

DIRT BIKE

MAY 1998

Attn. retailer:
Please display
until May 21

WPS
34355

WINDHAM'S
YZ250

DOWD'S
YZ125

HENRY'S
YZ400F

WE RIDE THE WORKS YAMAHAS

HUSABERG
400

KTM
400

YAMAHA
WR400

HONDA
XR400

4-STROKES MX80s

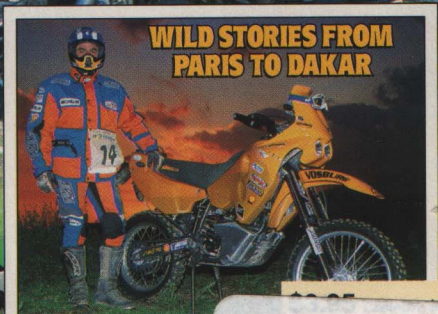
SUZUKI
RM80

KAWASAKI
KX80

YAMAHA'S
YZ80

HONDA
CR80

TM



WILD STORIES FROM
PARIS TO DAKAR

SEYMOUR £ 2.30
DIRT BIKE
MAY



THE NEW 400S

The Yamaha WR400F takes on the Honda XR400R, Husaberg 400 & KTM 400 EXC



Here we go again. A few years ago the middleweight four-stroke class was nowhere. It was the left-handed albino dwarf of off-road. Sure, it existed, but statistically it wasn't even a blip on the screen. If you actually wanted a middleweight four-stroke, you were saying "I want something that's slow, outdated, expensive and unreliable—and I want it *now*, darn it."

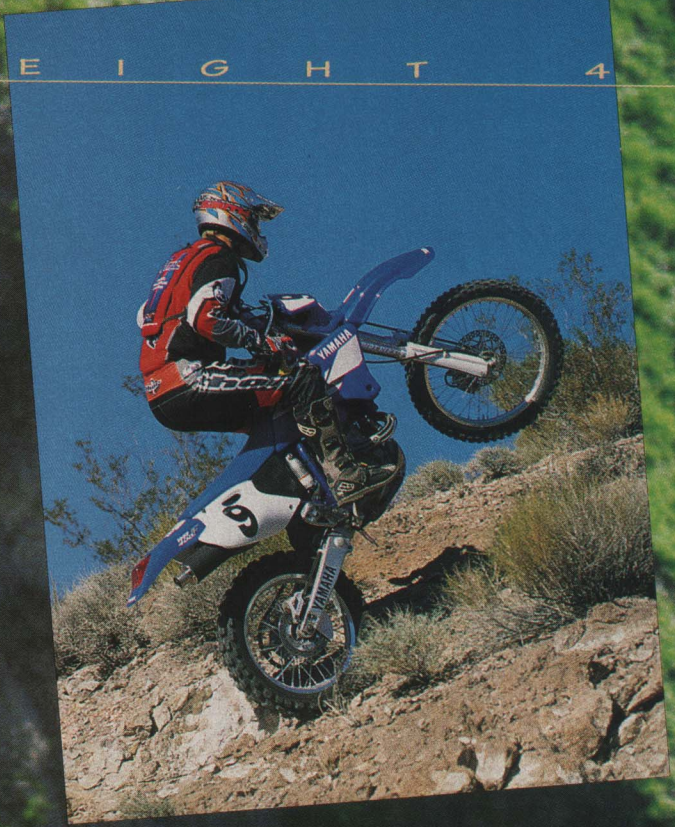
Then came the Honda XR400R. Con-

tinents shifted. The world tilted. Racing classes formed, and an entire category of dirt bike was reborn. Suddenly, the biggest-selling dirt bike in the country was this albino dwarf of a bike. After two years, we have barely gotten used to it, but the new world order has finally been set.

Now the Yamaha WR400F is here. Hold on to something. Are continents going to shift again? Is the WR going to have the same effect as the Honda XR?



THE NEW 400s





IN A WORD, NO

The Yamaha actually is a very predictable next step. Every revolution starts with a bang—that was the XR. Now we are in the evolutionary phase. Yamaha just looked at Honda's success and tried to one-up it at every level. Like it or not, this is a pattern we are going to see for the next few years as middleweight four-strokes become the major form of dirt bike in America. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? We wondered ourselves, so we decided to look at the state of the art in the 400cc

dirt bike category. Right now there are four major players. More will join soon, but if you want a 400 trail bike now, you have to decide between the new Yamaha, the Honda, the KTM 400 EXC and the Husaberg 400.

The cool thing about this kind of comparison is that the class is in its infancy right now. Each motorcycle is completely different. As the class matures, it will become more standardized. Take 250 motocross bikes, for example. They are all the same. Everyone copied everyone else in that class until your

choices are so similar it takes a pro to tell them apart.

It's not like that here. You have air-cooled bikes, liquid-cooled bikes, four-valve heads, five-valve heads and a total of 30 pounds separating the lightest from the heaviest. Beyond just the technical differences, there are huge rifts in orientation and philosophy. Two of the bikes are racers and two are trail bikes. No one, at this point, agrees on what a 400cc four-stroke *should* be. So we volunteered for the job. First, let's look at what they *are*.

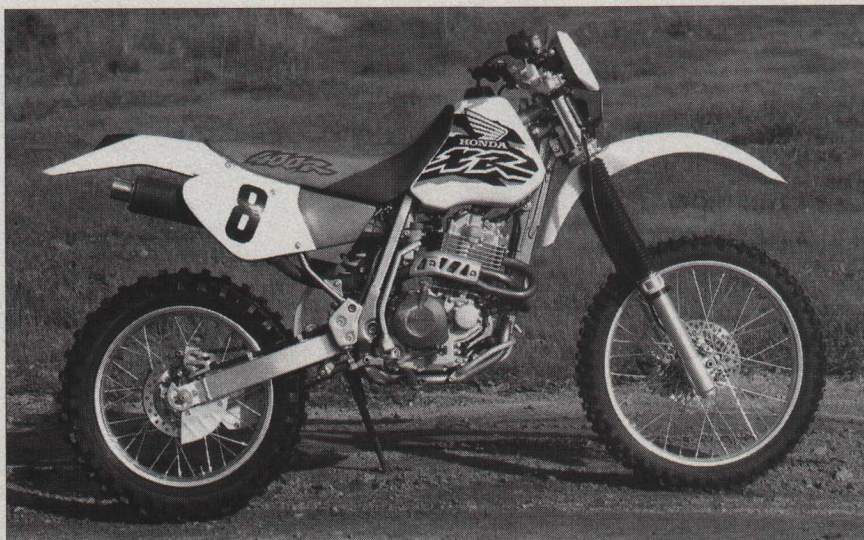
HONDA XR400R TECH INSPECTION

When Honda introduced the XR400R in '96, the engineers decided to cast it in the mold of the XR600R. Why not? The 600 was the best-selling four-stroke dirt bike of all time. In fact, in certain years it had been the best selling *dirt bike*—period. Of any type. The trick, Honda decided, was to make a lighter, narrower, less intimidating version of the 600. That's why the 400 has an air-cooled, four-valve motor. Like the 600, the 400 has Honda's Radial Four-Valve Combustion Chamber. That means each valve stem is splayed at a different angle so that the combustion chamber can have a true dome shape. Having the single overhead cam operate four valves set at four different angles is a bit of a mindbender, but Honda figured out how to do it using two rocker arms per valve.



