



PUNCH HERE TO FILE



## Economy fun car

*1100 performance from 600 c.c.; very noisy when extended; good economy with easy driving; fair comfort despite jolty ride; very easy to drive and park; quite well equipped for low price runabout.*

ALTHOUGH it is only seven months since we tested the Honda N360, we are giving the bigger engined N600 the full six-page treatment as well because it seems to us a significant new import that a lot of people in the utility (or second-car) market will be looking at closely. At £589—£60 more than the N360—it joins the eight sub-£600 four-wheelers already competing in the super economy class on the British market. In design, it is a mixture of conventional and unorthodox—a lightweight two-door, box-shaped body, plenty roomy enough for four adults of average size, powered by a light-alloy vertical-twin, air-cooled engine remarkable for its wide rev range and very high specific output. Despite a meagre capacity of 599 c.c. it makes the Honda by far the nippiest of the sub-£600 group (in fact its performance compares well with many 1100s) and it is by no means the most thirsty with a possible consumption of 40 m.p.g. on cheap petrol. Although you can't expect to outspurt the opposition and pay less for fuel at the same time, the car's unique attraction seems to lie in its ability to do one or the other, a choice that no rival can offer to the same degree. And it is in this respect that it scores over the 360.

There are snags, though. The engine is less smooth than any four and very noisy at high revs and although the car seems to take all-out driving in its stride a larger, less fussy engine giving the same results might appeal more to some people. Nevertheless, the Honda can still hold its own in traffic at a lesser pace without

much mechanical drama and it will cruise in top at 55-60 m.p.h. relatively quietly. Even at 75 m.p.h. the noise is not devastating by small car standards, partly because wind roar is very low.

Regarded as a lively runabout with some real zip when you want it for overtaking, rather than a hot-rod tearabout for which a Mini-Cooper is perhaps better suited, the Honda has a certain charm which captured some, if not all, our drivers. Its light, easy controls, compact size and reasonable roadholding enhance its role as a short-haul town car—though it performs surprisingly well on long journeys too. Despite a very hard, jolty ride, it is fairly comfortable even for tall people as there is a respectable amount of legroom inside; bearing in mind the price, the interior furnishings and equipment, which includes a good heater a crude form of fresh air ventilation and reversing lights, are also good.

We would not pretend that this sometimes buzzy, fussy little car will appeal to everyone but it does have some very real assets, including character, to counter its faults.

### Performance and economy

A pre-engaged starter (doubling as the generator) spins the tiny engine into life without any help from the manual choke which on our car was only needed to raise the idling speed a little during warm up. After the relatively smooth pulse of a four-cylinder engine, the Honda's vertical twin seems to shake itself into action with a hard, lumpy clatter, particularly when you blip the throttle. Yet it idles gently and surprisingly quietly on reaching normal running temperature—which it does very quickly.

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PRICE: £459 plus £130 purchase tax equals £589.  
INSURANCE: AOA group rating, 3; Lloyd's 3



