

# KAWASAKI KZ1000R

## From Street to Track and Back, the Eddie Lawson Replica Looks Like a Champion Superbike

■ Big, bright green motorcycles are about as hard to ignore as pink elephants. Especially if you happen to be Wes Cooley or Mike Baldwin or Roberto Pietri and that big, bright green motorcycle is Eddie Lawson's. But since Lawson won the AMA Superbike Championship last year on the greenest Kawasaki KZ1000 ever seen, more green Kawasakis have been appearing, first at racetracks around the country and now on the street.

The latest assault from the Green army is the KZ1000R, a street legal version of Lawson's Superbike. How much the 1000R resembles Eddie's bike depends on how deep one looks. On the surface there is that same eye-stunning green. The seat, cut low where the rider sits so Lawson has an easier time accelerating up to 180 mph or whatever his bike is geared for, is covered in the kind of dimpled black vinyl usually seen only on trucks or old Porsches. It looks businesslike, though Lawson's bike doesn't have this covering. A big, green gas tank has blue and white stripes on the sides, and a small badge in the middle of the tank proclaims that this is the Superbike Champion. A number 1 appears above Eddie Lawson's signature. Handlebars are low, narrow and painted black. A green GPz-style fairing encloses the rectangular headlight. Gold accent cast alloy wheels carry bigger Dunlop K300-series tires. A small oil cooler is mounted ahead of the engine, at the top of the frame downtubes. Carrying the racer replica theme further, there is a Kerker 4-into-1 exhaust on the 1000R, painted black just like the racing exhaust, but with a street legal baffle. Showa shocks designed to look like the Works Performance shocks of Eddie's bike are mounted on the swing arm, the gold-colored reservoirs riding on the back of the shock body.

Aside from those changes, the 1000R is identical to the standard KZ1000. Last



year Kawasaki revitalized the KZ1000 with a lighter, stronger, more powerful engine. Like all the big Kawasaki Fours before, it comes with a roller bearing crank, two valves per cylinder, a pair of overhead cams pushing inverted bucket-type followers with the adjustment shims on top of the buckets for easy adjustment. Bore and stroke are 69.4 by 66mm, producing a displacement of 998cc. The lighter weight of this engine came from a lighter crank, with smaller counterweights, the elimination of the kickstarter and several smaller changes such as aluminum carb bodies. The additional power came from larger valves, 37mm intake and 32mm exhaust, with a higher 9.2:1 compression ratio.

This is a moderately powerful engine by 1982 standards. In the original KZ1000J this was enough engine to push the 535 lb. bike through the quarter-mile in 11.56 sec. at 115.53 mph and to hit the redline in top gear at 135 mph within a half mile. Only the 1100cc Kawasaki and Suzuki and the Suzuki Katana offer more performance. Except for the Kerker exhaust, this same engine goes into the KZ1000R. With only 750 of the Lawson Replicas being built, it would have been impractical to make internal changes requiring emission recertification, so the stock motor is used. Getting more performance out of this engine is relatively easy, as can be seen at virtually any racetrack in the country. Yes, Kawasaki can build a killer motor for this bike and does for the real replica, the one raced by Harry Klinkmann and a few select others.

As a quick glance at the spec chart shows, this year's test bike wasn't as quick as the previous bike. It was actually a display bike that achieved these figures, the test bike meeting an unfortunate but spectacular demise at the racetrack. Because there are so few Replica models produced, there wasn't another test bike, only a display machine available one day only for the track results. It was hot day. The bike had few miles on it. It also wasn't tuned well, ping- ing badly at anything under 5000 rpm. As Kawasaki 1000s go, it was a good ex-

ample of what the bike can do when it isn't tuned well, broken in or ridden on a good day. That explains the half second longer quarter-mile time. Under normal circumstances, there is no reason for the Replica to be slower than a stock KZ1000J.

The display bike was literally taken out of a show for the crash-generated emergency and this prevented the normal two-day mileage check. But because the engine, gearing and weight are so close to the 1000J, we expect the Replica would return the J's 45 mpg.