The '96 and '97 mufflers are the hot setup for the new XR. Swapping the end caps on the new model is worth 3hp, although the bike does get louder.

Honda never intended to have people build "big-bore" XR400s because it didn't want the bike to cut into XR600 sales. The bore already is right out to the cylinder studs. However, that didn't stop the aftermarket from going crazy with the bike. We have seen XR400s in every displacement, right up to 500cc, with no apparent top-end problems. The bike's weak spots are in the clutch and transmission—they can't handle much more power than the bike makes stock. In '97, Honda went to stiffer



Is the XR400R still the wonder child of the 400 crowd? It depends on which 400 crowd you are talking about.

clutch springs, which made the clutch adequate for mild hop-up.

This year, the most significant change is the muffer. Before, there was a baffle that was easily removed for a boost in power (and, unfortunately, noise). Now the baffle is permanent. The good news is that the bike still makes virtually the same amount of power but is much quieter than an unmuffled '97 model. An easy hop-up for new '98 XRs is to install the muffer off an older 400, remove the snorkel from the airbox and install a 152 main jet. That's worth two or three horsepower.

Remember the jetting complaints that XR owners used to have? The new model doesn't look much different, but the bogs and misses are gone. Slight redesigns inside the carb and different jetting get the credit. Last year, a 162 main jet was standard—now a 142 is. Our test bike was a 49-state model. We have ridden the California-only model, which is leaner still, and noticed very little difference. For some reason, the 400 stands up better to the emissions restrictions than the 600, which loses a bunch of horsepower when it crosses the state line. Of these four manufacturers, Honda is the only one to even have a California model. The Yamaha isn't sold out west (for now), and the other two manufacturers skate by the rules by declaring their bikes "closed-course vehicles."

The only other change for '98 is the fork, which is stiffer this year (thank you). If you don't know XR400s really well, you can't tell a new one from an old one.



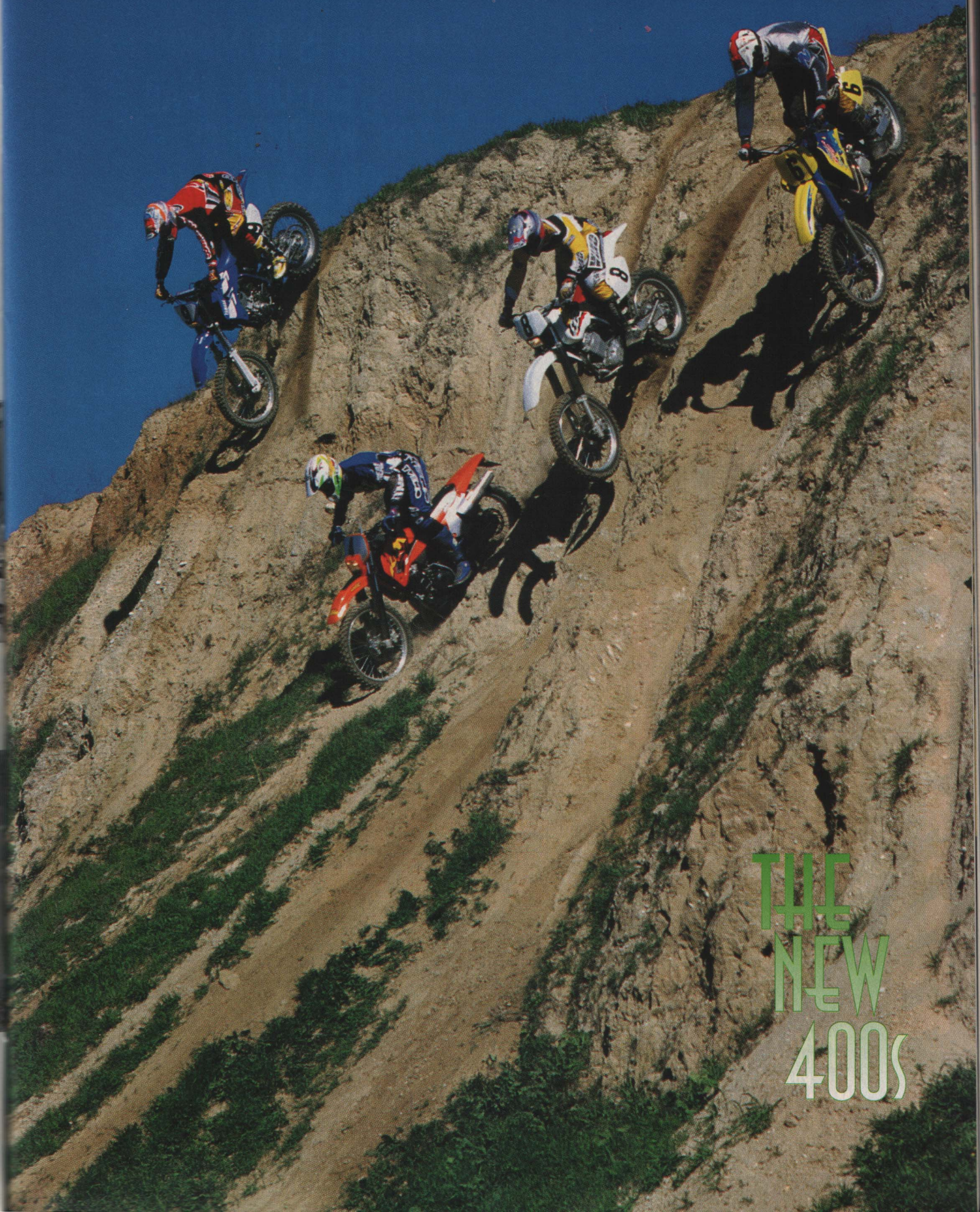
The package might look the same, but the clutch and carburetion problems of the early XR400s are virtually gone. Otherwise, it would be hard to tell a new XR from a two-year-old model.



Yes, some people actually race motocross on XRs. Some people swallow glass, too.

