

**WILD 3-WHEELERS CHALLENGE DIRT BIKERS:
MORE THAN A SHOOTOUT... IT'S ALL-OUT WAR!!**

DIRT BIKE

DIRT BIKE

WPS
34355

JULY 1984

**TESTING...TESTING
...7...8...9 BIKES:**

- KTM 125MXC
- SUZUKI RM500, PE175, DR100/125
- HONDA XR500, XL250
- YAMAHA IT490
- HUSKY 500CR

\$2.00
UK £1.25

**"THOSE
3-WHEELERS
ARE BRAVER
THAN I AM!"**
—BOB HANNAH



**100-MPH MXer?
HUSKY SEZ YES!**

**YAMAHA IT490:
HUSKY & KTM
SING THE BLUES!**



**HOW TO CONQUER
DOUBLE JUMPS:
STEP-BY-STEP
PHOTOS!**

**RACE-PROVEN
SUZUKI &
YAMAHA
HOP-UPS!**



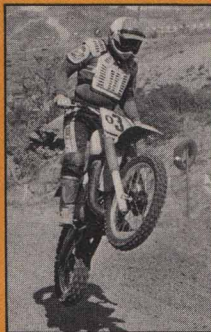
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XR500



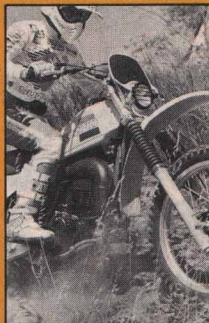
RM500



KTM 125C



IT490



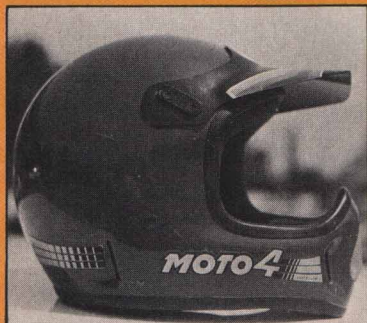
PE175



XR250



DR100/125



COOL HELMETS



2 vs. 3

ON THE COVER:—Jim Holley and Ron Haase duke it out in the battle of wheels; Mike Webb carves a water berm on the IT490; and Jon Miller throws sand with the Husky CR500. Photos by Tom Webb and Paul Clipper; color separation by Valley Film.

WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear.

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“I hate 'em and think they're stupid. They shouldn't let 'em within 200 miles of a dirt bike!” said the tall, bearded rider.

“Yeah, but your wife rides one of those three-wheelers around while you're out there racing and—”

“That's different. She's too uncoordinated to ride a bike. It gives her something to do instead of sitting around in a lawn chair all day. I still hate the things and wouldn't ride one if you paid me.” As if to emphasize the point, he crumpled up a beer can and banked it off his wife's shiny Honda ATC110 into a nearby trash can.

Sound familiar? It must if you've spent any amount of time off-roading in the last few years. Three or four years ago Honda was the only major manufacturer to make three-wheelers and four-wheelers, and they were happy as could be to sell around 70,000 of them a year.

Then the rest of the industry caught on and made their own versions of all-terrain vehicles. By the end of 1983, it's estimated that over 250,000 ATVs were sold... and the industry expects to sell about 400,000 of them this year.

One Honda rep told us that before three more years go by, they just might be selling as many as a million units per year.



On smooth, flat tracks, the ATC is definitely capable of faster lap times. When we transferred the two riders to a nearby MX track, Holley was four seconds a lap faster than Haase.

This is staggering! And it poses some questions that must be answered:

- Are ATV sales taking away from traditional dirt bike sales?
- Who rides ATVs? What *kind* of a person rides them?
- What are they doing to the already tense situation regarding land usage? Or, more exactly, the *lack of land* to ride on?
- Is this just a fad? Will it pass like hula hoops?
- Should ATVs and dirt bikes ride/race in the same area?
- Are ATVs more dangerous to ride than bikes?
- Are ATVs faster than bikes? If so, where? Let's analyze these questions.

ARE ATVs REPLACING DIRT BIKES?

According to the sales experts we talked

TWO WHEELS VS. THREE, FOUR OR MORE

ATVs VS. DIRT BIKES

Confrontation, controversy & confusion

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

WHO RIDES ATVs?

While it's dangerous to generalize, it's safe to say that many ATV riders are folks who would *never* consider riding a real dirt bike.

An unreal number of three-wheelers are owned by farmers, especially young farmers. A few years ago it was estimated by Honda that 90 percent of its three-wheelers were sold to farmers. Of course, that number has now shifted dramatically toward fun usage, but the farm sales have *not* dropped off.

