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Motorcycle **ENTHUSIAST**

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FEATURE ARTICLES:

ROAD TESTS — Kawasaki, Laverda, Moto Guzzi & Yamaha

LOOKING BACK ON THE TT by Mick Grant

TAKING YOUR BIKE THROUGH FRANCE TO SPAIN

VELOCETTE REBUILD

ROAD SAFETY

..... AND MUCH MORE

KAWASAKI Z1000J ROAD TEST

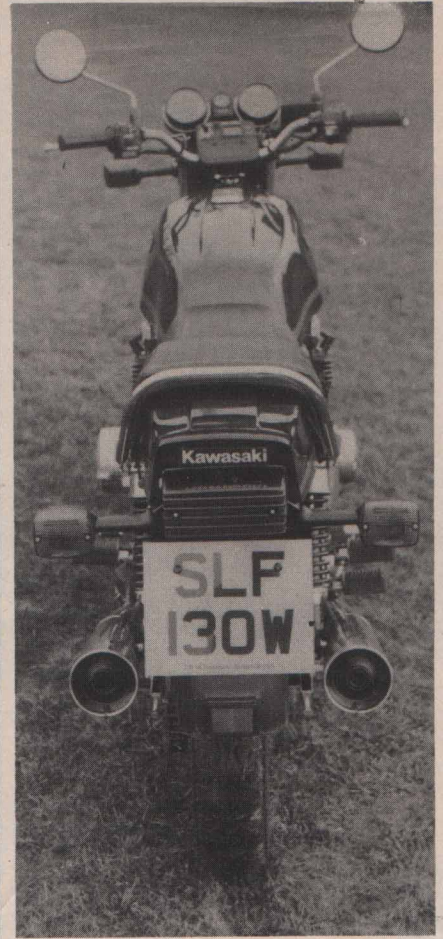


by Les Packham

It matters not what size a bike is, be it a 125, a 500 or 1100 cc machine. If it comes from the same manufacturer its pedigree will shine through. The same applies to successive models of the same capacity in one manufacturer's range. There will be no mistaking the hallmarks. Kawasaki's new Z1000J is a completely new machine but it still feels like a Kawasaki.

Imagine a sunny day, early March, a bit cool. Two of us ride 160 miles over mixed roads on a Z1000H fuel injection, Kawasaki's previous 1000cc model, to pick up the new bike. The ulterior motive: to compare old and new side by side. To the casual observer viewing the new machine for the first time, the differences may not be so obvious but when seen by the side of the old model they become apparent. The new bike has retained big 'K's middle of the road styling, although somehow it is softer. It has lost the chunky aggression of its predecessor. I cock my leg over (Mmm nice). The riding position is different, tighter, and lower, giving the impression of sitting in rather than on the bike. I feel more stretched, not in any way uncomfortably so, perhaps just an illusion created by the longer, larger tank. Footrests are higher, further back. All major controls fall easily to hand or foot

but the minor controls have been provided with larger, more positive knobs and switches and some of these are difficult to operate without at least partially moving one's hand from the handlebars in some cases. The worst switch is the combined horn/flasher unit. Now I like to inform people who might not have seen me of my presence by sounding the horns (very good they are on this bike) but I invariably found that my thumb inadvertently flashed the headlight en route to press the horn button, an action which might be misconstrued as a "come on" signal with possibly disastrous results. The new instruments are extremely clear. The speedometer and tachometer, mounted either side of a very inaccurate fuel gauge, are electronically operated and the tacho has an unusual illuminated red sector. There was a small problem, however, on the test bike. The voltage regulator had a fault which caused current surge at high revs. This had the effect of giving high mph and rev readings at high speed (150 mph showing on the speedometer is pretty exhilarating even if the true speed is "only" 130). This was a pity because other road tests have shown the electronic instruments to be extremely accurate throughout the range. Whilst on the subject of minor controls,

