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ISSUE!**



**FIRST TESTS: 1990 CR125 & XR200
PLUS—HONDA'S OUTRAGEOUS 1991 FUTURE BIKE!**

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**ANOTHER DIRT BIKE FIRST:
FROM BLACK & WHITE TO
ALL-COLOR!**

ISSN 0364-1546



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ON THE COVER:—Shane Trittler wheelies the 1990 XR200 across a Yuletide stream for the lens of Ed Arnet, and the 1991 Honda Cub 90 awaits its first Christmas. Tasteful cover design by De-West; separations by Valley Film.

WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear. *Dirt Bike* does all of its testing and photography legally on public land, or private land with permission from the owner(s), and we abide by the local laws concerning vehicle registration and muffler/spark arrester requirements. We are not responsible for quality of aftermarket accessories we use.

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Our first surprising observation with the XR200 is the price. With a suggested retail of \$2,398, the smallest full-sized XR should fit into many budgets.

That's neat, considering the '88 model ran \$2,598 and the '87 went for \$1,998, but it's not so neat compared to the \$1,599 RT180. Sounds like we have a shootout in the making.

The second surprise was the weight. At 224 pounds without gas on the official and highly accurate *Dirt Bike* scales, the XR is surprisingly light—only a half-pound heavier than the CR250. Sure, it's 50cc less than the CR, but still, it's a four-stroke carrying the extras of 1.2 quarts of oil, an oil pump and valve train. Okay, so it's light for a four-stroke, you say, but look at those spindly 36mm forks—it looks like it's set up for the total neophyte. Wrongo.

WHO IS THE XR FOR?

Everyone! Of course, a 200cc four-stroke limits the group of interested parties tight off the bat. Four-strokes are supposed to be big, heavy, hard to start, throaty, very powerful and, in essence, bikes for real men only. Honda's angle with the 200, which was missing from the '89 lineup, was to position it further away from the top-performing XR of the year: the cartridge-forked and disc-braked XR250. The elimination of lights, fender bag and speedometer has taken the bite out of suggested retail. Admittedly, we approached the XR200 with that "just another small foo-foo four-stroke play bike" attitude, but we found that every rider, big or small, fast or slow, who took a spin on the bike stayed out longer than they planned to and always came back for more. Isn't that how a play bike is supposed to perform?

SIMPLICITY—TO THE UMPTENTH DEGREE

The engine is nothing more than your standard-issue small thumper mill. The two-valve, overhead-cam, 24/26mm oval venturi Keihin-fed 10:1 mill won't set the tech books ablaze. It's basically the same mill that first appeared on the '86 XR200. The six-speed transmission is nice, as is the automatic kick-starter compression release. Dry engine weight is 57.3 pounds, which is 18.3 pounds lighter than the XR250 and 4.4 pounds heavier than the CR250. So that rather bland-appearing engine has one strong merit—very reasonable weight.

Following form, the chassis also stresses simplicity. The white semi-double cradle frame has bolt-on bash guards protecting the engine cases. Spindly looking 36mm leading axle forks look like they came straight off a 1976 CR125. Adjustments are made via oil weight, oil height, air pressure and spring rate. The remote reservoir shock features 20 compression and four rebound and spring preload adjustments. The steel linkage and a steel swingarm are aptly disguised as aluminum with a coat of silver paint. The rear swingarm axle plates are of the drop-in variety, which allow the rear wheel to be pulled straight out the back without removing the axle nut.

Maximum
off-road fun at a price that is \$1000 less than the new high-zoot XR250. The 200 fits most off-roaders' requirements.

Rounding out the package are cable- and rod-operated drum brakes, D.I.D. aluminum rims and IRC tires. The 17-inch rear rim provides a cushy ride and does little more than confuse the 18-vs.-19 argument; 17s are supposedly less susceptible to flats, although this is basically controlled by tire construction, not sidewall height.

Looks rate high on the XR200. The gray engine, white frame, white fenders, white



1990 HONDA XR200R

A play bike with race spirit

By the DIRT BIKE Staff



handguards, red tank, red seat with new-wave graphics, white plates and blue side plate backings make for a work of art to many eyes.

