

# EVIL K-NEVAL ?

**Despatch Rider's Dream or Couriers Nightmare ? Addison Lee's Kilo Seven test rides Neval's 650 Dnepr II Classic and spills the beans.**



**THE RUSSIANS MAY HAVE PULLED OUT OF AFGANISTAN, BUT THEY'RE PUSHING INTO THE UK IN A QUEST FOR NEW MARKETS FOR THEIR MOTORCYCLE INDUSTRY. PETE JENKINS GETS TO GRIPS WITH THIS BEAR OF A BIKE AND PUTS IT THROUGH A WEEK'S TRIAL ON THE LONDON DESPATCH CIRCUIT. PETE WAS EVALUATING THE BIKE FOR ADDISON LEE; OUR THANKS FOR LETTING US IN ON THE ACT.**

**D**espatching in London is not an ideal vocation for either man or machine. Much thought and money is expended by your average DR in obtaining the correct mount.

A hard working rider in the smoke can expect to put at least 30,000 miles a year on his bike. It goes without saying that under this sort of punishment, bikes don't last long at all.

Currently, the bike that is number one in the courier hit parade is the Kawasaki GT550; this being a well proven shaft drive, air-cooled four. K M Cycles of Hackney have introduced an all new Neval (pronounced either Nee-val or Nev-all; take your pick) which is a BMW style horizontally opposed twin intended to challenge the Japanese market supremacy. Fleet managers of companies all over the capital have been receiving information packs praising the

'new specification Neval Dnepr II Classic'. Despite the fact that it looks exactly like the old style Neval, it does have one extremely attractive feature that might interest company managers. It costs £1000 less than the Kwacker.

## DAY ONE

Ten o'clock, one fine and sunny (drab and overcast) Monday morning in February saw me negotiating the wilds of Hackney on an Addison Lee GT550.

After chatting to the Monks (Kevin and Dennis - from K M Cycles), drinking endless cups of coffee, talking endlessly about bikes, the all new singing and dancing Neval was wheeled out. It was big and black and mostly shiny, with a chunky look that appealed (to me, anyway) - not like the large plastic shrouded affairs that seem to be popular

# SPECIFICATIONS - NEVAL 650 DNEPR II CLASSIC

## GENERAL

PRICE: Basic - £1704.50. Despatch - £2300

WARRANTY: 6 Months.

IMPORTER: Neval Motorcycles, Brockholme, Seaton Road, Hornsea, North Humberside.

PREPARED BY: K.M Cycles, 4-17 Frederick Terrace, Hackney, London E6 4EW.

## ENGINE

TYPE: Twin cylinder, 4 stroke, OHV, horizontally opposed.

BORE & STROKE: 78 x 68mm.

COMPRESSION RATIO: 8.5:1.

FUEL SYSTEM: Twin 30mm carburettors.

IGNITION SYSTEM: Battery, 12volt electronic.

## TRANSMISSION

PRIMARY DRIVE RATIO: 4.62.

FINAL DRIVE: Shaft.

GEAR RATIOS: 1st - 3.6. 2nd - 2.28. 3rd - 1.7.

4th - 1.3. Plus reverse.

## ELECTRICS

ALTERNATOR: 150W, 12V AC.

BATTERY: 12N9.

HEADLIGHT: 65/55W.

## CHASSIS

FRONT TYRE: 3.75 X 19.

REAR TYRE: 3.75 X 19.

FRONT BRAKE: Twin Shoe, drum.

REAR BRAKE: Single shoe, drum.

FRONT SUSPENSION: Telescopic fork.

REAR SUSPENSION: Levered 5 spring adjusted position.

## PERFORMANCE

MAXIMUM SPEED INDICATED - UPRIGHT: 90mph.

- PRONE: 95mph.

FUEL CONSUMPTION : BEST - 62.22 mpg

WORST - 44.82 mpg

AVERAGE - 54.86 mpg

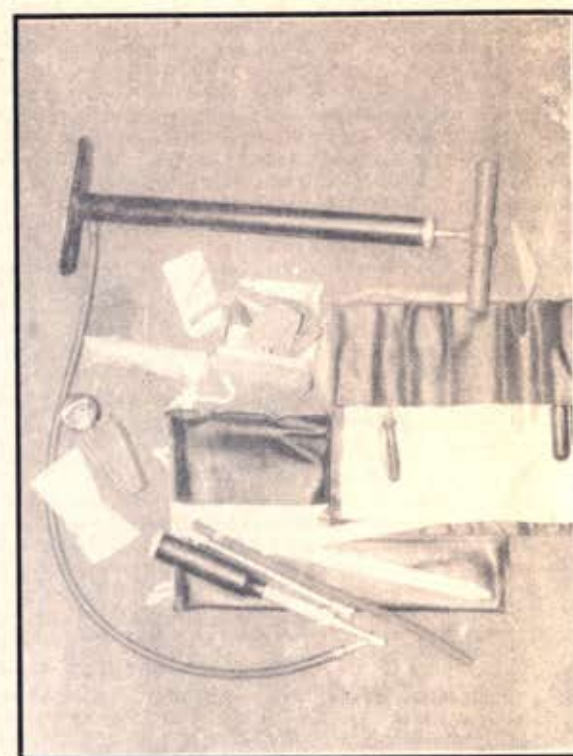
## DIMENSIONS

WHEELBASE: 1500mm

OVERALL LENGTH: 2500MM

DRY WEIGHT: 330kg

FUEL CAPACITY: 19Litres.