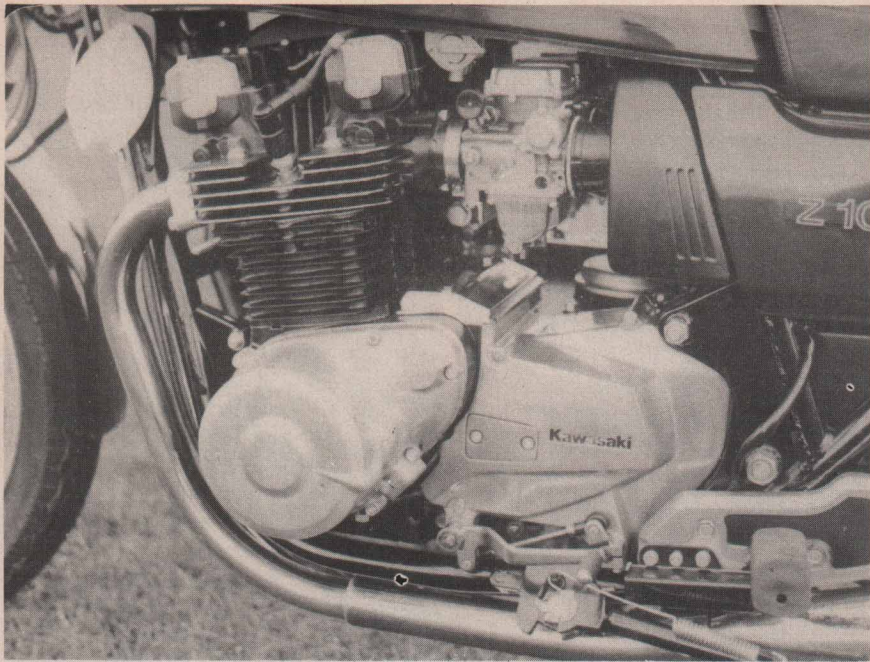


Kawasaki have come up with an excellent safety feature. How many of us have jumped on a machine which had been parked with the side stand down and ridden off without retracting the same, either with dire consequences or at the very least a bum-nibbling experience? Well on the Z1000J the motor can be started with the machine on the side stand but as soon as the weight is removed, the engine cuts. Simple, isn't it! A button on the handlebar over-rides the system, but no way can you forget about it.

The Kawasaki sports a new frame and though the cradle layout is similar to the previous model, the Z1000J has more rake, an increase from 26° to 29°, and more trail, 3.43" to 4.72". This has increased the wheelbase by approximately 2". Heavier gusseting at the steering head together with two transverse tubes across the front of the motor have strengthened the frame to such an extent as to silence the critics of earlier models. Also assisting with the



Electronic instruments and large but fumbly switchgear



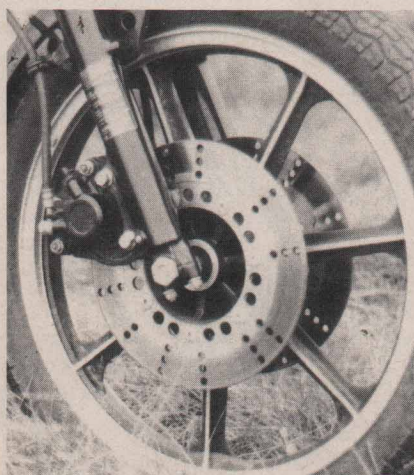
The redesigned 998cc mill

rigidity is a new, thicker swinging arm pivot mount.

Into the new frame and mounted by two rubber supports at the front and one solid mount at the rear goes the new 998cc unit. Obviously based on last years 1015cc unit the whole engine weighs in at over 5 lbs. less than the old model thanks mainly to the lighter crankshaft with its pork chop counterweight. The new motor also develops more power: a claimed 102 bhp at 8,500 rpm as against 93 bhp at the same engine speed for the Z1000 Mk. II is available. A marked increase, which is partly due to a redesigned cylinder head. At low revs the four 34 mm Mikuni C.V. carburetors cause the motor to idle rather 'lumpily' and it certainly lacks the crisp pick-up of the fuel injection system of the Z1000H. But once 3,000 revs have been reached everything smooths out and the power can really be felt.

