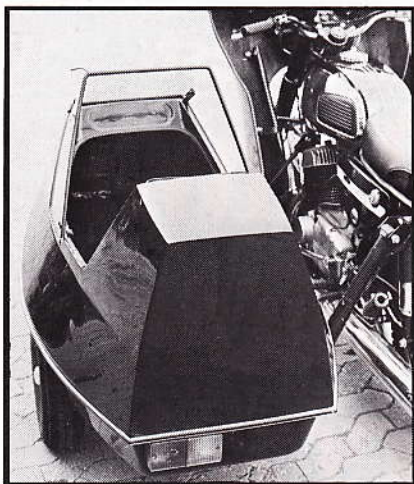


MCM Road Test

350 Jawa & Shadow sidecar





I'LL LET you into a terrible secret: my wife Liz is a lousy pillion passenger.

She always tries to tug the bike upright when I bank into a corner; she grips like a vice the instant she feels any acceleration being applied — even on a 50cc Vespa scooter — and if I go too fast I get a rapid tapping on my right shoulder. In fact, Liz is only happy again when we stop and she can take off her helmet at last.

To tell the truth, I was beginning to despair — then the Jawa 350 and Shadow sidecar outfit came along.

Actually, it happened when the family was without any other mode of transport for a fortnight. The Jawa was our bread and butter, as it would be for the buyer who, crippled by car prices and running costs, would get one for basic transport and economy.

The Jawa took us to work; the children to school; and we even spent a very pleasant Sunday afternoon meandering around the country lanes of Cambridgeshire. When I picked up the Jawa from Skoda GB Ltd at Kings Lynn, I felt a little dubious. It had been years since I last owned an outfit, and I felt I had almost forgotten the technique.

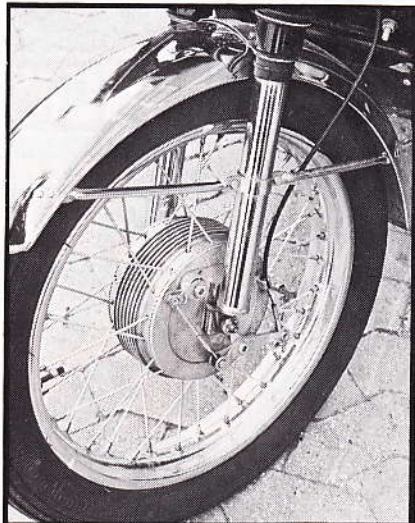
When I saw the combination waiting there, the familiar two-stroke twin all black and chrome with the futuristic-looking and very light Shadow sidecar, I wondered whether I would ever get it back to Peterborough in one piece.

The best bet is "when in doubt, drive slowly" and I doubt whether I exceeded 40mph on the 30-mile journey home. On left-handers with adverse cambers it felt extremely light, and I was terrified in case the sidecar wheel should lift.

I needn't have worried, because it later became apparent that even when the wheel does lift, it does so in a gradual and easily controllable manner.

Sidecar riding technique seems complicated at first but it quickly becomes automatic. You open the throttle rather than close it on left-handers, allowing the bike to drive around the sidecar, and you momentarily close the throttle on right-handers, allowing the momentum of the sidecar to save strain on the front forks.

After a day or so, riding the Jawa/Shadow



Drum brake doesn't look particularly potent but is man enough to lock the wheel.



Overall package is comprehensive and attractive to some tastes.

became so easy I was wondering what all the fuss had been about.

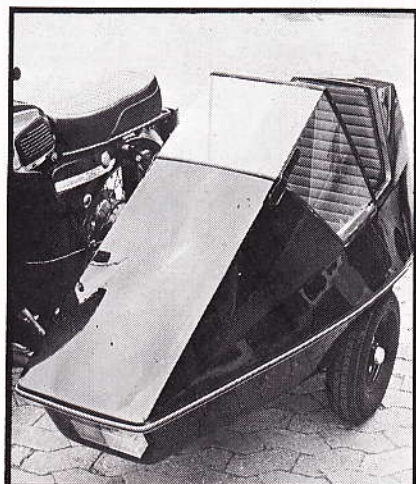
Persuading Liz to sample this even stranger-looking mode of transport was not easy — and she made a meal of getting into the little sports sidecar for the first time — to the guttural delight of passers-by. But as the miles rolled by, I'll swear she actually enjoyed it. After all, it went round corners UPRIGHT and the windscreens kept off a lot of the wind.

For a price complete of £1,064 you get a lot for your money: as well as bike and sidecar, there's an excellent fairing.

The Jawa might not be the best-finished or most modern machine in the world, but it's certainly a hearty slogger, strongly-made and easily able to cope with three-up touring at a steady 50mph.

In favourable conditions, you can see 65 or 70mph on the clock, and we managed an overall fuel consumption of around 53mpg. The 350 Jawa, unlike the smaller CZs, uses the "Oilmaster" positive oiling system, the oil tank being on the left of the machine.

The oil pump on our test model had been adjusted to a rich setting at the factory for running-in, and the bike soon gained the nickname "Smokey Joe" for obvious reasons.



Starting was always easy provided the proper procedure was followed. After the fuel has been switched on, you flood the carburettor with the tickler — what memories that brought back — push in and pull back the gear lever, which doubles as kick-starter, and the Jawa was always away within a couple of hefty kicks.

