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DESPATCHES:
THE MINI-MAG
FOR
WORKING
RIDERS

TESTS: KAWASAKI ELIMINATOR / YAMAHA FAZER / BMW K75SS / KAWASAKI VOYAGER XII



KAWASAKI ZL1000

ELIMINATOR

YAMAHA FZX750

FAZER

Can motorcycles made for California make the move to the UK and survive? Tom Isitt

Some idiot once told me that what California does today, Europe does tomorrow. Come to think of it, that idiot was none other than our own beloved editor, JR. But he can't be right otherwise Europe would be infested with MacDonalds, Beastie Boys and factory custom bikes with silly names like Intruder, Virago, Vulcan and Savage. Maybe even muscle bikes called V-Max, Fazer and Eliminator. No, whatever JR reckons there's no way us British are going to fall for all that crapola. He'll be telling us next that we all ought to own Harleys and change our names to Fat Bob.

In the good ol' US of A there are excuses for this collective lapse in good taste. The Californian sun shines for most of the time so the council has no need to salt the roads

for five months of the year. This means that motorcycles destined for these sunny climes can be made almost entirely of chrome and only require cleaning every six months. Performance and handling don't rate too highly on California cruisers either because they have no corners on their boulevards or freeways, and they have a stupid 55mph speed limit. Why, then, do the marketing men think that we northern Europeans, with our corrosive climate and pot-holed, winding roads, should be interested in cruisers that look like a tart's boudoir and handle like a pig on a pogo-stick? Damned if I know, especially when some of them cost the same as a good middleweight sportster.

The constraints imposed on American motorcyclists by the law makers has

spawned another interesting two-wheeled phenomenon—the power cruiser. In a land where 110mph is twice the legal limit and you can get nicked for crossing the road in the wrong place, all-out acceleration has become the name of the game. When your top speeds are limited you need something that's going to get you from one stop light to another in the shortest possible time and with the maximum street cred. Enter a whole new generation of US-oriented bikes: power cruisers, muscle bikes, or whatever else you want to call them. The basic idea is to shoe-horn a seriously grunty motor into a cruiser-style bike and tune it to turn in sub-1.5 second standing quarters. The next step is to cover it in black plastic and chrome, style it as a cross between a chopper and a drag bike, and finally give it a name in keeping with its macho design philosophy. Eliminator, Liquidator, Terminator, Annihilator... anything that evokes images of aggression and speed.

When some dude pulls up next to you at the lights and gives you a real mean stare, you want to be able to burn rubber on that sucker, to show him that you are the meanest mutha on the streets and he shouldn't mess with you. Rubbing people's noses in the dirt during high street drag racing is what muscle bikes are all about. Next year I wouldn't be surprised if Honda (who are renowned for going one bigger than anyone else) come out with a power cruiser to beat even the mighty V-Max—the Honda Humiliator: you too can kick sand in people's faces even though you're nowhere near the beach. We might even see a Suzuki Seeyalater in the not-too-distant future.

The appearance of two power cruisers on the British market this year is at least a welcome change from a staple diet of water-cooled four-cylinder sportsters. It's very difficult to be enthusiastic about pseudo-Harley factory customs because they really are fairly horrible motorcycles, but at least muscle bikes look like offering a certain amount of fun for your money. And with the increasing interest in 'Run What You Brung' drag racing in this country, maybe they'll catch on. There's certainly been a lot of interest in the V-Max even though it's not officially imported over here, so perhaps Britain is ready for muscle mania.

What we basically have with the ZL1000 and FZX750 are two proven bikes dressed in a new set of glad rags. The Kawasaki's power plant is based on that of the 1000GTR, which in turn was developed from the GPZ1000RX, and the Yamaha's motor is taken almost unchanged from the FZ750. Motodd's rolling road dynamometer is still out of action so we didn't get a chance to put the Eliminator or Fazer on the dyno, but ultimate horsepower isn't what these bikes are about, it's how they deliver it. Kawasaki claim 108.5hp at 9000rpm for the Eliminator and 67ftlb of torque at 7000rpm, that's the same output as the GTR but slightly less torque. For the Fazer Yamaha claim 92.7hp at 9500rpm and 56.4ftlb at 8000rpm, 12hp and 1.4ftlb down on the standard FZ750.

