

# cycle guide

ROAD TESTS:

**HONDA SL 350**

**TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE**

**KAWASAKI TRAIL BOSS**

**BMW 75/5**

ELECTRICAL TROUBLE -  
SHOOTING AND THEORY

HOW TO BUILD  
A MODEL BIKE.

FEBRUARY, 1970

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# PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

***One of the most successful pavement scorchers ever to hit these shores from the Island of Great Britain, now in 1970 it's better than ever.***

The Triumph Bonneville continues to improve with each passing year. When the rash of multis were first introduced to the public, a lot of knowing individuals (at least they thought they were knowing) smiled and said that the day of the Bonneville was over. It was their contention that the 650cc vertical twin from England was about to be dethroned as one of the kings of the highway. No way, baby, no way.

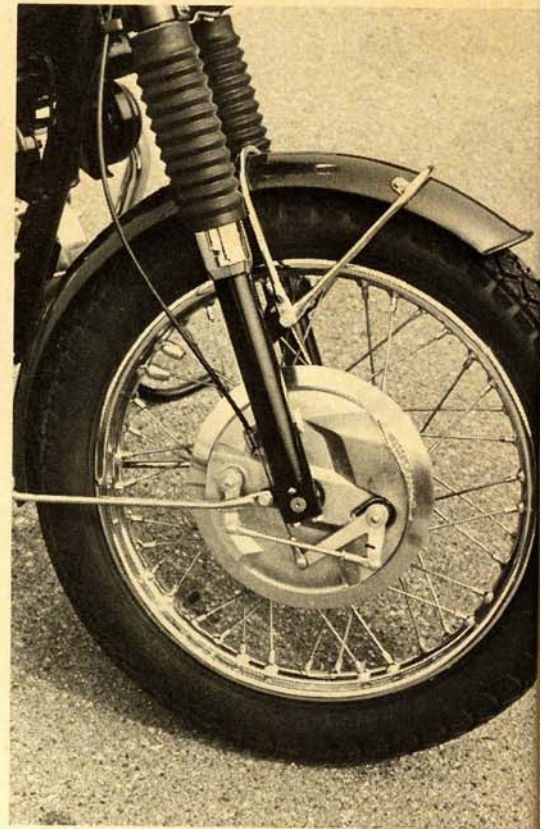
Sure, the multis are fast, but then

again, so is the Bonneville. The multis accelerate like blazes, but again, so does the Bonneville. The truth of the matter is, no matter what you say about the multis, the same thing can be said about the Triumph T120R, affectionately known as the 'Bonny' to its many loyal followers.

To someone who has never ridden a Bonneville, this will be a hard thing to understand. When you really analyze the thing, you discover one thing that be-

comes apparent. Once you reach a certain point, power-wise that is, any more than that merely becomes frosting on the cake. Many riders will argue for hours that this or that machine is better because it will go 125 miles per hour, or perhaps 130, but our feeling is, who cares. Any motorcycle that will go 105 to 110 miles per hour in standard showroom trim is certainly fast enough for any sane individual, unless of course competition is his forte, and by com-





*The trim sporty Triumph front end is clean and uncluttered. You can be as hard on the brakes as you want to and they won't let you down. They're great.*

*Riding double is a treat on the new T120R. The dual seat is large enough to handle two adults. Styling and trim is better than ever, and workmanship is first class.*

petition we don't mean a stoplight grand prix.

There are those who say the Triumph design is long in tooth. We agree. Also, there are those who say the esthetics are getting to be old hat. Possibly. But when it comes to sheer exhilaration and excitement, there are few motorcycles that can equal the Bonneville. Make no mistake, friend, it's a fast motorcycle, and fast is spelled with large letters. Ours went an honest 115 miles per hour, and by any standard, this is anything but dragging your feet. True, exterior-wise, the Triumph Bonneville has not changed much over the past few years, save a few styling changes. But it has more than kept up with the demands of the American motorcycling public, when it comes to a performance standpoint. And besides, it still is one of the cleanest designs around.

There are not too many riders of other types of motorcycles that, with any sense at all, will take on a Bonneville from a dead stop. To do this is foolish indeed. We have talked to a couple of Bonneville owners who had sold their

older Bonneville to buy one of the new Tridents, rode them awhile, and then decided they liked the Bonneville even better, and traded down to a 650 again. This does not mean that the Trident is not a good motorcycle. Far from it. It is just that the 650 embodies certain features that endear it to the owner.

