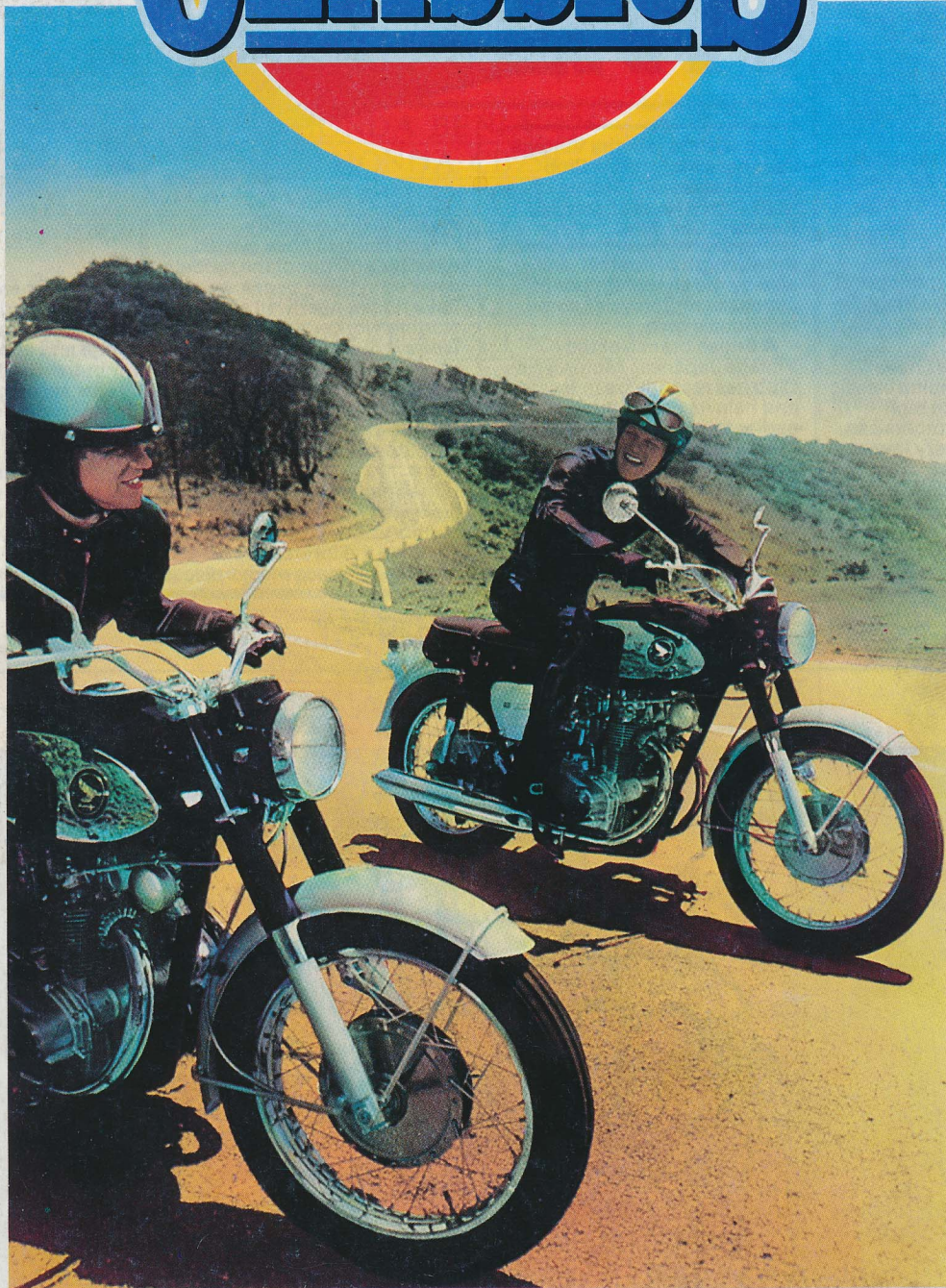


# JAPANESE CLASSICS



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



# JAPANESE CLASSICS

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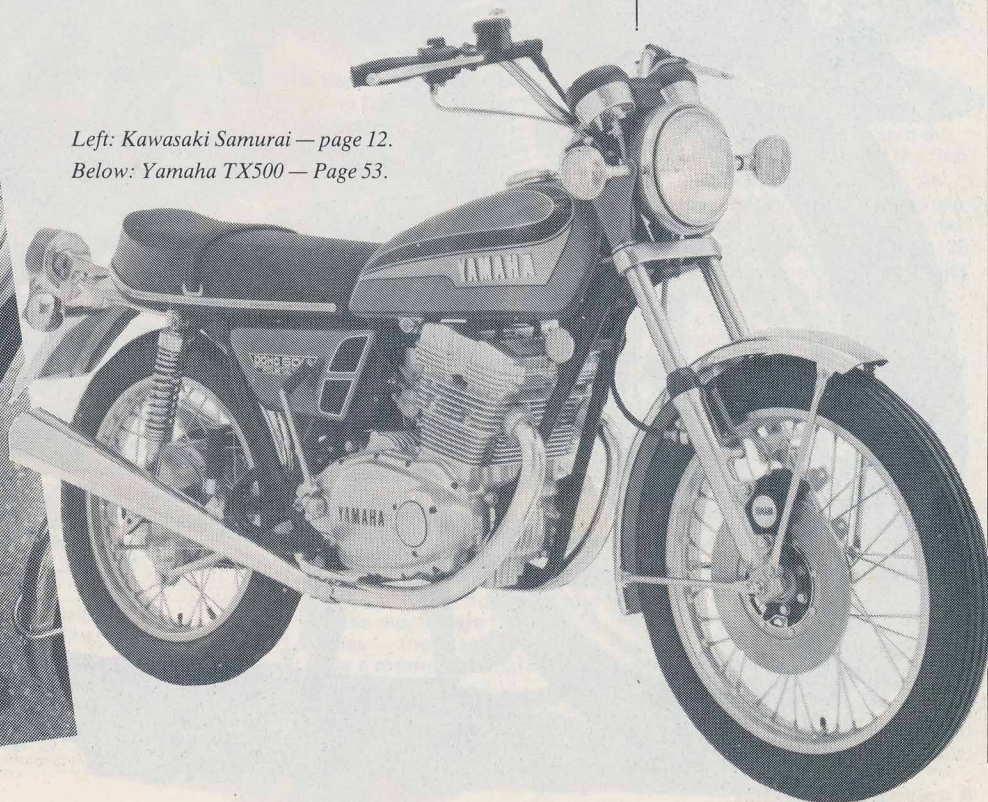
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*Left: Kawasaki Samurai — page 12.  
