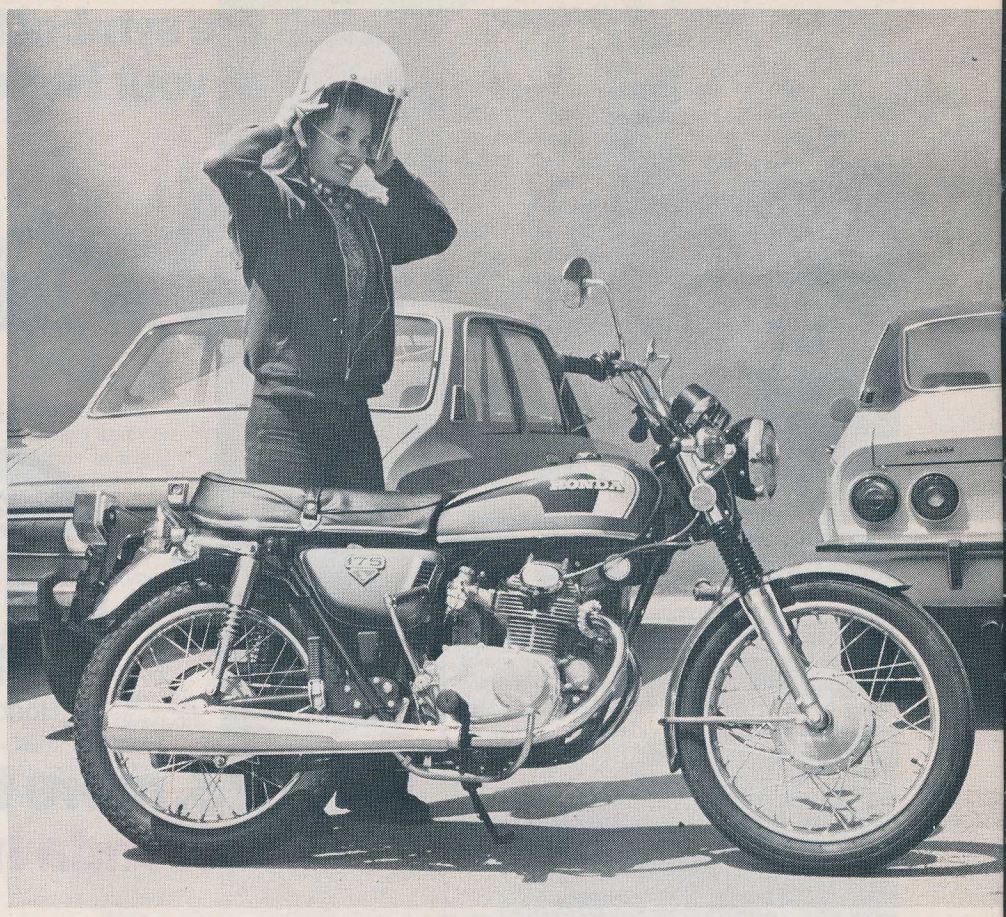
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN T. JO



HONDA CB-175K7

It does everything so well, it makes you sick!

Motorcyclist Test
by John T. Jo

Honorable motorcyclist, how would you make your City Slicker? If you were the inscrutable four-stroke master of the Orient, you might say, "... take a stout-hearted 174cc parallel twin with oversquare 52 x 41mm bore/stroke, rugged four-main roller and ball bearing 360° crank, efficient chain-driven single overhead cam and positive automotive-type wet-sump oiling ... add a mild 9:1 compression ratio and two gas-miserly 20mm Keihin concentrics ... include a 12,000 rpm let's-get-it-on tach ... attach a never-miss-a-shift, five-speed snick box. Mount the entire power assembly in a sure-tracking, single downtube/double engine cradle tubular chassis featuring excellent oil-damped, internally-sprung front telescopics and a pair of versatile Showa five-position adjustable rear shocks."

The City Slicker is a reality! One of only two strictly for street light-middleweights readily available in America today (the other being Suzuki's two-stroke counterpart, the GT-185K Adventurer), the City Slicker is Honda's surprising darkhorse.

Formally known as the 1973½ CB-175 K7, it may be this motorcycling giant's greatest contribution to cleaner air, fatter wallets and lesser crowded thoroughfares. Consider this: it leaks no oil, it burns no oil, hardly any gas, is freeway legal and parks in about one-eighth the space of a four-wheel behemoth. Creditable credentials for cycling's equivalent of the ubiquitous VW.