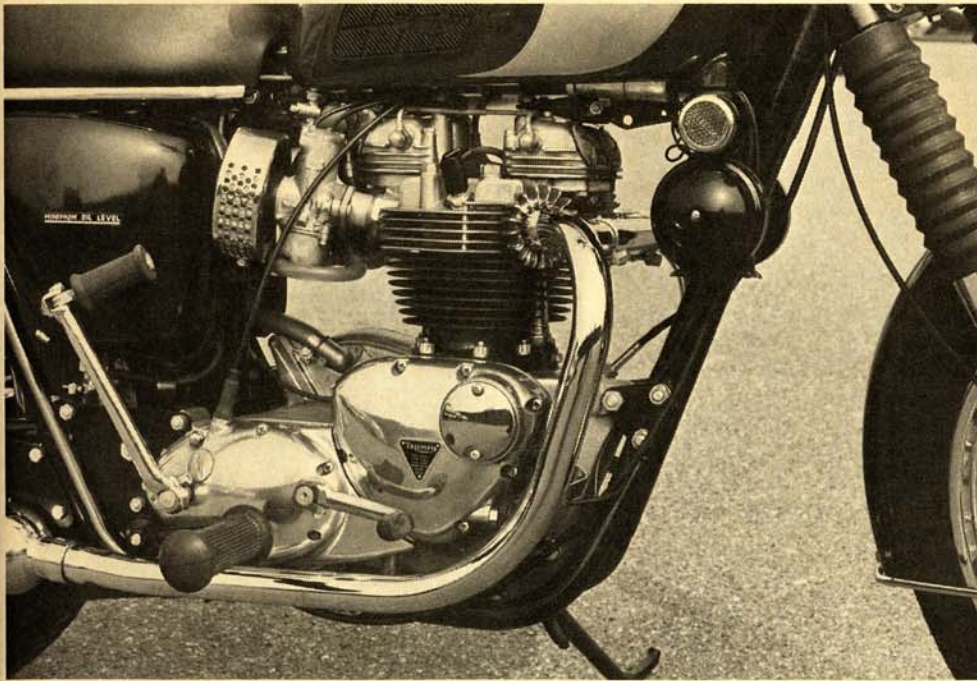
There is one nice thing about owning a Bonneville. You know the design has been around long enough for the factory to sift out all of the obvious deficiencies and remedy the situation with whatever steps are necessary. Every year the Bonneville gets a little better, and this year it's better than ever. Make no mistake about it. We are not partial to the Triumph T100R, nor any motorcycle, but we must give credit where credit is due, and of all of the motorcycles coming from Triumph, this is the one that must get our nod for being the real tiger in the 650cc crowd.

There used to be a time when a 13 second e.t. meant hard starting, cantankerous running, and fire belching performance. Not so any more daddy. These days are long gone. One stab on

the kick starter generally brings the engine to a full head of steam, and it will sit there ticking over all day long at a smooth, steady idle. Somebody at Triumph or Amal has been burning the midnight oil, and our test machine came equipped with Amal concentrics that operated flawlessly. Surprise of Surprises! Perhaps it looks as though we will have to take back all those nasty things we have been saying about the Amal concentrics these past months.

Throttle response, right from idle, is great. No flat spots, nothing but a gutsy type of power, yet without any real vibration and excellent controllability. The rider never loses the feeling that he is in complete command, and this is not always the case with some of the more powerful motorcycles. We might mention at this point that even with the introduction of some of the more exotic and stronger running machinery, the Triumph Bonneville is still the "in" bike with the local drive-in crowd. They are the most commonly seen and most sought after pieces of merchandise by teenagers, which certainly indicates the



