

WELL WORTH WAITING FOR

ONE CAN only speculate on why it has taken Honda such a very long time to sort out the horrible handling of their 250-twin. Whatever the reason it must have been a very good one for it's probably cost them a fortune in sales lost to the taut handling two-stroke competition in the ultra competitive quarter litre market.

At long last, though, Honda have got the message and the handling of their latest 250, now called the CJ250T, is more than a match for the bike's performance. In fact, handling is now so good that one could almost say it was worth waiting for.

For those who don't know, and there can't be many around now who are still in the dark, the old 250's big problem, apart from being slower than the Japanese two-stroke 250's, was insufficient damping action on the rear shock absorbers which meant that the bike would get into some mighty disconcerting weaves when taken through bumpy corners at any speed. Standard procedure for those of a cowardly disposition and a friendly bank manager, was to throw the original equipment dampers away and replace them with Girlings or Konis.

BAD NEWS

So the bad news for the damper manufacturers is good news for all Honda fans for the new 250T handles outstandingly well and in many respects is better than the rival two-strokes for it can be stuffed into a bumpy corner on the overrun or on a progressively opening throttle and come out the other side with the rider in complete control. Which says a lot, especially when that applies equally to wet and dry road riding conditions. Incidentally, throughout the test the dampers were set to the hardest pre-load position and the tyres inflated to 28 psi front and rear (30psi at the track).

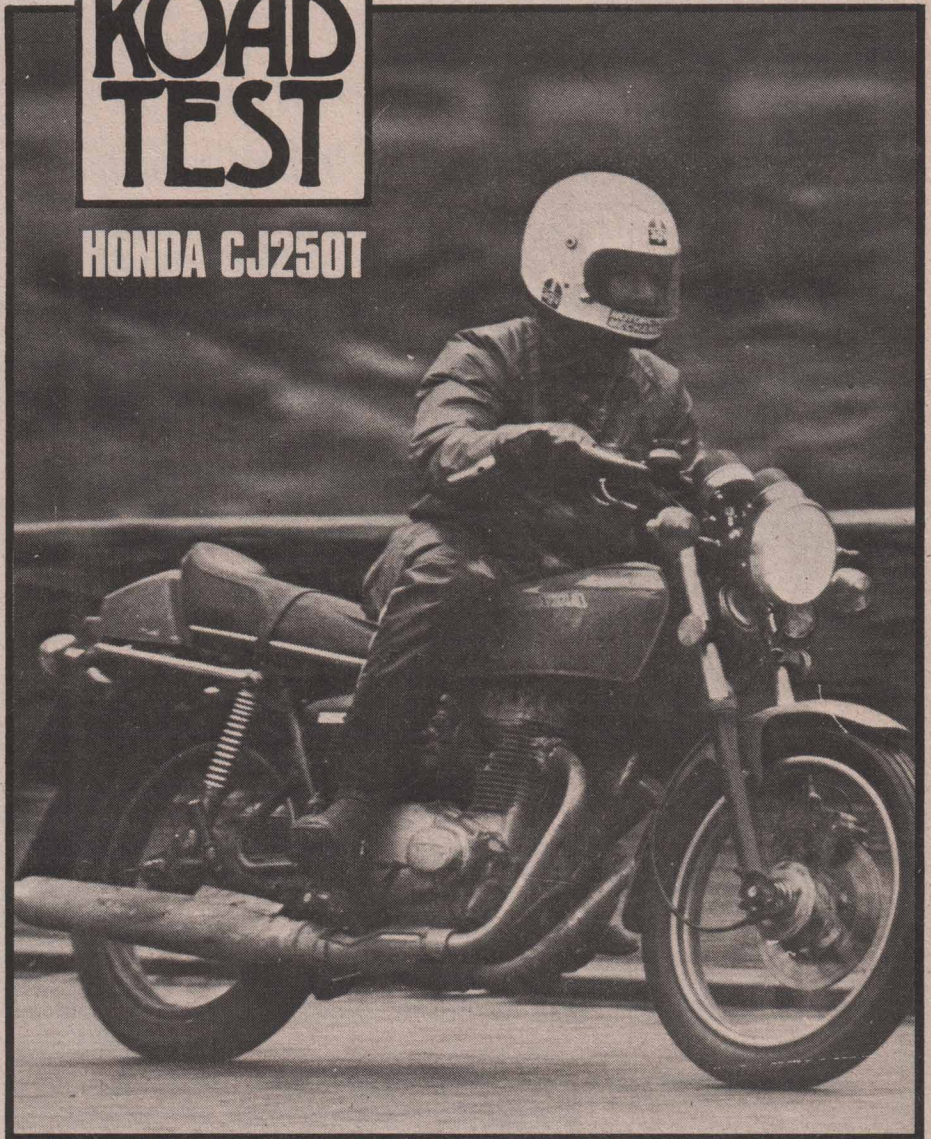
Apart from its safe and predictable handling the Honda has other plus points, not the least of which is its remarkable engine which in spite of being silenced very nearly out of existence still manages to give it a top speed approaching 85 mph and a standing start quarter performance of 18 seconds. While the Honda is still 5 mph slower than the Japanese two-strokes and lacks, too, their acceleration, it is far easier to ride and to get the best from without jiggling with clutch or throwing body weight forward to keep the front wheel down. The Honda just purrs away and pulls cleanly without transmission snatch from as little as 2,500 rpm in each gear.

