
Kawasaki

MOTOING KAWASAKI'S KX250-A4

A super-light, super-trick, great-powered, excellent-handling, limited production motocrosser for the pro. The best production motocrosser we've ever ridden.

By The Staff of DIRT BIKE

☐ The introduction of Kawasaki's KX-A4 marks the beginning of a new moto era. The era of the production works replica Japanese machine. For that's exactly what we've been testing for the last month. It's as close as mere mortals can come to owning a full-on works bike. According to reliable sources like representatives of the Team Kawasaki racing department (including "The Jammer," Jim Weinert himself), the KX-A4 has the same engine and chassis used in last year's Nationals except for a little less suspension travel. They've really done it this time. The two years of waiting for Team Lime Green to make an appearance again was well worth it.

Unfortunately the production run figure has been set at a mere 1500 units. A few will be sold to each dealer, and it will be up to him whether he wants to sponsor a rider out of his shop on it, sell it to a friend, or keep it for himself. Surely the projected popularity of the KX-A4 will prompt Kawasaki to start another production run.

The KX-A4 was designed for serious motocrossers. If you're into cleaning the filter, lubing the chain and taking a bike out to ride, this is not the machine for you. It doesn't necessarily have to be pampered as thoroughly as the actual works bikes, but it does require considerably more attention than, say, a Vespa.

One of the most important characteristics of a true race bike is its light weight. The KX-A4 is light. Without fuel it weighs in at a mere 94.3 kilos, or 206 pounds. That's seven to ten kilos lighter than any other production 250 to date. And that means a lot. Especially when you're talking about the amount of effort the rider puts out to get around the track. Just think, if you put helium in the tires . . .

Ingredients

Not a gram of sugar or corn syrup in sight. The KX-A4 is 99.999-percent pure protein and the rest is 100-percent organic lime juice and pulp. We spent part of an afternoon out at the track discussing the bike with tuner Cliff White, who worked for the Kawasaki race team in Canada when they won the National Championships there in '73, '74 and '75. He provided further evidence that the engine was indeed made up of the same castings and components that he was so familiar with. According to him, and everyone else we talked to, these engines are typically bulletproof.

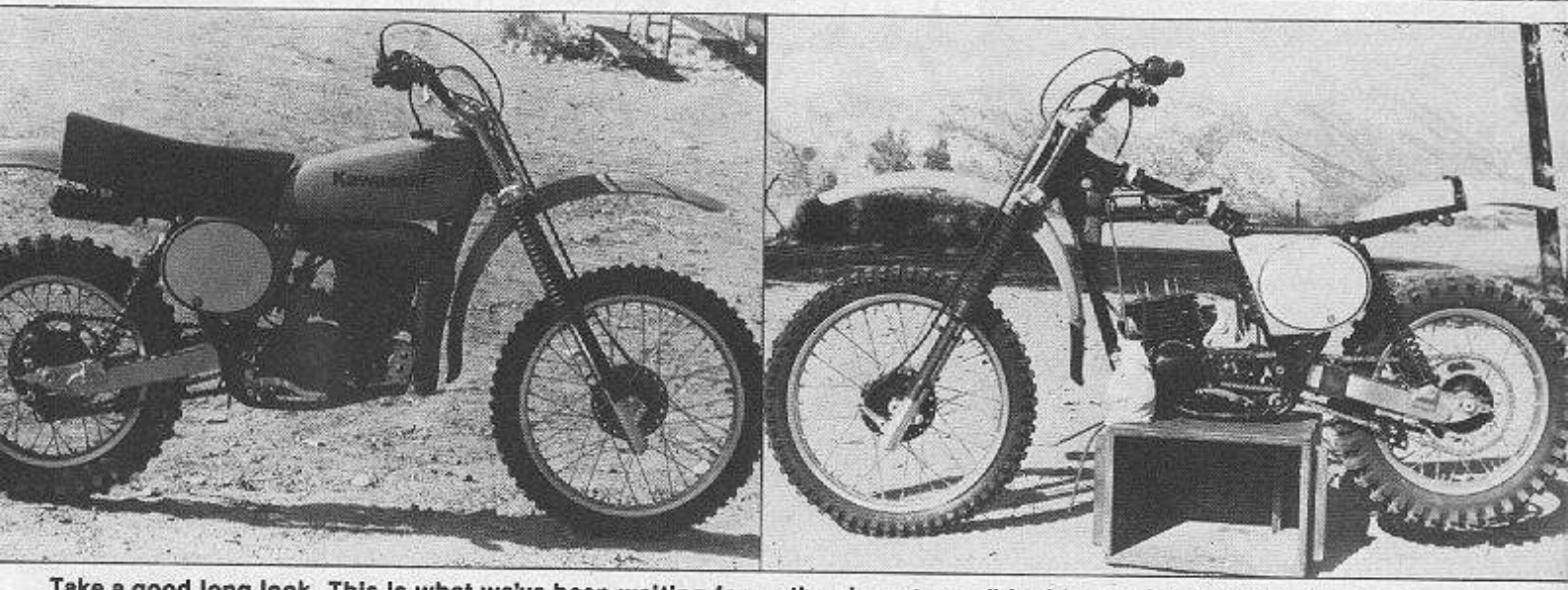
A trick Eyvind Boyesen-designed six-petal reed (similar to Husky's and Yamaha's) is used in the intake tract for maximum efficiency in fuel burning and power output. Two scavenging-type ports run around from the transfers to connect with the reed inlet. Very interesting. Other upper end features include a dual dykes-ringed piston that slip-slides inside a cylinder lined with Kawasaki's patented electrofusion process. A radial finned head tops it all off.