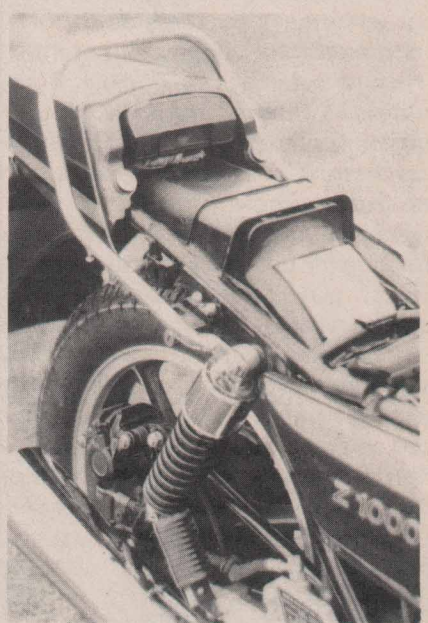
Once on the road, the changes to the machine really begin to show their worth. Suspension is by the increasingly common air front forks, set up with adjustable spring and damper units to the rear. This arrangement really looks after the handling and aids the feeling of security. If this were not enough, then the road holding is phenomenal. Tyres, especially those of the Japanese variety,

have over the years come in for some stick (or the lack of it) but the Bridgestones Mag Opus fitted to the Z1000J are superb. In the dry and especially in wet conditions they really inspired confidence almost to the point of complacency and we all know what happens when we become complacent. The Z1000J is far and away the best handling one litre bike to come from the Orient yet. All this adds up to a machine which is incredibly safe in all conditions. Quite often large capacity machines are a bind in heavy traffic conditions. Not so the Kawasaki. Its quick steering and easy handling coupled with a docility which belies its enormous power reserves, make the bike at home whatever the going.



