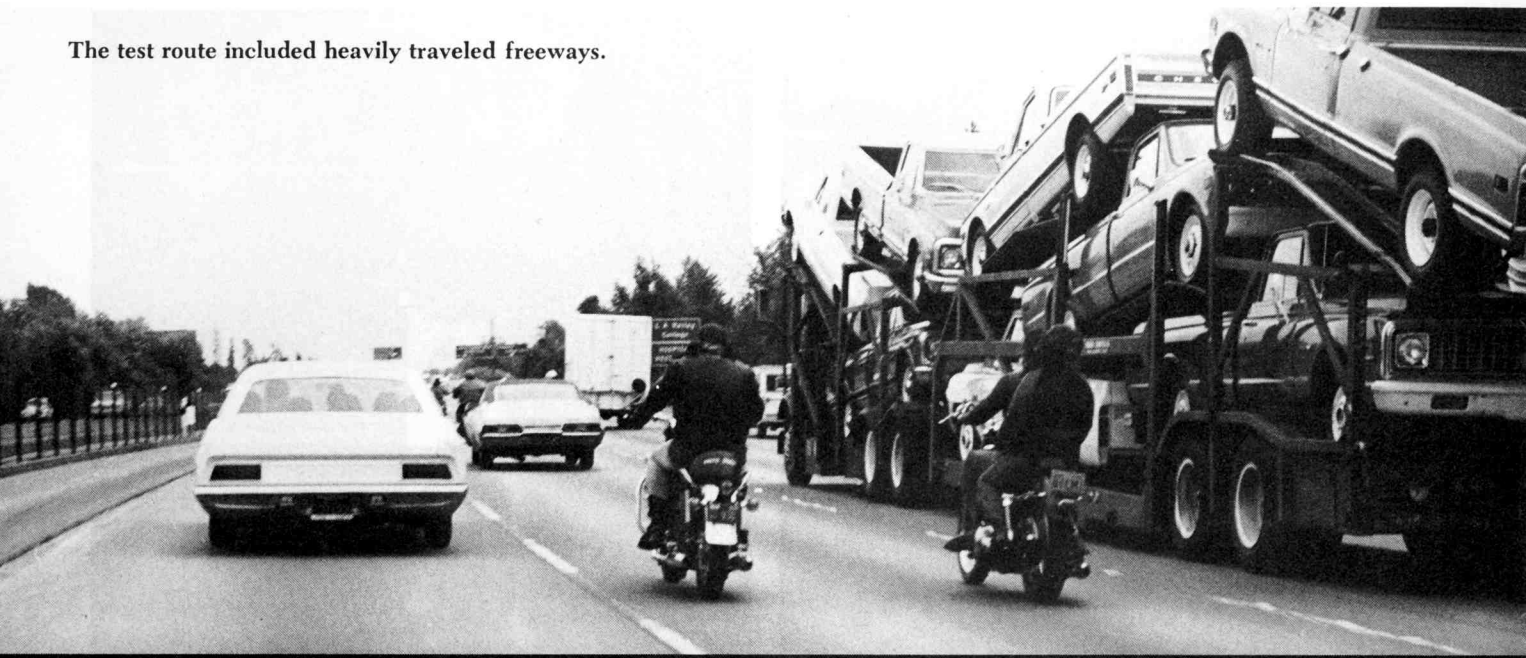


The test route included heavily traveled freeways.



# Five For The Road

**W**e get a lot of letters around the BIG BIKE offices. Many of them ask questions like “Which do you think is the better bike, the Superzap 750 or the Piddlyputt Four?”

Sometimes, the letters don't even ask which we THINK is the best. They flat out ask which IS the better from a list of three, four or more bikes.

Best for what?

And, if you're going to compare bikes, why not compare ones that are at least roughly similar in design and purpose.

These letters often call for an editorial conference. Soon everyone is in one editor's office, coffee cup in hand, batting the ideas around.

This time it was “If YOU were going to jam cross-country on a bike, which one would you pick? It's got to be a stocker.”

The first point to be decided was that since manufacturers don't advertise bikes as jammers, what was

wanted was a touring bike. Most choppers began in life as touring bikes, and a stock tourer, without any of the add-on junk like saddlebags and footboards, can be a pretty fast machine.

From this point the ideas flew thick and fast. “I'd only go on a Harley-Davidson.”

“All that noise would ziz me to death. If I was going to go on a



As different as bikes can get. A shaft drive opposed twin, a water-cooled two-stroke three, and a transverse four.



On the mountain stretches of the test, riders had to watch out for traffic. And, traffic had to watch out for our riders.

long jam, I'd want something with shaft drive."

"Two-cylinder bikes vibrate too much. Give me a multi any time."

And on it went.

Finally someone said "If we give this guy an answer off the top of our heads, it might be the wrong thing for him. One day he'll come up here wanting to pound on whoever made him spend all those bucks on a bike he doesn't like, or that's no good.

"Why don't we get all the bikes together, ride them all, and find out for sure what's what. Then we won't have to say "We think," but can say, "We rode them and found that..."

With that point solved, it took a lot more discussion to narrow down the choice of bikes. We decided



A long desert straight gave an opportunity for flat out speed.

