

Cover story: Yamaha spent several grand flying three UK bike journos to Egypt and entertaining them with everything from dancing girls to syrup of figs in the hope that said journos would say something nice about the 750 Super Ténéré. Pic: Kel Edge.

Performance BIKES

A B C

JULY — DEC 1989

6 7, 8 6 2

In tests, eight out of ten budgies who expressed a preference defecated on it.

Editor Rupert Paul
 Technical Editor John Robinson
 Design Editor Peter Comely
 Staff Writer Mark Forsyth
 Secretary Sarah Insall
 Advertisement Manager Shaun Collin
 Asst Ad Manager Tony Jarman
 Ad Production Audrey Wright
 Classified Ad Sales Andy Scrymgeour
 Product Manager Rob Croxall
 Group Ad Manager Mark Jeffs
 Publisher Mark Revelle
 Managing Director Peter Strong
 Editorial and advertising offices Performance Bikes, EMAP National Publications Ltd, Bushfield House, Orton Centre, Peterborough, Cambs PE2 0UW. (Tel: 0733 237111). Classified ads hotline: 0733 238855. Annual subscriptions £20.50 (UK & Eire), £22.50 (Overseas surface mail), £27.50 (Europe airmail). Cheques or postal orders made payable to Performance Bikes, PO Box 500, Leicester LE99 0AA. Telephone 0858 410510 (24 hour answer phone 0858 34004). Back issues from Circulation/Back Numbers, Frontline (EMAP/Haymarket) Ltd, Park House, 117 Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TS (0733 555161). Price £2.00 subject to availability.
 Reader offers: Neil Pitcher (enquiries 0733 237111, ext 5791). USA Sales Agent Lee Cowie, Motorsport, RR1 Box, 200D, Jonesburgh MO, 63351, USA (0101 314 488 3113). Typeset by Total Typesetters, Werrington. Printed by Nene River, Peterborough. © EMAP National Publications Ltd, Inc' Motorcycle Mechanics & The Biker. ISSN 0268-4942.

MAY ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 10

MAY, 1989



M A Y 1 9 8 9

FEATURES

- 36. **MISSION IMPRACTICAL** — Did the ARKX 125 run? Did it provide the kind of power that was expected? How long did it run for? The latest instalment of the Forsyth saga.
- 42. **FERRETS UP MY DRAINPIPES** — Would you buy a 1,000cc motorcycle if you had the money? Would you really? What is the point of an RGV250 after two months of ownership? Wouldn't you be better off in a car? A totally unscientific survey of attitudes.
- 48. **FROM MUD, THROUGH BLOOD** — Blood, sweat and tears (mainly Rupert's) from Team PB's outing in the Pembrey Super Moto. In other words, how to devalue a TDR250 in one easy step.
- 60. **HUB OF THE UNIVERSE** — If you're forked off with telescopic forks, here is a large number of expensive alternatives.
- 90. **SUZUKA PIG OUT** — Four delicious pages of luxuriant colour air freighted in from the Japanese Grand Prix.
- 94. **DAYTONA PIG OUT** — Daytona: what happened, who happened to make it happen and most of all, much techno-dribbling over the latest Pro Twins racing technology.

ROAD TESTS

- 10. **WAITER, THERE'S SAND IN MY DESERT** — Rupert endures many painful injections, in places of great intimacy, in order to bring you the first reports of the new 750 Super Ténéré all the way from Egypt.
- 16. **ARTURO MAGNIFICO** — Mark wobbles round Mallory Park trying very hard not to forget that this 750 MV Agusta is quite probably priceless.
- 24. **UNIVERSAL JAPANESE MISSILE** — The starting grids around the World were swarming with CBR600s last year. With 10% more power for '89 the plague will multiply. JR gives you the gritty nitty.

REGULARS

- 4. **NEWS** — The man who swallowed a Michelin Slick in 1½ hours takes the day off work to clean out his fish tank.
- 8. **RESPONSE** — Respond? You lot? Ha!
- 29. **NEW STUFF** — The world's first waterproof tortoise outfit with reflective strips, suitable for crashing in monsoons.
- 32. **NEXT MONTH** — "I think you'd better leave the ZXR750 test 'til June, nobody's gonna be interested in reading it this month..."
- 35. **HAPPY SPANNERS** — Indeed they are. Spondicious Reader Offer where we negotiate the price of a socket set and stud extractor down to an affordable level.
- 57. **RUDIMENTS OF WISDOM** — evaporated at the last minute in April's ish to make way for Eddie Lawson, we present: some observations and lacunae on final drive chain lubricity, by Professor Plum, in the drawing room, with the lead piping.
- 68. **ANSWERS** — technical bamboozlement deftly dealt with by hyperactive maniacal genius Kim Hull.
- 100. **FROBISHER: THE PAPERS** — Pyecraft discovers weightlessness and takes off from Beachy Head with a couple of welding bottles to repair the ozone layer.
- 102. **READER'S SPESH** — A return to traditional values: humungous power, weedy brakes and no handling.



