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**SPECIAL
'83 PREVIEW!**

- YAMAHA
- HUSKY
- MAICO
- KTM

**RADICAL!
'83 HONDA
XR350 &
XR500**

**THE
INCREDIBLE
MR. MAGOO!**

**NEW
KTM
495:
NO
EQUAL**



ISSN 0364-1546

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DIRT BIKE



NEW YAMAHA's



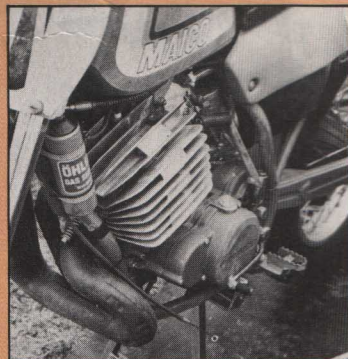
MAD MAGOO



DANNY LaPORTE



NEW HONDA's



NEW MAICO's



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ON THE COVER: Mister Magoo, caught in the act of a four-moto sweep at the Motocross and Trophee des Nations; and a quick look at the new, radical XRs from Honda. Photos by Rick Sieman. Color separation by Valley Film.

DIRT BIKE Magazine, ISSN 0364-1546 (Dec. '82) is published monthly by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Co., Inc., with editorial offices at 16200 Ventura Blvd., Encino, California 91436. Subscriptions \$14.98 for 12 issues (one year). Foreign subscriptions add \$5 per year and Canada \$4 per year for additional postage. Copyright © 1982 by Daisy Hi-Torque Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted in whole or in part without the express permission of the publisher. **CONTRIBUTORS:** Photographic submissions must be 5x7 or 8x10 glossy black and white, or 35mm and larger color slides. Please mark each photo with owner's name and address. Manuscripts should be type-written. Unsolicited contributors must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Unless special arrangements are made in advance, all published material becomes the sole property of Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Co., Inc. The publisher does not assume responsibility for unsolicited material. Second class postage paid at Van Nuys, California 91408, and at additional offices. DIRT BIKE, P.O. Box 317, Encino, California 91316.



FIRST LOOK!

1983 HONDA XR_s

Big changes on the 500 and a brand-new 350

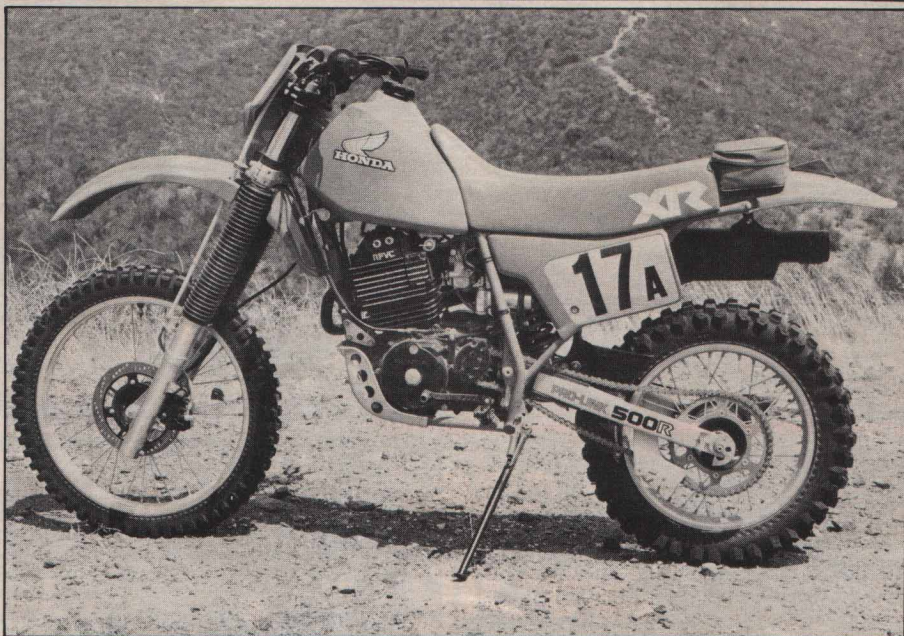
By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

When we were recently offered an exclusive look at "a couple prototypes of the new XR_s," naturally we accepted the invitation immediately. We expected not much more than a few minor changes on the XR500 and 250, but what the heck, news is news. We kidded with the Honda people about turbos and watercooling on the new four-strokes, but we were surprised out of our shirts when they opened the truck doors and our two "mildly changed" bikes were rolled off the ramp.

First came a radical-looking 500, and while we were smacking our lips over the big bike, the next surprise came rolling off the truck. Would you believe a 350XR? Yessir! We were told there still was a 250 and a 200 to be looked at, but we would be given a peek at them later on downstream.