By the Editors of **BIG BIKE**

## **BIG BIKE tests five of the world's finest motorcycles**

that getting all the bikes we'd like to try together at one place and one time might be a bit of a hassle, so we decided to cut the list down to five, as a representative selection.

Any more and we'd run out of editors, anyway.

### *WHY WE CHOSE THE BIKES*

To start with, we had to have a Harley. It would have taken too long to get an Electra Glide without all the King of the Highway stuff on it, so we settled for a Super Glide.

The BMW was chosen because of all the stories we'd heard or read of people going from the Aleutian Islands to Tierra del Fuego, or from London to Bombay, or any other improbable distances and places, on BMWs. Besides, their new model was supposed to be vastly improved.

The Moto Guzzi 850 Eldorado is being used by a lot of police departments around the country. If a bike is acceptable to a motor officer for an 8-hour duty stint, it ought to be pretty good for going from here to there without wearing out itself or the rider. So we decided to get a Guzzi.

We had two more editors left. We chose the Honda 750 Four as the bike that's probably giving everyone else more troubles in the sales department than any other machine.

It's fast and smooth, and lots of people are taking long trips on them.

Our last editor has a deep-down hidden love for two-strokes. To keep him happy, we chose the Suzuki water-cooled 750. We'd read a lot about it in other magazines, and wanted to find out about it for ourselves, anyway.

With the five bikes decided on, the next step was to get them all together.

### *GETTING THE BIKES*

One editor was duly assigned as contact man, and began writing and

telephoning the PR departments of the various manufacturers.

A date was decided on for the testing, and the bikes were requested for a two to three-week period around that date. Then the problems began. You've probably experienced the difficulty of getting ONE machine from ONE manufacturer to a given place (your dealer) at a given time (delivery date.)

With five bikes, it's about 25 times as difficult.

One make kept wanting to give us the bike two weeks early.

Another maker, whose PR offices



If the Guzzi was bent over much farther than this, things would drag and scrape.



In some places, the mountain roads got downright crowded.

are on the East Coast and whose distributor is here in the West, seemed to have no contact between the two offices. At least 47 trans-continental telephone calls took place before the West Coast man (a) would admit that a test bike existed, (b) that it would ever be ready for a test, or (c) that WE existed, and were supposed to have the use of his baby for two weeks.

As a final frustration, one make, whose whole setup is no more than 30 miles from our offices, LOST the test bike somewhere in his vast headquarters complex for 2½ weeks and then delivered it without a license plate, so that we couldn't ride it for another two days.

Security for the bikes was another problem. We'd already had the upsetting experience of having one of our test bikes ripped off from the office parking lot a few months back, so we were somewhat concerned, to say the least.

A quick call to Warner Riley produced a set of Chapman Locks, which we'd tested and found to be pretty secure units (BIG BIKE, August, 1972). Another call to Alcotronics produced the loan of a set of their Cycle Gard 2 alarm systems for each bike. Our tests had found this to be a pretty decent unit, too.



Some people enjoyed pushing the Suzuki through corners.



"... and when you get finished, check the water on the other one."



At one gas stop, an editorial discussion took place.



There's a lot of horsepower there.



Empty freeways were ideal for testing touring capabilities.



At the riders' meeting before the start of our day-long ride, everyone decided which machine they were going to start out on.



Cornering on the Super Glide brought varying reactions, from abject terror. . .



. . . to crossing oneself before final doom.



Playing "Johnny Roadracer" was fun on the Honda.

(BIG BIKE, June 1972). In combination, we felt that the bikes would stay where we put them.

As the machines arrived, the editors began to put in time on them, switching from one to the other as often as possible to feel the differences between them.

A day was also set for a group ride of several hundred miles. The route would be over widely varying road conditions, and with changes in altitude, to increase the variety of our impressions.

As we were starting the test, the editors of the English magazine, *Bike*, showed up and joined us for the ride on a demo 1,000cc Sportster, so we had six bikes to get a full set of impressions on.

#### TABULATING THE RESULTS

After the group ride, when everybody had ridden everything for a good number of miles, we evaluated

the bikes on a set of 25 factors covering everything from comfort to stopping power. The bikes were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 on each of the factors. A perfect score on any factor was worth 30 points. Absolute rotten-awful was worth 6 points, so there was a possible total of 750 points. Did we have a winner? Sure did. And a loser? Yup. Bike by bike, here are the results, with some of our comments.

#### BMW R75/5

The clear winner was the BMW. It pulled 642 on the 750 point table and was most in demand as a riding machine. It got a perfect score on its workmanship, and pulled high marks everywhere else, except for one somewhat subjective factor. To put the bad before the good, the only factor in our tabulation in which the BMW didn't score extremely high was in its shifting. Not



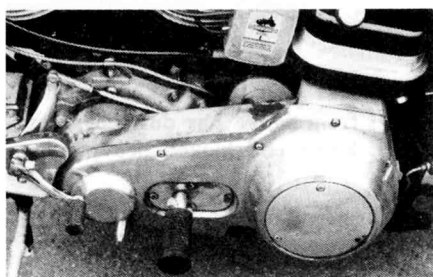
BMW's "new image" tank doesn't hold what the old one did.



