RICKMAN/HONDA CR750

When The Rickman Brothers Get Serious, They Build The Best. And It's 47 Pounds Lighter Than Stock!

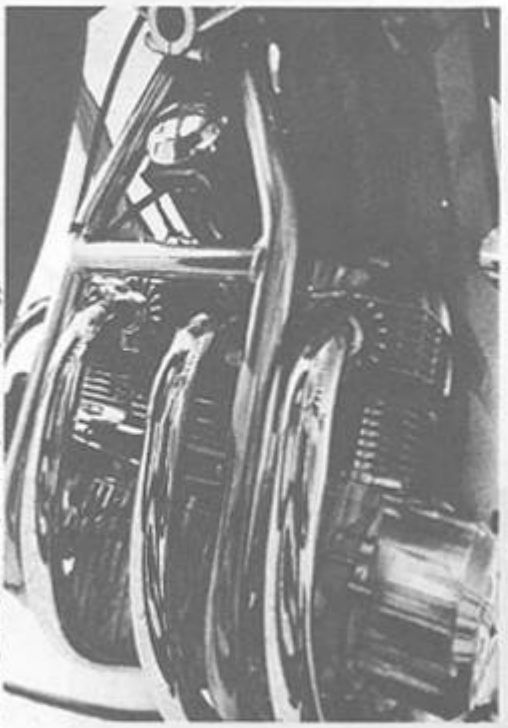
Cycle World Road Test

■ YOU CAN'T FOOL us. We ride bikes on the street too, and we know. There's a foolish touch of Mike Hailwood in the heart of just about every man who's ever swung a leg over a street bike. A touch of Borris Murray too, although the stoplight-to-stoplight games soon become old. But oh, that next corner. It's so different and such a new challenge from the last corner, or even the next one. But, you're on your way to work and you certainly don't want to overdo it. You'll come back and take it on. Saturday.

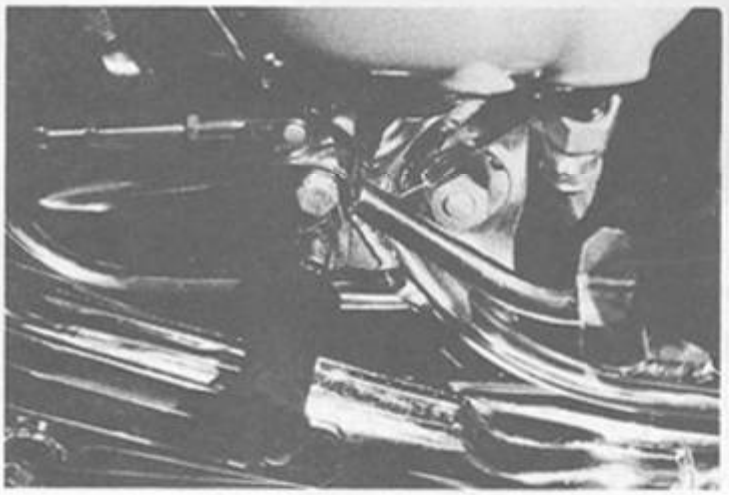
Be honest. It's happened before. And more than once too. But when you come right down to it, you wonder whether Ol' Paint is up to the task. Afterall, the tires have about five thou on them and the shocks have long since lost their initial vitality. But there was something about that corner. Something so daringly inviting. You go back, and before you know it, you're pitching your bike in. You are committed. There's no backing out and you're going to ride it for all it's worth.

