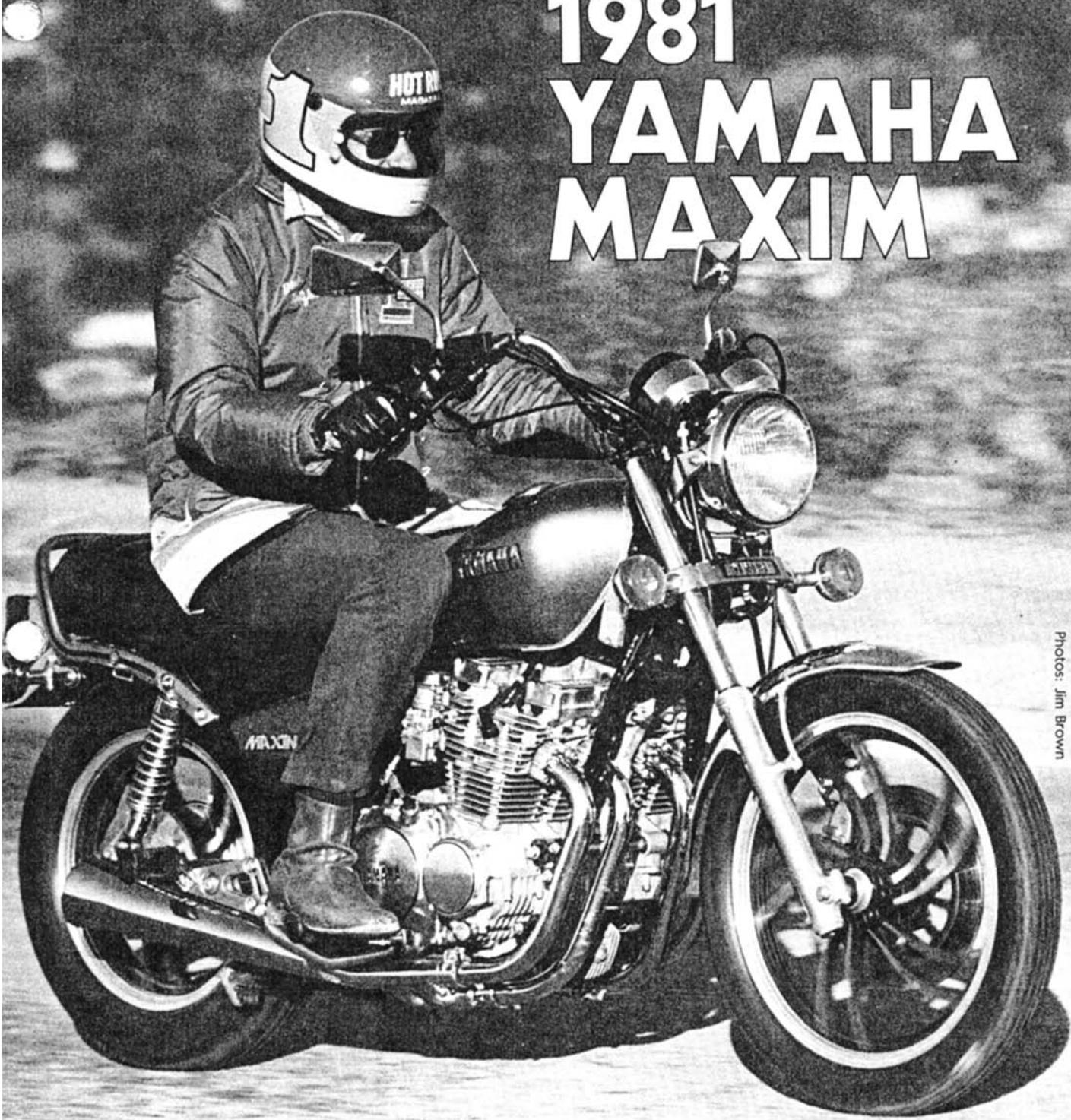


1981 YAMAHA MAXIM

Photos: Jim Brown



IT MIGHT BE SMALL
ON DISPLACEMENT,
BUT IT'S LARGE ON
PERFORMANCE

By Dave Hetzler



UP
ON
TWO
WHEELS

Last year, when Yamaha introduced the XJ650G Maxim (this year called the XJ650H Maxim and hereafter in this story called the Maxim so we don't go completely crazy), we felt as though the "street cruiser" market had taken a great step forward. The thinking behind this was that, for the first time, a

major manufacturer had built a bike from the ground up with the "chopper" image in mind, and the various frame geometries were designed for this type of motorcycle. In short, the Maxim was right at the head of the class in boulevard cruisers.

