

Kawasaki re-establish the

John McDermott tried the new four-pot Kawa at a Press Launch in Scotland. His verdict? Kawasaki's best yet.

WHAT can one say about a bike — a brand new, straight-from-the-crate machine with virgin innards, having ridden it for a bare 65 miles? In all truth, nothing very deep at all. Initial impressions count for something of course, but they can only be that: a quick, off-the-cuff appraisal.

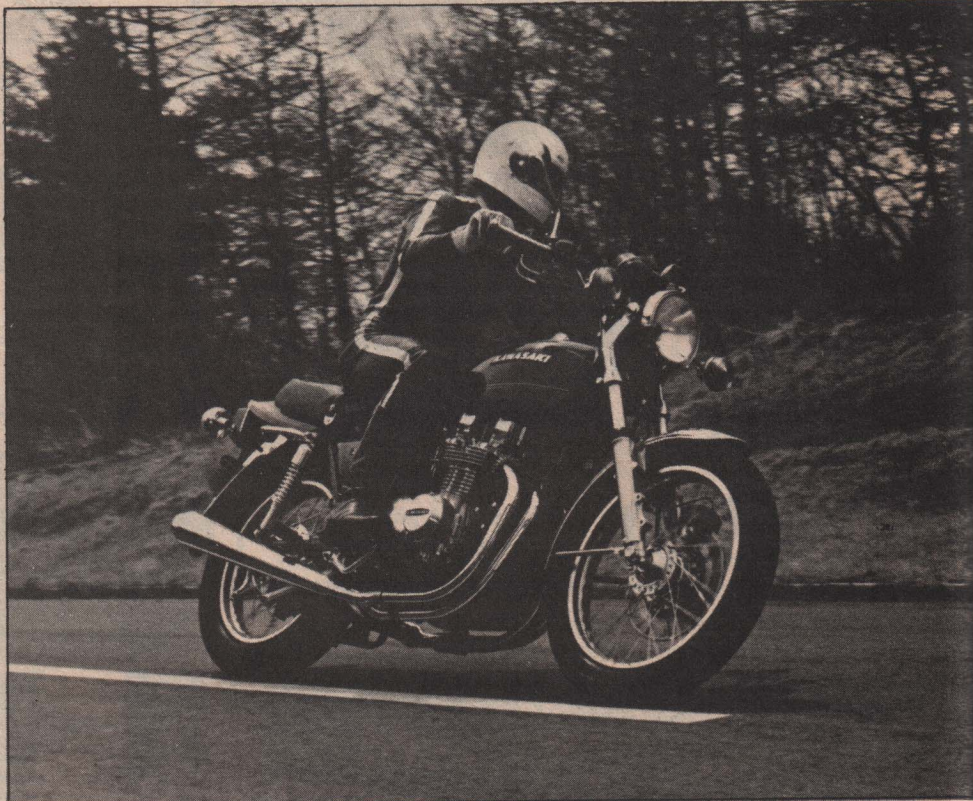
One thing I am sure of though, in recreating the 650 class, Kawasaki have built themselves their best yet offering, Z1 and Z900 included, for this middleweight is a real peach, a super-sweetie that will compete with both 500 and 750 sales on the showroom floor.

The 650 dohc engine was first conceived in April 1971. Having completed their work on the Z900, Messrs Tanegashima and Inamura studied the American market for a lead as to what to produce next. When the big one was eventually launched onto world markets to replace the Z1, other jobs had to be done, so the 650 was shelved until late 1973.

A brief plan of campaign was decided upon: a 650 would be right. Not too large, not too small. Certainly not too heavy. It had to be fast enough to compete with the competition's 750s and manageable enough to rob a few 500 sales as well. 60 bhp was thought of as being the minimum power to aim for and a four-pot motor would make that fairly easy to attain. With the same team that produced the 900 dohc models, things got underway. It was decided — sadly in my view — to design a motorcycle that had a flat, across-the-board appeal. One that was neither sporty nor touristic, a plain and basic but attractive bike that could be stylized by owners should they want to bother. The Z650 could have been Kawasaki's chance to do something different, like Honda's CB400F perhaps, but they chose a safe path that would offend nobody and please the majority. Fair enough, but I would like to see motorcycles in the '70s leave the '40s and '50s look of yesteryear behind.

