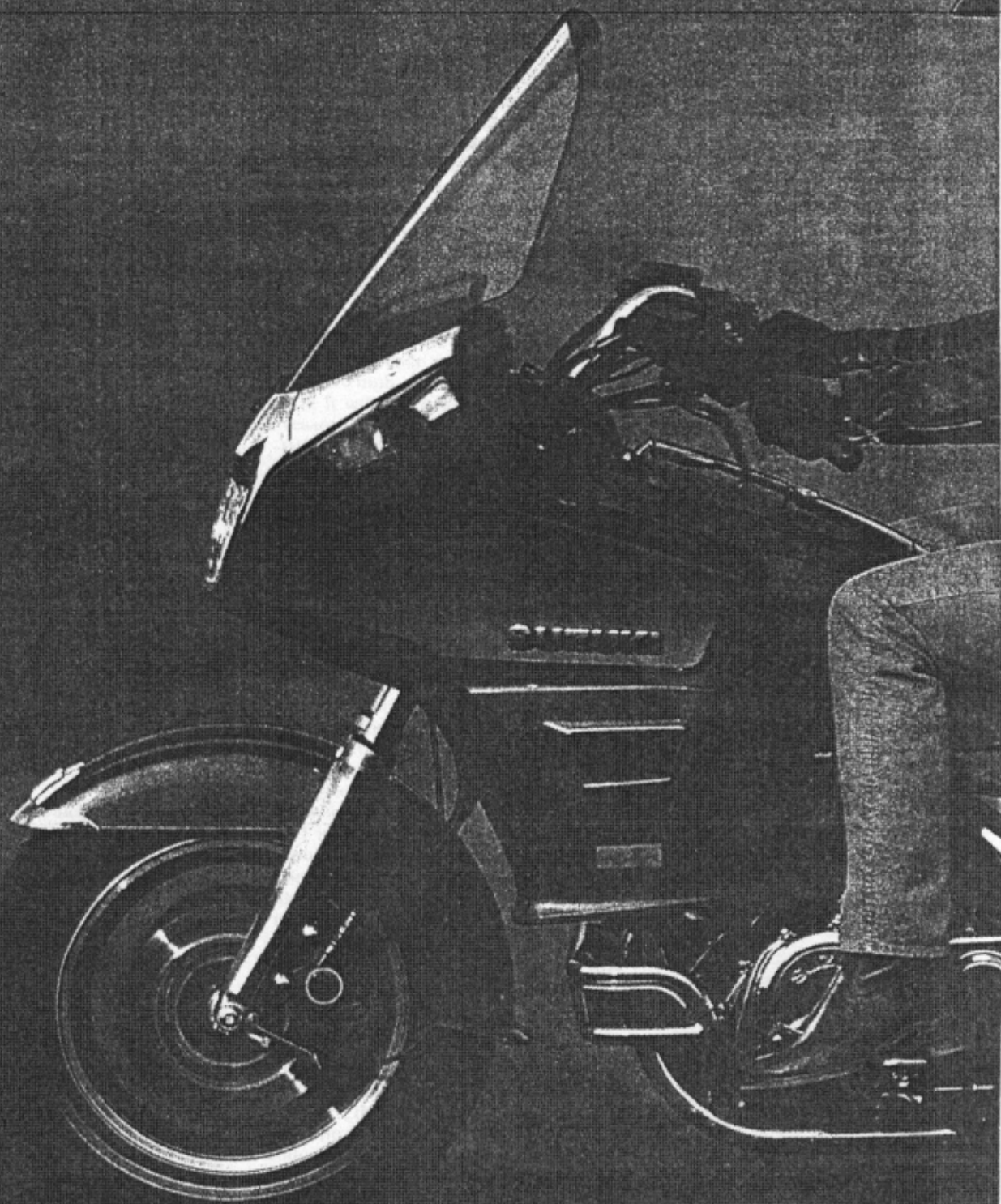
