

APRIL 1979

Collings

AUSTRALIA 90c. NEW ZEALAND 90c. MALAYSIA \$3.00

Motorcycling

MONTHLY

price 45p

**SUZUKI TS185
FANTIC TRIAL 125
KAWASAKI KM90
on the rough**

**MOTORCYCLE
MESSENGERS~
£100 a week?**

- PLUS**
- SUZIE A50P REBUILD
 - FORK SEALS REPAIRED
 - SLIPPING CLUTCHES CURED

**FOR ADULTS
ONLY**



8 Page Extra. Dave Taylor's Safety Special



HONDA CBX

CBX

FOR ADULTS ONLY

WANT the thrill of a lifetime, squire? Step this way for naked excitement that really moves. Straight up.

Yamaha and Suzuki offer quality merchandise with the powerful yet polished performances of the XS1100 and GS1000. Kawasaki's Z1R goes as far as titillation. But Honda's CBX is hard core.

hot stuff

If you've got the goods, show 'em. From any angle the engine is eye-catching as it bursts out of its shapely clothing. And lest you should forget that all the action is upstairs, bold lettering across the broad back of the tank shouts DOUBLE OVERHEAD CAM 24 VALVES every time you swing your leg over the well-endowed seat.

The CBX was built for only one purpose. By now everybody knows that the world's fastest moving object is a Honda. Our testing was done in December and January when a wet day was a relief because it meant no ice or snow. And yet we still covered the standing quarter mile in well under 12 seconds, and managed a best one-way top speed of over 132mph.

As the rear wheel spun and the bike slewed wildly up the damp track, it was easy to imagine that a dry track would greatly improve the figures. The standing quarter would probably drop to the low 11s, and top speed could be as high as 140mph with decent traction in the lower gears making better use of MIRA's rather inadequate timing straight.

So it's the fastest. So what? On the road any top speed over 120mph is academic, and it is hard to detect the one-second or so difference between the CBX's standing quarter and those of the XS1100/GS1000/Z1R. But there is a difference, because opening the CBX's throttle is like opening no other.

Perhaps it's the way that this amazing engine revs so freely. It is hard to believe that six pistons are displacing 1047cc as the whole lot zings to the 9500rpm red line and back in the time it takes most engines to cough their way from tickover to the main jet. It's a beautiful sound.

This lightning crankshaft acceleration can be felt as much in the gears as when revving up in neutral. Which is where the fun starts. The rear wheel can be spun in the first three gears on dry roads — in all gears on wet or icy roads.

Having such a direct connection between your right hand and the rear wheel means that whacking the throttle against the stop after every gearchange is for the test track only. The tacho needle flicks through the red



line to valve bounce at 10,500rpm in the first three gears. It even got to valve bounce in fourth gear on the downwind leg of our highspeed runs. Fifth (top) gear produced the highest speed but stayed out of the red line. Cruising at 100mph turns the engine at 7000rpm.

The most disappointing thing about this beautiful engine is its vibration. A straight six ought to be smooth, yet the CBX loses out to its four-cylinder opposition. Bad vibes start at 5500rpm and stay — which means that the mirrors are only ever clear in town riding, although there's no discomfort for rider or passenger.

After I had been up and down the test track flat out a few times, Merrill said: "It makes a terrible whining sound". From where I was sitting it was a stomach-turning yowl, just like the six-cylinder Hondas that took Hailwood to glory all those years ago. But then, like St Bruno ads, the CBX isn't designed to appeal to women.

transmission

With the engine developing 103bhp (at 9000rpm) the transmission could be forgiven for having a few shortcomings. Yet everything was sweetness and light.

The spinning rear tyre made sure that the clutch was never overloaded on take-off, and clutchless gearchanges never missed. Changing down without the clutch needed a degree of care because the engine is such a powerful brake but, again, the gearbox never missed.

Shaftdrive was never considered since the CBX's image can't afford any power loss or weight disadvantage. I had expected the rear chain to be the bike's weakest spot, yet it needed no adjustment after 1300 punishing test miles.

The sealed-for-life rollers looked after themselves although frequent doses of lubricant were necessary to keep the links rust and squeak free.

too hot to handle

All fantasies take place in perfect surroundings and naturally assume that your performances will be second to none. In

reality, a bed-sit may not be much of a turn-on for either partner.