Everything bolted under the top end is very compact and conventional in design. Flywheel weight is roughly medium rare. Sparks for motion come from a left-side-mounted flywheel and an electronic CDI system.

The gold rush is on at the big K. Two sexy looking, highly polished, high-zoot, aluminum alloy, gold-anodized objects of art are used to secure the engine to the semi-double cradle chrome moly chassis.

Another item touched by Mr. Goldfinger is the super-heavy-duty humongarm. There's no way this honey could flex. It's absolutely gorgeous. Two long, luscious, aluminum alloy

KAWASAKI'S KX250-A4



Take a good long look. This is what we've been waiting for — the closest possible thing to the real McCoy.

rectangular tubes wrap around the rear meat and come together in the beautifully boxed-in pivot area. Not two, but four needle bearings roll around the hollow swingarm pivot shaft.

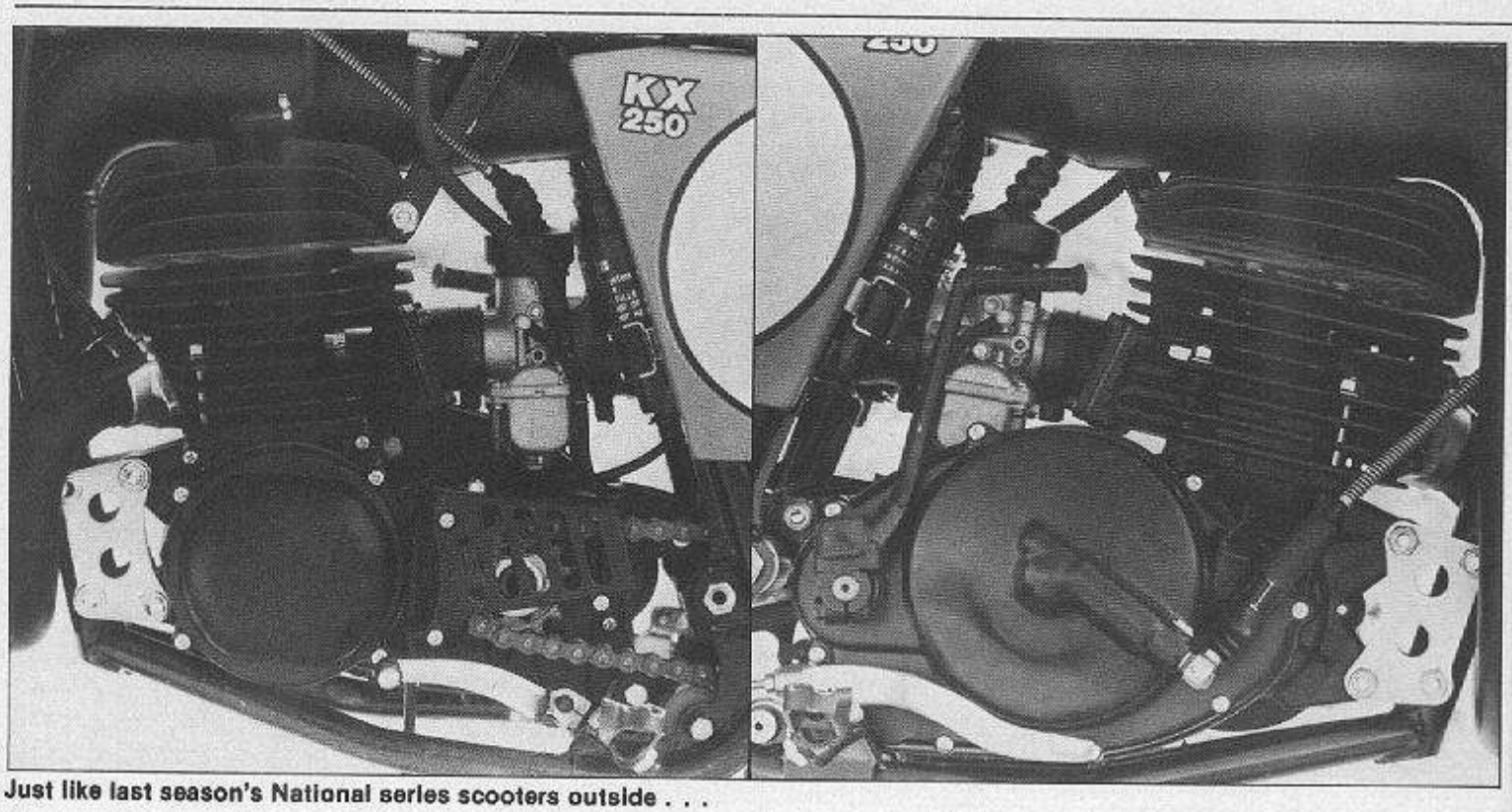
Gold fever has also spread to the D.I.D's. Yes, both ends are affected. The one up front is legal (21), and laced by 36 shining steel spokes to a conical aluminum hub with a magnesium backing plate. In the rear you'll find your basic golden 18 hooked up to a super-light magnesium hub. It too is conical in design.