The Eliminator's engine is a phenomenal piece of kit. Kawasaki have always been good at extracting serious horsepower from their in-line fours, but usually at the expense of low-down power and drivability. The GPZ1000 has an awesome peak horsepower output but is gutless below 5000rpm, which is no good for a muscle bike ▶





KAWASAKI ZL1000**YAMAHA FZX750****SA**

so Kawasaki opted for the 1000GTR engine with its better midrange power. However, even the GTR motor doesn't have the stomp required for serious traffic-light burn-ups so Kawasaki got to work on the top end of the engine, employing 34mm carbs (instead of the GTR's 32mm ones) and reprofiling the cams to give it even more grunt. Internal gear ratios are the same as the GPZ1000 but using the GTR's shaft drive system has lowered the overall gearing to give the Eliminator mind-boggling, stump-pulling acceleration.

The Fazer also follows the same take-a-powerful-motor-and-tweak-it-for-more-low-down-power philosophy, only to a lesser extent. Of all the super-sport 750s, the FZ has the most low-down pulling power and for this reason makes an ideal motor to power a muscle bike. Rather than spend a lot of extra Yen reprofiling cams, Yamaha have limited themselves to rubber-mounting the engine (as Kawasaki have done with the Eliminator), revising the carb settings and gearing the bike down to give it more at the bottom end than its super-sports brother. That's it, no other changes to what is already a superlative engine.

Launching a bike down the strip/High Street in the quickest possible time is a knack that's only acquired after much

SECOND OPINION

Welcome to the Edgar Jessop School of Point & Squirt. Here you will learn how to launch hard and enjoy a diet of Porches, TVRs, Ferraris and other exotica. For this course we strongly recommend the Eliminator, and for those with a weaker constitution, the Fazer is a good bet. Those of you who want to go fast other than in a straight line should leave now, as cornering either of these is akin to being between a rock and a hard place.

Now, if'd you'd like to step outside, today's lesson is on how to light the tyres up/Eric Thompson

practice, and what's so nice about these two bikes is that you don't have to spend years practising because they do most of it for you. Any of the big litre sportsters around nowadays will manage quicker standing quarters than the Eliminator or Fazer, but it's all down to technique. With all the horsepower at the top end you have to be careful to give them just the right amount of revs and get your clutch control spot on. If you don't do it right you either end up with the front wheel three feet off the ground or the whole lot bogs down and the MZ beside you chugs off in a cloud of blue smoke leaving you feeling very foolish.

Not so with the Eliminator. This motorcycle will transform you instantly into a Jay Gleason without you having to develop any technique at all. Next time a GSX-R1100 pulls up alongside you just brace your right foot against the pillion footrest, dial in 4000 revs and when the lights turn to amber dump the clutch while giving it maximum throttle. With a sticky 160/80 back tyre, a 63.5-inch wheelbase and a lot of weight at the front of the Eliminator will fire you away from the lights without spinning the back tyre or lifting the front end more than six inches off the road. When the revs reach 9000 flat-change up to second (you need to flat-change because the acceleration is such that your arms are



The KL1000 shouldn't really be called the Eliminator, but it's directly descended from the American musclebike



The FZX750 is only officially called the Fazer in the USA, but the name's crossed the Atlantic



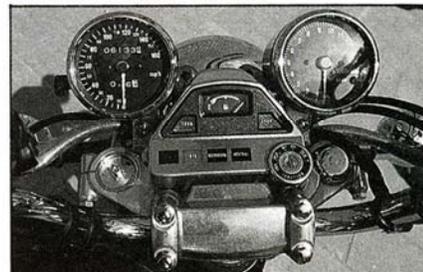
Dummy air scoops, fin edges and chrome pipes trace air flow through Yam motor