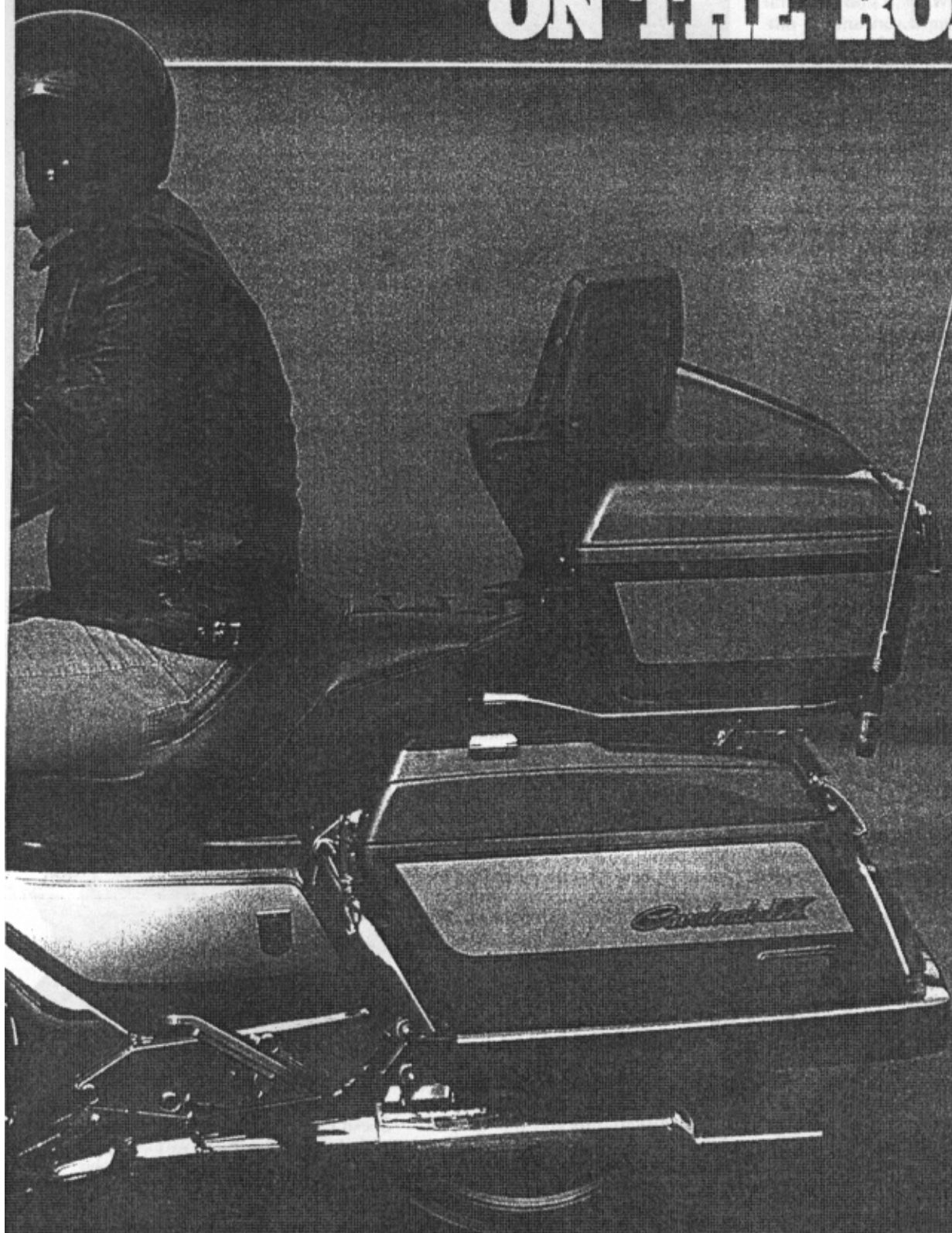




