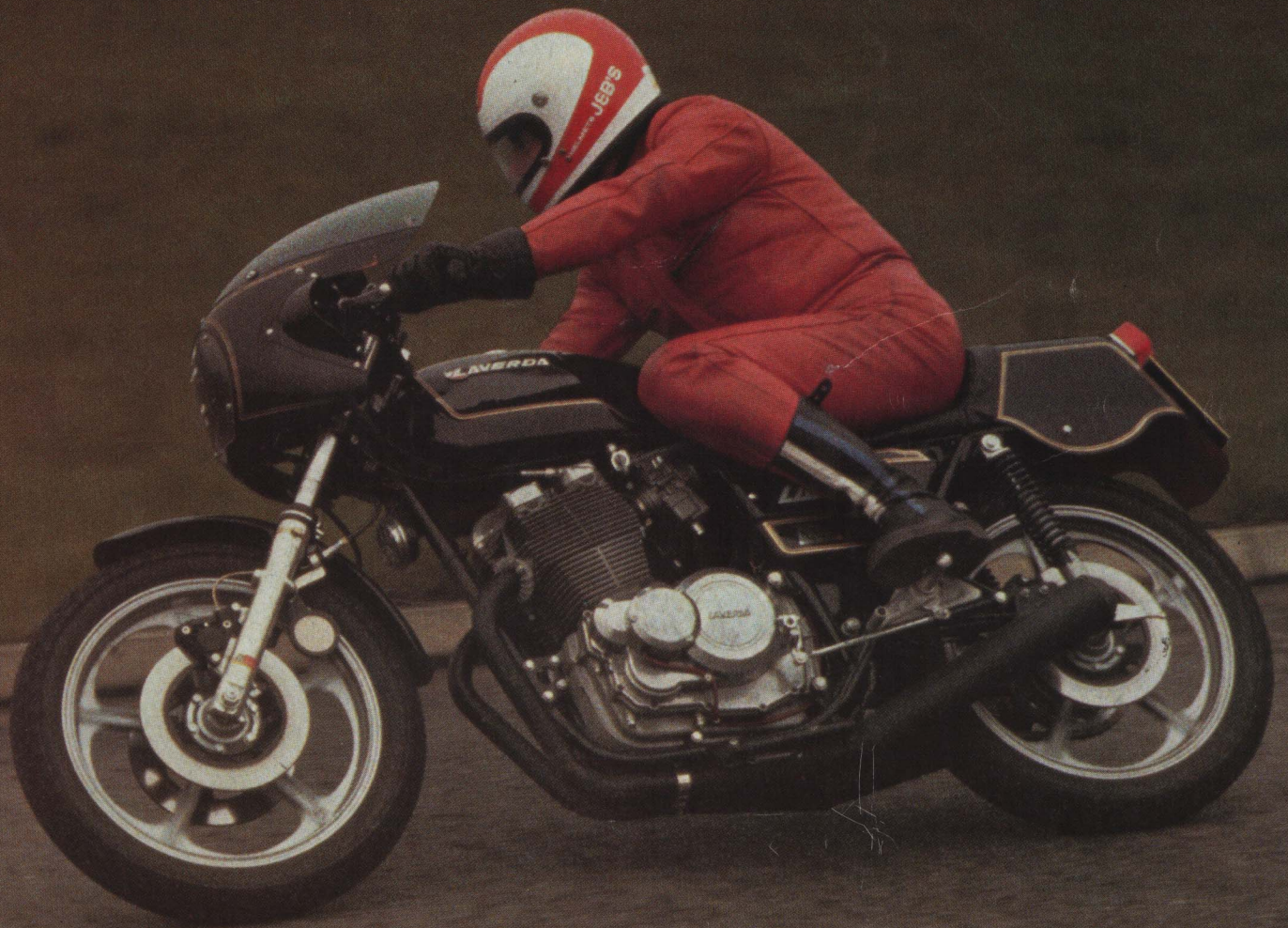


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# *Motorcycle* **ENTHUSIAST**

