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# MOTOR CYCLE MECHANICS


THE  
HOT BIKE  
MAGAZINE

RAYBORN:  
GIANT  
COLOUR  
SPREAD!

MANN, USA's No.1  
RACER TALKS!



ARIEL SQUARE-4 STRIP  
HONDA'S 500-4 ON TEST  
TT COURSE—INSIDE & OUT

A photograph of a motorcycle rider in a blue and yellow racing suit and helmet, leaning into a turn on a road. The rider is on a Honda motorcycle, which is leaning to the left. The background is a blurred road surface.

# HONDA

**Sports touring was never so  
easy! MCM thrashes the latest  
four-pot for four hours...**

# ON TRACK!

**T**here's been a movement afoot for some time now, but finally it has materialised in this country. The latest generation of motorcycles are well and truly here, not only works demonstrators, but machines available to everybody.

First there were the extremely successful Japanese lightweights, followed by the wave of superbikes and now we have the scaled down superbike. Kawasaki started the ball rolling with their 350, Honda followed suit and produced a 500 four.

When we tested the Kawasaki back in September, my own opinion was that it was the best road machine I had ever ridden, and one of the fastest. The Honda is now tying for pole position in my esteem.

As with the Kwackers, I was singularly impressed with the thoughtfulness and attention to detail, and as the two machines do have their differences, it is difficult to say which is the better.

I found the Honda less comfortable for high-speed riding, and didn't like the twistgrip, which needed two big handfuls to get it wide open. On the other hand it was less thirsty, not so sensitive to carburettor/ignition adjustment, more flexible and sported a starter motor.

There was that much in it, but when you compare either machine with *anything* else, they are both streets ahead.

Anybody who buys this sort of machine has to do it for the performance—if you want economy you'd buy something that would give more than 50 mpg all the time, if you want prestige you'd buy a bigster, a genuine Mark I superbike.

On these grounds we took the Honda up to Snetterton and thrashed it solidly for four hours, non-stop except for taking on fuel. If it had worn things out, vibrated things off or simply blown up, I'd have lots to write about. As it happened, it just kept going and as far as I could tell would have kept on for

another four hours, and another.

All we had to replace was the petrol. The engine needed no oil, the brakes needed no attention, and the rear chain stretched very slightly. The 500 just carried on packing 76 miles into every hour, and a little bit more if the rider tried hard.

The conditions at Snetterton were good, virtually the same as when we tested the Kawasaki, and here we noted some odd things about the performance figures.

The 350 Kawasaki had a slightly lower top speed than the Honda, and the Honda seemed slightly overgeared, yet the Kwackers lapped a clear 3 seconds faster than the Honda. But the Honda was lapping some 4 seconds faster than a 500 Kawasaki which we rode there . . . curiouser and curiouser. And the 500 Kwackers was a good five miles an hour quicker along the straights.

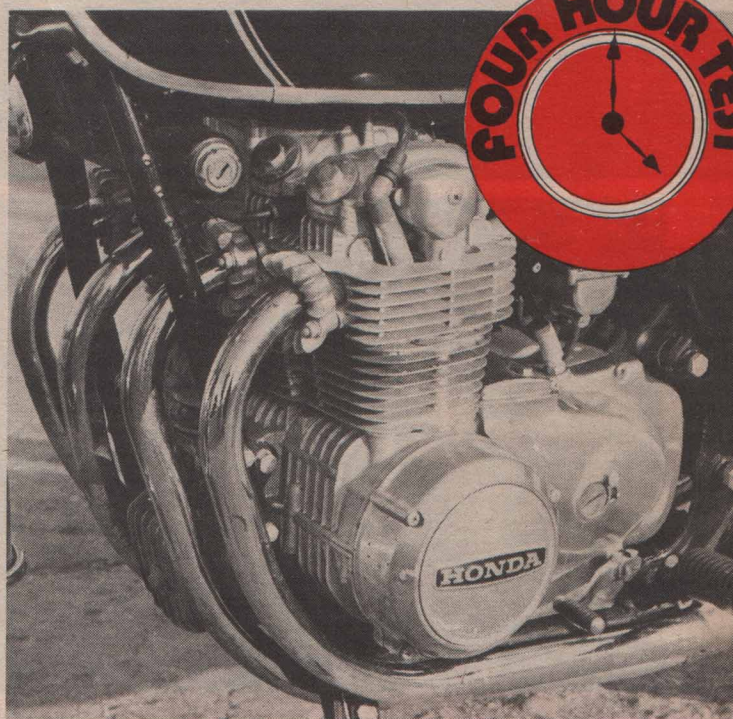
As all these machines were fully equipped roadsters, we can only assume that the smaller Kawasaki was finding more action through its agility, it certainly didn't have the sheer top speed.

