

CYCLE GUIDE

TEST ●  
REPORT



# ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE

***The performance for such a small package is outstanding, and the price is right.***

In late 1968, Kawasaki introduced their new 90cc rotary valve single cylinder machine on the U. S. market. At the time, it was an almost revolutionary bike because the performance was so good for the displacement, and the price was so low; \$300 for the

street version. A 100cc ten-speed trail bike and a 100cc scrambler followed, and both were snapped up by eager buyers across the country. Now Kawasaki has added a new 100cc five-speed street/trail version to their line for 1972. The model is designated





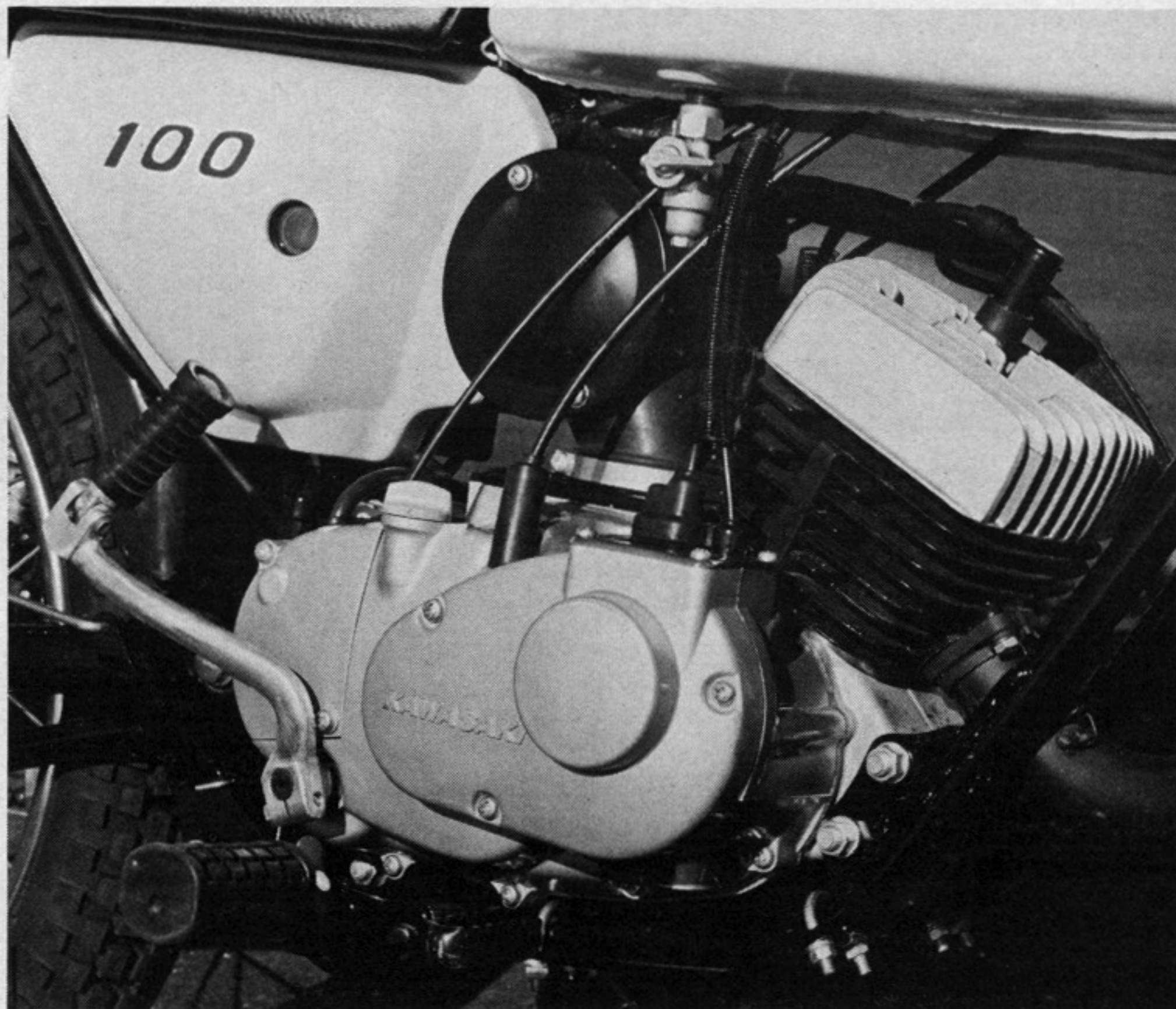
***The speedometer is a bit optimistic. Top speed is around 65-plus. The ignition key and idiot light panel location are the best.***