Who said Rupert was clean living? TDR headbanging at Pembrey — p48.



The Japanese do weird things to BMWs. Pro Twins in colour — p94.



The most expensive Performance Bike in the world is the MV Agusta — p16.



Pete thinks that the new CBR600 looks like a thermos flask — p24.

U J M

UNIVERSAL
JAPANESE
MISSILE

Designed to be all things to all people, Honda's CBR600 has yet to appear with knobbly tyres, but it has grown ten per cent more power



There are three things to say about the CBR600. It has consistently been the best seller in its class since it appeared three years ago. We voted the 88 model best of the group in a four bike shootout last May. The 89 version has been given a 10% power increase.

Everything else is mere detail, although it is the detail which makes the Honda such a well-balanced bike. the blend of engine, comfort, handling and brakes is perfect for all occasions . . . from the race-track through long-distance touring, right down to everyday riding to work. The only criticisms to come out of this test were of the tyres and the tank size.

The CBR comes with Dunlop K50s or Bridgestones as original equipment. Last year we sang the Dunlops' praises.

This year we found that the Bridgestone Excedras were no good in the wet and not much better in the dry.

PERFORMANCE BIKES



Strange, as other recent Bridgestone designs have been very good.

The only thing wrong with the tank is that it doesn't hold

enough petrol. Or hold it for long enough. It usually managed 120-odd on the main tank, and reserve only took it 20 miles if you were lucky. On

the occasion that I wasn't lucky we found that we could only squeeze 15 litres into the allegedly 16.5-litre tank. The missing 1.5 litres would have



Pic: Garry Stuart and Marilyn Barnwell

A high ratio of performance to £ sterling is where the CBR is strongest . . . but it needs the tyres to perform on.

given it a useful 15 miles extra range but what it really needs is another 4 or 5 litres. With such a bulbously sculpted tank it would be easy to fit in that much without it even showing, just by making it half an inch bigger in all directions.

At £3999, the price has gone up by 11% which, I suppose, isn't bad allowing for a bit of inflation and the 10% power increase. It now compares to the GPX at £3899 and the GSX at £3299, plus of course the all-new and so far untested FZR which will be £3995.

Yamaha have been a bit slow off the mark in this country with their nice-looking FZR. The Spanish magazine *Motociclismo* tested one against the CBR and found that the Yamaha was 1mph slower, although it recorded better lap times around a race track. The German magazine *PS* also tested the two; they said that the Yamaha gave about 5bhp less than the Honda, although it went 1.5mph faster in their test.

Last year the Honda was slightly down on power compared to the Kawasaki and the Suzuki. It didn't show up too much in the performance tests (in fact the CBR managed to go slightly faster than the Suzuki) but it was 1-2bhp down all through the rev range. This year, Honda have obviously worked hard to rectify that situation and have put 6-8mph on to the CBR's top speed, taking it over 140mph.

Last year we also praised its ergonomics, saying that all the controls worked ". . . ridiculously well over a huge range of bumps and speeds", while the motor's power delivery was "nice and explosive". Rupert summed it up by saying he would want to keep it for many miles and couldn't see how anybody could be disappointed with it. None of that has changed (except Rupert is currently negotiating for a Transalp; the first recorded evidence that the slaughter of whales can cause brain damage in another specy).

We reckoned that the 88 was resting on its laurels, but was still the bike to beat. And although the Kawasaki was slightly faster, the CBR was still the best overall package. Given the 89 level of performance it is going to be quite a lot harder to beat.

Ours topped 140 in a fairly stiff sidewind but the power increase is not restricted to the top end. Apart from a large hiccup at 5500 — which was more noticeable on the dyno

than it was on the road — the CBR has a stack more power and torque everywhere in its long rev range. On the road, the engine is one of the bike's nicest features. Smooth and instant, the response is crisp and the exhaust note has just a trace of the howl that used to mark Honda's four-stroke racers. Maybe it is no coincidence that the dip in the torque curve just happens to be where the noise test is conducted.