Some of Kayaba's finest front suspension units pivot in the frame on tapered roller bearings. Actual axle travel is a full 235mm (9.3 inches). Inside, along with air pressure, three individual springs are used to get the proper progressive support.

Super-long 412mm (16.25-inch) remote reservoir gas Kayaba shocks keep the rear end hooked up. Three pre-load positions are available in the usual snap-ring-style arrangement.

Contains less than ten percent of the following ingredients

Housed inside the slime green aluminum alloy fuel container facade is the secret to the KX-A4's lightness. Within that thin metallic skin is a highly efficient, super-compact, miniature airship. That's right, the vehicles that long ago mastered air travel have been refined to an art form by tiny green engineers and scaled down to master the art of motocross. Ingenious, eh what?



Just like last season's National series scooters outside . . .

Green is the color of our true love's fenders, in the morning, when mud flies. They're long, wide and are made of super-durable fender plastic.

Her seat is firm and very comfortable. It's long enough to let you slide up and back when the situation calls for it.

Kawasaki lets the good times roll

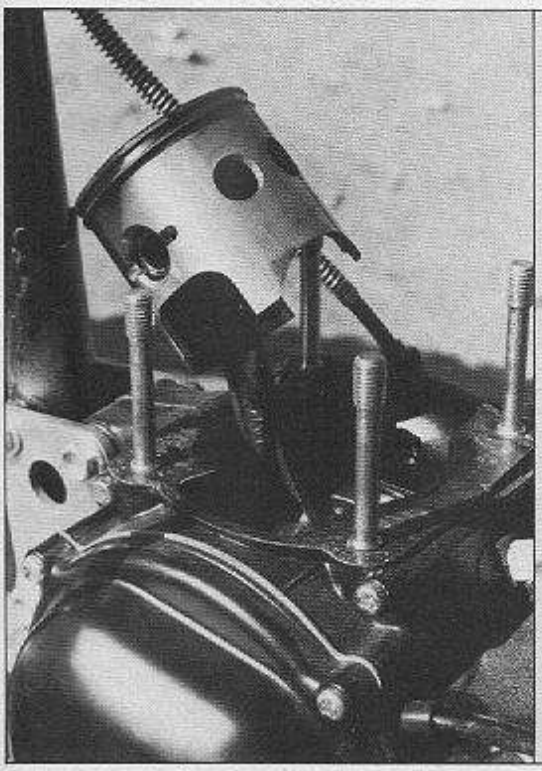
Green is for go, and that's what the Kawasaki does best. The moment you wrap your legs around her you know that she's ready for action. Name it and she'll do it. When you're on a machine that does most everything better than anything else you've accepted as the best, you realize that it has no set borders, no boundaries. It merely does everything that you've ever been able to get away with in the past, and more. From there on you are the student, learning from its abilities. Push her hard and her limits will eventually be shown to you. Never before has any production motocrosser been so incredibly responsive.

