YZ250L: SIZZLING SUPER STOCKER!

DIRT BIKE
WPS
34355

DIRT BIKE

FEBRUARY 1984
UK £1.10 $1.75

KAWASAKI KX80: FASTER THAN A 125?!!

NATIONAL ENDURO CHASE: "SNAKE" RATTLES & ROLLS

HONDA CR500R: IT SCARES MAGOO!

MIKE BELL

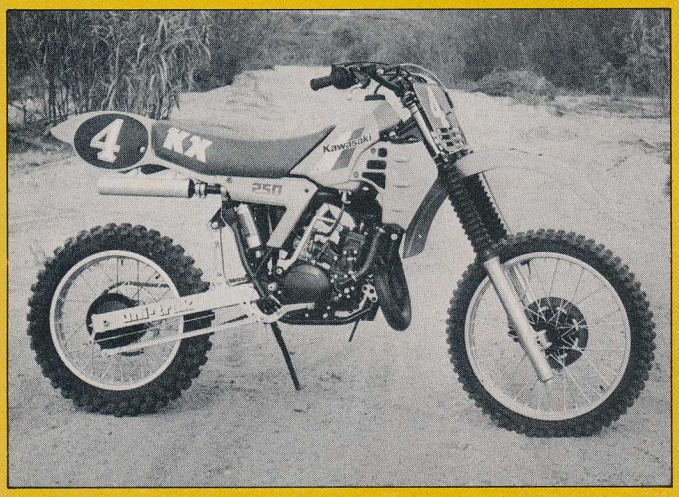
HONDA XR250R: MORE TORQUE, LESS PORQUE!

BAILEY'S HOT TIPS: "BURN THAT CLUTCH!"

ISSN0364-1546

DIRT BIKE

FEBRUARY 1984 VOLUME 14, NO. 2



KAWASAKI KX250

SAN DIEGO SUPERCROSS

HONDA CR500

KAWASAKI KX80

TESTS

FEATURES

COMPETITION

DEPARTMENTS

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.

ON THE COVER:—"Too Tall" Mike Bell styles for the ever-alert *DB* cameras. Aboard the YZ250, Mike gets aggressive on the production/works Yamaha. Photo captured by Paul Clipper. Inset photo of Clipper getting muddy on the XR250R by R. Sieman, who, incidentally, didn't shoot last month's cover, as previously credited. Stating that "A cover credit is the only thing I live for!" Clipper wants you to know that the January YZ shot was actually his. Valley Film gets the credit for transposing the dots into a real picture.

DIRT BIKE Magazine, ISSN 0364-1546 (Feb. '84) is published by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc., with editorial offices at 10600 Sepulveda Boulevard, Mission Hills, California 91345. Subscriptions $14.98 for 12 issues (one year). Canada add $4 per year and all other foreign add $5 per year for additional postage.

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 typewritten. Unsolicited contributions, manuscripts, photographs and illustrations 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 Company, Inc. The publisher does not assume responsibility for unsolicited material.

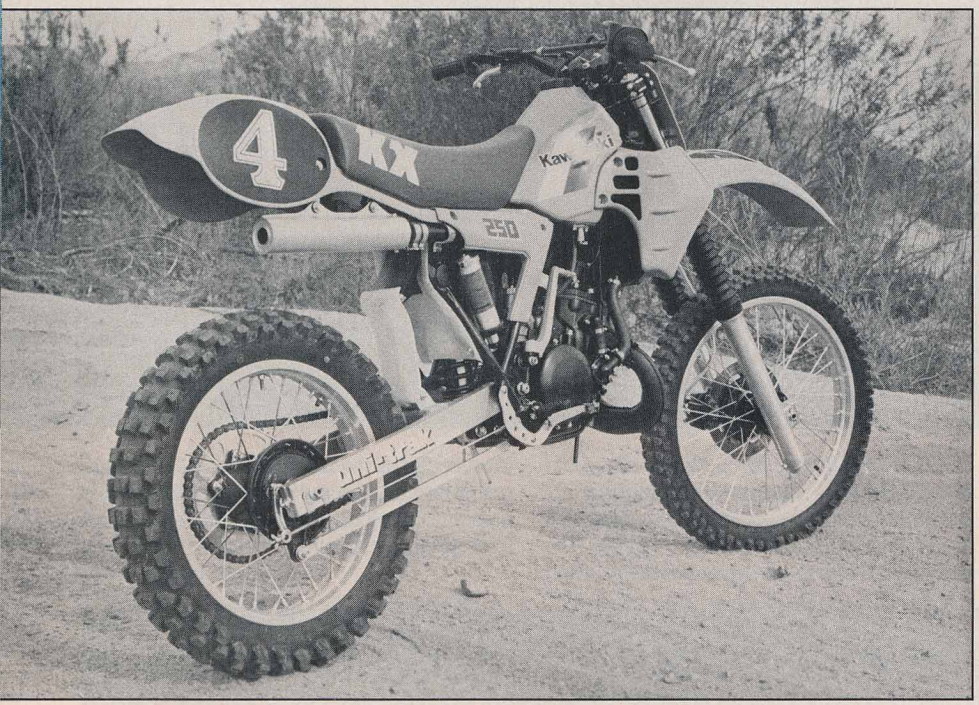
Second class postage paid at San Fernando, California 91340, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *DIRT BIKE* Magazine, P.O. Box 9502, Mission Hills, California 91345-9502.

