



AUGUST, 1976

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# Two wheels

THE MAGAZINE OF MOTOR CYCLING

STAY  
WARM & DRY

**CYCLE  
SUITS**

YOUR BIG  
GUIDE

**SCOOP TEST!**

**HONDA'S MR250 ENDURO**

**PLUS YAMAHA IT400 ...**

THE NEW-BREED JAPANESE TRAILSTERS  
OUT TO BLAST THE EUROPEANS!

PHOTOGRAPH BY ...



# TWO WHEELS

THE MAGAZINE OF MOTOR CYCLING

Editor: Mac Douglas

Tech Editor: Mike McCarthy

**OUR COVER:** That's right — a scoop test of Honda's enduro 250 two-stroke — and it's the best Japanese off-road bike we've ridden! Match that up with our workout of Yamaha's not-so-secret IT400C (against our own Yamaha enduro project) and inside it's a damn good coverage of the Japanese bikes settin' up to challenge in European territory! You'll be surprised how good they are! Gone cold on riding? Check out page 37. Our special accessories feature this issue covers all the oversuits we could find in Australia! On page 46 there's the good oil on motorcycling's pollution-free four-stroke future, but part of tomorrow might be automatic. See page 16.



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You're set up, you say? Backwoods freedom aboard the raunchiest trailster on the block? But it is the one with the big thirst and small tank? The one which doesn't have any spot at all for spare tools, and which you later find — on the darkest, most rutted trail of all — to have lights of about one candlepower? And then you fall off and learn how vulnerable the controls are . . .

It happens — too often to ignore. But out in the country off-roading demands practicality before performance. A "new-generation" farmbike is catching on. Aboard Honda's CT125 it's easy to understand why!

# IS HONDA'S FARMBIKE THE TRUE TRAILSTER?



THE SCENE is Barrawundra, a small rural community in the West. Two pubs, a few shops, a garage, a post office, one cop and a local chainsaw dealer constitute the town's trading centre. The chainsaw dealer also holds the local franchise for anything that even remotely resembles a motorcycle.

The time is Friday afternoon, around 3.30.

A Valiant ute shrouded in red dust stops and its driver steps out, leaving the two-year-old wreck angle-parked in the only shady spot to be found in the wide, quiet street. A tall man wearing a dark hat, elastic sides and a sensibly-colored workshirt, with the sleeves at half mast emerges from the shop ... "Central Chain Saw and Agricultural Services".

He greets the new arrival with a handshake, a smile and some small talk as they go inside across the shaded veranda to continue business over a cold glass.

"Your bike's ready, Ross, and she's a little beauty too. I just put her through the rego office this morning and the plates are on the bike now. All you need to do is to bung in some petrol, and you're in business.

"By the way, you don't have to fill up any oil tank like you used to do on the little Kwaka 100 you traded in. You must've got some work out of that poor old horse. They seem to go on forever those little bikes."

"Thanks, Ken. Just give me a hand with the bike into the back of the ute, and I'll sign the papers and be on my way. There's a bit to do before dinner and I'd like the chance to give this newie a bit of a run at the same time."

Ross heads off in the Valiant, with a badly tied-down Honda swaying from side to side in the rear tray. He turns off beyond the bridge and puts his foot down on the dirt road leading to his property and the spread of rocks, grass, streams, and of course ... sheep.

He unloads the Honda near the main shed, and rolls it down on a piece of 6 x 2. He fills the tank from a hand-pumped 44, jiggles the side-mounted ignition key, flicks the choke on the Keihin carb and prods the bike into life with three or four kicks. He hops on when the motor's running smoothly and snicks up on the left side shifter, looking for first gear.

He hits third, and the Honda pulls away cleanly, but a little sluggishly. Ross nudges the shift lever again and finally picks up first on the bottom of the shift pattern. He's not used to the conventional pattern of the CT, but pops the clutch at a fraction above idle and chugs away. He's into second



before even reaching the other side of the yard.