CYCLE WORLD TEST **SUZUKI GV1400** **CAVALCADE**



SUZUKI FINALLY GETS ITS TOURING SHOW ON THE ROAD



PHOTOS BY RICH CHENET

AUGUST 1985/51

IN MOTORCYCLING, AS IN JUST ABOUT any other business, success breeds imitation. It doesn't matter if it's mousetraps, microcomputers or motorcycles; as soon as you start selling them in large quantities, imitations will appear.

So, considering that the touring-bike success story of the last decade is Honda's Gold Wing, it's only natural that a collection of very similar motorcycles has appeared on the scene over the years. The latest one even has a name that mimics that of Honda's touring flagship, the Aspencade. It's called the Cavalcade, and it's Suzuki's all-new tourer.

Actually, some people might even go so far as to call the Suzuki an imitation of an imitation because its engine is similar to the one in the Venture Royale, Yamaha's answer to the Honda Gold Wing. Like the Yamaha, the Suzuki is powered by a liquid-cooled, 16-valve, dohc V-Four with a 180-degree crankshaft. And, of course, just like the latest touring rigs from Honda and Yamaha, the GV1400GD has electronic cruise-control, auto-leveling suspension, and an AM/FM/cassette stereo that includes an automatic volume-increasing feature. (Also available is a lower-priced GT model that is sold without the accessories that are standard on the GD.)

One original aspect of the Cavalcade, though, is its engine size. Suzuki has earned the distinction of building the biggest Japanese motorcycle engine ever, offering 1360cc at the other end of the Cavalcade's throttle cable. Suzuki admits that the main reason for this was just so the Cavalcade could be called the biggest, allowing it to stand out from all the other touring bikes on the road. There also was some consideration given to the fact that having lots of cubic motor can be of great value on a motorcycle that, when fully loaded and ready for the open road, can weigh more than half a ton.

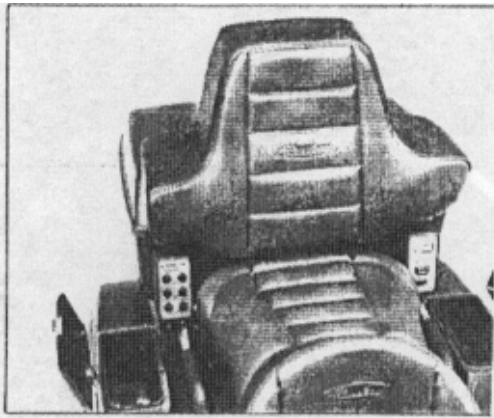
Despite having the biggest motor, however, the Cavalcade is not the fastest touring bike in captivity. That honor belongs to the Venture, which, by virtue of being a bit lighter and more radically tuned, outruns the Suzuki in every way. But Suzuki didn't intend the Cavalcade's displacement as something to help it win races; it's merely meant to help the bike ease on down the road more effortlessly than its competition.

The blood-line of the Cavalcade's 82-degree V-Four powerplant is short, leading back to the Madura 1200 cruiser first introduced a year

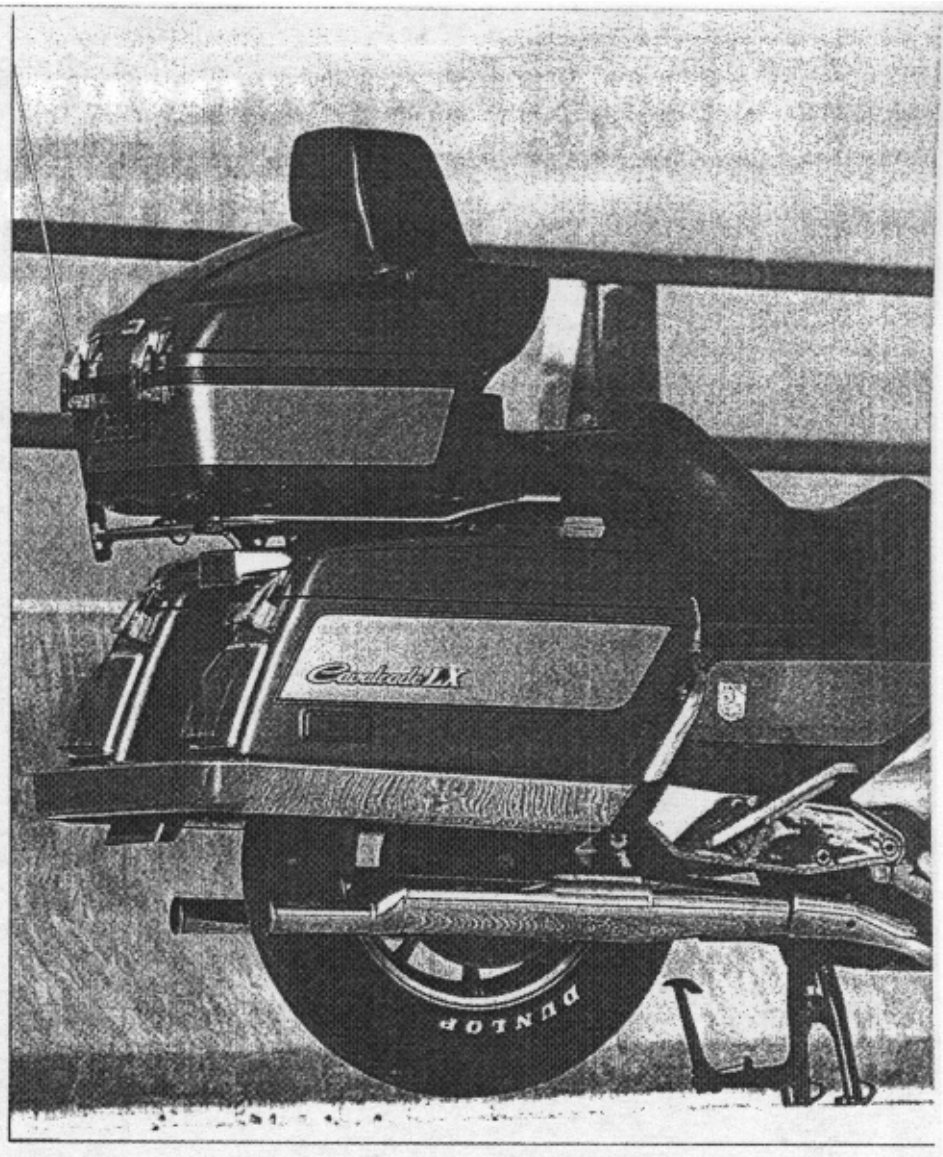
ago. Suzuki started with that 1165cc engine and, through considerable development, wound up with a bored and stroked (81mm by 66mm, vs. 78mm by 61mm on the 1200 Madura) version displacing 1360cc. In the process, the 360-degree Madura crankshaft became a 180-degree unit (for reduced vibration); the six-speed gearbox became a five-speed; and extensive changes in cam timing and compression ratio, along with 1mm smaller carburetors, gave the Cavalcade a broader, smoother powerband better-suited for the interstates.

