

"NOW then," questioned our Editor, "we've got to pick up the 350 Jawa outfit tomorrow, so which of you lucky boys is going to test it?" Silence fell on our editorial meeting. "Well, we've all got a lot on at the moment so what about you, lad?" The glare of three pairs of eyes blazed in my direction. "Me? Oh er, well, I've never . . ." Pleading inexperience wasn't going to work. "Do a piece on what it's like to pilot an outfit for the first time," the Ed affirmed with a demonic glint in his blood-shot eye. "But Mike I . . .", I protested. "Just go steady and watch those left handers, I'm sure you can handle it," The Man coerced.

That journey from the Jawa/CZ premises on the smokier side of King's Lynn wasn't, to be honest, my very first ride on a three-wheeler. That occurred with somewhat drastic consequences years ago when, as an O level-studying oaf I succeeded in wedging a large oak tree between a ratty Gold Star and the Busmar double adult chair to which it was attached. Fortunately that was a low speed prang in the comparative safety of a friend's large garden. The terminal likelihood of such a collision on the public highway was a fear which accompanied me throughout the test.

It's exactly that kind of first experience that either fortifies your will to overcome an apparent disability or deflates your confidence to such an extent that never do you wish to see an outfit again. With me it was the latter and upon such thoughts personal prejudice against sidecars flourished.

By adding a sidecar you sacrifice most of the advantages of a motorcycle. Gone is the satisfying ability to slice through traffic snarl-ups, the pleasing sensation of banking through a bend maybe loosing a little rubber from the footrests, and the accommodating value of parking in all but the narrowest of spaces. Chances are you'll be hemmed in the traffic, cursing and mumbling with frustration along with car and truck drivers. No, I'm afraid a combination, in my preconceived opinion, had about as much to do with good-time biking as it did with old gents' underwear.

Within 200 yards the inexperienced sidecarrist will discover that a third wheel opens up a whole new avenue in motorcycling with new rules and tactics. Even on straights the chair wheel (a tiny 4.00 x 8in on the Jawa/CZ sidecar) needs to be guided clear of bumps in the interests of comfort for the passenger and control for the rider. Not forgetting of course the Jawa's own wheels still need to be kept clear of bumps and potholes. With the chair wheel out 39ins to port it takes some considerable concentration to keep it from kissing the kerbstones, but it's in the turns where the fun really begins.

Right-handers just yearn for gobs full of throttle and opposite lock providing your physique is up to the Herculean proportions necessary to push 'n' pull the Jawa's 30in-wide cow-horn handlebars. Anyone who's watched sidecar racing will get the picture. Left handers? Well, they're something else. Unless the chair is occupied by some weight, be it ballast or a passenger, you'll be lucky to get round a left turn four times *slower* than a solo.

At a mere 103lb the fibreglass chair is extremely light mainly because the Jawa itself isn't, er, excessively powerful, and the left handers warrant the utmost caution and respect if you're not aiming to tip the chair's contents into the rear wheel of the machine. Cornering half a mile an hour too quickly or accelerating at the wrong time could be a pretty efficient way of acquiring a pine overcoat. To complicate matters even further, varying the weight and size of the chair ballast also changes the points at which it is safe to accelerate, again dictating cornering speed. Sidecars are both physically and mentally taxing but they do possess that all important quality, presence.

Whatever excuses car drivers and truckers

may have for not noticing a solo biker when they should just don't apply to the sidecarrist. Other road users more than just notice you, they seem to acknowledge and appreciate the potential danger of an outfit in inexperienced hands far more than they consider the solo biker. Even so, I seriously question the credibility of The Law which allows even the rawest novice onto an outfit of any capacity and allows a passenger in the chair without a crash helmet.

In the first ten miles of my first serious sidecar experience the wheel lifting antics of the outfit literally stopped or slowed down two buses, a petrol tanker and several cars. My first objective was to keep the outfit out of ditches and stone walls, so it was some time before I could even begin to evaluate the machine.

The motorcycle is the unexciting, single carburettor 344cc two-stroke twin Jawa with independent oiling system (hurrah, hurrah), which produces a claimed 28bhp at 5,250rpm. Yet mild though the output and power characteristics may be it's surprising how well it copes with hauling a third wheel once it has been adapted. Gearing is lowered by replacing the 18 tooth gearbox sprocket with one of 16 teeth, and a friction type steering damper is fitted. Front fork springs, which are notoriously spongy of the standard Jawa 350, have been junked and replaced by allegedly stiffer units. However, the forks still behave like a pogo-stick.

