

SEPT.-OCT. 1983 \$1.50 (\$2 NZ)

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# trails & track

**tests:**

**HONDA XLX 250**

*XL - 'ncy grows a carb*

**XT 600 YAMAHA**

*"Bowser drainer"*

**600 MX YAMAHA**

*"Rac'in thumper"*

**IT175 L / COOLED**

*Aussie waterbottle*

**MR MOTO-CROSS**

*Qld and NSW rounds*





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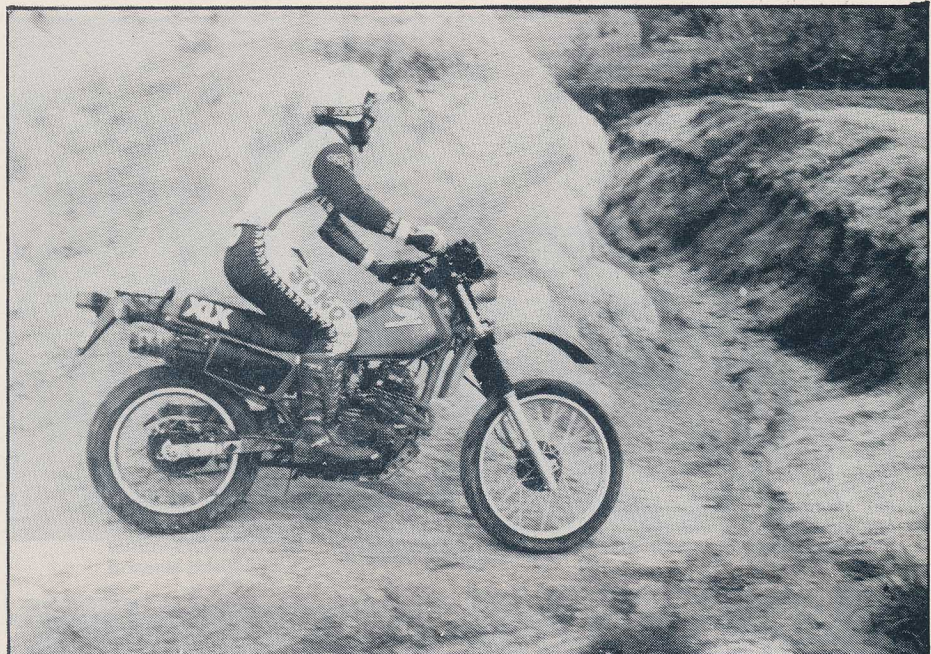
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COVER: The XLX250 under test — will it continue to be a sales winner? Race insert: Leisk and Willoughby hard at it in Qld. Mick Nicol lands the big MX600 Yamaha on test day.

# HONDA XLX250



Good street cruiser and play bike combined

Different models in motorcycles seem to pass endlessly on from year to year without any real changes so it seems. But every now and then one stands out from the rest, and you take a second look. Back in the early seventies the first XL 175 orange tank Honda was one of these bikes which showed huge potential. It handled brilliantly and everyone tried to big bore, and put larger motors in it, in an effort to exploit this great little bike. Many people used them in Enduros and in fact back in '76 I won the team entry in the now legendary Possum Hollow Enduro (which only had eight finishers out of over a hundred starters) on a pretty well standard XL 175 Honda.

I get the same feeling with this new XLX 250. I took it on one of my desert safaris and liked it so well I took it again stock standard, right down to the tyres. And everyone who rode it echoed my thoughts.

This is the first of the XL's with the new Radial Four Valve Combustion Chambers motors and the new XR designed frame. These two components coupled with the slightly longer wheel base and 29 30' caster are the major contributors to the bike's improved potential. The machine has lost that twitchy feel on down hill sections and in soft going such as sand, replacing it with a much more stable feel and unexpected controllability that will amaze you.

Don't get the idea that this is a smaller road version of the XR or a smaller brother to the XL 600; it is quite different and it shows. This machine has a certain stability that neither of these other two bikes has. This is noticeable particularly in the stable front end.

This model features the new 35mm forks (3.5 mm thick) which offer 220 mm of suspension. Between

these forks is the same well designed hub as last year, which is laced to the DID rim and Bridgestone universal type tyre.

