

GIANT CRASH & BURN SPECTACULAR !!

DIRT BIKE

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DIRT BIKE

OCTOBER 1983

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**HONDA
XL600:
THE HOT
TICKET!**

**YAMAHA
YZ TRICKS:
MAKING IT
A WINNER!**

**SURPRISE
ATTACK:
KAWASAKI'S
INCREDIBLE
3-WHEELER!**

**DANGER IN
THE SKIES:
DEADLY
DOUBLE
JUMPS!**



LARRY WILCOX

ISSN 0364-1546



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KAWASAKI KXT250



HONDA XL600R



DESERT RACING



CAN-AM 250 & 500



YZ HOP-UP



YAMAHA IT490K

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ON THE COVER:—Chips ahoy! Gentleman Jim Holley leaps our test Honda XL600R over Larry Wilcox (of CHiPs fame), while Sheila Sieman ponders the Hollywood ticket she just received. Will Holley make it? Will Sheila get grounded? Will Larry call for Eric Enchilada and get the SWAT team after Jim? Photo by Tom Webb. Color separation by Valley Film

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HONDA XL600R

FLASH BIKE!

Roost on to Electric Avenue

By the Staff of *Dirt Bike* & Dennis West

“Taking a trip?”
“What’s that?”
“Taking a trip?”
“Yeah.”
“Where to?”
“Ah, I don’t know. Wherever I end up, I guess.”

“Man, I wish I were you.”
“Really? Well...hang in there.”

And as Bronson spoke those immortal words and rode his Sportster off into the sunset each week, millions of unaware American TV viewers were witnessing the beginnings of the motorcycle boom.

What does this brief bit of motorcycling history have to do with a test on Honda’s XL600? Well, for all of you too young to remember, back around 1970, Michael Parks rode the now-famous eye-in-the-triangle Harley Sportster on the TV show *Then Came Bronson*. It was not your ordinary scoot, but a magic do-it-all bike. He would go tooling down the highway to an off-road race, sign up, stick a number on his headlight and smoke everyone across the desert. Sure, his Harley would turn into a CZ with a Sportster gas tank in mid-air, but not many seemed to notice.

Back in those days, there wasn’t much differentiation between a dirt bike and a street bike. Nowadays, bikes have become so specialized that even the untrained eye can quickly distinguish a tall and sleek thoroughbred motocrosser from a low-slung, multi-cylinder pavement burner. Which brings us back to the XL600, Honda’s approach to a do-it-all bike.



“All right, Miss Hotrod, let’s see your driver’s license... Huh? What the... Hey you, come back here!”



FLASH BIKE!



D. West parked his Interceptor for several weekends and took the XL600 up to his favorite canyon roads. Many GPz and Katana owners were embarrassed as the XL went flying by.

SIX-DOUBLE-OH!

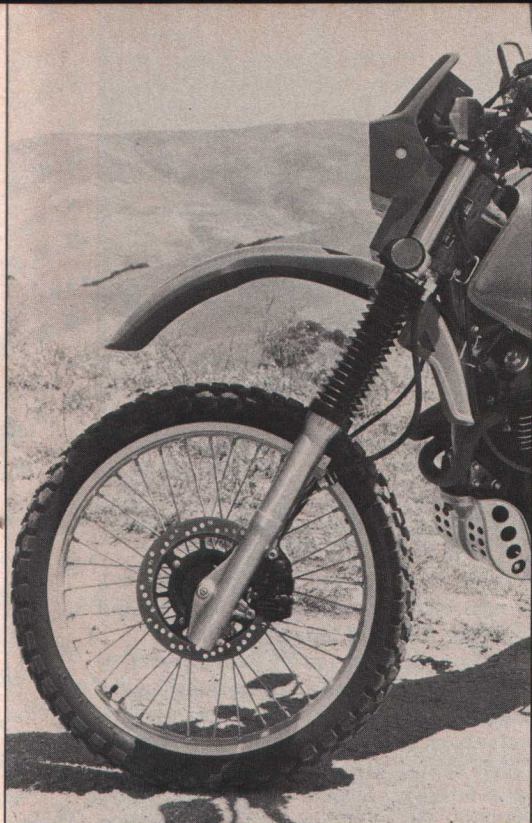
As its name would imply, a major difference between the XL600 and last year's XL500 is the size of the motor. But it doesn't end there, as the motor is not only bigger, but is also totally different. The XL engine is basically the same as this year's new XR500s, but with a fatter bore. Both share Honda's new radial four-valve head, dry sump lubrication and twin-carb design. Also, the engine configuration was changed to incorporate a shorter stroke to reduce piston speed.

Last year's XL and XR500 measured an 89mm bore with an 80mm stroke. The XL600 carries a monstrous 100mm bore to a 75mm stroke. Those numbers give it a piston size that is bigger than a small V-8's! We're talking echoes! Each explosion that occurs in the cylinder can be felt when riding the bike. Last year's 500 feels like a twin when compared to the 600. Vibration is still somewhat subdued with the use of counterbalancers, but the way the power pulses are transmitted throughout the bike would bring a grin to any John Deere owner.