"Hmm ... not bad. In second already, and I'm not even over 16 km/h. She feels as though she could pull like a tractor."

Across behind the sheds, and on to the access roads they're wound up into top (fifth) gear with the little trials-based motor making a happy 80 km/h down the smooth, gravel surface. Top's really just an overdrive to a virtually direct drivin' fourth gear, and he sits back on the wide "bicycle-styled" seat and wipes the mud from his boots on the engine protection bars mounted on the downtube.

He turns off into the south paddock and snicks down into fourth in the typically Honda snick-snick-in-gear fashion, allowing the bike a few more revs through the damp, low grass on a slightly uphill run. The Bridgestone "motocross knobby-pattern" tyres feel fine and they don't pack with

*Don't think this is all part of the CT125's normal fare — but it does show the little machine's impressive capabilities. As small as it is, powerplant's performance overwhelms that of suspension.*

loose weed or soft earth like the old trials tyres that he'd once bought as replacements on the little Kwaka 100. They were almost useless during the rainy winter months.

"A bloke could get to like this little bike a real lot, and if she's as reliable as Charlie's little step-through CT90 thing she'll probably outlive us all."

With two hours of daylight left, and no burning desire to rush back home for dinner, Ross hustles down through the paddock to a storage shed where he keeps his welding gear, a few bales of fencing and the miscellaneous junk that's accumulated on the place since he took it over nearly five years ago. There's a gate that needs repair, and with a

## IS HONDA'S FARBBIKE THE TRUE TRAILSTER?

little luck he can rehang it in about half an hour and still have time to put a mob of sheep under cover before crutching tomorrow.

He parks the Honda in the soft clay yard, knowing that the wide-base sidestand will keep it upright, kills the motor with the

clumsy three way kill switch and wanders off to find his old ammunition box with the spare bolts and hinges he'll need for the job.

"Just as well this bike has a good luggage rack. This thing must weigh about 40 pounds with all the rubbish I've stacked in it."

He's examining the rack and notices the label: "Good for 20 kilos".

"I'm still a good five pounds

under what she'll take fully stacked. Hope those Japanese are right — I don't feel like hauling this lot out of the creek if that rack goes on me!"

He fires up and rides away again, only this time remembering that it's down for first in the Honda box.

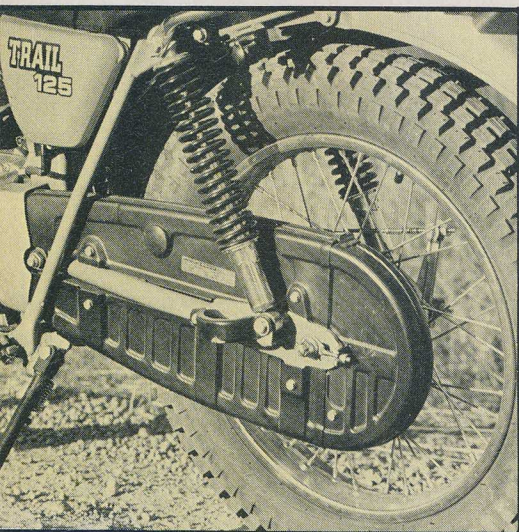
"Hmm . . . she pulled away okay the first time, even when I bunged 'er into third by mistake. I like the way that you can start the motor without having to look about for neutral. Makes it a helluva lot easier, when you're parked on a slope. Trouble is, when you're on a slope you have to keep 'er in gear to stop rolling away when you're parked. Can't see why they don't fit one of those little handbrake clips on the front brake lever, just like they had on the Honda ATC three wheeler back in the bike shop?"

"Even with that load of junk on the back she still pulls like a train and feels a lot like that 125 Trials Honda that old Charlie's kid, Darel, was riding in the trial bike event that his club held around the creek last winter. Same gutsy feel with really low gearing in the first three cogs.

"All a bloke has to do now is keep the kids off the thing."

