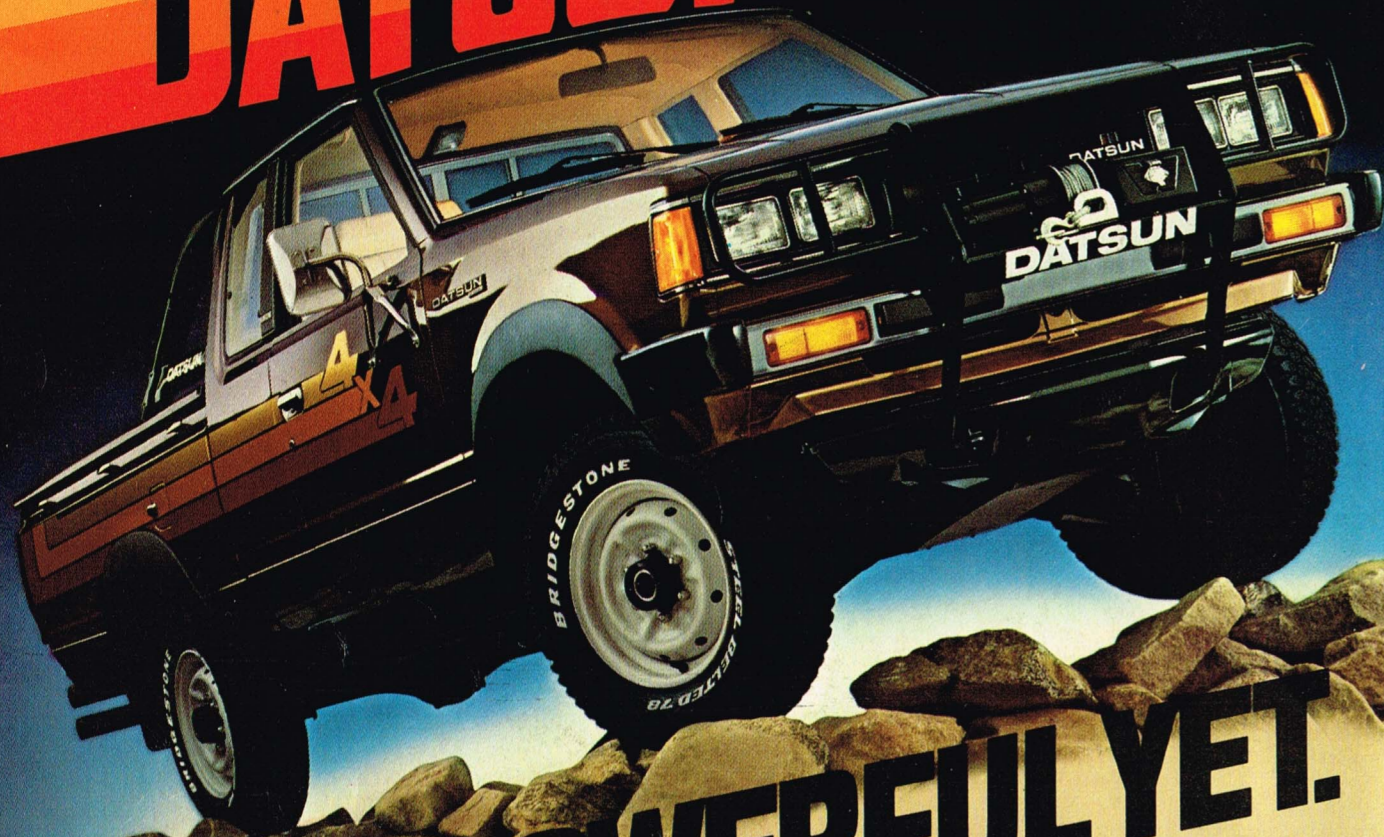


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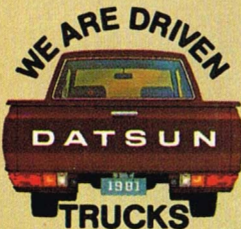
Crossflow hemihead and two sparkplugs per cylinder allow the NAPS-Z engine to burn fuel more completely, leaving fewer unburned wastes in the exhaust.

21 EST. MPG.
29 EST. HWY.

*EPA estimates for comparison with standard 5-speed. Actual mileage may differ depending on speed, trip length and weather. Highway mileage will probably be less. California estimates: **20** **28**.

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OCTOBER 1981 \$1.50 UK75P

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

HONDA XR250R: Thumping Special

SUPERSHOCK SHOWDOWN: Fox - Works - Ohlins - WP



PIKE'S PEAK: 1981 race to the clouds
SUPERBOWL TEN: Barnett's Bowl Burner



TESTS

- 22 HONDA XR250R**
Stuck in the middle again
- 40 SUZUKI RM465X**
In the court of the Floater King
- 48 KAWASAKI KD80 AND 100**
Low-buck playbikes, ground level fun
- 58 HONDA CR450R**
Motocross puzzle — is it really the right answer?

