

Right Zed Fred

Kawasaki's Z1900 was not just a benchmark in the world of motorcycle design but as true an aesthetic as well as engineering icon of the 70s as the Porsche 911

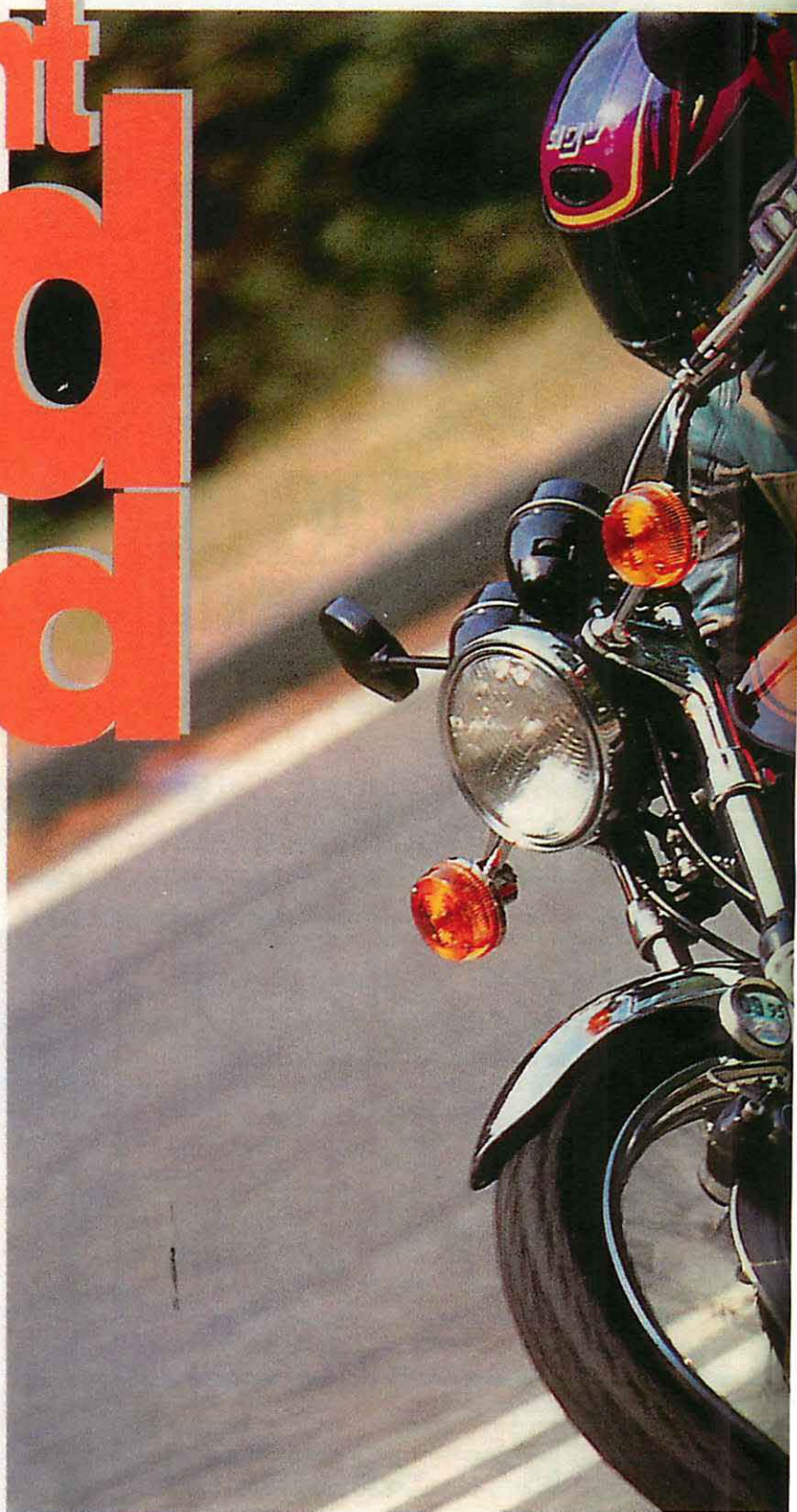
Little did we know in those halcyon days of the late 60s and early 70s that the type of machines produced in that period would redefine and re-shape the future of motorcycling into what we now refer to as the modern 'Superbike'.