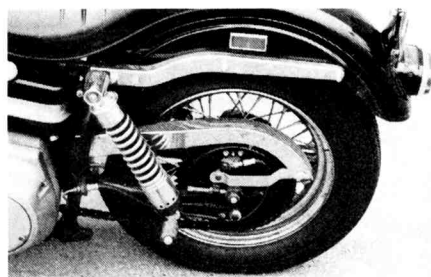
Super Glide vs. BMW in a corner.



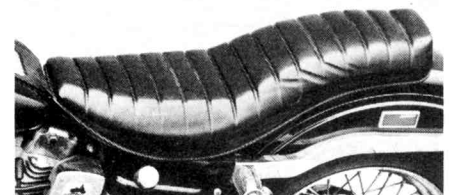
Everyone liked the Super Glide's lines.



No electric starter was inside the Super Glide's monstrous primary.



Harley's rear brake was the only hydraulic, but it was the first to fade.



The seat looked better than it sat.



With all the great gobs of torque available, the Harley doesn't need a tach.

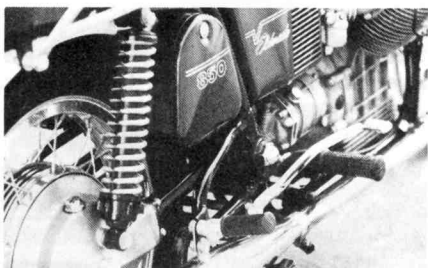
that the shifts aren't positive, or smooth; it's just that they are accompanied by a clunk that "sounds like a Louisville Slugger applied stoutly to the side case." It's just a noise, though, and has nothing to do with the smoothness and positiveness of the shifting.

The sidestand proved to be a small bother occasionally, since it makes the bike stand vertically. The stand retracts automatically, instantly, and if the rider isn't careful, it'll fall over automatically, instantly.

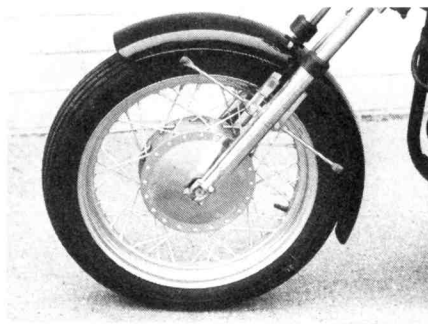
Our staff would have preferred the old-style tank, too, rather than the jazzy chrome-sided one, now standard. Not just for aesthetic reasons, either, since the old one held 6 gallons and the new one only holds 4½.

But bikes are to be ridden, not just to be looked at. And that's where the BMW earned its points. It did all the things a motorcycle is supposed to do, just that little bit better than any of the other bikes. It was smooth, quiet, tractable, comfortable and . . . FAST. Its speed astonished some of our people who were familiar with the old R69, which was reliable and smooth, but sedate. The R75/5 hauls.

As an example of the type of engineering that went into the bike, BMW realized that an electric starter would add a lot of weight to what was an already heavy bike. So the engine was completely redesigned, and the new electric start machine



Rear shocks are adjustable for load. Bike had no kickstarter.



Front brake faded almost instantly under hard usage.

weighs 40 or so pounds LESS than the old, less powerful kickstart model.

The bike was so tractable that it was turned over to one staff member who had a grand total of 15 minutes on a bike in his life, and that on a 125 ring-a-ding.

He hated to turn loose of it too, and found it to be confidence-inspiring and predictable.

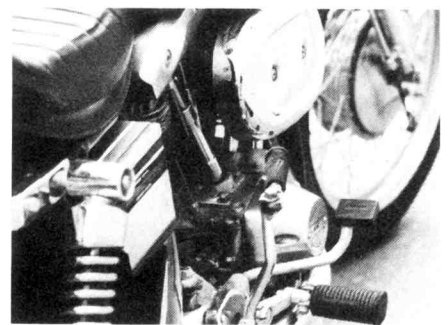
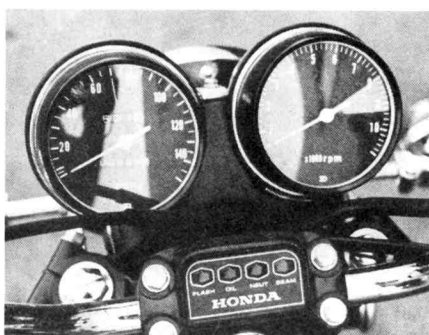
A bike for the macho minded? No. But a fast, reliable, good handling bike for anything from around-town putting to a transcontinental trip.

As a final point, the dreaded "torque reaction" everyone warned us of was there, but unnoticed after two minutes of riding. It has been so reduced as to no longer be a factor in considering the bike.

