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Daytona
Speed Week
feature

CB1100F
Tight-fisted
thrills on a
superbike

YAMAHA VENTURE
Coast-to-coast
touring fever

V65 MAGNA
10.73-second
scorcher



HONDA CB1100F



**CYCLE
CANADA**
TEST

HONDA CB1100F

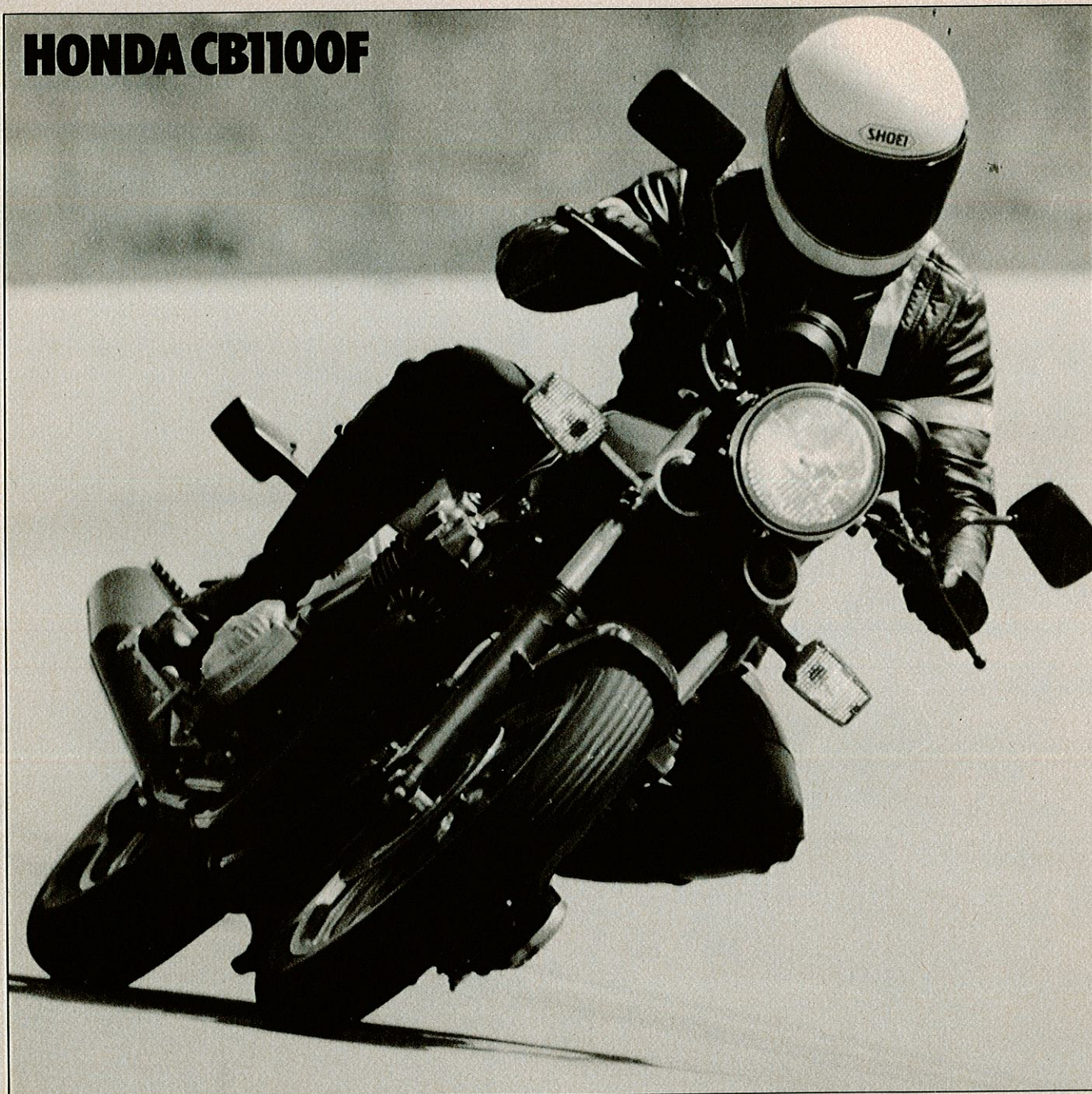
CHEAP SUPERBIKE THRILLS

Honda proves a bargain-basement superbike needn't give up good looks, sharp handling and a fast ride.



