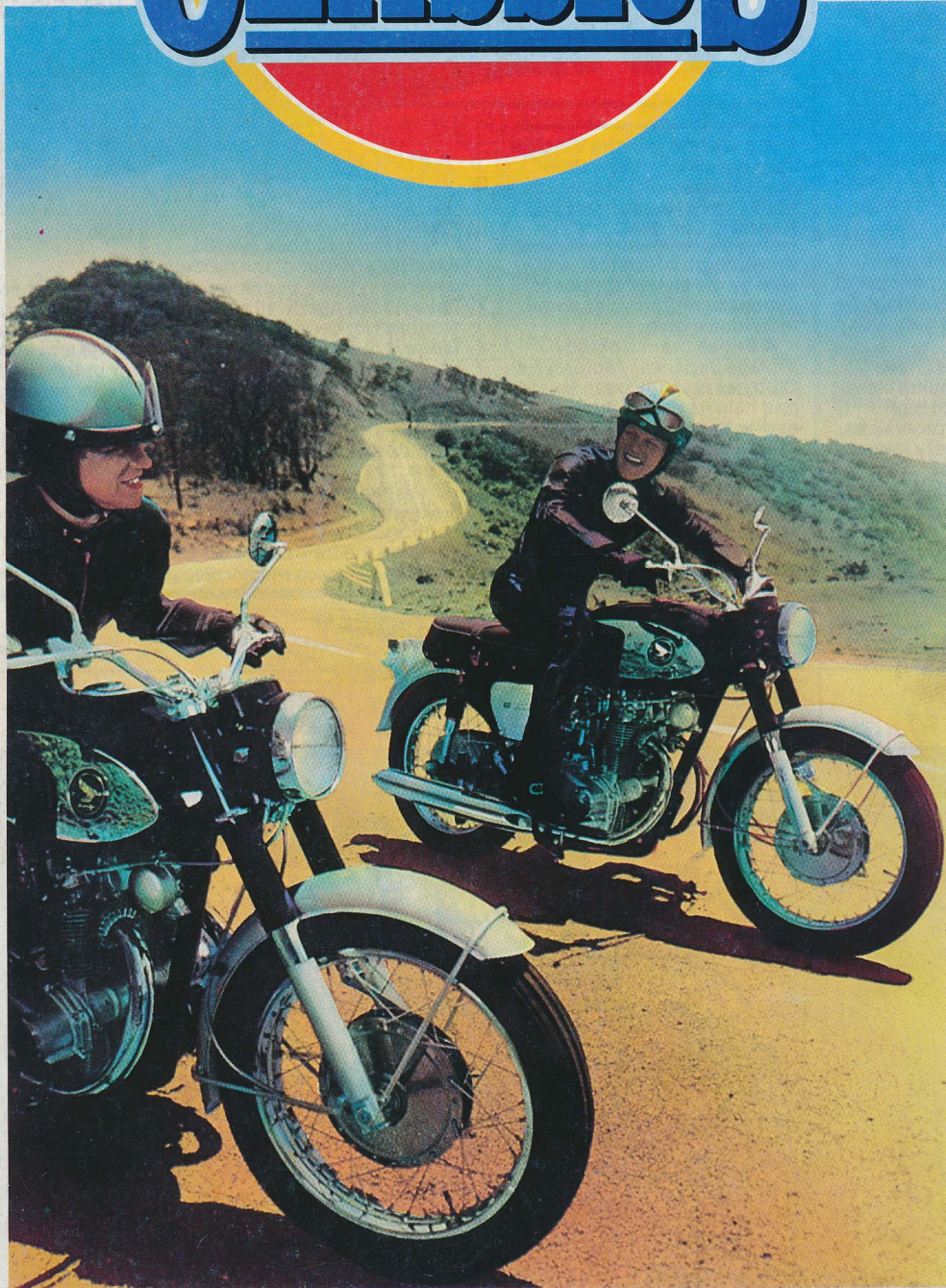


JAPANESE CLASSICS



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

JAPANESE CLASSICS

CONTENTS

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HONDA BENLY 125 ...	4
HONDA CB750 ...	9
KAWASAKI SAMURAI 250 ...	12
KAWASAKI H1 500 ...	16
HONDA CB450 ...	21
SUZUKI STINGER 125 ...	25
YAMAHA XS-1 650 ...	27
SUZUKI GT750 ...	30
HONDA CB72 250 ...	34
YAMAHA YR350 ...	38
KAWASAKI Z1 900 ...	41
SUZUKI SUPER SIX 250 ...	44
HONDA CB500 ...	48
SUZUKI GT380 ...	51
YAMAHA TX500 ...	53
HONDA SUPER CUB 50 ...	55
SUZUKI COBRA 500 ...	58
HONDA XL250 ...	61
BRIDGESTONE GTR350 ...	66
YAMAHA YDS250 ...	69

