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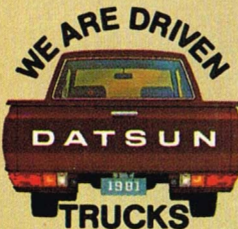
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OCTOBER 1981

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## Race testing the King Floater: **SUZUKI RM465X**

## **HONDA XR250R: Thumping Special**

## **SUPERSHOCK SHOWDOWN: Fox - Works - Ohlins - WP**



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ISSN0064-1546





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HONDA CR450R



PROJECT XR500 — PART III



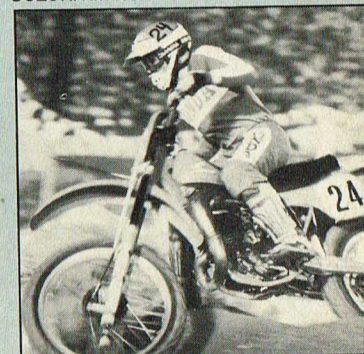
RM125X TRICKS



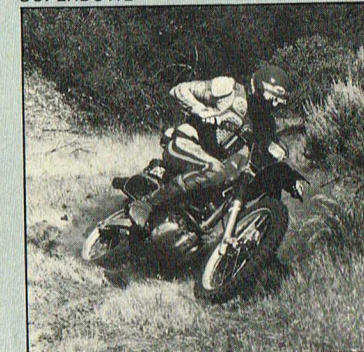
PIKE'S PEAK



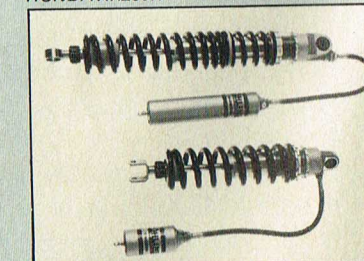
SUZUKI RM465X



SUPERBOWL



HONDA XR250R



THE SUPER SHOCKS

On the cover: Jon Miller, a close, old friend of the entire *Dirt Bike* staff, came out of his forced retirement to drag handlebars with us for a few days. Jon enjoyed it; the RM465 said it was good for him, too. Photo by Tom Webb.

**DIRT BIKE Magazine**, ISSN 0364-1546 (Oct. '81) is published monthly by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Co., Inc., with editorial offices at 16200 Ventura Blvd., Encino, California 91436. Subscriptions \$12.98 for 12 issues (one year). Foreign subscriptions add \$5 per year and Canada \$4 per year for additional postage. Copyright © 1981 by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted in whole or in part without the express permission of the publisher.

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## HONDA CR450R

A purebred motocross bike is similar in many ways to a complex jigsaw puzzle. Every piece is critically important to the final product. If one part is missing, the puzzle cannot be completed and therefore is flawed. Competitive motocrossers are just that: many parts that make up a whole. When one of the parts isn't correct, it affects the whole bike.

This brings up the Honda CR450R. A stylish mount with all the latest equipment needed for the motocross wars, the brilliant red chassis and motor look awesome enough to light up even the craziest loon's eyes. It looks lean and mean just propped up on a crate, let alone roosting wildly on some gnarly course.

But...sorry to say...looks don't make a bike. The CR450 has an ill-fitting piece in its puzzle. While the parts all appear correct, one important thing doesn't make it. The front end.

### Turns, berms and bumps

Honda's Pro-Link rear suspension works. Large jumps, potholes and whoops are tamed in a superb fashion. No sidekicks or sudden lurching was felt during testing. Small ripple bumps found when exiting a turn under power had the wheel churning, looking for traction. All in all, the Pro-Link rear end worked well. Not flawless like the RM Floater's, but well.

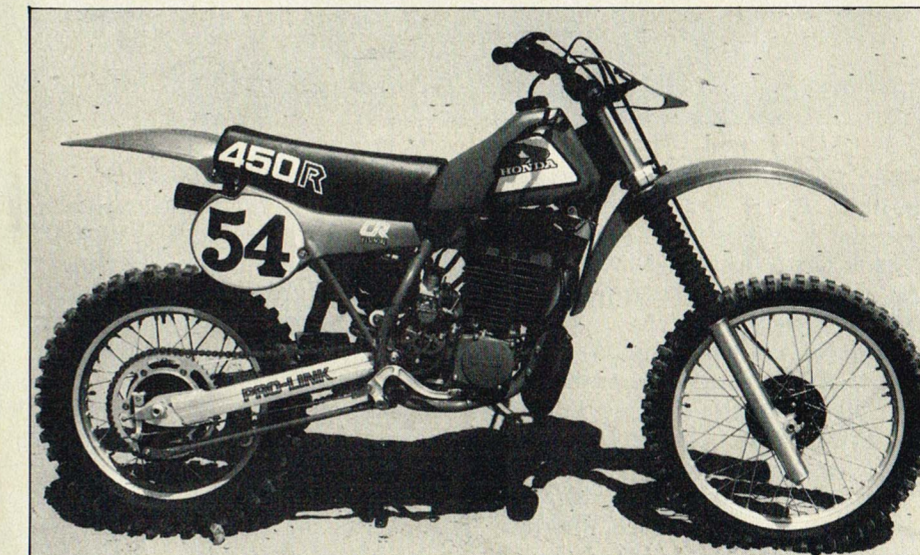
The 41mm Kayaba forks are another matter. Pogolike rebounding and a pronounced dive when entering turns had the test riders grimacing in disbelief. Picking a line was difficult; so was accurately steering through a

