

**How To's: VALVE ADJUSTMENT
PUTTING TOGETHER A TOOL KIT**

MOTORCYCLIST

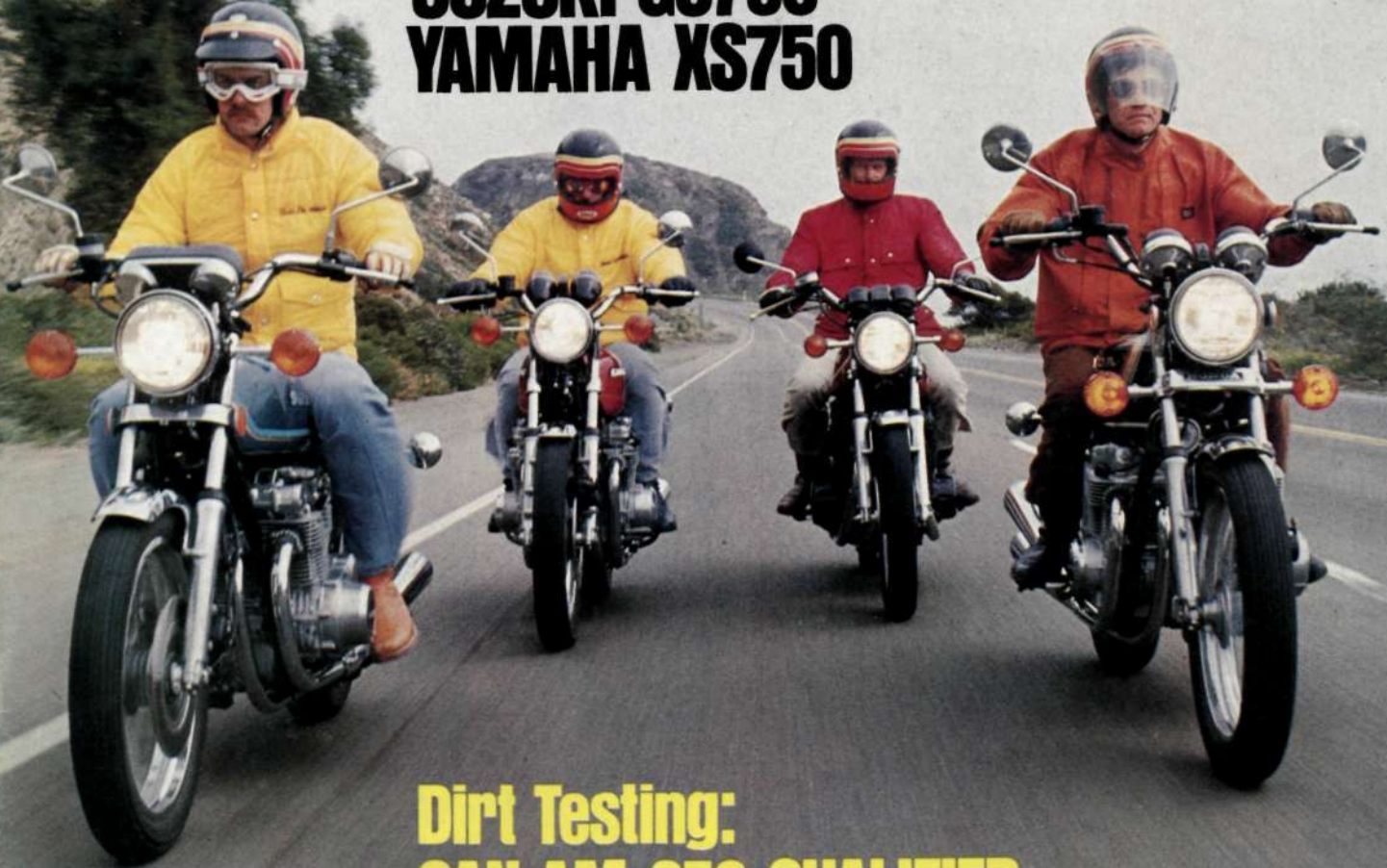
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Motorcyclist

AUGUST 1977 \$1.25

HITTING HIGHWAY 1

Tour Testing:
HONDA CB750K
KAWASAKI KZ650
SUZUKI GS750
YAMAHA XS750



Dirt Testing:
CAN-AM 250 QUALIFIER
SUZUKI RM250 and 370
HUSQVARNA 360



Motorcyclist

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TESTS

14

MOTORCYCLIST TEST
HONDA CB750K,
KAWASAKI KZ650,
SUZUKI GS750,
YAMAHA XS7502D



What can 1000-plus miles of touring tell you? Plenty.

32

MOTORCYCLIST TEST
SUZUKI'S RM250B &
RM370B



Most tests don't tell you how to ride and maintain them, this one does.

54

DIRT TEST
CAN-AM 250
QUALIFIER



We'd quibble with the "Qualifier," but it's definitely enduro-ready.

62

DIRT TEST
THE DICK
BURLESON ENDURO
CHAMPION REPLICA

Now you can buy the machine "King Richard" decreed.

FEATURES

46

**25 OFF-ROAD BIKE
PREP TIPS**

Some sure cures for the heartbreak of breakdown.

48

**HOW TO:
TOOLING UP
FOR MOTORCYCLE
MAINTENANCE AND
REPAIR**

See anything here your toolkit ought to contain?



60

**HOW TO:
VALVE ADJUSTMENT**

Keeping your 750 multi fine-tuned.

68

QUICK LOOK
HONDA
400 HAWKS

The Hawk is alive and well in three sporty versions.

70

QUICK LOOK
HARLEY-DAVIDSON
250 MXer



Duck, it's the Dirt-Hog!

72

QUICK LOOK
HUSQVARNA 390
AUTOMATIC MXer

The most "shiftless" bike on the national circuit.

82

**PRODUCT
EVALUATION
PROJECT
AND PROBOWL**

That omnipresent plastic has now found its way into your carburetor.

DEPARTMENTS

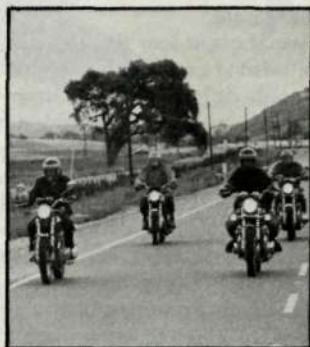
2 INSIDE LINE
4 HOTLINE
7 LETTERS
10 TOOLBOX
74 SPORT
84 ACCESSORY SHOP
87 CATALOGS
88 THE LAST PAGE

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COVER

Here we are, Hitting Highway 1, on our Four Tour Test bikes. Color photography by Dave Gooley.



Honda CB750K7 Kawasaki KZ650 Suzuki GS750 Yamaha XS7502D

Four Ways To Go 1157.6 Miles

Motorcyclist TEST

High on the list of fun things to do here at Motorcyclist is the tour test. It gives the staff a chance to get out of the office for about a week, see some countryside and ride some of the new machinery. Apparently, from the response we get, tour testing comparisons are also important to you, our readers.

It therefore wasn't hard for us to find an excuse to get out on the road again and roll away some miles on two wheels. We had four justifications for the trip: A Honda CB750K7, Kawasaki KZ650, Suzuki GS750 and Yamaha XS750-2D.

First, a little history.

Honda's CB750 started all this multi-cylinder Japanese madness back in 1969. Originally the machine was fast, but the power-robbing hatchet wielded by the EPA to limit noise and exhaust emissions has turned a frantic tiger into a mild-mannered pussycat in terms of performance.

Two years ago, Honda, for various reasons (including a suspected attempt to cut down on its chrome-plating bill), introduced the CB750F with a 4-into-1 exhaust system. Many died-in-the-wool Honda 750 riders would have nothing to do with the machine and stubbornly held out until the K model was resurrected with larger tires, better suspension and different seat design.

Our second test bike is the giant-killer itself, Kawasaki's KZ650. Why the smaller Kawasaki amidst all the 750s? It runs faster than two of them, will probably turn in a corner below

all three, and is easily adaptable to cross-country jaunts. In short, the KZ is a screaming, high-revving little four-cylinder engine mated to a good-handling frame that has put to shame many a 750 machine.

Without a doubt, the Suzuki GS750 has had more impact on the motorcycle market than any machine since the Kawasaki Z1. Introduced late in 1976, the GS750 got rave reviews from many motorcycle publications. We were so impressed with its potential that we rode one in a 24-hour production race in the box-stock class at Las Vegas, Nevada. The full report on that event appeared in the March '77 Motorcyclist, and aside from the atrocious weather conditions, the portion of the event we completed was an unqualified success.

Yamaha's "shifty," the XS750-2D, soft, smooth, extremely torquey and comfortable, is popular with many touring aficionados. Its box-like design leads you to suspect that the man in Japan responsible for the XS' final design drives a Mercedes-Benz to work.

Thus our group, consisting of 15 cylinders, numerous riders, lots of rain, cold, miles and interesting happenings. Elsewhere in this article you can read about where we went, what happened between here and there, how the machines compared on a race track, and what they're like under the skin. This section will deal with the down-to-earth findings, the things that our group discussed, and the conclusions we reached.

Our testers continually switched off machines, giving each staffer a good feeling for each machine, and a personal comparison of all four mounts. The final tally was reached in a variety of ways, including evening discussions after a few hundred miles, and filling out rating forms. The comparison categories and the reasons for

each machine's placing follow.

TOURING COMFORT

This category includes such items as seat/peg/handlebar relationship, seat comfort, vibration (or lack thereof), and general seat-of-the-pants feeling.

