

 **CYCLE WORLD TEST**

YAMAHA FZX700 FAZER



REWRITING THE RULES FOR STYLE

DO YOURSELF A FAVOR: BEFORE passing final judgment on Yamaha's new Fazer, ride one. Because if you've decided you don't like the bike based solely on its appearance, chances are you'll change your mind by the time your ride is over. And if you already like the bike before you get on it,

you're absolutely going to *love* it by the time you get off.

Guaranteed.

There's a very good reason why: Performance-wise, the Fazer is a wonderful motorcycle. It's fast. It's quick. It's nimble. It's smooth. It's comfortable. It's versatile. And best of all, it's fun.

FAZER

Problem is, it's also pretty radically styled. And that's where the picture gets hazy. The Fazer's unique appearance has a polarizing effect on all who see it, immediately causing everyone to fall into either one of two categories: those who think it's gorgeous and those who think it's grotesque. No one is indifferent when it comes to the way this bike looks.

No one is quite sure exactly what kind of bike it's supposed to be, either, for the styling offers few clues to the Fazer's intended usage. It's too spacy-looking to be a cruiser, doesn't have the earmarks of a sportbike, and is obviously not a tourer.

In truth, however, the Fazer is a little bit of *all* those different kinds of motorcycles. It's a bike that will fit right in with the boulevard cruisers on a Saturday night; that will give a lot of thoroughbred sportbikes all they can handle on a twisty backroad; and that will devour miles of open highway as easily and comfortably as many bikes that were specifically designed for the job. In other words, the Fazer is simply a high-tech, high-performance reincarnation of the standard motorcycle—that species of go-anywhere, do-anything, all-purpose bikes that has been on the endangered list in recent years.



the throttle. The engine has almost instantaneous throttle response and revs with lightning quickness, sending the tach needle zooming up to the 11,000-rpm redline—and beyond, if you're not careful—in a big hurry. The result is acceleration that's capable of giving the hottest 750-class performance bikes real fits, including Yamaha's own FZ750.

That's pretty impressive, consider-

that brought the displacement down to a tariff-skirting 698cc. Yamaha also reduced the intake-cam lift, decreased the crankshaft inertia, and designed a new exhaust system. All tolled, these engine changes put the Fazer 13 horses down on the FZ; but they were intended to give this all-purpose motorcycle a torquier, less radical powerband than the super-sporty FZ.

And indeed they do. The Fazer has tremendous low-end and mid-range punch—more, even, than the FZ, which is one of the torquiest 750s in the business. The Fazer's powerband is much wider and smoother, and the bike is easier to control as a result. The engine pulls smoothly, strongly and relentlessly no matter what the rpm, from down around idle all the way up to redline, in any gear. Gear choice, therefore, is not crucial, allowing you to spend more time riding and less time *thinking* about riding.

The Fazer also handles magnificently, but in this case, it owes nothing to the FZ750. Yamaha designed the chassis specifically for this machine, using twin-shock rear suspension, slower steering geometry than on the FZ, and a box-section frame that routes the front downtubes inboard of the two outer exhaust pipes, rather than outboard as on the FZ. The front wheel is a 16-inch, in keeping with current sportbike fashion; but with its 15-inch diameter and automotive-like, solid-disc-type design, the rear wheel seems more like something you'd find on a cruiser.

These specifications provide an in-



teresting combination of characteristics. The Fazer's 29-degree steering angle and 4.5 inches of trail give the bike good stability at speed; yet its small-diameter wheels and relatively low center of gravity allow it to feel and handle much like a middleweight sportbike. The steering is light and responsive, with no twitchiness evident at any time, and the bike always goes right where it is pointed.

