

cycle guide

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AUGUST 1972 60 CENTS

FIRST TEST ON A NEW 1973 PRESTIGE TOURER—

The Luxurious
350 Four From
Honda



Tests:

**Suzuki 550 • Ossa Pioneer
Rickman Enduro**

Elsinore GP - Visalia Antique Rally - Berkshire Trials

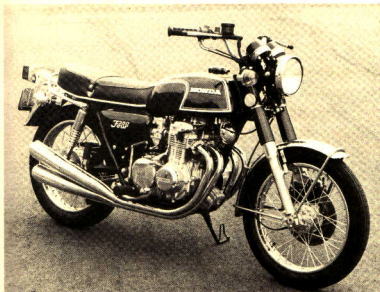
SOPHISTICATED MIDDIE

Like many other things, it seems that motorcycle design improves with age.

CYCLE GUIDE

TEST 
REPORT





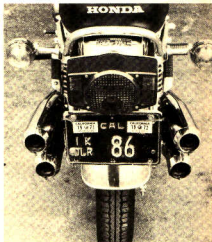
This photo clearly illustrates the more than adequate amount of ground clearance plus the very handsome lines of this new 350 Four from Honda.

On the surface a perfectly logical question naturally springs to mind when the subject of a multi-cylinder, small displacement touring bike comes up. Why have a multitude of cylinders on such a small machine? This is a perfectly logical question and one we asked ourselves several times while testing this newest of Honda's multis. The answer is not as simple or obvious as one might think.

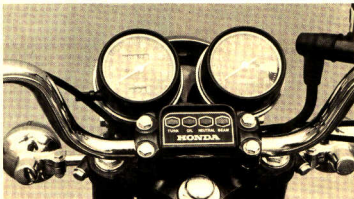
When Honda introduced their 500 Four, it was acclaimed by many (including *Cycle Guide*) to be the finest handling package they'd ever designed. What we didn't know, however, was that waiting in the wings was another entry ready for introduction to the motorcycle public. The 500 Four did everything a touring rider could ask except for one. It was a bit shy on horsepower.

Naturally, when the first news of the 350 Four reached us, we automatically assumed (and wrongly too) that this new baby multi would fall victim to the same situation. Not so. The new 350 will run up to 75 or 80 mph just about as quick as its bigger brother, the 500. Actually, and surprisingly, the 350 Four comes closest to being the most ideally sized all around motorcycle Honda has come up with yet.

The 750 is certainly nice, but it's large. In heavy traffic it is a bit unwieldy. The 500 is nice also, but it needs a bit more steam to really be



This mammoth tailfitt plus the turn indicators provide more than adequate rear illumination for night riding.



We found it a simple matter to cruise between 7-10,000 rpm for many miles at a time. The speedometer, however, was very optimistic—about 10%.

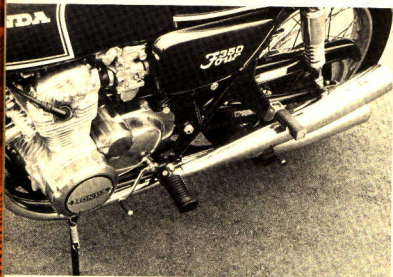
competitive in today's traffic situation. And now along comes an even smaller four cylinder mount.

There are several areas that will instantly warm the hearts of motorcycle enthusiasts everywhere—like the handling. Whatever you desire in a street bike, the Honda 350 Four has it. Steering even on the roughest of surfaces at virtually all speeds is dead stable and neutral. The chassis exhibited no funny habits or evil tendencies that the rider must make excuses or adjustments for. It does what is asked of it with no protest. The engineers and designers have done a very fine job of assembling the various

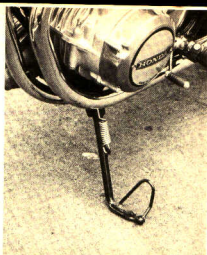
components and coming up with what can only be described as a superb roadable package that has all the earmarks of becoming a fine standard for the small displacement motorcycle market to follow.

Although a 350cc has been considered a medium to small displacement product, in the case of the new Four perhaps a re-evaluation of the 350cc motorcycle in today's marketplace is called for.

It is not the quickest (the Kawasaki S1 is about a half a second quicker in the quarter) nor is it the fastest (the Yamaha R5 is about 4-5 mph faster). However, as an overall design concept the motorcycle has a lot of things going for it. The all up weight of 409 pounds (with a gallon and a half in the tank) can be stopped very quickly by what is now a conventional looking front mounted disc and drum rear



There is a pretty fair amount of ground clearance for both the rider and passenger foot pegs. Also, the rear stand will not drag on the ground easily.