ABOARD THE LITTLE PLAY BIKE

Starting the XR is criminally easy. Once the mill is sufficiently warmed, only a fool could stall the XR. It isn't very quick or fast, the six-speed transmission is notchy but otherwise precise, the clutch is great and the USDA-approved exhaust output is whisper-

quiet. This is a reliable mill that redefines the meaning of "do it in the dirt." A word of warning: Rev the guts out of this puppy. For example, you're cruising along a luscious trail and a nice-sized hill suddenly looms ahead. The engine is singing in the middle of the powerband and you start ascending the hill. All of a sudden the bike is dead in the water. The moral is to plan ahead and shift down early to keep revs singing and remain on the cam.

Suspension favors the casual play rider's demands for plushness and semi-aggressive control. In all honesty, we thrashed the heck out of the XR and the suspension did bottom and the front tire would scrape the fender, but it would never rebound us out of control and off into another universe. Also, there are hardly any adjustments that can be made to mess up the action. We ran shock compression on 10 out and rebound on #2. Sag was adjusted anywhere from three to four inches, depending on rider skill. More

aggressive pilots would obviously want less sag to keep the rear up and steepen the head angle. We never touched the forks, although additional oil height and possibly some air would be recommended to fight bottoming for you harder riders.

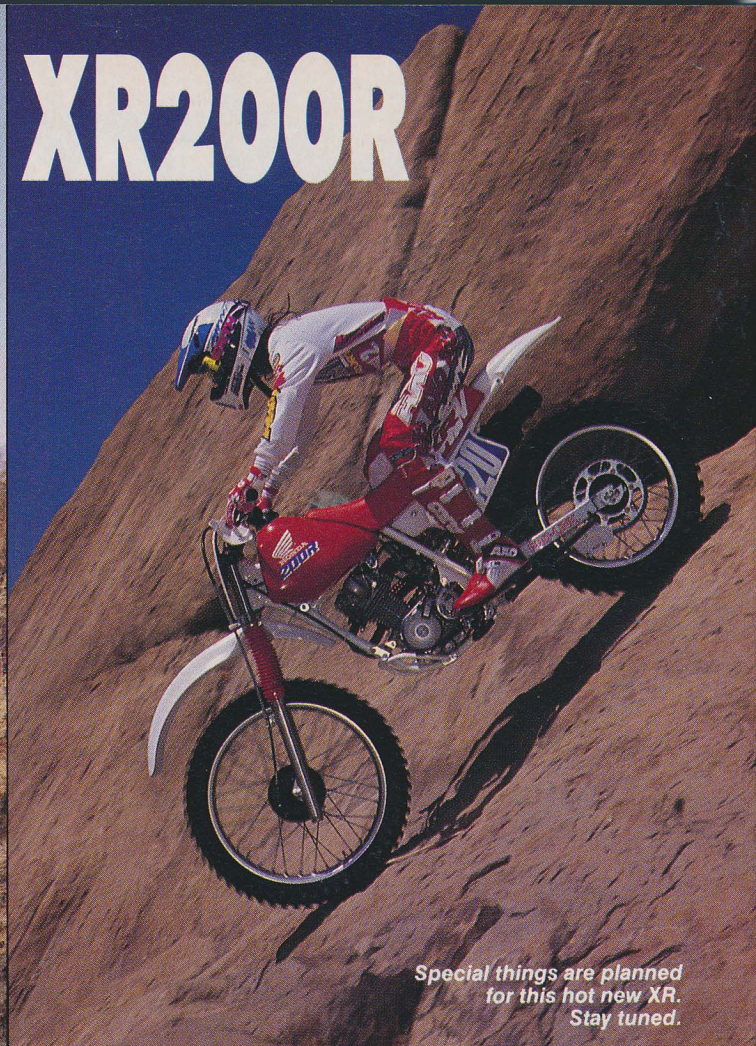
Handling is *very* predictable. The front will push in corners due partly to the geometry and partly to the front tire. A quality Dunlop, Bridgestone or Metzeler will aid turning. Owners will find the standard IRC rubber to last long and resist flats.

Comfort rates high on the little XR. Seat foam isn't as dense as the CR; the body lines and controls are ergonomically fit. Detailing is another plus—great throttle, levers, grips, pegs, folding shift lever, folding brake pedal, O-ring RK chain and snail adjusters. The white bars sweep back more than the CR's. They're comfortable, but experienced riders will prefer a straighter bend.

