

60c

Cycle

JULY '75

AUSTRALIA

**KAWASAKI'S
ONE-OFF TRIALS
WINNER!**

**TWO GREAT
TOURING TESTS!
SUZUKI RE5 ROTARY
YAMAHA XS 650 B**

**THE COMPETITION:
WHO WON AND WHY!**

**IN DEPTH: All aboard
the valve train**



THE COMMUTER

"The Ideal Second Bike", our tester labelled the Mobyette back in January. The statement raised a lot of eyebrows, including those of our Brisbane correspondent, who had this suggestion to make:

Phil Hunt's alternative



Below: the machine that Phil Hunt believes is the answer to the Mobyette: Honda's CL90 L.

OH SHAME ON YOU, Nigel! Your friends knew you were having us on when (in CA, January) you suggested that the Motobecane Mobyette G40TLC "is an excellent second bike for car owners and motorcyclists alike". But not everyone rises to your subtle brand of humour and some might think you were serious so, in all humility, let me make a suggestion of my own about which bike is "an excellent second bike for car owners and motorcyclists".

In case you don't remember, the Mobyette is a dinkum moped. "Mo" for motor — "ped" for pedal. It's a hybrid vehicle combining all the disadvantages of a 1.3 kW 50 cm³ motor with all the disadvantages of an overweight bicycle. If the hills get too steep you can assist the little motor by pedalling (this is all true, folks).

Nigel condescends to admit that the Mobyette "is really too slow for freeway use". That's a good one, Nige ole pal. This machine peaks out at 61 km/h and because of a significant lack of torque, maintaining enough speed to keep pace with ordinary city traffic is impossible. Actually Nigel listed the maximum torque as "N.A.". This stands for "None Actually".

If you have ever ridden a real bicycle (as I did for many years as a bicycle road-racer), you will know that there is nothing more hazardous than bicycling through city traffic. The first rule anyone learns about staying alive is "Keep up with the traffic flow — or the traffic will flow over you." So mark that up as a big disadvantage with a moped.

But what about the pedalling bit? Isn't that a good idea? I'm glad you asked. As I mentioned parenthetically above, I used to race bicycles and the experience taught me a few things about setting up a bicycle to conserve the leg muscles.

The Mobyette is an arch-example of how to make a pedal cyclist dog-tired after just one hill.

Discounting the weight of the machine (which at 40 kg is more than twice that of your average bicycle), the seat is too low and too far back and the handlebars too high and too far back. Naturally, the seating position has to be a compromise to provide comfort when that little motor is actually working, but you try pushing the little moped up a couple of hills and you will need more than the run down the other side to recover.

Fortunately, sanity reigned in our Editor's summary of the machine when he suggested that the Mobyette was "not exactly the ideal 'only' ". Let's be brutally honest and admit that even as a second machine it is patently useless (perhaps dangerous), unless your commuting consists of a daily two-kilometre jaunt along flat ground to the railway station.

The Alternative

Having thus dispensed with the Mobyette as a useful second bike it falls to me to suggest a replacement. Let's examine firstly what a second bike must do and be.

1. It must be cheap to buy and maintain.
2. It should be very reliable.
3. It should be easy to ride through traffic and powerful enough to keep up with and occasionally overtake other road users.

There is a bike (or rather a group of bikes) which fulfils all those criteria. The 90 series Honda. These machines started life as the C90 (a step-thru scooter), the CD90 (a motorcycle with scooter suspension), and the S90 (a regular motorcycle



Styling is not exactly futuristic but the machine has aged well.



The ultimate in commuter oneupmanship:
Konis on a Honda 90!

with a pressed steel backbone frame, telescopic front forks instead of the scooter's swinging-arm arrangement, and a manual clutch in place of the scooter's automatic unit).

The ohc 90s first appeared in 1964 and eleven years later they are still being produced (although many models have been superseded by 100s). The benefits resulting from such a long model run are ready availability and low cost of parts. A subsidiary bonus is that a motorcycle bought in its eighth or ninth year of development is bound to have most of its bugs ironed out.

