

**SUPER-HOT 200cc TERROR TESTS:  
RADICAL XR200 & ALL-NEW KDX200!**



'86 KDX200



'86 XR200

DIRT BIKE

# DIRT BIKE

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MARCH 1986

\$2.00  
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**'86 HONDA  
CR250:  
IS IT REALLY A  
WORKS BIKE  
IN DISGUISE?**

**SPECIAL ATK TEST:  
WE RIDE THE  
4-STROKE OF  
THE FUTURE!**

**'86  
RACING  
CALENDAR:  
WHO, WHAT,  
WHEN &  
WHERE!**

JOHNNY  
O'MARA,  
TEAM  
HONDA



**PROJECT  
CRX250, PART 2:  
WHY DIDN'T HONDA  
THINK OF THIS?**

**'86 TY350: YAMAHA  
TAKES YOU WHERE ONLY  
MOUNTAIN GOATS HAVE GONE!**

**BARSTOW TO VEGAS:  
1200 RIDERS BEG FOR MERCY IN  
THE ULTIMATE LEGAL DESERT RACE!**

**'86 TRI-Z250: YAMAHA PACKS MORE  
HI-PERFORMANCE INTO TRI-PERFORMANCE!**



# DIRT BIKE

MARCH 1986 • VOLUME 16, NO. 3



TRI-Z250



TY350



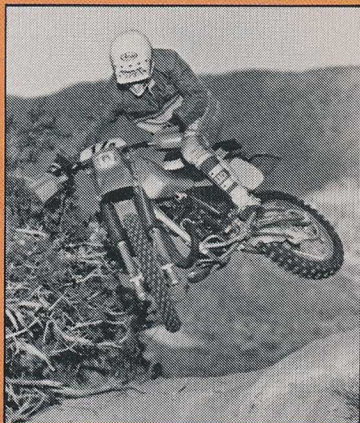
XR200



CRX250



ATK 560



KDX200



BEACH RACING



ROCK RIDING

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A day at the Pasadena Zoo

**ON THE COVER:**—Captain John P. O'Mara navigates Honda's '86 CR250 through the airspace over Chatsworth, California, while Mike Webb launches the latest XR200 (upper left) and Jim Holley bushwhacks Kawasaki's stunning KDX200. Photos and ground control by Fran Kuhn; cover design by DeWest; color separations by Valley Film

**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.



It wasn't tough to figure out how Kawasaki planned to improve the 1986 KDX200. After all, the '85 machine was so good that their options were limited, and a few minor updates would have been enough to keep even the toughest critics happy for yet another year. About the only major complaint we had with last year's bike was the lack of substantial front brake power, something Kawasaki remedied by adapting a KX-

Engine-related changes include a larger flywheel for greater inertia and reduced vibration, and an enlarged clutch assembly that can withstand massive abuse out of the corners and on slippery hillsides. Last year's heavyweight muffler has been changed to a less restrictive model, and while it is exceptionally quiet, it still looks like Queen Mary anchor material. As in '85, replacing the unit with an aftermarket aluminum item is a

quick way to shed a few precious pounds—something you might want to do since the KDX is a bit heavier this season. Part of the weight increase is no doubt due to the new rear grab rail/fender supports. "Supports" is actually a poor descriptive choice—"girders" would be more appropriate. The triangular tubes look like they were designed to support a small condominium, complete with occupants, furniture and the family

# RHAPSODY IN GREEN

*Off-road concerto in G-major*

By the DIRT BIKE Staff

style disc to the newest model. This was one change we had anticipated, but the KDX's design team didn't stop there; they updated and refined the machine in a few areas we didn't expect, and the overall result is a new bike that's close to being the ultimate lightweight weapon for off-road and enduro warfare.

## THE CHANGES

Aside from the front disc, many of the '86 bike's new features will go unnoticed at a casual glance. Take a second look, however, and the changes become more obvious. While the latest KDX is still air-cooled, the new engine now benefits from a KX-type KIPS power-port system. This design has been standard equipment on Kawasaki's motocrossers for the past two years, and it's a welcome and beneficial addition to the '86 enduro machine.

