

HONDA 50cc CUB

THE NIFTY FIFTY

“Distinguished as the biggest sales success story in the history of motor cycling . . . its winning formula introduced nations to the delights of independent transport.”

THE humblest but most significant motor cycle dealt with in this special publication is Honda's ubiquitous 50cc Cub.

It is a motor cycling molehill out of which Honda have been able to build motor cycling mountains such as the six cylinder CBX.

The Super Cub is the bread and butter foundation for the biggest motor cycle empire in the world. And as it presses on towards its 30th birthday it is still conquering new territory and pioneering a path for the best known name in the world of two wheels.

Built to withstand ignorance and abuse from people of all nations it has made Honda to motor cycling what Hoover is to vacuum cleaners.

So reliable and fuss free is this pack mule on wheels that most users take it completely for granted. The most common problem arises when the motor seizes, not because of any fault, but because owners ride them month in month out without ever checking the oil level.

The Super Cub presses on until starved to seizing point through lack of life giving lubricant. This is a great testimony to the world's most bought, most ignored, most neglected worker on wheels.

Distinguished as the biggest sales success story in the history of motor cycling the Super Cub was introduced in 1958. Its semi-motor cycle semi-scooter appearance was an instant hit.

It offered cheap, quiet, reliable transport with a degree of protection from the

elements. Hundreds, then thousands, then millions took to the Super Cub.

Its winning formula introduced nations to the delights of independent transport. It formed the roots of the Honda tree which grew and grew as owners, more than satisfied with their first taste of Honda transport, moved on to bigger mounts from the Honda stable.

In its first year 24,000 Super Cubs were made. By 1974 ten million had been built, and this year on April 7 (1983) the model celebrated its 15 millionth edition.

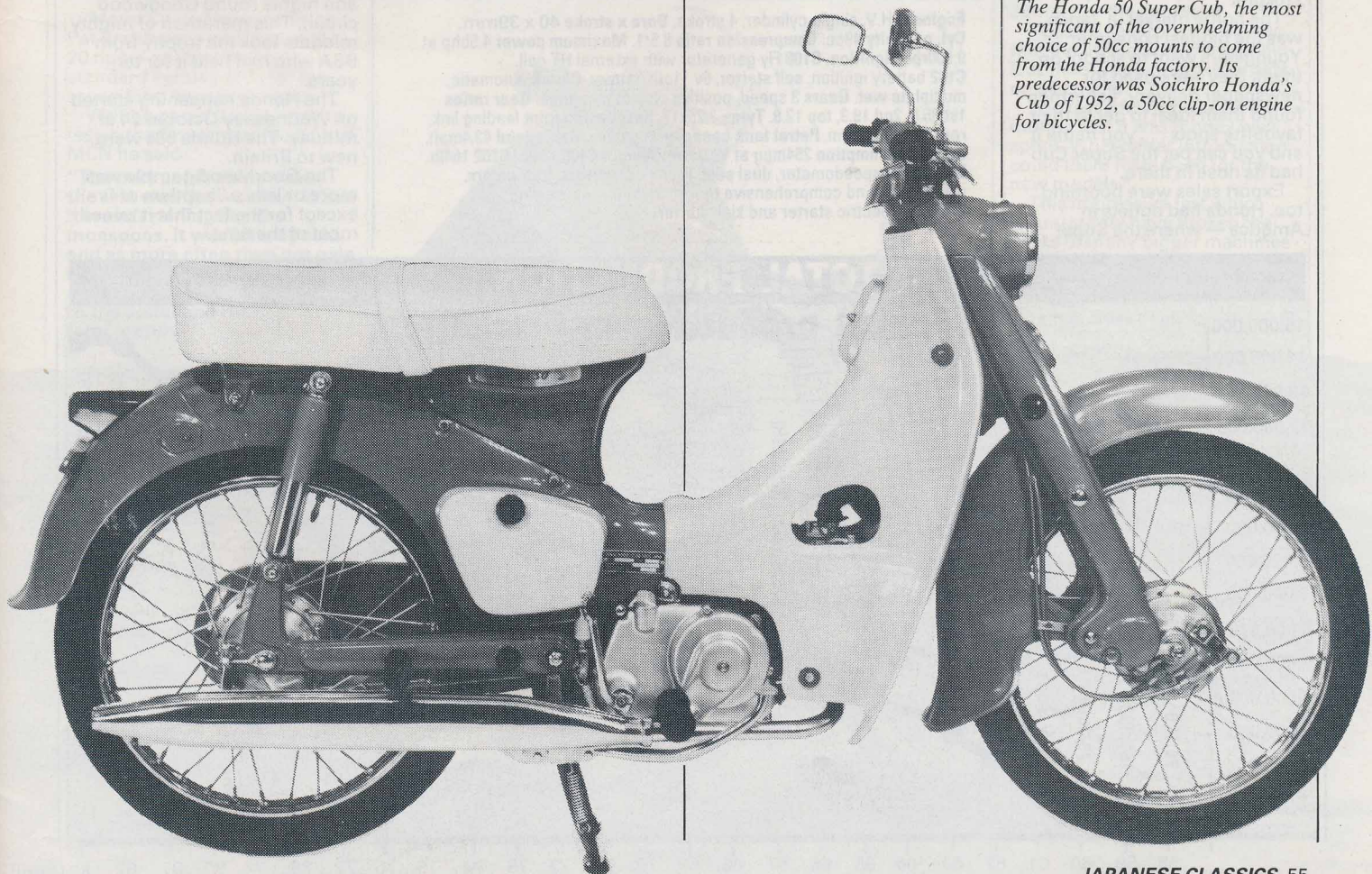
What a remarkable record. A table of the Super Cub's sales triumphs is listed with this feature.

