

# On the Buzzes

There's nothing like a good thrashing to quicken the pulse. But do you wanna take one or give one? The Honda Hornet knows what it wants. Do you?

**E**ver tried to beat an angry ferret with a stick? It's nearly impossible, massively frustrating and very hard to stop once you've started. But, by all the powers of piss, it feels good when you nail that sucker square on the noggin. Just like riding a Honda Hornet (actually, I love ferrets, and keep several as pets. I'd never dream of harming a hair on their precious little heads. I'm just making a point).

The Hornet's a little jewel. Two-fifty-ccers of grey import, quartz-action, four-cylinder madness. And, believe me or not, it's *fun*. Sure, the Hornet won't let you rest for a minute, a second even. Every mph needs to be worked for, every rpm wrung from its scrawny neck. I mean, unless you give it a big handful at the lights, young paperboy'll wave as he overtakes on his BMX. The only sure way to see off pedestrians is to dial up 8000rpm and slip the clutch to buggery. Only then the Hornet'll take off with all the savagery of... a dead sheep. Nah, I'm joking. 10,000rpm does the trick.

With only 35bhp on tap, and the sum total of nob-all torque anywhere in the rev range, this is not a bike for the lazy or easily bored. Oh no. But this little tart just begs to be bent over a knee and soundly thrashed, and the harder you spank, the better it feels. The only real power is tightly sandwiched

between 12 and 14,000rpm. Forget rolling on the throttle in higher gears — waste of time. Bang down a couple cogs, and keep it pinned. Lucky the gearbox is super snicky, it helps coz it gets so much use. The redline's set at 16,000rpm, but the little motor struggles to pull past 14,000rpm in top. Mind you, it's not for the want of trying. I did everything: hand on fork leg, feet on pillion pegs, lying flat, even running alongside naked. Nothing helped. Once, downhill with a following wind and a tow from an overtaking Skoda, I screamed the Hornet up to 15,000rpm. But only once.

If I owned one, I'd add two teeth to the rear sprocket as soon as it was in my driveway. Top speed is just over 100mph, and I'd sacrifice a bit of that for more acceleration. The other thing I'd do is slip on a carbon can. This bike sounds mad as stock, especially downchanging, but a fruity end can would give the motor a bit more bite.

The rest of the Hornet keeps up with the manic engine. Just. The unadjustable forks, like those on most jap imports, are soft and bouncy. Ditto the rear shock/It's not like there's a shitload of power to tie the thing in knots, but it steers so quickly — 16in front wheel — you can stuff the Hornet into roundabouts and corners *hard*. It gets a little fidgety with real fast changes of direction, and it's very easy to