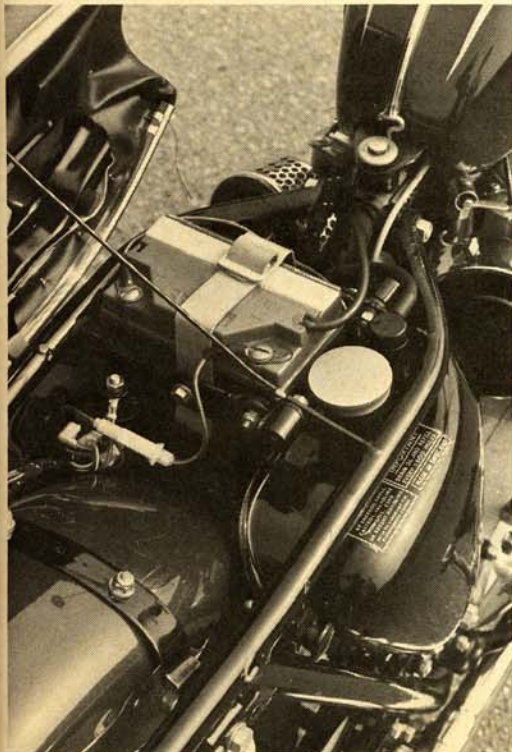


that are more than up to it. Both BSA and Triumph vertical twins now come equipped (as they have for the last couple of years) with a front binder that is really superb. Stopping from any speed is a smooth, steady experience, with no erratic behavior on the part of the motorcycle. This is what years of development can do for you. Many of the lessons learned at Daytona have been applied to the Bonneville. This is quite apparent.

One such change, born from the racing experiences over the past year, is the change in the primary breather. What this means, in plain English, is that the possibility of excess oil dripping out of the bottom is being minimized. True, the engine is still not absolutely oil-tight. There would be a couple of oil spots on the floor when left over night. Interestingly enough, it was brought to our attention that Triumph markets a device

***The powerplant of the new T120R is a robust 40 inch engine mated to a beefy four speed gear box. You'll notice the high degree of finish on engine cases and chrome work.***

***Comfort wise the Bonneville is above average. Handlebar, seat, and footpeg placement are good. Triumph has been building these high speed tourers for a long time, and it shows.***

