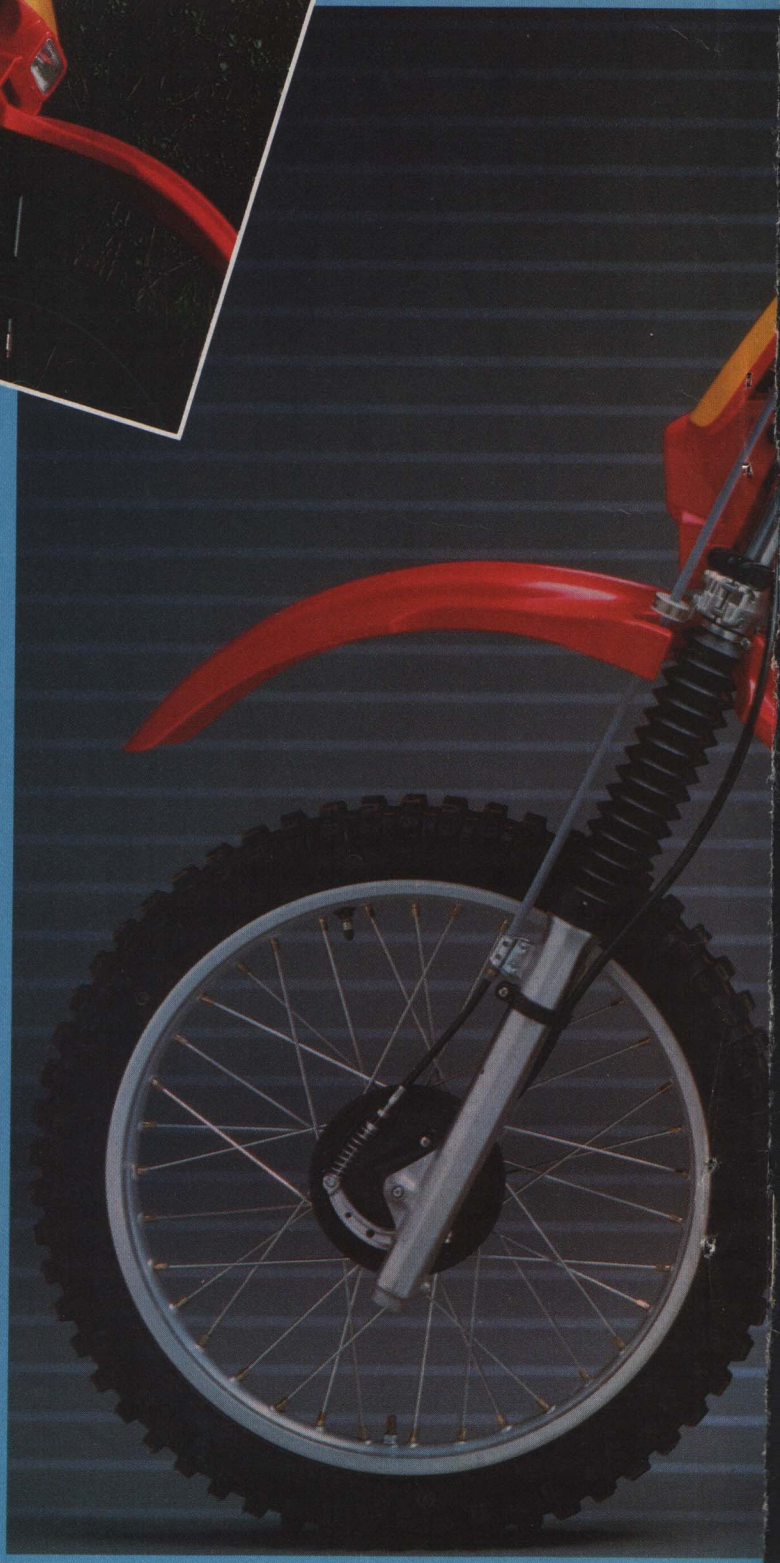
PHOTO: BOB CARPENTER

Stripped naked, the XR200R's all-new frame and engine is easily scrutinized. Steeper steering head angle and RFVC engine are the biggest changes. Action photo shows John Drury trail plonking in the hills above L. A.