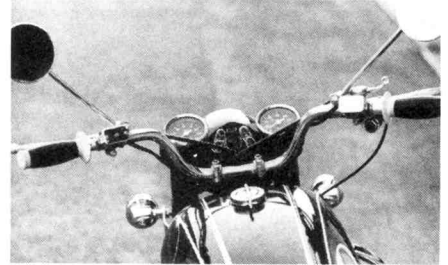
#### HONDA 750 FOUR

The Honda came a very close second in our tabulation, pulling 615 points. Its workmanship was almost as good as the BMW, but some of the welding on the bike is "safe but amateurish."

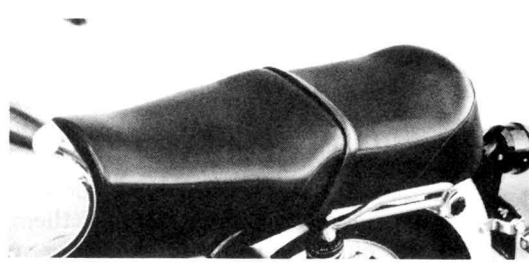
Instrumentation is extremely good, with large dials giving accurate, clear and smooth readings. In addition, a little panel holds a set of four idiot lights where they can be seen easily at any time. The Honda's turn signals have an audible warning beeper that will probably be standard on all bikes in a year or so. It's there to remind the rider to turn the damn



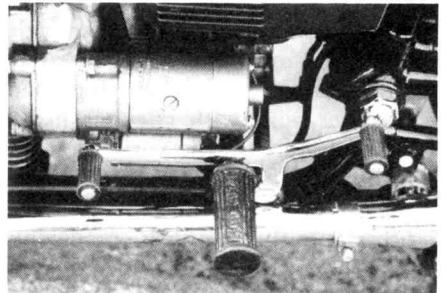
With 1,200cc displacement, kick starting was a lot of work.



Guzzi's hand controls required finger stretching to reach.



Seat was most comfortable in test.



Rocker shifter took some getting used to, then worked well.



Guzzi front brake has dust cover over cable. Front end looked heavy.

Honda's instruments were the best we've found.

things off after he completes his turn, but it probably means that he won't use them at all. The beep is so loud that it could be heard clearly in a car following the bike.

The Honda's disc front brake was an example of what a brake should be. It was progressive in action, smooth in feel, and could not be faded. The Honda pulled an almost perfect score for its overall braking ability.

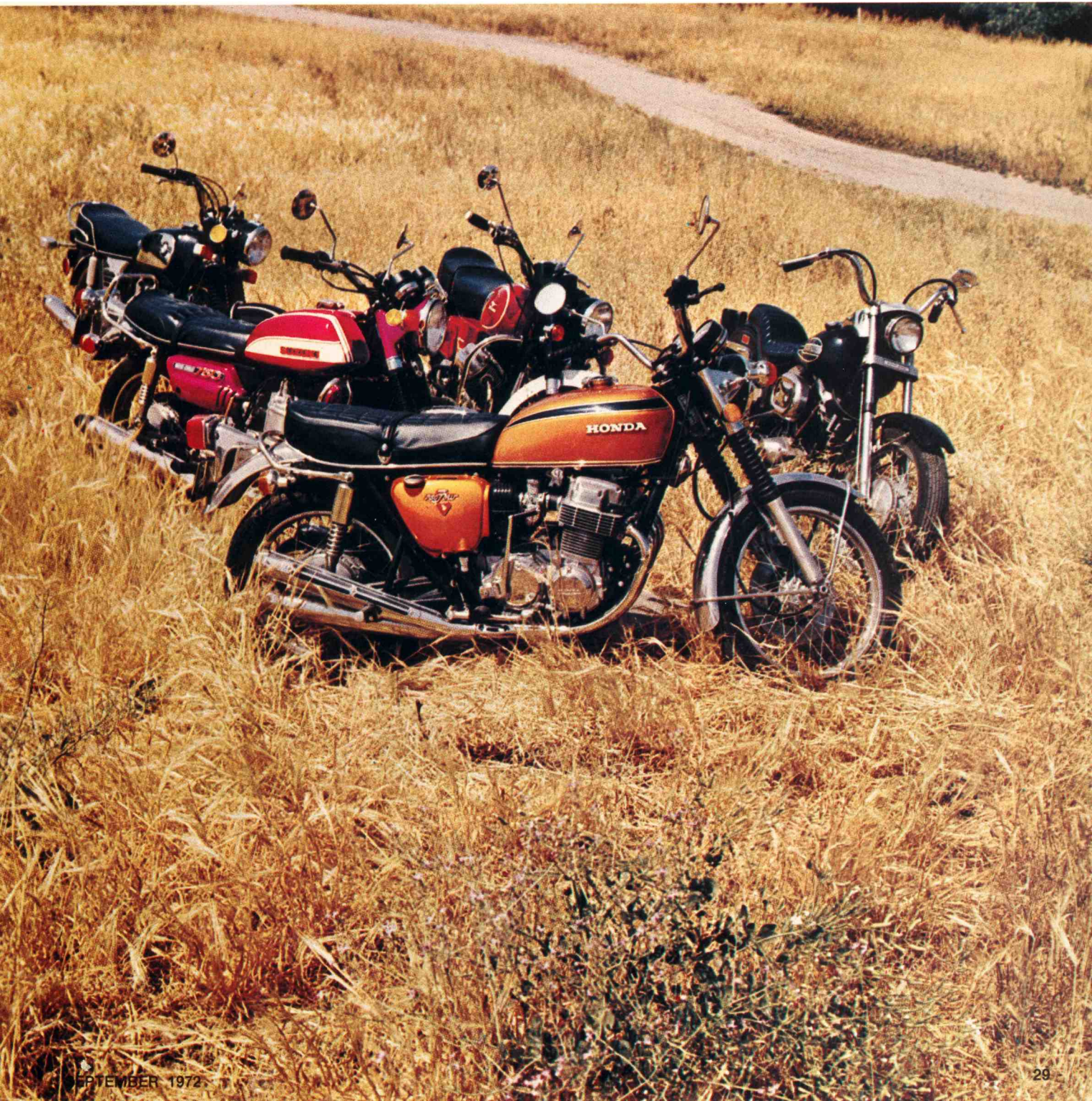
One rider complained about the location of the hand controls, since they require a finger reach to work them. He was probably spoiled by the BMW, where all controls are perfectly workable without moving the hands from the grips.

