Norton COMMANDO TEST

circlip. Both filters can be dismantled for purposes of cleaning. One of the things that really impressed us about the Norton power plant was the way in which it remained oil tight. Some machines of English manufacture have a tendency to ooze their lubricant; the Commando remains pleasantly free of oil scum.

Paired 30 mm Amal concentric bowl carburetors feed the gas/air mixture to the combustion chambers. Both carburetors draw clean air through a paper element filter which should be replaced periodically, depending on the amount of dust common to the owner's particular riding area. The exhaust system on the Commando offers nothing really out of the ordinary, yet it proves to be quite attractive. While appearing to be reverse taper megaphones, the devices on the ends of the exhaust systems are in point of fact very efficient mufflers. The mufflers are kicked-up at a slight angle which is not only visually attractive, but practical in that it keeps them from grounding during hard cornering.

The Norton is a fast touring machine, and the designers at the factory have taken care to insure that the braking system is capable of coping with the bike's power output. The double leading shoe front binder is housed in a full width finned alloy hub. A more common single leading shoe stopper, also mounted in a full width alloy hub, is used to brake the rear of the machine. Both brakes are operated by cables. Naturally, due to the nature of the Commando, we indulged in considerable enthusiastic mountain riding. We are pleased to report that the brakes on the Norton are in keeping with the nature of the machine and they are surprisingly free of fade.

Nineteen inch chrome steel rims are laced to the alloy hubs. The front rim is fitted with a 300 ribbed tire, and at the rear of the machine is a 3.50 x 19 inch semi-triangulated cover. The tires supplied on the Commando are quite similar to those used on out-and-out road racing bikes, and they account in good part for the precise manner in which the bike handles.

It is somewhat surprising, considering the size of the machine, but the Norton Commando seems to "fit" a wide variety of riders. The relationship between the footrests, saddle, and handlebars is such that even extended high speed touring is not overly fatiguing. Much of the lack of rider fatigue can be traced to the almost totally vibrationless performance of the bike. The aforementioned Isolastic suspension system effectively damps almost all vibration at anything above idle. (It's actually something of a surprise to look in the rear view mirror on a motorcycle and be able to make out something other than a blur—image!) The saddle is long, well padded, and just a hair on the wide side at its forward end. A couple of the shorter test riders did complain about the width of the seat.

No one complained about the way in which the Norton Commando performs. Flexibility is the word that most quickly comes to mind when trying to describe the performance of the Commando. Good, usable power comes in just a shade under 2000 rpm and from there on up the bike pulls like a freight train. The width of the power band makes it possible to ride through a twisty section without constantly rowing on the shift lever to keep the bike on the bubble.

In its stock form the Norton is a motorcycle that will reach speeds in excess of 110 mph, it's a bike that will handle on a par with any production machine on the road, it's a machine with shattering acceleration, and it's a damn good looking bike. When the bike was introduced in 1968, it was the first of the Super Bikes. In 1971 it remains one of the best of the Super Bikes.

Make	NORTON
Model	COMMANDO ROADSTER
Price as Tested	$1,460.00
Engine Type	4-CYCLE, VERTICAL TWIN
Bore	73mm
Stroke	89mm
Displacement	745cc
Compression Ratio	8.9:1
B.H.P. at R.P.M.	N.A.
Carburetor	AMAL (2-30mm)
Ignition	BATTERY AND COIL
Fuel Capacity	2.7 GALLONS
Lubricating System	DRY SUMP
Clutch Type	DIAPHRAGM
Final Drive	CHAIN
Starting System	KICK-FOLDING LEVER
Gear Ratios	1st, 12.4:1; 2nd, 8.25:1; 3rd, 5.9:1; 4th, 4.84:1
Top Speed	112.7 MPH
Tire Size	FRONT: 3.00 x 19: REAR: 3.50 x 19
Suspension	FRONT: TELESCOPIC FORK: REAR: SWINGING ARM
Frame Type	DOUBLE CRADLE
Weight	429 POUNDS
Wheelbase	57 INCHES
Ground Clearance	6 INCHES
Peg Height	11.2 INCHES
Seat Height	32 INCHES