There certainly has been a whole lot of shakin' going on with the new generation of XRs. Honda's best engineers started with a clean sheet of paper and completely redesigned the XR200R for 1984. This year's bike is so far removed from last year's bike that some people will never adjust to the changes. A completely different frame and a radically redesigned engine have given the XR200R, long known as the perfect play bike, a brand-new outlook for the road ahead.

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Honda envisioned the XR200R as a more serious enduro bike this year, but they emphasize that the old charm is still there. Gone is the raked-out "chopper" feel of the XRs of old. In its place, steep steering head angles have been substituted. Honda has set new boundaries for rake since the 1983 XR500R possessed a 25.5-degree rake and the 1984 CR250R sported a 26.8-degree rake. Now Honda has pulled in the rake on the XR200R a surprising 2.8 de-



PHOTOS: PAUL MARTINEZ

Whole lotta shakin' going on

HONDA XR200R

Make/model.....Honda XR200R
Serial number.....Frame: JH2ME0507EK000057
Engine: ME05E-5000084
Price.....$1625
Number of dealers (U.S.).....1800
Warranty.....Six-month
Customer service.....American Honda Motor Corp.
100 W. Alondra Blvd.
Gardena, CA 90247
213/327-8280

ENGINE

Type.....Single-cylinder four-stroke with Radial Four-Valve Combustion Chamber
Displacement.....199cc
Bore x stroke.....67 x 56.5mm
Compression ratio.....11:1
Horsepower/rpm (measured).....17.0 @ 9000 rpm
Torque/rpm (measured).....11.2 @ 7000 rpm
Carburetion.....Two Keihin, 18 and 20mm
Exhaust.....Dual steel exhaust into steel spark arrester/silencer
Ignition.....CDI
Lubrication.....Wet sump
Air filtration.....Oiled polyurethane foam

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission.....Six-speed
Primary drive.....3.316:1 (gear)
Final drive.....3.846:1 (13/50)
Gear ratios (internal).....1st 2.769:1
2nd 1.941:1
3rd 1.450:1
4th 1.174:1
5th 0.960:1
6th 0.815:1

CHASSIS

Frame.....Steel, diamond design
Rake/trail.....26°/4.1 in.
Front suspension.....KYB leading axle air/spring fork, 36mm stanchion tubes, 9.6 in. travel (measured)
Rear suspension.....Pro-Link with KYB gas/oil shock, four-way adjustable rebound damping, 9.0 in. travel (measured)
Brakes.....Front—Twin-piston caliper disc
Rear—Single-leading shoe drum
Wheels.....Front—1.60-21 D.I.D
Rear—1.85-17 D.I.D
Tires.....Front—3.00-21 IRC Vulcanduro VE-32
Rear—110/90-17 IRC Vulcanduro VE-32

MEASUREMENTS

Weight (wet, no fuel).....239 lbs.
Weight (wet, tank full).....259 lbs.
Weight distribution.....113/126 lbs. (47/53%) (Fr/rr, wet no fuel)
Weight distribution.....125/134 lbs. (48/52%) (Fr/rr, wet, tank full)
Wheelbase.....53.8 in.
Fuel capacity.....2.6 gal. total
Reserve capacity.....0.4 gal.
Sound test.....103 dbA
Ground clearance.....12.8 in.
Seat height.....35.0 in.
Swingarm length.....21.0 in.
Swingarm pivot to center of countershaft.....2.8 in.