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## FEATURE ARTICLES:

**ROAD TESTS** — Kawasaki, Laverda, Moto Guzzi & Yamaha

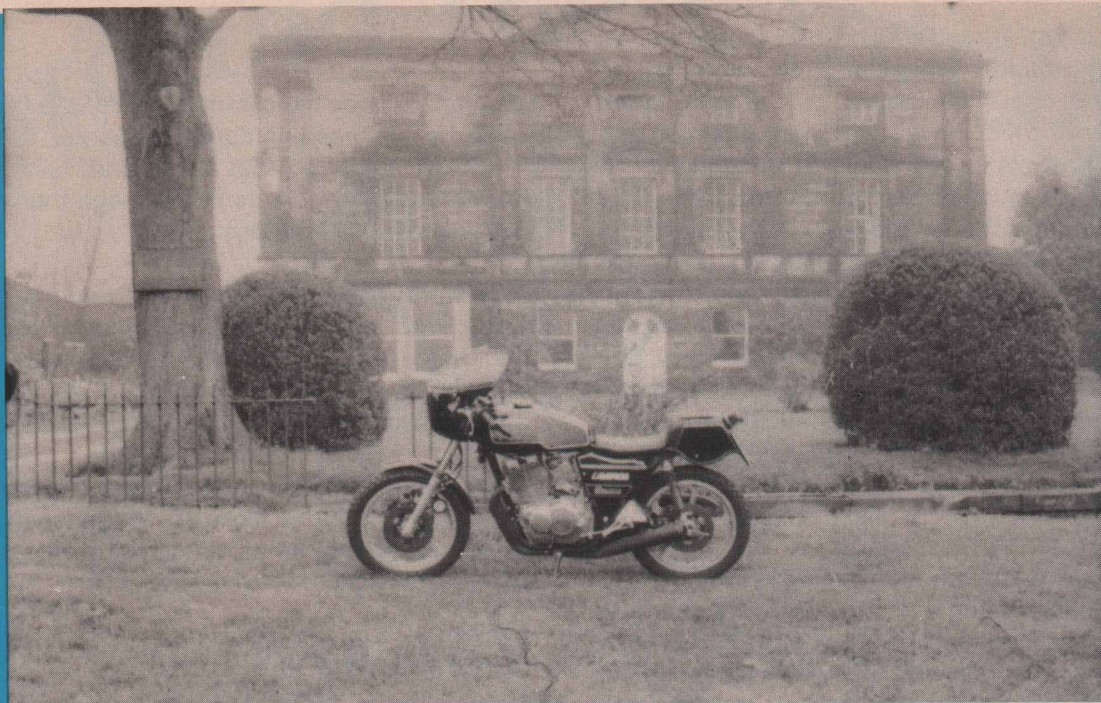
**LOOKING BACK ON THE TT** by Mick Grant

**TAKING YOUR BIKE THROUGH FRANCE TO SPAIN**

**VELOCETTE REBUILD**

**ROAD SAFETY**

..... AND MUCH MORE

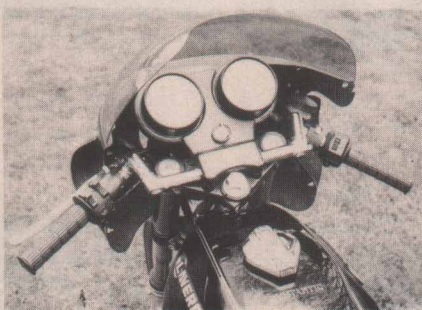
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## CONCERTO FOR A 'TWISTY ROAD