Surprisingly, the 1000R isn't significantly lighter than the standard 1000. Normally replacing a stock double wall chrome plated exhaust with any of the aftermarket exhausts will take about 15 lb. off the weight of a motorcycle. In this case most of that weight comes back with the small fairing, the oil cooler, the reservoir shocks and the bigger tires, so the R is only 3 lb. lighter than the J at 532 lb. That's still lighter than several smaller, less powerful motorcycles. It's also about 20 lb. lighter than the big sporting bikes, the GPz1100 and GS1100E.

By itself, 20 lb. would not be a large difference for a motorcycle that weighs over 500 lb. But combined with slightly steeper steering head and less trail, the 1000 Kawasaki feels much lighter and more nimble than the larger sporting Kawasaki.

A combination of weight and power and control location and even the styling makes the 1000R a more precise sport bike than most of its contemporaries. It is inconceivable that anyone would ever put saddlebags or a Windjammer on this bike. It is a hard edged, somewhat noisy, rough riding beast of a motorcycle, the kind of bike good racers are made of. Even the motor, that supposedly stock KZ1000 engine that is a model of good behavior in the standard Kawasaki, becomes somehow rougher running and more peaky in the R.

At any speed and on any road the rider senses the differences. Start the engine and there's that unmistakable deep-throated growl of a 4-into-1 pipe on a big dis-





placement Four. It manages to meet noise standards and it runs with the stock jetting, but the noise is deeper, more penetrating and impossible for the rider to ignore. At some low engine speeds there's a bit of a burble when the engine hits a spot where it doesn't run well. This doesn't happen when there's a load on the engine, but it adds to that staccato beat of a high performance engine about to be used. It adds excitement. It quickens the pulse. It raises expectations.

For the most part those expectations are fulfilled. The 1000R delivers the acceleration and speed of a fast 1000cc motorcycle, though no more so than the standard 1000 Kawasaki.

In other measures of performance it mixes some excellent parts with some not-so-excellent pieces that detract from the total. Handling, for instance, should be exceptional. The standard KZ1000 is one of the nicest handling big bikes made, with a strong frame, good cornering clearance and a stiff front end due to the wide-spaced triple clamps. The Lawson Replica keeps the frame and the stiff front end and adds to this with new footpeg mounts providing even more cornering clearance. Also, the Kerker pipe is tucked in as well as possible, eliminating the centerstand in the process. Add better than average Dunlop K300-series tires front and rear and an ideal high speed riding position and the 1000R should be perfect. But it isn't. Somewhere between theory and execution the rear suspension took a wrong turn and ended up hurting the comfort and the handling. These shocks that look like the shocks on Eddie's bike aren't like those at all. Those are made by Works Performance and they are carefully adjusted to suit whatever track conditions Lawson encounters, with a wide variety of spring and damping rates. The stock Showa shocks and springs are just plain stiff. On bumpy corners the back end does not cooperate with the front and the result is a strange side-to-side weave.

Informal swapping of shocks from a GPz1100 and talking with Replica owners show a quick and easy fix for the





# KZ1000R

Replica's rear hardships: trade for something else.

Certainly there have been other bikes with less than perfect high speed handling characteristics, but this is a racer replica, a bike not compromised by touring accessories and coming with its own shocks not shared with any other motorcycle. It is also a bike with enough speed to make steady handling necessary. The

other parts are all there. Cornering clearance is astounding. Riders used to other big bikes won't come close to dragging pegs or pipes on this one. Go into a corner at a medium fast pace, expecting to touch a toe or a peg, and the bike just goes through, nothing near the pavement. It requires considerably more speed to scrape than the standard 1000. The tires do their part to keep the bike under control. Even at the extreme angles of lean possible on the 1000R they feel good.

Due to the different geometry used on the 1000cc Kawasakis than the GPz-

1100, the smaller bikes require less effort to turn. With its stiff back end, the 1000R has even a more acute front end under most conditions, making for very light efforts.

This ease of steering doesn't extend far enough to make the bike twitchy or uncontrollable. It isn't as light steering as a 400cc machine. What it does is make the 1000R a more inviting machine to fling around curves than other, heavier, slower big bikes.