Below: Yamaha TX500 — Page 53.*



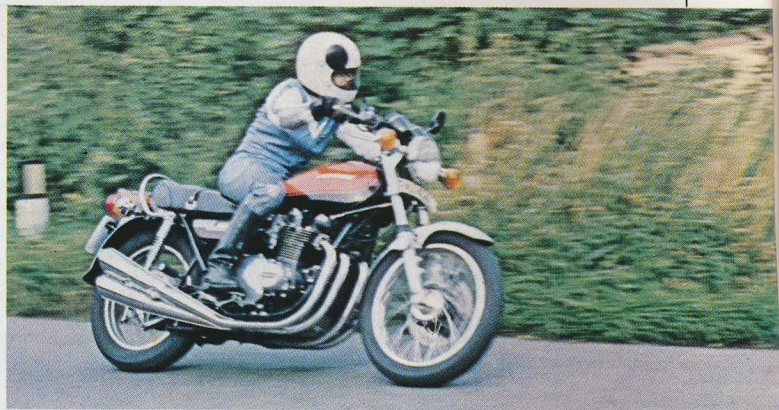


**KAWASAKI Z1 900**

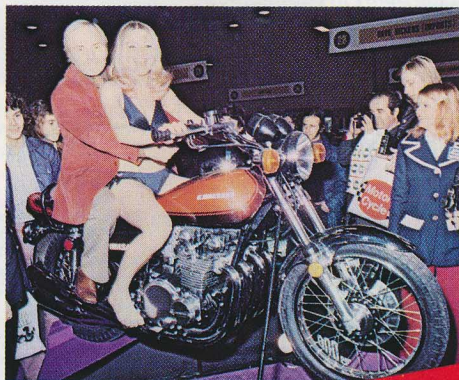
# NEW YORK STEAK

If the headline sounds strange it was meant too. New York Steak was the code name for the secret development of the Z1 Kawasaki, the most powerful road bike of its time.

