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as you do a Bonnie, it doesn't take you into its embrace. You are the rider, it's the machine.

With the Birmingham bikes there is synergy that's missing in this relationship. You have to try a little harder with the Yamaha - exert a shade more leverage on the bars, a little more knee pressure on the tank.

I also encountered a slight loss of stability around the 80 to 90mph mark. When the speedo reached these levels (I didn't take it any faster) the front wheel lost focus and began to shimmer like a desert mirage. Adjustment of the factory-fitted steering damper had no effect. Martyn suggested the trouble might have been due to his recent reshodding of the machine with a new but perhaps defective front tyre. Or maybe it was down to my weight (not inconsiderable),

riding stance, road surface, the rear shocks being out of sorts or because there was an R in the month. Whatever, it appears to be an isolated incident rather than a design flaw.

Brakes were upgraded with the introduction of a front disc on the XS-2. Apparently it's a real stopper, far superior to the CB750 Honda's. The XS-1 makes do with 7.9-inch TLS with a 7-inch shoe at the rear. From 80mph, a firm handful killed speed quickly and efficiently. I was impressed.

Indeed I found very little to criticise. The XS650 is a good all-rounder with strong character. Surely classic riders are not going to go in for the fast and furious boy-racer type heroics that would make its handling a serious drawback to ownership?

Now I can't wait to get my hands on our Kenny Roberts flat-tracker. The big-bore 744cc engine, vastly superior Shell race frame, latter day

brakes and more sophisticated suspension should make it a cracker. Come on Curtis get your finger out and get it built!

THE XS650 was finally axed to make way for the four-cylin-

der XJ650. Have you one of these shaft-drive sportsters we can test?

If so write, enclosing a picture if possible, to Classic and Motorcycle Mechanics, Test Bikes, The Old Bakery, 19 Market Hill, Rothwell, Northants NN14 6BW.

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: Aircooled parallel twin with 360-degree crank and sohc. Two valves per cylinder. Bore and stroke 75mm x 74mm. Capacity 653cc. Compression ratio 8.7:1. Carburation, twin BS38 Mikunis. Claimed maximum power 53 bhp at 7000rpm. Maximum torque 40.1 ft-lbs at 6000rpm. Wet sump: 3 litre capacity. Kick Start.

TRANSMISSION: Five-speed gearbox with wet multi-plate clutch. Primary drive by gear, final drive by chain.

ROLLING CHASSIS: Tubular steel duplex cradle with tubular steel swingarm, telescopic forks and twin rear shocks. Wheels, wire - 3.25 x 19 front, 4.00 x 19 rear. Brakes: 7.9 inch double leading shoe front, 7.1 inch single shoe rear.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES: Dry weight 409lbs (engine 135lbs), ground clearance 5.9 inches, overall length 85.4 inches, overall width 35.6 inches, wheelbase 55.5 inches. Fuel capacity 3 gallons.

U.S. imports fuel cult following

PETE Horn's 23-year-old XS-2 is the only one of the five bikes pictured right to have been originally registered in the UK. All the others are American imports.

Increased demand for the 650s has led to the growth of a small but buoyant trade in machines from the States.

