Dual Test

KAWASAKI KLX 250 & KDX 400 A-1

The lightweight four-stroke and the Jolly Green Giant

By The Staff of Dirt Bike

Normally, when we test two bikes of the same make together, we label it a "dual test." Often, these dual tests are done as a matter of convenience for the reader. It usually helps him choose between a 125, or a 175. Something like that.

With this dual test, however, we have two of the most dissimilar dirt bikes ever made. The KLX is a 250cc, mild-mannered four-stroke, while the KDX is a full 400cc two-stroke with more muscle than Arnold Schwarzenegger. Yet, if you stand the two bikes back about 40 feet or so, a casual glance will convince the uninformed they're identical bikes.

Kawasaki KLX250

The KLX is, indeed, a paradox. On the one hand, we have a sophisticated chassis, and suspension components straight from the very latest motocross technology. Nestled in the center of space-age green plastic, chrome moly tubing and expensive bits of aluminum, is an engine that would be more at home powering a medium-sized window fan.

To give you an idea of how the engine performs, it's necessary to compare it to more familiar machinery. A crisp Honda XR185, for example, will easily pull the KLX in a drag race on level ground. Up hills, or in sand, it'll crucify the KLX.

To find something closer to the output of the KLX, we located a rider with a very old, clapped-out Honda 250 single, about 1974 vintage. It still had the original rings in it and smoked profusely.

A drag race found these two machines dead even, but the old, tired Honda was still able to climb hills at least one gear taller than the KLX.

Does that make the KLX a failure?

No. Not at all.

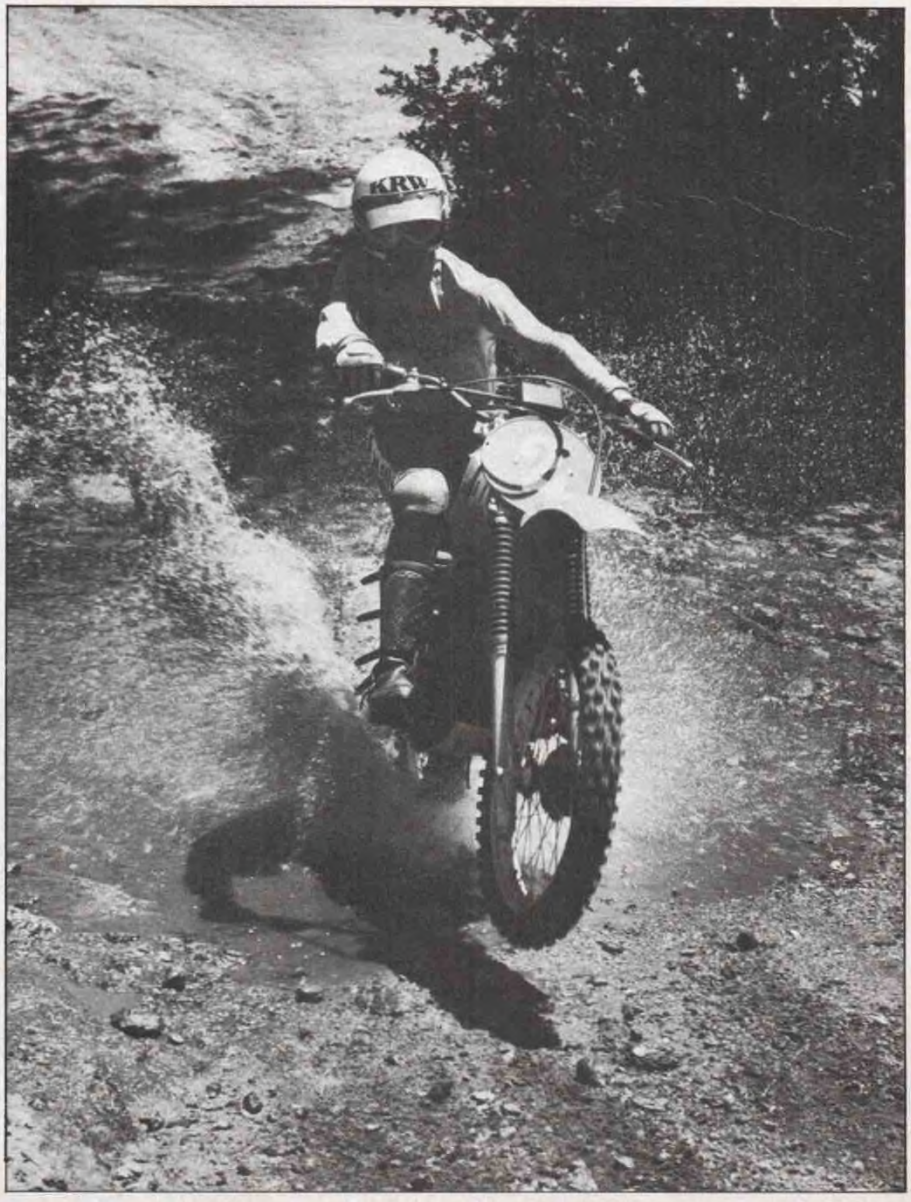
You see, large numbers of those early Honda 250 thumpers were bought by an eager public *because* they were four-strokes and *in spite of the fact* that they had a grim chassis and absolutely barbaric suspension. A veritable fortune must have been spent over the ensuing years to try to make these Hondas handle.