There are two distinct groups here: the Husaberg and the Yamaha are the racers, while the Honda and the KTM are the trail bikes. It's hard to go on a ride where they can coexist. ►

S T R O K E S H O O T O U T



THE
NEW
400s

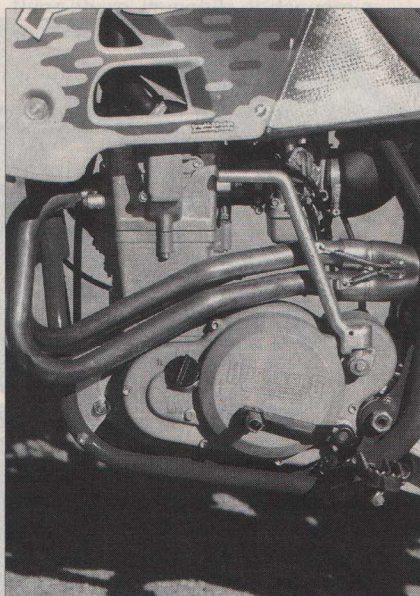
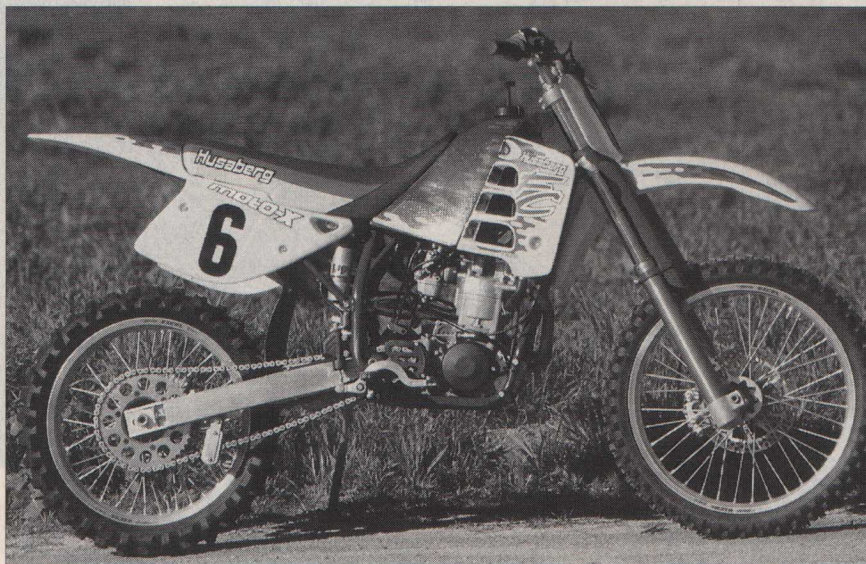
THE NEW 400s

HUSABERG 400 TECH INSPECTION

Despite being purchased lock, stock and barrel by KTM two years ago, Husaberg still remains very much its own company. The 'Berg is nothing like the KTM. Actually, the bike hasn't changed very much at all, compared to the first one that appeared (almost ten years ago). The 400 that we got for our test was actually the FC model, which is motocross-oriented. We had to take what we could find. The FE enduro model has only three differences: softer suspension, lights and a different gas tank. So that we would be comparing apples to apples and 'Bergs to 'Bergs, we asked White Bros. to revalve the suspension in our 400 to off-road specs. The 'Bros are probably the top authority on WP suspension in the U.S.

In every other way, a Husaberg 400 is a Husaberg 400—provided it isn't the electric start version (ours wasn't). They all have the same six-speed gearbox with the same ratios, and they all are incredibly light. Our bike tipped the dirt bike scales at 244 pounds; that's 21 pounds lighter than the Yamaha. Granted, the Husaberg didn't have lights or a kickstand, but that can only account for about five pounds, max. The secret to the 'Berg's light weight is its simplicity. The engine doesn't have anything that isn't necessary—no counterbalancer, only one overhead cam and a very ordinary four-valve, four-rocker arm setup. The tiny 10mm spark plug leaves a lot of room for big valves, and a super-short piston skirt keeps reciprocating weight low.

There isn't much of an airbox. The carb breathes through a boot that leads into the frame backbone, and on that backbone there is one small air filter about the size of a hotdog bun. When it gets a little dirty, it can cost the bike as



No counterbalancer. The Husaberg's engine is about as complicated as a bucket of rocks. The bike is much lighter than a bucket of rocks, though—provided they are very big rocks.

much as three horsepower (we measured it). Suspension is handled by WP components. The fork is typical of current Eurothink. The compression damping is adjustable via a clicker on the left fork cap, and the rebound is on the other—only you can't get to either clicker with the handlebar in place. That handlebar, by the way, is a Magura with oversize clamping area similar to the Pro-Taper design. Don't try to put Pro-Tapers in the 'Berg's clamps, though. They aren't quite the same size.

The FC model (like our test bike)

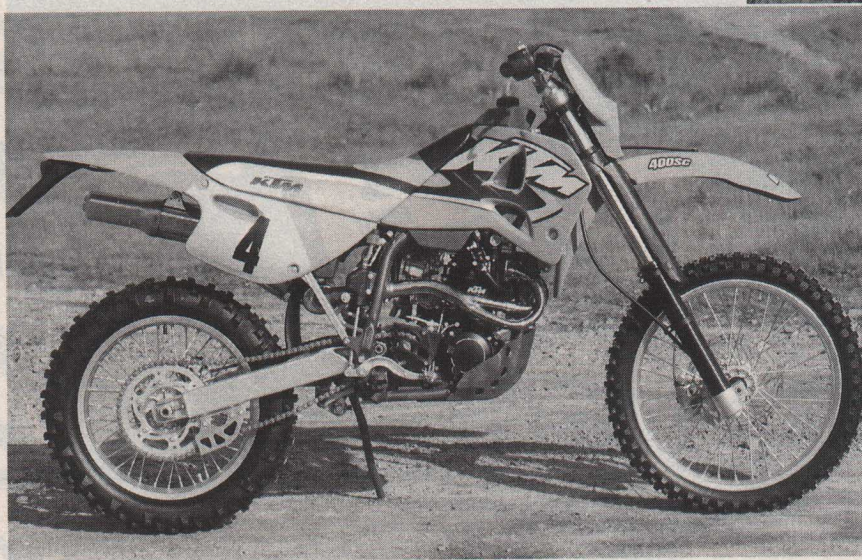
Husaberg's enduro and motocross models are identical except for suspension settings, lights and fuel tank capacity. From the strange fact file: the enduro model's gas tank is preferred by most motocrossers.



It works, but when you ride the 'Berg, you can't escape that crude, Eastern Bloc feel.

doesn't use a fuel pump because all of the fuel is above the carb. The FE carries some fuel below the carb and requires a small fuel pump to push gas uphill. Oddly enough, we prefer the FE's tank because it's narrower and carries more fuel.

THE NEW 400s



Usually, smooth means slow. Not so here. The KTM is the second fastest, but the powerband is so smooth you would never know it.

The KTM has the best powerband, starts the easiest and is the most comfortable. It's amazing what you can do if you aren't worried about weight.