turn. We let out whatever air was in the forks, lowered the clamps 20mm, and tried again. Much better, but the tracking ability still wasn't up to par.

We went for the first option; change the fork oil level. Stock oil level was seven inches from the top of the tubes, so we went to 5½ inches of ten-weight oil. These changes helped considerably. Instead of the confused push-and-wander action, it now actually would carve better through the turns...not like a Maico or YZ though. You must have your weight well forward and force the front end around. After this change, it could be maneuvered with some sort of confidence, rather than the hunt-and-pray method of the stock setup.

With the adjusted forks and the supple rear end, handling rough terrain is no problem. This is only true, though, when the power is on. Back off and the head shakes. On bumpy straights, it becomes even more pronounced. The violent oscillations make the 450 a handful any time the throttle is chopped. All attempts to cure this did not work. We had to learn to live with it and hold on extra tight when decelerating.

Hard-packed corners can be handled comfortably if the turn is taken using the midrange part of the powerband. Bog it, and a pipey burst of power would make the CR450 hard to control. Overrev the Honda when cornering and all control over the rear end is lost. With midrange throttle control, the CR will track controllably as long as the power is rolled on.



### A big 250?

The 450 is a cinch to start. Three kicks at the most was all it took to get fire. After a few easy laps, it was quite apparent that the Honda had plenty of midrange power. There wasn't much on the bottom of the rpm range, and the engine would flatten out when forced to turn high revs.

Dropping it into first showed it had a tall first gear. You almost had to slip the clutch when starting. This brought up another thought; gearing the bike for trail riding would be impossible. With only four speeds and a tall first gear, the CR is limited to only motocross use; no trail riding, enduros or woods playing. A pure racer.

Despite the lack of versatility, the CR is fast enough to be competitive if proper timing is used when shifting. If it's wound out too far, the power drops off sharply just after the midrange surge. The Honda has to be short-shifted from gear to gear. If it's kept in the midrange part of the powerband, it will maintain a powerful pull throughout the gears.

Here's another sore point. Since it has to be short-shifted to make the most use of the power, you simply run out of gears too quickly. Involuntarily, your foot keeps nudging the shifter up in search of the non-existent fifth gear. The problem here is that, by gearing it higher, first gear will become even taller than it already is. Quick starts will become difficult...sort of like waiting for the gate to drop on a 125 that's geared for high-speed desert use.

The CR feels very fast, partly because of the light flywheel effect. It revs quickly, much like a heavily breathed-on 250. In a drag race with other open bikes, the Honda holds its own. Care must be exercised to keep it pulling in the midrange, but if this is done properly, the CR is quick.

### Knicknacks

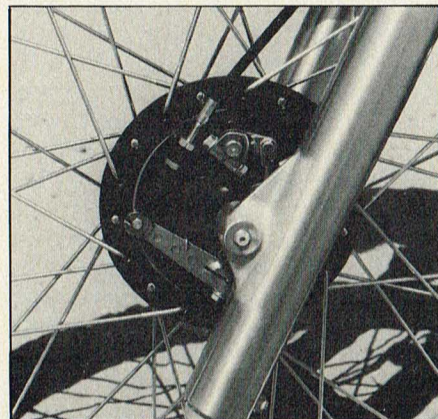
As is normal with Honda, the controls are superb. A straight-pull throttle requires almost no energy to turn. Split-perch dogleg levers are comfortable and are set up perfectly for most riders. The bars were a tad high for our standards; we prefer a lower RH-type bend for motocross work.