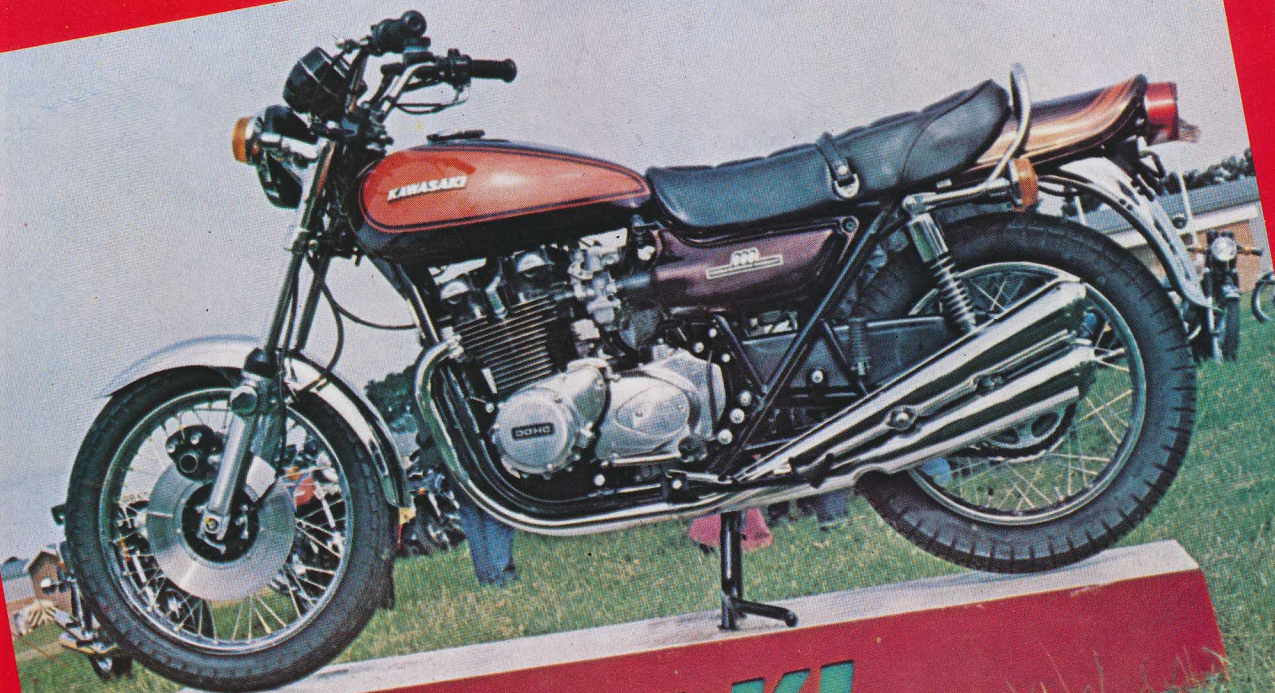
The bike's cover was never blown, but its development programme was dealt a crucial blow.  
**Full story on pages 41-43.**



*The author, first journalist to ride the Z1 in Britain. He speed trapped it at 134mph, the fastest road bike ever tested by Motor Cycle News at that time.*



*Comedian Dick Emery at the 1973 London show, later got to grips with the Z1. He was one of many personalities who bought one.*