In 1967 the CL90 was introduced. Jokingly designated a "Street Scrambler" by the admen, it was little more than an S90 with upswept exhaust. The C and CD were augmented by a "trail scooter", the CT90, in 1966. This featured the "postorqure" mechanism which provided an extra drive sprocket to expand the four-speed gearbox into low range for steep trails. The last addition to the range was a three-wheeler swamp vehicle called the ATC90, introduced in 1970.

From these variations on a theme I select the S90/SL90 and the CL90/CL90L as two bikes which best meet the three criteria for second bikes and which also can be called real (if different) motorcycles.

A three- or four-year-old CL90L will set you back between \$100 and \$175, and if it fires up in the bike shop you can be certain it will fire up every time for many months to come before it expires absolutely.

The reliability of these machines is legendary. A mate of mine has a C90 scooter which he uses perhaps twice a month to get some Coke from the corner store. A couple of weeks ago he pushed it down the hill to my place complaining that it would not start.

I spent 20 minutes checking all the obvious things: petrol,

battery, points, plug. They were all OK, although the spark was weak. After the inspection I kicked it over and it fired first time. Conclusion: He must have flooded it.

Later the owner confided that he hadn't had it tuned since he bought it (two years ago), never checked the battery, and couldn't remember when he last put petrol in it. Yet every time bar once, it had fired up first kick. And when it didn't it was unusual enough for him to assume the worst.

I have had a CL90L for around 18 months now and use it every weekday as a commuter to work and university. It has never once failed to start or finish a journey. Perhaps because I am more fussy than many CL90L owners, I pulled the head off as soon as I noticed a blue tinge in the exhaust smoke. A broken ring encouraged me to obtain a rebore, and while I was about it I stripped the gearbox with the intention of replacing worn parts. Despite the fact that my CL90L was five years old, the gearbox was in perfect order.

The rings, rebore, new piston, exhaust valve, and an oil pump drive sprocket set me back less than \$30. A few nights in the garage completed the job. It turned out that the cause of the broken rings was the faulty oil pump drive which had probably been damaged in a bingle involving me, a Holden and a road-sign. So it wasn't the bike's fault at all.

Besides extreme reliability, the 90 cm³ motor is moderately powerful for its size (provided the revs are kept up) and extremely torquey over a wide range (again, for a 90). The bike can negotiate most hills in fourth (top) gear, and minor hold-ups in traffic don't necessitate prodding the gear-lever unless brisker acceleration is required. At the Traffic Light Derby a CL90L will hose off Morris 1100s, pre-

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THE COMMUTER'S ALTERNATIVE

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186 Holdens, and VWs, and flat out will top 80 km / h. Head winds slow the machine up somewhat, but you can maintain 60 km / h into quite stiff breezes.

The CL90L's steering is delightfully light and fast. If the bike could exceed 100 km / h, it would be decidedly dicey, but since 90 km / h is its flat-out maximum in neutral down a cliff-face, this is not a problem. For trickling through traffic it is ideal, and combined with the low centre of gravity means the bike can be thrown about in incredible fashion without things coming unstuck. On the CL90L there are no clearance problems — you'll only ground the foot-pegs as you go under.

There is, however, a drawback to the 90 — bumpy roads. These show up the worst feature of the motorcycle: Pre-Cambrian suspension. The front is fairly hush with poor damping but the back has been lifted straight from a pogo-stick.

I personally got sick of wallowing along and fitted 483 KPa springs and Konis. But in fairness, our concept of the "ideal second bike" does not include racing handling as an essential characteristic. For short-haul commuting the suspension is sufficient, if imperfect. In any case, if a CL90L is your second bike it will make you appreciate the handling of your first bike all the more.

So, Nige ole mate, that is my suggestion. For half the cost of a new commuter you can have a cheap, reliable, real motorcycle that should never need pedalling. A CL90L or SL90 could never seriously be considered as flagship for your stable of motorcycles, but as a humble, safe, and reliable commuter it ought to be first choice.