*On paper, it works...*

# THE POWERFUL PUZZLE



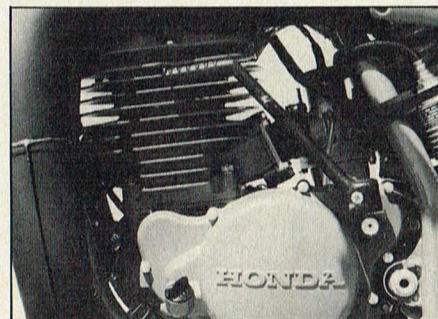
## HONDA CR450R



This is the strongest front brake found on any bike. The dual-leading-shoe set-up warrants caution when first applied.



A nice, progressive feel, along with good damping quality made the Pro-Link rear end a joy to ride.



With a 431cc, four-speed motor, the Honda is limited to just motocross use.



## HONDA CR450R

NAME AND MODEL	Honda CR450R
ENGINE TYPE	Two-stroke
BORE AND STROKE	85mm x 76mm
DISPLACEMENT	431cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)	N/A
CARBURETION	38mm Keihin
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	185
PILOT JET	65
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	2.4 gallons
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
LUBRICATION	Pre-mix
RECOMMENDED OIL	Any good grade
OIL CAPACITY	N/A
AIR FILTRATION	Foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet multiplate
TRANSMISSION	Four-speed
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	14/54
IGNITION	CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	B8EU NGK
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/QUALITY	Silencer/average noise level
EXHAUST SYSTEM	High-pipe, left side
FRAME, TYPE	Chrome moly, double downtube
WHEELBASE	59.4 inches
GROUND CLEARANCE	12.8 inches
SEAT HEIGHT	37.4 inches
STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)	29.5 degrees
TRAIL	4.8 degrees
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	245.5 pounds

RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	300x21 knobby Bridgestone
REAR	510x18 knobby Bridgestone
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT	12 inches
REAR	12.3 inches
INTENDED USE	Motocross
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.	\$2148

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<b>OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:</b>	
HANDLING	84
SUSPENSION	89 overall Front 80/rear 95
POWER	93
COST	96
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	99
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	84

Bar none, the Honda has the strongest brakes on the market. The double-leading-shoe front brake requires only one finger. Even then, proper care has to be exercised when using it. It's intimidating, to say the least. The floating rear brake is zoot-capri. While it felt too sensitive at first, the testers quickly adjusted and rated it top-notch. An aluminum shift lever is a work of art. It's spring loaded, with an internal rubber band-type arrangement; ultra-boss ingenuity.

The head pipe hangs well below the bottom frame rails and can be easily damaged. We dented ours landing from a large jump. On full compression, the pipe made contact with the

ground. The ground didn't give; the pipe did.

All the plastic is super-good stuff; the tank has an easy-to-fill hole and the front number plate looks more like a weapon than anything else.

Masterful craftsmanship abounds on the CR. The aluminum swingarm looks like it's straight off a works bike. A well-thought-out chain guide helps keep things in line.

When the CRs were first released, there was an internal problem with the clutch. Slippage occurred after several hours, and it usually ended with a wounded clutch. Honda has since updated all the clutches and the problem is no more. We'll keep you posted.

### Living with the CR

Riding fast on the Honda was like going to school for the first time. It takes a while to pick up the correct habits and put them to work. The CR handles like no other open bike around. It requires much throttle finesse to get around the track quickly.

Because of the lack of low-end punch, turns must be negotiated, rather than charged. Most open bikes allow you to lug through a turn while not breaking the rear wheel loose. Not so with Mr. Honda. The fastest way is to back the rear wheel into the turn, much like a TT bike. Wheelspin is needed to turn the CR, and this demands much more from the rider and

will take practice to master.

On high-flying jumps, the Honda feels like a 250. Very light, controlled, almost a neutral feeling. Whoop-filled straights are tamed easily with the Pro-Link. The chattering, ripple-type bumps found when exiting most turns are altogether different. The Honda would hop and flail, attempting to find traction. We backed off on the preload 5mm and this helped some. But, the more we backed the shock preload, the more vague the steering became.

Some of the top riders are having major work done to their chassis and forks in an attempt to overcome these deficiencies. Al Baker cuts and re-

works the steering head, redoes the shock and forks, and says this is the answer. Works Performance changes the front damper rods and revalves the Pro-Link shock. Pros who have these changes done swear by them.

It seems to us that the CR was designed by too many engineers, with not enough cooperation to tie everything together properly. These separate specialists built their one specific piece for the puzzle. The pieces are all quality, well-devised parts, but they just don't jive when the last bolt is tightened. Honda, in effect, has made a bike on paper that utilizes all the latest technology. But, in this case, that wasn't enough. □

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