Also remarkable in this age of instant change is the fact that the Super Cub looks almost the same as it did when first introduced.

Soichiro Honda got it right first time and the Super Cub set a trend which other manufacturers have been forced to copy to stay in business.

In 1961 when the Super Cub passed the first one million sales post, its production represented 73 per cent of the two wheelers being made by Honda.

The Honda 50 Super Cub, the most significant of the overwhelming choice of 50cc mounts to come from the Honda factory. Its predecessor was Soichiro Honda's Cub of 1952, a 50cc clip-on engine for bicycles.



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The previous year's production figure of 564,365 for the Super Cub made the 160,000 total figure for motor cycles and scooters produced in Britain look decidedly anaemic.

At that time Honda was operating three factories. In the largest at Suzuka, 450km west of Tokyo, a Honda 50 was rolling off the production line every 12 seconds. Amazing.

This factory housed 20 injection mould machines which pumped out the plastic and polyethylene parts which were becoming an accepted part of motor cycle construction in place of steel for mudguards, toolboxes and so on.

Honda 50cc Sport models (C-110 and C-111) were being built at Honda's Saitama factory, only not quite so quickly — only one every 50 seconds!

Produced in two variants, the C-100 and electric start C-102, the Cub's power was quoted at 4.5PS with top speed at 44mph (70kph).

The home market in Japan was the biggest consumer. Youngsters went to school on them, they were used for newspaper delivery, fishermen found them ideal to get to their favourite spots... you name it and you can bet the Super Cub had its nose in there.

Export sales were booming too. Honda had outlets in America — where the Super



Back to 1964, the Super Cub was by now a well accepted part of the motorcycle scene. It was especially liked by lady riders. Still basically the same machine today the Super Cub was upgraded in 1982 with the introduction of the "Econopower" engine which improved government test fuel figures from 150km per litre to 180 at 30kph. The best selling motorcycle of all time is currently produced in 11 countries outside Japan.

