

A Bike to Remember



ON ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY, AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S FIRST SUPERBIKE, HONDA'S STUNNING CB750 FOUR

Published in Cycle World, 1994

"Your Honda dealer will have it soon. The Honda 750 Four. When you twist the throttle, remember one thing. You asked for it." --Honda ad, 1969 "Single overhead cam, four cylinders, four carburetors and 67 ponies at 8000 rpm. Without a doubt, the wildest engine to come along in many a moon!" --Motorcyclist, July 1969.

"It was the neatest thing I've ever seen. It had an electric starter, that was one of the biggest things it had going for it. Every big bike at the time, you had to kickstart those rascals. Not this one. It sold itself. All you had to do was let someone go ride it. It was about that easy. They'd come back with a grin from ear to ear, you'd know you had a sale. --Mike Dreyer, general manager Dreyer Honda, Indianapolis, Indiana

"The disc brake on the front of the Honda is absolutely fantastic. It is the standard by which all brakes of the future will be judged." --Cycle, March 1970

"It was a very exciting time. Honda had developed enough of a reputation that customers knew this thing was gonna be a real runner. Everybody was excited about being able to buy something with that kind of performance for the kind of prices we sold them for-pocket change, today." --Bill McLean, general manager Colby Honda, Woodland Hills, California

"It had an introductory price of \$1295. That didn't last very long. The bike was instantly a success." --Bob Schultz, former owner Bob Schultz Motors, St. Louis, Missouri

"It is hard to keep from raving at the way the hardware on the chassis has been arranged to allow what must be the ultimate angle of lean for any big-bore...It is nearly impossible to ground the 750, which allows as much, or more banking than the Superhawk." --Cycle World, August 1969

"The Honda is very forgiving. The power comes on without any sudden rushes, and it's relatively simple to power drift the slower corners."

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Cycle, March 1970

"CB750s? I sold the hell out of them. At time the CB750 came out, the 750 Triumph Trident also was just out, and there was no comparison between the two. The Honda was much more refined. Without a doubt it was a better product. I sold probably 20 CB750s to every Triumph Triple I sold. The very few diehard riders who bought the Triumph 750s, every single one of them traded it back in on a Honda. I was a diehard Triumph fan myself and I hated to see that happen, but the British motorcycle industry had its head in the sand way too long." --Larry Lilly, owner Larry Lilly Honda, Lancaster, California

"I bought one of the first 750s to come into this country in 1969. The two things I liked most about the 750 was that it was faster than a Harley and it had an electric starter that really worked." --Mel Mandel, CB750 owner Los Angeles, California

"This engine has such an unusual amount of torque that the gearbox is hardly needed." --Motorcyclist, July 1969 "The 750 is in an extremely mild state of tune, with intake exhaust valve overlap being not much more than that of a good touring car...Honda didn't go all-out with a double-overhead-cam layout; it must be remembered that the benefit from the extra cam would be doubtful for a large-bore touring engine. Honda considers the reduced head size of an sohc engine to be of greater advantage." --Cycle World, August 1969

"We went to the dealer convention and saw it, I think it was in Las Vegas. We were really impressed with the way Honda people demonstrated it. They put a glass of water on the seat, revved it up, and the water didn't spill. Then they put a nickel on the cylinder head-put it up on edge-and it wouldn't tip the nickel over. I don't think anybody had heard of a motorcycle engine that wouldn't vibrate. Later, demonstrating it to customers, we tried to stand a nickel up, but never could get it in the exact spot. We did put a glass of water on the seat, and it wouldn't spill. That impressed customers." --Helen Musselman, owner Musselman Honda Center, Tucson, Arizona

"It was the best thing that had happened to motorcycles in 20 years. It just totally turned motorcycling into a more well-rounded activity. Electric starting, no sparkplug fouling, just total reliability. They were so smooth and fast. We started roadracing one soon after they came out-my brother John campaigned one quite well. They were bulletproof." Dave Bettencourt, owner Bettencourts Honda, West Bridgewater, Massachusetts

"Those bikes definitely caused a stir in the store. I remember that at one point we had 10 people standing in line waiting until I could get to them to do the sales paper-work. They were quite a seller." --Joy Neuschwanger, office manager Faymyer's Honda, Denver, Colorado

"A lot of our customers were in awe. We got just one in at first and it didn't stay around too long. We'd sell them in bunches. A guy would come in with his friends, we'd sell maybe three or four CB750s at one time. Now, we don't do that. I remember one week, we moved maybe 20 CB750s." Robed Garrett, manager Garrett Honda, New Orleans, Louisiana

"There just wasn't anything else like the CB750. These were the days of the muscle cars; in unofficial drag races the Hondas would generally clean up. The engineering was a generation ahead of anything else, and it was engineered to last a long time. The only dissatisfaction was from the person waiting to get one-the wait was a couple months." --Ray Van Zelst, owner Don & Roy's Cycle Shop Brookfield, Wisconsin

"I remember my first time sitting on a 750, thinking how much bigger it was than my CB450. Riding that beast down the road at a bdsk pace and looking down at those cylinders jutting out from under the gas tank, I realized this was more than a motorcycle; I was riding a visceral locomotive." --Gary Christopher, manager American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

"It came out at a time when everything seemed to be status quo. All of a sudden this bike comes out, sounds great, has great power, stops good; it just did a lot of things really good, except for handling, but we didn't notice that too much because other bikes didn't handle that great, either. It got people excited again about motorcycling. The acceleration was important, but it was the sound as much as any-thing-that four-cylinder thing." --Chuck Keys, president Imperial Cycle Sales Buffalo, New York

"I had to have one when I first heard that sound. Those four pipes wailing as the revs climbed made me shiver with lust. That sound is as much a part of the art of the CB750 as is its versatility, comfort and durability. It's just about perfect." --Barry Sommer, president CB 750 Preservation Society

"When those bikes were first introduced, it was a feeding frenzy. It was a four-cylinder, something new and neat, and it was fast. It had overhead-cam technology. We had a lot of people come in and look at it. Those were the good old days-it was a lot more fun, things were a lot simpler. I'd like to find one again so I could restore it." --Lane Jacquay, owner K&L Honda Sales, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

"The look, the sound, the feel, what more is there to say? Honda's CB750 is the bike, period. As long as there's at least one in my garage, I can die a happy man." --Jerry Beasley, collector Danville, California

If you have north of \$10K burning a hole in your pocket and desire a restored 1970 CB750 with a bit of documented history behind it, The Guggenheim CB750 recently sold on eBay.

According to the description, this is the bike that was purchased in 1993 by former *Cycle World* Editor-in-Chief David Edwards. The bike was then ridden across old Route 66 and featured in the magazine's May, 1993, story "West By CB750." A few years later, it was present at American Honda's 50th anniversary celebration in New York City and then again at the Guggenheim 'Art of the Motorcycle' exhibit.