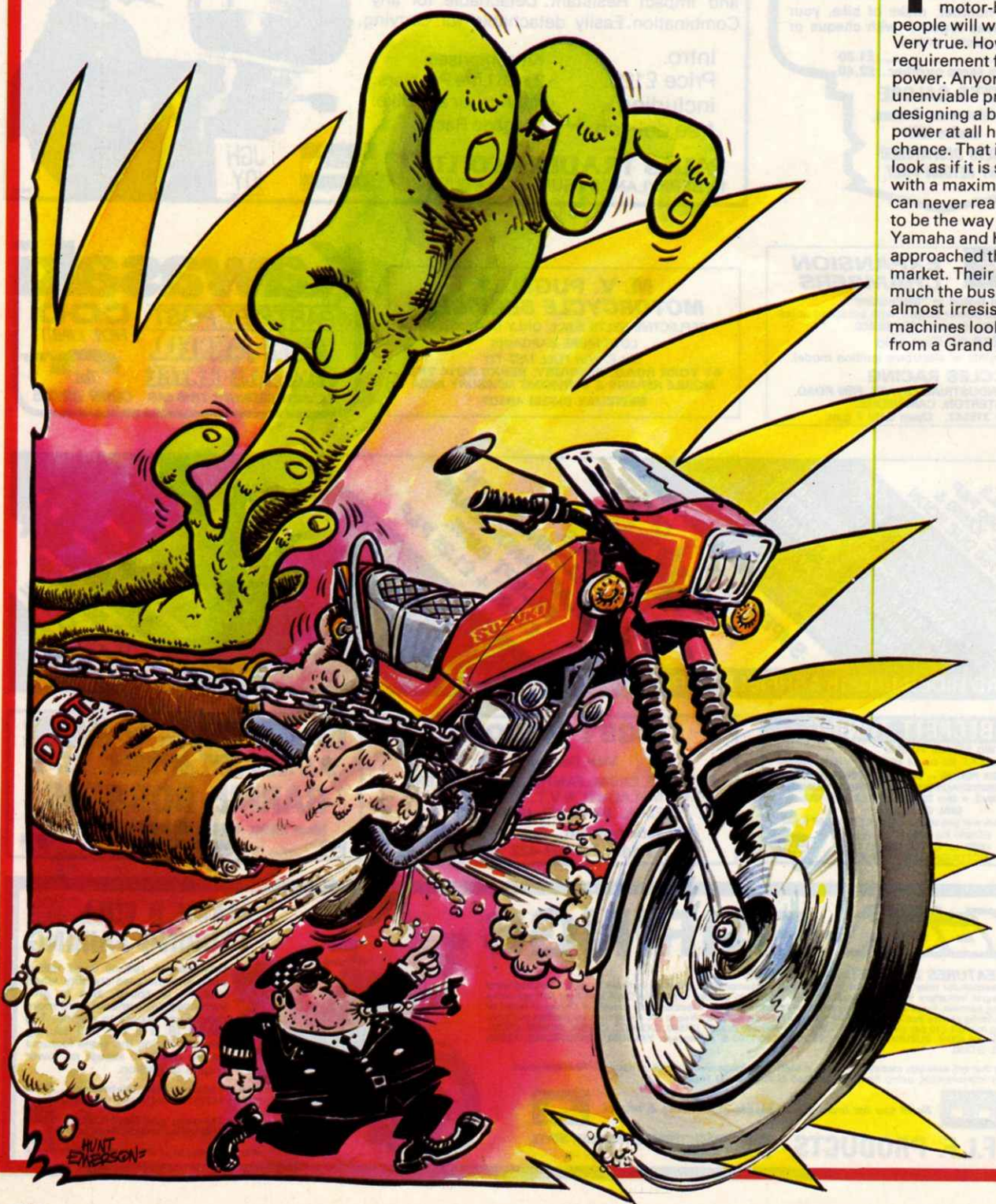


RESTRICTED

POTENTIAL

Suzuki's ZR50S would be great if . . .

There is an adage which goes . . . 'As long as motor-bikes are made people will want to race them'. Very true. However, a prime requirement for racing is power. Anyone faced with the unenviable prospect of designing a bike with next to no power at all has only one chance. That is to make the bike look as if it is something which, with a maximum legal 2.5 hp., it can never really be. That seems to be the way in which Honda, Yamaha and Kawasaki have approached the 50cc bike market. Their trail bikes look so much the business that they are almost irresistible and the road machines look like something from a Grand Prix circuit.





With the ZR50S Suzuki have somewhat gone their own way and all praise to them for so doing. The bike is an attractively styled, functional motorbike. Plain and simple, no particular frills and no fancy gizmos. The only sad thing is that the bike is restricted at all. In town the strangulation of the engine's power is quite bearable. Only when you need to change lanes or pull away from a halt is the lack of power a nuisance. At other times it's quite possible to filter in and out of the slower moving queues of cars and maintain a respectable average speed.

My first encounter with the ZR50S involved a 5 hour duration journey, from Crawley, where Heron Suzuki have their headquarters, to S. Loose Towers in Peterborough. As the bike is under 50cc it is not allowed on motorways. Still I doubt if many people would really want to risk being squashed by fast moving lorries which would be a real worry if a moped, and that's what the ZR50S is designated, were allowed to mix it with motorway lunatics.

Normally, a Crawley to Peterborough excursion would be a journey involving motorway riding. To comply with the Road Traffic Acts (and to avoid dying of boredom!) all sorts of diversionary back lane routes have to be explored. This in itself would have been quite pleasant if more than the regulation maximum 35mph had been available. Throughout the time I was associated with this bike I got the impression that within what came across as a choked and strangled machine there was a really good bike being held firmly in check. Occasionally if one were to catch the bike unawares, on say a short downhill approach to an island, then some 45+ mph could be seen on the speedo. No such luck on the flat though!