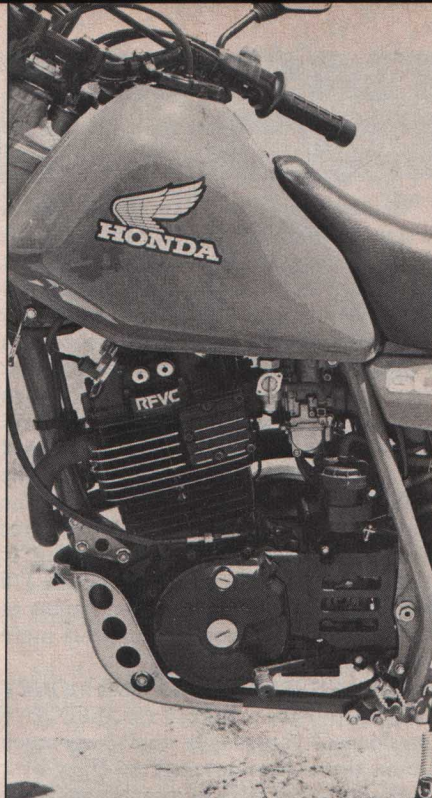
Power is the main reason people buy big four-strokes, and the XL600 certainly appears to be lacking none. But, as with most

The XL600 weighs a good 30 pounds more than the XR500. When smoking across some whoops, the extra weight could definitely be felt.





Trick, drilled, twin-piston disco brakes. The hot ticket for haulin' down a mountain.



The dual carbs are jetted very lean to please the EPA. This causes the bike to surge forward when shutting off the throttle too quickly at high rpm.



The XL's Pro-Link system features adjustable damping and pre-load. Cleverly designed helmet lock also locks the tool kit. Rad!



"Is this the way Steve Wise does it?"

big singles, the flat and steady pull of the XL is deceiving. When we first rode it, we thought it wasn't much faster than last year's 500. But after a drag race between the 600 and our '82 XL500 test bike, we quickly changed our minds. Before the 600 had reached 60 mph, it had put over six bike lengths on it, and continued to stretch the distance all the way up to its 100-mph top speed. Some restraint is needed when riding this beast through town. Accelerating away from a traffic light can put you well above the national speed limit before you realize it. "Gee, Officer, am I glad you showed up. Did you see how my throttle got stuck?"

BIG RED RIDING HOOD

When throwing a leg over the bike, you're immediately aware of one thing: This sucker sure sits low for an off-road bike. It sits almost two inches lower than

the XL500. Amazingly, the 600 has a half inch more travel, front and rear, to boot. A quick look under the rear fender of both bikes reveals that the tire moves farther up into the saddle area on the 600. This means less padding in the rear portion of the saddle, but it also means that smaller riders can sit on the bike with both feet on the ground. Speaking of the saddle, it's now a safety seat design that doesn't restrict movement when sliding forward.

Starting the 600 is like starting any big four-stroke. Giving it a halfhearted kick will often cause your knee to be sent swiftly up into the handlebar. An automatic compression release is actuated when the kickstarter is moved down, and when the correct procedure of throttle and piston position are figured out, the 600 can be started on the first or second kick. Still, turn the front wheel a little to the left to be on the safe side.

Before taking the big XL into the dirt, you must first realize that it's not going to handle like a CR. When traveling across gnarly terrain, the weight, suspension and tires will limit you from reaching the warp speeds of motocross bikes. The handling of the XL can be better compared with the XR.

If you have some time on an XR500, you'll probably adapt well to the XL600. Both seem to share basic characteristics of turning, braking and accelerating. The major difference will show up, though, when you come to some big whoops. Although the XRs come with fairly soft suspension, the XLs are even softer. Hitting good-sized bumps at high speed will cause the shock and forks to bottom.

This doesn't mean you can't ride quickly over the really rough stuff; it just means you have to back off the throttle to a more sedate speed. If you plan on riding mainly on this type of terrain, you could check into some heavier springs, but it might be easier to purchase an XR instead and make it street legal. If you are good at disciplining yourself to a cruiser pace, the stock suspension should be adequate for most types of riding.

If fire roading is your game, you can forget the cruiser stuff. Cooking down hard-packed dirt roads is where the XL shines. Get up on the tank, kick it down a gear, heel it over and roll on the throttle. Coming out of turns in a perfect, feet-up, full-power slide is no problem at all. Oh, what fun it is to ride a 40-horse open sleigh! The tires that worked marginally in loose dirt give a fairly good bite on the hard stuff.

INDISCREET IN DE STREET

We staffers of the well-lit, high-zoot and ground-in *Dirt Bike* empire usually don't get too excited about riding scoots around on the street. What with all the speed limits, rules and regulations they impose upon us, most of the fun is gone. What would it be like if you showed up at a motocross and they said no wheelies coming out of the gate, no getting air over the doubles, and keep it under 35 mph coming down the straight. Geesh! Anyway, since the XL was designed to be ridden on the road also, we figured we would check it out.

