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**HONDA  
XR500**

**125 MX SHOOTOUT!**

# **DIRT BIKE**

**AUGUST 1979 • \$1.25 UK60p**

**WIDOW-  
MAKER!  
THE BIG  
ONE**

**RM250N:  
SUZUKI'S  
SLINGSHOT!**

**SPARK  
WARS  
HOW  
TO**

**WEIRD  
WHEELS:  
HONDA ATC  
& ODYSSEY**



**BATTLE OF THE BULLETS!**



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# DIRT BIKE

Volume 9 No. 8  
August 1979



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### On the cover:

Gary Woodling wheelies the XR500 on the cliff trails of Gorman, and four brand-new 125s await a thrashing. Rick Sieman photo.

## Honda ATC110

# LEARNING HOW TO CRAWL AGAIN

Wide eyes and wheelies on Pismo Beach

By the Dirt Bike Staff

One of the strangest things we've done yet this year, was go out for a day on two of Honda's un-bikes. The ATC 110, is most assuredly an un-bike. With three wheels and no suspension, it was a shock to the system of our staff of veteran two-wheelers. To tread dangerously close to an understatement, riding the ATC was . . . uhh . . . a little different from what we have been accustomed to in the past. But, more about that later. Let's get the technical stuff out of the way first.

The ATC gets its forward motion from a single-cylinder, four-stroke motor, connected to a four-speed transmission through a centrifugal clutch. The transmission is a dual-range affair, and by use of a lever on the lower left-hand side of the engine you can choose between a stump-pulling low range, or a respectable high, with the use of all four gears in each.

Controls are provided in the form of a thumb-operated throttle, a left-foot shifter (*up* for low), a recoil (lawn-mower-type) starter, a right-foot brake, and a hand brake on the *left* side of the bars. Pretty much straightforward and simple, but some of the controls caused us a little confusion. More about this later.

Final drive is through a chain and sprockets, just like normal, and there is a single brake on the rear axle. No suspension is provided—front and rear — except for what you can get out of the seat and the 22x11 flotation tires.

All right, let's try to ride this sucker, and see what happens. A quick pull or two on the cord produces life in the little motor, and we let it warm up for a minute. There is a neat little clip on the hand brake that allows it to serve as a parking brake, a very useful item here. Without it, the ATC would be happy to roll all over the place, at the slightest hint of an incline. Amazing what a kickstand does for a motor-cycle. We flick off the clip, and stomp into gear. Neato! The ATC lurches into



**Rigid front end and a shock-absorbing tire would make strange bedfellows on a two-wheeler. Honda includes a headlight for those nightly trips into the boonies.**



**Everything is enclosed in the rear of the ATC. On the right is the drum brake, the only one, and on the left are the drive chain and sprocket.**

forward motion, with the transmission set in "low" range. Now we have to remember: There's no clutch. We have to shift down to go "up through the gears." The handling is just a little *different* from what we're used to . . .

Second gear produces a nice wheelie, slowly upshift another gear, and we're

smoking across the dunes. Not bad. It's nice and quiet. The lack of suspension isn't that noticeable on the flat. Uh-oh, here comes a hill . . . better get ready for it . . .

Charging at a sand dune, at a terminal rate of speed for the tranny's low range. OK, we're going to downshift right at the base, and the lower gear is going to carry us to the top. Right at the base of the dune, timed perfectly, we grab for the clutch . . . and go over the bars.

Second time around. This time we're going to remember that the lever on the left side isn't a clutch, it's a brake. Charge up to the hill, stomp down for low, and hit the hill with no power at all, being in fourth rather than second. Time to fall back and regroup.

After a little while, we got used to the different parts of the ATC. Shifting was merely backwards, and all it took was a lack of panic situations to keep from forgetting that fact. A few of us would have been happier if the brake was on the other side of the bars, but this too became second nature as the day wore on. The brake pedal worked just as well, and the only time it was inaccessible, was when our right knee was on the seat—which is the hot setup for long wheelies. Just put the trans in second/low range, and with one knee on the middle of the seat, it's no trouble to carry the front end forever.