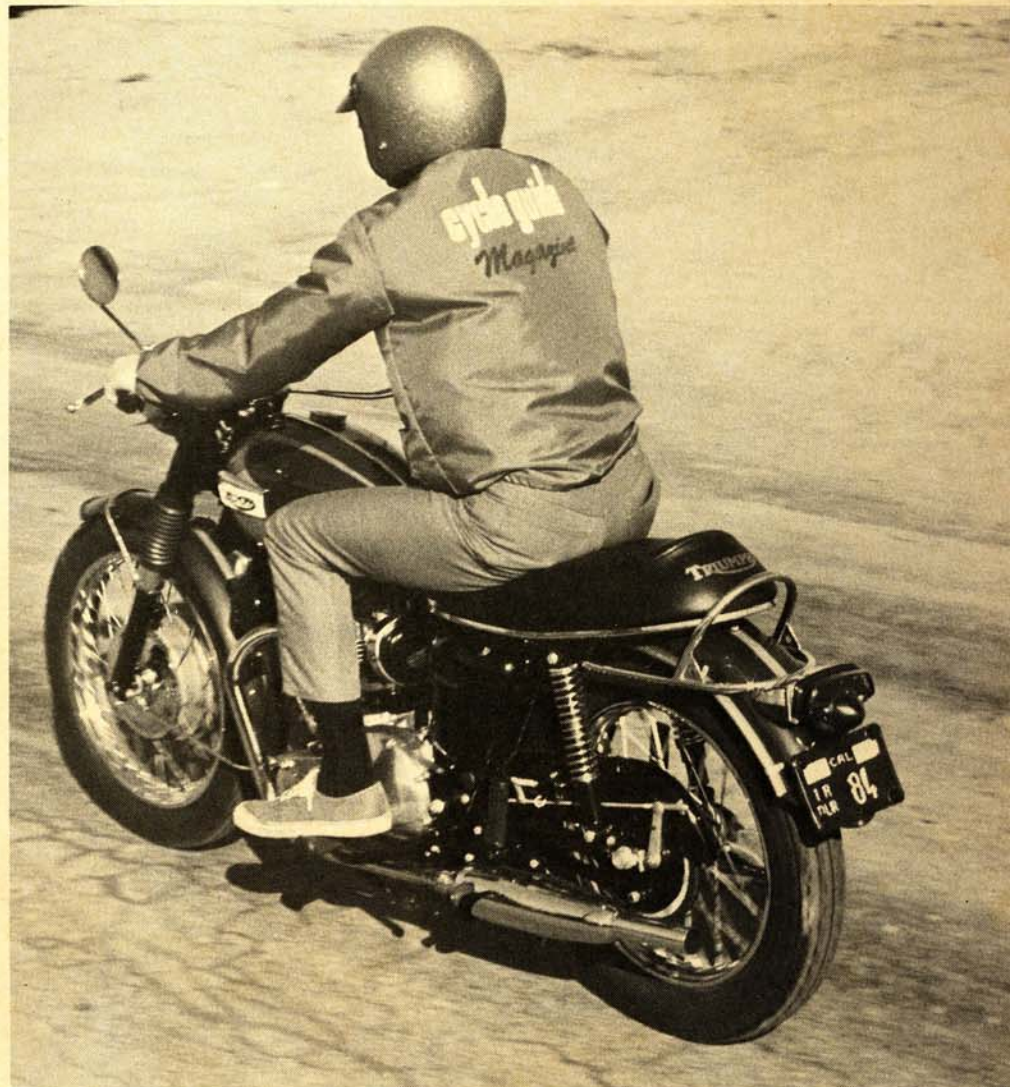


***Upon lifting the saddle you'll be confronted with most of the electrics in one neat package. The huge battery handles the lighting and ignition needs nicely.***

younger crowd's enthusiasm for the vertical twin from Meridian.

This form of loyalty is not unwarranted because it gives the rider everything he asks for in spades — power, looks, handling, and brakes are all there in abundance.

Speaking of brakes, anything that has the velocity potential that the Bonneville does, should be able to stop. The T100R comes equipped with a pair of binders





to be clamped onto the bottom of the frame that has some absorbent material to collect this oil. It is an extremely worthwhile accessory and may be purchased from your Triumph dealer for a few dollars.

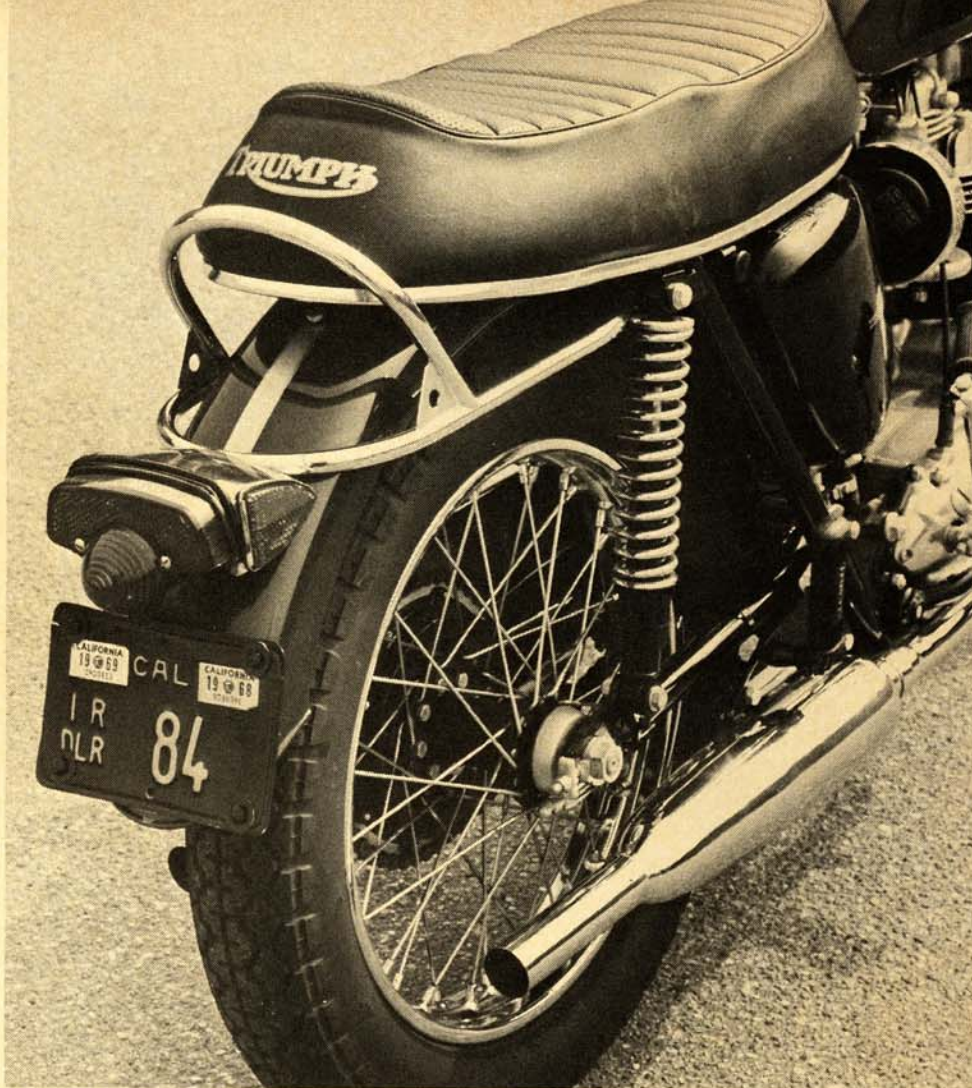
Besides just the power plant, the handling also gets better every year. Actually the handling is good enough that we found it no problem whatsoever to ground either side of the machine when cornering hard. The ability to do this without striking fear into the heart of the rider is certainly a credit to the Triumph engineering department and their diligence in upgrading the product from year to year.