**KAWASAKI**

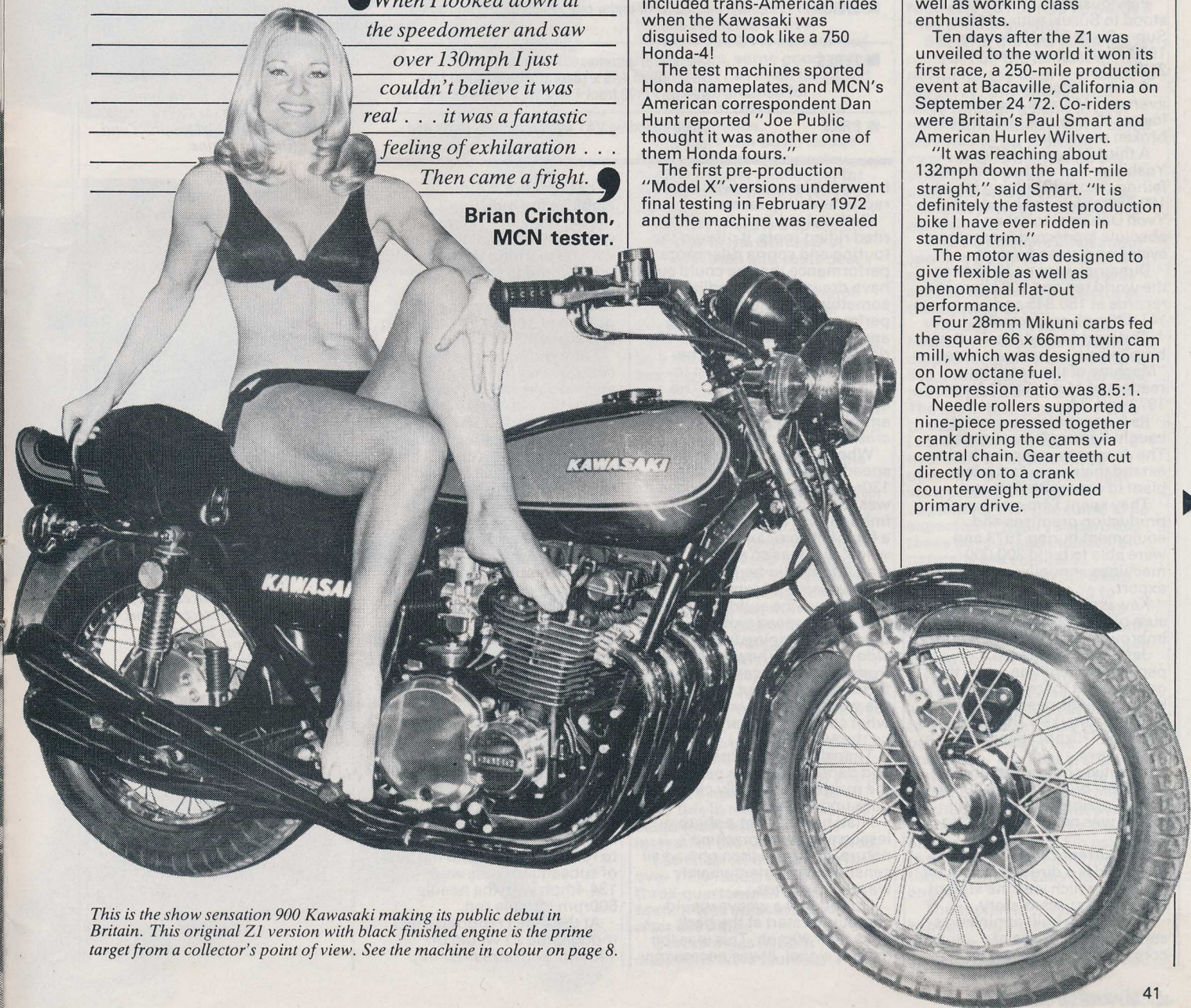


**KAWASAKI 900 Z1**

# NEW YORK STEAK

“When I looked down at the speedometer and saw over 130mph I just couldn't believe it was real . . . it was a fantastic feeling of exhilaration . . . Then came a fright.”

**Brian Crichton,  
MCN tester.**



*This is the show sensation 900 Kawasaki making its public debut in Britain. This original Z1 version with black finished engine is the prime target from a collector's point of view. See the machine in colour on page 8.*

(cont from page 8)

**UNDER** the code name "New York Steak", Kawasaki's mighty Z1 was almost a stillborn project.

Research engineers at the Akashi works started on it early in 1967. Their brief was a large capacity twin-cam four-stroke four mounted across the frame.