# Honda N600 *continued*

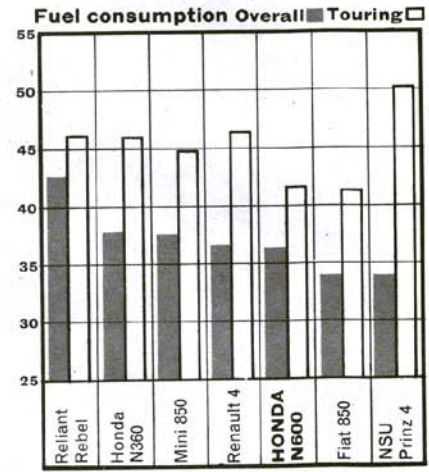
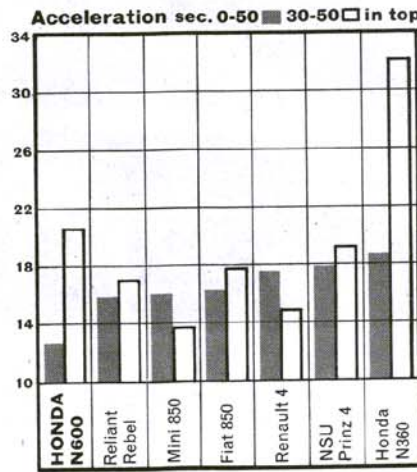
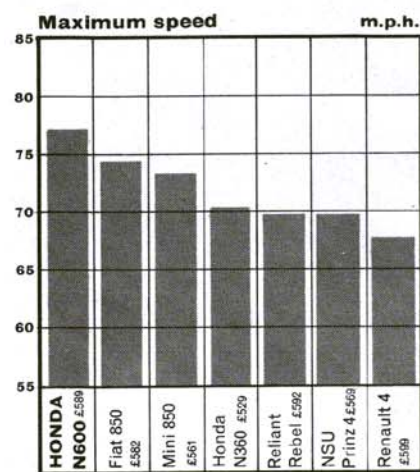
With the Honda 360, we often found it difficult to strike a happy medium between a respectable performance on the one hand and an acceptable noise-and-economy level on the other. It is very much easier with the 600 because you don't have to rev the engine into the thirsty high-decibel band nearly so much. Restricting the revs to around 5,000 (modest enough when you consider that peak power of 45 b.h.p. is developed at 7,000 r.p.m. and that the optional rev-counter, not fitted to our car, is red lined at 8,500 r.p.m.) allows brisk acceleration up to 18, 30 and 45 m.p.h. in the lower gears and a cruising gait of 60 m.p.h. So, even without trying very hard, the Honda will outperform most of its rivals without too much fuss. Take it to the limit in each gear and the acceleration is really remarkable for 600 c.c.; not even a Mini 1000 can stay with it, let alone an 850, and the

lesser 360 actually takes almost twice as long to reach 60 m.p.h.

Unfortunately, the noise level rises in proportion to the revs and the engine's raucous scream during spirited bursts makes continuous hard driving tiresome. However, in contrast, top gear cruising in the 50-60 m.p.h. band is quite peaceful and smooth—more so, we reckon, than in many competitive small cars. The engine will also pull very cleanly from as low as 20 m.p.h. in top, 14 m.p.h. in third, so you can trickle along in a slow traffic stream without revving the engine fussily. There isn't much pull, though, at low revs so for top gear flexibility, the 600 is much poorer than the Mini it will comfortably beat through the gears.

The car will cruise easily at the all-out maximum, 70 m.p.h., of the 360 in a geared-up fourth (in effect, an overdrive above direct third) which makes motorway journeys unexpectedly easy. In favourable conditions the speed can be built up to well over 80 m.p.h. without over-revving the engine—though exactly

## Performance



Performance tests carried out by Motor's staff at the Motor Industry Research Association proving ground, Lindley.

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### Conditions

Weather: Good, mild breeze 0-10 m.p.h.  
 Temperature: 54-56°F.  
 Barometer: 29.45 in. Hg.  
 Surface: Dry asphalt and concrete.  
 Fuel: 94 octane (RM), 2-star rating.

### Maximum speeds

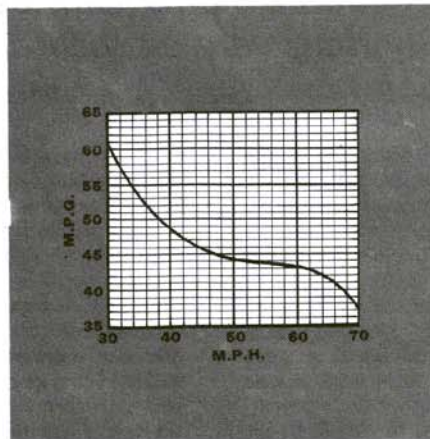
	m.p.h.	k.p.h.
Mean lap banked circuit	77.1	124.1
Best one-way ¼-mile	80.0	128.8
3rd gear	73.0	117.0
2nd gear at 8,000 r.p.m.	46.0	74.0
1st gear	29.0	47.0
"Maximile" speed: (Timed quarter mile after 1 mile accelerating from rest)		
Mean	74.4	—
Best	76.3	—

### Acceleration times

m.p.h.	sec.	
0-30	5.4	
0-40	8.3	
0-50	12.7	
0-60	19.0	
Standing quarter mile	21.3	
	Top 3rd	
m.p.h.	sec.	sec.
10-30	—	11.9
20-40	18.4	11.1
30-50	20.6	11.8
40-60	31.6	12.6

### Fuel consumption

Touring (consumption midway between 30 m.p.h.