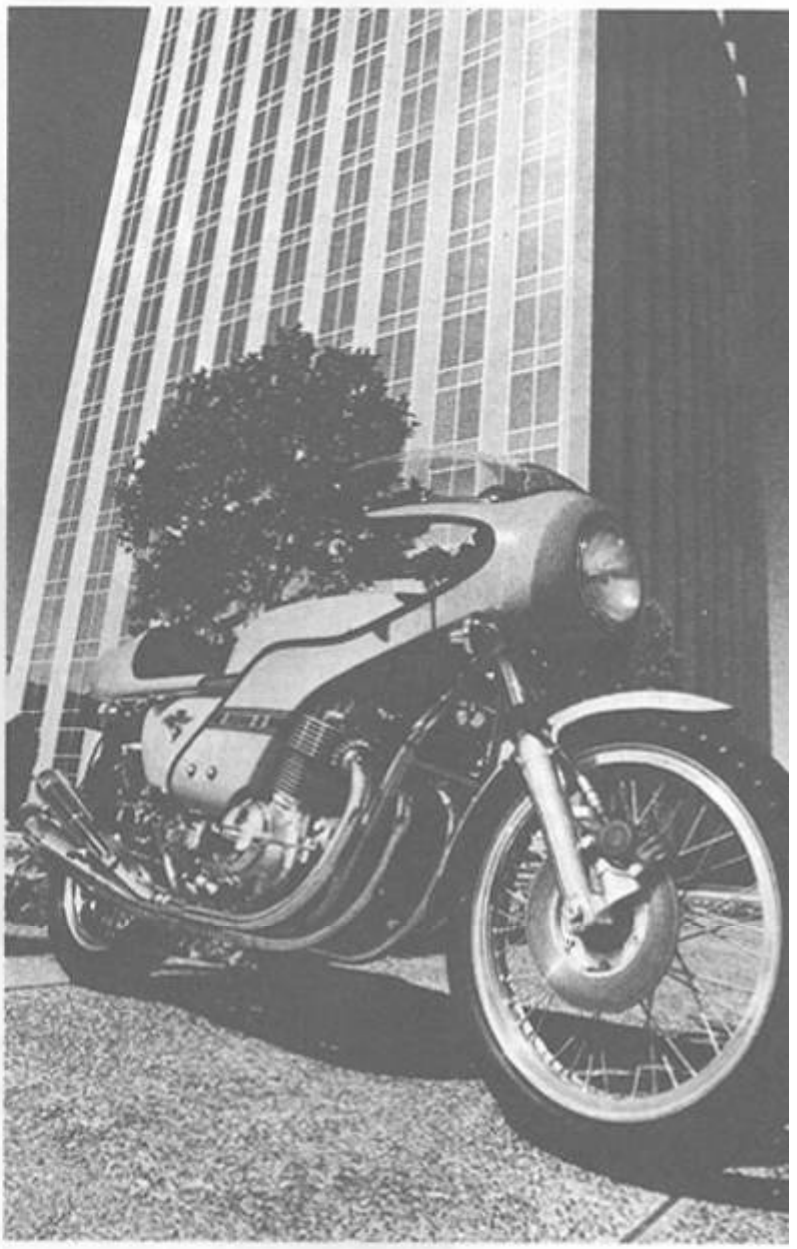
The first time you feel the footpeg or sidestand scrape the ground there is an immediate uneasiness in the pit of your stomach that makes you want to back off. But dammit, NO! You even press a little harder. "My God, I'm doing it."

If the experience doesn't cure you of the affliction, then the cafe racer bug has bitten. You won't know it for a while;



Photography: Randy Papke, D. Randy Riggs





RICKMAN

not until you realize that that heap you've been riding this last year, the one the dealer told you handled like it was on rails, actually feels like it's running on the ties.

Before long you'll have it sold and be in the market for something better. But mass-produced motorcycles are rarely capable of handling those twisty roads that you've decided to conquer. At least not at the speeds you feel are within reach of your abilities. What to do?

Don't sell that monstrous four-banger just because it wiggles like a wounded snake every time you even think about tilting it from a vertical plane. Afterall, hasn't that engine been reliable? And hasn't it been able, when you forgot, to go twice the recommended distance between oil or plug changes without a whimper. And it sure gets it on down the highway.