By September 1968 a complete wooden mock-up was ready. Kawasaki were on their way to supplying the world with the first mass produced transverse four.

Then at the Tokyo show that year Honda's well kept secret the 750 Honda-4 was displayed.

It pulled out the rug from under Kawasaki's feet.

The development team halted progress and decided to see how the Honda would fare. The Honda opened up such a big enthusiastic market when it went on sale in 1969 that Kawasaki decided to resume development and build a machine to out-muscle the Honda which had beaten them to the first punch.

The first prototype was ready by the spring of 1970 and underwent intensive testing at Yatabe circuit near Tokyo.

It's ironic that part of the reliability testing the Z1s underwent outside Japan included trans-American rides when the Kawasaki was disguised to look like a 750 Honda-4!

The test machines sported Honda nameplates, and MCN's American correspondent Dan Hunt reported "Joe Public thought it was another one of them Honda fours."

The first pre-production "Model X" versions underwent final testing in February 1972 and the machine was revealed

to the public later that year at the Cologne Show in Germany.

The twin cam spec, rubber mounted engine, power figure of 82bhp at 8500, moody black finished engine, and aerodynamic styling of the instrument pods heralded a new street king.

British fans were able to get their hands on the most potent road power package offered in May of '73.

And it wasn't only dyed-in-the-wool motor cyclists who were impressed. The changing face of motor cycling was tempting people from all walks of life on to two wheels.

The Z1 attracted celebrities and aristocrats such as comedian Dick Emery and Prince Albert of Belgium, as well as working class enthusiasts.

Ten days after the Z1 was unveiled to the world it won its first race, a 250-mile production event at Bacaville, California on September 24 '72. Co-riders were Britain's Paul Smart and American Hurley Wilvert.

"It was reaching about 132mph down the half-mile straight," said Smart. "It is definitely the fastest production bike I have ever ridden in standard trim."

The motor was designed to give flexible as well as phenomenal flat-out performance.

Four 28mm Mikuni carbs fed the square 66 x 66mm twin cam mill, which was designed to run on low octane fuel.

Compression ratio was 8.5:1.

Needle rollers supported a nine-piece pressed together crank driving the cams via central chain. Gear teeth cut directly on to a crank counterweight provided primary drive.



# NEW YORK STEAK

Claimed dry weight was 506lb and the machine featured an 11.7in disc up front to slow it down.

Kawasaki underlined the Z1's supremacy by setting a new 24-hour world record for 1000cc machinery at an average speed of 109.641mph at Daytona in March 1973.

In fact it was one of no less than 46 American and world records claimed round the Florida speed bowl.

During the 24-hour period 2,631.403 miles were covered by a Z1 which was standard except for clip-ons.

Previously the record had stood to Suzuki with a 250cc Super Six at 90.115mph set in 1968. Distance covered was 2172 miles.

A second standard Z1 averaged 104mph in spite of the loss of 30 minutes because of a broken rear chain.

A third Z1 tuned by Pops Yoshimura and fitted with race fairing recorded a flying lap of 160.288mph in the hands of Yvon Duhamel to set an absolute lap record for motor cycles on a closed circuit.

Duhamel went on to shatter the world ten and 100 kilometre records at 150.845 and 141.439mph respectively.

The world loved the Z1. It was born to be king and was voted "Machine of the Year" by readers of *Motor Cycle News* in 1973 and '74.

Its success was so great it caught Kawasaki by surprise. The Japanese company had to extend their manufacturing plant to cope with demand.

They spent £4m on new production premises and equipment during 1973 and were able to build 300,000 machines annually, mainly for export.

Kawasaki also spent a further sum of £3m on research and improving after-sales back-up.

Japan itself suffered a peculiar twist of fate when the government there decided to ban machines over 750cc for the home market. They also put a 42mph (70kph) speed limit on motorways.

To satisfy home demand Kawasaki built the Z2, a 69bhp 746cc version of the Z1. This model was never exported to Britain.

The current Z1100GP Kawasaki is a direct descendant of the Z1 which was the start of a fabulous success story.