Ross lugs down through the slippery back trails leading to the broken gate, with 20 kilos of assorted junk strapped on behind in a battered ammo box. He doesn't hesitate at the creek, and simply stands up on the serrated steel pegs, pops down into second cog, and picks a path through the axle-deep stream.

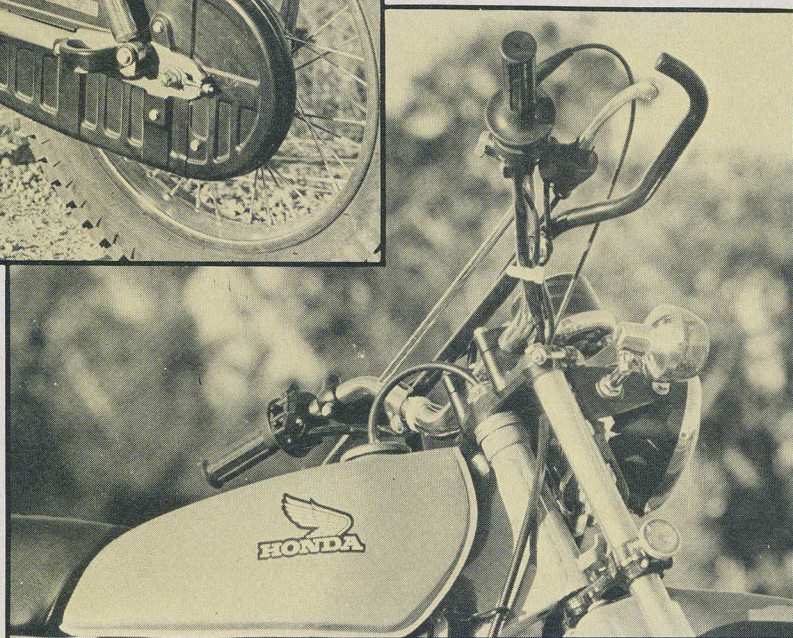
The engine slogs on running dry and clean and doesn't miss a beat as muddy water pours from the giant-sized mudflaps on the orange-plastic guards. He's dry and comfortable, not spattered with water, as he used to be on his old 100.



*Although it obviously covers more than just the run of the chain and looks slightly ungainly as a result, the guard is well-sealed and surprisnly solid. Our test machine ran trials tyres but all CTs now run full knobbies.*

*Below:*

*Steel tank, handlebar lever guards and small blinkers all offer added durability.*



### SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE . . . . . HONDA  
 MODEL . . . . . CT125 Trail/Agricultural  
 PRICE . . . . . \$725  
 WARRANTY . . . . . Six months/10,000 km  
 ENGINE: Single-cylinder, air-cooled, four-stroke, 124 cm<sup>3</sup>. Overhead cam, 1 x 24 mm Keihin carburettor. Oiled foam filter.  
 Bore x stroke . . . . . 56.5 x 49.5 mm  
 Compression ratio . . . . . 8:1  
 Claimed power . . . . . 6.7 kW (9 hp) at 8000 rpm  
 TRANSMISSION: Five-speed, constant mesh gearbox driven through wet, multi-plate clutch. Left side shift. Pattern: 1-N-2-3-4-5. Primary kick start.  
 RATIOS (Internal:1):  
 1st . . . . . 2.769  
 2nd . . . . . 2.125  
 3rd . . . . . 1.45  
 4th . . . . . 1  
 5th . . . . . 0.724  
 FRAME: Welded mild steel, backbone style frame with single front downtube.

SUSPENSION:  
 Front: Honda hydraulic forks, 155 mm (6 in.) travel.  
 Rear: Five way adjustable, conventionally mounted shock absorber/spring units. Single rate springs.

WHEELS, TYRES and BRAKES:  
 Front: SLS brake with cable operation. 21 in. steel rim, with 2.75 in. section knobby pattern tyres.  
 Rear: Cable-operated SLS brake, 18 in. steel rim with 4.00 in. section knobby pattern tyre.

