

UNDERCOVER

McDiarmid adapts his profile to bikes designed for torrid main street standing quarters. Kawasaki's Eliminator and Yamaha's Fazer burn the midnight rubber



Ok, folks, it's macho time, upmarket version. Cardin cut-offs, Gucci boots, enough chrome to kibosh the *papparazi's* exposure meters and a fuel range enough to take in a couple of wine bars without risking your manicure on the filler cap. The New Wave customs come with raunchy

names and laid-back looks. Willie compensation for the upwardly mobile, the downwardly discerning and the genitally disadvantaged.

"Faze", according to my book of words (yes, Mr McCoy, I have got one), is of Old English origin, a variation of freeze — to drive off — and

means to disconcert, to perturb. I suppose a Yamaha FZX750 Perturbator wouldn't have had the same verbal impact, although its harmonic potential would soon have eclipsed that of even Honda's Wet Dream. Think that's saucy? Then how about a ZL1000 Eliminator — "to

discharge waste matter from the body" (amongst other things). Why did they have to spurn such a golden opportunity for alliteration? — a Kawasaki Krapper would have been irresistible.

Monikers aside, what Yamaha and Kawasaki are about is maybe trying to redress

recent price trends. Since the arrival of the GPZ900, practically every bike trying to hit the punter for large wads of the folding stuff has been race-replicated — but always to the advantage of the asking price. Naked bikes are out, although it's truly a daft World in which 100 horsepower unfaired monsters

are considered utilitarian. But not everyone wants to look like Raymonde Roche — perhaps not even the man himself, and who could blame him? Maybe *nouveau custom* styling exercises are an attempt to pick up any supplies with the ackers but not the inclination to pose on a 1000 Genesis? ▶

OFF THE NIGHT

UNDERCOVER OF THE NIGHT

FAZE TO FAZE WITH THE FZX750

This, it says 'ere, is a new mode in the Genesis concept, from the Bible as abridged by the boys at

Hamamatsu. And it came to pass that on the seventh day the Lord rested and went out on his new FZR for a game of doms with the lads at the Snake and Apple. And the archangels in the back room, having a little time and an empty factory on their hands, and not knowing at this early stage in history that the devil finds work for idle hands, decided to knock up something less obviously criminal to the heavenly host, uniformed division, who'd been coming on a bit strong with the divine retribution lately. (Several of their licences were already close to the twelve Hail Marys which earned the big drop downstairs.) And when He returned, already well dischuffed as the Snake was out of milk and honey flavoured crisps, as usual, the boss archangel was so afraid that he discovered 11 grand several thousand years before the arabs invented numbers. Neither he nor the Fazer have been seen upstairs since.

Meanwhile, back in the 20th Century. Willis handed over the object of all this commotion with the words "it's brilliant, you'll like it." I didn't take much notice. Then Motad boss Alan Baker, not a man to offer praise lightly, put in his two penn'orth. One look at the dyno chart had him drooling "wow, what a beauty! That's my kind of powerband." Not Satchispeak, admittedly, but he wasn't trying to flog me anything, either.

Japspeak, which generally has a rather lower credibility rating than Bakerspeak, tells us that the FZX750 "does not belong to a category, it creates one!" It combines the "power and handling of a sports machine" with "the sophistication and styling to be a high-profile 'cruiser.'" The blurb goes on about Yamaha's stylistic frontierbusting with everything from the XS-11 Midnight Special to the V-Max, conveniently omitting such landmarks as the Triumph Hurricane, although both those behemoths probably

entitle them to a little self-satisfaction.

And it has to be said that the Fazer's powerplant lives up to every epithet the ad boys can throw at it. Yamaha had arguably the best starting point in the three-quarter litre class with the stock FZ750 engine. When it first came out the 20 valver astonished everyone with a midrange punch that just didn't belong on anything under a full litre, and even two years later the affect is still as mesmerising. On the basis that the only possible improvement on too much is a little bit more, the FZX has even stronger low-down welly.

The difference, said to be due only to a revised air-box and carburettor settings, isn't hugh — a maximum of 5bhp at 4000rpm, tailing to zero at 7000rpm. That it feels even greater is due to a combination of the cruiser's lower gearing, the strenuous efforts of several tons of unimpeded atmosphere trying to punt you off the back, and a deep-seated prejudice which says that bikes like this are just for wallies and poseurs and simply shouldn't be this quick. After 7000rpm the FZ's power curve climbs away from the Fazer's but only to the tune of about five horses at their respective peaks. The FZR tops out a grand earlier at 9500, but hangs on slightly longer. Both engines chuck out over 80bhp all the way from 7,300rpm to 11,500, after which we stopped counting.