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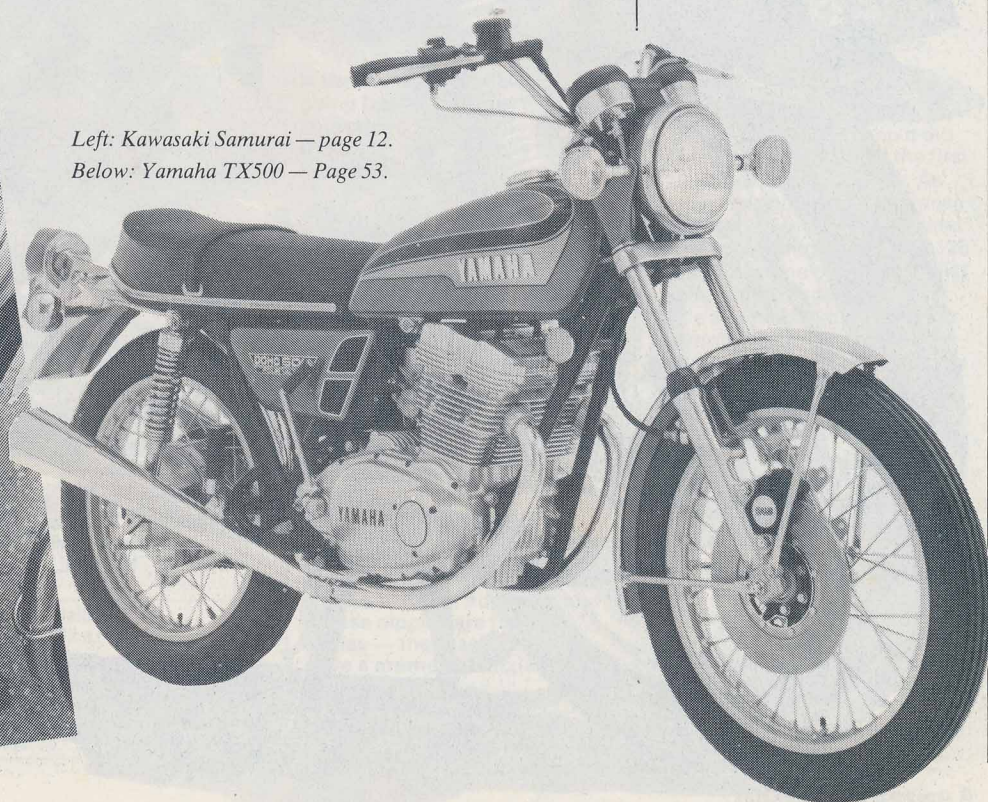
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*Left: Kawasaki Samurai — page 12.
Below: Yamaha TX500 — Page 53.*



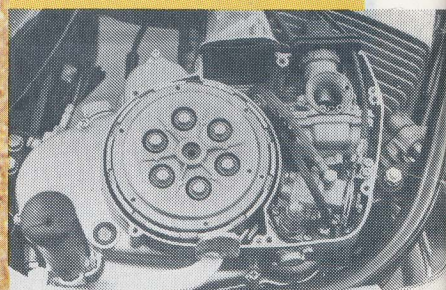
CREDENTIALS UNLIMITED

... engineering and design are second to none. The GTR — the star of the Bridgestone range — is an exercise in craftsmanship.

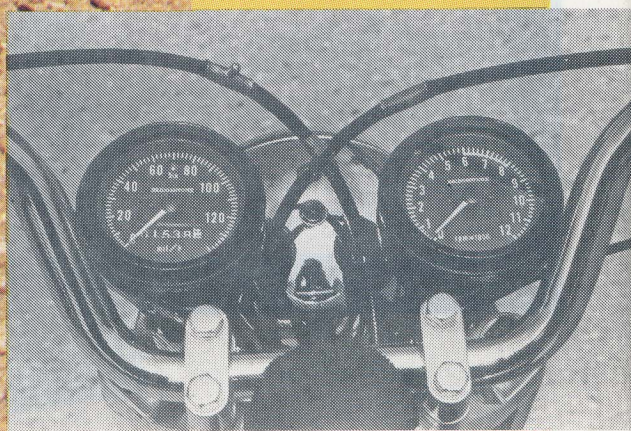
Mike Wilson, MCN tester



Down by the folding footrest you can see the gearchange shaft. A kit was available allowing the owner to change to right side gearchange if required.



