

# GOING FOR BROKE!

Good overall power with decent suspension for the off-roader make the XT a nice play bike. Roosting through the mud should be done with caution, as the bike is only meant to go so far.

## Watch out, Honda, this baby is serious

By the Staff of DB

On looks alone there appears to be a real battle shaping up. For some weird reason the big-bore street/trail class got a shot of adrenalin for 1984. Honda has been the unheralded king of this division with its XL500/600 series of bikes. Previously, Yamaha stuck its nose in with halfhearted attempts to break the XL stranglehold.

No such luck.

This year both Yamaha and Kawasaki sprang forward with all-new equipment. With the XT600 and the KLR600, both companies are bidding to take over Honda's throne.

You can't help but like the looks of the Yamaha XT600. With brilliant white and red colors, it's a direct descendant of the European YZs. Beefy hand-me-down YZ-looking forks and a new-style Monocross rear end spruce things up, too. A drilled front disc and an aluminum rear swingarm attract the dirt minded. It looks fast and light.

With the new chassis, suspension and motor aboard, the 600 makes the year-old 550 look like a Buick in comparison. So, as you can see, before we ever threw a leg over the 600, our thoughts were positive.

### POWER CHARTS

Starting a big single is usually risky business. Kickbacks, dead knees and buckets of sweat come to mind. With the XT, getting fire takes very little effort. An automatic compression release keeps the lever resistance to a minimum. It won't kick back,

and unless it's been sitting for a long while, always starts within three or four kicks.

One quick trip through the gears showed us two things: One, it's much faster and more responsive than the 550; and two, it would give the XL600 a run for the money. The power delivery is sweet—smooth off the bottom into a strong mid-range and blending into a relatively mellow top end. Unlike the hard-hitting and high-revving XL600, the Yamaha is silky smooth, with the bulk of the muscle packed in the mid-range.

We ran an '83 XL600 and the XT600 together for a day, just for comparison's sake. It was noted that the Honda hits sooner and out-revs the Yamaha. In a drag race the Honda would jump out slightly and carry the lead a couple of lengths up to a 70-mph shut-off point. This isn't to say that the Yamaha is slow. It's not. We got an even 100 mph on flat ground and pinned the needle to 115 mph on a slight downhill. That's plenty fast for us. During this comparison, it was also noted that the Yamaha vibrates much less than the Honda. On a long haul it'll be easier on your bod.

Off-road trailing brings out the street heritage of the machine. It's geared way too high. We'd suggest dropping the counter one tooth for *any* dirt work. As it stands, *tight* going is not the XT's strong point.

Fire roading is a gas, as the mid-range power is perfect for maintaining traction on dry, skittery roads. When you get to tight



