

cycle guide

47457

DECEMBER 1972 75 CENTS

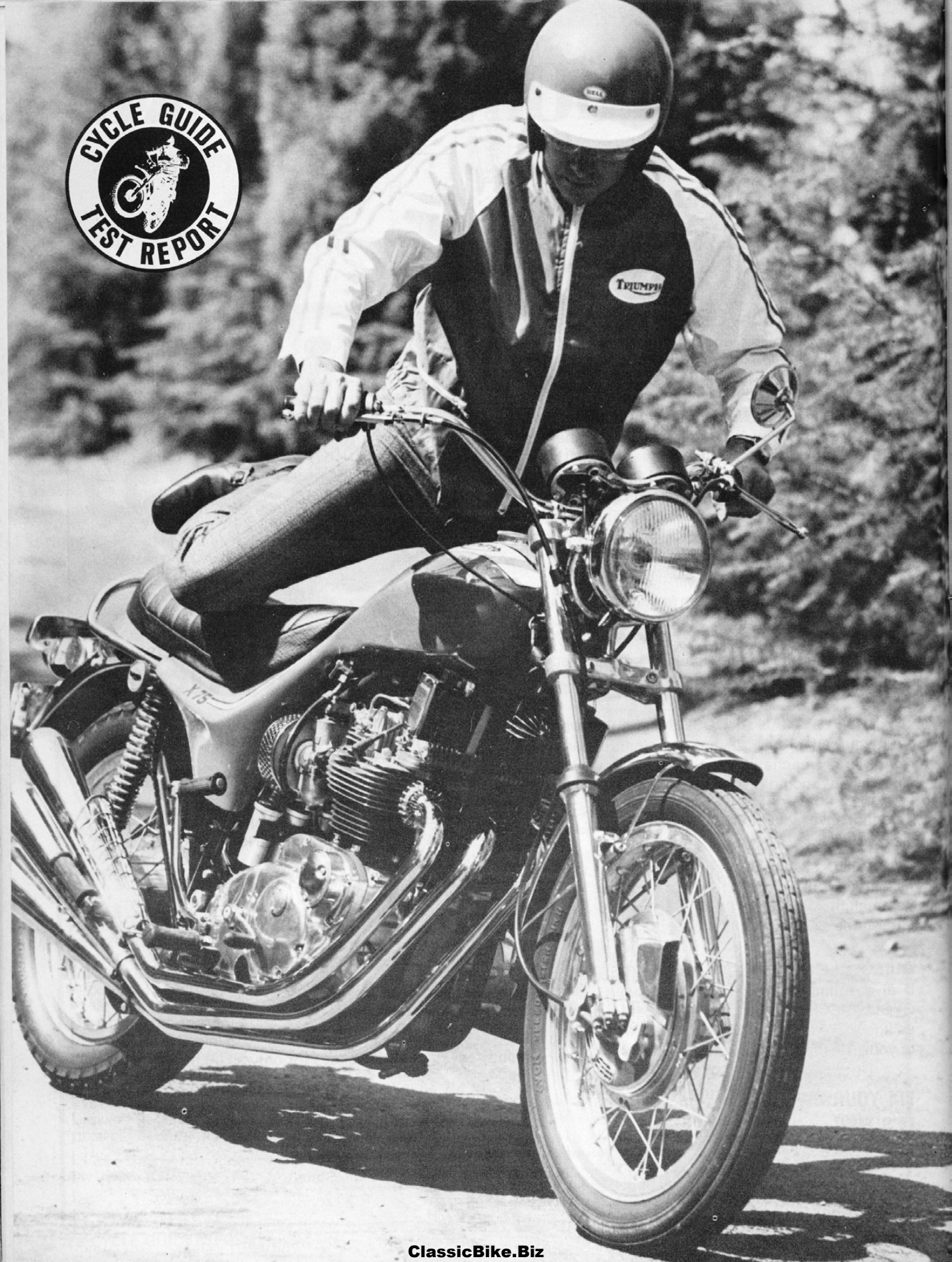
EXCLUSIVE TEST REPORT *Triumph's high performance* **X75 HURRICANE**



**Epilogue:
Side-Car Project**

Honda CB-100 Test

**Competition:
Bonneville, Peoria TT**



HURRICANE

The long awaited BSA Vetter Rocket finally appears—only it's a Triumph now. But whatever the nomenclature, the tri-piper is a machine well worth the wait.