A curious aspect of the FZX's graph is the absence of even a hint of a flat spot. Manufacturers habitually engineer a bit of a doldrums into the delivery at around 5000rpm to cheat on the noise tests. The partly-faired FZ has one but the naked FSX doesn't. Curious. Maybe it's a function of the redesigned airbox which sits inside what looks like a petrol tank but isn't, or maybe that tinny shroud does have some slight purpose. Fuel actually lives between the frame rails behind the cylinder block, all 13 miserable litres of it.

Any other differences between the two engines are purely cosmetic — different valve covers and pseudo cooling fins — except that this one is rubber-mounted. Smoothness the old FZ isn't short of, but maybe they were concerned about tingles being amplified through the tubular and much longer bars of the Fazer. The frame, which is ▶



DYMO
TUNING - PARTS

HIGH PERFORMANCE & QUALITY PRODUCTS

MTC ENGINEERING PISTON KITS
From £175.00
Aluminium big block c/w liners fitted
From £290.00

GOODRIDGE AERO HOSE
e.g. Suzuki Crank Case Breather Complete with 1 metre hose and anodised fittings
From £20.00
All applications catered for

DYMO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
Heavy Duty Cylinder Studs From £30
Heavy Duty Main Bearing Studs From £25
Heavy Duty Cap Studs From £25
Forged aluminium clutch baskets and straight cut gears

MANLEY VALVES & ACCESSORIES **ARIAS PERFORMANCE COMPONENTS** **CARRILLO RACING PISTON & RINGS** **CON RODS** **PERFORMANCE EXHAUST SYSTEMS**

PEARCE PERFORMANCE
Cylinder Heads and Engine Preparation

BHR TURBO CHARGERS BHR
Bill Hunter has had consistent results over the years culminating with an unprecedented run on success in the 1989 Ultimate Street Bike competition on his Turbo Charged Spondon Suzuki.
The components and technology that contributed to his success are now available from Bill Hunter Racing.
Remember, anyone can quote you big horse-power figures over the phone. We suggest you look at the performance and reliability of the bikes running with their equipment and then ring us.
DON'T BLOW YOUR MONEY AND YOUR ENGINE
RING BILL HUNTER RACING
INSTALLATION * MAINTENANCE * SERVICING * REPAIRS
FOR THE ULTIMATE PERFORMANCE
Why not have an aluminium Spondon frame and a Turbo?
AVAILABLE NOW!

NOS NITROUS OXIDE SYSTEMS

NITROUS OXIDE

Dymo Research and Development kits are the same as the one fitted to Martin Peck's GSX 1100 which was the fastest nitrous bike at the 1986 Ultimate Street Bike Finals at 9.91 / 150. This made it the first nitrous street bike in the country to run a nine second pass.

Our kits are supplied to work on standard engines and can be modified to give even greater b.h.p.

The kit can also be used in conjunction with a tuned engine, as shown by Martin Peck's first outing this year when he won the Super Street class at the Santa Pod April meeting.

With nitrous oxide a lot of people claim unbelievable b.h.p. readings. All we can offer is the same kind of performance and reliability that Martin experiences using one of our kits

1 Cylinder £300.00 + VAT
2 Cylinder £325.00 + VAT
3 Cylinder £350.00 + VAT
4 Cylinder £375.00 + VAT

SOME BRAG ABOUT IT, SOME GET ON WITH IT
WE WIN WITH IT!

PHONE (0234) 271191

93 TAVISTOCK STREET BEDFORD MK40 2RR

UNDERCOVER OF THE NIGHT

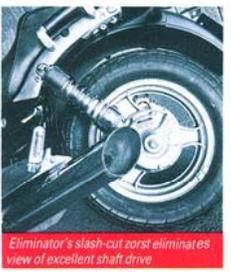
otherwise not totally dissimilar to the FZ's carries engine coolant through its left downtube. The opposite downtube drops out for engine removal. Yamaha reckon the extra cooling area allowed them to use a smaller version of the already very efficient double-core radiator than they'd otherwise have been stuck with. Whatever the reason, the tiny rad is certainly less intrusive than the ugly black slab adorning the front end of the ZL1000.