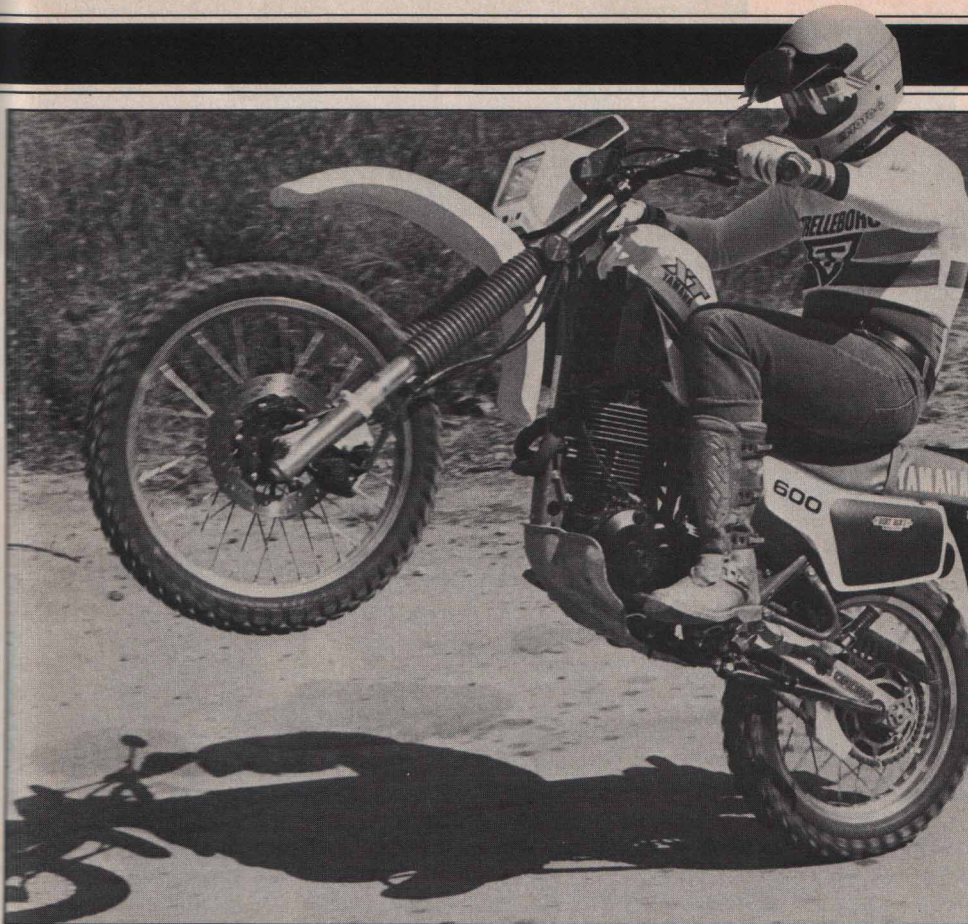
Folding levers, a skid plate and the motocross-bred safety saddle are nice touches for the dirt oriented. The tachometer, air scoops and plush suspension are for the street minded.

endurolike sections, plan on stalling quite often. This is where the lower gearing is a must! Faster skiddin'-type stuff is the strong suit of the bike. It gets up to 70 mph real quick and will scare even the experienced veteran.

### HANDLING, ON AND OFF

For such a hefty machine, the Yamaha is a quick handler. A tightish 28-degree rake gives it off-road traits that are acceptable. The new safety-type seat and tank combo aid in this area, too. Getting forward on the bike is natural, giving it a nimbler feel in





Our crack DB tester pops a visually stimulating wheelie. All that's needed is a blast of gas and the front end climbs.

pose in life, we'd rate the suspension as workmanlike. Remember, this is a street/trail bike, not a racer.

Street riding beats to a different tune. The bike is exhilarating, to say the least! The short wheelbase, combined with a power snap in the middle, spells wheelies. In fact, simple power-shifting through the gears will crank the front end sky-high. It's a rush. Playing Freddie Spencer in the canyons makes you feel that the bike was designed with this in mind. On the pavement it's light, steers quickly and has plenty of punch.

Up front the disc brake is more than adequate. It's only a single-piston unit (the XL is a double-piston caliper), but it hauls the 300-pounder down from speed quite nicely.

In dirt the action is sensitive, requiring some time to adjust its strength. After a few hours, you won't even notice it. The rear stopper is average; not great, not poor. It has a tiny folding tip on the end of a bulky pedal. We never bent the unit, but are dubious as to its worth.

#### BITS AND PIECES

Last year's XT500 carried the oil in the frame itself. The 600 is still a dry-sump motor but carries the oil in a tank located between the left-side panel and the rear tire.

A tachometer comes as stock equipment. One good flip tore the mount and destroyed the tach. In this same crash the turn signals went unharmed.

The passenger pegs bolt directly to the frame, unlike the swingarm-mounted units found on the XL. This is good news for the doubles riders. Also, the entire peg assemblies can be unbolted and removed.

Trick tank-mounted cooling shrouds look great, but what's the point? A meek horn is mounted behind the right-side shroud.