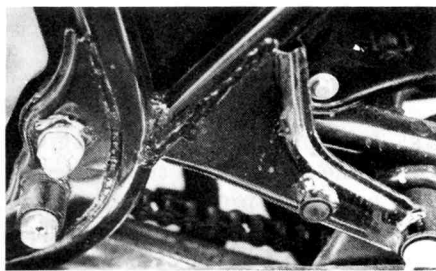
Another editor felt that the gear ratios were a bit too close to be as useful as possible. He felt that a 4-speed tranny would be more than adequate, but Honda put in the 5-

speed for the added marketing value.

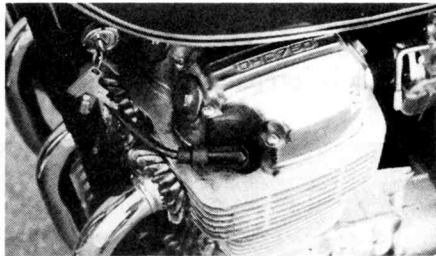
On our particular example, the transmission clunked and ground on some shifts, but since we've never had that problem with any other Honda, it's probably an adjustment problem with this particular bike.

We rode each bike as we found it, taking delivery as a normal owner would. And we seem to have received normal machines, not specially prepared test bikes that are





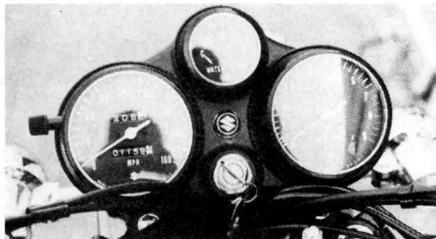
Suzuki's welds looked sloppy.



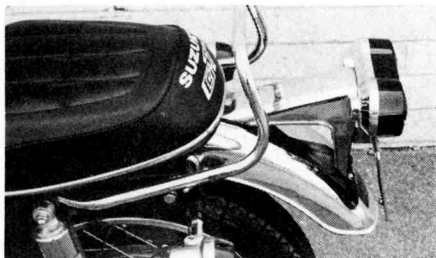
Key location on Honda is awkward, too close to hot engine.



Suzuki's radiator filler is under cover on front of tank.



Temp gauge sits between speedo and tach.



Suzuki's rear lighting is huge and effective.

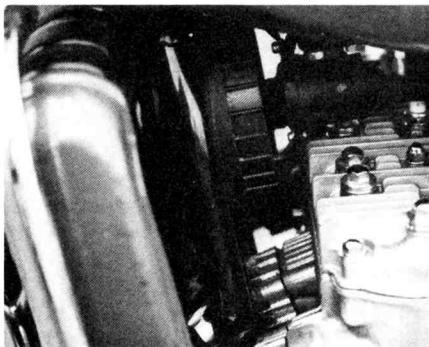
Hand controls were better than Harley or Guzzi, not up to BMW standards.



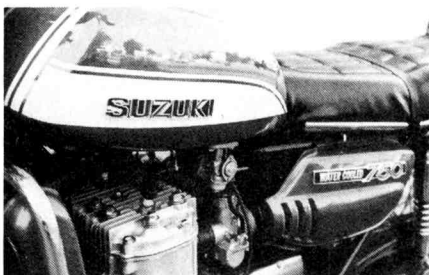
Honda's front brake is almost perfect.



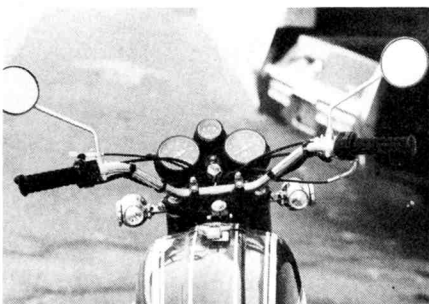
Huge taillight and turn signals give plenty of warning to car drivers.



Electrical fan is thermostatically operated. Bike is almost impossible to overheat.



Stripes, louvers, gross badges all add up to jukebox effect.



smoother, hotter or more whatever than what's in the showrooms.

