

Honda's "big" Scamp on test

SUPER-SCAMP!

We found the Scamp "S" an economical State-hopper — 464 miles in eight hours for \$5 isn't at all bad.

IT'S like this. I called in on my old friend Harry Dalton one Saturday morning and he says with this sly grin: "What about me in my Honda Scamp and you in your Renault 10? A quick two-be-two up to whatever through the parklands?"

Slightly flabbergasted, yet keeping my cool, I replied: "If you wish . . ."

My Renault 10 is bog standard. So I said "Go." I got the jump and led at the end of first gear. Then, *allosuiddin* there was this helluva bellow and this plastic thing screams past my right ear.

It was all over.

My car does an even 11 seconds to 50 at the bouncing end of second. I thought it was all a bit strange. But let me explain. Harry Dalton is Dalton Honda, Adelaide's progressive

Honda concessionaire, and suddenly the penny dropped. This was my introduction to the Scamp "S", or the Honda Scamp N600. It wasn't run in and on an odd impulse I offered to loosen it up for Harry over the weekend — with a trip to Melbourne. So at 2.30 in the afternoon a brave friend and I took off with a few hard boiled eggs and a half bottle of decongestant.

This is what we found. The sohc parallel-twin is cooled by rushing air, and has 598 cc and 45 bhp at 7000, 40 lb/ft of torque at 5000, and an all-up weight of a smidgeon under 11 cwt. It goes indecently fast. With only 206 miles on the clock we were very gentle. It never saw more than 55 and returned 49.8 to the gallon. The looser it became, the faster we went, and at a cruising 65 it returned 43.6. On the way back between 75 and 85 this dropped to 30 mpg.

WHEELS didn't get enthused with

Handling is at all times safe — no matter how perilous it may appear to the spectator or the passenger.

the ordinary Scamp 360. It was noisy and slow. The Scamp "S" is not quiet, but at high revs the shriek has deepened to a yell. And cruising at 70 — the car's optimum cruising speed — it's quite possible to carry on a conversation in normal tones. But you can forget about the ticking of the clock bit. This is a Scamp with a long-legged feel, for the gearing is 11.6 per 1000 in top, where it'll rev to about 8000 under good conditions, and that's a shade over 90. We saw the low 90s several times, and the speedo checked out more accurately at 80 and 90 than it did at 50 and 60. That Fairmont driver was surprised when we inched past him flat out in top!

At high speed the roadholding is good with cornering tendencies on the understeer side of neutral, and it's usually unaffected by side winds and ton-up pantechicons coming the other way. The only drawback is in the sitting division, because the seats are traditional knees-waving-in-the-air Nipponese. After 400 fast miles this point was driven home, as it were. Hard. For an extra \$45,





No longer quite as jack-rabbit at the rear. Brakes are better too, but on the test car were "certain kamikaze" in the wet.



Superscamp has lower lines, more purposeful look — and even a bump on the bonnet for big carbie.

however, the Scamp buyer can add recliners which seem to be more habitable all round. If you can put up with the discomfort and noise, the Scamp "S" is an economical State-hopper — 464 miles, eight hours, \$5.

Acceleration is, ounce for ounce, incredible. With one on board, 50 mph came up a couple of times in 9.8 seconds. With the regulation two people, it worked over five consecutive runs at 10.4. Like all Hondas, Superscamp has a very narrow torque band, from 5000 rpm to slightly over 7000. For maximum performance, therefore, you've got to keep it screwed up tight. This is one car that badly needs a tachometer, for it's not easy to pick 500 rpm by

ear when it's yelling its head off in the indirects. Tachometers are available as a factory extra, and there's a big round blank in the dash specially for that purpose. The gearchange is the same constant-mesh affair that the 360 has. Quick, crunchy and solid.

When one's sprinting hard, it pays to turn a deaf ear to the awful mashing sounds as the non-synchronised teeth bite in fast. Basically, one has two choices. Whack it through as fast as the hand can move, or be slow and precise with double-declutches, and then it's

The hills are alive . . . with ear-splitting shriek of Scamp. Much safer than it looks, however.

aesthetically quite satisfying. Medium speed gear changing means brief graunches before each cog engages. Half a dozen times over a 1000 miles it baulked downchanging into second, and once it nearly collected reverse. Frightening, that.

However much it goes against the grain, vicious hairy-handed operation of the little chap produces the best results. Over hilly, give and beg-your-pardon country you just drive flat out, and that's that. As soon as you let the revs drop, it burgles and won't play. Third is a tremendous gear, and it'll reach from 20 mph right up to a bellowing 75 mph, 9000 rpm. Pretending not to hear, we saw an indicated 31 mph in first (9500 rpm) and 52 or so in



second (9700 rpm). Boy, yuh shore need that tachometer.

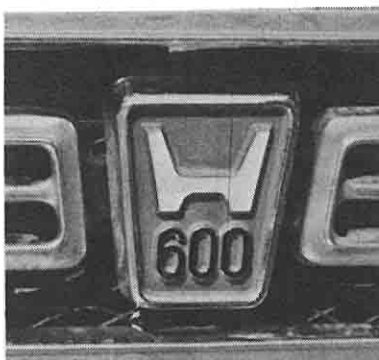
Handling in and out of the torque range is at all times safe, however perilous it may look from the outside. Under power it reacts in similar fashion to the 998 Mini Cooper of yesteryear, although the understeer is not so pronounced, and one can control stubborn dives into the shrubbery with the steering wheel as well as the right foot. It's easy to burn rubber through tight, tight corners, and on loose or corrugated surfaces. This is translated into savage tramp as it grabs handfuls of revs in great snatches out of the air. The Scamp "S" will trundle and tramline when it has an opportunity, and diving down steep valleys on high-crowned Mickey Mouse roads has its moments. But then there are always the brakes.