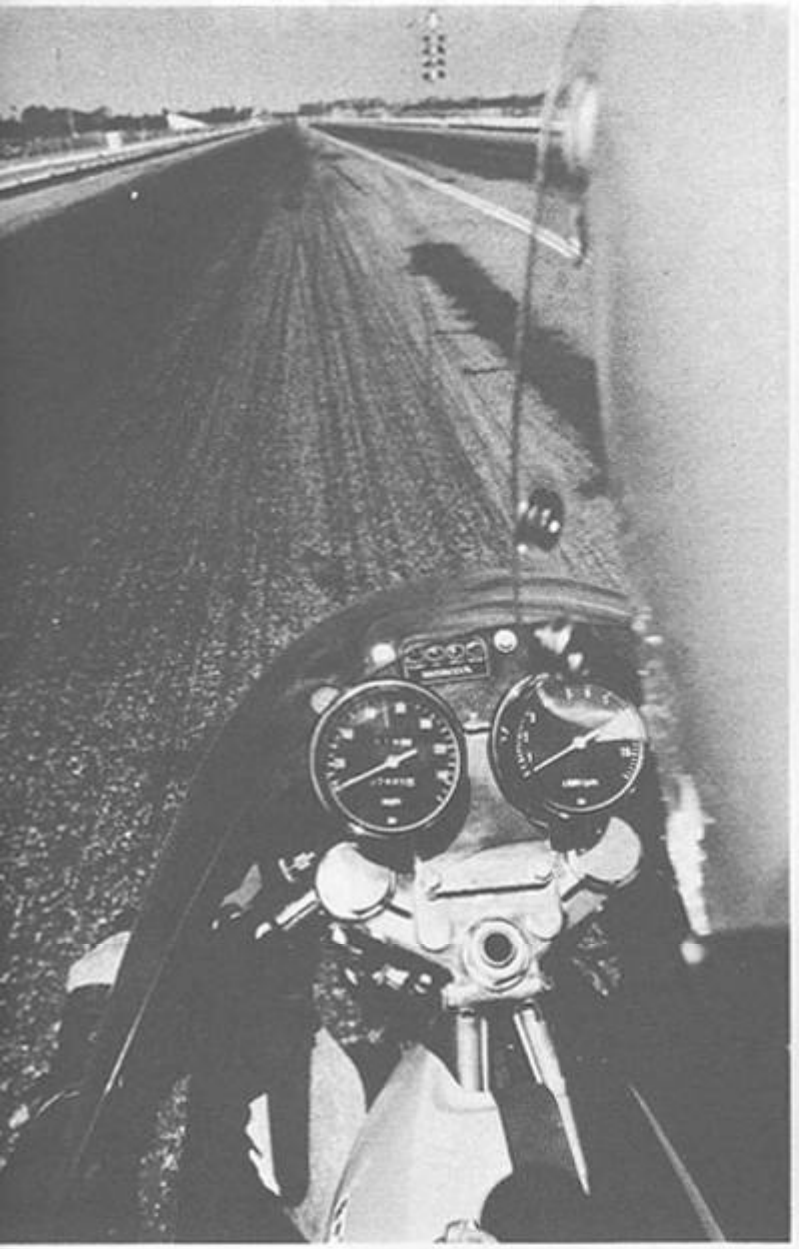
What you need is a new chassis to put around the mill. One that isn't designed to be the best for a given price, but one that is designed to be *the* best. Period. And while you're at it, go all out. Do it right and all that sort of thing.

That's what the Rickman Brothers do. They do it right. And their cafe racer kit for the 750 Honda is without a doubt one of the most attractive and incredibly functional pieces of two-wheeled engineering on the street surfaces of the world. If this doesn't do it for you, pack it in 'cause you can't take Agostini's bike where you like to ride.

If you purchase a Rickman Cafe Racer kit, you're going to need a little more than just your engine though. The carburetor and air filter box are needed. Also the exhaust system, side and center stands, oil tank with adjacent plumbing, the battery compartment, control levers, cables and electrics including the wiring harness, and both body side panels and all instruments. Now, with all of this piled neatly into a box in the corner of your garage, you begin to uncrate your CR kit.

First the fiberglas: the tank, the seat, the fairing. Orange. Brilliant orange. And the bubble shield; mild blue. Just picking it up and looking through it makes you feel like you've crested the "ton." Putting this baby together with a lot of TLC won't be too hard; although you really can't wait till you can get her up to the rest stop near the top of that old mountain road. Won't those guys strain an eye or two.