ELECTRICS: 6V battery. Flywheel magneto. Street legal lighting and ancillaries.

CAPACITIES:  
 Fuel . . . . . 6 litres  
 Oil . . . . . 1 litre (in transmission)

DIMENSIONS:  
 Weight (dry) . . . . . 108 kg (236 lb)  
 Wheelbase . . . . . 1295 mm (50.8 in.)  
 Ground clearance . . . . . 230 mm (9 in.)  
 Length . . . . . 2035 mm (80 in.)

Up a long, muddy climb on the far bank, Ross is up on the pegs again, steering the Honda with body movement only, and retaining drive through slipping up to third cog and cutting down on wheelspin. Once or twice he backs off the slow throttle and brakes gently to turn and change direction up the slick slope. Back into first only on very rare occasions — there's mostly enough poke in the low second gear.

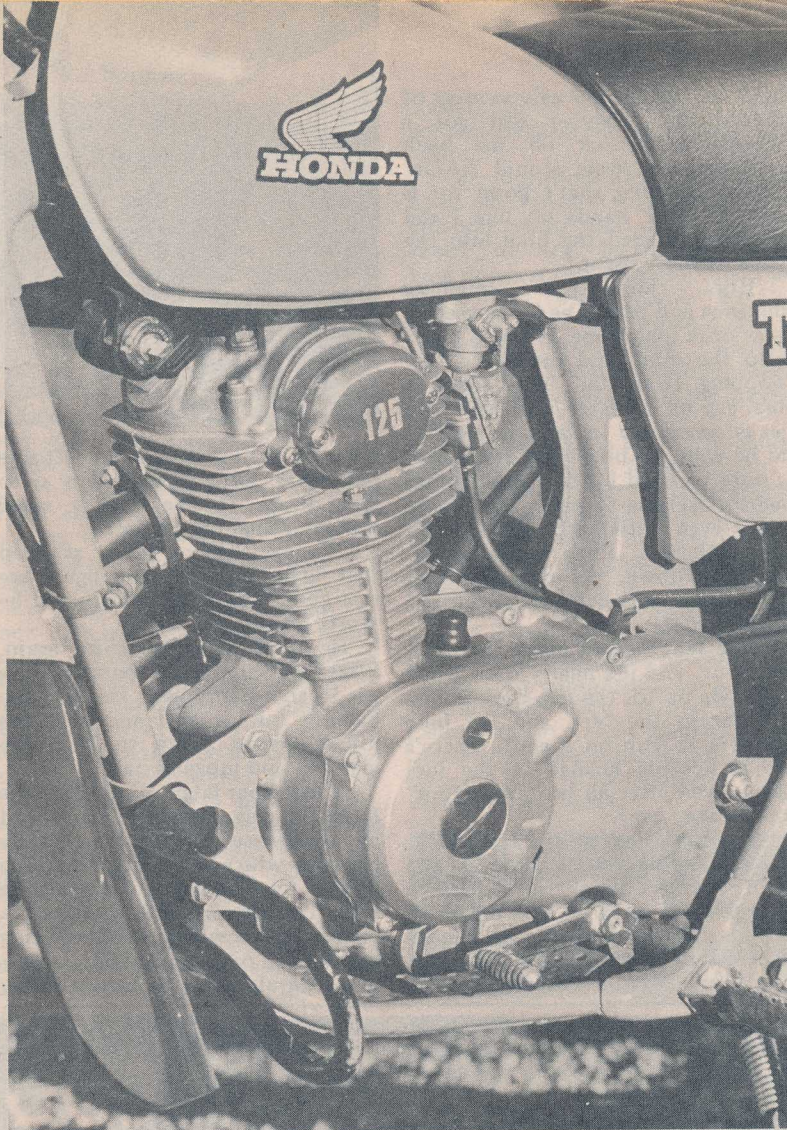
"Those brakes are just as good as they were back on the road when they were dry. They musn't leak or whatever brakes do, I guess?"