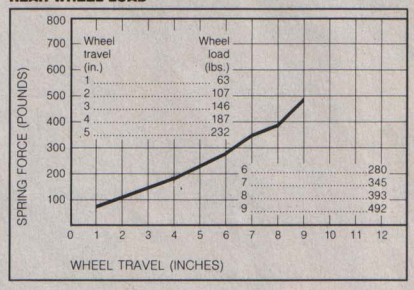
PARTS/COSTS

Maintenance manual.....$2.49
Carburetor jets.....Main—$3.53
Pilot—$4.26
Needle—N/A
Needle jet—N/A
Sprockets.....Front—$13.08
Rear—$57.89
Handlebar levers.....$10.21 ea.
Shift lever.....$19.51
Piston kit (complete).....$41.43
Rings only.....$10.47
Cylinder.....$102.49
Head.....$224.53
Clutch plates.....Friction (5)—$4.41 ea.
Steel (4)—$2.88 ea.
Air filter.....$9.76
Brake shoes.....Front—$8.63
Rear—$8.63
Chain.....$67.98
Seat.....$113.80
Fenders.....Front—$38.07
Rear—$33.63
Fuel tank.....$131.46
Cables.....Clutch—$6.96
Throttle—$9.18
Front brake—$9.67

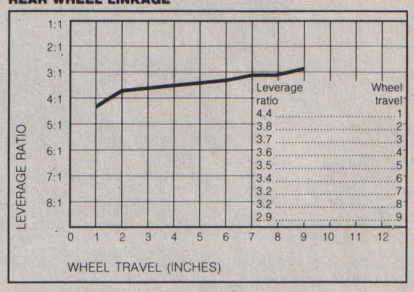
OPTIONS

Quartz 12v/55w halogen headlight.....$25.46
Regulator.....$34.61

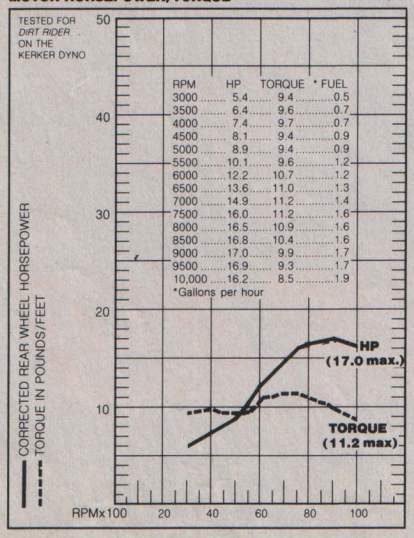
REAR WHEEL LOAD



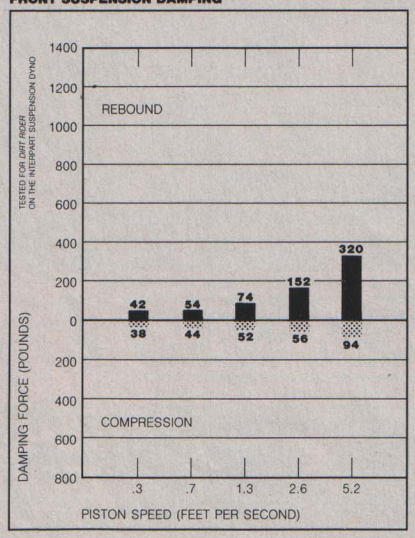