All things considered, the end result of that development is extremely successful. On the open highway, the Cavalcade's engine displays almost perfect manners. It isn't, perhaps, as quick as Yamaha's Venture, but it's more than a match for any other touring rig and certainly able to blow past any four-wheeler that might wander into its path. And more to the point for a touring bike, the Cavalcade has flexible, usable, always-available power. It's a challenge, in fact, to find

From the three adjustable air cushions in the seat to the remote stereo controls, the Cavalcade's passenger accommodations are the best on the road.



a gear and speed combination that doesn't work. If the rpm is too low and the gear too high, just opening the throttle causes the bike to accelerate—not viciously, but it accelerates nonetheless. It pulls from way down low, and revs comfortably to its





Overall, the Cavalcade is one big motorcycle that, size-wise, fits somewhere above the Honda and Yamaha touring rigs but below the Kawasaki.

count the engine as the Suzuki's second-strongest attribute.

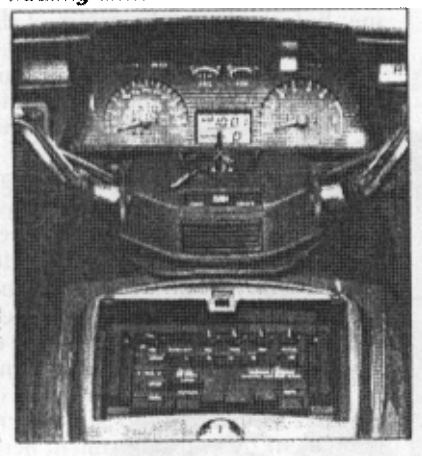
Its *strongest* point is found under the general heading of comfort, for the Cavalcade seems as though it could make a tour through hell a pleasant experience. The riding position is roomy and spread-out; the distance between footpegs and seat is generous; the handlebar (which can be moved to either of two fore-and-aft positions simply by reversing the mounting pedestals) positions the grips in the right place; and the seat is as plush and comfortable as any OEM touring saddle in existence.

Still, much of the credit for the bike's exceptional comfort must go to the suspension. There's nothing unique about the twin-shock rear end or the ordinary front fork that doesn't even offer any valves for adjusting air pressure; but that doesn't keep the Cavalcade from being one of the smoothest-riding bikes ever. Out on the road, the Suzuki makes its rider feel absolutely pampered by keeping him almost completely insulated from the bumps and jolts that can jar and jiggle a long trip into a dreary, interminable grind. That even holds true when there's a passenger along for the ride. The 1400 maintains its suspension composure so well in two-up situations that at times it's easy to forget that you're riding tandem.

