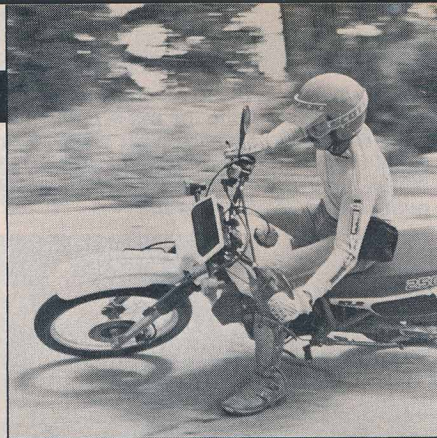


KAWASAKI KLR250

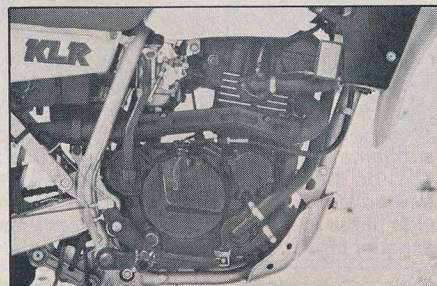
LIQUID-KOOLED KANYON KRAZY

*Making a splash
in the dual-
purpose
pool*

By the Staff of
DIRT BIKE



A regular Canyon Krazy: The KLR will keep up with many roadsters on the tight switchbacks. The key to moving quickly here is to ride it like a dirt bike—foot out in the turns and clutching it.



Though it's not what you'd call pipey, the KLR's DOHC four-valve engine IS a revver. It makes better-than-average power and, thanks to the liquid-cooling system, makes it consistently. Liquid is pumped from the lower right side of the engine to the dual radiators mounted in front of the fuel tank.

◀ **Suspension works well for most of the conditions the KLR is likely to encounter. Though it's better than we expected on the dirt, its relatively short travel does limit speedy travel. On the road the KLR was capable of handling almost anything that came its way.**

Back in 1981, Yamaha set the motocross world, as well as the rest of the dirt bike world, on its technological ear by introducing its liquid-cooled YZ125 motocrosser. Sure, watercooling had been experimented with on a few works bikes, and some of the hop-up guys were offering liquid-cooled cylinder heads, but the YZ was the first bike to put the technology to work on production machinery.

Though it's been highly successful on both the street and dirt, watercooling has taken a bit longer to leak, as it were, into the realm of dual-purpose machinery. With the introduction of its KLRs—both 600 and 250—Kawasaki has taken a giant stride toward revolutionizing this segment of the market.

INSIDE THE QUARTER NINJA

Cosmetically, the KLR250 is set apart from the air-cooled legions by its dual plastic radiator scoops. The shrouds mount at the front and below the 2.5-gallon metal gas tank, and they channel air to a pair of frame-mounted aluminum radiators.

Coolant is pumped from the lower right of the engine case. It goes first to the left unit, then across the frame through a hose to the right radiator, where the liquid then drops to its delivery port at the upper right of the cylinder. There's a coolant reservoir located below the seat on the left side of the bike, and a clear plastic window allows for easy coolant level checks. Additional fluid can be added to the system through this reservoir as needed.

Even though the engine runs in water, its DOHC four-valve head and cylinder still feature substantial finning. The engine itself is, if nothing else, interesting to look at, and it draws a lot of questions from observers not used to water pumps on dual-purpose machinery. One of our testers—a regular canyon crazy—thought the mill looked a lot like a quarter-size version of the street-only Kawasaki Ninja.

OUT ON THE ROAD

Since this is *Dirt Bike*, we were naturally most interested in the KLR's off-road prow-

ess, but a lot of us also like to get out on the pavement when the opportunity arises. This is the beauty of a bike like the KLR—theoretically, you can go almost anywhere with it. And that's what we wanted to do.

Our test ride started on the winding black-top roads through the Angeles National Forest. The tarmac winds its way from several points at the base, through the foothills, and finally to the summit of the rugged mountains of the Southern California range, all the while following contours dictated by the jagged, rocky terrain. We brought along our well-used Yamaha XT250 dual-purpose mount to serve as a point of reference when switching off at breaks in the testing.

On the winding roadway the KLR was outstanding, especially when you consider that it was not built primarily for road work. Cornering was smooth and predictable within the limits of the tires, which we didn't reach very often. It's tough enough falling in the dirt, and utter insanity to do it on the road.

The KLR's engine qualifies as a revver—it makes better-than-average power, but most of it is at or near the upper rev range. The powerband isn't pipey; there's a gradual, predictable rise in pony output from right above



A quiet spark arrester/muffler, good-sized tool pouch, flexible turn signals and integral taillight ride at the rear of the KLR. Both front and rear fenders are plastic, but the fuel tank is metal.



Getting you where you want to go is the KLR's specialty. Jeep trail and fire road travel is no problem, and the Kawasaki can manage passage through a lot of terrain that would stop most four-by-fours.