Somewhat amazingly it was actually Triumph who got the ball rolling in 1968 when the Trident went on sale. It certainly looked the part with its across the frame three cylinder motor but it still relied heavily on old fashioned engineering

principles utilising as it did overhead valves, and only a brace per cylinder at that.

It therefore came as no surprise when the following year Honda stole Triumph's thunder by introducing the technically far superior CB750 Four. Its chain driven Single Overhead Cam engine broke new

ground, using four carbs and more importantly four exhausts, that were no longer just a stylistic and irrelevant add-on but actually a legitimate part of the performance prescription. And I can tell you from personal experience that its effect on all us young men at the time was devastating - after a lifetime of crusty British twins it





really was like something from another planet.

Other Japanese manufacturers were not sitting idle, either. Kawasaki stunned everyone with their banzai H1 500/3 which was quicker accelerating than anything previously seen and as if to confirm how ludicrous production bike

performance had become, in 1970 Ginger Molloy was to finish 2nd to Giacomo Agostini on the MV in the 500cc World Championship on a H1R production racer! Also that year Dick Mann won at Daytona on a CR750 four cylinder Honda, beating several previously invincible Triumphs and BSAs. By now it wasn't

just alarm bells that should have been ringing in the corridors of the British Motorcycle Industry - they should have been calling for the bloody Fire Brigade.

Hot on the heels of the incredible demand for that first Honda superbike, however, the Japanese manufacturers had no intention of



Above:
Forget retro boy,
this baby's for
real

Middle:
Angle of dangle
is limited by a
low slung
undercarriage -
our man makes
a hole in his
boot instead

Bottom:
In the 60s and
70s if this
moniker was on
your machine
you were a
serious bad ass!

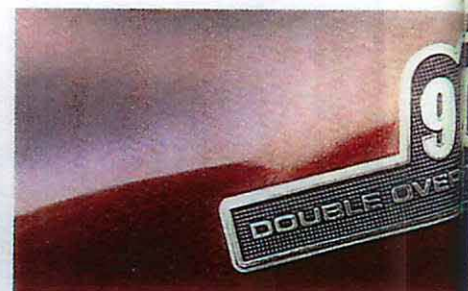
letting up and by 1972 both Kawasaki and Suzuki had 750cc three cylinder 2 stroke road machines for sale to the public. Whilst the Suzuki was mild mannered and more suited to touring, the H2 Kawasaki was a bonkers machine; it wheeled, it was thirsty, it didn't handle, but it proudly held the mantle of the Fastest Accelerating Motorcycle in the world and anyone who owned one was a veritable street legend..

But behind the scenes, and unknown to anyone, Kawasaki were working on something even more incredible - their own 750cc 4 cylinder four-stroke machine

right at the time Honda debuted the CB750. Kawasaki were obviously corporately mortified by the CB750's



introduction, and it very nearly saw the whole project killed off. Instead, it only inspired them to an even more audacious idea - not just a DOHC instead of a SOHC, but 903cc instead of 750cc, too. The first prototype ran in 1970, made over 95bhp and was clocked at over 140mph, and all they could say in Britain at the



time was that 'It can't be done'.