Eliminator lump bears internal and external resemblance to GPZ100RX



White faced FZX clocks ape Harley



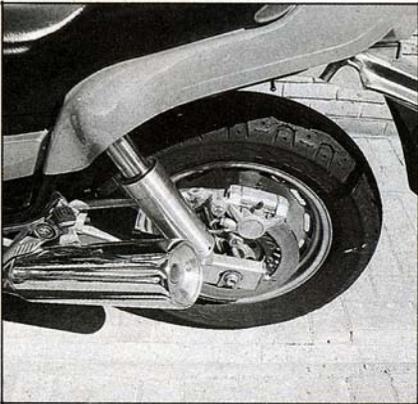
Kawa puts more info in front of you



16-inch wheel means Yam steers quickly, opposed-piston brakes are superb



Eliminator's single-piston calipers aren't quite as pleasant to use as Yam



Yam's inverted shockers look trick, work okay. Pirelli Phantom is its reliable self



Kwack's rear Dunlop refuses to be overwhelmed by massive torque

being wrenched from their sockets and it's very difficult to reach the clutch lever). Do this up through the gearbox and in less than 11.5 seconds from when you started you'll be travelling at over 120mph, having left just about everything else on the road just a distant speck (possibly a distant speck with blue flashing lights on top) in your mirrors.

The pay-off for the ease with which you can launch the Eliminator is manageability, or rather lack of it, in the wet. With massive stomp available as low down as 3000rpm it's almost impossible to stop the back wheel from spinning all over the place on wet roads—you need all your self-control just to keep it in a straight line and wet zebra crossings become seriously terrifying.

Being just a modified FZ, the Fazer isn't nearly so easy to get cleanly away from a standing start. Although the motor is impressively grunty for a sportster, as a muscle bike it could do with a little more bottom-end power. If you get the clutch/throttle control right, keeping the tachometer dropping below 4500rpm, you'll find that the Fazer acquires itself very well against the Eliminator and is only 10 or 15 yards behind over a short sprint. Overdoing the revs or banging the clutch home too quickly looks impressive as you monowheel off down the road, but meanwhile the Eliminator has gone off like an F-111 on full thrust.

The riding position of both bikes is just right for this sort of town riding, but when you get out on the open road you find out just how single-purpose these machines are. Handlebars are high and wide, footrests are low and forward-set, and the whole position feels like a big fat trail bike... a 130mph trail bike. It's quite obvious the moment you leave a built-up area and head for the countryside that these bikes were designed for the US. Cruising on the motorway at a steady 55mph, the Fazer and Eliminator's motors are turning over at a leisurely 4000rpm and both bikes are relaxed and comfortable. The trouble is that no one in this country drives on motorways at 55mph (except grey-haired men wearing flat caps and driving Austin Allegros). At 70mph the sit-up-and-beg riding position becomes more strenuous as you take the full wind blast on your upper body, and if you up the ante to 85/90 it becomes a real struggle to stay aboard. One journey of 250 miles on the motorway left my arm, shoulder and neck muscles knotted and aching; these are definitely *not* touring motorcycles (unless you're prepared to go everywhere at 60mph or less). Which is a bit odd because the Eliminator's saddle is one of the most comfortable I've ever perched on, and the Fazer's is very luxurious considering the bike is a Yamaha FZ. The only problem with the Kawasaki is that even though it has a seat height of less than 30in, the seat is very wide so people with little legs have problems getting both feet on *terra firma*.

The next reminder of how far off their home territory the Eliminator and Fazer are is when you start pushing them hard on twisty back roads. In the frame and suspension departments these two bikes are cruiser-like and 'traditional' in feel. In order to maintain the cruiser/drag bike look both manufacturers have opted for unsophisticated front forks which are air-assisted but nothing else, and twin shocks at the back. The Kawasaki's 38mm forks are pretty beefy items which despite being air-assisted are actually designed to run with

atmospheric in them—the little valve at the top of each fork leg is for letting any air out, not putting it in. At the back end the Eliminator's shocks are adjustable for preload via an air valve at the top of each shock and also rebound damping. The best settings seemed to be just a couple of psi in the shocks (atmospheric makes the back end sag and the front end go light) and a lot of rebound damping because the spring rate is pretty hard. Even then the handling isn't exactly brilliant. The steering geometry, with 29° of rake and 101mm of trail, is more like that of a sportster than a cruiser and at low speed makes it very flickable. It's only when you start cornering at speed that the steering becomes slower and harder work, mainly due to the very long wheelbase. Fast cornering is a real knack on the Eliminator because with the shocks being on the harsh side the shaft reaction takes up a lot of the available travel leaving little in reserve for bumps. Shutting off or touching the brakes mid-corner makes matters worse because it sits up and heads for the outside of the bend.

