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DIRT BIKE

JANUARY 1990

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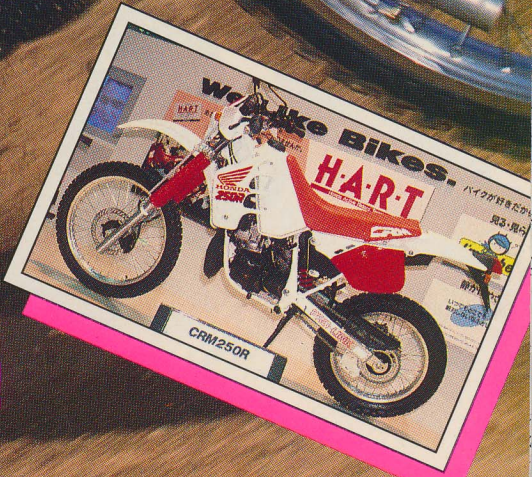


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GREAT RACES
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'90 CR500:
HOW IT RATES ON
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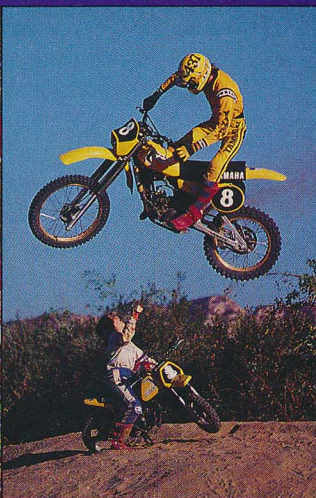
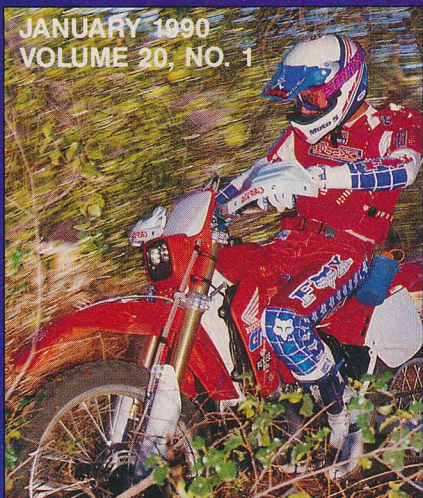
**FIRST PHOTOS:
EXOTIC NEW BIKES FROM TOKYO'S
SPECTACULAR 1990 MOTOR SHOW!!!**



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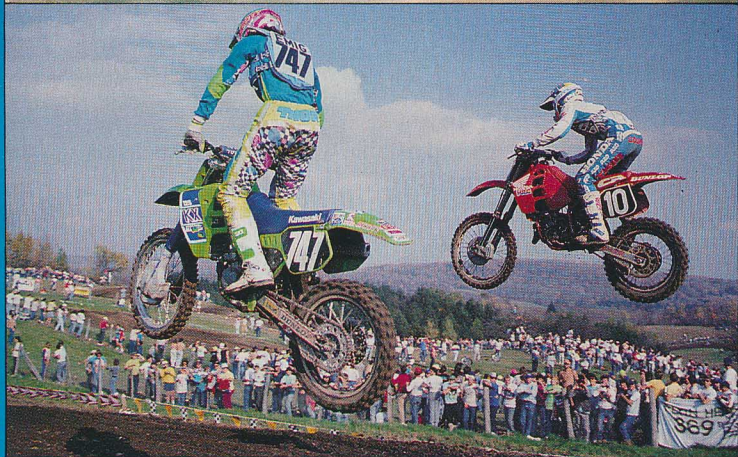


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WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear. *Dirt Bike* does all of its testing and photography legally on public land, or private land with permission from the owner(s), and we abide by the local laws concerning vehicle registration and muffler/spark arrester requirements. We are not responsible for quality of aftermarket accessories we use.