At 50 mph in top with 6,000 rpm on the tacho the motor is so quiet that a helmeted rider can clearly hear the spare seat keys tinkling against the handlebars. At the track when we were getting performance figures, a collection of by-standers mentioned the Honda's unobtrusive exhaust note and commented that all they heard as the bike thrashed passed them at 9,500 rpm in fourth

By Colin Mayo

ROAD TEST

HONDA CJ250T



and the motor takes a long time to spin up to the 8,000 rpm mark where it starts to really respond, as it should, to the demands of the throttle.

For those who want a 250 and whose sole

was the clatter of the valve gear.

I said earlier that the Honda's engine has been silenced very nearly out of existence, and there can be no disputing that the massive silencer which is positioned very low down, does an excellent job of keeping the exhaust note, even at 9,500 rpm, to well within the pain level of the most testy of coppers. But the price of the Honda's silence is a high one so far as mid-range torque goes

criteria is not sheer top speed and the ability to beat their mates away from the High Street traffic lights, the Honda has a lot to offer, not the least of which is its amazing fuel economy. The best I managed to get, and not being particularly throttle cautious about it, was 73 mpg and the worst, holding it in all the gears up to 9,500 rpm during a two hour track session, was 50 mpg. Overall average fuel consumption for the entire test,

MOTOR CYCLE MECHANICS

including the track session was 56 mpg but the average owner would probably get nearer 60 mpg.

Although they were not particularly powerful I liked the Honda's brakes because they demanded no great skill in their use and were extremely well matched, the front providing the bite and the rear the balance when required. With the four-stroke's built-in advantage of engine braking the brakes came in for very little hard use during the test but when they were wanted they worked and worked well. It would take a pretty insensitive or ham fisted rider to lock either on inadvertently.

NIGGLE

A couple of things I didn't like about the bike were the mirrors which, although plenty large enough, were mounted on very short stalks meaning that half of the image was of the riders' own shoulder. Another niggle was the very imprecise action of the throttle which nine times out of ten would have gone unnoticed. However, when you want to feed power to the rear wheel coming out of a wet and greasy bend, throttle control is vital and the Honda throttle's long action, combined with a degree of backlash that can't be adjusted out, does not make for perfect control.

Beauty, says that well worn cliché, is in the eye of the beholder, and this beholder didn't think very much of the Honda's looks. For a start the Honda's styling is completely and utterly characterless. To meet American safety regulations the tank blends with the nose of the dual seat and this design limita-

PERFORMANCE AND SPECIFICATION

TEST CONDITIONS

Damp track, ambient temperature 49 deg F, 5mph cross wind.

PERFORMANCE

maximum speed	84.5 mph
braking from 30 mph	25 feet
fuel consumption: worst	52 mpg
best	76 mpg
average over test	56 mpg

oil consumption	n/a
standing quarter mile	18 sec at 71 mph
speedo error	1 mph fast at 30 mph

ENGINE

Air cooled, single overhead camshaft twin. Compression ratio: 9.5 to 1. Capacity: 249cc. Bore and stroke: 56 x 50.6mm. 12V 9ah battery. AC generator.