The sidecar itself is a product of that East-West cooperation world leaders are always encouraging in their more superficial moments of politicking. George Rue, Sales Manager of Jawa/CZ persuaded the Czechs to send over a pattern of their Velorex Mk 2 chair. With strict instructions to construct the sidecar with the frugal in mind, the rest was left to Squire



Third Wheel War

Graham Sanderson
found his first
sidecar experience
a rider versus
machine battle.

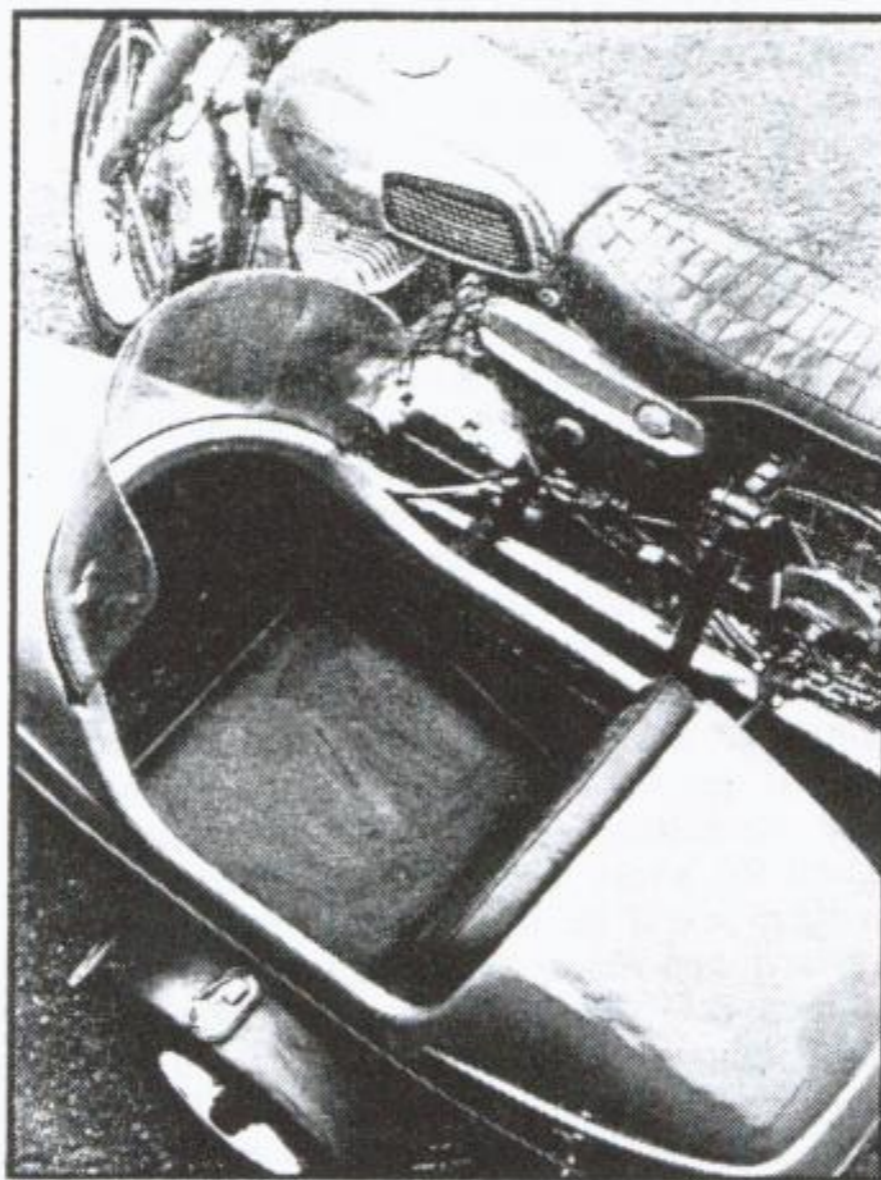
Sidecars who rounded off the corners in the Czech mould and bent the main chassis in 1½in 10 gauge tube.

Front mountings are conventionally attached to the Jawa's downtubes. At the rear, the chair is tied to the suspension unit top mountings and, through a weird swinging link, to the rear wheel spindle. It's something to do with relieving stress on the swinging arm spindle, a traditionally weak point when a sidecar is added to a solo machine. Because of modest power output, and an extremely light sidecar, the method of attachment has no adverse effects on the combination.

I was just beginning to tolerate the fact that accommodation for three may be an attractive proposition for some when the almost inevitable happened. The chair's Barton Hover bonded rubber suspension feels really springy when you're bouncing the wheel while stationary, but once you're riding there's not enough absorption and even small bumps are a problem. Gingerly easing through a left hander the sidecar wheel launched itself over a bump and the tranquillity of a Cambridgeshire village was shattered when I panicked, locked the brakes and collided with the opposite kerb as an oncoming car screeched to a halt.