Out on a backroad at full-tilt sport-



That versatility gives the Fazer a lot of appeal to a lot of riders, but most of them will be seduced first and foremost by the performance of its engine. The bike is phenomenally quick, so much so that it startles everyone the first time they whack open

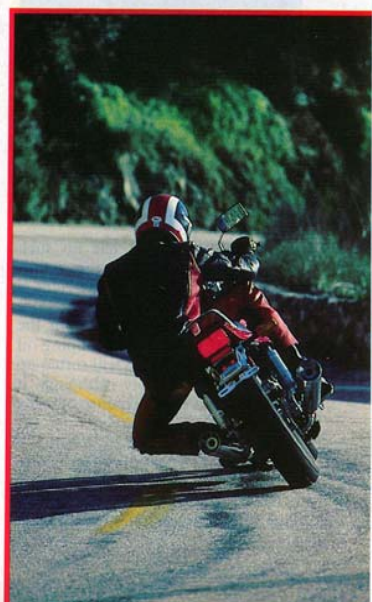
ing that the Fazer is only a 700. But then, its engine is based on the awesomely fast FZ750 powerplant, so it comes from good stock. The biggest difference is that the five-valve-per-cylinder, liquid-cooled inline-Four was given a 3.6mm-shorter stroke



riding speeds, the Fazer feels right at home. It dives into corners as willingly as the best sportbikes, and its sticky tires help it stay on the selected line as though controlled by a computer program. In fact, anyone on a full-on 750cc sportbike will have to

work *hard* to stay ahead of this 700cc all-purpose bike. Even on a roadrace track, the Fazer cuts laps and turns times that would do most pure-sport machines proud.

At or near racetrack-levels of cornering, however, one of this bike's



FAZER

very few performance weaknesses comes to light: Its rear shocks are a bit short of rebound damping. They also have no damping adjusters. So when the suspension is compressed fairly far, as it is during flat-out cornering, the rear end tends to rebound too quickly. No wobbles or wiggles result, but the rider is aware that the rear end has momentarily lost the firmly planted feel it previously had.

What's more, the rear suspension also delivers a less-than-plush ride. There's not an abundance of travel in the rear, and the shocks seem unable to respond to sharp, abrupt little bumps. Sections of highway made up of uneven concrete slabs, for instance, can set up a rhythmic, up-and-down jarring that can prove tir-



The shocks resemble the once-popular Fox Airshox, but they're actually just upside-down deCarbon dampers with covers over their coil springs.

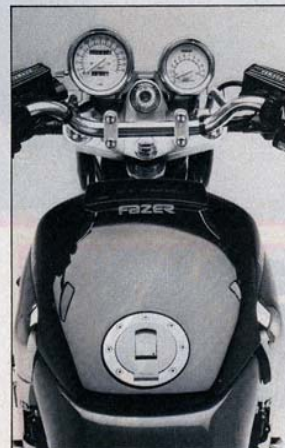
ing if it continues for very long. The ride is decent on bigger, more gradual bumps, but it can be fatiguing over the little, choppy ones.

Up front, the fork has no such problems, generally offering a firm but non-abusive ride. If the rider is not of the knee-dragging persuasion, he can bleed a bit of air from the tubes and lower the damping-oil level 10mm or so. This will soften up the ride considerably, although it does so at the slight expense of some corner-carving agility.

Obviously, the suspension is one of the few places where the Fazer's competence as an all-around motorcycle is flawed. But that's certainly not the case with its ergonomics, which seem

suitable for practically any kind of riding. The seating position is neither a laid-back cruiser slouch nor a canted-forward sportbike crouch, but instead is a nice compromise between the two. It offers excellent leverage on the not-too-wide, not-too-high handlebar, and the rider is not so upright that he has to hold himself up in the wind at cruising speeds. The bar/seat/footpeg relationship is roomy enough to keep anyone close to average in size from being cramped on short rides or fatigued on long ones. The seat is intelligently designed, too, with no hard edges or ridges, and it is stuffed with foam that is firm without being hard. Consequently, you can spend long days in the saddle without looking for a chiropractor every night.

Another key part of the Fazer's comfort-and-convenience package is its rubber engine-mounting system, which does a wonderful job of isolating vibration from the rider. Sometimes the Fazer is so silky-smooth that you can hear the engine but can't feel it in the least.



The tank-top location of the indicator lights helps keep the gauge area uncluttered, but the panel is situated far below the rider's normal line of vision.

