

'99 BMW R1100S: It's the sportiest Boxer yet

August 1998
\$3.50

Cycle Canada

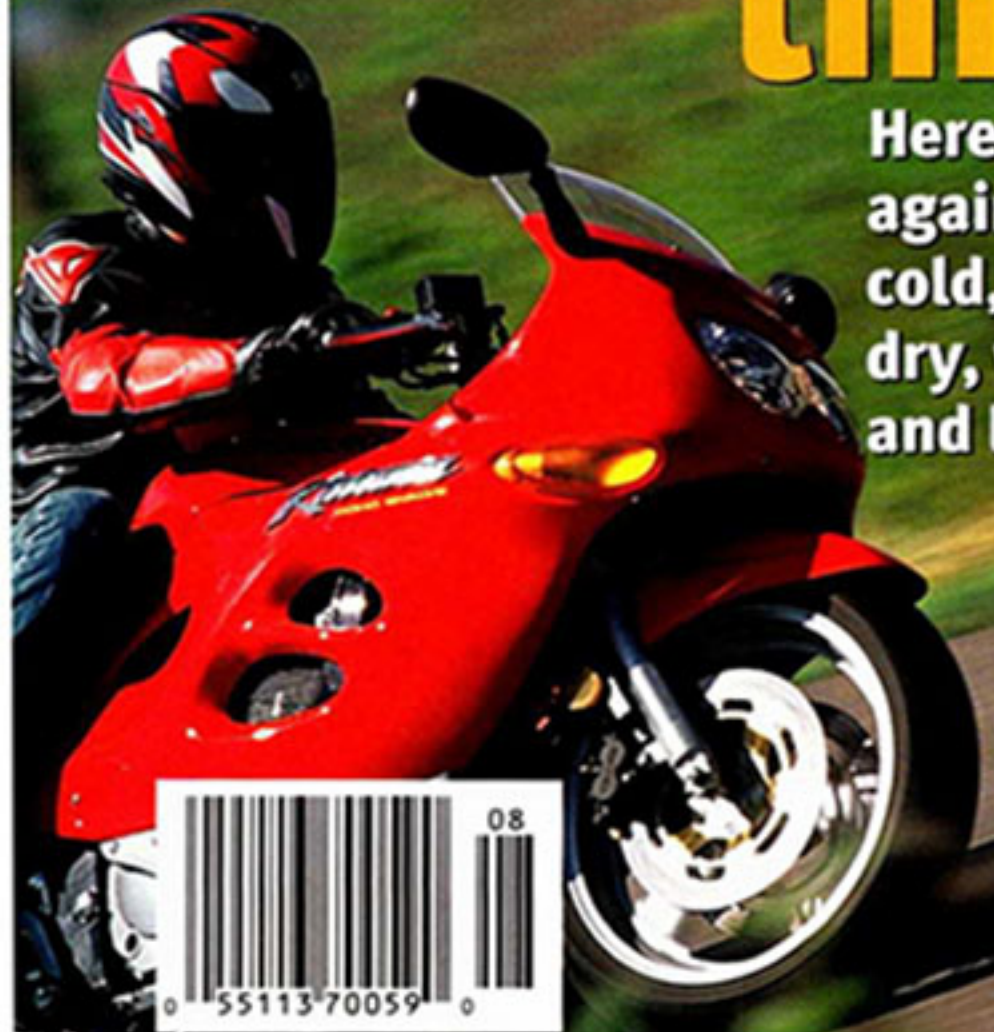


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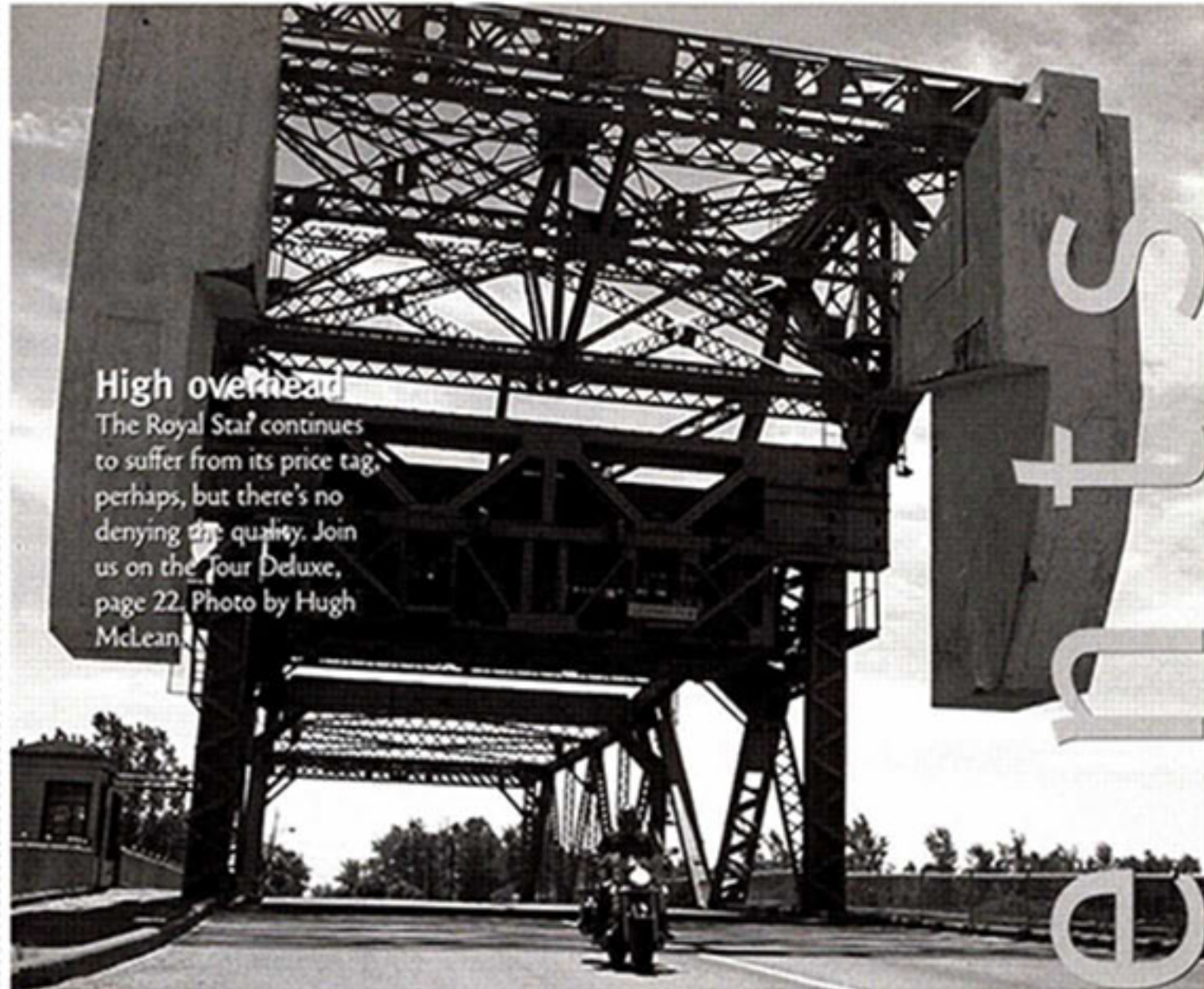
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Cover

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High overhead

The Royal Star continues to suffer from its price tag, perhaps, but there's no denying the quality. Join us on the Tour Deluxe, page 22. Photo by Hugh McLean.

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Cycle Canada

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MOTUL



By Bruce Reeve

The flaw in Murphy's law

THIS IS PROBABLY ASKING FOR TROUBLE, BUT I'D LIKE to take issue with Murphy's law, which states that anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. To me, this is a complete misrepresentation of how life works. Stop for one moment and think of the almost infinite number of random occurrences that can lead to a screw-up; from the very moment of conception we navigate an almost unimaginably complex and hazardous path, yet here we are, in more abundance than seems possible. The truth is, hardly anything goes wrong; there are far more near-misses than collisions, something you can witness in a kindergarten playground or a busy intersection. Even things that seem chaotic, I believe, actually represent the outcome of millions of years of evolution in which the odds have gathered steadily in our favour, an invisible hand that guides us more firmly than we imagine.

At times, of course, it seems the world is falling apart, but that's mostly because never in history have we been so well-informed about bad news. As crime drops, fear of it increases, because it becomes more newsworthy and therefore gains larger exposure through mass media. Bad outcomes of all sorts are indeed happening every second around the world. It's always been that way. To me, though, it seems like a miracle things aren't vastly worse.

Total recall

Murphy's law, however, must seem like a very real concept to manufacturers of mass-produced vehicles, judging by the Transport Canada vehicle recall notices I have on my desk. It's quite an experiment, issuing thousands of vehicles into the hands of people around the planet, many of whom are eager to test every possibility for creating mayhem. We've had a few motorcycle recalls lately that seemed quite frightening in their implications, though it's not certain how serious the problems really were. Triumph had to replace thousands of frames on its Daytona and Speed Triple models last year because they broke at the steering head, rather than bent, after a crash; and Suzuki needed to retro-fit a steering damper on the TL1000S. This year, there has been a recall of the new Katana models to replace the grabrail bracket; apparently a passenger managed to break the grabrail while holding on tightly in a turn, which caused her to lose balance and fall off, taking the rider with her. Buell models were recalled last year because of a defective clip design, which could cause a pin to move against the front brake caliper and lock the front wheel; Kawasaki 96-97 Vulcans have been recalled because the seats can collapse enough to break off the battery termi-

nals underneath, causing "electrical system failure and the engine to stop unexpectedly," which could "cause loss of operator control and a possible crash." Some Suzuki and Kawasaki motocross bikes have been recalled because the footpegs can snap off. Most likely, these mishaps would never happen to you; but they have apparently happened to somebody else, which is one way they come to light.

Bag your face

Naturally, the more complex a product, the more possibilities there are that something can go wrong. (Although if you've looked lately at the warning label on something as simple as a step ladder, you'll realize there is no limit to human creativity when it comes to making mistakes.) In my latest copy of the Vehicle Recall Register, for example, it warns that certain Land Rover models can develop a short in the cruise control that "could initiate an involuntary deployment of the driver-side air bag." Oh my goodness.

And it gets worse. The '98 Toyota Lexus uses a yaw-rate sensor to detect a skid and provide a signal that applies the brakes to correct steering. Pretty fancy stuff. Unfortunately, the electromagnetic waves from a cellular phone could affect the sensor and cause the brakes to come on unexpectedly, affecting the steering and "increasing the risk of a vehicle crash." It sounds like a myth, but there it is in black and white. You can steer your Lexus accidentally with a cellular phone.

Read these recall notices uncritically and you might be convinced that people are constantly flying off the road in motorhomes with stuck throttles (Ford F Super Duty) or in flames (Fleetwood) or in cars and trucks with brake failure (take your pick of models). The truth, however, is that almost all vehicle accidents have very familiar causes. Judging by the recent Ontario Road Safety Annual report, only about 6 per cent of accidents have anything to do with vehicle failure. Of these, almost all result from people driving with defective lights, tires and brakes, which are their own responsibility. People drive on the highway with one hand out the window holding a mattress on the roof; their trailer hitches fall off; the list of dumb things we do goes on forever.

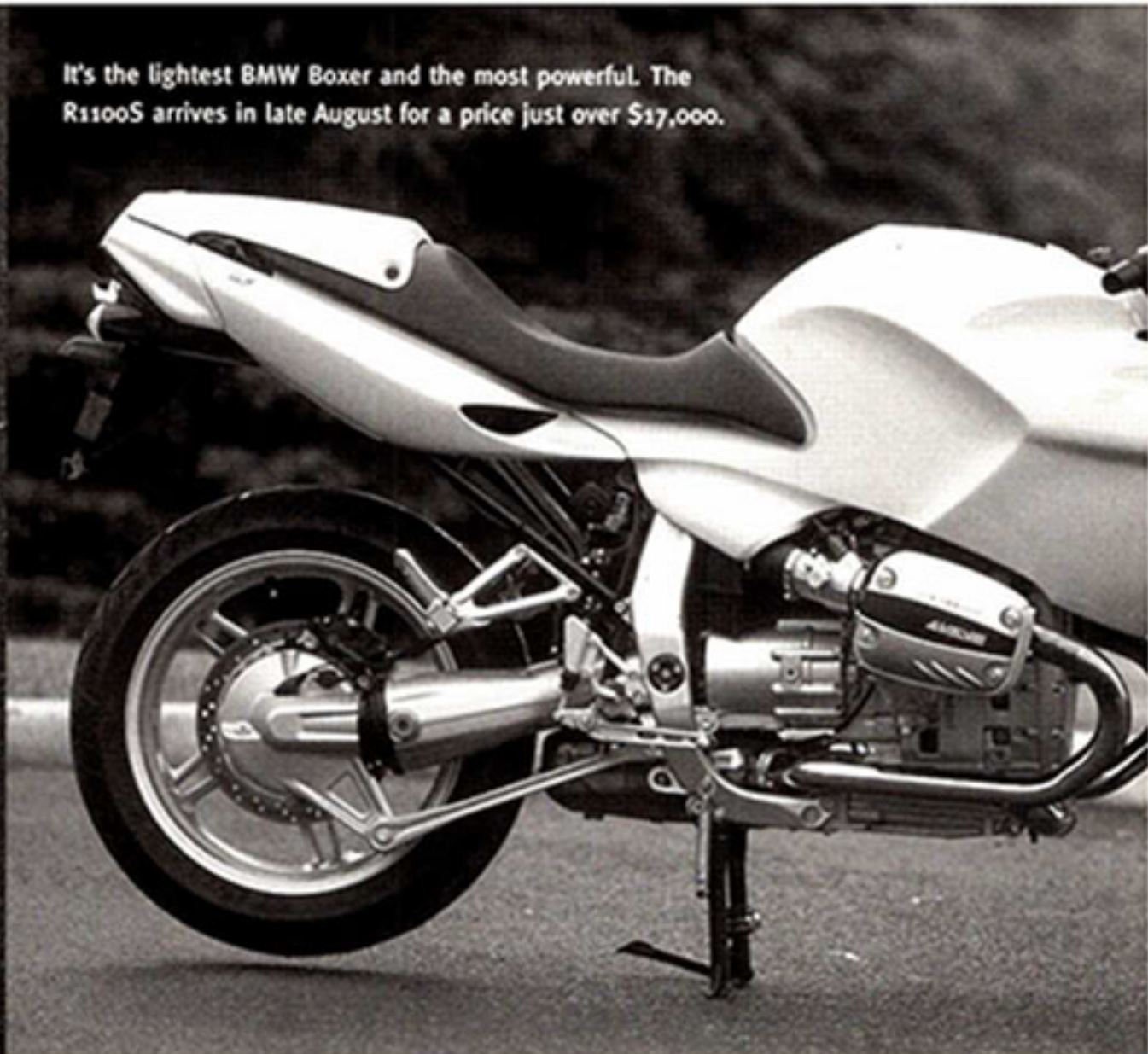
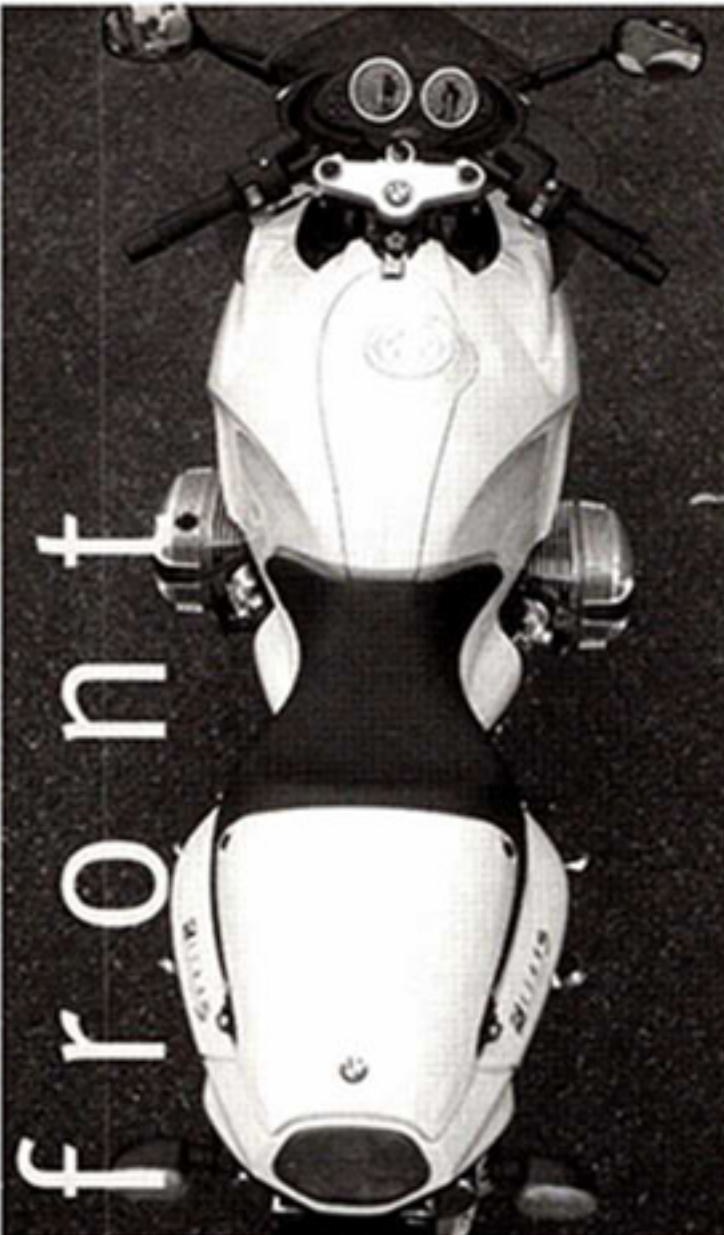
Murphy's law says that what can go wrong will go wrong. If that were true, more people would hesitate before doing so many stupid things in a routine manner. As it is, we get away with the most amazingly risky behaviour.

Most of the time.

cc

front

It's the lightest BMW Boxer and the most powerful. The R1100S arrives in late August for a price just over \$17,000.



news

BMW R1100S

Sporty new Boxer packs harder punch

A NEW HIGH-PERFORMANCE BOXER is due to arrive at Canadian dealers by late August. The sleek R1100S incorporates some familiar BMW technology, but uniquely revised and packaged. The S-model is BMW's lightest Boxer, weighing 6 kg (13 lb) less than the unfaired R1100R, and also the most powerful, with 98 hp at 7,500 rpm, which compares with 80 hp for the R. Torque is a claimed 97 N-m (72 lb-ft) at 5,750 rpm.

Higher-domed forged pistons raise compression to 113:1 from 107:1 and a less restrictive air-filter is fitted, but 70 per cent of the boost comes from a freer-breathing exhaust that produces a distinctive note. Redline has been raised to 8,400 rpm, and the bike is said to have a quicker-revving character. An air-intake snorkel under the left turnsignal feeds the airbox with cooler air, but it's not a ram-air system.

A major change is the new clutch and six-speed gearbox, similar to the Getrag-designed K1200RS transmission. The new gearbox is lighter, quieter and

more compact, but no longer stiff enough to support the swingarm pivot as it does on the other Boxers. A pair of aluminum C-shaped frame members wrap around and over the engine and provide the structural strength to support the single-sided swingarm. The open side of the swingarm provides a clear view of the rear wheel, because the exhaust pipes join a catalytic converter

Exhaust routing with mufflers under the tail section provides a clear view of the wheel.



and then exit upward via a single pipe to a pair of mufflers under the seat, with tailpipes pointing out of the tail section. The slimmer profile also accommodates full-size BMW hard luggage, which is optional.

Wheels and brakes are identical to the elegant design developed for the K1200RS, particularly handsome up front where the discs bolt directly to the wheel spokes without the usual carriers. ABS will be an option for the S-model.

A Telelever front end provides quicker steering geometry than on the RS model, with half

a degree less rake and a reduction in trail to 100 mm from 111 mm. New fork legs have shaved a kilo in unsprung weight from the front end, and a steering damper is no longer deemed necessary.

The Telelever shock adjusts for rebound damping via a small knob that sits at the front of the fuel tank behind the cast alloy steering head. Rebound is also adjustable at the rear, where preload can be altered hydraulically with a handy knob.

Some weight savings have been realized with a carbon-fibre front fender and magnesium valve covers, but mostly with an economical approach to design that gives the bike a light and airy profile. Full of fuel it weighs 228 kg (503 lb).

BMW designer David Robb, who led the K1200RS and

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUGH McLEAN



Two-stroke '99 YZs

YAMAHA HAS ANNOUNCED major changes for the '99 YZ250, including a new engine design and revised chassis.

The engine has a smaller bore and longer stroke, a more compact combustion chamber and completely revised porting. A new three-piece guillotine-type YPVS system includes valves for the main exhaust port and auxiliary ports on each side. The Keihin 38 mm carburetor is a power-jet type that uses an electronic solenoid. Other changes include a lighter crank, piston pin and rod, and a redesigned transmission. The engine is mounted

differently in the frame for '99, while the suspension has been revalved front and rear. Weight has been reduced at the rear with a lighter swingarm and rear wheel.