PHOTO BY BILL PETRO

HONDA CB1100F



When Honda Canada announced its 1983 model line to Cycle Canada, the firm's spokesman waxed eloquently about a trio of sport bikes that would be unique to Canada in the North American market. The CBX550, the CX650E and the CB1100F were all designed for the sporting enthusiast. American Honda didn't think the North American market would be interested in the machines, but fortunately for Canadian riders, Honda Canada thought differently.

We were excited by the CBX550 in the February issue, we loved the CX650E in the April issue, and here we are with the third of the trio — and we like it just as much as the other two. The CB1100F runs at the forefront of sporting motorcycles, and to top it off is priced hundreds of dollars under its competition.

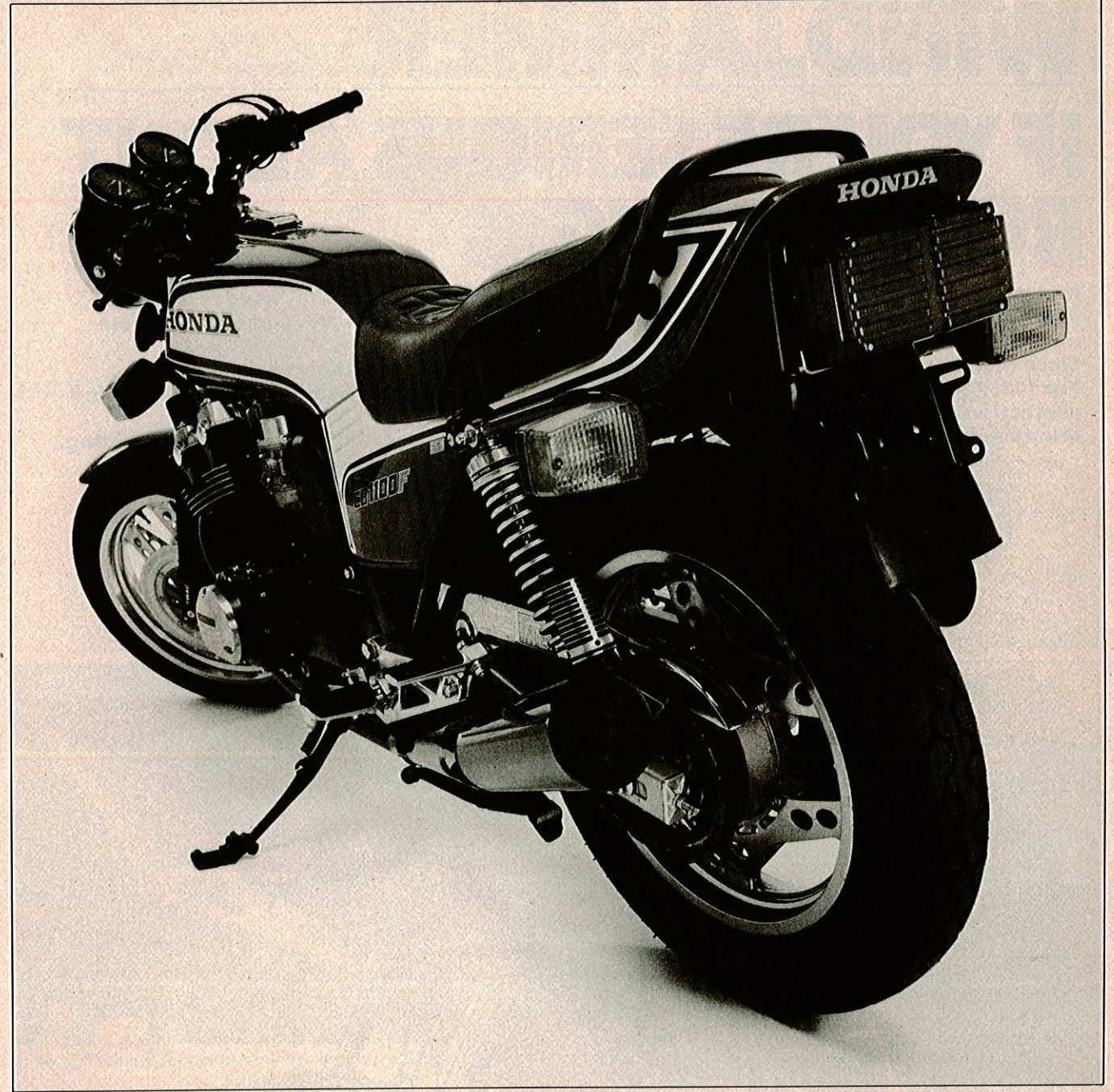
The CB1100F represents the end of an era. In 1969 Honda reintroduced the transverse four to the motorcycling world, and for the last 14 years other manufacturers have been forced to follow. Now that Honda has split off in a new direction with its generation of V4s, it seems probable that the CB1100F will mark the apogee of development — at least from Honda — of the inline four that has dominated motorcycling for the past decade and a half.