You can read about it, though, on the Fazer's 12,000-rpm tachometer, which has the same white face as the 150-mph speedometer but is about 20 percent smaller. Still, that's no more unusual than putting the temperature gauge and all the warning lights in a low, wide pod atop the Fazer's gas tank. The pod looks stylish, but requires the rider to dip his



The area around the steering head is cluttered with various hoses and screens, and the radiator looks too wide for the rest of the bike.

eyes quite a bit below his normal field of vision.

Anyway, the part of the bike normally called the fuel tank really isn't—not all of it, at least. The front part of the "tank" is actually just a covering for the Fazer's airbox; the fuel is contained in the rear segment, which extends downward between the carburetors and the front of the seat. The odd shape and location of the tank prompted Yamaha to use an electrically triggered fuel petcock that could have its On/Reserve switch located up on the right side of the handlebar, where it's easy to reach quickly when the main tank runs dry.

That atypical fuel-tank arrangement, which is fundamentally the same as the FZ750's, was dictated by the near-vertical positioning of the carburetors. The use of the FZ750 powerplant in the Fazer also played a key role in determining the bike's overall appearance; any unfaired motorcycle built around such an unusual engine is bound to look, well, different. And the Fazer is nothing if not different-looking.

It's so different-looking, in fact, that a lot of people simply write it off at first sight, without ever giving it a chance to live or die on the strength of its performance. That's why we recommend a test ride on one: The Fazer is so competent, so exciting, so much out-and-out fun to ride that just a few minutes on one is guaranteed to alter your perception of the bike—and alter it for the better. That's the one thing on which everyone who rides the bike agrees. ☐

YAMAHA FZX700 FAZER

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

List price	\$3499
Importer	Yamaha Motors Corp., U.S.A. 6555 Katella Ave Cypress, CA 90650
Customer service phone	(714) 761-7439
Warranty	12 mo./unlimited mi.

CHASSIS

Weight:	
Tank empty	473 lb.
Tank full	495 lb.
Weight distribution, front/rear, percent:	
Tank empty	46.8/53.2
Tank full	47.2/52.8
Fuel capacity	3.2 gal.
Wheelbase	60.7 in.
Rake/trail	28.7°/4.6 in.
Handlebar width	28.5 in.
Seat height	29.7 in.
Ground clearance	6.2 in.
GVWR	980 lb.
Load capacity (tank full)	486 lb.

DRIVETRAIN

Engine	liquid-cooled, four-stroke inline Four
Bore x stroke	68.0 x 48.0mm
Displacement	698cc
Compression ratio	11.1:1
Claimed power	87 bhp @ 9500 rpm
Claimed torque	50.0 lb.-ft. @ 8000 rpm
Valve train	dohc, five valves per cyl., shim-under-tappet adjustment

Valve adjustment intervals	26,600 mi.
Carburetion	(4) 34mm Mikuni CV
Air filter	dry paper
Lubrication	wet sump
Oil capacity	3.7 qt.
Starter	electric
Primary drive	spur gears
Clutch	wet multi-plate
Final drive	chain
Sprocket sizes	16/44

Gear ratios, overall:1	
1st	15.21
2nd	11.41
3rd	9.22
4th	7.82
5th	6.62
6th	5.89

ELECTRICAL

Electrical power	300w @ 5000 rpm
Battery	12v, 14ah
Headlight	quartz halogen

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION

Time to distance:	
1/4 mi.	11.83 sec. @ 114.94 mph
Time to speed, sec.	
0-30 mph	1.3
0-40 mph	1.9
0-50 mph	2.5
0-60 mph	3.2
0-70 mph	4.2
0-80 mph	5.3
0-90 mph	6.9
0-100 mph	8.7

Top gear time to speed, sec.	
40-60 mph	4.0
60-80 mph	4.8

SPEED IN GEARS

Measured top speed	134 mph
Calculated at 11,000 rpm redline:	
1st gear	52 mph
2nd	70 mph
3rd	86 mph
4th	102 mph
5th	120 mph
6th	135 mph

Engine speed at 60 mph	4890 rpm
------------------------	----------

FUEL MILEAGE

High/low/avg.	50/39/44 mpg
Avg. range inc. reserve	142 mi.

BRAKING DISTANCE

from 30 mph	31 ft.
from 60 mph	113 ft.

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated	29 mph
60 mph indicated	57 mph