We didn't run out of problems, though; it soon became apparent that we were having trouble controlling our direction. If we rode in a straight line, over square hills and smooth dunes, and then turned around and rode back, everything was fine. When we rode into anything that was the slightest bit off-camber, there was no telling which way we'd be going at the other end. Occasionally we found ourselves careening down hills, when we meant to go around, and in a steep gully we would be forever climbing up the walls. In any combination of the above,

total confusion would reign.

Now, there were two or three very experienced ATC riders with us, one of whom had a CR250-powered ATC, and they were having no trouble at all with things that were putting us on our heads. They couldn't understand our problems. It finally came out that it had taken these gentlemen a few days

to figure out which end was what themselves. It boils down to this: You have to steer the ATC to get it to go anywhere. And at any speed above a crawl, it's necessary to weight the outside wheel in a turn, to give the inside wheel a chance to break loose. You see, the rear axle is solid, and both wheels are driven at the same rate. This

opened our eyes, somewhat, but we still got into trouble now and then.

Our hosts pointed out that non-riders have very little trouble riding the ATC. Easy to understand. If you have no preconceived notions about where the clutch should be, or how the shifter should go, or which direction your weight should be in during a turn, then it's as easy as learning how to doggie-paddle.

A lot of ATCs are sold to farmers. They're quite a bit cheaper than tractors, for light hauling, and they won't get stuck in the mud. They won't get stuck in anything, except deep water, and they don't even get stuck in that . . . they sink. A few companies even sell accessories for farm ATCs, like seed spreaders and trailers. (I can see them now . . . wheelieing through the corn!)

Also, there are a lot of people heavy into ATCs, as thoroughly as we're into bikes. There are frame kits that let you bolt any kind of motor into a three-wheeled chassis, and all kinds of pipes, carbs, engine modifications and accessories to bring out the hair on an ATC. The mind boggles.

At any rate, even though we didn't master the controls in one day's time, it was a fun way to spend it. These things aren't motorcycles, and we don't expect them to take the place of dirt bikes, either. But, if you're looking for a three-wheeled way to have your fun, look at an ATC. Just don't grab for the clutch too fast. □

If you've got an ATC, and you're looking for ways to bring out the beast in it, give one of these companies a call:

**ATC pipes:**

DG Performance Specialties  
1170 Van Horne  
Anaheim, California 92806

**Motor hop-up:**

Powroll Performance Products  
P.O. Box 1206  
Bend, Oregon 97701

**Big-bore frame kits:**

American Motorcycle Engineering, Inc.  
10900 Burbank Blvd.  
North Hollywood, California 91601  
(Builders of the RD350 ATC)

**Carb kits, disc brake kits, pipes, etc.:**

Posa Enterprises  
7530 East Jackson St.  
Paramount, California 90723

**Mikuni carb kits:**

Sudco Distributing  
(See your dealer)

**Just about anything and everything:**

PK Racing Products  
525 N. Azusa Ave.  
La Puente, California 91744 □



The ATC's 105cc powerplant—there's more power to be had, for the price of a little tuning.

**Honda ATC 110**

ENGINE TYPE . . . . . Four-cycle, OHC  
BORE AND STROKE . . . . . 52x49.5mm  
DISPLACEMENT . . . . . 105.1cc  
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY) . . . . . N/A  
CARBURETION . . . . . Keihin 18mm  
FUEL TANK CAPACITY . . . . . Six liters (1.6 gallons)  
TRANSMISSION . . . . . Four-speed, constant mesh, dual range  
GEARING, FRONT/REAR . . . . . 15/49  
IGNITION . . . . . AC flywheel magneto  
WHEELBASE . . . . . 1015mm (40 inches)  
GROUND CLEARANCE . . . . . 110mm (4.3 inches)  
STEERING HEAD ANGLE . . . . . 21.5 degrees  
WEIGHT (CLAIMED) . . . . . 107 kg (235.9 pounds)  
INTENDED USE, MFR . . . . . Off-road  
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN . . . . . Japan  
DISTRIBUTOR . . . . . American Honda Motor Co.  
100 W. Alondra Blvd.  
Gardena, California 90247