Fewer changes have been made to the '99 YZ125, but its engine has revised exhaust and scavenging ports, better YPVS sealing, a new Mikuni carburetor and a crankcase with a reshaped intake path. No changes have been made to the YZ80 for '99.

Yamaha will also have a number of modifications made to its 400 four-stroke, to be announced later.



2,000 miles in a single day?

THE LATEST LANDMARK IN LONG-distance road riding is called the "2K day." That's 2,000 miles in 24 hours. You might think this is a distance that could only be covered on a high-speed oval with a team of riders, but then you've never met Michael Gasper. He covered 2,155.5 miles (3,468 km) in a single day,

riding solo aboard his Gold Wing GL1500 equipped with two auxiliary fuel tanks.

Gasper recorded the highest mileage in an event known as the Big Bang, held on the wide-open roads of Nevada on the weekend after Memorial Day, when there is little police presence. Unlike most long-distance events, the Big Bang places no restriction on fuel load nor does it require orienteering tasks. It's more or less non-stop riding, though a fuel receipt is required for documentation at least every 400 miles. Gasper kept his stops to a minimum, obviously, but needed to cruise steadily at 110-115 mph to achieve his record.

There are no plans to move the rally from Nevada to Prince Edward Island.

News bits

Ontario's most recent **Road Safety Annual Report** offers analysis of accident data for motorcyclists in 1996. The most shocking information it contains is how far the bike accident stats have declined. Fatalities dropped to 27 in 1996, less than half the number five years earlier, which had already shown a steep decline. The explanation would seem to be the relative absence of young, high-risk riders on motorcycles. At one time young motorcyclists made up the majority of accident cases, but recent stats show riders older than 30 are involved in most of the fatal crashes. As well, there were fewer cases involving alcohol or unlicensed and unhelmeted riders. Solo accidents made up 48 per cent of the fatalities.

Moto Guzzi is expanding its production and developing new models as a result of investment from the U.S.-based Trident Rowan Group. A new factory is planned outside its historic Mandello del Lario site. A Superbike-spec sport model is expected between 2000 and 2001. The American ownership of Moto Guzzi, however, has cost it sales of police bikes in Italy. Laverda builds police bikes now, based on the alloy-frame sport twin.

Polaris Victory motorcycles were due to arrive in U.S. dealerships at the end of June, and a company spokesperson said plans were still in place to launch the brand in **Canada** next year. We hope that isn't overly optimistic, but **Laverda** has yet to sell any bikes here this season. A container marked for Canada was sitting in Italy as the selling season began this year, while the distributor found itself immersed in Transport Canada red tape. The 750S that Cycle Canada tested last year was later seized by the feds for having been imported without the proper paperwork.

R1200C projects, was also in charge of the S styling. It's surely the best-looking BMW ever, and the deep knee cutouts and low screen are said to provide good protection from the wind. The headlight has an unusual shape, with an ellipsoid low-beam reflector, something developed on BMW's automotive side, which provides a sharper light pattern. The light sits above a pair of kidney-shaped vents that pay homage to BMW tradition while feeding air to the oil cooler.

The current handlebar position is modestly sporty, but a higher bar and windscreen for more sedate touring requirements will be optional. The price of the R1100S has not been set, but will likely be just over \$17,000.

Quick Clip

Max Mosley, president of the auto sport sanctioning body FIA, defended Formula One car racing recently by claiming the lack of any passing on the track actually enhanced the sport. Describing the Argentine GP, he said "the whole outcome of the race hung on what happened at the second pit stop. This is arguably more exciting," sniffed Mosley, "than the sort of continual overtaking which has occurred in motorcycle racing."

Bike shortage

Re Yamaha V-Star test, CC June '98: It is interesting to see so much hype about a bike that has yet to appear on the streets. I've had two V-Star Classics on order from Bow Cycle in Calgary since the middle of February, and Yamaha has not been able to supply them. Yamaha needs to get its act together or they'll start losing a crowd of enthusiastic buyers.

I would appreciate CC doing a follow-up on the article and getting a comment from Yamaha as to what has been holding up production and delivery of these machines.

—RON MORLAND
Fort Assiniboine, Alta.

The concept is one Harley buyers have been familiar with for years—you've been on a waiting list. Demand exceeds supply, a situation that Yamaha has faced with a number of new models this season. —Ed.

Short bikeage

I want to buy a motorcycle that suits my size. This sounds easy, but at 5-foot-1-and-3/4 inches it is anything but. I took the motorcycle safety course five years ago and have owned one bike during that time, a 400 Heritage Special. This was a bike my partner wanted (as a contrast to his RZ350), so I bought it and rode it once. I was lucky enough to sell it for the same price I paid and considered getting a Vespa or Lambretta.

But I want to ride across Canada; as my partner and his friends plan their annual August sojourn, I want to come with them on my own bike, not as a passenger. And there is the problem. All of the men at the motorcycle dealerships are very nice and helpful, and they all know my partner, but do they know what women want in the way of a bike? I don't think so, because there is a total of only one bike that I can reach the ground on in all the places we visit. This is frustrating.

If motorcycle manufacturers want to reach the vast and mainly untapped female market, they should design small, powerful bikes that small women (and short men) can ride. I don't want to hear about dropping the suspension, which doesn't give you a lot of travel, or any other non-solutions. I want a bike that fits me, and I don't think that that is too much to ask. And don't even think of painting it pink.

—KAREN RALPH
Victoria, B.C.



Nomad yes

I ordered my new Kawasaki Nomad as soon as I saw it at the Vancouver show in January. Photos do not do it justice. Wherever I stop, someone will remark on the beauty of the green paint and chrome. In your test of the bike (CC July '98) a couple of things stood out for me. I have 4,500 km on the clock already and I agree with most of your findings.

However, as for mileage, I have had as much as 205 km before needing reserve and as little as 180, but not 160 as your test states. I agree that it needs a little more oomph, though at low revs it pulls like a tractor. For a tourer, it does need better passing power, but it tracks straight and true on the highway.

I have put a Corbin touring saddle on the bike but am seriously thinking of keeping the stock seat, as it seems just as comfortable and doesn't cost \$800 extra. I have a few beefs with Kawasaki, however. If one is to travel two-up, a backrest is not an option, it is a necessity! Kawasaki's accessory package of stuff is not yet available, which has left me a tad frustrated. My dealer, Interior Motorcycles in Kamloops, put me in touch with Peter Smith, owner of Side Effects, a local Kamloops company that does mostly sidecar installations. Peter manufactured a backrest, rear rack and bag racks in less than a week. My wife and I are to leave for a cross-Canada ride on the Nomad starting June 29. Time to check on the weather forecast for St. John's....

—DAVID DENBIGH
ddenbigh@direct.ca

Nomad no

I was really impressed with the Kawasaki Nomad in the July issue. What a machine. I sort of compared it with my '77 BMW R-100/7/RT (a '77 with an '81 factory RT fairing), just turning 200,000 miles.

Let's see, the Nomad is more than 200 lb heavier; the BMW has 25 per cent better fuel economy and a fuel capacity 50 per cent greater, which translates into an almost 90 per cent greater touring range.

In highway roll-ons, the Beemer eats the Kaw for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The RT full fairing gives far superior highway protection; the 40-litre BMW/Krauser bags have greater and more usable capacity and are instantly removable. Add a Vetter 36-litre tankbag (which the Kawi can't use because the speedo would be covered up), 45-litre topbox from an FXRT, and once again the Kwacker comes up short.

But, what the hey! The Nomad has flashy paint, gobs of chrome and looks, sounds and feels like a H-D Road King, and that's what really matters, *n'est ce pas?*

Glad I didn't buy one.

—BOB SCHNEIDER
Vancouver

The great divide

Gentleman: I find that you do not publish enough touring articles with *real* touring bikes. The bikes that Max Burns rides would go missing up the crack of my ass. Make these tours on Harleys or Gold Wings, not some crotch rocket.

—EDWARD STEVENS
Cambridge, Ont.

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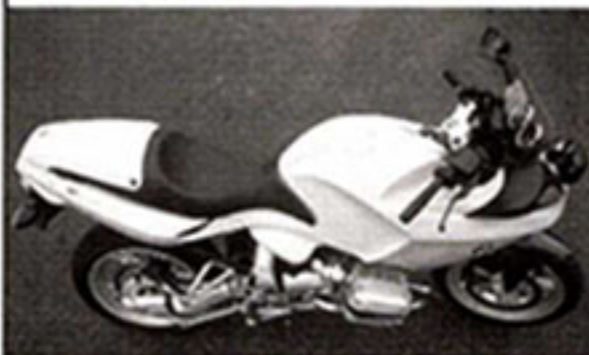
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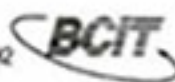
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Clean out of proportion

I'd like to comment about a new problem we see at our shop, which is occurring on both recent models and older bikes that are apparently well looked after and kept immaculately clean. I have written in the past about how a lack of cleanliness can lead to corrosion from condensation, but this problem is almost the opposite.

At one time to clean a bike we would use some soap and water, or a bit of degreaser on the tough stuff, and then brush and hose it off. This worked just fine, even on English and American bikes that were renowned for wetting themselves. Today we have miracle cleaners that take much of the time out of the job; spray it on and power wash it off. Many of these cleaners come in a concentrated form and are meant to be diluted. But, boy, do they ever work well at full strength, and often that's how they get applied. Cleaners are left on the bike longer than necessary and are being sprayed or brushed where they shouldn't, for example, on electrical switches and carb linkages. I see aluminum frame spars that are streaked and discoloured by cleaners that weren't properly rinsed off.

Some cleaners do such a good job of removing grease and oil that they dry out things that should be lubricated, such as lever pivots and oil seals and cable ends. Some cleaners, if left unrinsed, will react with plating used on some bolts and axles, causing them to seize or become very stubborn to remove.

Making the problem worse is the growing popularity of home power washers, which are now fairly inexpensive. These can force cleaners into new areas, past oil seals and into bearings (most often on the wheels), causing corrosion. Even without the strong cleaners, a pressure washer can force plain water into these spots and cause damage. These tools can be used safely. Follow the instructions on the cleaner label for dilution strength and note the materials to avoid. Use it only where necessary, and for the other places stick with good old car-wash soap and water. Power wash only the heavily soiled areas and be careful with your pressure and aim.

Do not spray directly at a seal or opening you can't see into. Think about where the spray is going. Do not just point the nozzle under the tank or seat and pull the trigger. There are electrical and ignition boxes under there that may not be waterproof under this kind of pressure, and

damaging these can be very expensive. The same goes for the electrical switches—keep them untouched by cleaners and spray. Once the bike is clean, rinsed and dried, lubricate the pivots, seals and exposed linkages you may have dried out. Chain lube works well for this, though other lubricants may be needed in some areas.

Chain letter

Q Drive-chain maintenance drives me batty. The chain lube flings off and messes up my bike. Shaft drive is great for cleanliness, but I've found the jacking effect really turns me off. Do you have any tips for easier chain maintenance? And should a used chain be taken to a hazardous-waste disposal centre?

— ANTAL GYORI
Barrie, Ont.

A After many years of making a mess myself, let me give you the procedure I have found works best. I will only clean a chain if it is an absolute mess, in other words, if the sides are caked with dirt or grit from various riding conditions or from over-lubricating. Some lubes attract dirt more than others, but if you only ride on the highway, your chain won't get as dirty as it would if you lived by a gravel road.

To clean a chain I use engine degreaser in an aerosol can, which is simple and easy, though sometimes a bit of brushing helps before rinsing it off. If you use something like Simple Green be sure to rinse it well, or it will continue to remove lubrication.

Once the chain is clean and dry I apply the lube. I apply it to the inside of the chain as it goes over the sprocket. The lube will be slung to the outside anyway, so less will be lost with this approach. Try not to over-lube the chain; lighter and more frequent applications will be tidier than a soaking. I use a steady stream along each row of plates, directing the flow between the plates or on the O-rings. I tend to steady the aerosol straw on a footpeg plate or the swingarm or anything steady to keep the stream in the correct location. I then spin the wheel by hand to be sure the lube is distributed about the chain.

If you don't have a centrestand or workstand, then the job is more awkward. The easiest method is just to move the bike ahead a few feet at a time and lube the chain in sections. A helper who can hold the bike upright and move it on your com-

“Power wash only the heavily soiled areas and be cautious of the power and direction of spray. Do not spray directly at a seal or under the seat.”



mand makes this method much quicker. Regarding chain replacement, use the best you can afford, as it will pay off. The manufacturer's original equipment is not a bad choice. They often require removal of the swingarm for installation, but this is a good opportunity to inspect and lubricate suspension links and swingarm bearings.

When the chain is clean and lubricated, be sure that it is adjusted properly. Follow the procedure in your owner's manual for this. Keep in mind that there are going to be tight and loose spots in the chain and it must be adjusted at the tight spot. This is a compromise, since the tension will seem too loose at another point. If there is a large variation in the tension, the chain should probably be replaced.

As for disposal, I must admit it's never occurred to me that a chain should be treated as hazardous waste. Just about anything these days might be considered that by some organization. But I recycle all my scrap chains to the metal bin, to be melted down and reused. **CC**

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Cycle
Canada



By Max Burns

IN THE JUNE ISSUE'S READERS WRITE, HAROLD Nightingale from Dunrobin, Ont., apparently had a bird over my flighty relationship with some fictitious redheaded chick named Anne, suggesting that I either see a shrink or return to P.E.I. and make love on a hill without worrying about the ferry schedule. Having missed the boat on the latter option, I thought why not the former, even if it hasn't worked wonders, apparently, for Harry? The following is a transcript from my first visit. To help get in the appropriate frame of mind, try reading this while lying on a couch. With your eyes shut.

Doc: So Mr. Burns, what seems to be zee problem? (This is shrinkonics; they all talk zat vay.)

Me: Someone said I should see a shrink.

Doc: Why?

Me: He thinks my mom and dad loved my sister more than me.

Doc: Very interesting. Does zis bother you?

Me: Not until he mentioned it.

Doc: Und why does it bother you now?

Me: I didn't know I had a sister.

Doc: Oh. Vell, ah, perhaps somezing else is bothering you...

Me: You know, now that you mention it, there is somezing. I don't know why, but I seem to have developed this thing for bizarre-looking motorcycles. [Doc's eyebrows raise.] First it was the Valkyrie. I mean, look at it—chrome-plated, giant mud-paddy of an engine fronted by a rad liberated from a Mack truck, wheels and tires off an earthmover. The only thing missing is the horny bulldog dump-truck hood ornament. Yet what an absolute joy it is to ride. It handles better than anything that porky has any right to, certainly better than most cruisers. And it's comfy. And my oh my, what a wonderful engine. It's just a smile a mile on that beauty. There! You see? I even referred to it as a beauty. I tell you Doc, I'm in love.

Doc: Being in love iz nothing to be ashamed of. It zounds like a very charming motorcycle....

Me: Oh, it sounds wonderful, Doc, like a Porsche flat-six under full throttle, the perfect marriage of purr and growl. I came that close [I hold up my hand showing a paper-thin space between thumb and forefinger] to buying one.

Doc: Und why didn't you?

Me: I met the BMW R850/1100R. Now you want ugly, take a look at the front of that beast. Worse than Marvin's R1100GS even, if you can grasp that concept. But again, who looks at his own bike when he's riding it? And again, what a genuine treat to ride. You ever flogged one of these things, throttle pegged, sideways down a gravel

Oh my shrunken head

road? Oh lordy, what a high. The ugliest front suspension in the world and yet, total control. Bumps? Who cares, just give 'er, you don't even notice 'em. And what good fun to watch the squiggle-marks left in the gravel as you exit a corner. You know, it just occurred to me, those mirrors didn't even vibrate. Not like my air-cooled GS.

Doc: Iz zat ugly too?

Me: Pretty much, but it kinda grows on you, like a wart. Anyway, the R1100R is another bike I came that close [extended hand again] to buying. Doc, this was getting serious. I was that close [fingers again] to spending money!

Doc: Vhat happened?

Me: The Triumph T509 Speed Triple. One of the ugliest bikes I've ever seen. I broke out laughing the first time I saw it. It looks like a once-fully-faired sport bike somebody crashed and then cobbled together because he didn't have collision insurance; hoses hanging out, and brackets dangling with two praying mantis eyeballs for headlights. Even the clip-ons must have got smashed because there's a set of tubular bars stuck on above the upper triple clamp. But it's all for the better. The Speed Triple's got the perfect ergonomics for full-blitz, backroad antics. Sure the suspension needs some work, but you just can't make that chassis wiggle, no matter what you do. And the brakes—phenomenal, Doc, just a pleasure to squeeze when you're cookin' too hot into a sand-covered corner. And what an engine. This is probably the ultimate giggle bike, the most likely to put a major smirk on your face, whether you're riding it or just looking at it.

Doc: Und of course you did not buy it.

Me: Right, but how did you know?

Doc: Lucky guess.

Me: I tell you, it's like a variation on that old rock and roll song, "If you want to stay happy for the rest of your life/Never make a pretty woman your wife/Take it from my personal point of view/Get an ugly girl to marry you," only with bikes. So I'm looking for even uglier motorcycles. It's an addiction.

Doc: But vhat could be less attractive zan zis Speed Triple?

Me: The BMW R1200C. You know, that new cruiser? I haven't ridden it yet, but jeez, based on my past affairs, this one has got to be a gas. It's just toooooo ugly for words, and already I'm just itchin' to flog one.

Doc: Are you shure you did not have a sister?

Maybe the Harry Nightingale was right. Sis, please write. We've got to straighten this out. ☐



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Fatten up your midrange

Bartels' new slip-on muffler for Buells adds a claimed 15 hp and 18 lb-ft of torque to the S1 White Lightning at 4,500 rpm. The carbon-fibre and polished stainless-steel muffler is less than half the weight of the stock item, with a larger diameter for both the canister and pipes. Suggested retail price is \$375 U.S. from Bartels, (310) 578-9888.



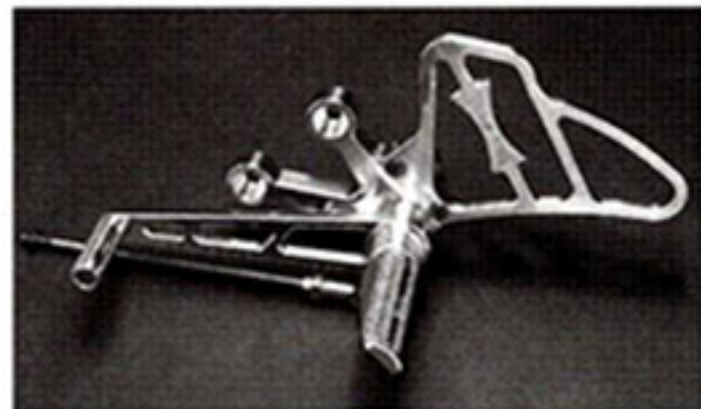
Heat up your horses

Hooker claims its metallic-ceramic thermal-barrier coating increases power by retaining heat in the exhaust pipe to increase gas velocity. The coating also resists rust and reduces the temperature of the heat shields. Various header-pipe diameters are available depending on engine size, and the end of the muffler can be mounted to improve midrange or top-end power. Made by Hooker Headers, (909) 983-5871.



Quick release for bags

Many custom and touring bikes with saddlebags make it a pain to check rear tire pressure. Two Brothers Racing offers a set of aircraft quick-release ball pins for Honda Shadow ACE and Valkyrie Tourers to enable removal of the bags in seconds. A kit that includes eight pins plus a drill bit for installation costs \$236.57 from Moto Hyper-Sport, (514) 226-6080.



Touring saddle for Intruders

Corbin's new dual touring saddle is designed to bring all-day comfort to Suzuki's new 1500 Intruder. It's contoured to help maximize weight distribution for long-range travel. Seating panels are leather stitched in a stylish pattern, and an optional V-rail and backrest are available. Suggested retail price for the saddle is \$779 from Bike Rider, 1-800-663-1016.



Build it from billet

Pro-Tek's new line of rearset footrests and controls is machined from solid aluminum and bright-anodized for corrosion resistance. Rods and fasteners are stainless steel. The pegs move the rider's feet 25 mm upwards and to the rear and fit most late-model sport bikes. Suggested retail prices range from \$199.99 to \$219.99 U.S. Manufactured by Pro-Tek, 1-800-776-8355.

Suzuki's 600 Katana had nine lives. Now it's got some

New skin for



Suzuki GSX600F Katana
Cycle Canada test

e more.

or the Kat

THE SUZUKI GSX600F Katana is a curiously stubborn survivor. Since its introduction 10 years ago, the Katana has remained virtually unchanged, a period in which it has outlasted many machines, including other 600 Suzukis that were seemingly more attractive—for example, the Bandit and RF600R, not to mention the first-generation GSX-R600 that never landed in Canada. Perhaps the clue to the success of the Katana is that while the rest of the sport-bike world has moved beyond it, the Kat has been left alone, a small island of low cost and high function in a sea of extremes.

