

NOT JUST ANOTHER PRETTY PHASE

YAMAHA FZX700 FAZER

You remember the "standard" models, right? All but gone now, standards once ruled the roads, whether they were twisty or dead straight. At a time when the thought of factory customs or faired sport bikes was deemed too outrageous to be successful, the standards were the recipients of the best technology. And they were wonderful motorcycles. In their era, bikes like Honda's CB-F series, the Suzuki GS-E machines and the Kawasaki KZs were truest to the formula.

It wasn't a complicated recipe: just have your engineers design the best in-line four you figure customers can afford. The motor was bolted into a well-refined, chain-drive chassis that provided a completely upright riding position. Styling was largely a last-minute thing; semi-pleasing shapes were dreamed up for all the conventional pieces, but the comfort of the seat or the capacity of the fuel tank was not compromised. After all, standards were supposed to do everything well, without excuse. The buyers would never put up with skimpy seats or tiny tanks for the sake of a little style, or so the reasoning used to go.

As it turns out, buyers *will* put up with

all sorts of weird inconveniences and quirks in the name of style. In fact, they demand style, often without regard for its functional consequences. Today, the standard bikes have faded away among droves of polarized styling ideas; we've got full-dress bikes, faired sport bikes, cruisers and Musclebikes.

This year Yamaha has pulled the wraps off the FZX700S Fazer, which at first glance looks like the first example of yet another new and specialized class of machinery. Look deeper, though, and the undeniable *standardness* of the machine becomes clear. Sure enough, Yamaha is slipping us a new version of the old standard formula, only this time it's shrouded under a wild moto-tart styl-

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PHOTO: DEXTER FORD LEATHERS: YAMAHA ACCESSORIES BOOTS: BATES



PHOTO: PATRICK BROLIER

Sturdy-looking wheels are made from cast aluminum, then machined to their final dimensions. The rear disc is vented; shocks adjust for spring preload only.

The Fazer is a responsive handler and has more consistent steering feel than the faster FZ750. With premium tires, the Fazer would make an excellent sport bike.

ing treatment. Yamaha wisely realized that nobody was bored with how those nice old standard bikes worked, just with how they looked. The Fazer's appearance is by no means boring. Yamaha intends the Fazer to bridge the gap between pure sport bikes and what it calls Modern American Cruisers. It calls the result the American Sport Class. The idea is to create a parallel to the Toyota Supra and Nissan 300ZX in the automotive world. The Fazer is intended to offer a high level of sporting performance combined with plenty of style.

Underneath its styling, the Fazer is a standard built with some of Yamaha's best technology. Power comes from a version of the FZ750 five-valve engine, retuned for more low-end and midrange power. Small-diameter wheels and nimble steering characteristics ensure a level of steering response the old standards never enjoyed. There's even a real seat and a livable sit-up riding position. The only standard rule broken is fuel capacity; the Fazer's hidden fuel tank holds just 3.4 gallons, necessitating fuel stops not long after the 100-mile mark. The Fazer is positioned as the second most serious performer in Yamaha's 700 to

750 lineup, just behind the FZ but ahead of the Maxim and Maxim X.

Wild, multipanel bodywork in a variety of colors and surface finishes make the Fazer's appearance the subject of discussion wherever it's parked. Yamaha's stylists have been taking the biggest chances recently, and their daring has reached its peak in the Fazer. Traditionally clear-cut styling elements like the fuel tank and side panels aren't traditional looking here. On the Fazer, these parts have new boundaries and relationships; the proportions look new, and yet the motorcycle's silhouette is comfortably familiar.

The main styling licks are the simulated air-intake scoops. First seen on the V-Max last year, Yamaha's scoops are becoming increasingly stylized and abstract. On the V-Max, the scoops were made of businesslike brushed aluminum. They were utterly fake, of course, but they looked believable. On the Fazer, the pseudoscoops have a more angular basic shape and are made of chromed steel stampings. No effort has been made to make these panels look like functional air scoops; now they only function as abstract chrome reminders