On the face of it, Honda haven't had to do that much to get the power increase. They have raised the compression slightly, and have probably got better combustion because the ignition unit is also different. The connecting rods are new, which probably means lighter or stronger. Or both. Lighter would mean less power wasted in moving bits of engine around. The carburettors are bigger — but only by half a millimetre. This on its own wouldn't account for too much, but it is probably the result of more extensive modifications to make the carbs flow more air.

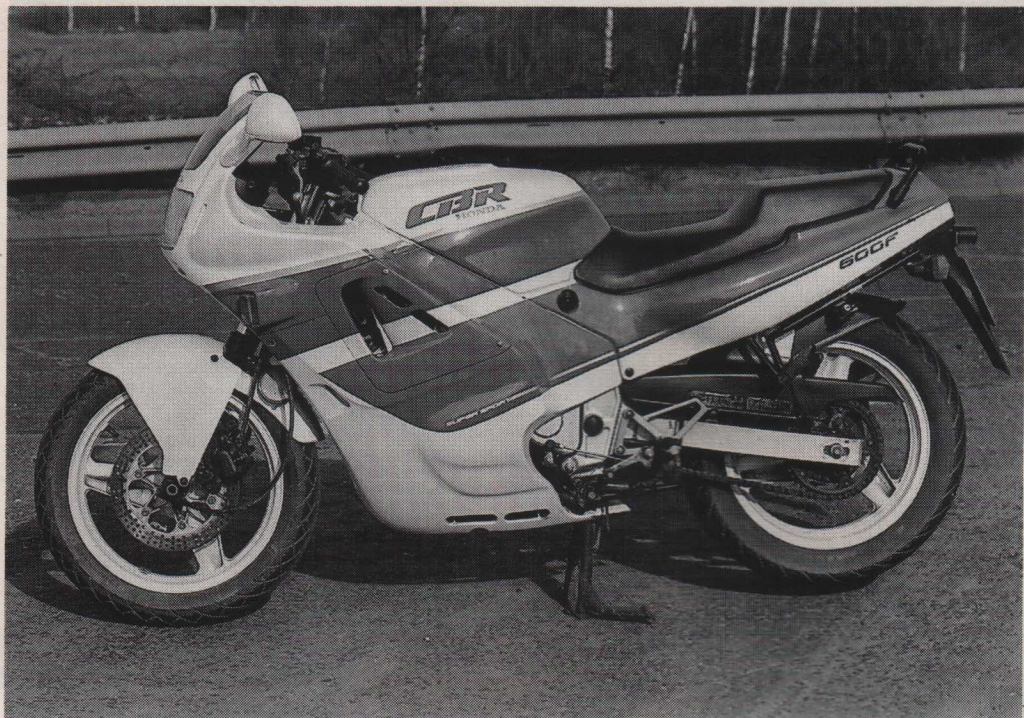
And the engine certainly does flow more air, they haven't got the extra power by making it rev further; if anything, the rev range is a few hundred rpm shorter than it was on the earlier engines.

Honda have also changed the cams but it is not what you'd expect; they have made the duration a few degrees shorter on the new engine. My guess is that they've increased the air flow and have altered the cam timing to improve the trapping efficiency of the engine, to cram more air in — and keep it in — at all speeds. This, plus the increase in compression, would give higher pressures and a shorter burn time, so they would need a different advance curve and possibly a more powerful ignition system.

The earlier engines seemed to be intake-restricted; Leon Moss got one up to 85bhp (but without the strong midrange of the 89 model) just by working on the air filter and carbs, plus a race exhaust, and that proved good enough to nudge 150mph.

Other engine changes include stronger clutch springs (well, different clutch springs, but I don't suppose they've made them weaker) and an "improved" fuel pump. So they can empty the titchy tank even faster?

The dip in the torque curve at 5500 feels like an early peak



Engine changes and a new choice of colours distinguish the 89 CBR.

when you're cruising along gently. There is no spluttering or hesitation but you sense the load dropping off and shift up. This coincides with 70mph in top and simply feels like a natural, relaxed cruising speed. Of course, ease it up past 6000 and the motor takes off again, screaming up to the places where it makes real power. But it at least gives the choice; instead of having a clearly-defined power band, it gives you the option of using the soft, woolly, low-speed

delivery or letting it rev and feeling the hard edge of the 80 horsepower motor.