Some form of updating was necessary, though, and this year Suzuki has revised the Katana styling in a flamboyant manner. The bulging, front-heavy aero look seemed either to appall or delight the onlookers we surveyed, but on the whole, we find the new shape a risky but worthwhile freshening of a bike whose styling had gone stale. There are a few aesthetic lapses, though; the gaudy chrome fairing badge looks as if it belongs on a '72 Chevy, and the taillight is bizarre, resembling the nether regions of a baboon. The Katana's brilliant red paint makes a vibrant statement, however, and the bike drew a remarkably positive reaction



A friendlier riding position than the sport-bike norm makes the Katana a good candidate for a tankbag tour. Suspension is plush and the fairing protective.

from hoi polloi at street level. Beneath the new bodywork Suzuki has also updated the underpinnings, though in most respects the design closely resembles the first 600 Katana of 1988.

To refresh your memory, the Katana arrived in the wake of Honda's CBR600, which has been the 600 class benchmark ever since. Initially the Katana held a slight horsepower edge, but its larger physical size and heft put it at a sporting disadvantage, and gradually the Katana's role evolved as a sporty all-rounder, accompanied by

an almost identical 750 version that landed in '89.

Both Katana models have been powered by oil-cooled, DOHC 16-valve inline fours, descendants of the original GSX-R engine that debuted in 1984. The '98 Katanas are based on a version of the engine developed for the 600 Bandit, which arrived in '95. This engine, which was exposed by a half-fairing, had some cosmetic refinishing to make it more attractive, but was also notable for its use of smaller 32 mm carburetors and narrower-diameter intake tracts, as well as milder cam timing that erased some top-end power but added midrange. The engine also differed from previous Katana design by having returned to a valvetrain using forked

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUGH McCLEAN

rocker arms with threaded adjusters instead of single rockers and shim adjusters. The transmission's output shaft was also fortified with a double-row bearing.

In its latest '98 configuration, the Katana has further revisions to the cam timing and exhaust system to improve midrange, and also includes the current generation of digital ignition that varies timing according to throttle position and engine rpm. On first acquaintance, the engine seems unusually

and intensity, look elsewhere; the Katana is competent, but friendly and relaxing. One significant upgrade on the '98 model is the fitting of wider rims, which permit the use of radial tires instead of the previous bias-ply type. Our test bike was fitted with Michelin Macadam 90 X rubber in 120/70ZR17 and 150/70ZR17 sizes. The radial rubber offers a larger footprint for grip and also plays a role in the superior ride quality. The previous Katana came with four-pis-

sophisticated and well-mannered. A handlebar-mounted choke helps the engine warm up quickly, and the clutch pull seems effortless, with a smooth engagement, which makes use of the slick gearbox particularly pleasurable. There's a good tug of power down low for casual navigation in traffic and the throttle response is smooth and precise. Engine vibration is virtually unnoticeable at low revs, but as the pace climbs to a typical highway speed of 110 km/h or so, the engine develops a slight roughness that urges an upshift to a non-existent seventh gear. The engine feels smoother if you downshift three gears and let the revs soar closer to the 11,000 rpm redline—and if you need to make a pass, downshifts are pretty much compulsory.

The 600 Katana is refreshingly competent and a good

13 kg (29 lb) less. Changes to bodywork and chassis on the '98 model have increased claimed dry weight to 208 kg (459 lb) from 199 kg (439 lb). The horsepower level is certainly sufficient for general use—after all, this is the age of the 50 hp cruiser—but if the output seems too meagre, buyers have the option of choosing the almost identical 750 version of the Katana, which has a list price just \$400 more than the 600. Both 600 and 750 continue to be based on the original frame, a perimeter design constructed of rectangular and tubular steel, mated to a steel swingarm. It's a sturdy but somewhat heavy construction, and it produces a relatively long wheelbase of 1,470 mm. The lightly braced 41 mm fork and single shock with a progressive linkage each offer rebound damping adjustment, and the shock also offers seven preload settings. Suspension is oriented more toward comfort and compliance rather than sporting precision, which suits the Katana role well. It soaks up bumps and potholes comfortably, with little harshness intruding except over sudden, sharp jolts. The soft ride quality imparts a vagueness to the handling feel that would be undesirable in a pure sport machine, but seems appropriate for the Katana, which has a steady, neutral steering character. It doesn't turn in quickly, but responds evenly to steering pressure and remains comfortably stable and predictable. If you want quickness

ton brake calipers up front, but they were of an aging design, and have been replaced by a Tokico twin-piston type that work well with the 290 mm diameter discs, offering better power and feel at the lever. During the course of our test, the Katana was loaded with a tankbag and a packsack under a cargo net for a three-day road trip.

The Katana's new bodywork drew a mixed response. Airflow off the screen is smooth.



Fuel consumption for the mildly tuned inline four was a modest 5.4 L/100 km (52 mpg), which offered a theoretical range of 370 km from the generously sized 20-litre tank. A reserve setting on the fuel petcock and a gauge on the re-styled instrument panel help manage the range, as does a digital trip-meter with two readings. As a sport touring bike, the Katana makes a good backroad companion, with comfortable suspension and reasonable ergonomics. Its

Value for \$8,249.

shortcomings, though, are a tight relationship between the footpegs and the relatively narrow seat and a surprisingly long reach to the bars, which are lower than seems appropriate for a casual sport machine. The 750 Katana has slightly higher handlebars, which we would have preferred on the 600. The lower bar height works well at elevat-



New twin-piston calipers, which work well, replace the aging four-piston design.

ed speeds when the rider's weight is offset by the airflow off the windscreen. The fairing adds some wind noise around your helmet, but produces very little turbulent buffeting. The only glitch in our Katana occurred at the end of the test when a float in one carburetor became stuck, causing some gas to overflow.

In an era of expensive, intimidating sport machinery and expensive, cumbersome custom bikes, the Katana struck us as refreshingly competent and a good value for a suggested \$8,249. We'd be inclined to pick the torquier 750 for an additional \$400, unless there was an insurance saving or similar incentive on the dealer floor, but the 600 is by no means something to avoid. Suzuki risks the bike's future reputation by having let its engine performance fade over the past decade, but the 600 Katana has proved remarkably resilient. We're amazed, really, that it outlasted the 600 Bandit, a similar but even less-expensive bike with superior performance, lighter weight and similar all-round utility that Suzuki dropped from its

Snap judgment

On the one hand...

- 👍 You can't beat the range of utility and performance for this price
- 👍 Reasonable comfort, good suspension and brakes

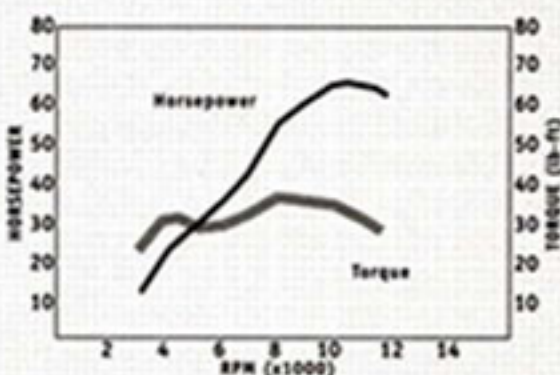
...but on the other

- 👎 Less power and more weight? Not a healthy trend
- 👎 Patch of vibration hits right at typical highway cruising speeds

Canadian line this year. It may return, but meanwhile the Katana has found an invulnerable niche in the market. File it under this category: a darn good bike for the price. **CC**

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Suzuki GSX600F Katana
Price	\$8,249
Engine	Oil-cooled four-stroke inline four with four valves per cylinder
Horsepower	66.5 at 10,500 rpm
Torque	48.5 N-m (35.8 lb-ft) at 8,000 rpm
Displacement	600 cc
Bore x stroke	62.6 x 48.7 mm
Compression ratio	11.7:1
Carburetion	Four 32 mm CV
Transmission	Six-speed
Final drive	Chain
Suspension	41 mm front fork adjustable for rebound; single rear shock adjustable for preload and rebound
Wheelbase	1,470 mm (57.9 in.)
Rake/trail	25.3 degrees/99.5 mm
Brakes	Twin 290 mm front discs with twin-piston calipers; single 240 mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper
Tires	Michelin Macadam 90 X 120/70ZR17 front; 150/70ZR17 rear
Dry weight	208 kg (459 lb)
Seat height	785 mm (30.9 in.)
Fuel capacity	20 L
Fuel consumption	5.4 L/100 km (52 mpg)
Fuel range	370 km



Horsepower/torque

Fading glory: Suzuki has smoothed out the midrange gulch that used to afflict its 600 Katana, but the top-end power has slipped too, down to 66.5 hp from 77. It's not actually as bad as it sounds, because the engine is smooth and responsive in the upper midrange. But the 750 model seems a better bet.



Wider rims now carry superior radial tires, which help improve the Katana's ride quality and grip. Steering is steady and predictable, and the suspension supple.



By Claude Léonard

IF YOU READ THE AMERICAN DIRT BIKE MAGAZINES, you've probably noticed that Jean-Sébastien Roy's name (usually followed by "pronounced *Wha*") and even his picture have been appearing more and more. Not only in race reports, but also in national ads (e.g., Malcolm Smith Racing). One could definitely say things are happening this season for Jean-Sébastien in the States. But one would be wrong. Just ask the riders who lined up next to him at the two first Canadian nationals, with a mix of respect, admiration, awe and envy behind their goggles. These guys know—things are not happening for Jean-Sébastien: he is making them happen. And on the U.S. circuit, that does not come easy.

Lap dancing

"At the two first outdoor nationals, I got my clock cleaned," says Roy. "In Supercross, I was finishing in the top ten on the same lap as the winner, and all of a sudden I was barely qualifying and getting lapped on a track with an over two-minute lap time. Man, I was so discouraged." But instead of whining about how tough it is out there, Jean-Sébastien did what he usually does—he went to work. After all, he'd been there before.

"At the first Supercrosses, I was getting lapped twice. I'd blown the series last year [due to injuries], and it was real tough coming back. But at the end, they weren't lapping me any more. I'd say my speed improved by about 30 per cent; in some heats I was riding with guys like [Mike] Craig and [Larry] Ward. But to do this, I had to concentrate only on Supercross—on the road, with only two or three days a week to train and test, you can't do everything. When the nationals got going, neither the bike nor I were ready to ride that fast. So we went out and found some really long and fast tracks, and we rode and tested like hell."

The results weren't long in coming. After an encouraging outing at the third national in Mount Morris (11th in the second heat), Roy hit Southwick with a vengeance. As did the weather. "It was like the deluge; I'd never ridden in so much muck before. There was a hill, maybe 150 feet, that you crawled up in first gear at a walking pace. The California guys were freaking out, but I didn't really mind. I ride pretty good in the mud."

After seizing his engine while running near the top ten with only a half-lap to go in the first heat, Roy came back strong and finished sixth in heat two, his best performance ever at an American national. But mud races have a reputation for producing one-hit wonders, so to confirm his Southwick result wasn't a fluke, Roy finished eighth in

Wha happening

both heats the following week at Budds Creek, good for an impressive sixth overall. Each time, Roy started mid-pack, somewhere between 15th and 20th, and systematically worked his way up to the vacuum behind the leaders. "In the last half of the second heat, I was riding the same times as Emig, who was fifth."

Such results tend to get you noticed by the right people, especially at this time of the year. When we spoke, Roy was preparing for round six of the 12-race national series. "That's when things will really get started regarding rides for next year. Things are gonna be happening this year, a lot of big names are riding out their contract: all of team Kawasaki [Emig, Huffman, Hughes], guys like McGrath, Lamson... a whole bunch of people. You can expect some big changes." While Roy's chances of signing with a big factory team are slim at this time, his landing a ride on one of the factory B teams seems a sure thing. In fact, some of them have already started talking to him. Problem is, most of these teams concentrate on the 125 class. "And I want to ride 250." Team Honda of Troy would seem like a logical step, considering Roy has been beating Mike Brown and has even started zeroing in on Mike Craig, but "I've talked with Kehoe [the team manager], and it's possible they'll be racing only 125s next year, too. Ideally, I'd like to stay with Kawasaki. Things are going well, and I don't really feel like changing brands again. Among other things, it would make things easier when I go to Europe at the end of the year. I could just bring my suspension and be ready to race, instead of starting from scratch away from home on a brand-new bike. We'll just have to wait and see."

Keeping the streak alive

For now, Roy just wants to keep charging and give the various team managers something to think about. He is training very seriously, both on the bike and off, and his motivation is pegged at the red line. He's invested a lot of time, effort and money criss-crossing the U.S. ("I took a plane only once, to go to the Seattle Supercross, and I didn't qualify. I came home in the hole."), and he knows he has to make it pay off soon. Racing in the States is costly—he has to cover all his expenses, including his mechanic, with prize and contingency money as his only income. No results (in the nationals we're talking top ten overall), no profit.

But Roy is sticking to his plan. "This year is an investment," he concludes in a firm and confident voice.

Whatch it pay off.

CC

Harley whips the covers off its Twin Cam 88, the new big twin for the 21st century.

Twin peek

THIS FIRST OFFICIAL GLIMPSE OF MILWAUKEE'S new engine might seem less than breathtaking—after all, it doesn't look much different from the Evolution engine. But that, perhaps, is the real measure of Harley's accomplishment: to deliver more competitive power, less mechanical noise and more sophisticated manners from an engine that won't seem shockingly different from Milwaukee's 95-year-old traditions.

The Twin Cam 88, as it's called, is new from the cases up, but the basic configuration is unchanged: an air-cooled, 45-degree V-twin with two pushrod-operated valves per cylinder. The bore and stroke are nice round numbers, at least in imperial measurement, with a 3.75 x 4.0 inch bore and stroke producing an 88-cubic-inch displacement. That's 95 x 102 mm and 1,450 cc, in other words, a bigger bore but a shorter stroke than that of the 1,340 cc Evolution engine.

Harley claims the Twin Cam 88 engine in touring form will produce 86 lb-ft of torque at 3,500 rpm, which compares to 77 lb-ft at 3,500 rpm for the Evolution. In cruiser trim, with shorty dual pipes, the claims are 82 lb-ft at 3,500 rpm versus the previous 76 lb-ft at 4,000 rpm.

The improved performance derives from a number of areas, including the additional displacement and the reshaping of the combustion chambers. Intake and exhaust ports and valves have been reworked, says Harley, and the engine breathes more efficiently through a new air-cleaner design with a front intake. Both carbureted and fuel-injected models will be offered. The ignition system is a single-fire type, meaning it doesn't waste a spark.

Instead of the Evolution engine's gear-driven single cam, the new twin uses a chain-driven pair of cams, whose design, along with altered cam and rocker boxes, reduce valvetrain noise.

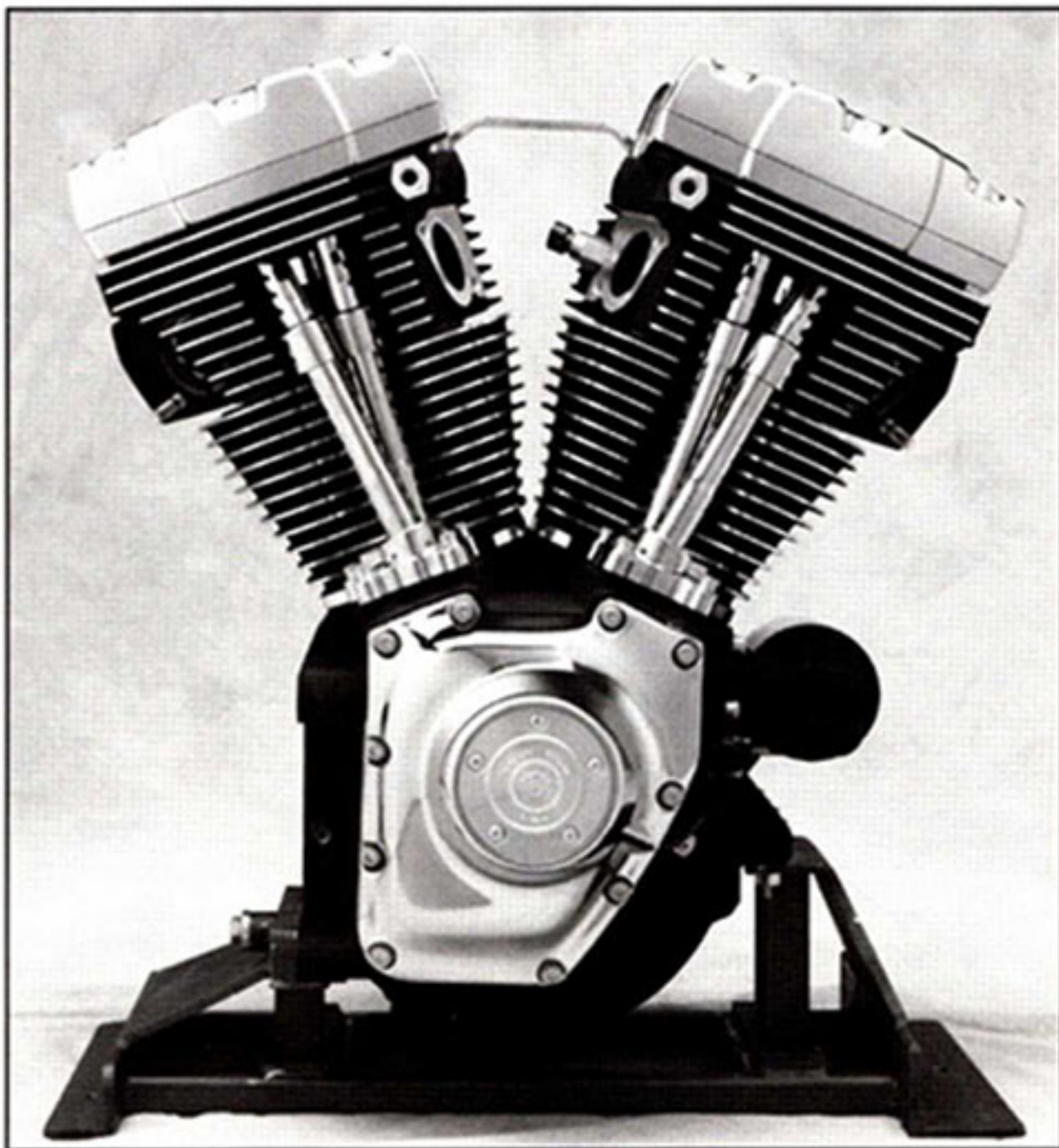
A stronger high-pressure diecast alu-

minum crankcase splits vertically, while the similarly diecast aluminum cylinders use cast-iron liners that have an O-ring base seal. The three-ring pistons are cooled by oil jets, and the cylinders have 50 per cent more fin area.

Oil circulation of the dry-sump engine is improved with a higher efficiency pump, and the oil is now filtered before it flows into the engine. The bottom-end construction continues to be a single-crankpin design with knife-and-fork rods, but the crankpin is a larger diameter with more bearing surface.

The crankcase and transmission remain separate on the new engine, but will have a stiffer joint to improve powertrain and chassis rigidity.

Not all of the '99 big-twin models will use this new engine. Evolution-powered bikes will continue to make up the bulk of the production numbers. We should have a more complete picture of Harley's '99 model line, including some riding impressions, after Harley's official launch. **CC**



In the next issue we'll show you where Harley plans to put this 1,450 cc V-twin.



Deluxe

service

NOW IN ITS THIRD YEAR OF PRODUCTION, the Royal Star, it seems clear, will not conquer the world. It hardly seems fair to have expected such an outcome, but when Yamaha introduced the Royal Star it seemed bent on global domination of the cruiser market, fully expecting to bump Harley-Davidson off its pedestal.

This didn't happen, of course, so now Yamaha has settled in for the long haul, building the reputation of its premium cruiser in small steps and variations. The main obstacle in finding buyers continues to be the price of the Royal Star, which begins at \$18,999 in original form, but rises to \$20,999 for a Tour Classic. The most recent variation tested here, the Tour Deluxe, lists for \$20,299, but comes in solo seat form at that price. A complete passenger kit assembly, including a backrest, seat and floorboards, is another \$1,056.95.

These are expensive motorcycles; what makes them worth the money? Harley-Davidsons sell for a similar price, and Yamaha seemed to think it could ask at least as much for a technically superior motorcycle of a higher build quality that carried a five-year warranty. The intangible qualities of a Harley, though, are a major source of its appeal, which subsequently translates into high resale value. The market has yet to confirm that Royal Star prices will prove similarly durable, though you'd expect the long warranty to back up its value.

If the bike is viewed as a collection of components, and not as a speculative investment, it's easier to see why the Royal Star carries a lofty price tag. Every piece is solidly built and superbly finished; there are no rough edges anywhere, which is something you can't say about any other big cruiser on the market, including a Harley. The large



Tour Deluxe comes with larger hard saddlebags and a solo seat, though a passenger kit is available as an option.

central speedo sits like an expensive chronometer on the gas tank, and the chrome, paint and polished surfaces are flawless. Nor is there anything sloppy about the Royal Star's performance; the clutch, transmission and brake are heavy in operation, but deliberately so, for a genteel, dignified feel that matches the bike's imperceptible aura of dignity.