KAWASAKI KX250C2

TRICK MOTOCROSSER TRAK

Lean, green & mean

By the Staff of Dirt Bike



Looking much like the 1983 model, the 1984 KX is actually a dramatically improved machine.

The Kawasaki KX250 was well down on our list of new 1984 bikes for testing. Like many others, we assumed that it was not much changed from the 1983 model. That was a huge mistake on our part. Even though the KX250 looks a great deal like last year's middleweight, it's a machine that has received massive changes and refinements. Here are some of the major changes, in no particular order:

- You'll find a lot more pure horsepower in the 1984 KX. It now revs out higher and also hits harder, earlier.
- A new pipe handles the gas-removing chores, and is tucked in better.
- The Keihin carb has been replaced with a 38mm Mikuni that comes with normal hex jets instead of the screw-slot Kawasaki jets that made us rip our hair out in tufts when trying to jet any KX.
- A higher compression ratio has increased the low-end punch of the KX250; this year it's up to 9.1:1 from 8.8:1.
- The radiators have been lowered 50mm. This may not sound like much until you consider that 13mm is just about a half inch!
- There's a new timing and advance curve in the CDI ignition.
- Some of the '83 KXs had leaks in the sealing/mating surfaces. All of the critical areas have been beefed up.
- Structurally, the KX has had the cross member behind the shock removed and the weak left side has been strengthened by a new gusset. Two of the rear frame members have been changed to allow for the increased (10mm) rear wheel travel.
- A new box-section aluminum swingarm promises to be stronger; new chain adjusters are on the end caps of the arm; and better chain guides and rollers replace the destructos of last year.
- The revised shock has both adjustable compression and rebound damping capabilities, and the preload is easier to accomplish. All you have to do is remove the bolt from the lower dog-bone and move the swingarm. After some initial break-in time, we didn't even have to do this, as the threads were then slightly above the level of the swingarm, and we could reach in there with a normal shock tool.
- Forks have been completely reworked with a new bottoming cone and an adjustable blow-off valve; eight clicks of adjustment are available.
- Inside the new forks are better springs that resist sacking out. Kawasaki claims they're the same as those used on the works bikes. One odd touch: The air valves are machined directly out of the fork caps.
- Straight-pull spokes can be found on the rear wheel, while the front retains the ordinary items.
- Both the shifter and the brake lever are fabricated from aluminum alloy, as is the ultra-light kickstarter.
- Finally, the Uni-Trak links have zerk fittings to make greasing the pins and bolts easy.
- A works-type aluminum alloy brace helps keep the front fender from flopping and cracking in heavy mud conditions.
- Shorter riders will welcome the lower seat height; the saddle is blue and rides up on the tank.
- New clutch plates are claimed to be improved and less grabby and noisy.
- The Uni-Trak leverage ratios have been altered, with the first part of the shock travel softer and a greater resistance to bottoming at the full-travel mark.

And this is the bike we thought was unchanged? Still, when all is said and done, how the machine works is the main thing—not *how much* has been changed. Change for the sake of change does not necessarily mean improvement.

POWER

The KX250C2 hits hard very early in the powerband, more so than the Honda, yet it does so without any sort of trick exhaust

When landing, the Uni-Trak rear is much appreciated. Some harshness from the forks is our only gripe.

valve setup. The mid-range is super strong and fairly wide, but just when you think the KX is going to rev out more at the end, it signs off.