by John Fairclough

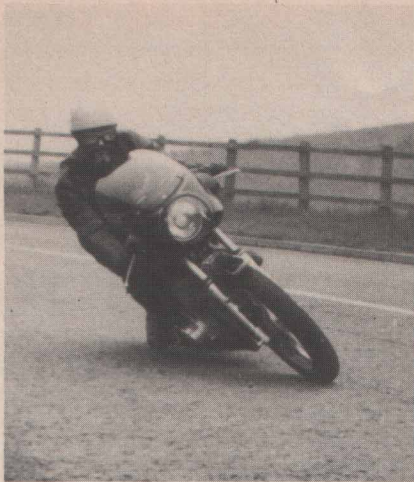
Students of architecture will note a certain Italian influence evident in James Paine's Heath House (Wakefield) of 1744 : the Palladian proportions, the Ionic columns, the coupled pilasters (à la Inigo Jones), the fine . . . Oh, the Laverda? Yes, well perhaps some Italian influence there too. In fact, about 99% worth, if you deduct 1% for the d-i-y handlebar fairing and seat unit made in G.B. Actually, 'Italian' is stamped so emphatically on the Montjuic's cobby proportions that even the local plimsoll-wearing FSIE brigade had no doubt that it wasn't made in Japan (unless the ones I encountered were knowledgeable types and knew Laverdas come from Italy). Unfortunately, it wasn't made in Britain, though it conjures up memories of Gold Stars and Velo Thruxtons, and like them is the subject of inflated performance claims, inevitable with machines of such charisma. Equally inevitable is the question "What'll it do?" So here's the answer. In standard form the Montjuic is about as fast as a standard Thruxton or untweaked 500cc Goldie, i.e. it'll do approximately

115 m.p.h. And I know that any one of this trio can be made to go faster, but write and tell me if you must. Where the Montjuic does out-perform the other two is in the handling and braking departments.



The Laverda is the most endearing motorcycle I have ridden for some time, though it's far from faultless. The finish of the cycle parts is poor, switchgear is not of the best and the Nippon Denso speedometer optimistic. But these things are forgotten as soon as you ease the Montjuic off its side-stand. Its low weight (a claimed 360 lbs. dry) gives it the feel of a 250cc machine and the low seat height (29 ins.) brings you close to the tarmac and right 'into' the bike. You don't sit 'on' this cycle.

The almost infinitely-adjustable Jota-type handlebars offer sufficient permutations to rule out aching wrists, though an aching posterior is more or less guaranteed by the hard seat. But at least the latter is of a reasonable length; you can shift around a bit, and the generous bum-stop chocks your cheeks reassuringly (nice, eh Les?) when you're tramping on. The footpegs you are stuck with. Mounted on plates which are slotted into the sub-frame used to support the pillion rests on the Alpino, these rear-sets are really rear rear-sets! What's more, they're very high. There are two draw-backs. One, your legs feel coiled somewhere behind you as you are forced to adopt a surprisingly comfortable (for 100 miles or so) frog-like riding position which causes leather jeans or whatever, to ruck up and compress tightly behind the knees — painful after a while. Two, this riding position means your feet tend to point roadwards more markedly than usual, with an attendant loss of leather when cranked over. In turn, the gear-change and brake pedals have to be angled fairly steeply for



comfort which brings them that much nearer the tarmac. However, as our brake pedal was being chamfered on the road surface the 'silencer' was just grazing the deck too, so the bike couldn't have gone much further over without interesting results. On the left, the propstand is the first thing to drag.

Such excessive angles of bank require no heroics. The Montjuic feels so 'right' that you find yourself looking for corners and smirking as you hammer round them. Our machine was fitted with Pirelli Mandrakes which drifted slightly at the limit in a pleasingly communicative fashion. Some Montjuics come shod with Phantoms, others with Gordons. The latter appear to be first choice for fast road work and club circuitry, as confirmed by Daventry club racer Syd Shackelford when I spoke to him at the Velocette Owners Cadwell Meeting back in May. Though his Montjuic was wearing Dunlop KR124 racing covers at that meeting, he rated Gordons very highly, and better than Phantoms for short-circuit stuff. Syd had also added a Kawasaki steering damper which the Montjuic certainly needs. Steering is very light and encourages rapid changes of direction, but a good deal of handlebar flap can set in on bumpy corners.