The Royal Star V4 engine is central to its personality. Originally the V4 was built to power the Yamaha Venture touring bike,

and then hot-rodded to serve in the V-Max. In Royal Star form the 1,294 cc engine has been detuned, with smaller 28 mm carburetors, milder valve timing and a lower rev limit. Anyone who's ridden a V-Max, or even a Venture, will likely think that something is missing from the engine, but it nonetheless produces a healthy surge from low revs and

a relentless pull up to its maximum output of 65 hp. That may not seem like much, but most bikes in the heavyweight cruiser category are putting out roughly 50 hp. The emphasis is on low-speed grunt, but the Royal Star is both a real tractor and blessed with enough top end to crawl beyond 160 km/h. In cool weather we noticed a slight weakness just off idle, apparently a lean condition that disappeared as the

temperature rose, but otherwise it felt muscular, at least at low revs. Top-gear roll-on power tends to seem flaccid, but that's partly because of the tall overdrive gearing. As if to excuse this lethargy, the latest Royal Stars have a green "overdrive" light set in the speedo face that comes on in fifth gear, reminding you to downshift for a pass. The tall gearing keeps the revs in the basement, which also reduces vibration. Among the changes made to the Royal Star V4 was the removal of the counterbalancer in order to increase the low-frequency, high-amplitude shaking that provides essential character in the cruiser ranks. On the Tour Deluxe at highway speeds, a steady vibra-massage was

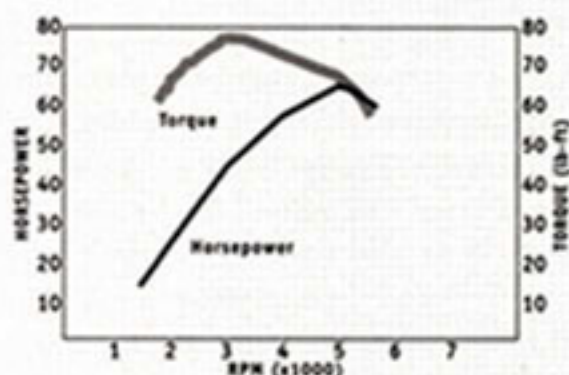
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUGH McLEAN

Royal, Classic or Deluxe? Anything but the cheap seats, baby.

detectable through the footboards and handlebar, but it was more of a flutter than a buzz, and no impediment to comfort. The mirrors stay clear.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Yamaha Royal Star Tour Deluxe
Price	\$20,299
Engine	Liquid-cooled four-stroke V4 with four valves per cylinder
Horsepower	64 at 5,100 rpm
Torque	103 N-m (76 lb-ft) at 2,000 rpm
Displacement	1,294 cc
Bore x stroke	102 x 90 mm
Compression ratio	10:1
Carburetion	Four 28 mm CV
Transmission	Five-speed
Final drive	Shaft
Suspension	43 mm fork with 140 mm travel; single rear shock adjustable for preload
Wheelbase	1,695 mm (66.7 in.)
Rake/trail	30 degrees/129 mm
Brakes	Twin 298 mm front discs with four-piston calipers; 320 mm rear disc with four-piston caliper
Tires	Dunlop D404 150/80-16 front; 150/80-15 rear
Dry weight	329 kg (725 lb)
Seat height	711 mm (28.0 in.)
Fuel capacity	18 L
Fuel consumption	6.3 L/100 km (45 mpg)
Fuel range	286 km



Horsepower/torque

Mini Max: That humpback whale of a torque curve is the defining characteristic of the Royal Star engine. Roll-on response from the bottom end is very good—at least in the lower ratios. Very tall gearing makes a passing move from top gear seem on the sluggish side. Which is why Royal Stars now come with an “overdrive” light on the speedo to remind you to step down on the shifter.

The Tour Deluxe version of the Royal Star comes with a four-into-two exhaust system rather than four separate mufflers, and to our ears, the separate pipes seem more musical. One reason might be that the four-into-two design has longer muffler extensions running under the saddlebags that direct sound away from the rider's ears. Despite the muted rumble, the Royal Star engine has a pleasantly throaty vroom and a forceful response to a handful of throttle. Rolling off the throttle, however, can produce a primary-gear whine that sounds a bit like the whistle of a dropping bomb at some revs.

Part of the Deluxe treatment is the thick solo seat with a prominent bolster for back support, but the more generous padding doesn't make it an obvious improvement over the original seat. The shape tends to lock the rider into one position of the saddle, and the laidback tilt concentrates weight on the base of the spine.

Behind the solo saddle is a small toast rack—or at least so it seems if one were to abide the 2 kg (4 lb) load rating stated by a warning sticker. Since the area normally helps support a passenger, we felt safer increasing the burden. The Deluxe model also comes with more capacious hard saddlebags, with a volume 33 per cent greater than the leather bags fitted to the Classic. Unlike those bags, the hard type on the Deluxe can be locked, though they require a separate key. The saddlebag lids are not hinged, unfortunately, which means two latches need unlocking to remove the lid, which must be placed somewhere while the bags are loaded or unloaded. A hinged lid with a single latch, like Honda uses on its custom Tourers, is much easier to use.

On the subject of awkwardness, previous Royal Stars have had ignition switches hidden behind and beside the rider's seat, which would not have worked with the new saddlebags. Now the switch has been moved closer to the steering head below the tank, where it requires a very long reach for the key—which also tends to become surprisingly hot from the engine.

That stretch for the ignition switch reminds you of how big the Royal Star is, with a 1,695 mm (66.7 in.) wheelbase and a claimed dry weight of 329 kg (729 lb). Yamaha was determined to give the Royal Star a heavyweight presence—which it has—but this also makes the bike something of a brute to push out of an inclined parking spot.



Royal Stars are heavy and low by design, but they handle comfortably well—up to the point where the footboards drag.

In the saddle, the Tour Deluxe seems less cumbersome, and the low centre of gravity and chassis geometry make it surprisingly well balanced in low-speed manoeuvres. The penalty for that ground-hugging feel is very modest cornering clearance, and it doesn't take an aggressive lean angle before the footboard skid plates scrape the pavement. Some improvement in clearance can be obtained by adding air to the fork through a new valve and adding preload to the rear shock. Or you can simply scale back your expectations about cornering speeds, which longer acquaintance with a Royal Star tends to encourage anyway.

Despite its considerable heft, the Tour Deluxe requires little steering effort from the wide handlebar to initiate a turn, though the length of the wheelbase and mass of the bike produce a slower and relaxed turning reaction. At higher speeds the Tour Deluxe can seem a bit rubbery

Snap judgment

On the one hand...

- 👍 It's no V-Max, but the big V4 has a pleasant sound and feel, decent torque
- 👍 Exceptional finish quality. Nothing cheap or tacky anywhere on the bike

...but on the other

- 👎 Despite the Tour designation, seating comfort is not improved
- 👎 Even a slight improvement in cornering clearance would be welcome

while making brisk lane changes, some of which results from the aerodynamic forces being fed into the steering from the large fork-mounted windscreen. Suspension compliance on the Tour Deluxe was similar to the other Royal Stars we've tested: adequate, but not exceptional. The fork occasionally gives a clunk over potholes and the rear shock can transmit a sharp whack, but the comfort level is of middle rank in the cruiser category.

We complained previously about the wooden feel and weak power of the Royal Star's twin front disc brakes, but this Tour Deluxe offered a slight improvement in power, if not in feel. The rear disc brake is huge, with a 320 mm diameter disc of unusual thickness squeezed by a four-piston caliper. It's obviously designed for heavy use, and on dry pavement you can stand hard on the big pedal above the footboard. Modulation at low speeds on a slick surface can be tricky, but the long wheelbase bike remains

fairly stable even if the wheel locks up coming to a stop.

Unlike the windscreen on the Tour Classic, the one fitted to the Deluxe is adjustable to two heights, the lower of which allowed us to see over the top comfortably. The screen, which is unusually thick, produces some mild buffeting at highway speed, but far less than we noted on the Kawasaki Nomad (tested in the July issue).

In theory, the fuel range offered by the 18 litre tank should be around 290 km, given the consumption of 63 L/100 km (45 mpg),



but the fuel-level warning light usually comes on around the 180 km mark, which was distracting. A petcock is also used to switch to reserve, the need for which arrives later.

A functional advantage of the Royal Stars are their cast wheels, instead of fashionably retro spokes. They support tubeless tires, and their strength and maintenance-free nature make sense for long-distance use.

The Tour Deluxe should still be considered a cruiser among tourers, but we found it a pleasant mount for relaxed explorations that included frequent stops for sightseeing. There are plenty of more functional choices for a touring bike, so a decision regarding its worth comes down to an aesthetic appraisal. The Royal Star has the heft and feel of quality, the torquey V4 engine makes the right sounds and a five-year warranty should help preserve its value. Yamaha's approach to a cruiser providing emotional appeal is perfectly logical, but remains a conundrum. It still requires a leap of faith to spend the money. **cc**

YAMAHA KINDLY CONSENTED TO MY REQUEST to borrow a bike from its European headquarters in Amsterdam for a week, but something was lost in translation. I'd asked for a YZF600 or reasonable facsimile and made plans for a sport-tour that would culminate in a few laps of the legendary Nurburgring. Fresh out of suitable equipment,

Tilting at windmills

On tour in Europe, John Cooper rides a Royal Star Tour Classic at Nurburgring—leaving his marks.

Yamaha lent me a Royal Star Tour Classic instead.

It wasn't exactly what I had in mind, but at least I wouldn't be riding the bus. The historic Nurburgring circuit (at least the Nordschliefe part of it that is still kept up) is usually rented to manufacturers for car and tire testing, but is still open to the public at least part of the time. The day I arrived the public hours were 5:45 to 7:00 p.m. The atmosphere was serious, with numerous Honda FireBlades, a Ducati 900SS and a new Yamaha R1 in the parking lot. I warily eyed the Acura NSX and black Audis, as well as the VW GTI with lowered suspension, hood pins and full roll cage. The Royal Star was incongruous, to say the least.



At Nurburgring you pay 22 marks and insert your ticket in the machine. It must be the world's fastest and scariest toll road.

In the registration office there was much eye-rolling over my waxed cotton jacket and kevlar-panelled Draggin' jeans. This was Germany, after all, where everyone dons full leather unless they're on a moped,

where anything goes. "Keine leder, nicht fahren." I'd half expected this, but wasn't about to lug my leathers across the Atlantic just for a 20 km ride. We compromised on my yellow PVC rain pants over the jeans. For 22 DM I got a ticket good for one lap, or close to a buck a kilometre.

Even one lap on a Royal Star is next to pointless, but I couldn't resist. Feeling and looking ridiculous, I set off as fast as I dared, keeping one eye on the mirrors and the other peeled for the Ring's notorious blind corners while heading into the late afternoon sun. I left the right turnsignal flashing to encourage the track warriors to keep clear, and every so often a GSX-R or BMW sedan would howl past. There was great musical accompaniment from the Royal Star's scraping footboards, but also some occasional hard knocks of a more serious nature as the boards' heavy forged mounting brackets slammed to ground. The big Yamaha's brakes are powerful, but a strong smell with each vigorous application told me they were working really hard.

On the closing straight we struggled to hit 160 km/h and then the lap was over too soon. I may have the lap record for a Royal Star, for what that's worth. No one else would be silly enough to try. I left the Yamaha clicking to itself in the garage of the Pension Jung-Stroof in Nurburg and walked down the road for dinner.

Ein grosse bier, bitte.



Battle Royale

Jean-Sébastien Roy seems ready to grab Blair Morgan's No. 1 plate. But surely that's more than a part-time job? By Jason Griffiths

ONE RIDER STANDS OUT FROM the field gathered to the pro riders' meeting at the opening round of the CMRC national series at Midhurst, Ont., but the stares he draws are not just because he's holding a baby in his arms. Jean-Sébastien Roy is back in town, and he's the man to watch.

Roy is by reputation the fastest motocrosser in Canada, but it's something he's proved by impressive results racing in the U.S., not by earning a Canadian champi-

onship. Earlier this year Roy battled into top-ten Supercross finishes against U.S. factory riders and is now pursuing the AMA outdoor series. His goal is a factory ride of his own. The only reason he's at RJ Motorsport Park for the opening round is that there is no conflicting American date.

"I did really well this year in the AMA indoor series, and if I can do as well outdoors I might get a factory ride for next year," says Roy. "So that's why I'll be racing the rest of the series down in the States." But a Canadian championship—if he could

squeeze it into his schedule—would look good on his résumé.

Currently, though, that title belongs to 22-year-old Blair Morgan from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Roy's teammate this year on the Two Wheel Motorsport Kawasaki squad. Morgan dominated the '97 series and then, like Roy, turned south of the border for riding opportunities—except Morgan made his mark last winter racing snowmobiles for Arctic Cat. Morgan was a spectacular success on sleds using a stand-up, motocross style, and after earning the Snowcross Champi-



onship he signed a lucrative three-year contract with Arctic Cat. Financially, it's a far more rewarding pursuit than domestic motocross. Last season in Canada, Morgan showed up at races on borrowed money. This year he arrived for the opening round at Midhurst in his Acura NSX, an exotic sports car worth more than a hundred grand. Morgan's attitude has also changed. Last year he was striving to earn his first No. 1 plate, winning 17 of 24 motos in the process. This season the title is Morgan's to lose, and he knows he has to beat Roy to be considered the country's fastest rider. Morgan must be asking himself some questions as he sits behind the wheel of his NSX: "Can I beat him? Will it be worth it if I do?"

Morgan knows he has a good chance of winning the '98 title, since Roy will be racing only four of the seven rounds. If Morgan can't beat Roy on the track he'll only be No. 1 on paper.

But it's not just Morgan and Roy waging battle. In the series' opening 125 moto, former No. 1 rider Marco Dubé takes the lead and, surprisingly, holds it ahead of Morgan. Dubé had torn a ligament in his knee at the Daytona Supercross and was not expected to come out strong. But the Quebec rider, who switched from Honda to Suzuki this year, has one of the trickiest bikes on the course. Dubé is riding erratically, but doesn't leave any room for Morgan to pass. Roy, meanwhile, catches up after a bad start and finally makes the pass. Morgan has to settle for third behind Dubé and Roy.

Morgan showed up for the first round in a new Acura NSX, financed by a lucrative three-year Arctic Cat contract to race Snowcross. Some wonder how hungry he is to defend that No. 1 plate.



For the rest of the day it's a scrap between Kawasaki teammates Morgan and Roy, but it's Jean-Sébastien who comes out on top in each of the three motos.

Morgan blew a chance to win the final 125 moto after Roy crashed on the fourth lap. But Roy's superior speed and conditioning helped him catch and pass Morgan two laps before the finish. In the final 250 moto Roy began with a holeshot and led Morgan and Dubé for the entire 30 minutes.

Morgan seemed happy enough with his

Blair Morgan, left, and Jean-Sébastien Roy flank Two Wheel Motorsport team manager Ron Ashley, who can't complain about the level of talent on his machinery. But what about commitment? Roy's priority is a U.S. factory ride, and he will not contest the entire Canadian series, despite an early points lead. Morgan is a better bet for another No. 1 plate, but so far he hasn't shown the intensity that won last year's title.



results and made no excuses, though he'd broken a finger practising the week before and had a chest cold. "This was one of my first races this year and I had the speed to run around with Jean. We left everybody else well behind."

Youth and guidance

Perhaps the most disappointing performance of the day was from Ryan Gauld, the Machine Racing Yamaha rider who has shown great promise and was expected to rise to the top. But at a track he practises on every week, Gauld's tenth place in the 125 class seemed anti-climactic.

exerting some pressure on Blair Morgan, suggesting that he hadn't been putting the same effort into his training as he had before the '97 season. Ashley's concern grew after Morgan finished third in the first 125 moto and a lacklustre fifth in the 250 class.

"It's just not my day," said Morgan after making it back to the trailer from the 250 moto.

"He just hasn't been riding enough," countered Ashley, who also suspected Morgan had been "spoiled by Snowcross."

Morgan was determined to ride harder in the afternoon program. When the gate dropped at the start of the 125 moto, Mor-

dazed. He attempted to race the final moto of the day but pulled in after a lap, unable to ride. In the absence of much competition, Roy won both remaining motos with a one-minute lead over the rest of the pack. A chastened Ryan Gauld redeemed his rep-



"I've got so much hype built up around me. I'm the next up-and-comer and I just threw it away out there. The last two motos were just an embarrassment....All I can do is put it behind me and think about the next race."

He wouldn't have long to wait, because the next round in the CMRC series took place the following week at Riverglade Park near Moncton, N.B.

Among the new talent making the trek east was 15-year-old Darcy Lange from Courtenay, B.C. Lange made the jump from 80 cc bikes to the pro ranks in just over a year, and the Kawasaki rider is determined to follow Jean-Sébastien's example and ride in the U.S. series once he's shown he can win in Canada. He finished eighth in both pro classes at Midhurst—which was two spots ahead of Gauld in the 125 class.

During the drive out from Moncton, Gauld had endured a painful lecture session given by Machine Racing manager John Nelson.

Meanwhile, in the Two Wheel Motorsport Kawasaki camp, Ron Ashley had been



Morgan and Dubé slammed together at Riverglade. Dubé was out cold and Morgan dislocated his ankle. Ryan Gauld, left, now trails Roy in the points chase.

gan charged into the lead, reminiscent of his championship season—but his day was ruined in the second corner. Dubé had pursued him into the corner when he lost direction in a rut and slammed into the side of Morgan. The two bikes locked together and tumbled, hurling both riders to the ground. Dubé lay unconscious from the impact and Morgan was sprawled in the middle of the track grasping his leg in pain. The race was halted.

The rest of Morgan's day would be spent in the emergency room, while rumours circulated that the champ had broken his leg. Dubé had suffered a concussion and was



utation with second-place finishes in both 125 and 250.

"John pulled me aside and just said, 'This is what you have to do, you have to ride the whole moto, and if you are not willing to do it I want my bikes back right now.' John said as soon as the 30-second board goes up I'm locked into a contract of 30 minutes of riding. No whining or crying, just 30 minutes of twisting the throttle."

Yamaha veteran Marty Burr took the last podium spot in the 250 class, a good result after misfortune in Midhurst when his bike ran out of fuel in the final moto after the carb float had stuck. And young Darcy Lange showed himself a force to be reckoned with, finishing fourth in the 250 class.

Morgan was eventually diagnosed with a severely dislocated ankle from his crash with Dubé, but he was racing again a week later at an Ontario regional, though off his usual pace. He has five weeks to prepare for the next round in Raymond, Alberta, and an unsatisfied Ashley was stepping in to guide Morgan's training with a firmer hand. He's pumped time and money into Morgan's career and wants a return on his investment.

Meanwhile, Jean-Sébastien Roy keeps on getting stronger. After the New Brunswick round he scored his best-ever result in an outdoor AMA national moto, with a sixth at Southwick, Mass. He'll race at the Alberta round, but miss the next two in Nanaimo, B.C. and Edmonton before returning to Ulverton, Que., and the Walton, Ont., final.

Roy's absences might prevent him from winning the No. 1 plate. But Morgan and Dubé or somebody else will have to beat Roy on Canadian soil to show they really deserve the championship. **CC**

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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SAFE MOTORCYCLING (CASM) is an awareness and safety campaign directed at both riders and non-riders. We welcome all riders and clubs to be part of the resolution. For more info check out our website www.casm.on.ca/. CASM, 51 Sproule Dr. Brampton, ON, L6V 4B6. Tel. (905) 457-7850, fax. (905) 457-0774 or email to kcasm@netmatrix.net

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DUCATI OWNERS CLUB - Serves Ducati owners/riders/dreamers and all European (including British) bike riders. Members receive a topical and informative newsletter 4x/year and an invitation to ride at our rallies. 1998 Track rallies at Mosport June 27/28 and Grattan, Michigan Aug. 1/2. New membership is \$25/year for single or \$30 for family or international. Renewals are still only \$20.00. For more details contact David Acey, 1920 Ellesmere Rd., #229, Scarborough, ON, M1H 3G1 or visit our web site - <http://www.vaxxine.com/new-ducatti-owners-club-corp-info> email: new_docc@vaxxine.com.

GOLD WING TOURING ASSOCIATION (GWTA) - We provide Gold Wingers with an environment and club structure for enjoying social gatherings and family events without political or religious affiliations. Members receive monthly magazines, patches, decals, and the Annual Touring Guide. For info on joining and/or starting your own local chapter: GWTA, Brian Taylor, 742 Elgin St. Newmarket, L3Y 3B8, (905) 853-2263, bttaylor@netrover.com Western Canada: Bruce McQueen (604) 753-9512, fax (604) 753-1519. Atlantic Canada- Noel Facey Tel. (902) 434-7095.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF TRAIL RIDERS (OFTR) - Are you an active off road rider? If so, you should consider joining the OFTR, the voice of off-road motorcyclists and ATV users in Ontario. Membership benefits include a regular informative newsletter, monthly meetings and assistance in keeping riding places open in your area. Membership is only \$25 per year and your fees help us to fight negative legislation, land closures and to develop a trail network in Ontario. To join, please call Warren Thaxter on (905) 786-2836 or Tony Cleary on (905) 824-7344 during business hours.