TECHNICAL

- 26 RM125 SPEED SECRETS**
Hot tips for the hottest 125

COMPETITION

- 18 SPRITE SUPERBOWL OF MOTOCROSS**
Barnett takes home another title
- 46 PIKE'S PEAK HILLCLIMB**
The 1981 Race to the Clouds
- 62 DINOSAUR RUN TT**
Four-stroke frolic at Ascot Park

FEATURES

- 50 PROJECT XR500 — PART 3**
Part Baja, part motocross, part misery, part joy
- 30 THE SUPERSHOCKS**
A guide to the Big Four of suspension
- 70 LEGAL UPDATE**
Let's all save Watt's hide... if we can

DEPARTMENTS

- 7 FROM THE SADDLE**
The Great Motocross Strike of '82
- 8 LAST OVER**
The Rites of Spring
- 10 BITS AND PIECES**
Barnett wins two, Moates goes to Europe
- 12 MISTER KNOW-IT-ALL**
Would you like to buy an Ossa?
- 14 RIDERS WRITE**
How about a Rokon, then?
- 16 NEW PRODUCTS**
Boot protectors, odometers, filters and foxes
- 74 CRASH AND BURN**
Ahh, the subtle joys of motocross



HONDA CR450R



PROJECT XR500 — PART III



RM125X TRICKS



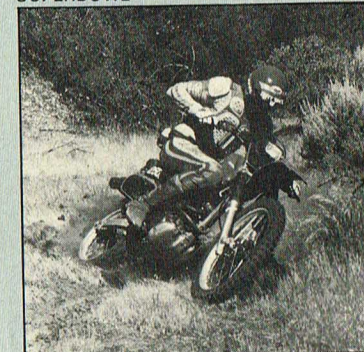
PIKE'S PEAK



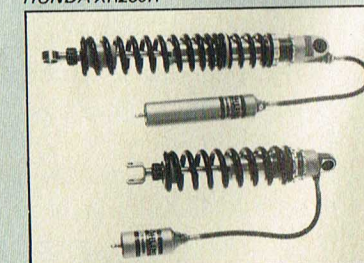
SUZUKI RM465X



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.

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Wear Your Sunday Best



Mike Bell didn't get to be 1980 AMA Supercross Champion by accepting second best. His riding shows it. And so does his riding gear. Malcolm Smith riding gear. The "Clean Look" for the '80s.

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**PROJECT XR500—
PART III**

BIG RED ROLLS!

Half Baja Commander, half motocrosser

By Rick Sieman

Well, we got that sucker done, alright. Yup. Project XR500 is a living, fire-breathing piece of reality. After the Mugen engine was slipped into the C&J frame, things started to fall into place. But, we're getting ahead of ourselves...there were some interesting problems to solve along the way.

The most bizarre problem surfaced when we dropped the engine off at Mugen, U.S.A., for the full Baja Commander treatment. Al Baker took one look at the big engine and moaned,

"It's an '81. You didn't tell me it was a new bike."

Puzzled, I enquired as to what was wrong with a new bike. Maybe Al wanted something that had been thrashed around for a few years? It turned out that there is no technology available yet to build a fast, reed-valved four-stroke motor. Even the Honda Team flattrack effort is using '79 and '80 motors built up. All of the technology developed by Mugen is based on the non-reeded motors, too. Baker saved the day by suggesting that

we use a 1980 head on the motor.

Later on, we found an alternate solution to the problem. The White Brothers, or at least one of them, has developed a manifold to replace the reed cage. It slips right in the space the reed used to occupy and has an internal bell to direct the gas/air mixture in the same fashion as a non-reeded intake. Of course, we didn't find out about this nifty device until we'd already built the motor up and installed it in the chassis.

Because we had to use an '80 head,

the stock manifold pointed directly at the Pro-Link shock. Not the best set-up for clearance. Ours was the very first single-shocker C&J frame 1981 engined bike ever built, and, as such, served as a guinea pig. The mistakes we made can now be avoided by anyone who is the owner of the issues of *Dirt Bike* dealing with our Project. See? And you thought that your money just gave you monthly chuckles and grins.

Things you better know about the Honda engine

Here's the most important thing that you can possibly know about the XR500 engines. And this goes for the XLs, too. *You absolutely have to do something to the clutch basket or you*

face the distinct possibility of wasting the entire engine.

This is serious business, folks. You see, the engine and the gearbox share the same oil. And, the oil travels throughout the whole motor. You got it...the same oil that is sloshing around between gears and swirling around the clutch plates, gets sent upstairs to lubricate the rockers and cams, then drips back down to the lower and then does it all over again.