The suspension, courtesy of Marzocchi, is a curious mixture: front forks which have plenty of travel without being the least bit soft, and near rock-hard rear units

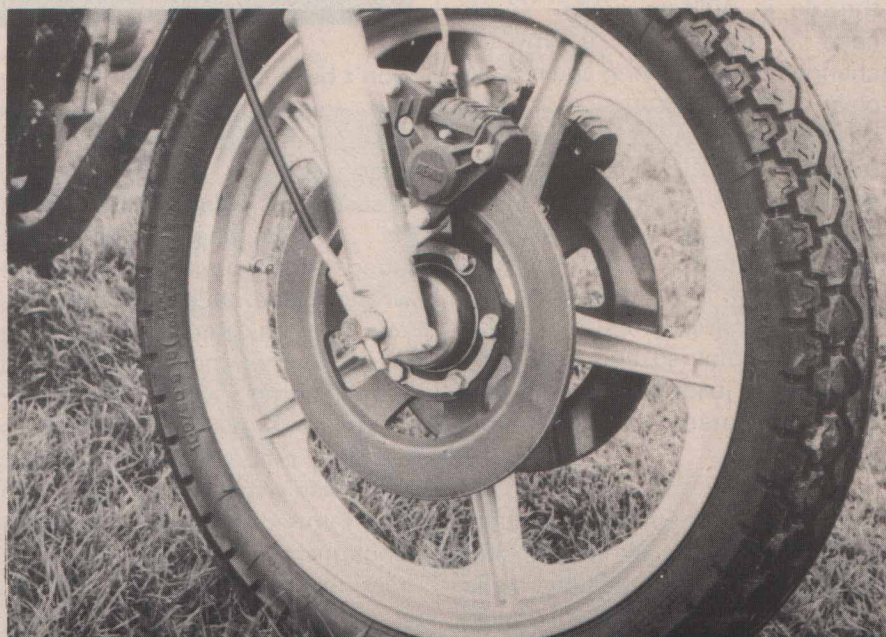
which, even on the softest of the five settings, give the rear end (yours and the bike's) a pounding on all but smooth surfaces. But even if the back end gets airborne occasionally, you simply continue on your chosen line when you return to earth. Not that you really notice this harshness anyway until you have time to think about it on boring old straight bits. It's on the straight bits too, and at highly illegal speeds that the light steering gets even lighter as the breeze embraces the tinpot handlebar fairing and eases the front end skywards, producing a subtle weave. Nothing dangerous, and eliminated once the fairing was removed. (Happily ours had a tendency to self-destruct anyway, ripping out bolt-holes with eagerness). The aforementioned steering damper would doubtless eradicate this weave entirely.

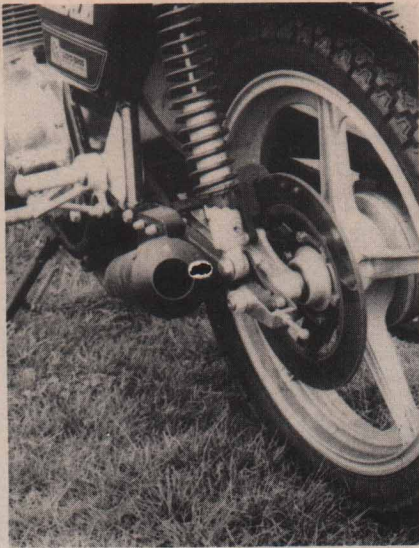
The frame must contribute to the bike's good handling though there's nothing particularly noteworthy about the semi-duplex cradle (single spine and downtube). Some racers have junked it in favour of something more exotic, but any vices it may have were not in the least evident on the road.

Brakes? Perfect. With little weight to stop, the three Brembo calipers biting onto 10¼ in. discs coped with all demands in all conditions,

and were beautifully progressive right up to tyre-whimpering limits. They seemed to have much more feel than some of the larger Brembos fitted to bigger Italian machinery, and used in conjunction with the excellent six-speed gearbox I often found I'd got speed off ridiculously early. Running out of brakes with a Montjuic is a pastime for madmen only.

