

YAMAHA'S NEW YZ125: HARDEST HITTING 125 IN '87

WPS
34355

**DIRT
BIKE**

DIRT BIKE

**KAWASAKI'S INCREDIBLE KX250:
IF YOU CAN'T WIN ON
THIS...GIVE UP!**



\$2.00
UK £1.60

MARCH
1987

**HOW DO
YOU RATE
ASA
RIDER?
TAKE THE
TEST,
PAGE 22**

**PROJECT
IT200:
THE MASTERPIECE
IS COMPLETE!**



**TESTING
THE MOST
POPULAR
DIRT BIKE
EVER MADE!!**

**BARSTOW TO VEGAS
MASSACRE: LOCAL UNKNOWN
WINNING THE FACTORY
STARS!**

**'87 CR250 LO
MUSCLE MO...**

DB91342 OSTR000 03 8802 #
WM OSTR0M #
14808 AZTEC ST 14808 #
SYLMAR CA 91342 91342 #



**HONDA'S
NEW 250X 4-TRAX:
AN XR250 WITH 2 MORE WHEELS?**

DIRT BIKE

MARCH 1987 • VOLUME 17, NO. 3



HUSKY 430 CROSS COUNTRY



YAMAHA IT200 HOP-UP



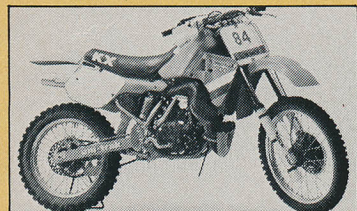
KAWASAKI KX250



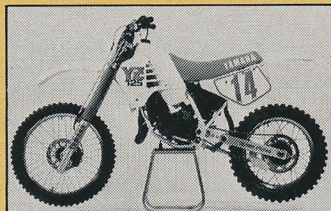
HONDA XR80



HONDA 4-TRAX 250X



BARSTOW TO VEGAS



YAMAHA YZ125

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.

Lee Waldie Craig Scott Chris Koira

ON THE COVER:—Steve Schmitz and Lance Johnson split the newest *Dirt Bike* cover aboard the latest rockets from Kawasaki and Yamaha. Schmitz (top), obliterates a corner on the potent KX250, and Johnson lofts the front end on the quick YZ125. Both photos were captured by "Fearless" Fran Kuhn. DeWest tastefully laid out the design, and Valley Film did the color separations.

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THE EQUALIZER

One step forward & no steps back

1987 KAWASAKI KX250

By the DIRT BIKE Staff



It seems to be getting harder and harder to evaluate and properly test the current crop of hard-core motocrossers these days. The reason is, *all* are good machines. Gone are the days of glaring handling problems and vacant powerbands; all of today's bikes have reached a plateau of semi-equality. In order to separate the men from the boys, you must look hard, which brings us face to face with the 1987 Kawasaki KX250. Kawasaki has incorporated subtle changes along with semi-major revamps in an effort to stay abreast of the quickly changing motocross market. Let's take a look at the latest in green technology.

GOING DOWN, DOWN, DOWN

In 1986 the KX250 mill was probably the best all-around 250 mill on the market. The Kwacker powerplant was blessed with huge sums of usable low-end and mid-range thrust. For 1987 the men in green increased the stroke by five millimeters, and decreased the bore. Add to this the KIPS valves (rpm-activated boost exhaust ports) with a new pipe, and you now have a broader and lower torque-style powerband.

Along with the redesigned mill, Kawasaki scrapped the 40mm Mikuni carb in favor of a 38mm unit. Again, the new carburetion, mated with the head and barrel mods have created a 250 workhorse of a motor. There's no top-end dizziness here; it all starts at the bottom end and then transfers to a strong mid-range with very little power being made at the upper revs.

Getting the KX up to speed is accomplished via the five-speed tranny which, after the stock oil was replaced with Maxima transmission oil, operated flawlessly. A nagging problem with all pre-'87 Kawasakis was hopeless clutch action. A strange, grabby, lurching feel plagued the machine. Thanks to the use of thinner clutch plates, aluminum drive plates and six springs instead of five, the clutch is an easy pull and smoothly efficient to operate.

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

As we stated earlier in the test, Kawasaki has made some small refinements and some major updates for the KX. The biggest difference in both the aesthetic and performance areas is the new Uni-Trak rear end. Apparently, it was only a matter of time till Kawasaki joined the rest of the Asian community with a Honda-type shock layout. The old dogbone struts of past KXs have been done away with.