For all practical purposes, the 1981 version has received nothing more than a face-lift—which is okay, because it didn't need any major changes; it was basically fine just the way it came from

the showroom floor. About the only thing we didn't like about the machine last year was the seat, and if anything, it's worse this year. That little Naugahyde device at the rear of the machine is a real cheek-number. Just 30 minutes in the "saddle" is enough to turn the most hardened rider into a quivering mass of jelly. And if you're taller than 5 feet 10 inches, it's even worse, because you're trapped into sitting in one spot. If you're shorter than that, you can move back and forth a bit to change the point of contact; but no matter what, that seat has to go.

Happily, there's something you can do about it, and the solution comes right from the Yamaha accessory catalog. Part No. ABA-4H723-00-00 is what they call a Tall Custom Cruiser Seat, and the description says it is thickly padded. I suggest that you get it installed right away.

Other than the seat, there's very little we didn't like on the latest version of the Maxim. Perhaps the rear shocks are a bit too stiff; but in fairness, our machine was almost brand-new, and the few hundred miles we put on it might not have been enough to completely break them in. Actually, in normal riding there's very little problem; it is only when a sharp, quick bump is encountered that the rider notices anything. Then the compression damping doesn't seem to follow the contour of the road, and a sharp jolt is received by the rider. Perhaps this wouldn't be such a big thing if the seat were padded better.

One area where no one can find fault is the engine, for here the Maxim really shines. Again, there aren't too many differences between the '81 version and the '80 model. The Yamaha engineers have incorporated a new starting system, but the double overhead cammer still retains the four HSC 32mm Hitachi CV carbs, the transistor-controlled ignition and the smoothness inherent with any 4-cylinder engine. To go into the transmission would be almost worthless. Like any and all Yamaha gearboxes, the one found on the little four is outstanding in operation and rugged beyond belief. I can remember about 11 years ago when Yamaha had some gearbox trouble with one of their street bikes; I haven't heard of any since.

Handling of the bike is quite good. The footpegs are mounted fairly high for a machine of this type, and consequently the rider has a chance to corner a bit more briskly than with the average chopper-type machine. The Maxim is up to it in all respects; the forks soak up the bumps extremely well, even stiffer bumps that make many non-air-assisted units give up the ghost. The rear shocks, even though a bit stiff as mentioned earlier, work fairly well under normal circumstances and un-