The Suzuki came out on top here. Because of the control layout and handlebars, it gives an impression of sitting "in" the bike, offering the most secure and "involved" feeling of all the machines. The bars are comfortable, footpegs in the proper place and vibration minimal.

Yamaha took a close second. Its strongest points are the very comfortable seat, and swept-back handlebars. Drawbacks include the feeling of sitting on top of the machine rather than in it, the vibration within the 4000 rpm range and the long strange and low shifter placement.

Honda's improved seat nudged it into third position just ahead of a trailing Kawasaki. The tank on the K model is very wide, giving the impression that the bike is heavy and cumbersome.

Kawasaki finished fourth in the comfort department. Reasons include stiffer suspension, higher vibration caused by the tighter, higher-revving engine, and the fact that your lower posterior eventually gets the novocaine treatment. As a touring machine, the Kawasaki after 500 miles gives you the same feeling you get by depositing 250 in a Holiday Inn vibrating bed.

CONTROL LAYOUT

Yamaha won this one walking away. Its biggest advantages are the self-canceling turn signal system, and the fact that the swept-back bars make mirror placement perfect and switches and grips easy to reach. Throttle tension was also included in this class, and the XS' is least demanding on the right wrist muscles.

Suzuki came in second here. Mir-

TourTest

ror vibration is minor but evident. Controls are placed nicely, but the on/off switch is tricky at times, turn signals don't have a positive feel, and throttle tension is slightly higher than the Yamaha's.

Eventually while riding the Kawasaki, our race faces wore through the helmet. Touring a very adaptable race machine was hard, and tight corners such as those on Pacific Coast Highway were a welcome sight. Handlebar switches were sometimes a fumbling proposition, the mirrors vibrate heavily and throttle tension is high.

Honda lost heavily in this class, due mostly to the throttle spring tension. It was so stiff that many of the testers nudged away from the 750K when it came time to switch machines. Five-hundred miles of constant pulling make for a sore and occasionally numb wrist muscle and tricep, and a general uncomfortable feeling. Mirrors bounce too.

MECHANICAL OPERATION

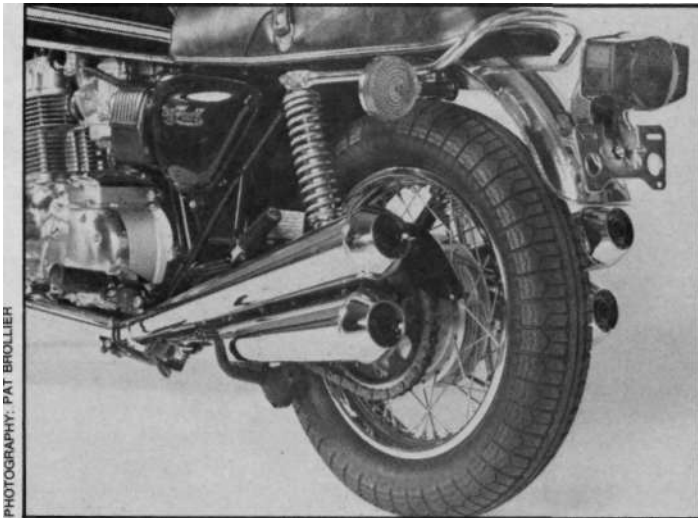
This one boiled down easily. The Suzuki shifts the smoothest, has good throttle response, and is the easiest to start in the morning. The Yamaha, although it shifts without complaint, doesn't have the response, and suffers from a noticeable lag, possibly due to the shaft design.

The Kaw is a bear to start in the morning because of the hassle of having to always pull in the clutch (even while in neutral) to get cooperation out of the electric starter. The Honda will always trail in this field as long as it retains stubborn cold-morning starting habits, its annoying clunk while shifting from neutral into first, and its occasional missed shift from third to fourth.

PASSING ACCELERATION

The Suzy won this one hands down. When it comes to getting past a cattle truck or some other such moving obstruction, the Suzuki is safest. Its favorite powerband hits right at about 50 mph and continues on up.

The torquey Yamaha was second

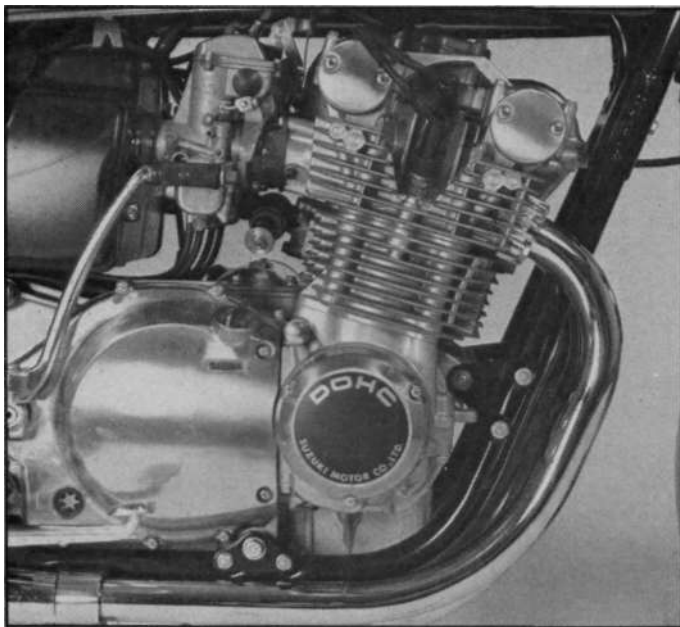


PHOTOGRAPHY: PAT BROLLIER

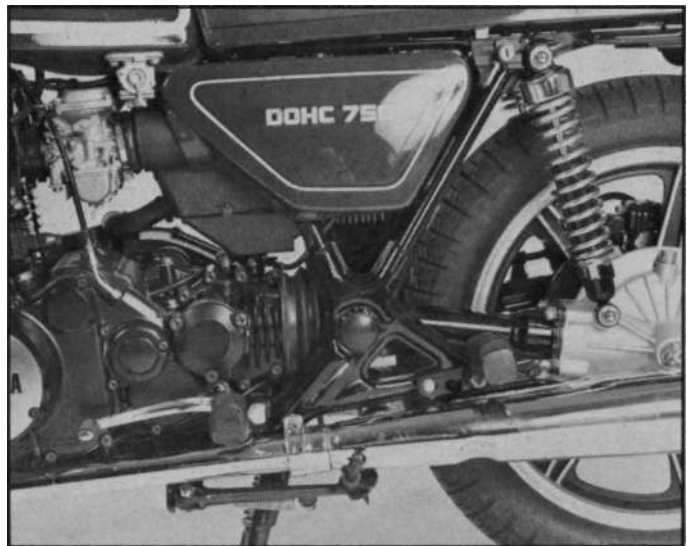
Honda CB750K7 is fitted with 4.50H17 rear tire and wide rim for increased safety when carrying heavy loads while touring, but upswept seamless mufflers make fitting large saddle bags impossible.



The compact KZ650 engine features DOHC valve actuation and a Hy-Vo primary chain. The cylinder head and block casting have cooling air passages to direct air over combustion chambers and between cylinders.



Suzuki makes the most horsepower of the four bikes and features a gear primary drive and automatic cam chain tensioner. Airscoop on top of cylinder head directs cooling air to tops of combustion chambers.



XS750D is unique because of the transverse crankshaft and the shaft. A complicated but well-designed transmission system uses a Hy-Vo chain, transfer shaft, universal joint, ring and pinion.

choice, building up steam much like a locomotive. Its acceleration is deceptive. Lack of noise or sudden happenings down below the tank lead you to believe it isn't moving quickly, when, in effect, it passes with the best of them.

The Kaw's drawbacks in the passing department are few, but enough to allow the Yamaha to nudge it out for second spot. Vibration annihilates any vision to the rear, and although it's a jackrabbit in acceleration, the engine vibration in relationship to the speed makes it uncomfortable to wick on the throttle and quickly increase speed after a few hundred miles of cruising in the 55-60 range.

The Honda, laden down with regulations and stipulations, has a lag in passing response, takes the longest to get past that cattle truck, and in many instances enjoys a habit shared by its brother the GL1000—that of shifting down to fourth for a quick and clean pass.

STOPPING POWER

The Yamaha, with its dual disc units on the front and single disc on the rear was the best bet for avoiding trouble. It stopped as quickly as you could squeeze the appropriate controls. Two chipmunks encountered in the Fresno mountain outskirts should be grateful Yamaha did its homework in the stopping department. Wet or dry, it takes the least amount of time and footage to haul down to crawling speed.

The rear brake on the test Suzuki wasn't as touchy as the one encountered on our Vegas machine, yet it was a bit touchy and didn't slow the machine like the Yamaha's did. The lack of an additional front disc also put it behind the XS' abilities.

The Kawasaki, being the lightest, stopped third best. Its single front disc works well, even under racing applications, but a rear disc would greatly enhance its abilities. The back single leading shoe drum setup is susceptible to fade after continual use.

The Honda was just flat hard to haul down, despite the fact that it has the largest rear tire surface. Possibly the softer fork springs that cause the front to dive and the rider to back off brake lever pressure, as well as softer brake shoe material in the rear, make its stopping distance longer than the other three machines'.

STYLING AND OVERALL GOOD LOOKS

This category is more one of personal opinion and taste, but the Suzuki was unanimously lauded as the nicest looking. The Kaw, with its racy appearance, was a close second. The Yamaha, with its square corners,

reminded many of us of a German car, and the Honda suffered from its "heavy" impression, caused by the large, wide gas tank and four pipes out at the stern.

WHICH WOULD WE BUY FIRST? LAST? IN BETWEEN?