Prior to the 1973 model previews Cycle Guide was offered an exclusive sneak look at BSA's long anticipated Vetter Rocket—well, sort of. We saw it and rode it but it isn't a BSA Rocket anymore. It's a Triumph X75 Hurricane. What's a Hurricane? It's the official designation the people in Coventry have placed upon their startling new, limited production, triple. One must admit that said nomenclature doesn't have quite the flare, the elegant élan that the appellation BSA Vetter Rocket conjures within the imaginative spirit. But a Rocket by any other name is still the over the counter version of the BSA prototype that first appeared in print back in 1970. As the months passed little was heard from Birmingham and the prototype appeared to have submerged from sight. But many hands were busy in Britain. Just when that striking image was but a distant memory, BSA prepared to come sauntering into the market place encountrancing a "look what I have here, fellows" grin.

Initial conversations with BSA-Triumph here in California indicated that the tri-piper would be marketed as the BSA Vetter Rocket. It is unusual for a design collaborator to be credited in the naming of a model. BSA had approached Craig Vetter, a prominent fairing designer-builder doing business out of Rantoul, Illinois, several years ago to solicit his designing skills and apply them to their Rocket triple. Vetter's efforts, including the rakish triple pipes on one side and chopper influenced styling, were enthusiastically greeted when photos were first published. In June of this year we got the word that the three cylinder bike would be marketed by Triumph, BSA's sister corporation. Those who keep up with current world wide happenings are probably aware that things are not that good over in old Blighty. The pound has been devalued, the Beatles broke up and business in general is bad. Belt tightening

is s. o. p. in England. Both Triumph and BSA are trimming some of their models from the production schedule, seeking a more unified marketing approach in these troubled times.

Whatever its name the current production model retains all the pizzazz that first whetted the public's appetite. It's a prototype that hasn't been done in by "committee" tampering. The rechristened Rocket offers stock reliability, yet has a rakish air about it. It's a real free-booter suggesting go-for-broke excitement.

The appearance of the new entry is striking because of the bright colors, its semi-custom look and the arrogant posture effected by the three stacked pipes. The front forks are one inch shorter than the previous standard units and because of frame change

haps this is also in the offing for the three-piper. Naturally the use of fiberglass suggests a weight reduction but that isn't the case here. Federal regulations now require that all fiberglass tanks sold as original equipment must have steel liners. This is an appreciated safety consideration.

Just because passenger pegs are fitted doesn't always mean two can ride in comfort. The seat is wide but short. The solo rider can travel with much comfort for many miles without ill effects. However riding double becomes a real chore. With two average size people the riding position is really cramped, but not altogether unpleasant if you don't mind getting stabbed in the back or whatever. The seat is no higher than those on standard triples but it is wider. Because of this



are mounted slightly further forward than the everyday triple seen on the road. The top triple clamp and bottom 'T' stem are made out of aluminum and have been highly polished. The gas tank and seat is a one piece affair molded from fiberglass, with the paint under a heavy coat of epoxy, producing a scratch free finish. The color scheme is bright orange with reflective yellow decal stripes running down both sides of the tank. The tank was constructed with a two piece mold, necessitated by its shape and size. The only shortcoming is the unsightly rib down the center of the tank where the two halves are joined. It is too bad the mold didn't separate under one of the decals on the side of the tank or another decal wasn't used to cover the rib in the center. We were very glad to see the rib removed from the new tank on the '73 Trident. Per-

it is difficult for the smaller sized rider to reach the ground with both feet without tip-toeing. It is a lot easier for those of shorter stature to just put down one foot at stops.

The Hurricane is an around town tripper. The gas tank handicaps touring aspirations. Its capacity, a smallish 2.6 gallons, doesn't match its visual satisfaction. Limited fuel capacity can be a hassle if cross country traveling or week-end touring is contemplated. Those gas stops can get few and far between. And stopping for gas every hour on the hour does get a bit monotonous. The range is seventy-five miles. Some distance type diehards might argue that isn't even enough to get the engine warm. It appears there is sufficient space available for a larger tank but apparently styling considerations and anticipated use of the bike superceded touring utility.

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However we do feel a larger tank capacity would not hinder the style and would be beneficial to those riders who like to put a few miles on when the time and inclination permit.

One characteristic peculiar to the products from Birmingham and Coventry is the offset in the footpegs. Triumph and BSA find it impractical to lengthen or shorten either the brake pedal or the gear shift lever. Instead the pegs are placed where it is easy to reach both controls. This explains the offset. The right peg on the X75 is also lower than the left. Other than initial awareness the unusual positioning is not noticed at all when riding. The pegs are folding. To the average rider this may not mean much, but for those who really like to lean into a corner, this is a reassuring safety feature. The shortening of seat space up front and the forward positioning of the pegs eliminates that "straight up and down" riding feeling prevailing with most stockers and is in keeping with the conservative "chopper" styling of the machine.