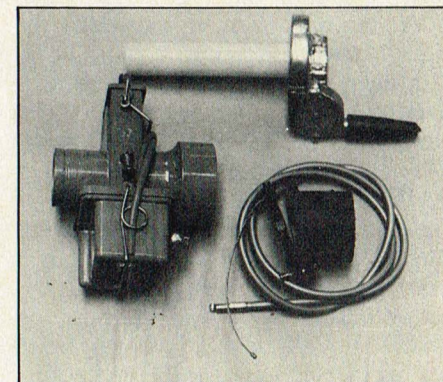
Now, the crank is bullet proof and the cams and rockers will give reasonable life if you don't run excessively high valve spring pressures. We consider anything over 75-80 pounds excessive, even though there are builders around who are running 110 plus.

rest of the engine. Blow a clutch basket and you'll be faced with splitting the cases and spending endless hours cleaning aluminum particles from everywhere. Your bearings will be shot, debris will be in the cams and followers, particles will be imbedded into the piston and smeared to the cylinder wall.

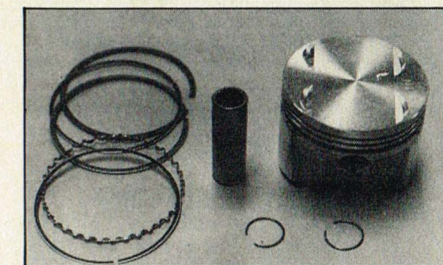
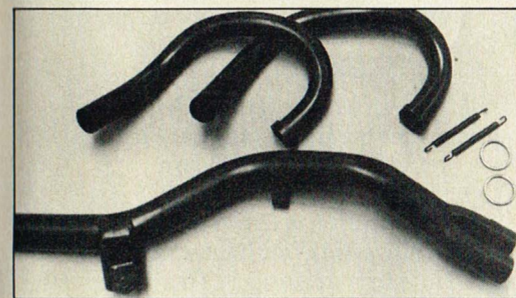
We know, because when our engine was stripped for the full build-up, the mechanics found that it had happened to our bike already. It took a half-day of cleaning to shape the salvageable parts and 40 gallons of solvent was ruined in the process.

Get the picture? Right. To prevent this from happening in the future, Al had his people heliarc an aluminum band around the clutch basket. The cost for this is \$60 and it has to be the single most important modification you can make to any XR/XL. If you hop-up the engine and don't do this, quite frankly, you're nuts.

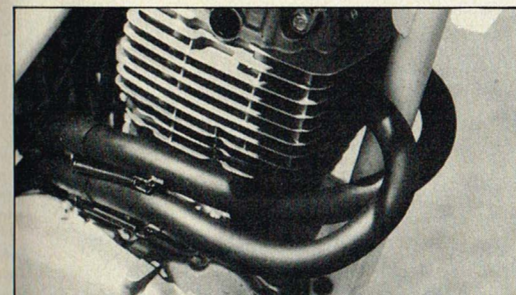
There's one other option, but it's a bit out of reach for most people right



A 38mm EI carb was used with good results. This S&W Blue Magnum has come a long way in the last year. We used the newest version that had an adjustable main jet. A Gunnar Gasser and a special cable hooked things up nicely, thank you.



Special Mugen piston kit has a modest 9.5:1 compression ratio. This lets the big engine rev out nicely when you need it.