Riding through London was remarkably easy. The bike is very manoeuvrable and trickling along either side of long streams of slower moving or stationary traffic was easy and safe to accomplish. Easy because the bike is light to steer and safe because the combination of the front disc and rear drum brakes stop the bike swiftly and smoothly should the occasion arise. The operation of the gear lever is particularly praiseworthy. On similar capacity machines I've ridden it was easiest to change down whilst the bike was still on the move. That was the only way to ensure unhindered down changes. Not that stationary down shifting is that regular occurrence but as it is normally associated with an unscheduled halt, it is always less of an embarrassment if it can be accomplished without recourse to between shift outfeeding of the clutch lever. With the Suzuki a succession of downward pedal movements



could always be relied upon to select the lowest ratio.

Fuel economy is good; very good. There would be little excuse for it being any other way with such a restricted engine. At over 100mpg, the cost of petrol hardly enters any economy equation. Excessive exhaust smoke is not a problem either. Some mopeds tend to leave a trail of acrid blue smoke in their wake. Not so this one, only a slight trace of blue haze is apparent. Over the 550 miles of testing this bike, only half the 1.2 litres of two stroke oil, which is carried in the under-seat tank, was used. After covering 400 miles without any sign of the oil warning light operating I did begin to wonder if it was, in fact, functioning. A glance at the level in the tank soon revealed that my fears were unfounded.

For journeys of up to one and a half hours' duration the seat was quite comfortable. Anything more and it was essential to get off the bike and stretch aching muscles every so often.

Soon, very soon, after getting on a restricted bike the challenge to complete as much of the journey with the twistgrip firmly against its stop becomes a real one. Quite often the combination of a built-to-a-low-budget frame and tyres which would be better suited to a golf club trolley decide the maximum speed at which corners can be taken safely. The ZR50S is not such a bike. The machine can be flicked to the left or the right at full speed with complete confidence. The non-folding footrests can even be lightly grazed on the road.

No I'm not dreaming. With about 10hp instead of the 2.5

with which it is graced this bike would be a real flyer. In normal Suzuki fashion the indicators, high and low beam are all controlled from the same switch. The head light was just sufficient for safe night riding; only just. The indicators appeared to be visible to other road users but they lacked sufficient luminal intensity to be used with complete confidence for right turns across lanes of oncoming traffic. A confirmatory hand signal seemed to be essential to let the other people on the road know exactly where you were intending to go.

The bike is uncluttered so keeping it clean would not present much trouble, and the regular maintenance is only a quarter of an hour's work. Fork gaiters keep the stanchions free from dirt and with a disc at the front, only occasional pad checking together with weekly tyre inspection will be needed. The rear drum will need occasional cleaning and it appears from the test that the chain will need to be adjusted every 500 miles.

Apart from keeping the bike clean and the levels topped up, there will not be much more to do.

Full marks to Suzuki for not trying to create the illusion that the ZR50S is anything other than a small capacity bike, legal for sixteen-year-olds and attractive for short haul commuting.

Colin Taylor.

SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

max. rated speed 30mph
max. achieved speed 39mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION

average 96mpg
best 109mpg

ENGINE

Air-cooled 2-stroke single

TRANSMISSION 5 speed gearbox

ELECTRICS

6 volt, headlamp 25/25W

CAPABILITIES //

petrol — 7.5, oil — 1.2 litres

BRAKES

Front 220mm disc
Rear 110mm drum (sls)

TYRES

Front — 2.50 x 18
Rear — 2.75 x 18

SUSPENSION

Telescopic front
Swing arm rear

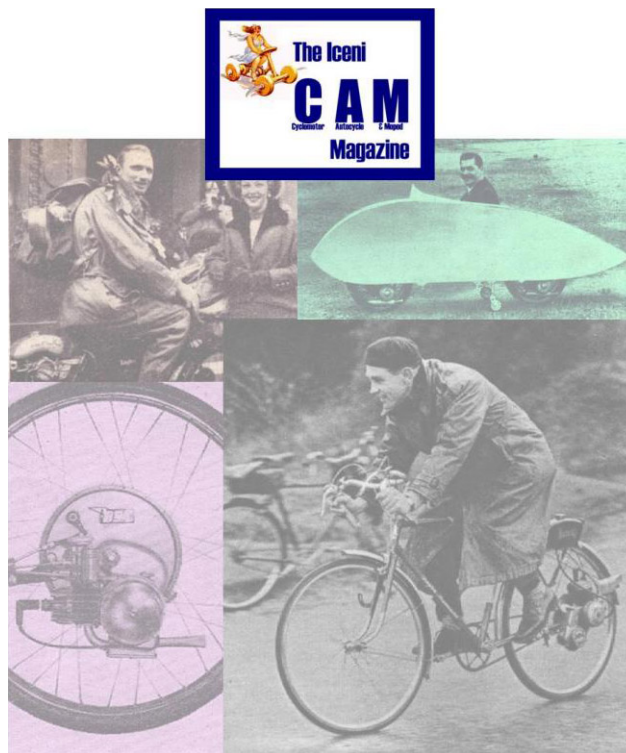
DIMENSIONS

Length.....2,000mm (78.7 in)
Width745mm (29 in)
Wheelbase.....1,240mm (48.8 in)
Weight82.0kg (181 lb)

PRICE: £499. WARRANTY: 12 months unlimited mileage.

IMPORTER: Heron Suzuki Ltd., Gatwick Road, Crawley, Sussex.

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