Not only is the CB1100F's engine a tried and true development; so is much of the gear wrapped around it. The rear suspension, for example, is a twin-shock design rather than the single-shock type used on many new sport bikes. A simple console with two large, circular instrument faces holds the speedometer and tachometer. Red lettering, large faces and crisp night lighting make the gauges clearly readable.

Quick steering and abundant midrange power make riding the CB1100F a breeze.

The CB1100F is a good example for those who argue that a great deal of the technical gloss of the new breed of bike is unnecessary at best or a costly nuisance at worst. The CB1100F is at least a match for its newer competition. And starting with an older, more easily built design has significant cost advantages, too — the GPz1100, for example, is \$1,050 more expensive. The GPz is a showcase for its type, but those of us who have ridden both think it's hard to find \$1,000 worth of improvement over the CB1100F's old-style suspension, simpler instrumentation or carburetors rather than fuel injection.

The CB1100F's engine characteristics differ markedly from Kawasaki's GPz1100. At low engine speeds the Honda



Few motorcycles are designed as rationally as the CB1100F — form follows function.

puts out more torque and horsepower, making the bike feel much stronger than a GPz during most street riding. The Honda's power is always in reach, while you need a serious intent to use the GPz's punch.

The Honda's awesome midrange power is tractable, too. One staffer started the bike up and rode out of a parking lot in fourth gear; not until he went to shift did he realize he was a long way from the right gear. *That's* useful street horsepower.

Fortunately, the brakes of the 1100F are a match for its engine. Even among the latest Honda brakes, the F's stoppers stand out as worthy of mention. Twin discs up front work with the wide wheel and fat tire to make hair-raising stops easy. Lever

feel is good; some find it a bit wooden, but the braking power is directly proportional to the strength of pull on the lever, making control easy.

