



IT'S A BARGAIN

Julian Ryder reckons that Kawasaki's Z1000ST touring shaft is the snip of the year

When I was drawing up some guidelines on what makes a good touring bike for last month's Tour de Force feature I omitted one obvious factor. As the bikes in question were both equipped with shaft drive it was taken as read that a high-performance motorcycle intended primarily for touring should be shaft driven.

The extra weight of the shaft compared to a chain and the small power loss produced in the drive train don't matter to the serious touring rider. So, what better idea than to take an engine established as almost bulletproof and revamp its cycle parts to suit, then add shaft drive.

Kawasaki did just that with the Z1000 and come up with the Z1000ST. The power plant is just the same as a MkII but the rest is different, albeit in a rather subtle way.

The front fork stanchions are 40mm tubes as compared to the MkII's 36 and they are leading axle. The ST has more travel and is noticeably softer at the front end than other Kawasaki 1000s. Rear suspension is also different with softer springs and improved damping. It's a combination that gives a very comfortable ride but doesn't encourage scratching.

The frame has come in for attention as well. The steering

head is braced by plates behind the downtubes and a cast iron plate beefs things up between the swinging arm pivots. The airbox is 2 litres bigger than on other models, which means that inlet noise is cut and also means that sidepanels and frame geometry in that area are different again from a MkII.

Apart from the final drive, other distinguishing points are the lower silencers and 17 inch rear tyre on the ST. Kawasaki say the silencers are routed that way to leave plenty of room for touring bags or panniers.

And does the shaft affect the bike's behaviour in any way? The answer is no. On the first couple of occasions I rode it I was aware of the rear end rising as I pulled away, but once I'd got a few hundred miles under the ST's wheels it felt like I was on a bike with slightly slack chain final drive.

There is a penalty to be paid for the convenience of shaft drive. First there is weight; the ST coming in at 20 pounds heavier than the Z1000H fuel injector. Secondly there's performance. A top speed of just over 120mph at MIRA is 5mph down on the H but more significantly the standing ¼ mile time of 12.62 was over half a second down on the fuel injector.

On the road though the now classic engine — it's been with

us for nine years — deals out seemingly endless supplies of power. It doesn't mind what gear it's in or where the tacho needle is, just wind it on and travel. Mind you it's still a Z1, and has to be treated with a fair amount of respect. Getting a little too enthusiastic in the wet is just asking for the rear tyre to break traction. The ST is most definitely a big hairy-chested motorcycle. Don't mess with it.

Another factor that the touring rider will take into account when looking for a bike is fuel consumption. I got an average of 44mpg but this figure hides two extremes. One tankful was used up around town at a rate of 30mpg. A full bore slog down the M1 gave 36mpg and a gentle trip two-up with luggage from Rouen up the Seine Valley towards Paris saw figures of nearly 60mpg being returned.

A fuel gauge is sited in the face of the tacho but like most of these things currently being fitted it tends to induce paranoia rather than inform the rider of the state of affairs in the tank. The needle hits the empty mark after 100 to 125 miles, well before the rider needs to switch to reserve. It's the sort of thing that's impossible to ignore and retain any peace of mind, so fuel stops are an all too regular occurrence.

Really this is a small moan

compared to the overall excellence of the bike as a tourer. The only thing that really niggled me, or rather it niggled my passenger, was the lack of a grab rail. That and the vibration period that blurred the mirrors and shook the rests.

To compensate for those discomforts the seat was excellent. Neither rider nor passenger had any complaints.

Any time now the 1981 Kawasakis will be in the dealers and this means that the ST's replacement, the Z1100A, will be with us. So what's happening to the STs already in stock? They're being discounted something fierce, that's what.

I've been having a quick flip through the weekly comics and in one issue for early December spotted two quite large dealerships offering STs for under £1700. And that's an on the road price. When you consider that the list price is £2199 it doesn't take a lot of brain to recognise a bargain.

The Z1000ST is a perfectly good all-round bike as well as being a damned good tourer. If you want a big tourer and aren't the bothered about having the very latest model then make a few calls. If STs were £1700 when I wrote this in December you may be able to pick one up at a real bargain basement price now. You won't be sorry.

READOUT Kawasaki Z1000ST

Performance

Maximum speed 120.19mph
Standing ¼ mile 12.62sec/104.49mph

Fuel Consumption

Overall 44mpg
Best 62mpg
Worst 31mpg
Average full tank range 176 miles

Speedometer accuracy

At indicated 30mph 30.44mph
At indicated 60mph 59.46mph

Braking distance

From 30mph 35.5ft (10.8m)
From 60mph 121.5ft (37m)

Engine

Type Dohc in-line four
Capacity 1015cc
Bore x stroke 70 x 66mm
Compression ratio 8.7:1
Carburation 4 x 28mm Mikuni
Claimed bhp at rpm 93 at 8000
Claimed torque at rpm 65.8ft-lb (9.1kgm) at 6500
Transmission Gear primary drive, wet multiplate clutch, 5-speed gearbox, shaft final drive

Electrical system

228W alternator, 12V, 16Ah battery,
Electronic ignition, 60/50W headlamp

Cycle Parts

Frame Duplex cradle
Suspension Telescopic, leading-axle front fork,
Pivoted rear fork with 5-way adjustable dampers
Wheels 7-spoke cast alloy
Tyres 3.50 x 19inch Bridgestone Mag Mopus front
4.50 x 17inch Bridgestone Mag Mopus rear

Brakes

Twin 11.5in (285mm) discs front
Single 11.5in (290mm) disc rear

Dimensions

Wheelbase 62in (1575mm)
Seat height 32in (813mm)
Overall width 30.5in (775mm)
Ground clearance 8.5in (216mm)
Weight (with 1 gal fuel) 592lb (268kg)
Fuel capacity 4 gallons (18.2 litres)

PRICE

£2199 inc VAT

Warranty 12 months / unlimited mileage
Supplied by Kawasaki Motors (UK) Ltd, Deal Avenue,
Trading Estate, Slough, Bucks