The new, lower-link Uni-Trak system features a piggyback Kayaba hard-anodized shock with 16 clicks for compression and rebound adjustment. The Kayaba damper is nestled neatly behind the airbox, out of harm's way. However, in the new location, the bottom portion of the shock hangs low and is exposed to the elements. We consider the action of the shock to be first-rate, especially after the sag is set at 100mm and the compression adjustment is turned all the way out to the softest setting. Once these steps have been taken, the KX rear end will

Incredible power at the flick of a wrist allows the KX pilot to totally disintegrate any berm. Turnability is vastly improved, and power and stability are awesome.

outperform any other rear suspension tested, to date. Pros may opt for a heavier spring, but for the masses the Uni-Trak is awesome!

TCV UP FRONT

When the KXs were first released, we heard that Kayaba would be producing cartridge kits for the forks at a later date. Well, we still don't have the cartridges (we'll keep you abreast of their availability), but we have a set of very good front dampers. Again, a little fine-tuning will bring the most out of the forks. Start with a good-quality five-weight fork oil set at 125mm from the top of the tubes. This will prevent the KX from bottoming in harsh G-out situations. We chose to set the compression adjuster (at the bottom of the forks) all the way out (the softest setting).

Once these mods were completed, the KX was able to absorb the smaller braking bumps without the jolt being transmitted to the rider's arms. Softening the front end also improved the turning ability of the Kawa. The mid-stroke of the forks is good for a conventionally damped set of forks, but not in the same league as cartridge units. As with the rear end, stiffer spring rates are available, and faster or heavier riders may want to try them.



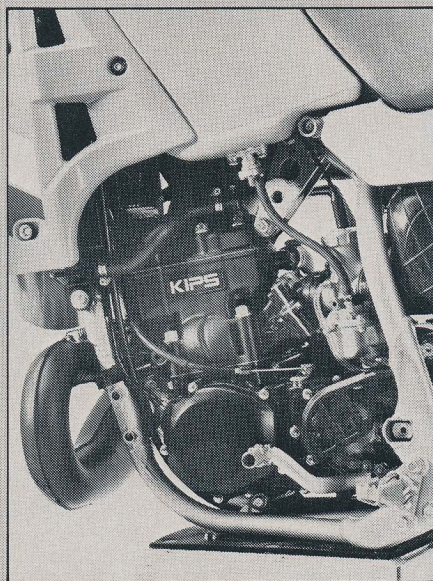


It's hard to find fault with the KX in any category. Suspension, handling, power and looks are all first-rate. Kawasaki has one heck of a bike.

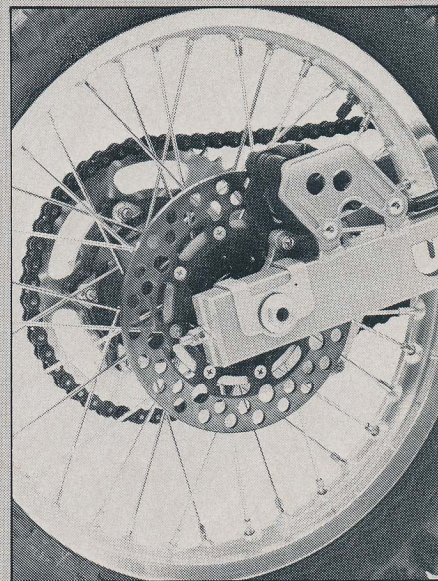
A look at the undercarriage provided by wheelie expert Steve Schmitz shows a highly vulnerable pipe. We dented ours in a semi-slow front-end wash out. ►



Power forms at the bottom with the '87 KX and surges into a strong mid-range. A change in the stroke, as well as some head mods, let the Kawa dig trenches and climb virtually anything.



Last year's 40mm Mikuni has been replaced by a 38mm unit. Aluminum drive plates and thinner clutch plates have remedied the lurching clutch action of past KXs.



Rear brake action is still on the touchy side but is improved over last year's unit. Rims have been beefed up. Hopefully, the cracks of last year's bikes will not reappear.

LOOKING AT THE FORKS AND SHOCK AS A UNIT

By refining the Uni-Trak rear and dialing in the oil level and fork height of the TCV forks, you can set up the KX to perform extremely efficiently. The KX will not turn as sharply or exactly as the Honda CR250, but it comes close. What it lacks in turning ability, it *more* than makes up for in straight-line prowess. In the high-speed square-edged world, the KX is second only to Yamaha for maintaining a straight line and keeping the

front-end shake to a minimum.

Jumping the KX is the most fun. Any kind of jump is laughed at with the Kawasaki. The front and rear end respond in a working unison that allows the rider to attack any type of jump without having to strangle the grips in anticipation of the unknown. No it can't carve its name on the tightest hairpin, but if you're willing to sacrifice some of the stability, you can always raise the forks and improve the steering.

