

2006 Honda Rincon 680 GPScAPE

Story by Chad Jessej Photos by Rick Sosebee



►► In our April '06 issue, we put five of the world's toughest and roughest big-bore utility devils into a head-to-head clash to find out which was the ultimate warrior. Although the Bombardier Outlander 650 reigned supreme, three out of our seven testers picked the Honda Rincon 680 for their top choice. The other four riders cast their second-place vote on the Rincon, resulting in a close battle that left the Rincon losing by a smidgeon. All seven testers admitted that choosing between the Outlander 650 and the Rincon 680 was a grueling decision, but the Rincon's sluggish power and easily bottomed suspension were its Achilles' heel. Understanding the Rincon possessed tons of potential, I decided to take on the Honda as my long-term test project. After 579 miles and 47 hours of tough trail testing and even a few races, the only wear and tear issues have been a torn CV boot and some peeling of the camo plastic wrap.

Tender meats are only acceptable with steaks or chicken, not with ATV tires. Pounding out trails during several rides with the stock Dunlop meats left me cringing over every sharp rock and obstacle as I've developed a horrible reputation with flattening OEM tires. The Rincon's tires also tended to roll over in hard turns, making me exert more energy than necessary. Six-ply-rated tires are a must on these monster utes. Since our goal was to improve trail performance on this machine, huge mud clogs were not necessary. So we sought out a good all-around tire that would perform well on all terrains while keeping weight to a minimum. ITP had the ideal solution with its new TerraCross radial—hot off the production line, no less—mounted on its sparkling C-7 wheels. Not only did this wheel and tire combo give the Rincon a big dose of bling, but the tires fit our expectations perfectly as the tread design drastically improved the steering and response of the Honda. The Rincon

benefited greatly from the radial construction of the tires and acted as if a new level of suspension had been added. And the rear tires hooked up almost too well, as I discovered when backing her into corners with the puny power of the Rincon. I'd say tire and wheels should be the first and most important upgrade for this machine.

My second critical complaint was that the Rincon could deliver some painful hits in rough terrain, and it was difficult to keep my line with the rear end swapping back and forth. That is because the stock suspension would easily bottom out on hard hits with very little rebound resistance, especially under larger riders. The too-soft shocks also allowed both rider and machine to lean heavily into every turn at speed. Stadium Suspension out of Quebec, Canada, solved our suspension nightmares with a full set of 740T shocks. Easy to install and nearly perfectly dialed-in right from the box, the 740Ts improved the Honda's handling drastically. Those painful hits in rough terrain were now distant memories. These aftermarket shocks also lessened the rodeo effect and helped me maintain my direction effortlessly. Last, but certainly not least, I could aggressively carve corners without the excessive leaning. At \$718 a pair, this upgrade is fairly pricey but worth every penny if your budget permits.

Even though it was drastically improved over the '05 model, the motor induces little excitement. In stock form, the 675cc motor feels sluggish and even struggles to pull up steeper hills. Muddy trails left me tooling around as if I was passing through a school zone. I was eager for an easy horsepower gain by installing a pipe and uninterested in a major motor renovation, mainly for the sake of reliability. Due to the Rincon's new EFI system, most exhaust companies are still in development stages testing pipes and various electronics.

Kudos to the guys at HMF Exhaust. They

The Toll

Hours on ATV: 47

Miles on ATV: 579

Repairs:

CV boot replacement, just keeping bolts tightened

Normal Maintenance and Service:

Oil change and air filter cleaning

Modifications:

ITP Tires: 800/859-4740; www.itptires.com

26x18-14 Terra Cross front tires: \$110.95 each

26x11R-14 Terra Cross rear tires: \$131.95 each

ITP C-series Type 7 wheels: \$87.95 each

Stadium Suspension: 450/964-4730;

www.stadiumsuspension.com

Stadium 740T front and rear shocks: \$718

per pair (\$1436 total)

HMF: 866/HMF-PIPE; www.hmfengineering.com

Utility Series pipe: \$239.95

HMF Optimizer EFI Controller: \$249.95

sped up the production timeline just for this test and rescued me with power for the Rincon. Bolting on HMF's Utility Series pipe, plugging in the HMF Optimizer EFI Controller and removing the airbox lid made a world of difference all the way through the powerband. The best part about it was that I could adjust the Rincon's fuel flow with the Optimizer as the quad seemed to be starving for gas even before I removed the stock pipe. Overall, the motor was much more responsive.

If you are a motorhead, the Rincon still may not be the wisest choice. But for those who enjoy decent power with superb handling, the Rincon would be right up your alley. With the total cost of mods rounding out at \$2763, the Rincon was transformed into a trail rider's dream ride, and it has performed flawlessly for nearly 600 miles with a minimum of maintenance—just what the average trail hound needs. We might try delving into motor work next and, if so, I'll be back with an update on the Rincon long-term project.