TRANSMISSION

primary reduction	3.174
final reduction	2.312 (2.062)
gearbox ratios:	2.500; 1.750; 1.375; 1.111; 0.965

CHASSIS

Telescopic front forks, swinging arm rear with 3 pre load adjustable dampers. Front disc brake, drum rear brake.

front tyre	3.00S18 (4PR)
rear tyre	3.50S18 (4PR)
wheelbase	54.1 in (1,375mm)
caster	63 deg 1 minute
trail	3.35 in (85mm)
overall height	42.1 in (1,070mm)
overall length	84.9 (2,145mm)
overall width	28 in (710mm)
dry weight	356 lb (162 Kg)
fuel tank	3.1 gallons
oil	1.8 qrts

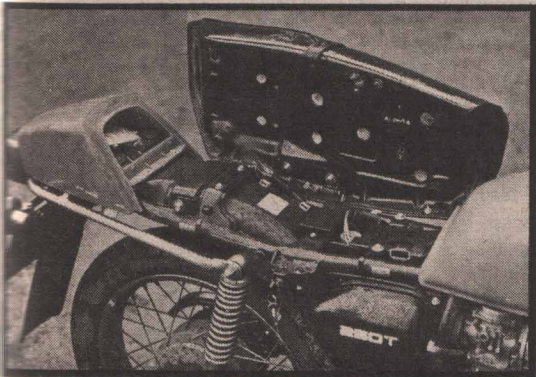
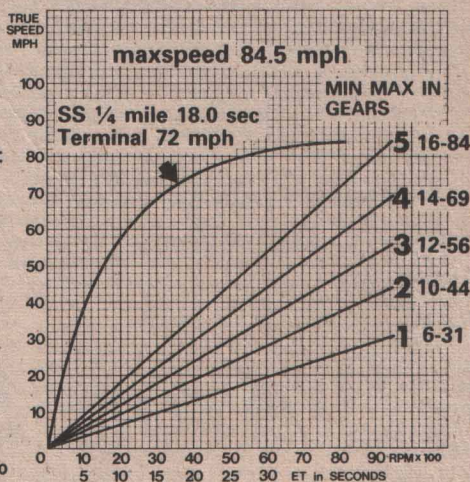
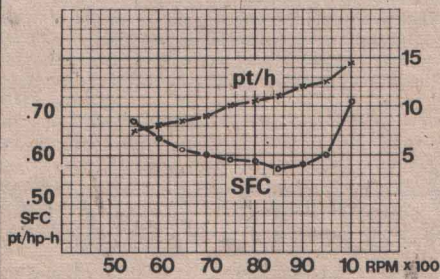
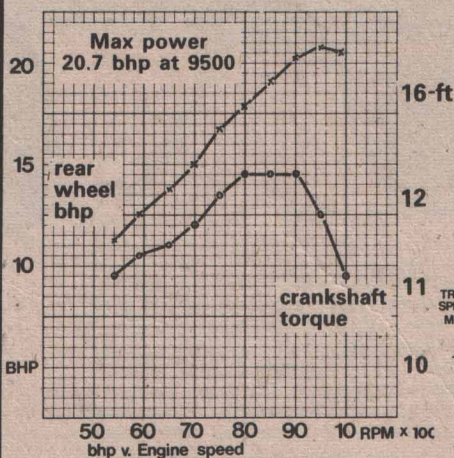
PARTS PRICES (inc VAT)

	£
front mudguard	14.67
handlebar	6.04
speedo cable	1.86
cb points	4.72
set of pistons/rings	18.68
exhaust system	93.10
list price	549.00

warranty: 12 months, unlimited, mileage, parts and labour.

HOW IT COMPARES

Model	Price inc VAT	Max speed	Avg mpg	SS 1/4 mile	Dry wt.
Honda CJ250T	549	84.5	56	18.0	356
Kawasaki KH250	539	92	46	17.2	348
Suzuki GT250A	598	92	44	15.9	322
Yamaha RD250	549	100	40	15.9	318
CZ250 Sport	339	74	59	—	310
Benelli 250	599	92	55	17.2	348
Harley-D 250	524	80	66	—	250



Honda's only concession to modern styling — the tail fairing contains a tool compartment.

tion means that the tank is not only flat and shapeless but provides nil support to the rider's body when the brakes are used in anger. This usually means that he ends up sitting on the filler cap — a highly undignified position to be in when exchanging four letter words with the idiot who has just pulled his ten-ton truck out in front of you.

Another styling feature I didn't like was the long black plastic mudshield hanging behind the rear wheel which looked very peculiar, particularly as it was in close proximity to the Honda's only concession to modern styling, the seat fairing which also doubles as a tool box.

To sum up, the new Honda 250 shows one major improvement against the model it replaces and that is it handles very much better and therefore is a whole lot safer to ride. Other plus points are its amazing fuel economy, its remarkable quietness and the great ease and safety in which it can be ridden fast and reasonably hard. A very undemanding motorcycle.