

far from the handgrip and we would like to see them half an inch nearer.

Switches were similar to those on the other two bikes and seemed to work well. They were harder to operate and ran second to a tie between the KZ and XS in the opinion of our testers. Lighting was fine with the headlamp performing better than the 50 watt high beam specs would lead one to believe. Triumph continues to fit a single bulb taillight; although it was as bright (or brighter) than the other two, failure of one bulb will put your tail in the dark.

We tend to take electric starters for granted these days. The electric starter

introduced on the 1981 Triumph is the first for that company and they did it well. It was quiet in operation and never failed to promptly spin the big twin to life. Indeed, the Triumph's starter performed better than the one fitted to Yamaha's XS650, which would occasionally emit a howl of protest on cold mornings.

Handling was the Triumph's forte. It was the best bike on the trip when it came to getting around the twisty mountain passes we traveled. The Bonnie was first choice on any road that was not straight. It would knife through corners with absolute

predictability and stability and made experts out of all of us. Partly because of its light wheels, superior tires and excellent brakes, but mostly because of its low weight and fine steering geometry, the Triumph encourages the most conservative rider to go a bit harder than he might on a heavier, less agile bike. It isn't that the Triumph led to foolish things; it's just that one can ride with more spirit on the Bonnie because it is safer to do so.

COMPARISONS

Vibration: All three bikes shook their riders more than anyone was willing to live with—except one rider who regularly commutes on a large vertical twin. This mass criticism resulted primarily from having to ride the bikes at speeds down long, straight roads that were above the comfort zone in vibration. In the company of the larger twins covered in last month's issue, the vertical twins were forced to maintain speeds that simply made them less comfortable than they could have been at nearer the double nickel. In particular, the Kawasaki KZ750M1 was awful if ridden at 62-65 mph; its bars would vibrate so badly that the rider would often slow down and then speed up to remain in contact with the group and still avoid this speed range. At any other speed, the Kaw was the lowest vibrator of the three; the Triumph and Yamaha shook *all* the time—the faster we went, the more they shook. With the exception of the Kawasaki's four-mph discomfort zone, none of these bikes were vibrators by the standards set a decade ago.

Comfort: The Special styling of the Kawasaki and Yamaha include pull-back bars and forward-mounted footrests. Both these features tend to place undue pressure on the rider's tailbone and can result in discomfort after a few miles at touring speed. We fitted lower, more traditional bars to both the XS650 and KZ750, even though all the bikes were equipped with small fairings that took wind pressure off the rider's torso. The upright seating posture of the pull-back bar, in combination with forward-mounted plegs, was suitable for few riders at touring speeds and distances.

Strangely, the Triumph's footpegs were the most poorly placed. They were too far forward and no rider found them comfortable. This forward positioning is a holdover from the days when Triumph first converted the bike to a left shifter and had the task of getting the shift spindle around the clutch and making the kickstart arm miss the footrests, etc. With its new electric starter, Triumph should be able to rectify this shortcoming. The Yamaha's footrests were also too far forward, and for the same reasons;

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