REAR WHEEL LINKAGE



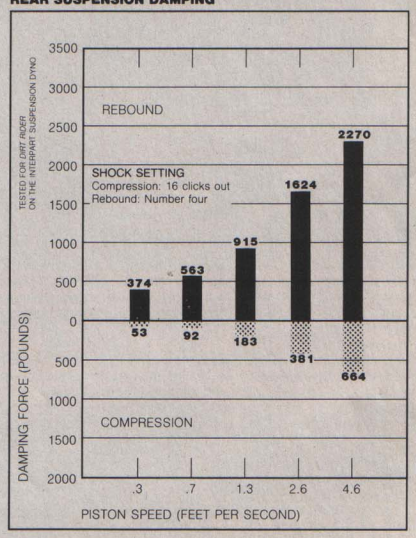
MOTOR HORSEPOWER/TORQUE

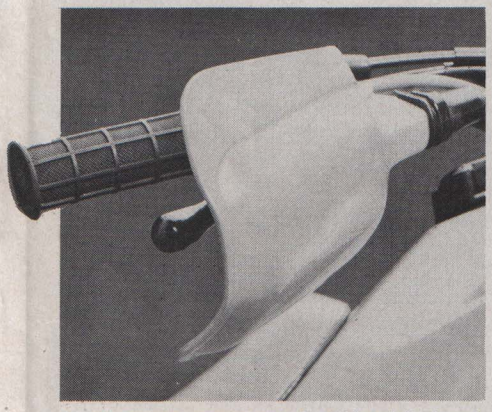


FRONT SUSPENSION DAMPING



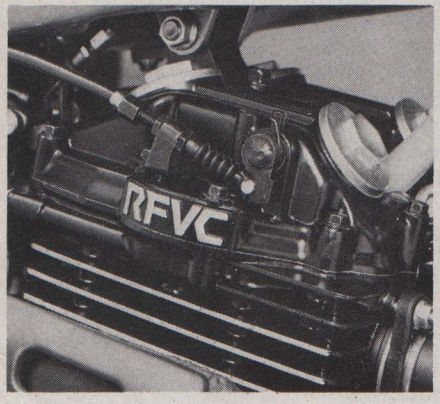
REAR SUSPENSION DAMPING



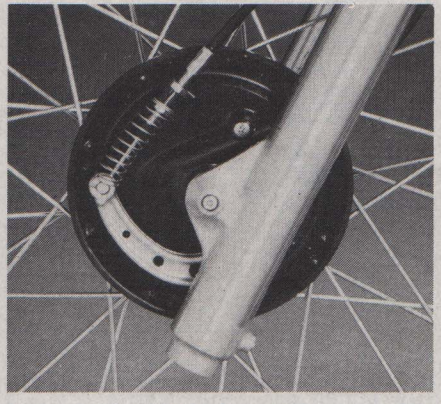


We've grown accustomed to Honda's handguards. How'd we ever live without them?

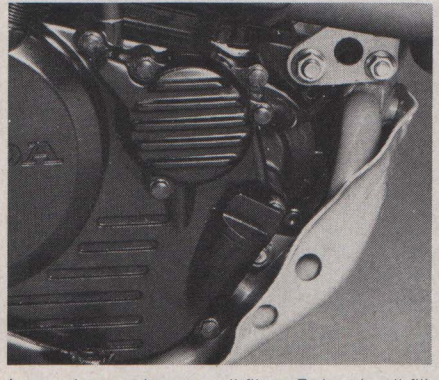
The rear suspension was too soft for our overweight testers. Extra preload helps.



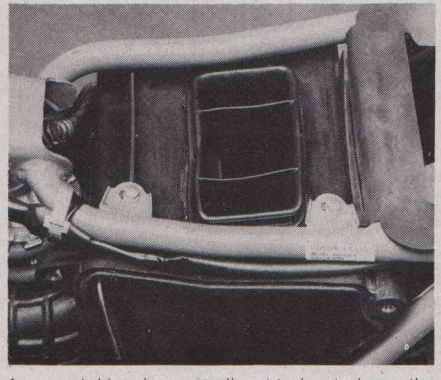
A redesigned engine netted two extra horsepower. The bike gained nine pounds.



A standard front brake is more than enough to pull the XR200R down to a safe speed.



A round cover houses oil filter. Below is oil filler hole. Get to know them well.



As usual, Honda went all-out trying to keep the XR200 waterproof.

