STARRED REVIEW

Code Z: Kawasaki Superbikes, 900 Super Four Z1
Stefan R. Oehl
Xlibris, 404 pages, (paperback) $15.99, 9798369495605
(Reviewed: July 2024)

Stefan R. Oehl's exhaustive volume details technical information for the Kawasaki 900 Super Four Z1, part of a planned series of guidebooks for Kawasaki motorcycle lovers.

This model has a particularly interesting history: In 1967, Kawasaki set out to develop a four-cylinder motorcycle with an engine size up to 750cc. The company was hoping to tap the American market, with its love of high-speed bikes. It developed the N600 or "New York Streak" to fill this need.

One year later, however, Honda released the CB750-4, completely overtaking Kawaski. Dropping the N600, Kawaski raised the ante by producing a 900cc bike. The CB750-4 had been on sale for three years when Kawasaki finally released the 900 Z1. Fast, powerful and striking, it also came with a price tag that, for the first time, ordinary riders could afford.

Oehl's book—the second in an eight-volume series that will cover Kawasaki superbike models up to 1989— is aimed at those interested in restoring or repairing their Kawasaki Z1 motorcycles. Like the first book, dedicated to Z 1000 R and Z1100 R, it catalogues every part for the Z1, down to nuts, bolts, screws and washers, and most importantly offers reference numbers and the model year(s) to which those parts correspond.

Oehl, who previously worked for Virgin Australia Airlines and Skywest Airlines, is meticulous in his presentation. He explains the structure of each page, noting where certain information will appear. He also offers a color code to guide readers; For example, an orange border around text indicates "Important information"; a red border signifies "Unusual detail"; etc.

Throughout, the author explains, in short narratives, important specifics about this model, including its engine, handlebar, fork brace, front suspension, paint schemes and so on. One of the book's finest elements is its photographs, which are sharp and detailed.

This is a lovingly and painstakingly produced guide—one sure to prove invaluable for anyone looking for parts or help restoring a Kawasaki Z1.

Also available in hardcover and ebook.