SPECIFICATION IN 1963

Engine O.H.V. single cylinder. 4 stroke. **Bore x stroke** 40 x 39mm. **Cyl. capacity** 49cc. **Compression ratio** 8.5:1. **Maximum power** 4.5bhp at 9,500rpm. **Ignition** C100 Fly generator with external HT coil. **C102** battery ignition, self starter, 6v 11a/h battery. **Clutch** automatic, multiplate wet. **Gears** 3 speed, positive stop foot change. **Gear ratios** 1st 35.8, 2nd 19.3, top 12.8. **Tyres** 2.25x17. **Suspension** front leading link, rear swinging arm. **Petrol tank capacity** ¾ gallon. **Max. speed** 43.4mph. **Petrol consumption** 254mpg at 18.6mph. **Weight** C100 134lb. C102 154lb. **Equipment** speedometer, dual seat, rear view mirrors, trafficators, pillion rests and comprehensive tool kit including spare plug. **C102** has electric starter and kick starter.

Cub was first exported to in 1959 — Canada, Europe, south-east Asia, Australia and New Zealand, the Middle East and Africa.

The Super Cub was billed as "The newest idea since the scooter". It really did, and still does have a lot to offer.

Nicknamed the "Nifty Fifty", and sometimes the "Thrifty Fifty", and often the "Nifty, Thrifty, Fifty" it was claimed to be able to cover 250mpg at 20mph.

It hit the bike scene with indicators, fully enclosed rear chain, automatic clutch, three speed gearbox, twin mirrors, steering lock, twin shock rear suspension, two-tone finish, dual seat, or single seat with carrier, leg shields, speedometer, and the option of electric starter.

When much of the opposition in the 50cc bracket was still basic moped class the ohv four-stroke single Super Cub was a de luxe mount with looks and performance.

To give it a further touch of class in 1962 it was advertised in Britain for guineas rather than pounds — 79gns for the C-100, or 97gns for the C-102 electric start version.

It was in 1962 that the Honda 50 distinguished itself at Goodwood race track by taking the Maudes Trophy, awarded by the Auto-Cycle Union for an outstanding achievement under ACU observation.

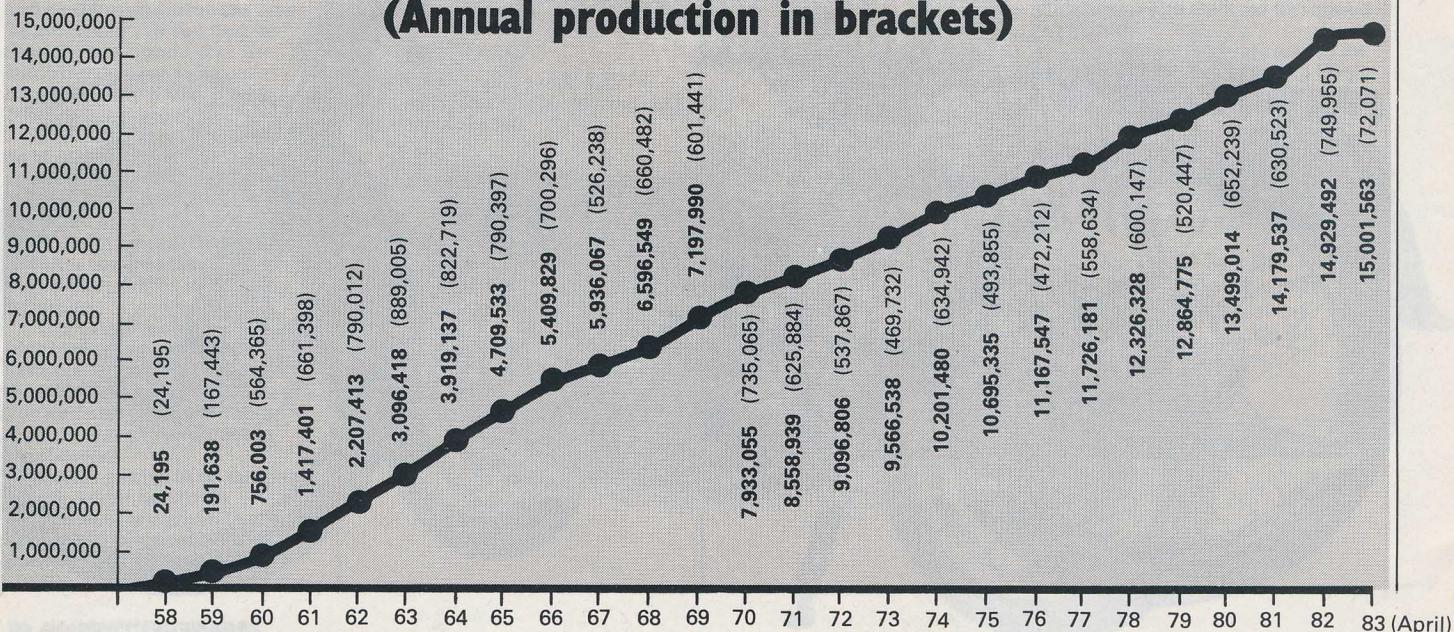
Three Honda 50s were ridden non-stop, apart from minor adjustments, for seven days and nights round Goodwood circuit. This marathon of mighty midgets took the trophy from BSA who had held it for ten years.