The bike handles and stops. It goes well too, provided you remember the red line isn't. The Alpino tachometer red-lined at 8,000 r.p.m. and retained no doubt for reasons of economy, is something of a deterrent to revving the motor. But rev it must, and well into the red if you want real progress: maximum b.h.p. (50 plus) is not developed until you've hit 9,000 r.p.m. Rev it to 9,500 (more if your sponsor's paying for rebuilds) and the motor is still smooth, thanks to the crankshaft balancer, though it emits the mechanical symphony (all but drowned by the other music from the megaphones) that is so typical of Italian engines and so unlike the sewing machine susurrations of Japanese mills. You certainly know things are moving inside that beautifully sculptured engine. There's not a lot of power below six grand, and the gearbox has to be used to keep the motor boiling, which is a real pleasure because this gearbox

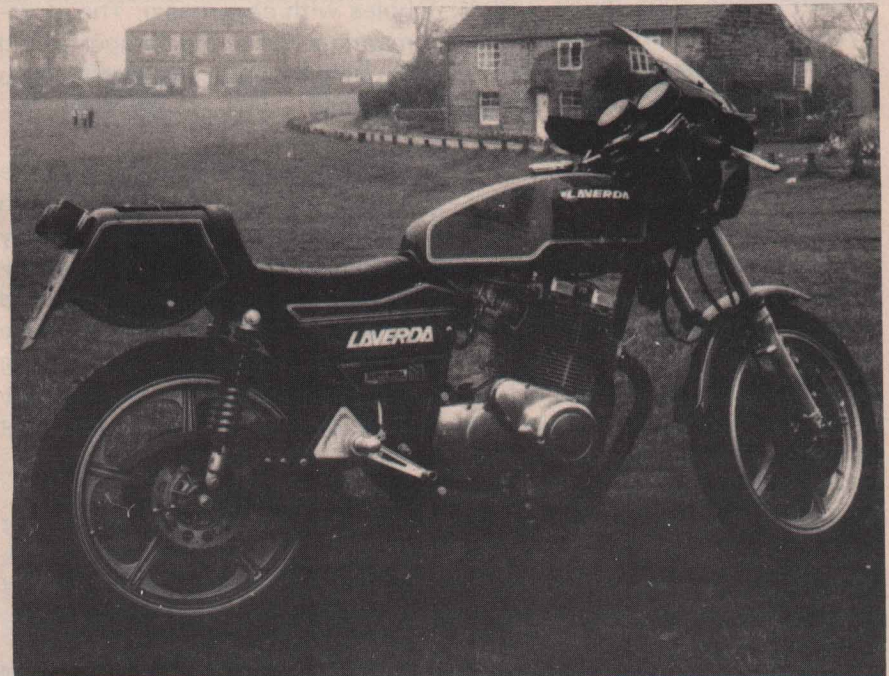
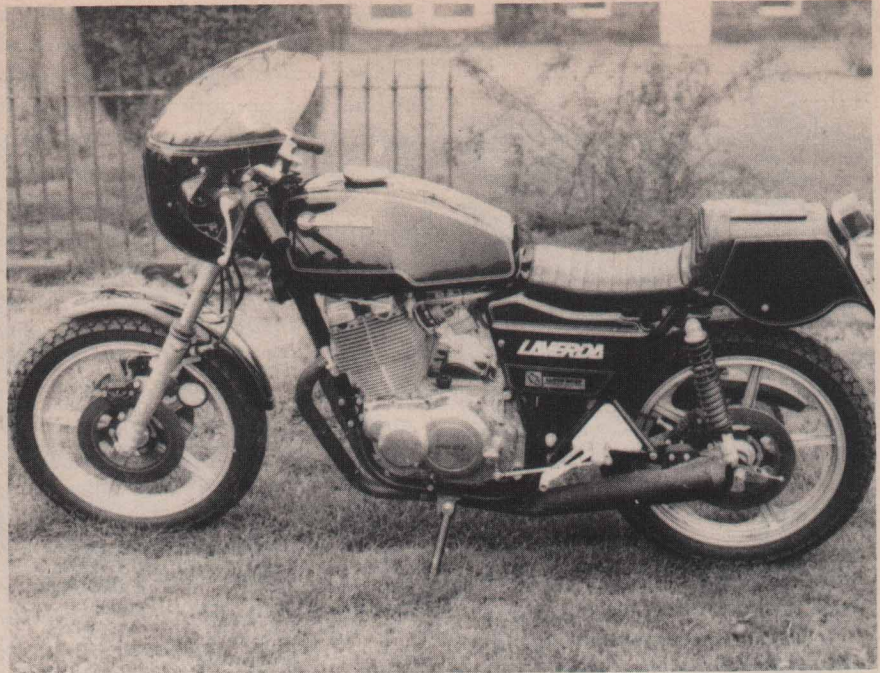