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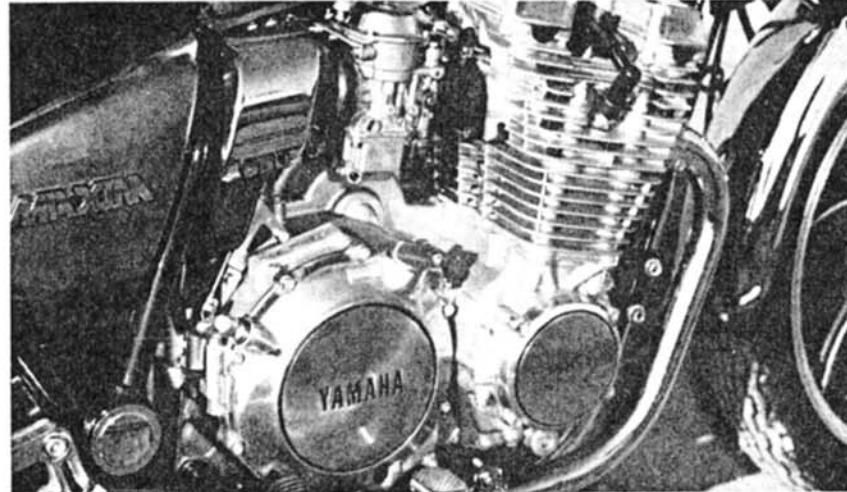
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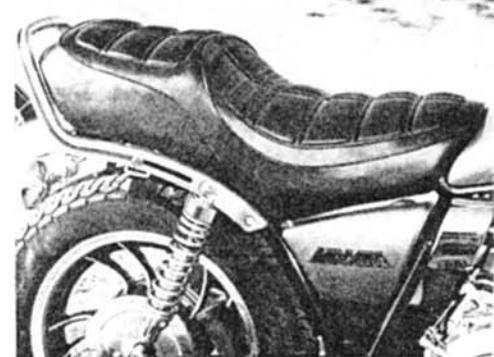
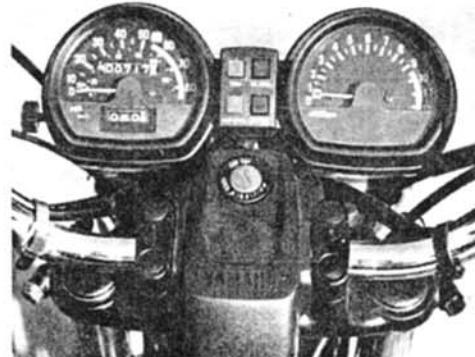
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Designed as a lowrider from the ground up, the Maxim handles better than most cycles with this type of styling.



Plenty of muscle is provided by this double-overhead-cam, 650cc powerplant that revs to a maximum of 9500 rpm.



The now-standard Japanese instrument panel features an 85-mph speedo, various warning lights and a 12-grand tach.

The main item on the Maxim we didn't like was this nice-looking, but totally underpadded, saddle.

The "lift" experienced by some shaft-drive machines has been completely eliminated on the Maxim by the Yamaha engineers.

doubtedly will be even better after they've been broken in. All in all, the Maxim is still the best-handling street cruiser we've ever ridden.

Yamaha offers many different accessories for this bike. The buyer can get engine guards/crash bars, street fairings, with various combinations and colors available, handlebar fairings, windscreens, and even a sissy bar or sissy bar/seat combination. The range of aftermarket accessories for motorcycles is huge, and Yamaha has some of the best for their various models.

We mentioned the "spiral"-design mag-type wheels last year, but we didn't say too much about them because at that time we felt they looked a bit odd. Now that we've become used to them, we think they are one of the best-looking sets of wheels available. By the way, they're fitted with tubeless tires, a 19-incher up front and, in keeping with the lowrider look, a 16-incher at the rear.

We really can't say that this year's bike is better than last year's, but only because the Maxim was introduced in midyear and not many changes have evolved. But then, few were necessary. The bike is super just the way it comes—with the exception of the seat. If they ever change that, the machine will be just about perfect, and you can't beat that! **HR**

HOT ROD MAGAZINE'S BIKE TEST SPECIFICATIONS 1981 Yamaha XJ650H Maxim

PRICE:

Suggested Retail \$2899

ENGINE:

Type Four-cylinder, DOHC, four-stroke
Displacement 653cc
Bore/Stroke 63x52.4mm
Compression Ratio 9.2:1
Maximum Horsepower N.A.
Maximum Torque .. 38.8 ft./lbs. @ 7500 rpm
Carburetion (4) 32mm Hitachi HSC
Ignition Transistorized controlled
Lubrication Wet sump
Battery 12V/12 amp

DRIVECHAIN:

Primary Drive Helical gear
Clutch Wet, multi-plate
Secondary Drive Shaft, 2.91:1

CHASSIS:

Forks Kayaba, 5.80-in. travel
Front Tire 3.25H19
Rear Tire 130/90-16 67H
Rear Shocks Kayaba, 3.8-in. travel
Seat Height 30 in.
Overall Length 84.6 in.
Overall Width 35.1 in.
Overall Height 46.6 in.
Ground Clearance 5.9 in.
Fuel Capacity 3.4 gal.
Wet Weight 461 lbs.

PERFORMANCE:

Quarter-Mile 12.87 @ 105.3 mph
Average Fuel Consumption 46 mpg

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