

August 1982

\$2.00* NZ\$2.50*

Two Wheels



**KAWASAKI'S
RED-HOT
550!**

Plus:
**HARLEY
FXRS and
YAMAHA
IT465**

Also:
**RIDING
HONDA'S
SENSATIONAL
VT 250**

**TURBOS:
DO WE
NEED
THEM?**

Contents

August 1982

Editor
Brian Cowan
Editorial
Julia Cullen
Don Cox
Art Director
Lindsay Hannington
Production
Keith Swann
John Taylor
Advertising Production
Eric Moore
Bike Tests
Dave Bourne
Craig Lamberton
Col Miller
Lester Morris
Kel Wearne
**Contributing Writers
And Photographers**
Grant Aisthorpe
B. J. Akhurst
Patrick Behar
Peter Bellamy
Mike Boylan
Geoff Hall
Jan Heese
Doug Jackson
Greg McBean
Graeme McElligott
Graham Monro
Anthony Seymour
Prue Timpson-Wearne
Leo Vogelzang
Elton Ward

Cover by Greg McBean
And many thanks to the weather,
for its cooperation, and the
Vicks cough drops afterwards.

NEWS

HONDA'S VT250F — We told you it was coming..... 10

TESTS

KAWASAKI GPz550 — Unitrak pocket rocket; so who needs 750s?..... 18
HARLEY-DAVIDSON FXRS — This Hog delivers the bacon 26
YAMAHA IT465J — Shock! Bike bites man!..... 46

FEATURES

HARLEY HISTORY — The marque that made Milwaukee famous 34
TURBO: ERA OR ERROR? — Will we *all* pay the price of turbotech? 38
THE TOWN BIKE — Long term GSX750E. We've all been on it 44
THE LONG ROAD TO JUNEE Pt II — Talk about the odd trio 56
KAWASAKI'S TOP GUN IN THE WEST — WA superbike champ Bob Jackson 72
BIKE SPOTTER'S GUIDE — Would you know a Zcht if you saw one? 79
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE — A tale of two twins, both CX500s 83

RIDING

LIVING WITH IT — 12 months with a Yamaha IT465H 52
ROUGH ROAD JUSTICE — Honda F2B vs Yamaha XV1000
vs Honda CX500TC 67

DEPARTMENTS

It's All Happening	4	Wrap On.....	86
A Different Drum	16	Tech Trips.....	88
Behind Bars	37	Rally Rave.....	92
Horsefeathers.....	64	Club Register.....	94
Gizmo File.....	76	Maynard.....	98

Freelance contributions are welcomed by the magazine and submissions should be addressed to The Editor, TWO WHEELS, 154 Clarence Street, Sydney 2000. Submissions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return. The publisher accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or transparencies.

Annual subscription rate to addresses in Australia \$24.00. Other countries \$A27.00.

Back Copies: Gr Floor, 154 Clarence St, Sydney. Photostat service inquiries to Julia Cullen, 5th Floor.
Advertising: National Advertising Manager, John Miller, 154 Clarence St, Sydney 2000. Phone 268-9811. **Melbourne:** 150 Lonsdale St, Melbourne 3000. Phone 662-1222. **Adelaide:** THE ADMEDIA GROUP PTY LTD, 24 Kensington Road, Rose Park 5067. Phone 332-8144. **Brisbane:** GEOFF HORNE AGENCIES, P.O. Box 247, Kenmore 4069. Phone 202-6813. **Perth:** TONY ALLEN, ALLEN & ASSOCIATES, 1st Floor, 224-226 Stirling St, Perth 6000. Phone 328-3633. P.O. Box 191, Doubleview 6018. **New Zealand:** RON COOK, Sun Alliance House, 42-44 Shortland St, Auckland, GPO Box 486. Phone 30311. **London:** PETER HOLLOWAY, Ludgate House, 107 Fleet St, London EC4A2AL. **Japan:** Bancho Media Services, 15 Sanyei-Cho, Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo 160. Phone (03) 359-8866. Telex BMSINC J25472.