Oh, getting the engine to produce was no real problem, but getting that sucker to turn, track and steer was a nightmare situation. Many serious four-stroke addicts resorted to accessory frames and found out that the SL Hondas still did not work. This called for accessory forks, shocks, wheels, etc.

Cubic dollars.

Virtually nothing more than the motor could be used in the construction. This meant that a successful finished product would cost the en-

Attention to detail kept the KLX out of the gutter as far as overall rating was concerned.



Leading axle forks and a new swingarm gave the four-stroker a big edge over the competition in suspension.

thusiast something in the vicinity of $3000 to $3500, which is a very rarified vicinity for a play bike.

The KLX 250, then, is what the Honda SL250 should have been. In order to ask for improvements on the KLX chassis, suspension, wheels, plastrickery and such, a rider would have to be very spoiled indeed. All of the asking will come in the engine department. This is not to say that it's just fine and dandy to sell the KLX with such a mild motor. But, at least it's easier to get more horsepower than it is to turn a non-handler into a handler.

We had a chance to ride a Powroll 301 kitted KLX. This delightful motor put out a substantial increase over the stock unit that made the KLX a true joy to ride.

Actually, the stock KLX engine is not as slow as the riding sensations suggest. On hard-packed ground, for instance, the KLX produces just enough power to slightly spin the rear wheel at most any rpm. This means that the rider can merely leave the throttle wide-open at all times and concentrate on stirring the shift lever to get and keep maximum revs.

At one riding/testing session, we found the ideal terrain for the KLX: the rock-hard, winding fireroads of Texas Canyon, an open riding area about 20 minutes north of Los Angeles. Here, the KLX was not only able to keep up with all of the bikes present, but was also able to ride around them quite comfortably in the turns. It even smoked the mighty KDX easily on one serpentine uphill section. Alas, though, when the party of fireroaders hit a fairly long straight, the KLX resumed its rightful place at the back of the pack.

We found that the KLX could go just about anywhere. Steep, long hills called for low gear all the way and some paddling near the top, but we never had to slip the clutch to maintain forward motion. Only gentle grades with a good run at the bottom, let the test riders climb hills in second or third gear.

This would tend to indicate that the KLX would make an excellent enduro mount, in stock trim. After all, it's light, agile, has good suspension, and low gear will take the bike just about anywhere.

Wrong.

There's one nasty fly in the pudding, Willard. Throttle response, right off idle, is grim. The 32mm Mikuni carb hesitates and burps when the throttle is snapped on at low speeds. A running joke developed between the test riders: "How many ways are there to shut off a KLX?"—I give up—"There are three ways. 1) You can push the kill switch up; 2) you can push the kill switch down; 3) you can crack the throttle open at idle. Of the three methods, the throttle is the surest and the least expected."

This strange behavior would seem much more at home with one of the wretched Keihin carbs that are dependent on vacuum to operate the slide, or even on the accelerator pump carbs found on the street-legal carbs, but as to why it curses a more or less normal Mikuni carb, we are at a loss to say.

A check with the very detailed Kawasaki shop manual showed that the engine is supposed to idle at 1400 rpm. This is a fairly high idle for a motorcycle, especially a four-stroke single. Our guess-timate is that at least another 1000 rpm higher is the minimum point from which the engine will willingly pull without problems.

It's entirely possible that the hitch in carburetion is due to a flaw in inlet tract design, or is even caused by slow air speed. The valves in the KLX are slightly larger than the valves in the KL engine (from which the powerplant is directly taken), but this alone should not create the problem. The street-legal KL had a much smaller 28mm carb (with an accelerator pump), and also exhibited the same hesitating trait right off the bottom. Quite frankly, we're at a loss to explain this phenomenon, as are the folks at Kawasaki.

Our ride on the Powroll 301 kitted bike showed none of this hesitation, which leads one to a further level of genuine confusion. Apparently, Kawasaki, being more than aware of the shortcomings of the engine, is coming out with their own version of a kit. While it's being offered after the fact, so to speak, it should be an easily integrated kit, somewhat on the conservative side. We can only wonder why the Big K didn't just offer this sort of powerplant in the first place?