Underneath the KDX's blue fork gaiters are a set of massive 43mm Kayaba forks—another design incorporated from the motocross lineup. When we tested the KDX last year, larger forks were one of the changes we felt would make the 200 more suitable for the faster riders, up to and including AA level competitors. Kawasaki responded by adapting the larger MX tubes to the '86 machine. They've also refined the rear Uni-Trak shock this year, adding a 13-way rebound adjustment and upping last year's four-way rebound range to 20 clicks. The shock reservoir material has been changed from steel to aluminum, and the rear wheel now has an additional 10mm (.2 inch) of travel for a total of 11.4 inches. The front end has picked up some additional movement as well, gliding through a 270mm (10.6 inch) range, 10mm more than in '85.



**Flick and twist: Fling the Kawasaki any way you want. Even though it's a few pounds heavier than last year's bike, it's still a simple matter to throw the KDX around.**



◀ **Lofting the KDX is simple, and with its KX125-based frame, midair handling manners are as stable as its motocrosser cousin's.**

For 1986, Kawasaki fitted its KIPS (Kawasaki Integrated Power System) exhaust port system to the KDX200 engine. The new cylinder features two supports whose openings are regulated by an rpm-sensitive governor, enhancing low-end power without sacrificing high-rpm thrust. ▼



◀ *One of the big advantages about riding a nimble, lightweight enduro mount. Jim Holley won't let a tree stand in his way—he simply jumps over it.*

dog. This is good news if you loop your bike a lot, but perhaps something lighter would do for most riders.

Kawasaki went to the trouble of adding a nifty pair of hand guards to this year's bike, which in itself was a good idea, but not without problems. The first time we brushed through the tight stuff, the guards folded back, pivoting on their mounting bolts enough to make contact with both the clutch and brake levers. In the case of the clutch, this tendency was annoying; with regard to the brake, alarming! The guards push the levers far enough to allow the clutch to slip, while at the same time activating the front brake slightly, something that becomes painfully apparent when you go to make a turn and find yourself eating pine needles. The solution to this problem involves either drilling the guards and lever mounts and inserting a pin or sheet metal screw to anchor them, or taking the guards off and throwing them away.

### DASHING THROUGH THE PINES

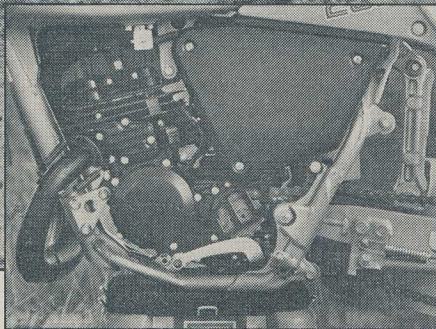
For the Eastern enduro rider the KDX is a ticket to a trophy. The bike is most comfortable in tight switchbacks and saplings, where its superior steering accuracy and plushmobile suspension work to the greatest advantage. In this type of riding situation, the 200's engine is almost ideal. It still has the same mellow powerband as last year, but with a little more KIPS-induced punch. It'll torque out of corners and up hills, yet is still willing to scream when things open up. The engine is slightly smoother this year as well, and the only time vibration becomes a problem is at the upper rpm limits, where the KDX transmits an annoying buzz through the bars and pegs.

Comparing spec sheets with the '85 model revealed a minor change in the new bike's transmission ratios: There's a slightly higher first gear, while second through sixth and the 13/48 final drive ratios remain unchanged. As with its predecessor, the 86's transmission is flawless—the ratios are perfect for most situations, and shifting is smooth and precise, though the lever is just a shade too long for a size 9 foot. The clutch is also without fault—it doesn't fade or slip, even under the toughest abuse, and a light feel at the lever keeps your trigger finger from tiring prematurely.