Printed in New Zealand by Comprint. Published by Murray Publishers Pty Ltd, 154 Clarence St, Sydney, 2000.

*Recommended Price.

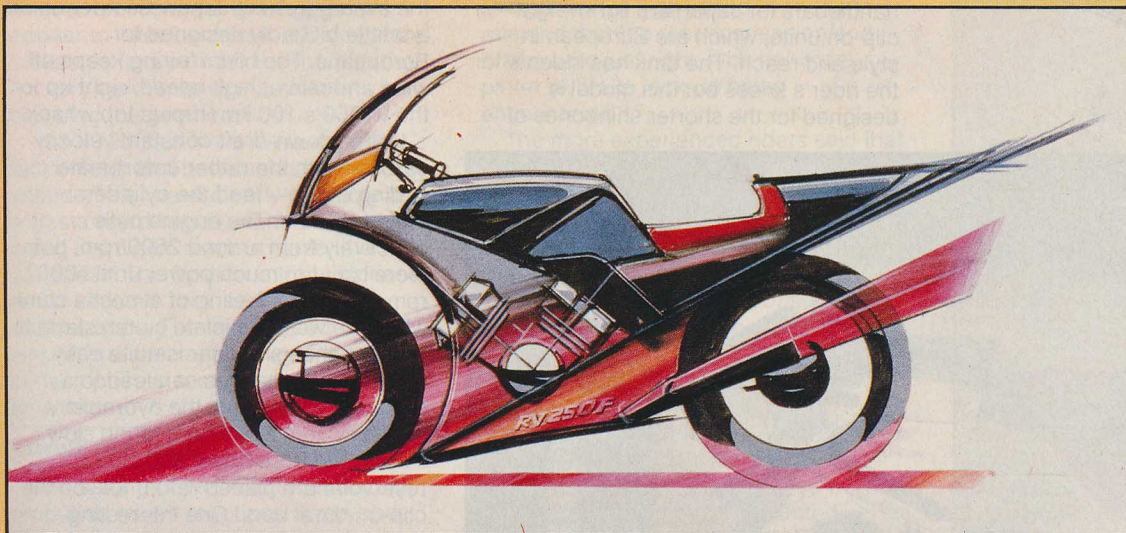
DISTRIBUTORS: GORDON & GOTCH (A/SIA) LTD, MELBOURNE. MURRAY PUBLISHERS PTY LTD, SYDNEY.

NEW ERA 250

In the June issue of TWO WHEELS, we brought you an English-language exclusive on Honda's new water-cooled, four-stroke 250 V-twin. The model has now been officially released, and once more we're able to bring you right up to date with a story from Japanese correspondent PETER BELLAMY on how the bike goes, plus full technical and development details. Psst! Want another hot tip? Look for a 350 cm³ version to make a world debut at the Cologne Show next month. Meanwhile, let's take a close look at . . .

HONDA'S SCORCHING 250!





How to follow the wedge styling theme without looking too much like a Yamaha turbo or Vetter's Mystery Ship? Using the 16-inch front wheel as a key element, Honda's stylists achieved an aggressive look which translated well to metal.

RUMOURS of the VT250F abounded here in Japan long before its first viewing by the top Honda dealers earlier this year. The original release date for the VT250F was to be September, but with the very strong competition from the other Japanese manufacturers the announcement was pushed forward to

June. Not long after, Japanese journalists got their first rides on the VT250F at Suzuka Circuit and around Suzuka city.

Incorporating many lessons learnt from the NR500 racing programme, and having much in common with the VF750 four, the VT250F engine puts out a very healthy 26 kW at 11,000 rpm with a

redline at 12,000 rpm. Several riders said that the engine would rev well above the 12,000 rpm mark without any signs of valve bounce. Remembering that the NR500 revs to over 20,000 rpm this is hardly surprising!

For the domestic market the VT250F's bikini fairing also incorporates the front turn signal units in a manner similar to the CX500 Turbo. The rear turn signals are also incorporated into a single unit with the stop and tail lights but presumably for overseas markets stalk signals will be used. This is a pity as the current system enhances the slim-line look of the VT250F very well indeed.

