

TEST AND PHOTOGRAPHY **KEN WOOTTON**

# BYE BYE BLACKBIRD

We find out how this big-bore favourite has stood the test of time

**W**hat better way to sample the build quality of a motorcycle than grab a thoroughly abused testbike and take it on a 1500km ride?

That's what I did recently with Honda Australia's CBR1100XX Super Blackbird 'stealth' bike, a 2004 model which has spent the majority of its tortured life blasting down Victorian drag strips.

Used as a tool by Victoria Police to encourage hoons to take to the dragstrip, the test XX even came equipped with flashing red and blue cop lights – presumably used primarily for promo purposes at the strip, as well as the occasional undercover surprise on an errant motorist. Not that I would have activated the lights to scare fellow riders on the recent Snowy Ride. That would have been naughty...

With just 28 Blackbirds remaining unsold on dealer floors (at the time of AMCN going to press), the curtain is about to fall on one of Honda's most successful models Down Under. Even though production ceased in late 2007, Honda Australia ensured sufficient stock to carry into 2008. Just as well it did, as the model was still ranked in 2008's year-to-date top 10 in the sports-tourer category.

That sales success has been helped by some aggressive pricing in recent years, with ride-away prices from mid-2006 of \$15,990 a long way removed from the XX's recommended showroom tag of \$18,790, a price it has carried since 2002.

Launched in carbed form in late 1996 at \$16,500, the distinctively-styled XX was at that time the world's fastest production motorcycle – a fact emphasised by Honda when it conducted the international press launch for the XX at the

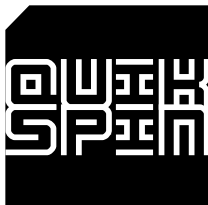
dauntingly fast Paul Ricard circuit in southern France. That Mistral Straight is something else!

That world's fastest title would pass to Suzuki's Hayabusa three years later, but sales of the XX remained strong Down Under. There have been minimal changes throughout the years, the biggest being fuel-injection and ram-air in 1999. A catalytic converter and a drop in power from 122 to 113kW came in 2001, but the cat-equipped testbike was still good for 10.944sec through the quarter mile. That's impressive for a 223kg sports-tourer.

With 17,000 extremely hard kilometres on the odometer, the testbike showed little evidence of its abusive childhood other than for a rather light-switch clutch take-up. The rest was typical Blackbird. The engine was super-smooth, pulling from 2500rpm in top with no flat spots throughout the range. It made for easy riding to and from the Snowys – be it the fast sweepers on the Murray Valley Highway or the Alpine Way twisties. Redline is 10,750rpm, but that's best saved for the dragstrip.

There's a lot to like about the 'Bird. The saddle is firm but supportive, there's good weather protection from the rakish fairing, luggage attachment points are plentiful, build quality is superb, the headlight will roast a wombat to medium rare from 200 metres, and the 23L tank provides an impressive 350km-plus range. Plus the linked brakes on the later models are unobtrusive compared to the earlier versions.

If you want to secure one of the few remaining Blackbirds you'll need to be quick. Nearly as quick as the 10.944sec quarter mile Mr Plod recorded at Calder Park drags on the test bike. 🐌



**HONDA  
CBR1100XX  
SUPER  
BLACKBIRD**



## ENGINE

**Engine Type** Liquid-cooled, four-valve, DOHC, in-line four-cylinder

**Bore x stroke** 79 x 58mm

**Displacement** 1137cc

**Compression ratio** 11:1

**Ignition** Electronic

**Fuel system** PGM-Fuel injection

**Starting system** Electric

## TRANSMISSION

**Type** Six-speed

**Primary drive** Gear

**Clutch** Wet, multiplate

**Final drive** Chain

## CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR

**Frame type** Twin-spar aluminium

**Head angle** 25°

**Trail** 99mm

**Wheelbase** 1490mm

### Suspension

Front: 43mm cartridge-type forks, no adjustment, 120mm travel

Rear: Pro-link swingarm, monoshock with stepless adjustable rebound damping

**Wheels** Three-spoke, cast aluminium

Front: 3.50 x 17 Rear: 5.50 x 17

**Tyres** Bridgestone BT-015

Front: 120/70ZR17 Rear: 180/55ZR17

### Brakes

Front: Twin 310mm discs, three-piston calipers

Rear: 256mm disc, three-piston caliper.

D-CBS linked system

## HOWSITGO?

**Power** 115kW @ 9500rpm (claimed)

**Torque** 118Nm @ 7250rpm (claimed)

**Fuel Consumption** 6.3L/100km

**Top speed** 287km/h (measured, 1998)

## WHATSITCOST?

**Testbike** Honda MPE

**Contact** www.hondamotorcycles.com.au

(03) 9270 1111

**Price** Discounts at \$15,990 on-road

**Colour options** Blue, Black

**Warranty** Two-year, unlimited km