PHOTO: JEFF KARR

YAMAHA FZX700 FAZER

Suggested retail price: \$3499

Warranty: 12 months, unlimited miles

Number of U.S. dealers: 1500

Recommended maintenance intervals: 3800 miles

ENGINE

Type: Liquid-cooled, in-line, transverse 4-stroke four

Valve arrangement: DOHC, 5 valves; adjusting shims under buckets

Displacement: 697cc

Bore x stroke: 68.0 x 48.0mm

Compression ratio: 11.2:1

Carburetion: 4, 34mm Mikuni downdraft constant-velocity

Ignition: Battery-powered, electronically triggered

Lubrication: Wet sump, 3.7 qt

Charging output: 300 watts

Battery: 12V, 14AH

DRIVETRAIN

Primary transmission: Straight-cut gears, 1.896:1

Clutch: Wet, multi-plate

Final drive: No. 530 O-ring chain, 44/16

Gear	Internal ratio	mph per 1000 rpm	mph at redline (11,000)
1	2.293	4.8	53
2	2.187	6.4	70
3	1.777	7.9	87
4	1.500	9.4	103
5	1.272	11.0	121
6	1.125	12.5	137

CHASSIS

Front suspension: 38mm Kayaba, 5.5 in. travel; adjustment for air pressure

Rear suspension: Dual Kayaba dampers, 3.8 in. wheel travel; adjustment for spring preload

Front brake: 2, double-action calipers, 267mm discs

Rear brake: Double-action caliper, 267mm disc

Front wheel: 2.50 x 16 in.; cast aluminum

Rear wheel: 3.00 x 15 in.; cast aluminum

Front tire: 110/90V16 Dunlop K355F

Rear tire: 140/90V15 Dunlop K355

Rake/trail: 29.0°/4.6 in. (117mm)

Wheelbase: 59.8 in. (1520mm)

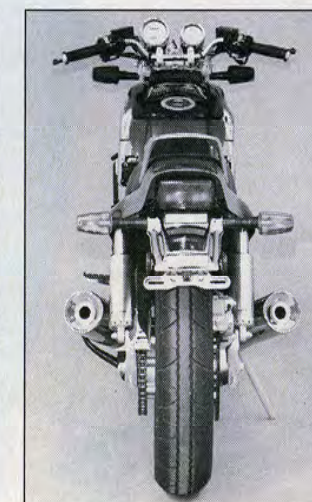
Seat height, unladen: 29.5 in. (749mm)

Seat height, with 160-lb rider: 27.9 in. (709mm)

Fuel capacity: 3.4 gal (13L)

Weight: 489 lb (222kg) wet; 469 lb (213kg) tank empty

Colors: Red or silver



Instruments: Speedometer, tachometer, tripmeter, odometer, coolant temperature gauge; lights for neutral, low oil level, high beam, turn signals, low fuel level

Speedometer error: 30 mph, actual 28.6; 60 mph, actual 56.8

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption: 33 to 52 mpg, 40.1 mpg avg.

Average touring range: 136 miles

Average 200-yd. top-gear acceleration

from 50 mph: 78.7 mph terminal speed

Best 1/4-mile acceleration: 11.80 sec., 114.1 mph

Projected best 1/4-mile acceleration*: 11.45 sec., 117.7 mph

*Projected performance with test-session weather conditions corrected to sea level standard conditions (59 degrees F, 29.92 in. of mercury)

	1986 Yamaha FZX700S	1986 Yamaha FZ750	1985 Yamaha XJ700XN	1986 Honda CB700SC
Price	\$3499	\$4599	\$3499	\$3398
Projected quarter-mile sec./mph*	11.45/117.7	11.05/122.2	11.97/109.5	12.46/106.2
Wet weight	489 lb	525 lb	523 lb	525 lb
High-speed pass, terminal speed	78.7 mph	75.9 mph	71.9 mph	69.5 mph
Average fuel consumption	40.1 mpg	39.8 mpg	44.1 mpg	38.2 mpg
Average touring range	136 miles	211 miles	150 miles	160 miles

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of a nonfunctional styling part on another motorcycle.

In our experience, the response to the scoops seems related to the viewer's technical knowledge. Those new to motorcycles and technology in general were pleased with the look, and enjoyed the flash and glitter of the chrome and brightwork. Viewers with a strong technical background were more put off. These people are always suspicious of chrome; no serious piece of machinery is ever chromed, after all. To them, bolting on fake scoops is as ludicrous as hanging several false superchargers on the engine—and chroming them. And indeed the logic seems a bit cockeyed. The Fazer already has the most sophisticated production piston engine available *anywhere*. Embellishing this jewel further with fake scoops seems superfluous.

Unlike the Maxim X motor which uses an FZ-style top end on a Maxim shaft-drive lower end, the Fazer is almost FZ

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tech all the way. The Fazer is a standard, remember, and needs the more efficient chain final drive if it is to offer serious sporting ability. It also inherits the FZ's six-speed transmission instead of the five-speeders found in the cruisers. The gearbox works beautifully in the Fazer; paired with a hydraulically actuated clutch, the transmission clicks through the gears with satisfying quickness.