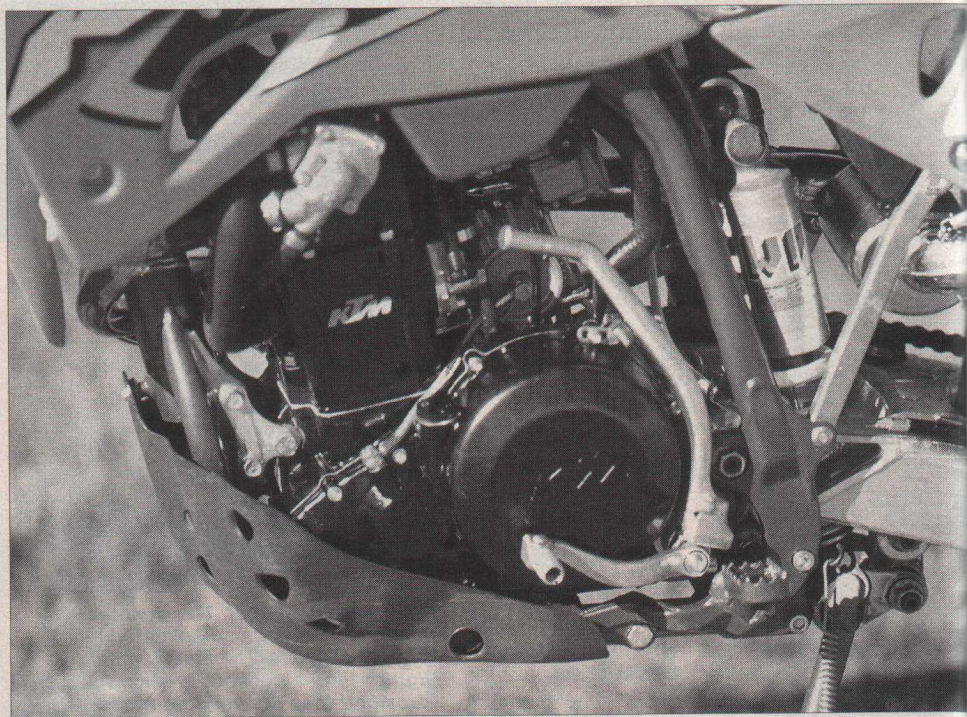
Horsepower is the worst enemy of handling. The 400 is identical to KTM's 620 except for the displacement and handling. You gain one, you lose the other. ►

KTM 400 EXC TECH INSPECTION

The KTM four-stroke engine hasn't changed its appearance much over the last ten years—but, boy, is it different. When the first models came out, the engine was heavy, ill-mannered, poorly carbureted, hard to start and would occasionally stop running for no apparent reason. That original LC4 motor has evolved into a family of engines that are the mildest-mannered, most pleasant powerplants in the four-stroke world—and the 400 is the best of the lot.

A lot of the refinement comes from the investment that KTM has made in its street-legal, RXC line. When something works on the RXC, the EXC gets it (example: the counterbalancer and new clutch that was introduced on the RXC two years ago). Yet the EXC is free of the DOT regulations that plague the dual-sport versions (example: the EXC doesn't have the lean-surge king Quick-Silver carb. Instead, it has a slightly lean but acceptable Dell'Orto).

The EXC is more of a cruiser than a racer. Most aspects are designed for comfort. For example, the bike has an automatic compression release for starting. You don't have to mess with any of that just-past-top-dead-center stuff like you do on the Yamaha. Also, even



though the kickstarter is on the left side of the bike (evidently a lot of Europeans are left-footed), it is mounted low on the engine case. That means you don't have to stand on a ladder to get your foot high enough. The EXC also has the softest seat and the softest suspension.

Those suspension components are the same as the Husaberg's, only different. The front has a WP conventional fork with the rebound clicker on the right and the compression on the left. The shock also is a WP. The spring and damping rates, however, are much,

much softer than those of the 'Berg. Also, fitting in with the KTM's cruiser mentality, everything is a little overbuilt and beefy—the bike actually is much easier to work on than any of the others. The air filter can be accessed without tools, and it has a big, life-scale element, not a little piece of foam rubber such as the Honda and the Husaberg. The handlebar is an oversize Magura (like the Husaberg), and the whole bike has a solid, substantial feel. It is the heaviest of the lot by a good ten pounds.

YAMAHA WR400F TECH INSPECTION

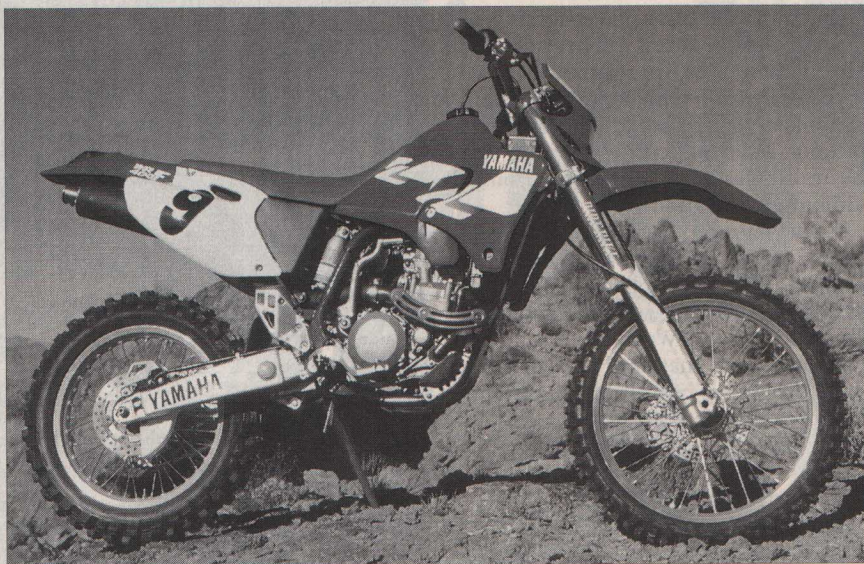
Yamaha must have paid a fortune in overtime to get the WR done as a '98 model. The full-race YZ version was the top priority all year. Everyone just assumed that there would be an off-road version as well, but no one guessed it would follow so quickly on the heels of the YZ. Yamaha just did the stuff that would make it acceptable to the off-road crowd and nothing extra. The WR has:

- A wider-ratio gearbox
- Larger fuel tank
- Wider seat
- Lighting coils *and* lights
- Heavier flywheel
- Softer compression damping, front and rear
- An 18-inch rear wheel
- Kickstand
- Spark arrester
- Retarded exhaust timing
- A throttle stop to prevent full-throttle openings
- A removable baffle

Those last two items are to keep the bike's sound levels down. The baffle is a good idea, but the throttle stop is ridiculous and unnecessary. Plan on replacing the stock throttle stop with one from a YZ a few seconds after rolling the bike out of the showroom, like everyone else in America.

Well, we should say *almost* everyone else in America. California buyers will have to either buy YZs or go to other states. Yamaha hasn't yet finished a California-only model that will meet the new emission standards. We don't be-

If you want more midrange hit from the WR engine, just advance the exhaust cam one tooth. Then it becomes a YZ engine.



Is the WR400F as fast as the YZ400F? Not quite, but it's close. On tight trails, just be sure you aren't pointed at anything sharp, immobile or dangerous when you pull the trigger.

grudge Yamaha that; like we said, it's amazing that the bike is available at all. Yamaha will probably have a bike that can satisfy California's bureaucratic loonies by next year.

In case you missed the last nine months of hoopla over the motocross version of the bike, let's recap. The bike has five valves that are driven by double overhead cams, a super-short stroke and makes crazy horsepower. It has a motor that's just as narrow as the Husaberg's, but with all the normal four-stroke entrails: oil filter, oil pump, counterbalancer, etc.