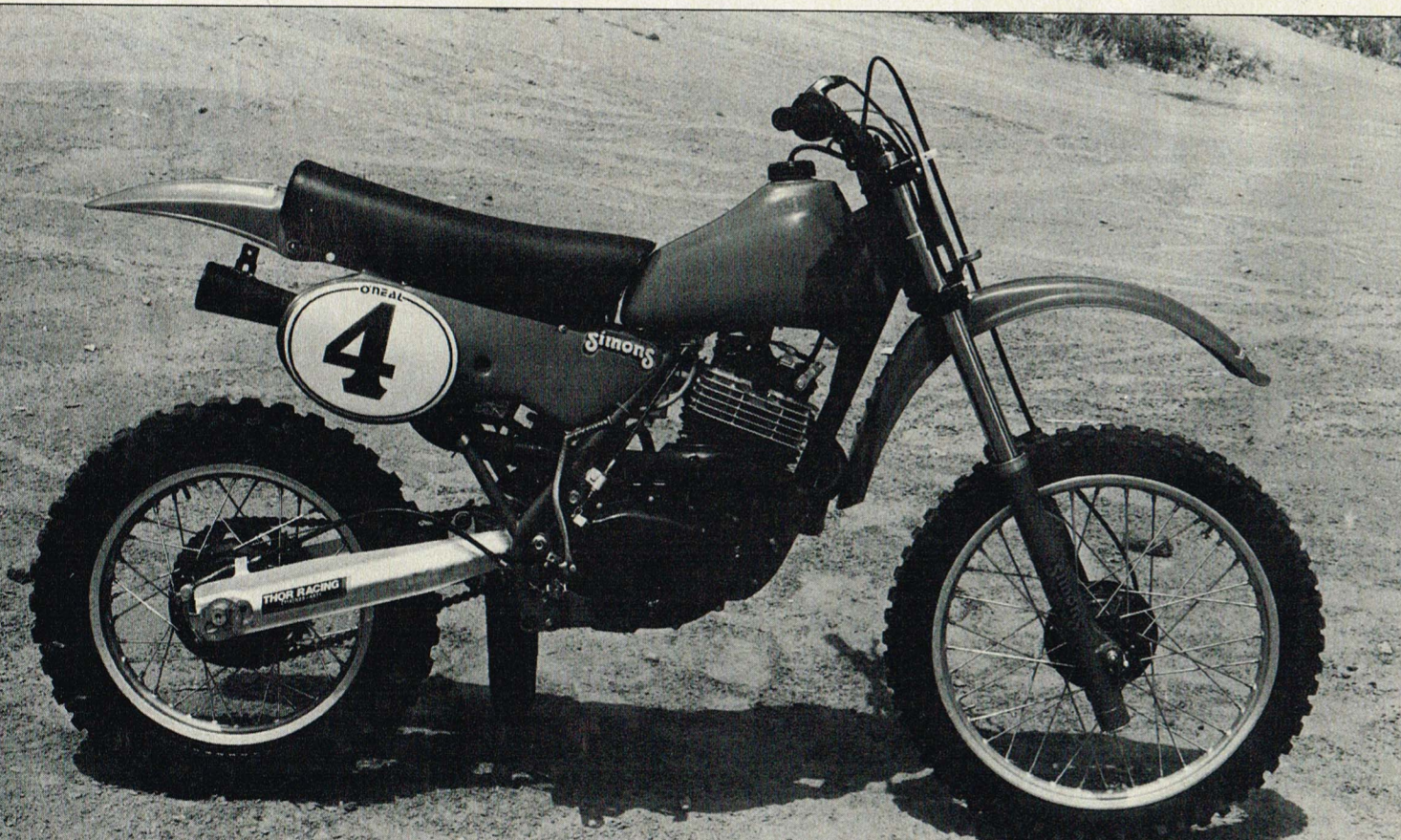
For maximum horsepower, these dyno-developed, Mugen-matched and cc'd pipes are the way to go. Even though stock head pipes work well, they're of unequal length. These pipes are hand measured for matching volume.

The clutch basket is light and made of aluminum. In a stock engine, it's probably up to the job... maybe. If you don't ride the bike hard. However, the moment you put some horsepower in the engine, the clutch basket becomes a time bomb with a shaky fuse. What happens is this: the aluminum tangs shear off under a heavy or sudden load and fall into the oil. In a flash, they're then chewed up by gears and chunks of aluminum and powder particles are transferred via the oil to the

now. Mugen has hand made about a dozen billet steel clutch baskets that are virtually unbreakable, but, because there are only a handful of them in existence, the cost is right around \$300. If there's a demand, Mugen will gear up production and bring them out at a more affordable price. But, for right now, it's three big bills for the ultimate in protection.

Putting ponies in the XR

The whole secret to making a four-stroke run hard is getting it to breathe. A special Mugen porting job was done to the head and exotic Mugen valves were installed. They have gently rounded shoulders and are polished to the max. We had planned to use a Mega-cycle cam made especially for the reed



Actual weight, with oil in the forks and gearbox, in this photo, is 251½ pounds. There are 7.8 pounds of oil in total so the "dry" weight is 243.7 pounds. We later slipped on a new 17-inch Dunlop rear tire and saved two more pounds, giving us a ready-to-ride weight of 249½ pounds.



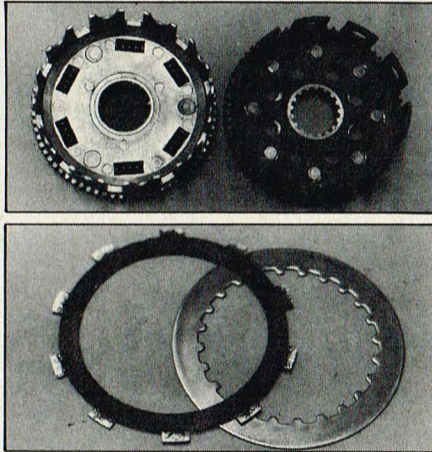
PROJECT XR500

engine, but will have to try it later downstream on our 1981 head, which at this moment occupies a space on the *Dirt Bike* workshop bench.