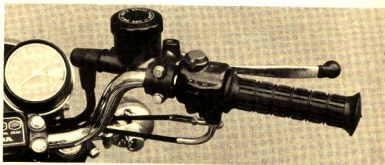


A nice touch was the addition of a welded on wire form to help the rider find the sidestand without the usual groping around.

brake setup. The rear brake, surprisingly, is quite powerful, almost on the point of being sensitive. Also, many repeated hard stops failed to produce any fade on either front or rear. This in itself was quite surprising since we induce brake fade in most drum brakes after several hard stops.

The engine for the most part is a scaled down four-cylinder power plant not unlike its bigger brothers, the 500 and 750. If anything, the 350's even smoother than the latter two. The basic design concept is very much like its predecessors. It's a single overhead cam design which is easily serviced and is absolutely oil tight insuring clean running operation. The 350 Four, however, is a bit short on torque. As a result, it is necessary to keep the wick turned up under most circumstances. We found out early in the game that under 5000 there is not a surplus of power available.

The only really annoying part of the whole machine is a vibration period between 5500 and 6000 rpm. On the surface this may not sound like a great deal, but we found this is what we normally would be cruising at. It was never necessary to glance at the tach whenever the engine revs fell between 5500 and 6000. Both mirrors would blur quickly, and the right side of the handlebars and right foot peg would buzz noticeably. This is a very obvious flaw in what otherwise can only be described as a truly superlative piece of touring equipment. We



As on the larger displacement machines, a conventional Honda front brake master cylinder arrangement plus the throttle mounted emergency ignition switch are standard equipment.

certainly hope Honda exhibits some initiative and eliminates this irritating vibration.

Above or below this resonance period the engine is silky smooth, so smooth in fact that the rider must constantly keep his eye glued on the tach in order to accurately tell where he's at. At 6000 rpm the speedometer is reading 60 mph. The speedometer, by the way, is one of those optimistic jobs that we thought were a thing of the past. It's approximately 10% too high. At a true 63 mph the speedometer is reading 70.

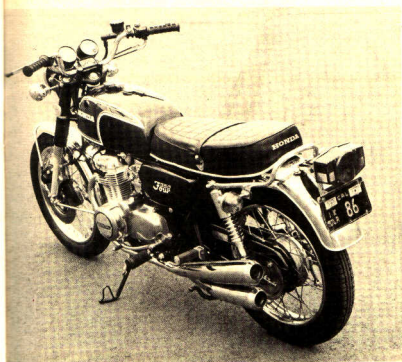
Future 350 Four owners will really appreciate the trouble free operation of the entire drive line. Starting in the cool air of the morning was instantaneous. Also, we discovered the warm up period was only fractionally

as long as the larger version 500 and 750. We were told the 350 will run along all day with the needle buried in the red zone. For 20 miles we ran the bike wide open in fourth gear only to find the engine completely indifferent to the punishment heaped upon it.

For those of you who do most of your riding two up, the 350 Four is certainly worth more than a casual look. We discovered early in the game that it will transport two people quickly and easily from point to point.

There are several advantages in this newest of Honda products. There is greater ground clearance between the pavement and the underside of the motorcycle. Surprisingly enough, we only managed to kick the center stand a couple of times while riding the bike. This for the most part was when riding double. The bike can be leaned over at a surprising angle and you'll still find about 1/2-1" clearance underneath the machine.

The rear foot pegs are high enough to keep the passengers off the pavement. Similarly, the rider's foot pegs



For riding two up, the large comfortable saddle provides a good perch for two people who enjoy getting away from it all.

and pleasing. Even at high rpm there is very little noise to talk about.

Acceleration of this 409 pound 350 was quite surprising. We made four runs (see accompanying chart), one right after the other, and discovered it was not difficult to turn in consistent ET's. Normally with high horsepower, low torque machinery, it becomes a difficult matter to get the bike out of the gate smoothly and quickly. Not so with the 350 Four. Consistency was the name of the game.

1/4-MILE ACCELERATION

RUN	E.T.	SPEED
1.	15.631	81.81
2.	15.690	81.52
3.	15.532	82.26
4.	15.683	82.79

In the past we have had some problems with some Honda products. They reacted adversely to severe drag strip usage. However, the 350 is a departure from those earlier types. No matter how many runs we made or how hard we abused it, the clutch never even so much as hinted at slipping or grabbing. It always remained velvet smooth and very positive.