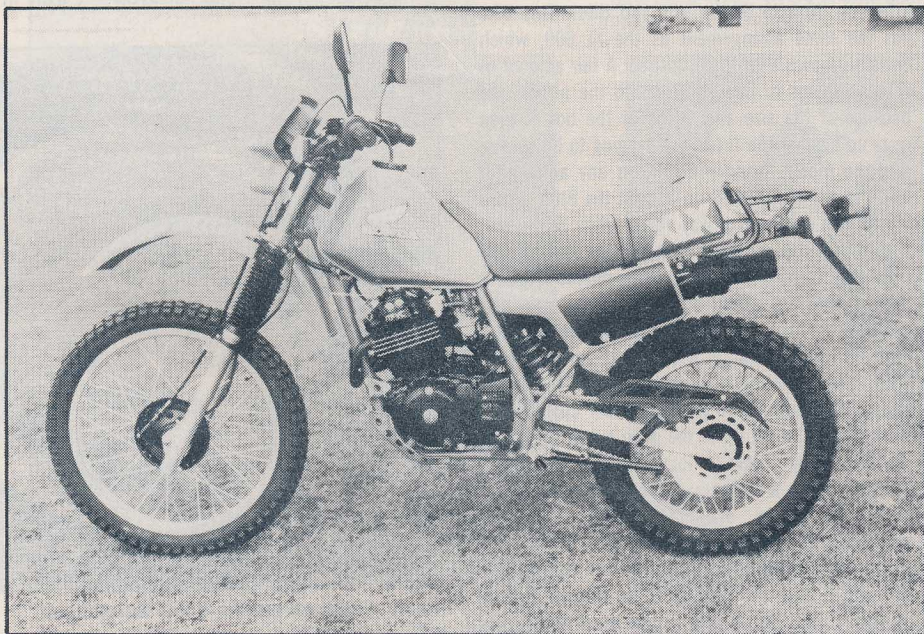
There are two areas here that I didn't like. One is the way the speedo is hooked onto the fork leg so that it sticks out on compression of the suspension and hooks on to all sorts of branches which in turn don't do it the world of good, and the other is the totally useless front mudguard. It is wide enough but this is not much comfort when it is too short both front and back and it flicks garbage all over you because the front of it is too flexible and wobbles everywhere at the slightest wind pressure or bumps. This can be improved putting an alloy strengthening brace on the front and adding some inches to the very front, and also adding some inches onto the rear of it. But it is easier to just buy and fit a better accessory one.

A wider head rectangular head light has given a wider and stronger beam of light than you would normally expect from a 35 watt light. The 12 volt system has also helped with this. Traditionally Honda electrics have been pretty good and this machine is no exception.

A strong head light number plate-wind deflector protects the now rectangular tacho and speedo. While these look better and neater than the old round instruments they are pretty fragile so if you anticipate any rough riding I suggest you remove them. Enclosed in the speedo is the neutral, turn and high beam indicator lights, along with a trip meter and odometer.

Directly behind these the ignition key acts as a steering lock also which is very handy if you're leaving your bike around undesirables for any length of time. The bike theft business seems to be booming. Locking your bike can help reduce it sometimes.

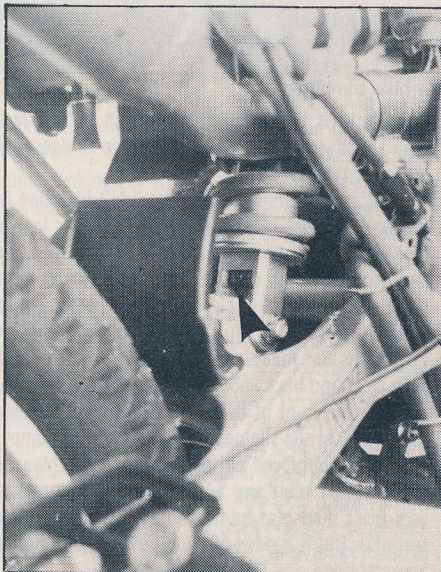
On the left hand side of the bars (which tend to bend very easily) is a new multi switch, choke lever, mirror and clutch lever. The main change on the multi switch is the push button turn indicator release. On the right, the front brake lever kill switch and twin cabled throttle are found. While the



Many of the XR's good qualities have found their way into the XLX



Nothing like the XL of old



Fine tuning of rear end is very easy with accessible adjuster [arrowed]



Rubber protection is everywhere to keep out dirt and grime

throttle is neatly tucked in the kill switch sticks out more than is necessary. Both front blinkers suspend from mid way down the bars.

There has been an increase in the size of the tank this year which is handy, but it is still steel. Plastic would be better. The fuel cap while being large and easy to handle is very heavy steel.

Seating is more comfortable with the new safety seat design and goes a long way towards protecting the family jewels.