To shrink the Fazer down into the 700 class, the cylinder bores were left alone, but the stroke was reduced, as on the Maxim X. The new short-stroke crank has less mass to keep the Fazer engine's flywheel effect on about a par with that of the FZ. Slightly longer connecting rods are paired with Maxim X pistons, and the compression ratio is the same as that used in all of Yamaha's five-valve engines. As part of the effort to give the Fazer better low- and mid-rpm power than the FZ, designers reduced the Fazer's intake valve lift a touch but left the exhaust lift alone. The exhaust system is new, but the four Mikuni downdraft con-



PHOTO: JEFF KARR

stant-velocity carburetors are essentially the same as those on the FZ.

Overall, these few changes are enough to make the Fazer the nicest power producer in Yamaha's 700 to 750 lineup, though there is a flaw that partially offsets that advantage out on the street. At the dragstrip, the Fazer is not as speedy as the FZ, but it does very well considering that it gives up 50cc of displacement. It has a substantial margin over the Maxim X and a huge edge over the air-cooled Maxim. The only other motorcycle that might be considered in the Fazer's class, the Honda Nighthawk S (shaft drive means it's not really a standard), is way off the Fazer's pace too. In a top-gear roll-on from an actual 50 mph, the Fazer comes away looking even better. Its 78.6-mph average terminal speed easily whips all the bikes mentioned here. That's almost 10 mph faster than the Nighthawk, about 6 mph up on the Maxim and Maxim X and about 1 mph faster than the FZ750.

Even though its performance figures were very impressive, our Fazer set a new record for overly sensitive throttle response. We've complained over the

More cornering clearance would be nice, but a good rider can get around that problem by hanging off. Suspension action could be improved with some work.

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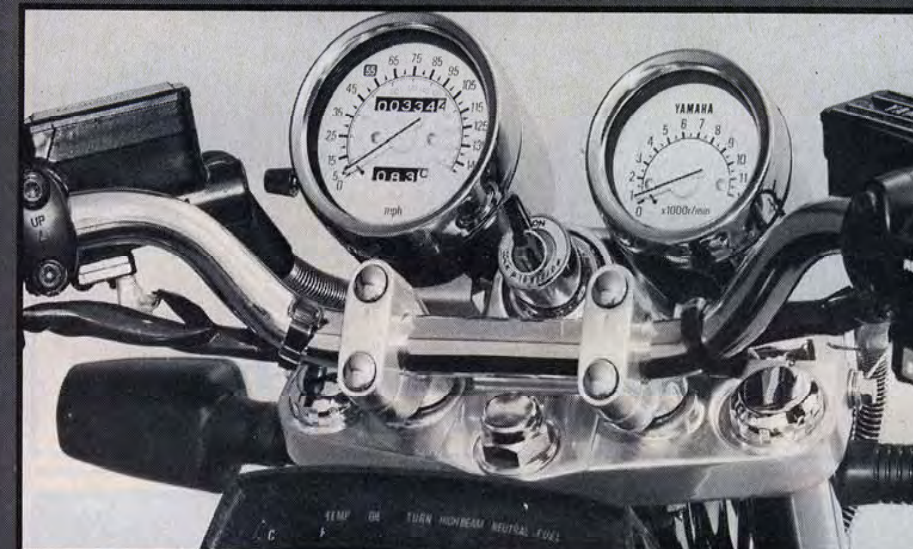
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years about some constant-velocity carbs' tendency to be too sensitive to throttle-grip movement, but the Fazer's jerkiness is almost beyond belief. Smooth throttle control is no problem on most motorcycles, but it's a big problem on this one. Cruising along at a steady speed, the *slightest* change in throttle position (we're talking about .05-inch measured at the edge of the throttle grip's thumb guard) immediately results in a speed change of several miles per hour. On a very smooth road such exacting throttle control isn't hard to manage. As soon as pavement bumps are introduced into the equation, though, it becomes an almost impossible task. The Yamaha's suspension compliance is only average, so the rider gets a small sample of every bump he rides over. Over broken pavement, the Fazer's revs jump around like those of a motocross bike pounding over rough ground.

The jittery throttle response is mainly a problem around town or while cruising the highway; any place you need to hold a constant, small throttle opening. Our testers' reaction to the sudden throttle response varied. Some found it very annoying at times, while others were hardly bothered. Blazing along back roads, where the throttle is mostly all-on or all-off, all of our riders felt the sudden re-



For the sake of variety, the tachometer is smaller than the speedometer. Idiot lights are mounted atop the false fuel tank, just out of easy view for the rider.