The 350 gets a taste of a Texas Canyon trail. We can't wait to give it a good thrashing!



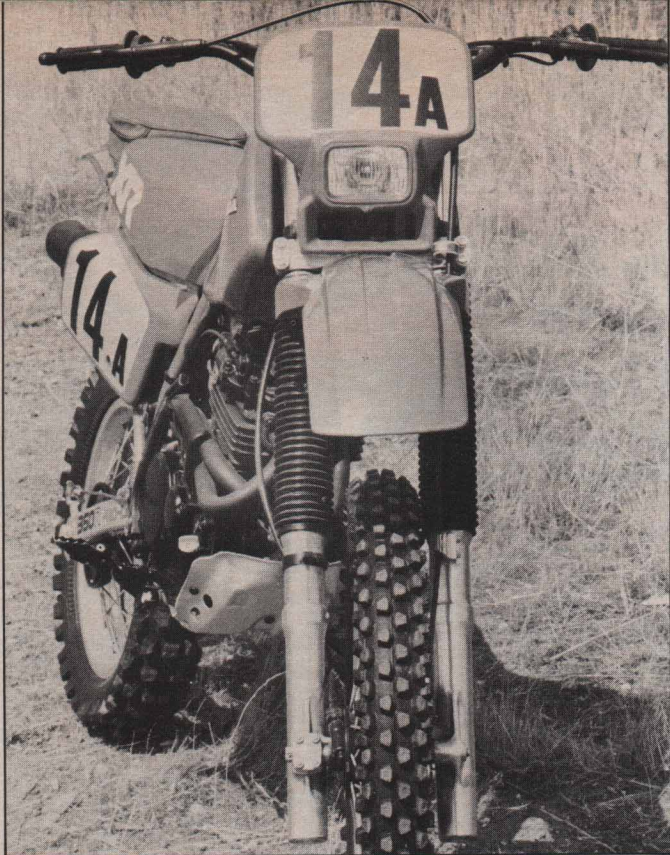
Serious four-strokes. Honda's XR lineup gets a complete face lift with all-new motors, frames, suspension and plastic.

RADICAL 500

That's okay, we don't mind waiting for the 250 and 200; we have plenty to handle right here. The first thing that greets the eye on the 500 is the disc brake on the front wheel. Although the double-leading drum of last year did a good job, the disc should be better yet, and waterproof, to boot. The caliper is attached to a massive fork leg. A quick session with the DB calipers revealed 43mm tubes. No chance of flexing here! Travel is 11 inches, and the forks are air adjustable.

Looking back a few inches on the frame, the first evidence of a new engine appears. The oil filler is located on the frame backbone—a dead giveaway of a dry-sump engine. Not having to carry a huge oil supply in the bottom end, the new engine is shorter and more compact, and we suspect that a few pounds have been lost in the process.

The cylinder head is engraved with the letters "RFVC," which stands for Radial Four Valve Combustion Chamber. This means that the four valves come into the



The 350 forks are 41mm Showa units, without the compression damping adjustment found on the CR Kayabas. Travel is 11 inches. Headlight/numberplate is rubber-mounted for quick removal. Note routing of front brake line.



Stand it up! XR500 responds to a tweak on the throttle.

combustion chamber at an equal angle all the way around; it's a design used to keep the engine compact and to deliver more horsepower. If it has more horses than last year's machine, it's bound to be a rocket.

The head is fed fuel through not one but two carbs. Unlike the Yamaha XT550, which uses one piston valve carb and one constant velocity (vacuum) carb, the XR uses two piston valve carbs and a mechanical linkage to control the secondary valve. This should be good for even more horsepower. Both carbs can be jetted easily using the standard Keihin jets.

More engine info: Transmission is a five-speed on the 500; whether or not the clutch has been beefed up is still a mystery—we would suspect that it has. The cam chain tensioner is now automatic, meaning no more fiddling with the adjustment every few hundred miles. Ignition is still a CDI, however the mechanical advance assembly has been removed in favor of an electronic advance, to take care of a few reliability problems of the old ignition. The new sparker should be completely bulletproof.

Let's you think that the Pro-Link suspension of the 500 remains the same as last year, take another look. That funny-looking dial at the bottom of the shock reservoir is a compression damping adjustment—12 different flavors, we may add. Rebound action is still controlled by a knob at the bottom of the shock, and four adjustment positions are available. That's right, a true twin clicker! The shock has been redesigned to suit the new

1983 HONDA XR's



Seat/tank combo is blended perfectly—there's no way to get snagged on this bike. XR's use full speedometer rather than odometer only.