What I am trying to say is that the CBX is for the perfect days. On such a day it is an unforgettable experience. Unfortunately for me, the test period was notably short of perfect days and miles of greasy roads, wet roads, snow and ice-covered roads left their mark on my ego. I couldn't cope. My confidence was destroyed.

Take an engine that responds instantly to the slightest movement of the throttle, breathe on

it until it produces more power than anything before, wrap it up in a lightweight frame with a high centre of gravity — and you've got a recipe for disaster.

Everything depends on the tyres, and the tyres couldn't cope any better than I could.

I'm not making excuses, you understand. The Japanese Dunlops were pretty good. It's just that the tyre hasn't yet been built that will cope with the CBX.

Chas Deane was impressed with the bike's low-speed handling. I would go further than that, because 70mph is only slow by the CBX's standards and it handled well up to that speed on dry roads.

The Japanese tyre designers have been forced to turn the rear tyre's central groove — so essential for water clearing — into inch-long slots in order to stop the thing overheating. We'll probably never know whether cooler-running, bias-belted Red Arrows are any better in the wet, because Dunlop have no plans to make them in a wide enough size.

And don't think you're going to blast down to the Med at 130mph, either. The most I ever cruised at was 100mph, and it would start to weave at 90 with the wrong combination of crosswinds and luggage. There was no high-speed weave when riding two-up, but I still kept my speed down because of the tyres' tendency to blow away from under the bike after overtaking lorries — especially on wet motorways.

Given the right weather conditions, the CBX is not the beast you might expect. A dry



weight of 545lb is featherweight by today's 1000cc standards, and being slim in all the right places makes the 32-inch seat height manageable for most people.

The bike was deliberately given its high centre of gravity to ensure high-speed stability and to make flicking through the esses easy. It fails miserably on the first count, but a nudge of the knees is all it takes to get down into a corner. There's no need to Indian wrestle with the handlebars to make the bike lean, which makes a nice change after some of the other one-litre wonders.

Pushing and pulling on the bars is as inadvisable as it is unnecessary. On several occasions when the frame was threatening to corkscrew itself out of a corner and into oblivion, releasing my white-knuckled grip on the bars cooled things down considerably.

not a cheap thrill

You expect to pay for a performance as wild as this, so an overall fuel consumption of 33mpg comes as no surprise. The worst figure of 24mpg shows what a high-speed blast up M27 and M3 can do.

Riding as gently as possible through 170 miles of snow on the way back to Poole from MIRA gave a best of 38mpg.

All things considered, 100-120 miles from each 4.4 gallon tankful isn't bad. The fiddly tank cap is supposed to look like a Honda RCB endurance racer, I suppose, but any hopes of a quick pit-stop are dashed as the last half-gallon trickles painfully slowly into the flat-topped tank. Stick to self-serve garages unless you want a lapful of four-star petrol.

comfortable positions

Sit well forward, arms straight and at 90° to your body, hands resting gently on the bars. Once the fun has started, lift feet up out of harm's way and hook heels on rubber covered pegs provided.

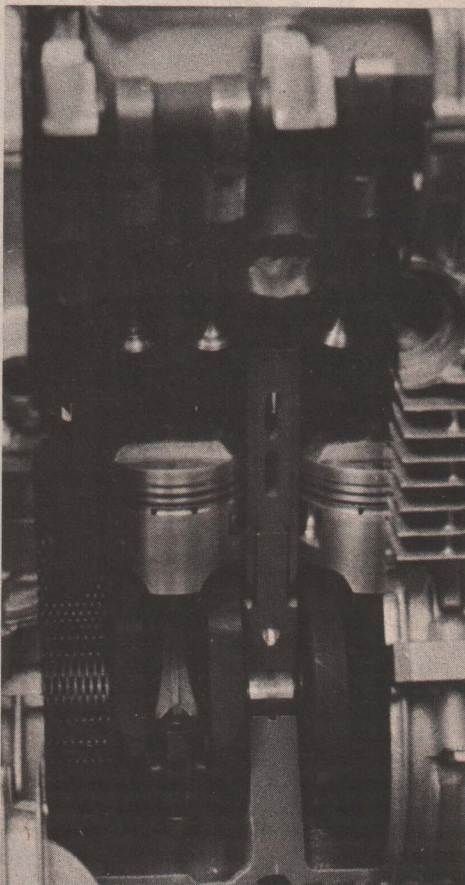
Any other participants should climb up behind, bringing their knees up as far as possible in order to reach the second set of pegs, and then hold on tight to the body of the person in front or to the rail provided under the saddle.