Top speed on our test bike was a



That rear boot attached to the left fork leg catches the debris thrown off by the disc and helps keep the machine cleaner.

shade under 85 mph (actual speed, not speedometer). The best speed we got was 84.74, 84.66 on our second run. Our best ET was 15.53 at 82.26 mph. As you can see, the bike is pretty well flat out at a 1/4 mile.

Every effort to pare off weight has been looked into by the factory. A close examination of the engine cases will reveal how Honda made a real effort to pull away those unwanted pounds from power plant components.

When riding on the freeway, expressway or highway at normal cruising speed in the wind, the rider must utilize an abnormal amount of concentration and body English to keep the bike moving in a straight line. We never got into any situations we felt were dangerous, but windy weather definitely does affect the bike's road performance.

The suspension and tires really do a magnificent job in keeping the contact patch firmly implanted on terra firma where it belongs. Even that grooved pavement on the freeway failed to make an impression on the motorcycle's personality. We discovered the tires worked quite well on wet pavement also, in fact, much better than average.

Under severe and average usage we found our gas mileage leveled out at 44.3 mpg. This includes normal surface street and freeway traffic, running flat out on the coast plus more than a few laps at Orange

We discovered, much to our surprise, that it was a simple matter to get quick, consistent ET's at the drag strip.

are up high, which for a tall person means his knees are going to be a bit higher than normal. For anyone 5'11" or under, there should be no problem. The exhaust system like the center stand is up high and inboard. Also, the exhaust note itself is quiet

County Raceway. Also included in this average were the drag strip tests.

One of the really delightful parts of the motorcycle is the gearbox. The ratios are nicely suited to the character of the machine. What is even nicer is the absolutely effortless and super slick operation. There was never any effort expended moving from one gear to the next. It's a shame all motorcycles don't operate this effortlessly.

As of this moment there is no firm price set yet, but our information indicates the price will be between \$1,000 and \$1,200. This would seem

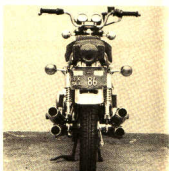
on the surface a bit steep for a 350 road bike, but when one considers what this price buys, the amount of money doesn't seem unreasonable. There is every reason to believe the quality and longevity will be on par with other Honda manufactured products, which for the most part have been excellent.

We were so impressed by our test bike that one of the staff members has already planned to purchase one of the first models released for sale.

This bike will probably not appeal to everybody wanting a 350 roadster.

Our guess is that it is slanted toward those riders who want something a bit better than their neighbor's 350 twin. Also, we feel this machine will be a better highway touring machine than the twin. All things considered, the price is actually quite reasonable when one examines what he is getting for his dollar.

We liked the 350 Four, and our personal guess is that it will be an instant success and a lot of potential middleweight purchasers will snap them up like free \$10 bills. *Bob Braverman*



350 HONDA

ENGINE

Type	four cycle/four cylinder
Bore and stroke	.47x50mm
Displacement	347cc
Compression ratio	9.3:1
Ignition	battery/coil
Carburetion	(4) 20mm

DIMENSIONS

Length	81 in.
Seat height	30.7 in.
Wheelbase	53.3 in.
Ground clearance	6.1 in.
Dry weight	403 lbs.

WHEELS AND BRAKES

Front tire size	3.00-18
Front brake type	hydraulic disc
Rear tire size	3.50-18
Rear brake type	internal expanding shoes

TRANSMISSION

Type	five speed/constant mesh
Clutch	wet/multi plate
Internal gear ratios	1st, 2.73; 2nd, 1.85; 3rd, 1.41; 4th, 1.14; 5th, 0.96
Final ratio	2.23
Countershaft sprocket	17
Rear wheel sprocket	38

PERFORMANCE

Indicated highest one-way speed	87.2 mph
Acceleration 0-60	7.3 sec.
Braking distance 30-0	28.0 ft.

GENERAL

Air filtration	dry paper
Battery type	12V, 12AH

CAPACITIES

Fuel tank	3.2 gal.
Fuel reserve	.5 gal.
Oil tank	3.7 quarts
Fuel consumption	43.8 mpg

FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Front suspension	oil dampened telescopic
Rear suspension	oil dampened telescopic
Frame type	tubular cradle

COLORS

Red/green

PRICE AS TESTED

\$1100 (approx.)

DISTRIBUTOR

American Honda
Gardena, Ca. 90247