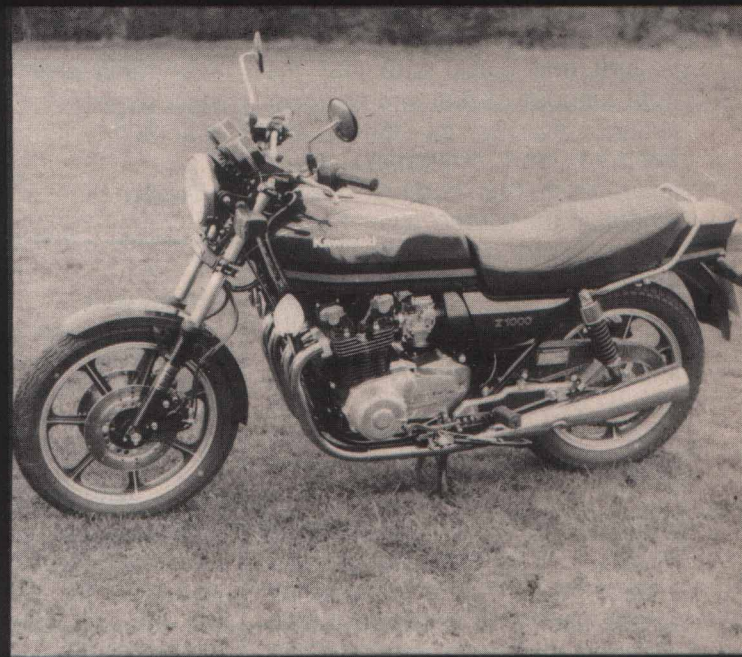
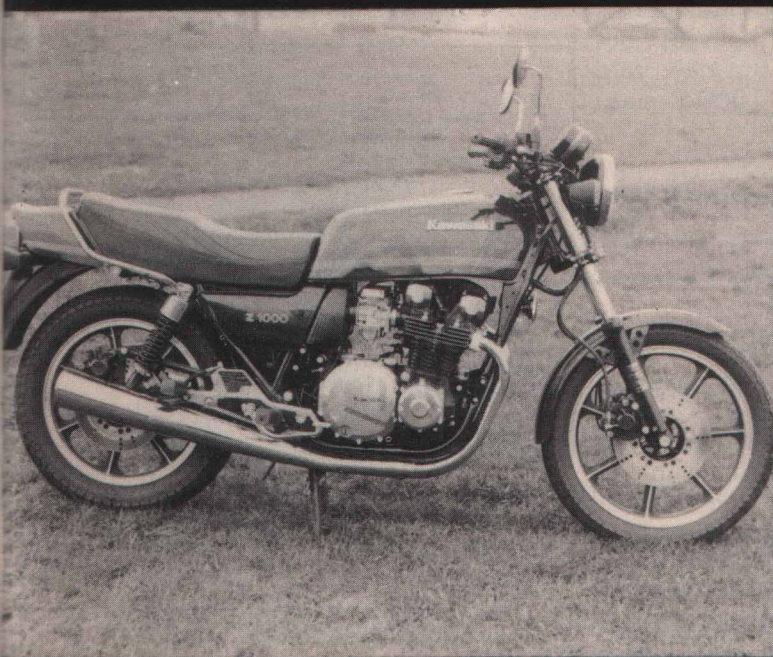
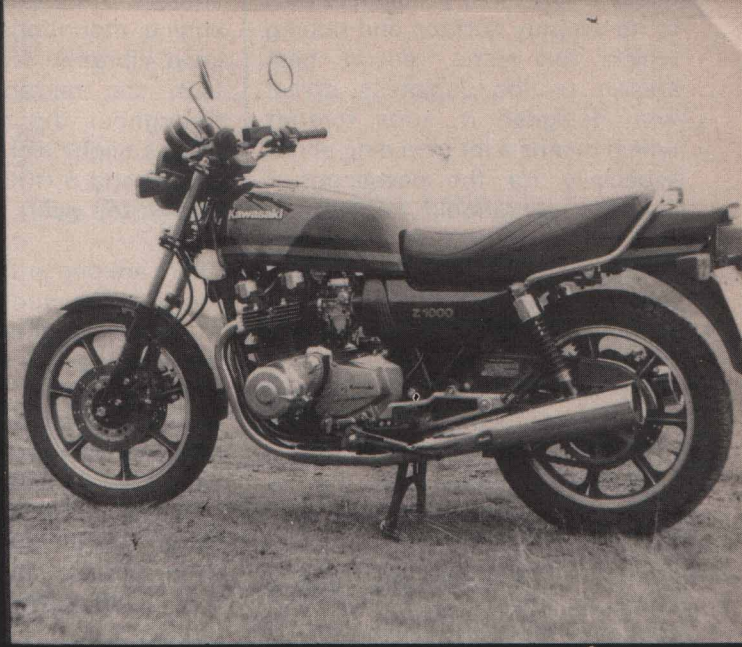
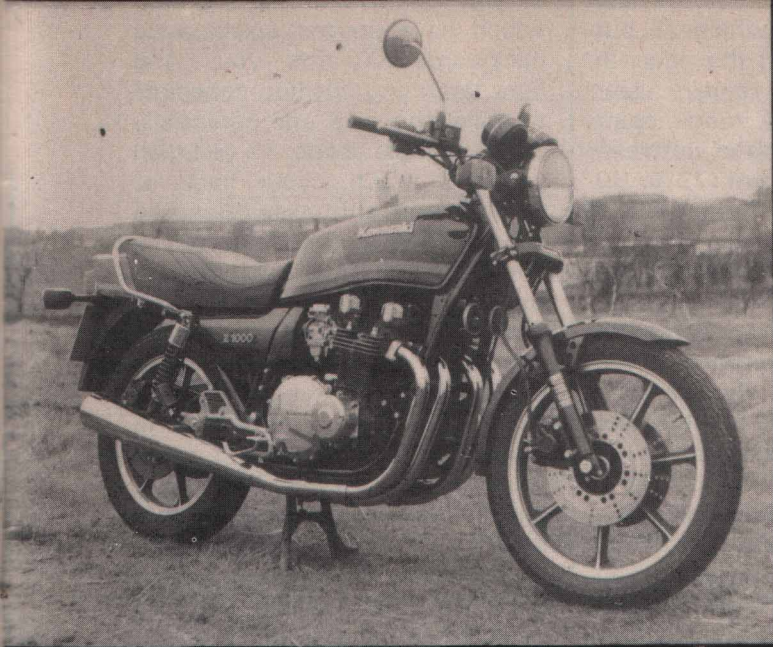
Drilled discs and sintered pads provide excellent wet weather braking