Dry clutch, oil pump and 26mm carb revealed. Inside the engine the rotary valves were one-piece phenolic resin units with no steel inserts to possibly come loose and damage the engine.



THE SPECIFICATION you are about to contemplate is not for a brand new machine about to be launched in 1984. It's from the Bridgestone 350GTR of over 15 years ago.

Hailed as "the most advanced motor cycle ever built" by advertising of the time the amazing Bridgestone which still looks so beautifully modern boasted the following credentials:

- Dual rotary valve two-stroke twin cylinder engine.
- Four main bearing crankshaft.
- Six speed gearbox.
- "Jet Lube" forced lubrication system for positive oiling of mains, crank pins and big ends.
- "Glass eye" inspection window for gearbox oil level.
- Rotating gears ride on needle bearings.
- Claimed 40hp at 7500rpm.
- Both ends of both gear shafts run in precision bearings.
- Straight-through gearchange shaft permits left or right side gearchange.
- Primary kickstarting (kickstarting in any gear).
- Chrome bores.
- Pistons and barrels of aluminium alloy designed to heat expand at same rate to avoid seizures.
- Finned exhaust pipe clamps to dissipate exhaust port heat.
- Grease points on control cables.
- Rubber mounted engine.

- Dual coil ignition system.
- 12 volt lighting.
- Fifth gear indicator light in speedometer telling you one more gear to go.
- Suede seat.
- Dry clutch.
- 0-60mph in under five seconds.
- 110mph top speed potential.
- SS ¼-mile 13.7secs.

And then there is all that chrome and highly polished aluminium to reflect glowing pride of ownership which these machines instilled in their new owners back in 1968.

The bike made its British debut at the 1967 Earls Court Show. Previewing the model for *Motor Cycle News*, tester George Martin wrote:

WHEN fifth gear is engaged a green light in the speedo indicates one to go! The bike, due for British launching at Earls Court in ten days, is the 350 Bridgestone — a six speed twin with disc valve induction.

Quickly catching on in California, where this test was carried out, the Bridgestone will sell at £329 19s. 9d. in Britain next year.

My first impression was of its

beauty. My second was that it incorporated some very good British features. My third was that the fifth gear device could better be used to signal second gear.

The six-speed gearbox is very nice except that neutral is at the top with a six-straight-down pattern. If one overshoots first while changing down, all engine braking is lost as neutral is engaged.

Oddly, the rev-counter is calibrated to 14,000 and the speedo to 140, rather over-estimating the bike's potential.

The seat is swept up at the back, racing style, and is covered with non-slip compound. Sliding is

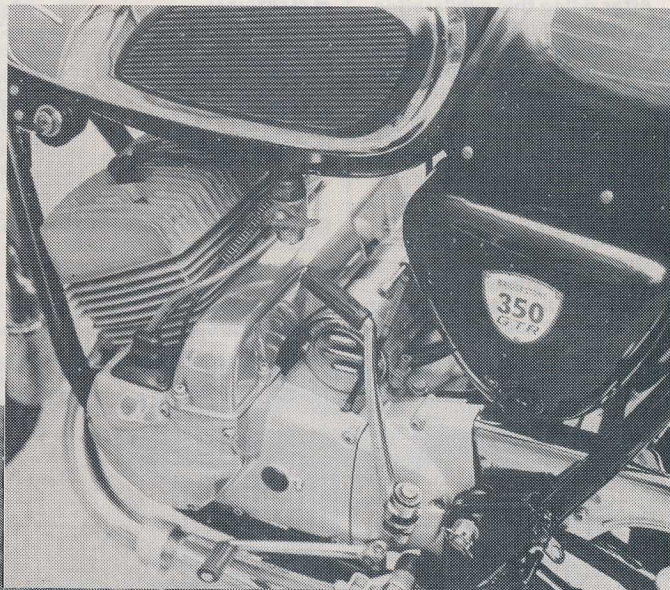
impossible. To change position you must stand up on the pegs.