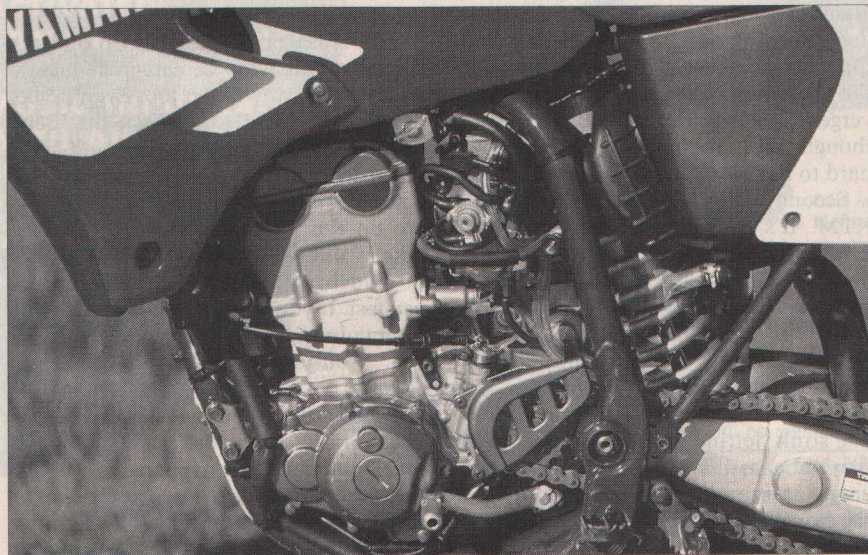
The chassis is about as close to a YZ250's as Yamaha could make it. The geometry is the same, only the back-



The Yamaha doesn't just outrun the other bikes, it disappears. The bike makes more power than most 600s.

bone is a little higher to make room for the taller motor. That's good news for tall guys who feel that the YZ250 has a little cramped seat/footpeg relationship. The suspension components are the same as the YZ with the exception of the stiffer spring and damping rates necessary for the additional weight of a thumper. The KYB fork has an elastomer bottoming system just like the YZ, and even the lever ratio in the rear is the same as the two-stroke's.

One thing that's not the same as the two-stroke, or even the motocross version of the four-stroke, is weight. The WR tips the fabulously high-tech *Dirt Bike* scale (accurate to 1/100th of a metric ziplock) at 265 pounds. That's 15 pounds heavier than the YZ400.



WHAT A CHOICE!

Up front, the bikes have nothing in common besides metal, rubber and dirt. After ten minutes, we realized that two of them are racers and two of them are trail bikes. The racers aren't much fun on long, tight, difficult trail rides, and the trail bikes can't be raced seriously without modification.

If you guessed that the Honda and the KTM fall on the trail side of the fence and the Husaberg and the Yamaha are the racers, you win the Smarter-Than-A-Block-Of-Wood award. That distinction isn't that hard to figure out. None of these is completely single-purpose, though. Here's where we look at all the parts before examining the four wholes.

START THEM UP

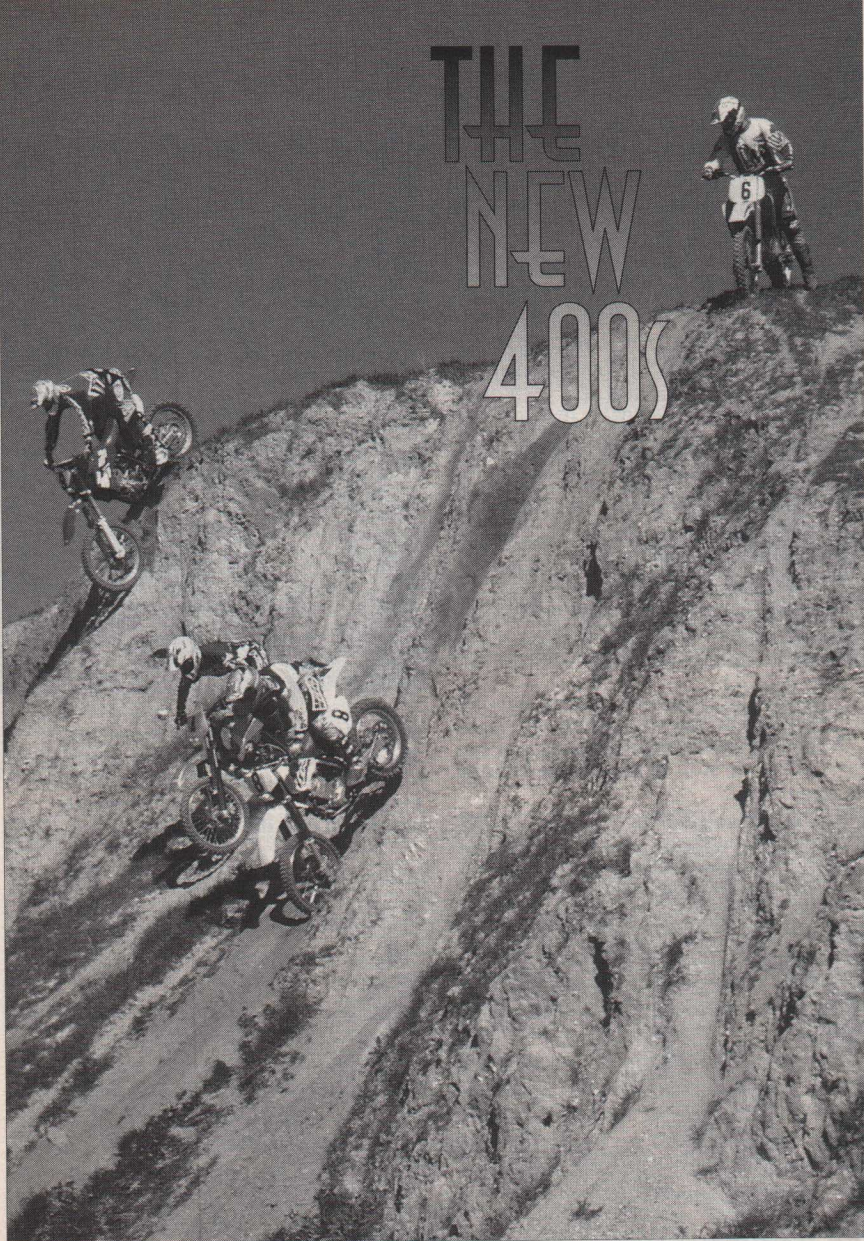
Starting any four-stroke takes more time than starting a two-stroke. But it isn't necessarily *harder*. In fact, all these bikes usually start in one kick when cold, and two or three when hot.