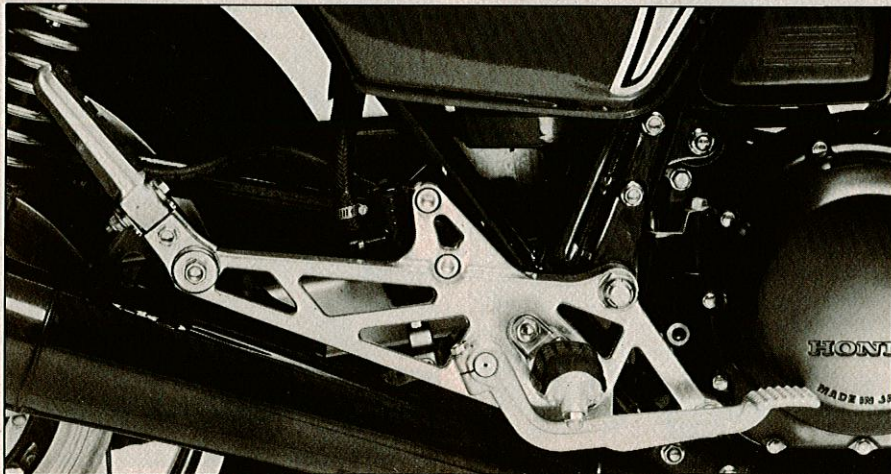
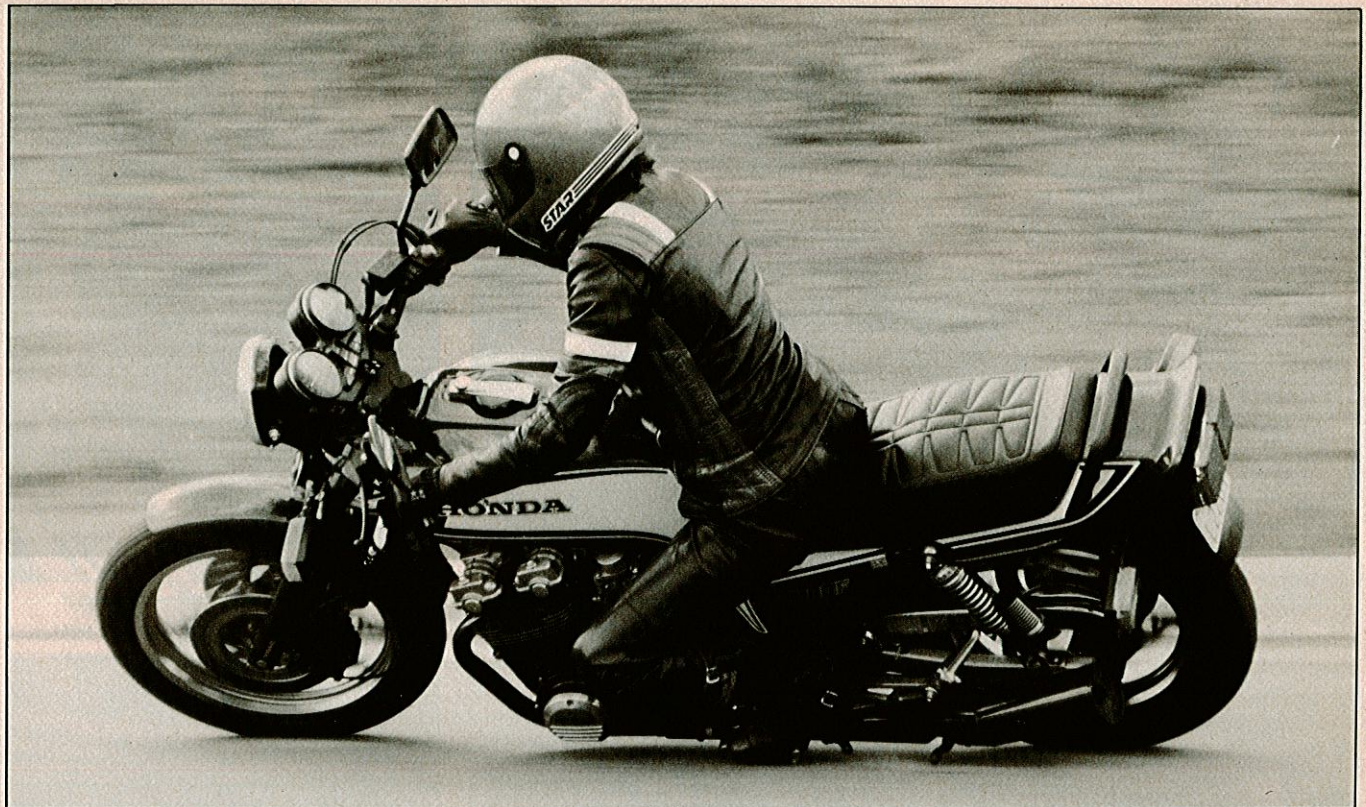
The anti-dive TRAC system provides the strongest anti-dive control we've felt. Mounted to both fork legs, the four-way adjustable, mechanically actuated anti-dive gives a noticeable reduction in front-end dive under hard braking. After some initial experimentation we left the TRAC on its hardest setting.