and maximum less 5% allowance for acceleration)  
 Overall . . . . . 41.7 m.p.g.  
 Overall . . . . . 36.3 m.p.g.  
 (= 7.8 litres/100km)

Total test distance . . . . . 1,030 miles

### Brakes

Pedal pressure, deceleration and equivalent stopping distance from 30 m.p.h.	lb.	g	ft.
25	0.27	111.0	
50	0.68	44.0	
75	0.90	33.0	
85	0.92	32.5	
Handbrake	0.35	86.0	

### Fade test

20 stops at ½g deceleration at 1 min. intervals from a speed midway between 40 m.p.h. and maximum speed (=58 m.p.h.)

	lb.
Pedal force at beginning	45
Pedal force at 10th stop	43
Pedal force at 20th stop	40

### Steering

	ft.
Turning circle between kerbs:	
Left	29.3
Right	29.3
Turns of steering wheel from lock to lock	3
Steering wheel deflection for 50ft. diameter circle	0.85 turns

### Clutch

Free pedal movement	= 1 in.
Additional movement to disengage clutch completely	= 2½ in.
Maximum pedal load	= 23 lb.

### Speedometer

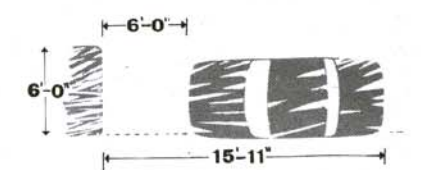
Indicated	10 20 30 40 50 60 70
True	10 20 29½ 39 49 59 69
Distance recorder	3.5% fast

### Weight

Kerb weight (unladen with fuel for approximately 50 miles) . . . . . 10.5 cwt.  
 Front/rear distribution . . . . . 66.2/33.8  
 Weight laden as tested . . . . . 14.2 cwt.

### Parkability

Gap needed to clear 6ft. wide obstruction in front:





when it does over-rev is hard to tell as there are no guide marks on the speedometer.

A surprisingly flat consumption curve in top between 40 m.p.h. (49 m.p.g.) and 60 m.p.h. (43 m.p.g.) permits quite frugal cross-country motoring but frequent and hard use of the lower gears or all-out motorway runs brings the consumption right down to the low thirties. So, depending on how and where you drive, the overall figure could be anywhere between 30 and 45 m.p.g., the best "spot" consumption during our test being 41.2 m.p.g. for 240 fairly easy-going miles. On a cost basis, the car again scores by running on the cheapest petrol without pinking which represents a saving of 6d. a gallon on cars that demand four-star grades. This is to some extent countered by the group 3 rating (against group 1 for the Mini) that has been allotted to it by Lloyds and AOA. A 5.7-gallon tank gives a range of between 160 and 230 miles. The nearside filler flap has an ingenious lock-up arrangement with a push-button release on the door-stop but the plastic bung in the filler neck is infuriatingly difficult to release, as any forecourt attendant will testify.

## Transmission

Like the 360, the 600 has a simple sump-mounted gearbox with four forward speeds engaged by dog clutches. Because the revolving gear masses are so light, no synchromesh is provided, or needed. Through a cunning rod-and-pivot arrangement, the gear lever operates with splendid ease and precision despite a slight clonk—more felt than heard—if the engine is spinning at all quickly. The dogs do grate, however, on really high-rev changes, especially if you snatch the lever through without pausing in neutral. By double de-clutching, every change, especially downwards, can be made completely smooth and silent though single de-clutch changes are quite in order. The clutch itself is fairly light and has a nice cushioned engagement so it is easy to start off and change gear without jerking the car. However, the short, taut drive line makes the transmission rather sensitive to any sudden torque reversals in the lower gears so you have to operate the throttle smoothly to prevent snatchy progress in

*Continued on the next page*



*Simple box-shape styling gives the car a pert, practical appearance.*

*The seats and driving position are quite comfortable but the gearlever and steering wheel can foul your left leg and there is not much room for your off-clutch foot.*

*There is ample space for two adults in the back though legroom is meagre unless the front seats are pushed forward.*







The sunshine roof costs an extra £33. Exposed hinges and number plate on plastic boot lid, high-mounted light clusters and prominent spring shackles make the tail a bit cluttered.



Top left: Handy release for the front seat squabs. Top right: Side cubby, arm rest and top hinged venting window for back seat passengers. Below: the rear seat cushions can be removed to increase luggage space. Left: push button release for filler flap but the plastic cap is difficult to remove.