The Honda has the simplest procedure. You just kick. There's a centrifugal compression release that keeps one exhaust valve slightly open when the engine isn't spinning. The Honda sometimes takes four or five kicks if it's in a bad mood, but that's rare. The Yamaha has the most complex procedure. There is no automatic compression release, so you have to manually bring the piston to top dead center before kicking. We have learned that some people have a knack for this, other's don't. If you do it right, the Yamaha always starts first kick. If you don't do it right, you will break a kickstarter. The Husaberg and the KTM both have automatic decompressors and start easily, but the left-side kickstarters are a little awkward. The KTM is the easiest to kick of all four because it has the longest kickstart lever and the lowest kickstart shaft. Overall, we rank them on how easy the start procedure is.

Starting ease: **1.** Honda; **2.** KTM; **3.** Husaberg; **4.** Yamaha.

RISE TO POWER

In the power sweepstakes, there were two different winners. If you want quantity, then there's no question: the Yamaha is way faster than anything else here. We never bothered advancing the exhaust timing to make it match the YZ's output because there was no need. It already goes much faster than you need for 80% of the trails in America. The bottom-end power is good if slightly abrupt, the midrange is great and the top-end is awesome. The WR is a bit like an Open-class two-stroke on the trails; when you open the throttle, you better be pointed in the direction you intend on going; you'll get there fast. It's faster



THE NEW 400s

than any of the 400s, faster than an XR600, as fast as most 250 MXers, but not quite as powerful as a KTM 380, a Husaberg 600, a KX500 or CR500R. It does, however, have a wider powerband than any of those bikes, except maybe the Husaberg 600. The WR is on the verge of being too rich at sea level, though, so it becomes too abrupt and hard to handle at altitude.

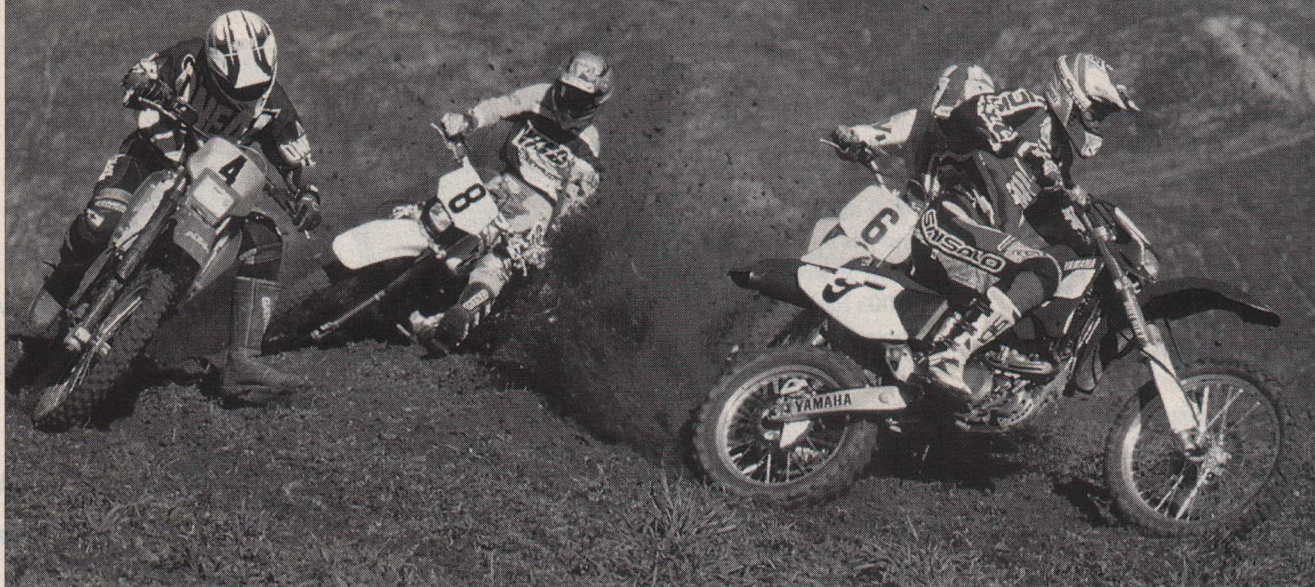
Second in a drag race would be the KTM. It's a different kind of power, however. The great pumpkin of the dirt bike world doesn't hit at all. It just goes faster and faster. In fact, you wouldn't guess that it's as fast as it is. The EXC just seems like a big, happy puppy without any plan or purpose. In the meantime, it revs really high and goes like stink. Jetting is just the opposite of the Yamaha; it's lean at sea level and happy at altitude. Plan on going up two sizes on the main jet unless you live in the hills.

On difficult downhills, the light bike wins. That's the Husaberg, in case you didn't already know.

The Husaberg is super crisp and responsive, but it's a screamer. It makes all its power way up on top. Even if you don't mean to ride very fast, the 'Berg *makes* you start racing. You can't help but rev the bike; it *wants* to scream. As a result, you tend to go faster when you are on the Husaberg. It isn't that the bike is outrageously fast (although it's no slouch), it's just that the bike makes *you* fast. If you try to lug it, the power is disappointing. Crisp, yes. Responsive, yes. Well-jetted, yes. Just not very torquy.

We said that there were two winners in the power sweepstakes. The other is the Honda, which happens to be the slowest of the four. Drag race results aren't everything, though. The XR has more low-end power than any of the

THE NEW 400s



others, even the Yamaha. Even though it doesn't do much at high rpm, the XR might have the best kind of power. It never misses a beat (Honda made some invisible carb mods that cured the '96 and '97 bog), it has good response and it's easy to dial on the right amount of power in tough situations. Where the other bikes might bog, jerk or hesitate, the Honda is always easy to handle. Also, with the aforementioned '96 muffler (actually, just the spark arrester and end piece will do), it isn't *that* much slower on top.

Peak power: 1. Yamaha; 2. KTM; 3. Husaberg; 4. Honda.

Low-end power: 1. Honda; 2. Yamaha; 3. KTM; 4. Husaberg.

SUSPENSION SWEEPS

Okay, divide the group into two camps again. The Honda and the KTM are the softies and the Yamaha and Husaberg aren't. If you have experience with Honda 400s, you know they have been soft in the front, stiff in the rear and overdamped at both ends since day one. The new '98 model is less soft in the front and less overdamped than before, but the same generalities hold true. There are certain areas where that works; rocks, for example. The Honda is the king of the rock pile. The flexy

soft fork seems to absorb everything well, and the bottom line is that you go straight when all the other bikes are swapping around.

Does that mean the Honda is awful in high-speed whoops? Not necessarily. If the whoops go straight and the bike is pointed straight, no problem. The rear end doesn't bottom and the front end is surprisingly stable. When you have twisty, rough sections with G-outs, though, the suspension loses its composure. The front end flexes too much and the bike's weight takes over. The rear end still doesn't bottom hard, but it does pack down and get progressively more wild as the whoops get bigger. In general, it's still best to decrease the compression and rebound damping to the lighter ends of the scale.

The KTM is even softer than the Honda, at least in spring and damping rates. You can bottom both ends out without trying all that hard. When the rear end bottoms, you know it, too. You will think you just heard the Mir space station fall out of orbit. The KTM has a much more rigid frame and fork than the Honda, though, so when you do bottom, you tend to remain stable. On the other hand, it's isn't as good in the rocks as the Honda. Life is full of trade-

offs. Run the KTM on the stock rebound settings, but toward the stiff end of the compression clickers, front and rear.

