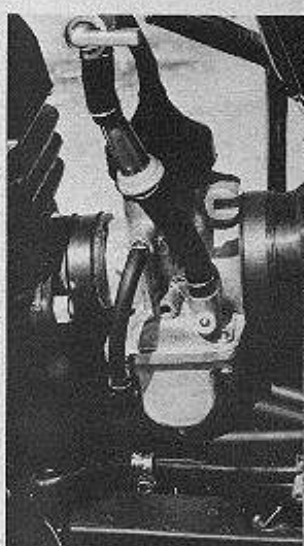


KAWASAKI KX250

Stylish, Competitive,
Priced Right,
Only A Few Minor Ills.
Kawasaki's First Effort
Is More Than Just
Another Motocrosser.





■ POKER, IF YOU don't already know, is a game of both patience and action. Players are dealt cards, and play them out, bidding according to their value and the odds of someone else having something better. Poker is also a game that should be familiar to just about every motorcyclist.

As a motorcyclist, and therefore always a potential purchaser, you are dealt a new hand each year, by the motorcycle manufacturers, in the form of new and (hopefully) better models. This is true whether you are a street bike buyer or an off-roadist.

The Japanese are the most notorious for dealing out fancy hands. The Europeans change little, if anything, from year to year, but the Big Four? WOW!

This year, after sitting out several hands of motocrosser, motocrosser, who's got the best motocrosser?, Kawasaki has pulled up a chair. They want "in" for 1974. And *in* they are with their KX250.

Although Kawasaki has produced a 250 motocrosser before, it was only a modified F-11 enduro bike, which was manufactured in limited quantity to qualify their special works bikes for AMA motocross. The old F-11M had a double-cradle frame, good suspension, a bad rear brake, and a host of other items both acceptable and regrettable. These few limited-production machines were also released for road tests to the magazines, top-flight kibitzers that we are.

Kawasaki realized that the press can indeed be instrumental in not only introducing new machinery to the public, but also in helping to sell that machinery. The first few bikes were given to us to see just what we would complain about and what we would praise. They were guinea pigs. The KX250 is the sum of what Kawasaki knows about motocross, and what the magazines think they know. Modesty aside, it turned out to be a pretty good package.

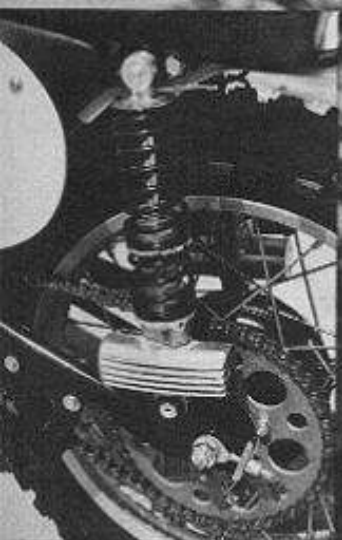
The KX250's frame is a new single-downtube item with a hefty gusset at the steering head. The frame splits conventionally just below the forward motor mount and cradles the engine with two case-protecting undertubes. The entire frame is made from what is referred to as Japanese chrome moly. While this steel cannot meet the high standards of the Swedish chrome moly used in Husqvarna frames, it is much stronger and lighter than the mild steel used on many other bikes.

This piston-port Single is specially designed for motocross.>

Cycle World Road Test

KAWASAKI





Kaw. But initially it is stiff, particularly on the little cobby junk that seems to infest the corners of nearly every motocross track. The front forks simply refuse to work. Everything that you hit is transferred through the forks and handlebars to your arms.

We talked to a KX250 owner at a motocross, and he told us that the stiff ride wears away after awhile. In fact, he said that it was necessary for him to go to 20-wt. fork oil to keep the forks from bottoming on the real nasty tracks (like Saddleback on a Thursday). The marshmallow-like landings were still there, but horrendous bumps and ditches caused the units to bottom, once broken in.

The rear shocks were better in that they broke in right away (whether or not they will last is another question), but they produced some rump-jarring when they were new, too. Which brings us to another point—the seat. The density of the foam used on the KX's seat is too light. You sink right down to the seat base the minute you sit on the bike. There was also some reluctance on the part of the seat to spring back to its original shape each time our rear ends lifted off as we rode. Whether this is due to lack of "breathing" in the seat, or whether this may also be attributed to the foam, it was uncomfortable nonetheless.