This dual role is matched by the chassis which is comfortable in its riding position and suspension yet still precise in its steering and handling. Last year, the CBR felt taut and often seemed too hard, especially at low speeds. This year, for no apparent changes, except the tyres, it seemed softer and more comfortable. Possibly the tyres made a better match with the

suspension. The steering and handling were limited mainly by the tyre's grip. Both front and rear were too easy to move about, wet or dry — but especially in the wet — would follow ridges and lines and generally gave bad sensations without actually breaking away into lurid slides. The grip and the feel weren't good by any standards, but they were particularly poor in comparison to the current generation of sports compound tyres.

Knowing what is available — and how well the CBR responds to it — made this set-up seem unnecessarily inferior. It's a serious omission on Honda's part but not one that is entirely of their making, at least as far as the UK is concerned.

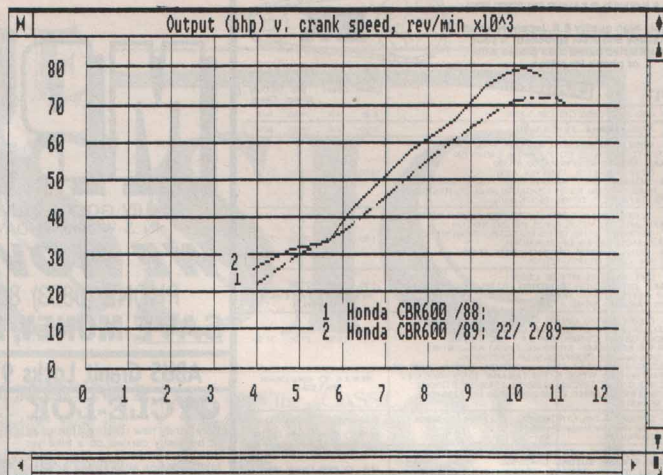
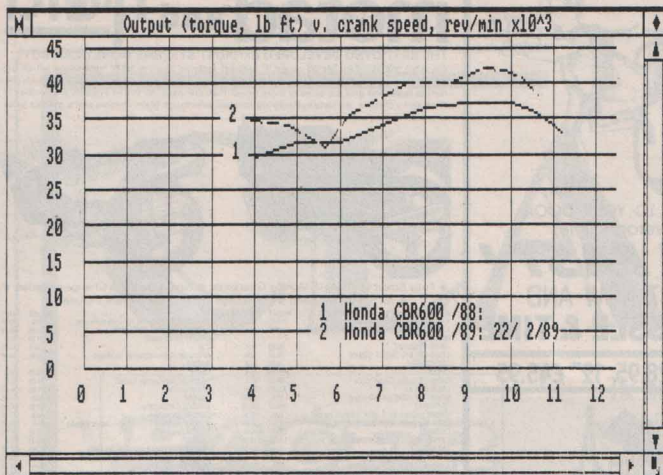
Dunlop are not the most efficient company at distributing their goods and Honda UK simply didn't have any Dunlops to fit. Perhaps Honda Japan should follow Suzuki and Yamaha and specify Michelin, Pirelli and Metzeler as OEM. I'd include Avon, especially for the CBR, but have you tried to buy any?

The only chassis changes for 89 are the colours and the brakes, not counting a modified sidestand cutout switch and warning light, despite the fact that Honda's rubber strip outshone all other devices for preventing take-off without retracting the sidestand.

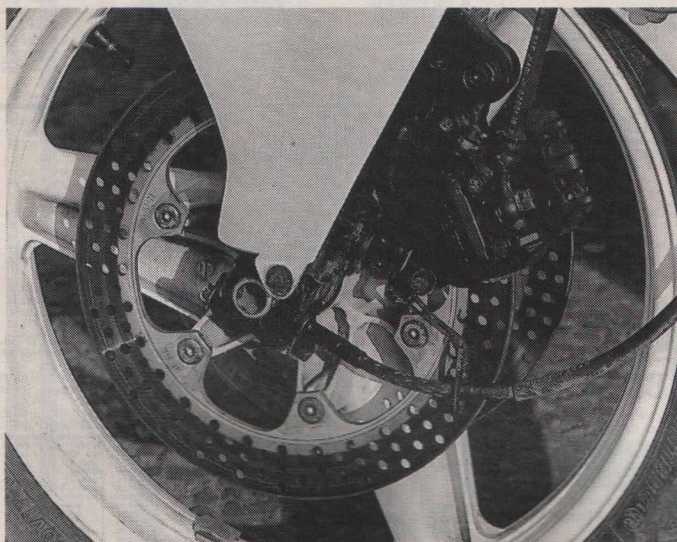
New hues are red/white/blue, black/red and white/red, using some of the most intense colours available on standard machinery. Regardless of the styling effect they are worthwhile for the attention they attract. Hardened doyens of the second and third lanes would pull over even though they could see there was a lorry



Good comfort, good aerodynamics and paint which is bright enough for Volvo drivers to see, most of the time.