It's difficult to know how to rank the Husaberg's suspension. Like we said, it was a motocrosser when we first got it. On the trail, those suspension settings didn't work at all. We felt every pebble and rock going right through the bars. After White Bros. set up the suspension it was much better; we only felt every *other* pebble. The suspension action was fine; it turned out to be the hard seat and the rigid frame that made the bike feel so unyielding. In true Husaberg fashion, the faster you ride, the better the suspension feels. It's great in sand whoops and G-outs. The WP fork requires a few hours of break-in, but even in enduro spec, it's never as soft as the KTM's. Same goes for the rear end. Racers love it. Trail cruisers don't. At least in the rear, you can adjust the compression damping easily—you don't even need a screwdriver. You can't adjust the fork with the handlebar in place, though, so you have to pick a clicker setting and stick with it.

The Yamaha has the most flexible suspension of the lot. The bike is just as good as the Husaberg in whoops, and

while it's not the marshmallow that the KTM and Honda are at slow speeds, it's still pretty darn cushy. Unlike the other three bikes, which have to be run near the extreme damping settings, the Yamaha's KYB fork and shock have truly useful clickers. If you are going to ride MX-like sections, stiffen things up and you'll be fine. If rocks are on the agenda, spin those adjusters out.

Fork performance, high-speed: **1.** Yamaha; **2.** Husaberg; **3.** KTM; **4.** Honda.

Fork performance, low-speed: **1.** Honda; **2.** Yamaha; **3.** KTM; **4.** Husaberg.

Shock performance, high-speed: **1.** Yamaha; **2.** Husaberg; **3.** Honda; **4.** KTM.

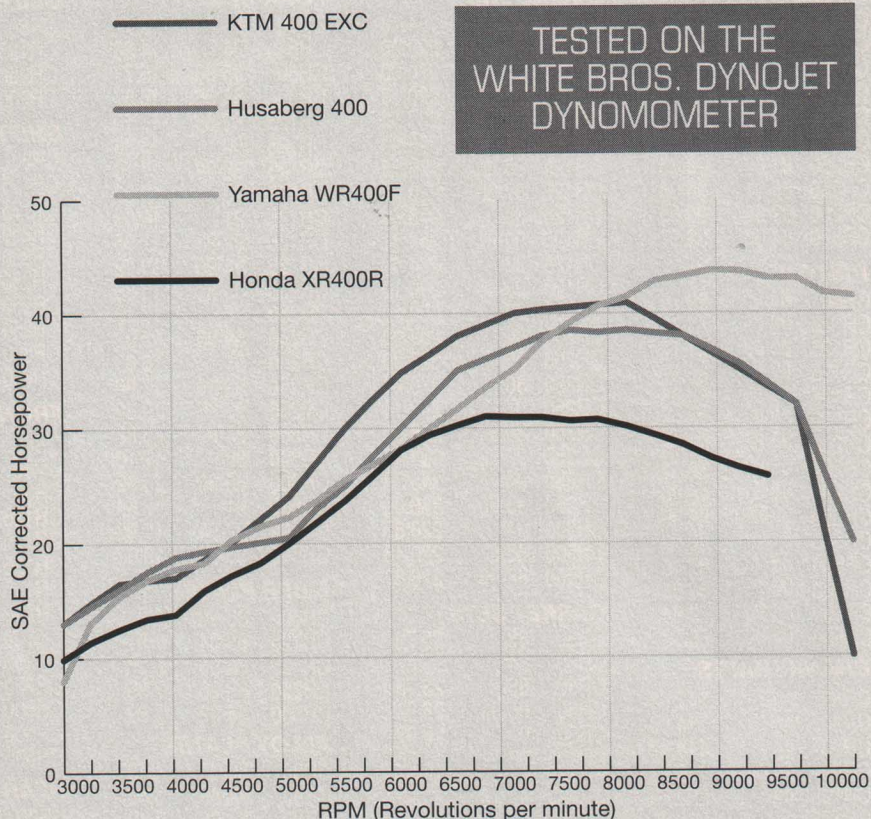
Shock performance, low-speed: **1.** Yamaha; **2.** KTM; **3.** Honda; **4.** Husaberg.

IN THE TWISTIES

A funny thing happened on the way home from the motocross track—at least to the Yamaha. It became a tank. While the YZ version of Yamaha 400 feels respectfully light and agile, the WR version feels big, fat and cumbersome. Okay, you can blame a little on the 15 extra pounds. You can blame a whole lot more on the fuel tank. Yamaha didn't want to make the tank fatter, so the engineers made it longer. The seating position has moved back about two inches. You don't notice it when you first sit on the bike, but you sure do in a turn. It's extremely hard to get enough weight on the front wheel. Eventually you learn to stick that foot way out there and lean way forward, but it's an exaggerated riding position. On our test rides, we have mandatory bike switches every few miles. No matter which of the other three bike you just rode, the Yamaha feels like a freight train when you first get on.

A lot of that feeling might come as a natural result of power. After all, horsepower is the natural enemy of handling. Maybe that's why the Honda 400, at almost the same dry weight, feels like a super-agile minibike next to the Yamaha. Sure, the Honda is lower, shorter and smaller, but it's also slower, and that might have something to do with it. The Honda also is the ultimate low-effort trail bike. Where the Yamaha requires all this exaggerated body English, the Honda barely makes you move at all. You just sit or stand in the middle of the bike and move your neck fore and aft. You don't even have to stick your foot out in the turns if you don't feel like it.

The Husaberg requires a little more monkey motion than the Honda, but its advantage is light weight. It's 16 pounds lighter than the Yamaha, but feels more like 30. You can throw it around like it was carved from the world's largest sty-



foam peanut. The fuel tank looks big, but doesn't move the rider's natural seating position back like the Yamaha's.

Actually, the only bike that has a decent fuel tank shape *and* carries a reasonable amount of gas is the KTM. It is by far the heaviest bike, but on tight trails it doesn't feel bad. The narrow tank makes it easy to climb around on the bike and the smooth, linear nature of the power makes it easy in every other way. It doesn't feel as light as the Husaberg (no four-stroke does) and the handling isn't as neutral and effortless as the Honda's, but it ain't bad for such a big bike. The most amazing thing about the KTM 400 to us is that it has the same chassis and almost the same engine as the KTM 620, yet the 620 is a juggernaut. That just goes to show you that power affects handling more than anything else.

Tight trail performance: **1.** Honda; **2.** Husaberg; **3.** KTM; **4.** Yamaha.

SPEED IT UP

At speed, the four bikes are grouped much tighter. Put them all on a fourth-gear trail, throw in some big whoops, and they are all pretty stable. It's hard to argue against the Yamaha, though. You don't notice the seating position, the suspension is awesome, the power is more awesome and it never, *ever* head-

shakes. Ty Davis said it's the first off-road bike he ever considered *not* using a steering damper with.

