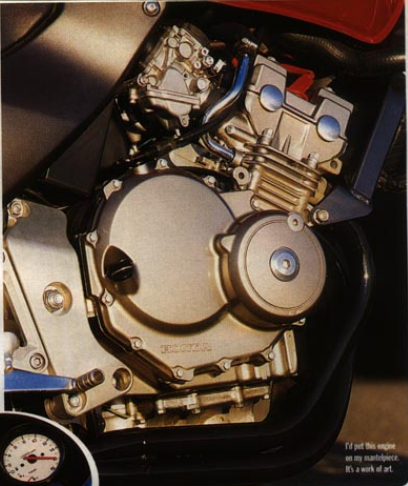


On the Buzzes

over-ride with too much heavy-handed steering input. Be brutal with the engine, gentle with the chassis. It takes a bit of getting used to — you have to be re-perfect and in the right gear. Hit it right (I didn't a lot of the time) and the feeling of satisfaction is tremendous. Maintaining momentum is everything.

But the bike's so small that one good fart'll send the thing over to the other side of the road. In spite of the huge, FireBlade size tyres — 180 section rear, 130 front — the Hornet steers easy. Weirdly, the revs rise by 500rpm as the Hornet goes from upright to lean. It's down to the rear tyre's massive change in profile, the rolling diameter of the centreline's so much greater than the edge. This happens on all bikes, it's just very noticeable on the Hornet. Daft, but kinda cool. But a light bike like this will never get fat BT50s as hot as they should be. Also, there's a touch of Coco the Clown's comedy cycle about the Hornet. It looks awesome from behind, silly from the front, like a five year old wearing size 12 moonboots.

I reckon they robbed the Fireblade parts bin for the front brake system. I'm not complaining, the gold Nissin four-pot caliper nips the floating disc with a vengeance, easily chirping the front tyre at any speed. Top quality kit. Even the rear caliper's a twin pot. No penny pinching there. The frame's a box section steel spine bolted to a solid alloy section for the swingarm/rear engine mounting. It ain't pretty under the seat, but it's tidy. From every other angle the Hornet's exquisitely formed. The miniature carbs, teeny cylinder block and chromed



I'd put this engine on my masterpiece. It's a work of art.



Kenney made me do this. As if the poor thing hadn't suffered enough.

silencer nestling under the rear sidepanel, they all press my buttons. The Hornet stirs some maternal instinct — it's just so dinky. But bugger me you wouldn't wanna own one. Or would you? In some perverse way I enjoyed every mile spent abusing the Hornet. And riding my GSX-R600 straight

after the Honda made the Suzuki feel like the King Of All Midrange (and you know how gutless GSX-R600s are). Of course the Hornet's a nightmare to live with, but, faced with choice between this 250 doodlebug or, say, a GS500 or ER5, I'd take the Hornet. No question. Pottering about on the Hornet? Not an option. Everywhere's flat out, a million revs and a million gear changes. And a big grin. Quite how long that grin would last is another matter. But the more I look at the Hornet the more I'm convinced I could live with one. Nah, I'd have to fit a 600 motor. Eventually.

AH

The Hornet V Honda Hornet



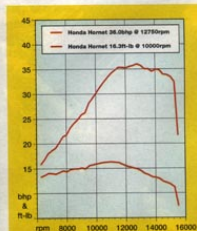
The Hornet (Vespa Crabro)

They don't come much harder than these poisonous little blighters. Recorded top speed is 13.31mph @ 200 wing cycles per second. Males tend to snuff it after mating. Mind you, in a head to head with a Honda Hornet the insect's gonna suffer. Just go and look at the headlight of your bike. The only hope for insect victory is a well delivered sting to the Honda rider's tongue. This will cause huge swelling and pain, possibly leading to a massive smash, resulting in complete destruction.



Honda Hornet (motorbike)

Similar in some ways to its insect namesake. Annoying, irritating, could well drive you mad, top speeds very alike. However, the Honda Hornet's about as hard as that last bit of Violette, so loses out in the cred stakes pre-flight. I think I'd have to put my money on the Honda Hornet though, coz it's a billion times bigger and made of metal. Nature's Hornet'll have the last laugh however. Long after Honda's Hornet is a long forgotten piece of scrap, its insect adversary will be going strong.



▲ Before and after silicone implants...