

WANKEL 2000

The Little Wonder



HAD BEEN summoned to the Editor's desk; "Wankel," he said. "Pardon?"

"I want you to test the DKW Wankel 2000." Ah yes, it was all clear now. I was to road test the DKW, a rotary engine motor cycle, that's the type of machine Suzuki spent a small fortune developing and couldn't sell to anyone.

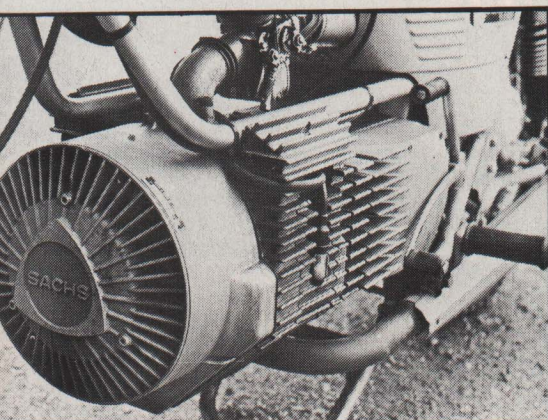
DKW on the other hand have taken the easy way out and fitted a modified Sachs-Wankel 27 power unit into a motorcycle frame. This engine, in one form or another is used in all manner of things from snowmobiles to static industrial units.

Before riding the bike I looked up our last road test and checked the "Bumph" panel. 27bhp and a price tag over £900 should make it one of the most expensive toys we have tested to date. With the power output of a 250 and a price tag some £300 over the odds, it would have to be pretty special to be regarded as anything other than a "Toy".

When the machine first arrived things got off to a bad start; the bike wasn't charging. With magneto ignition this didn't affect starting or running, substituting the kickstart for the starter motor and glaring at people instead of flashing the headlamp.

ROAD
TEST

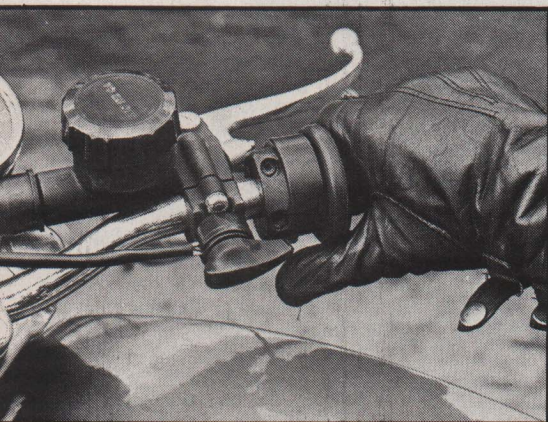
WANKEL 2000



Suspended from a twin-loop frame, the 294cc single rotor Wankel is fan cooled and has a six-speed gearbox.



The short kick-start lever was difficult to use and its left foot operation didn't help.



The indicator switches were large and clumsy, not only that they were difficult to operate.

Fortunately, the engine started quite readily, hot or cold, and after an initial belch of smoke from the exhaust it settled down to an irregular throb, accompanied by a nice bark from the silencers.

Like most motorcyclists, I have a lengthy suspicion of anything new, or different, and the Deek had to overcome it if it was to leave me with even a half favourable impression. For this reason the DKW must be quite a lot of motor-bike because within the first one hundred yards it had won me over.

Weaving my way out of the car park the low speed steering felt just right and a tweak of the right wrist brought the front forks up as the bike surged forward in a manner belieing its 294cc. The mid range punch from 4000 to 5000 rpm is reminiscent of a 500 four stroke twin rather than a 250cc two stroke. This coupled to the silky smooth six-speed gearbox gave a tremendous impression of speed and around town there was plenty of go on hand.

The first round-about produced another surprise. Having plenty of go is one thing but there was a decided lack of stop. Some might argue that this only adds to the excitement but I prefer brakes with plenty of bite coupled with light lever pressure. The 300mm front disc needed a big handful of lever to produce even moderate retardation. The rear brake, however, seemed just right giving a good account of itself under light pedal loads but needing a determined effort on the part of the rider to lock up the rear wheel.

The riding position was perfect for my particular shape and size. The bars were nice and flat and the footrests set back and tucked up slightly. This provided a very comfortable forward lean that gave rider balance against the wind at 70mph but without making wrists ache at low speed. The general riding position was, in fact, reminiscent of an old Norton twin — and that's meant as a compliment.

The switchgear on the other hand was less than satisfactory. In order to operate the indicators or lights one hand had to be removed from the bars, or both hands if you wanted to switch the lights on and indicate at the same time. Since the switch gear was part of the lever clamps you could, of course, move them nearer to the grips but then the levers would be awkward to operate.

The six speed gearbox was one of the nicest units that we have come across for a long time. The ratios were nicely spaced and the change, both up and down, was really

smooth. With most of the engine torque stacked in the middle of the rev range rapid cog swapping produced lively performance without over-revving the engine.

When testing a machine as different as the DKW it is all too easy to get carried away, paying most of your attention to the engine, simply because it is so different. There can be no doubt about it though, the jet turbine-like lump hanging under the frame certainly attracts a lot of attention wherever the bike is parked.

Initially, the engine seemed incredibly powerful for its size. The stopwatch, however, makes a fraud of these impressions because the performance figures are just what you would expect from a 27bhp power unit. To be fair to the Deek, the motor was making a lot of mechanical noise when we picked it up from the importer and although most of the power on our test bike evaporated after 5,500rpm it could be that other examples are much better.