is a beauty and playing tunes on it is part of the pleasure of Montjuicing. Every gearchange produces a delectable warble or harsh braying from the stubby exhausts, depending on throttle openings; shutting off gives you a staccato muttering in the pipes, and downward changes demand precision so that five notes are struck for the appropriate length of time. The public's got to listen to the tune, so you feel obliged to play it properly.

Is the exhaust noise so excessive as to be deemed anti-social? I think not, though a fool and his right hand could make it so. In spite of its lumpy camshaft, 32mm. carbs and 10.2 : 1 pistons, the Montjuic was quite tractable and could be trickled along in a high gear on a whiff of throttle in built-up areas. You'd need a couple of downward changes to get moving again once clear of civilization, but the gearbox is there, and oh boy, any excuse to use it! Our bike certainly wouldn't tick over properly and cut out abruptly if the twistgrip was shut, but waiting at traffic lights needn't be an excuse for throttle-blipping: a fast 'tick-over' could be obtained and held with the throttle just off the stop and not too many disapproving glances.

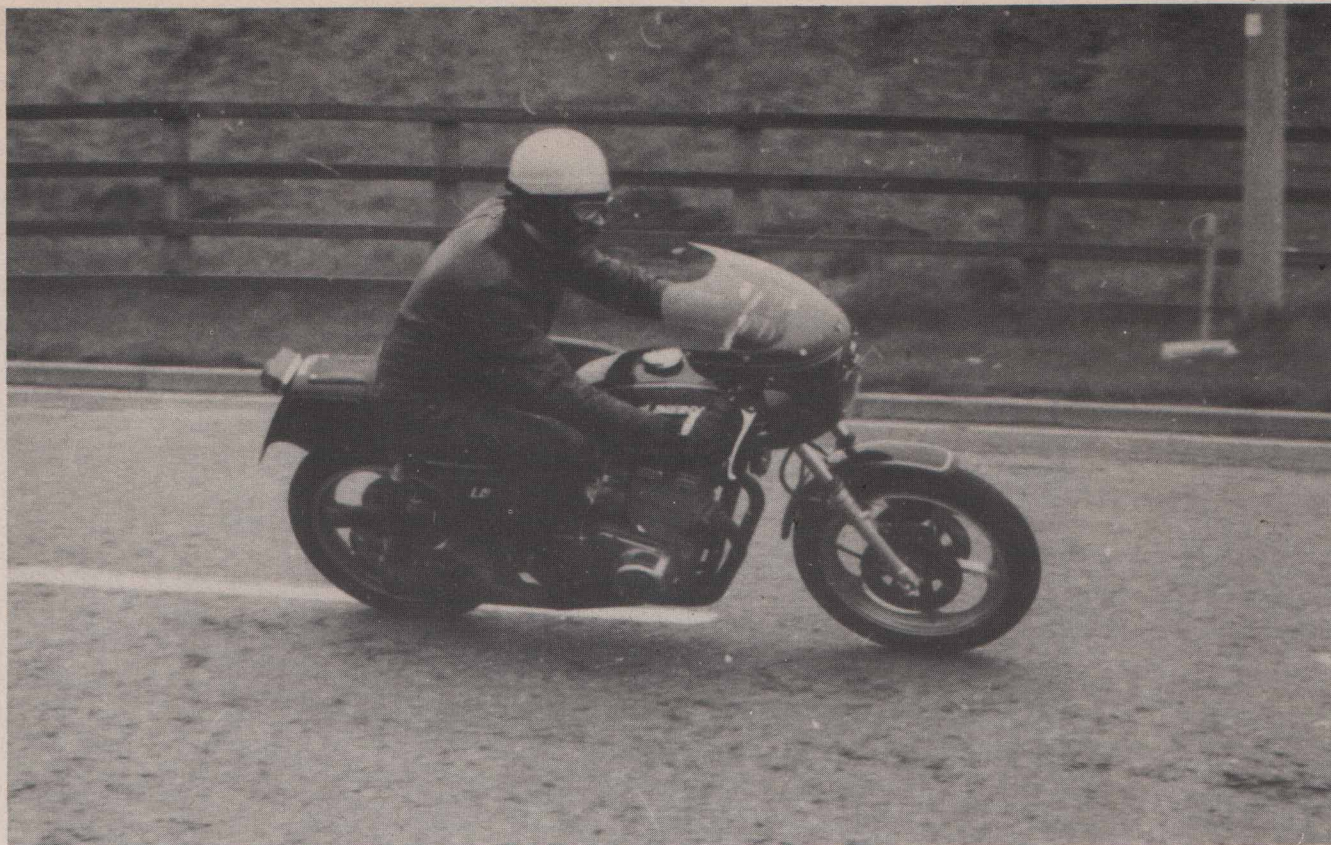
On the open road, you can take some consolation from the fact that if you're riding the Laverda as it's meant to be ridden, the noise