Wives, girlfriends, small children and first-time riders all seem to be able to comfortably ride most any three- or four-wheeler, with no special skills or training needed.

You do have a number of ATV riders who are highly skilled and competent riders, but they are in the distinct minority. The majority of ATV riders are happy simply to wander around the riding area, always keeping the truck in sight so they don't get lost. By and large, almost anyone can hop on and ride an ATV immediately.

RIDING AREA IS ALREADY AT A PREMIUM? WILL ATVs ADD TO THE PROBLEM

Oddly enough, much of the hassle experienced by dirt bikers is not a problem with ATVs. A three-wheel rider can blithely ride



We turned Holley loose on the Speedway track to cut some serious lap times. His best efforts were one second per lap slower than Haase on the ATC250.

to, a small percentage of ATV riders are former dirt bikers... perhaps five to ten percent. Most of the ATV riders are new (entry-level) riders who probably *would not have gotten into off-road riding at all* if it hadn't been for the availability and popularity of ATVs.

There has been a slight dip in dirt bike sales, but not in the hard-core MX/enduro bikes. Rather, the casual bike sales have declined. That is, some people who ordinarily might have bought a DR250 or an XL185 instead bought some sort of ATV.

What the huge increase in ATV sales has done, in effect, is simply double the amount of off-road activity in this country and only lightly detract from pure dirt bike sales. The dual-purpose/street-legal market seems to have suffered the most.

around in a vacant lot next to a residence, and the little, white-haired old lady will just smile. Unload your YZ250 in that same vacant lot, and she'll call the cops quicker than if a flying saucer had just landed.

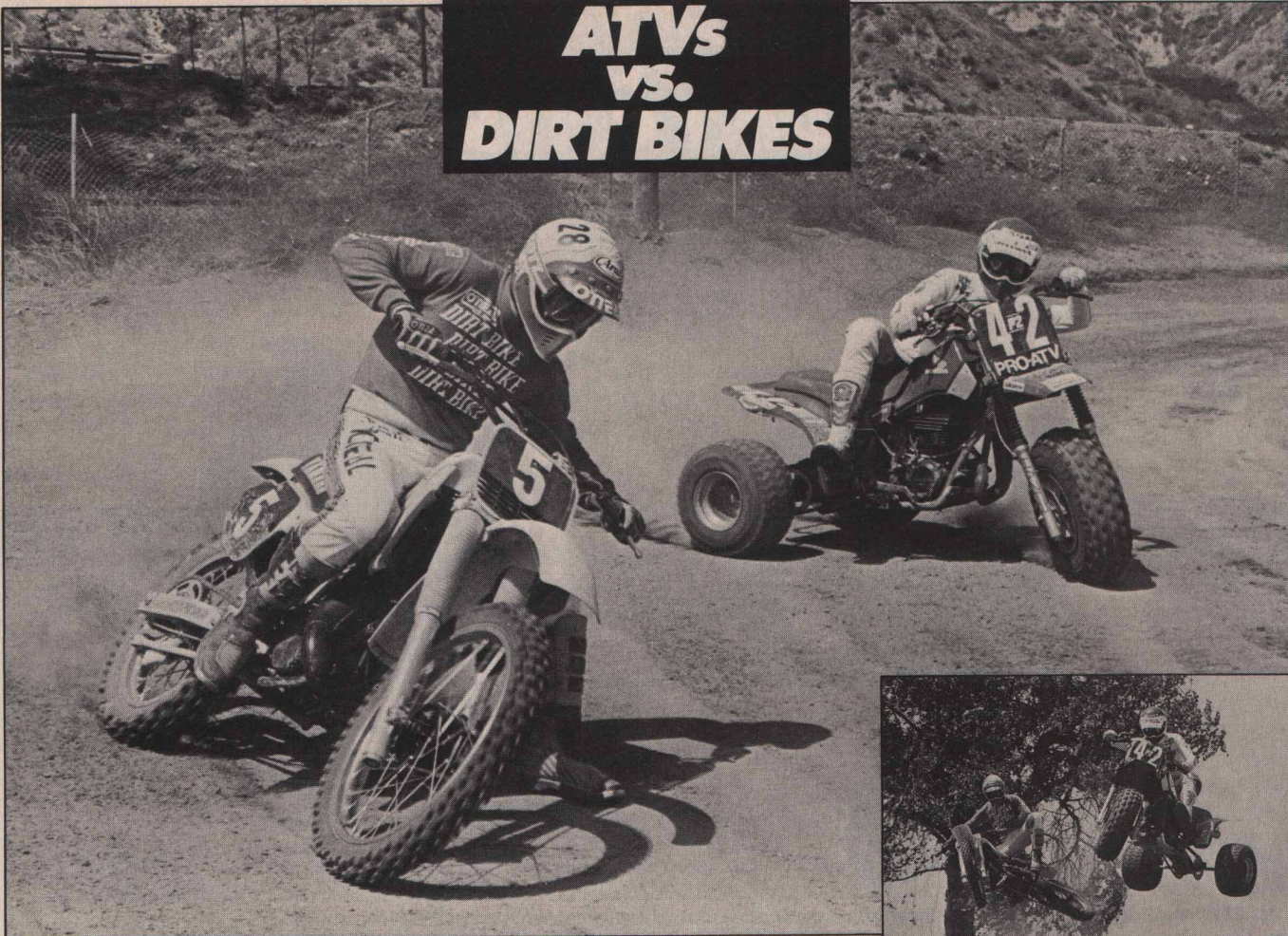
To a large percentage of the public, ATVs are not bikes. Instead, they are cute little things that purr around quietly and are not aggressive or offensive.