But Kawasaki knew otherwise. Major reliability testing took place in the USA in early 1972 and the machines were subjected to much abuse and still proved totally dependable. After the prototypes went back to Japan for minor improvements they again returned to the States where they were ridden by factory riders Paul Smart and Yvon DuHamel who were shocked by the output of what were to all intents and purposes, road bikes. A month later in August 1972 mass production of the new machine (the Z1) started in earnest and the model made its first appearances to instant acclaim at Motorcycle shows the world over. In 1973, its first year of production, it won the coveted 'Bike of the Year' award, breaking a five year stranglehold for the Norton Commando, repeating the feat in 1975 and 1976.

During 1974 the Z1 chalked up some impressive victories on the race tracks of the world, namely the Bol d'Or, the Oss 24 hour race and the Barcelona endurance event, and a quite impressive 1st, 3rd and 5th at LeMans in the 1000km race. The Z1 had arrived and motorcycles would never be the same again.

That was 22 years ago and a lot of motorcycling water has passed beneath the bridge since then, and I felt the time to rediscover the Z1 legend was nigh. To that end I had a





rap with Steve Reed of Steve Reed Motorcycles in Prestatyn who I just happened to know was the owner of probably the nicest Z1 in the kingdom, and convinced him a test ride was in order to which, surprisingly, he agreed.

Seeing such a pristine Z1 again just brought those memories flooding back. Resplendent in brown and orange livery and with the shiniest pipes this side of the Scots Guards band room, even our photographer, Mike, got into a bit of a lather.

The engine had just over 300 miles on the clock and was still being run in and had been set up a little on the rich side, but the bike fired up on the second prod of the starter button and burst into life emitting a lovely muted growl from the 4 separate exhausts.

With instructions from the owner to be careful with his pride and joy and being assured that any indiscretions would be resolved on a 'you-bend-it-you-mend-it' basis, I selected first gear, put 2500rpm on the tachometer and smoothly headed out on the road.

First thing that struck me was how comfortable it was, those high and wide American spec handlebars, in conjunction with the wide deep seat and footrests resulting in almost perfect ergonomics. True this was more touring than scratching oriented, but it made the 500lb machine

seem almost effortless to throw around, the limiting factor during such moments being the proximity of the undercarriage to the road.

On the subject of handling, considering the age and design of the

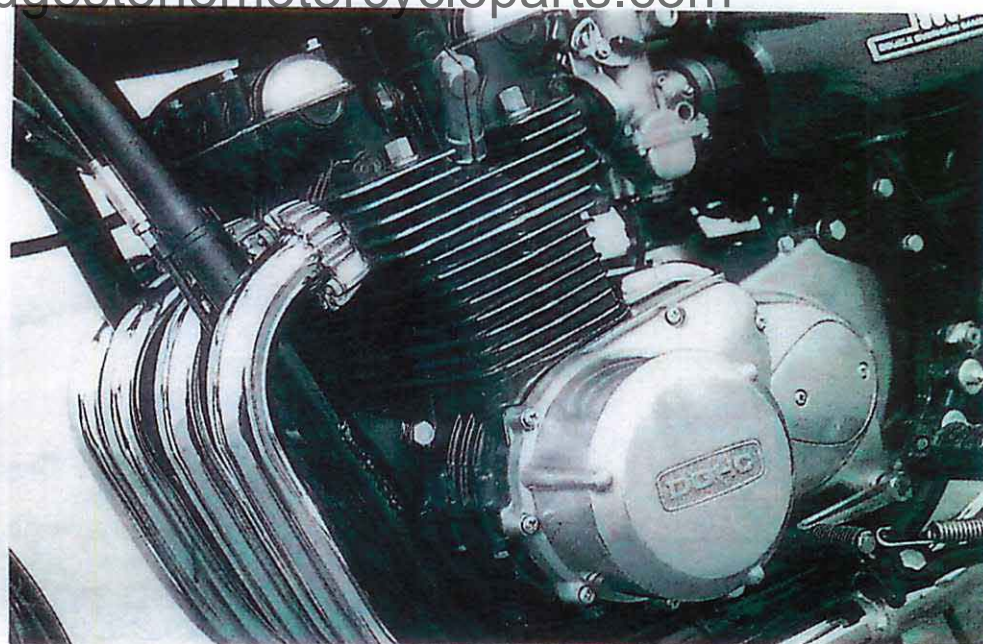
is a bike that responds well to setting up a line *before* the twisty bits and powering smoothly through them. Sudden deviations from line and mid corner changes will get you into deep trouble on this baby.