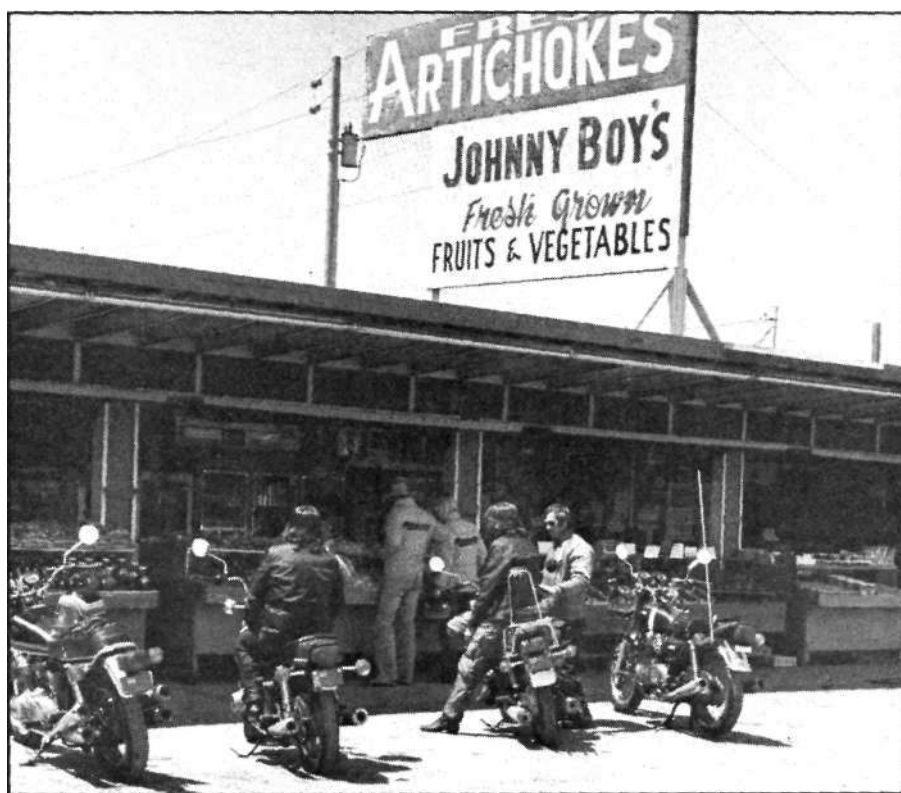
Again, the Suzuki won this one, for many reasons. It toured nicely, you sat "in" the machine, it turned well, stopped fairly well, and was fun in the corners, making it the most versatile of the touring foursome.

The Yamaha came in second. It was very smooth, relaxing and comfortable. For just plain touring it worked very well, and was surprisingly good in the high performance department of our Sears Point trips around the race track.

The KZ650 Kawasaki was rated third by our group. It made for a better racing machine or canyon journey vehicle than touring bike. The higher rpm range at touring speeds, the vibration and relatively uncomfortable seating arrangement were points against it in touring applications.

Possibly the Honda came in last for reasons already listed. It feels heavy, doesn't respond as well as the other machines, and in the back of our minds we know that the 1978 Honda machines are touted to be different, better and far superior to what they're offering now.

Overall, you'll find that different bikes won different categories. To make your choice, and find the machine that will be a winner in your



TourTest

garage, go through our list, find the points that are most important for your buying money, and visit the appropriate dealership. Using our guide, we guarantee you'll have no surprises, and buy exactly what you're looking for the first time around.

The Machinery: Looking Inside

HONDA CB750K7

Honda's CB750 has been around the longest of our four test machines. Originally released late in 1969, the CB750 was the first of the modern four-cylinder Superbikes.

Basically, the engine of today's CB750 is unchanged from the original. A transverse four, its alternator is mounted on the left end of the crankshaft and the contact breaker assembly is located at the other end of the somewhat wide engine/transmission unit. Five plain main bearings support the crankshaft and another four the connecting rods. A high capacity trochoid oil pump circulates oil from the remote oil tank through the engine unit and returns



VIRGINIA DEMOSS

it to the tank, making the CB750 the only machine in this test with a dry sump lubrication system.

A single-row chain runs from the crankshaft center up through the cylinder block to drive the single overhead camshaft, which uses fingertype followers to open the valves. Next to the cam chain on the crankshaft are two single-row chains that transmit the power from the crankshaft to the transmission, the shafts

of which are also pressure-fed with oil. This engine's robust design has been proven by thousands of owners, some of whom have ridden their CB750s over 100,000 miles on the original crankshaft and connecting rod bearings. The transmission itself is also very strong but the clunk heard when engaging the gears up or down was the loudest of the four test machines, even though the in-

continued on page 26

Life In The Fast Lane

There were a few "memorable occasions" on our 750 tour trip. One was our tour of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay. While there, we learned of a prisoner named John Giles. It seems that John worked the laundry detail and was assigned to the loading dock. Each day as the army boat dropped off the laundry, John would grab the bags and rip off a small piece of material from a shirt or coat.

Over a period of many months, John finally had enough to make an Army Sergeant's uniform, and get himself off the island. Unfortunately, he didn't think far enough ahead, and got on the wrong boat which deposited him on another island that happened to be army territory. He was captured and returned to Alcatraz, at least with the distinction of successfully getting off Alcatraz without ever getting his feet wet.

On our return from this interesting and worthwhile tour we discovered that our helmets, two full coverage Bell Stars and one Bell Magnum, had been stolen. We had put the bikes in what we felt was a conspicuous spot. We had locked the forks. And we locked the helmets to the helmet locks located on each of



BRAD ZIMMERMAN

the bikes. But, just like John Giles, we didn't think far enough ahead, and returned to find three sets of D-rings—the only inexpensive and replaceable parts of a helmet, and a cinch to remove—securely fastened to our bikes. Our consensus: Don't leave your helmet anywhere if you want to keep it.

Speaking of criminals, if you consider speeding tickets a crime against mom and country, this magazine has three law breakers on staff.

Mary McGee was first to embark on a life of crime by getting a ticket for speed in excess of 55 mph. The

officer who nailed her said he had followed her out of a gas station because he felt that "she got out of there a little too fast." The solution: Cool it in town and do your boogieing in the boonies.

While Jody Nicholas and Rich Cox were cruising down I-5 at a comfortable 70 mph, a police car passed in the opposite direction. Cox, who was looking way ahead at oncoming traffic, backed off to a reasonable 60 mph. Nicholas didn't see the officer and got caught. Consensus: Look at traffic coming the other way.

Brad Zimmerman got his due on a country road. There were no police evident in oncoming traffic, and Brad figured nothing could catch him from behind. Yet four miles from the nearest intersection a black and white suddenly was beckoning him for a roadside chat. Moral: Since some police departments use aircraft for pacing speeding vehicles, you should look ahead, behind and above before wicking the throttle on.

Overall, we came to the conclusion that the only place to stow your helmet is under your arm and the only place for high speeds is on the race track, where you get a trophy instead of a notice to appear.

The Tour: Doing California

There's a recurrent cliché in California that asks: "Where else can you go to the mountains, the desert and the ocean all in the same day?" A bit chauvinistic perhaps, but like most platitudes it has a point. California is infinite in its variety of terrain, which makes planning a tour here a matter of narrowing down options rather than trying to hunt up someplace to go.

Planning the itinerary for our 750 class tour test, we were faced with formidable choices: beaches (sandy, sunning ones and rocky, scenic ones), mountains, hills, deserts, valleys, big cities, the Mission trail, the winery route, gold country, redwood forests, state parks, and generally some of the country's finest twisty, fun-riding roads. Multiply those choices by seven people whose tastes and interests are just about as diverse as possible and still be prod-

Friday through Sunday we had to be close to the Sears Point Raceway in Sonoma in order to get lap times on the test bikes and to enable Jody to ride the little Honda in Sunday's AFM race. And at least one of us had to make tracks for San Jose the same day to cover the Mile there. Early Monday morning we were scheduled for the Dunlap Motocross Track, a good 50 miles east of Fresno, for the unveiling of Harley-Davidson's new 250 motocrosser. Eight a.m. Tuesday had to find us back in L.A. for Honda's new model preview. Complicated logistics? Only slightly less than those involved in moving an army.

WEDNESDAY

As on all trips, our early start turned into a slightly later one. Luggage was loaded (see accompanying story), tire pressures checked, and the machines gassed up. We'd head up 101, first stop to be Santa Bar-

stage coach route north. This was more the kind of riding we had in mind, fast twisty stuff. Hungry and cold, we were as happy as the old-time teamsters must have been to see the Cold Spring Tavern, a 109-year-old stage stop where horses were added for the uphill climb. We had all the horses we needed and were more interested in the Tavern's other offerings, like the blazing fireplace, hot food and steaming coffee.

The word cold began to take on new meaning as we headed farther north through rolling hills. Heavy clothing was pulled from packs and there was more than one lament over the absence of fairings. Hot coffee stops started to become a necessity. One we found fascinating as well as functional was the Madonna Inn, Santa Maria's monument to bad taste architecturally and good taste gastronomically. They serve the best and most generous desserts imaginable, but the structure itself is rococo gone wild, where simplicity is appar-



ucts of the same planet, and we had some heavy-duty decision making.

Our only option, it seemed, was to do it all, or at least as much as we could squeeze into six days. A little something for everyone. Our entourage would include the four test bikes (Honda CB750K, Kawasaki KZ650, Suzuki GS750, and Yamaha XS750), the seven principals: Oick Lague, Virginia DeMoss, Patt Dietz, Jody Nicholas, Rich Cox, Brad Zimmerman and Mary McGee, and the Motorcyclist van, with a Honda 125 road racer, tools, luggage, and road racing and dirt riding gear tucked inside.