As many ATVs are owned by farmers, they have their own riding areas right outside their doorsteps. There is a running battle going on in the northern climes between snowmobiles and three-wheelers. Sharing trails is a real problem there.

And many of the country's famed sand dune riding areas are in danger of being regulated heavily or closed down completely because of unbelievably heavy numbers of rid-



ATVs vs. DIRT BIKES



The bike always got the best starts but paid the price when it came to sideways cornering under power.



Ron Haase (ATC) and Jim Holley (YZ125) get weird for the DB camera crew.

ers. Concentrations of any sort of fun always seems to bring out the authorities and the eco-freaks.

ATV riders—like bikers—are their own worst enemy. If they did not gather in huge numbers but rode dispersed over a greater area, they would be nearly invisible. But when thousands of them flock to the sand dunes on long weekends and mill over the sand like so many crazed lemmings, the consequences are more than obvious.

ATVs: FAD OR HERE TO STAY?

The writing, as our Egyptian friends say, is on the wall. In the foreseeable future ATV sales and activity will increase. It's our guess that sales will level off below the one million units predicted by many in the industry, simply because there is almost no peer pressure to have the latest model year after year.

Also, we predict a large number of ATV riders branching out eventually and making the transition to dirt bikes. When a three-wheel rider sees a bike rider going places and doing things that he cannot do, he'll be tempted to try a dirt bike. And many of them will get hooked. Look for a big increase in dirt bike sales within two years that will cross over from the ATV market.

ATVs VERSUS BIKES: DANGER?

Yes! Emphatically. While both forms of off-road riding are valid, they simply do not mix well. In open fun riding, dirt bikers tend to use existing trails and to create a "loop,"

or course, to ride on. Three- and four-wheelers tend to wander in any direction and to cut a wide swath as they go.

It's just the nature of the beast. It's fun to pitch a three-wheeler sideways until you run out of power, then flop it full lock to the other direction and let it hang out again.

HOW TO FORM AN ATV CLUB

- One very good idea has emerged on how to help educate the ATV riders. The Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA), a trade association from the Big Four, now offers a free booklet telling you how to form an ATV club.

The benefits are clear. It tells how to get new places to ride and how to keep the riding areas you already have. Also covered are subjects like putting on an event, how to get political clout with your group, how to get members, how to deal with the legal and organizational details, and much, much more.

So, if you're into ATVs of any sort, you ought to send for your free copy and then get together with a few enthusiastic friends. As we said, the 28-page book is free!

To get a copy, send a letter stating your intent to: Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, 3151 Airway Ave., Bldg. P-1, Costa Mesa, CA 92626; (714)241-9256. Tell 'em *Dirt Bike* sent you. •

This does not mix well with dirt bikes, nor with other three-wheelers, for that matter.

A typical dirt bike is a bit over 200 pounds and can be guided along a very precise path. The typical three-wheeler is right around 300 pounds and is merely aimed in the general direction of flight, and it skitters about in the process.

On a motocross track, having three- and two-wheelers out there at the same time is inviting serious injury to the two-wheeler. Lines through turns are not even close. Where a three-wheeler slides and slithers, the bike might cut and thrust. The two riding styles do not blend at all.