The riding speed is biased towards high-speed needs, as you might expect. Even long-armed people will always be leaning forward. Janine, who prefers an upright

position supported by glass-fibre aids, complained of being stretched over the tank. I found the position comfortable up to about 90mph, after which I wanted to lean even further forward.

Sliding back along the seat and putting my feet on the pillion pegs kept the wind off while high-speed cruising on motorways. However, the rearward shift of weight made the bike so unstable that I soon sat up again.

Once they got used to sitting with their knees high and spread wide, passengers found the bike comfortable. It was important that passengers stayed tucked in close. Not only was there the danger of being accelerated off in a backward somersault, cornering with someone sitting bolt upright at the far end of the seat could get the frame in some contortions that the *Karma Sutra* never heard of.



Hy-Vo jackshaft drive at bottom left

let down by details

If hard-core action is what you've paid for, you don't expect the finer details to be too polished, and so it is with the CBX. Stylish good looks come higher up the list than practical good sense.

Although commendably accurate — especially at high speeds — the speedo is too fiddly to read at-a-glance. Both instruments are poorly illuminated. The mileometer and tripmeter are also spot-on accurate but invisible at night.

The headlamp is a powerful blaze of white light. Range could be even better if only the main beam was more tightly controlled. Adjusting the headlamp for maximum range on main beam spoils the otherwise sharp z-shaped cut-off on dipped beam. In other words, the angle between the two beams is too narrow.

Probably the least practical thing on the whole bike is the front mudguard. Not only does mucky water get chucked all over the engine — and it's one hell of an engine to clean successfully — but spray also pours up and over the tank. A graceful arc of spray from the top of the tyre soon dims the headlamp, too.

Like all modern Hondas, the CBX didn't feel very safe on its side stand. It was therefore nice to find that putting the bike on its centre stand was a doddle.

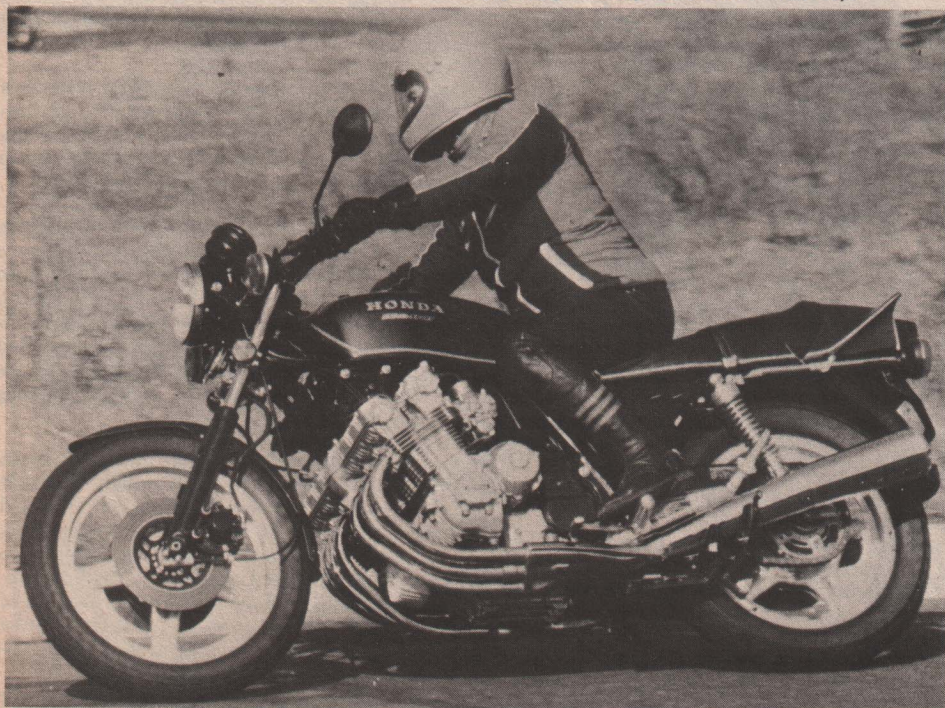
While struggling with a steering-lock key that is fouled by the wiring harness, it is maddening to know that non-UK bikes have the lock built into the ignition switch. Don't ask me why.

good-time girl

The sort of girl who gets everyone panting on the Rugby Club's stag night isn't likely to be much good at washing socks or doing the shopping. Likewise, the CBX will do more for your ego than a chest wig and you can restore your sanity at the weekend after five nine-to-fives have reduced you to a vegetable. But it's not too much good for touring with luggage or winter commuting.