However, we do have some private thoughts and ideas on just why the KLX saw life in its first form as it did, rather than as how it could have been. Want to hear them? Of course you do.

Well, as nearly as we can figure, Kawasaki wanted to get into the four-stroke play bike market. But, they were cautious about it, wondering if a valid enough market really existed. In the back of their corporate heads, they also knew that four-stroke dirt bikes were going to be the *only* thing sold in the not-too-distant future.

So, in order to get a feel for an earlier-than-planned entry into that market, they decided to stick their corporate toe cautiously into the waters. They already had some knowledge to go by: Every four-stroke dirt bike on the market, save for the XR185, was too heavy. None of them really handled. And not one of them, including the fabulously successful XR185, had decent, modern suspension components. They knew that actual performance of any four-stroke motor was not a prime consideration from the people who bought four-stroke play bikes. Bear witness to the Suzuki DR370s. Mild, decent units, with not too much surge. They also knew that they didn't want any problems at all in the reliability area. Nothing kills a new model off faster than teething problems.

Knowing all of these things, and knowing also that they did not want to invest any great amount of money, it was more than logical to use existing parts, tools and dies. Best of all, using

an "in-house," or existing engine, would really keep the old costs down.

The KX125 motocross chassis already existed and was a light, proven fixture. All KYB suspension components already sat on shelves. The only completed four-stroke single engine in their production line was the stodgy KL250 single. In the present form, the KL put out something between 15 to 17 ponies.

Some experimenting showed that the KL engine could take seven or eight more horsepower with reasonable reliability. After that, the engine could not be counted on to remain bullet-proof in the usual conservative Kawasaki manner. To get that small increase in horsepower would cost a great deal of money. To get more, would mean massive outlays. It would be cheaper to make a new engine from scratch, rather than convert the KL into a fire-breather.

There really was no choice.

The KL engine received a few modifications that cost very little, was slipped into the KX chassis, and the very latest KX A-5 plastic was used all the way around.

And that, friend, we feel, is how you got what you see here. If our conjecture is off-base, we apologize in advance.

Still, what you *do* get for the money, is a genuine bargain. For $1649 suggested retail, you have the makings of a trick four-stroke. Many will find the KLX a pleasant trailbike the way it is. Those who want to go faster, will find that it's an economical way to get a good four-stroke.

Consider.

To get a decent four-stroke today, you have to spend around $1500 and up, for starters. Then, you have to trim weight off the thing, because all of them (XR185 excepted) are porky. Plan to drop at least $500 to achieve a partial weight loss. A frame is a must for the serious dabbler. $500? $600? More?

Then hundreds more for forks, shocks, etc. There is no way that you can build a neat four-stroke right now —today—for less than $3000, with all of the construction done yourself. Have someone else do the work for you and the price of admission gets close to four grand, right away.

Believe us, we know. We've been diddling around with that RM/DR370 project bike now for a long time and we still aren't done. And, we have, figuring retail costs, over $3500 in the thing.

For a few hundred bucks of hop-up work done to the KLX, you can end up with a thoroughly satisfying four-stroke. It is, when all the smoke clears, the only rational game in Thumper City.

Looked at in that light, the KLX appears to be one hell of a decent first-time effort.

Kawasaki's got a real goodie with their KDX 400; a lot of engine with fine suspension.

For those two or three folks who'll leave the KLX stock . . .

Here's what you get. Accurate steering with not a hint of front-end washout, even with the stock tires. The KLX front end can be placed easily where the rider directs it.

Wheelies required some planning. A little rise . . . a tug on the bars, perhaps a slight headwind. It all adds up.

Brakes proved to be excellent, with the rear being a bit grabby and chattering at first, then settling down as time accrued. Not much braking was experienced from the engine, which felt very odd on a four-stroke. The conservative 8.9:1 compression ratio no doubt contributed to this.

Starting was always easy, requiring no more than a kick or two. In fact, we even started the KLX a few times with our hand, but then, DB editors are soooo macho, that we even do this with out-of-tune 501 Maicos.

Shifting was a bit notchy until the engine got some time on it and loosened up, or perhaps we got used to the shifting and adapted.

Shorter riders—those under 5'9"—had trouble swinging a leg over the saddle of the KLX, but had no hassle touching the ground when seated, as the forks and shocks sagged an inch or two.

Layout of the bars, controls and pegs was as close to ideal as we've found lately. The rider will find that he's forced to sit well forward to be comfortable, which is the only place to be on the long-travel bikes to get them to turn. Many Yamaha riders will feel uncomfortable initially on this particular machine. Time will permit them to adjust.

Both ends of the KLX suck up bumps nicely and basic fiddling will enable each rider to dial in his preference, front or rear, as both ends are completely adjustable.