Another minor complaint on the Honda was that the suspension seemed to be a little stiff, transmitting road shocks and jolts too easily to the rider. Again, though, only one editor complained of this, so it may be a personal thing.

In general, the Honda earned high marks in all areas. It approached state-of-the-art perfection in its braking. All this good stuff, combined with a relatively low price, shows why Honda sells all the 750s they can make.

#### MOTO GUZZI 850 ELDORADO

On the front of their brochure, Guzzi advertises that the 850 is "The machine built exclusively for unlimited touring." They speak the truth. Of all the bikes in the test, the Guzzi is probably the most single purpose, and that purpose is high-speed cruising on freeways. It pulled an absolute perfect score for its freeway handling and a very high score for overall rider comfort.

At one point, one editor was taking his wife riding on the bike, and he commented that it was so smooth and steady, it didn't even feel like a motorcycle. "Thank goodness," answered the wife.

The engine was turning approximately 4,800 revs at 75 mph in 5th gear. That is, it seemed to be, when you could read the tach. One rider commented that the tach needle would make a good windshield wiper if he wanted to run a windshield and fairing.

The torque effect was very noticeable on the Guzzi, far more so than on the BMW. Revving the engine in neutral caused a couple of editors to joke that a missed shift might cause a barrel roll, but in fact not even the most horribly missed shift could destroy the fantastic stability of the bike at speed.

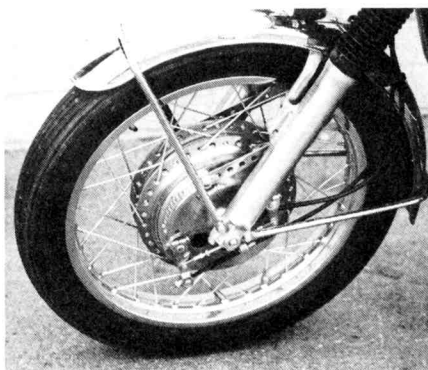
Starting was never a problem, once we learned to make sure that the neutral indicator was really lit and not picking up glare from the sun.

When the bike was stationary, it was possible to find a false neutral between 2nd and 3rd, but the neutral light wouldn't light for it, and the starter wouldn't turn.

Straight line stability is excellent. With the bike cruising along a street, the rider feels as if he's putting along in an overstuffed chair. Comes a cor-



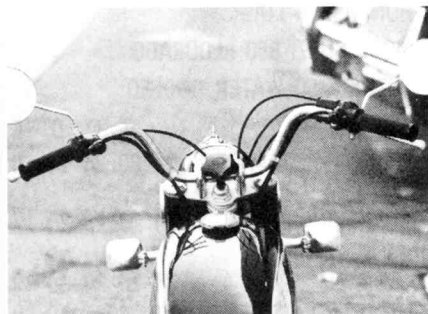
Radiator is protected by crash bars.



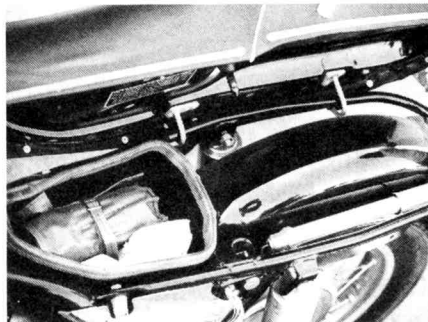
Four-leading-shoe front brake went out of adjustment easily; isn't as good as a disc.



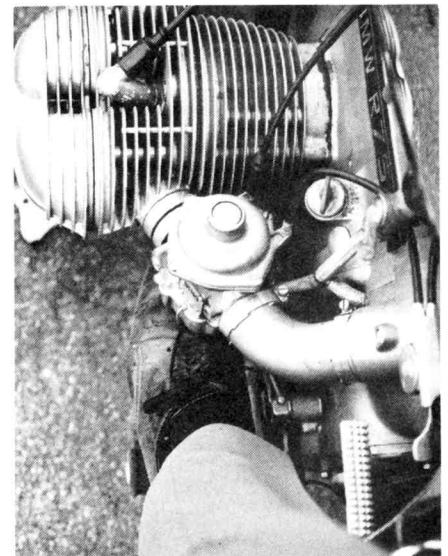
BMW's chrome tank sides and rear panels don't add anything to the looks.



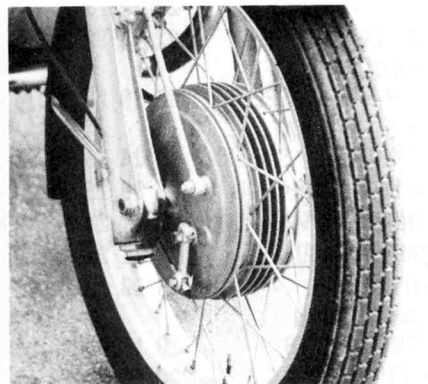
All controls could be reached without taking hands from grips.



BMW supplies a tire pump along with their tool kit.



