



APRIL, 1978

\$1.00*

two wheels

EXCLUSIVE
ASPES 125MX
FLIER

HOW
TO HOT
XT/TT500
Yams

INTERNATIONAL
VINTAGE RALLY
PREVIEW

3 BIKES TESTED

two wheels

VOLUME 18, No. 2, APRIL 1978

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COVER: The Aspes 125 (test p10) through a crystal stream. Photo by BARRY ROSS.



Honda CB400T:

A CLASSY COMMUTER

Honda's new twin-cylinder CB 400T is light, precise, well made and good looking. But with all these things in its favor, is it better than the old 400 Four? DAVE ROLLINS investigated.

THE SPEEDOMETER reads 110 km/h, you're in fifth gear and the only noises you hear are the air whipping through your helmet and the hum of the tyres. The pleasant thump-thump of the exhaust ricochets off the cars you pass, after that, only the wind and tyres. Through some fast esses the bike responds predictably, with a bit of a wobble from an indeterminable source, but it's still easy to control. Back down through the gears and musical exhaust sounds begin to reach your ears. You pull off the road and look down at the tank just to prove that you're not dreaming. It must be a mid-capacity Triumph, or at least a European bike... But it isn't, those five letters are still on the tank. It's a Honda.

Honda has flexed its corporate muscles and the result is a complete range of new generation machines, designed from the ground up with the motorcyclist in mind. Sure it's still a mass produced unit (you only have to look at the extensive use of plastics to figure that out), but you can't deny that

Honda is paying more attention to detail, finish and dynamics. It's the most expensive bike in its capacity class, at \$1495 — the Kawasaki Z400 is one dollar cheaper. The Yamaha RD 400D is \$1399 and Suzuki's GS 400B is \$1249. But the CB 400T is out of the realm of the other manufacturers' commuter bikes and while it doesn't quite have the performance of the RD400, it passes it in sophistication and is the only four-stroke to approach the RD.

The old CB 250-350 twins weren't known for their speed or agility. Honda constantly updated them, which culminated in the CB 360J but the other manufacturers had come up with something better. Honda's tedious twins are no more. The CB400T is a sports commuter in the truest sense. Its engine is the best of its kind to ever leave the shores of Japan.

The CB 400T has a pressed steel backbone type frame with the engine located by a single downtube. The engine's function isn't so much to aid rigidity, but support the swingfork spindle, which is clamped to the rear of

the gearbox. The swing-fork is a conventional tubular type, with a dog leg where it clears the frame. The rear units are typically Japanese, with overly stiff springs and insufficient damping and no amount of fiddling with the five preload settings can improve them. Honda claims that its FVQ shock absorbers are great, but they're not, despite the use of inert gas instead of damping fluid in the rear units.

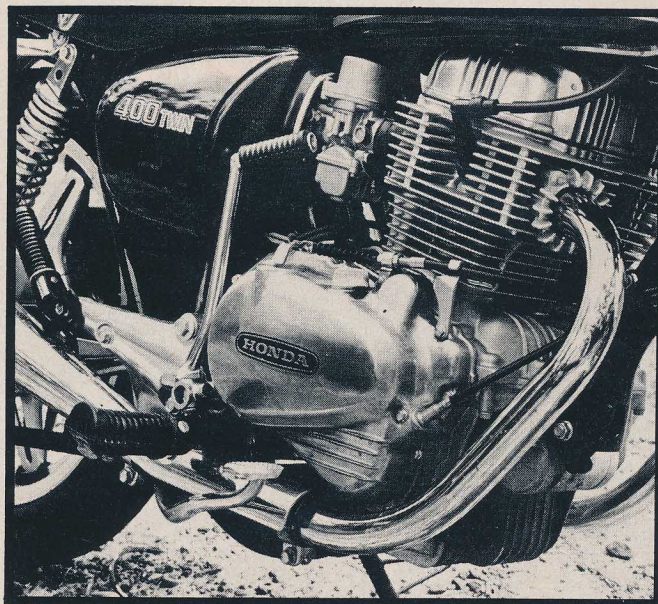
The front forks are good, with just the right degree of firmness. However, some development is needed on the steering geometry because above 100 km/h the steering becomes super-sensitive and the bike is unstable through corners. The cowboy handle bars don't help the situation but we're told future bikes will be sold with flat bars, which should lessen the high speed sensitivity.

For city use the CB 400T is a dream because of its light steering and it can easily be manoeuvred in and out of traffic. The only disappointment apart from the rear shock absorbers are the tyres. A Yokohama 4.10-18 on the rear and a 3.60-19 on the front destroy the bike's handling in the wet. So much so that one of our testers stepped off while taking a fast left-hander at only 50 km/h. Even the Honda employees have no faith in them. One local Honda man told us: "We were thinking of putting decent tyres on it, to make it safe for the journalists testing it, but it wouldn't be standard then, would it?" So if you're thinking of buying one, get Avons or something equally reliable before you take it out in the wet.

