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HELP · FOR · THE HAWK



The right bolt-ons add excitement and extend the broad appeal of the Hawk GT

BY MITCH BOEHM

Just over a year ago Honda unveiled its all-new Hawk GT, a motorcycle that offered the look and feel of the standard machines of the '70s in an up-to-date, high-tech package. We raved about it in our July '88 road test, calling it a "wonderfully capable street machine." This is a motorcycle that's as happy straightening the kinks in your favorite back road as it is run-

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ning up the coast for the weekend two-up with a set of soft luggage.

But even the competent, do-it-all Hawk can use some help. It offers little wind and weather protection. Its suspension is on the soft side, especially for riders on the far side of 200 pounds, and the tires could stick better and offer more feedback at the limit. We hoped to improve the bike's overall abilities, not focus on one of its areas of expertise at the expense of others. The Hawk handles almost everything short of trail riding, and we wanted to keep it that way.

The Hawk's lack of fairing is perhaps its most obvious limitation, so that was the logical place to begin. We wanted the fairing to match the bike's personality and lines closely. It needed to be lightweight, functional and aesthetically pleasing. We'd award bonus points for ease of installation and reasonable price.

When the folks at Targa showed us their new Tsunami fairing, we wondered if they'd read our minds. Constructed of fiberglass and utilizing a nifty three-point mounting system, the lightweight and stylish Tsunami seemed perfect. The unit mounts simply; one V-shaped bracket attaches the upper portion of the fairing to the bike's top triple clamp using an expanding rubber plug, while a pair of clamps secure the lower portion to the fork tubes. The paintwork and attention

to detail of the Tsunami are excellent, but the paint match with the Hawk's metallic-blue finish wasn't exact.

The Tsunami works well, shielding the rider's torso and shoulders from the windblast. Most riders' heads remain out in the breeze, but the wind angling off the sloping, smoked windscreen isn't overly turbulent and never causes undue amounts of bothersome noise. At \$269.95, wind and weather protection in the form of the Tsunami doesn't come especially cheap, but we regard it as money well spent.

In our road test we reported that the saddle was fairly comfortable for short

hops, but registered complaints about its forward-sloping shape, soft foam and relatively narrow width. For a replacement we went to Mike Corbin. Corbin's Gunfighter saddle was simple to install and quite a bit more comfortable for long hauls than the stocker because of its firmer construction and flatter, wider perch. We picked a solo version for aesthetic reasons, although those planning two-up trips can get identical comfort with Corbin's Gunfighter and Lady version. Both are available directly from Corbin or Targa.

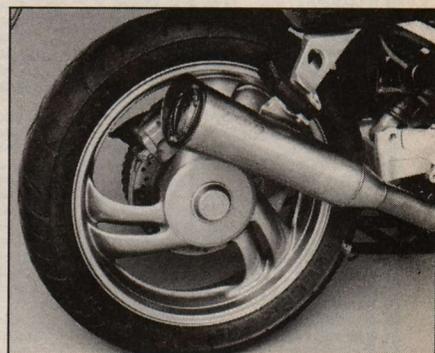
A few thousand miles of use sacked our Hawk's fork springs, and the bike's



PHOTO: RICH COX/SLIDE ACTION

handling went with them. To freshen the fork's innards, we replaced the stock springs with a set of Lockhart's Pro Rate fork springs, made to Lockhart's specs by Progressive Suspension. The Lockhart springs are slightly longer than the stockers but use shorter preload spacers. After installing the coils with 10-weight Kal-Gard fork oil, the Hawk's front end resisted bottoming better than the stock setup yet still offered a ride almost as plush as stock during less aggressive use.

We also installed an S.T.D. fork brace to give the front end a bit more rigidity, though the 41mm tubes are fairly stiff unbraced. The S.T.D. Superbrace, which we didn't receive until after our photos were taken, is a beautiful piece, made of highly polished 6160 aluminum and clamped to the sliders with No. 9 hardness allen bolts. Though the Super-



Though louder, the stainless steel SuperTrapp exhaust provides more midrange punch than the stocker and is lighter. Metzeler ME1 rear tire sticks tenaciously.



