

Magna Continued from page 48
 Magna on the drawing boards. Look how the pegs, gearshift linkage and brake pedal are laid out, and then think about it. Honda could easily make an alternative tank, seat, bar and footpegs for the Magna, then upgrade the rear suspension, and create an instant tourer.

The Magna's seat, a his-and-her split-level number, corresponds to the riding position and rear suspension. The riding position drives long-legged riders back, putting their rumps against or on the rise pocket; it's better for smaller people. The saddle is broad, flat and soft in the rider's pocket. It feels cushy enough, and with a short rear suspension travel the seat must assume rider-suspension duties. Yet after 100 miles or so, a rider feels as if he's compressed the foam even though he hasn't; it's just that fatigue and bun-burn make him aware of the saddle's flatness and the stepped ride. For any one rider, the ergonomic relationships and the saddle construction dictate a single seating position. From that pocket, the rider can get little fore-aft movement, and the rear footpegs are too far rearward to give the rider any alternate positioning. Like the Sabre, the Magna could use some more seat work for those riders who want to ride more than a 100 miles in a stretch.

Again like the Sabre, the Magna throws some heat back on the rider from the radiator. California winter conditions were cool enough that we couldn't quite determine how objectionable the heat throw-off might be. A couple of 85-degree days indicated that the outside temperature combined with radiator throw-off and radiant heat from the rear cylinder head would warm the Sabre rider's legs and thighs to tolerable limits. Clipping along on the Sabre on a 90-degree afternoon might be unpleasant. The Magna, with its wider gas tank and different riding position, doesn't have the problem to the same degree as the Sabre. In part, the rider's legs are farther away from the engine; also, the Magna's riding position encourages lower highway speeds.

We'd take a fair amount of heat to get this engine; it's that much a functional marvel in other ways. In functional terms the Magna is compromised compared with the Sabre. Pure-blood sporting riders will proceed directly to the Sabre without so much as a look at the Magna. But guys who want *that engine* in a motorcycle with styling bias will gravitate to the Magna. Honda figures the Magna customers will outnumber Sabre-types three or four to one. These V-fours signal a giant step forward; they represent a breath-stopping escalation of technowarfare in the motorcycle market; they portend the arrival of a whole new generation of Honda street motorcycles; and the Magna, especially, announces that in the future everyone will have to sell style and super-tech together.



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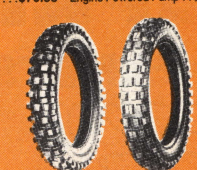
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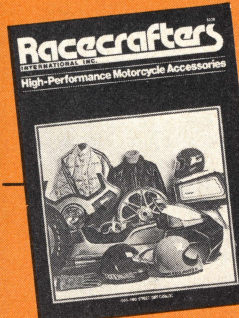
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