

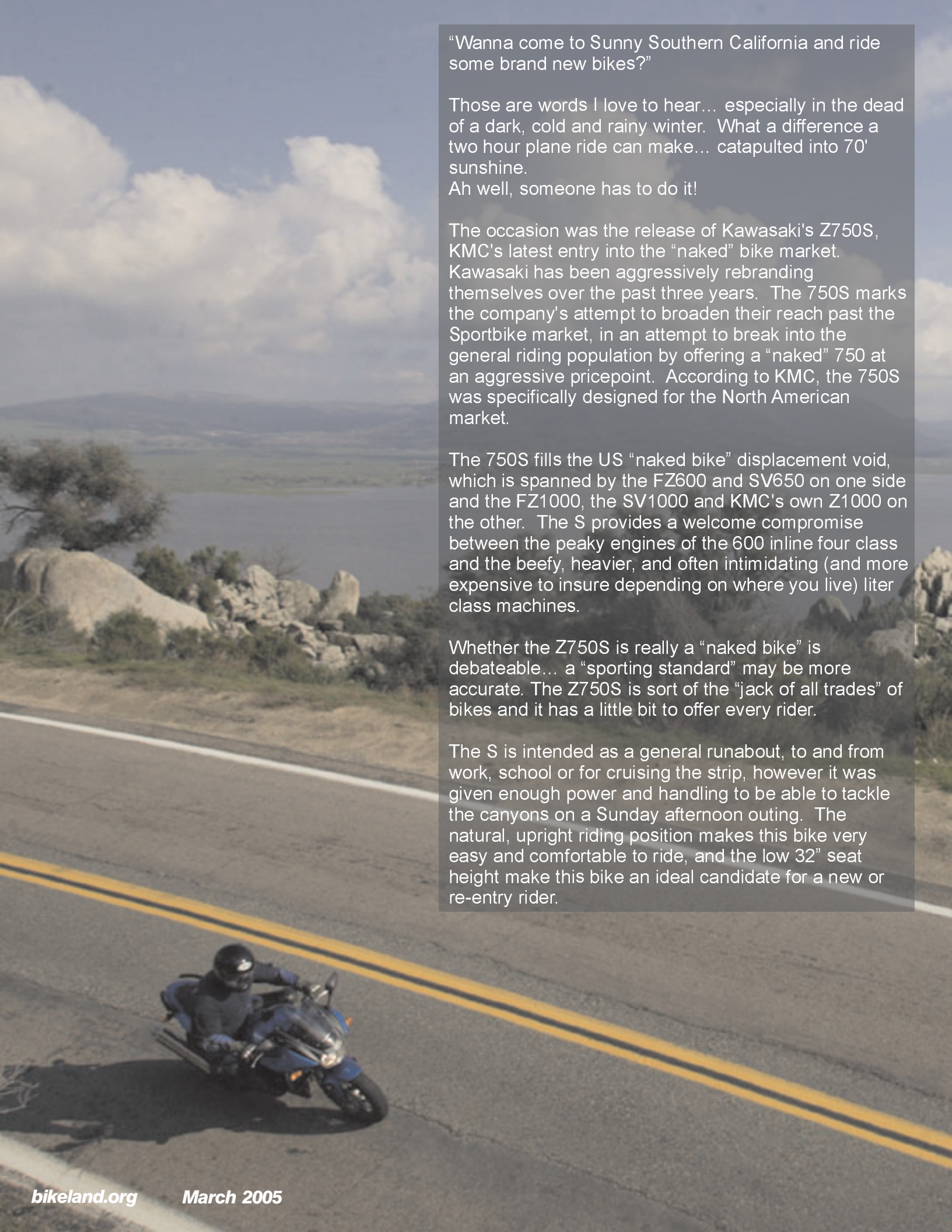
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March 2005

1st RIDE

2005 Z750S





"Wanna come to Sunny Southern California and ride some brand new bikes?"

Those are words I love to hear... especially in the dead of a dark, cold and rainy winter. What a difference a two hour plane ride can make... catapulted into 70' sunshine.

Ah well, someone has to do it!

The occasion was the release of Kawasaki's Z750S, KMC's latest entry into the "naked" bike market. Kawasaki has been aggressively rebranding themselves over the past three years. The 750S marks the company's attempt to broaden their reach past the Sportbike market, in an attempt to break into the general riding population by offering a "naked" 750 at an aggressive pricepoint. According to KMC, the 750S was specifically designed for the North American market.

The 750S fills the US "naked bike" displacement void, which is spanned by the FZ600 and SV650 on one side and the FZ1000, the SV1000 and KMC's own Z1000 on the other. The S provides a welcome compromise between the peaky engines of the 600 inline four class and the beefy, heavier, and often intimidating (and more expensive to insure depending on where you live) liter class machines.

Whether the Z750S is really a "naked bike" is debateable... a "sporting standard" may be more accurate. The Z750S is sort of the "jack of all trades" of bikes and it has a little bit to offer every rider.