The Fazer is just the opposite. The front forks are soft and bottom out easily under braking so the back end has to be run soft as well to match. The front end has a cruiser-type trail of 116mm, and coupled with a 16-inch front wheel it tends to oversteer in corners while the back wallows over the bumps in a manner reminiscent of bikes eight years ago. Having said that, the Fazer is more manageable than the Eliminator through the twisties as long as you don't

SECOND OPINION

The Fazer is a throwback: Squidgy suspension, sit-up-and-beg riding position, lack of fairing, comfortable seat—all these things were given up by sports bike designers years ago, so I don't believe the Fazer is really an FZ. And I don't believe the Eliminator is a motorcycle. **Julian Ryder.**

expect it to perform like an FZ600 or NS400. It's adequate without being startling, given the low-tech nature of its suspension set-up.

Brakes and tyres are an essential part of the muscle bike kit. Street dragging from red light to red light requires the bike to be hauled down as quick as it takes off, and on these two machines that means PDQ. The Eliminator's brake set-up is not as nice as that of the Fazer, having only single-piston rather than dual-piston calipers, but even so they're enough to haul over 760lb of bike and rider to a halt quickly and easily. The Kawasaki's monstrous 160/80 Dunlop rear tyre is sticky enough to stop the back wheel from spinning under flat-out acceleration yet seemed to be wearing very well over the two weeks of abuse we meted out to it. The Pirelli Phantom on the Fazer's rear wheel was even stickier but was losing a lot of rubber by the time we gave it back. In the wet the Phantoms were nicely grippy and made the Fazer feel more sure-footed than the Eliminator, which is somewhat hampered by its outrageous power delivery.

You'd think that this kind of street racing would do horrendous things to the fuel consumption of muscle bikes such as these, but that turned out not to be the case. The Fazer averaged out at an impressive 47mpg during our two-week tenure, with a best of 56mpg and a worst of 36 which means it has a range of 110 miles before it goes onto reserve, and then another 20 miles before it runs dry. The really trick thing about the Fazer is that the reserve tap is an

KAWASAKI ZL1000

YAMAHA FZX750



electric switch on the righthand handlebar which obviates the need to fiddle around under your left leg as on most other bikes. What isn't so clever is the row of idiot lights that are situated on top of the tank so you have to take your eyes off the road for a glance at them—unnecessary and irritating. Another serious trick bit on the Fazer is a strange archaic device seldom seen on motorbikes in this day and age... a centrestand.

Fuel consumption on the Eliminator wasn't so impressive. An average of 35mpg isn't too bad but it's a bit sick compared to

the Fazer. The best I managed out of it was 38mpg and at worst it dipped down to 29, but with a capacity of four gallons that still means you can do 120 miles before you need to look for petrol. As for the rest of the running gear, the clocks and idiot lights are readable and well positioned but the indicator switch could do with being the push-to-cancel type as used by the other Japanese manufacturers.

It's really a little unfair to make a direct comparison between two muscle bikes of different capacities, but when there are only two on the market in this country it's inevitable. Despite the fact that it gives away 250cc and 16hp to the Eliminator, the Fazer comes off very well. It's lighter, handles slightly better and is more economical but

does lose out in sheer grunt and mind-bending acceleration. When it comes to levelling cities, tearing up chunks of tarmac and turning cocky hot-hatch drivers into snivelling babies the Eliminator has it all the way. What you then have to decide is whether the Eliminator is really worth £600 more than the Fazer, and if so do you really want a Fazer when an ordinary FZ750 is only £100 more? If you absolutely *must* have a muscle bike and don't mind such single-purpose bike then the Eliminator is for you; if it's an all-round power cruiser you want then go for the Fazer. Or for the same money you could even buy a Suzuki GSX1100E, several spare rear tyres and have some tuning work done on it, because the big GSX is still the ultimate quarter-miler.