The Honda happening started on Wednesday October 24 at midday. The Honda 50s were new to Britain.

The Goodwood gamble was more or less a "baptism of fire", except for the fact that it rained most of the time!

TOTAL PRODUCTION

(Annual production in brackets)





"In these conditions, the bikes had to be ridden almost to the limit to maintain their schedules. Iced carburetors were common. The carburettor on the white machine was changed to cure a misfire caused by the worst of the weather.

"But apart from the condenser, again on the white during the last two hours, the only other parts changed were headlamp bulbs, a fuse, and tyres on all three.

"The engines, stripped by ACU engineers, were found to be in remarkably good condition, especially the white's cylinder barrel which they adjudged to be perfect."

The white machine referred to was an electric start Super Cub. It covered 4,934.69 miles at an average speed (including stops) of 29.373mph, and at an average fuel consumption of 140.52mpg.

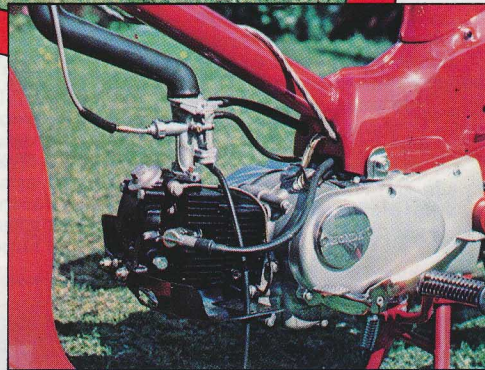
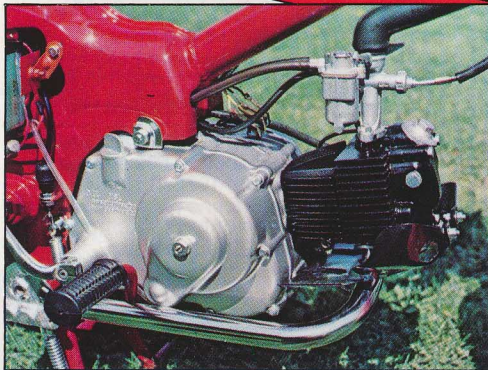
The C-100 model on test covered 5,022.1 miles at 29.893mph average speed and 124.27mpg. The third member of the gallant little trio, a four speed sports C-110D model, covered no less than 5,896.23 miles at 35.096mph and 124.2mpg.

The schedules mentioned in the report were targets of 30mph average speeds for the two "step-thru" models and 35mph for the sports 50.

You can see from the figures that the little giants were within less than 1mph of those targets on all counts.

The test cost Honda a lot of money. But it was money well spent. What better introduction could there have been for the new models?

This impressive test which would surely have broken the backs of many bigger machines of the day proved that Honda had set new levels of reliability and sophistication for the smallest class of all. □



Motor Cycle News staffman Pat Braithwaite was one of the 20 riders guiding these standard lightweights for the seven long days and nights.

Writing about the endurance test in the November 14 issue of MCN he said:

"The only unfair thing about the test was the weather. When it wasn't raining like the monsoons, it was bitterly cold, and as more often than not gale force winds — on one occasion a force nine — added their blast to the water and the temperature.