The single rear disc is powerful, but unlike many, has little tendency to lock up. It can be easily modulated and provides good feel. Many rear discs are a liability because of the difficulty in controlling them, but this one works as it should.

The CB1100F you can buy in Canada differs considerably from the one sold in the U.S. Basically, ours is the same bike

being sold in Europe. Compared with the American bike, ours has a round rather than rectangular headlight, lacks the mini-fairing, has lower bars and pegs that are a good 15 cm (six inches) farther back, gold-anodized Comstar wheels and a padded grab rail for passengers. The carburetors are also jetted differently, since emissions needn't meet U.S. standards. The result is a better-running engine that warms up more quickly and makes about five more horsepower, too (exact figures aren't available).

The crew that covered Daytona for Cycle Canada took the 1100F with them. They found Daytona filled with U.S. CB1100Fs and many owners stopped to look at ours; to a man they agonized that the Canadian version wasn't available to them. It seems that American Honda underestimated the taste of its buying pub-



Lightweight aluminum castings position rider's feet well back for highway riding.



Damping adjusters sit on top of fork legs; air valve on right leg links both legs.

HONDA CB1100F

lic, despite the sales success of the watered-down version of the bike.

While one of our test crew carped mildly that he'd like a lower set of bars — and everyone was sad to see that individual cast bars rather than a tubular one are fitted — everyone else who rode the bike thought the seating position was as close to perfect as you could find; certainly much better than the U.S. bike's upright position. Like the CX650 and CBX550, the CB1100F cants the rider forward, not so much as to make riding in town a chore, but enough that wind pressure tends to balance the rider's body at highway speeds.

One advantage to the cast bars is that they give access to the tops of the fork legs,

which have damping-adjustment wheels built in. The three-position adjusters noticeably vary the damping from soft to stiff and turn easily enough to be set while riding.

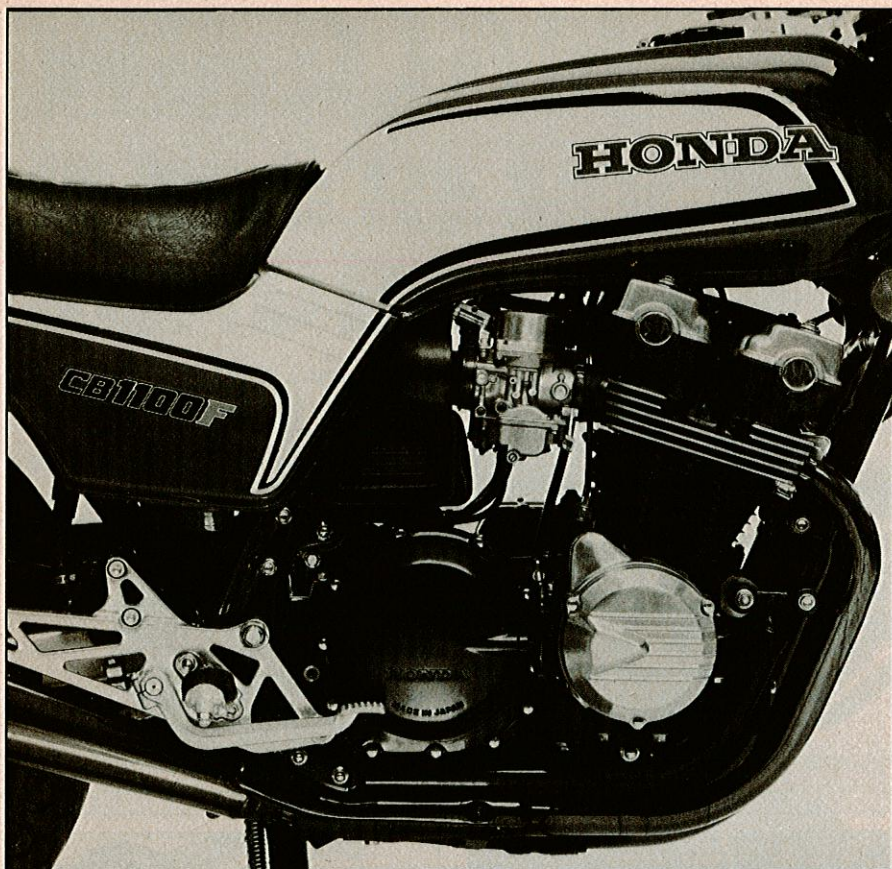
Air adjustment is provided via an air valve on the right fork leg below the top crown. The valve is linked to both legs so they can't be mismatched. Honda recommends a range of 0-40 kPa (0-6 psi); the company is fitting stiffer springs and using less air pressure these days on all its street bikes; this allows the fork to slide more easily over small bumps. High air pressure causes the oil seals to grab the legs, increasing static friction.