But all is not boredom! Unlike most pure transportation straightjackets, Honda's CB-175 roadster is great fun to ride—day in, day out. Because of its agile 50.5-inch wheelbase and quick 3.5 inches of trail, it handles and tracks like a finely tuned racer; yet it does not yaw on exaggerated highway seams or freeway rain grooves. It literally invites, nay, encourages, you to zing it around every hairpin bend and flog it down the straights right up to its almost unbelieveable 10,500 rpm redline. It's a *well-balanced* street package.

Partly what makes it so is its dietetic thirst for low-lead regular. During its initial 100 break-in miles, we kept R's under 9000 and gung-ho speeds between 25 and 55 mph. Gas mileage averaged an excellent 58.5. However, after another 100 piston-seating miles were put on the odometer (but this time allowing revs to peak at 10,500 rpm and zooming to 65 mph)—gas economy increased to 63.9 miles per gallon. If that doesn't impress your money clip, what follows will.

The next 200 miles of road testing were spent criss-crossing various Southern California interstates with intermittent maximum throttle bursts. An indicated 79 mph was reached on one on-the-paint tuck and 71 per, straight-up, on another; both in top gear. Relative rpm? A speedometer reading of 70 equals 8200 rpm in fifth gear ... in fourth, 9600. The only way you know the engine is humming is by scanning the tach, the figures, relatively speaking, are astronomical (for example; Kawasaki's potent Z-1 903cc freight train loafs at half the CB-175's rpm at 70 mph, approximately 4400). Surprisingly, there

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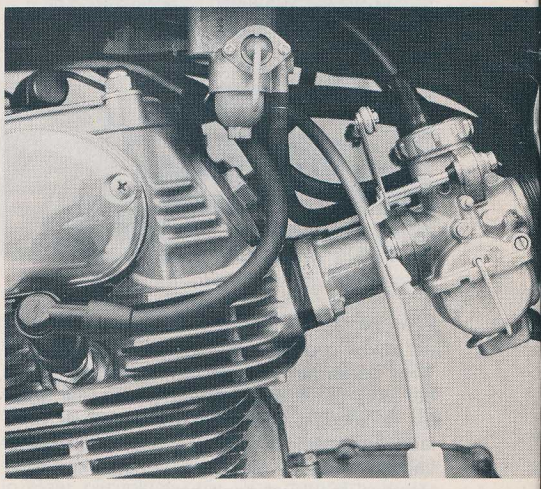
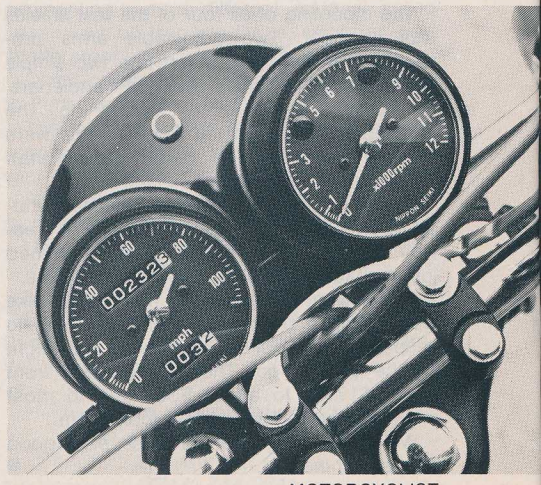




Top: A perfect pair: Motorcyclist's new editorial assistant Pauline Gehrmann (5'7" tall, 120 pounds, green eyes) and Honda's light-middleweight City Slicker!

Above: Fuel petcock in the "on-position," choke lever "off" and one of two 20mm Keihin concentric carbs visible here.

Right: Note 12,000 rpm tach face and 10,500 redline!; lower odometer resets.

HONDA CB-175K7

TEST BIKE

Serial number.....CB175-8001060
Engine serial.....CB175E-8001077
Date of manufacture.....8-72
Base price as tested.....$650
Factory warranty.....6 months/ 4,000 mi

ENGINE

Type..... Parallel twin OHC 4/s
Displacement.....174cc
Bore x stroke.....52x41mm
Compression ratio.....9:1
Lubrication system.....Wet sump
Carburetion.....20mm Keihin concentric
Fuel required.....Low lead 91 octane
Air filter.....Replaceable paper element
Ignition system.....Battery/coil/points/ condenser
Electrical system.....Negative ground w/alternator, regulator and rectifier
Battery.....12 volt, 9 A.H.
Starting.....Electric and Kick
Exhaust.....Dual downswept pipes w/mufflers