## CLASSIC

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Dealer enquiries welcomed

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these days.

But there was something wrong. The Neval looked exactly like all the other Nevals I'd ever seen - except that this one was brand new and could fall over.

Kevin then talked me through the bike and pointed out all the new additions and changes. Electronic ignition (courtesy of Piranha), four rings instead of the old two ring pistons, and alloy rather than cast iron heads and barrels. New carbs, clocks and twelve volt electrics.

The bike I rode had also been set up specifically as a despatch bike with a Mach fairing and a wonderfully huge set of panniers and top box. The beefing up of the rear also included a towing hitch.

I had been warned about the height of the seat by several knowing bods (I am a short arse of 5'6"), but I had absolutely no problems with it. In fact, it seemed no different from the old Honda F2 I had (still have, in fact, in the back of the garage). The bike started without difficulty thanks to electronic ignition. The Neval, of course, does not have a 'leccy start' - only the old fashioned kick-start.

## EASY STARTING

The kick starter transmits to the crank via gears. There is no kick back, and starting is effortless. Even when cold, the engine needed the choke on for only a few seconds. 90% of the time, I was able to get the bike started on first kick; no wucking forries.

The problems started once the bike was moving. Whilst the seat was comfortable and the bars and controls fell easily to hand, the fairing seemed to be badly positioned with the screen coming up to my chin. This enabled all the road crap to be directed into my face; this was, of course, especially useful when it was raining.

Also noticeable during the first tentative miles was the softness of the rear suspension. Any slight irregularity of the road - white lines, shadows etc - made the back end bottom out. I had to get off the bike to see if I had a flat. On inspection, the pre-load was at its

easy to engage and never gave any unexpected surprises.

The clutch. Ah! The clutch! First impressions reminded me of rolling fields, tractors and Moto Guzzis. The clutch was *fearsome*. After a day doing minimums in the smoke, my left hand throbbed something chronic.

Examinations of the lever assembly and linkages revealed that the cable guide was slightly bent at the bottom of the engine where the pushrod emerged, leaving the inner cable rubbing on the outer. A gentle application of pliers alleviated the situation a bit, but the clutch operation still remained slightly stiff.