My first ride on the machine was at Ingliston race circuit, at the Royal Highland Showground just outside the Edinburgh city limits. It's a tight little one mile loop and makes an ideal off-road test track for a bike that is low on mileage. The following day I used it on country roads.

I criticized Kawasaki at a later 'talk-in' for two of their innovations on this model, because it worries me that the more our imbecilic legislators are shown how idiotproof



(as opposed to foolproof) manufacturers can make bikes, the more hard and fast legislation will be brought to bear on future models. The Z650 can only be started, even if the bike is in neutral, by pressing on the starter button and pulling the clutch lever in. Clever, but why?

The other bit of nonsense that upset me was the idiot light on the dash panel that lights up when the stoplamp is activated — so you can tell if the stoplamp packs up. On a motorcycle? That seems to discourage commonsense and regular maintenance. However, KHI need not be damned over these points, but I hope they and other manufacturers bear in mind that legislation could kill their market, and one does not feed the hand that bites any more than the other way about.

The bike felt good. Nicely proportioned, light and manageable. And it steered like a good 'un. Not that navigation was perfect, it was not, being let down somewhat by the damping of the rear struts. The following day during our country ride, having been used by all and sundry for six hours, the dampers were in need of a rest. The back

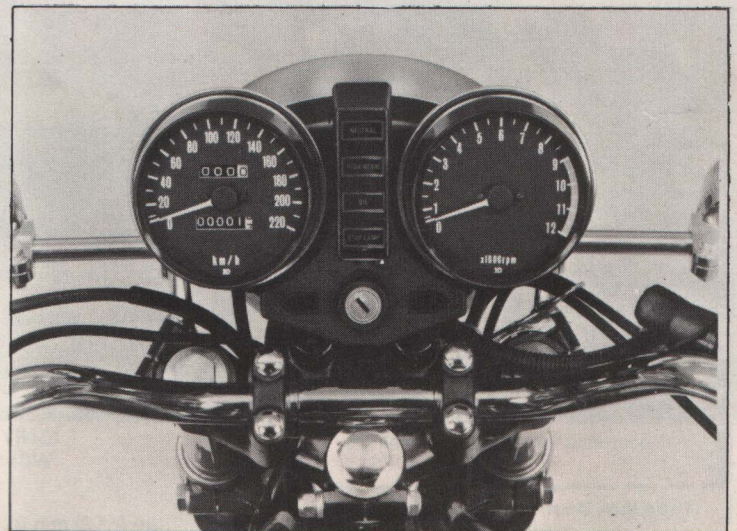
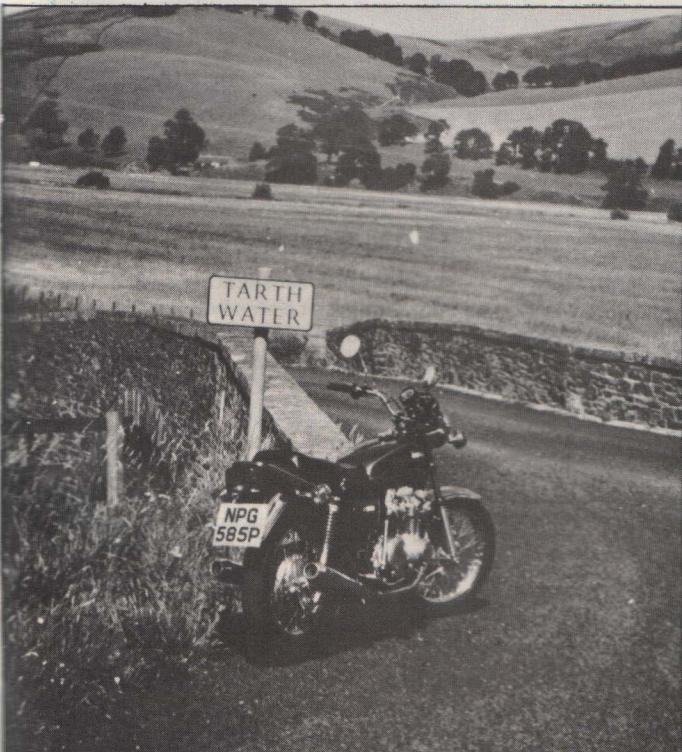
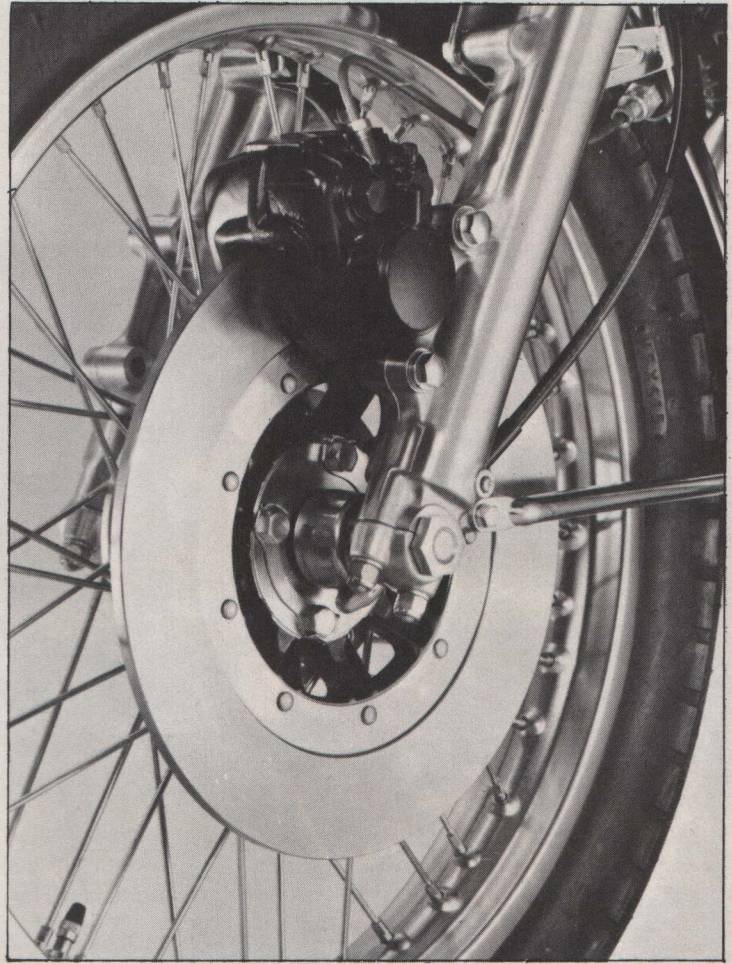
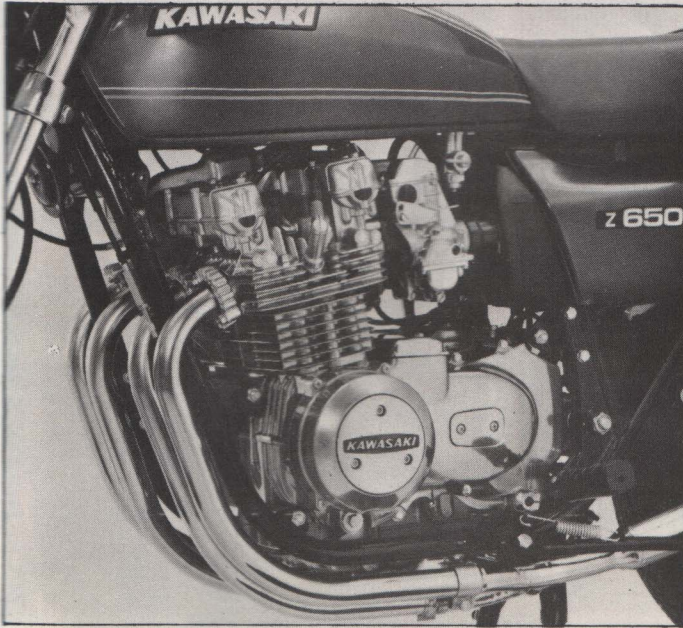
end started wagging a little on fast bends indicating that a few hours off would do them a world of good.