The frame is a double cradle affair but I was not over-impressed. Suspension, front and rear, is quite soft, and the machine bounds over bumps, particularly when heeled over.

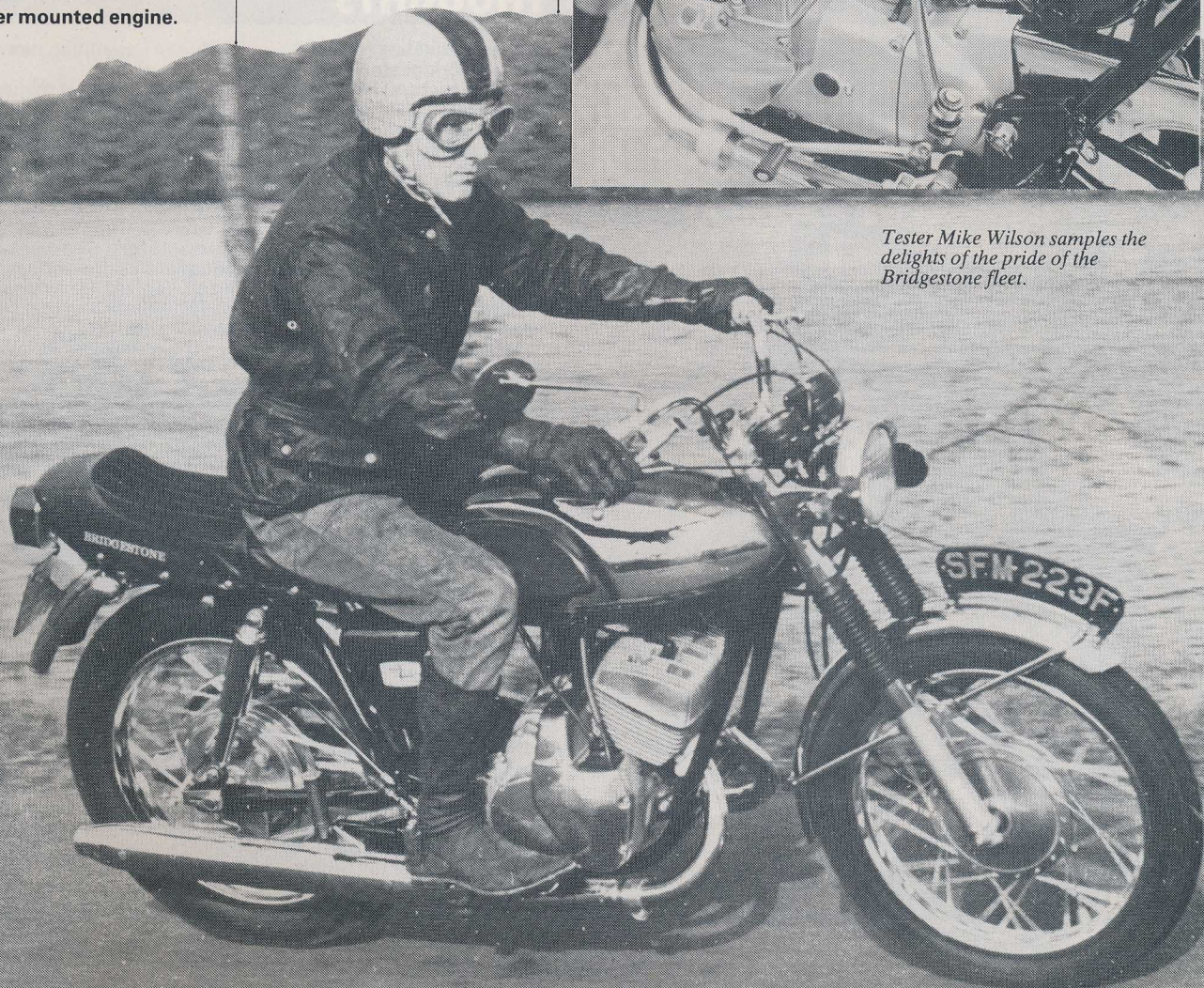
A second mounting for the rear shockers is provided. This is supposed to stiffen the suspension but I had no time to test it. A similar machine, more extensively tested by the American magazine "Cycle", was clocked at 104mph. It covered a standing quarter mile in 14.3secs with a terminal speed of 93mph.

Although not outstanding, the brakes were adequate. The front is a two-leading shoe job.

Below: A kit was available allowing the owner to change to right side gearchange if required.