Its strongly built engine was suitable for all types of competition work and has

## SPECIFICATION IN 1973

■ ENGINE	903cc (66 x 66mm) dohc transverse in-line four cylinder all alloy motor with crankshaft supported on six roller bearings with roller bearing big ends. Wet sump capacity four litres with renewable car-type filter. Compression ratio 8.5:1. Four 28mm Mikuni carburettors fitted with cold start jets. Develops maximum power of 82bhp at 8,500rpm.
■ TRANSMISSION	Primary drive by straight cut gears (not helical) through wet eight-plate clutch to five-speed gearbox. Overall ratios: 12.78, 8.83, 6.73, 5.56, 4.92. Final drive by $\frac{3}{4}$ in x 0.45in chain fitted with automatic oiler.
■ ELECTRICAL	12-volt ignition with 14amp/hr battery/coils. Charged via alternator. 35/35-watt headlamp, 12-watt parking light, 15/6-watt tail and 21-watt indicator lights (4). Electric starter, headlamp flasher console and instrument lights.
■ FUEL CAPACITY	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ gallons including approx $\frac{3}{4}$ gallon reserve.
■ BRAKES	Single 11.6in front hydraulically operated disc, 7.9in diameter single leading shoe rear.
■ SUSPENSION	Hydraulically damped telescopic front fork, hydraulically damped spring loaded suspension struts at rear with adjustment for five different settings.
■ DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase 59in, ground clearance 6in. Seat height 31.5in unladen.
■ WEIGHT	534lb (with under one gallon of fuel and sump full of oil).
■ TYRES	(Standard) Japanese Dunlop Gold Seal 3.25 x 19 front ribbed 4.10 x 18, rear. Fitted to test bike Dunlop TT100 front 4.10 x 19, TT100 4.25 x 18 rear.
■ PRICE	£1088 including VAT and six months parts and labour.

become a favourite with road racers and drag racers.

Getting back to the machine's road riding roots, it offered the touring and sports rider more performance than he could ever have dreamed of. Handling left something to be desired, but performance was everything and more than you could rightfully expect at the time.

I was the first journalist to ride a Z1 in this country. The acceleration was so effortlessly amazing, it felt like a non-stop crescendo of power.

When I looked down at the speedometer and saw over 130mph I just couldn't believe it was real. The motor, though imbued with the busy nature of a four, felt so relaxed. The whole plot was so smooth. It was a fantastic feeling.

Then came a fright.

The machine suddenly broke into a high speed wobble. The bars were jumping from side to side violently. They weren't torn from my grip, because fortunately I did not try to fight the wobble. I just sat there for what seemed forever waiting to be thrown off.

Thankfully this maniac front end dance slowed its pace and the machine gradually came back under control.

I had been taught a sharp lesson about the machine's nature, and from then on had all sensors on red alert when I wanted to go fast.

I found that a weave would sometimes start at the back once over 90mph. This was the danger signal. It was necessary

to ease off the throttle to stabilise the machine.

That first over 120mph wobble had come on instantly with no warning from the back end. Whereas at first I had simply blasted the machine, now I was building speed gradually, ready to respond to any signs of instability.

Later during speed testing a contributing factor to the weave and wobble was discovered.

The firm which supplied the bike had fitted TT100 Dunlop tyres in place of the originals. It turned out to be a crucial error.

The Z1 wouldn't remain stable enough to hold the power on for a genuine top speed figure. The original ribbed front tyre was re-fitted and there was a marked improvement in stability, though several runs still had to be abandoned because of the weave.

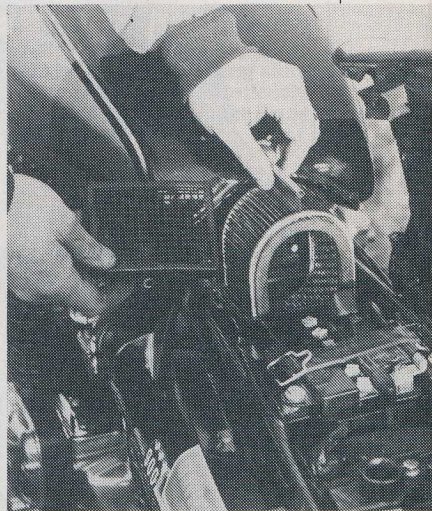
It was necessary to search out the smoothest path along the airstrip where the speed trap was set up in order to reduce suspension pitch which would start the problem.