Comparison between the '88 and '89 engines shows a pretty healthy increase all the way up the scale.



The brake calipers and master cylinder have been rejigged to alter the feel of the brake.

in the slow lane only half a mile ahead. Well, some of them did anyway, and it seemed like significantly more than the average. Although it didn't prevent one little pervert from pulling out of a side turning after I had started hooting to warn him not to.

Which brings us to the subject of the Honda's brakes, the final items to be altered from last year. This year, the calipers have larger piston sizes and so does the front master cylinder. The result seems to be as powerful as before but the lever action is lighter, with a shade more travel. The brake lever still has the span adjuster but where last year's brake needed four fingers all the time, this year's only needs two for normal braking and all four when loonies throw themselves

in front of you or when you want to outbrake Geoff Johnson into the chicane.

Given decent tyres it is hard to fault the CBR; in its third year of development it is a reliable, well-tryed unit which is equally good at relaxed touring and high speed scratching. For sheer rideability, I still prefer the sports-bias of the KR-1 or the performance of the GSX-R750J; but the extra midrange of the 600 and its everyday practicality make a strong argument for it against a sports lightweight. Its price makes an equally strong defence against the 750s and, on the road, the difference in performance isn't that great. Of the 600s, it looks like it will stay at the head of the class as the best all-round package, the one to beat.

TEST SPECIFICATION

Honda CBR600F

Price.....£3999
 Warranty.....2 years, unlimited mileage
 Importer..... Honda UK, Power Road, Chiswick, London, W4 5YT (01 747 1400)

Engine

Type.....liquid-cooled, dohc, in-line four
 Bore x stroke.....63 x 48mm
 Displacement.....598cc
 Compression ratio.....11.3:1
 Fuel system.....4 x 32.5mm CV carbs
 Ignition system.....digital transistorized

Transmission

Primary drive; ratio.....gear; 1.775
 Final drive; ratio.....chain; 43/15
 Gear ratios.....1st 3.23; 2nd 2.235; 3rd 1.8; 4th 1.5
 5th 1.272; 6th 1.13

Electrics

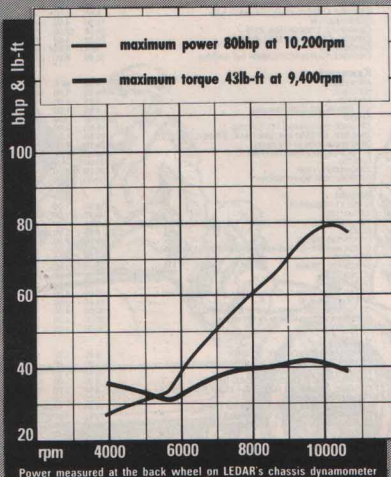
Alternator.....315VA at 5000rpm
 Battery.....12V, 18Ah
 Headlamp.....12V, 60/55W

Chassis

Front tyre.....110/80V 17
 Rear tyre.....130/80V 17
 Front brake.....twin disc

Performance

Maximum speed, prone.....142mph
 SS ¼-mile.....12.1s/115mph
 0-60mph (computed).....3.8s
 Fuel consumption average.....43mpg



A long, strong rev range with a single hiccup in the noise test region.

Rear brake.....single disc
 Front suspension.....37mm fork, air-assisted, TRAC, 130mm travel
 Rear suspension.....Pro Link, adjustable pre-load, 110mm axle travel
 Castor/trail.....26°/104mm

Dimensions

Wheelbase.....1410mm (55.5in)
 Overall length.....2130mm (83.9in)
 Overall width.....685mm (27in)
 Dry weight.....186kg (409lb)
 Fuel tank.....16.5 litre (3.6gal)

Tester's verdict

Good points.....all round performance
 Bad points.....tank range, tyres
 Performance.....10% more power than 88
 Economy.....same as all the others
 Comfort.....good at all speeds
 Braking.....now have choice of fingers
 Value.....among best

Quick comparison

Bike	av mpg	top spd	ss ¼	price	issue
CBR600F	41	142	12.1/115	3999	breck
GPX600 (88)	—	137	12.3/112	3899	May 88
GSX600F(88)	—	132	12.4/110	3299	May 88
ZR-1	37	131	13.1/106	2999	April 89
GSX-R750J	34	150	11.1/123	4899	April 88