



**FUN IS THE NAME OF THE GAME IN
MOTORCYCLING, AND THIS LITTLE
TRAIL BIKE DELIVERS A LARGE PORTION**

Kawasaki

100 cc G5

Road Test





The little 100cc Kawasaki is surprisingly peppy for its size, despite high gearing for off-road riding. The suspension is limited in efficiency, but predictable and controllable, so no nasty surprises crop up just when you're beginning to enjoy yourself. The plastic rear fender and tail light combination is one of the nicest designs around, sleek looking and out of the way of the rider's boot when mounting. The rotary valve induction system contributes to better torque at lower rpm, although a 100cc hardly qualifies as a stump-pulling tractor.



■ The Japanese manufacturers have come to dominate the U.S. market in the sale of dual-purpose street/trail motorcycles. And this domination is especially evident in the smaller-displacement bikes, the 100cc and 125cc machines. The other foreign manufacturers simply cannot match the Japanese volume of production, which is of course the secret of their competitive pricing structure. They can afford to settle for a smaller dollar volume of profit on each unit because they sell more units. The result has become a bonanza for the American small-bore trail bike enthusiast, who enjoys a selection of models that was unheard of just a few years ago. One of the outstanding examples of this bonanza is the 1972 Kawasaki G5 100cc trail bike.

In the first place, it's an attractive machine with a

bright banana yellow finish complemented with two-tone striping on the sides of the gas tank and the rear fender. The eye appeal of the little trail bike is considerable; it has a look of solid quality throughout that makes the modest price almost amazing. While the Kawasaki is not a big bike by any means, it doesn't give any impression of being a fragile toy only suited for the games of small children. This is a motorcycle, amply capable of transporting a man through a variety of on- and off-road country. The finish of the machine is downright painstaking, with no rough or cobby details anywhere that the eye can see. Every surface is either painted or polished or chrome-plated for optimum appearance as well as protection from the elements a motorcycle is routinely subjected to.

The front wheel is a bright polished steel rim 18 inches in diameter and laced to the small aluminum alloy hub with 36 stainless steel spokes. The wheel mounts a 2.75 x 18 block tread pattern trials universal tire, the almost universal preference for both on- and off-road riding. While a 2.75 cross-section is not very big, it's adequate for this light little bike. The brake hub is small and light, but it is more than adequate to do the necessary job. The speedometer gear drive is housed in the front brake hub assembly for more accurate readings due to less tire slippage because no power is being applied to the front wheel.

The forks are of Kawasaki's own manufacture, with chromed steel stanchion tubes and polished steel lower slider legs. The total travel is only about five inches, but it's adequate for street and trail usage. The springing and return damping are both good, with high-quality seals that keep any oil from oozing out of the interior. The forks seem fairly rigid, so a fork brace is probably not required unless the rider intends to do an excessive amount of hard bashing over very rough terrain. The lightweight yellow plastic front fender is mounted to the lower fork triple clamp, allowing ample clearance between it and the tire for any large size crud to pass through.

The small headlight and instrument package is a cluster mounted between the triple clamps. Like most Japanese electrics, the light is very bright for good night vision. The speedometer is positioned above the light alongside the ignition key switch and a small panel with three indicator lights. This is our favorite location for the ignition switch, and the lights indicate gearbox neutral, headlight high beam and turn signal flasher. This last feature is a surplus on the standard machine, as the turn signals are not standard equipment on the G5. But they can be purchased as optional items from your Kawasaki dealer if you prefer, although we think they're unnecessary on a small trail machine.

The handlebars are the motocross type with a crossbar brace. They're very comfortable, with a 32-inch width and a 5-inch rise. The control levers are malleable aluminum that can be straightened after a crash without snapping them off. A kill button is located on the right handlebar where the rider's thumb can flick it off in an emergency. It is also necessary to be sure it's on when you proceed to start the engine, or else you will kick for naught.

The carburetor choke lever is located under the left

KAWASAKI 100cc G5

hand grip, very hard to find unless you know where to look. It's a small item operated by the thumb, but the engine absolutely will not start without it when cold, so you have to know about it.

The narrow gas tank looks small and trim, a really groovy shape, but it still holds slightly more than two gallons, and two gallons will take you for 100 to 150 miles. You don't have to worry about refilling very often with the Kawasaki G5. The gas cap needs a better seal, as the fuel will slosh out over the top of the tank when it's full off the road. The engine utilizes Kawasaki's Superlube automatic oil injection, sparing the rider the bother and mess of mixing the gas and oil required for two-stroke consumption. The oil is contained in a separate tank just under the saddle on the right side. It holds 1.3 qts. of lubricant, which should suffice for several hundred miles of running, and a small plastic window on the tank allows the rider to visually check the oil level. The saddle is tapered, well padded and comfortable, and it sits close to the ground. The rider really feels like he's sitting down *into* this machine. The plastic rear fender projects horizontally back from under the saddle in what Kawasaki refers to as Metisse styling, after the famed Rickman fiberglass designs. The fender mounts a large tail light that is situated low on the bike where the rider's leg will never hit it while mounting the machine.