Some changes have helped the XR200R cosmetically. The front fender used to stick up in the air so much it looked comical, while the headlight above the front number plate appeared lopsided. With that combination, nobody could see the numbers on the plate. Adding injury was the huge speedometer/odometer perched high above the light. What a difference a year can make! Now the front fender slopes down, if it slopes at all. The number plate is above the light with a much larger area available for numbers, and the odometer is small and compact. The seat continues up onto the tank and contributes to the racier look of the XR200R. Unfortunately, many testers complained that the seat is too thick where it goes up onto the seat and prevented them from moving as far forward on the bike as they would have liked.

The seating position has been changed, with a little more room added to the distance between the seat and the pegs. Actually, one or two more inches are needed to make the transition from sitting to standing a smoother operation. We're happy to see that the ground clearance has been increased by one full inch—it's sorely needed on the XRs. Still, our feet were constantly knocked off the footpegs when running an XR hard through ruts, rocks, logs or any number of things.

Although the transmission oil capacity is up 0.2 quarts to 1.4 quarts, it still needs to be changed regularly since the RFVC engine runs at relatively high temperatures which causes the oil to quickly break down. Even if you perform only the barest of mechanical upkeep on your XR, be sure to clean the air filter and change the transmission oil. Other than that, the rest of the bike will live up to its four-stroke reputation of being reliable. We suffered no mechanical failures with our XR200R, and we flogged it to death.

Obviously, the engine is new for 1984. It's kind of hard to overlook two carburetors and two exhaust headers. As we explained in the March 1984 test of the XR250R, the Radial Four-Valve Combustion Chamber design of the new XR engines uses two carburetors, two intake valves, two exhaust valves and two exhaust headers. You might want to call them the "terrible twos" since the engine hasn't gained a whole lot in return for all the time, effort and expense that Honda has invested in the RFVC.

The bottom end and midrange power is virtually identical to that of the 1983 XR200R *Dirt Rider* tested in the October 1983 issue. The only place where more power can be found is high in the powerband. The 1984 XR200R put out 17 horsepower at 9000 rpm, while the 1983 model put out 14.7 ponies at 8500 rpm. Not only is the gain—2.3 horsepower—no more than what a good engine kit would do to a 1983 model, but the maximum power comes later in the powerband. The XRs continue to take on more and more

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of the characteristics of two-strokes as far as their "revviness," while they are losing their vital "torqueyness."

ON THE GAS

The increase in high-rpm power, coupled with the usual low and midrange power, has not only made the XR200 feel like it has lost some of its low- end grunt, but now it doesn't carburet well, either. When compared to a stock 1983 XR200R, the 1984 bike feels a bit sluggish. While we were testing the new 200 at a local enduro, we had the chance to ride a 1984 model that had been rejetted with a smaller pilot jet and a bigger main jet. The difference was quickly noticed, as the bike seemed to pull stronger throughout the powerband and start more easily.

Beginners and weaker riders were constantly frustrated by the XR200's refusal to be cooperative in regards to starting. Several times we found ourselves push-starting the 200 when we would have rather been riding. We're not sure what jetting changes are needed, though, since we haven't been able to test them. When we get that problem straightened out, we'll report our findings in "Test Wrap."

One problem we *have* sorted out concerned the rear shock spring. It definitely needs to be replaced with a stiffer unit if you weigh more than 160 pounds. With the stock spring, the bike bottoms out much too easily, even when the preload is bumped up higher. The stock XR250R shock spring could be stiffer, too. Like the XR250R, the XR200R's shock is prone to fading when ridden in extremely

PHOTO: BOB CARPENTER

rough territory. During a typical enduro, it probably won't become apparent, but we rode the 200 in a grand prix that used half of a motocross track and included some pretty tall sky jumps. Not only did the shock fade, but half of the bike shook loose, too. The gas line fell off three times (zip-ties cured that), the left footpeg came loose and dangled (extra bolts fixed that) and the shift lever was bent into the side of the cases, making shifts extremely "unpositive." Our tester didn't realize the problem was merely a bent lever or he would have fixed it right away instead of struggling the last three laps in second gear.

If nothing else, we at least rode the XR200R in a wide variety of conditions. We rode it in the desert, in the national forest, at a motocross track, a grand prix and a National enduro.

