

KAWASAKI KL250A7

In these days of rising costs and runaway inflation, many can't afford the luxury of owning two bikes—one for street, the other dirt. If transportation is of major importance, motorcycles are stingy gas users. But how about an occasional trail ride? What kind of bike fits that bill?

Primarily a four-stroke will fit the bill; generally dependable and economical; fairly mild mannered, but with enough grunt to get you up a hill, or pass on the freeway. A low seat height is important for comfort when cruising around town, but you need suspension to handle a normal trail without smashing your kidneys to hamburger. Kawasaki's effort in the four-stroke,

dual-purpose bike is the KL250.

At 254 pounds, the KL isn't *that* heavy for a street-legal trail bike. While the weight can be felt, it's not over-taxing on the trails, just as long as they're not too rough.

The KL is equipped with a 21-inch front and a 17-inch rear wheel, with street-legal, trails-type tires. They handle the street chores decently, but are barely marginal for trail use. Front-end washout when fireroading is severe, partly from the 30.5-degree rake and mainly from the poor rubber.

With 8.6 inches of front-fork travel and 7.7 in the rear, the KL handles small trail bumps adequately. But, if you get out of the nice, mellow trail

spirit and start hitting whoops or water-bars at speed, expect harsh bottoming. The suspension is set up soft, and if wild thrashing in the hills is in your future, you'll have to spend some dough firming up the forks and shocks.

A CDI ignition and Mikuni carb are standard; they make for easy starting and good economy. Around town we got close to 60 miles to the gallon, so with a 2.6-gallon gas tank, fuel stops should be fairly far apart.

Both wheels have good, strong brakes. The front conical hub looks strikingly similar to the KDX unit and has a positive progressive feel on both street and trail. Though the rear works well for street use, some choppiness

DUAL TOOL

Mellow thumper

By the Street-Legal Staff



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Engine type	Four-stroke, SOHC single	Ground clearance	9.5 inches
Bore and stroke	70mm x 64mm	Steering head angle	30.5 degrees
Displacement	246cc	Weight (claimed)	254 pounds
Horsepower (claimed by factory)	N/A	Intended use, mfr.	On-, off-road
Carburetion	Mikuni BS34	Country of origin	Japan
Fuel tank capacity	2.6 gallons	Distributor:	
Transmission	Five-speed	Kawasaki Motors	
Gearing, front/rear	14/40	2009 E. Edinger	
Ignition	CDI	Santa Ana, California 92705	
Wheelbase	55.7 inches		



was felt in ripply bumps.

The single-cylinder four-stroke isn't particularly dazzling in the speed department. It is fairly torquey and, from all indications, reliable. With the five-speed tranny, top gear would barely pull 60 mph. First gear is too tall and for slow-speed plonking a gearing change would be needed. This would also take away from the KL's top end. A wide ratio tranny is the answer; lower first and second and a taller fifth. Maybe in 1982. Who knows?

All things considered, Kawasaki's biggest four-stroke, dual-purpose bike is a reasonable effort, hampered by an oddly spaced gearbox. □



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