We got over 80 miles out of one tank and about 65 out of another. It depends on how hard the KLX has to be pushed and how much time has to be spent in the lower gears, screaming the guts out of the little engine.

We learned to like the KLX 250. It attracted a lot of attention and proved to be a popular bike, even though it was usually the slowest mount in our group.

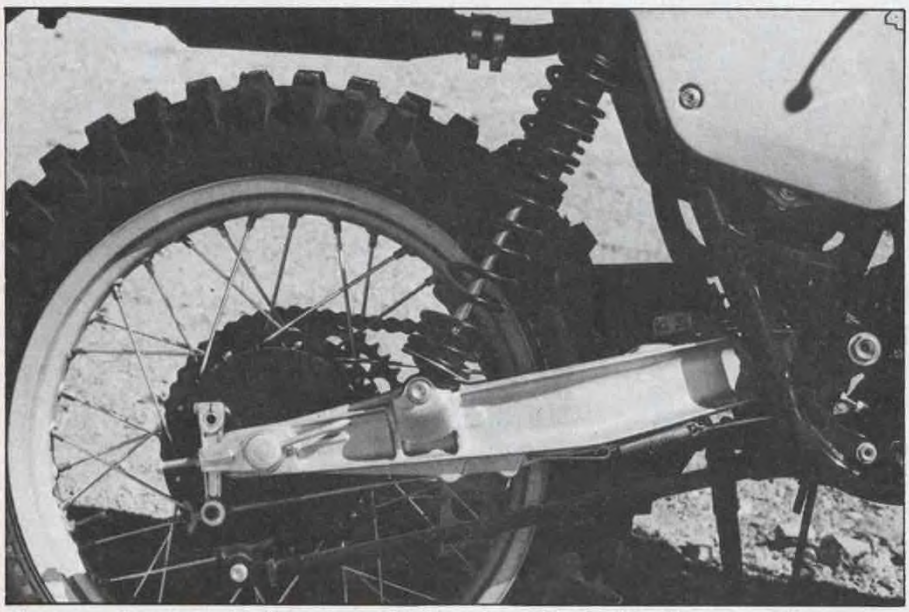
Still, the true enjoyment of a KLX will not be realized until the thing is made to breathe a bit. Quite frankly, no one in his right mind will probably buy a KLX and *not* tamper with it. The bike begs to be coaxed into wolf's clothing.

Kawasaki KDX 400 A-1

Getting directly off the KLX and onto the KDX produced some highly amusing incidents among our test crew on the first day out. Because the KLX had to be ridden flat-out most of the time to merely keep up, riders who then transferred to the KDX often retained that habit. At least for a few heart-stopping minutes, that is.

An unplanned tweak on the throttle of the KDX will instantly produce a wheelie if there is even a semblance of traction. There's such an abundance of torque at low rpm, that discretion is an absolute must. If you've had a chance to ride an IT400, you know what good

The KDX's powerplant rests in a surrounding of plastics, including the skid plate, side plates, tank and fenders.



A new swingarm adds beauty to the beast, and height to the rear end.

low-end pulling power is. Now, take a deep breath: The KDX pulls much stronger off the bottom than even a sharp-running IT.

It pulls so hard, in fact, that the rider must learn to reevaluate what gear to use for any given situation. An uphill that looks like it should call for second gear, can be taken in third, or even fourth, on the KDX. The more time one spends on the KDX, the more one learns about the bike. First-time riders invariably tended to stay in too low a gear and over-revved the bike. While this didn't harm the unit in any way, it was not the most efficient way to ride.

When testing any new bike, comparisons must be drawn with the current state-of-the-art machinery. This means that the KDX must be held right up against the powerful winning glare of the Husky WR and OR 390. No other bike dominates the enduro scene in this country as completely as the Husqvarna. This could change, however, if more folks get a chance to sling a leg over the KDX.

Comparing the KDX to the Husky 390 WR, point for point, is interesting. Suspension. Here, the Husky is still ahead of the Kawasaki, but not by much. Only the presence of superb Ohlins shocks gives the Husky the edge. They're probably the finest units that come on any production bike today. The KYB shocks on the KDX do a decent job, and most riders will probably leave them on until they wear out. The ride at the rear end must be rated in the good-to-excellent category with the KYB shocks, but the suppleness and overall quality of the Ohlins must still be considered state of the art. Using the old 1 to 10 scale, we'd give the Ohlins a 10 and the KYBs a solid 9. Not bad.

Some discussion with the folks in R&D at Kawasaki yielded the information that the KYB shocks actually get better as they accumulate some time. Apparently, they're a bit stiff when new and loosen up as parts seat in.