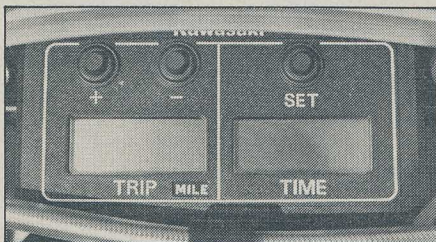
The KDX's new seat is exceptionally well padded, and it remains comfortable as long as you're willing to keep riding. The bike is slim and plush, and it's still small enough for shorter or younger riders to manage quite easily—your basic intelligent ergonomic layout.

### OUT IN THE OPEN

Last year's KDX suspension, while comfortably soft for trail and woods work, was something of a handicap if the bike was used



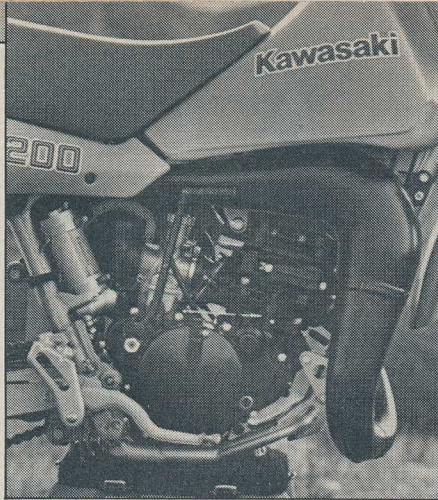
*After a few years of complaints, Kawasaki finally revised the KDX's airbox design. The new unit features a trio of quarter-turn screws on the outer cover and a pair of twist-off wing nuts on the inside, making access and service much easier.*



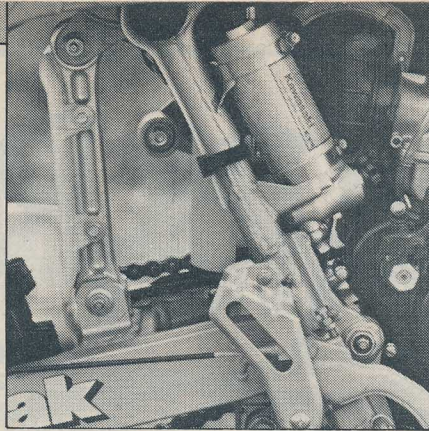
*The KDX's electronic odometer/clock unit displays mileage accurately down to hundredths, and is resettable both up and down in tenths. The clock reads time up to an hour, then starts back again from zero.*



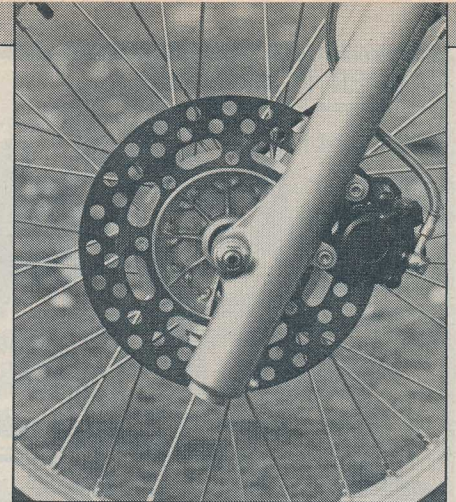
*While the KDX's suspension is almost ideal for slow-to-moderate speeds, it's still too soft for really high-speed work. Fortunately, it's easy to modify both ends for faster paces.*



The engine's lower extremities are protected by a pair of welded-on tubes; the 34mm Mikuni carb is the same as last year's, but with different jetting; the KIPS mechanism is covered by the shroud at the center of the cylinder.



An aluminum reservoir body replaces the steel unit found on the 1985 KDX, while the Kayaba shock gets a new 13-way adjustable compression damping adjustment. The rear brake is activated by a cable rather than the rod used in the past—the unit is moderately strong, though not quite a match for the excellent front disc.