the G5, and it's a little sweetheart.

The front wheel is an 18 inch steel rim mounting a 2.75x18 trials universal tread tire. 36 stainless steel spokes mount the rim to a small diameter aluminum alloy brake hub that is light and strong. The single leading shoe front brake is plenty adequate for hauling the light weight bike to a stop. The Ceriani type forks are not by any means competition performance items, but they work well enough for street and trail. While the travel is somewhat limited, the spring rate is good but the damping is poor. The forks top repeatedly over rough terrain. The seals don't leak a drop of oil. The high mounted front fender is made of light, flexible plastic for durable use when bashing and crashing.

The small headlight gives brilliant illumination at night, with the ignition key mounted just above it doing double duty as the on/off headlight switch. No tachometer is provided on the G5, and none is needed. The speedometer is mounted above the headlight, and alongside is the ignition key with a small panel of idiot lights to indicate transmission neutral, headlight high beam and turn signal flasher. Turn signals are not standard equipment on the G5, but are optional equipment.

The handlebars have a neat shape, although they're a trifle narrow, 31½ inches wide with a 5 inch rise. The hand grips are Kawasaki's familiar fluted, serrated surface rubber items that wear on the hands too much. They should be replaced with smoother grips. On the right handlebar is an on/off kill switch to shut off the engine in case of emergency, while the choke is cleverly hidden



***The rotary valve engine puts out a lot of power for its size. The oil tank contains lubricant for the automatic oil injection system.***

under the left grip where you have to hunt for it the first time.

The slimline gas tank is a little beauty and it holds 2.1 gallons. You can ride all day on one tank, well over 100 miles. The saddle has a neat motocross shape that is very comfortable, and it sits only 30 inches above the ground. The short plastic rear fender sticks straight out horizontally, instead of curving down with the contour of the tire. A sanitary looking taillight and license plate bracket are attached.

The double cradle frame is made of steel, with good quality welds and a finish of black paint. The swing arm is suspended with a pair of five way adjustable shocks that give adequate service in springing, but have poor damping. The rear wheel is also an 18 inch steel item mounting a 3.00x18 trials universal tire. The rear brake hub is small in diameter, but big in stopping power.

The rotary valve single cylinder engine is a slightly undersquare configuration, with a bore and stroke of 1.95 by 2.04 inches for a total displacement of 99cc. The five-speed wide ratio gearbox is well suited to the engine's power band which is fairly wide for such a small dis-



***The 3.00x18 trials universal tire and lightweight brake hub are just right for this little bike. Shocks have only mediocre damping.***

placement mill, but the neutral position is on the bottom with all gears up. This can be an annoying and even dangerous feature when the rider downshifts unintentionally into neu-





***Despite a high ground clearance for the frame, the bike has a low profile and low seating position, 30 inches above the ground.***