Up front, we again prefer the action of the Husky forks over the KYB Kawasaki forks, but, as with the shocks, the margin is slight. When we received the KDX, the Kawasaki reps told us that the forks would be stiff for some time until the seals found a happy home on the sliders. This proved accurate, but we never found the action to be harsh, just a fraction chattery on stutter-bumps. On large bumps, the stroke of the forks was superior. Too, the Kawasaki forks exhibited less flex than the Husky forks. While those Husky forks have superb action, the tubes are a smallish 35mm. With the long travel available, flex is unavoidable. Reverting back to the 1 to 10 scale, we'd rate the Husky 9.4 and the Kawasaki a 9.0 even.

Traditionally, the beauty of a big-bore Husky enduro bike has been its ability to pull hard at low rpm. Here, the KDX is the winner, hands-down. While both machines will chug right down to the last few rpm and still keep the bike moving forward, the KDX will do it more smoothly. No grabbing or snatching is felt at the lowest imaginable rpm. It's almost like the KDX was an electric motor, rather than a large, single-cylinder two-stroke. The Husky, by direct comparison, will bang and pop at random when forced to work hard right at the bottom part of its power curve.

Once moving, the KDX also exhibits a bit more power through the mid-range and top end than the Husky. In a drag race, both bikes running stock gearing, the KDX will come out of the hole stronger than the Husky, then both bikes will run even through the mid-range, and, as the top end is approached, the KDX will pull the Husky by a small distance.

Impressive, very impressive.

While we hate to turn this into a KDX/Husky confrontation, it's necessary. The reason is that the KDX is a very serious effort. It's not just another decent enduro/play bike; it's a genuine, certified professional woods racer, with enough of the right things on it to carry a rider to a position on the Six Days Team.

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Getting familiar

Slinging a leg over the KDX is much like climbing on a full-blown motocrosser, because the chassis and long legs put it in the same league. There is no real need for the KDX to be that tall, though, as a close examination shows that the seat is quite possibly the thickest we've ever seen on a dirt bike. It would be very easy to take two or three inches off that saddle without reducing much in the way of comfort. Part of this tall saddle syndrome surely must come from two people who had a lot to do with the initial design of the bike: Walt Axthelm and Mike Hannon, Ax is an old desert rider and Hannon is about 11 feet tall. Kawasaki feels that the next generation of KDXs will probably have a cut-down saddle to accommodate the average dirt bike rider, who we all know stands around 5'8" and weighs 225 or so.

Kickstarting the KDX was easy, in or out of gear. The absence of clutch drag made this pleasant. It never took more than two kicks to get things stirred up. Mechanical clatter was non-existent. None of the piston slap of the garden-variety IT can be heard. Things whir, rather than hammer and clang.

Exhaust noise is moderate and the note does not offend the ear. Both Husky and Yamaha should take note of this, as they both emit a rather irritating type of sound, that, while it might not be loud, does not please the ear.

While we warmed our bike up most of the time before riding, we are still pleased to report that the KDX will run clean while the cylinder is cool enough to lay a bare hand on. This could prove valuable to the serious rider involved in a Two Day Qualifier. For the Six Day rider, who must perform all repair work in a 15-minute period before the start, it's like money in the bank.

There's no graunch when the KDX is nudged into gear, and the clutch engagement is smooth to the point of using the old "silky" cliche. Once rolling, the massive amount of low-end power can be felt with the merest tweak of the right wrist. It's wise to get into the upper gears as quickly as possible.

At first, the KDX feels slightly top-heavy. After a few minutes of riding, this sensation disappears. A trip to the highly accurate and coldly impersonal DIRT BIKE scales shows that the KDX tips the scales at 268½ pounds, fully gassed and ready to ride. While this might sound like a lot, it isn't. You have 3.3 gallons of gas in the big plastic tank. Figuring gas at a bit over six pounds per gallon, you can take off about 20 pounds right there. By the time oil in the forks and gearbox is deducted, you can see that the KDX comes in dry at a mark comfortably under the 250-pound reading. And for a 400cc bike, with lights, skid plate, speedo and all the other basic enduro hardware to hit that weight, shows a tremendous effort on the part of Kawasaki. Have you weighed an IT400 lately? Now you're getting the idea. Jeez. Even the PE250 and the IT250 weigh in at over 260 pounds, ready to ride.

We found no bad habits with the turning and cornering manners of the KDX. It's right at the point where bikes still turn. Travel at both ends is enough to get the job done, with 10.2 inches in the front and 9.1 at the rear end. We're convinced that if the KDX had any more travel, handling would suffer. We would advise KDX buyers not to fall prey to the "more inches is better" syndrome. The way the bike is stock, is correct. Don't screw it up.