Next the highly-polished front forks and a pair of beautiful disc-braked wheels. Both sport Borrani rims and Dunlop TT100 tires. And then the frame. It's a gleaming, nickel-plated product of 531 Reynolds manganese molybdenum tubing. Every joint is profiled, fitted and bronze-welded like a custom one-off job. Assembly instructions very proudly claim that, "the stock Honda parts bolt straight on without modification.



No drilling or welding necessary."

We picked up our test bike already assembled, so we can't attest to the accuracy of that statement. But the Rickman people seem very adamant about it.

Complete in a matter of hours, the bike sits there waiting for you to take it out and put it through its paces. You fire up the engine, which sounds even stronger than before, just sitting there idling. Take it out on the street and see how it goes.

The first problem you'll notice is that there is very little steering lock. While this may be fine for a road racer, cafe racers need a certain amount of manueverability for city traffic. Secondly, because the shift lever had to be reversed in order to be reached by your newly-positioned feet, a backward shift pattern must be learned. Rickman is working on linkage that will allow owners to maintain the standard down-for-low arrangement, but it isn't available yet.

Out of town at last and up to your favorite set of bends. Conservatively at first, you begin testing the limits of the bike. The Lockheed discs make it easy to go way beyond all those old braking markers you memorized so diligently. Yet, when you clamp them on, they haul you down with such fierce smoothness that it's hard to believe. Braking stability on this machine is second to none.

Deeper into the turns you go, heaving it over farther and farther. Then it hits you. This thing is heeled over more than you've ever been, but it isn't through yet. It wants more. So more you give it. And it just hangs in there. The traction provided by the tires is phenomenal. The chassis is rigidly accurate and the brakes perfect. On fast turns you can almost take your hands off the bars and steer the bike with your rump.

And the looks this beauty gets. Even old ladies in their Caddies do a double take. You can imagine the conversation inside the last cop car you encountered. "Hey Herkewicz, that guy's got a racin' bike on the street."

But the Rickman has turn signals. And it has a stop light and proper running lights. It's also quiet. Besides, you were smoothly cruising at the posted speed limit. You know they'd love to pull you over, but there's nothing in the books about not being able to ride a racing machine on the street if it meets all federal and state requirements. And you know it bugs them.

After your outing, there might be a few things you will want to alter just to suit you. The shift lever position is one of them. And changing those awful Honda grips is a must. Now that you are putting a greater percentage of your weight on them, they do bother you. Without a doubt you'll be giving some thought to what you might be able to do to make the Rickman more comfortable. Here you're in trouble.

The positioning of the seat makes it mandatory that for

even the slightest bit of comfort, the rider be at least 5 ft. 10 in. or have a large upper torso. This would make it possible for him to ride all day without constantly resting his rib cage on the unpadded tank surface. But getting real comfort out of the bike is going to take some sacrificing.

You see, Rickman took a perfectly good seat-height-to-handlebar-height arrangement and ruined it by padding the seat so well. This has raised the back end of the pilot just enough to put a strain on his back. After a while in the saddle, you begin to notice a dull muscle pain at the base of your back. While with practice you could strengthen your back and eventually overcome the discomfort, there are easier ways.

One would be to reduce the padding in the seat. Another would be to increase the handlebar height or to purchase a set of clip-ons that are not so downswept. But this would require a minor reshaping of the fairing cutaway in that area. Persons over 6 ft. 2 in. will find that their rear ends are backed up to the seat upsweep, and that the machine is perfectly tailored for them. No alterations will be necessary.

The fuel tank is easy to remove; just one strap does the job, but watch out for the rubber pads under the tank. They are glued to the tank at the factory and come unglued easily. At your earliest convenience, tape them to the frame in their proper positions. Also, try to find some replacement petcocks for the tank. The standard ones are clumsy and overly stiff.

Mirrors are going to be difficult to locate if you don't have a BMW dealer nearby. The mirrors you want are the kind that attach through the grips and expand against the inside of the bars. You should probably leave the control levers alone, although dropping a few beads of weld on the slick surface of the brake pedal would certainly aid sole adhesion. But this means having the pedal replated.