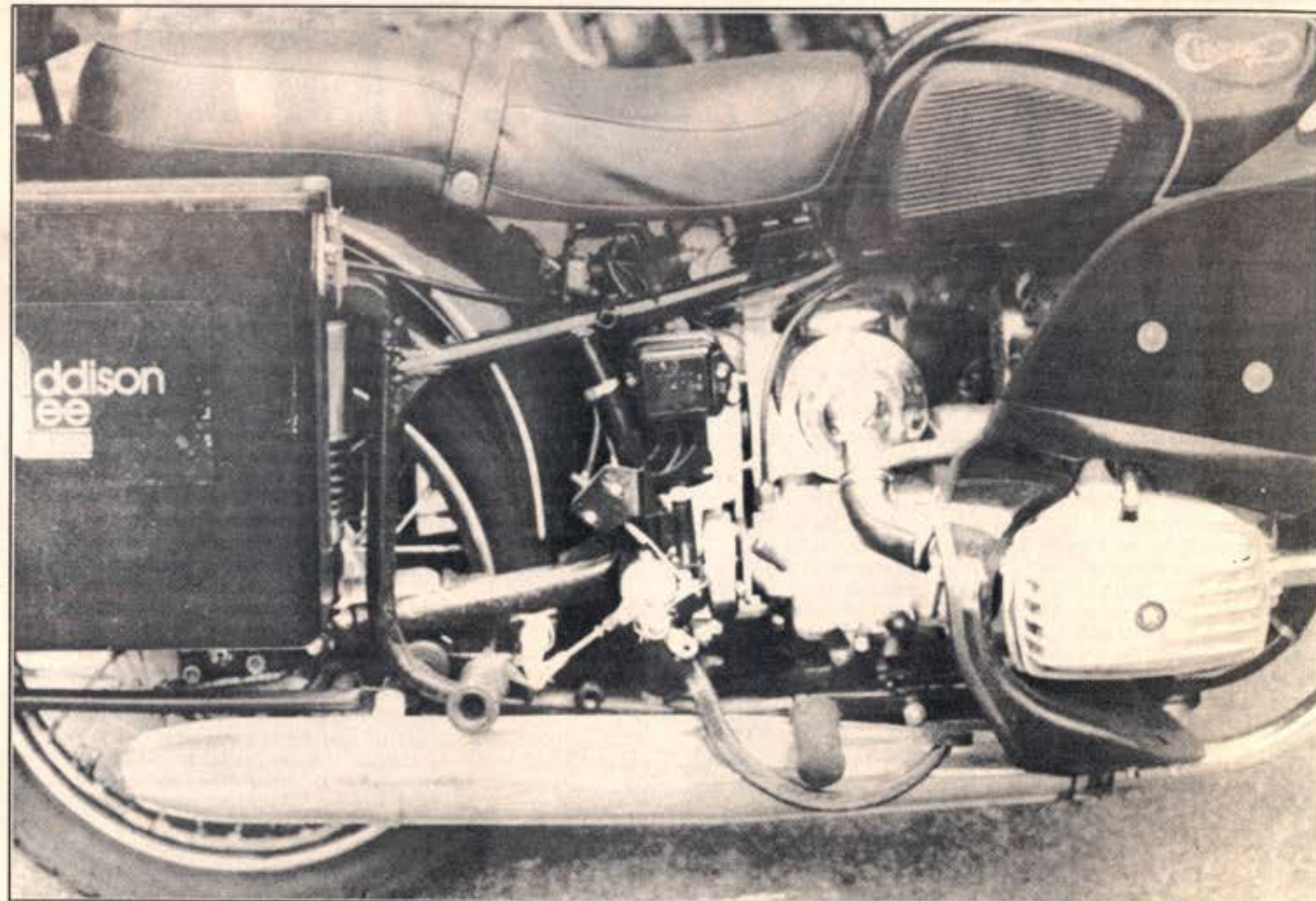
## DROWNING

Day two of the test was a lot colder. I spent most of the time working from north to south. Longer runs of twenty to thirty miles but without the opportunity to really open it up.

These longer runs did however show up one problem that was to dog me for the rest of the time that I was to have the bike. As I tried to push the engine past three and a half grand, I'd hit a HUGE flat spot. It felt as if the carbs were drowning out the spark, and that the engine was flooding. After various adjustments, I ended up by opening the screws half a turn from the starting setting. This took the flat spot up to four grand which at least made the bike usable.

This problem aside, the bike was extremely comfortable to ride between forty and fifty mph, the seat being among the best I have ever experienced. The extremely wide bars (leftovers from chair hauling) proved surprisingly easy to use, and made the bike feel even more like the BMW it was originally copied from.

Petrol consumption was an easy 50 mpg from these early indications - much as I would have expected this understressed V-twin. My last job of the day took me out on the M1 - a chance to try and see what the bike would do. By very carefully feeding in the throttle, I was slowly able to get past the flat spot. But the mucking about with the gears and the



big as to be obtrusive. In fact, I'm so impressed I'm going to buy the factory! - well, a set of luggage, anyway.

## AVONS

The tyres, as fitted, were Avon's. Perfectly adequate for the performance of the machine, and despite its weight, I'm sure they're going to last a very long time. The wheels, although spoked, were extremely heavy duty; and London's many potholed roads would make no impression there. The brakes, twin leading shoe (front) and single (rear), proved adequate; but only just.

The Neval did have a few novelties. The most humorous being

was around his ankles as I got off the bike and made my drop. He was still halfway through turning his bike around as I left for my next job.

The last few days of the test proper were very busy, time evenly split between around town minimums, 10 - 20 mile runs, and a few motorway blasts. I had the opportunity to take a pillion a few times, and whilst good comments were made about the seat as they initially sat on the bike, none of them were impressed with the way the bike could happily bottom out just because it had run over a piece of paper. My good lady wife's description of the Neval certainly takes some beating:

'This bike is like driving an AJS

the bike working as best as I could with the air-screws exactly three and a half turns out, and the idle adjusted to suit. On the way back from Hitchin to Wembley, North London, with the aid of a bit of wind (and the downhill slope of the A1 as it approaches London) I was able to ease the bike through the flat spot. By revving the nuts off the bugger in lower gears, the engine warmed up. When the happened, the hesitation disappeared and the characteristics of the bike changed dramatically. Naff suspension permitting, the bike became an absolute pleasure to ride. 95 mph appeared on the clock and stayed there for two and a half mins (on a private test track). At last it was possible to

the bad suspension and finicky motor. However, once these faults are fixed, the whole thing might well be a different story.

On talking to K M Cycles, they now have many plans for the bike. It will be fitted with heavier springs on the rear and modified front forks. The fairing will be refitted properly with new mounts.