T E C H N I C A L S P E C I F I C A T I O N S

	KAWASAKI ZL1000	YAMAHA FZX750
Price	£4499	£3799
Motor	Liquid-cooled 16-valve DOHC in-line four	Liquid-cooled 20-valve DOHC in-line four
Displacement	997cc	749cc
Bore and stroke	74 × 58mm	68 × 51.5mm
Compression ratio	10.2:1	11.2:1
Maximum torque @ rpm	67.3ftlb (9.3kgm) @ 7000 (claimed)	56.4ftlb (7.8kgm) @ 8000 (claimed)
Maximum power @ rpm	108.5hp 9000 (claimed) @	92.7hp @ 9500 (claimed)
Carburettors	4 × 34mm Keihin	4 × 34mm Mikumi
Transmission	Gear primary, 6-speed box, shaft final	Gear primary, 6-speed box, chain final
Frame	Full cradle with rubber engine mounts	Double cradle box-section
Rake	29°	28.75°
trail	102mm	116mm
Front fork	38.5mm telescopic with air assistance	38mm telescopic with air assistance
Rear suspension	Twin shock absorbers with air assistance and 4-position rebound damping	Twin de Carbon type shock absorbers with 5-piston preload adjustment
Brakes front	2 × 280mm discs with single piston calipers	2 × 267mm discs with opposed piston calipers
rear	260mm disc with single piston caliper	267mm disc with opposed piston caliper
Tyres front	100/90V18	110/90V16
rear	160/8V15	140/90V15
Wheelbase	63.6in (1615mm)	60in (1525mm)
Seat height	29.5in (750mm)	29.5in (750mm)
Width	31.7in (805mm)	30.9in (785mm)
Weight	538lb (244kg) dry	449lb (204kg) dry
Fuel capacity	4 gallon (18.5 litre)	2.8 gallon (13 litre)
Fuel consumption	32mpg	39mpg
Mean top speed	136mph	127mph

COMPARISONS	PRICE	POWER	TORQUE	TOP SPEED	FUEL CONSUMPTION
KAWASAKI ZL1000	£4499	108.5hp	67.3ftlb	136mph	35mpg
KAWASAKI GPZ1000RX	£4499	125hp	73ftlb	153mph	37mpg
YAMAHA FZX750	£3799	92.7hp	56.4ftlb	127mph	47mpg
YAMAHA FZ750	£3899	105hp	57.8ftlb	149mph	39mpg

Power and torque figures are those claimed by the manufacturers

PARTS PRICES

	ZL1000	FZX750			
Fairing (complete)	N/A	N/A	Front brake lever & m/cylinder	£80.62	£35.48
Petrol tank	£211.34	£141.68	Indicator	£15.36	£14.87
Front wheel	£162.13	£146.22	Footrest	£9.21	£39.35
Front forks (complete)	£422.66	£332.56	Oil filter	£3.09	£3.29
Silencer	£59.95	£208.32	Service intervals	6000 miles	4000 miles
Sidepanel	£31.90	£23.13	Service time	4 hours	N/A

	KAWASAKI ZL1000	YAMAHA FZX750	Poor	Indifferent	Average	Good	Excellent
RATINGS							
ENGINE							
Responsiveness						□	●
Vibration						□	●
Bottom end power						□	●
Mid range power							■
Top end power							■
Fuel economy					●		□
Starting							■
Ease of maintenance					●	□	
Quietness						■	
TRANSMISSION							
Clutch operation					●	□	
Gearbox operation						●	□
HANDLING							
Steering							■
Cornering clearance							■
High speed cornering					●	□	
Medium speed cornering					●	□	
Bumpy bends			●	□			
Flickability					●	□	
Manoeuvrability							●
Top speed stability					●	□	
SUSPENSION							
Front					□	●	
Rear					●	□	
Front/rear match					●	□	
BRAKES							
Stopping power							●
Braking stability						□	●
Feel at controls							●
GENERAL							
Quality of finish						□	●
Fairing efficiency							
Seat comfort						□	●
Riding position							■
Pillion comfort						□	●
Touring range							■
Headlight					□		●
Stands					●	□	
Mirrors							■
Horn					□		●
VALUE FOR MONEY							
						■	