But good-natured power curves alone do not a motorcycle make, whether the book of Genesis or the Lord God Almighty in person gave a hand in the design office. Verily, it profit a man little to get spat into the bushes — and a plague of wobbles on all your houses if the handling's strictly Old Testament. No problem, Moses would have been just a distant speck on this one, long before the Pharaoh's mob made those first ill-advised attempts at horse-drawn water-skiing. The Fazer handles better than any tart's boudoir has a right to.

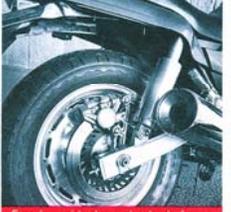
Compared to other so-called land-cruisers the Fazer's steering is light and responsive enough not to clout the poles through city-centre slaloms. The plot's a lot handier through any sort of twists than its juggernaut wheelbase and trail, at 60in and 4.5in respectively, would suggest. This is largely a tribute to the lowness of a machine which carries its c of g lower still, not to mention two tiny wheels with the combined gyroscopic effect of a couple of Ritz crackers. In town the 45° forward slant of the engine helps maintain a solid footprint without the vagueness afflicting many such laid-back bastard customs, although really turning up the wick gets it as light as 90-odd brake ought.

There's nothing remarkable about the running gear — conventional teles up front and twin shocks at the stern. A monoshock arrangement would have meant a style-cocking higher seat, and anyway the low-slung tank has pushed everything else arsewards into the space the linkages would have occupied. The shocks look like pure air units but lurking inside the shiny bean cans are simply De Carbon gas/oil jobs, turned upside-down to the debatable advantage of style points and

the certain detriment of unsprung weight. That said, they work well enough despite a pauper's range of adjustment. For all-round use the spring rate and damping are fine despite an understandable bias towards comfort. The Fazer's rear has a touch of chatter on staccato surfaces and oscillates a little on fast, bumpy sweepers but the sheer length of the bike keeps things obediently in line.



Eliminator's slash-cut worst eliminates view of excellent shaft drive.



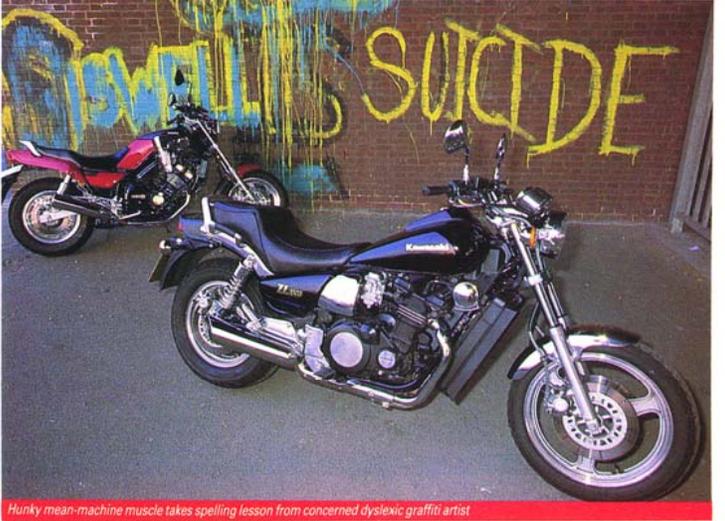
Fazer's upside-down shocks do for unsprung weight what Dachau did for Israeli-German understanding.

Now that we've become accustomed to the flexibility of sophisticated single shock systems, any twin plunger arrangement, particularly one made done to a price, is bound to appear primitive. Without rising-rate it's just not realistic to achieve fluent low-amplitude movement without compromising full-chat, full-stroke control, and vice versa. The FZX is such a compromise, although a bloody good one. The same problem's compounded by the difficulty of arranging the same range of wheel travel — the

Fazer has a full 35mm less than the FZ. Stopping is taken care of by the same opposed-piston calipers grabbing the same 10½ inch rotors as the FZ. In other words they're at least as good as you are and rather better than any front tyre, including the Phantoms the Fazer's reassuringly equipped with. Landcruiser fashion limits ground clearance scarcely at all, although the Ed moaned that the resulting high pegs made his chubby little legs ache. On the whole it's well thought out rather than the ▶



"Let's get fazed by eliminating some of these white lines, short, short"



Hunky mean-machine muscle takes spelling lesson from concerned dyslexic graffiti artist