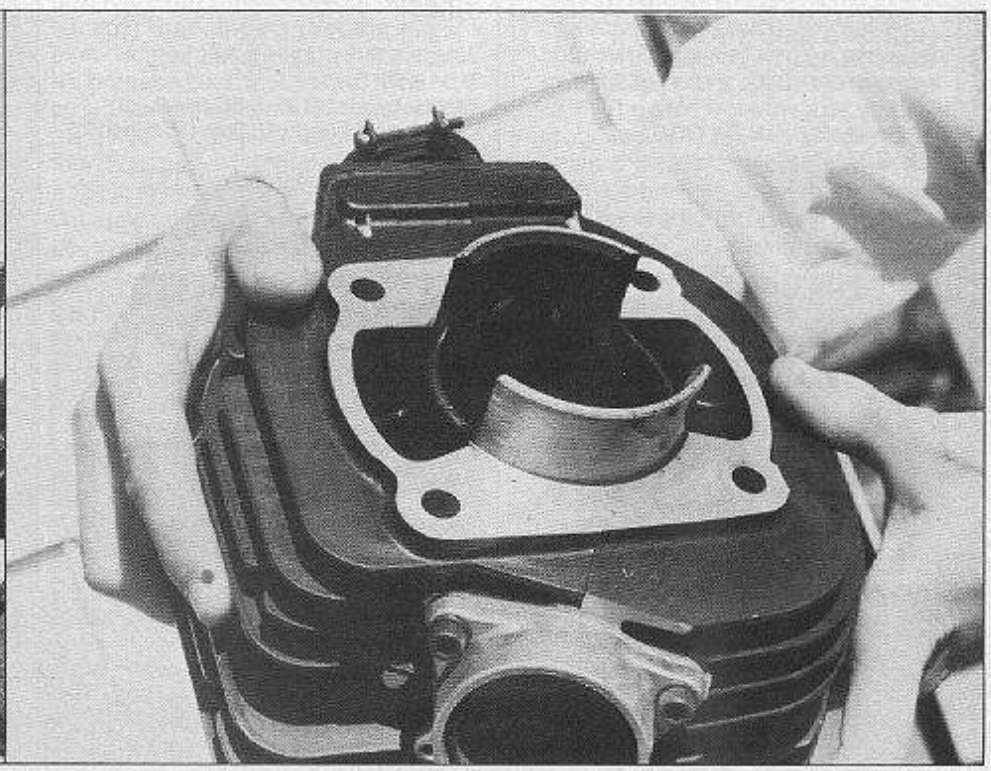
Your first ride will make a believer out of you. This is THE bike (this month). It simply works better than everything else. The KX-A4 fit everyone perfectly, with the exception of the bars. Some thought that they were a bit too tall. Most had no complaints.

The first thing you notice is its light weight. It saves you in more situations than we can list here.

Next is its precise steering and

Race testing in dual 40-minute motos at Saddleback. Won its class, naturally.





