

moving them back would cause interference with the kickstart mechanism. Kawasaki alone escaped general criticism of footpeg positioning.

Both the Yamaha and the Kawasaki have stepped seats designed to fit an image rather than a tush. They are round where they should be flat and the step that permits a low seating position for the rider also limits fore-and-aft movement. With low bars, neither was terrible but they could have been much better. The Triumph seat was well shaped but lost its advantage by being made of a material that was way too hard; by a small margin, the testers put it in last place. Triumph informs us that the production 1982 models will be fitted with cushions made of a material similar to the excellent BMW cushion material. Some of us found relief by sitting on one of the wool seat covers evaluated elsewhere in this issue.

Performance: The Kawasaki was the roll-on champ and had the most responsive engine of the three. We cannot fairly compare the Triumph because of the rich carburetion but later evaluation leads us to believe that it would be about the same as the Yamaha in road performance while having an edge at higher rpm. All three bikes will out-accelerate any car one can buy and all will pass a truck (one up) in a comfortably short interval. Because of their light weight and moderate power when compared to today's touring bikes, their performance would be marginal for two-up touring. These bikes will beat a CX500 in a roll-on and have satisfying performance on the open road if not overburdened.

Handling: No question, the Triumph was the champ among not only this group, but when compared to almost any gathering of motorcycles. Precise, predictable and confidence inspiring, the testers could be found jockeying for possession of the Triumph when we got to the twisty roads. Second is the Kawasaki. It was stable, tracked well and had excellent compliance. The KZ gave the best ride on straight roads and its adjustable rear dampers performed better than those of the other two bikes. It also had as much ground clearance as the Triumph and considerably more than the Yamaha. The XS650 exhibited straight-line performance almost as good as the Kawasaki but would get wobbly legged if pushed around on rough mountain passes. Weak rear dampers and an overly damped front fork reduced its overall competence when compared to the Kawasaki. The Triumph simply rode too stiffly under any circumstances. It had too much damping at the rear, together with springs that were too stiff. The front fork was sticky and would not respond to small bumps such as were

found on any road we traveled. We are told that production 1982 models will be equipped with different rear dampers and lower-rate springs. They are also working on the cause of the fork stiction and plan to improve the production 1982 fork.

Both the Kawasaki and the Yamaha are styled as "Burger cruisers" and are fairly comfortable when ridden at speeds and distances common to daily use. The Triumph is a sport bike that has allegiance only to the requirements of short sprints through interesting roads. Subsidiary roads in England are twisty and demanding of a bike's

steering competence; the Triumph was developed for those roads and is a master of them.

Riding a sport bike a few hundred miles in search of a beautiful surrounding takes on the aspect of an adventure. The middleweights place the rider in closer contact with the environment. They can't help but make the road's texture more apparent; they won't glide over high passes without announcing the fact to the throttle hand and they force a more leisurely, relaxed pace. Their weight and maneuverability make sandy corners less threatening and see-your-own-tailight roads fun. □

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