Playing no small part in the Cavalcade's two-up stability is the auto-leveling rear suspension system. With the bike stationary, a press of a button on the fairing causes an on-board air compressor to automatically increase or decrease the air pressure in both rear shocks until the bike reaches a predetermined ride height. That can be an especially handy feature for riding with heavy loads or when pulling a trailer.

Once again, though, the Suzuki isn't perfect. Unlike Honda's auto-leveling system, the Suzuki's doesn't tell you what it's *doing* to the suspension. You don't know if the air pressure is increasing or decreasing, or at what level it finally settles. And there's no easy provision for doing a little suspension fine-tuning on your own. Admittedly, the need never arose for such an adjustment during our test, but there's something unsettling about a bike that decides what's right for you, and then doesn't even tell you the details of that decision. >

The location of the AM/FM/cassette unit in the dummy fuel tank makes on-the-road radio fiddling difficult.

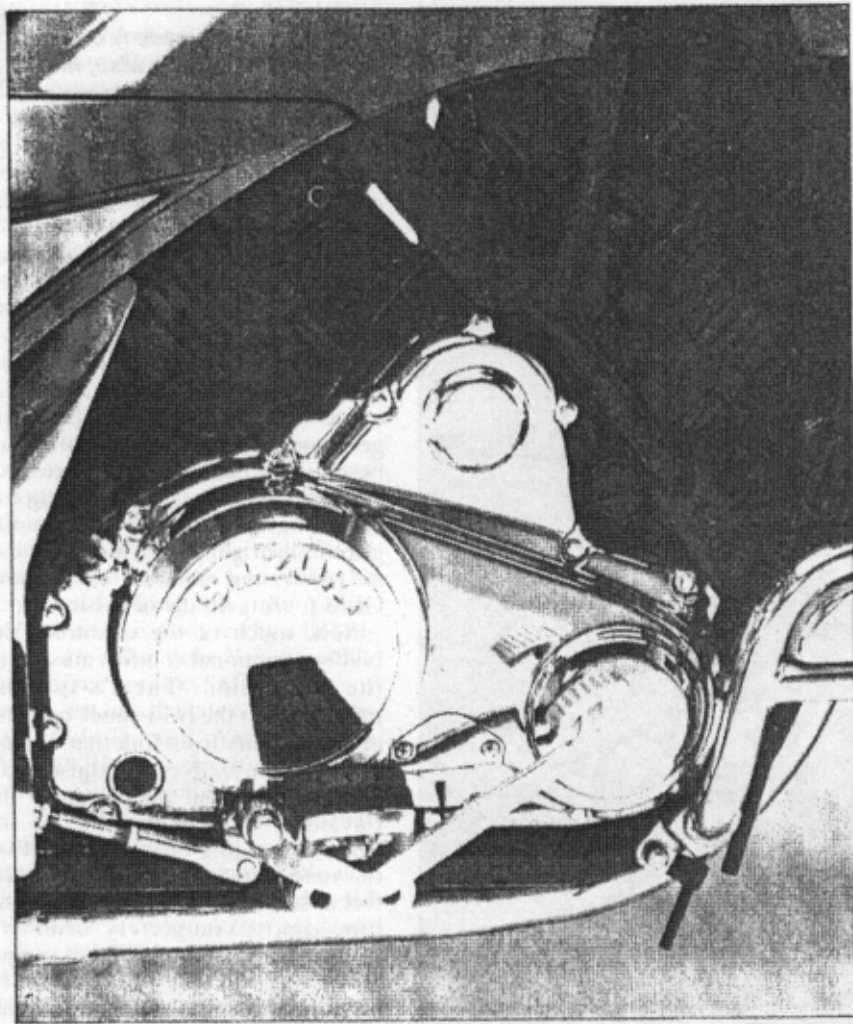


7000-rpm redline.