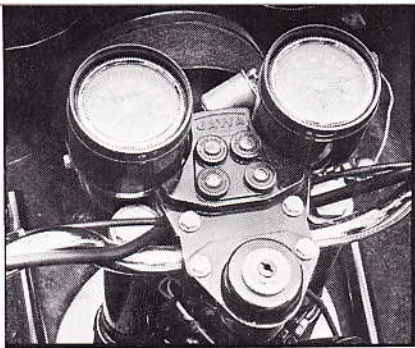
The bike on its own costs only £514, and with the new specification this represents better value than ever. The 350 Jawa now has stronger, larger-diameter front forks; a wider front mudguard; rubber gaiters; a really comfortable seat with a better profile than before; better indicators; and a headlamp flasher button. The solo Jawas are now available in metallic gold or red, although the slightly-modified sidecar models stick to the old colours of red or black to match the sidecars. In addition, the sidecar bikes have non-folding footrests; stronger front fork springs and a steering damper; and a brilliantly simple sidecar braking system. You pull in the front brake lever, press down a button, and the brake stays on. There are no modifications to the front wheels on the sidecar bikes because they are fairly heavy duty anyway; they certainly coped with the extra sidecar forces.

The Shadow sidecar, designed by the people at Skoda GB is futuristically "wedge"-shaped, offering plenty of leg-room, and has a comfortable seat with a folding-forward back which reveals a lot of boot space. In fact it became the ideal vehicle for shopping.

By unfastening two clips, the three-sided windscreen hinges forward to allow easy passenger access. With a passenger in the Shadow, the outfit felt perfectly balanced on the road and was very easy to ride.

A surprising feature about the Shadow outfit was the effectiveness of the brakes. They didn't look much from the outside — just a pair of old-fashioned drums — but handsome is as handsome does, and used together, they could lock both wheels and cause the outfit to slew sideways. A couple of "spectacular arrivals" outside the office proved that to amazed onlookers.

The Jawa gearchange is extremely loud and clunky, and the only silent changes were downwards after "blipping" the



350 Jawa & Shadow sidecar

throttle. Upward changes always had that agricultural sound, but on the plus side they were always positive, and the bike slipped out of gear only once during the test period, during which we covered some 500 miles.

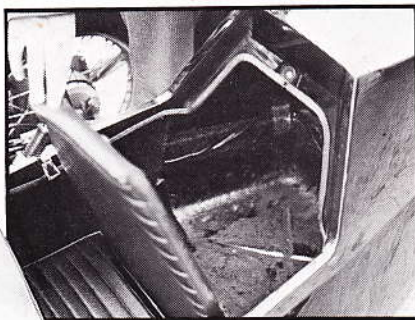
Because of the joint clutch/gearchange arrangement, the Jawa can be put out of gear by downward pressure on the gear lever in first. Obviously this slackens off the clutch lever too, and it was useful in town traffic queues to use your foot instead of your hand to disengage the gear. Actually, this was never strictly necessary, because neutral was always easy to find, and the indicator light was bright and clear.

The six-volt lighting set-up was particularly good, throwing a really wide, bright beam, and the rear light and stop light were equally effective. It's nice to see the larger units now being fitted to the Czech machines.

The indicators were worked by a forward and backward-acting rocker switch on the right handlebar. It took some time to realise



The screen folds forward to make getting in and out easier, but it's still awkward as Liz Kelly discovers.



The seat backrest folds forward to reveal the useful luggage carrying area.



Wedge-shaped chair looks modern and was styled in Britain.

that you pushed forward for right, and backwards for left. Not very logical, and something that might just be tidied up.

The indicators were good and bright, and on the sidecar in particular were quite smartly styled, almost in the car class.

On tight right-handers, a lot of force was needed on the handlebars, and the front wheel could start wobbling about. However, this was quite controllable with a firm grip and although it might have looked a little alarming to passers-by, it never felt bad from the saddle. The Barum tyres gripped well under such manoeuvres.

The chain has the usual Jawa totally-enclosed gaiter set-up. This must prolong the life, and adjustment was never necessary during our test.

The motor gave a throaty "yowl" out on the road, a little reminiscent of the old Scotts. Quite a lot of lumpy thumping came from the twin-cylinder motor, but that's just a Jawa characteristic you learn to live with.

Top gear was just a little too high for the outfit, in a strong headwind. Normally, it would hold 60 to 65mph, but sometimes it was necessary to change down to keep the lazy motor slogging.

The power peak comes just after 5,000rpm — our test bike had the optional tachometer — and this is no doubt what gives it its excellent torque characteristics for chair work.

The 350 Jawa outfits have been referred to endearingly as "crude but effective". I'll modify that: they are not particularly crude. Our 350 Jawa was perfectly reliable, and although I've seen much better finishes on bikes, it had a great capacity to slog on uncomplainingly and the whole family was sorry to see it go. The full fairing which complements the bike and sidecar has two useful compartment holes at the front. It was strongly attached to the frame, and did not rattle or move about. It kept a lot of weather off the rider, and the screen was just right for my height, making it possible to ride without my helmet visor.

One problem occurred after the parking brake had been left on for several days. Water got into the front brake and locked it solid, necessitating a strip-down to grease the cams.

One small point. The stick-on "Oilmaster" flash, and the gold flashes on the fairing, look cheap and nasty. The outfit would look much nicer without them.

The Jawa is not in the luxury class, nor is it intended to be. It's been produced for cheap but enjoyable transport, and at just over a grand complete it has no competitors. Let's face it. Most other outfits would set you back between £2,000 and £3,000, and that can still buy a car.

— Peter Kelly