	KAWASAKI ZL1000	YAMAHA FSX750
Price.....	£4399	£3799
Importer.....	Kawasaki Motors (UK) Ltd., Deal Avenue, Slough	Mitsui Machinery Sales, Oakcroft Road, Chessington
Guarantee.....	12 months/unlimited mileage	12 months/unlimited mileage
Engine.....	Liquid-cooled, 4-stroke, 16 valve, DOHC	Liquid-cooled, 4-stroke, 20 valve, DOHC
Bore x stroke.....	74 x 58mm	68 x 51.5mm
Capacity.....	997cc	749cc
Comp. ratio.....	10.2:1	11.2:1
Carburation.....	4 x CVK34 Keihin	4 x BDS34 Mikuni
Gearbox.....	six speed	six speed
Electrics.....	12V 14Ah battery	12V 14Ah battery

CYCLE PARTS

Tyres.....	Dunlop	Pirelli Phantom
Front.....	100/90 V18	110/90 V16
Rear.....	160/80 V15	140/90 V15
Brakes, Front.....	Twin 280mm (11in) discs	Twin 267mm (10.5in) discs
Rear.....	270mm (10.6in) disc	270mm (10.5in) disc
Suspension, Front.....	Air-assisted telescopic	Air-assisted telescopic
Rear.....	39mm fork	36mm fork
	Twin shock absorbers, air and damping adjust	Twin shock absorbers, 5-way preload

DIMENSIONS

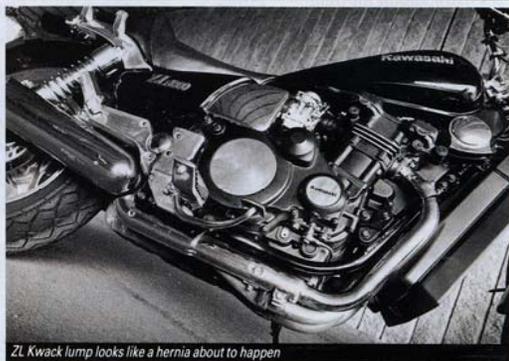
Wheelbase.....	1615mm (63.6in)	1525mm (60in)
Weight (inc 1 gal fuel).....	241kg (536lb)	204kg (453lb)
Fuel capacity.....	18.5 litres (4.1 gal)	13 litres (2.9 gal)

PERFORMANCE

Top speed in 1/2 mile, prone.....	130.3mph	127.0mph
Upright.....	127.3mph	122.1mph
Best one way.....	134.4mph	131.6mph
Standing 1/4 mile (one way).....	11.85sec/112.5mph	12.06sec/111.5mph
1/4 mile roll-on from 50mph (one way).....	11.42sec/106.8mph	12.14sec/96.6mph
Top gear.....	13.1mph/1000rpm	14.9mph/1000rpm
Fuel consumption, overall.....	36mpg	46mpg
Worst figure.....	33mpg	42mpg



FZX techno-parts look triff except for the tinny chrome concealing carbs



ZL Kwack lump looks like a hernia about to happen

usual lashed-together silhouette, with a few nice touches such as an electronic reserve control on the right-hand switch assembly.

Hardware aside, at least as big a factor in the Fazer's surprising agility is its compactness. Not only does it weigh a couple of pounds less than the FZ, but from the business seat it feels astonishingly small and lighter still. Fire it up and something in your subconscious forgets the badge on the side panel and dials-in 'middleweight', aka 'ferkin' silly'. Half a handful of revs, a quick "blimey, this is quick," and you've gone, an accident in hot pursuit of a venue.