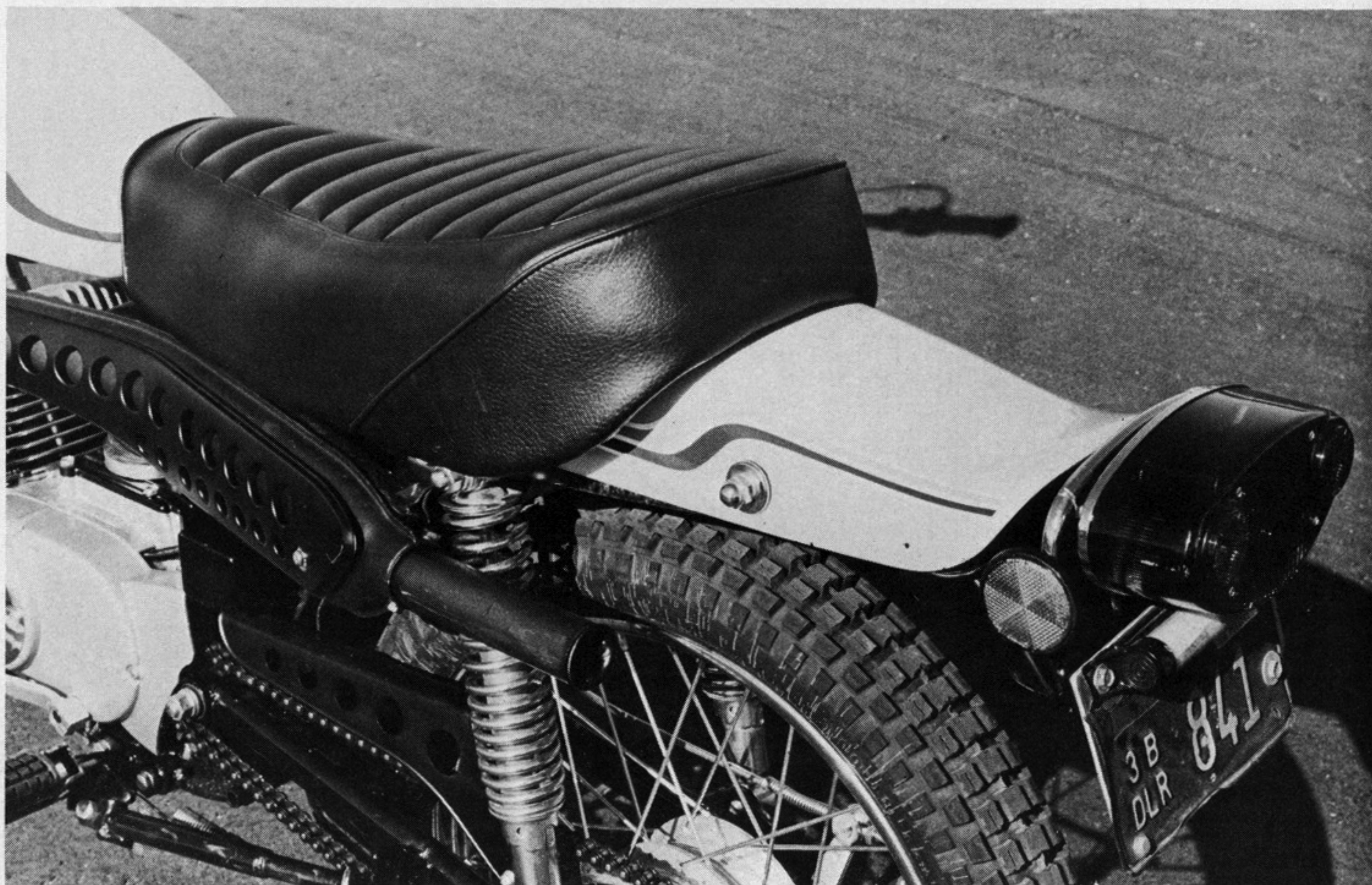
***The business end of the Kawasaki 100 is well designed for rider control. Note the rubber dust covers on the control lever pivots.***



tral while banging along. The transmission should be redesigned to have neutral between first and second. The exhaust pipe is shaped like an expansion chamber and finished flat black, very attractive and reasonably quiet.