I did one of the speed runs by the book, changing up exactly on the red line. The Kawasaki clocked 132mph. So it definitely was capable of 130-plus speeds. Fantastic.

The motor was quite willing to rev into the red and the best of subsequent runs was 134.4mph with the needle 500rpm into the red.

At the time I reported that I thought the Z1 would do 140mph with streamlining.

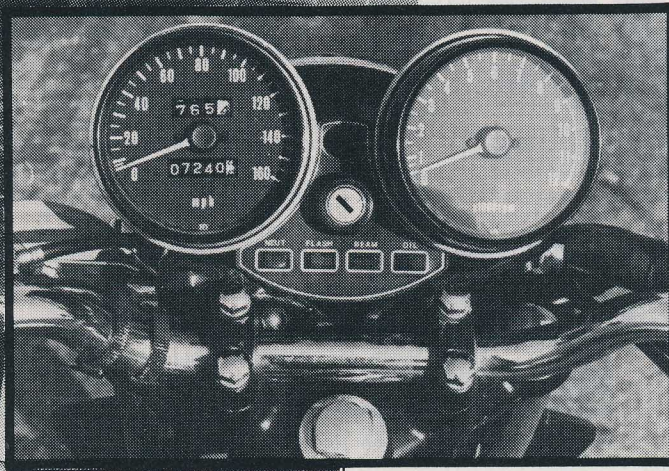
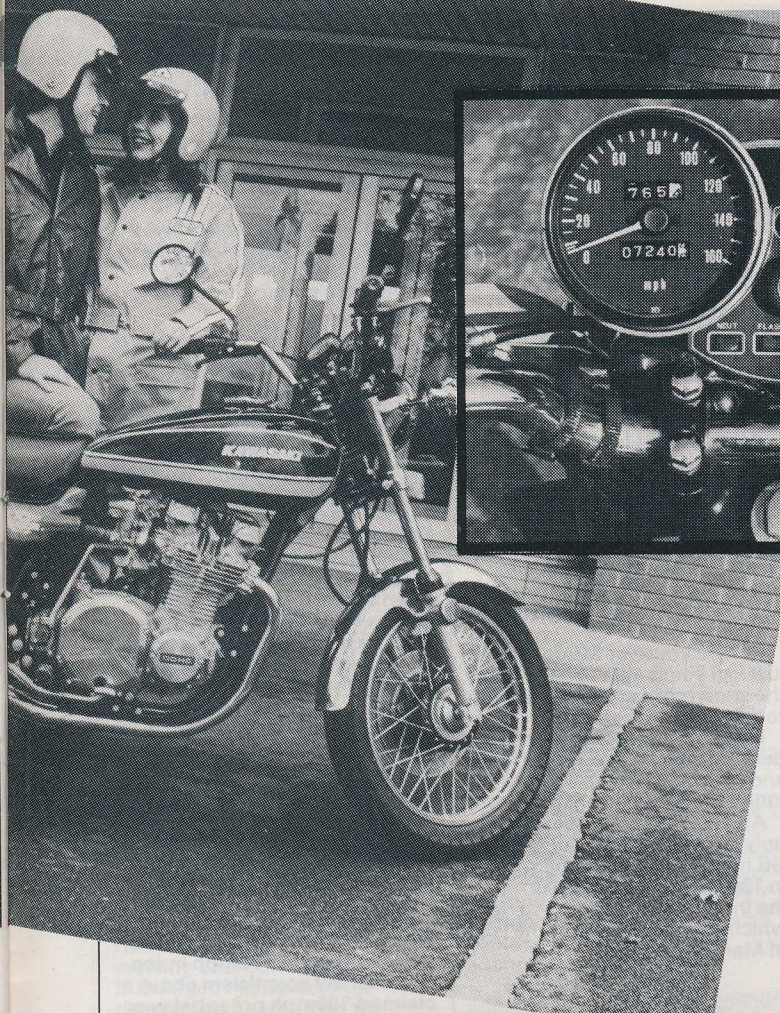
*An ideal machine for two-up touring — this is the later Z1A version with revised graphics and alloy finished engine.*



*Above: Easily replaced car-type paper air filter protects engine. To reduce emissions Kawasaki incorporated PCV (positive crankcase ventilation) on this engine. The system re-routed blowby gases back to the inlet rather than to atmosphere.*

*Right: Crank runs on roller bearings. Primary drive teeth are cut into counterweight.*





Performance-wise it was sensational.