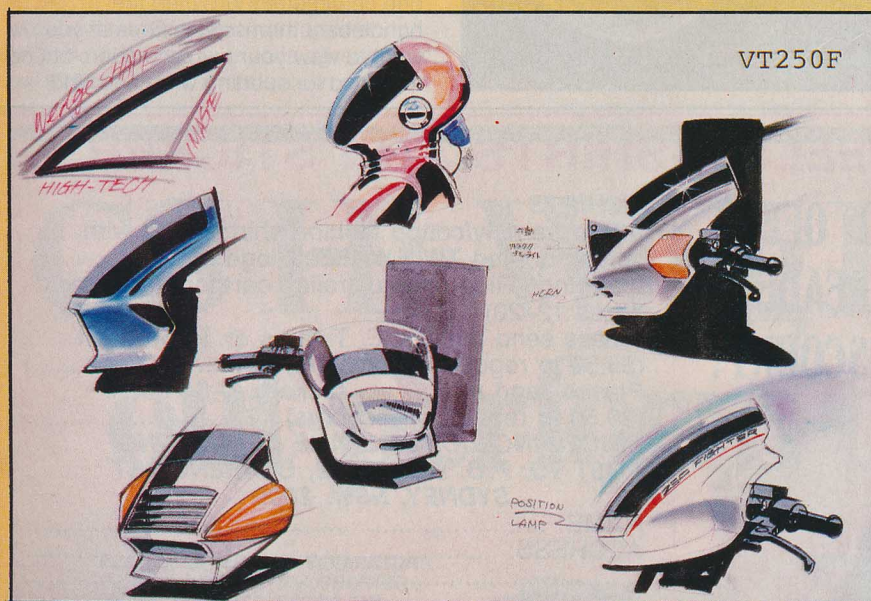
Tidy and compact

Everything about the VT250F is compact. Honda has gone for a 16-inch diameter front wheel to further reduce frontal area and promote nimble steering. The small front wheel is also very much a racer-derived fashion, as are the air-assisted forks and their cast alloy brace. However, the front end is not fitted with any form of anti-dive unit. This has resulted in a very long travel at the front when the brakes are slammed on at low speeds. The radiator comes to within a couple of centimetres of the front fender which looks quite frightening when viewed from the side!

The integral front disc brake unit is identical to that fitted on the CBX 400/550 series. It works excellently and doesn't change characteristics in the wet as the test riders found on the Press day which was windy and very wet.

The VT250F weighs in at only 162 kg when full of fuel, which gives it a pretty good power to weight ratio. Yet it is a full-sized bike and riders of 180 cm in height didn't feel that it was too small for them.

The bike's double cradle frame is painted racing red and its shape is very much NS/NR racing style. The



The wedge theme dominates these concept sketches of various VT250 features (above). Life-support helmet could be the go if we lose the fight against air pollution! Neat instrument pod design (left) was eventually dropped in favour of one even more restrained.

NEW ERA 250

handlebars for Japan are lightweight clip-on units, which are European in style and reach. The tank has indents for the rider's knees but this model is designed for the shorter shinbones of

the average young Japanese rider and it is a little bit badly designed for Europeans. The bikini fairing keeps off wind and rain at high speed, right up to the VT250's 160 km/h-plus top whack.

Keihin down-draft constant velocity carbs — with the rather unfortunate coding of VD — feed the cylinders between the V. The engine pulls effectively from around 2500 rpm, but there isn't too much power until 5000 rpm. There is a feeling of almost a clunk when the wet, multiplate clutch starts to grip but changing gear is quite easy. Super-quick changes can lead to a graunch, which hints the hydraulic clutch system might be a touch slow.

Both the front brake and clutch reservoirs are placed rather low on the clip-on dural bars. One interesting feature is the headlight flasher switch which is located on the front of the switch block and is operated by the forefinger rather than the thumb. Coupled with a super-bright 60/55 W halogen headlight it should prove an effective warning system with which to zap errant car drivers!