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NORTH AMERICAN 40+ RIDERS: ONTARIO is an international organization offering fun social events and weekend tours geared to the wishes of our touring enthusiast, 40 years and over members. We're growing rapidly with chapters in New York, Penn, Ohio and Illinois. Regular breakfast meetings. Everyone is welcome. For information contact: Lorne Shrum, 6 Wade Rd, Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0. Phone: 905-957-3082

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VIRAGO OWNERS CLUB - Come and join our family of riders. The Virago Owners Club is an organization of motorcycle enthusiasts dedicated to Yamaha's Virago. After 15 years the Virago Owners Club is intended for, but not limited to, riders of the Yamaha Virago. For Information contact: www.xtalwind.net/~virago or EAST - Bob Cross, 41 Rue de la Coulee, Hull, QC, (819) 595-1002 cross@fox.nstn.ca / WEST - Wayne Corley, 6346 171 A St., Surrey, BC, V3S 7C4, Tel. (604) 576-0448

UNITED MOTORCYCLE CLUB INTERNATIONAL - 40 Years of age or older. Motorcyclist or enthusiast. Food, fun, freedom, and friendship. No membership fee or dues. No special brand required. Chapters in Canada, USA and Germany. For information, write to UMCi 20099-50A Ave. Langley, B.C. V3A 7H8

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A SUDDEN HARD RAIN HAD SWEEPED MOSPORT Park just before the start of the opening Superbike national. Water soaked the well-aged pavement and heightened the hazard of an oil spill lurking in a slough of cement dust leading onto the back straight. The track condition was horrible, but even worse, it was changing, with the sun breaking out and wind beginning to whip the track dry. In other words, a perfect day for the green-haired monster of Mosport, Martin Gaudreault, who is as slippery and unpredictable as the surfaces he masters.

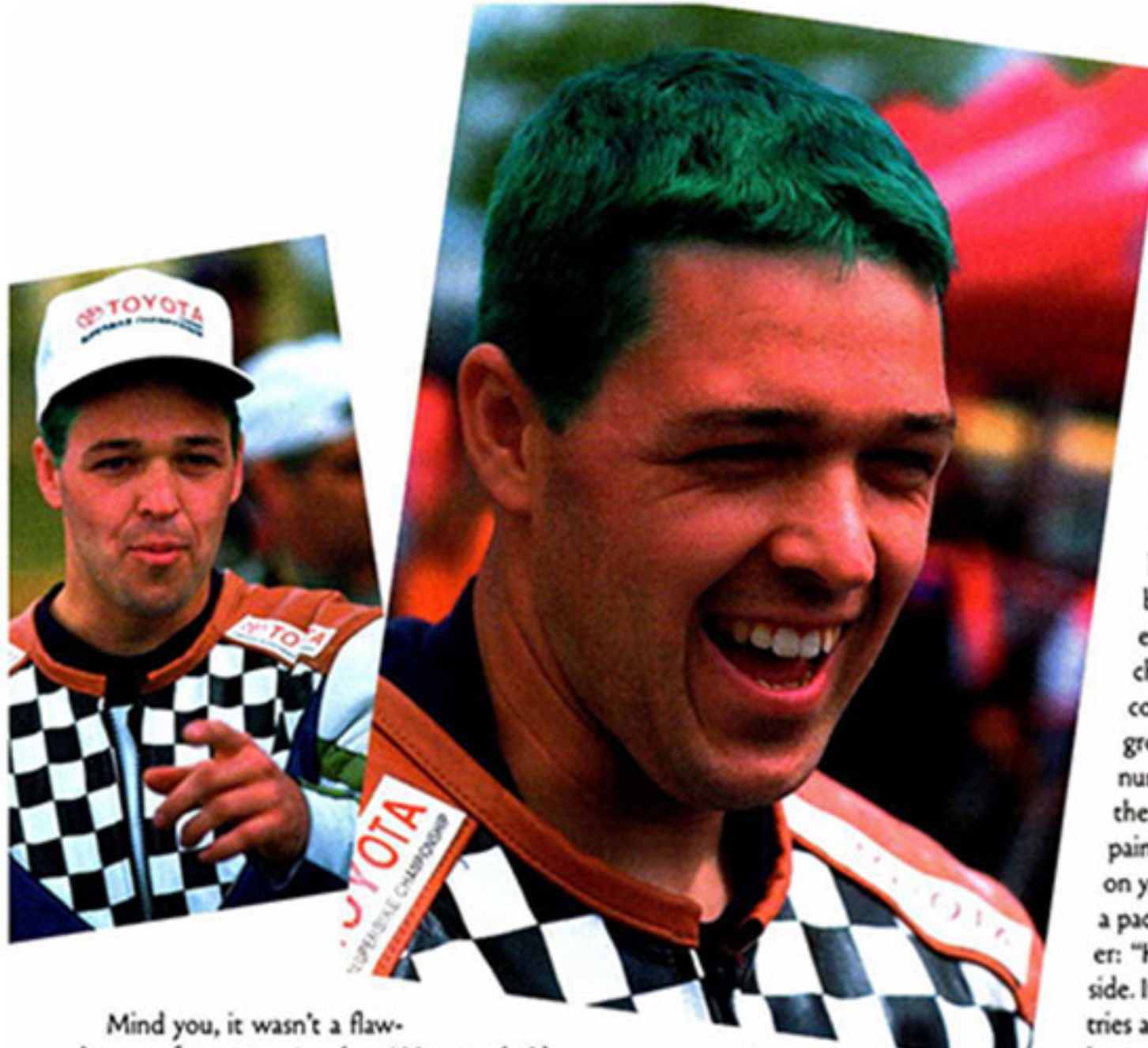
During the final round of the Superbike national series last September at Shannonville, Gaudreault had nearly won the wet-but-drying final on his ZX-6R until a gearbox failure caused a crash. Earlier this season he won the opening Shannonville

Martin Gaudreault thrives on the ragged edge. How he gets away with it amazes those in his wake—which was almost everybody at the Mosport Superbike round.

race on a track so oily much of the grid walked out. And at Mosport, Gaudreault triumphed with his first big win, coming through the field as the track dried, side by side with Jordan Szoke until he forced his way to the front on the last turn.

True, the win was something of a fluke; Gaudreault and Szoke on ZX-6Rs and third-place finisher Benoit Pilon on an R1 were all on Michelin rain tires, which work better than Dunlops on a drying track. But by the end of the day Gaudreault had added to his accomplishments—this time on dry pavement—by passing Michael Taylor on the last lap to take the Open Sportbike win and then finishing a solid fourth on his ZX-9R Sportbike in the second Superbike final of the day, which gave him the overall points lead in the championship.





Mind you, it wasn't a flawless performance. In the 600 race he'd attempted an impossible pass under braking against Munroe, who was already on the limit trying to out-brake Neil Jenkins at the end of Mosport's back straight, now faster than ever after the removal of the hump. "He carried way too much speed in there," said Munroe, and Gaudreault tucked the front end at a frightening velocity. By the time his ZX-6R stopped cartwheeling, it had folded like an accordion. The crash had looked messy enough to bring out the red flag, and the results were made final, giving Jenkins the win ahead of Munroe and

Owen Weichel. Gaudreault wobbled to his feet holding his wrist, and he needed to replace a battered helmet, but was soon back in the saddle of his ZX-9R to win the Open Sportbike final.

If he was riding hurt, it didn't show. Finishing behind him in the Open race was American newcomer Josh Hayes, a member of the Valvoline Suzuki team who made a fine debut at Mosport, and admitted astonishment at the sight of Gaudreault in front of him. "He was riding like a madman. I kept waiting for him to highside. He sure doesn't mind experimenting with his drives out of corners. I thought he'd be in a low orbit.... He wanted that race real bad."

Taylor had made a mistake downshifting from the back straight on the penultimate lap, allowing Gaudreault to close, and then pounce. Coming out of the oil-soaked exit of Moss Corner for the final time, says Taylor, Gaudreault "went sideways so far I had to shut off." Wild, perhaps, but he saved it and led Taylor across the line.

How long can Gaudreault get away with this kind of thing? Well, he's not a rookie, though this will be his first season on a full national campaign, supported by Canadian Kawasaki on ZX-6R and ZX-9R Sportbikes. A 26-year-old from Laval, Que., Gaudreault is a francophone who has ventured little

beyond his provincial borders—though as an amateur, he says, he went to Loudon in '92, managed to register as a pro and went on to qualify second in a 750 Supersport race behind a certain Scott Russell. Of course, it was raining....

Gaudreault has always enjoyed racing in the wet, which offers the opportunity to compensate for a horsepower deficit. The worst injury he's suffered has been a broken wrist, but there have been quite a few crashes and much shattered bodywork. He chose his racing number 101 because he could re-do it easily with tape, having grown tired of repairing more elaborate numerals. But the number also signifies the 101 Dalmatians, as do the pawprints painted on his helmet. Having Gaudreault on your tail is not unlike being pursued by a pack of excitable puppies, agrees one racer: "He'll pass you anywhere. Inside, outside. If he sees you in front, he automatically tries a pass. There's no hesitation." It's a riding style that frequently lands Gaudreault in trouble, but he can also make it work. At the very least, he's currently the most entertaining rider in Canadian road racing. He



Gaudreault made a pretzel of his ZX-6R after losing it at the end of Mosport's back straight. Neil Jenkins took the 600 win.

holds nothing back, not on the race track and not in the simple joy he shows atop the podium.

In the final Superbike race, early leader Taylor blew an engine and Gaudreault finished fourth, the best he could hope for on dry pavement against the full Superbike equipment of Munroe, Hayes and Pilon. He's not expected to hold his points lead in the Superbike championship beyond this first event. But if it turns out to be a rainy series, all bets are off. **CC**



Martin Gaudreault, Jordan Szoke and Benoit Pilon moved to the front as the track dried, conditions that favoured their Michelin rain tires.

The BMW C1 enters production next year. Is this car/scooter hybrid a mere curiosity or does it have repercussions for motorcycling? Bruce Reeve rode a C1 prototype and brings back this report.

THE FUTURE AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE. At one time it kept a discreet distance, promising strangely futuristic devices for some remote date—the year 2000, for example. Now that future is indecently close, and I've just come back from riding an example of it in Munich, Germany. There, BMW introduced its 2000 model C1, which goes into production next year, built by Bertone in Italy.

The C1 is a powered two-wheeler, but a hybrid that combines elements of the automobile and scooter. Its defining characteristic is passive safety, something that up to now has been virtually absent from any form of scooter or motorcycle. BMW has designed the C1 to protect its rider from collisions with other vehicles, particularly the most common frontal variety. The C1 is designed to be operated without the need for a helmet, for the simple reason that the C1 itself forms a kind of egg-shaped helmet around the entire seat area. A passenger can be carried, but must wear a helmet since he or she sits outside the protected area. The alloy space frame includes a roll cage that

can withstand 2.2 tons of pressure; a deformable bumper is located above the front wheel, which is steered by a Telelever fork that also supplies an element of crash-deformation. The rider sits in an automotive-style seat with a headrest, strapped securely with an inertia-reel double safety harness. An airbag is also under development. German regulations have been changed to exempt C1 riders from the helmet law, and similar exemptions will be sought in other jurisdictions.

Using accident research data and 200 computer simulations, the C1 proved safer in crashes than motorcycles in almost every case, something that was backed up by a series of collision tests using dummies and prototypes. Video footage shown by BMW offered convincing proof of these claims, though it's clear that C1 crashes would also lead to a different range of injuries to the arms and legs, which are not restrained and

**BMW C1
Impression test**



BMW has succeeded in convincing authorities in Germany to exempt C1 riders from the helmet law. A second seat can be fitted, but passengers on the back would need a helmet.

vulnerable to injury or abrasion. And in some situations where a motorcyclist might be thrown clear without injury, the C1 rider could come out worse. In general, though, the safety benefits of the C1 seem inarguable. A good question, however, is whether or not the advantages of a scooter or motorcycle have also been greatly compromised.

BMW offered five prototype C1s to the gathered press, first advising us they were worth about \$160,000 each and asking that they not be damaged. I had two short riding sessions around something like a hilly go-kart track located inside BMW's huge Aschheim test centre. Most of the other visitors were automotive journalists, and BMW had provided a fleet of conventional scooters and some shorty helmets to allow them to brush up their riding skills. I took the opportunity to re-acquaint myself with a couple of scooters, which typically are notable for hyper-quick steering, low centre of gravity, modest weight, and in the case of a Piaggio 180 two-stroke, brisk performance. They offer an extraordinary sense of freedom and are, of course, bloody dangerous by automotive standards.

Then I boarded the C1. Immediately I noticed the additional weight, a total of 180 kg (397 lb) full of fuel, but particularly the higher centre of gravity. After strapping myself in with two separate buckles and pulling the huge central lever that controls the centrestand, I rocked the C1 back and forth with my feet on the ground and felt the mass of the roll-cage and glass overhead, which swayed something like a high-masted ship. With a turn of the key and a push of the electric start, I was ready to go. Like most scooters, the C1 uses an automatic continuously variable transmission. Two hand levers control the front and rear brakes.

Underpowered, overweight?

The C1 prototype engine was similar but not identical to the final production item, a 125 cc four-stroke made by Bombardier-Rotax in Austria. The engine felt somewhat overstrained, which isn't surprising considering the weight, and it accelerated slowly up to what was a claimed 100 km/h, though the speedometer remained politely inactive on the prototypes I rode. The production engines will have a redesigned cylinder head and electronic fuel injection,



A crash-deformable bumper above the front wheel keeps the C1 from flipping in a front-end collision, and the Telelever fork is also designed to collapse. The aluminum framework is strong enough to withstand a couple of tons of pressure without crushing.



but a 250 version would seem an obvious improvement, and is said to be in the works. Essential to the success of the C1, though, is the licensing structure in much of Europe, which will allow many drivers to operate a 125 scooter with a standard driving licence.

Most scooters strike me as being a tad squirrely, but the C1 felt solid and slower steering, a predictable result of its longer wheelbase, braced fork and much stiffer frame. I quickly grew used to the somewhat pendulous steering feel, and probably would also grow used to the presence of the thick pillars of the roll cage up front, which interfere somewhat with your cornering view.

Brembo calipers offered good braking power, and future versions of the C1 will also be offered with ABS (which was demonstrated by a BMW engineer during an emergency braking test through sand).

Weather protection on the C1 should be exceptional. The windscreen is automotive-type safety glass, not plastic, with a large wiper and defrosting vents, and the handlebars have electric warmers. Your feet sit inside a semi-enclosed well, which should also discourage unwisely taking a dab in case of a low-side crash. Despite riding without a helmet, I felt more claustrophobic on the C1 than I had on the conventional scooters with a helmet. A handy single button releases both seatbelt buckles when it's time to disembark and the straps recoil out of the way, while a pull on the big lever hoists the centrestand. No sidestand is fitted out of

concern that the C1 might blow over in a high wind.

I also have some doubts about how easily the heavier C1 could be manoeuvred into tight parking areas on crowded sidewalks in European cities. Although it's not huge, the C1 is bigger than a normal scooter. And I watched one journalist begin his ride by running over a plastic pylon immediately in front of him, which had been obscured by the expansive front bodywork.

Traffic splitter

The BMW C1 will not likely be coming to Canada, mostly because traffic customs here wouldn't allow it to show its strengths. BMW illustrated its presentation on the C1 with video clips showing the speed with which motorcycles and scooters slip through lanes of motionless car traffic. The environmental benefits, time savings and reduced congestion are obvious. Lane-splitting is tolerated in most of Europe and parking is permitted on sidewalks and in special zones. In Canada that usage garners tickets and homicidal rage from other drivers. As a result, motorcycle and scooter use here is almost entirely recreational. At a retail price of approximately \$8,000, the C1 would struggle to find sufficient buyers to make it worth importing.

There are the safety benefits, of course, something which has traditionally been of little interest to motorcyclists. The lack of any passive safety design is an integral part of the motorcycle as we know it. Now that BMW has introduced a powered two-wheeler with a new level of safety, however, it concerns me that similar expectations might be applied to motorcycles. According to Dr. Michael Ganai, head of BMW's motorcycle division, "There are no plans nor is it possible to make a C1 out of every motorcycle." BMW considers the C1 a new category of vehicle, and I would agree. But I was surprised that no one at the factory seemed aware of the possibility that BMW might be sued in a U.S. courtroom for failing to apply the same passive safety standards on its motorcycles. Dr. Ganai acknowledged that the production of the C1 was a marketing risk, and I hope that's all it is.

If BMW has successfully created a new hybrid vehicle with the manoeuvrability of a scooter and the crash protection of a small car, I'm sure the world will be a better place. On the other hand, let's hope BMW hasn't unwittingly created a template for the motorcycle of the future. **cc**



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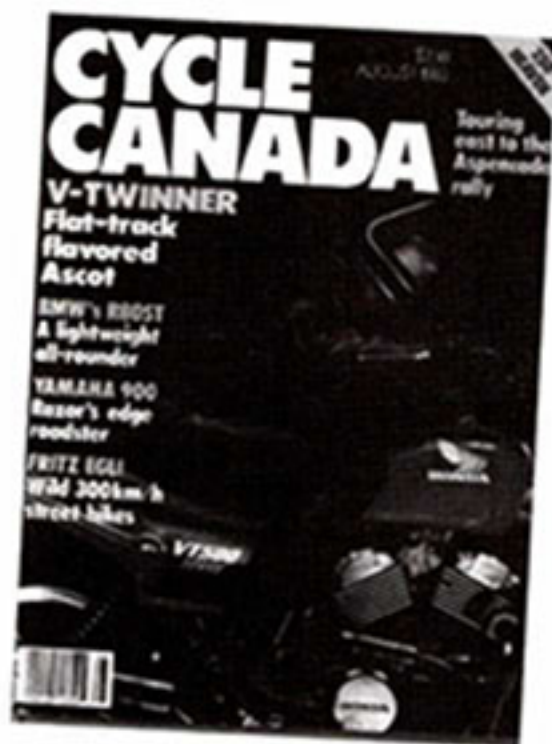


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Ascots and Secas and STs

Fifteen years ago in Cycle Canada

V-twin sport bikes are so well established now that we need not fear for their future. More good ones are on the way. But 15 years ago we couldn't help but be disappointed with some of the offerings from mainstream Japanese manufacturers. The Yamaha Vision had seemed so promising, but fell short of expectations and then was canned. Honda tried a different approach with the VT500 Ascot, which used a version of the 45-degree liquid-cooled V-twin introduced in the homely Shadow custom. The Ascot was also styled in an American tradition, but it used dirt track instead of custom elements. Nothing was wrong with the bike, exactly, but it didn't stretch much beyond the role of inoffensive all-rounder. The engine needed high revs to generate much power and the shaft-drive chassis was listless. If the Honda had been a real rip-snorting flat-tracker for the street like Harley's XR1000, it might



have been more successful, at least to us. But the Ascot was just too nice.

Next on the list of disappointments was Yamaha's Seca 900, an expanded version of

the shaft-drive 750 that had a sleek, sporty European flair. Unfortunately, the Seca wiggled like a salmon going upstream at brisk highway speeds, and our test bike was not unique in this regard. Too bad, really, because it was a charming sport-tourer. So appealing, in fact, that our test concluded when somebody stole the bike.

BMW's R80ST made the best impression in our test lineup, though the bike was really just a parts-bin conversion of the GS model. But it worked. Elsewhere in the August issue Max Burns reported on the Aspencade Rally from Lake George, N.Y., which had recently been transplanted from New Mexico and would become known as Americade. Max suffered from chrome envy for weeks afterward. **CC**

News snapshot: August 1983

- Harley-Davidson introduces its new generation of Evolution engines
- Ride for Sight's first national rally raises \$350,000 for retinitis pigmentosa research

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Aug. 15—Leamington, Ont. Half mile. National. CMA. (905) 522-5705.
Aug. 28—Barrie, Ont. Half mile. National. CMA. (905) 522-5705.

HARE SCRAMBLES

Aug. 9—Agassiz, B.C. CMA. (604) 536-2321.
Aug. 9—Vega, Alta. Oldtimers. CMA. (403) 475-0943.
Aug. 9—Welland, Ont. National. CMA. (905) 522-5705.

MOTOCROSS

Aug. 1-2—Grunthal, Man. Amateur Nationals. CMA. (204) 338-4094.
Aug. 2—Paisley, Ont. CMRC. (905) 642-5607.
Aug. 2—St. Jude, Que. ACMQ. (514) 799-5753.
Aug. 3-7—Chatsworth, Ont. Moto Park Summer Camp. (519) 794-2434.