To put it another way, have you got one of the bigger-engined Austin Princesses sitting in your driveway? For the same price, you can own an equally-boring Allegro and a CBX. The Allegro will get you there and back in safety while the CBX waits in the garage to be unleashed whenever a dry day dawns. You'll feel better for it.

Neil Millen



Ground clearance is generous, as Charlie Deane finds out — on a dry road

Road and Track Test....

MAXIMUM & MINIMUM SPEEDS

GEAR	Solo max.	Prone max.	Min.
1	63.29	63.39	5.61
2	88.04	88.50	7.01
3	110.90	111.45	9.44
4	125.42	128.84	11.35
5	126.89	130.44	12.97
6	—	—	—

SPEEDO CORRECTIONS

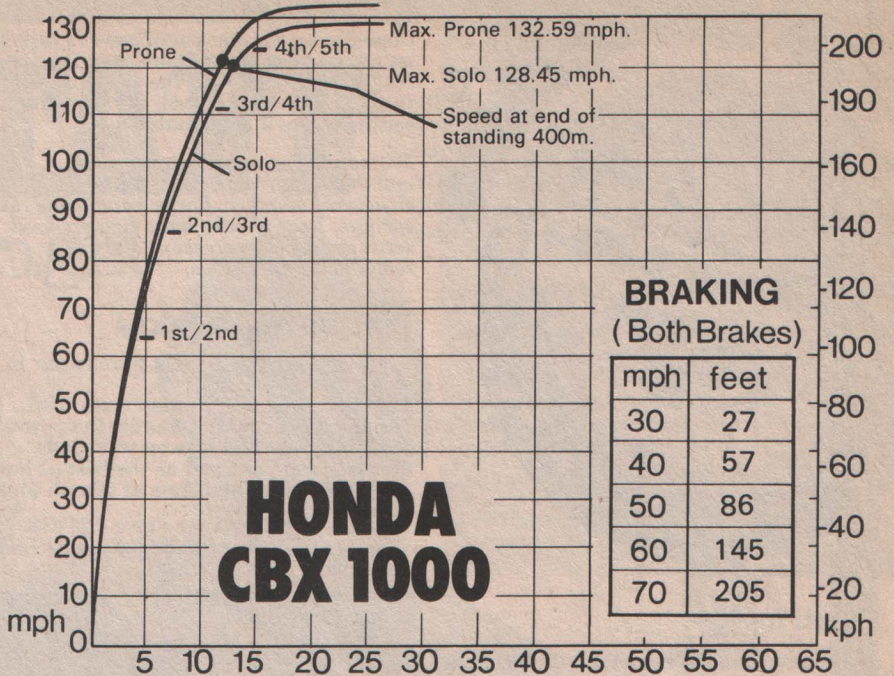
Indicated mph	30	40	50	60	70
Actual mph	28	37	47	58	68

FLEXIBILITY, Top Gear

mph	20-40	40-60	60-80	30-50	50-70
Solo	6.45	5.93	6.74	5.69	6.25
Prone	6.44	5.91	6.69	5.71	6.21