Mugen cams were installed. A higher compression piston was slipped into place and S&W valve springs were pressed into service. We used another S&W product for carburetion; one of the Blue Magnum E.I. carbs. Ours was one of the latest generations with a main jet in the bottom. The needle system still works as always, but now conventional Mikuni main jets can be installed in the base of the E.I. for fine tuning the high rpm range.

One nice thing about the E.I. It gets rid of any low-end hitch without resorting to accelerator pumps and their attendant two-cable hassle. Tuning the E.I. is simplicity in itself. You get a needle with the carb that's in the ballpark for your engine size and type. Ours was an E10. With the needle installed, you adjust the needle to one of the center marks on the flat side. Then, if you need to lean out the carb, you lower the needle by turning the holder to the right. To richen things, you simply turn it the other direction. Full throttle conditions are taken care of by choosing the correct Mikuni main jet after the low- and mid-range jetting is dialed in. A small tool is supplied with the carb, but in a pinch, a slender screwdriver can be used to turn the needle holder.

Special Mugen pipes are another power-adding option. Unlike the stock head pipes, the Mugen pipes are exactly the same length. In fact, they're cc'd



Here's the ultimate ticket for clutches. The stock clutch basket is on the left, and the billet steel Mugen unit is on the right. You're looking at \$300 worth of hand-formed steel. Specially treated clutch plates make for no slip under the most grueling conditions. They're basically Barnett plates with a trick copper coating.

out to have identical volume as they siamese into the exhaust pipe. There's a very quiet Mugen muffler available that's lighter than stock, but is still a bit bulky.

We chose a special order Pro-Tec megaphone for our bike that weighed 5½ ounces. It's a feather! Pro-Tec also makes a steel megaphone with a built-in silencer core that weighs a fraction over a pound. While it may not meet 86 dirt bikes, it sure has a sweet sound to it.

Gettin' my act together and taking it off the road

Slipping the engine in a C&J frame for the first time is a two-man job. Not only do you need an extra pair of hands, but a sympathetic ear to listen to the cursing is helpful. You will have

to file here and there and grind this, jiggle that and fidget around. The fit is tight. Once the engine is in, though, things start to look real good.

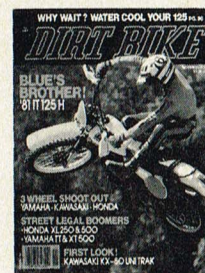
Minor problems with the C&J are as follows:

- You have to make some sort of clutch cable holder. You can saw the stocker off the old frame and attach it to the tab on the side tube.
- There's no back, top motor mount spacer built into the C&J frame, as with the stocker. You can, however, use another aluminum spacer, if you can find one. We made our own, as no Honda shops carried extras.
- Mounting the coil and wiring will take some drilling and clever thinking on your part. But, you can fit everything under the tank neatly.
- If you use an 80 head with a Pro-Link chassis, you'll have to fabricate an intake manifold. There's no easy way out. You can start with the base of the 80 manifold, but you'll have to weld, cut and braze from there.

This took more work than anything else on the bike. You must swing immediately away from the shock, then curve back straight. This must be done in a very short distance and the "S" bend has to be smooth for best flow. Once you clear the top of the Pro-Link shock, you can then run 2½-inch I.D. hose back to the stock XR air box. The C&J frame comes with nice mounts for that particular box already in place. You can use the XR air box if you drill a few holes for increased air flow and remove the rubber water boot from the top.

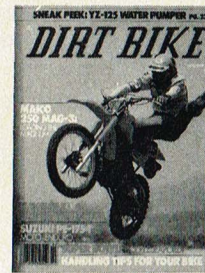
- Clearance on the carb is grim. After talking with Tim Smith at C&J, we found that the frame rails have been widened a bit, but it'll still be a tight fit.
- If you use the stock Honda rear wheel (as we did), you'll have to use the cable actuated brake. This means removing the cable end and re-soldering it back on after the cable is in place.

Nice things about the C&J frame are the way the Honda CR items slip into place. The tank, saddle and rear fender practically fall on. To really set off the looks of the bike, we installed 1981 Maico side panels. The frame has tabs that are already drilled for dzus fasteners. Very classy touch. Excellent welds make the workmanship dazzling and the red epoxy paint stands out. Other colors are available and all paint is epoxy. You don't realize just how good the steel is on a C&J frame until