Except for the too-stiff rear suspension, the Replica is a more comfortable bike to





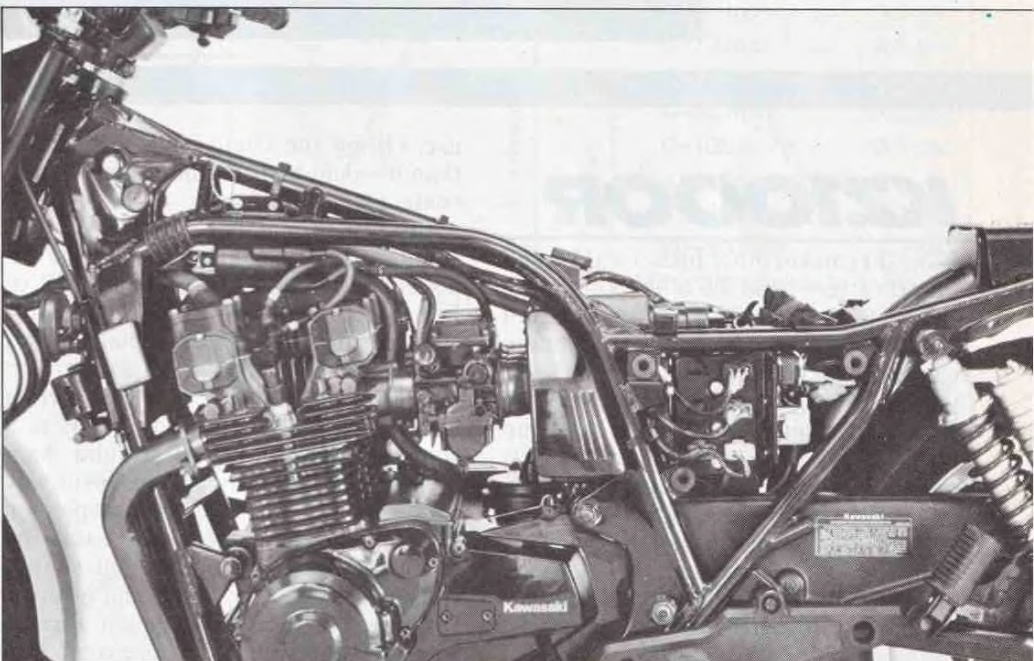
ride than it would appear. The chopped-down seat still has ample padding and it's large enough to provide good support. Its also closer to the ground than the normal 1000 saddle, making it easier to maneuver the bike in town than bikes with 32 in. seat heights. The pegs are high and positioned farther back than average, but these aren't racing rear-sets. The position makes a reasonably comfortable perch for a variety of rider sizes. What makes the bike uncomfortable is, again, the rear suspension. On repetitive bumps, the kind found on concrete freeways when

they get old, the Kawasaki rides like a mechanical bull.

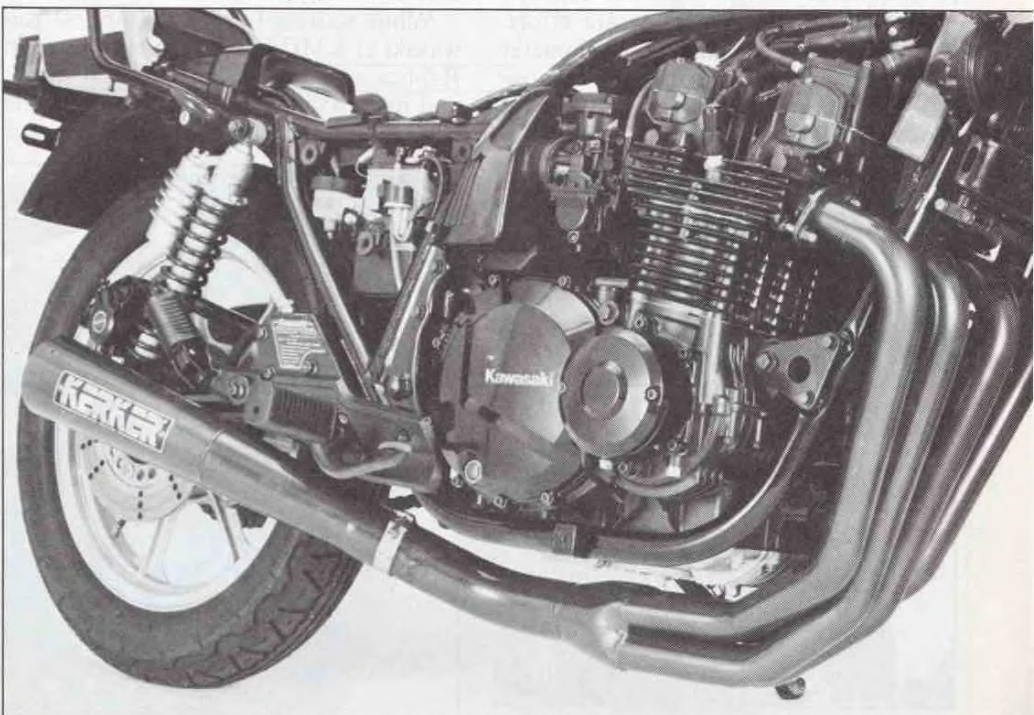
Front suspension is much more able than the rear. Air caps on the fork legs are provided for front end preload, though the stock settings resulted in good compliance and control. Brake dive was minimal, even though the Kawasaki doesn't use any anti-dive devices to increase damping during braking. The combination of three large discs provides enormous stopping power and good stopping distances, but the control could be improved. It takes very little increase in