It was the fastest road bike MCN had ever tested and it was given front page billing in November 1973.

Jerry Clayton was in charge of the machine while it was on test and here are extracts from his report:—

**BY FAR** the quickest road bike MCN has tested at over 134mph, the Z1 is surrounded by rumours, some good, some bad. And it has been launched while the franchise for Kawasaki in this country is changing hands.

But there can be no doubt that the Z1 emerges as the most muscular challenger for the superbike market we have yet seen.

Already there is a speed kit available in the States that gives 168mph and costs over £400!

With its 8.5:1 compression ratio, the big four-cylinder double overhead camshaft "square" engine can be started by a hand on the kick-starter and the motor is so tractable it will go down to 15mph in top gear without snatching. Indeed, it is possible to pull away in top by slipping the clutch.

But nowadays most people are more concerned with sustained pace in comfort, after all it is hardly any good chuntering along at speeds over the ton if physical fatigue forces you to keep stopping. Here again there's no problem. The Kawasaki riding position was spot on, but the model tested was fitted with the straighter Kawasaki handlebars. Anything higher would probably cause the rider to be subjected to far more wind pressure, resulting in tired arms.

On the public weighbridge the machine registered 534lb with less than a gallon of petrol on board and a sumpful of oil. With this in mind the machine could really use twin discs instead of the single unit fitted.

The chain (the second in just over 7000 miles) is the first three-quarter-inch unit I have seen. It was adjusted once — after 800 miles.

Gearchanges in both directions were faultless. I

missed a gear only once and that through carelessness.

The bloodline is drawn at 9000, but so often this can be exceeded through over exuberance.

While carrying out the standing quarter times, the rev counter twice indicated 10,500 in second gear, but the 900 showed no sign of distress. The only noticeable sound from the engine was seemingly some backlash in the cam chain which runs up the centre of the engine. There is a centrifugal device on the driveshaft which prevents second gear being engaged when the bike is stationary. This ensures neutral selection without fiddling.

Handling was something different again. The rider feels as if he is sitting 'in' the machine rather than on top of it. This illusion is probably a direct result of a tank that rises towards the front end and of the huge twin speedometer and rev counter 'clocks' mounted quite high up behind the headlamp. Unlike the big Honda, the Kawasaki's footrests do not fold upwards if they should ground.

But with the rear suspension units set on the hardest of five positions, the back end tends to dip away. One should really drive through a bend to gain maximum stability, but a better way was to go in on the over-run and then smoothly drive out. It's a big bike, but it's easy to chuck about and once the idiosyncrasy is familiar it's marvellous.

There's an expression about spoiling a ship for 'a pennyw'th o' tar,' and our Kawasaki was spoiled for lack of a resistor in the lighting circuit.

Without the resistor the headlamp bulb kept blowing its dipped filament at night and at 54p a time going out after dark proved just a little expensive. The horn, too, was of the type to use at a vicarage tea party — I could shout louder! The hydraulic front brake also operated the rear brake light via a pressure switch — something that has come to be expected of luxury superbikes these days — and indicators naturally are standard.

The headlight on full beam was good enough for 70 to 80mph, but I'd not like to go much faster at night — it's only a 35-watt bulb! Quartz halogen would seem a necessity here.

I put just half a pint of oil in the bike while it was on test and this overfilled it according to the little sightglass set in the right-hand side of the crankcase. The filler is situated just above the eight-plate clutch and it seemed strange to be chucking oil straight over it! The engine runs on the lowest of oil pressures at 2.8lb psi due to the use of roller bearings throughout virtually the whole engine.

The toolkit is what one would expect from a class conscious machine, for the kit includes drop-forged chrome spanners. □