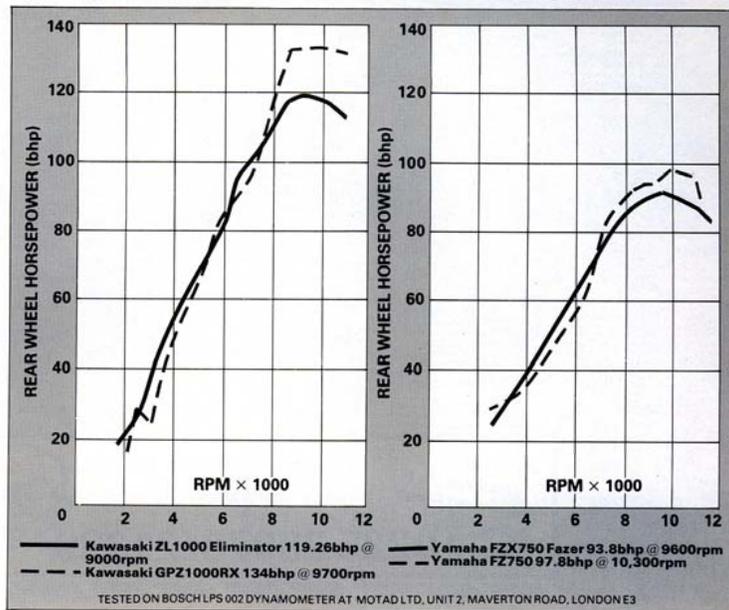
The accident never happened. The FZX accepted every lunatic liberty without getting more than mildly grumpy, which is, I suppose, understandable. Presumably the clones who begat it promised the Fazer it could expect a sheltered life with nothing more to fear than the odd pina colada spilt on its flanks. How wrong they were.

I must admit that when I first laid eyes on the Fazer I half hoped, and fully expected, to be disappointed by its performance. Whether you

like the looks or not — and most people did — it looks about as functional as a ferret with claustrophobia. That the engine is as good as any in the

class came as no surprise, but would only have spurred me to take a shotgun to the heretic who'd balled-up the other bits. At the end of the test

there's no escaping that Yamaha really have done what they set out to do in combining two previously irreconcilable concepts. ▶



UNDERCOVER OF THE NIGHT

ELIMINATORY — IT'S THE DEAR ZL1000

Unlike the Fazer, Kawasaki's ZL1000 Enema — sorry, Eliminator — has no obvious scriptural significance. Doubtless some obscure religious despots have pronounced on the theological relevance of absolute power — and come to think of it the big Kawa would be ideal for a jaunt to Italy, particularly if you have it in mind to sack the Vatican. For all I know Henry VIII used something similar to pull down the monasteries — the syphilitic old buffer could have done worse in the absence of JCBs. This thing is the latter-day equivalent of a middle-ages battering ram.

Trouble is, heavy-duty siege weapons don't handle too well. Stable, yes, but a bit of a liability through the swervery. We have the Americans to thank for bikes that have to try every trick in the book not to follow suit. The current flood of musclebikes, land cruisers, call them what you will, all began in the sunny lingering death of the double nickel speed limit. It's not permitted to go quickly to demonstrate the size of your gonads, so you have to haul them around on a motorised codpiece and make like they'd need a wheelbarrow otherwise. Columbus wouldn't listen when they told him that the end of the World lay at the other side of the Atlantic; it's taken us 400 years to find out they were right after all.

Let's start with Exterminator's best feature, its engine. No prizes for guessing it started life on the GPZ900's drawing board. In fact the original, Stateside-only, ZL was a 900, tuned for more midrange and less top-end. The package got comprehensively blown-off in the quarter, not only by Yamaha's V-Max (inevitably), but also by Suzuki's Madura and the Honda Magna. '86 saw the US launch of the full litre version in restyled and slightly heavier form. This, give or take the omission of a backrest and a few reflectors, is what we've got.

The 997cc engine is almost identical to that in the GTR1000, but rubber-mounted in lieu of the tourer's balance shaft. No-one's likely to be bothered by a little extra

weight on a brute like this, so they also threw a few extra pounds of pig-iron at the ZL's frame to soak up the vibes. Although the carburetors are slightly different to suit the Annihilator's revised induction and exhaust systems, all the go-faster bits are identical.

Which both the dyno and the seat of my pants says is odd. On the dyno our test GTR struggled to return 110bhp, fully nine less than the ZL, although granted it needed 400rpm less to do so. More significantly, given the natures of both bikes, the ZL puts out seven more horses at 4000rpm, exactly the same at 6000rpm, and then seriously ups the ante all the way to the redline and beyond. It's still pouring out over a hundred brake at 11,000rpm, where the GTR is in steep decline. Not surprising that my first reaction on riding the tourer was to rubbish Kawasaki's "King of Grunt" claim; the Liquidator has far more right to that particular crown. Part of the difference is probably due to a truly enormous exhaust resonance box located under the engine, in the space which might otherwise have been occupied by a centrestand. You'd better join BUPA before you try to change a wheel.

