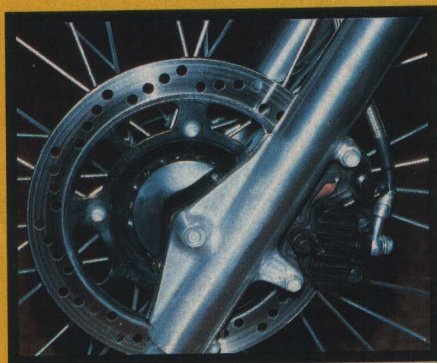




# TRAIL BLAZERS

Brilliant new additions to Honda's XR/XL series point to a four-stroke future

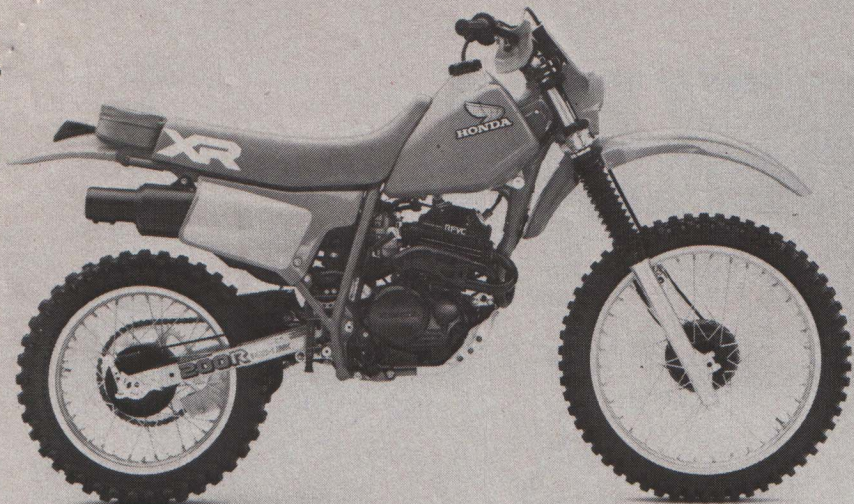
BY CHARLES MOREY



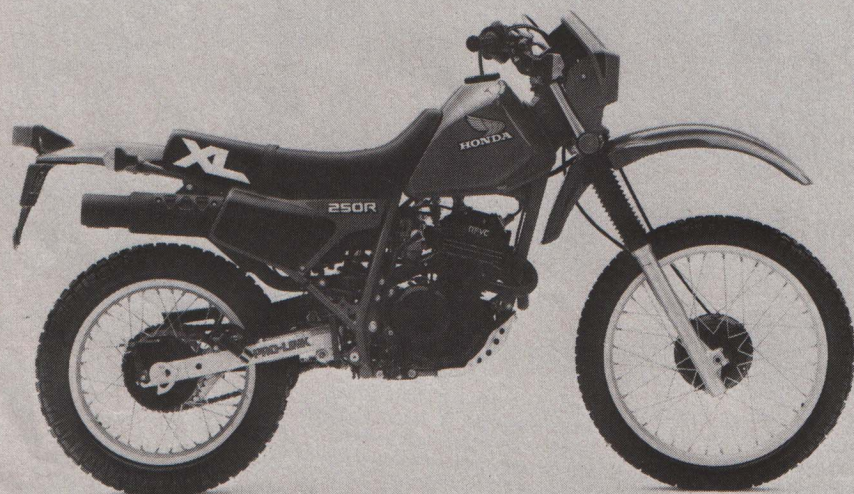
Innovation is the name of the game, and Honda continues to demonstrate leadership in that area with their four-stroke dirt machines. This year's new XL and XR series bikes are just steps in a long-range plan. Invention and refinement of details plays a large part in their program as proven systems are added to successive models.

Honda's Radial Four-Valve Combustion chamber head—introduced to off-road riders with the 1983 XR500R and XR350R Hondas—now sits atop the redesigned XR200R, the all-new XR250R and the two new-for-1984 XLs, the 250 and 350. Honda claims the RFVC gives the XR200R sufficient power to be a serious A class enduro machine. Honda spokesmen were quick to add, however, that the popular trail bike is still suitable for non-competitive riders.

*The '84 XR250R is not a sleeved-down version of the popular '83 XR350R; rather, it's an over-bored version of their redesigned 1984 XR200R. This 250 sports a front disc brake; RFVC head with dual-carburetor/dual-intake port induction; six-speed close-ratio gearbox; air-adjustable 38mm KYB forks with 10 inches of travel; Pro-Link rising-rate rear suspension with KYB shock with four rebound and 16 compression damping settings; straight-pull spokes; 17-inch rear wheel; 2.4-gallon fuel tank; automatic cam chain tensioner; claimed dry weight of 229 pounds.*



Still red, but otherwise the XR200R is an entirely new motorcycle. The 199cc four-stroke engine features RFVC head design, dual-carburetor/dual-port induction, close-ratio six-speed gearbox and an automatic cam chain tensioner. An all-new rolling chassis from frame to shock to fork promises to deliver, according to Honda's introductory press release, "the necessary power to be a serious 'A' class enduro competitor" to the ground. Shock and fork are KYB, rather than Showa, and deliver 10 inches of front wheel travel, 9.6 inches at the rear.



Honda also introduced a pair of new dual-purpose bikes. The XL250R (above) puts the promising new 249cc RFVC motor into a dual-purpose chassis with 8.7 inches of front wheel travel and 7.5 inches at the rear. The XL350R (above right) is the street-legal version of last year's hit single, the XR350R. The XL350R claims 8.7 inches of front wheel travel through a 39mm fork and 8.1 inches at the rear wheel through Pro-Link suspension with adjustable rebound damping. The 350 also gets a disc brake up front.



The popular XR500R and XR350R models received updates such as handlebar brush guards and a change in the material used in the chain guide. The 500's (left) fork was modified for smoother action, while the 350 (right) got a front disc brake this year. Forks on both bikes (41mm for the 350, 43mm for the 500) deliver 11 inches of travel. Pro-Link suspension, with adjustable rebound and compression damping, delivers 10.6 inches of rear wheel travel on the 350 and 11 inches on the 500. Dry weights are 247 pounds for the 350 and 267 pounds for the 500.

Part of the RFVC system is Honda's twin carburetor setup, also introduced in last year's XR350R and XR500R. The two carbs improve throttle response over a single carburetor system. At low rpm, only one carburetor feeds the combustion chamber, so air velocity is kept high. Then, as motor speed increases, the other carb—which has no low-speed jetting at all—cuts in to deliver the high volume of fuel/air mix required by the fast-breathing motor.

New suspension also graces the XR line. Kayaba shock and fork units are used—as they are on the CR125R—to provide Honda a second supplier other than Showa.

Other detail improvements abound, including hand guards on the XRs, but it's the XR200R and its larger-sized off-spring, the XR250R, that promise to please the avid off-road rider. New from the frame up, they appear to be exactly what we've been waiting for the Honda engineers to design: serious four-stroke enduro bikes.

The biggest and smallest of the XL/XR series dual-purpose Hondas, the XL600R and the XL200R received very minor revisions; basically a graphics update. New on the 200 (above) is a smaller, lightweight ignition coil.