The Kaw corners well. Although we don't particularly care for the Dunlop knobby fitted to the front wheel (it wears out quickly and has poor traction), the 4.60 tread on the rear wheel is a real traction getter. Front wheel washout was non-existent most of the time. Then, all of a sudden, it would give. You had to be quick to catch it, too. For the most part, the steering behaved itself and provided little trouble.

Stopping was easy too. The rear brake was a tad touchy, but to complain about it would be nitpicking. It is strong and controllable. The front unit was just as up to the job as the rear one. We experienced a bit of front-brake shudder when the bike was new, but it went away. Both brake hubs are aluminum alloy castings with magnesium backing plates. The front one is a full-width binder; the rear is half as wide. Both are cable-operated.

Lever on the chrome moly handlebars are the typical breako specials that plague Japanese machinery. They do, however, sport grit covers that are a nice touch. The plastic quick-turn throttle is fitted with some harder-than-Doherty-but-better-than-Yamaha-Enduro grips, which most people will like well enough to leave alone.

Footpegs are of the folding variety, but are not spring loaded. It's a shame, too, as they sorely need to be. Early pegs broke off because the chrome moly used was of too thin a wall thickness; but we understand this has been corrected at the factory.

The fenders are flexo-flyers, but crack readily and will require immediate replacement.

With D.I.D. rims and a smartly-styled green fuel tank, the KX brought out the curiosity in people wherever we took it. And when it fired right up with a minimum of hassle, well, they were even more surprised. It is an easy machine to ride and on which to compete. It does nothing radically; but does everything well. The KX owner is going to have to change the oil in the front suspension and then wait for the units to break in, re-pad the seat, get some spring-loaded footpegs and probably change the front tire. But he needn't do so to be competitive.

This year Kawasaki is slipping their ace, the KX250, into a deck that is already loaded with aces—CRs, VRs, YZs, CZs, and now the KX for MX. It's your hand to play out. Go ahead, you can't lose.

KX250

SPECIFICATIONS

List price	.....	\$1150
Suspension, front	.....	telescopic fork
Suspension, rear	.....	swinging arm
Tire, front	.....	3.00-21
Tire, rear	.....	4.60-18
Engine, type	.....	piston-port, two-stroke Single
Bore x stroke, in., mm	.....	2.74 x 2.56, 69.5 x 64.9
Piston displacement, cu. in., cc	.....	15.01, 246
Compression ratio	.....	7.9:1 (corrected)
Claimed bhp @ rpm	.....	34 @ 8000
Claimed torque @ rpm lb.-ft.	.....	23.6 @ 7000
Piston speed @ rpm ft./min.	.....	3413 @ 8000
Carburetion	.....	Mikuni VM34SC
Ignition	.....	magneto CDI
Oil system	.....	oil mist, oil in fuel
Oil capacity, pt.	.....	1.9
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	.....	2.38
Recommended fuel	.....	premium
Starting system	.....	primary kick, folding crank
Air filtration	.....	oil-wetted foam

POWER TRANSMISSION

Clutch	.....	wet, multi-disc
Primary drive	.....	straight-cut gear
Final drive	.....	single-row chain, (5/8 x 1/4)
Gear ratios, overall:1		
5th	.....	9.88
4th	.....	11.47
3rd	.....	13.94
2nd	.....	17.10
1st	.....	23.04

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	.....	55.8
Seat height, in.	.....	32.5
Seat width, in.	.....	7.0
Handlebar width, in.	.....	34.5
Footpeg height, in.	.....	11.6
Ground clearance, in.	.....	7.7
Curb weight (w/half-tank fuel), lb.	.....	214
Weight bias, front/rear, percent	.....	44/56

DYNAMOMETER TEST HORSEPOWER AND TORQUE

RPM	BHP	TORQUE	RPM	BHP	TORQUE
2500	4.05	8.52	5500	20.72	19.79
3000	5.49	9.61	6000	23.29	20.39
3500	7.14	10.71	6500	25.08	20.27
4000	10.14	13.31	7000	24.34	18.26
4500	13.35	15.59	7500	16.33	12.84
5000	15.92	16.73	8000	14.36	9.43