Aug. 3—Uxbridge, Ont. CycleFair. (905) 852-6507.
Aug. 9—Kerrobert, Sask. CMA. (306) 668-4341.
Aug. 9—Ste. Anne, Man. CMA. (204) 338-4094.
Aug. 9—Ulverton, Que. National. CMRC. (905) 642-5607.
Aug. 16—Kinsella, Alta. CMA. (403) 475-0943.
Aug. 13-16—Walton, Ont. Grand Nationals. CMRC. (905) 642-5607.
Aug. 22-23—Valleyfield, Que. ACMQ. (514) 370-4518.
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Aug. 23—Grunthal, Man. CMA. (204) 338-4094.
Aug. 23—Regina, Sask. CMA. (306) 668-4341.
Aug. 23—Swan Hills, Alta. CMA. (403) 475-0943.
Aug. 29-30—Auburn Hills, Ont. CMRC. (905) 642-5607.
Aug. 30—Beausejour, Man. CMA. (204) 338-4094.
Aug. 30—Port Hardy, B.C. CMRC. (250) 758-8299.
Aug. 30—Prince George, B.C. CMA. (604) 536-2321.
Aug. 31—La Tuque, Que. ACMQ. (514) 654-8193.

RALLIES & EVENTS

July 30—Aug. 3—London, Ont. Balloon Festival Show & Shine. (519) 696-2088.
July 31—Aug. 2—Sanair, Que. Moto Mondial. 1-800-361-4595.
July 31—Aug. 3—Sudbury, Ont. Freedom Rally. Mine Mill Campground. (705) 677-0431.
July 31—Aug. 3—Humber College, Ont. CSC Motorcycle Instructor Rally. Fax (416) 253-2109 or e-mail radiat@idirect.com.
Aug. 1-2—Ormstown, Que. CVMG Rally and Trials. (905) 627-4185.
Aug. 2—Welland, Ont. Ride for Huntingdon's disease. CMA. (905) 522-5705.
Aug. 14-16—Ameliasburgh, Ont. CVMG Quinte Rally. (905) 627-4185.
Aug. 16—Welland, Ont. Paul Travis Memorial Mystery Tour. CMA. (905) 522-5705.
Aug. 23—Mississauga, Ont. Samuel R. McCallion Toy Ride. GWTA. (416) 748-3146.
Aug. 21-23—Kelowna, B.C. Sportbike West. 1-800-762-5305.

ROAD RACING

Aug. 8-9—Calgary. CMRA. (403) 280-3144.
Aug. 9—Shubenacadie, N.S. CMA. (902) 542-7478.
Aug. 14-16—St. Felicien, Que. National. PMP. (416) 696-2455.
Aug. 15-16—Seattle, Wash. Vintage/Superteams. WMRA. (206) 338-4686.
Aug. 22-23—Mosport, Ont. VRRRA. (905) 627-4185.
Aug. 22-23—Portland, Ore. WMRA. (206) 338-4686.
Aug. 22-23—St. Eustache, Que. ASM. (514) 663-2431.
Aug. 23—Richmond, B.C. Mini racing. CMA. (604) 536-2321.

TRIALS

Aug. 1-2—Sanair, Que. CMA. (905) 522-5705.
Aug. 3—Uxbridge, Ont. CMA. (905) 522-5705.
Aug. 29—Haliburton, Ont. CMA. (905) 522-5705.
Aug. 30—Tweed, Ont. CMA. (905) 522-5705.

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Suzuki GSX-R750
Cycle Canada test

Theory vs. practice

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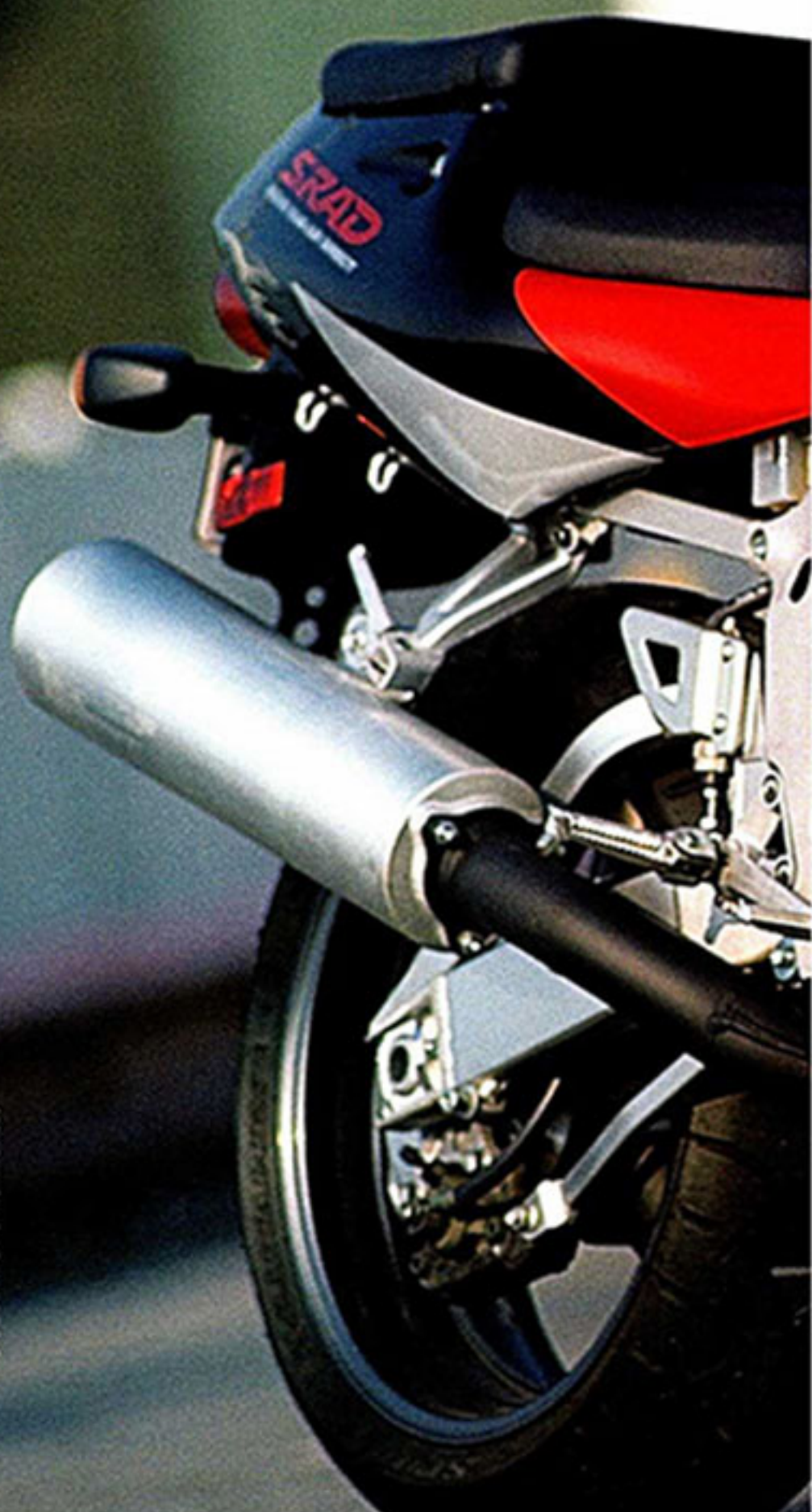


TWO YEARS AGO SUZUKI HAD THE SPORT BIKE OF THE year with its stunning reconfiguration of the GSX-R750. It was a certifiable wild thing, with less weight and more peak horsepower than a Honda CBR900RR, hairtrigger steering and a frantic personality, marked by a big jolt of power beyond the 10,000 rpm mark that made the front end dance like a puppet.

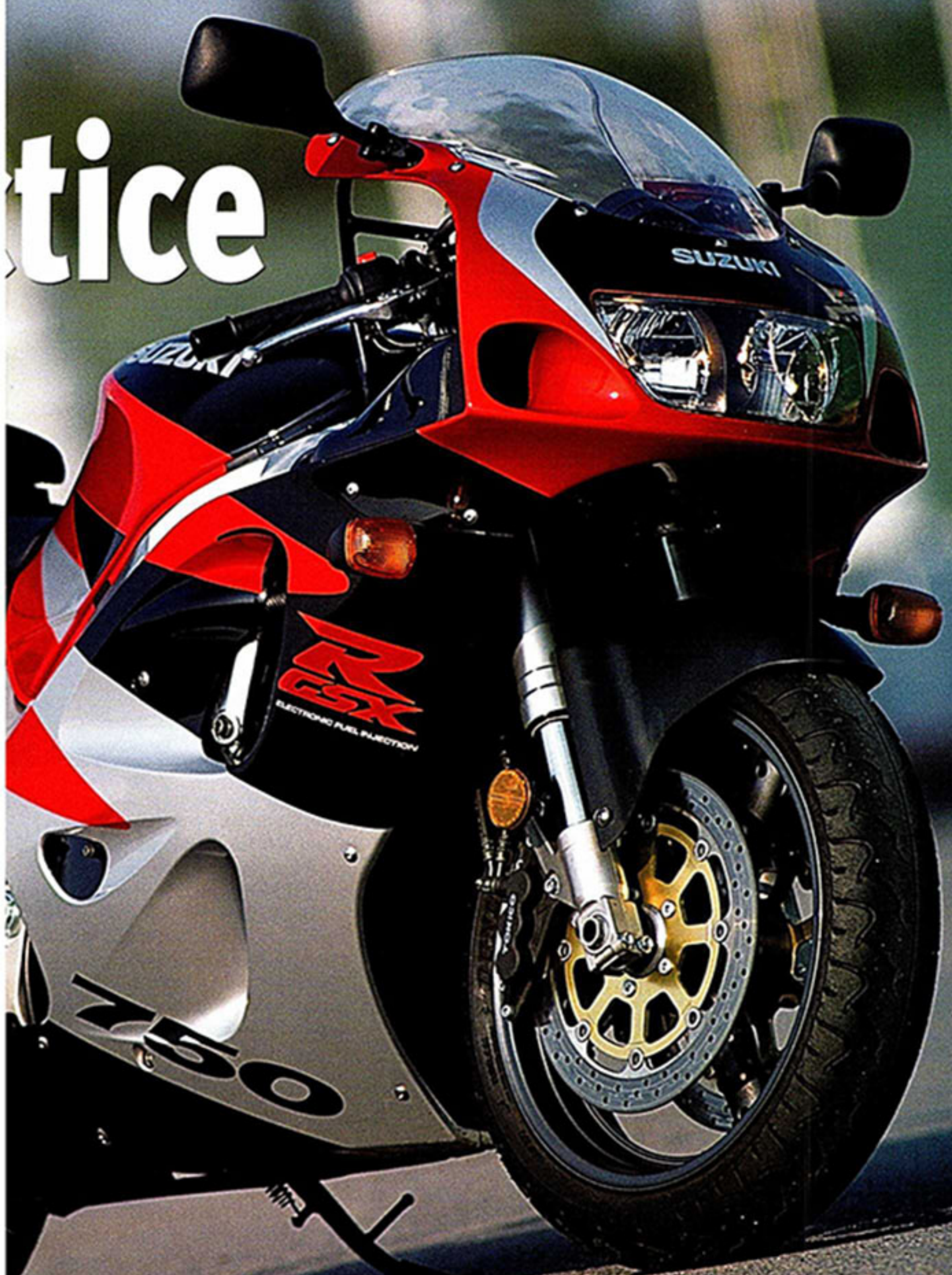
And it made some race bike, to the extent that the grid of an AMA 750 Supersport race seems to be a Suzuki Cup event—nothing else in the 750 class can compete. The only trouble for Suzuki is that the rules of the game have changed—open-class sport bikes now rule on the street, and there is no 750-based class in Canadian racing. The GSX-R was hardly obsolete, but it still needed a boost. How about fuel injection?

Despite having first appeared on a Kawasaki 1000 nearly 20 years ago and being commonplace in automotive design, fuel injection still has an exotic aura in motorcycling, where carburetion persists stubbornly. It would seem to defy logic. Carburetors are relatively crude devices,

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS KNOWLES



Justice



1000

essentially consisting of a throttle slide to control air intake and a jet and needle to determine the flow of fuel to mix with the air. The carburetor cannot respond to differences in temperature or air density; if you're a racer you re-jet the carburetors; if you're a street rider you live with the compromises.

Yet the long and subtle development of carburetors has produced good results. Plenty of motorcycles on the market have nearly perfect carburetion, providing that combination of linear throttle response and precise feedback that feels so satisfying, a seamless link that makes the bike seem a part of you.

As emission regulations tighten, however, and demands for power increase, carburetors have begun to falter. Fuel injection offers the promise of more precise fuel metering, which can be determined by sensors providing information about air-intake and engine temperature, atmospheric pressure, engine rpm and throttle position. Despite the obvious theoretical advantages of fuel-injection, its superiority in practice is not a foregone conclusion. Suzuki introduced a fuel-injection system almost identi-

response proved faultless. But then the TL1000S hadn't shown any glitches during its race-track press launch either.

Ideally, a fuel-injected bike shouldn't draw any attention to itself, but simply offer the throttle response of a perfectly carbureted engine, with a lighter throttle action, perhaps. A good example is Honda's VFR800, currently a *Cycle Canada* long-term test bike, which we frequently forget is fuel-injected. It just works. In the case of our GSX-R750 test bike, though, it took only minutes aboard the bike before it became obvious this was a fuel-injected model with characteristic quirks. These aberrations were most noticeable at low revs, when there was an odd feeling of disconnection between throttle position and engine response. A small amount of throttle would produce some acceleration, and then after a short delay, some more. Holding the throttle steady tended to cause surging, with the engine accelerating and coasting instead of pulling evenly. Occasionally, while coming out of a low-speed corner, the GSX-R felt awkward, since it would surge ahead more strongly than expected.

Some tasks the fuel-injection system handled well; even at low revs, it was possible to whack the throttle wide open and have the engine pull seamlessly to the 13,500 rpm redline. In the upper gears at highway speeds during a passing roll-on, the engine responded smoothly after a couple of downshifts, behaving much like a carbureted GSX-R—though without the same vicious kick we remembered from the earlier model. At first we guessed that the fuel-injection had smoothed out the top end of the powerband, but a session on the Hindle dyno indicated the bike was in fact down on power, despite the claim of 5 hp more this year. We'd recorded 113 hp on our '96 GSX-R test bike (not to mention 117 hp for



a stock bike we'd begun our racing project with), but the fuel-injected bike had a peak output of 108 hp. Surprisingly, the injected bike was no stronger in the midrange either, though Suzuki altered the cam timing to improve midrange. It also has a 50 per cent larger airbox, increased intake valve lift and a revised exhaust system.

Following its dyno run, our GSX-R test bike went straight to Shannonville Motorsport Park, where contributor Andrew Trevitt had stopped en route to Chilliwack, B.C., with a van carrying his GSX-R600 race bike. Circulating on the Nelson short circuit, Andrew immediately had a complaint. After shutting the throttle and braking, he couldn't carry revs smoothly through corners or roll-on cleanly from the exits. No matter how smoothly Andrew attempted to turn the throttle, the power would come on with a lurch. A fundamental of road racing is the smooth and forceful application of power out of a corner, following a consis-



Six-piston calipers squeeze thicker, more heat-resistant discs, offering excellent power and sensitivity.

cal to the GSX-R's last year on the TL1000S twin, which was far from perfect. We noted during our road test that it suffered from surging at steady throttle and an abrupt roll-on response. Suzuki provided two post-production updates to cure the ailments.

Our first chance to sample how the fuel-injected '98 GSX-R performed was during the press launch at Road Atlanta, a high-speed race course where the throttle





No matter
how
smoothly
the throttle
was
turned,
the power
would
come on
with a lurch.

tent line on the limit of traction, but Andrew struggled to get a proper drive.

This problem seemed more than a little reminiscent of our fuel-injected TL1000S project bike from last year. Suzuki's injection map cuts off the fuel supply entirely when the throttle is shut, presumably for emissions and fuel-consumption concerns, but this also hurts the progressiveness of the response when the gas is rolled on again.

Might there be a good reason, after all, why motorcycles have been so slow to adopt fuel injection? A sport motorcycle exists in a far more delicate dynamic balance than a car, whose mass and momentum coasting through the apex of a turn make throttle response less critical. On a motorcycle, the degree of weight transfer and the tenuous nature of traction at the rear wheel make greater demands on throttle sensitivity and power delivery. Fuel injection can work, obviously. But it's not a simple task.

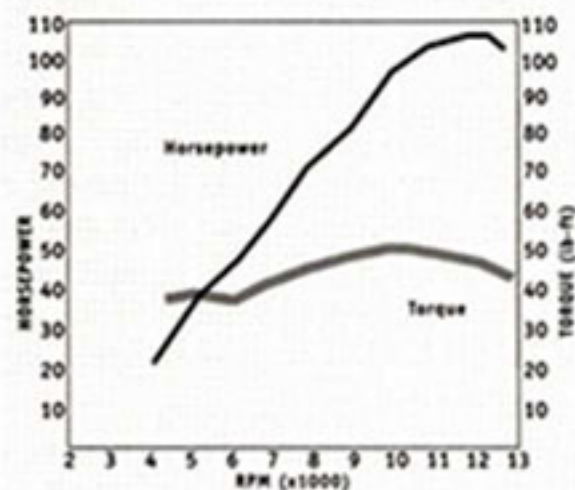
For our project TL1000S, the most suc-

cessful approach was found with the use of a Dynojet module called a Power Commander, which plugs into the stock wiring harness. With the aid of a laptop computer, the module (about \$600), can be programmed to alter the signal governed by barometric pressure, which will produce a change in the mixture. A source with Dynojet confirmed that other injected GSX-Rs had similar problems—though our test result of 108 hp was said to be unusually low.

We're holding the GSX-R750 to a very high standard, perhaps, but we think this is proper. In other respects, our test bike measured up with the kind of brilliance that made it the 750 class benchmark. At Shannonville, the GSX-R was initially pronounced a "marshmallow" by Andrew Trevitt, but this more accurately describes suspension that provides surprisingly comfortable compliance and control on bumpy backroads. Small increases to compression and rebound damping of the fork and shock

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Suzuki GSX-R750
Price	\$11,949
Engine	Liquid-cooled four-stroke inline four with four valves per cylinder
Horsepower	108.2 at 12,500 rpm
Torque	70.1 N·m (51.7 lb-ft) at 10,000 rpm
Displacement	749 cc
Bore × stroke	72 × 46 mm
Compression ratio	11.8:1
Carburetion	Fuel injection
Transmission	Six-speed
Final drive	Chain
Suspension	43 mm front fork adjustable for preload, rebound and compression; single rear shock adjustable for preload, rebound and compression
Wheelbase	1,395 mm (54.9 in.)
Rake/trail	24 degrees/96 mm
Brakes	Twin 320 mm front discs with six-piston calipers; single 220 mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper
Tires	Dunlop D207 Sportmax 120/70ZR17 front; 190/50ZR17 rear
Dry weight	179 kg (395 lb)
Seat height	830 mm (32.7 in.)
Fuel capacity	18 L
Fuel consumption	7.2 L/100 km (39 mpg)
Fuel range	250 km



Horsepower/torque

Missing something?: A simple roll-on test on the dyno fails to show the problem with the fuel injection, which occurred at steady throttle and in throttle transitions. The peak output of 108.2 hp makes us think our test bike was something of a dog, though a check revealed nothing wrong. Other '98 GSX-Rs we've heard of have been significantly stronger. It wasn't slow, but should have been better.



An upgraded shock and a steering damper steady the '98 GSX-R's handling.

helped settle the chassis on the track. The '98 shock has a temperature-compensating system to maintain damping consistency, and new reinforcing plates that increase rigidity around the suspension-link mount.

Although his lap times were hurt by the poor drives he was getting out of corners, Andrew found the bike tracked well over bumps and maintained a consistent, light steering feel. On the '98 GSX-R, Suzuki has added a non-adjustable steering damper under the lower triple clamp, which can produce a slight weave at low speed, but it makes the GSX-R noticeably steadier under full-throttle acceleration and at higher velocities. As his lap times dropped, Andrew found he could push the front end predictably and correct a slide. Dunlop D207 Sportmax tires are fitted to the GSX-R, and they continue to impress us as both consistently grippy and fairly durable.

The six-piston caliper brakes on the GSX-R are excellent, mated to thicker, more heat-resistant discs this year and controlled by a new six-position brake lever. The brakes were easy to modulate and the chassis tracked well under hard applications.

Engine vibration was considerably more prominent on this '98 bike than the last GSX-R we tested, with a prominent buzz between 4,000 and 5,000 rpm that made legal highway speeds irksome. Suzuki has reduced the gearing slightly on the '98 model with an extra tooth on the rear sprocket, but we'd say this was an unusually buzzy example. Clutch action is light and smooth on the GSX-R and the gearbox accurate, if clunky at times.

Stop-and-go riding in heavy traffic is definitely a pain, and the engine on this fuel-injected model seemed to run hotter than the previous version. The usual running temperature of 78 C would climb to more than 100 C in heavy traffic, which might be another indication of a lean condition. It's never wise to leave a running bike unattended, but we've heard of one GSX-R owner who melted the fan on his bike after leaving it at idle too long.