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ON THE COVER: Troy Welty melts a berm on the 1990 Kawasaki KX250, while we take a look back to our roots, and the *street-legal* Honda CRM250 poses for the public. Photos by Joe "Papa-San" Kosch.

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1990 KAWASAKI KX250H1

Well worth the wait
By the DIRT BIKE Staff



Long after the other manufacturers had released their 1990 models for testing, Kawasaki had yet to unveil the new perimeter-framed KX250 or 125. This led to a huge roostertail of rumors. Here are a few of the juicier ones: 1) The top aluminum shock tower was breaking; 2) the perimeter frame was breaking; 3) they couldn't make the inverted Kayabas perform nearly as well as last year's 46ers (and Europeans would kill to swap their '89 inverted 41s for made-for-America 46s); 4) Jeff Ward says, "Performance is identical to the '89s" and so forth. The *Dirt Bike* staff disregarded these ugly rumors and patiently waited for Kawasaki to unwrap the test bikes.

We met with Kawasaki at Goat Breker's well-pampered and heat-treated Perris Raceway for our first ride. After giving the new KX the famed "once-over," we concluded that the bike looked better in real life than in the photos we had seen. Attention to detail was prevalent. Clear tape is used at the swingarm pivot box to limit paint scuffing on the awesome perimeter frame. Next we pulled the tank. The center of the tank actually droops between the twin "backbone" beams. You could almost throw a party in the roomy airbox. One could spend hours poking and prodding the new KX and goggle on about trick little features, but let's get the technical stuff done in a hurry so we can ride!

BEFITTING THE GREEN BEAST

Engine: New cylinder with revised port specs houses a new piston with Alumilite-coated wrist pin holes for increased durability. Spark is provided by a hotter microcomputer-controlled ignition with dual generator (not lighting) coils. Larger-capacity intake tract increases flow and throttle response. Spent gases exit via a new lowboy pipe and more quiet oval aluminum silencer.

A floating clutch like the KX500 improves feel and drives wider and stronger gears. Also, the clutch cover was redesigned to provide better oil flow and cooler operation, and the left crankcase was widened to provide room for the wider gears. For a cooler-



running motor, coolant flows to both radiators simultaneously. No earth-shattering updates here, but face it—the KIPS-valved mill wasn't hurting in the first place.

Chassis: Why the road racing-inspired box-section perimeter frame? The twin lateral beams directly triangulate the steering head to the swingarm pivot to construct the most rigid and mass-centralized frame ever offered to the dirt biking public. It also allowed for a long overdue and more mobile tank/seat/sideplate lines. An additional crossbrace improves swingarm rigidity and the linkages have been raised 15mm to eliminate contact when casing it over doubles or whoops. Head angle is a steep 26.5 degrees, with 4.4 inches of trail, so cornering and stability are enhanced. Footpegs are the widest (front-to-rear) in the business for safety and support.

The fuel cell holds 2.2 gallons, the same as last year, but expansion for more capacity (see *DB*, March '88) is harder. IMS ([714] 781-5849) is working on a larger-capacity tank. The radiator shrouds, side plates and rear fender are totally redesigned, as is the seat. An optional taller seat is available. A plastic front disc guard is also new for 1990.

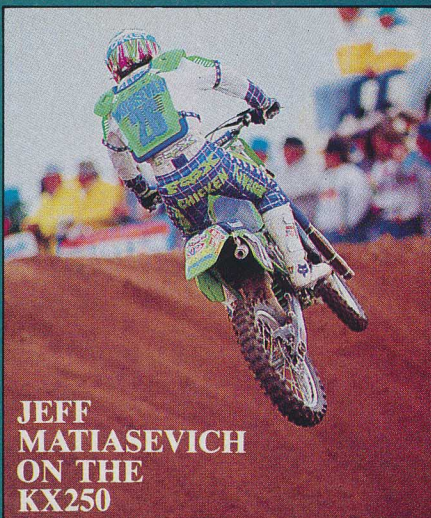
Suspension: Inverted 41mm Kayaba forks replace the 46mm conventional cartridge forks found on the '89s. The inverted KYBs offer 20 compression and rebound adjustments. Although the linkage has been moved up 15mm, the Uni-Trak leverage curve is unchanged. Two aluminum triangles link the perimeter frame and KYB piggyback shock, which features 16-way adjustable compression and rebound damping. Kawasaki's goals were to provide stiff spring rates for aggressive riders, with adjustments in the middle of their range. This way riders can back off or crank in the clickers a tad to accommodate their size and style of riding. Smart thinking.