Starting the Kawasaki G5 requires little effort, but it is not exceptionally quick. You must be sure both the ignition switch and kill switch are on. With the gas on, press the choke lever with your thumb and kick the starter through. The engine fires briefly, but if you try to open the throttle, it dies. If you don't open the throttle, it also dies. So starting when cold is a series of short power spurts from the engine until it gets warm enough to allow the





**The short plastic rear fender has a flowing horizontal design that Kawasaki calls "Metisse" styling, after the Rickman products.**



**The forks have only limited travel, but deliver good suspension for a trail bike. The front brake hub houses the speedo drive.**

throttle to be opened and take off. However, warmup is rapid and the kicking is effortless. The G5 has primary kick starting which means it can be started in any gear as long as the clutch is disengaged.

The gearing is just about ideal for street riding, which means it's rather tall. One glance at the tiny rear sprocket confirms this. With the wide ratio transmission and the strong pulling power from the little engine, the G5 is a surprisingly rapid road touring machine. The indicated top speed in fifth gear is a hair over 65 mph, and it will cruise all day at 60. The gas consumption is so modest it's almost ridiculous. This is really economical transportation.

When we picked up the G5 from Kawasaki Motors in Santa Ana, it had just a few miles on the odometer; just enough for the mechanics to check the tuning. Before subjecting the little engine to any demanding off road work, we felt obliged to put at least 150 miles on the bike on the road. It turned out to be a most pleasant experience. The sunny winter mornings on southern California roads are not at all congested, provided you stay off the freeways. Since the G5 is not freeway legal, this posed no problem. We found that the coast highway and a lot of winding roads through the coastal hills are just made for this kind of putting along. The average speed was 50 mph or less, so the little bike was not getting in anybody's way. The fresh, clear salt air and the comfortable purring of the engine have a way of clearing your

head and giving you a fresh outlook. A mid-morning stop at an almost deserted out-of-the-way coffee shop is a pleasant change from the usual lunch hour crush so common in most eateries. We enjoyed this little tour so much we repeated it a few more times in the next three weeks, only varying the route.

Off the road, the G5 is a strong performer for its size, although the gearing is a bit too high for demanding off road terrain. About four more teeth on the rear sprocket would add considerably to the bike's pulling power, especially on hills, without detracting too much from its cruising speed. The machine feels very light and agile, inviting the rider to fling it around with reckless abandon. And despite the fact that it's not a competition machine, the handling is good enough that you seldom find yourself in trouble. With a ground clearance of almost ten inches, the frame cradle could easily be lowered two inches without compromising the off road mobility too much. Then if the extremely short 49-inch wheelbase were stretched to 52 inches, the combination of lower center of gravity and more directional stability, along with the low seating position of the rider would make this an outstanding handling package. Another recommended improvement would be the foot pegs.



They bent badly after a couple of jumps.