lever pressure to go from moderate braking force to heavy braking. A more linear response would make it easier to get the most out of the brakes.

Vibration is the other comfort shortcoming. Like the 1000J, the Replica has two of the three engine mounts connected through rubber vibration dampers. And like the 1000J, the Replica vibrates more than most other big Fours. Perhaps due to the pipe and the shorter bars, even more vibration reaches the rider on the Replica. Of course this isn't meant to be the most comfortable cruiser on the highway. >



Pegs are mounted high and far back. Pipe is tucked in tightly, eliminating room for a center stand. Stiff rear suspension adds to cornering clearance.



Eddie's bike has a Kerker 4-into-1 pipe, so the Replica has one. It's street legal and doesn't change the jetting. The sound is louder than a normal KZ1000, but not offensive. Center stand is sacrificed so the tucked-in pipe will fit. Cornering clearance is enormous.





## KZ1000R

Kawasaki makes other bikes for that, and they do a very good job of it.

The Replica is meant to go fast and turn heads, and if it happens to be an enjoyable bike to ride at the same time, that's almost a bonus. In many ways the R is convenient to ride, too. It starts up instantly with the push of a button. It runs well at all engine speeds, though occasionally the choke would stick on and the test bike would run on three cylinders until the rider pounded on the choke knob a few times. The big round instruments are easy to read and the gas gauge between them doesn't hurt, though it is only accurate when the tank is completely full or completely empty. All the controls work easily, with only moderate effort. The nuisances are small. The odometer isn't visible from a normal riding position. The seat is difficult to remove and replace. The helmet lock was difficult to

use. Oiling the chain is more difficult than it would be if the bike came with a center stand.

But these are small points on a dedicated sport bike. Compared with the impossible riding position of a Ducati SS, or Bimota, the Replica is a model of civility. It is also enormously adaptable, and this is one of its biggest charms.

Unlike some other recent big sporting bikes, the 1000R is easy to adapt to a rider. The conventional tubular handlebars can be easily and inexpensively changed. The twin shock rear suspension will be easy to make work. Even the engine's power can be boosted simply. Carburetors are easy to jet and whether you want a bigger displacement or more sporting cams, there are dozens of companies making high performance parts for the Kawasaki.

While waiting to pick up the test Kawasaki at KMC headquarters, a Lawson Replica was ridden past the CW truck and parked outside the back door of the Kawasaki race shop. Kawasaki's race

team manager, Gary Mathers, got off the bike, went inside to get some rags and came back out to polish his bike. The shocks had been changed, and he had softened the front end. Carburetors had been worked on and the cams exchanged for some other production models. He's working on a big bore motor for his bike, too. Mathers isn't paid to be a spokesman, but he likes his bike. He thinks it's a fun machine. And when he gets the custom 18 in. front wheel made for it, it's not going to be quite like any other 1000R... except maybe Eddie's.