We returned our GSX-R test bike to Suzuki Canada and asked that it be checked over. Nothing was mechanically amiss, we were told, nor did the service people find anything wrong with the bike after riding it. We also checked with a large Suzuki dealer who had sold a fleet of GSX-Rs; he said none of his customers had complained about throttle response. (But four of them had been stranded when a hose from the fuel pump inside the tank had come unclipped.)

We don't believe the problem exists in our imaginations, however, and nothing confirmed this so quickly as riding our 600 Katana test bike immediately after the GSX-R. Throttle response from those carburetors was perfect—smooth and linear. Something like the GSX-R used to be. **cc**

Snap judgment

On the one hand...

- 👍 A great chassis with improved suspension and brakes

...but on the other

- 👎 Fuel-injection seems quirky—and where's the horsepower?

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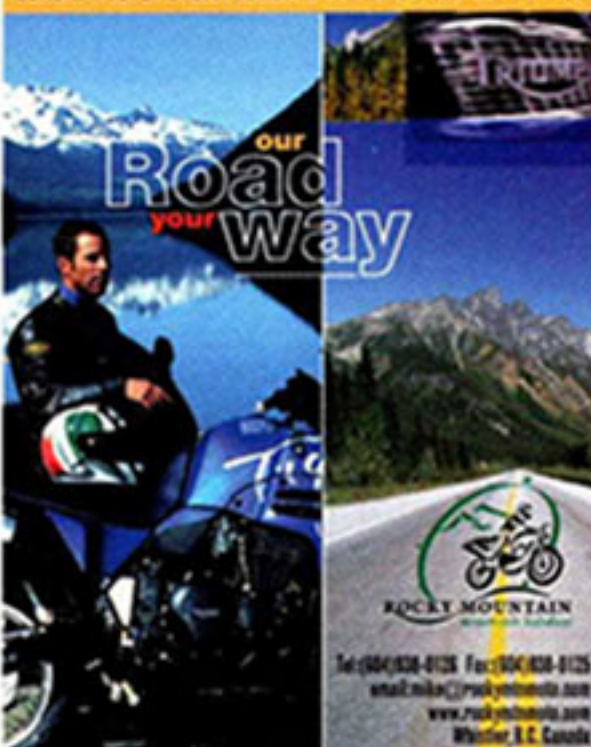
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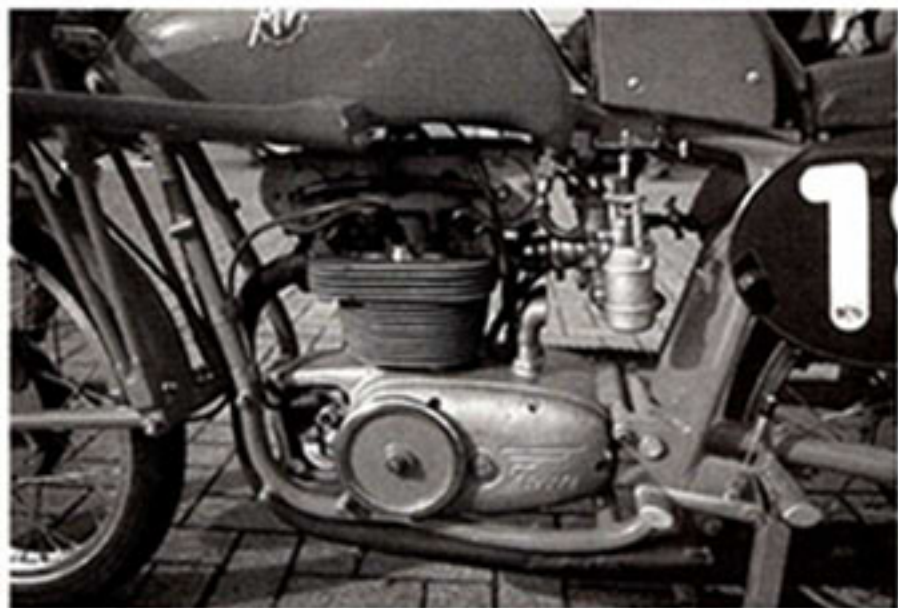
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One more lap of Assen

A second look at some of the rare machinery that was on view at the Assen Centennial TT

By John Cooper



In days of old, engines wore their flywheels on the outside. It allowed a lighter, stiffer and more compact crankshaft with the same inertia as a conventional one. A standard feature of Moto Guzzi singles for 50 years, the idea was tried by MV Agusta (above) on its works 125 and by Norton on a special 350, both in the early '50s. The Norton forms part of the collection of John Surtees, the only world champion on both two and four wheels.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN COOPER



At right is a four-stroke 50 cc Motom, a hand-built Dutch concoction based on a moped and modified beyond recognition. The "tiddler" class was popular in the Netherlands, encouraging much ingenuity, but was eventually dropped from grand prix racing.



German sidecar racer Helmut Fath designed a four-cylinder 500 cc engine and named it URS after his home town of Ursenbach. It appears above in a solo chassis. At left is a Linto, a seldom-seen machine named after its creator, Italian engineer Lino Tonti. He built his own GP bike by assembling a pair of Aermacchi cylinders onto a common crankcase. At right is the 125 cc four-stroke CZ twin of Martin Kamenicky. In their prime such machines were seldom seen in the West.





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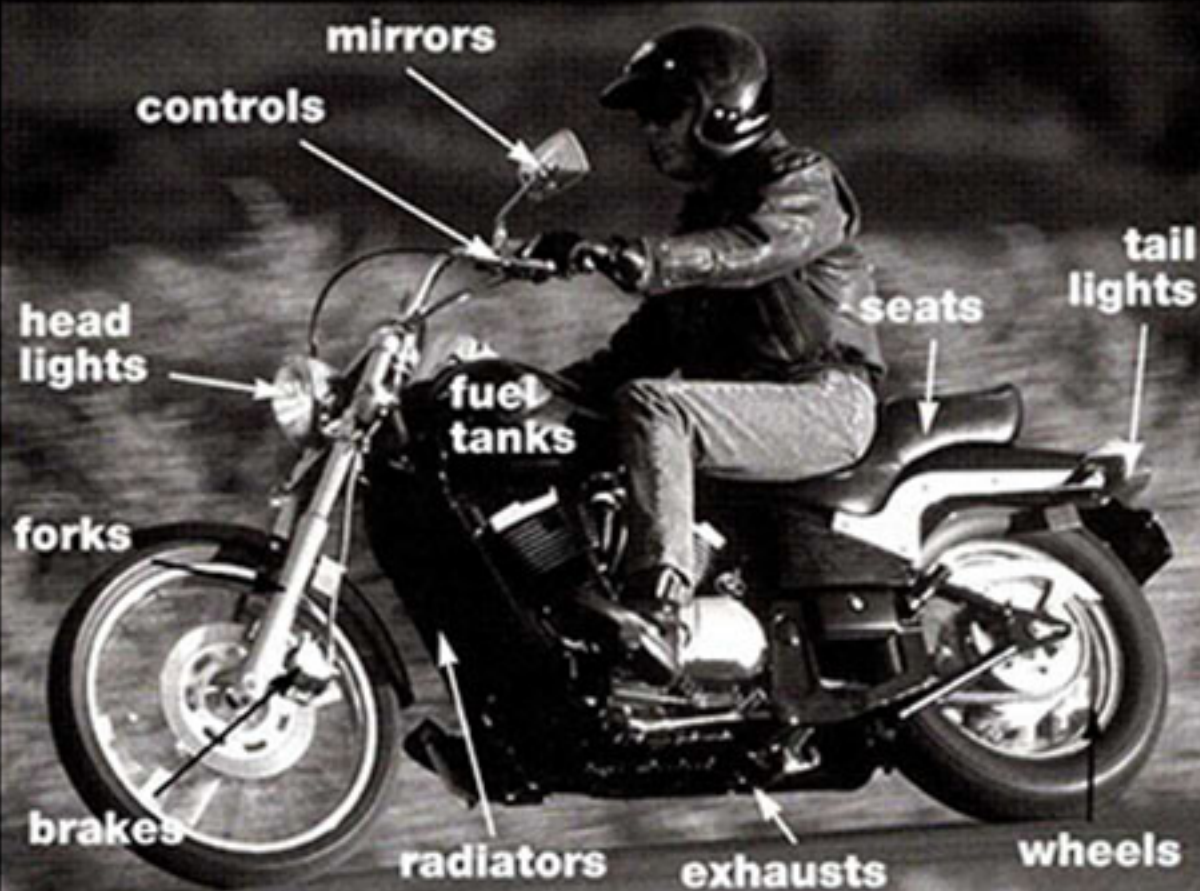


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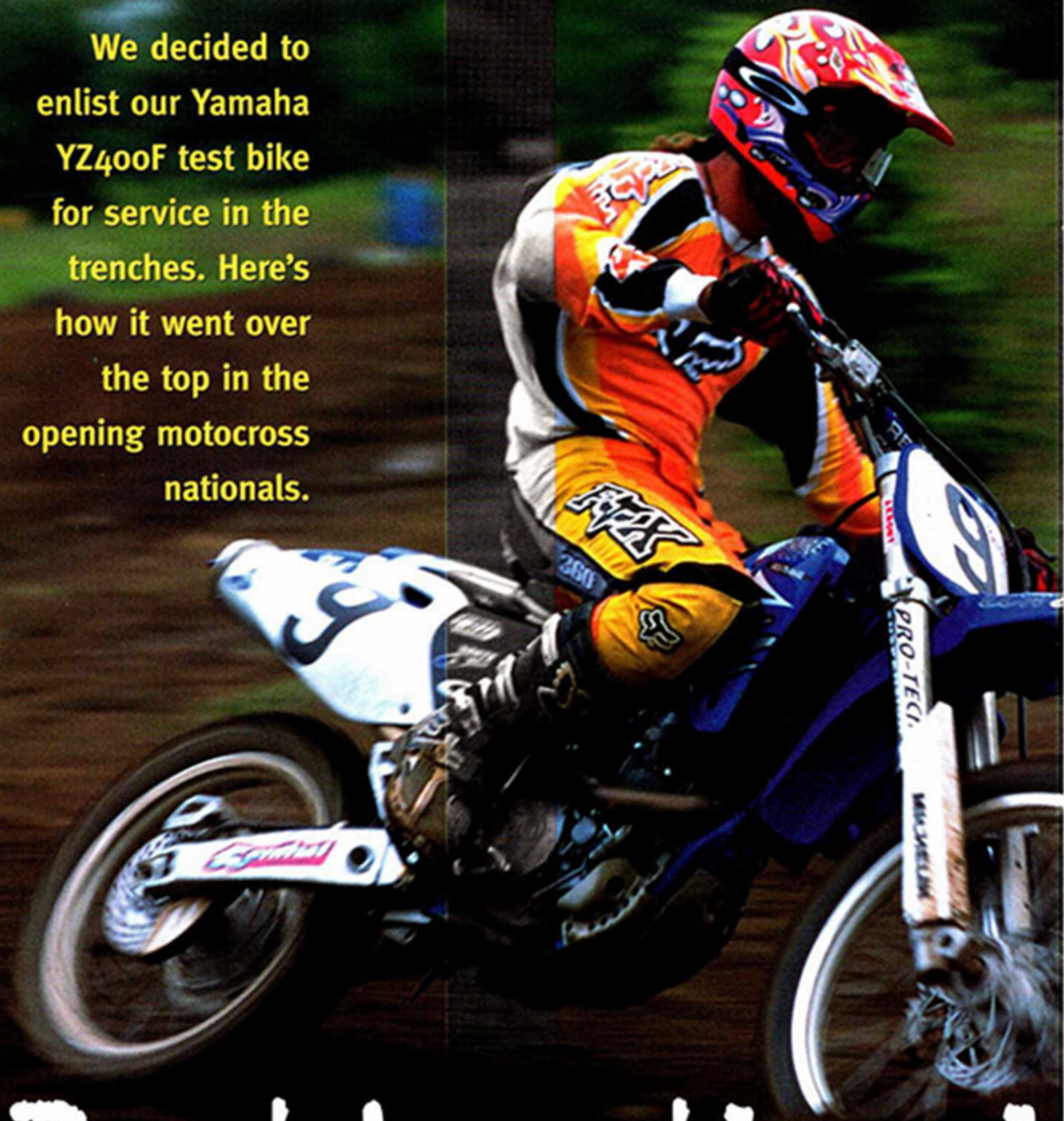
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We decided to enlist our Yamaha YZ400F test bike for service in the trenches. Here's how it went over the top in the opening motocross nationals.



Beating the d

YAMAHA'S NEW YZ400F IS UNDOUBTEDLY the dirt bike of the year. The first truly competitive four-stroke motocrosser from Japan has been universally praised as a breakthrough design. It is fast, uncomplicated to ride, superbly balanced and, yes,

competitive against the two-strokes.

Since we obtained a YZ400F test bike relatively late in the season, it seemed pointless to ride it and repeat the obvious conclusions. Instead, we decided to explore how competitive the 400 really is by racing

one in the pro class right here in Canada. We originally asked Yamaha Canada rider Alex Langevin (national No. 9) to race the bike locally, but he was so impressed after trying it the week before the first national that he decided to race it at Midhurst.

Yamaha YZ400F Cycle Canada race test

Getting the YZ-F race-ready was relatively simple. Alex installed a Renthal handlebar (Steve Lamson bend), a Works Connection clutch adjuster (allows at-the-perch, on-the-fly cable adjustments) and a grippier seat cover. The motor was left stock except for experiments with various exhaust systems (see sidebar on page 47). The jetting was altered to complement the various pipes, but also to address a slight hesitation when cracking the throttle open just above idle. Enrichening the pilot helped, but a complete cure has not yet been found.

The biggest changes made to the bike involved the suspension. "Alex rides hard and likes the bike really stiff," says Pro-Tech Suspension's Lee Tinkler. "He jumps it like it's a 125, just does everything [all the jumps]. He doesn't care about the weight."

For the nationals, Lee started by going two steps stiffer (0.46 kg/mm front, 5.6 rear) on the spring rates. Next he revalved both ends for increased low-speed and high-speed compression damping, the goal being to make the suspension stiffer initially, but also more progressive. The shock's low-speed rebound was also increased. "This is touchier than compression, because the 400 has a lot of inertia to control, but you don't want it to pack down [fail to return to full travel]. For a normal rider, the YZ-F already has more low-speed rebound than the YZ250, and I would leave that stock, but Alex needed more." The high-speed rebound was untouched internally. Rear sag was set at 95 mm.

For the Midhurst national, the engine sported a White Brothers exhaust system, which made it one of the least-modified engines on the pro starting line. Alex felt the power was competitive on the track, but he didn't manage well off the starts. Wait a minute—aren't these things supposed to be holeshot machines?

"If you're among the first out of the gate," explains Langevin, "then the tractability and long pull of the four-stroke can give you an advantage. But if you don't gate well and get boxed in, it won't really help." Admittedly, Alex is not a great starter and was short on practice launching a four-stroke, but he felt the bike needed to be more explosive out of the gate. Adding two teeth to the rear sprocket helped, but

some motor mods are in the works.

During the first heat, Langevin received a first-hand introduction to a couple of classic four-stroke quirks: it's easy to stall the engine, and hard to get restarted. "I stalled it twice, and it cost me a good finish. I knew about following the drill with the decompressor and all to start it back up, but it still takes a lot of time. My problem was that I was still riding the bike too much like my 250, shutting the gas and riding the clutch entering turns. When you do that on a two-stroke, the motor will often momentarily stall, then relight with-



With a little more thumper time under his belt, Alex Langevin had no problem cracking the top ten at the second national round, held near Moncton, N.B.

out you even noticing it. On a four-stroke, if the rear wheel stops, it just locks everything up."

Alex later practised getting the motor refired by tapping the compression release while the bike was still rolling. It worked, but he didn't have to use the technique in the subsequent races. "It's better just to learn not to stall it."

In the second heat, Alex rode the YZ-F to 11th at the finish, a result he felt "could have been better, but despite a few mistakes, it was a good race." His enthusiasm for riding the thumper was such that he decided to ride the rest of the national series on it.

"I liked it from the start," says Alex. "It's fast, fun to ride, balanced, and I felt at home on it right away. This thing can do it all." So far Alex has raced the YZ400F in the first two nationals, a muddy provincial round and even an arenacross.



SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Yamaha YZ400F
Price	\$7,099
Engine	Liquid-cooled four-stroke single with five valves
Horsepower	n.a.
Torque	n.a.
Displacement	399 cc
Bore x stroke	92.0 x 60.1 mm
Compression ratio	12.5:1
Carburetion	39 mm Keihin FCR
Transmission	Five-speed
Final drive	Chain
Suspension	46 mm inverted front fork (300 mm travel) and single rear shock (315 mm travel), both adjustable for compression and rebound
Wheelbase	1,490 mm (58.9 in.)
Rake/trail	27.8 degrees/119.4 mm
Brakes	Single 245 mm front discs with twin-piston caliper; single 220 mm rear disc with single-piston caliper
Tires	Michelin M12, 80/100-21 front; 110/90-19 rear
Dry weight	107 kg (236 lb)
Seat height	980 mm (38.5 in.)
Fuel capacity	8.7 L

"I had opted to pass on the four-stroke when ordering my race bikes last fall, because I didn't know what to expect, but after Midhurst, I told [Yamaha Canada's] John Bayliss: 'If you want someone on the thumper for the rest of the nationals, I'm your man.'"

With a little more practice under his

"You can go inside or out, criss-cross the line, and still find traction..."

wheels, Alex was anxious to race the second round held at Riverglade, outside of Moncton, N.B. There he opted to ride the bike with the White Brothers large-diameter header mated to the stock Yamaha silencer, which he found allowed the motor to rev a little more quickly. The New Brunswick track is a fast sweeping course that suited the four-stroke well.

"The suspension was a little too soft for some of the big jumps and g-outs at Midhurst, but it was perfect for Riverglade. I was more at ease on the bike and my technique had improved. I got a seventh in the first heat, in rhythm with the leaders. In the second heat I blew my start and worked up to eighth. I could have done better, but I fell into a target-fixation mode behind some guys and wasted time, which was my fault.

"One of the advantages of the four-stroke is that it allows you to leave the racing line to make a pass. You can go inside or out, criss-cross the line, and still find traction, which a two-stroke can't always do." Trouble is, when you're racing hard, it's not always easy to break away from years of acquired two-stroke technique.

The YZ-F is very good in the air, well balanced and easy to control, but it differs from two-strokes in that you have to hold the gas on all the way up the ramp. Otherwise, the engine's compression braking can cause the front end to dive. This can become a problem, since the YZ-F's rev-limiter also limits the rider's ability to correct a nose-down attitude by revving the engine to speed up the rear wheel's gyro effect. Alex became reacquainted with this potentially scary YZ-F characteristic at Midhurst.

"There was a big camel jump [aka an

elevator jump, with the second bump higher than the first] that got all rutted, and one time I got crossed-up and the rear end kicked up. That's when I learned the rev-limiter is there to kill you." With the engine sputtering, Alex barely saved it, and when a similar incident happened on a downhill jump at Riverglade, he "had to

shift two gears in the air to keep from going over." You can guess what that might have meant for the rest of us.

The fast Riverglade track allowed Alex to further refine his four-stroke cornering technique. "If you leave the throttle on a bit over the braking bumps, the suspension works really well. Coming out, you can get on the gas much sooner than on a two-stroke without worrying about the rear end stepping out. It accelerates more cleanly. Should you need to come in fast, then brake and turn on a dime, the YZ-F can do it. Despite the extra weight, it's ten times better than a 500 two-stroke. The four-stroke is great in fast sweepers, but you need to have good tires. If the rear is worn on the sides, you can lose the back end real quick if you let off the throttle, because of the compression braking. This becomes real obvious in the mud."

Langevin and the YZ400F won overall at the first Quebec provincial round, held under a driving rain. This is heat one: it got worse.





LCR Competition's Lucien Caggiano (above), the man who modifies Alex Langevin's motors, was anxious to get inside the thumper, but at this stage we only had time to play around with the exhaust system. Using two bikes, we compared four combinations: stock; full White Brothers (WB); WB header with stock muffler; and stock header with a CRD muffler.

A few things quickly became obvious, one being that for the money (which you've already spent), the stock system, like the stock motor, is pretty darn good. Also, unlike going for top speed at the

Plumbing for power

Ear to the ground

Bonneville salt flats, power on a motocross track is a flexible concept. What works for one rider may not for another.

The WB E-Series Pro-Meg system uses a 3 mm larger-diameter stainless-steel header and an aluminum muffler that lets gases escape around a stack of discs. It's well

made, fits easily and makes the most power, but it doesn't bowl you over. Delivery is much like stock only a little stronger, which isn't necessarily a fault, but Alex felt it didn't rev quickly enough. Caggiano, who is also an excellent off-road rider, feels this is a very good system for the woods. Noise is comparable to stock.

Side-by-side testing showed the full WB system to be ultimately more powerful, but using the WB header with the stock muffler seemed to make the motor more responsive. Alex felt he could go faster with the mixed set-up and chose for it for races two and three, but was still wishing for a little more hit.