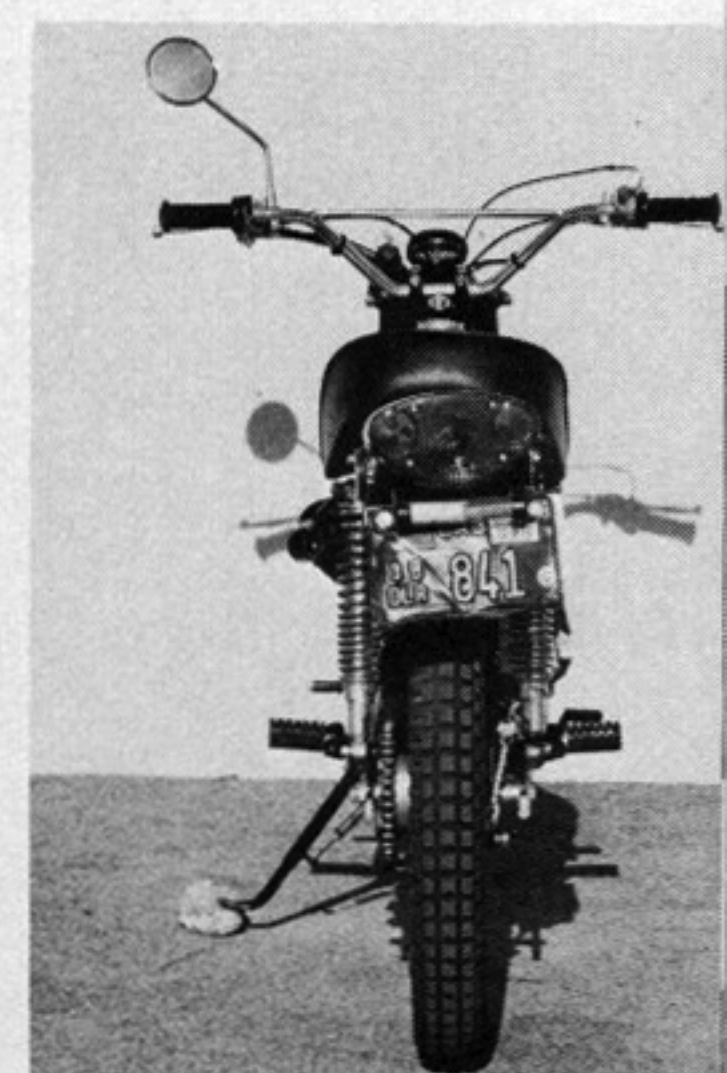
But even as it is, it's a blast to fling it around across the rough. Even with the tall gearing, quite steep hills can be mastered provided enough running room is available at the bottom to get up some speed on the approach. And the G5 is so light that if you get in trouble and stall it, you never lose control of the machine. It's easy to wrestle it around so you can take off in another direction that the engine can handle.

One of the most pleasant parts of

the test occurred on a very short TT course at Saddleback Park on a Sunday afternoon. There was a variety of machinery present, including a number of 400cc competition bikes. There was nothing smaller than a 125, except for our G5, and no other bike there had lights on it. While every machine had us in power, we could gain on anything on the track in the turns. Riders on bigger bikes would pull off the course after we had passed them on an inside or outside line in a corner, only to be repassed on the straight, and we would compare

notes. They all agreed it was the quickest bike on the course in the turns.

But the G5 is still not really a racer, although it could probably be made into one. In standard form, it's a very versatile little bike with many good points and not too many shortcomings. It's attractive and astoundingly economical. It sells for a very modest price considering what you get, and it carries one of the best warranties in the industry. All in all, the little Kawasaki is as good a value as we've seen in its class.—*Swede Carlson*



## KAWASAKI G5

### ENGINE

Type..... single cylinder two stroke  
Bore and stroke ..... 1.95x2.04 in.  
Displacement ..... 99cc  
Compression Ratio ..... 7 to 1  
Ignition..... magneto  
Carburetion ..... Rotary valve induction  
Lubrication ..... automatic oil injection

### DIMENSIONS

Length ..... 76.5 in.  
Seat height..... 30 in.  
Wheelbase ..... 49 in.  
Ground Clearance..... 9.5 in.  
Dry weight..... 191 lbs.

### WHEELS AND BRAKES

Front tire size..... 2.75x18 in.  
Front brake type ..... single leading shoe  
internal expanding  
Rear tire size ..... 3.00x18 in.  
Rear brake type ..... single leading shoe  
internal expanding

### TRANSMISSION

Type..... constant mesh five-speed  
Clutch..... wet multi-disc

### PERFORMANCE

Indicated highest one-way speed..... 66 mph

### GENERAL

Air Filtration..... washable foam element

### CAPACITIES

Fuel tank ..... 2.1 gal.  
Oil tank ..... 1.3 qt.

### FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Front suspension .... hydraulic telescopic forks  
Rear suspension..... shock absorbers  
Frame type ..... double cradle

### COLORS

Yellow with trim

### PRICE AS TESTED

\$466.00

### DISTRIBUTOR

Kawasaki Motors  
Santa Ana, CA 92705