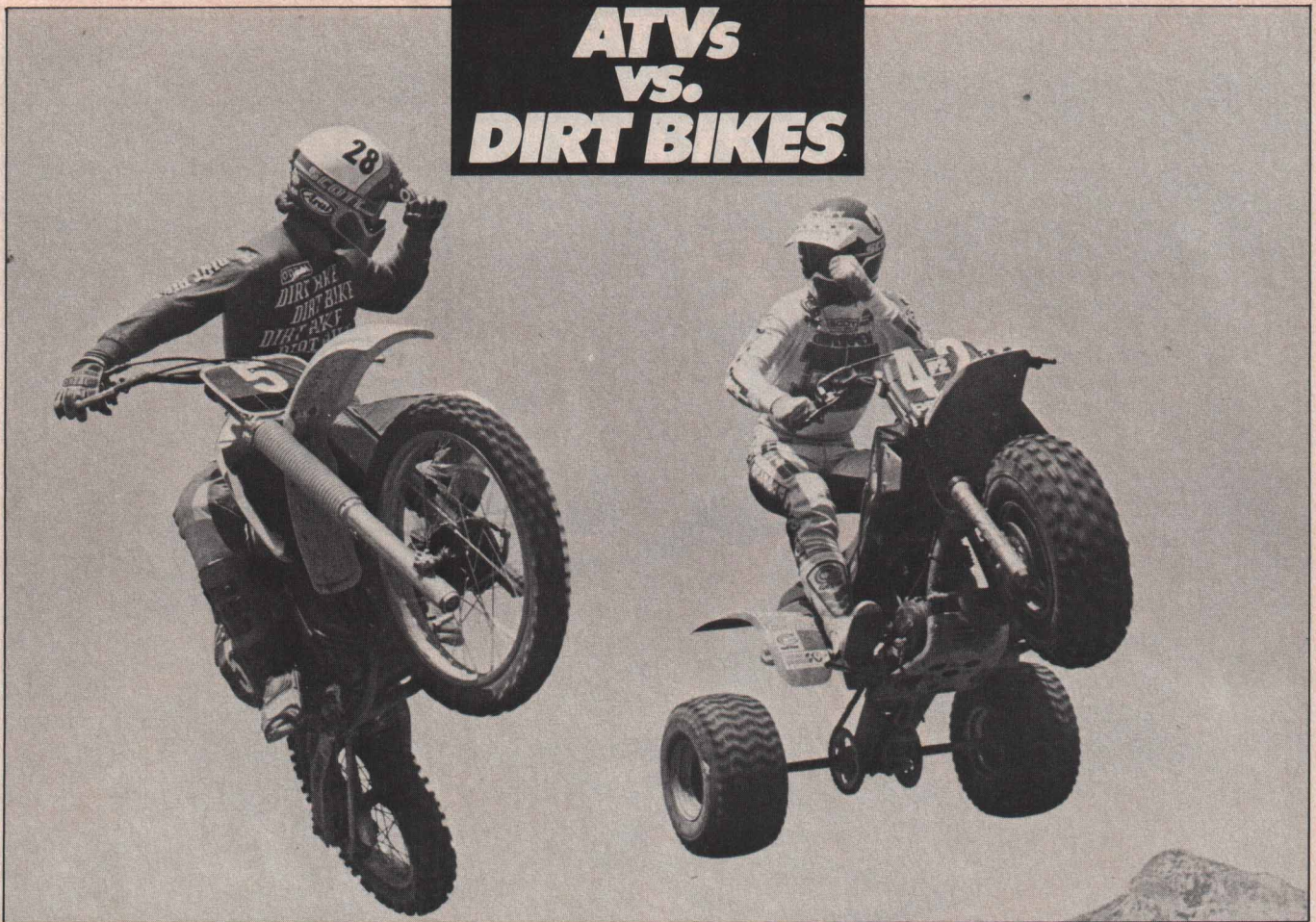
Existing bike parts throughout the country would be well advised to clearly mark bike and ATV areas, and then enforce the boundaries. Failure to do so results in injuries, bitter litigation and anger on both sides of the fence.

ARE ATVs MORE DANGEROUS THAN BIKES?

In some circumstances, yes. *In others, they are easier to ride and safer than bikes.* Basically, under ideal traction conditions a three-wheeler is miserable to turn. Here a bike is happy and comfortable.

In snow or deep sand one can expect the three- and four-wheeler to respond in a superior fashion—on level ground, that is.

ATVs vs. DIRT BIKES



Can ATVs and bikes coexist? Or will they crowd each other out of available riding areas?