For the same reason I wouldn't be surprised if the 500 Honda proved faster than the 750 variant in full road trim; it is certainly an easier machine to get along with.

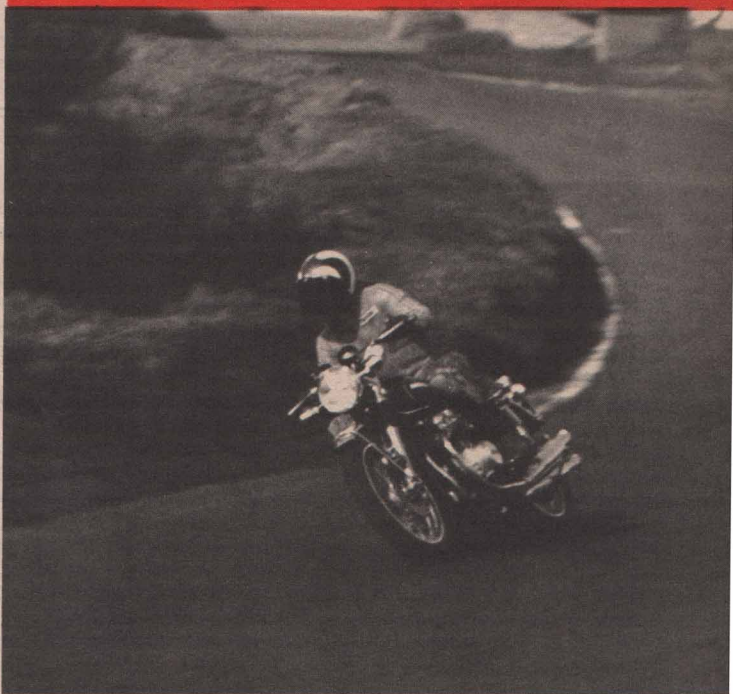
For all practical purposes, the Honda's top speed is 100 mph or a shade more. It reaches this speed without any real effort and holds it comfortably with the rider sitting up.

If you take it past the red line in fourth, slam it into fifth, grab the fork leg and hit the tank with your chin, you can see another 10 mph quite comfortably. That still leaves a few rpm before it's pulling maximum revs in top, so the 500 is slightly overgeared.

While this may knock a couple of seconds off the lap time, it's not a bad idea on a road machine—top gear becomes something of an overdrive, giving easy high-speed cruising together with

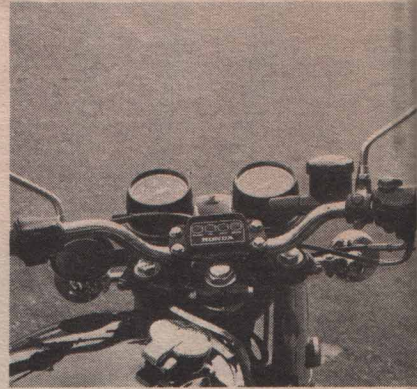


*This is where the 50 horses live, packed into a 498 cc space. The four Keihin carburettors are rubber mounted*