Ah, the brakes. Friend Dalton gave me the fish eye when I said they were on the bad side of awful. But then he tried the car himself and we came to the conclusion that the brakes on the test car were a Bit Funny. I must point out that this car was virtually just off the wharf, and showed 206 miles when we first got out clammy paws on it. Other Superscamps showed up very well in the anchors division, but the one we had had brakes that faded, worked unevenly, locked up at the rear, and were certain kamikaze when travelling very fast in the wet. Kept cool on the open road they were quite satisfactory. Providing one don't run into emergencies...

It's a drum set up all round, with twin leading shoes at the front.

The uninspired "meep" of the horn is dead feeble for high-speed (sic) work. Not so the light flasher. This is a tiny button on the end of the dip/flasher stalk on the right of the steering column. It's even effective in daylight. And when the headlights are on it brings in the other beam as well, which is extremely useful when you need to see very quickly very badly, and for blasting the absentminded nit ambling toward you with a bank of qv's lighting up the fillings in your back teeth. The 7 in. Toshiba lights were able to cope with all fast driving situations.

Another minor criticism can be made of the unwiped area on the far right of the screen, or that bit of glass that one needs to look through when lining up the posts on the inside of a fast right-hander. The single-speed wipers work well, and in fact do wipe a large area of the screen, and a couple of pokes at the large, black, sensual washer knob squirts water in large quantities high up on the screen. Other little irritants were the drooping of the doors and the driver's door handle falling off. I must point



Honda's new Scamp, the N600 "S", is a far more refined elder brother to the little 360cc device.

out again that it was no fault of the distributor that the car wasn't prepared. It was only my eagerness that made them let the car go without their usual meticulous checking and pre-delivery adjusting. Fair's fair.

For the money (\$1597) you get a lot of motor car. It fully complies with all Mr Nader's US Safety Regulations, with laminated screen, 7 in. lights, twin circuit brakes, seat belts, collapsible steering column, recessed knobs (better placed than on the earlier 360s) has "standard" Continental markings, and are of the increasingly popular "organ" type.

There are several differences between the Scamp "S" and its short-legged brother. The only internal difference is that the speedo now reads to 100 "moomphs" — 10 more than before. The bonnet boasts a power bulge, covering the larger carburettor, the hub caps are redesigned, the bumpers protrude, making the car four inches longer, and the tougher suspension makes the car sit one inch lower. The ass-in-the-air attitude has been diminished, and the car now has a more purposeful squat. Oh yes, carpets have been added to the front floor. It's a nice touch, they're very attractive, serviceable and tough, but

unfortunately still loose fitting. Under the bonnet there's a bigger battery and a new starter motor.

The engine has twice the capacity, horsepower and torque, and therefore needs less revs to do twice the job. Those of you who know the difference between Honda's S600 and the S800, will appreciate the difference between the N360 and the N600. In both cases the beefier brothers do everything they should do, and do it that much better. In fact it would not be surprising to hear that the twin-cylinder sedan will outperform the S600 in the lower ranges of acceleration. And point-to-point, over winding roads of uneven surface it would be close, sir, very close.

An interesting feature of all Scamps is that they have plastic boot lids. So if some dozy clod whumps you in the back, you merely throw it away and buy another for less money than it would cost to have the dent knocked. However, on the white test car, the color difference between plastic and metal was quite discernable, and the plastic tended to attract dirt more so than the other.

Nothing goes faster than the Scamp "S" for the money. Plain and simple, it's the cheapest big performer on the market today. It's the same price as the standard Hillman Imp, and about the only cheaper car is its little brother the N360. It's cheaper than the standard Mini by \$70, and \$140 to \$200 cheaper than the Mini de Luxe, various Corollas, and Datsun 1000s. It is simple enough to make maintenance minimal, and miserly enough on fuels and oils to keep it well into the economy car bracket.

If you want a new car that's a real goer and has all the benefits of mini-motoring, and you don't see yourself paying much more than \$1600, then Superscamp — with a noise of rushing wind — will streak over the heads of the amazed crowd and land in your Christmas stocking. #

SPECIFICATIONS

Four-stroke, sohc, air-cooled, parallel twin of 598.7 cc, 45 bhp at 7000 rpm. Maximum torque 40 lb/ft at 5000 rpm. Bore and stroke 2.91 x 2.74 cu ins. Compression ratio 8.5 to 1. Top gear per 1000 revs: 11.65 mph. Final drive ratio: 3.03 to 1. Kerb weight 10.83 cwt.

PERFORMANCE (Average of five runs):

0-30 mph 4.8 sec 0-50 mph 10.4 sec 0-70 mph 23.2 sec
0-40 mph 6.9 sec 0-60 mph 15.3 sec 0-80 mph 33.4 sec

MAXIMUM SPEEDS IN GEARS:

1st ... 31 mph. 2nd ... 52 mph. 3rd ... 75 mph. 4th ... 87 mph

TOP SPEED — Best: 93 mph. Average of three runs: 87 mph.

AVERAGE FUEL CONSUMPTION OVER 1000 MILES: 39.1 mpg.

PRICE: \$1597 inc tax.