The rear mirrors are large, but still set too far inboard, only protruding about one centimetre more than the handlebars themselves. Great if you want to view your own shoulders but not too good for spotting what's behind!



AT LAST!

TWO WHEELS T-SHIRTS AND STICKERS

**SPECIAL OFFER
TO OUR READERS
PLUS SUBSCRIBER DISCOUNT!**



T-SHIRTS

Attractive poly/cotton fashion shirt: Beige with screen-printed **TWO WHEELS** logo on front featuring "Ride on, Australia" cartoon kangaroo. (sizes 12-20)

Please send me T-shirts @ \$7.50 each. (\$5.50 to regular subscribers) = \$..... (in sizes

Please send me stickers @ \$1 each. (\$0.50 to regular subscribers) = \$.....

**PRICES INCLUDE POSTAGE & HANDLING
POST TO: P.O. BOX C102, CLARENCE ST
SYDNEY, NSW. 2000**

NAME:

ADDRESS:

..... P/CODE

STICKERS

Bright yellow and black **TWO WHEELS** logo on clear polyester. Won't tear or fade. 15cm x 4cm. Looks great on your helmet!

I enclose Cheque Money Order
 Bankcard American Express.

No:

Expiry Date:

Signature:

**I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO BECOME A
REGULAR SUBSCRIBER TO TWO WHEELS
AND INCLUDE \$24 IN THE ABOVE PAYMENT
FOR ONE YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION
COMMENCING WITH THE ISSUE
PLEASE TICK . SUBSCRIBE NOW AND GET
A FREE STICKER AND GODDARD'S GLOW.**

Another point where the designers appear to have boomed is the side stand, tucked so far up under the footpeg that it's very hard to lever out without bumping the gear lever.

The VT250F is fitted with an electric tachometer and both tach and speedometer have clearly readable dials with standard hands. Honda avoided going the digital readout route, thank goodness! The ignition is transistorised which reduces the need for maintenance. The bike is fitted with a tiny 12-litre fuel tank but claimed fuel consumption at a constant 50 km/h is an amazing 45 km/l!

Mixed reactions

The testing of the VT250F at Suzuka produced mixed reactions. Everybody agreed that it was fast, light, and well-braked. However, the biggest problem that riders who were not ex-racers had was that the handling was too quick. Several dropped the VT250F under braking, mainly at slow corners when the front wheel would slide out from under them. It would seem almost certain that Honda will need to produce a version with anti-dive fitted on the front wheel, to combat what seems to be excessive movement under brakes.

Other than that, everyone agreed that the VT250F is fast and stable in a

straight line at high speed even in the rain and that the rear suspension and brake were just right, with no wheel patter or brake lock-up being encountered.

The more experienced riders said that the VT250F was easy to ride and one could "think" it round the curves of the six km long Suzuka circuit. Its slim lines were found to be an advantage in city riding and the wide spread of power meant that riders weren't constantly running up and down the gearbox to keep up or pass slower traffic.

With the VT250F, Honda has a fast, good-looking 250 which is certain to sell well. One or two details — notably the rear view mirrors and the side stand — need improvement, and updates will no doubt appear, together with anti-dive units for the front forks, on the F2 model.

Optional equipment includes a single seat conversion like the CB1100RC, side covers which direct hot or cool air on to the rider depending on the time of year, and a pretty little belly pan a la NS500. Three colour schemes are available in Japan.

Would I buy one? Well, I'd probably wait and see what improvements next year's model had before taking the plunge, but if I was a young rider with a limited budget then the VT250F could well be an ideal choice today. *

THE AUSSIE CONNECTION

WHEN are we likely to see the VT250 in Australia? We put that question to NSW distributor Bennett Honda, and to Honda Australia in Melbourne.

"At the moment we have very few details," said a Bennett Honda spokesman. "We are treating the bike as an '83 model, and expect to have firm details on price and on-sale date towards the end of the year." Honda Australia did have a marketing schedule, but was unable to divulge it.