## Honda N600 *continued*

town. Nonmeshing dogs sometimes prevent the engagement of first and reverse at rest without first releasing the clutch; just occasionally it happens on the move, too, though normally the lever slips through with fingertip pressure.

The overall gearing is much higher than that of the 360 as both the primary reduction gear and the final drive has been raised to give 12.7 m.p.h. per 1,000 r.p.m. in top, against the 360's 8.9 m.p.h. What little noise there is from the gearbox is normally drowned by the engine.

### Handling and brakes

On dry smooth roads the 600's roadholding and cornering powers are quite good which, together with excellent acceleration and lack of girth makes this a particularly nimble vehicle for town work. Drivers more concerned with ease of control than rally handling will find the car simple and effortless to drive as the steering is very light, parking no problem and the gearchange and footwork virtually foolproof. Pushing the car really hard along a twisty road, though, reveals quirks, if not vices, in its handling, which stem largely from a pronounced throttle steering effect at high cornering speeds, particularly on a wet road. The steering is actually quite high geared (0.85 turns on a 50-ft. circle) but the understeer builds up so much when cornering hard under power that you might have to wind on another half turn of the wheel to hold your line. At speed, the steering is therefore not so responsive as its gearing would suggest. Lift your foot from the throttle in mid-corner and all this extra lock must be instantly unwound to prevent the nose from tucking sharply into the verge or, worse still, the tail from sliding—very unlikely on a dry road but possible in the wet.

These characteristics, though quite predictable (it soon becomes second nature to apply more or less lock according to throttle opening), in effect makes the steering a bit vague for spirited cornering. We stress, however, that at lesser speeds this throttle steering is barely noticeable and only a variation in pace on, say, a roundabout is likely to show it up. The roadholding does not deteriorate too much through wheel hop on bumpy corners but the vibro jolting you get from the hard springs discourages any autocross antics. In contrast, the car is particularly stable at speed on a motorway and is not put off course by side winds. Nor is there normally much body roll when cornering though the lift-off tuck-in behaviour mentioned earlier is accompanied by a final lurch of the body to a noticeably greater roll angle.

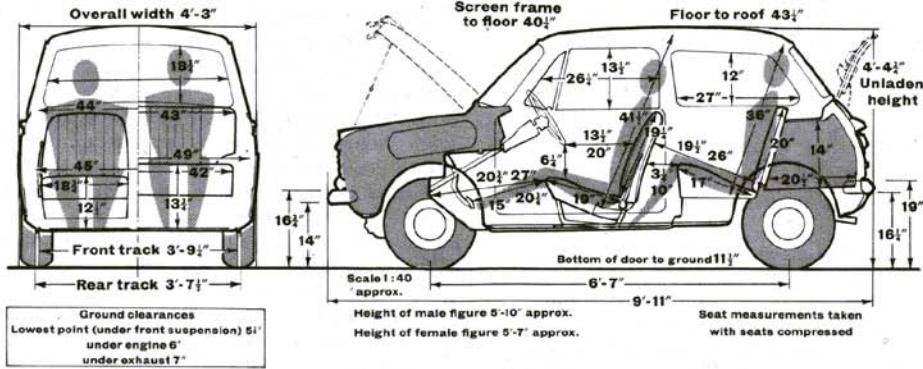
The unservoed all-drum brakes cope well enough with the light weight they have to stop. During our 20-stop fade test pedal pressures actually diminished from medium to light weight, though a hard stop from maximum speeds produced some juddering and an impression that this really was the braking limit. They worked quite well after the watersplash, too (unusual for drum brakes), but lack of weight, and therefore adhesion, over the back wheels does not allow a face-down stop on a 1-in-3 hill which the car will slide down with locked back

The uncluttered boot is small (3.1 cu ft of test boxes) but will swallow quite a lot of loosely packed objects. A useful toolkit lives under the front seat and the jack, despite a spindly handle, is quite easy to position and use.