In addition, the Cavalcade is relaxingly smooth throughout that rpm range. Many other touring bikes might be able to match the Suzuki for smoothness, but only at certain engine rpm or road speeds. The Suzuki,

however, is extraordinarily smooth at all speeds, whether poking through traffic just above idle rpm or burning along at its 115-mph top speed—or anywhere in between. At lower revs there is a gentle pulsation that is a by-product of the V-motor's unevenly spaced firing sequence, but it is a non-debilitating, almost enjoyable sort of throbbing. And when the throttle is rolled off, the Cavalcade never rumbles, vibrates or backfires as some bikes do on deceleration.

There is, however, one area in which the Suzuki engine falls short, not only of Yamaha's and Honda's touring bikes, but even of its mother bike, the Madura: shifting. The 1200 was never renowned for its shifting prowess, and the Cavalcade seems likely to keep that reputation intact. Shifting up or down into any gear is met with a crunch, with the jump from first to second a particular offender. And the shift lever requires a solid yank before it even considers giving you a new ratio. But if you can overlook that shifting glitch, you can



The GV1400 engine began life as a 1200, eventually becoming a 1360—and one of the most pleasing motors in all of touring.

Your traveling companion probably won't care about that, though, because the Cavalcade G1D far and away has the best passenger accommodations in the business. The buddy seat has three built-in, inflatable cushions—two on the backrest, one on the passenger seat itself—that can be pumped up or bled down to fit different body contours simply by pushing the appropriate button on a panel at the right-front of the tour trunk. A similar panel on the left side lets the passenger change the radio station and volume. A lever under the trunk permits the co-rider's backrest to be adjusted back and forth to any one of four positions, and a lever on the left-side grab rail adjusts the passenger footboards to either of two positions. So in one fell swoop, Suzuki has elevated back-seat riding to something higher than second-class status. It almost offers all the comforts of home.

Unfortunately, at low speed, the Cavalcade also *handles* something like a two-wheeled home. The bike is so massive that it's hard to maneuver gracefully as you're coming to or pulling away from a dead stop. With time you can learn to minimize the

amount of wavering and weaving you go through at speeds under 10 or 15 mph, but the feeling of low-speed instability and tippiness never completely goes away.

And, in fact, there even are high-speed, open-road situations in which the Suzuki's stability is unimpressive. Riding over rain grooves or along longitudinal paving joints can induce the kind of twitching that was common back in the early Seventies but is rare these days. The Cavalcade uses the same front-tire tread pattern as do many of Japan's heavyweight streetbikes, so the problem would seem to be in the bike, not the rubber. The Suzuki also tends to wander about in heavy winds. All large, faired touring bikes have this basic trait, but the 1400 is affected by wind more than most because it's bigger than most. The oversized fairing catches the wind like a big foresail.

But as large as that fairing is, it doesn't offer superior protection. The windscreen is exceptionally high and wide, but it's so far away from the rider that he gets subjected to quite a bit of buffeting anyway. And because Suzuki's designers were concerned

about the amount of engine heat a rider often must endure on a liquid-cooled motorcycle, they decided not to equip the Cavalcade's fairing with lowers. That's dandy in nice weather, but when the conditions turn either wet or cold, so do the rider's and feet.

This isn't the only area in which Suzuki didn't pay enough attention to the details. The cruise control, for example, is extremely accurate and has all of the state-of-the-art features (Resume, Accelerate, Decelerate, etc.), but the Decelerate function works abruptly and makes adjusting down to a lower speed a hit-and-miss affair. Likewise, the Clarion stereo system is full of glitches. The radio's location in the pseudo gas tank requires too much eyes-off-road time, and the various buttons—although quite large—offer little feel to anyone wearing even fairly heavy gloves. Further, it's practically impossible to get the auto-volume knob adjusted so the sound level is right at any two given speeds; the fidelity of the sound is not exceptional; and there is no easy-access place in the fairing for the storage of cassettes.

That's too bad. Because were it not for details such as these, the Cavalcade could easily set a new all-around standard for big-rig touring bikes. In most of the major categories, such as engine performance, overall smoothness and ride quality, the Suzuki is without peer. Granted, some of the big areas still need some attention, such as low-speed maneuverability, high-speed stability and ease of shifting; but it's the inadequacies of the little things that make the difference. Because after you've had to put up with them for three weeks on the road, little things that aren't quite right don't seem so little at all.