"The release date has to tie in with the sales patterns of other models," we were told, "and we'd be silly to give our competition too much warning of when such an important model will be released."

The Honda Australia spokesman also admitted that at least two prototype VT250s had been tested in Australia in February of this year, although this had previously been denied (see TW, June).

GS Hi-Wing Batteries out-perform the rest.

FEATURING THINNER SEPARATORS FOR GREATER POWER, SHORTER CHARGING TIMES, EXCELLENT CHARGE RETENTION AND PERFECT DRY CHARGED

GREATER TERMINAL VOLTAGE

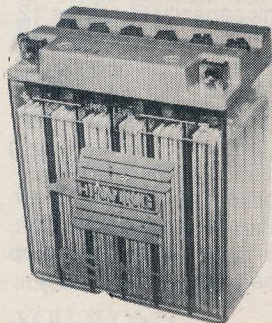
At low temperatures, the new Hi-Wing battery produced greater terminal voltage over a longer period of time than conventional batteries.

SHORTER CHARGING TIME

Due to lower internal resistance, the new Hi-Wing battery can be charged more quickly than conventional batteries.

EXCELLENT CHARGING RETENTION

The new Hi-Wing battery will also stay charged longer due to reduction of antimony in the grid alloy.



PERFECT DRY CHARGED

The new Hi-Wing battery maintains a constant dry-charged condition due to coating the negative plates with an airtight film — thus sealing the battery vent holes.

However, dry charged batteries stored for long periods, will require some 10 hour's additional charging to insure a good performance and long life.



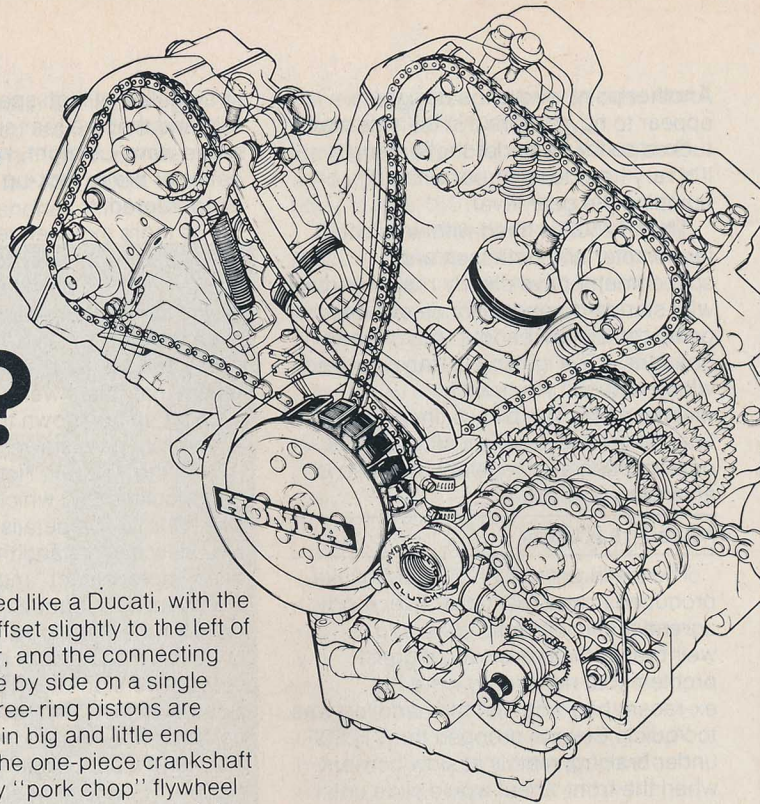
LONDON TRADING CO. PTY. LTD.

DISTRIBUTORS TO THE MOTOR CYCLE TRADE

476-480 New Canterbury Road, Dulwich Hill, 2203. Phone 560-6522
43 O'Connell Street, North Melbourne, 3051. Vic. Phone 329-0438
211 Pulteney Street, Adelaide, 5000. S.A. Phone 223-4754
15 Maud Street, Newstead, 4006. Qld. Phone 52-1941

NEW ERA 250

What Makes The VT Tick?