Just to keep things interesting there were a few more variables thrown in in the form of particular places we *had* to be on certain days.

bara, California's repository of Spanish culture. Adobe, tile, bell towers, Spanish and mission architecture are the rule rather than the exception. Its impressive historical buildings include the last Spanish army post in California and beautiful Mission Santa Barbara, "Queen of the Missions."

Highway 101, alias El Camino Real, a good place to start any tour of California. The road is now marked by mission bells to approximate the route taken by the Franciscan padres in the late 18th century as they established California's 21 missions beginning in 1769.

We decided to slip away from the traffic of 101 and the coast for a pastoral shortcut along winding State 154, past Lake Cachuma and through San Marcos pass, once the

ently a dirty word. Everything is red "and pink, velvet, brocade, carved, scrolled, filigreed, gold and gaudy. All of us had heard outlandish stories about the flushing system in the lobby men's room, so, women and all, we slipped in for a look at the electric-eye activated stone waterfall.

The nasty expression on the Santa Maria" sky ensured that no foul weather gear was left in the van. And in spite of the cold the bikes gained two extra passengers at this point, refugees from the van who wanted to see the gorgeous coastal scenery along Highway 1 at closer range. Something about seeing them from the back of a bike makes scenes like imposing Morro Rock and San Simeon (of Hearst Castle fame), even

continued on page 20

TourTest

more impressive. And anybody cooped up in a car has no idea of what his nose misses along this route. One minute it's the fishy/salty smell of the sea, the next pines, then eucalyptus, and even fireplaces burning aromatic woods against the coastal cold.

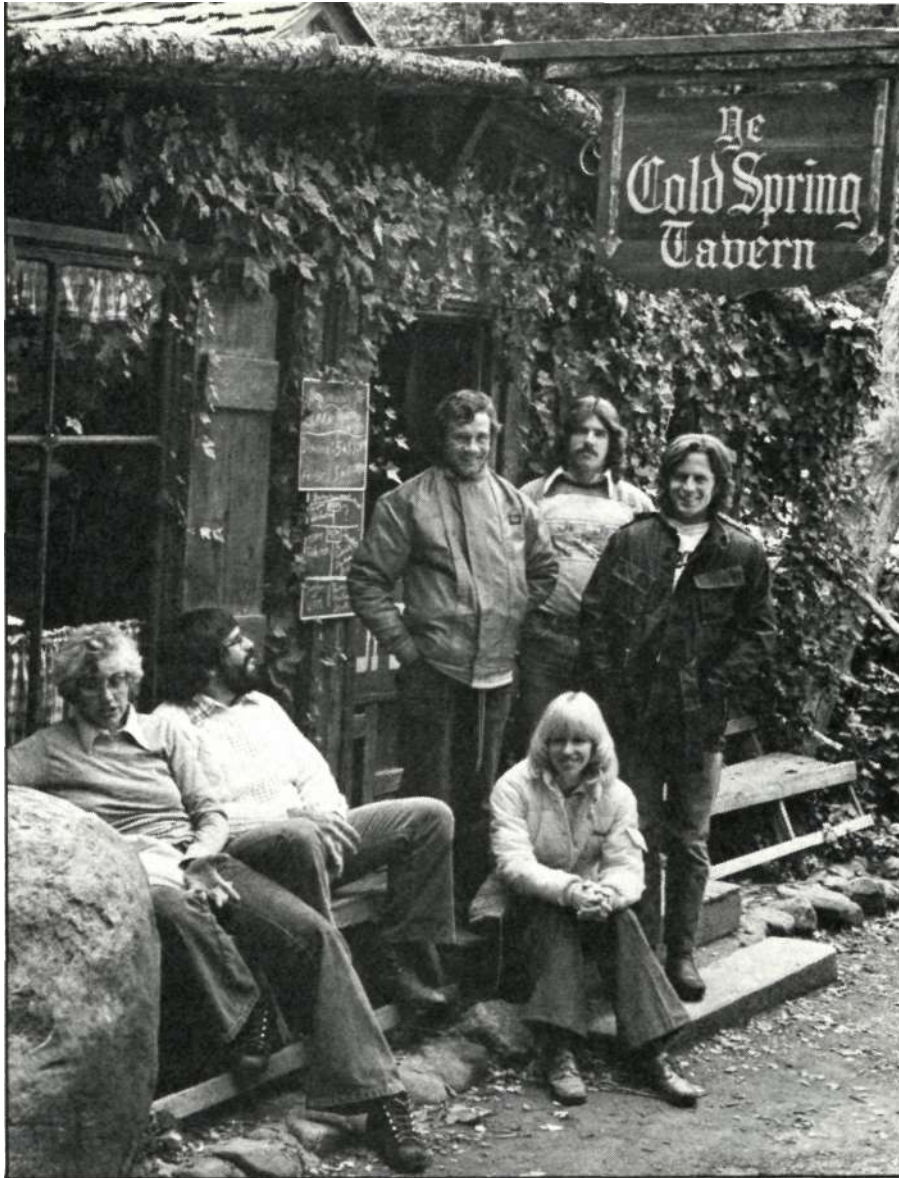
In spite of landscapes rife with scenic farmhouses, Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco barns and lonely lighthouses, one passenger gave into the cold and rain after the next gas stop. By now it was just a mad dash as fast as the weather would allow along the treacherous curves to our first night's lodging. A steady wall of water hung between us and the most spectacular scenery on the coast. One last vital stop at the little non-town of Lucia to pour hot liquids into ourselves and bend joints locked up with cold. Our other passenger threw it in too for dry clothes and the warmth of the van. Water was sloshing in shoes by now and one rider switched to MX boots.

Twenty-five more of the trip's toughest miles to the Big Sur Lodge and stares in the lobby at those mad, dripping motorcyclists. All was atoned for by rooms with fireplaces, hot showers, dry clothes. Still not warm, we headed up the road to Nepenthe, Big Sur's gathering place and setting for the film "The Sandpiper." Nepenthe is a mythical Egyptian drug used to induce forgetfulness and surcease from sorrow. The establishment's hot buttered rum and warm atmosphere did the trick.

THURSDAY

A hike before breakfast among the redwoods and other growth that fill the rugged, wooded canyon that is Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Then barely back on the road north before an obligatory stop in quaint Carmel, a gingerbread town certainly built by Munchkins. A haven for artists and writers, its hundreds of little shops provide an array of handmade goods unmatched anywhere. A retreat from civilization, Carmel's little houses are devoid of house numbers and there is no mail delivery. We visited Mission San-Carlos Borromeo del Rio Carmelo, final resting place for Junipero Serra, father of the California Missions.

Above Monterey, Highway 1 leans inland for a time through a microscopic agricultural community called Castroville, which bills itself as "The Artichoke Capital of the World," a title no one else seems inclined to compete for. Cool, white-puffy-cloud weather led us through Eastern-look-



VIRGINIA DEMOSS

ing little beachfront specks like Moss Landing, Zmudowski and Manresa. More farmlands through what is referred to as California's "Salad Bowl," and a close call with a road full of spilled vegetable crates. As far as the eye can see on both sides of the road, twisting rows of crops broken by bright colored dots that are human laborers.

Before long the hilly roads south of the city give way to the inevitable freeways, but somehow San Francisco's are pleasant and picturesque—if you don't hit them at rush hour. Surface streets through the city are lined with brightly painted Victorians built so close together you can't slip a matchbook between them. Next stop, the far side of the Golden Gate Bridge to toast our arrival with a glass of California wine and an impromptu picnic over the San Francisco Bay.

That night, dancing to live music at Zack's on the waterfront in Sausalito, the little European-looking community that before the Golden Gate was accessible only by ferry boat from the city.

FRIDAY

Back into San Francisco for the full tourist trip. A good way to grasp the whole city is to take the 49-mile drive, which is clearly marked along its entire length and takes you past nearly every must-see landmark in town.

It's hard to think of anything in the city we missed, including Chinatown, Irish coffee at the world famous Buena Vista, shrimp cocktails at Fisherman's Wharf, the tour of Alcatraz, trolley cars and shopping everywhere from the sidewalk stands to the Cannery and Ghirardelli Square. High points of the city are the street musicians who play flutes, guitars, saws, perform magic tricks, do impressions. The best are a trumpet-toting gorilla and the Human Jukebox, who pops out of his crate to play the tune of your choice for a quarter. Local rumor has it he pays taxes on 20 grand a year.

SATURDAY

There are several wine-producing valleys in California, but Napa, with some 50 wineries located within a

continued on page 22

TourTest

grape's throw of one another, is the quintessence of wine country. It's with good reason that the signs at each of its ends quote Robert Louis Stevenson: "... and the wine is bottled poetry."

We set off to do the whole winery tour and instead spent most of the day bombing around the best roads we'd found the entire trip; beautiful, curvy things lined with trees and grapes. We stopped to watch gliders soar over Calistoga, home of hot springs and mud baths, ate flaky baklava and drank fresh cherry juice from roadside stands, checked out the little villages of St. Helena and Yountville and picnicked on sandwiches and champagne from The Cottage in Rutherford, a two-story Victorian house turned deli, bake shop and ice cream parlor.

A day on those incredible roads left us dazed. We returned to the hotel paralyzed with giddiness, unable to do anything but sit in the hallway, nod our heads knowingly at each other and laugh. Fantastic roads, extraordinary machines, an unforgettable day.