won't be in one place for long. No one was nabbed by the local constabulary during the bike's stay with us, though on one occasion . . . Well, if looks could kill . . . Again, an idiot will soon be stopped for too much noise in the wrong place. If you're sensible you ride on. Personally, I like a machine that gives bliind road users some warning of my imminent arrival. Some drivers couldn't pull over fast enough, and those waiting to join the main road I was on actually stopped at junctions to let me by. In theory, only myopic motorists sporting large ear-trumpets will ram a

Montjuic.

This Laverda exists to transport one person quickly and safely with no more luggage than an oversuit and a packet of fags. You can commute on it. I would be happy to do so, though others found the riding position and lack of indicators an embarrassment in traffic. Poseurs can ride sedately on it. Ageing cowboys can relive their youth on it. But it's no tourer, and you won't be going down to the supermarket on it to get the week's supplies. It's a very expensive 500cc motorcycle at close to £2,500. So if you



equate pound notes with ccs., idiot lights and 130+ m.p.h., the Montjuic won't even get on your shopping list. Which is a pity. Because when you come down to what motorcycling is all about, i.e. twisty roads, you're going to miss out on scratching along them quicker than all but a very few bikes of any capacity. You're going to miss out on the concerto too.

J. F.

**The machine used for this test was a limited edition by Lloyd Bros. of Hamilton.**

**Motorcycle World of Bradford kindly loaned us the machine.**

#### BRIEF SPECIFICATION

**Engine:**  
d.o.h.c. 8 valve 180-degree parallel twin of 497 ccs. Geared crankshaft balancer. 10.2 : 1 compression ratio.

**Carburation:**  
Two 32mm Dellortos.

**Ignition:**  
Bosch capacitor discharge.

**Frame:**  
Semi-duplex cradle.

**Wheels:**  
Five-spoke cast WM3 size.

**Tyres:**  
Pirelli Mandrake 3.00 - 3.25 x 18 front and rear.

**Weight:**  
360 lbs (claimed) dry.

**Top Speed:** **St. ¼ ML**  
115 m.p.h. 13.5 secs.

**Fuel Consumption:**  
49 m.p.g. overall.

**Equipment:**  
Electric starter, handlebar fairing, side-stand, tachometer, speedometer (with trip), flasher, steering lock, toolkit.