The steel frame is Kawasaki's well tested double cradle design, with smooth welds at the joints and a black paint finish. The foot pegs are spring loaded and fold back and up at a 45 degree angle. The rubber covers have a broad, corrugated upper surface that should give good traction for the rider's boot even in wet or muddy going. A small steel bash plate is standard equipment on the G5 to protect the engine cases against rocks and logs and the like. The swing arm is suspended with five-way adjustable shocks that have good spring rate, but the damping is mediocre. This is the most common failing among lower priced Japanese trail bikes. The rear wheel is also an 18-inch steel rim with a 3.00x18 trials universal tire. While the size is not bad, a 3.25x18 would give better traction in soft terrain. We would recommend the change along with a larger rear wheel sprocket for lower gearing off the road.

The little single cylinder engine utilizes Kawasaki's rotary valve induction system, which provides better crankcase sealing while the piston is on its downstroke. This causes more fuel/air mixture to be forced through the transfer ports into the combustion chamber, instead of back into the carburetor. The result is more torque, especially at lower rpm's where the smaller-displacement engines need it most. The exhaust pipe resembles an expansion chamber, but it has a muffler and a forestry approved spark arrestor. The five-speed transmission is a wide-ratio unit for a broad speed range. It works superbly, but the worst fault is that neutral is at the bottom position, with all other gears shifting up. When the rider is downshifting, he can easily shift unintentionally into neutral unless he carefully and continually counts gears, which is a nuisance. Kawasaki should have long since redesigned

the gearbox to place neutral between first and second gears. Shifting unexpectedly into neutral can be hairy, especially in rough going off the road.

The little 100cc Kawasaki starts effortlessly, even when cold. Just push the choke lever with your thumb, be sure both the ignition key and kill switch are on, turn on the gas and kick. The effort required to kick the little engine through is nothing a ten-year-old boy could not manage. The engine fires on first kick every time, and by keeping the choke on it idles rapidly until warm enough to take off, which doesn't take long. Shift up into first gear and you're under way.

The Kawasaki G5 is a pleasant little touring machine on the road for shorter distances at moderate speeds. It's extremely agile and maneuverable, with strong brakes that no automobile could ever match. It will cruise all day at an indicated 60 mph, which really means that it's geared too high for off-road work. With another few teeth on the rear sprocket, perhaps the easy cruising speed would be reduced to 50, but that should be adequate for this type of bike. The gain in pulling power off the road would be worth the difference. However, if you are looking for super-economical transportation for commuting to work or school and have no intention of ever riding off the road, the G5 might be your cup of tea with the standard gearing. The little engine is smooth and almost vibrationless, and the bike is so easy to control that fatigue on the road is almost nonexistent, even after a couple of hours of riding. The gas consumption is very low; the 100cc Kawasaki must get 60 or 70 miles per gallon. It was so low that we simply didn't bother to check it to see what the actual figure was. If you worry about gas consumption with this bike, then you can't afford the machine in the first place.

Despite the gearing being too tall, the G5 is still a pretty good off-road performer. It won't climb the steepest hills around, although it can handle some pretty steep ones if you can get a run at them. But across level off-road terrain, the little bike really hauls. While the handling is not of the motocross competition caliber, it is quite good for a production trail machine. Although the suspension units provide only reasonable absorption, the bike is so light and maneuverable the rider rarely feels on the edge of losing control. The wheelbase is extremely short, 49 inches. If the frame were stretched to, say, 53 inches, and the cradle dropped so the ground clearance were only 8 inches instead of almost 10, the handling of this scooter would be out of sight. With better forks, better shocks and some breathing on the engine, this could be a potent competition bike in its class. The potential is all there in the standard production package.

But even as it is, the G5 Kawasaki is a lot of motorcycle. It's difficult to convey the amount of fun you experience when riding it. It makes the novice rider feel he has suddenly acquired more skill and more confidence. It's a forgiving machine, light enough so the rider can muscle it out of some tough situations. The exhaust noise is not offensive, and the appearance is enough to turn on most real enthusiasts. While it's not perfect, what is? The Kawasaki G5 is a terrific buy, if you enjoy having fun on a motorcycle. ●



ENGINE

Type

Single-cylinder two-stroke

Bore and stroke

1.95 x 2.04 inches

Displacement

99 cc (6.04 cu. in.)

Compression Ratio

7:1

Ignition

Magneto

Carburetion

Rotary valve induction

Lubrication

Oil injection

DIMENSIONS

Length

76.5 inches

Seat height

30 inches

Wheelbase

49 inches

Ground Clearance

9.5 inches

Dry weight

191 pounds

WHEELS AND BRAKES

Front tire size

2.75 x 18

Front brake type

Drum

Rear tire size

3.00 x 18

Rear brake type

Drum

TRANSMISSION

Type

Five-speed constant mesh

Clutch

Oil bath multi-disc

PERFORMANCE

Indicated highest one-way speed

65 mph

GENERAL

Air Filtration

Oiled foam air cleaner

CAPACITIES

Fuel tank

2.1 gallons

Oil tank

1.3 quarts

FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Front suspension

Telescopic forks

Rear suspension

Shock absorbers

Frame type

Double cradle

COLORS

canary yellow

PRICE AS TESTED

\$466.00

DISTRIBUTOR(S)

Kawasaki Motors

Santa Ana, Calif. 92705