Nov. '80

IT125H•PE250T•Water Cooling Technology•Three-Wheeler Roundup



Oct. '80

Works: 465 YZ•YZ465G•PE-175T•Maico 250



Sept. '80

Suzuki RS250•KX420•Can-Am 175



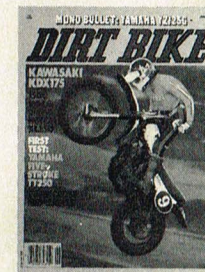
Aug. '80

125 MX Shootout•IT175G•Enduro Goodies



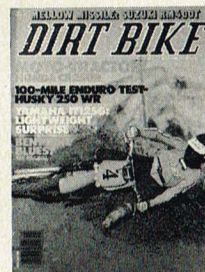
July '80

80cc Shootout•KTM250•PE-400T•Trick Reeds



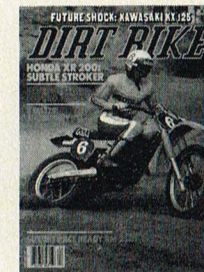
June '80

Can-Am 400MX•KDX175•Honda LX250•Yamaha TT250



May '80

Kawasaki KX80•Husqvarna 250WR•Honda CR250R•Frame Straightening



Apr. '80

XR200•RM250T•KTM175•KX-145A6•The Knee



Sept. '81

KDX hop-up•Husky 250 & 430•Mini shootout•Old bike fix-up•GP bikes•How to jump



Aug. '81

125 Shootout•DR500X Can-Am 250Q•Rim tech Project XR•RM80X



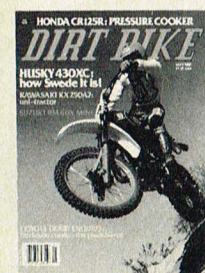
July '81

YZ250H•RM125X ATC250R•PE175X•CR80R Pipe Repair•Cable Routing



June '81

RM250X•IT250H•KL240 KTM 495•CR125R Hop-Up



May '81

CR125R•Husky 430XC•KX250F RM60X•Wheel-bearing tech



Apr. '81

Maico 250 MX How to Buy a Used Bike Yamaha TT250H



Feb. '81

Husqvarna XC250 Yamaha YZ125H National Enduro Wrap-up



Jan. '81

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PROJECT XR500

you have to drill a few holes. Boy, unless your drill bits are super good, you will fry them right out. This is tough, tough metal!

Riding the beast

When the bike was completed, it was time for that most magic of all moments: starting it up for the first time! Would the throttle stick wide open? Would something go ker-klank inside and do horrifying damage? What did I leave off? Am I sure there's oil in the motor? Will it blow my foot off if it snaps back?

It started on the second kick! You got it... that big, red animal of a bike lit off like a street bike and immediately settled down to a fast idle with the choke of the E.I. carb about one-quarter open. And the sound was glorious! A nice, mellow booming rap that stirred primeval feelings deep in your gut.

I remembered Al's advice: always warm up a modified XR really well before you ride it. At least five minutes. Make sure that the fins are too hot to be touched with the bare hand before you put it into gear. I gave it five minutes at a fast idle, then shut it off to cool down. After doing this three times, I slipped a helmet on and decided to just take 'er down the street and get a feel.

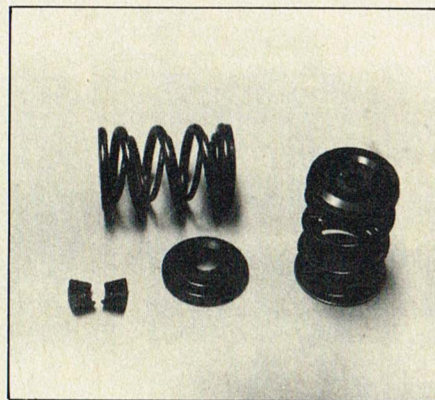
Lord love a duck, the thing was sweet! I wanted to run it hard through the gears and do craziness like that, but neighbors and common sense must prevail over animal urges. Big Red was pushed back into the tool-strewn *Dirt Bike* garage and fondled over until sleep forced me to switch off the lights.

Very early the next morning, the C&J XR was rolled into the van and pointed toward Indian Dunes. Several people were already there, in spite of the wee hour and they all trundled over and examined the Honda. Lots of interest in four-strokes these days, and it's all building. The first manufacturer who's savvy enough to offer the riding public the equivalent of what we had at the Dunes that day, will make a killing, as long as the price is remotely in the ballpark.

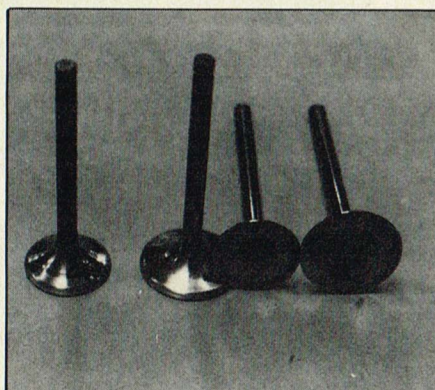
Anyway, we heeded Al Baker's advice about putting fifty easy break-in miles on it before we got on the gas. Those were the hardest fifty miles I have ever ridden. It was pure misery showing restraint with the deep booming sound of that exhaust beckoning me to run it up to seven grand or so, then back it off and listen to the compression slow it down.