Between the Girling shocks in the rear and a superb suspension up front, the rider soon becomes quite spoiled, and it isn't until you get on something else that you really discover just how good the handling of this motorcycle can be.

The Bonneville has a great deal of personality, much more so in fact than a number of motorcycles of equal displacement and size. This is one of those things that kind of grows on you. The more you ride it, the more you like it. Certainly there are more advanced designs now being marketed, but for sheer feel it's very difficult to find anything better than the Bonneville. This feel is what endears itself to the owner, and this is why you find so many riders of Triumph motorcycles vehemently defending their mounts against riders of more recent manufacture.

We were informed that the new 1970 Bonneville has had the rear suspension improved. Where this improvement lies, we cannot determine, since it feels very much like last year's machine. There is one change, that they did make, and the adjustments on the shocks are now protected with an external sleeve. Another change we found quite by accident were the new improved horns. They really let people know you're coming, and this gives you a great deal more peace of mind when zipping along in traffic. Like the mechanical improvements, the overall finish improves every year, and the new 1970 model is no different. The exterior finish is impeccable. The brightly polished aluminum cases, glistening two-tone paint, and beautifully executed dual saddle, and flawless chrome, all make up a beautiful package that's truly hard to resist. A number of things have been done to give the motorcycle a rather sporty look. External fender stays, exposed shock springs on the rear, and the extremely tidy overall appearance presents a very fresh look to the whole motorcycle.

While Triumph has been quite diligent in trying to upgrade their product, there are still a few things that haven't changed. Like the clutch and transmission. The gearbox still crunches when



***A large portion of the high speed handling characteristics come from the rear suspension system. Girling shocks dampen the rear portion of the chassis.***

you go into low gear at a dead stop. Perhaps the plates are not fully disengaging in the clutch, or perhaps the shifting dogs are giving trouble in the transmission. Whatever the case, the gearbox still grinds. Once you're under way, however, this no longer is a problem. It's no big thing, but it is annoying.

Another thing that has not changed is the mechanical noise. This, however, is not something we object to. It's a nice kind of noise and lets you know that things are working. It's not a rattling type of noise, but merely a sound of machinery doing its job.

Triumph now has a balance tube between the exhaust pipes and intake tracts to help smooth out lower speed performance, and a quick tug on the throttle does not produce a staggering coughing condition from the engine due to inadequate carburetion. We did notice a slight hesitation. However, due to the very nature of the concentric carburetor (being a slide type and is about as good as you're going to get). We can only expect so much.

There is a very robust battery found under the seat that provides power for the coil, ignition system, plus the lighting. We were quite surprised at the actual size of this battery, and should the power replenishing device fail, the engine should continue to tick over for many miles, so the rider will not find himself stranded out in the middle of nowhere with a dead battery.

The 12 volt alternator puts out a full 120 watts, which under even the most abnormal conditions should be more than sufficient. The battery, by the way, is a 12 volt 8 amps per hour unit. Because of the engine's very wide power range, we found the gearbox ratios ideal. Actually, most of the things about the bike were ideal. This is what comes from this one design being around for a long time. A lot of the new motorcycles can boast of many things: overhead cams, over square engine, bags of power (the Triumph, by the way, has over 50 which most people will find more than enough), swoopy styling, and a number of new gadgets. Styling-wise, we liked the Bonneville very much. It's a bit on the garish side, but in a pleasant way, if you can imagine that. It is one of those motorcycles that is very difficult to fault, and the more time you spend with it, the more enamored you become with this 650 vertical twin. True, it still leaks