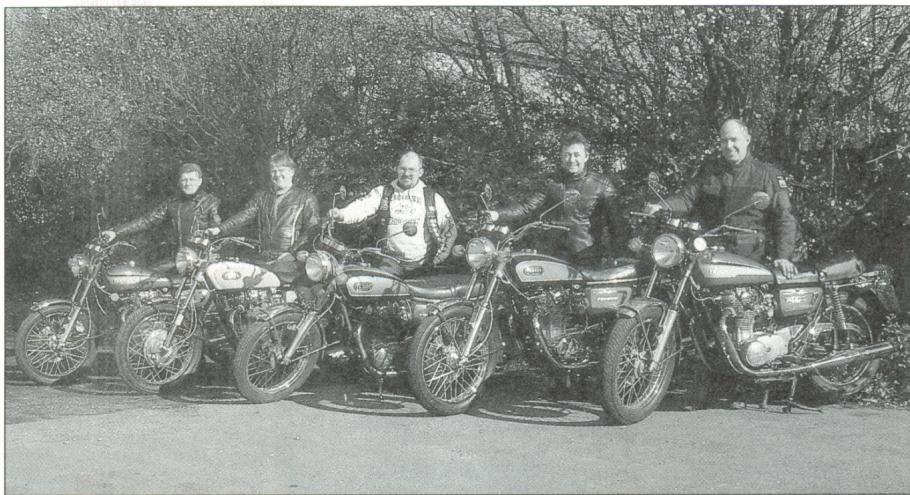
Both police motorcyclist Mick Taylor and retired fireman Tony Coleman run TX versions produced exclusively for the North American market. The coding is a little confusing as these machine have nothing in common with the twin cam 750s and 500s that carry the same prefix.

Engines and frames are identical to their XS European counterparts. Differences include a revised front wheel with improved disc mounting, and a cosmetic revamp of the tank, seat and mudguards.

Mick bought his 1973 model with 15,000 miles on the clock a year ago from M S Weatherley's of Norfolk. It was a £1000 bargain even taking into account the £450 he has since spent on parts and rechroming. The one big headache is that the silencers need replacing. Originals fetch up to £540 a pair and are in desperately short supply. Mick's hoping a dealer contact in Minnesota will come up trumps.

The 39-year-old enthusiast has owned hundreds of motorcycles over the years (he has a relative in the trade) and is not uncritical of the Yamaha.

"The suspension is harsh and it lacks the torque and character of a 750 Commando I once owned," he said. "A ZX-10 is my everyday motorcycle but I use the TX as a Summer plaything. I often get rid of bikes very quickly but this is one I will



Proud owners (l to r) Mick Taylor ('73 TX), Martyn Stephens ('71 XS-1B), Pete Horn ('73 XS-2), John Russell ('72 XS-2) and Tony Coleman ('71 TX).

be hanging on to for quite some time."

Tony, 42, has chalked up 6000 miles on the 1971 model he bought last year and is planning a full cosmetic restoration. It had covered just 12,000 miles and cost £1500.

"I think it's a better motorcycle now than when it first came out," he said. "I guess that has got a lot to do with modern rubber. There were lots of stories about their awkward handling when they were new. True, the frame is plasticine but the engine is massively over-engineered and its a very pleasant machine to ride at low speeds."

Unlike with some models, the influx of American immigrants has not sent prices plummeting. Indeed, they are on the increase.

The XS-1 and 2 are the most sought after. An example in good original condition bought from a dealer might set you

back between £2000 and £3000 while a minter could command £3500 or more.

Buyers can expect to pay between £2500 and £3000 for a late roadster and between £2000 and £2500 for a custom.

Those prices may seem rather high but cheaper examples are likely to feature after-market components rather than the factory McCoy and will appeal less to serious collectors.

The purchase of basket case 'bargains' in need of extensive restoration is not advised. Although most OE parts can be obtained there are some exceptions, particularly in the case of the early models. And remember the cost of those pipes!

Help in tracking down parts and the swap of technical information are high priorities with the XS653 Club of the UK. Pete says he has had a steady flow of calls since its launch was

announced in the March issue of *Mechanics*.

He has now taken on the job of chairman, and bullied his wife Billie into becoming secretary, but all posts will be up for grabs when an inaugural general meeting can be arranged. In the meantime Pete is spreading the word at rallies and shows and is hoping to establish close ties, with XS clubs in other countries, including Germany, Holland and America.

Membership is £12 a year. And don't worry if your bike is not standard. "Our doors are open to concours machines, rat-bikes and one-off specials, anything that began life as an XS650," said Pete.

For details call him (evenings 6pm-8pm) on 01843 293170 or write (including an SAE) to the XS653 Club of the UK, 59 Byron Avenue, Margate, Kent CT9 1TU.