Lockhart fork springs and a Metzeler Comp K Laser tire offer a taut ride and more front-end feedback. The stock disc and dual-piston caliper perform admirably.

brace's presence between the tubes wasn't obvious, the front end did feel more securely planted at the limit. Unfortunately, the S.T.D.-built Superbrace smacked the underside of the Targa fairing over large bumps or during hard

braking. Fortunately, a fix is just a few file strokes away for those planning to use both products. Simply removing a small amount of fiberglass from the fairing bottom allows the brace to pass by without incident.

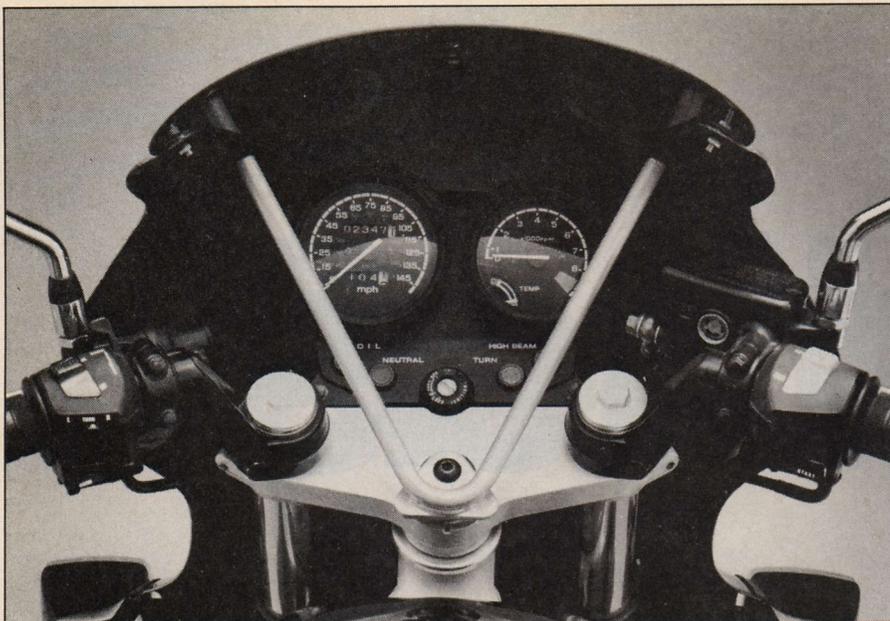
Though racers will want to replace the Hawk's rear damper, the stock unit performs well enough for the majority of street use despite the fact that it offers only preload adjustability. Its soft, compliant spring makes it ideal for freeway or around-town use, and only the heaviest, most demanding riders will find it lacking. Only Ohlins currently offers a replacement damper for the Hawk, and though it no doubt works wonderfully, most folks will find the stocker adequate. As increased mileage tends to soften the spring considerably, Hawk owners not willing to plunk down \$500 for a new shock might check out the possibility of installing a slightly stiffer replacement rear spring.

We finished off the chassis mods with a set of Metzeler tires, a 110/80-17

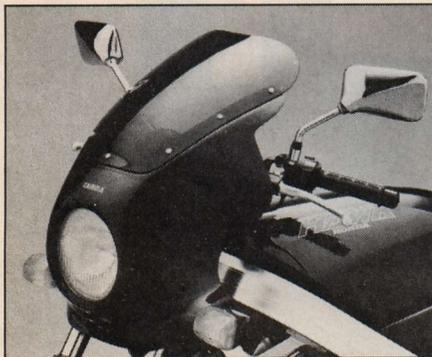
The lack of fairing is the Hawk's biggest limitation. Targa's Tsunami was just what we ordered.

ME33 Comp K Laser up front and a massive 160/60-17 ME1 in back. The original-equipment Bridgestone Exedras they replaced performed relatively well in most situations, though the Metzlers, which grabbed top honors in our November '87 sport-tire shoot-out, offer more stick, more rider feedback at the limit and, perhaps best of all for a street rider, seem to wear like iron. The Metzlers offered more neutral steering and though pricey are well worth their cost.