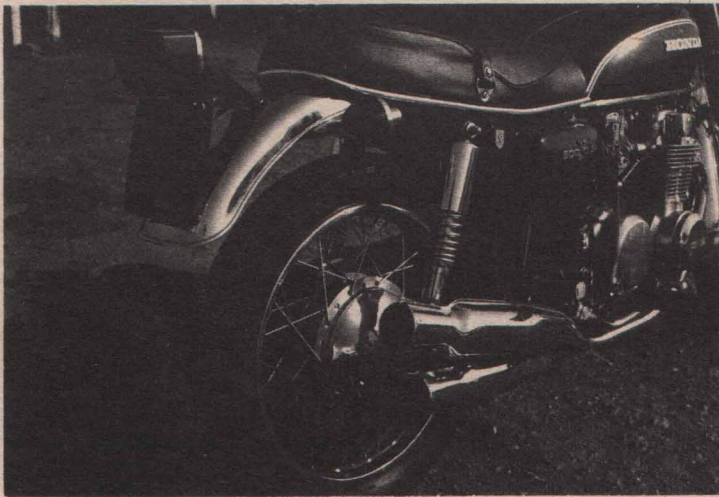




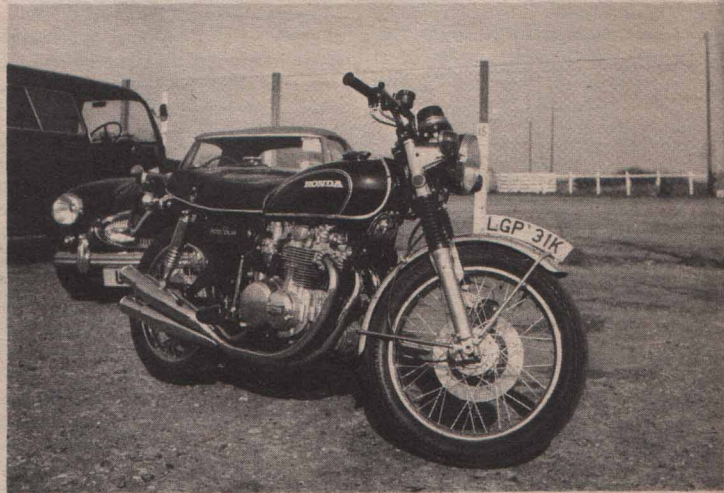
# HONDA FOUR HOUR TEST



*Handlebar layout is neat, with array of warning lamps and easily operated switches. Ignition kill switch is over throttle drum*



*Quiet comfort—the suspension and exhausts do their jobs well, but without spoiling the machine's high-speed performance*



*Honda have managed to combine neat styling with a comfortable ride, although the footrest could be positioned better*

the minimum of wear and tear.

The bike isn't really set up for fast riding though. To cheat the wind you've got to get your head down and the handlebar-footrest arrangement obviously wasn't made with this in mind.

The gearshift is also too far forward, making rapid upward changes rather awkward.

At the other end of the scale, the brakes and suspension might almost have been made for a racer. Handling was tight, firm and positive, not heavy but not light enough to make the Honda feel edgy through the turns.

At any speed it could be laid over, accelerated, braked, even over bumps, and it kept its rock steadiness, finding the line and holding on to it. The rider could even change line suddenly without getting any nasty reaction—this happened once or twice as the Honda outraked racing machines going into the hairpin.

And that really says enough for the brakes. The front disc and rear drum got incredibly hot, but neither even tried to fade, the pads didn't wear and the shoes didn't lose adjustment. Hydraulic discs can sometimes be strange animals; the bite felt through the lever is often too hard or too soft to really tell the rider anything. Honda have somehow made their hydraulics just right—this was one machine where you didn't have to wait for smoke to come off the tyre before you knew you'd gone too far!

Racing standard handling is usually only found at the expense of comfort, but again Honda have found an amazing compromise. The spacious seat probably has a lot to do with it, but whatever the reason, it stays comfortable under all conditions. The only complaint is that the footrests need to be moved back into a couple of inches.

Starting the motor is simplicity itself. From cold it needs the choke for a few seconds and is warm enough to run after a few more seconds—totally different from the temperament of the earlier 750.

When the engine is warm you only have to look at the starter button and it jumps into immediate action.

As expected the large straight four is smooth and power comes in from tickover upwards, making for a very pleasant ride at low touring speeds. There is no marked cam effect—as the revs get higher, more power comes in all the way up to 9000 and then some, but there is no sudden surge of power, it just builds up.