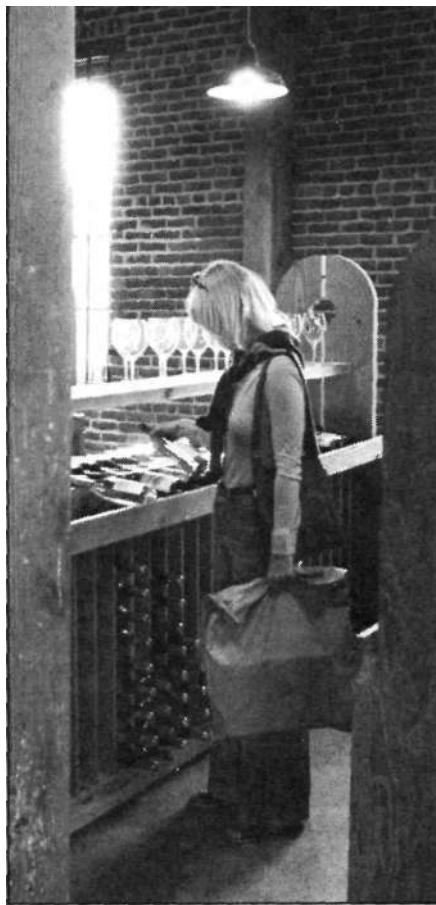
SUNDAY

Most of Sunday was spent at the AFM races at Sears Point, perhaps the most picturesque race track in the country. Its freshly resurfaced road course writhes through tall grasses and blooming wildflowers to create the perfect marriage of nature and machinery. Jody gave us something to celebrate that night by taking first place in the 125 G.P. class.

We took our good spirits to the Yountville Restaurant and Coffee Saloon, where most of the fare contains buffalo meat and sounds like something John Wayne would eat around a campfire. We spent the most pleasant evening of the trip, sipping local wine, feasting on fresh sauteed scallops and salmon and listening to the mellow kind of music we searched in vain for in San Francisco.

The thought of our five o'clock wake-up for the next day's trip to Fresno finally won out over our good time and we reluctantly walked the mile back to our rooms in the Burgundy Inn.

The little five-room stone Inn, with bathroom down the hall, was built in the 1870s and is furnished entirely in antiques ... all of which are for sale. In each room and on the sideboard in the game room are always-full decanters of local wine. Breakfast, included in the room rate, is served at a long pine table in the downstairs hearth room. The view from upstairs



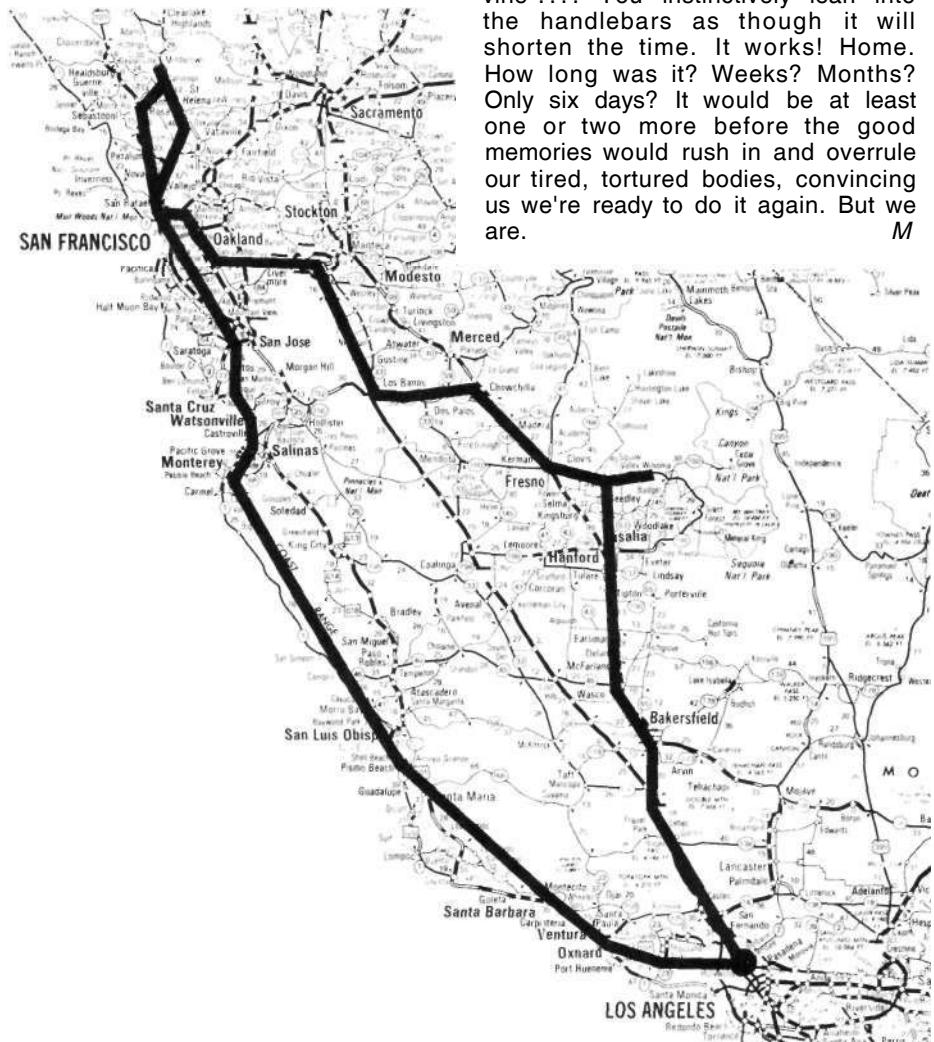
is of fields of Cabernet, Reisling and Chardonnay grapes that stretch mile upon mile to the hills. Peaceful, serene, a delightful place to sleep off an exceptional evening.

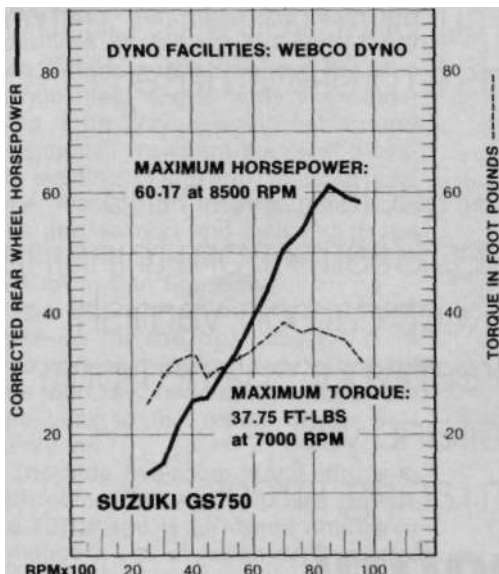
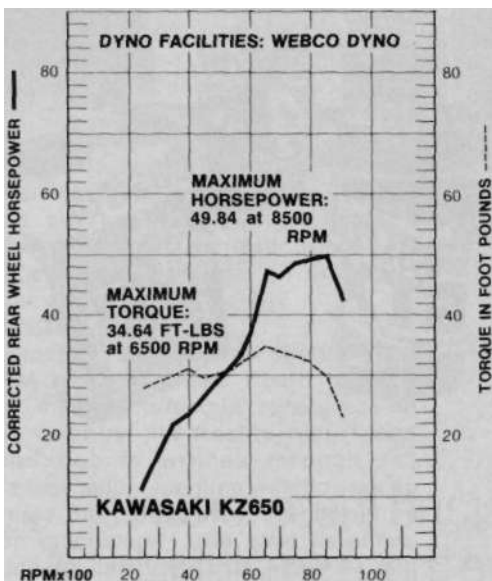
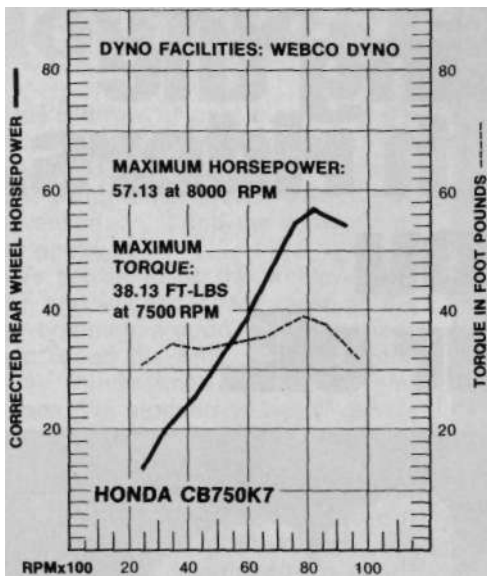
MONDAY

We got our final look at the San Francisco Bay when we crossed the Richmond Bridge and then paralleled the golden brown foothills of the coastal range south and then east beyond Fresno to Dunlap. With a slight nudge the tiny town would tip right over into the Sierra National Forest. A magnificent setting to try out the new H-D MXers (see "A Quick Look"), and our last look at idyllic wooded scenes for a time.

Our road back, Interstate 5, is the fastest route down the state, but also the most boring. It's a fast, wide-open highway that seems never to twist an inch as it slices through flat tan, beige, brown land. Already "home feeling," the scenery would be wasted on us anyway. The only stops were quick ones at junk food drive-thrus.