THE BIGGEST PLUS ABOUT ATVs

Just about anybody can ride one. This means that people who are intimidated by dirt bikes can still go out and have some good, dirty fun. You don't have to have the skills of a fighter pilot to make the thing move from point A to point B and back.

The controls are simple, with a thumb-actuated lever being the most common throttle setup, and most ATVs (except for the competition units) are automatic or semi-automatic. Many of them even offer electric starters. Just hop on one, start it up and go.

THE BIGGEST MINUS ABOUT ATVs

Just about anybody can ride on. Yup, you got it, sport. The same thing that makes them easy to ride is the biggest curse. We've seen five-year-old kids riding around bike parks on full-sized 200cc three-wheelers. That same kid couldn't ride a full-sized two-wheeler if his life depended on it. Yet both vehicles are powerful units and should be treated with respect.

The five-year-old kid on the 200cc unit has no idea of what the machine can do. He merely knows that if he pushes the thumb throttle, the thing will go forward. He might know where the brakes are. Then again, he might not.

People who let new riders or very young riders go off by themselves to wander around are intensely stupid, negligent or both. More problems are caused by inexperienced ATV riders than anything else in the off-road world.



Just about anyone can ride a three- or four-wheeler. This six-year-old lad is happier astride his Honda ATC than a wino in a grape arbor.

On the other hand, it takes a certain amount of skill just to get a full-sized motorcycle to move, let alone to go fast on it. It's safe to say that the skill required to ride a two-wheeler is much higher than that of an ATV.

Get a three-wheeler on an off-camber

slope or trying to navigate a serious uphill or downhill, and you have potential doom, grief and destruction.

The biggest danger about ATVs is that most of their riders tend to think that these vehicles are *not dangerous!* They feel that the extra wheel (wheels) makes the ATV stabler and much safer. They continue to ignore the fact that the ATVs are only stabler when ridden in a conservative fashion on level ground. *Push an ATV to or at its limit, and the skill level required to keep it under control is higher than on a two-wheeler!*

BIKES OR ATVs: WHICH IS FASTER?

On a typical motocross track a bike will cleanly smoke a three- or four-wheeler. On a flat, bermless track you can expect ATVs to turn better lap times than the bikes. Three or four fat wheels simply offer better traction than two skinny ones.

In a straight-line drag race plan on seeing the two-wheelers in front, every time. In mud or deep sand the ATVs will more than hold their own. In tight woods the shape of a bike lends a clear advantage. ATVs tend to ignore rain ruts and small rocks, all of which tend to make a two-wheeler skittery. On twisty, medium-speed fire roads a good ATC rider can keep up with most fast bikers. On ultra-high-speed fire roads the bike usually disappears.

In a crash you're usually ahead of the game if you bite the bullet on a bike. The sheer weight and mass of an ATV is enough to turn a simple flip into severe pain.

HOW CAN NEW RIDERS BE TAUGHT?

It's been estimated that there are nearly 20 million off-road enthusiasts in the United States and Canada. Yet total magazine sales (street and dirt combined) add up to only about one million. This means that only one out of 20 riders reads about his sport on a regular basis.

Education at the dealer level is pitiful. The customer walks in, buys a bike or ATV, then leaves, often with nothing more than a fuzzy owner's manual as his sole guide.

THE BOTTOM LINE

No doubt about it, ATVs are here to stay... and their problems will grow in direct proportion to their sales. When all the smoke clears, we tend to think that the manufacturers should start to take a more aggressive stance on informing ATV buyers.



People who ride ATVs tend to take a lot of things for granted. This nice lady apparently never considered what would happen to the kid on the sled if she had to make a sudden stop.

Clear, well-written booklets and instructional manuals should come with each new vehicle sold.

Perhaps dealers could offer local riding

classes for learners. And the factories and dealers will have to get together to secure new riding areas.

If the numbers they anticipate are real, then the land crush will be even more real. Nothing will stop sales of ATVs quicker and with more impact than not having a place to ride the things.

All of the Hi-Torque off-road publications will be doing their part to educate ATV riders, with *Dirt Wheels*, our all-ATV publication, leading the way.

If everyone digs in and tries to educate the ATV rider, things should work out fine. However, if the industry is content to just reap the temporary rewards of quick bucks, then they'll have to live with the grief and confusion that will accompany the sudden growth. □

CAN WE QUOTE YOU ON THAT?