We found that we could stuff the KDX into turns like a motocrosser and roll the throttle on cleanly and smoothly for rocket-fast exits. Actually, with the lights removed and the enduro hardware set on a shelf, we feel that the KDX is more than capable of winning the Open class at your local track in the Novice or Intermediate class. It's that good.

At higher speeds, some attention was required to keep the KDX on the desired line. Not a great deal, but the rider should not let his mind wander. We had a chance to run the KDX through some loose and shifty sand. Here, the flotation of the front end was marvelous. It shared much of the same trait that the KX250 A-5 we tested (January 1979 DIRT BIKE) did. Almost as soon as the bike was rolling, that front tire squiggled up on top of the sand like a flotation tire. Truly marvelous. Western enduro riders will learn to appreciate this mannerism, as they often have to come out of the

(*Continued on page 64*)

Riding the Powroll KLX-301

Almost everyone we talked to about the KLX agreed on one point, if nothing else: It is gutless. Considering the sophisticated suspension, there isn't even enough power to give the shocks a workout. For some people, this'll be just the ticket, because in a no-power situation they can ride around full-throttle all day, and with good suspenders they'll never get hurt. Might not be as much fun as being able to dice with their friends, but at least it's safe.

But, if it's horsepower you want, you're in luck. Powroll has all kinds of goodies on the shelf that'll turn your KLX into a power to be reckoned with. They can bore the KLX out to a 275 for the small sum of $75, and that includes a sleeve for your cylinder, because the stock one is too thin. They say it's a no-sweat operation, and the sleeve slips in with no machining.

They also have a stroker kit for $116 exchange, which, when combined with the bore job, increases the displacement to 301cc. A pipe that's tuned to work with all this is available for approximately $35, and head porting can be done for $37.50 a valve. The head work is most recommended when installing a cam. Cams are available, but at the time of this writing, a firm price has not been established.

We had a day out riding on their first 301, which had been bored and stroked, had the head ported and a pipe installed. The difference between the 301 and the stocker is astounding! Instead of having to pick our gears carefully, we now had two or three to choose from in a turn. The bike had an outrageous amount of torque, something that the stocker is not exactly overendowed with. It actually made the bike easier to ride—now we had some power to put to the ground if we got into trouble, and it was a whole lot easier to climb hills with. Really an agreeable bike!

We could have used a little more top end out of the KL motor, but that's the job of the cam, and we're sorry we didn't get a chance to try one. When we do, we'll let you know how it works. In the meantime, if you have any questions or want some specific prices, don't hesitate to give Powroll a call.

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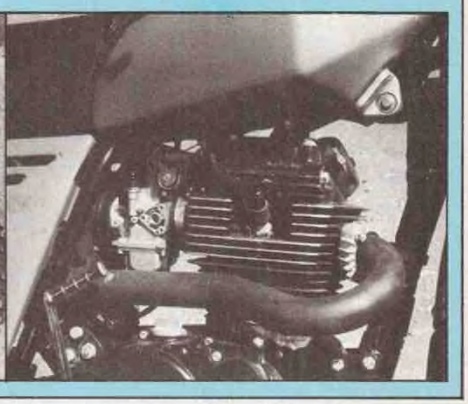


JOHN
4
KDX

2 KAWASAKIS (Continued from page 39)

Side by side, there's a noticeable difference, but only a fraction of the total opposites.

mountains and ride seemingly endless sandwashes on a typical enduro.

At a hard, fast trail riding pace, we were never able to induce fade into the remote reservoir KYB shocks. So, we turned the bike over to our enduro consultant, Gary Woodling. Gary, as you might recall, tied for the win at the Greenhorn Enduro on our bone-stone-stock Honda XR500 and is capable of finding out just how an enduro bike holds up. Here are his thoughts on the KDX:

1979 Kawasaki KDX 400 Enduro Riders Opinion: Gary Woodling

After 125 miles of High Sierra trail riding, I learned a lot about the KDX. Two things really stick out in my mind: The engine has stump-pulling torque from idle to 6500 rpm and good (while not long) suspension. The forks are super-progressive and very soft the first few inches. I never felt a harsh bottom no matter how hard I tried, and they soak up small rocks very smoothly.

The damping is perfect and an aftermarket modification is not needed. The shocks are fade-free and work great after the stiff springs get broken in. The tall seat, combined with the rubber-mounted handlebars, produces a ride that you could fall asleep on.

The bike turns like a Maico, even with the long wheelbase. Just plant your leg, turn the bars and gas it! In anything from a family enduro to a National, the KDX will do the job. Although it makes a superb forest bike, desert events will also be a cakewalk. The relatively moderate travel keeps geometry stable and weight low.

