

The SP-2 comes from a hallowed family of bikes that make most roadgoing two-wheelers seem cheaply put together and bland. The American name for the SP-2 gives the necessary clue: it's the RC51. 'RC' Hondas are low-volume, high-spec machines built to win races. Some have to be sold for road use to qualify for these races and as a result a lucky few get to own and ride machines which are pretty similar to British and World Superbike racers.

So while many bikes are race replicas, the SP-2 is the real McCoy - a race bike with lights. OK, GSX-R1000s and other inline fours are allowed in WSB and BSB now but they were always designed as road bikes for the public.

The SP-2 has an aura of purpose and engineering

without compromise. The design's almost a decade old but it makes most current sportsbikes look namby-pampy and cluttered. The SP-2's colossal swingarm, incredibly chunky frame and no-nonsense minimal details scream 'real deal'.

Riding the bike's not a letdown. Even on standard cans it's quite loud. First gear's tall - designed for hairpins, not tricking through town. In fact, it's awkward in the urban environment, with low bars and a stabby power delivery. But get onto rapid, smooth roads and the RC pedigree shines through like a hi-tech torch in your face.

Quality suspension is a marvellous thing on a motorbike. On a smooth surface the SP-2's abilities feel limitless and while it requires a little muscle to turn it's still an easy bike