Once all this is done, and assuming the engine doesn't retain the mark 1 reliability difficulties, the Neval could be a viable alternative to the GT550.

Thanks to K M Cycles, Fosdyke & Addison Lee.

(We contacted K M Cycles for their comments regarding the road test. They wanted to make it clear that

daily useful when it was raining. Also noticeable during the first tentative miles was the softness of the rear suspension. Any slight irregularity of the road - white lines, shadows etc - made the back end bottom out. I had to get off the bike to see if I had a flat. On inspection, the pre-load was at its highest setting. Seven days of bottoming out and consequential sore bott to be anticipated.

My first afternoon on the road was spent getting used to the plot and doing minimums. Addison Lee work an 'open call' system which, to a certain extent, lets you pick and choose your own work.

Continual stop/start work in the city and then the west end did highlight another problem which became more and more annoying as the week progressed.

K M Cycles junked the original Russian sidestand and replaced it with a Triumph jobbie. Probably not the best idea in the world as it turned out. If the bike was on the slightest camber, it wanted to fall over - and actually did, more than once. Despite the niggling and unnecessary little problems, the bike did have some redeeming features.

### REDEEMING FEATURES

Around town, it could plod along in almost any gear without appearing to strain the engine or gearbox. Whilst not exactly smooth, the gears were relatively

smooth - much as I would have expected this understressed V-twin. My last job of the day took me out on the M1 - a chance to try and see what the bike would do. By very carefully feeding in the throttle, I was slowly able to get past the flat spot. But the mucking about with the gears and the time it took was very annoying to say the least. Once past the hassles, the engine was able to open up and 80mph + could be seen on the clock. Braking from this speed proved interesting to say the least. The inadequacies of the front end were not so obvious around town, but out on the motorway the lack of damping, and the naftness of the springs, made the Neval almost frightening.

I did manage to survive to day three. I was most concerned by the difficulties the engine had at over three and a half grand so I had a good play before I went out. The fairing had by this time dropped another inch, and the reason for this was soon pretty clear. The top bracket was completely missing. The centre stand could not be used without the aid of a second person, and if there was anything in the boxes it was almost impossible to disengage.

The rev counter, which was Italian, was also unreliable. Sometimes it was rock steady, and sometimes it oscillated around three and a half grand. The top box and panniers were about the most impressive feature of the bike. They were huge. Yet not so

wheels, although I would have expected this understressed V-twin. My last job of the day took me out on the M1 - a chance to try and see what the bike would do. By very carefully feeding in the throttle, I was slowly able to get past the flat spot. But the mucking about with the gears and the time it took was very annoying to say the least. Once past the hassles, the engine was able to open up and 80mph + could be seen on the clock. Braking from this speed proved interesting to say the least. The inadequacies of the front end were not so obvious around town, but out on the motorway the lack of damping, and the naftness of the springs, made the Neval almost frightening.

The Neval did have a few novelties. The most humorous being the reverse gear. One afternoon, I delivered to Portsoken Street (hands up all those who know where that is . . .), which was a dead end due to road works.

Some poor old sod on the latest of Japanese exotica was executing a fifty-three point turn at the end. I was able to shoot up to the end curb, come to a halt, nip into reverse, back into first - and off again; all in the space of a few seconds. The poor bugger's chin

were impressed with the way the bike could happily bottom out just because it had run over a piece of paper. My good lady wife's description of the Neval certainly takes some beating:

'This bike is like driving an AJS combo around a muddy field, and is about as comfortable as sitting on my sewing machine!' (The missus currently rides as GS550).

On day seven of the test, the bike was taken up to Hitchin for some photo's. The A1 should have provided a good place to try out the top end, but the engine problem became more and more acute. It became so bad that I had to stop the bike and completely re-adjust the carbs. After 45 minutes, I had

happened and the characteristics of the bike changed dramatically. Naft suspension permitting, the bike became an absolute pleasure to ride. 95 mph appeared on the clock and stayed there for two and a half mins (on a private test track). At last it was possible to see what the bike was capable of. It is quite probable that without the extra weight (and drag) of the fairing, toolkit (huge) and luggage, the bike could top the ton.

I wasn't sorry to say goodbye to the bike. I'd done over 1000 miles on the 650, but at the end of the week the thing most evident was my tiredness. After every day, I came home totally shagged. The test bike needed total concentration all the time; probably due to

the mark 1 reliability difficulties. The Neval could be a viable alternative to the GT550.

Thanks to K M Cycles, Fosdyk & Addison Lee.

(We contacted K M Cycles for the comments regarding the road test. They wanted to make it clear that the Neval is a continuously developing machine and that the bike was tendered out for comment and criticism in order to tailor it to specific needs.

Basically, the Neval is delivered subject to buyer specification what you want is what you get, but it a particular seat, fairing or whatever - within reason.

The flat spot was due to an ignition fault which has since been taken on board.)

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