Tester Mike Wilson samples the delights of the pride of the Bridgestone fleet.



BRIDGESTONE 350GTR CREDENTIALS UNLIMITED

It seems that touring will be the 350 Bridgestone's forte. Riding two-up was a pleasure. At 355lb, it is little lighter than a 350 Yamaha and a bit heavier than the Kawasaki Avenger (325lb). With stiffer suspension, and a well run-in engine, it could be a real goer.

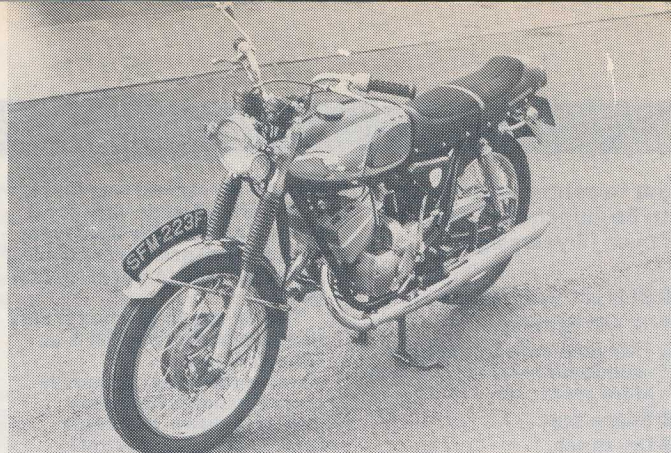
Motor Cycle News staff man Mike Wilson was able to try the GTR on British roads and had this to say about the machine in November 1967:

LOOKING at the superb lines of the 350 Bridgestone GTR, it is difficult to believe that it is a "sideline" product of Japan's biggest tyre company.

After riding this exhilarating six-speeder, and sampling its blood-curdling acceleration, precise handling and awesome stopping power, it seems all the more incredible that this bike has been built without the benefit of decades of racing and engineering experience.

But what Bridgestone lack in motor cycling tradition and race honours, they make up for with sheer, honest-to-goodness value.

Their engineering and design are obviously second to none.



Dry clutch, oil pump and 26mm carb were featured on this machine. Inside the engine the rotary valves were one-piece phenolic resin units with no steel inserts to possibly come loose and damage the engine.

SPECIFICATION IN 1967

■ ENGINE:	345cc twin cylinder two-stroke. Bore and stroke: 61mm x 59mm. Compression ratio: 9.3:1. Maximum bhp: 40 at 7,500 rpm. Rotary valve induction. Oil injection lubrication to crankshaft.
■ TRANSMISSION:	dry; multi-plate clutch; six speed gearbox; helical gear primary drive.
■ ELECTRICAL:	12-volt ignition and lighting.
■ FRAME AND SUSPENSION:	tubular cradle frame telescopic front fork, swinging arm rear suspension.
■ TYRES:	3.25 x 19 front and rear.
■ DIMENSIONS:	overall length 6ft 11in, overall height 3ft 7½in, overall width 2ft 8½in, wheelbase 4ft 6in, saddle height 2ft 8in.
■ FUEL TANK:	three imperial gallons (approx.).
■ WEIGHT:	363lb.
■ PRICE:	£329 19s. 9d.

The GTR — the star of the Bridgestone range — is an exercise in craftsmanship.

The machine is generously endowed with chromium, stainless steel and burnished aluminium alloy.

All this glitter combines with a host of thoughtful extras to make the GTR the most attractive foreign newcomer this year.