On previous triples (both the Trident and the Rocket) the three exhaust pipes were run into only two mufflers, the center tube being split into both outside pipes. There was some power loss employing this method but it did make for quieter exhaust and a balanced appearance. The disadvantage was all the heat produced with this set-up. After a few blocks from the dealer's showroom floor the pipes have started turning color and by the end of the day they have turned either blue or yellow and other assorted hues. To avoid this problem with this new model Triumph has elected to route all three exhaust pipes separately down the right side of the machine into three separate upswept mufflers. This rampant askewity gives a somewhat lopsided yet really distinctive appearance. One glance at those three tubes so jauntily perched there on the starboard side leads one to conjure up the vision of a set of 3's balanced on both sides. The double triples sure would be a sight, and a natural for the first six.

After several hundred miles of testing the chrome on the head pipes retained its natural silvery appearance, obviously an indication that the three separate pipes satisfactorily handle the heat build up around the exhaust port. Because of the rain collecting tendencies associated with upswept mufflers Triumph has drilled a small hole at the bend in each pipe to facilitate water drain off. The exhaust note is somewhat deeper than that of the three into two systems



previously used on the Rocket.

Triumph has mounted 3.25 x 19 rubber up front. Alloy rims are also fitted to both wheels which saves a slight amount of weight. The rear tire is a Dunlop K-81 which was originally designed for the Trident and the Rocket. As always it provides excellent traction and wear. The front tire is a rib design which gives the front end a light and maneuverable feeling at slow speeds. This is an improvement over the use of the K-81 up front where it gave the front end a heavy feel and tended to fall from side to side at very slow speeds. When riding on freeways with those troublesome rain grooves cut in them the front end tends to wander some. This is true of any rib design up front.

Perhaps the most important mechanical improvement was in the gearbox. The Hurricane, as is the '73 Trident, is fitted with one more gear. With the torque the three produces, there is no disadvantage to having only four speeds. The 5-speed does come in handy in slow traffic, first

gear is rather low. This eliminates the lurches we experienced at low speed with the standard gearbox. The 5-speed shifts as smooth as glass, there is very little travel of the lever from one gear to the next and it is not necessary to use the clutch when shifting to a higher gear. Actually, with first lower and 2nd through 5th closer together, it is a bit easier to select the best gear through town. Neutral is now a little tricky to find but once you get the hang of it it's simple. We feel the five speed was not a necessity from a performance standpoint but is an asset for the sales department. We were quite pleased with the overall workings of the new transmission.

The clutch has not been changed on the new models because there is no reason for it. The dry, single plate automotive type clutch (offered only by BSA-Triumph among major manufacturers) worked without fault always allowing good engagement and smooth shifts.

Starting requires the same proce-

dure as other triples from Birmingham. Prime the two outside carburetors, one kick and the engine is running. There was never any indication of the engine kicking back. Also there is no fear of the kickstarter lever folding up part way down. We wish this were true of some other bikes we've encountered. The kickstarter pedal tucks in well out of the way of the right leg.

Our first impressions of the per-

formance of the Vetter styled Triumph were not too favorable. The engine didn't run smooth, the entire machine vibrated unbearably at seventy mph and, in addition, the acceleration was more like a 500 instead of a 750. One quick call to the distributor and we found out that there had been a slight(?) misunderstanding. Our test unit was taken out of the box, gassed and oiled, and delivered as is, without any additional set-up.

After we put out the distress signal it was Bob Ellison and Jim Pearson to the rescue. Bob and Jim are service technicians for BSA-Triumph and they know their business. In no time flat the anemic triple-piper was transformed from an anchor to a veritable rocket, or should we say, hurricane. The vibration was traced to a very loose primary chain and once this was adjusted the bike rode like a limousine. After the valves, carburetors and



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ignition were set we were ready to try again. We must say the servicing substantiated the value of a good tune-up. The quarter mile speed increased from 94.8 mph in the high thirteens to a very satisfying 101.35 mph in 13.09 seconds. We now had a bike that was a pleasure to ride, as far as the petrol permitted.

The front forks have been shortened by one inch. The tubes are quite strong and do not flex at any time. Both damping and spring rate are acceptable for everyday road use. The rear shocks are 3-way adjustable Girling units that can be moved to suit various weight requirements.

Handling is slightly faster than on the Trident. This is due, in part, to the rib front tire and the different rake. Because of this it is easy to thread through that stop and go traffic often encountered at rush hour.