Other controls are of typical Honda quality. Effort and feel are good in the various levers and pedals, and neither the clutch nor the throttle have an overly strong action. The convenient choke lever

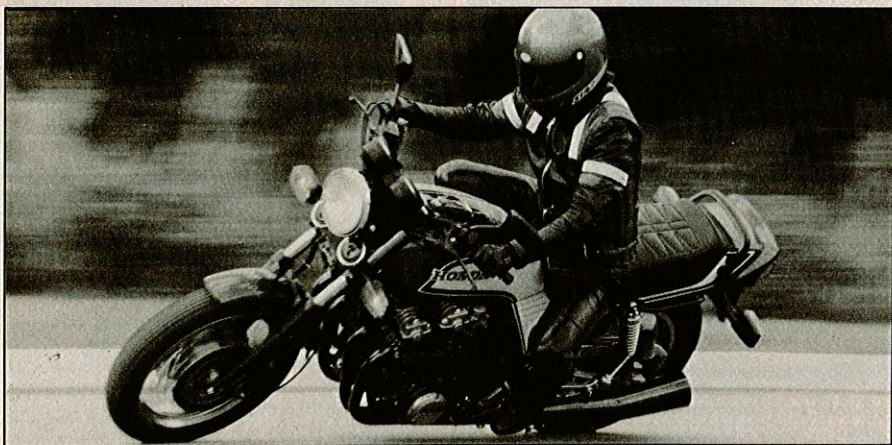
above the left grip can be operated by the thumb. The small petcock tucked between the rear cam cover and the top of the No. 1 carburetor is extremely awkward to operate with other than the thinnest gloves, but that's still preferable to a gas gauge of dubious reliability coupled with a no-reserve petcock, as some of the new bikes have.

Rear shock damping easily adjusts by hand with a collar at the top of each shock. Preload is adjusted by the usual ramped collar that requires a hook wrench, supplied in the tool kit. The tools are a bit better than usual; an air gauge is supplied, and some Allen-head wrenches make minor adjustments around the bike easier. The kit is held in place in an open-sided box by a rubber strap behind the right side cover.

Long-legged passengers often find that their feet are a little high for comfort, but



Marvelously torquey engine is rubber mounted and very smooth at constant revs.



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that's a penalty paid for ground clearance gained by the upswept pipes. On the other hand, there is a well-placed padded grab rail for passengers, something inexplicably lacking from the U.S. model bike. It makes a passenger's ride more enjoyable.