TOSS IN SOME BITS

Braking power is improved over last year's, both front and rear. Up front, a shorter brake lever and bigger hydraulic piston help the KX achieve both power and control. This improvement is most apparent on long, rough descents where the rider must apply steady braking. The front binder brings the KX down from speed with excellent control and no grabbiness. In the backyard, a reworked disc-pad composition allows for touchy, though controlled, stop-

1987 KX250

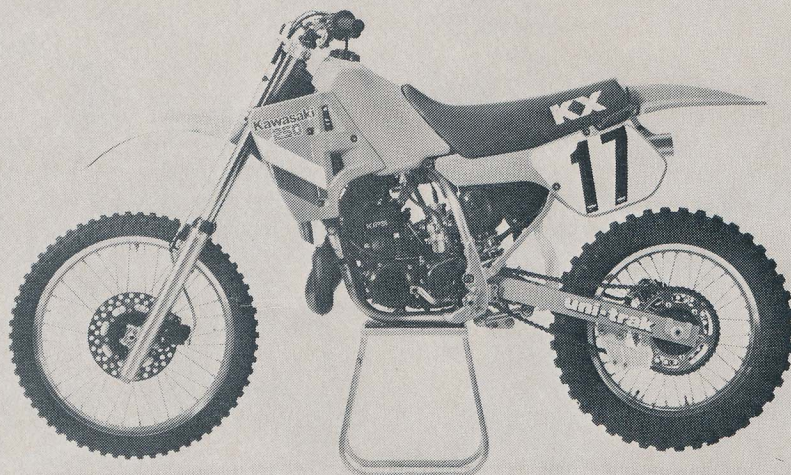


an excellent hard-track tire that has an average life span. Up front, a Dunlop K395 tries to destroy whatever good points the front end has to offer. Replace the front meat with a K490 and enjoy the Kawa's steerability.

Kawasaki's new 250 is a very thin and exact-feeling motorcycle. Once settled on the well-padded safety seat, the rider becomes acutely aware of exactly how thin the seat/tank junction is. Moving back and forth requires almost no effort because of the very thin layout. The handlebars are okay until the first flip; they're soft units that will bend easily. Footpegs are excellent deep-cleated units that fit the rider well. All controls, the shifter and the brake pedal are well constructed and sano. The pull of the throttle is too long, but an easy remedy is to install the quick-turn unit of a KX80. Starting the KX is a no-hassle affair, but beware of fouling plugs during the break-in period. We turned the air screw out one-and-one-quarter turns.

RESULTS

Even though the entire crop of 250 MXers are talented, only one will come out on top as the best 250 on the market. We haven't tested all the 250s, but you can bet your last dollar that the 1987 KX250 is a sure candidate for best 250 of the year. Stay tuned for *Dirt Bike's* 250 shootout. □



1987 KAWASAKI KX250

Engine type	Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 2-stroke	Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/no
Bore and stroke	67.4mm x 70.0mm	Wheelbase	1500mm (59.1 in.)
Displacement	249cc	Ground clearance	375mm (14.8 in.)
Carburetion	38mm Mikuni	Seat height	970mm (38.2 in.)
Factory recommended jetting:		Rake/trail	28°/120mm
Main jet	350	Claimed weight	212 lbs.
Needle jet	6FJ58, #2 position	Tire size and type:	
Jet needle	R2	Front	80/100-21 Dunlop K395G
Pilot jet	45	Rear	110/100-18 Dunlop K595H
Slide number	3.0	Suspension, type and travel:	
Fuel tank capacity	7.5 L (2.0 gals.)	Front	Telescopic, air-assist, adj. comp., 300mm (11.8 in.)
Lubrication	Pre-mix	Rear	Uni-Trak, adj. comp./reb., 330mm (13.0 in.)
Gearbox ratios:		Intended use	Motocross
1	2.133:1	Country of origin	Japan
2	1.764:1	Suggested retail price	\$2899
3	1.388:1	Distributor/Manufacturer:	
4	1.136:1	Kawasaki Motor Corp.	
5	1.000:1	9950 Jeronimo Rd.	
Gearing, front/rear	14/47	Irvine, CA 92718	
Ignition	CDI		
Recommended spark plug	NGK B9EG		

Kawasaki's KX250 is one of the best jumping machines ever. There are no weird tendencies on the KX—just smooth, straight flight patterns.

ping. The rear brake is a very powerful stopper, and the rider must adjust his form to a toe-style braking technique.

The rims have been beefed up after last year's whimpy units persisted in cracking after only mild abuse. The tires are a mix of good and bad. The rear Dunlop K595 is