

# STREET SCENE

to do it; that's two million bikes per year, people. That's success on a planetary scale.

The company has 32 production sites in 27 countries, including, of course, here. Honda's Marysville, OH, factory has reached a milestone of its own, rolling off more than 1.2 million bikes since the plant opened in 1979. American Honda has been churning out motorcycles since 1959, when it opened in Los Angeles. Not resting on its ample laurels, Honda will soon open a 175,000 sq.-ft. manufacturing facility in Timmonsville, SC, marking its 10th plant in the U.S. Timmonsville is expected to produce 100,000 units per year. Brings a different meaning to "Built in America," doesn't it?

## YAMAHA PREZ YENS FOR U.S.

The naming of a new company president seldom stirs the passion of people other than understandably anxious employees, but the recent naming of Jim Gentz to head Yamaha's U.S. Motorsports operations should be warmly greeted by Yamaha owners. As a Yamaha Motor Corporation U.S.A. spokesman explained, the naming of someone outside the Japanese ranks to the top U.S. management position itself "is unique in the industry and shows the company's dedication to marketing to American consumers." "I am very pleased to accept this responsibility," said Gentz. "My



goal in this new position is to put together a team at Yamaha that will know the customer better than any other manufacturer. We want to predict the customer and product trends and be able to provide the right products at the right time."

Gentz, a veteran of more than 30 years with Yamaha and most recently senior vice president of the company's Motorsports Group, will have the authority to implement changes based on what he perceives to be needed by American customers.

Gentz will also be in charge of other Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. motorized recreation products, which also includes snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles and personal watercraft vehicles. *Look for our interview with Gentz in an upcoming issue of CR.*

## EQUALITY, ONE FENDER AT A TIME

Non-Harley riders may well argue that their cruisers are the finest machines in the world, but deep down there is an awful truth inside them that cannot be denied. Say what you want, Harley riders have long been able to customize their cruisers to an extent that boggles the mind (and checkbook). Yes, there are some parts available for non-Harleys, but compared to what H-D owners can choose from, it's like visiting an ice cream store with two flavors versus a stroll through a 32-flavor Baskin-Robbins.

However, there are signs that non-Harley cruisers may be getting more respect...and options. Oriskany, N.Y.-based Sumax, which recently opened a new composite facility and is well-known for serving the Harley faithful,

## A '50s CHIEF? No. IT'S A KAWASAKI

The machine pictured here was first created as a concept bike by the wizards at Cobra Engineering, makers of zillions of goodies for popular cruisers. The "Native American" inspired design was built around the chassis and engine package of a stock Kawasaki Vulcan 1500 Classic. The bike was a big hit on the show circuit last year. So much attention has been heaped on the highly-styled machine that Kawasaki now plans to intro-

duce the machine as a production motorcycle. It will be marketed as a 1999 model, but word is that it will be available sometime this year. Currently, the project carries the name "Vintage" which may or may not be its ultimate moniker.

Kawasaki has been working with Cobra on the project and the accessory firm will develop a full line of special accessories specifically for the nostalgic rig. News of the



Vintage was a big surprise at the National Kawasaki dealer meeting last fall. Many dealers, after viewing the bike, were seen elbowing their way to the order desk right after the show. As for the price and other details, we don't know yet but we'll keep you informed.