But steering was up with the best in the oriental stakes, certainly an improvement on the 900 and a little more positive than the 750 twin. The five ratios in the gearbox were well chosen and preferred to be used above 4000 rpm in order to show their talent. A top speed of 120 mph is talked about and my inclination is to agree that that could be made, although I would hazard a guess that most owners will get an easy 115 and a very occasional higher reading.

It will be an economical little flyer too. During tests at KHI in Japan an incredible 114 mpg (that may be US gallons) was obtained at a steady 31 mph — but whatever the impracticality of matching that on the road, however treated the bike should return a goodly consumption.

The same publicity notes tell us that it will cover the standing quarter mile in 12.4 seconds — almost matching the 900. If so, then the queue for those green or red zappers is going to be thick and deep.

650 class





Photography this page: John Nutting / Motor Cycle

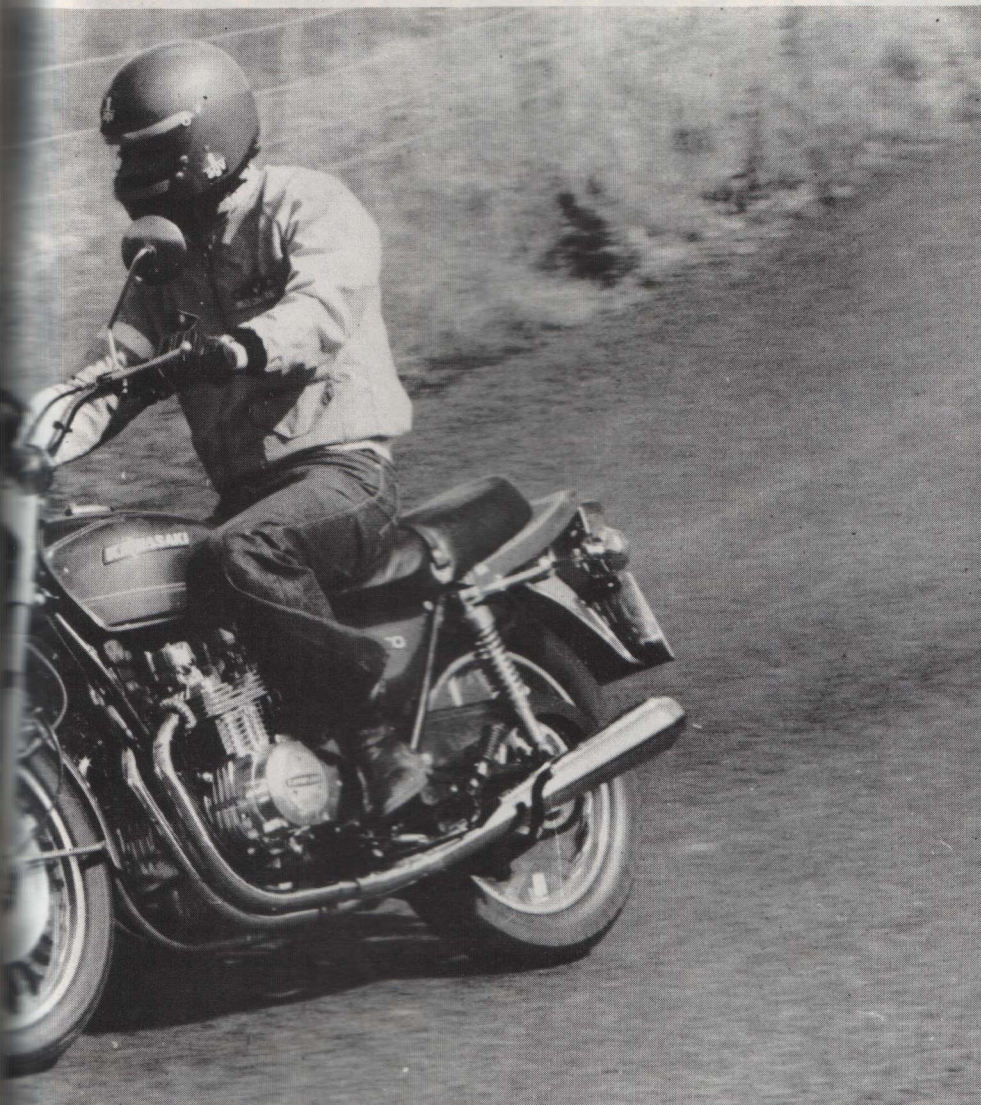


The engine is super smooth and a joy to use, but it is quite firmly sports orientated. Keeping the motor on a level 4000 rpm, for normal unrushed cruising, the ride became a little snatchy and annoying, the thing was far happier either accelerating or decelerating, not running at a steady low speed.

Comfort was fine as the bike is more or less full sized with a 55.9 in (1420 mm) wheelbase and 30 in (762 mm) seat height, a puffy but progressively firm saddle and a fit-all handlebar / seat / footpeg relationship.

No price had been announced at the time of going to press with this issue, but the Earls Court Show will no doubt be the launch pad for these fine little bikes onto the UK market.