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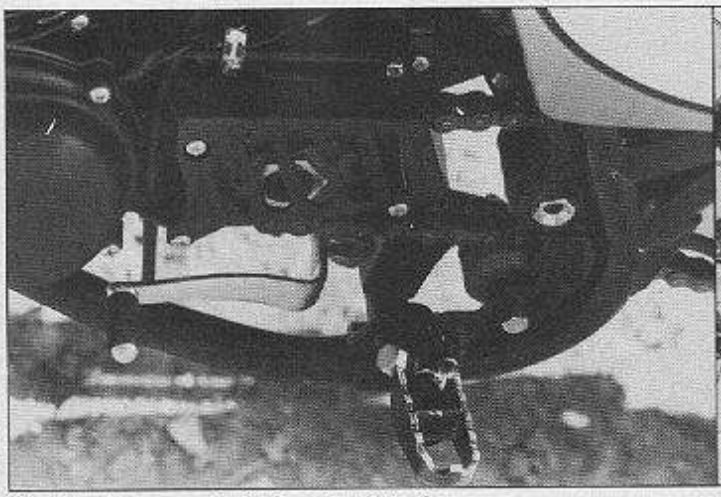
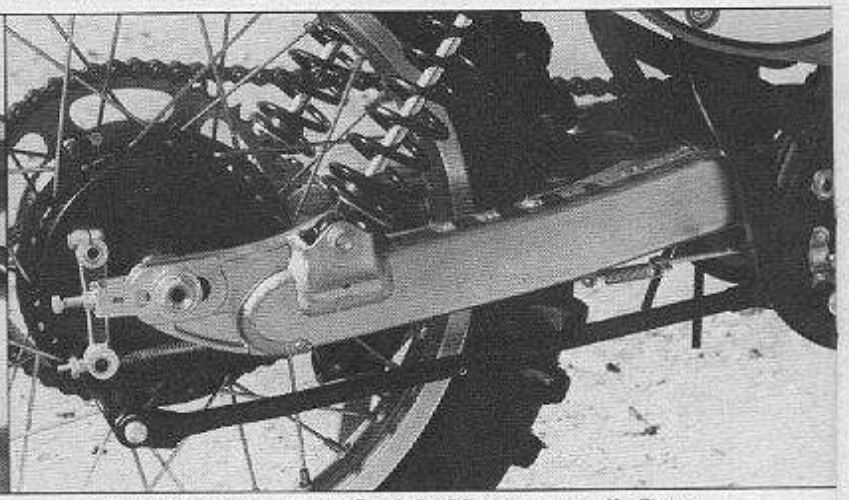
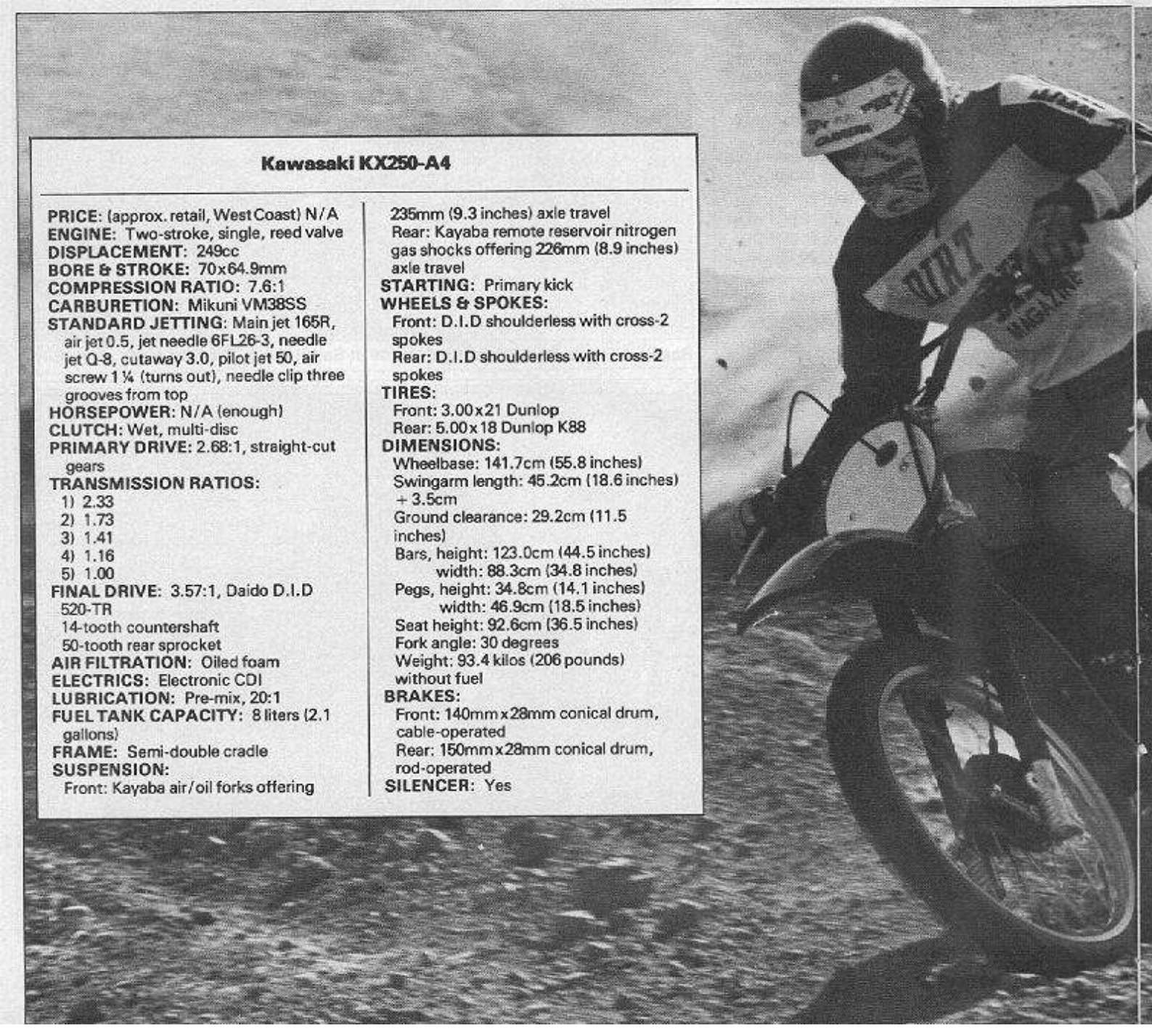