Brake action was quite impressive. You have the preconceived notion that drum

More aggressive riders found that they could get wild on the tame XR—without getting spit on their head.

XR200R



Special things are planned for this hot new XR. Stay tuned.

THE BAFFLE GAME & SUPERTRAPP EXHAUST SYSTEM

• For ages XR owners have removed the airbox and muffler baffles in search of additional performance. After making sound tests, acceleration and top-speed runs with the stocker, we made additional runs without the baffles and came up with some interesting discoveries.

What did we learn? Between the airbox snorkel and exhaust baffle cap, the exhaust cap barely yielded the highest acceleration gain while the airbox snorkel allowed similar acceleration and a tad more top. Obviously, both baffles out-rewarded top numbers. But who cares about numbers? How did it feel? The exhaust cap made no noticeable difference besides raising noise output 2 dB. The removed snorkel made a big difference in throttle response—it really allowed the engine to breathe freer. Although it didn't raise 20-inch test exhaust note, it will raise the EPA governing 50-foot ride-by noise results. That's why Honda puts it (and the exhaust baffle) in and supplies the new owner with the cute note on the crossbar. Like it says, remove only for closed-course competition. We would recommend only removing the snorkel since the exhaust cap didn't make much of an actual riding difference.

After our baffle experiment, we got power

greedy. A SuperTrapp muffler/S pipe was fitted (\$119.95), the filter screen removed, three one-inch holes cut in the top right side of the airbox and the jetting richened to a 112 main (from 110), the needle raised one clip position (to the fourth groove) and the mixture screw turned in one-quarter turn. One noticeable benefit right off the bat was the weight reduction. The SuperTrapp with eight discs cut a nice two pounds off the exhaust, bringing total weight to 222 pounds, 1.5 pounds less than a '90 CR250! After riding the bike, we felt that the power increase would just rip our baffle's test numbers right off the chart. It didn't! Acceleration was consistently around the 10.4-second mark and top speed was a smidgen higher than the top showing of 56.5 mph. Some course time was in order. The stocker felt sluggish compared to the SuperTrapp-fitted bike. It would go a gear higher in most sections and was more responsive through the entire powerband. We learned that an exhaust system alone won't set the performance charts ablaze on a small-bore four-stroke since there are so many other restrictive components that are keeping the freer exhaust from reaching full potential. Remember: Tampering with the exhaust system might eliminate your machine's off-road legality in some states. •

brakes are totally outdated and can't possibly work. But they do. The front is progressive and not so strong that it will throw a panicking youngster or learning girlfriend on their heads. Rear action is decent, although it will require constant adjusting to maintain proper pedal free play as the shoes set in and wear rather quickly.

THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Change engine oil frequently. Since the top end and transmission share oil, and the bike likes to be operated at oil-breaking high rpm, it would be foolish not to frequently replace the fluid. Now to the air filter. Removing it is straightforward. Loosen three side plate screws—that stay in the plate when loose—pull the plate off, spin the winged center bolt and slide out the filter. Simple. Now put it back in while pressed for time. It's too hard to find the threaded seat for the securing bolt. Honda, point the bolt and/or funnel the threaded seat! Next, remove the seat—and put it back on. This could be designed simpler. The seat has two 6mm posts that fit through the stamped steel seat rail fender loop and fender with two cupped washers which tend to fall out and roll under a parts cabinet. If it raises costs to further detail these areas, leave well enough alone. Take care of this bike and it will take care of you. Although it's hard, avoid the service-once-a-year four-stroke play bike syndrome.