Behind this the very successful bolt on subframe carry rack is found as on the last model. This area is strong and functional as is the rear guard and tail light which fit the bill quite nicely even though I still am not wrapped with the duck tail end of the guard.

On the RHS just behind the frame triangulation is the lockable tool box with the usual average lot of tools. To get into the air box you need to remove the side cover but there is no tool that will get into the recessed bolt holding the side cover on which can be VERY FRUSTRATING. This definitely needs attention. Now to the air box and filter. This bike has the same arrangement as the XL 600, which certainly leaves a lot to be desired. A fair amount of rubbish seems to find its way into the airbox and because of the size and shape of the box it then rests up against the filter just begging to be sucked into the motor. When you take in any amount of water at all, it is pushed up against the filter before it gets out via the one way valve. While this is not such a big problem when riding on the road, for off road work it does present some problems and will require constant attention maintenance wise and could be annoying in very adverse conditions.

At the rear the hub is wide strong and houses a good brake. The brake adjuster is not the quick release type but you do get the rubber cushions on the LHS that take a lot of the snap out of stops and starts, making things a lot smoother. The chain guide is rather a symbolic gesture while the chain guard is almost one of the best around. Unfortunately it has had to be cut away at the front to stop contact with the bottom of the air box and this allows mud and rubbish to be thrown directly onto the chain. This is just another good reason why Honda need to look hard at changing the air box on

any future models, particularly the XR 250. On this model you get a much improved rear end shocker which features the rebound damping four position dial on the lower end of the unit. All the moving parts on the ProLink suspension have grease nipples for easy maintenance. This is most important if you are going to get good life out of your bike. On some bikes you still have to pull the swing arm bolt out to grease it. Not on the Honda. A quick zap with the grease gun and it's all done.

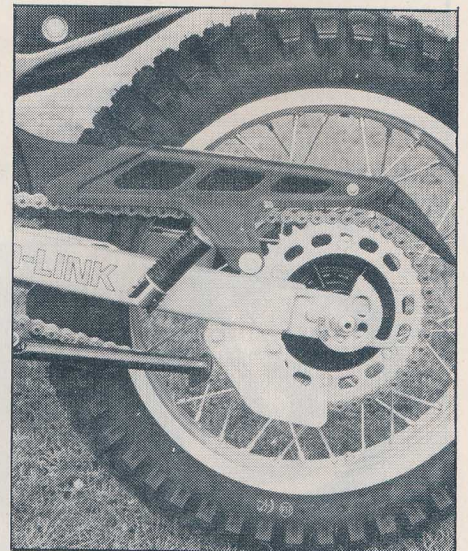
Visually, the main change to this bike is the new RFVC motor and the twin carbies feeding it. As you are probably aware by now the RFVC stands for Radial Four Valve Combustion and the feature of this design is that the four valves enter the chamber from individual angles thus keeping the chamber as compact as possible. You get roller bearings for the cam to run in, and an external oil line feeding the head. The multi section cam is much quieter, lasts longer and is all automatic. Many of the bolts are now Allen headed but you don't get a key to use. Pity.

At the front the pipes sneak snugly out and around to the RHS towards the muffler at the rear. Motor mounting brackets are alloy and both gear and brake foot levers have folding tips.

For off road use the bash plate is totally useless. Take it off and get something decent. If you want the best and don't mind paying for it, give me a ring, I have some available. Replacing side covers is a very expensive business. In the motor dept. you have virtually got all the features of the XR-XI 600 motor and that is good news.

Starting is generally easy although as with the 350 XR sometimes when it stalls hot it can take a few kicks to get it going again. Seating position is good and you can easily touch the ground.

It's not till you start to push this bike that you realize just how good it really is. It's 6 kg lighter than last year's model but it feels lighter than that again. The bike has lost that top heavy feel that plagued the earlier models and is great fun to ride. You can throw it into a corner at high speeds and it has greatly improved stability over previous models. It tracks around the corner so easily it's hard to



Chain guard and guide are well thought out

believe it's related to the RC.