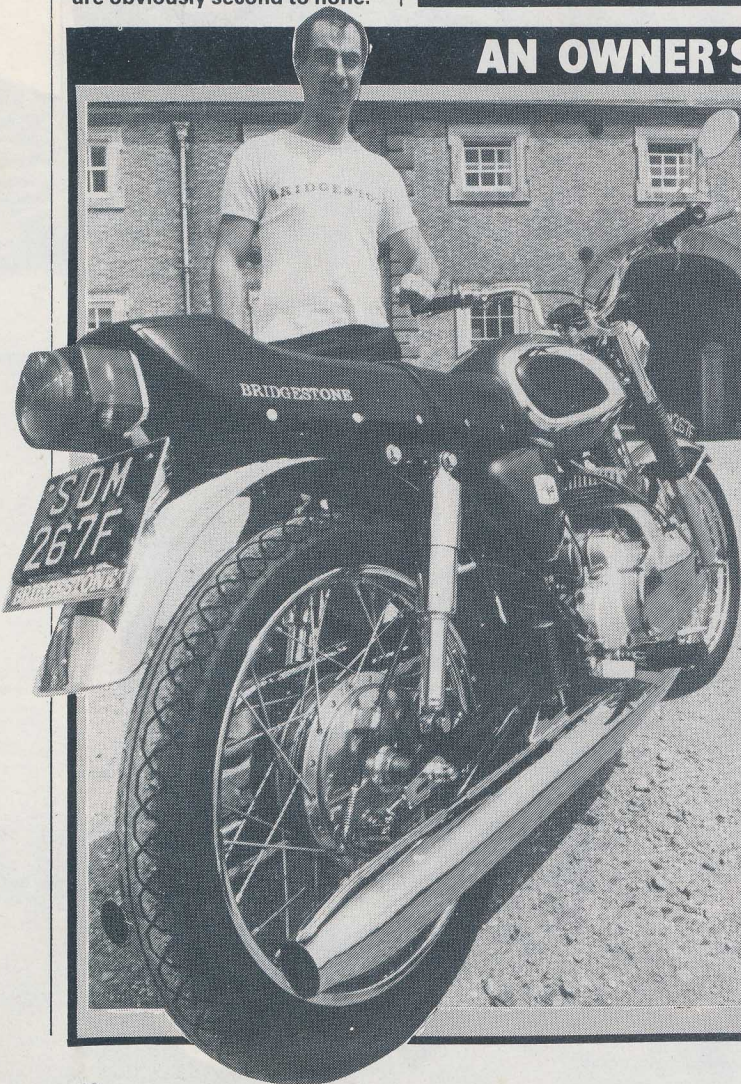
Taking it to 8,500rpm through the gears, acceleration is astonishing once 4,000 is reached. Sixty appears on the clock in second, and 70 is reached in third. Fourth is good for fractionally more than 80, and fifth propels you into the high nineties very rapidly indeed.

Sixth, is in fact, very useful above 60mph. A hundred was seen in this gear, with 6,800 on the tachometer.

At speeds like these it will be comforting to remember the injector lubrication system which feeds oil direct to the crankshaft bearings.

Unfortunately the GTR's reign was shortlived (see owner's story). Its parent company which had started life in 1931 as a tyre and rubber goods company gave up bike manufacture in the early '70s to concentrate on tyre production, including those for fitment on rival machines such as Honda and Yamaha □

AN OWNER'S THOUGHTS



THIS immaculately restored 1968 GTR Bridgestone (also in the colour picture) belongs to Dennis Lodge (35) from Runcorn, Cheshire.

Since acquiring the machine 18 months ago and rebuilding it to concours condition Dennis has picked up trophies wherever he takes it.

These include best in the 1958-68 class at the BMF Rally 1983, and best Japanese machine at the 1982 Bristol show.

Secretary of the Vintage Japanese Motorcyle Club Dennis, who works for ICI, has been rebuilding 175cc Bridgestones in his spare time for the past six years.

His involvement with the 350, the biggest Bridgestone ever made, started when he was offered a pair for £450. One was a runner and the other in bits. He sold the runner and set about turning the bits into this show-stopper.

It is one of only 53 imported and Dennis has cut no corners into bringing it back to better than new. His aim is to be able to compete on equal terms with classic British machinery at shows, and so far he is succeeding bit by bit.

Highly acclaimed from a technical point of view when it was introduced, the 350 was destined to be a rare bird because importer Bill Smith decided to stop bringing them

in due to impending heavy price rises.

Of those that did make it to these shores many were used for road racing. Dennis reckons there are only 15 left of which four are in concours original condition.

What does he think of the model? — "Nippy and very tractable for a two-stroke with completely different power to an LC Yamaha for example. The 350 Kawasaki Avenger I used to have was little faster.

"The red-line is from 6-8000rpm, but it will rev to 8200rpm before it runs out of breath. Power is 37bhp at 8000rpm.

"It does 45mpg which is quite good, though I would have expected more.

"Weight is 365lb which is reasonable, but at the time was regarded as rather heavy.

"The engine has chrome plated alloy bores. The barrels and the pistons are of the same alloy for low clearances, and it has a racing type dry clutch. Now that you can get nikasil recoating there is no problem with reboring.

"The only slight disappointment is that the brakes are the same as those on the 175 Bridgestone. They are incredible on the 175, but on the 350 they feel spongy. I wouldn't like to ride two-up because of them."