Chain rollers are bolted on both below . . .

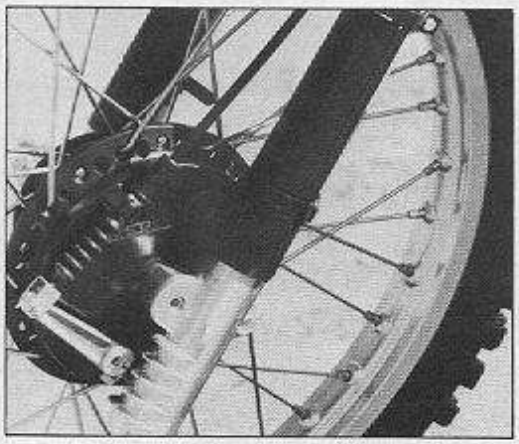


. . . and above the chain. Both held up very well. Rear brake is full-floating.

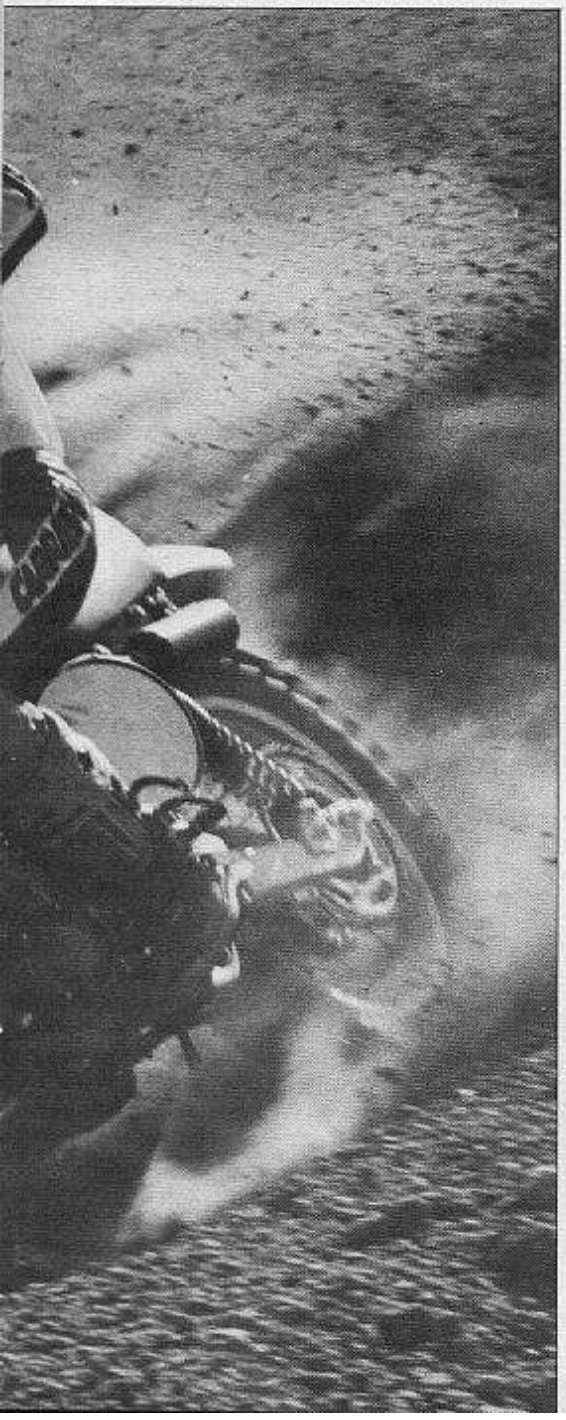


Kawasaki KX250-A4

PRICE: (approx. retail, West Coast) N/A
ENGINE: Two-stroke, single, reed valve
DISPLACEMENT: 249cc
BORE & STROKE: 70x64.9mm
COMPRESSION RATIO: 7.6:1
CARBURETION: Mikuni VM38SS
STANDARD JETTING: Main jet 165R, air jet 0.5, jet needle 6FL26-3, needle jet Q-8, cutaway 3.0, pilot jet 50, air screw 1¼ (turns out), needle clip three grooves from top
HORSEPOWER: N/A (enough)
CLUTCH: Wet, multi-disc
PRIMARY DRIVE: 2.68:1, straight-cut gears
TRANSMISSION RATIOS:
1) 2.33
2) 1.73
3) 1.41
4) 1.16
5) 1.00
FINAL DRIVE: 3.57:1, Daido D.I.D 520-TR
14-tooth countershaft
50-tooth rear sprocket
AIR FILTRATION: Oiled foam
ELECTRICS: Electronic CDI
LUBRICATION: Pre-mix, 20:1
FUEL TANK CAPACITY: 8 liters (2.1 gallons)
FRAME: Semi-double cradle
SUSPENSION:
Front: Kayaba air/oil forks offering 235mm (9.3 inches) axle travel
Rear: Kayaba remote reservoir nitrogen gas shocks offering 226mm (8.9 inches) axle travel
STARTING: Primary kick
WHEELS & SPOKES:
Front: D.I.D shoulderless with cross-2 spokes
Rear: D.I.D shoulderless with cross-2 spokes
TIRES:
Front: 3.00x21 Dunlop
Rear: 5.00x18 Dunlop K88
DIMENSIONS:
Wheelbase: 141.7cm (55.8 inches)
Swingarm length: 45.2cm (18.6 inches) + 3.5cm
Ground clearance: 29.2cm (11.5 inches)
Bars, height: 123.0cm (44.5 inches)
width: 88.3cm (34.8 inches)
Pegs, height: 34.8cm (14.1 inches)
width: 46.9cm (18.5 inches)
Seat height: 92.6cm (36.5 inches)
Fork angle: 30 degrees
Weight: 93.4 kilos (206 pounds) without fuel
BRAKES:
Front: 140mm x 28mm conical drum, cable-operated
Rear: 150mm x 28mm conical drum, rod-operated
SILENCER: Yes



Dual cable clamps and integral fork boot/leg protectors grace Kayaba's best original equipment forks to date.



excellent tracking characteristics. There is almost no effort involved in turning. The slightest hint of where you wish to go is all that's needed. It's like a slot car. If you go off your line, you've done something seriously wrong. The chassis engineers at Kawasaki have come up with ideal geometry for the best steering, tracking and flat-out stability. Finally they have decided to give them to us (in very limited quantity).