The price of the Rickman kit is what one would expect to pay for a complete package. No extra nuts and bolts to buy or extra parts to have hand fabricated. As such, the kit is an excellent purchase. But it's also a great investment. When Rickman makes a budget frame they make a budget frame. But when they throw cost to the wind and make a good frame, they make a great frame. With proper care, this chassis should easily outlast more than one motor. And then, it will probably return a surprising percentage of your initial investment. Not bad, eh chap?

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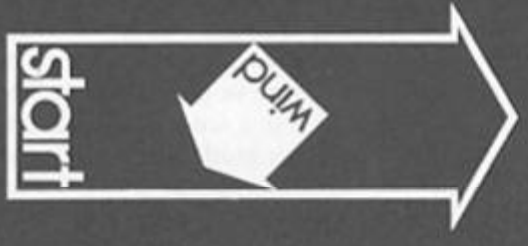
SPECIFICATIONS

List Price	$1495 (for kit only—see text)
Suspension, front	telescopic fork
Suspension, rear	swinging arm
Tire, front	3.60-19
Tire, rear	4.25/.85-18
Brake, front, diameter x width, in.	(2) 9.8 x 1.3
Brake, rear, diameter x width, in.	(2) 9.8 x 1.3
Total brake swept area, sq. in.	151.08
Brake loading, lb./sq. in. (160-lb. rider)	4.14
Engine, type	SOHC four-stroke Four
Bore x stroke, in., mm	2.40 x 2.48, 61 x 63
Piston displacement, cu. in., cc	44.9, 736
Compression ratio	9.0:1
Claimed bhp @ rpm	67 @ 8000
Carburetion	(4) 28mm Keihin
Ignition	battery and coil
Oil system	dry sump, gear pump
Oil capacity, pt.	7.4
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	4.2
Recommended fuel	premium
Starting system	electric; kick, folding crank
Lighting system	12V alternator
Air filtration	dry paper element
Clutch	wet, multi-disc
Primary drive	(2) single-row chain
Final drive	single-row chain
Gear ratios, overall:1	
5th	4.99
4th	5.83
3rd	7.08
2nd	9.08
1st	13.29
Wheelbase, in.	56.5
Seat height, in.	31.5
Seat width, in.	10.5
Handlebar width, in.	25.0
Footpeg height, in.	12.8
Ground clearance, in.	6.3
Curb weight (w/half-tank fuel), lb.	465.5
Weight bias, front/rear, percent	47.2/52.8
Test weight (fuel and rider), lb.	625.5
Mileage at completion of test	7503

TEST CONDITIONS

Air temperature, degrees F	70
Humidity, percent	56
Barometric pressure, in. hg.	29.55
Altitude above mean sea level, ft.	383
Wind velocity, mph	2-4
Strip Alignment, relative wind:	



PERFORMANCE

Top speed (actual @ 7327 rpm), mph	109
Computed top speed in gears (@8000 rpm), mph	
5th	119
4th	102
3rd	84
2nd	65
1st	45
Mph/1000 rpm, top gear	14.87
Engine revolutions/mile, top gear	4014
Piston speed (@ 8000 rpm), ft./min.	3307
Lb./hp (160-lb. rider)	9.33
Fuel consumption, mpg	35
Speedometer error:	
50 mph indicated, actually	42.5
60 mph indicated, actually	51.4
70 mph indicated, actually	59.8
Braking distance:	
from 30 mph, ft.	43
from 60 mph, ft.	132
Acceleration, zero to:	
30 mph, sec.	2.9
40 mph, sec.	3.4
50 mph, sec.	4.6
60 mph, sec.	5.5
70 mph, sec.	7.3
80 mph, sec.	9.0
90 mph, sec.	11.5
100 mph, sec.	14.2
Standing one-eight mile, sec.	8.87
terminal speed, mph	79.22
Standing one-quarter mile, sec.	13.74
terminal speed, mph	99.00