

HALF MOTOCROSSER, HALF TRAIL BIKE

KAWASAKI KDX80 A-1

Now It's in the Budget Class

By the Dirt Bike Staff



What is a budget racer? An expensive race bike that you can do cheap modifications to? Or is it an inexpensive motorcycle to start out with, that won't need a whole lot of modifying, yet still be competitive? In the case of the Kawasaki KDX80, it's the latter.

Dubbed the KDX80 A-1, this little 80 is nothing more than last year's mini motocrosser, with a spark arrestor/silencer tacked on to make it enduro legal. And its price tag is about \$110 less than the 1980 KX80, or around \$80 less than the YZ, RM, or CR racers. That's a budget racer right there.

How does the KDX stack up against the KX80 on the spec sheets? By just glancing over the bike, you

can see that the KDX's arrestor/silencer is much bigger and heavier than the KX silencer, and that the KDX's side panels are just frame covers, unlike the FIM skidplates on the KX.

As for the swingarms, the KX has the boxed steel type, while the KDX sports a tubular steel constructed unit. The shock bodies are different, with the KDX having a cheaper, less effective set. The KDX kill switch is an on/off lever, rather than a push button. But that's it. From just looking at the bikes, there are no other apparent differences.

Now the spec sheets say different, though. The KDX lists with about an inch shorter wheelbase, which means

it will turn faster than the KX, and the ground clearance is a bit less on the KDX when compared to the KX. As for the front and rear travel of each bike, the sheets say the KX has 1.2 inches more up front, and .6 inches greater at the rear end. Just to test all of these so-called facts, we put the KDX right up alongside the new KX, and brought out the measuring tapes. When the bikes are pitted head to head, there's very little difference in ground clearance, the wheelbase is shorter on the KDX, and the travel appears the same, both front and rear, on the two machines.

There were a few more interesting facts about the two bikes as well. The KDX weighs-in one pound heavier than the KX, at 140 pounds, but if you remove that silencer/spark arrestor, the KDX becomes the lighter of the two. The KX lists on the sheets as having one more horsepower than the KDX at the 11,500 rpm mark, but it also sports a 29mm Mikuni carb, bigger compared to the KDX's stock 26mm. As for the ignition systems, the KX comes equipped with a CDI unit, while the KDX features a magneto setup.

Still wondering just how close the KDX is to the new KX, and what it would be like in competition, we ran the two machines head-to-head on the track. Out there, we found that the KX is the faster of the two, but not by much. Its advantage over the KDX is that it builds the revs quicker and delivers the power sooner, with a harder surge. In the handling department, the KX suspension is just a hair plusher than the KDX, but again, not enough to make the KDX any less good of a competitive bike.

The KDX does feel better in the turns and esses, again thanks to the shorter wheelbase. The powerband of the KDX is just right for a beginner who wants to start racing. It comes on with a good low end and smooth midrange, with a decent surge as it



Kawasaki took last year's motocrosser and made it into the KDX80 A-1. With a little help, it can be either a mean moto thrasher, or a killer woods mount.

hits the peak. Granted, the KDX will not beat either the RM, YZ, or CR 80s in a drag race, but it will be able to stay close to them.

If you really wanted to make the KDX as good as the KX, or closer to the other three Japanese efforts, then take the hundred and ten bucks you saved and head into a DG catalogue. There you'll find the Intermediate or Expert kits available for the KX, which will bolt right on to the KDX as well. Suspension mods can also be found there, and before you know it, you'll have a full blown racer, if you feel the need.

So what we have here is a bike that is last year's motocrosser, with a few goodies to make it trail-ready. If you want to leave all of that stuff on and take it trailing, it'll work fine. And if you want to race the bike in a local motocross, then all you have to do is slip off a few items and the KDX is set for competition.

There are a lot of ways to go if you feel that you want more out of the KDX, once you get better yourself. In the beginner ranks, this bike is a real

winner. But if you still want to keep on it at the Intermediate and Advanced levels, then you'll still have to fork out some of that money that you saved buying the KDX in the first place, and invest in a hot pipe, carb, and possibly a porting kit. That still won't exceed the hundred and ten bucks, so the rest can be used on either suspension tricks, or cosmetic changes. Left stock, you still have one of the hottest machines in the forest.

KAWASAKI KDX80 A-1 Specifications

NAME AND MODEL	Kawasaki KDX80 A-1
ENGINE TYPE	Two-stroke, air-cooled, reed-valved
BORE AND STROKE	48mm x 45.8mm
DISPLACEMENT	82cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)	15 at 11,000 rpm
CARBURETION	26mm Mikuni
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	1.4 gallons
GAS/OIL RATIO	20:1
TRANSMISSION	Five-speed
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	14/50
IGNITION	Magneto
WHEELBASE	45.3 inches
GROUND CLEARANCE	9.1 inches
STEERING HEAD ANGLE	26 degrees
WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	140 pounds
INTENDED USE	Minicycle, off-road
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
PRICE, APPROX.	\$619
DISTRIBUTOR:	
Kawasaki Motor Corp. USA	
2009 E. Edinger Ave.	
Santa Ana, California	



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