The basis for the suspension design lies in the race bikes of Jimmy Weinert and Gary Semics. For dudes who go as fast and land as hard as they do there is no choice but to have springs strong enough to take care of the business at hand. We felt that the rear springs were a bit on the stiff side. The lighter portion of their progressive design is too light and is used up for the most part just by sitting on the bike. The remainder was just a little too stiff for even our 175-pound staffers. On the other hand, when Marty Moates tested with us, he thought the rear end was a little too soft. So, as we said earlier, this is a true works replica designed to be used by professionals at professional speeds. Both compression and rebound dampening felt dialed in, and would probably be equally as suitable with a lighter set of springs.

Jawin' with The Jammer

In our conversations with Weinert we learned that he too was not satisfied with the rear springs. His A4 practice bike has even stiffer, straight rate springs. His only other change was bars. He pointed out that when he puts his practice bike and his race bike side by side they are nearly identical. While the power is competitive with the other top 250s, he feels that the KX gets its edge in speed and maneuverability because of its light weight. Also, the good riding position and narrowness of the machine let him feel right at home. He loves it. It's the same bike that he'll be racing in the stadium events this season.

Lime ponies

Everything in the powerband happens within a relatively narrow range of two to three thousand rpm. Initially it was even narrower because it was running a little fat (rich) in the lower midrange. Dropping the needle a notch made a difference similar to that between daylight and darkness. Picking up another 800 or so revs was all it needed to get with the program. While the powerband is on the narrow side, it is not the least bit pipey. It's different from anything we've felt before. It's Kawasaki factory-type power. Because of the short power spread you have to shift more often than with most 250s, but still not nearly as often as with a 125. Our pro testers, Marty Moates and Eddie Cole, both felt that the power was great. We regret not having had the opportunity to bolt the KX to a dyno. Whatever its power figures are, they are surely enough.