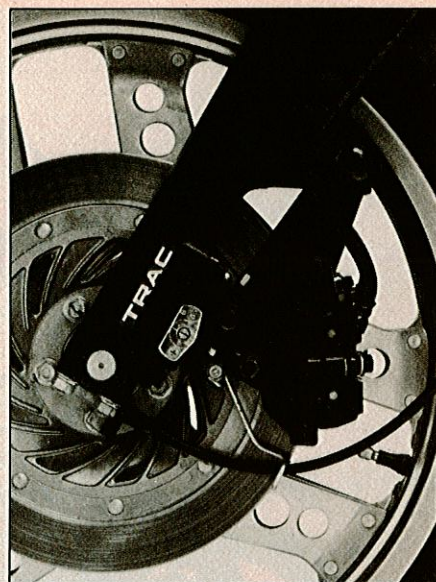
The mirrors would be better if they were slightly convex, but have sufficient adjustment to clear most riders' elbows. The round headlight, while not as good as our all-time favorite on the Suzuki 1100 series, is adequate.

The sidestand has a nice flat tip that helps support the bike on soft surfaces, and for such a large, heavy machine the 1100F pops on to its centrestand with a minimum of strain. Riders who like to use tank bags, soft saddlebags or luggage held

in place with bungee cords will find room for straps and reasonable tie-down points for bungee cords.

One of the best aspects of the F is that it's so easy to ride. All the detailing and thought that have gone into getting everything just right combine to make riding the bike effortless, even for small riders who might be intimidated by the bulk and weight of a big motorcycle. The tractable engine, light control effort and quick steering create a motorcycle that feels much smaller than it is once in motion.

Not that you're ever liable to forget it's an 1100. While compared with a GPz the F is much quicker steering, there's no question that you've a large mass rolling along between your legs. Setting the bike up for a turn requires some deliberate aiming and a quick roll-in rather than the snap you can get away with on a small, light



TRAC on both fork legs gives strongest anti-dive we've felt, without sponginess.



Both compression and rebound damping are adjustable by hand; springing is firm.

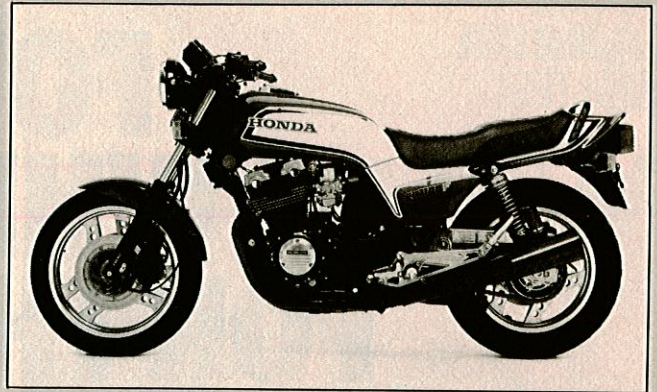
bike like a CBX or GPz550. Still, compared with the GPz1100, the big Honda is much faster in response.

The trade-off is that the Kawasaki has a more solid, planted-on-the-pavement sensation at speed. The GPz feels like a locomotive on rails during high-speed cornering, while the Honda has a lighter, more nervous touch. It's a good example of the traditional trade-off between stability and quickness, since both bikes fall into the excellent-handling category, yet give the rider radically different sensations.

It's possible to drag the Honda's footpegs, but only just. Compared with most stock bikes, even much smaller ones, there's a great deal of ground clearance. By the time the warning knobs under the pegs are dragging, the tires are beginning to slip and wander on the pavement. That's no fault of the tires; the stock Dunlops do a

SPECIFICATIONS

Honda CB1100F



MODEL 1983 Honda CB1100F
 TEST DISTANCE 2,034 km
 PRICE \$4,549

ENGINE

TYPE Four-cylinder DOHC four-stroke, four valves per cylinder
 DISPLACEMENT 1,062 cc
 BORE AND STROKE 70 x 69 mm
 COMPRESSION RATIO 9.7:1
 HORSEPOWER 108 at 9,000 rpm (U.S. model)
 TORQUE 9.4 kg-m at 7,500 rpm
 CARBURETION Four Keihin 33 mm CV
 STARTER Electric only
 OIL CAPACITY 3.5 litres, wet sump