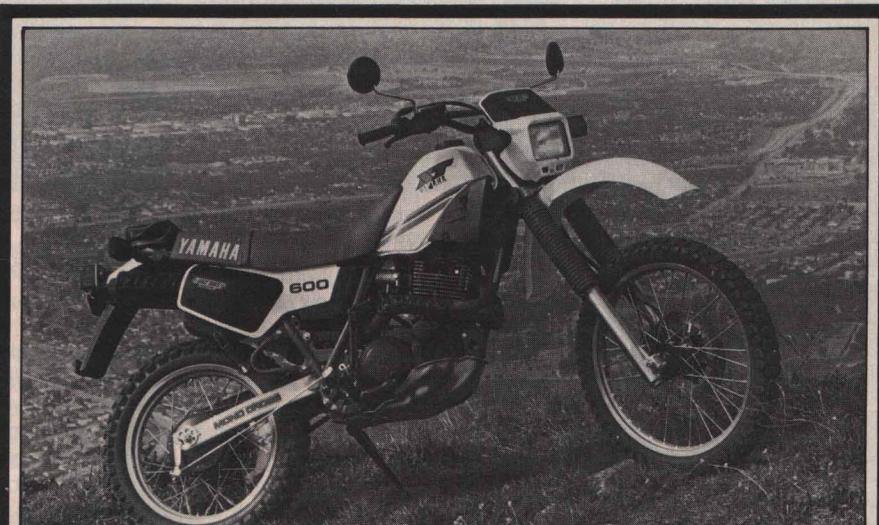
Enduro-designed snail/cam chain adjusters and the rear fender tool bag give a touch of dirt class to the XT. The low-hanging rear brake arm is bogus and just begging to get ripped off the first time the bike sees dirt.

Everyone loved the seat, especially passengers. It's long and comfortable for single or double riding. The skid plate molds around the bulky lower engine cases. You'll appreciate it the first time you cross a rocky stream bed.

A white YZ replica front fender does a good job of keeping the debris off the rider. The rear fender has an appendage hanging from it that is not only odd-looking—it's ugly.

#### MORE TO COME...SOON

Yes, the Yamaha XT600 is an excellent machine. Plush, with a snappy motor and smart dirt-oriented styling that give it the got-to-have appeal. In the big-bore street/trail class, this bike is definitely a contender for top honors. We haven't tested the new XL600 Honda or the KLR600 Kawasaki yet. Until we do, a winner cannot be declared. One thing's for sure: This has the makings of a hot shoot-out for the "King of the Duals" class. Stay tuned. □



### 1984 YAMAHA XT600L

Engine type	..... Air-cooled, 4-stroke, SOHC	Ground clearance	..... 260mm (10.2 in.)
Bore and stroke	..... 95mm x 84mm	Seat height	..... 860mm (33.9 in.)
Displacement	..... 595cc	Claimed weight	..... 326 lbs. with a full tank and oil
Carburetor	..... Teikei Y27PV	Tires	..... Trials type, dual-purpose tires
Ignition	..... CDI	Brakes	..... Front disc, drum rear
Starter	..... Manual, kick-type	Approximate retail price	..... \$2399
Transmission	..... 5-speed	Distributor:	
Clutch	..... Wet, multi-disc	Yamaha Motor Corp.	
Fuel tank capacity	..... 11.0 L (2.9 gals.)	6555 Katella Ave.	
Wheelbase	..... 1440mm (56.7 in.)	Cypress, CA 90630	

the corners. Still, always use caution, as the stock semi-knobs barely hold traction, even when the dirt is moist.

Both ends are soft on suspension; on the street you'll like them, but off-road riding brings out the limitations of the systems.

Any serious cow trailing will warrant heavier springs, both front and rear. But, in stock trim we felt that the XT performed better than last year's Honda XL. It's firmer, more progressive and will let you hit gnarlies with some confidence. Considering the XT's pur-