A couple of big changes for '86: The KDX now sports a KX-type disc brake and 43mm KYB forks. Both are worlds better than the items they replaced, giving the KDX a true state-of-the-art enduro front end.

for fast hare scrambles or desert work. The story is almost the same in '86. The suspension that works so well in the tight stuff becomes a liability in high-speed situations. On fast, rocky fire roads, a good rider can easily bottom both ends, though the machine does an admirable job of retaining its composure, even under such stressful conditions. For this kind of fast-paced riding, or for anyone over 170 pounds, we recommend raising the oil level about an inch in the forks, then fitting the rear shock with a heavier spring, and bumping up the compression damping. Both are easy fixes that allow for more precise, less harrowing high-speed runs. You'll probably want to gear up things a bit too, or those sixth-gear, tapped-out vibrations will shake the fillings from your molars.

#### LITTLE THINGS WE NOTICED

Like last year's KDX, the new bike is fitted with a pair of Dunlop knobbies, a K490 up front and a K890 in the rear. They're not bad in wet and muddy conditions, but for dry, rocky hard-pack, they're not the best. Rate them average. The KX125-based frame is painted silver this year, and both front and rear hubs are unpainted aluminum. The handlebar bend is fine for sit-down riding, but a little too low for tall riders who like to stand up a lot—they're also too wide for seriously tight woods conditions. The new box-type swingarm caps and welded-on left-side chain adjuster make for faster and easier wheel removal.

We managed to get the KDX to gag in a relatively shallow, low-speed water section, and while the bike didn't completely drown out, it might be a good idea to carefully tape and silicone potential leaks before you head out to the Blackwater. We also had a few problems with the chain derailing, which came as a surprise given the stout design of the KDX's chain guide system. The problem arose while riding the bike through a rocky stream bed, and we should note that the chain was a little loose at the time, though not drastically so. It never happened again after that.

#### A VINTAGE YEAR

Even if Kawasaki hadn't made a single change on the KDX for 1986, we would have been happy with the bike. The fact that they did make changes—and intelligent ones, at that—is just jelly on the toast. Last year's KDX200 had almost everything going for it, and this year, with better forks, a better shock, the new front disc and the improved

KIPS engine, there's almost nothing we can really complain about. It's still an easy bike to ride, but for '86 it's better suited to faster riders than ever before. For woods riding and lightweight enduro competition there's nothing better, and for any rider who likes the sound of whistling along a trail or darting through trees, the KDX is now, more than ever, a bike that'll bring music to your ears. □



### KAWASAKI KDX200C1

Engine type	Single-cylinder, air-cooled, 2-stroke	Ignition	CDI
Bore and stroke	66mm×58mm	Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/yes
Displacement	198cc	Wheelbase	1440mm (56.7 in.)
Carburetion	34mm Mikuni	Ground clearance	340mm (13.4 in.)
Factory recommended jetting:		Seat height	927mm (36.5 in.)
Main jet	300	Rake/trail	26.5°/135mm
Needle jet	R-4	Wet weight, no fuel	228 lbs.
Jet needle	6FL52-3	Tire size and type:	
Pilot jet	35	Front	3.00×21 Dunlop K490
Slide number	3.0	Rear	4.00×18 Dunlop K890
Fuel tank capacity	12.5 L (3.3 gals.)	Suspension, type and travel:	
Lubrication	Pre-mix	Front	43mm Kayaba forks, 270mm (10.6 in.)
Gearbox ratios:		Rear	Uni-Trak, single KYB shock, adj. comp./reb., 290mm (11.4 in.)
1	2.692:1	Intended use	Enduro/off-road
2	2.000:1	Country of origin	Japan
3	1.533:1	Retail price, approx.	\$1899
4	1.235:1	Distributor/Manufacturer:	
5	1.041:1	Kawasaki Motors Corp.	
6	0.869:1	2009 E. Edinger Ave.	
Gearing, front/rear	13/48	Santa Ana, CA 92705	
Recommended spark plug	NGK B9ES or NGK B9RES		