The Fazer's styling tends toward the more radical end of the spectrum, with a wide variety of textures and shapes. There's no shortage of chrome or glitter.

PHOTOS: PATRICK BROLIER

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sponse was only a minor factor. Greater care must be exercised when cornering at partial throttle, but that can be managed. The FZ750s we've tested have had somewhat abrupt throttle response, but not nearly as bad as our Fazer. In all other respects, the Fazer's engine performs beautifully.

In terms of chassis design, the Fazer borrows more heavily from the FZ than the Maxims. It's got a little front wheel like the FZ, and the frame is constructed of box-section steel. The steering geometry has been slowed down from FZ spec, but a wider handlebar and a more upright riding position boost the rider's

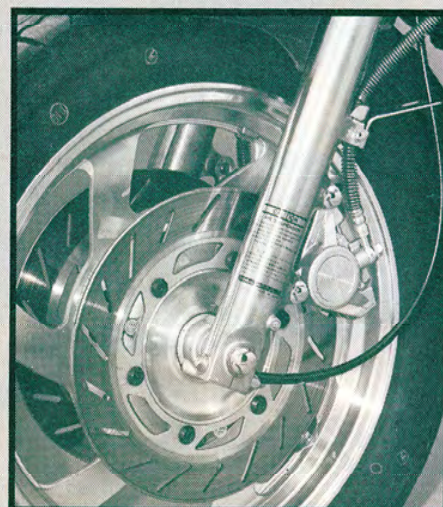


PHOTO: PATRICK BROLIER

Though the discs are the same diameter as those on the FZ750, these are slotted, not vented. Paired with double-action calipers, they're strong and fade resistant.

leverage for steering inputs. The result is very light, responsive steering characteristics. The relatively narrow 110/90 front tire also helps to keep steering effort low and contributes to the Fazer's neutrality while minimizing the stand-up tendency under braking. It doesn't put as much rubber on the ground as the FZ's 120/80 Bridgestone, but isn't as heavily loaded by the weight of a fairing and forward-crouching rider.

The Fazer can be banked over pretty respectably before planting its pegs in the pavement, though not as far as the best sport bikes. The Dunlops at both ends are predictable but not serious sport tires. The suspension keeps its composure when the metal starts to drag. The dual rear shocks with their enclosed springs have enough rebound damping for fast, fun riding but can be heated into temporary limpness by continuous pounding. You won't find any anti-dive system on the front fork, but you will find a surplus of compression damping. The fork (and to a certain extent the rear suspension) is needlessly harsh over sharp bumps. The spring rates are close to the mark, though, and the fork is air-adjustable should you want to experiment.

Overall, the Fazer is a very responsive

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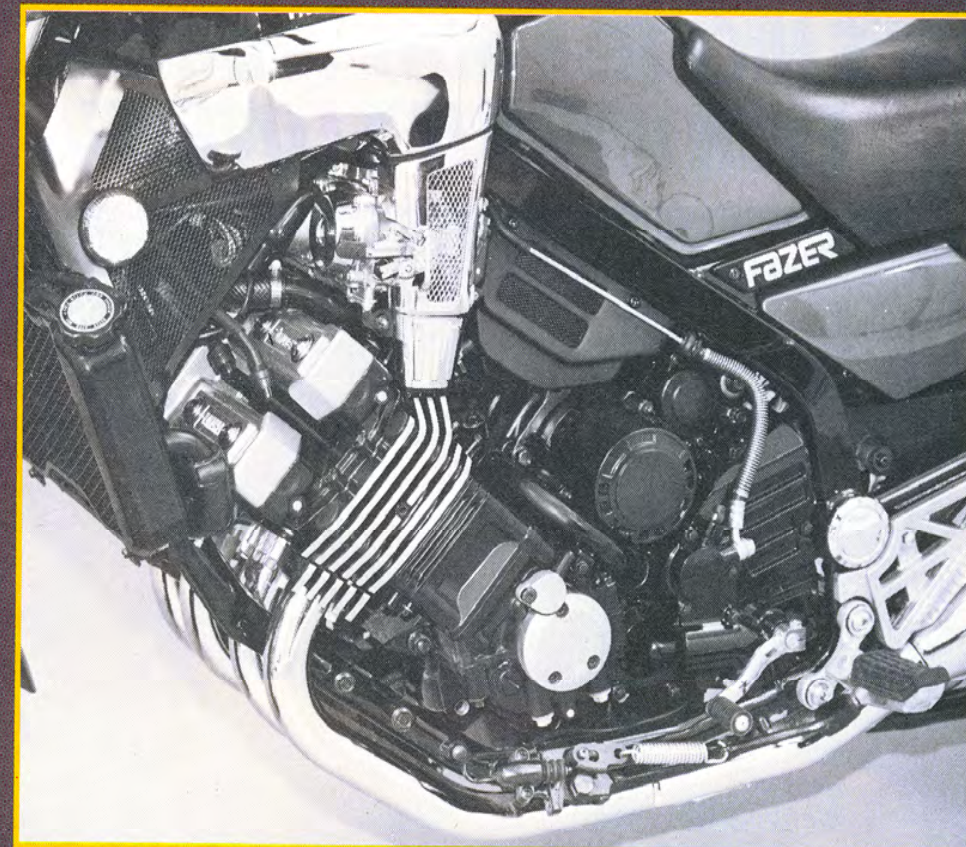
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Power comes from a slightly detuned FZ engine; chain final drive and a six-speed transmission help the bike to run faster than the shaft-drive Maxim and Maxim X.