The CB500 is not the sort of bike to do wheelies or wheel-spins, everything is done in a most graceful, almost demure manner and it has the sort of behaviour which can be most

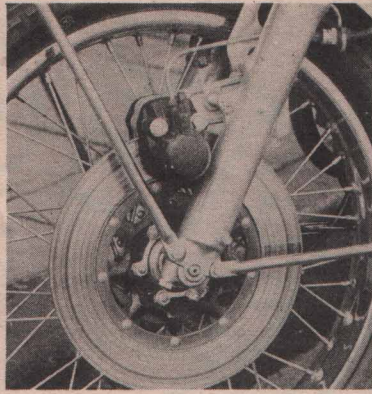
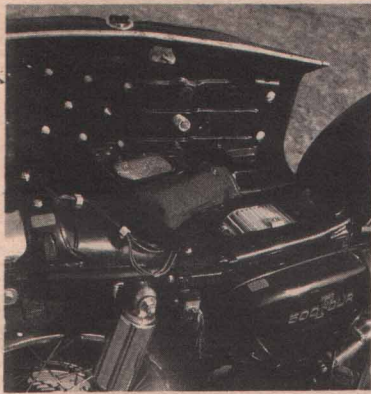
misleading—until you look at the speedo.

The gear ratios are pretty well chosen, at Snetterton we managed to use all except first, and on the road the power band is so wide you only need to use the lower ratios when you're really searching for some extra acceleration.

It has all the power of a big engine coupled with the easy manners of a lightweight.

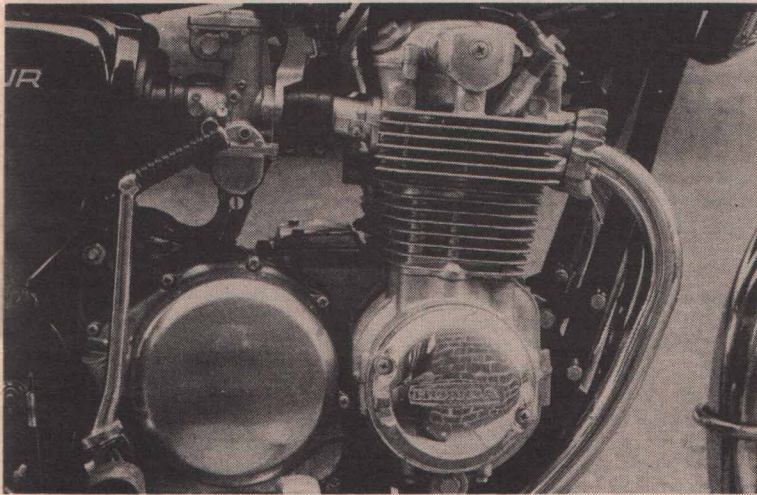
Most of the time the engine noise is lost in the wind-rush, the only time you notice any sound is when you're going so slowly there's nothing else to listen to, or when you hammer it up to maximum and the whine from the exhaust takes over from the wind.

There's no mechanical noise from the timing gear or primary drive, and watching the Honda flash past the pits flat in fourth it was difficult to tell from the sound whether it was a motor-



The seat hides quite a reasonable toolkit and the most easily removable air cleaner we've ever seen. Seat can be locked down

Honda's single disc gives more stopping power than you need, with a high level of feel through its hydraulic operating system



Offside view shows the simple lines of the single ohc motor—perhaps the ideal unit for a sports touring machine

cycle pushing 95 or a high-revving milk float.

Back on the road the Honda continued in the same reliable, comfortable yet fast fashion. Even on rough-surfaced roads the suspension kept the wheels on the floor without letting the rider know too much about it.

Ground clearance, too, is ample—even on the track the stand and footrest only just grazed the floor.

The electrics set a pretty good standard all round; the horn is loud enough to be heard at speed, the switches can be found with cold fingers and they all worked positively. On any powerful machine we like to see a "kill" button, especially after one or two experiences of throttles sticking open, but it's a pity that Honda did not fit a headlamp flasher. The only other fault is that the dipswitch is combined with the lighting switch, making it possible to

switch the lights off when you only wanted to dip the main beam.