If the Super stroked his moustache, and with his sly grin gave me permission to ride this bike at an ISDT Qualifier, I would make the following changes: Lower gearing one tooth at countershaft, and do a little port work to raise the top-end revs. Although the latter is not really needed, nothing in the 500 class would touch it if performed. As you can see, the bike has a lot of trick stock equipment which will win a gold medal, or sweepstakes trophy. Kawasaki really did their homework and at $1800 apiece, expect to see the KDX at the top of future results.

As you can see, Gary thinks the KDX is a serious machine and most definitely not a play bike for the casual rider.

Bits and pieces

Serious enduro and Qualifier bikes should have folding shift and brake levers. When questioning Kawasaki about this, they told us that an accessory folding shift lever would be available at Kawasaki dealers by the time this hit print, for about eight bucks. Apparently, they feel the brake lever is sufficiently tucked in and protected by

the skid plate.

We really liked the forged aluminum swingarm, which looks like it was part of a bridge. Not only is this baby strong, but the area around the axle slots is thick and beefy, preventing flex. Excellent design!

Cables and control levers need improvement. A contoured lever like the Yamahas should be considered, or even better, short DeHandlers would be most appreciated. Those cables are thin and flex a great deal. We don't expect a long life out of them.

All the plastic on the KDX was first-rate. Fenders appeared well-thought-out and kept crud from being flung up on the rider. Even the tank was fairly narrow where it met the saddle.

Speaking of that saddle, we felt that the foam was built up at too square of a shape at the forward edge. It tended to irritate the inside of the rider's thighs when seated. Rounding off and lowering that forward portion of the saddle would be highly appreciated.

A minor gripe: The front brake cable runs directly across the face of the speedo. Was someone asleep when this piece was designed?

No one cared for the thick grips that came on the KDX. And, when water got on the bars, the suckers started rotating and sliding off.

Our brakes worked remarkably well when soaked in water. Are you listening, Husky?

Spokes came loose like crazy during the first six hours of riding, but bedded in after that. A new owner would be well advised to have the wheels trued by his dealer after the bike is broken in. Those rims seem a bit on the soft side. We have several flat spots to back that statement up.

All of our lights worked well until we had the Wheelie King stuff the rear fender into the rear tire for a photo session. Oh well.

Shifting, whenever we thought of it, was decent. No surprises. The KDX did not like to upshift under full power without the clutch, but then, only one bike that we know of will tolerate that kind of treatment.

Our pegs started to sag a bit, then stayed there. Don't ask us why.

We got fabulous mileage from the KDX. Under normal enduro conditions, a rider can expect about 75 miles from a single tank.

One plug lasted through the entire test. The KDX is a very clean-running bike. Even with the choke on, we only saw a wisp of smoke. We used Kawasaki's own K2 oil for the duration of the test.

The frame loop over the rear fender should be a bit higher, like the KLX, to create a better grab bar. All enduro riders, sooner or later, are going to have

to extract their mount from something.

We felt that the skid plate didn't extend back far enough and left the rear section of the cases exposed to potential rock damage.

Our chain rarely required adjustment and seemed to be superior to most of the stuff we've run across lately. A check of the specs showed that it was American-made Diamond 520 chain.

Maintenance on the KDX proved straightforward, with no weirdness encountered to get to anything.

An American-made K&N filter comes standard. All right! This is great for lazy riders who only want to clean the filter every few months.

Adding it all up

When you stand back and take a long, hard look, you realize that the KDX is a superior enduro weapon. In actual fact, it's equal to the Husky, which is the reigning king of enduro bikes. However, when you take a look at the suggested retail of a KDX at $1799 and then go shopping for a Husky at well over two grand, the contest ceases. The KDX emerges as the new Open Class King of the Hill. The only thing that remains to be seen, is how the KDX will hold up over an extended period of abuse. We know the Huskys shine in that department. It's not uncommon to get a full year out of a WR390. Can the KDX match the Swedish Monarch there?

We'll let you know as soon as feedback trickles into the DB communications center. Meanwhile, all hail the new King! □

Kawasaki KLX 250

NAME AND MODEL	Kawasaki KLX 250
ENGINE TYPE	One-cylinder four-stroke, OHC, air-cooled
BORE AND STROKE	70 x 64mm
DISPLACEMENT	246cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY)	21.3 at 8000 rpm; actual 18.2
CARBURETION	Mikuni 32mm
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	137.5
NEEDLE JET	P-2
JET NEEDLE	6H2-2
PILOT JET	30
SLIDE NUMBER	2.5
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
RECOMMENDED OIL (MFR)	10W 40, 10W 50, 20W 40, 20W 50
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	2.5 gallons
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
GAS/OIL RATIO	N/A
LUBRICATION	Wet sump
OIL CAPACITY	1.6 quarts
AIR FILTRATION	K&N gauze, oil-saturated
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, multi-disc
TRANSMISSION	Five-speed
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	2.64
2	1.73
3	1.30
4	1.05
5	0.88
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	14/45; optional: 13 through 15—43 to 47