Some time later, and I'm not sure if it was fifty miles (but it felt like 100), I drained the break-in oil out, slipped some fresh oil in, and, after a quick plug reading, headed out and ran it through the gears briskly for the first time.

Friends, it was right then and there worth all the time in the garage. The motor *talked to me*. Even though the suspension was not dialed in at this



Heavy-duty S&W valve springs are needed to keep the high-revving engine from floating valves. However, they don't run overly high pressures to assure long cam life.



point, but bike still showed the inherent good manners of the C&J frame. On the smooth corners, you could just pitch the bike in and let both wheels drift, while you controlled the steering with calculated tweaks of the throttle.

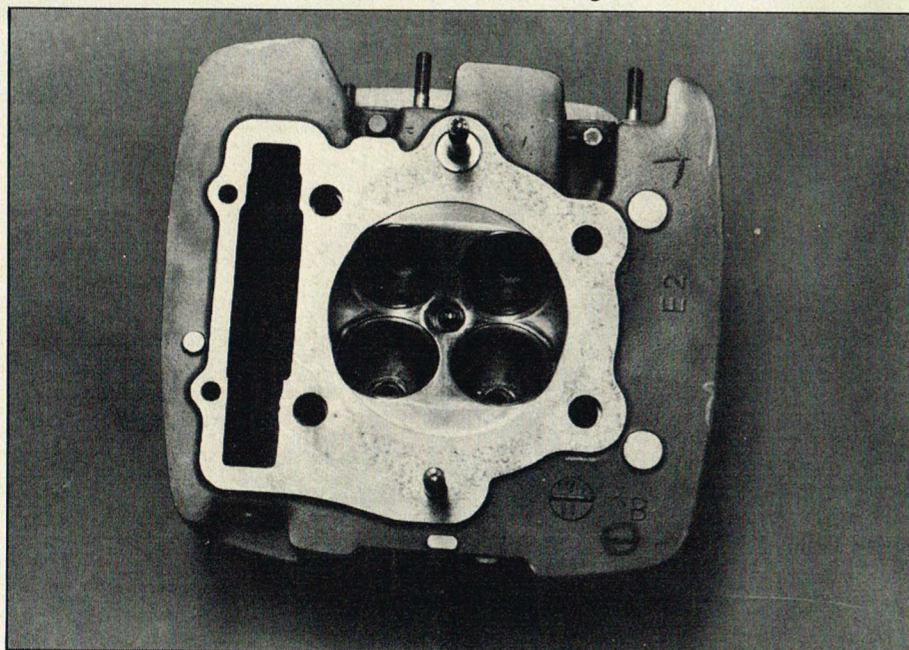
The big, willing engine pulled right from the bottom and built revs smoothly. It revved out cleanly, even though the jetting was on the rich side for now. Probably the best part was the fabulous mid-range power. You had enough horsepower on hand to lift the front wheel on short straights, without tugging on the bars.

Dialing it in

It took quite a while to get the suspension sorted out to our satisfaction. Eventually, after much fiddling, it was found that five-weight oil, 4 1/2 inches from the top, with 20 psi air in each leg did the trick. It takes a very long time to break the Simons fork seals in... at least a dozen hours of hard riding will be required before they release their grip on the fork tubes. Because of the greatly reduced weight of the whole package, we were able to back a considerable amount off the preload on the Pro-Link spring.

Once set up, the bike was taken out and thrashed through some whoops and given three or four hard riding/training sessions. It tracks straight as a pure desert bike, with no head shaking over the severe stuff. A bit of high-up weight can be felt when hopping off a two-stroke and getting on Big Red, but the feeling goes away after a few minutes of riding.

Here's a head that's been Mugen-ized. Part of the trickery is the very smooth contouring on the valves.



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\$18 @ 15	X	=	\$9.00	X	=	\$
\$15 @ 12	X	=	\$7.50	X	=	\$
\$12 @ 9	X	=	\$6.00	X	=	\$

*Add \$1.00 Handling Charge Per Order.

TOTAL # TICKETS _____ TOTAL _____

*Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed business size envelope. Tickets will be returned to you in this envelope... otherwise they will be held at WILL CALL WINDOW.

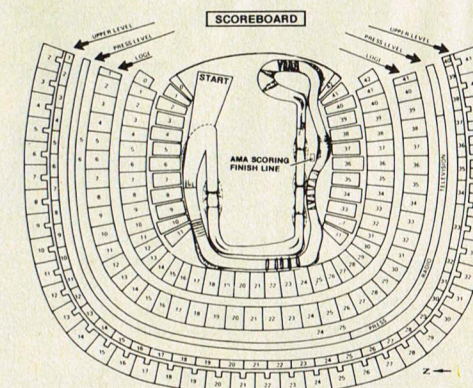
You can charge your tickets VISA MASTERCARD

Account # _____ Interbank # _____ Exp. Date _____

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San Diego Stadium



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Canadian add \$1, other foreign add \$2 (U.S. funds).

