



1970 CYCLE GUIDE ENGINEERING AWARD

In trying to come up with a recipient for the CYCLE GUIDE Engineering Award this year, we were faced with a monumental task. It was necessary to sift through all of the information we had on all of the models introduced this year in order to accurately evaluate all of the bikes, not only those that we have road tested, but those that we haven't also. The weeding out process was very slow and laborious. The motorcycle manufacturers it seems, have spent a great deal of time, a lot of money, not to mention effort, in producing the finest products we have ever had on sale in this country for the past umpteen years.

Just to give you a rough idea of what we faced, it was necessary to consider 300 models now offered for sale and then establish a list of parameters that we deem necessary a motorcycle meet in order to qualify to be eligible to receive this award. In the first go around, over 50% of the machines were passed over. In the second go-around, an additional 20% were eliminated. As we got closer to the final 10%, it suddenly became painfully aware that what we thought would be a rigid set of requirements was not quite stringent enough. As a result of this, we had to re-evaluate our thinking and come up with even more exacting standards. After all of the results had been tabulated, and all of the information had gone through, the Ossa Pioneer emerged at the top of the list.

The Pioneer is in our opinion, a dark horse. As of this writing, it is less popular than the DT1 or the TS250. There are a number of factors responsible for this. Number one, the Ossa dealer network is not nearly as large. Number two, and what is probably the most important, not enough bike riders really know just how good a machine the Pioneer really is. Most on/off road type motorcycles are road oriented. The Pioneer isn't. While the bike may be legal enough to ride on the street, the knobby tires, front and rear, give you an indication as to its true character. While most on/off road bikes are designed for 50% to 75% use on the road, and 25% to 50% off the road, the Pioneer is not. The Pioneer is clearly designed for the fellow interested in riding off of the road (about 75%) with a minimum of pavement use (25%).

Over the past two years, the Pioneer has been improved to an astonishing degree. There are no more electrical troubles, and not only that but we discovered that very few Ossa dealers have a great request for replacement parts. This means that chassis longevity is no serious consid-

eration anymore. Ossa got off to a bad start in this country. They came in with a splash, had a number of problems, initially (they warranted all of the defective machinery at their own cost in an effort to set things right). But motorcyclists are a funny breed of cat. If they once have trouble with a given motorcycle, they seldom return to the same fold twice. This is unfortunate in the case of Ossa, because quietly and unobtrusively they have been making giant strides in both powerplant and chassis design, not to mention the reliability aspect. One thing we came to discover in both our own experience and in talking to other motorcycle riders, is that the Pioneer will take a fantastic flogging without any apparent malfunctions of any type.

While the 1971 model features a five-speed transmission and a few other goodies, our award goes to the 1970 four speed model. The five speed machine is basically the same item with another gear tacked on at the bottom of the gearbox, thereby giving the rider an extra low, low gear. The four speed model however, and five speed also, has an engine capable of producing a fantastically wide power range, thereby making it almost unnecessary for the rider to do much gear shifting. This is very unusual for a trail machine of this displacement.

The gearbox, clutch, and engine components are all designed with a very healthy safety margin, thereby precluding any possible problems, if the rider ever finds it necessary to over-stress any of the chassis components, and this of course includes the engine package.

Workmanship and finish are as good as any, and better than most. It would be difficult indeed to criticize the Pioneer when it comes to looks. There are a few things we feel that need changing. We aren't very wild about the seat, it's too narrow and not soft enough. At least, not for an enduro type motorcycle. For trials, it might be okay, but for a guy who has to pound along for mile after mile through rough and rugged country, the upholstery department could use more attention. The side stand we're not too enthusiastic about either, but these are the only two items that we can really fault the machine on.

Handling wise, the Pioneer is a joy. It goes where it's pointed, is soft riding, and absolutely predictable. It does exactly what it was designed to do without expecting a great deal of work on the part of the rider. In an effort to illustrate Ossa's philosophy on upgrading their product, mid-year they replaced the Telesco front suspension members with those of Betor manufacture. While the Telesco forks worked quite well, they had an annoying tendency to rupture the seals, and thereby empty all of the shock oil in a comparatively short period of time. The new Betor units are much stronger and do not leak. Instead of merely putting in a different seal, the factory felt it would be better to replace the whole unit for one better suited to the job, rather than merely settle for better fork seals. The whole motorcycle is constructed with this philosophy. This is why, in a couple of short years, Ossa has risen to the popularity it now enjoys, and we predict before 1971 is over these orange and black beauties will be even more popular than they are today. It would be easy to go on telling you all of the virtues we found in the Pioneer. This however, is unnecessary. If you're a true off-road rider, one ride will tell you far more than we ever could on these pages. Let it suffice to say, we feel the 1970 Ossa Pioneer is the most deserving motorcycle and as a result receives the 1970 CYCLE GUIDE Engineering Award.

Bob Brown