Minor controls on the left side of the handle bar include high and low beam switch, headlight flasher, indicators and horn button. All are easy to reach except for the horn button, especially while wearing thick gloves. It is tucked under the turn switch and will probably remain there until Honda becomes less obsessed with symmetry and angles the button 45 degrees towards the thumb. The right hand block holds an engine kill switch, lights and starter button. Four idiot lights, for indicators, oil, neutral and high beam are in the dash panel, between the instruments.

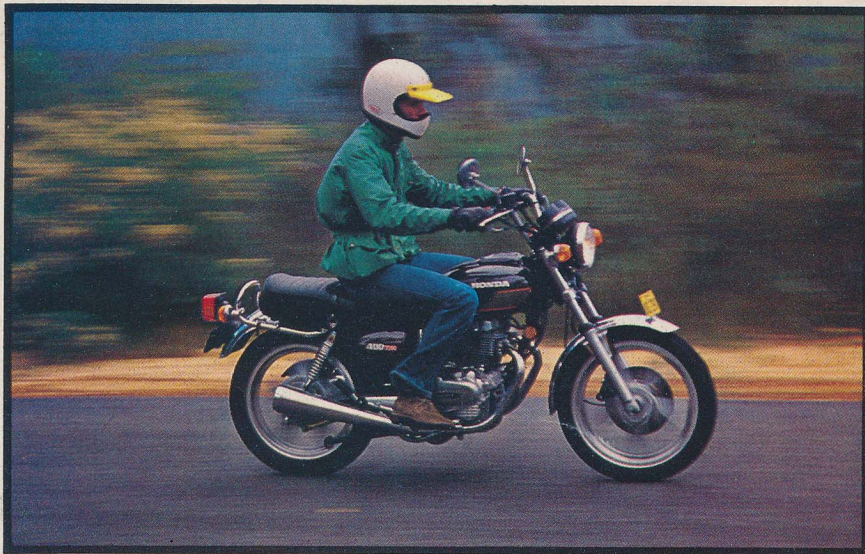
Honda has gone back 10 years in its blinker design by not providing a hole at the base of each blinker to let

Besides performing better than Erol Flinn (a barber in Matraville), Honda's latest twin looks good. The short megaphone exhaust pipes are joined by a main silencing chamber which Honda calls a "power chamber" and says acts like an expansion chamber on a two-stroke. Ankles can be burned when the rider's foot rests beside the clutch cover. Balls on the bottom of the footpegs were ground down in two days.





A CLASSY COMMUTER





condensation drip out. Because of this the inside of the blinkers will rust quickly. But at least the CB 400T doesn't have blinker beepers. The headlight is adequate, but only just. It's about time all the Japanese manufacturers included halogen inserts on all their bikes. The horn is loud, but for safety's sake, air horns would be better.

The side stand tucks neatly up under the muffler on the left. So neatly in fact that it's very hard to put down. The easiest way to drop the stand is to get off the bike and flick it down with your shoe.

Two spare fuses are provided — another "car" touch, and like the Honda Civic car, the petrol locking cap can be opened with a long fingernail, so you can expect trouble with petrol milkers and neighborhood saboteurs when the price of petrol increases.

All styling is relative — you either like it or you don't. With the CB 400T's overly rounded 14-litre tank, large contoured saddle, upswept megaphone exhausts and layed down shocks, it looks almost like a new generation

It is a very compact bike and the engine is located close to the centre of gravity with rider seated, instead of the normal practice of placing the engine as low and as far forward as possible. The Comstar five-spoke wheels and large front disc add to its styling appeal. In

this area, Honda has taken a great deal of trouble. The attention to detail and finish are excellent. The footpegs are low to the ground and are easy to scrape, but they are spring loaded and fold up. In a step-off, the pegs would not go through the engine side-covers as we first thought, but they do bend fairly easily. The footpeg on the right hand side is mounted below the clutch sidecover, which proved a little hot for the ankle more than a couple of times.

The first parts to scrape on the left side are the rider's footpeg, the centrestand and then the muffler guard mounting bolts. That's just before you throw it away. On the right-hand side only the footpeg scrapes.