DRIVE TRAIN

Primary/ratio.....Gear/3.70
Clutch.....Wet, multi-plate
Transmission.....5-speed constant-mesh
Shift..Left foot, neutral between 1st & 2nd, down for low
Gear ratios.....1st/2.77, 2nd/1.88, 3rd/1.45 4th/1.17, 5th/1.00
Final drive, size.....Single row chain/ ⅜"w x ⅝"p
Sprockets, front/rear/ratio.....14/33/2.36
Overall ratios.1st/24.18 2nd/16.41 3rd/12.66 4th/10.21 5th/8.73

CHASSIS AND SUSPENSION

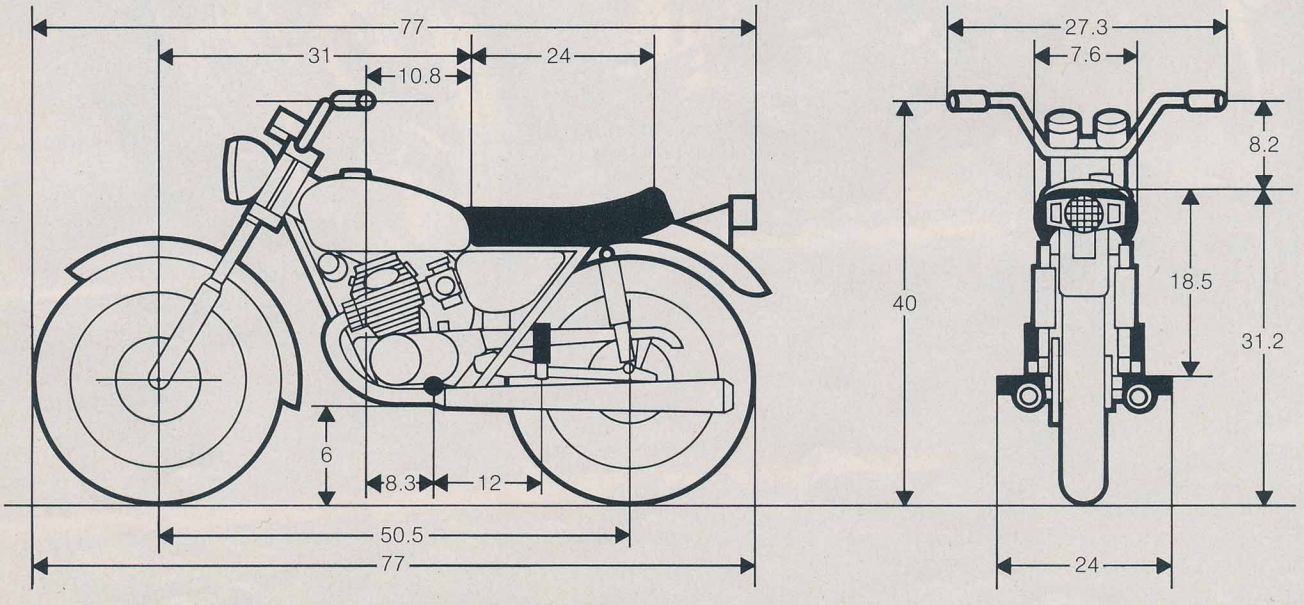
Frame.....Tubular single downtube
Forks.....Telescopic w/4.1-inches travel
Caster/trail.....26°/3.5-inches
Steering damper.....None
Rear shocks...Coil spring over tube shock w/2.7-inches travel, 5-pos. adjustable Pre-load
Brakes, front..Twin-leading-shoe drum, 23.3 sq. in. lining area
rear.....Single-leading-shoe drum, 20.3 sq. in. lining area
Tires, front.....2.75x18 Yokohama Rib
rear.....3.00x18 Yokohama Block
Balance weights.....None
Rim locks, front/rear.....None

WEIGHTS AND CAPACITIES

Weight, wet, unladen.....304 lbs
Weight bias, front/rear.....139/165
Allowable gross weight.....600 lbs
Wheel loading, front/rear.....230/395 lbs.
Fuel capacity.....2.4 Gal.
Reserve capacity..... .7 Gal.
Engine oil.....1.6 Quarts
Gear oil.....Integral w/engine

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Controls, left hand.....turn indicator, horn, clutch
right hand.....high-low/on-off headlight switch, electric starter, two-way kill switch
Speedometer...0-110 mph range in 2 mph increments w/70 mph red marker, two odometers (one resettable)
Tachometer..0-12,000 r.p.m. range in 200 rpm increments w/10,500 r.p.m. engine redline
Indicators.....turn, neautral, high beam
Locks.....seat (w/integral helmet locks), ignition, steering—one key operation
Passenger provisions.....Foot pegs, saddle hand strap
Tools.....15-piece
Stands.....side, center stand



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is no offensive vibration throughout the City Slicker's rev range. Seat, footpeg and handlebar tingles did not overpower to make you feel uneasy, nor did Honda's excellent location of these primary contact points fail.