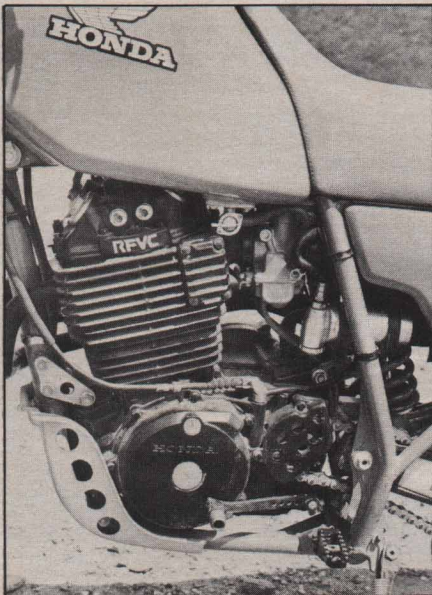
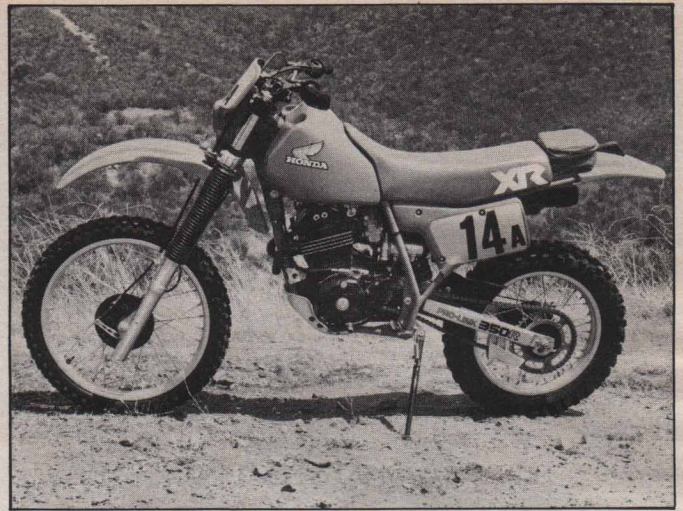
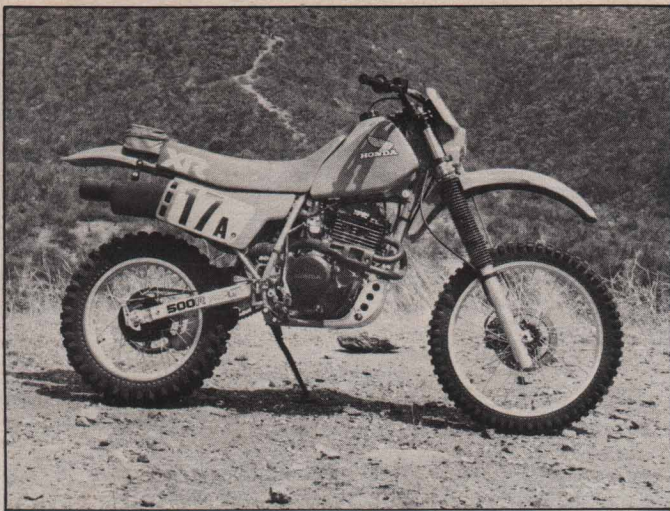
system, and has been beefed up for better reliability. Rear wheel travel is 11 inches on the 500.

Both wheels use straight-pull spokes and lighter hubs. The wheelbase is 1425mm (56.1 in.), seat height is 950mm (37.4 in.). Honda's target weight for the 500 this year is 260 pounds, dry. We won't know if they achieved this goal until we see an actual production bike, but if they do, you know they've shaved off some serious pounds.

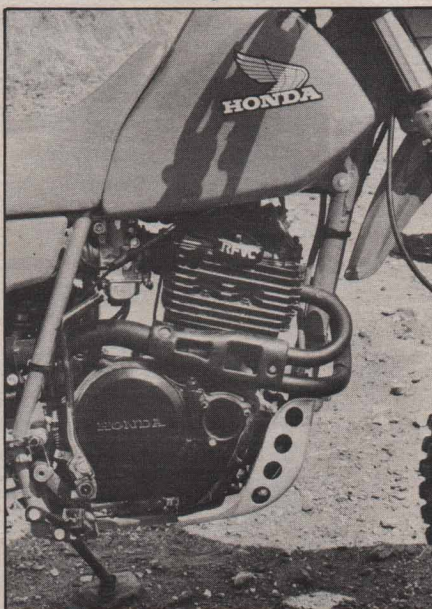
NEW-GENERATION 350

Before you ask the obvious question, we'll answer it for you: No, this is not a rehash of the old XL350. The XR350R is a completely new machine from the wheels up, and it should fit very nicely into Honda's four-stroke market. It looks like the perfect machine for the rider who wants more than the XR250 has to give, and needs less than the raw horsepower the XR500 delivers. Just as long as the weight is kept to a minimum on the production bike, this new 350 may just become Honda's new "best seller."