ELECTRICAL

IGNITION TYPE Transistorized pointless
 GENERATOR OUTPUT 260 watts at 5,000 rpm
 BATTERY CAPACITY 12 volts, 14 amp-hours
 HEADLIGHT 60/55 watts

TRANSMISSION

TYPE Five-speed constant mesh, wet clutch
 PRIMARY DRIVE Hy-Vo type silent chain, 2.042:1
 INTERNAL RATIOS (1) 2.533, (2) 1.789, (3) 1.391, (4) 1.160, (5) 1.000
 FINAL DRIVE No. 530 O-ring chain, 2.471:1

CALCULATED DATA

WEIGHT/POWER RATIO 2.25 kg/hp
 SPECIFIC OUTPUT 101.6 hp/L
 PISTON SPEED AT REDLINE 21.9 m/sec

at 9,500 rpm
 RPM AT 100 KM/H 4,216 rpm
 SPEEDS IN GEARS AT REDLINE (1) 89, (2) 126, (3) 162, (4) 194, (5) 226 km/h

PERFORMANCE

QUARTER MILE T.B.A. July issue

FUEL

CAPACITY 20 litres including 3.5 litres reserve
 CONSUMPTION 6.71 L/100km (42 mpg)
 RANGE 298 km total, 52 km on reserve

CHASSIS

WHEELBASE 1,520 mm
 RAKE/TRAIL 28.5 degrees/120 mm
 SUSPENSION Air-assisted telescopic front fork with TRAC anti-dive, three-position rebound damping adjustment and 150 mm travel; box-section swingarm with two Showa VHD shocks adjustable for preload, compression and rebound damping with 110 mm travel

BRAKES Twin front discs with TRAC anti-dive, 276 mm diameter; single rear disc 298 mm diameter

TIRES Dunlop 100/90V18 front, 130/90V17 rear
 DRY WEIGHT 243 kg (535 lb)
 LOAD CAPACITY 168 kg (370 lb)
 HANDLEBAR WIDTH 762 mm
 SEAT HEIGHT 784 mm

Distributed by Honda Canada Inc., 715 Milner Ave., Scarborough, Ont., M1B 2K8, (416) 284-8110.

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marvelous job considering the amount of clearance available and the speeds you must travel to use it up.

The one weak point in the package is the transmission. While in normal riding it's adequate, the harder and faster you use the gearbox the more it tends to hang up. It's a typical Honda fault, and while the 1100F isn't as bad as its earlier 750 and 900 cc stablemates in this respect, it still requires a healthy prod on the lever to ensure a completed shift if you're hustling along. Being lazy with the lever is asking for trouble, as at some point you're going to get a false neutral or slip back into the previous gear. It is, however, much better

than previous big Hondas; while not at Kawasaki or recent Suzuki levels of smoothness, we'd say it's acceptable. It's just something you must keep in mind.

Our test staff almost feels embarrassed lavishing so much praise on a motorcycle. You might ask, how can any motorcycle be so good? Are these test riders merely blinded by the fun of riding such a big, fast, handsome sport bike?

Sorry, but you'll have to take our word for it. The CB1100F really is that good. Its engine puts out horsepower at every possible rpm while remaining tractable and smooth. It has a chassis that, while traditional in concept and execution, has been put together with such care that it works in a way you'd never believe a big bike could. The riding position, while admit-

tedly not designed for Saturday-night cruising down your local main street's traffic jam, is the best compromise for all-around street riding that you can find. And the CB1100F is good looking; the bike we tested was red and white, but it's also available in an attractive blue and white. The gold wheels are at least striking, and seem to appeal to most riders.

And finally, the motorcycle is a steal. At \$4,549 suggested retail, it's an excellent value. The Cycle Canada staff opinion is that you can't find more bang for your buck anywhere in 1983. You can certainly get enough performance for fewer dollars, but if you have to push things to the max yet watch your money too, there's no question the CB1100F is our recommendation for this season. □

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER PATERSON AND BILL PETRO