When Kawasaki UK have one to spare, we'll be doing a real test. In the meantime, these notes are all we can give you — but rest assured, first impressions do count and we feel Kawasaki have a real winner on their hands.



**KAWASAKI Z650-B1
BRIEF SPECIFICATION**

ENGINE

Type: 4 stroke, 4 cylinder, in-line, transversely mounted, air-cooled, DOHC.
Displacement: 652cc.
Bore and stroke: 62 x 54mm.
Compression ratio: 9.5 : 1
Ignition system: Battery and coil.
Starting system: Electric starter and kick.
Lubrication: Forced lubrication (wet sump).
Carburetors: Mikuni VM 24SS.

PERFORMANCE

Maximum horsepower: 64 bhp/8,500 rpm.
Maximum torque: 5.8 kg-m/7,000 rpm (41.9ft-lb/7,000 rpm).
Acceleration: SS 400m (¼ mile): 12.4 sec.

FRAME

Type: Tubular, double cradle.
Suspension: Front: Telescopic fork.
Rear: Swing arm.
Tyre size: Front: 3.25H-19 4PR.
Rear: 4.00H-18 4PR.

TRANSMISSION

Type: 5-speed, constant mesh, return shift
Clutch: wet, multi-disc.
Gear ratios
1st: 2.333.
2nd: 1.631.
3rd: 1.272.
4th: 1.040
5th: 0.888.

BRAKES

Front: Single disc brake, disc dia 245 mm (9.6 in).
Rear: Drum 180 x 40 mm (7 x 1.575 in).

ELECTRICS

Battery: 12V 10AH YB10L.
Headlamp: 12V 45/40W.

DIMENSIONS

Length, overall: 2,220 mm (87.4 in).
Width, overall: 850 mm (33.5 in).
Height, overall: 1,145 mm (45.1 in).
Wheelbase: 1,420 mm (55.9 in).
Ground clearance: 140 mm (5.5 in).
Dry weight: 211 kg (465 lb).
Fuel tank capacity: 16.8 litres (3.7 imp gal).

MOWBRAYS

Malaguti

MONTE



Style

It looks the part. Competition mudguards, headlamp guard, Enduro tank bag, 4 or 5 speed gearbox. Finished in striking red. Trials tyres.



Competition Spec

Duplex frame. Marzocchi telescopic forks. Semi cantilever rear suspension. High level exhaust. Ample ground clearance. Morini high powered two-stroke engine.



Legal

Equipped with pedals for "sixteener" law. Kickstart conversion available.

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