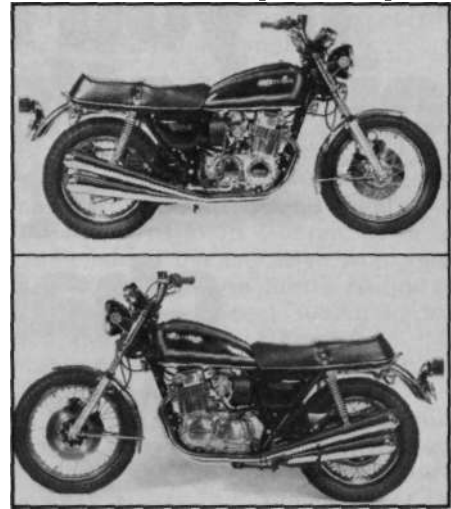
I-5 starts to get to you and makes you want to be *there*. Going too fast seems the only way to cope. Finally, the rugged mountains leading into Los Angeles, the legendary Grapevine ... You instinctively lean into the handlebars as though it will shorten the time. It works! Home. How long was it? Weeks? Months? Only six days? It would be at least one or two more before the good memories would rush in and overrule our tired, tortured bodies, convincing us we're ready to do it again. But we are. *M*





NOTE: ACTUAL DYNO FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR THE YAMAHA XS750 2D, AS IT IS A SHAFT-DRIVE MACHINE AND CANNOT BE RUN ON THE WEBCO FACILITIES.

Honda CB750K7



HONDA CB750K7

\$1998

TEST BIKE:

Price, sugg. retail

ENGINE

Type
Bore/stroke
Piston displacement
Compression ratio
Carburetion
Air filtration
Ignition
BHP @ rpm
Torque @ rpm
Lubrication
Electrical power
Battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary transmission
Clutch
Secondary transmission
Gear ratios, overall :1

CHASSIS & SUSPENSION

Suspension, front

Suspension, rear

Tire, front

Tire, rear

Brake, front

Brake, rear

Brake swept area

Rake/trail

Wheelbase

Seat height

Handlebar width

Ground clearance

Instruments

Stands

Tire retention device(s)

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

Fuel capacity

Oil capacity

Weight, wet, unladen

PERFORMANCE

Standing start quarter-mile

Average fuel consumption

SOHC transverse four
61 x 63 mm (2.402 x 2.480 in.)
736 cc (44.91 cu. in.)
9.2 : 1
(4) Keihin 28 mm
Dry paper
Coil and battery
57.13 @ 8000
38.13 ft. lbs. @ 7500
Dry sump, trochoid pump
210-watt alternator
12V, 14AH

Two single-row chains, 1.985 ratio
Multi-plate, wet
3/4 x 3/8 in. (#630) chain, 2.733 ratio
1st 13.56; 2nd 9.27; 3rd 7.22; 4th 6.15; 5th 5.26

Telescopic fork, 5.6 in. (142 mm) travel

Swing arm, 4.0 in. (102 mm) travel

3.50 H 19

4.50 H 17

Disc, 11.7 x 1.625 in. (296 x 41 mm) x 2

Drum, 7.09 x 1.51 in. (180 x 38.5 mm)

112.7 sq. in. (286.3 sq. cm.)

28°/4.5 in. (115 mm)

58.7 in. (1491 mm)

32.5 in. (826 mm)

31.5 in. (800 mm)

6.25 in. (159 mm)

Speedometer, trip reset; tachometer; oil, hi-beam, neutral, turn signal.

Side and center

None

5.0 gal. (19 lit.)

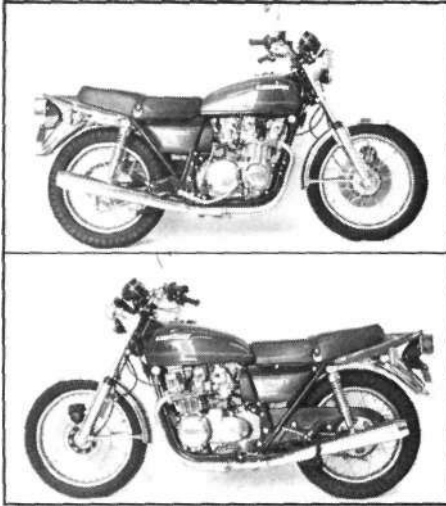
3.7 qt. (3.5 lit.)

550 lb. (249 kg.)

13.74 sec/95.13 mph

45 mpg

Kawasaki KZ650



KAWASAKI KZ650
\$1895

DOHC transverse four
62 x 54 mm (2.44 x 2.13 in.)
652 cc (39.8 cu. in.)
9.5 : 1
(4) Mikuni VM24SS
Pleated paper
Coil and battery
49.84 @ 8500
34.64 ft. lbs. @ 6500
Wet sump, trochoid pump
218-watt alternator
12V, 10AH

Hy-Vo chain, 2.55 ratio
Multi-plate, wet
5/8 x 3/8 (#530) chain, 2.63 ratio
1st 15.63; 2nd 10.93; 3rd 8.52; 4th
6.97; 5th 5.97

Telescopic fork, 5.5 in. (140 mm)
travel
Swing arm, 3.15 in. (80 mm) travel
3.25 H 19
4.00 H 18
Disc, 9.65 x 1.56 in. (245 x 39.6 mm)
x 2
Drum, 7.09 x 1.57 in. (180 x 40 mm)

110.5 sq. in. (280.7 sq. in.)
27V4.25 in. (108 mm)
56.5 in. (1435 mm)
31.8 in. (807 mm)
31 in. (787 mm)
6.1 in. (155 mm)
Speedometer, trip reset; tachometer,
oil, brake light, neutral, high beam,
turn signal.
Side and center
Security bolts; two rear, none front

4.5 gal. (17 lit.)
3.7 qt. (3.5 lit.)
504 lb. (228.5 kg.)

13.17 sec./99.22 mph
42 mpg

Suzuki GS750



SUZUKI GS750
\$2195

DOHC transverse four
65 x 56.4 mm (2.56 x 2.22 in.)
748 cc (45.6 cu. in.)
8.7 : 1
(4) Mikuni VM26SS
Polyurethane foam
Coil and battery
60.17 @ 8500
37.75 ft. lbs. @ 7000
Wet sump, trochoid pump
200-watt alternator
12V, 14AH

Spur gear, 2.152 ratio
Multi-plate, wet
3/4 x 3/8 in. (#630) chain, 2.733 ratio
1st 15.12; 2nd 10.45; 3rd 8.12; 4th
6.12; 5th 5.65

Telescopic fork, 6.3 in. (160 mm)
travel
Swing arm, 4.1 in. (103 mm) travel
3.25 H 19
4.00 H 18
Disc, 9.61 x 1.4 in. (244 x 35.6 mm) x
2
Disc, 10.05 x 1.45 in. (265 x 36.8
mm) x 2

141.7 sq. in. (360 sq. cm.)
27°/4.21 in. (107 mm)
59.0 in. (1499 mm)
31.4 in. (798 mm)
34.3 in. (871 mm)
6.1 in. (155 mm)
Speedometer, trip reset; tachometer;
oil, turn signal, gear position,
hi-beam lights.
Side and center
None

4.8 gal. (18.2 lit.)
3.6 qt. (3.4 lit.)
540 lb. (245 kg.)

12.70 sec./101.12 mph
41 mpg

Yamaha XS7502D



YAMAHA XS750-2D
\$2198

DOHC transverse triple
68 x 68.6 mm (2.68 x 2.70 in.)
747 cc (45.6 cu. in.)
8.5 : 1
(3) Mikuni BS34 constant velocity
Dry foam
Coil and battery
n.a.
n.a.
Wet sump, trochoid pump
210-watt alternator
12V, UAH

Hy-Vo chain, 1.66 ratio
Multi-plate, wet
Shaft and bevel gear (see text)
1st 13.29; 2nd 8.64; 3rd 7.07; 4th
5.96; 5th 5.20

Telescopic fork, 6.9 in. (175 mm)
travel
Swing arm, 3.15 in. (80 mm) travel
3.25 H 19
4.00 H 18
Disc, 10.51 x 1.45 in. (267 x 36.9
mm) x 4
Disc, 10.45 x 1.45 in. (267 x 36.9
mm) x 2

247.6 sq. in. (628.9 sq. cm.)
27V4.3 in. (110mm)
57.8 in. (1469 mm)
32.4 in. (823 mm)
33.5 in. (851 mm)
5.8 in. (147 mm)
Speedometer, trip reset; tachometer;
oil, neutral, turn signal, headlight
filament out.
Side and center
None

4.5 gal. (17 lit.)
4.0 qt. (3.8 lit.)
562 lb. (254.9 kg.)

13.93 sec. / 93.45 mph
39 mpg

TourTest

continued from page 18

take and exhaust noise levels were the lowest.

Honda's four-stroke technology is among the most advanced in the world. Their CVCC automobile engine is a stroke of genius in terms of good fuel economy and low exhaust emissions. The results of such progressive technology are evident in Honda motorcycles as well as automobiles.

KAWASAKI KZ650

Kawasaki's KZ650 is definitely a sports-oriented bike, although it does quite well as a tourer. It is the smallest of the four bikes, both in engine size and in physical dimensions, and weighs 504 pounds fully gassed, as opposed to the heavyweight Yamaha XS750, which topped the scales at 562 pounds.

Similar in many ways to the Z-1 engine, the KZ650's has several significant differences worthy of mention. Instead of having a built-up crankshaft running on roller and ball bearings and with roller connecting rod bearings, the 650 features a one-piece forged crankshaft that rides on five automotive-type main bearings with insert bearings at the connecting rod big ends. Both the cylinder and head are beautiful castings. The cylinder features steel liners and an air passage between each bore, and the head has large passages beneath the camshaft areas to permit air to flow around the tops of the combustion chambers. The double overhead camshafts, driven by a single-row chain between the center two cylinders, ride directly in the aluminum of the head casting. The cam lobes depress inverted lifter buckets with the adjustment shims below them instead of above, as on the KZ1000, Suzuki GS750 and the Yamaha XS750.