The CB500 is a docile, gentle, smooth machine, but deceptively fast. It is well finished, both in appearance and mechanically, and easily capable of doing just what the rider wants it to.

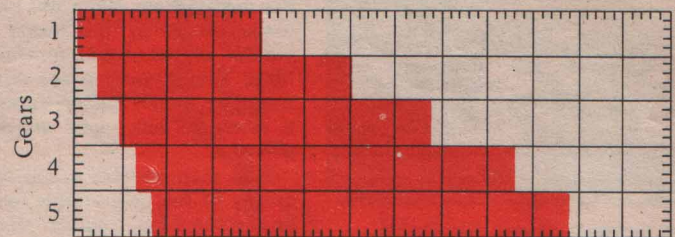
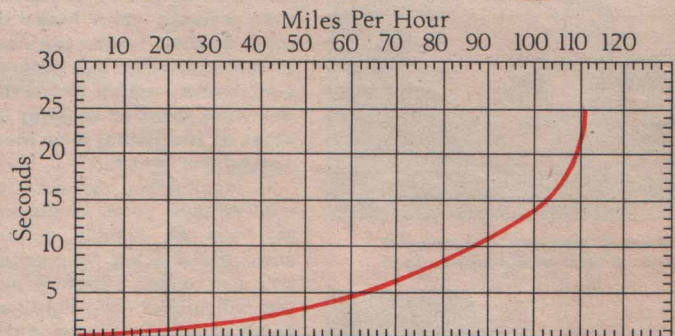
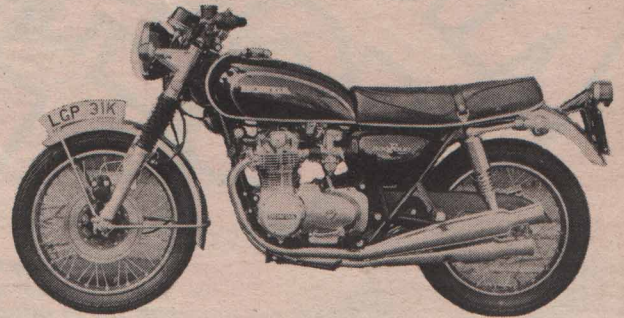
It has to get ten out of ten for attention to detail—like the QD air cleaner, helmet hooks which lock along with the seat and toolbox, and so on.

At £619 it is expensive by some standards, but compared to other large capacity motorcycles, it's reasonable.

**JOHN ROBINSON**

**TURN TO  
PAGE 64 FOR  
YOUR HONDA  
STOCKIST**

## ROAD TEST



Standing Quarter 15secs

**fuel consumption (during track test)**  
**(average road use)**  
**braking from 30 mph**

**42 mpg**  
**50 mpg**  
**29 ft**

## SPECIFICATION

**Engine:** In-line four-cylinder single ohc, aircooled, bore × stroke 56 × 50.6 mm, capacity 498 cc, compression ratio 9:1, claimed output 50 bhp at 9000 rpm. Carburation by four Keihin. Lubrication, oil for engine and gearbox carried in crankcase casting.

**Transmission:** Five-speed gearbox driven by gear primary drive through multi-plate clutch. Final drive by chain. Primary reduction 3.246:1, secondary reduction 2.0:1. Internal gear ratios 2.353, 1.636, 1.269, 1.036 and 0.90:1.

**Electrics:** Coil and contact breaker ignition, 12-volt ac/dc lighting supplied from crank-

shaft-mounted alternator and battery. Starter motor, indicators, ignition kill switch, front and rear stoplight switches fitted as OE.

**Wheels:** Front 3.25 × 19, single disc brake, rear 3.50 × 18, single-leading-shoe brake.

**Suspension:** Telescopic front forks, rear swinging arm with adjustable damper units.

**Dimensions:** Wheelbase 55.5 in., overall height 44.4 in., overall length 83.0 in., overall width 32.5 in., dry weight 403.5 lb., engine oil 5½ pints, fuel tank 3 gallons plus 1 gallon reserve.

**Price:** £619 inc. PT.

**Concessionaire:** Honda UK, Power Road, Chiswick, W4.