With only 750 Lawson Replicas being produced this year, the bike offers a degree of exclusivity not common with Japanese motorcycles. Whether there will be another Replica next year hasn't been decided yet. First Eddie has to win another championship. At this time that looks likely.

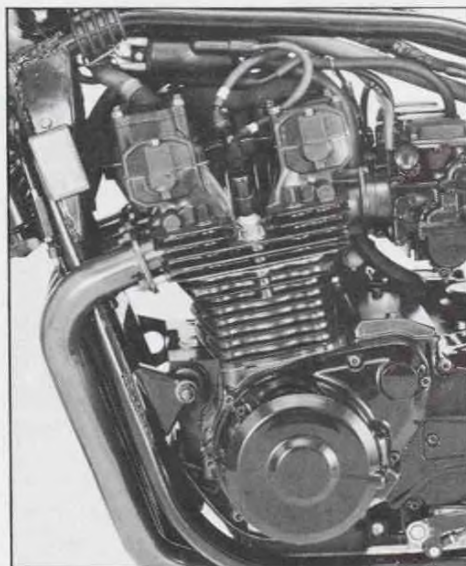
If he does a few more people may have a chance to ride this head-turning, eye-shocking, tire-scorching, road-going road-racer. ☐



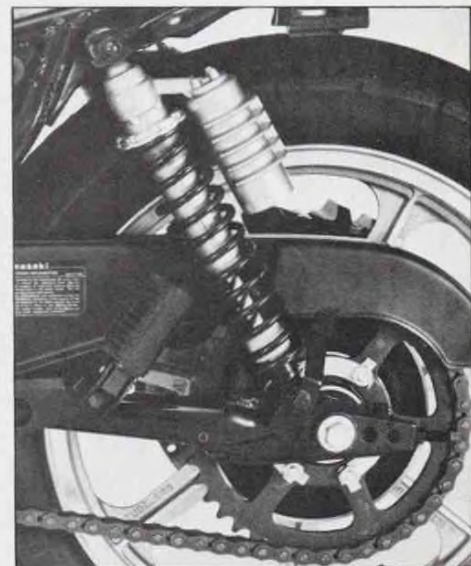
A small oil cooler is added to the 1000R. Like all other mechanical bits, it's painted black.



Unlike the big GPz Kawasakis, the 1000R gets simple round instruments. Odometer isn't visible from normal riding position, but everything else is convenient.



Rubber engine mounts do little to reduce vibration. The big Kawasaki Four is a shaker, though a powerful shaker. Black pipes easily discolor.



Worst feature of the bike is the rear suspension. These imitation Works Performance shocks don't do anything to help handling or comfort.