# Specification



## Air-cooled vertical twin engine; front wheel drive; dead back axle.

### Engine

Block material	Light alloy with steel liners
Head material	Alloy
Cylinders	2
Cooling system	Forced air
Bore and stroke	74 mm. (2.91 in.) 69.6 mm. (2.74 in.)
Cubic capacity	599 c.c. (36.5 cu. in.)
Main bearings	4 roller bearing
Valves	s.o.h.c.
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Carburettor	Constant vacuum
Fuel pump	Mitsubishi electric
Oil filter	Full flow paper element
Max. power (net)	42 b.h.p. at 6,000 r.p.m.
Max. power (gross)	45 b.h.p. at 7,000 r.p.m.
Max. torque (gross)	37.6 lb. ft. at 5,000 r.p.m.

### Transmission

Clutch	s.d.p. diaphragm spring
Internal gearbox ratios:	
Top gear	0.714:1
3rd gear	1.000
2nd gear	1.565
1st gear	2.529
Reverse	2.440
Synchromesh	None
Final drive	3.037:1 (on top of primary reduction of 2.050:1)

### M.p.h. at 1,000 r.p.m. in:—

Top gear	12.7
3rd gear	9.1
2nd gear	5.8
1st gear	3.6

### Chassis and body

Construction . . . Pressed steel unitary body/chassis

### Brakes

Type	Hydraulically operated drums. 2 leading shoe front, leading/trailing shoe rear
Dimensions	7.1 in. x 1.34 in. internal diameter
Friction areas:	
Front	35.8 sq. in. of lining
Rear	42.2 sq. in. of lining

### Suspension and steering

Front	Independent by MacPherson struts and coil springs
Rear	Dead axle on semi-elliptic leaf springs

### Shock absorbers:

Front	Telescopic
Rear	Telescopic
Steering type	Honda rack and pinion
Tyres	Dunlop C41, 5.20 x 10
Wheels	Pressed steel
Rim size	3.5 in.

### Coachwork and equipment

Starting handle	No
Tool kit contents	Jack, jack handle, plug spanner, wheel brace, two open-ended spanners, pliers, two screwdrivers, tommy bar, holdall
Jack	Parallelogram screw
Jacking points	Under spring U-bolts rear, chassis frame front
Battery	12-volt negative earth, 40-amp. hrs. capacity
Number of electrical fuses	3
Headlamps	12V 50/40W
Indicators	Self-cancelling flashers
Reversing lamp	Yes
Screen wipers	One-speed electric
Screen washers	Rubber-bulb plunger
Sun visors	One
Locks:	
With ignition key	Doors and boot
Interior heater	Fresh-air unit standard equipment
Upholstery	Vinyl
Floor covering	Carpet
Alternative body styles	None
Major extras available	Automatic transmission

### Maintenance

Fuel tank capacity	6 galls
Sump/gearbox/final drive	5.5 pints SAE
Coolant	Air
Chassis lubrication	None
Minimum service interval	3,000 miles
Ignition timing	10° b.t.d.c.
Contact breaker gap	0.015 in.
Sparking plug gap	0.032 in.
Sparking plug type	NGK B8ES
Tappet clearances (cold)	Inlet 0.08 in.: Exhaust 0.08 in.
Valve timing:	
Inlet opens	at ° b.t.d.c.

Inlet closes	40° a.b.d.c.
Exhaust opens	40° b.b.d.c.
Exhaust closes	at ° a.t.d.c.
Front wheel toe-out	1/2 in.
Camber angle	1/2°
Castor angle	1°
Kingpin inclination	14.5°
Tyre pressures:	
Front	24 p.s.i.
Rear	20 p.s.i.

### Safety check list

<b>Steering assembly</b>	
Steering box position	Good—behind engine
Steering column collapsible	Yes
Steering wheel boss padded	Yes—but with rather proud hornpush
Steering wheel dished	No

### Instrument panel

Projecting switches	None where they look to be dangerous
Sharp cowls	No
Padding	Along fascia rails

### Windscreen and visibility

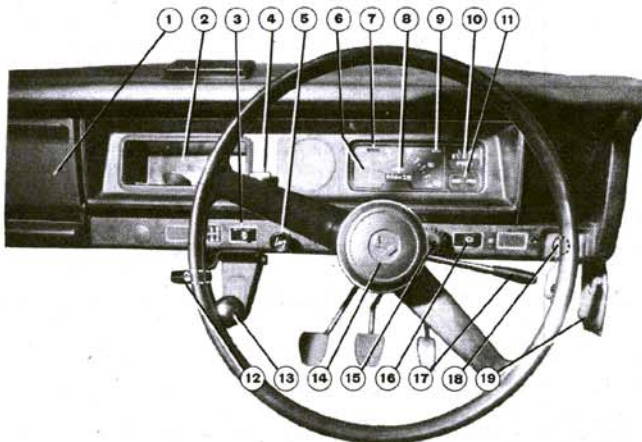
Screen type	Laminated
Pillars padded	No
Standard driving mirrors	One inside
Interior mirror framed	Yes
Interior mirror collapsible	Probably
Sun visors	One, soft and padded, but on projecting metal hinge