After playing around for another 15 minutes, Ross remembers the matter of one fence that hasn't been attended to, puts on his best workin' on the land face and burbles off with the Honda to do the job which should have been finished long ago. He was having so much fun on the wet slopes with the red bike he just forgot, so he shortcuts through some uncleared land to cut a few minutes off the run to the fencing. Over a few rises and around the firetrail that he put in last summer — foot down and with the power on, in third and fourth gears. The Honda isn't exactly a match for an RM125 Suzuki across country, but he can pull 55 km/h most of the way on the open sections, and still keep out of trouble.

"Makes me feel like I'm back in the Army again, when we used to ride those old 350 BSAs. This thing's faster than any old Beeza, and she seems to handle okay. The front forks must have at least 150 mm of movement and they soak up all the bumps just fine. Adjusting those rear shock springs up a setting or two looks like it's done the trick, and I can barely notice all that load on the back. She's pretty easy for a bloke like me to ride, and doesn't bash around or clunk your arms to death.

It's comfortable for a little bike too. The bars feel good and wide, and those soft grips don't wrinkle up your hands like the ones on the old bike did. I used to wear my welding gloves when I rode that for any distance, and even then the exhaust pipe used to burn my leg."

He remembers how the cattle used to start when he came by on the old bike. It was a little noisy, and he tried to avoid riding near them if it was at all possible. The Honda hardly makes a chuff. It's as quiet as the little Honda generator they installed in the shearing shed last season. It doesn't burn the leg either, and the folding kickstarter tucks well away so there's no grinding protest from the primary gears when he has to stand up on the pegs down the back track.



Buzzing down through the trail, Ross hits a log that's half covered with loose dirt and sand, does a "hi-ho Silver" handstand on the CT, and takes a second gear dive into the dust. The Honda lies there slogging away, until he fumbles for the right side killswitch and silences the runaway. He picks the bike up, dusts himself down and wanders off in search of the demon log that introduced him to his own dirt.

"Well done super rider, you stupid bastard. How about keeping the eyes open next time? Hmm... I wonder what damage I've done to the bike, probably stuffed it right up; that'd be JUST great... pushing and shoving it all the way back to the house.

"Hey, how's that? Not a scratch, and those funny metal guards on the bars have protected the levers and the accelerator grip just like they're supposed to. That metal case on the chain really seems to do the job too. I'll be able to almost forget about 'er with that thing keeping the chain clean, and I'd be pretty unlikely to ever catch it on a rock and break one, like Charlie did to that rep's bike at the field day

*The CT's powerplant is almost pure TL. Considering the weight of its surroundings its performance is astonishing — would do credit to a far bigger machine.*

last year. I'll never forget the look on that young bloke's face when Charlie clouted that big rock, and the chain went ping — like a kid's catapult."

Just before he fires up, Ross notices the back tyre has started to creep around the rim, probably from the low tyre pressure he uses to help ride through the mud, and he wonders why the Honda factory didn't bother to fit a few rimlock bolts it uses on the trail bikes. He's bent the ignition key in the fall, and makes a mental note to move it up on the steering head, where it won't be damaged or lost. The sidecover plates on the bike aren't even scratched, and he looks at them closely.