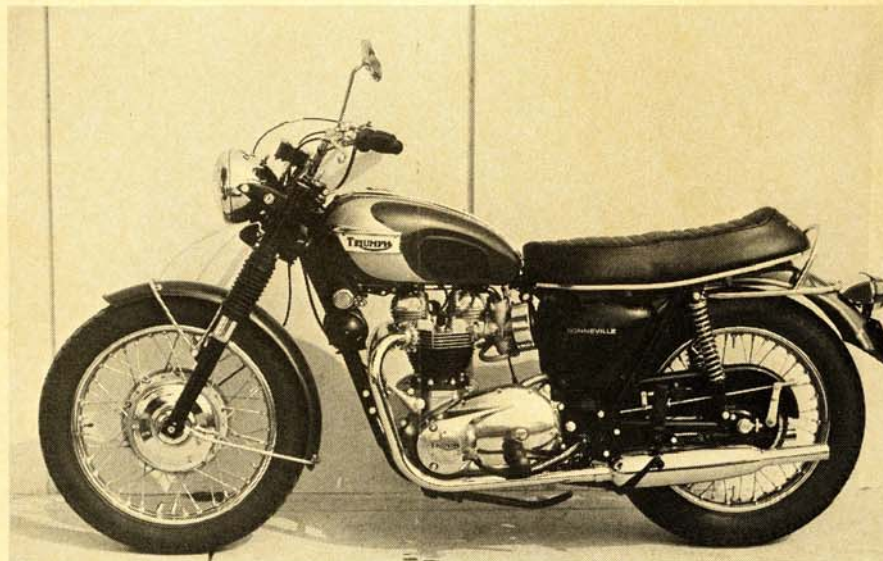
**CYCLE GUIDE**



oil on the floor, and the engine noise level is definitely higher than some of the others, and then, too, it is definitely not as sophisticated as some of the latest multi cylinder jobs. But after riding the motorcycle for a few days you will suddenly find yourself saying, who cares. You learn to put up with the oil on the floor (unless you buy one of those new gadgets and stick it on the bottom

of the frame). You learn to put up with the engine noise, and suddenly all those new gadgets and features the other machines are shouting about have become not very important any more. Why? Very simple friend. Because the Triumph T120R Bonneville does what it was designed to do, in a very gratifying manner that leaves the rider with a feeling of satisfaction and enthusiasm.

A long ride on a T120R will not leave you tired. It leaves you exhilarated. That's a big difference. We liked the Bonneville very much, and it is our opinion that although new and more advanced thinking is being introduced daily, there is a lot to be said for improving the breed, and the Triumph Bonneville is an excellent example of just what this term means. ●



## TRIUMPH T120 BONNIEVILLE

### ENGINE

Type	vertical twin cylinder ohv 4-cycle
Bore and stroke	71 x 82mm
Displacement	649cc
Compression ratio	9.0:1
Max. horsepower	52 bhp at 6,500 rpm
Ignition	alternator/battery
Carburetion	twin 30 mm Amal Concentrics
Lubrication	dry sump

### DIMENSIONS

Length	84 inches
Wheelbase	55 inches
Ground clearance	5 inches
Dry weight	365 lbs.

### WHEELS AND BRAKES

Front tire size	3.25 x 19"
Front brake type	internal expanding-double leading shoe
Rear tire size	3:50 x 19"
Rear brake type	internal expanding

### TRANSMISSION

Type	constant mesh 4-speed
Clutch	wet multi-plate
Internal gear ratios	1st 2.44:1, 2nd 1.69:1, 3rd 1.24:1, 4th 1.00:1
Final ratio	4.84:1
Countershaft sprocket	19
Rear wheel sprocket	46

### PERFORMANCE

Indicated highest one-way speed	115 mph
Acceleration 0-60	5.1 sec.
Braking distance 30-0	33 feet

### GENERAL

Air filtration	cloth/metal gauze
Battery type	12V 8AH

### CAPACITIES

Fuel tank	2.5gal.
Oil tank	7.25 pts.
Gear box	500cc

### FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Front suspension	telescopic-double dampening
Rear suspension	adjustable shocks
Frame type	tubular-single loop
Steering damper type	friction

### COLORS — Red

**PRICE AS TESTED — \$1440 FOB West Coast**

### DISTRIBUTORS:

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