This is very strange when you consider that peak horsepower is reached at 8500 rpm, a rather high rpm range. As the KX goes from the basement to 8500, it does so quickly. The time spent winding through each gear is rather abrupt. The rider is best off *not* trying to use that last rev, but shifting early and getting into the early mid-range ASAP.

We found that the best way to ride the KX was to avoid shifting down as much as we would on another 250. The KX responded well to hammering the clutch and staying in the tallest gear possible (see Bailey's clutch tips elsewhere in this issue). With most of the thrust developed at the low and mid-range, and not much at the higher revs, a rider who tries to make the KX work by screaming it will frustrate himself and turn slower lap times.

All things considered, we'll call the KX a powerful bike with plenty of snap. It would pull the YZ250 by a full length through the gears in a drag race, and the YZ is no slug.

SUSPENSION

We loved the action of the rear end but merely tolerated the forks. This is the best Uni-Trak ever, with a suppleness at the first part of the stroke that Kawasaki never exhibited before. It also resisted bottoming well. We got the rear end working best with 100mm of sag. Compression setting was two clicks out, with rebound at two clicks. The rear end also handled square-edged bumps nicely. Good all-around setup.

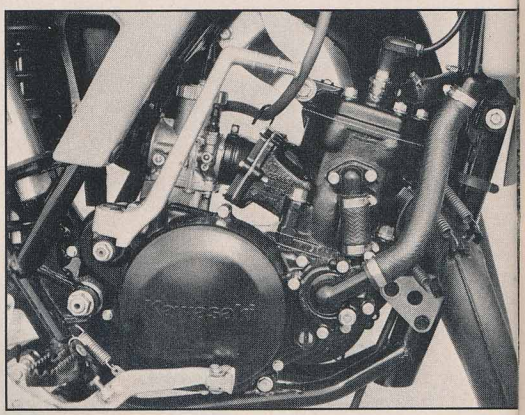
It's a bit easier to get to the preload this year, but it's not as sano as many other bikes. Some work is still needed here.

Those hefty 43mm KYB forks don't look like any other KYBs around, and they sure don't perform like them, either. Both the YZ and the RM250 deliver a superior upstroke under all conditions. The problem seems to be too much diving under braking conditions, even when the fork oil level is raised. Increasing the compression damping helps lessen the front end wallowing, but then the forks tend to "bounce" when the bike lands from a jump. We'd have to rate the action of the forks as only "average." There are optional springs available, but none were ready in time for our test. The stock spring number is 44026-1192, while the heavier spring number is 44026-197.

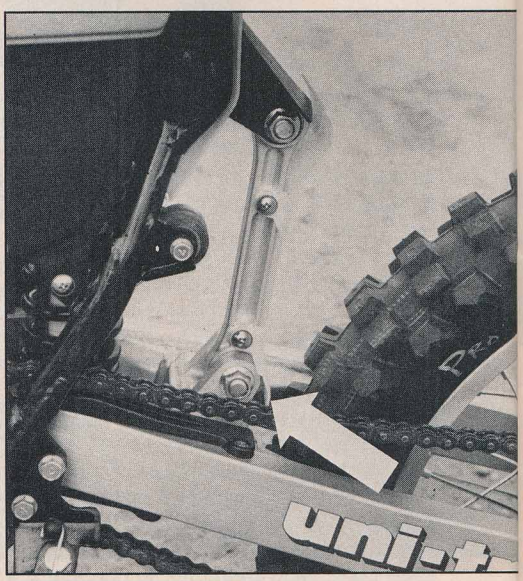
It's likely that a heavier spring, decreased compression damping and a higher oil level would make the forks as good as other KYB offerings. Stock, they're much like the Honda 250 forks, but they do resist bottoming in a superior fashion.

The KX is reasonably happy sliding through a corner and the rear end doesn't do anything weird when playing Speedway. Tires seem to be the limiting factor on flat turns; here, the KX can be coaxed through the turns by rolling on the throttle and us-

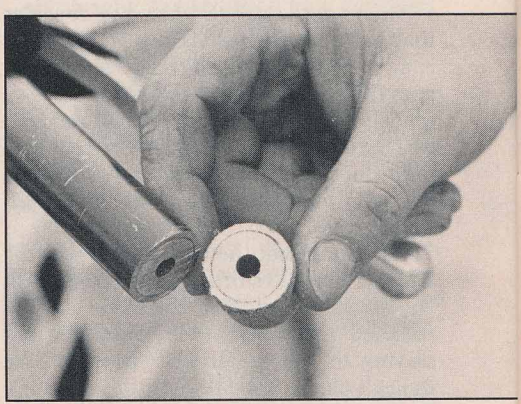
Dirt Bike's very own art director, Dennis West, mono-wheels the KX250 at Sunrise Cycle Park during race testing.