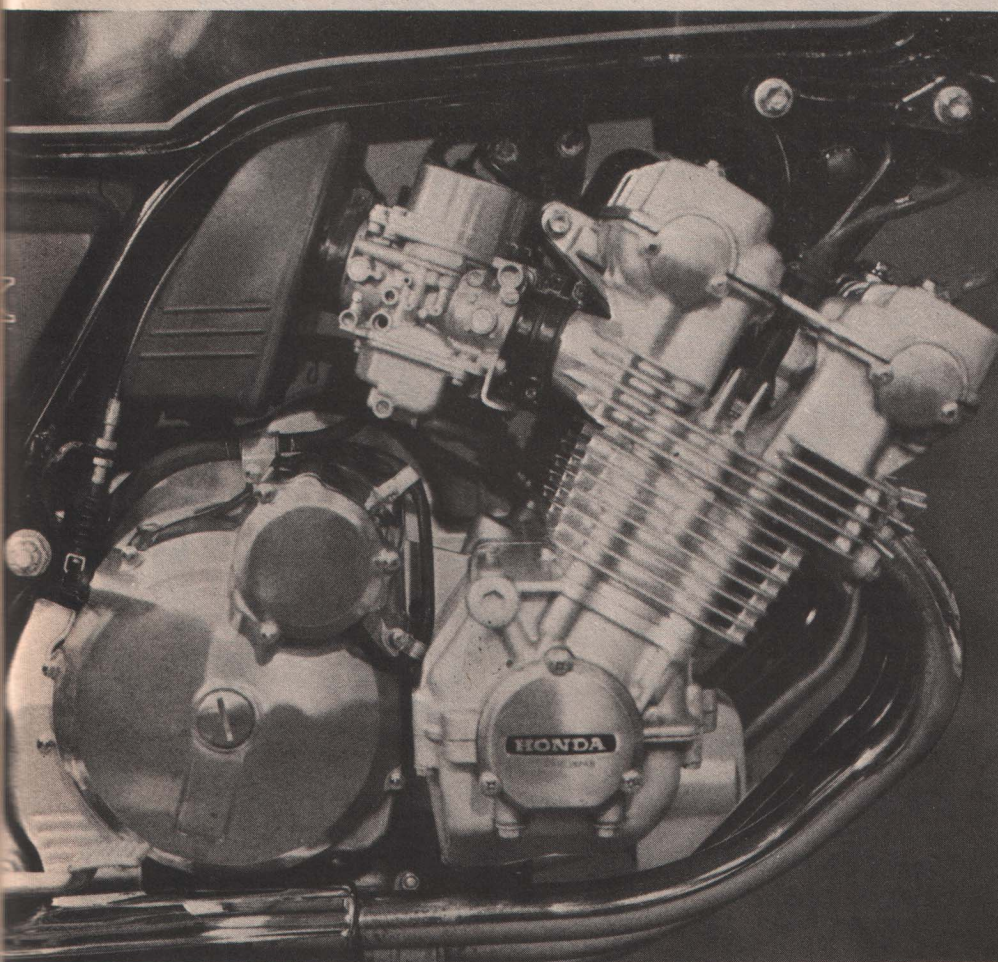
ACCELERATION FROM REST (secs)

Omph to	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130	400m
Solo	1.02	1.62	2.21	2.87	3.69	4.41	5.34	6.50	7.89	9.85	12.21	—	12.23
Prone	1.00	1.58	2.20	2.85	3.67	4.39	5.32	6.45	7.84	9.62	11.66	14.98	11.67



FUEL CONSUMPTION

mph	30	40	50	60	70
mpg	67	61	52	46	38
Overall consumption	33 mpg				



Technically Speaking

Engine

Amazingly responsive and powerful engine. Power flows from tickover, changes to warp drive at 6500rpm, and keeps on coming through the 9500 red line to valve bounce at 10,500.

Disappointing vibration blurs the mirrors from 5500rpm onwards but never spoils riding comfort.

Transverse, six-cylinder, air-cooled four-stroke. Double overhead camshafts, in four sections for torsional stiffness, operating four valves per cylinder. Bore x stroke 64.5x 53.4mm. Displacement 1047cc.

Compression ratio 9.3:1. Claimed power 103bhp at 9000rpm. Wet sump lubrication.

Transmission

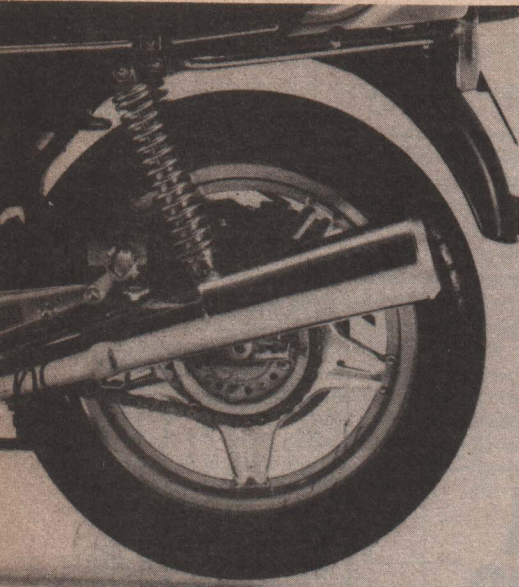
Clutch is gear-driven from a jackshaft lying behind the crankshaft, in turn driven by Hy-Vo chain from the centre of the crankshaft. Clutch was light and smooth and showed no signs of slipping during the test.