On the street, just as in the dirt, the 600 loves to wheelie. Not as much as the XL500, but still, even with its longer wheelbase and more weight on the front, it loves to show off its power. The most difficult

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HUMBLE.....
WHEN YOUR AS
GREAT!!
AS I AM.....



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SMITH
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You can play with my wife
BUT
When you play with this BIKE
You're playing with your Life!



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AS MUCH AS I
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**DAMN
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FLASH BIKE!

part of riding the XL on the street was restraining our natural dirt biking urges. "Look, Ralph, that boy is doing a willy!"

Besides being a fun bike, the XL makes a comfortable road bike. The long and soft suspension soaks up road bumps that jolt normal street bikes into the wobbles. But the surprising thing about the XL600 is how fast it goes down twisty back roads. On canyon roads, the XL will run with the *best* sporting pavement scratchers. And when the roads get really tight, the 600 will actually put distance on them. One word of caution: The bike is farther off the ground than most road bikes, and the amount of lean is limited more by the tires than by the pegs or the frame scraping. If the scrub marks on your front tread are 1/8 inch from the edge, you've been leaning as far as is safe and need to hang off more to compensate.

WORKING HARD FOR YOUR MONEY

Dual-purpose bikes are like vice presidents—you usually don't hear much about them. Motorcyclists go crazy over radical off-road bikes or insanely fast street bikes. They never seem to get excited over dual-purpose scoots. Maybe it's the jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none syndrome. These people have probably never ridden a bike like the XL600. A wide variety of riders, ranging from Pro motocrossers to weekend trail riders, rode our test bike. Nearly all came back surprised, saying "Hey, this is really a neat bike"—which

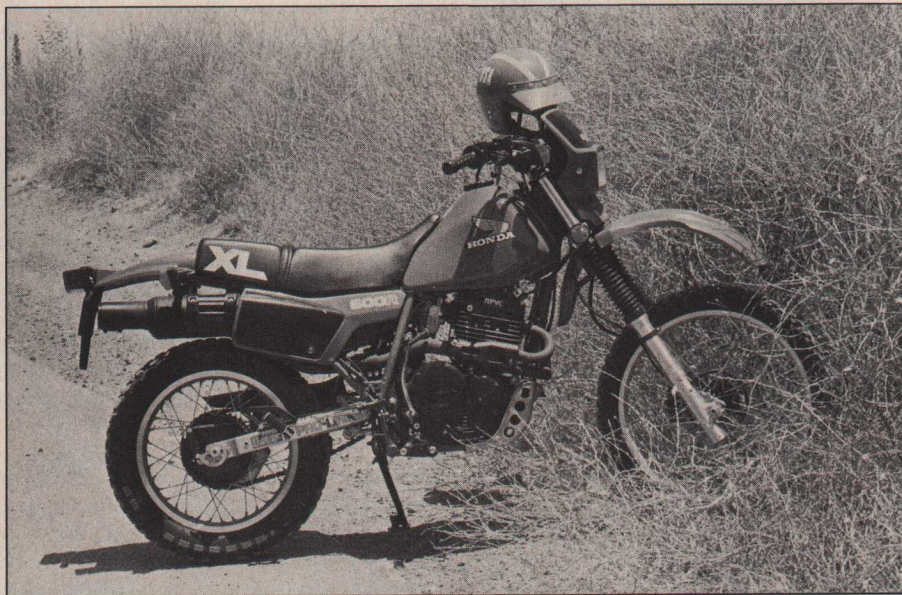


You should do this on the street only in the case of extreme emergencies.

is how we would sum up the XL600. It's a neat bike that is fast, handles well and has just the right amount of flash.

Throughout the testing it also proved to be trouble-free, even after the thrashing the *DB* test crew gave it. To best illustrate this, refer back to the cover. Young Mr. Holley made almost 50 passes of the 100-foot leap over little Miss Sieman and *CHiP*ster Larry Wilcox. The only damage to the bike was several broken turn signal bulbs.

Last year we rated the XL500 as the best dual-purpose bike, even with stiff opposition from Yamaha's XT550 and Suzuki's SP500. This year, Honda improved its XL considerably, while the XT550 and SP500 remain, more or less, unchanged. Guess where that puts the Honda XL600? □



HONDA XL600R (SPECIAL STREET-ORIENTED SPEC SHEET)

Engine type	4-stroke, 4-valve, single	Ground clearance	10.6 in.
Bore and stroke	100mm x 75mm	Tires:	
Displacement	589cc	Front	3.00x21 Bridgestone
Carburetion	Dual, 28mm and 30mm	Rear	5.00x17 Bridgestone
Ignition	CDI	Intended use	On/off-road
Transmission	5-speed	0-60	Warp factor 5
Fuel tank capacity	3.2 gals.	Top speed (with rider)	102 mph
Wheelbase	55.9 in.	(without rider)	0 mph
Seat height	33.9 in.	Approx. retail price	\$2248
Weight (no gas)	308 lbs.	Distributor:	
Suspension:		American Honda Motor Co.	
Front	39mm, air/spring, 9 in.	U.S.S. Enterprise Ave.	
Rear	Pro-Link, adj., 8 in.	Captain Kirk, CA	