But despite those shortcomings, the Cavalcade is quite an impressive machine anyway, especially when you consider that it's Suzuki's first legitimate attempt at a full-boat touring rig. Indeed, the bike is so impressive right now that it's interesting to speculate about how it could be improved for next year, after a season of customer feedback and subsequent refinement. A little adjustment here, a slight tweak there, and Suzuki could easily have itself one barn-burner of a touring bike.

And even if that doesn't happen, a fella could do a lot worse than the Cavalcade that's available right now. ☐

SUZUKI GV1400 CAVALCADE

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

List price	\$7999
Importer	U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp. 3251 E. Imperial Hwy Brea, CA 92621
Customer service phone	(714) 996-7040 x380
Warranty	12 mo./unlimited mi.

CHASSIS

Weight:	
Tank empty	812 lb.
Tank full	848 lb.
Weight distribution, front/rear, percent:	
Tank empty	43.7/56.3
Tank full	43.2/56.8
Fuel capacity	5.8 gal.
Wheelbase	66.2 in.
Rake/trail	29.0°/4.7 in.
Handlebar width	31.4 in.
Seat height	31.8 in.
Ground clearance	5.4 in.
GVWR	1300 lb.
Load capacity (tank full)	452 lb.

DRIVETRAIN

Engine	liquid-cooled, four-stroke V-Four
Bore x stroke	81.0 x 66.0mm
Displacement	1360cc
Compression ratio	9.5:1
Claimed power	112 bhp @ 7000 rpm
Claimed torque	91.9 lb-ft. @ 5500 rpm
Valve train	dohc, hydraulic valve adjusters
Valve adjustment intervals	not reqd.
Carburetion	(4) 33mm Mikuni CV
Air filter	pleated paper
Lubrication	wet sump
Oil capacity	3.4 qt.
Starter	electric
Primary drive	helical gear
Clutch	multi-plate, wet
Final drive	shaft
Gear ratios, overall:1	
1st	12.88
2nd	7.89
3rd	5.85
4th	4.68
5th	3.99

ELECTRICAL

Electrical power	500w @ 5000 rpm
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Battery	12v, 20ah
Headlight	60/55w

SUSPENSION/BRAKES/TIRES

Front suspension:	
Manufacturer	KYB
Tube diameter	41mm
Wheel travel	4.6 in.
Adjustments	none

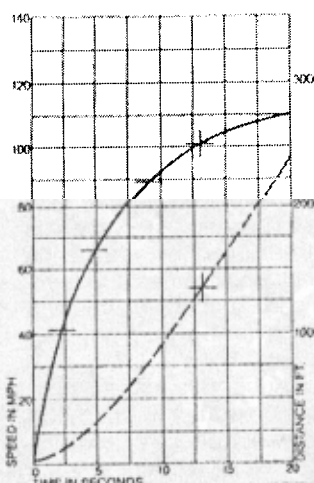
Rear suspension:	
Manufacturer	KYB
Type	twin-shock
Wheel travel	4.0 in.
Adjustments	auto leveling, air pressure

Wheels:	
Front	MT2.50 x 16
Rear	MT3.50 x 15

Tires:	
Front	130/90-16 Dunlop Qualifier
Rear	150/90-15 Dunlop Qualifier

Rear tire revs. per mi.	818
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Brakes:	
Front	(2) 11.0 in. disc
Rear	11.8 in. disc



PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION

Time to distance:	
1/4 mi.	13.10 sec. @ 99.94 mph

Time to speed, sec.	
0-30 mph	1.4 sec.
0-40 mph	2.2 sec.
0-50 mph	3.2 sec.
0-60 mph	4.2 sec.
0-70 mph	5.7 sec.
0-80 mph	7.3 sec.
0-90 mph	9.8 sec.
0-100 mph	13.2 sec.

Top gear time to speed, sec.	
40-60 mph	5.1 sec.
60-80 mph	6.1 sec.

SPEED IN GEARS

Measured top speed	115 mph
Calculated at 7000 rpm redline:	
1st gear	40 mph
2nd	65 mph
3rd	88 mph
4th	110 mph
5th	129 mph

Engine speed at 60 mph	3256 rpm
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FUEL MILEAGE

High/low/avg.	42/35/38 mpg
Avg. range inc. reserve	218 mi.

BRAKING DISTANCE

from 30 mph	29 ft.
from 60 mph	133 ft.

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated	30 mph
60 mph indicated	59 mph