Five-speed, constant-mesh gearbox up to Honda's usual impeccable standard — silent, light and positive.

Drive chain surprised everybody by needing no adjustment during the test period, although copious amounts of lubricant were necessary to stop the outer links from seizing up.

Wet multi-plate clutch. Overall gear ratios: 1st 12.89, 2nd 9.25, 3rd 7.35, 4th 6.34, 5th (top) 5.48:1. Primary reduction ratio (crankshaft through jackshaft to clutch) 2.27:1.





Frame and forks

Considering the amount of power available, let's just say that the frame is unforgiving. Not much wrong with the suspension, though. With long travel, the firm damper settings were a good match.

Diamond-type, tubular, chrome-molybdenum frame uses engine as structural member. Forks have triple-rate springs. Rear shocks have five pre-load settings, two compression and three rebound damper rates.

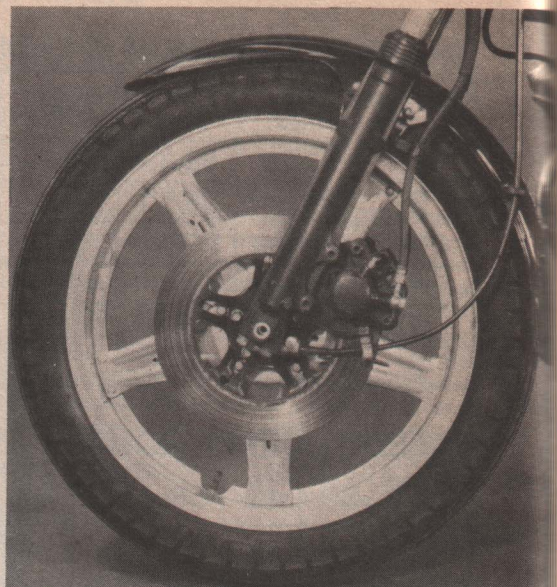
Wheels and brakes

All-alloy Comstar wheels were easier to clean than they look.

Tubeless Japanese Dunlop tyres tried valiantly but couldn't handle the power. Rear tyre was at a loss on wet roads.

Brakes were as good as the best at low speed, but took their time at 60mph plus.

Front tyre 3.50V19, rear tyre 4.25V18. Double 11inch front discs and single 12inch rear disc.