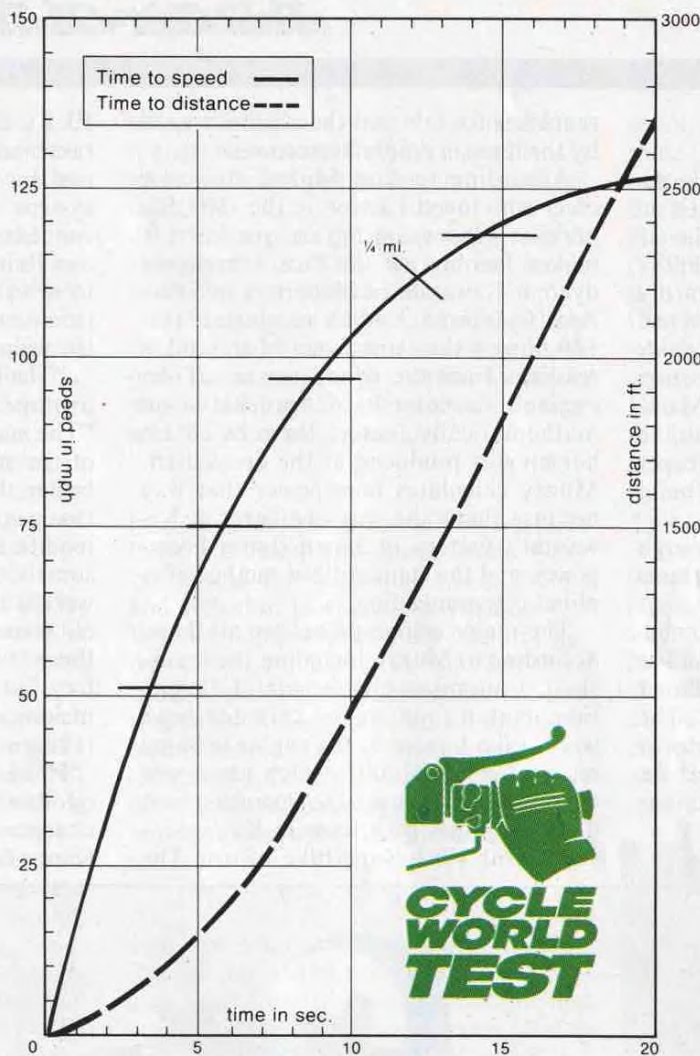


# KAWASAKI KZ1000R

## SPECIFICATIONS

List price .....est. \$4400  
 Engine .....dohc Four  
 Bore x stroke ....69.4 x 66mm  
 Displacement .....998cc  
 Compression ratio .....9.2:1  
 Carburetion ....(4) 34mm CV  
 Mikuni  
 Air filter .....oiled foam  
 Ignition .....transistorized  
 inductive  
 Claimed power .....na  
 Claimed torque .....na  
 Lubrication .....wet sump  
 Oil capacity .....3.9 qt.  
 Fuel capacity .....5.3 gal.  
 Starter .....electric  
 Electrical power .....280 w  
 alternator  
 Battery .....12v 18ah  
 Headlight ....60/55w halogen  
 Primary drive .....straight-cut  
 gears  
 Clutch .....multiplate wet  
 Final drive ....630 O-ring chain  
 Gear ratios, overall: 1  
 5th .....4.92  
 4th .....5.56  
 3rd .....6.76  
 2nd .....8.68  
 1st .....12.51  
 Suspension:  
 Front .....telescopic fork  
 travel .....5.7 in.  
 Rear .....swing arm,  
 dual shocks  
 travel .....4.1 in.  
 Tires:  
 Front .....100/90V-19  
 Dunlop K300  
 Rear .....120/90V-18  
 Dunlop K300  
 Brakes:  
 Front .....11 in. disc  
 Rear .....10.5 in. disc  
 Brake swept area ..229 sq. in.  
 Brake loading (160-lb.  
 rider) .....3.02 lb./sq. in.  
 Wheelbase .....60.6 in.  
 Rake/Trail .....27.5°/3.9 in.  
 Handlebar width .....29.5 in.  
 Seat height .....30.5 in.  
 Seat width .....11 in.  
 Footpeg height .....13.5 in.  
 Ground clearance .....5 in.  
 Test weight  
 (w/half-tank fuel) ..532 lb.  
 Weight bias,  
 % front/rear, ....48.1/51.9  
 GVWR .....917 lb.  
 Load capacity .....385 lb.

## ACCELERATION



## PERFORMANCE

Standing 1/4-mile ....12.11 sec.  
 @112.07 mph  
 Top speed in 1/2-mile .128 mph  
 Fuel consumption .45 mpg est.  
 Reserve (to  
 tank range) ....189 mi. est.  
 Acceleration:  
 0-30 mph .....1.8 sec.  
 0-40 mph .....2.5 sec.  
 0-50 mph .....3.5 sec.  
 0-60 mph .....4.6 sec.  
 0-70 mph .....5.5 sec.  
 0-80 mph .....6.4 sec.  
 0-90 mph .....7.5 sec.  
 0-100 mph .....9.1 sec.  
 Top gear acceleration:  
 40-60 mph .....3.9 sec.  
 60-80 mph .....5.0 sec.  
 Maximum speeds in gears  
 @ 8500 rpm:  
 1st .....52 mph  
 2nd .....75 mph  
 3rd .....97 mph  
 4th .....118 mph  
 5th .....133 mph  
 Speedometer error:  
 30 mph indicated ...30 mph  
 60 mph indicated ...60 mph  
 Braking distance:  
 from 30 mph .....31 ft.  
 from 60 mph .....129 ft.  
 Engine speed  
 at 60 mph .....3830 rpm