At extremely low idle speeds the looseness between the chain, the jackshaft and the clutch housing creates a peculiar, if not loud, noise that can be annoying if you set the engine idle speed too low. The transmission itself is a joy to use, virtually silent while changing gears and requiring only the lightest touch on the shifter pedal to move from one gear to the next.

A trochoid oil pump moves oil through the engine at a high rate and pressure to properly lubricate the plain bearings and dissipate heat.

With bore/stroke dimensions of 62 x 54 mm, the KZ650 thrives on revs and a good many are necessary to get performance comparable to that of the 750s. But the engine is balanced so well that the excess revolu-



tions produced by the 5.96:1 final overall gear ratio are not in the least annoying. Good power is available from just under 6000 rpm right up to 9000 rpm and the lighter weight of the bike helps compensate for the deficiency in engine size and sheer horsepower.

SUZUKI GS750

Very similar in design to the Kawasaki Z-1 engine, the GS750 sports a built-up crankshaft riding on six main bearings, five roller and one ball bearing. The connecting rods are roller-bearing supported and the entire unit is immensely strong. The center of the crankshaft has a sprocket that drives the double overhead camshafts via a chain. As in the Yamaha XS750, valve adjustment is accomplished by substituting shims of various thicknesses on top of the inverted bucket followers; cam chain adjustment is correctly maintained automatically by the use of a unique spring-loaded adjuster.

Unlike the other three machines in this test, the Suzuki's clutch is driven by a gear located between the #3 and #4 cylinders instead of by chain. The gears are straight-cut and the noise from them is only just audible and certainly not objectionable. Clutch operation is very light and virtually slip-free. The transmission operates just as advertised: Silent and positive gear changes were the rule.

As shown on the horsepower chart, the Suzuki is the most powerful of the three machines we tested on the Webco dynamometer. At no point in the engine's rpm range is power delivery sluggish or uneven, but at 6000 rpm the engine really comes to life and pulls strongly to 9000 rpm. In conclusion, we felt the Suzuki GS750 to be more sports/touring oriented than vice versa.

YAMAHA XS750-2D

Technically the most innovative of

the four test bikes, the Yamaha XS750-2D is the second generation of the original XS750 introduced in mid-1976. The idea of placing an engine with three cylinders transversely in the frame is nothing new.

Beginning with the top of the engine, we find a DOHC layout with the camshaft chain driven by a single-row chain at the left end of the cylinder block. Valve lash adjustment is accomplished in exactly the same manner as on the Kawasaki Z-1 and the Suzuki GS750, with shims fitting in the tops of the inverted bucket lifters. Conventional three-ring pistons fit in the three closely-spaced cylinders and the compression ratio is a moderate 8.5 : 1 to allow the use of regular and unleaded gasoline.

Supported by four large automotive-type plain main bearings, the crankshaft has the three-phase alternator mounted on the left end and three separate contact breakers on the right. The connecting rod big-end bearings are also plain and are of generous proportion for long life.

Like the Kawasaki KZ650, the Yamaha uses a Morse Hy-Vo chain to transmit power from the crankshaft to the clutch, but in this case it is from the right end of the crankshaft. The motive effort goes through the transmission exactly as it does in the other three bikes. But instead of having a countershaft sprocket on the end of the transmission output shaft to drive the rear chain, the Yamaha has a gear to engage another gear which turns a shaft that runs across the engine and terminates in an automotive-type bevel gear on the left side. From that point back, the driveshaft is very much like that found in a BMW, terminating in a ring and pinion gearset at the rear wheel. Under acceleration the rear of the motorcycle rises; downshifting

continued on page 28

TourTest

continued from page 26

causes the rear end to squat slightly, but not so much as on a BMW, partially because of the firmer rear suspension springs. But there is no sideways torque reaction because of the transverse (rather than longitudinal) placement of the crankshaft.

Annoying periods of vibration at several different places in the engine's rpm range on the XS750 have all but disappeared on the XS750-2D, there being a slight tingle in the handle-bars at about 4300-4600 rpm instead of many such points.

Cornering clearance has also been aided, and presumably a slight power increase realized, by the installation of two somewhat smaller mufflers. The right muffler is fed by the #2 and #3 cylinders and the left by the #1 cylinder. In order to keep from loading the right muffler with twice the number of exhaust pulses, there is a 1.5-inch-diameter balance tube between the exhaust header pipes just in front of the mufflers. In spite



of this the left muffler end appeared to be slightly darker (richer) at the exit than the right one. But improved quarter-mile times—without changes to cam timing, compression ratio or carburetion—indicate improved exhaust efficiency, in spite of a slight increase in weight from the additional muffler.

The XS750-2D is also an enigma: The engine/drivetrain layout would suggest its forte to be touring, but the sporty cast aluminum wheels and tremendously effective triple-disc brake system, coupled with good steering geometry, a rigid frame and well-designed suspension, make it an excellent sporting mount, as well.

The Track: Pushing The

Limits By Jody Nicholas

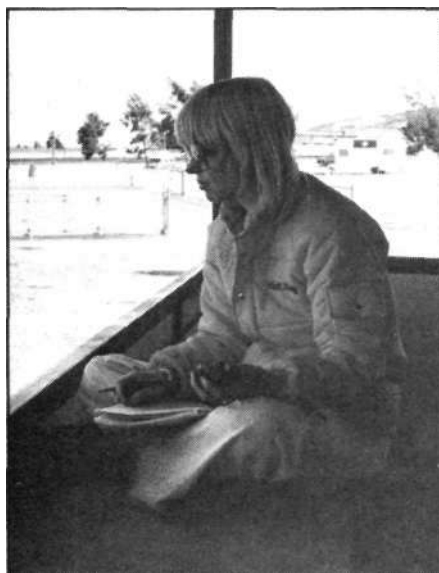
Most of our road tests contain a section sometimes vaguely referred to as "A Trip up Racer Road," in which we try to analyze the motorcycle's
continued on page 30

Patti And The STT 200

Because our 750 tour test would take us to the Bay area—and specifically Sears Point Raceway for an AFM race—we decided to take advantage of some open time on the road race course to get lap times on the test machines. In this way we could compare their performance, acceleration, braking and handling when pushed to the maximum.

Because we wanted the most accurate figures possible, the electronic stopwatch seemed the answer. They are highly precise and easy to read, even to 100th of a second. The best thing is you don't have to interpret a dial, just read off the numbers. After looking at several units, we selected the STT 200, available from Sports Timing and Technology, 3621 W. MacArthur Blvd., Santa Ana, CA 92704, at a retail cost of \$125.

The STT 200, with an accuracy of .005 percent, has a liquid crystal readout easily readable in bright sunlight, as well as a lap-timing function that was essential for our purposes. Each time Jody crossed the start/finish line, it was necessary only to punch the split button, read off the time, and punch the split button again. While you're writing down the time, the timer is running internally and catches up with itself when the split button is



pushed again. For an instant total of the laps, simply move the slide switch from "Lap" to "Total."

The responsibility for measuring Jody's times was given to Patti Dietz our managing editor. Prior to this great moment in her life, Patti's timing experience had extended only as far as three-minute eggs. With all of 30 seconds' explanation of the controls, Patti was ready. It was as though her whole life had been spent preparing for this moment. Recording Jody's lap times was only the beginning. She found out that by using a simple formula ($2.523 \times 3600 + \text{total seconds}$), times could be converted to miles per hour. Next was the discovery that it took 3:05.94 to load the 125 Honda road racer into the van, and that it takes 2:30.36 to put 3.6 gallons of gas into the Kawasaki. Patti was proud to announce that the Motorcyclist staff can load Hondas at the rate of 19.36 bikes per hour, and fill Kawasaki KZ650s at the rate of 23.94 bikes per hour.

A timing freak was born. The possibilities were suddenly limitless. The fact that it took Virginia 0:26.78 to get the joke about the chicken with the capon was translated to an I.Q. of 73.24, something we had all suspected. Unfortunately, the STT 200 has a 1500-hour battery and a one-year guarantee, so we are still suffering. Our only regret is that we didn't select the brand with the battery life of six hours.

TourTest

continued from page 28

suspension, handling and braking characteristics. However, when you are on a public road it's virtually impossible to push the machines to their limits, for a number of reasons. Besides the fact that you often have to exceed the speed limit, you can never be completely certain that you won't meet a truck with a huge camper halfway in your lane when rounding a blind corner. Neither of the possible consequences is very inviting, so we planned our tour test to finish the first half in San Francisco, just a few miles from Sears Point Raceway, where we would ride and evaluate the four test machines.

After filling the tires to the recommended pressures for solo riding, I decided to adjust the rear suspension springs to the same relative position, giving a proportionate amount of suspension movement from full extension to a static setting with me sitting on the machine. As it turned out, this occurred with the spring adjusters in the third, or middle position, which was a good compromise between having the machine sit too high, thereby losing some of the shock rebound travel, and compressing the shocks so much that cornering clearance was lost.

Because we were simulating the "Racer Road" portion of a normal test, the side and centerstands were left in place and only the rear view mirrors were removed in the interest of safety should a spill occur. I rode each machine around several laps to learn the course and try to discover any handling quirks they might have before beginning the timed laps. Everything went very smoothly as I gradually increased my speed on each machine, learning how far they could be leaned over before the stands and/or footpegs started to drag, and also determining the maximum point where each corner could be braked for without overshooting the turn.