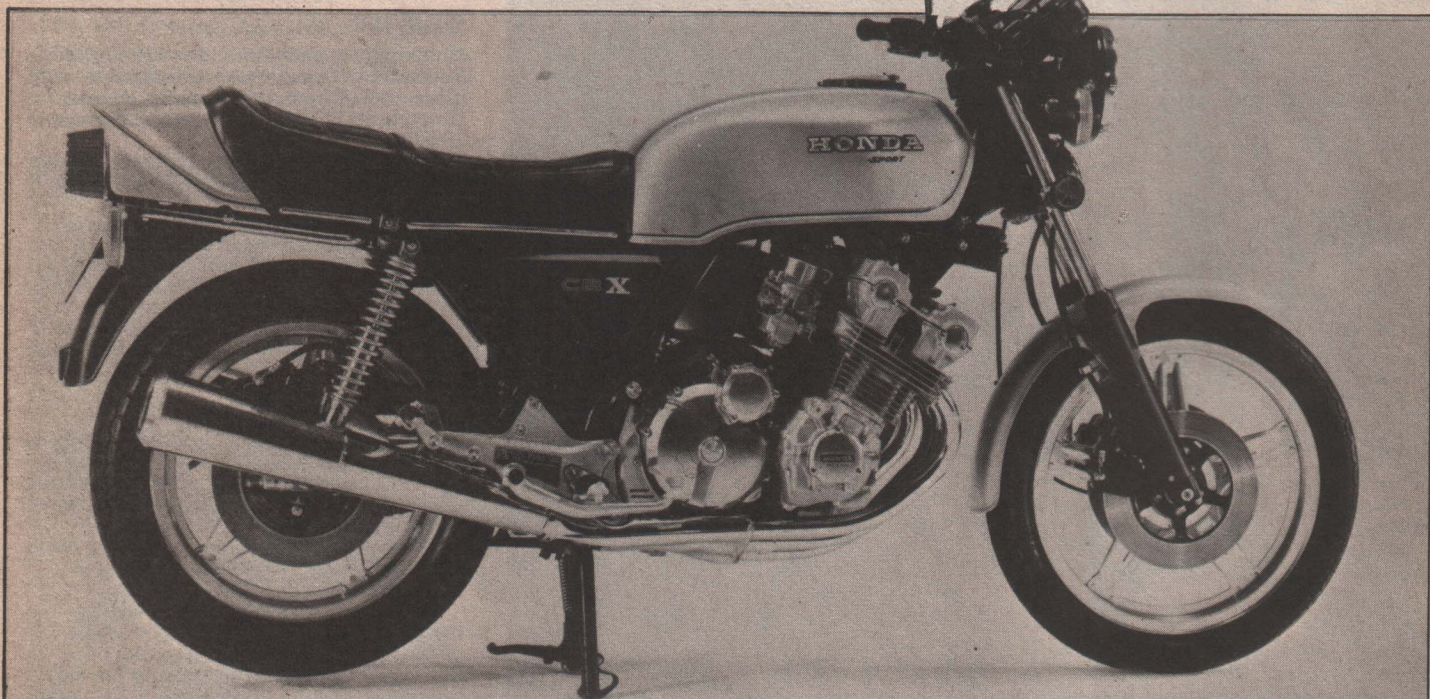
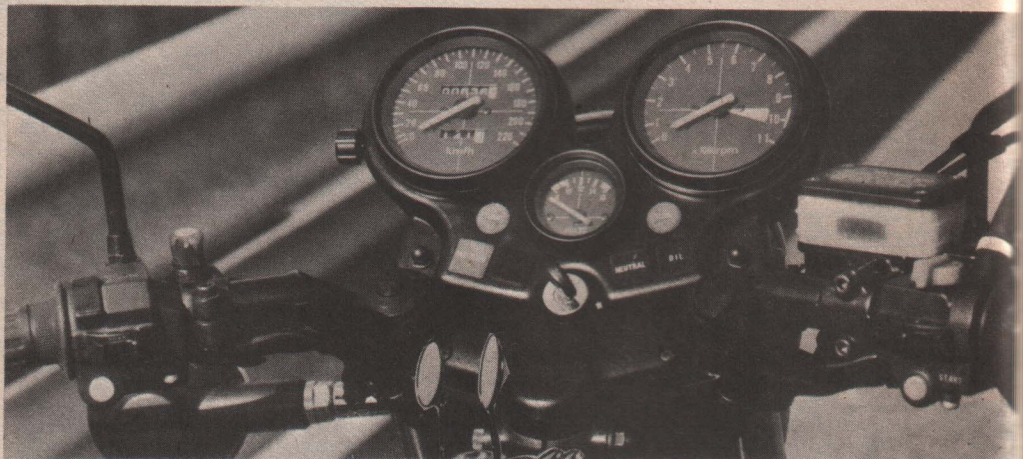
Electrics

As we have come to expect, all the electrics functioned on command. Poor beam control limited the ultra-bright headlamp's main beam range. Dipped beam had very sharp cut-off as long as main beam wasn't pointed too high.

In contrast to the huge and bright rear lamp, instrument lighting was pathetic. Indicators not self cancelling.

Alternator is mounted on jackshaft, and is protected from phenomenal engine acceleration by its own clutch.

Alternator delivers 249W at 5000rpm to 12V 18Ah battery. Headlamp 60/55W halogen. Double tail lights 5/21W. Pilot light 5W. Warning lights for oil pressure, main beam, neutral gear and indicators.



Equipment and finish

Easy-to-use centre stand and tip-toe prop stand. Steering-head mounted lock fouled by wiring harness. Annoyingly complicated locking fuel cap. Well-made toolkit.

Exhaust pipes were rusting at manifold and clamps. Expansion box won't last long.

Dimensions

Light for its class, the CBX managed to be slim in all the right places. Wide and flat fuel tank very awkward to fill, but capacity is adequate for sports use.

Wheelbase 1496mm (59inches). Ground clearance 150mm (6inches). Seat height

810mm (32inches). Dry weight 248kg (545lb).

General

Test bike supplied by Honda UK Ltd, Power Road, London SW4. Price £2750 including VAT. Delivery extra.