The box-section swingarm is constructed from steel, even though it's painted to look like aluminum. The sturdy passenger grab handle is actually aluminum.



motorcycle. The controls need only light, but precise, touches to get the job done. Two fingers or less will lock the dual front disc brakes and only mild countersteering force is needed to snap the Fazer over into a corner. Shifts are close

to instantaneous, as is throttle response. Anything you might like to try, the Fazer is ready to do *right now*.

One of the traditional strong points of standard motorcycles has always been their overall comfort. The Fazer comes

OFF THE RECORD

● **I don't notice the styling on the Fazer, and I'll tell you why.** To me, cruisers or Musclebikes will never be beautiful, stylish or even ugly. Anything with this much chrome has got to be a cruiser. I understand why others like them and accept their reasons. For me, sport bikes, cafe racers and even race bikes are the species to be judged on beauty and style. If the cruiser works as well in a street environment as the Fazer does, I like it. I'll never love it or loath it as I do some sport bikes; I'll merely judge it on merit.

—Nick Ienatsch

● **I'm not in love with its looks, but there's a lot of excitement packaged beneath the Fazer's chrome-plated skin.** The FZ motor is there in force, and while the seating position isn't committed to either the sport or cruising crowd, it is close enough to the V-Max's predatory stance to keep me happy. Twisty roads are as negotiable as the back streets, and with soft luggage, the Yamaha might be a half-decent sport-tourer. Styling might be open to debate, but function certainly is not. And while the Fazer's appearance doesn't thrill me, I can't fault its function.

—Mitch Boehm

● **Count me as one of those people who's not going for the Fazer's styling treatment.** Every time I look at the thing, I find myself formulating ways to fill in the random seams in the bodywork with Bondo or replace the drapelike tailpiece with something more pleasing. And, of course, the chrome scoops would have to go. At about that time in my daydreaming, it dawns on me that there is a simpler way of getting what I want in a motorcycle. News flash: Simply buy the motorcycle that looks and works the way you like in stock form.

—Jeff Karr

● **When the eager planners and shakers at Yamaha rolled the Fazer out the first time, in the Hamamatsu factory's super-secret styling analysis room, the English-speaking motorcycle press held its collective breath.** Who would be the guy who would actually tell them? Suffice it to say that the Fazer's bodywork recalls an earlier era of Japanese pop culture—the school of thought that gave us such classics as *Godzilla Meets the Smog Monster*.

The basics of the bike are strong enough to give the frantic Japanese Defense Force soldiers quite a tussle,

though. The engine is great, once you get by the hair-trigger throttle response at small throttle openings. The chassis works, even on the racetrack, but the steering is also on the twitchy side. I always tell the Italian manufacturers that there is no such thing as too-quick steering, but the Fazer has me on the edge of taking that back; between the throttle and the steering, a quick trip in heavy traffic is a great way to hone your concentration to a racer's edge.

If I were in the business of building fairings or accessory bodywork, I'd get me a Fazer, this week, and see what I could do to clean it up. The idea of a Yuppie bike for all-purpose use between the racquetball court and the Sushi bar is a good one, but I hope Yamaha is already back at the drawing board trying to make this one's looks come out right next year.

—Dexter Ford



PHOTO: JEFF KARR



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