The non-standard front anchors shoed with hard AM4 linings (AM2 and 3s are being experimented with) were too fierce. The incident was a rather frightening way of discovering that braking an outfit in bends tends to make it go straight on and served as a timely reminder that complacency and sidecars don't mix.

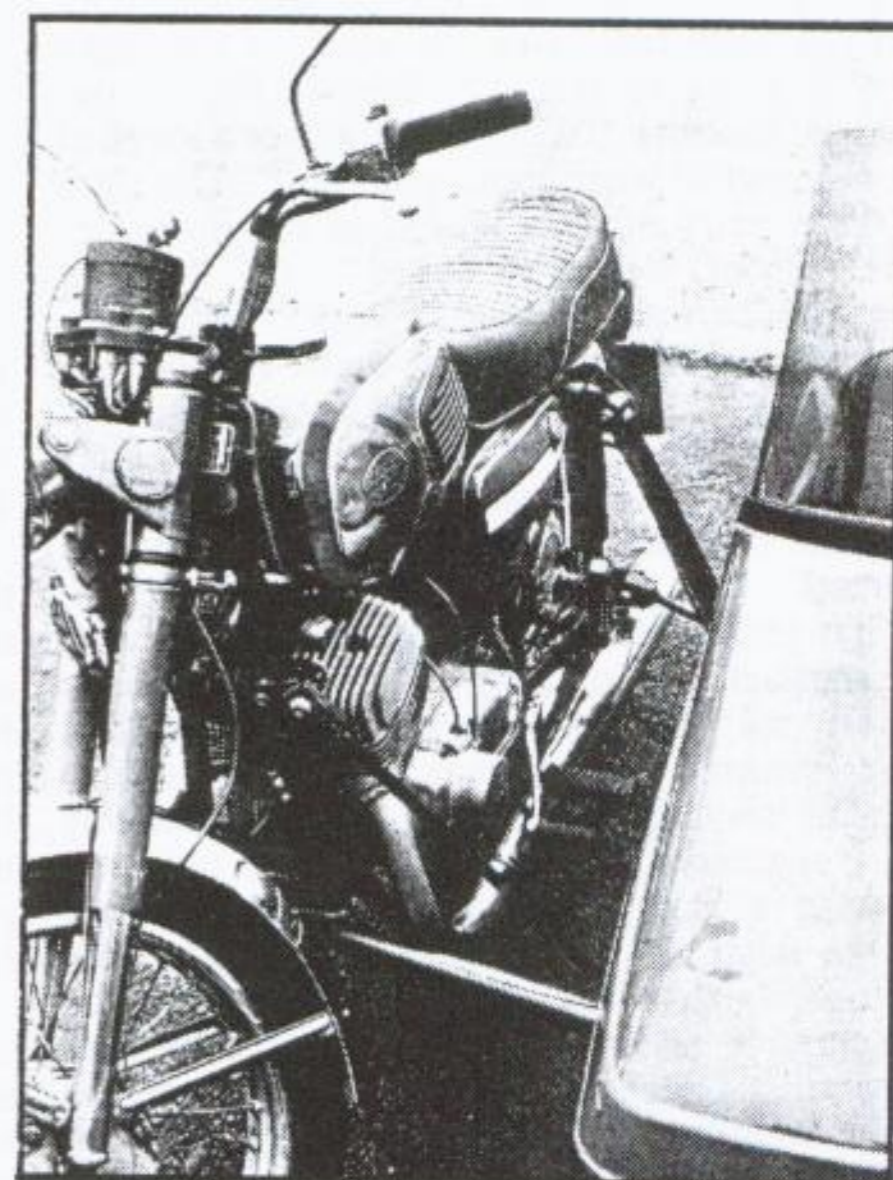
Judging by the impressive sales record of the outfit it's obvious that folk are prepared to make concessions to its idiosyncratic behaviour. For just "£599 All In", according to the ads, the Jawa outfit is a proverbial bargain capable of



Chair is wide enough for the heftiest of passengers but the tall screen did not deflect cold winds away from the arms and shoulders.

returning 45-55mpg. For a further £40 you'll get a hood and the necessary framework to mount it on the chair. Owners of standard 350 Jawas, the only machine for which this particular sidecar is suitable, can buy a chair through Jawa/CZ dealers for £235 but then there'll be brake, gearing and other slight mods to consider.

After several hundred miles on the Jawa I'm



Lower gearing on the mild 28bhp 350cc twin made the Jawa surprisingly suitable for sidecar duties.

forced to conclude that sidecarrists are born, not made, and that experienced bikers won't necessarily find a combination to their liking. I returned the machine to Kings Lynn with only a damaged brake back-plate to show for all the heart-stopping near-misses. Jawa/CZ are lucky the outfit wasn't returned through the post in a tiny cardboard box . . .