Front end performance was nothing short of excellent. The front wheel follows the surface of the earth as if it were attached with Velcro. Some days we dropped the air pressure down from 15 to 11 pounds, depending on course conditions at the time. Everything else was fine. These Kayabas absorb small braking bumps just as well as high-altitude landings. The cooling fins cast into the sliders below the axle aid in protecting these lower extremities from both stationary and flying rocks as well as from any other solid object in your path. The area from the axle up is protected by a nifty set of integral fork boots and slider protectors. T-rick.

No complaints about the brakes. Both units were smooth, strong and had a

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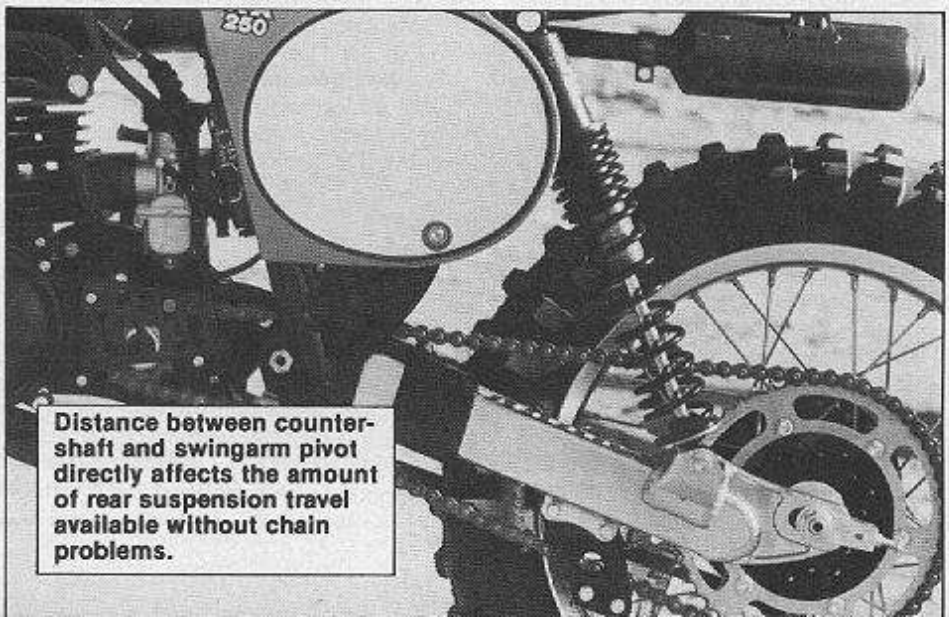

Distance between counter-shaft and swingarm pivot directly affects the amount of rear suspension travel available without chain problems.

KAW KX250A4

(continued from page 43)

good progressive feel to them. They work like a good set of brakes should — without much thought.

Shifts were seldom missed, and never was it the machine's fault. The clutch action is light and its performance was flawless throughout our tests, even when abused.

Details

With proper maintenance the new Kaw should prove to be very durable. In fact, in some areas the lack of wear was surprising.

Two stationary plastic rollers with sealed ball bearings serve to check excessive chain slack and preserve vital components like the shift shaft and air box. A replaceable rubber drive chain rubbing block slips over the swingarm pivot to protect the vulnerable aluminum. After numerous hours of testing and a couple of 40-minute motos none of these parts showed any signs of wear. Way to go.

In the traditional factory works bike style, all of the bolts have thin dished-out heads and are secured with equally narrow profile locknuts. None of the bolts are a millimeter longer than they need to be, and they are as light as possible without going to very exotic metals. It's not any one thing that gets the weight of a motocrosser down to a dry weight like the KX's of just over 200 pounds, it is rather the combined lightness of all the individual components. Many of the bolts and shafts, including the axles, swingarm pivot shaft and even the brake cams and rear shock mounting bolts, are tubular (or if you prefer, hollowed out) in design for added weight savings.

Like the KXs before it, the '78 model uses an easy-to-service air filter that is accessible from the side. A single slip pin holds the element in place.

Kawasaki has just put together a very complete workshop/service manual for the bike.

Go for it, Big Green

The appearance of a True Green Replica, with its interrelated mechanisms working in such great harmony, is, needless to say, very good for the sport. If we were all on these green machines we would all soon be faster and better riders. The problem is that a painfully small number of us will be able to take advantage of its fine handling, good power and super-light weight because there simply won't be anywhere near enough to go around. With any luck at all, this availability problem will soon be a thing of the past. Watch for the bright limers. They should be claiming a large share of the purses all around this fine country of ours. ■