The Husaberg ranks next in stability. It will never headshake, either; the rigid-feeling chassis gives you confidence and that super-light feeling sure doesn't hurt. The Honda is reasonably stable, too. The XR has such a short wheelbase you would expect it to be about as calm as a hummingbird on caffeine, but it's actually a stable-feeling bike as long as you keep it away from the aforementioned G-outs. The fork is just too soft for too much speed. The KTM falls in nearly the same category. It's surprisingly stable for a bike with such soft suspension. When you roll off the throttle, though, the front end drops a little and you have to fight off headshake.

Stability: **1.** Yamaha; **2.** Husaberg; **3.** Honda; **4.** KTM.

KEEPING IT TOGETHER

Frankly, we are pretty good at breaking things, but you can only do so much damage in the two months or so of testing that we can squeeze in before deadline. Here are a few tidbits that surfaced in that short time.

- The KTM completely wore through a set of rear brake pads on one muddy ride. The others did the same ride with half the wear.

Be A Responsible Rider.

ATVs can be hazardous to operate. For your safety, read your owner's manual. Always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing. Never ride under the influence of drugs or alcohol, never ride on paved surfaces or public roads, and never carry passengers on your ATV. Never engage in stunt riding or ride at excessive speeds. Be careful on difficult terrain. The Foreman ES is recommended only for riders 16 years of age and older. Honda recommends that all riders take a rider training course. New ATV buyers should take advantage of free ASI training and completion incentives. For safety or training information, ask your Honda Dealer or call the ASI at 800-887-2887. When riding any vehicle designed for off-road use, remember to respect the environment.

HONDA
BEST ON EARTH™



MIDDLEWEIGHT 4-STROKE

• Even though the Husaberg's brakes didn't wear out, they never regained full strength after that day.

• Every time we started the Husaberg, the kickstarter would stay down. We had to pull it up by hand. That got old.

• On the aforementioned wet, muddy day, the temperature was in the high 30s. The KTM plastic radiator shrouds became very brittle and shattered. We didn't even get to crash.

• Honda has pioneered new technology in tank stickers. They are absolutely the thinnest material known to man. You can tear them with anything coarser than a damp towel.

• The KTM has a rear tire with very tiny knobs. They don't wear out as fast as the others, but we wish they did.

• Our Yamaha didn't break its kickstarter, but we have seen others that

One thing about four-strokes: you always know when there's one behind you.

have. Yamaha blames it on owner abuse. We blame it on two-stroke riders who aren't used to thumpers.

• The Husaberg vibrates a lot, and lost a number of nuts and bolts. Use thread cement.

• We don't know why, but the KTM's automatic decompressor would make clanking sounds at idle. We expected something to eventually break, but nothing happened.

• The Honda is the only bike to come with handguards. If cost is the reason that the others don't, why is the Honda the cheapest?

• The Husaberg has a twist grip that almost takes two hands.

• The Yamaha has a clutch pull that almost takes two hands.



SPECIFICATIONS

	HONDA XR400R	HUSABERG FC400	KTM 400 EXC	YAMAHA WR400F
Engine type	Air-cooled, 4-valve, OHC, 4-stroke	Liquid-cooled, 4-valve, OHC, 4-stroke	Liquid-cooled, 4-valve OHC, 4-stroke	Liquid-cooled, 5-valve, DOHC 4-stroke
Displacement	397cc	399cc	398cc	399cc
Bore and stroke	85.0mm x 70.0mm	92.0mm x 60.2mm	89.0mm x 64.0mm	92.0mm x 60.1mm
Carburetion	36mm Keihin	38mm Dell'Orto	38mm Dell'Orto	39mm Keihin FCR
Fuel tank capacity	2.5 gal. (9.5L)	2.0 gal. (7.5L)	2.4 gal. (8.7L)	3.2 gal. (12.1L)
Gearing	14/48	13/48	14/50	14/50
Lighting coil	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spark arrester	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
EPA-legal	Yes	No	No	No
Running weight w/no fuel	264 lb.	244 lb.	275 lb.	265 lb.
Wheelbase	56.1" (1425mm)	58.7" (1490mm)	59.5" (1511mm)	58.3" (1481mm)
Rake	25.5°	28.0°	28.0°	26.5°
Ground clearance	12.2" (310mm)	15.0" (375mm)	13.8" (351mm)	14.7" (373mm)
Seat height	36.6" (930mm)	37.4" (950mm)	37.0" (940mm)	38.5" (978mm)
Tire size and type:				
Front	90/90-21 Dunlop K490	90/90-21 Michelin MS11	90/90-21 Michelin Enduro Comp 3...	80/100-21 Dunlop K490
Rear	130/90-18 Dunlop K695	130/70-19 Michelin MS11	140/80-18 Michelin Enduro Comp 3..	110/90-19 Dunlop D737
Suspension:				
Front	Showa conventional, adj. reb./comp., 11.0" (279mm) travel	WP conventional, adj. reb./comp., 11.0" (279mm) travel	WP conventional, adj. reb./comp., 11.8" (300mm) travel	KYB inverted cartr., adj. reb./comp., 11.8" (300mm) travel
Rear	Showa aluminum piggyback, adj. preld./reb./comp., 11.8" (300mm) travel	WP aluminum piggyback, adj. preld./reb./comp., 12.8" (325mm) travel	WP aluminum piggyback, adj. preld./reb./comp., 13.0" (330mm) travel	KYB aluminum piggyback, adj. preld./reb./comp., 12.4" (315mm) travel
Country of origin	Japan	Sweden	Austria	Japan
Suggested retail price	\$5199	\$6475	\$6148	\$5899
Distributor/manufacturer	American Honda 1919 Torrance Blvd. Torrance, CA 90501-2746 (310) 783-2000	Husaberg Motorcycles, USA 1906 Broadway Lorain, OH 44052 (404) 246-6301	KTM Sportmotorcycle, USA 1906 Broadway Lorain, OH 44052 (404) 246-6301	Yamaha Motors Corp 6555 Katella Ave. Cypress, CA 90630 (714) 761-7300

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

You can't have it all, not in a middleweight thumper. Not yet, anyway. Right now, if you spend half your time doing hardcore trail rides and the other half racing (even if it's unofficial), then you will have to give up something. The Yamaha is the best racer because it has the best power and suspension, but any of the others will eat it up on a tight trail. The Honda makes trailriding the easiest and

most fun, but there's no way it can keep up with the others in an all-out race; at least not without heavy modification.

The Husaberg might well have been the best overall compromise in the shootout. It falls near the top in almost every category, but it's just too cobby. You get tired of the vibration, the kick-starter that stays down, the brakes that don't work and the Soviet-like engineering. The KTM might also be a good

compromise with its awesome powerband, but the bike is dated, and that shows up most in its weight.

Where does that leave us? With two different winners, that's where. If you want to do it all, there's only one answer. Buy 'em both.

Overall rank, trail riding: **1.** Honda; **2.** KTM; **3.** Yamaha; **4.** Husaberg.

Overall rank, racing: **1.** Yamaha; **2.** Husaberg; **3.** KTM; **4.** Honda. □