JIMMY WHITE—CHAMPION ATV RACER, FACTORY-SPONSORED KAWASAKI TECATE PILOT

"An ATV is less physically demanding than a bike on a smooth TT-type track. But on an MX or Supercross track it works you to death.

"Most of the injuries on ATVs are beginners or inexperienced riders. Too many play riders drink beer and ride around with no helmets on and never even consider the possibility of an injury.

"Experienced riders tend to take their skills for granted and overcompensate. They simply forget about those two extra wheels in the back and get into big trouble that they never even see."

C.H. WHEAT—PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORTS

"For family activity it's one of the greatest things that ever happened. A guy can justify buying an ATV because everyone in the family can use it. A dirt bike? Often, he's the only one capable of riding it.

"To a seasoned rider an ATV is dangerous. He tries to ride it like a dirt bike and does everything wrong. A new ATV rider learns how to ride the unit naturally, with no built-in preconceptions. A vet rider will put his foot out when he turns and run over it... every time."

JACK PENTON—ISDE AND NATIONAL ENDURO RIDER/HI-POINT RACING

"I think they (ATVs) are dangerous. They bounce on your body when they flip and offer very little control compared to bikes. Anybody can ride one, anywhere. In the East, they ride them all year round. They're replacing snowmobiles in many respects, so they CAN be useful."

MARK BLACKWELL—FORMER MX CHAMPION AND HUSKY USA PRESIDENT

"I like the fact that ATVs will expand off-road activities and perhaps lead them into

two-wheelers. There's much less of a public negative attitude toward ATVs compared to bikes.

"Motorcycles AND ATVs are inherently dangerous. I'm appalled by the lack of safety equipment on ATV riders. They tend to NOT wear helmets and ride around with a false sense of security."

DICK BURLESON—EIGHT-TIME NATIONAL ENDURO CHAMPION

"I own THREE three-wheelers and like to ride them in the snow. They're a lot of fun where there's no traction, like sand, mud or light snow. I don't enjoy them when it's dry or when there's good traction. When the weather gets good, I park 'em and get the bikes out.

"It's a new area. People who normally would not buy a dirt bike, buy ATVs. As far as their impact on the land... ATVs don't seem to make ruts, but they do make wider paths. Also, ATV riders are not as well informed as dirt bikers regarding safety gear and attitudes. There's just too much random activity and too little thinking."

MARK DOOLEY—VICE PRESIDENT, DG PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

"The average ATV rider is a fun rider and doesn't even think about getting hurt. ATVs weigh much more than bikes, and three-wheelers are like magnets when you crash—they tend to follow you.

"In the last three years we've seen the use of safety gear rise from maybe five percent to 20 percent. It can only get better.

"Most MXers dislike ATVs because the first time they tried one, they ran over their foot and got hurt. I can see only growth in ATVs for the next three years."

JODY WEISEL—EDITOR, MXA MAGAZINE

"Parents love to buy them for their kids because they think that three wheels must be safer than two. By that same theory, my mother should have bought me a Buick Electra to race in. ATVs are totally different

from motorcycles. Every time I tried to ride one, I rode over my foot, flipped upside down and crawled back into my Buick too bruised and battered to shift gears."

PAUL CLIPPER—DIRT BIKE MAGAZINE

"I've done both, but I'd much rather ride a two-wheeler than a three-wheeler. Fun riding on three-wheelers is limited by the terrain they can handle, and I've found myself in a whole lot of trouble in a hurry a few times, trying to get an ATV up a steep hill. I don't begrudge riding space to any ATV enthusiasts, and I'll make room for them anywhere they want to ride, but give me a bike—any day of the week."

RANDY RUSSELL—DIRT WHEELS MAGAZINE

"The ability to ride a three-wheeler at speed can only enhance one's ability to ride well on a two-wheeler. You have to learn to pick three good lines at a time. Riding a three-wheeler only becomes difficult when one is limited by a narrow mind."

RICK SIEMAN—AMA #198305

"I hate to ride three-wheelers with a passion that approaches zeal. These awkward units gyrate in a general direction with a disquieting motion that induces nausea. Even when I sit on one, I get stomach pains.

"The skill level required to make an ATV move is not much more demanding than the primeval slime functions of birds eating. They are vile, dangerous things that should be smashed with a large instrument until they cannot roll anymore. Other than that, they're okay."

ROGER DeCOSTER—FIVE-TIME WORLD 500cc MX CHAMPION

"ATVs are only really dangerous when you race or try to go very, very fast. There's a false sense of security and the rider tends to relax and think he can't get hurt. The danger is only as much as you make it, especially on the bigger ATVs."