It was during this segment, too, that we noted the CB-175's 2.4-gallon gas tank consistantly went on reserve at the 1.7 mark. Also noted was the fact that from 108.7 to 120.8 miles were averaged before switching to reserve. The latter figure computes out to an amazing 66.6 mpg, while tank range works-out to be a "safe" 140 to 155 miles before a pit stop.

Another facet of the K7 City Slicker is what seems to be its *lifetime* engine. Whether pulling along in 35 mph midday city traffic in fifth gear or banzaiing through the cogs at Irwindale Dragstrip, no protest emitted from the mill in either expensive engine noises or lugged chuff. Its powerplant is a mechanical masterpiece. What other engine(s) can redline all day at 10,500 rpm, crisply, and still get 60 mpg plus to boot?

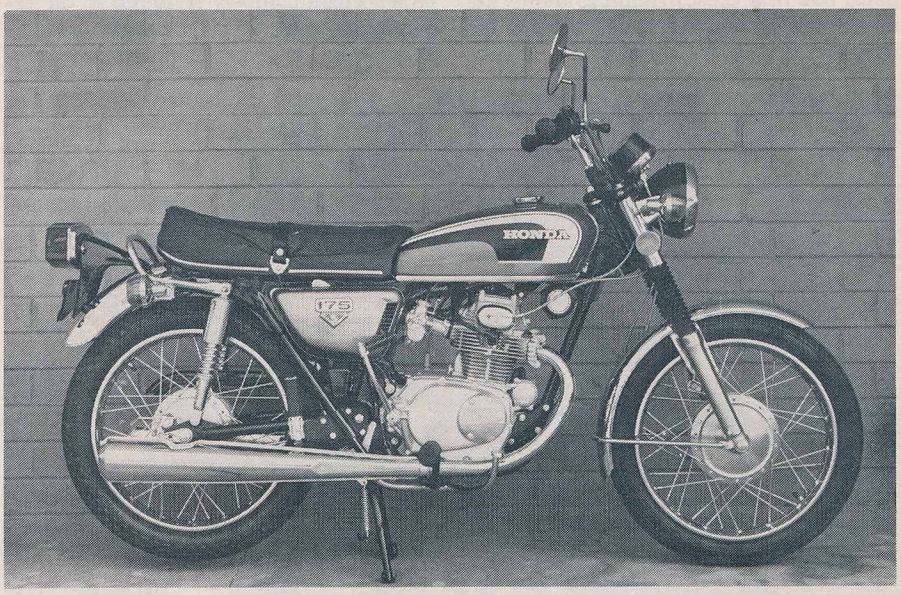
Not to be out-dazzled by its integral power source, the City Slicker's buttersmooth, five-speed constant mesh transmission (which derives power via a straight-cut primary gear drive and multi-plate wet clutch) displays nearly perfect internal gear ratios of 2.77, 1.88, 1.45, 1.17 and 1.00 for first through fifth, respectively. How well they are matched to the engine's torque characteristics, 3.70:1 primary gear reduction, 14-tooth counter and 33-tooth final drive sprockets became clearly evident in our quarter-mile evaluation at Irwindale Raceway.

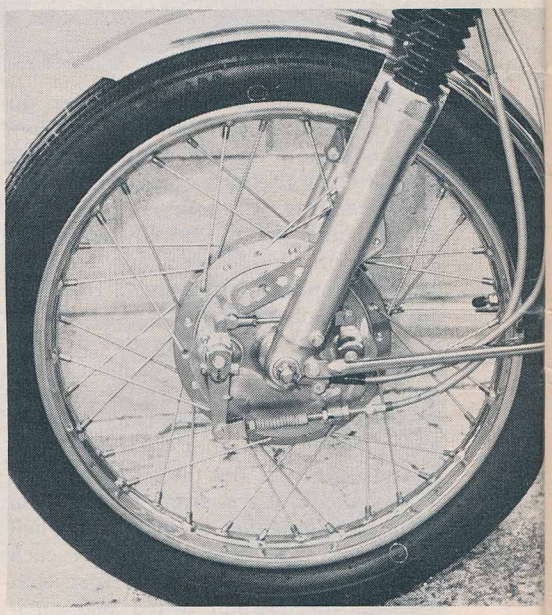
At the strip, the technique used to launch off the line was: revs up, clutch s-l-i-p, and power shift at 10,000 through the gears. Results? 19.56, 19.60 and 19.46-second et's at 63.73, 64.10 and 64.70 mph respectively. Getting a running start for a top speed shot yielded an indicated 71 mph maximum. According to Irwindale's NHRA certified eyes, this speed was optimistic by about 5-6 mph. Actual top velocity through the timing traps was 65.83 mph. As you can see, the CB-175 K7 reaches, very closely, its top speed potential in the quarter and, appropriately, has the right