He got it with the French-made CRD muffler. It added a surprising amount of bark in the midrange, but flattened and wasn't as strong on top. The added power is a bonus in some situations, but can diminish tractability in others. Side-by-side testing clearly showed that it requires short-shifting to gain full benefit. The CRD is also louder than acceptable.

The White Brothers E-Series Pro-Meg header (\$129.95 U.S.) and silencer (\$249.95 U.S.) are made in California by White Brothers, (714) 692-3404. The CRD Absolute Power muffler sells for \$320 and is distributed in Canada by LCR Competition, (450) 631-9797.

Alex discovered this at his next race, the first round of the Quebec provincial series, held in a downpour at Ste. Julie. The hilly, clay circuit has been a part of the Canadian motocross scene since the early '70s and has a nasty reputation when wet. The YZ-F adapted well, with Alex scoring the 250 overall with a win in the first heat, followed by a second in the final, despite some vision

problems after riding the last 125 moto without goggles. "Torque it and stay on the gas, and it's great. Back off and it's not so good. That's true with a two-stroke too, but on the thumper it's even more crucial."

Next was an arenacross, where once again, and perhaps more surprisingly, Alex felt the YZ-F was as competitive as a YZ250. Tinkler added "more damping everywhere to make it stiffer, stay up in its travel and not bottom." Alex also fitted a CRD muffler, which gave the

motor more snap.

"I was in the top three in the final when I tangled with another rider, crashed and broke the clutch lever." By the time he got going, the parade had left, but Alex felt the thumper was right at home on the tight indoor track. "It's very well balanced in the air; you can throw it around almost like a 250. The motor has enough drive to propel you through timing sections, but I did find it seems to favour length over height. This is a problem on sit-down doubles, and I still haven't quite figured out the technique to get the height. It's touchy—you have to hold it on long, but you don't want to flip out."

The clutch is another weak point indoors (as off-road racers in tight woods have discovered). The engine transmits a lot of heat to the oil, and the clutch does not comfortably tolerate abuse. But at least the characteristic matches the nature of the bike. "You have to be fluid. If you fight the bike and rev the hell out of the engine, you'll think you're going fast but you're not.

You have to be smooth and use the torque."

All in all, our Yamaha YZ400F lived up to its reputation through our test (including some use by lesser riders). It's fast, well balanced and suspended, uncomplicated to ride, competitive against the two-strokes and a whole lot of fun. But you still have to work hard to get the best out of it. **CC**

Snap judgment

On the one hand...

- 👍 A potent motocrosser that can be raced with minor modifications
- 👍 Really is competitive against 250 cc two-strokes under varied conditions

...but on the other

- 👎 Starting is more complex and less reliable than a two-stroke
- 👎 More weight, more complexity and more expensive to repair



Michael Taylor won the Chilliwack, B.C. round of the Toyota Canada Superbike Championship on his ZX-9R, taking over the lead from Don Munroe on the second lap and maintaining it to the finish. Jordan Szoke was third on his Kawasaki ZX-7RR. Martin Gaudrault, points leader after Mosport, injured his elbow and failed to score points. Taylor also took Open Sportbike on a ZX-9R while Owen Weichel won the 600 race on his GSX-R.

Jean-Sébastien Roy finished sixth overall at the Budds Creek, Maryland, AMA motocross national, with a pair of eighth-place finishes. The round was won by Doug Henry on his Yamaha YZ400F, who now leads the series. The win ended a nasty jinx for Henry, who broke both arms at Budds Creek last season and had broken his back there the season before. Jeremy McGrath has been out of contention while a broken wrist heals.

Michael Doohan won the Dutch 500 GP, fending off a surprisingly strong challenge from Kiwi Simon Crafar on a Yamaha, who led late in the race but eventually slipped to third, his first podium finish. Max Biaggi was second and has a slim points lead over Doohan, who was knocked off his bike at the previous round in Madrid.

Aaron Slight scored double world Superbike wins at Misano aboard his Honda, but Troy Corser followed him to the flag in both races and continues to hold a 202-194 points lead over Slight. Colin Edwards is third in the standings on his Honda with 167 points.

Duhamel's season shattered in crash

MIGUEL DUHAMEL'S HEROIC season ended with a qualifying crash at Loudon, N.H., in which he suffered a compound fracture of his left femur, just above the knee. The accident suddenly deflated what had been developing into a classic championship struggle, where Duhamel had set a record for AMA Superbike wins and was riding at his best on a superb Honda RC45. At the previous Elkhart Lake, Wis., round, Duhamel had finally drawn even with defending champ Doug Chandler in the points chase, after clawing his way back from a crash at the Daytona season-opener.

Duhamel's Loudon incident occurred during Friday qualifying. He had turned a hot lap in dry conditions, but on his second entry into the first turn he encountered a damp track from falling rain, which caused a highside. Duhamel slid into an exposed wall and was squeezed by his spinning bike.

Loudon's poor runoff area and numerous walls have frequently drawn criticism in the past, but this year the seriousness of the problem became obvious. Before Duhamel's crash, Harley factory rider Thomas Wilson had slid into the same wall outside Corner One, suffering two broken femurs, a fractured pelvis and other injuries. His career is likely finished. Duhamel complained to AMA officials about the absence of any haybales shielding the wall. Eventually they were installed—but not until after Duhamel crashed and hit the same wall. Later, Formula Extreme racer Brett Metzger crashed into another exposed wall; he suffered a fractured skull and internal injuries that required removal of a kidney and his spleen.

Much has been said about



Leading the AMA Superbike points, in his most spectacular season ever, Miguel Duhamel broke his leg during qualifying at Loudon, when a rain shower caused a highside and he slid into a wall.



Steve Crevier was a valiant fourth at Loudon on the TL1000R, which still needs development. He leads the 600 Supersport points, but is still hunting his first race win.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS KNOWLES AND HUGH McLEAN

the level of competition in AMA Superbike racing, which has begun to approach that of world Superbike. But the safety of the tracks is bush-league in comparison, with Loudon one of several examples.

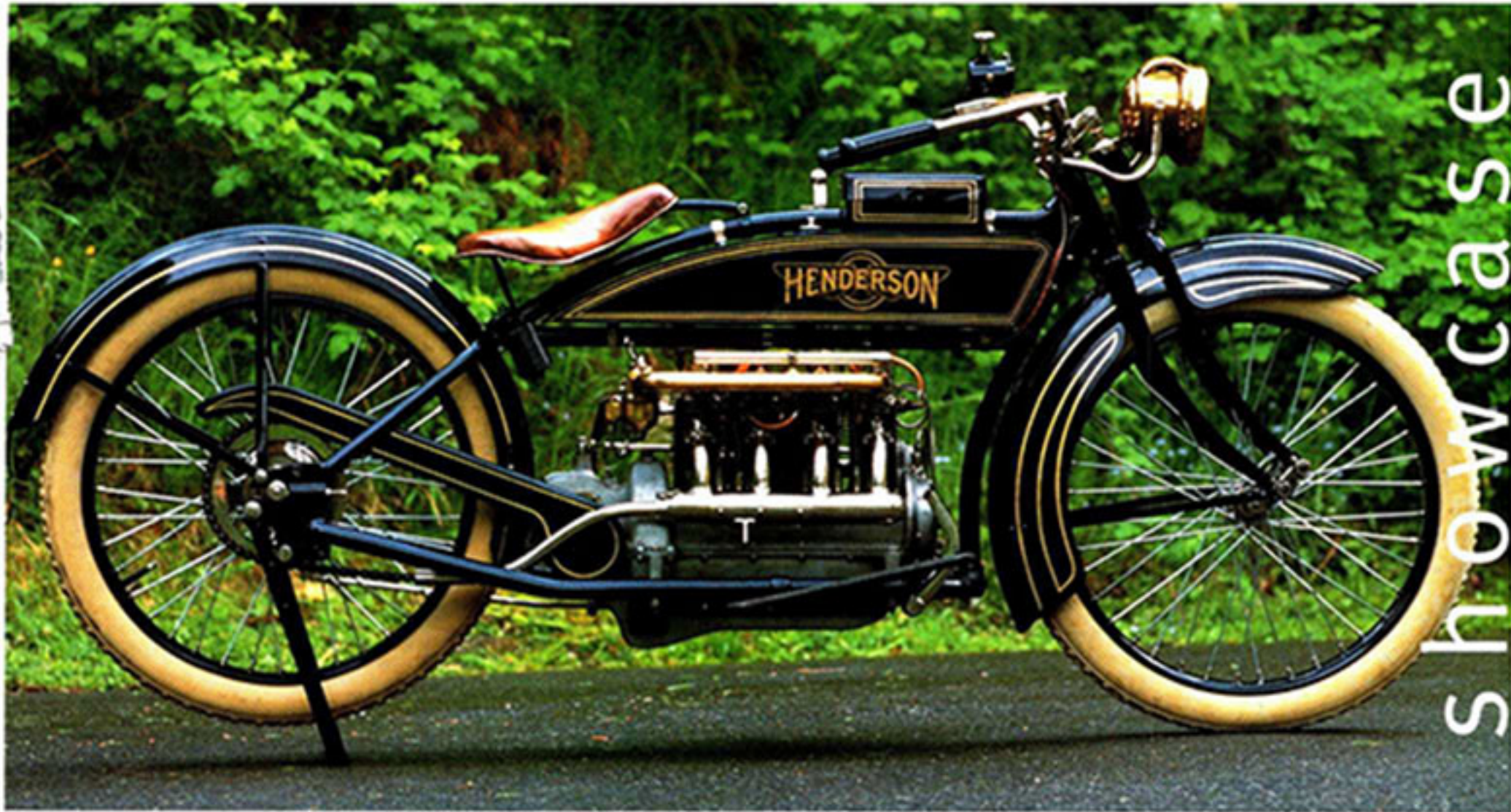
"The writing has been on the wall about Loudon for years," says Steve Crevier. "And now the marks are on the wall. It is truly, truly one of the most dangerous tracks we ride at. But the truth is, none of them are getting any safer for motorcycle racing. We're skimming the walls everywhere. I mean, I love racing. I love it. But I'd like to keep racing, for a long time."

Duhamel underwent a six-hour operation that used a rod and screws to repair his femur and knee. He had broken the same femur in 1989 testing in Japan, but this injury, where the bone had broken through the skin, was more serious. The extent of damage to knee ligaments had yet to be assessed in the week following the operation. It's not impossible that Duhamel could be racing again before the season ends in

October, but unlikely. A few days after the operation, Duhamel was moving about with a walker; he was pretty fast with it, observed a nurse. "As usual with a Duhamel," said Miguel's manager Alan Labrosse, "the problem is getting one to slow down."

Duhamel faces a tough rehabilitation, but his morale is good, says Labrosse, and his sense of humour remains intact. A group of top AMA racers visited Duhamel after the final on Sunday night and he soon had them laughing. "After Anthony Gobert had left, Miguel said 'You've got to watch that guy. I think he was after my morphine.'"

The Loudon Superbike final was won by Suzuki rider Aaron Yates, followed by Yamaha rookie Jamie Hacking and Gobert. Chandler had been third on the final lap when he made an uncharacteristic error trying to pass Hacking, but he remounted to finish ninth, which maintained a slim points margin over Gobert. Six rounds remain in the series. **CC**



Out of the chicken shed

By Steve Thornton

THE TIRES ON THIS 1917 HENDERSON four look narrow and hard—and the numbers on the sidewalls, “28 X 3,” reinforce that impression. It seems doubtful that a rider could have stayed on the road with such a tenuous footprint. Yet this was the “GSX-R of its day,” according to Allan Barrett, the bike’s restorer. Barrett, who opened a British Columbia Honda franchise with his father in 1964, is an amateur historian and professional machinist who previously restored a ’29 Harley and a ’39 Indian. Currently he’s working on a ’28 Indian 401.

The Henderson’s original owner was an American who rode it until the engine suffered a con-rod failure, probably the result of the primitive oiling system. He stashed the Henderson near the San Francisco docks, where salt air devoured metal and paint. Later, an Idaho farmer bought and dismantled it, spreading Henderson pieces among several barns. Barrett talked him into selling the bike in 1989.

The essentials were there, however, a 61 cu. in. or 1,000 cc F-head (a side-valve with intakes above and exhausts below) inline four, with no front brake, a rigid rear end, trailing-link front fork, and a claimed 70 mph top speed. A dipstick served to transfer drops of oil from the sump to the

open-air rocker arms before a ride—that’s it for top-end lubrication—and you had to prime the fuel system because gasoline wasn’t so inflammable in those days. The sparkplugs were made of mica (Barrett sticks in some NGKs when he wants to run the bike) and headlights were optional—if you wanted one, you could choose between electric or acetylene gas. It red-lined at a speed that would stall a modern four-cylinder bike, but was intoxicatingly muscular in 1917.

Barrett put his skills as a machinist to work restoring this antique: the Henderson’s crankcase had been partially destroyed, and in order to mate the original upper half with a crankcase bottom from another bike, he spent eight hours constructing a line-boring tool, then about 20 minutes tapping out a new crankshaft bore and a drive-sprocket shaft in the transmission. The original front fender had been lost and its replacement had spent some time in a chicken shed, where bird droppings etched a fowl imprint; he

chopped it to the correct length and cut out the bad sections, then tidily welded up the skirts to make an exact copy. A company in Texas wrapped new horsehide around the seat pan, and a jeweller friend made the tiny nameplate that identifies it as a product of the Persons Saddle Company. The deep purple-blue finish was applied by

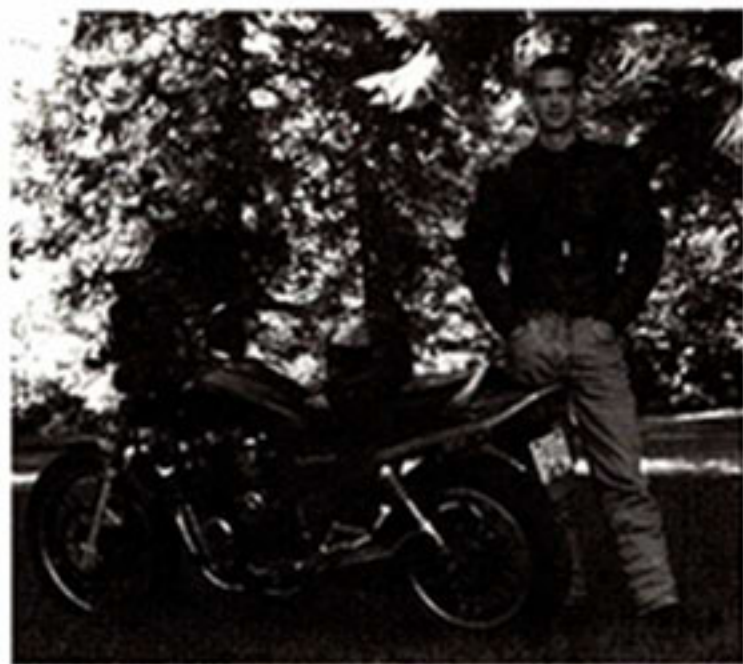
local painter, Joey Gilmour, while plating was done by Kelowna Electro Plating and pin-striping applied by Wayne Harder.

A restorer of old outboard motors had a roll of wire with the correctly coloured cotton insulation, and Barrett found some Kawasaki Jet Ski pistons that fit the bores, obtaining the correct compression ratio with

machining. It took him two years to finish the job, and when it finally ran, he felt no worry about the integrity of its innards: “I had every clearance inside that engine the way it was supposed to be. I knew it would run; it couldn’t do anything else.”

The Henderson is currently on display at the Nelson Museum in B.C. **CC**





“The first weekend I had my licence, I rode to the west side of Vancouver Island and camped out by the open ocean, with only a campfire and the sea gulls for company. There have been numerous experiences that I will never forget....skipping out of church on a sunny summer Sunday morning to ride to Manning Park with the minister’s daughter....”

The earliest event that influenced my life as a motorcyclist was the day Uncle Abe and my dad talked about farming together. Dad decided he would rather pursue a career as a teacher, thereby forever banishing his son to a suburban existence.

I have no quarrel with my father for his choice of career, but it did make it that much harder to see my friends and cousins ripping around their farms on dirt bikes. Why couldn't I live on a farm, too?

As a kid I managed to eke out a few rides here and there on assorted minibikes, and from then on, the die was cast. I had to get my own machine.

There was no amount of pleading that would convince my parents to purchase a bike for me; we lived in town, there was no place to ride, ergo, a dirt bike was pointless (or so they said). It wasn't until I

was 15 that I was able to scrape together enough cash to purchase a brand-new, shiny red XR350 on my own. What a bike! I spent heaps of hours on it, riding with friends or alone, in raspberry fields, on logging roads, in the bush and along river banks. Unfortunately, we still lived in town and I had to keep it on someone's farm.

Later, my desire to work with kids led me to be a summer-camp counsellor. Of the 30 or so people on staff, nearly a dozen had street bikes. Again, fate grabbed me by the throat. When summer ended, I purchased my second bike, a Nighthawk 650.

The folks weren't thrilled about my purchase when they returned home from vacation, because to them, street bikes were different. They went faster and were more dangerous. To make matters worse, I needed Dad's signature to get my bike licence because I was still a minor.

The street bike opened up a whole new set of possibilities. Because I could keep it at my house, the world of motorcycling began right at my doorstep and not in some farmer's field. The first weekend I had my licence, I rode to the west side of Vancouver Island and camped out on the open ocean, with only a campfire and the sea gulls for company. The next summer my Uncle Dan offered me a job in Ontario, an offer I pondered for about five seconds.

Cross country

The ride east was the most exhilarating thing I could imagine doing. For the first time I realized the sheer size and diversity of our nation: the Fraser Canyon, the Rockies, the Prairies, the Shield. I must have met every biker in St. Catharines that summer. We rode to Niagara Falls and cruised the strip, we rode to the Lakes and swam, and of course, we posed with our machines in front of the girls at church. In the middle of summer, I took a week-long ride to Washington, D.C., New York City, and Boston, passing through the New England states on the way.

As the years roll by, there have been numerous experiences that I will never forget: riding an FZ 750 in Australia on the wrong side of the road; trips to Oregon, Sturgis and Winnipeg; my first leather jack-

et and electric vest; giving Mom her first ride and receiving the symbolic "okay" for the street bike; rebuilding a friend's lifeless XR500 one unemployed winter; and skipping out of church on a sunny summer Sunday morning to ride to Manning Park with the minister's daughter and swim in Lightning Lake.

Looking back on 15 years of motorcycling, there are many reasons I love the sport. I love the long tours; I can't imagine dating without it, and I do enjoy the power and speed of bikes.

State of mind

But as I get older, my backside can't handle the long rides, and after 140,000 km the Nighthawk isn't very fast any more. These things don't bother me. I ride today for what it does to my state of mind. I enjoy nothing better than to hop on the bike, point it to the mountains and go for a long spin alone through the trees and valleys. For myself, motorcycling is at its essence a solitary venture. It's a time to unwind, give my mind a break, and let the handlebars go where they may. I'm just too fidgety to be able to sit still, relax and think. Thinking time is on the bike.

By chance, I have chosen the profession of my father: I, too, am a teacher. When training finished recently, I worked hard to find a job, so now I'm settling into the career mode that seemed so foreign during my decade in university.

With education finished, I'm thinking about looking for frames to hold the degrees I earned at school. While I'm at it, I also want to frame a studio photo I recently had taken of myself and the old Hawk. That bike has been a large part of my education and new career. After a long day at school with kids, what better way can there be to re-establish sanity than a spin on a motorcycle?

— JAMES KAMPEN
Abbotsford, B.C.

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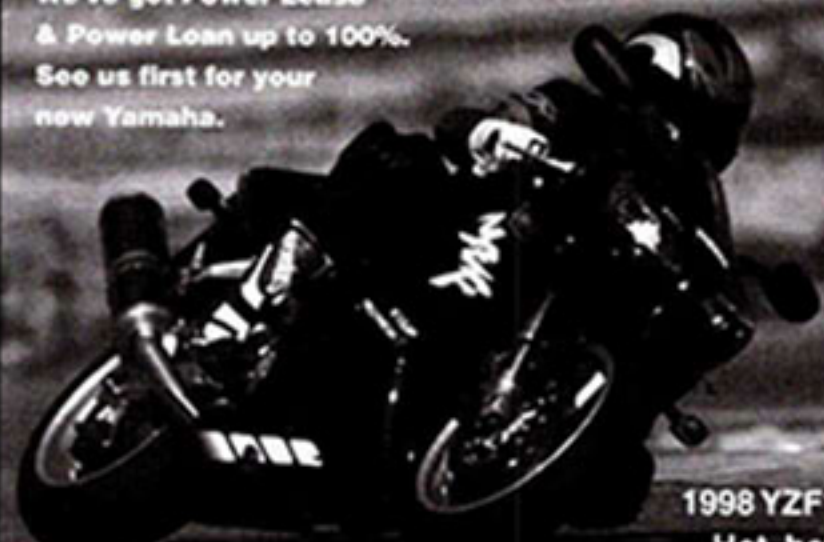
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