I'd also conveniently forgotten that the big Kawasaki was only endowed with a single disc and 2 piston caliper and a rear drum brake to inhibit 500lbs of alloy. There are two very simple rules when braking on one of these: (1) make sure all of it's done before entering the bend and (2) be very gentle with

the rear stopper, cause it can lock up with a heavy foot, I know, I did it.

To be fair the front disc is adequate, but Kawasaki obviously realised it was

Z1 it ain't bad, guys. With the Dunlop K81 TT100 clad 19 inch front hoop and incredibly skinny, by today's standards, 4.25 X 18 rear this

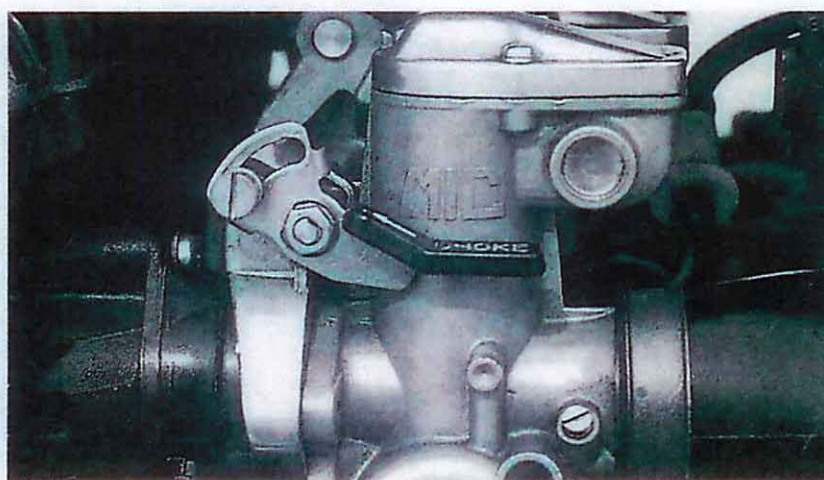
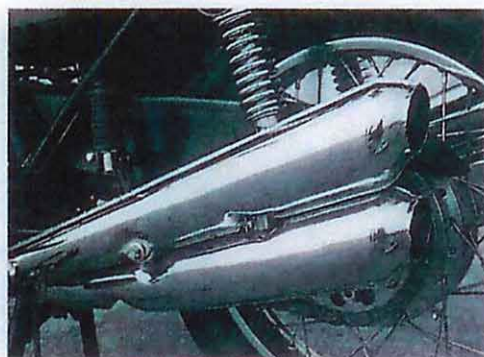


Centre:
The badge that ushered in a new era in motorcycling

Above:
Kawasaki 903cc mill was bullet proof but not so crazy after all these years

Middle:
The way we were. Pure 70's, quadraphones in chrome

Below:
28mm Mikuni mixers with a novel arrangement whereby the bolt of the flat bowl comes out and allows easy removal of the jets





Above:
"Ain't nothing
like the real thing
baby",
I hear that!

underbraked for serious use so they rather kindly placed caliper mounting brackets on the other fork leg. Double discs were actually offered by Kawasaki

as an extra cost option.

Under heavy braking the 35mm front forks flex a fair degree, tend to pull slightly to the side with the disc brake on it and are a little underdamped. I must say I think the extra disc would even up the braking forces somewhat and alleviate some of these problems.

