

FIXING HONDA FORKS

Simons CR fork kit

By Tom Webb

No doubt about it, the most improved bikes for 1982 are the Honda MXers. Across the board, they have decent engines and handle in a more than reasonable fashion. There are two areas of concern, however. One is the rear end, which we shall ignore here. The other is the forks, which are fixable for low bucks and a bit of an effort.

Stock Honda forks are harsh over sharp-edged bumps, and when they bottom out, they do so with a sickening metal-on-metal clang that hurts wrists.

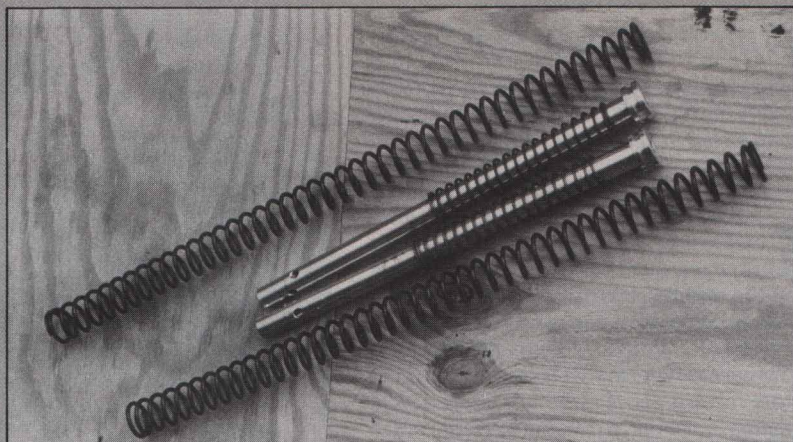
Like the rear end, the compression damping on the Honda forks is adjustable. And, as we unfortunately found out, the adjustments available are all too high, even at the lightest settings.

Therefore, for any fork kit to work, it has to decrease the compression damping rate and increase the rebound rate. All Simons fork kits we've worked with have featured a tapered damping rod that effectively eliminates any harshness on the compression stroke. Our Honda kit had the same characteristics and was also air assisted, which would help alleviate any shortcomings in spring rate.

While we're not great fans of air-assisted forks, the Simons units were measurably better than the stock strokers. A big improvement was noted on the up-stroke, and hand/wrist impact was greatly reduced.

Installing the Simons kit appears to be a straightforward process, at least by reading the instructions one would think so. Put the bike on the stand, drain the oil. Take the forks off the bike. Remove the damper rod bolt from the bottom of the fork. It's step number four that's the tough one. You see, even with the aid of a compressor and various air tools, we could not break the bolt loose.

Finally, it started to loosen. At this point the whole damper rod spun with the bolt. We finally rammed a 26mm bolt which was welded to a socket that was held on by three long extensions, held by a pair of



The kit comes with the rods and the fork springs. Notice the long negative springs on the damper rods. These are needed because the Simons kit requires the use of air. The negative spring keeps the ride sensitive on the smaller bumps, where air alone would be harsh.



With the Simons kit installed, the harshness found with the stock forks is effectively eliminated. The ride is supple, yet will take the hard hit better than the stock setup.

Vise-Grips, and then the bolt undid from the damper rod with the aid of an air ratchet. If you do not have access to these tools, you'll probably have to see your dealer and have him do it for you.

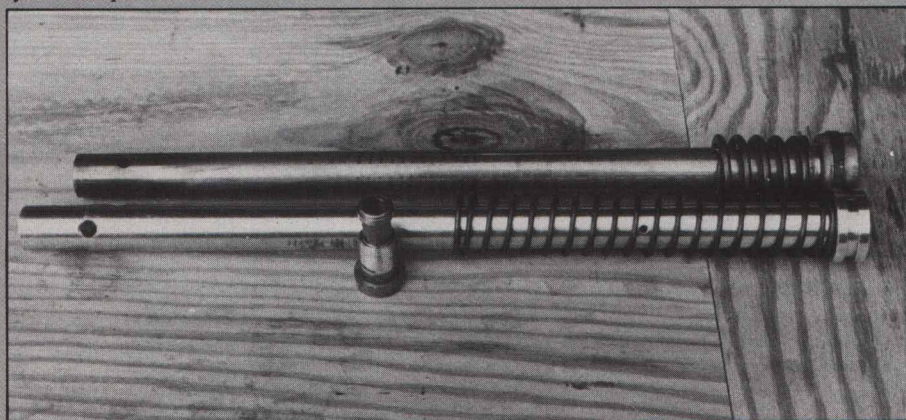
After that, it's a cruise. Reinstall the Simons rods, remembering to put the stock piston rings on the rods (take them off of the stockers). Tighten everything, especially the damper rod bolt.

Next step, add about 200cc's of oil to each leg. Pump the forks. This removes any air trapped in the forks. Then add the final amount of oil. Simons suggests starting off five inches from the top of the tubes, five-weight oil.

Reinstall into the forks the supplied springs. Put them on the bike, throw on the front wheel and tighten all the necessary hardware. The next step is adding air. Simons uses a light spring combined with air to get the proper preload. The starting point should be ten to 15 pounds. After a generous amount of fiddling, we ended up with 12 pounds as just about right. Depending on skill level and weight, this may vary.

At this point, all gripes and snivels we had about the stock Honda forks became a thing of the past. Because of the way Simons tapers the rods and positions the holes on the damper rods, any harshness on square-edged obstacles, or lack of feel in the first part of the stroke, is replaced by plushness.

Our only complaint, and it's a small one, is having to deal with the air. The CR's front end is on the line with anything around, maybe better. For info, contact SIMONS, INC., 2625 Miller Avenue, Mountain View, California 94040; 415-948-3470. Price is \$69.95. □



Although the Simons rods are longer than the stockers, the travel remains the same because of the long negative springs.