There are however two points which could be improved. Firstly the brakes, 90% of the time the brakes were more than adequate for general riding. Even in the wet Kawasaki's famous sintered pads gripped immediately. But on the test bike, the brakes had a spongy feel, even after bleeding them. The main problem, however, arose when using the performance capabilities of the bike to maximum effect. At speeds in excess of 100 mph the Z1000H would pull up yards sooner than the new model despite its heavier weight. It's something that is difficult to define. I may be wrong but they look to be the same as those filled to the Z750E introduced last year and if so are just not up to the job.



Seat removed shows document compartment and tool kit

The second complaint is with regard to the seat. Kawasaki have provided the latest seat with a non corrosive plastic base, which also saves weight. Fine! Except that it is of the lift-off variety which I personally find a bore but also because it's such a fiddly job to unlock it, flick the metal pegs to release it on both sides and lift off. It is even more time-consuming to relocate it and lock it into position. But the main grouse is with regard to comfort - or lack of it. Initially the seat feels good, but on long journeys it lacks support and after more than an hour on the road a chronic aching starts in the



coccyx. The other problem relates to its slippery surface and ribbing which for some reason best known to the Japanese stylist who designed it, runs fore/aft which means a lot of sliding about especially for the passenger. I suppose we should be grateful that Kawasaki now fit a grab rail as standard but I hate to think where passengers would end up without it. My poor wife has developed biceps like Charles Atlas with trying to hang on and its no joke I can tell you! This really is a pity because it is as a long distance tourer that the big Kawasaki should excel,

Enough of the bad points and back to the good. The first concerns the transmission. As is fairly universal on Japanese machinery these days the clutch is light and quick with just the right amount of feel and the gear change equally as quick and positive and Kawasaki have abandoned the curious oddity, whereby the clutch lever had to be pulled in before the engine would turn over. Chain life is excellent too. 1500 to 2000 miles being covered before adjustment is necessary and a life of 20,000 to 30,000 before replacement isn't bad and hardly worth bothering a shaft for.

The second good point is the bike's phenomenal fuel consumption. Overall we attained an average of 58 miles per gallon of liquid platinum and regularly achieved over 60. Even during performance testing it recorded 45mpg which is far better than many machines of less than half its capacity and even better than some a quarter of its size. This means that journeys of over 200 miles can easily be contemplated before going onto reserve if your bum will stand up to it. Although Kawasaki recommend 2 star it does run better on 3 star.

The circular 55/60w headlamp is excellent, giving a good and definite spread of light, and the rear light, which appears grey in colour by day gives off what can be described as a conspicuous, subdued brightness at night.

On the road the bike is extremely

smooth, thanks mainly to the new engine mountings which all but keep vibration from the rider. In fact, the mirrors remain clear throughout the rev range apart from a slight blurring at between 4,500 and 5,000 rpm (75 to 80 mph in top gear).

There are one or two nice touches too. Like the studs on the grab rail to attach "bungee" straps to and the steering lock integral with the ignition switch. Before the Chancellor increased tax, the new bike sold for the same price as the old MK2 which can't be bad. All in all it's a very pleasurable bike, the lighter weight making it easier to push around the garage even though the seat height creates problems for those with short legs. Its a shame about the brakes and a pity about the seat, but everything else is the new yard stick by which the 1000cc class is judged.