NO expense has been spared in the design of Honda's buzz-bomb V-twin. Sharing many features with big brother VF750, and in spirit at least derived from the NR500 racing programme, the new model is a far cry from the cost-conscious CB250 parallel twin which has long been Honda's mainstay in the quarter-litre bracket.

The CB250 will probably stay in the company's line-up — it's a popular seller in one of the biggest segments of the market — but the hearts of Honda's engineers will be very much with their el tricko V-twin, as it goes gunning for Yamaha's RD250 in the battle for top dog among the littlies.

The 90-degree V powerplant has its

cylinders disposed like a Ducati, with the rear one being offset slightly to the left of the front cylinder, and the connecting rods running side by side on a single crankpin. The three-ring pistons are supported by plain big and little end bearings, while the one-piece crankshaft features cutaway "pork chop" flywheel segments. With the 90-degree V-twin's ideal primary balance, balancer shafts are not needed.

Camshaft drive for each cylinder is by a single-row chain from the left-hand end of the crank, inboard of the alternator. A rather complex spring system tensions long slipper guides against the cam chains. Each single-lobe camshaft operates two valves through a forked and pivoted follower. Clearance adjustment is carried out by conventional screw and locknut.

The four-valve head layout contributes markedly to the motor's high power output. Valve timing itself is quite modest, with an overlap of only 15 degrees. The two Keihin CV carbs feed the inlets at a shallow downdraft angle, and draw air from a plastic airbox mounted above the frame rails under the tank.

The airbox and filter location combines with the bike's road-racer styling to cut tank capacity to a mere 12 litres. However, the bike should still offer a reasonable range, as a result of good fuel economy. Certainly not the 45 km/l claimed by the factory (presumably the model can do it, but who is forever riding along a flat road at 50 km/h?), but the specific fuel consumption charts indicate that it should return 22-24 km/l at 100 km/h, 18-19 at 130 per, and drop to around 14 when being ridden really hard.

Primary drive is through a straight-cut gear on the right-hand end of the crank. Could be the designers figured the noise of a straight gear would be offset by the quietening effect of water-cooling. The

six-speed transmission features a new shift-pawl system and hydraulic clutch operation.

Drive for the oil and water pumps is taken by chain from the gearbox mainshaft behind the clutch. Both pumps share the accessory shaft which runs transversely below the transmission. Cooling water from the radiator flows via the left frame downtube, in the same manner as the VF750. Radiator capacity is 2.5 litres and lubrication capacity 1.6 litres.

The VT250F's front end sports a 16-inch wheel of the alloy "boomerang" Comstar pattern, and Honda's enclosed disc brake system. A single disc and a floating dual-piston caliper are used. Steering geometry falls into the medium range (26.5 degrees of rake and 91 mm of trail), as does the 1385 mm wheelbase.

At the rear, the Pro-link suspension layout uses a Showa air spring/damper unit. The forks also use air springing, but only to add preload to conventional metal coil springs. While racing-oriented owners might curse the adoption of a 16-inch front wheel for restricting their choice of tyres, they'll thank Honda for the generous rim widths which allow the fitting of 100/90 (front) and 110/80 (rear) tyres as stock.

So there it is. As detailed in our exclusive story in the June issue of TWO WHEELS, all hell is gonna start popping in the 250 bracket, and the VT250F is the first shot in the war. Honda has its biggest guns loaded with the biggest shells, and as an opening salvo the VT250 is going to take some topping! *

"TRI-RATE"

the complete answer to SUPERBIKE rear SUSPENSION needs



3 rates:

- 1 = ONE UP
 - 2 = plus PILLION
 - 3 = plus PANNIERS
- in one progressive spring on a **KONI SPECIAL 'D'** adjustable SHOCK ABSORBER

ONLY \$54 each complete present stock from:

K-Shock INDUSTRIES

P.O. Box 333
PARRAMATTA 2150
Phone: (02) 681 3585

ORDER or send for details:

Name

Address

Make Model Year

tick if MONEY ORDER enclosed

KSTWB.82