

FIRST TESTS: '88 CR500R & '88 YZ125U!
RIDING THE HOT '88 XR600! INSIDE THE NEW KX & RM125s!

DIRT BIKE

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EXOTIC BIKES:

- **185-POUND ALUMINUM RM250**
- **RADICAL HONDA XCR**
- **MUGEN'S GP SPECIAL**



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NEW LOW-COST VINTAGE-CLASS MX: WHO SAYS RACING IS EXPENSIVE?!



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More of everything except weight
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Cartridge forks, rear disc and razor handling
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Life with ancient iron

ON THE COVER:—Jeff "Chicken" Matiasevich backs the CR500R into the new year, Pete "Pepe" Murray time travels on a vintage Maico, Gary LaPlante styles the '88 XR600R, and the RM250 and Mugen 125 get the aluminum treatment. "Flying" Eddie Arnet snapped the two-stroke action, while "Torquing" Tim Tolleson captured the thundering thumper, and the *DB* lens traveled to Japan for the photos of the ultra-trick RM and CR. Tom Strattman took the Table of Contents photo of Jeff Leisk, styling deep in an Ohio National berm.

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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.

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SUZUKI

DUNLOP

RM

RM

401

Full Flange

YAMAHA

THE 1988 HONDA XR600R, 1988 KAWASAKI KX125,
PROTOTYPE SUZUKIS & MUGEN CR125R

1988 & BEYOND



Looking into
the crystal ball

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

MUGEN 125

◀ Bobby Moore's factory Mugen CR125R features an aluminum tank that scoops air directly into the airbox. Moore claims that the ram induction adds a solid horsepower to the motor. Mugen is owned by Mr. Honda's son.



DAMIAN SUZUKI RM250H



◀ Sources claim that the bike Erik Kehoe won the 125 USGP on is a prototype 1989 RM125. Slimmer lines, improved handling, refined suspension, and a full case-reef motor highlight the yellow screamer. Maybe we'll still see it in '88!

Jim Adams

This one-off box-section aluminum-framed Damian Suzuki 250 is competing in the Japanese MX Championships. The RM250 motor is highly modified. Suzuki RM125 suspension is used because the bike is so light. Underneath the aluminum housing is a fan to help keep the engine cool. The aluminum-framed motocrossers are extremely popular in Japan, as several aftermarket companies are producing 125 and 250 Class racers. A low-slung aluminum gas tank sits on the left side and brings the center of gravity down closer to the ground. At 185 pounds, the bike is a rocketship!



Kawasaki

DUNLOP
TIRES

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uni-trak

1988 HONDA XR600R

• For 1988, Honda's XR600R went on a diet and training program for better performance from the motor and suspension. The new thumper's regimen paid off, as it literally runs away from the '87 and our Progressive Suspension-modified test unit. Let's take a look at some of the changes and see how the machine works.

ENGINE: A nikasil liner shaves several pounds off the top of the machine, so the center of gravity is lower for improved flickability. A 40mm oval-venturi Keihin replaces the old two-carb setup, and the radial four-valve combustion chamber is retained. Two stainless headers now route back to the steel silencer, instead of the two-into-one header of old. There is no hitch in power off the bottom, and the '88 has more power on top. It will pull an '87 by about ten bike lengths in the quarter-mile.

Starting ease is as awesome as power output. The motor incorporates a one-way clutch that freewheels if the motor kicks back. Would you believe that the '88 can be started with your hands? We didn't either, until we tried it ourselves! No more trips over the bars due to kickbacks! Shifting is improved by a bearing-supported shifter system.

SUSPENSION: Although the biggest XR didn't get cartridge forks, action is greatly improved over last year's. Spring rates are up at both ends, and damping has been changed to complement the new springs. Out back, rebound damping is more sensitive to adjustment, and the reservoir is relocated for better cooling. The forks resemble a Simons Anti-Cavitation setup. Action is considerably improved; the new XR soaks up terrain better than our modified '87, and initial travel is less jarring to the rider. Impressive.

DETAILS: Weight has been shaved off the machine to bring dry weight to 262 pounds. A heavily drilled front disc, composite brake hose, turned-down fork tubes, new front hub, lighter cam-chain setup, smaller gas tank and new throttle aid in weight savings.



Although the seat and tank are narrower, the side plates bulge out to give the '88 a wider midsection than the '87 XR600R. Also, we had a rear-wheel bearing go out on our '87, so with the '88 using two bearings instead of three in the rear hub, longevity is in question. The tank decals die within a month. Still, the '88 is light-years ahead of last year's offering.

Other changes include an 18-inch rear wheel, narrower handlebars, a speedo-less resettable odometer, stronger rear-wheel bearings, improved quick-change system on the swingarm and splashless gas cap. These mods add up to a greatly improved package, all for a suggested retail price of \$3198.

IMPRESSION: Power output is impressive, and the new XR600 gets the power to the ground better than ever before. It's more plush over small stuff and soaks up killer hits without a whimper. Shifting is smoother, and starting is light-years ahead of the '87! Weight savings make the big XR less of a handful in tight going, as well.

Although the gas tank is supposedly slimmer, the new XR600 is wider in the midsection, due to wider side panels. That's our only complaint, other than not having one of our own yet! Stay tuned for an in-depth test and report on how the machine stands up to torture. •



Less bulk and stiffer suspension make the new XR600R a better-handling, less-tiring package. A nikasil cylinder and other weight-saving details give the thumper a lower center of gravity, which translates into more flickability. The firmer boingers soak up big hits better, and they also feel smoother over small bumps.

TAJIMA HONDA XCR250R

A highly-modified Honda XR250R four-stroke mill is stuffed into a Honda CR250R chassis. The bike is being entered in Japanese motocross events. Mr. Toshihisa-Tajima built the one-off thumper. The oil cooler is tucked neatly behind the left-side radiator shroud, which helps keep the lubricant supply to the 40-horsepower Mugen engine cool. Wouldn't it be nice if Honda's XR250R looked like this? ►

◀ *Kawasaki introduced its startling 1988 KX125 at the 125 USGP. A full case-reed motor, cartridge forks, revised rear suspension linkage, new plastic, tighter chassis and two-piece clutch cover highlight the Team Green tiddler.*

Jim Adams