KAWASAKI KLR250D2

Engine type	Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, DOHC 4-stroke	Rake/trail	28.5°/117mm
Bore and stroke	74mm×58mm	Wet weight, no fuel	267 lbs.
Displacement	249cc	Tire size and type:	
Carburetion	Keihin CVK34	Front	3.00×21 Dunlop K750A
Factory recommended jetting:		Rear	4.60×17 Dunlop K750A
Main jet	120	Suspension, type and travel:	
Needle jet	N/A	Front	Telescopic fork, air/oil, 230mm
Jet needle	N31B	Rear	Uni-Trak, single shock, 230mm
Pilot jet	35	Intended use	Dual-purpose: street/trail
Slide number	N/A	Country of origin	Japan
Fuel tank capacity	11.0 L (2.0 gals.)	Retail price, approx.	\$1999
Lubrication	Wet sump	Distributor/Manufacturer:	
Gearbox ratios:		Kawasaki Motors Corp., USA	
1	3.000:1	2009 E. Edinger Ave.	
2	2.000:1	Santa Ana, CA 92705	
3	1.500:1		
4	1.250:1	Overall rating of bike, keeping intended use in mind:	
5	1.050:1	Handling	Very good
6	0.904:1	Front suspension	Very good
Gearing, front/rear	15/44	Rear suspension	Very good
Ignition	CDI	Power	Very good
Recommended spark plug	NGK DP9EA-9 or ND X27EP-U9	Cost	Very good
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/yes	Attention to detail	Very good
Wheelbase	1415mm (55.71 in.)	Effectiveness, stone stock	Very good
Ground clearance	270mm (10.6 in.)		
Seat height	855mm (33.7 in.)		

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 is a meaningless exercise in futility.

idle to the 9500 rpm redline. This predictability is an advantage on the road—there's absolutely no tendency to break traction at the rear wheel.

UP ON THE TRAILS

At the top of the canyons, our test crew departed from the blacktop for greener pastures. There are hundreds of miles of beautiful fire roads that loop through the forest, most of them open to off-road vehicles. The initial stretch of road proved to be quite rocky, and the KLR seemed skittish at first but calmed down as the rider learned to dodge large obstacles rather than ride over them. Too much time on plushly suspended motocross and enduro iron can spoil you.

Cornering at high speeds was also marginal at first, but once the proper technique was learned, things became quite manageable. The KLR will slide across loose, rocky or dusty terrain, mostly due to the limitations of the on/off-road tires. If you're carrying any kind of speed coming into a turn, the best approach is to head for a berm and bounce off it. It's effective and soon becomes second nature. We'd have to rate the suspension as very good, keeping the intended use of the machine in mind. Both front and rear will soak up nasty stuff, as was our experience on the trails. More than once we found ourselves rounding a blind corner, only to encounter a large rock or pothole. Most of the time it was only necessary to gas it and hang on while letting the forks and shock do the rest of the work.

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KAWASAKI KLR250



Front brakes? Don't ask! The Kawasaki's got more than enough for anyone. The rear binder does an equally good job of slowing down things.

we decided to head back for the smooth stuff. Once clear of the mountains, we headed out to see what the bike was like on the dreaded SoCal freeways.

Not bad, actually.

The first thing you learn to appreciate is the KLR's sixth gear. We never got close to using it on the fire roads, but it's a requirement on the Autobahn. The engine turns about 5500 rpm at 55 miles per hour in sixth, which is about as fast as you'll want to go on this machine. The motor is more than capable of pulling 70-plus mph, but gusting winds from passing semis are a constant reminder that this is a lightweight bike, not especially suited for high-speed freeway encounters. After brief stints at illegal speeds, there's a welcome lack of crosswinds and vibration at the magical 55 plateau.

Brakes are, simply put, excellent. The front disc is a one-finger stopper that's more than a match for anything in the class. The rear is smooth and powerful without being the least bit cranky. A bit of squealing was noticed from the front after it got hot, but nothing major.

PIECES AND MINOR BITS

The single rear Uni-Trak shock features adjustable preload. Up front the KYB air/oil telescopic forks carry a pair of fork boots to protect the tubes. The control panel features a speedo, tach, temperature gauge and indicator lights for turn, high beam and neutral. There's a fork lock built into the ignition switch. The turn signals mount on flexible plastic stalks that will survive minor, and possibly not so minor, spills. In the back there are a pair of snail-cam chain adjusters, passenger pegs and a large, quiet spark arrester/muffler unit. Cleated metal footpegs help keep your feet where they belong, and a folding metal shift lever protects your wallet.

BACK TO THE GARAGE

There's a kind of dual-purpose revival going on these days. Lots of people are finding that a bike is the best way to get away from it all, even if it's not to the race track. When the day is done, and you finally roll that bike inside, you might find yourself thinking more about where you've been and what you've seen than just how you got there. And if you do find yourself thinking like that, you might start thinking about heading on down to your local Green dealership for a spin on the KLR. We think that you might think it's as good as we think it is. Think about it. □

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