The motor is certainly smooth with just a hint of torque reaction when the throttle is opened from tickover, with American silencing legislation making most Japanese bikes sound like sewing machines it was a nice change to find a bike with a nice healthy bark to the exhaust. Two silencers are fitted but since these are both fed from the one exhaust port I would think that this is just an attempt to make the machine appear conventional; it doesn't work!

On light throttle loadings the engine had a marked tendency to four-stroke; or whatever it is that a Wankel rotor does, and as the test progressed I found myself continually accelerating and slowing down to keep the motor running evenly. When cruising, this was not a problem as the motor was spinning over at 4000rpm with an indicated 70mph on the clock. With the motor turning at this speed cruising was really relaxed and a slight tweak on the throttle was all that was needed to cope with head winds and inclines.

After a very relaxed 100 mile run down to the test track the Deek was giving 46mpg which is not as bad as I had feared, but after adding the cost of the oil mix to the petrol the consumption in miles per pound is not so good.

Handling on the road felt quite solid but when you started to use all the road things got decidedly twitchy. A look at the tyres revealed an interesting combination of foot-wear. The front tyre was the standard Continental while the rear boot was a Dunlop TT 100. At high speed on the track this set up produced some interesting results. Heeling

the bike into an 80mph turn started a vicious weave and the rear end felt as if it was about to pull out and overtake the front wheel.

In the past we have said that some of these high speed antics looked much worse than they felt, this one felt as bad as it looked and goes to show how dangerous it can be to mix different manufacturers' tyres.

By the time we had finished the test session the DKW had had enough of our attempts to make it corner at speed and expired. At the time of going to press we have no details about the extent of the damage but the rotor certainly did not want to revolve in its chamber.

So is the DKW rotary a bike worthy of the potential customer's consideration?

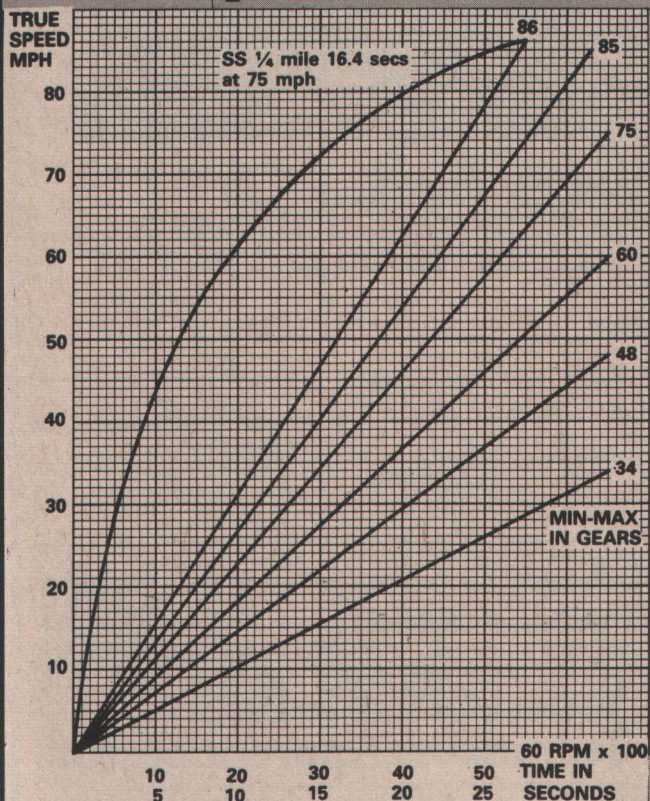
It depends on what you are looking for. Compared to other machines of the same power output the DKW is a superb machine, being smooth, quite rapid and, given the right tyres, a safe handling mount.

If you start looking at other machines in the same price range, however, there is no contest. For around the same price you could get any of the Japanese 550's which will out-corner, out-brake and generally out-perform the DKW without really trying. There is always, however, the difference factor, and if you are looking for something really different then the DKW could be the bike for you.

DAVE WALKER



Performance & specification



PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed	86mph
Standing start	
1/4 mile	16.4sec at 75mph
Braking from 30mph	32ft
Fuel consumption	
Average	42mpg
Best	46mpg
Worst	N/A

ENGINE UNIT

Single rotor, fan cooled	
Wankel	
Displacement	294cc
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Claimed output	27bhp @ 6500rpm
Ignition system	Magneto
Carburation	Single Bing CV 64/32/17
Clutch	Multiplate
Gear Ratios	16.74; 11.6; 8.66; 6.78 5.76; 4.89
Lubrication	Petrol

CHASSIS

Telescopic Ceriani front forks with 115mm travel. Rear swing arm with five position dampers and 80mm travel. 300mm front single disc with a 180mm drum on the rear.

Weight (claimed) 350 lbs

Wheelbase	57.5 ins
Ground clearance	8.25 ins
Seat height	31.5 ins
Castor	67 deg
Trail	3.5 ins
Fuel tank	4 gall

PARTS PRICES INC VAT

Front mudguard	£8.75
Handlebar	£3.19
Speedo cable	£2.64
CB points	£3.76
Exhaust system	£83.43
List price (inc delivery)	£928
Model with oil injection	£1036
Warranty	12 months 12,000miles

Importer: Mobyke (Accessories) Ltd, Villiers Road, London, NW2 5QD.

HOW IT COMPARES

Model	PRICE	MAX SPEED	FUEL CONSUMPTION	SS 1/4	WEIGHT
DKW 2000	918	86	46	16.4	350
Suzuki 380	747	101	45	14.8	377
Morini Sport 350	995	94	60	15.8	345
Yamaha RD250	667.50	91	47	16.4	320
Suzuki GT 250	637.00	92	44	15.9	322