Brakes: Not much new here; Nissin master cylinders and callipers squeeze slotted steel discs at both ends. The front disc has a diameter of 8.7 inches, while the rear is 7.5 inches.

ON LINE IN THE PERIMETER ZONE

Engine: The '90 KX250 has that familiar KX-style throaty burst when the throttle is

Banzai bunny: The '90 KX250 bolts out of corners like a huge green rabbit on steroids. Stiffer forks and frame give it hare-like cornering abilities.



JEFF MATIASEVICH ON THE KX250

• Jeff “Chicken” Matiasevich, twice Western 125 Supercross Champion, is getting bumped to the 250 class in supercross competition for 1990, but he’ll ride 125s outdoors. Chicken spent some time on the ’89 250 in Eastern supercrosses and recently was introduced to the 1990 KX250. Let’s take a closer look at Jeff and his outlook for ’90 aboard the KX250.

DIRT BIKE: Now that you’ve ridden the production KX250, what do you think?

JEFF MATIASEVICH: It’s the best 250 I’ve ever ridden. It’s got a lot of snap for launching out of turns and over doubles. I wouldn’t do anything to my race bike for supercrosses and we’ll want to smooth it out a little for the Golden State Series. It’s set up really stiff for supercross and the layout is very good. It’ll turn on a dime and you can put the bike anywhere you want it.

DB: So your outlook is strong for 1990?

JM: I’m looking forward to it, for sure. I think we’ll have the best bike going into the season. The 125 outlook is also good; it has the same components and a much better motor than ’89—much more midrange and a stronger top. •

NAME: Jeff “Chicken” Matiasevich

BIRTH DATE/AGE: April 26, 1969/20

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 5’11”/155 lbs.

HOMETOWN: La Habra, CA

HOBBIES: Jet skiing, water skiing, training

FIRST BIKE: ’80 XR80

FIRST RACE: Age 13, YZ80, fourth mini beginner

FAVORITE TRACK: Unadilla

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: ’89: Western 125 Supercross Champion, 6th in 125 Nationals; ’88: Western 125 Supercross Champion; ’87: 9th 125cc Western Supercrosses, 125 and 250/Open Pro/Am Amateur National Champion, 250cc Stock Ponca City National Champion, 4th in 125 USGP, Sydney and Brisbane, Australia, Supercross Champion, 125cc Ultracross Champion.

LONG-TERM GOALS: “To win a couple of 250 supercrosses and finish the season in the top five and to win the 125 National series in 1990. Right now I’m just taking it one year at a time.” •

wicked—more than the ’89. It hits in the basement and shrieks into the midrange. Top-end power is eye-watering. This motor works very well in supercross or outdoor applications. Disengage the moderately light-feeling clutch and snick the transmission up a cog. That’s right; don’t even waste your time starting off in first gear. This puppy has that torque pull that translates into a smooth burst of power once the clutch is dumped and the throttle goosed. Experienced riders will start in third. When the gate drops, you’ll be cleanly gone, through a semi-short straight and into the first corner—without ever making a shift! If you’re capable of pulling the holeshot, you’ll even be more capable on the new KX.