The National enduro put Honda's slogan that the XR200R is "competitive enough to win the 'A' class" to the test. But unless Honda was talking about the *four-stroke "A" class*, we don't agree. Oh, it can be done with the right rider or a good amount of fiddling, but, as it stands stock, the XR200R isn't up to the tasks easily handled by a Kawasaki KDX200 or Yamaha IT200.

The crowd at the Quicksilver National enduro was pleased to see *Dirt Rider's* Bob Carpenter beaten to a pulp as he struggled to finish the 106-mile event on the XR200R. The year before, Carpenter took second place in the four-stroke "A" class, so he, of course, was eyeing the first place trophy this time around. But after losing about 127 minutes due to falls and hills that couldn't be climbed without pushing, Carpenter soon grew to hate the XR200R. But several hours...no, several days after the event, he was able to put things into a better perspective and recognize the good and the bad qualities of the new XR200R.

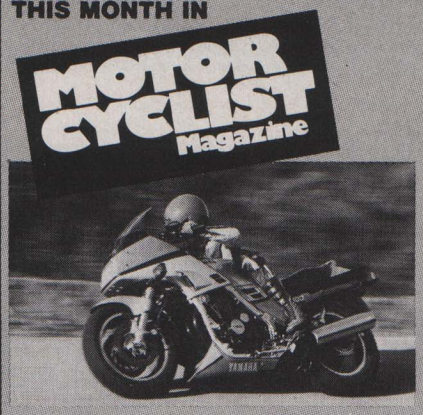
Everybody who has ridden our test bike agrees that it squirms around too much and feels extremely short. But, unlike the 1983 version of the 200, this bike does *not* have a tendency to engage itself in massive tankslappers. If we had to make a choice, though, we would do without the tankslappers altogether.

The steep steering angle, on the other hand, makes the '84 XR200R a winner in the extremely tight sections of an enduro. Sections with turns so tight that a "normal" motorcycle would have to be walked around them are easily managed by the XR200R.

It's a matter of "you win some, you lose some." You gain some horsepower, but you also gain some weight. You get a better turning motorcycle, but you lose stability. Most testers entered into a love/hate relationship with the 200; they honestly couldn't decide if they liked it or not.

Put another way, the Honda XR200R is decidedly different, but it's not necessarily better. **DR**

THIS MONTH IN



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The bikes are the two quickest middleweights ever sold, and when they come handlebar to handlebar, the results are explosive.

DAYTONA
Kenny Roberts has a funny way of retiring—or at least it's funny if you aren't Freddie Spencer or a bunch of other riders who hoped to win the Daytona 200.

SPECIAL TOURING SECTION
People who are going places should appreciate this section, which looks at the ins and outs of sport-touring, helps you gauge the capacity of your electrical system to support accessories, takes you for a ride through the Yukon and introduces you to some new touring products.

PLUS: The lowdown on Suzuki's new V-4, a bevy of product evaluations and much more.

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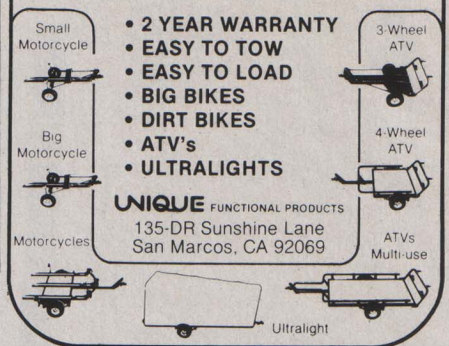

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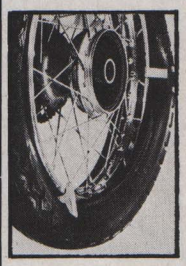

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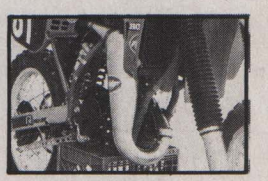

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