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HONDA
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BE A RESPONSIBLE DRIVER. *Driving off-road is an exercise in responsibility—to yourself, to others, to the environment and to the sport. So wear a helmet, eye protection, and protective clothing whenever you drive the Pilot. Always use the Pilot's seatbelt/shoulder harness system and wrist restraints. Never drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, never carry passengers, and never engage in stunt driving or drive the Pilot on paved surfaces or public roads. Avoid excessive speeds, and be particularly careful on difficult terrain. Read your owner's manual, and inspect your vehicle before driving. Remember, the Pilot is recommended for operators 16 years and older. Always stay on established trails in approved driving areas. Keep your driving area clean, and respect the rights of others. Never modify your silencer or spark arrestor. Always obtain written permission before driving on private land, and obey all the laws and regulations governing your driving area.*



*Test rides offered from Oct. 1st thru Dec. 31st at participating dealers. See dealer for complete details. Specifications and availability subject to change without notice. For a free brochure, see your Honda Dealer, or write: American Honda, Dept. A1020, P.O. Box 7055, No. Hollywood, CA 91609-7055. Pilot is a Honda trademark. ©1989 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. (11/89)

Components that make life extremely pleasurable are: the O-ring RK chain, steel rear sprocket, zerk fitting on the swingarm pivot, drop-in rear axle holders, trouble-free CDI ignition and wheel spokes that refuse to loosen. After thrashing the bike for hours on end, we have yet to tighten the spokes!

HONDA'S INOFFENSIVE FOO-FOO BIKE

It's a dream play bike or great machine to learn on. It will run all day on a tank of gas and would still run if serviced only once a year. It reminded Eddie of his SL100, Tim dreamed of the XR600 and played games on it, we couldn't get Joe off of it and couldn't get Super Hunky near it. Actually, Rick did have these kind words for the XR: "You'll be out doing some serious trail-riding on a high-tech, vibrating monster. Towards the end of a long day when you're tired and the trail is dry, slippery and technical you'll be fighting the bike just to maintain control. That's when you wish you had an XR200—

the perfect bike for those nasty conditions. So you go out and get one and for the rest of your life riding conditions will be perfect with lots of traction. Then you'll hate the bike. Although this is just enough bike for most people, the American public wants more!"

Our plans for the fun-loving little XR? Although it makes little or no sense, we would love to modify the heck out of it. Why not just leave it as is and move up to the new XR250? This is a legitimate question. However, the 250 weighs a good 23 pounds more. Imagine an XR200 with White Power upside-down forks and shock, an engine bored to 250cc or so, filter, carb, cam, piston and pipe. Throw on some real tires and cut lots of pound-adding foof, and you'll have a 250cc four-stroke that would weigh less than a CR250. Sounds very inviting and completely unreasonable. This is exactly the way many thumper nuts think. We gotta go—off to the White Bros! □

XR200R



Engine type	Overhead cam, air-cooled four-stroke
Displacement	194.8cc
Bore and stroke	65.5mm x 57.8mm
Carburetion	24/26mm oval venturi roundslide Keihin
Fuel tank capacity	2.4 gals. (9)/4 gals. (1.5L) reserve
Gearing	13/47
Lighting coil	Yes
Spark arrester	Yes
Green sticker legal in stock trim	Yes
Wheelbase	53.5 in. (1360mm)
Ground clearance	11.9 in. (302mm)
Seat height	34.8 in. (890mm)
Tire size and type:	
Front	80/100x21 IRC Volcanduro VE-35F
Rear	100/100x17 IRC Volcanduro VE-33
Suspension:	
Front	36mm Showa conventional, 10 in. (254mm) travel
Rear	Pro-Link, Showa remote reservoir aluminum, adj. comp./reb., 9.6
Country of origin	Japan
Suggested retail price	\$2398
Distributor/Manufacturer:	American Honda Motor Corp. 100 W. Alondra Blvd. Gardena, CA 90247

VITAL STATS

• Piston	\$37.28
Ring(s)	\$20.84
Clutch plate (F)	\$5.23 (5)
Clutch plate (M)	\$3.29 (4)
Front brake shoes	\$9.86 w/springs
Rear brake shoes	\$9.86 w/springs
Countershaft sprocket	\$10.38
Rear sprocket	\$26.46
Claimed weight	222.7 lbs. dry
Actual running weight w/no fuel	224 lbs.
20" MIC test sound output	84 dB
Time to remove/install air filter	53 sec./2:01
1/10th-mile acceleration	10.63
Top speed (stock gearing)	54mph

	Stock	Muffler cap out	Airbox snorkel out	Both baffles out
20" MIC sound output	84 dB	86 dB	84 dB	86 dB
1/10th-mile acceleration	10.63	10.43	10.46	10.4
Top speed	55 mph	55 mph	56 mph	56.5 mph