The 350 uses a standard single-leading shoe drum brake on the front, rather than a disc. It may not be as good of a stopper as the 500, but using the drum will help to keep the weight down and the price low. Keeping with the smaller, lighter weight theme of the 350, the forks use 41mm tubes, rather than 43s, although travel is the same at 11 inches. Two millimeters should make little or no difference in the flexing department—41s should be plenty strong for this bike.



XR350 engine looks like a small copy of the 500, but uses wet-sump lubrication. Drilled-out pieces and dish-head bolts should make for a light machine.



Oil is carried in the frame backbone and downtube on the 500, allowing for a shorter engine. Twin carbs are the rage this year.

1983 HONDA XR's

The smaller engine uses the same RFVC system as the 500, although a wet-sump lubrication system marks the difference between the two designs (meaning that the oil is carried in the lower end, rather than the frame tubes). Two carbs again supply the mixing, and the 350 top end simply appears to be a smaller-bored version of the new 500. The main difference is the use of a six-speed transmission, rather than five gears. Cam chain tensioner is automatic, and the ignition uses the new electronic advance.

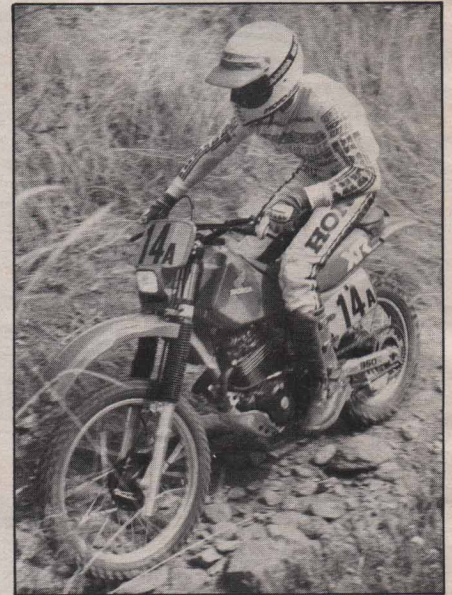
The rear suspension uses the same 12-way compression/4-way rebound adjustment as the bigger bike, although rear travel is shorter, at 10.5 inches. We have no figures on rake and trail for either bike, but we would assume that the front end has been pulled in slightly on the 350, and the shorter rear suspension was used to help keep the seat height down. Straight-pull spokes, 520 O-ring chain, and quick-change rear wheel are all standard items.

Dimensions: Wheelbase is 1405mm (55.3 in.), seat height is 930mm (36.6 in.). The target weight for the 350 is 245-250 pounds.

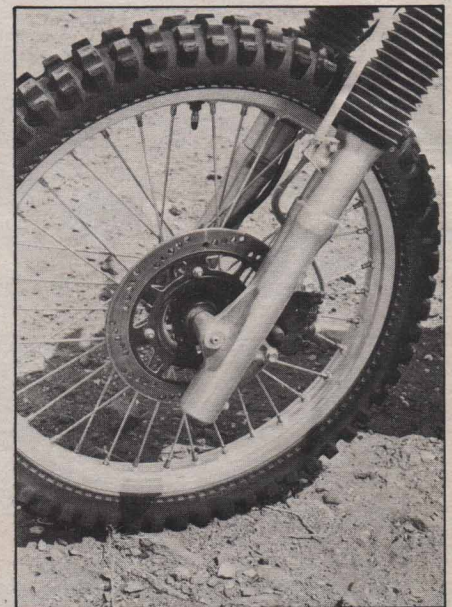
Graphics on both bikes are absolutely blow-mind! Bright red plastic and frame set off a blue safety seat and black engine. The front numberplate/headlight, fenders, tank and side panels have all been sculpted to flow into one smooth design. Honda has always built good-looking machines, but the new XR's should qualify as works of art. If they work as good as they look, they'll be killers.

HOW DO THEY WORK, ANYHOW?

Sorry, we can't say. These bikes are the earliest of prototypes, built for display at the dealer meetings, and not ready for the full test routine. We agreed to wait for production bikes to pass judgment; for now allow us to say that our photo riders came back very impressed, and seemed to be having the time of their lives during the shooting session. You can be sure that we're going to test both of these bikes real soon. □



Honda claims a dry weight target of 250 pounds for the 350.



Hydraulic disc front brake will be a standard item on the XR500. Straight-pull spokes and a rubber-lined valve stem hole make for an interesting front wheel. Giant 43mm forks give 11 inches of travel to the 500.