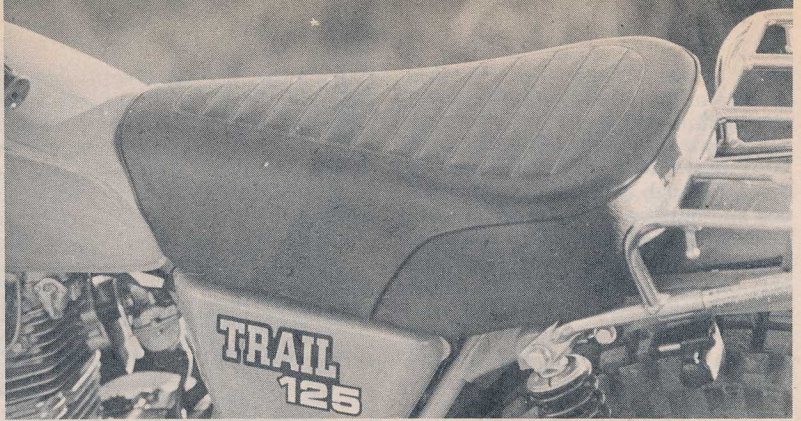
"Plastic... just like the mudguards and the air filter box. That's pretty good. Wonder why they still fit that stupid metal brace under the back mudguard though? It's not really needed, and even the tail

light isn't as big and ugly as most of the others. They've also got a bloody metal bar on the back mudflap for some stupid reason. The only thing that's good for is cutting your hands on like I did when we loaded the bike into the back of the Valiant."

Ross rides the remaining distance and parks the CT in second gear on a long slope. It doesn't sink into the mud, and there's no fuel slopping from the little screw-in fuel cap on the large, steel tank. No leaks anywhere in fact, he notices as he eyes the bike over, and makes a note to wind up the back springs another setting to make the shocks work even better with his load on the back rack. They were okay on the way down, but he's sure that the back'll steer better if he sets it a little harder.

The fence takes more than half an hour, and it's nearly dark when he loads up for the trip back home. He checks the fuel, and the bike appears to run on a sniff. There's no noticeable change in the fuel level, even after all his "trailriding" on the way over.

The bike fires on the third kick, after standing for an hour in the cool, damp evening air and Ross sets the idle screw a little higher to warm the motor, while he juggles the last of the tools and wire into the ammo box on the rear rack. He



turns on the lights with the left side handlebar switch, and slips onto high beam to pick up a small wallaby ahead on the path.

"Fancy that — really stunned that little bloke. These lights are real good, and I thought they'd be pretty crummy."

He pulls away, in third again, forgetting the gear pattern he's tried to memorise, fastens the buttons on his shirt and pulls the rolled sleeves down to keep the night air and mozzies out.

A half hour later he's back at the house; having slipped in unnoticed by everyone; even the family labrador who's more attuned to the noisier rasp of the old two-stroke bike. The Honda's wet, splattered in mud and cowdung and making those hot, oily contraction noises that travel with a hard-working

*The "bicycle" seat — and it's real comfortable!*

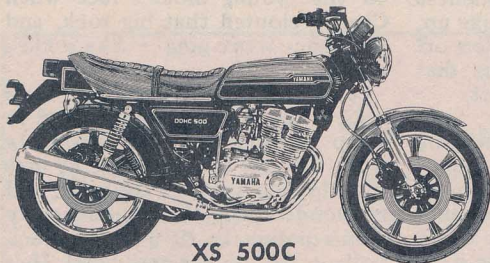
small motor. He's going to hose the junk off the bike, and is halfway through the job when a female voice warns "Dinner's on the table — NOW — Ross."

The bike's soaked with cold bore water, and he downs hold and walks away to the outside basin, leaving his damp boots under cover near the back door. He knows that the thing'll start in the morning without any hassles, and figures that he may as well let it look a little tatty right from the start. That way the kids'll keep off the bike, and he might just be able to go for a shoot with Charlie and the other blokes occasionally."

"Hi dad. How'd you like your new toy?" \*

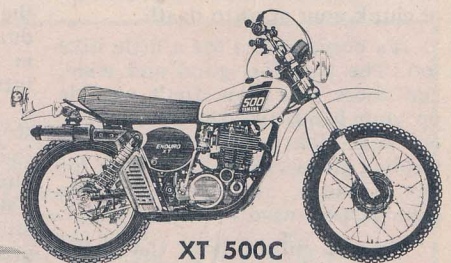
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