It is quite difficult to drag anything on the left side of the bike because everything is up high and well tucked in. The right side does leave something to be desired. Those attention riveting triple pipes are not without a cost. The bottom pipe is so low that it is very easy to ground even when riding solo. With two up it is difficult not to ground it even when rounding a slow street corner. Our only suggestion here is—be careful.

The Hurricane will have the conventional shoe brakes fitted. There is nothing special about these but they

do stop reasonably well and they have a good feel with little fade. No doubt a disc brake would improve binder performance and we can hope that one will be fitted to the front in the near future. (The new front disc on the '73 Trident offers exceptional high speed roadability performance.) We made several quick stops from 100 mph and had both front and rear brake hubs discolor from the heat. The rear brake faded more than the front but it still worked at the finish. One thing we did notice was that when using the front brake hard there was a considerable amount of weight transfer. The rear end would become light and wanted to move from one side to the other. This could cause trouble if you don't have a good feel of what is happening.



There is a limited production order for 1200 units which will come through without turn signals. After January 1st all manufacturers will have to comply with federal regulations that will require turn signals. Unlike the Trident this triple has no bogus instrument switches. The horn button and dimmer switch are placed in one unit located on the left handlebar. Both switches are easy to reach.

Another item that would have to be changed for calendar year 1973 is the exhaust system. We feel the current pipes don't unduly restrict power performance, and to our ear they emit a pleasant sound. The government, however, found the system to be over the maximum set (86 Db [A]) for next year. This means that quieter mufflers would have to be fitted to subsequently produced units. We all have a good idea what the new mufflers will do to performance so if you're in the market, be sure to get yours early. Since production is limited to 1200, initial dealer orders will probably exhaust the supply. Sufficient orders once the showrooms are empty would most likely prompt scheduling of another production run.

There was only one thing that really bothered us about the whole bike, that was the center stand. It may seem strange why such a minor item should bug us, but take it from experience, that insidious device can hurt you. It takes two strong men to get the reconstituted "Beezer" up on the center stand without a struggle. We were guaranteed that by release time this would be changed. We hope so.

The changes made on the revamped Rocket are far out of the ordinary and quite a departure from the conservative ways of this old English company. Change has been knocking at their door for some time now and it appears that the door is now ajar. Previous sales disappointments may have led management to conclude that speed and performance may not be enough in today's appearance oriented, Orient dominated market. Their new triple is the first stock machine (other than the obvious bellwether of chopperdom, Harley-Davidson) with significant, albeit conservative, chopper styling. This surely will be a grabber for big bike buyers. How many often gaze upon those full blown, intensely modified two wheelers blasting along, admiring and yet not really desiring to go whole "hog?" The Hurricane may initiate a partial resolution to that reality-fantasy gap for a good number of them. It is surely an intrepid trader into the uncharted territory of custom-like styling for a stock machine. The changes from BSA-Triumph may evolve slowly, but they do come. *Bob Braverman/Walt Fulton, Jr.*



TRIUMPH X75 HURRICANE

Engine type.....	three cylinder, OHV four stroke
Bore and stroke	67 x 70 mm
Displacement	740cc
Compression Ratio	9:1
Max. Horsepower developed	@ 7250
Ignition	alternator/coil
Carburetion	three 26mm Amal
Lubrication	dry sump
Length	88.5 in.
Seat height	32 in.
Wheelbase	57 in.
Ground Clearance	7 in.
Dry weight	458 lbs.
Front tire size	3.25 x 19 in.
Front brake type	internal expanding
Rear tire size	4.25 x 18 in.
Rear brake type	internal expanding
Transmission	5-speed constant mesh
Clutch	dry single plate
Overall gear ratios	(1) 13.55; (2) 9.65; (3) 7.35; (4) 6.25; (5) 5.26
Final ratio	5.26
Countershaft sprocket	18
Rear wheel sprocket	53
Indicated highest one-way speed	114 mph
Acceleration 0-60	5.9 sec.
Quarter-mile acceleration:	
Top Speed	101.35 mph
Elapsed time	13.09 sec.
Air Filtration	dry felt
Battery type	12V
Fuel tank	2.6 gal.
Fuel reserve2 gal.
Oil tank	6 pts.
Front suspension	telescopic, double damping (6 3/4 in.)
Rear suspension	adjustable spring over shock
Frame type	double cradle
Colors	orange with yellow trim
Price as tested	\$2295 FOB Baltimore or Duarte

DISTRIBUTORS

(West)
Triumph Motorcycle Corp.
P.O. Box 275
Duarte, Calif. 91010

(East)
Triumph Motorcycle Corporation
P.O. Box 6790
Baltimore, Maryland 21204