On the street the ZL feels stronger still, partly because it is, but mostly because the only thing between you and the elements is more elements. The high bars and forward-sited footpegs give you as much frontal area as you could get without actually standing up and unzipping your belt, hauling you relentlessly backwards at anything above 80mph. It's geared for the mid-140s at the redline in top; if you can hold that for more than a couple of minutes you'll be ideal as a stand-in for Clint in the next Eastwood movie. What strain doesn't try to tear your head off heaves at your hands hard enough to cut off the circulation, and isn't helped by high-frequency resonance in the long bars themselves. Roland came back from a trip to MIRA at his customary speed complaining his fingers had gone dead. I suppose he could just have been trying to get out of making the coffee.

Stick to saner speeds and the Eradicator feels good. From 2000rpm upwards it's positively incontinent with grunt and immediately responsive to any pretenders in ▶

UNDERCOVER OF THE NIGHT

the traffic lights Grand Prix — "I'll show you mine if you show me yours, only watch out 'cos mines bigger". The engine is 90% of the ZL's personality — it could punch a hole clean through it. Once we reconnected the fuel tap diaphragm tube which gave it a slight misfire — and probably shaved the edge off the speed trap figures — it pulled smooth and hard in top the way from 15mph to maximum. Why it's got six gears is a mystery when the 1000RX doesn't miss one less. Maybe gears are a metaphor for inches in this particular brand of Shinto symbolism.

At every stage of the power curve the Kawasaki murders the Fazer by pretty well the same margin as their respective displacements. Compared to the Yam the statement it makes is crude, and it makes it almost as well standing still as on the move. This is where we come back to the battering ram syndrome — whilst the FZX makes a fair stab at being all things to all men, the Kwacker contents itself with being mean, massive and menacing and up yours, John, if you don't like it. Eliminators don't apologise, and they think Fazers are wimps.

On the move it doesn't have a long wheelbase so much as a fair-sized keel, almost five foot four of it. Four inches of trail — relatively little for a bike of this nature — avoids excessive heaviness in the steering, but doesn't exactly make for a Spring Sales Special, either. In town the ZL needs a fair bit of rowing and countersteering to do your bidding, and there was no way I could chuck it over-exuberantly into a corner with any confidence its innate good nature would bale me out. Take your brain out and the ZL has the sort of forgiving nature for which the Spanish Inquisitors are remembered.

On faster going, at least on a road you know, the Intimidator settles down into a passable hustler, staying on line long after the pegs start dragging and giving the same sort of manic satisfaction as driving a Transit far too quickly. You'll be slower through the turns than most other bikes, but stung that fat rear tread coming out and you'll haul back the difference in no time. Unless there's another corner that is. What handling it has is helped by a pretty impressive pair of shock absorbers, which make the

most of the 110mm travel. Riding on minimum damping and zero air pressure offers the nearest to regal progress you're likely to have experienced since the roads went to pot. Click the rebound damping to max — squirt done even on the move — easily another atmosphere of air in there, and the plot stiffens up nicely. It's still a long, long heavy lump, but at least it's not likely to weave you into the next hedge.

The most irritating aspect of the ride is a far too-sharp throttle response which hampers fine control. Coupled with the inherent rigidity of the lash-free shaft drive this makes for erratic progress and clumsy gear changes at low throttle openings. It's not insurmountable — even clutchless changes are possible, up or down, given a little concentration — but it is an annoyance in an otherwise hassle-free engine.

Stopping is taken care of by Kawasaki's usual unpretentious but excellent single-piston calipers. However hard you hit them the ultra-low (29.5in) seat height and bulbous tank will keep your own tackle safe from a trip into the instruments. And I defy you to find a more comfortable bumrest outside your own front room. Instrumentation is styled down to a minimum — the temperature gauge, for instance, is now no more than a warning light. Our custody of the ZL coincided with an unexpected impersonation of post-go snarl-ups could persuade the light even to blink, although the automatic fan often cut in busily when the engine was cut. The radiator's of awesome size and presumably up to the hottest that California can offer.

As a fake drag bike the Eliminator makes a passable all-rounder, but I can't help feeling that after the first flush of ownership its inability to explore even a fraction of the engine's potential in anything but a straight line would become an expensive frustration. This will come as no surprise to Kawasaki who clearly aren't looking for sales in remotely RX-type numbers. There will always be a few high-profile punters wanting nothing more than to be different. The ZL will surely oblige them. Personally, I think it's a criminal waste of a brilliant engine. ■