Our final mod, prompted by aesthetic and weight considerations, was to swap the stock exhaust system for a two-into-one stainless steel SuperTrapp unit. The SuperTrapp was an obvious choice for our project since the system's external tunability allowed us to gain some poten-



The Targa fairing channels air directly at the rider's head and shoulders, though it's not turbulent enough to cause major noise or comfort problems.



Targa's Tsunami fairing helped considerably. It's well made, easy to install and adds wind and weather protection. The mounting bracket could be less obtrusive.

tial oomph in the lower reaches of the rev range without having to rejet the carburetors, a task we wanted to avoid. The system also cuts roughly 10 pounds off the Hawk's weight, has a rebuildable muffler assembly and a lifetime guarantee against rust. With six muffler plates installed (SuperTrapp recommends between four and eight), the Hawk carbureted as well as with its stock system, seemed to gain a bit of low-end and mid-range power, was clearly more rideable as a result, sounded better—and only slightly louder—than stock and definitely improved the bike's looks. The Hawk's rear wheel still won't come off without removing the pipe, but with the SuperTrapp only the muffler must come off, not the entire system as with the stocker. The system is available from most dealers and mail-order outfits.

With these simple, bolt-on modifications, our Hawk was significantly improved. The suspension and tire mods gave the bike a more stable, surefooted feel at speed, and because the tauter

These mods improved the Hawk GT as a sporter, a commuter and a tourer.

fork and superb Laser tire offered more front-end feedback, our modified Hawk was more confidence-inspiring to ride quickly than the stocker. Riders felt the pipe improved midrange power; the SuperTrapp-equipped Hawk could usually



The Hawk's stock seat is good, but Corbin's Gunfighter is better. We chose the solo version for its looks, though a two-up saddle is available.

be ridden through corners a gear higher than a stocker, since the engine pulled harder at low engine speeds.

The bike's around-town and long-haul manners were better as well. The seat garnered high marks, and the fairing made freeway jaunts aboard the bike far less tiring than on a stock Hawk. With a set of soft luggage, this bike would have no problem with a string of 500-mile days. In fact, the only negative aspect for full-bore touring is the bike's smallish 3.2-gallon fuel capacity.

Ask us and we'll tell you Honda did a fine job with the Hawk GT. It's one of those rare motorcycles that does just about everything well, from sport riding to touring to commuting. It's comfortable, good-looking, durable, a fine handler, fairly quick, light, easy to ride and, perhaps best of all, unique. For those who wish to personalize their Hawks, it's good to know there are a number of aftermarket goodies that give the bike added function as well as flash. **M**

SUPPLIERS - LIST

CORBIN

123 C Lee Rd.
Watsonville, CA 95077-1562
(408)728-0169, (800)538-7035
(800)662-6296 (California only)
Supplied: Gunfighter saddle, \$179.95;
Gunfighter and Lady saddle, \$189.95;
optional backrest, \$96.00

LOCKHART CONSUMER PRODUCTS

991 Calle Negocio St.
San Clemente, CA 92672
(714)498-9090
Supplied: Pro Rate fork springs, \$55.95

METZELER

4520 107th St.
Everett, WA 98204
(206)348-4000
Supplied: tires—front, 110/80-17 ME33
Comp K Laser, \$115.41; rear,
160/60-17 ME1 Comp K, \$151.30

S.T.D. ENTERPRISES, INC.

5842 McFadden Ave., Suite O
Huntington Beach, CA 92649
(714)894-2994
Supplied: Superbrace fork brace, \$90

SUPERTRAPP

3910 Seaport Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95691
(916)372-5000
Supplied: stainless steel exhaust system, \$269.95

TARGA ACCESSORIES, INC.

23561 Ridge Route Dr.
Unit F/G
Laguna Hills, CA 92653
(714)472-1022
Supplied: Tsunami fairing, \$259.95;
Hawk GT side panels, \$39.95