Below: *Deluxe chrome grab-rail, seat strap and footpegs for passenger—tilt-back instruments and shiny circular horn (under tank front) for the driver—this CB-175 K7 Honda has it all! Note kicker.*

Left: *Single downtube branching into dual engine cradle tubes, under-tank ignition switch and electric starter motor in front of cylinders are evident here. Supermill!*

Bottom: One of the best dual-leading-shoe front brakes in the business is this one.





combination of powertrain components to do so.

Quarter-mile testing also verified that fourth gear is the City Slicker's headwind gear. That is when going across the finish line, we were in fourth taching just over 9600 rpm, a shift to fifth did not increase speed dramatically. Only a few mph. Correlated to actual highway flying it can be related thusly: on the level with no headwind, 70 mph can be maintained in fourth or fifth. A strong headwind will drop speed by 5 to 10 mph if you hold in top gear. A shift down to fourth will pull speed right back up to 65-70. On long uphills, fourth gear is the one to use—expect about 55-60 mph maximum. Add a headwind to the long upgrade and the most you'll see on the speedo is 50.

So the bike is definitely not a *super* freeway hauler. For short jaunts on superhighways—15 to 30 miles—it is bearable. The City Slicker's only limiting factor being reserve power. But if there are no steep hills or strong windage in your locale, then it is entirely feasible for all day freeway hopping. Interstate stability? Due to excellent steering geometry, rigid framework, confidence-inspiring suspension and clinging tires (2.75x18 rib Yokohama front, 3.00x18 universal Yokohama rear), its high-speed stability is amazingly equal to many 750's and better than some. Side winds did not hinder handling nor did passing trucks or buses. In fact, our test CB-175 exhibited less freeway rain groove twitch than our July touring test CB-750 Honda flyer. You figure that out!

While we're touching on safety . . . night riding on the City Slicker is a joy. New tilt-back tach-speedo dials (a la Honda Fours), bountiful pattern high and low beams, very audible horn, easily seen directionals and that huge, monstrous taillight beacon—taken off what seems like their biggest four—will surely let everyone know that you're coming, going, turning or stopping. Honda definitely wants you to be seen first, sleek beauty be damned if it interferes.

Keeping Honda's safety pace is the braking system on the CB-175. While not disc, both binders still do an admirable job. Stopping from a true 30 mph produced a 28.2 feet streak of black rubber; from 60 mph, only 130.1 feet were needed to halt completely. Credit a progressive feeling, dual-leading-shoe front brake and dandy single-leading-shoe rear drummer in standstilling this slightly overweight 302-pound (wet) streeter.

What else contributes in making the 1973½ CB-175 K7 a superlight-middleweight? Well, there's a three-way handlebar mounted kill switch . . . a lockable hinged seat with two helmet holders beneath . . . a single key that locks ignition, steering and seat . . . an electric starter besides the kicker . . . a hushed exhaust . . . plenty of cornering "lean" clearance and a passenger package consisting of a chrome grab-rail, passenger strap and footpegs. For the record—so that it won't be said that we own stock in their company—we'll state right here and now all of the test Honda's faults. All three little nit-picky ones: a slightly hard seat, a poorly located, undertank, fumble-key ignition switch and a cold-blooded engine (it took about ten blocks of stumbling or about five minutes of morning idle sickness for the mill to warm up completely and allow manual choke disengagement).

What's left to say but that we liked the City Slicker for what it is. Running as clean, crisp and strong the last day of our test, if not better than when we picked it up; it never missed a beat, shift or brake dab. The impeccable 1973½ Honda City Slicker did everything so well (what it was intended for) that it overwhelmed us with *blasé* consistency. But gassing it to 10,500 and rowing through the gears quickly breaks this mold. Braaap, snick; braaap, snick; braaap snick. Bring on those elephant cee-cee hippo-bikes . . . the rush-hour Grand Prix is on!! •