### Seats and Harness

Attachment to floor	By bolts on rails
Do they tip forward?	Only after releasing safety catch
Head rest attachment points	No
Back of front seats	Firm padding
Safety Harness	Britax lap and diagonal
Harness anchors at back	Yes

### Doors

Projecting handles	Yes, window winder—but door handle recessed
Anti-burst latches	Yes
Child-proof locks	No



1, cubby. 2, radio recess. 3, lights. 4, heater distribution slide. 5, choke. 6, speedometer. 7, indicator tell tale. 8, distance recorder. 9, main beam tell tale. 10, fuel gauge. 11, charge and parking brake lights. 12, heater control. 13, gearlever. 14, horn. 15, screen washer. 16, wipers. 17, indicators/dip/flasher. 18, ignition/starter. 19, air vent.



## Honda N600 *continued*

wheels. Weight transfer makes an uphill stop quite secure and you can park either way on a 1-in-4 slope.

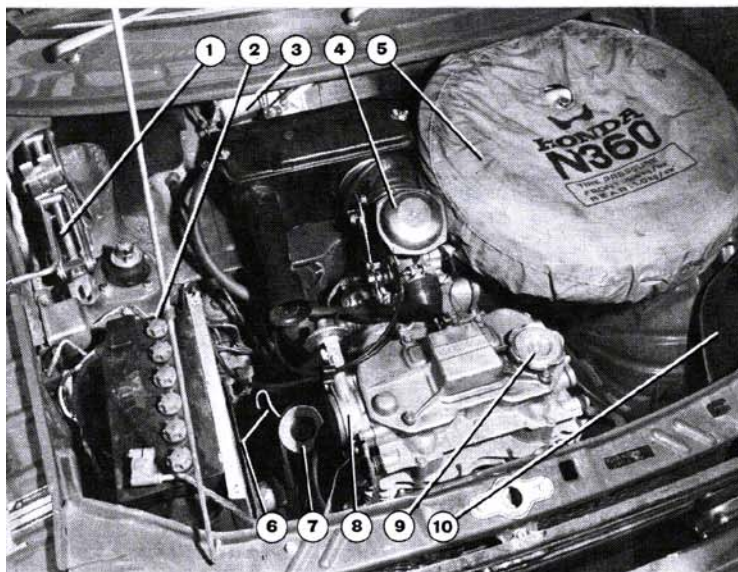
### Comfort and controls

Very firm suspension—MacPherson strut front and a leaf-sprung dead axle behind—gives a hard, unforgiving ride and even small disturbances like Cat's-Eye studs can jolt the car. The amplitude of body movement, however, is small and pitch, sway and float virtually absent.

Like the BMC Mini, the Honda is surprisingly roomy inside for a car of such small overall dimensions though the single-box, wheel-at-each-corner design prohibits the inclusion of a large boot. The relatively long bonnet—long, that is, in relation to the slim transverse twin it houses—is explained by quite generous front seat foot wells. A tall driver still has to sit with splayed legs but this is more to clear the low-set steering wheel in his lap than through inadequate legroom. Even on the fixed passenger's seat, a tall person can stretch out quite well and there is sufficient, if not generous, rearward adjustment for the driver.

The seats themselves don't look particularly inviting but, apart from rather poor lateral support when cornering hard, we all found them—and the driving position—reasonably comfortable. The pedals are quite large enough, nicely spaced (you can heel-and-toe) and not offset despite the intruding wheel arch. Because of their splayed knees, though, some drivers complained of ankle ache in their throttle foot on long runs and of the marginal clearance between knee, steering wheel and gearlever when in top. Long handy seat release levers—of copybook design—unlock and tilt forward the front seat squabs for access to the back where there is ample room for two adults. Again, a tall person will have to sit with knees apart but as the cushion is quite steeply raked to give support to the thighs, accommodation here is quite agreeable for all but long journeys. Side recesses with in-built pockets and arm rests allow generous elbow room in the back.