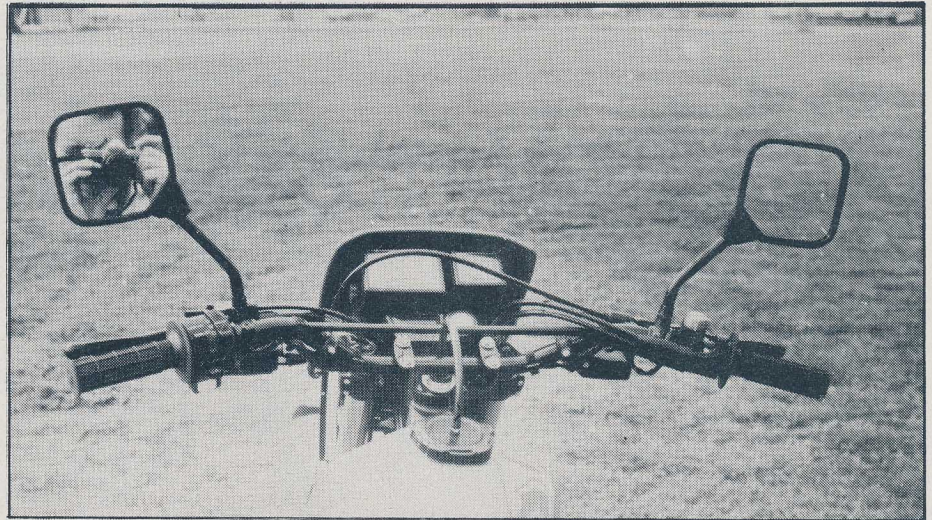
With the vast improvement in suspension, rough terrain is handled as never before. I was dicing with a couple of YZ 250's and they were amazed at the XL actually passing them in the rough.

On steep hills it will lug up or just blast. Once the motor reaches 7000 revs it hits the power band and pulls like all hell. As you can see by this it has loads more top end than previous models. If you keep it in this upper rev range you will be travelling very fast indeed. This doesn't mean that the bike has no bottom and mid range. It's just that when many four strokes start to level out, this bike comes on hot and strong; something extra you don't expect.

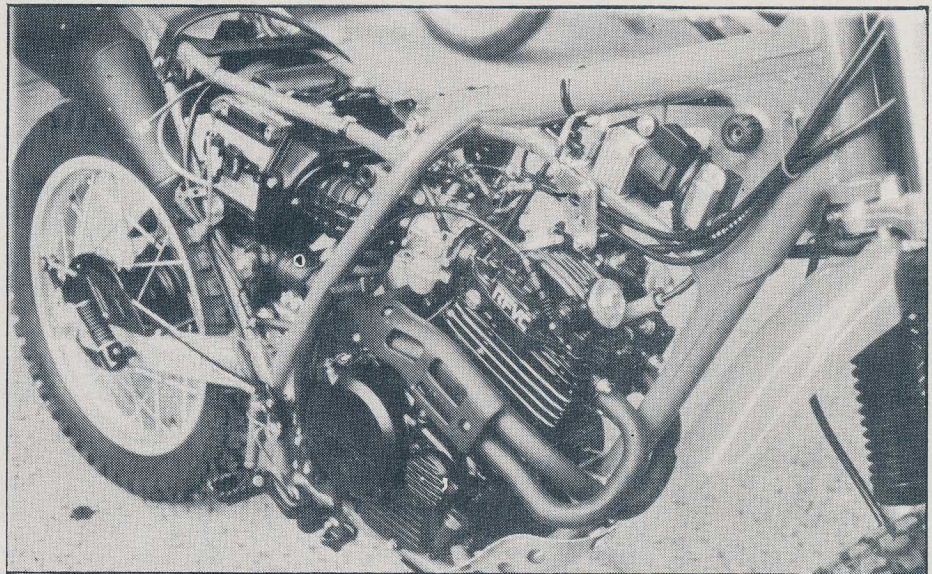
For those people with duck's disease, you will be pleased to know that you can touch the ground easily when necessary. The suspension is the best yet on an XL and while it's not enduro class it is very good and will more than satisfy the average buyer.

On the road you can cruise vibration free at 120 K's without a worry. Smooth is the way to describe the motor; quiet is the word to describe the sound. Strong is the word to describe the power. Fast is the word to describe the speed and stable describes the handling. Not for a long time has an XL displayed such good offroad potential without sacrificing its road going potential.