The 1984 powerplant is plenty strong, with lots of low-end and mid-range punch. The kickstarter is aluminum, as is the brake pedal.



It's slightly easier to get to the shock preload ring on the '84. Just remove this bolt and move the swingarm out of the way.



When we shortened the bars, we noted the solid metal inserts. They're common in street bikes to reduce vibration.

ing moderate lean. Bermshots can be handled as long as the rider *commits* himself to leaning the bike over heavily to compensate for the tendency to lift, and *allows* for it. In fact, some riders *use* the lift to overturn and then square off quickly. After a while, one does tend to adapt to this handling quirk, but when hopping from bike to bike as we do when testing, it is more obvious than one might think.

Straight-line stability was good, with very little headshake when coming down from speed. This bike would be at home in cross-country or desert events.

BITS AND PIECES

Even though the clutch is claimed to be improved, we noted a heavy vibration when taking off from a dead start—a sort of shuddering that had its maximum intensity at the maximum slippage point.

Shifting was excellent, although a hair notchy at first. More time and a few oil changes smoothed things to our complete satisfaction. Ratios seemed well spaced, and there should be no need to juggle around sprockets for most MX tracks.

Braking was typically KX: excellent front and rear, with that powerful disc leaving nothing to be desired in the way of fierceness.

A trip to the *DB* scales showed that the KX was 222.5 pounds with the side stand removed. Not the lightest 250 around, but certainly in the proverbial ballpark. The bike feels much lighter than the scales say, mostly because of the very low position of many of the heavy components. One rider commented, "It feels like a 125 when it's in the air."

Nothing gets in the way of the rider when moving around on the bike, as the midsection is very slim and clean, but taller riders mentioned that they got smacked in the rump by the rather tall rear fender with the dual strengthening ribs. Fact is, their tail section should not be back there in the first place, according to Gary Bailey. So there.

HANDLING

We'd call the KX250 a "vertical" bike. It works best with the wheels square to the ground. Unless cornering is done "by the book," the KX tends to straighten and lift. Effective cornering demands that the rider get forward on the saddle, weight the outside peg *and* have the throttle on.

Two of these things can be accomplished with no problem, but getting up on the saddle proves to be difficult for shorter riders (those five-foot-nine or less), as the saddle rises up as it goes on the tank. As the shorter rider moves forward, it raises his body upward and the bike then tends to lift up.

It's a simple matter to trim the saddle, but it seems that many of the new models are committing this design error. On paper, the upward sloping saddle looks good. On the track it's awkward and defeats the original purpose of a safety saddle. In 1982, Yamaha did the safety saddle properly, and since then no one seems to have done it right.

We can pleasantly report that the KX250 came jetted right on the money. This is a far cry from some of the bikes that must be dialed in for a remote mountain range in Tibet. Starting was easy as long as the rider put the bike in neutral. In gear, there was enough clutch drag to make starting irritating.

The basic shape, layout and feel of the KX are greatly improved over past efforts. More riders will feel at home on this KX250 than on any other. It's a much more universal bike than ever before.

When we sawed the too wide bars down to exactly 31¼ inches, we noted an odd thing: It took us 20 minutes to saw through the ends because the bar tubing is plugged with metal. We don't know whether this is to reduce vibration or to save grips, but it sure is weird.