The fun won’t stop there. Cutting laps will boost the fun. The KX snaps to attention once the throttle is twisted. The potent hit, strong mid and ample top will have riders stuffing turns, exploding berms, clutching in the meat of the powerband to gain lift for clearing doubles, skimming the ground while

accelerating and generally feeling like the world’s in their hands. It’s extremely good and must be felt to be appreciated.

Chassis: Of course, the first thing to be noted is the great seating compartment. The new KX is slim, flat and has an overall “together” feeling. Once you stop ogling the frame, head out to the course. Right off the

KX250H1



Engine type	Case-reed and KIPS-valved, liquid-cooled two-stroke
Displacement	249cc
Bore and stroke	67.4mm x 70mm
Carburetion	Keihin PWK38 crescent-slide
Fuel tank capacity	2.2 gals. (8.5L)
Gearing	14/48
Lighting coil	No
Spark arrester	No

Green sticker legal in stock trim	No
Claimed dry weight	213 lbs.
Sound output (MIC 20" test)	98 dB
Wheelbase	58.3 in. (1480mm)
Ground clearance	15.2 in. (385mm)
Seat height	37.6 in. (955mm)
Tire size and type:	
Front	80/100 x 21 Dunlop K490
Rear	100/90 x 19 Dunlop K695

bat, the KX impresses the rider with excellent turning and inspiring stability. Sure, some might claim that the handling improvements are due to the half-degree-steep head angle and different axle offset which give a smidgen more trail. Granted, it helped. However, the main boosts in handling capabilities are the rigid frame and fabulous body parts that finally allow you to *really* move around on the KX.

Suspension: Kawasaki has had a full year to dial the inverted KYBs for the American market and performance shows they did their homework well. The forks took G-outs and square-edged hits very well for every test



The box-section perimeter frame comes from Kawasaki's road race technology and offers never-before-seen rigidity in a motocross bike. Intake tract volume is increased considerably.

rider, without a hint of spiking anywhere in the travel. We like them better than the excellent 46mm forks of '89, in all conditions. Likewise, the rear provides excellent compliance and traction over small hits and soaks up anything thrown its way. Other than setting sag, we didn't have to change settings from rider to rider. Kawasaki's "stiff" philosophy really paid off on the KX250!

Brakes: Up front, power and feel were ex-



Suspension:

Front	Kayaba 41mm inverted cartridge system, adj. comp./reb., 12.2 in. (310mm) travel
Rear	Uni-Trak, Kayaba hard-anodized aluminum piggyback, adj. comp./reb., 13 in. (330mm) travel
Country of origin	Japan
Suggested retail price	\$3899

Replacement parts cost:

Piston	\$53.98
Ring(s)	\$20.16
Clutch plate (f)	\$4.72 (8)
Clutch plate (m)	\$6.88 (7)
Front sprocket	\$17.12
Rear sprocket	\$54.50
Front brake pads	\$32.90
Rear brake pads	\$32.90

Distributor/Manufacturer: Kawasaki Motor Corp.
9950 Jeronimo Rd.
Irvine, CA 92718

KX250H1



they had. There are going to be a lot of green machines in winner's circles this year. The motor explodes out of turns, the suspension puts that power to the ground, the frame is more rigid than the most staunch environmentalist, it carves and goes straight with abandon and it feels like an extension of the rider. Most of all, it disproves all of those ugly rumors. By the way, that rumor about Ward saying that the new KX basically performed the same as an '89 came from a reliable source. Bull! There's absolutely no comparison! □

▲ **Stealth bomber:** A slim new layout makes the KX feel invisible under the rider, and the suspension feels plush on stutters and big air landings.

cellent; however, the rear felt spongy even after repeated bleeding. We rode the 125 and 500 on the same day and both delivered excellent binding power. We suspect a trapped

air bubble or damage to the master cylinder plunger seal. This is the only thing on the KX250-H1 that we could find to snivel about, other than the thing was so late in arrival.

WAS IT WORTH THE WAIT?

Let's put it this way: A lot of racers out there who didn't wait are going to be wishing

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