IGNITION ..... CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? ..... Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG ..... NGK B7ES
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/ QUALITY ..... Excellent
EXHAUST SYSTEM ..... Straight pipe with silencer and spark arrestor
FRAME, TYPE .... Tubular, single downtube, split cradle
WHEELBASE ..... 55.9 inches
GROUND CLEARANCE ..... 12.0 inches
SEAT HEIGHT AT TANK ..... 36 inches
STEERING HEAD ANGLE ..... 28 degrees
TRAIL ..... 4.8 inches (121mm)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS ..... 242 pounds (234 pounds dry)
RIM MATERIAL ..... Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZES:
FRONT ..... 3.00 x 21 knobby 4PR
REAR ..... 4.00 x 18 knobby 4PR
SUSPENSION:
FRONT, TYPE AND TRAVEL ... Telescopic fork, 250mm (9.8 inches)
REAR, TYPE AND TRAVEL ... Swingarm/ shock, 250mm (9.8 inches)
INTENDED USE, MFG ..... Off-road
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ..... Japan
PRICE, APPROX $1649
PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:
PISTON $15.72
RINGS ONLY $14.58
CYLINDER $89.45
SHIFT LEVER $6.64
BRAKE PEDAL $20.06
FRONT SPROCKET $11.32
DISTRIBUTOR:
Kawasaki Motor Corp., U.S.A.
3630 Garry St.
Santa Ana, California 92704
OVERALL RATING, FROM 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:
HANDLING 97
SUSPENSION 95
POWER 42
COST 88
ATTENTION TO DETAIL 90
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK 75

Kawasaki KDX 400A-1

NAME AND MODEL ..... Kawasaki KDX 400 A-1
ENGINE TYPE .... Two-stroke, single-cylinder, piston reed valve
BORE AND STROKE ..... 80 x 78mm
DISPLACEMENT 392cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY) ..... 39.4 at 7000 rpm; actual 35.8
CARBURETION ..... Mikuni 36mm
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:
MAIN JET 162.5
NEEDLE JET Q-2
JET NEEDLE 6DH-18
PILOT JET 45
SLIDE NUMBER 2.5
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE ..... Premium
RECOMMENDED OIL (MFR.) ..... Kawasaki K-2
FUEL TANK CAPACITY ..... 3.3 gallons
FUEL TANK MATERIAL ..... Plastic
GAS/OIL RATIO 20:1
LUBRICATION ..... Pre-mix
AIR FILTRATION ..... K&N gauze filter, oil-saturated
CLUTCH TYPE ..... Wet, multi-disc
TRANSMISSION ..... Five-speed
GEARBOX RATIOS:
1 ..... 2.31
2 ..... 1.53
3 ..... 1.18
4 ..... 0.95
5 ..... 0.79
GEARING, FRONT/REAR ..... 15/48; optional: 13 through 16—46 to 50
IGNITION ..... CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? ..... Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG ..... NGK B8ES
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/ QUALITY ..... Good
EXHAUST SYSTEM ..... High-pipe, left side, silencer and spark arrestor
FRAME, TYPE .... Tubular, single downtube, split cradle
WHEELBASE ..... 57.1 inches
GROUND CLEARANCE ..... 11.8 inches
SEAT HEIGHT AT TANK ..... 37.6 inches
STEERING HEAD ANGLE ..... 28 degrees
TRAIL ..... 4.7 inches (120mm)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS ..... 248 pounds (240 pounds dry)
RIM MATERIAL ..... Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZES:
FRONT ..... 3.00 x 21 knobby, 4PR
REAR ..... 4.50 x 18 knobby, 6PR
SUSPENSION:
FRONT, TYPE AND TRAVEL ..... Telescopic fork, 10.2 inches
REAR, TYPE AND TRAVEL ... Swingarm/ shock, 9.1 inches
INTENDED USE, MFR. ..... Off-road, enduro competition
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ..... Japan
PRICE, APPROX $1799
PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:
PISTON ..... $31.84 piston only
RINGS ONLY $12.40
CYLINDER $206.40
SHIFT LEVER ..... $7.98; optional folding lever $8.00
BRAKE PEDAL $8.00
FRONT SPROCKET $16.52
DISTRIBUTOR:
Kawasaki Motor Corp., U.S.A.
3630 Garry St.
Santa Ana, California 92704
OVERALL RATING, FROM 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:
HANDLING 92
SUSPENSION 94
POWER 99.5
COST 98
ATTENTION TO DETAIL 97
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK 96