DB10-1

PROJECT XR500

While the bike cannot be tossed around like a 125, it nonetheless has no bad habits in the turns. The front end sticks where you put it and the rear end doesn't hop around and scare you. Most of the turning is accomplished by placing the front just where you want it and snapping the bike around to the desired line with the right amount of power.

Goals: Was it worth it?

We ended up with a bike that weighs 251½ pounds, with oil in the forks and gearbox, no gas in the tank. Our goal was 250, ready to ride. There are still a few pounds that can be pared off and we might get around to it. But, for now, being one and one-half pounds away from our target isn't all that bad. We also found out one thing: the loose talk you hear about 225-pound XR-500s is just that... loose talk.

Quite frankly, to get much lower in ready-to-ride weight than we've achieved, you're going to have to start drilling and resorting to titanium. Even then, we can't see how more than ten pounds can be whittled away—using reasonable techniques and keeping cost under some semblance of control.

Big Red will be raced soon and we'll let you know how we fare. But, even if it never wins a trophy, it'll still be more fun to ride than we could have ever believed. Roll your own? You bet! □

WHERE TO GET IT AND WHAT IT COSTS

MUGEN U.S.A. CO., LTD., 6878½ Santa Fe Ave., East, Hesperia, California 92345; (714) 244-6405

Baja campshaft	.....	\$55.00
Baja exhaust system '79/'80	.....	\$180.00
Baja exhaust system '81	.....	\$99.00
Pre-tuned E.I. carburetor kit	.....	\$120.00
Carburetor insulator	.....	\$19.19
Mugen's special piston kit	.....	\$70.00
Baja valve set	.....	\$75.00
Racing valve springs	.....	\$59.95
Mugen factory head complete	.....	\$365.00
Mugen factory head modification	.....	\$120.00
Cylinder head cover	.....	\$49.90
XR500/250 heavy-duty clutch springs	.....	\$11.95
Clutch plate kit	.....	\$55.00
Special clutch hub	.....	\$295.00
Mugen XR Baja Commander engine assembly	.....	\$1695.00

WHITE BROS., 11611 Salinas Drive, "M", Garden Grove, California 92643; (714) 638-1653.
 Reed replacement for 1981 head \$27.95

MALCOLM SMITH DIST., 7563 Indiana, Riverside, California 92504; (714) 687-1300
 Gunnar Gasser throttle and cable \$27.45

S&W ENGINEERING, 7051 Village Drive., Buena Park, California 90621
 E.I. carb \$120.00
 S&W valve spring kit \$59.95

DUNLOP TIRES, See your local dealer and demand one of the new 17-inch trick tires.
 5.00x17 K88 stock #422479 \$60.02

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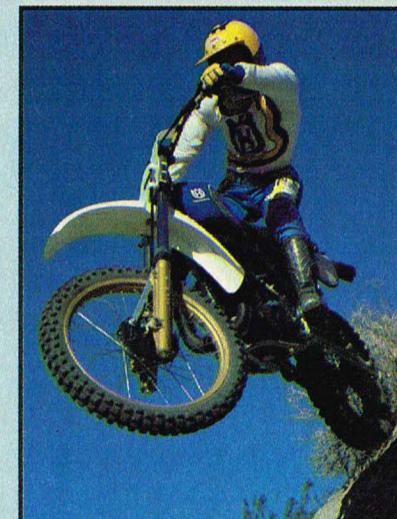
ORDER NOW



1. Flyin' Four-Sixty-Fives—Rick Sieman photo.



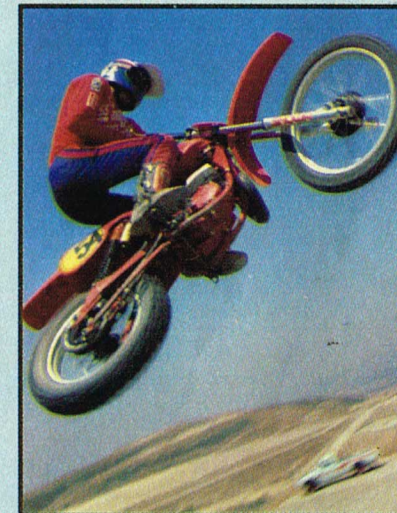
2. "Magic" Mark Barnett—Dennis Cox photo.



3. Dick Burleson on the rocks—Tom Webb photo.



4. Sandblasting on the ATC250—Paul Clipper photo.



5. Soaring Clark "Kent" Jones—Dennis Cox photo.



6. Marty Moates and Chuck Sun—Miller photo.



7. Johnny O'Mara on the 125 Mugen—Dennis Cox photo.



8. Bob Hannah at Unadilla GP—Dick Miller photo.

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