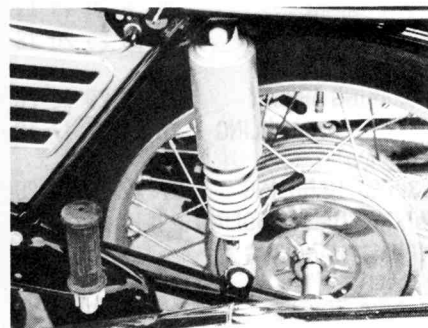
Relationship of feet to Bing carbs can be ticklish.



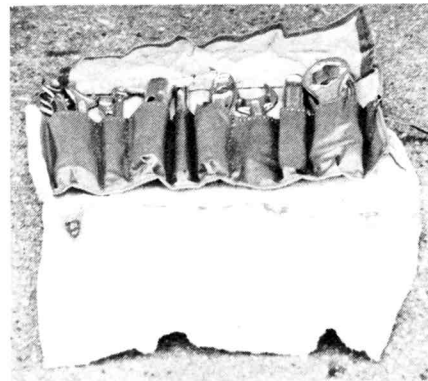
Front brake was best drum of the group.



Sideways kickstarter locks out when ignition is off.



Handles make rear shock adjustment easy.



BMW tool kit is the most complete anywhere.

ner, though, and he's got to work to be able to bend that overstuffed chair through it.

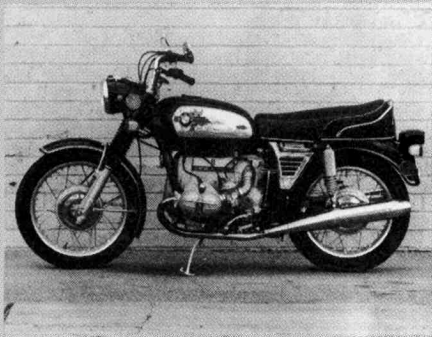
Quality of workmanship on the Guzzi rated between the BMW and the Honda, while the overall appearance was rated fairly low. The styling wasn't jukebox-jazzy, like the Suzuki, but it just didn't seem to be terribly attractive or coherent.

Before we became really familiar with the bike, we occasionally had difficulty getting it into low from neutral at traffic lights. It would go into gear, the neutral light would go out, but as the clutch was released, the transmission would pop out of gear. After a few minutes experience on the bike, though, everyone found that they could feel the point at which it was really in gear.

If freeway cruising is your style of riding, the Guzzi is the winning choice. Its high gearing and quiet drive, along with comfortable seat-