The S is intended as a general runabout, to and from work, school or for cruising the strip, however it was given enough power and handling to be able to tackle the canyons on a Sunday afternoon outing. The natural, upright riding position makes this bike very easy and comfortable to ride, and the low 32" seat height make this bike an ideal candidate for a new or re-entry rider.

Our riding group set out from KMC in Irvine on a bright sunny day for a ride that turned out to cover a variety of riding conditions; from interstates to large mud washouts, to smooth curvy canyon roads. The stock BT019 front /012 rear provided more than enough grip, and tracked even the worst of SoCal's rained grooved highways with ease.

In general, people were impressed by the 750S, and the most telling sign was that riders who may be enthusiasts of different genres of the sport (ie: Big Twin riders, Sportbike riders, Touring riders) could all "see" themselves riding this bike, myself included.

One of the only disappointments was that the front suspension offered no adjustments whatsoever. KMC did not cut back on the rear suspension, knowing full well that the purchasers of this bike may want to take passengers. The S does offer a rear damping and preload adjustments. Understandably, to reach the pricepoint KMC wanted with this bike, they had to cut somewhere and I suppose to front is a good place to start (better than cutting the brakes or the fuel injection).

Surprisingly, however, the front suspension actually performed admirably for about 75% of the riding we did. The only time it showed any real weakness was from quick left to right transitions under sport riding conditions. The undersprung front suspension gave a bit of a springy, bouncy, lurching feeling, upsetting the line of the bike on the exit of corners. You could counteract this by being particularly precise in your cornering; carefully predicting what steering inputs the bike could and could not handle. Bolting on the front end of a 636 would help as well.

Mucking around with the fairing's "air curtain" proved to be interesting. What appears to be a ram air duct under the windscreen is in fact a duct that allows the air to go in and under the windshield as well as over the windshield. When the airstreams meet they meet above the rider's head and reduce turbulence. To my surprise, this actually worked, so a thumbs up for that.



The Z750S was easy to ride. Whether I was commuting on the interstate, or carving the canyons on Ortega and Palomar, the 750S was a pleasure. It truly is amazing that technology has advanced such that the performance of a standard could approach that of a Sportbike of just a few years back. I tried to take myself back to the time when I owned my Suzuki GS650E as my daily runabout. It is hard to imagine that today's Standard class bikes handle and perform the way that they do. I couldn't have imagined taking my GS650E and "hanging with the boys" who were on their Gixxers... it never would've happened.

The 750cc engine is strong, but the "S" is no ZX12R. You WONT be doing any power wheelies with this bike. Don't let photos you may see elsewhere online fool you. Clutch it up, no prob, but a fistful of gas went launch the front end of this machine into the air, no matter how hard you try (believe me ... another rider and I tried reeeel hard)

The 750S is a nice little bike... A breeze to ride, no bodywork to worry about, good gas mileage and still enough stomp and handling to hang with the boys on a Sunday ride. The transmission and fuel injection are near flawless. The power delivery is strong and linear. Even the suspension, thought lacking adjustability in the front, worked quite well, even from me. The fact of the matter is this.... 90% of the riding public who would buy this bike would never adjust the front suspension.

As for the comparables... it's been a while since I've ridden the bike's closest competition (and one of my favorites) the SV650. I do love twins, and the way they put power down... but styling wise I prefer the 99 SV650 (non-"S") to any of the new SV models... I prefer the 750S' styling to the latest SV's, but that's just me...

KMC has done their research and turned out nicely finished product.



Happy happy Southern California!



A "man's" bike in the town of Rainbow

Other Stuff....

What makes this thing tick, anyways?

Since this is the Internet and there are a lot of talented, knowledgeable individuals here, a bit of research is in order for the Z750S... The 750's engine is derived from the Z1000, which in turn was derived from the 900 Ninja (9R). Closer investigation on the part of members of this website might reveal some eyebrow raising similarities between the parts which comprise the Z1000's engine and those that make up that 750. Since we know everyone likes a challenge we won't spoil the answer for you, but just what would it take to turn a 750 into a 1000? Enquiring minds want to know...

Head Scratcher!

Take the Z750S challenge. Without any hints, try to find out how to remove the rear seat to get to the storage area. Even the smartest of thieves will be baffled! Time yourself and let us know!



There is another side to this story...

Since we like to be "straight up" here at Bikeland, this has to be mentioned. While the USA only receives the "S" model in its blue bodywork, those pesky Canadians and Europeans get the bikini faired Z750, available in silver and black, which features the digital gauges from the ZX6R/ ZX10R and slightly more aggressive geometry.

Other than the fairing, the two machines are virtually identical. All of this had me thinking of the stateside release of Suzuki's SV650S all over again. Think back to the introduction of this ground breaking bike and its similar release of the "cool" model up North... made for a lot of "cross border" shopping and more than a few irritated consumers.

Spokesmen for KMC stated that the general reaction to the Euro model was very polarized. Riders either love it or hate it. The "S" model has a much broader appeal, which is why KMC only brought the Z750S to the American market.

Chances are that KMC is right and the American Riders want the Z705S and not the Z750.

Or do we always want what we can't have?