The motor is a gem, though; it has loads of grunt at low rpm and even in top gear you can delve as deep as 20mph without any drive chain snatch. Open her up at this speed and you're rewarded with a smooth rush of power. It doesn't have the thrust of modern bike but for a 22 year old design it moves on a bit. But 82bhp? I think not; not unless horses have got bigger over the years. It also doesn't have the sophistication of power delivery no doubt due to the fact it utilises non CV carbs but compared to

anything Italian or British of the period, it's a turbine. The good thing about these engines is they come in a mild state of tune and the potential for improvement is purely dependent on the size of your cheque book.

So if you're in the market for a retro machine, think very carefully indeed. A modern off-the shelf incarnation of the breed will lose half its value in 18 months and most, with the exception of the Honda CB1000, aren't anywhere near as good looking as the real thing, something I found out every time I parked the bike and had to fight my way back to it..

Many thanks to Steve Reed Motorcycles for allowing us to ride a slice of motorcycling history.

KAWASAKI Z1 900 SPECIFICATIONS.

Maximum power: 82 bhp @ 8500rpm.

Maximum torque: 54.3ft-lb @ 7000rpm.

Acceleration: Quarter mile - 12 seconds.

Engine

Type: Four stroke four-cylinder in-line, air-cooled, DOHC.

Capacity: 903cc.

Bore and stroke: 66 X 66mm.

Compression ratio: 8.5:1.

Carburettors: Mikuni VM28Sc X 4.

Transmission: 5 speed, constant mesh, return shift.

Tyres

Front: 4.10 X 19 K81 TT100

Rear: 4.25 X 18 K81 TT100.

Brakes

Front: 11.65 inch single disc

Rear: 7.9 inch drum.

Dimensions

Length: 2,245mm

Width: 865mm.

Height: 1,170mm.

Wheelbase: 1,490mm.

Ground clearance: 165mm.

Dry weight: 230kg.

Fuel tank capacity: 3.9 gallons.

Chassis

Type: Tubular steel, double cradle.

Suspension: Front 35mm telescopic fork.



Congratulations to Derrick Whalley, Irish Championship Leader, 1st Classic 250 Cookstown, 2nd TT Classic, 2nd Superbike, 1st 1000cc and Peter Keen 2nd Nuremberg 95 on their Staccato tuned Ducatis. We can supply a full list of tuning parts ie; 180 Fontana and Amadorie racing brakes, CDI magnetos, cam shafts, tanks, seats and fairings etc, plus race winning engine building.

STACCATO ART T-SHIRTS

100% cotton full colour hand printed T-shirts. Aermacchi-Renzo Pasolini, Monza 1966; Ducati Supermono-Alan Cathcart, Assen 1993; Moto Morini-Tarquinio Provini, Imola 1962. These T-shirts are exclusive, the prints are of original oil paintings by Pat Townsend. £10 each+£1.50 p&p (£2.50 outside Europe). Payment by cheque UK only, money postal orders elsewhere.

57 Primrose Corner, Wood Bastwick, Norwich, NR13 6JL, England.
Tel: 01603 721493 Fax: 01603 713553

RIMS
OVER 5000 RIMS IN STOCK
MADE UP OF Alcantara Plated and Rangeless Alloy and NEW STAINLESS STEEL RIMS. Radial Chrome Plated Steel Rims, Our own ENGLISH CHROME Plated Steel Rims.

CHENG SHIN TYRES
300 X 17 Ribbed £18.55
300 X 18 Ribbed £18.65
325 X 19 Ribbed £24.60
350 X 17 K70 Lookalike £24.10
400 X 18 K70 Lookalike £34.45
300 X 19 K70 Lookalike £20.70
350 X 19 K70 Lookalike £29.60

TRADE & OVERSEAS ENQUIRIES WELCOME

Postage & packing £5.00 for 1 tyre, £1 per tyre thereafter
ALL PRICES EXCLUDE VAT
LICHFIELD ROAD, WATER ORTON, BIRMINGHAM B46 1NU.