*Cont'd. on page 70*

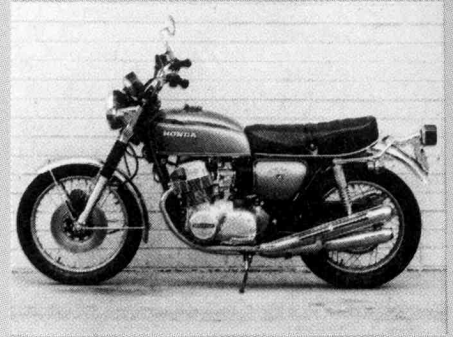




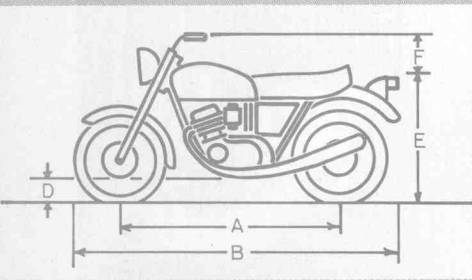
**BMW**



**Harley-Davidson**



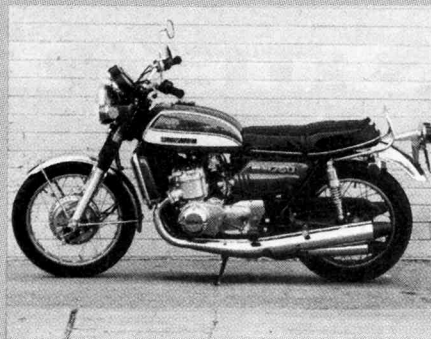
**Honda**



	0	10	20	30	
BMW	[Bar]				A-BMW R75/5
HARLEY	[Bar]				B-HARLEY-DAVIDSON SUPER GLIDE
HONDA	[Bar]				C-HONDA 750 FOUR
MOTO GUZZI	[Bar]				D-MOTO GUZZI 850 ELDORADO
SUZUKI	[Bar]				E-SUZUKI 750 WATER COOLED
					A B C D E
	OVERALL APPEARANCE				OVERALL APPEARANCE 22 20 24 14 6
	QUALITY OF WORKMANSHIP				QUALITY OF WORKMANSHIP 30 13 23 24 17
	RIDER COMFORT (OVERALL)				RIDER COMFORT (OVERALL) 24 10 24 28 19
	CONTROL CONVENIENCE				CONTROL CONVENIENCE 26 14 25 19 20
	FOOTPEG POSITION				FOOTPEG POSITION 22 12 24 22 19
	HANDLEBAR ARRANGEMENT				HANDLEBAR ARRANGEMENT 27 12 23 23 21
	SEAT DESIGN				SEAT DESIGN 22 11 22 28 18
	SMOOTHNESS AT "IN TOWN" SPEEDS				SMOOTHNESS AT "IN TOWN" SPEEDS 22 10 26 21 16
	SMOOTHNESS AT "FREEWAY" SPEEDS				SMOOTHNESS AT "FREEWAY" SPEEDS 29 14 25 29 18
	FOOTPEG VIBRATION				FOOTPEG VIBRATION 28 10 25 21 20
	HANDLEBAR VIBRATION				HANDLEBAR VIBRATION 27 11 24 26 19
	STARTING ABILITY				STARTING ABILITY 28 11 27 21 21
	CLUTCH FEEL				CLUTCH FEEL 26 19 22 24 22
	TRANSMISSION SMOOTHNESS				TRANSMISSION SMOOTHNESS 19 13 24 18 26
	SHIFTING				SHIFTING 22 15 24 13 14
	GEAR RATIO SELECTION				GEAR RATIO SELECTION 27 22 23 20 22
	FRONT BRAKE				FRONT BRAKE 28 8 29 19 19
	REAR BRAKE				REAR BRAKE 24 10 25 20 18
	OVERALL BRAKING ABILITY				OVERALL BRAKING ABILITY 27 9 29 18 20
	LOW SPEED HANDLING				LOW SPEED HANDLING 26 14 23 17 16
	FREEWAY SPEED HANDLING				FREEWAY SPEED HANDLING 27 22 24 30 20
	TWISTY ROAD HANDLING				TWISTY ROAD HANDLING 29 13 27 19 23
	OVERALL HANDLING ABILITY				OVERALL HANDLING ABILITY 28 15 26 20 21
	PASSING ABILITY				PASSING ABILITY 26 18 25 22 30
	TIRE SELECTION				TIRE SELECTION 26 20 22 23 17
	OVERALL HANDLING ABILITY				



**Moto Guzzi**



**Suzuki**

Make	BMW	Harley-Davidson	Honda	Moto Guzzi	Suzuki
<b>Model</b>	R75/5	Superglide	750 Four	850 Eldorado	750 (GT)
<b>Price</b>	\$2,095	\$2,250	\$1,702	\$1,989	\$1,575
<b>Displacement</b>	745cc	1200cc	736cc	844cc	738cc
<b>B.H.P. @ RPM</b>	57 @ 6,400	N/A	N/A	64 @ 6,500	67 @ 6,500
<b>Carburetor(s)</b>	2 Bing	1 Bendix	4 Kei 'Hin	2 Del 'Orto	3 Mikuni
<b>Ignition</b>	Batt./Coil	Batt./Coil	Batt./Coil	Batt./Coil	Batt./Coil
<b>Starting</b>	Elec./Kick	Kick	Elec./Kick	Elec.	Elec./Kick
<b>Primary</b>	Shaft	Chain	Chain	Shaft	Chain
<b>Final</b>	Spiral Bev. gear	Chain	Chain	Bevel Gear	Chain
<b>Gear Ratios (overall)</b>					
	1. 11.337:1	10.74:1	13.289:1	11.424:1	14.92:1
	2. 7.512:1	6.50:1	9.078:1	7.929:1	9.09:1
	3. 5.456:1	4.39:1	7.086:1	5.980:1	7.14:1
	4. 4.365:1	3.57:1	5.832:1	4.963:1	5.89:1
	5. —	—	4.992:1	4.284:1	4.84:1
<b>Clutch Type</b>	Single plate dry	Multi-plate dry	Multi-plate wet	Twin plate dry	Multi-plate wet
<b>Shift Pattern</b>	1 down 3 up	1 up 3 down	1 down 4 up	1 up 4 down	1 down 4 up
<b>Fuel Capacity</b>	4.7 Gals.	3.5 Gals.	4.5 Gals.	5.8 Gals.	4.5 Gals.
<b>Weight</b>	418 lbs.	543 lbs.	480 lbs.	548 lbs.	472 lbs.
<b>Front Tire</b>	3.25x19	3.75x19	3.25x19	4.00x18	3.25x19
<b>Rear Tire</b>	4.00x18	5.10x16	4.00x18	4.00x18	4.00x18
<b>Front Brake</b>	2LS drum	2LS drum	disc	2LS drum	4LS drum
<b>Rear Brake</b>	drum	(hyd.) drum	drum	drum	drum
<b>Dimensions (In inches)</b>					
<b>A. Wheelbase</b>	54.5	62.75	57.3	58.0	57.8
<b>B. Overall Length</b>	82.7	92.0	85.6	88.0	87.2
<b>C. Overall Width</b>	29.1	29.5	34.3	31.0	34.0
<b>D. Ground Clearance</b>	6.5	5.1	5.5	6.0	5.9
<b>E. Seat Height above ground</b>	33.5	28.0	31.9	31.5	31.5
<b>F. Handlebar height above seat</b>	12.0	17.0	12.0	10.0	12.0
<b>G. Seat Width</b>	12.0	10.0	12.0	12.0	13.0

DEFIANCE  
CYCLE  
ACCESSORIES  
P.O. Box 2917  
Fullerton, Calif. 92634  
Ph: (714) 522 7611 or  
522 7612