The most impressive aspect of the bike by far is the engine. It's a transversely-mounted parallel twin with a three-valve head (one exhaust and two inlet valves) fed by two Keihin constant velocity carbs. Twin balance cranks eliminate much of the primary vibration, making it one of the smoothest parallel twins we've ridden. The engine is tractable and pulls in top gear from 900 rpm. In fact it's possible to take off (on the flat) in fifth gear, provided you slip the clutch until 900 rpm is showing on the tacho. Acceleration proper starts at 3000 rpm, with the engine spinning readily to its redline of 10,000 rpm. Thanks to the c/v carbs and the three-valve head, the

engine breathes well with no dead spots through the entire rev range and an even torque spread.

The bike is quick, at least as fast as the 400F it's replacing, and if popping wheelstands is your bag, you'll dig the CB.

The CB 400T has a two-into-one-into-two exhaust system which uses a silencer/power chamber under the engine sump. We're not sure how effective it is, but there's plenty of power and not much noise from the exhaust.

Winding the engine out to its redline in every gear gives quick acceleration and a top speed of about 160 km/h. Maximum power is 32 kW (43 bhp) at 9500 rpm and maximum torque is 33 Nm at 8000 rpm.

One of the big tricks on the 400T is Honda's transistorised CDI ignition. The capacitor charging coil output is converted from AC to DC by the rectifier and then charges the capacitor. At low engine speeds the output from the advance and retard controlling or limiting coil is rectified by a second silicon-controlled rectifier which charges the capacitor, and induces high tension current to the plug. There is another coil in the generator, the advance coil. When its voltage exceeds that of the limiting coil, current is directed through

(Continued on page 56)

**LICK
SIP
SUCK**

salt . . . El Toro . . . lemon

That's how the Mexicans take their kicks straight. But if that sounds a little heavy, it's quite OK to bend the rules by mixing El Toro Tequila with whatever turns you on . . . for just a tap, instead of a kick. So lick, sip, suck . . . or mix, El Toro Tequila. Fully imported from Mexico.

And that's no bull.

Sunrise

(El Toro, Grenadine & orange.)
Pour 1½ oz El Toro into a tall glass over ice cubes. Add a dash of Grenadine. Fill with orange juice and stir.

El Toro & Coke

Pour 1½oz El Toro over ice, into a tall glass. Fill to top with Coca-Cola. Stir. Garnish with lemon or lime. Tee-rific!





All that rubber on the road looks impressive but in the wet the tyres are ineffective. Rear is a Yokohama 4.10-18, front a Yokohama 3.60-19. The bike is slim, the widest part being the bars. Side stand is difficult to put down despite the large horn, but it tucks neatly up under the silencers and doesn't scrape.

SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE	HONDA
MODEL	CB400T
PRICE	\$1495
ENGINE: Twin cylinder four-stroke, single overhead cam, chain driven from centre of crank. Three valves (two inlet, one exhaust), adjusted screw and locknut. One piece forged crankshaft on three plain main bearings.	
Bore x stroke	70.5 x 50 mm
Capacity	395 cm ³
Compression ratio	9.3:1
Claimed power	32 kW at 9500 rpm
Claimed torque	33 Nm at 8000 rpm
Lubrication ..	Wet sump via high pressure gear pump and filter, incorporating transmission
Carburetion	Keihin c/v
Air filter	Oil-damped plastic foam
Ignition	Transistorised CDI
Starting system	Kick and electric
TRANSMISSION: Five speed constant mesh gearbox through wet multi plate clutch. Left side foot change, one down, four up.	
RATIOS (Overall:1):	
1st	2.733
2nd	1.850
3rd	1.416
4th	1.148
5th	0.965
Primary reduction	3.125
Secondary reduction	2.312
FRAME: Semi-spine type. All welded tube steel.	
SUSPENSION:	
Front: Two way oil and spring tele-fork.	

Rear: Pivoted fork with Showa oil damped rear units, adjustable for five preload settings.

WHEELS, TYRES AND BRAKES:

Front: Composite wheel with alloy hub, pressed steel spokes and alloy rim. Yokohama 3.60 S19. Hydraulic disc brake.

Rear: As front but with 4.10 S18, tyre and single leading shoe drum brake.

CAPACITIES:

Fuel tank
 14 litres |

DIMENSIONS:

Dry weight	167 kg (197 kg kerb weight)
Wheelbase	1390 mm
Overall length	2130 mm
Overall width	730 mm
Seat height	800 mm
Ground clearance	160 mm (from primary silencer)

HOW DO THE FINER POINTS SCORE (Out of 10)

Instrumentation	8
Comfort	8
Tool kit	7
Quality of finish	8
Vibration	9
Lighting	7
Positioning of controls	8
Stability (to 100 km/h)	8
Stability (to 100 km/h plus)	7
Engine performance	10
Suspension	7

TEST BIKES SUPPLIED BY: Bennett Honda, Tempe.