Manufactured at the premises in galvanneal and Stainless Steel over 50,000 blanks in stock ready to be made up to your requirements. Galvanneal supplied in single gauge only. Stainless Steel available in single gauge and butted, in Polished or Unpolished finish. A full wheelbuilding service is available. Same day service by appointment (extra charge). Wheelbuilding for the National Motorcycle Museum. Hub/Rim reconditioning service, blasting, powder coating, polishing, painting and coachbuilding. Delivery service via a National Carrier, fully insured (U.K. only).

AVON TYRES
300 X 19 Ribbed £32.65
325 X 19 Ribbed £43.45
350 X 19 Ribbed £38.40
300 X 21 Ribbed £35.00
250 X 19 SM Rear £38.40
400 X 18 SM Rear £46.40
350 X 17 Supreme £34.75
350 X 18 Supreme £36.75

DUNLOP TYRES
360 X 18 K81 TT100 £37.50
(SPECIAL OFFER)
410 X 18 K81 TT100 £49.75
425 X 18 K81 TT100 £61.50
360 X 19 K81 TT100 £48.00
410 X 19 K81 TT100 £48.90
325 X 19 K70 £36.05
350 X 19 K70 £38.10
400 X 18 K70 £47.90

DUNLOP/MICHELIN
Tubes £8.00 each
Security bolts £4.50 each

NOVA

RACING TRANSMISSIONS LTD

8 HORSESHOE YARD, CROWLAND, Lincs PE6 0BJ.

TEL : 0733 210082.

WORKS INSPIRED **DRY CLUTCH** FOR ALL **DUCATI SINGLES**

TO COMPLEMENT THE NOVA CLOSE RATIO GEAR SETS. THE DRY CLUTCH COMPRISES MAGNESIUM COVER AND GUARD. STRAIGHT CUT PRIMARY GEARS, 250 OR 350 RATIOS, DRUM DRIVING PLATE FITTED WITH HARD ANODISED ALLOY CLUTCH DRUM, NEEDLE ROLLER AND BALL BEARINGS, SEAL, O RINGS ETC.

NOTE: A LONGER OUTPUT SHAFT IS REQUIRED. THESE CAN BE SUPPLIED SEPERATELY OR AS PART OF A TRANSMISSION PACKAGE AT NO ADDITIONAL COST. CLOSE RATIO GEAR SETS AND WET CLUTCH PRIMARY GEARS ALSO AVAILABLE.



RACING TRANSMISSIONS

AVAILABLE FOR THE FOLLOWING
CLASSIC RACERS

AERMACCHI 6 SPEED CLOSE RATIO
AERMACCHI/HARLEY DAVIDSON 5 SPEED
CLOSE RATIO
HONDA CB72/77 5 SPEED C.R.
K4 CONVERSION
CB 450 5 SPEED CLOSE RATIO
NORTON 6 SPEED TO FIT A.M.C. CASES
SUZUKI T20 FULL CLOSE RATIO SETS
T500 C.R. CONVERSION
GT 750 5 & 6 SPEED

FOR FULL DETAILS OF OUR PRODUCT RANGE AND STOCKISTS
CONTACT GRAHAM DYSON ON 0733 210082.

STEVE REED MOTORCYCLE SERVICES

KAWASAKI Z1, H2 & Z1000 SPECIALISTS
BIG FOUR SERVICING, FULL ENGINE REBUILDS & RESTORATIONS BY
PROFESSIONALS
SPECIAL OFFERS

BRAND NEW INDICATORS H2, Z1 & Z1000

4 For £40

POSTED ANYWHERE IN THE UK

STAINLESS STEEL CALIPER BRAKE PISTON FOR Z1's

£35 Inc VAT

POSTED ANYWHERE IN THE UK

STEVE REED MOTORCYCLE SERVICES

70 CARADOC ROAD, PRESTATYN, CLWYD, N. WALES. LL19 7PF

Telephone: 01745 855195 or Fax: 01745 886902