

Looking For Mr. Goodbore

HOPPING UP THE XR185

Trying out Honda's high-performance options . . .
and getting a few ideas of our own

By Paul Clipper

Back in April ('79), we did a full test on the Honda XR185. Just in case you missed it, in a nutshell we: raved about its light weight, applauded its quickness and good handling, and spoke favorably of its four-stroke torque and cleanliness. At the time, we had a few secret wishes tucked away. One was that we wished the XR185 had a little more power. The stock motor felt really good (don't get us wrong), but a little more horsepower would be just the thing to get us babbling in our sleep. The other wish was that we could get one of these bikes in our greasy little paws, and see how much we could coax out of the motor—just to find out the limit of wretched excess we could produce.

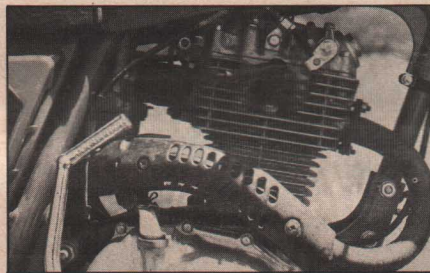
It looks like our supplications have been heard.

Just the other day, we went out with one of our friends from Honda, we'll call him John Row—just to protect him, you see, he hates fame—and in his possession was, among other things, one each Honda XR185 complete with installed factory hop-up kit! Needless to say, after much fumbling with leathers and boots and such, we took out the kitted bike and thrashed it around Texas Canyon for a while.

It was great! The best way to describe the kitted bike is as a mild, but well-tuned, 250. It makes all the difference in the world. We ran it against the stocker, up and down hills and across ridges, and this is what we found: The kitted bike has gobs more torque. In many cases, enough to save us from having to downshift on a hairy uphill,



Without the larger accessory pipe, you can't tell the kitted XR from stock.



How many ponies are hiding in this innocent-looking motor? The mind boggles at the possibilities.

Who to call, where to write:

Powroll Performance Products, Inc.
P.O. Box 1206
Bend, Oregon 97701
(503) 382-6395

White Bros. Cycle Specialties
11611 Salinaz Dr. "M"
Garden Grove, California 92643
(714) 638-1653

DG Performance Specialties
1170 Van Horne
Anaheim, California 92806
(714) 630-5471

C&J Frames
1151 E. Mission Rd.
Fallbrook, California 92028
(714) 728-1707

Champion Frames
18257 Parthenia St.
Northridge, California 91325
(213) 886-1728

and we didn't have to shift nearly as much in the tight stuff. Also, the bike revved out to truly astounding limits—just the thing when you don't want to shift, but need a constant driving force from the back wheel to keep you out of trouble. Not only was the kitted bike faster, it was quite a bit easier to ride than the stocker—and more fun, too.

The factory high-performance kit gets its power from a larger bore: 194.6cc as compared to the stock 180.2cc. The kit itself consists of a new cylinder, larger piston and rings, a new, larger-capacity air box and a more efficient (yet louder) pipe to improve breathing; plus new jetting for the standard carb, and various small pieces to help them all fit together. In another optional form it comes with different gearing and chain. For the total kit, including sprockets and chain, the suggested retail is \$304.75. Without the gearing change, the price is \$209.90.

The only problem, John said, will be the availability of the kits. They'll be produced in limited numbers, and only checking with your dealer will tell you if it will be possible to buy one. What about all those folks who want to turn their XR into a firebreather, and can't get one of the kits, we asked him; are they expected to go away disappointed? And at this point, John told us that Honda was making the kits to show what could be done with the XR, and not necessarily make a fortune with them, so why don't we just show everybody who does what, to make the XR work better? Righto!

Currently, there are a few companies

marketing parts to make the XRs more exciting. *Powroll Performance Products*, a company that has been making hop-up parts for four-strokes since the beginning of measured time, is at the top of the list with all manner of parts. They can stroke the 185 (lengthen the piston stroke with a modified crank), or bore it to displacements of 199 or 198cc, respectively, which is nice if you want to stay within AMA legal limits. But, if you want to go all the way, they can do both to your engine and bring it out to 218cc, and at the time we talked to them, they were trying to hog it out farther. These folks are admirably crazy! They are also working on a cam for the XR, for a hot yet rideable powerband, and can do porting work on the head to increase the flow. They also have a pipe and Super Trapp silencer combination, and although nothing was mentioned, we would suspect that they will have carb kits available in the future. Their prices are reasonable, and they are able and willing to go as far as you want. Write them, or give them a call, for prices and more information.

White Brothers Cycle Specialties didn't waste any time coming out with parts for the XR—they had suspension parts on the shelf before we even got a test bike. An alloy swingarm for the 185 is available for \$159.95. It is two pounds lighter than stock, one inch longer, comes complete with bearings and uses all the stock hardware. For another \$100, they will fix you up with a set of Curnutt or S&W FE-series shocks, dialed in complete with springs. Terry fork kits are also available from White Bros., for \$39. Both suspension improvements increase the wheel travel, by the way, and are the hot setup for a breathed-on 185.

White Brothers will also be happy to sell you a Super Trapp exhaust system, for \$47.50, that uses the stock head pipe (a larger-diameter pipe gives no increase in power), and they also make them for XLs. For maximum power, they have a megaphone kit for \$19.95. Last, but not least, they have Mikuni carb kits for the bikes—a 32mm Mik with a Magura or Whirlpull throttle, for \$79.95 and \$86.95, depending on the throttle.

White Bros. soon will have a complete line of motor hop-up parts—call or write for more info.

Let's see now; *DG Performance* has a pipe available for the bike, air fork caps that will fit, and are thinking about bringing out a few more items—call them for details.

And if you're into going all the way with a frame kit, *CeJ Frames* and *Champion Frames* both have good products that have a long and excellent reputation. They'd be happy to hear from you.

The more we look at all that can be

done with the little XR, the more our mouths water, so I guess we're going to have to put one together. We wouldn't let John go home with the stocker the other day. We told him we needed it for a research project, and I guess that's what it's going to be. We're pretty sure that they're not going to recognize it when they finally get it back, but in the meantime, we're going to figure out what works best on the 185, short of putting it in a frame.

In no certain order, we will try to:

- Build the suspension up to a competition standard,
- Raise the power output without going to an overbore or stroker job,
- Bore and/or stroke it to produce

maximum power—complete with a cam and head work, if necessary, • Reduce weight (!), and work on the little details to make the XR even more rideable than it already is.

This is going to take some time, and will most likely stretch over a few months. Should be fun, though. All along the way, we will keep track of the expenses, and if a cheaper way of doing something will produce the desired result, then that's the way we'll go. We're not going to do anything impractical, or unnecessary (no 12 inches of suspension). We're just going to build a good, fast, middleweight enduro bike. In part one, we'll figure out how. □

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