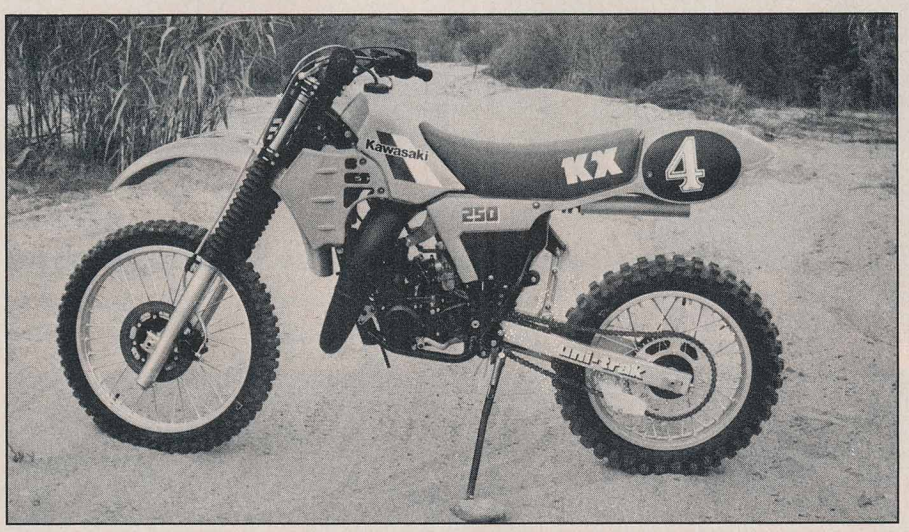
One minor bug: The front brake lever cannot be angled down properly once the bars are cut, because the hydraulic reservoir then hits the bars. Once you learn to ride forward with your arms up, the lowered brake lever position is a must. We don't have any answer, except to recommend a set of bars that rise earlier before they flare out.

Oh, yes...the headpipe hangs down too low. Sooner or later, you're going to crunch it in. Don't say we didn't tell you.

The KX250C2 is a handsome machine with spacey-looking plastic. It stayed looking good, too, as the stickers still haven't fallen off the gas tank as of this writing, which we consider only a bit less miraculous than the charge of the lemmings.

MANDATORY SUMMATION

We like the new KX250. Aside from the puzzling forks, the bike is solid, fast and totally competitive. A rider will need to adjust to the way the power hits, but once he does, he'll be able to battle any other 250 in a thoroughly competitive fashion. □



KAWASAKI KX250C2

Engine type	Water-cooled, 2-stroke, single
Bore and stroke	70.0mm x 64.9mm
Displacement	249cc
Carburetion	38mm Mikuni
Factory recommended jetting:	
Main jet	320
Needle jet	R-2
Jet needle	6J4-3
Pilot jet	30
Slide number	2.5
Recommended gasoline	95+ octane
Fuel tank capacity	8.0 L (2.1 gals.)
Fuel tank material	Plastic
Lubrication	Oil in gas, 30:1 ratio
Recommended oil	Kawasaki 2-stroke racing oil
Oil capacity, gearbox	700cc (0.74 qt.)
Air filtration	Dual oiled foam
Clutch type	Wet, multi-plate
Transmission	5-speed
Gearbox ratios:	
1	2.133 (32/15)
2	1.764 (30/17)
3	1.388 (25/18)
4	1.136 (25/22)
5	1.000 (24/24)
Gearing, front/rear	14/50
Ignition	CDI
Primary kick system?	Yes
Recommended spark plug	NGK B8EG/ NGK BR8EG
Silencer/spark arrester	Silencer only, aluminum
Exhaust system	High-pipe, right side, average noise
Frame, type	Single downtube, split cradle
Wheelbase	1465mm (57.68 in.)
Ground clearance	350mm (13.78 in.)
Seat height	975mm (38.0 in.)
Steering head angle (rake)	28.5°
Trail	118mm (4.65 in.)
Wet weight, no fuel	222 lbs.
Rim material	Aluminum alloy
Tire size and type:	
Front	3.00 x 21 Dunlop
Rear	5.00 x 18 Dunlop
Suspension, type and travel:	
Front	43mm KYB telescopics, air/oil, adj. comp., 300mm (11.81 in.) travel
Rear	Uni-Trak single shock, adj. comp. & reb., 315mm (12.4 in.) travel
Intended use	Motocross
Country of origin	Japan
Retail price, approx.	$2299
Distributor/Manufacturer:	Kawasaki Motor Corp., U.S.A. 2009 E. Edinger Ave. Santa Ana, CA 92705
Parts prices, high-wear items:	
Piston assembly, complete	$41.06
Piston rings only	13.26
Cylinder	176.33
Shift lever	19.32
Brake pedal	33.45
Front sprocket	16.56
Overall rating of bike, keeping intended use of machine in mind:	
Handling	Very good
Front suspension	Good
Rear suspension	Excellent
Power	Very good
Cost	Very good
Attention to detail	Excellent
Effectiveness, stone stock	Very good

This rating system is included to aid in comparison of bikes in the same displacement and intended-use categories. Comparing the ratings of two dissimilar machines (four-stroke vs. MXer, 175 enduro vs. 80cc mini) is a meaningless exercise in futility.