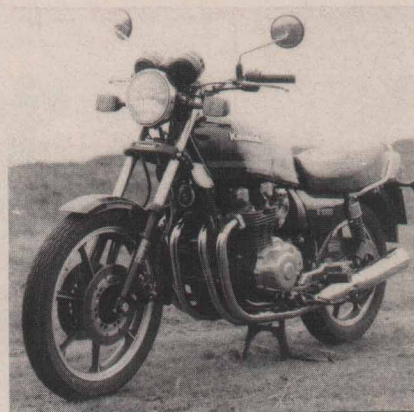
I liked it ! Les Packham

Mmm, well

I only had the Kawasaki a short time, but I was not enamoured of it. It may be lighter than its predecessors, but it's still one hell of a big motorcycle. Climbing into the saddle elevates the rider so he's just below the snow-line, with the tips of his toes. And I'm just under 6ft. Lesser mortals (like the editor, whose legs stop at his knees) would be 6ft under before they got mobile. Once in the saddle, you are still aware of the bike's bulk which is exaggerated by the 'remote' feeling conveyed by the arms-in-the-air riding position. More of this anon.

The busy mill starts readily; the clutch is light; the gearchange impeccable. But how undergeared the bike is! I was often searching for another gear or two above top; in 5th you're doing no more than 70 m.p.h. at 4,500 r.p.m.: ridiculous for a 998 cc motor. This undergearing means changes down the box are hardly needed, particularly as the motor is flexible enough to allow 25 m.p.h. pottering in top. From this speed, a slight easing of the throttle will have the Kawasaki howling away

as you look over the cars ahead, which have started accelerating backwards towards you. And here the riding position conspires to make this bike one potentially uncontrollable bolide. As you rush past 80 m.p.h., your back as straight and stiff as a Victorian schoolma'am's, the blast shoves you rearward; so you hang on to the 'bars, inevitably opening the throttle more, and more, and the wind-rush colliding with your frame takes the weight off the front wheel. . . . Interesting stuff. The footrests aren't badly placed, so why the daft handlebars? Do they constitute a safety (!?) device to make you knock off the speed when you get tired (and I did, quickly) of being pounded by the airflow? Or do big 'K' purchasers like a challenge?



I found the handling something of a challenge on anything but perfectly smooth bends and corners. Even when tackling the latter, the beast's bulk doesn't exactly encourage you to stick it into a corner quickly with power on. But timidity won't do either. Enter a bend on a trailing throttle, and the bike wants to run wide, leaping away from the apex if the surface is poor. At sedate speeds, the handling is fine, but this is one machine I wouldn't like to push round corners.

Is it a tourer? Not with its equally incredible performance and riding position. Sports mount? I doubt it; Joe Average could get from point to point quicker on a number of other bikes. High Street point-and-squirt machine? Certainly. There's no way members of the traffic light grand prix circus are going to see off this tool.

. John Fairclough

SPECIFICATIONS :

Engine :	<i>998 cc dohc four (69.4 x 66mm)</i>
Max. Power :	<i>102 bhp @ 8,500 r.p.m. Max. Torque : 67.3lbs/ft at 7,000 rpm</i>
Lubrication :	<i>Wet Sump</i>
Carburation :	<i>4cv 34mm Mikuni</i>
Ignition :	<i>Electronic, coil</i>
Primary Drive :	<i>Helical gears</i>
Clutch :	<i>Wet multiplate</i>
Transmission :	<i>5 speed constant mesh gearbox, 630 sealed final drive chain</i>

Tank capacity :	<i>4.7 imp. galls</i>
Frame :	<i>Duplex cradle</i>
Suspension :	<i>Front – telescopic air fork Rear – adjustable damp/pre loaded springs</i>
Brakes :	<i>Front – twin 10.25" discs Rear – single 10.25" disc</i>
Tyres :	<i>Front – 325V 19L 303 Bridgestone Mag Mopus Rear – 425V 18G 506 Bridgestone</i>

Dimensions :		
Wheelbase	<i>62.25"</i>	
Seat Height	<i>33.25"</i>	
Ground clearance	<i>6.5"</i>	
Width	<i>29"</i>	

<u>Performance</u>	<u>Fuel Consumption</u>
<i>Max Speed : 134.3 mph</i>	<i>Overall 57.3</i>
<i>Standing ¼ mile : 11.92 secs</i>	<i>Best 63.2</i>
	<i>Worst 45.3 During performance tests</i>