Honda CB750K7

Averaging 65.96 mph around the course, the Honda proved to be the slowest of the four. Braking was fairly good even though the rear unit began to heat up and fade slightly, but there was little wallowing in the turns before things started dragging. The overly strong throttle return spring made the K7 the most difficult machine to ride. Because some of the corners were a little bumpy going in, trying to coordinate heavy braking and blipping the throttle open at each downshift over the bumps was virtually impossible. No shifts were



RICH COX



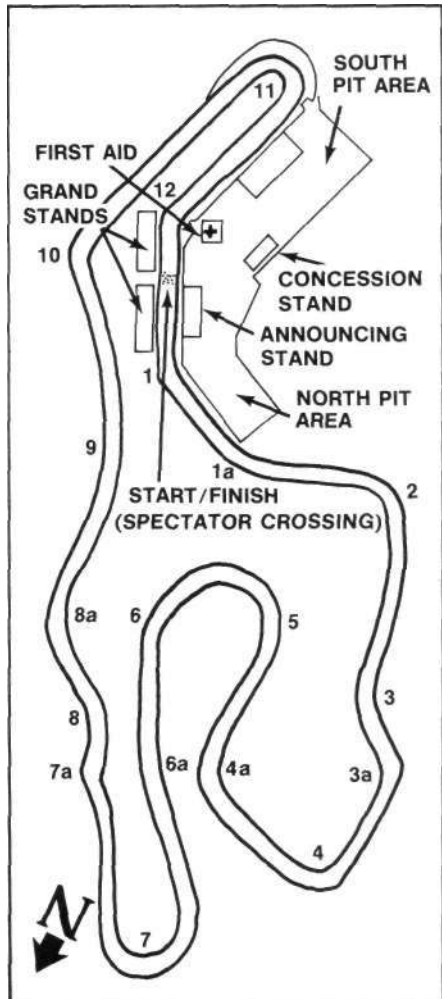
DICK LAGUE

missed or corners misjudged during the best of the timed laps, but such a strong spring has no use on a motorcycle's throttle...except to develop the rider's right forearm out of proportion to the rest of his body.

Suspension proved to be quite good and the flow of power was smooth and progressive. The Honda was next to the slowest in the quarter-mile acceleration test with a 13.74 sec./95.13 mph, beating the Yamaha XS7502D by .2-second. But on the road course, the tables were turned in the Yamaha's favor.

Kawasaki KZ650

Being the lightest in weight of the four machines and having the second fastest quarter-mile time of 13.17 sec./99.22 mph, the KZ650 had the third highest average speed around Sears Point Raceway. Basically very stable in the turns, the KZ's rear brake began to fade rather badly and the engine's smaller size and power output couldn't quite be compensated for by the slight weight advantage it had. During the first



LAP TIMES AT SEARS POINT RACEWAY		
MACHINE	TIME	SPEED
Suzuki	2:14.31 min:sec	67.63 mph
Yamaha	2:15.15 min:sec	67.21 mph
Kawasaki	2:15.45 min:sec	67.06 mph
Honda	2:17.71 min:sec	65.96 mph

Sears Point Raceway is well known as a very difficult track. The 2.5-mile length includes 11 turns and slopes as steep as 15% grade. The longest straight is only 1100 feet and naturally leads into the slowest turn in the course, turn 11. It is a riders course, not a horsepower track.

warm-up lap while smoking between turns 10 and 11 (the fastest part of the course), thinking I was alone on the track, I had the biggest surprise of the week when a Formula Ford racing car swooped by me on the inside and distracted me a bit! Assuming that there was no other car on the track, I pressed on and turned three very consistent laps, after I had regained my composure.

Pushing a fully equipped street machine around a race track teaches you many things about riding that particular machine, and I feel it would be helpful if 90 per cent of all street riders had the opportunity to do so. The KZ650 was the easiest to ride because of its weight and ease of control operation, but cubic inches really help when you're trying to go fast. The KZ's average speed around the course was 67.06 mph and the suspension was quite firm and positive in action.

Suzuki GS750

Having ridden a slightly modified GS750 in the 24-hour Las Vegas pro-

duction race, I was very familiar with the machine. That is, with one that had modified suspension, different tires and the stands removed. Easily the most powerful of the four machines, and possessing one of the best transmissions in regard to shifting smoothness, I figured the Suzuki would be considerably faster than the other three. With a single disc brake on each wheel, the GS was second in stopping power only to the Yamaha, but what was a supple and softly damped suspension system on the street turned into a real handful over the bumpier turns of Sears Point. There was pronounced wallowing and accompanying stand and footpeg dragging that slowed the machine's average some. The real beauty was the engine which has such a broad and healthy powerband that fewer gearshifts per lap were required than was expected. Steering was absolutely dead true on the smooth parts of the track, but the bumps wreaked havoc when really getting it on. Not only was the GS750

fastest around the track (67.63 mph average), it turned in the fastest quarter-mile time as well: 12.70 sec/101.12 mph.

Yamaha XS7502D

Probably the biggest surprise was the speed at which the big Yamaha got around the course. The comfortable and yet firm suspension was the best of the four bikes at speed but the biggest advantage the bike had was the superb braking power it exhibited, lap after lap. The red-line is a relatively low 7500 rpm, but the tractability of the engine down, low and the excellent midrange power made quick exits from the turns possible. The lifting of the rear end under hard acceleration and the squat when decelerating weren't at all objectionable.

Its quarter-mile time of 13.93 sec/93.45 mph was the slowest of the four bikes, but the average speed around Sears Point of 67.21 mph placed it second, just half a mile an hour slower than the Suzuki. Will surprises never cease? *M*

Off The Record...

The Triumph Bonneville spent a lot of time being *the* big bike. It had that classical "British" style... the lean tank, compact engine, it was the right mixture of chrome, alloy and attractive paint. That paint was about all that changed each year. The Bonnie was not just a bike, it was a market.

Honda changed all that in 1969 by introducing the 750/4. Here was exotic sophistication you could afford. Eight years later the four Japanese manufacturers have all zeroed in on the 750 class with technological overkill. The old romance of the British twins does not exist in these bikes. The starting drill, for example, consists only of pulling out a handlebar-mounted choke lever and punching the starter button.

Ho-hum, right? Wrong. These bikes have their own brand of romance... like the thrill of seeing the tach wind from 5000 to 8500 rpm in a smooth, turbine-like flow, or powerful brakes that can slide you up the tank in a heavy stop. And the craziest part of all is that you ride them 1200 miles and do nothing but add gas.

I am happy that you can still buy a Bonnie in 1977 (with a blue tank, by the way), but personally I opt for overkill. I have come to love a digital gear indicator, self-canceling turn signals, rubber-mounted rearview mirrors, cast wheels with dual disc brakes. They certainly are gadgets, but they serve a purpose and they work.

—*Dick Lague*

Possessing an overactive right wrist, and admittedly doing more racing than touring during our test, I favored the KZ650

over the other machines. Running over 90 mph up Pacific Coast Highway in the rain was an eye-opener that I wouldn't have attempted on the Honda or Yamaha, yet a later canyon road trip on the "shafty" proved that its handling capabilities were far beyond what I had expected. The Suzuki? Neat, but too mushy for my type of riding style.

If it was real honest-to-goodness flat-out touring, with no fun canyons or tight turns, I'd jump on the Yamaha first. It was very smooth, had a pleasant exhaust tone, and went fast enough to get me 100 miles in 64 minutes in comfort, ease and unfortunately, one ticket. For 50/50 interstate/canyon riding, I'd pick the Kaw. The Suzuki, with better suspension, fits between these two, and the Honda 750K would stay home.

—*Brad Zimmerman*

Temperatures in the low forties, enough rain to drown a water buffalo, kamakaze bugs, and a 10-mile freeway ride minus my ripped-off helmet were enough to convince me I'd never do it again without a fairing.

As far as the bikes go, the Honda is finished beautifully, runs quietly and smoothly and has the best touring range. But the overly stiff throttle plus a seating position that never did feel right to me are enough to keep me off it.

The 650 Kawasaki is anything but new to me, having ridden one in Kawasaki's 24-hour record attempt, plus some local club racing, so it's no surprise that I favor the KZ650 when the luggage is removed and it's time to groove. In stock condition, I think it handles the best, but

for absolute touring, the high engine buzz and strain around 65 mph would lead me to shy away from it.

The Suzuki is just plain nice in just about every respect. It's cleanly styled, quiet in every way, has an engine that responds beautifully with a near perfect power curve, good brakes—the type of bike that makes deciding a chore.

But my choice for strictly touring purposes—the Yamaha! Although somewhat "square" in appearance, it has several enticing features, and I can still hear the sound it makes around the race track—it turns me on, even with the stock pipes.

—*Rich Cox*

I'm partial to motorcycles that shift on the right side (preferably up-for-low). I don't presently own a shaft-driven machine but the freedom from chain adjustment and lubrication, plus the lack of oil being thrown on the machine's rear wheel (and the rider's back) make the Yamaha my favorite for long-distance, low-maintenance touring.

Aside from the overly-stiff throttle return spring and the high handlebars, the Honda attracted me because of its proven reliability and frugality—it uses less fuel than any of the other bikes. For touring purposes it fills the bill but not-too-excellent brakes limit sporting riding and poorly placed mufflers limit the size of saddlebags you can fit to *small*.

The Suzuki GS750, with its stiffer, better-damped suspension, the best steering and fastest speed, rated a high place on my list of preferences, but it's a sportster at heart.

The Kawasaki KZ650 fits me better size-wise (a bit smaller) than the other machines, and it falls between the sports and touring categories. In spite of only slightly better-than-average brakes, its good acceleration and reasonable fuel economy attract me too. —*Jody Nicholas*