Economy wise it will return you around the 100 miles to the gallon in good riding conditions and that is much better than most bikes these days. OK, there are things that could be better, like the front mudguard, fuel tank, air box and filter, tyres, etc. for the off roader but once you start slotting through the well spaced six speed gear box you'll be so



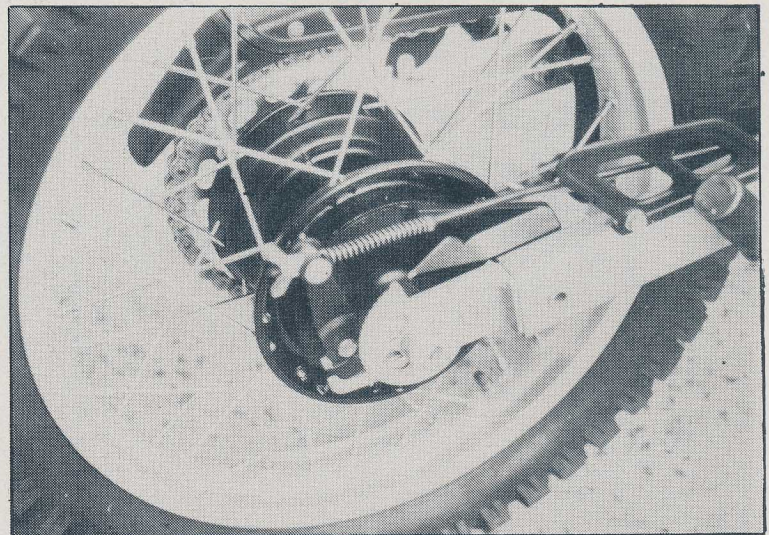
Luxury everywhere adorns ~~the~~ handlebar area [note we are not using a Box Brownie this test]



"New generation" RFCV engine sports a second carb to broaden power and improve fuel consumption



Single leader did its job adequately. Front guard is plenty long out forwards but a bit short on at lower for engine protection



Single clean lines plus snail cam adjuster. Note guard for pillion riders foot. Spokes are straight pull along with other good gear



pleased with what's happening you will hardly notice these defects. I have used this bike in every riding situation, from road to sand to dirt to gravel to mud to clay and found it to be far better than the DR, XT and the KE. Try one and you'll come to the same conclusion.

MURRAY CRAWFORD

**ENGINE:**

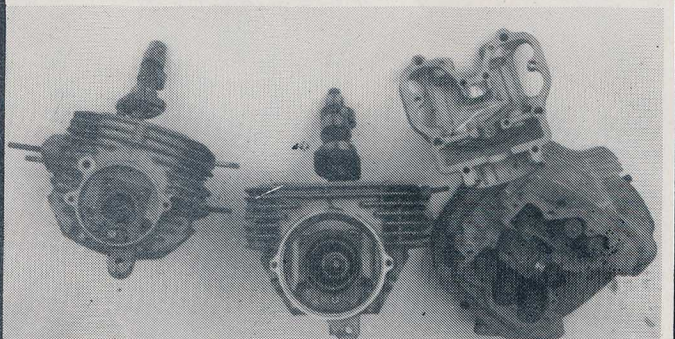
- Bore and stroke . . . . . 72 x 61,3 mm
- Compression ratio . . . . . 9.8
- Displacement . . . . . 249 cm
- Spark plug gap . . . . . 0.8-0.9 mm
- Valve clearance (cold) . . . . . Intake: 005 mm
- Tyres
- Front . . . . . 3.00-21-4PR
- Rear . . . . . 4.60-17-4PR
- Engine Oil . . . . . 2.0 l
- Fuel tank . . . . . 10 l
- Fuel reserve . . . . . 2.0 l
- Front fork oil capacity . . . . . 281 cc
- Transmission . . . . . 6-speed
- Headlight (High-low) . . . . . 12V-35 36.5W
- Tail stoplight . . . . . 12V-8 23W
- Turn signal light . . . . . 12V-23 23W
- Overall length . . . . . 2,175 mm
- Overall width . . . . . 840 mm
- Overall height . . . . . 1,225 mm
- Wheelbase . . . . . 1,415 mm
- Dry weight . . . . . 118 kg



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# Saturday night.

# Sunday morning.

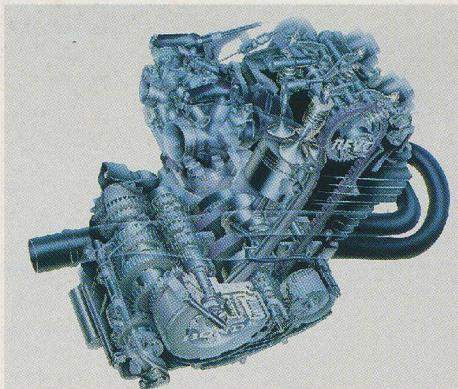


## XLX250R

Never before has a single motorcycle been so right for so many different reasons... On Saturday night your Honda XLX250R can take you right to where it's happening in style and comfort and yet, Sunday morning it can take you away from it all just as easily.

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