Although the tyres thud quite loudly over bumps and hollows, and roar on coarse surfaces, road noise is not normally obtrusive (usually because the engine drowns it). In contrast, wind rush is particularly low, which partly accounts for the car's relatively fussless performance when cruising in the 50-60 m.p.h. range in top. Opening one of the stiff quarter-lights does not increase wind roar much but it does seem to create a draught on the opposite side. If it is not too hot, the all-or-nothing shin-level cold air grilles under the scuttle can be used to



1, jack. 2, battery. 3, wiper motor. 4, carburettor. 5, spare wheel. 6, dipstick. 7, jockey pulley for fan belt. 8, distributor. 9, oil filler. 10, screen washer reservoir.

ventilate the car instead of an open window. The simple heater (standard equipment) has two controls—a push/pull temperature plunger under the scuttle and a distribution slide, marked “room” and “screen”, on the facia.

Despite the inherent limitations of a heater operating on the engine cooling air, this one seems almost foolproof and you don't continually have to re-adjust it as the engine speed, and thus the heater's output, changes. It does have one potentially dangerous fault, though. Really heavy spray from the vehicle in front—often difficult to escape on a soaking wet motorway—can be vaporised by the hot engine and then condensed in an instant, opaque film on the screen, leaving you quite blind. Heavy rain on its own fortunately does not have this effect. Otherwise, visibility to front and back is excellent and the lights are particularly good, main beam casting a powerful long-range spread down the road. The same fingertip back-pull on the indicator stalk dips and beams the lights so there is no possibility of confusion. A button at the end of the stalk flashes the lights—all four filaments, incidentally.

### Fittings and furniture

For a cheap car, the Honda is quite well trimmed inside. The facia is made of an attractive, crushable (they say) plastic moulding with a lidded cubby on the left, a small oddments indent on the right and a neat rectangular instrument panel behind the steering wheel, housing a clear and unusually honest speedometer, a mileage recorder (with tenths), a pessimistic fuel gauge and several bright warning lights. The dim panel light makes it difficult to read the speedometer after dark. All the minor controls are easy to use and reach—except for the light switch (like that for the wipers, a horizontal rocker) which is obstructed by the gearlever when it's in first or third.

Standard equipment includes a rubber bulb screen washer for the single-speed wipers, reversing lights, a dim interior light that comes on when the doors open, a radio recess and an ash tray atop the facia. Loose fitting carpet over felt covers the floor. Our test car also had an excellent sliding roof (£33 15s. extra including fitting) that could be opened and shut easily on the move. It was also well sealed and free of wind hiss. The Britax Excelsior lap-and-diagonal seat belts, easy to adjust and clip up, were comfortable to wear. Other safety features include recessed door handles (but not window winders), a padded steering wheel boss that also sounds the feeble horn, burst-proof locks and padding in the facia. Curiously, the passenger still has to manage without a sun visor. Judged purely by feel and appearance, the car generally seems to be soundly designed and constructed though there are signs of penny-pinching here and there; the outside catch for the bonnet release, for instance, bends under a heavy thumb (which is needed to undo the catch) and one of the quarter-lights snapped off.

The plastic boot lid can only be undone with the ignition key (which is a bit annoying sometimes) and the boot is small though sensibly shaped. Luggage capacity can be greatly increased by folding, or removing altogether, the back seat leaving a clear deck from boot to front seat.

### Servicing and accessibility

Servicing is needed every 3,000 miles and, according to the concise and comprehensive handbook, the schedule is not a demanding one. Being mounted well forward under the bonnet, the engine and its ancillaries are easy to reach and work on though the spindly dipstick is a bit buried. A parallelogram jack, wiry jack handle, spare wheel and 12-volt battery are all under the bonnet leaving the boot free for luggage, and there is a useful tool holdall clipped under the passenger's front seat. There are no chassis grease points to bother with but the brakes need periodic attention as they are not self adjusting.

Honda are now represented by over 110 agents in Britain so spares and servicing should not be much of a problem.

**M**

**MAKE:** Honda. **MODEL:** N600. **MAKERS:** Honda Motor Co. Ltd., Tokyo, Japan.  
**CONCESSIONAIRES:** Honda (UK) Ltd., Power Rd., London, W4.