



The past few months have been a time of dramatic change to the motorcycle industry. Not only have we seen hitherto exclusively four-stroke Japanese manufacturers enter both the two-stroke and motocross worlds, but we have also witnessed former European four-speed machines become five-speeders, more big-bore motocrossers come about, left-side shifting Spanish bikes, and the first Japanese trials iron. Keeping with the progressive trend, Kawasaki informed us that the first of their 250 MX'ers had arrived and was ready for testing. We knew, from the past several month's experiences, that this machine was probably going to be special. It is indeed.

You can't help but notice when you first see the bike, the fuel tank and the exhaust pipe. The depository is imbedded with the now famous Kawasaki green. An Oriental copy of a domestic plastic replacement tank, its unpolished design tells you right away that this bike is all business. No frills, only the lightest and strongest components are used. The exhaust pipe

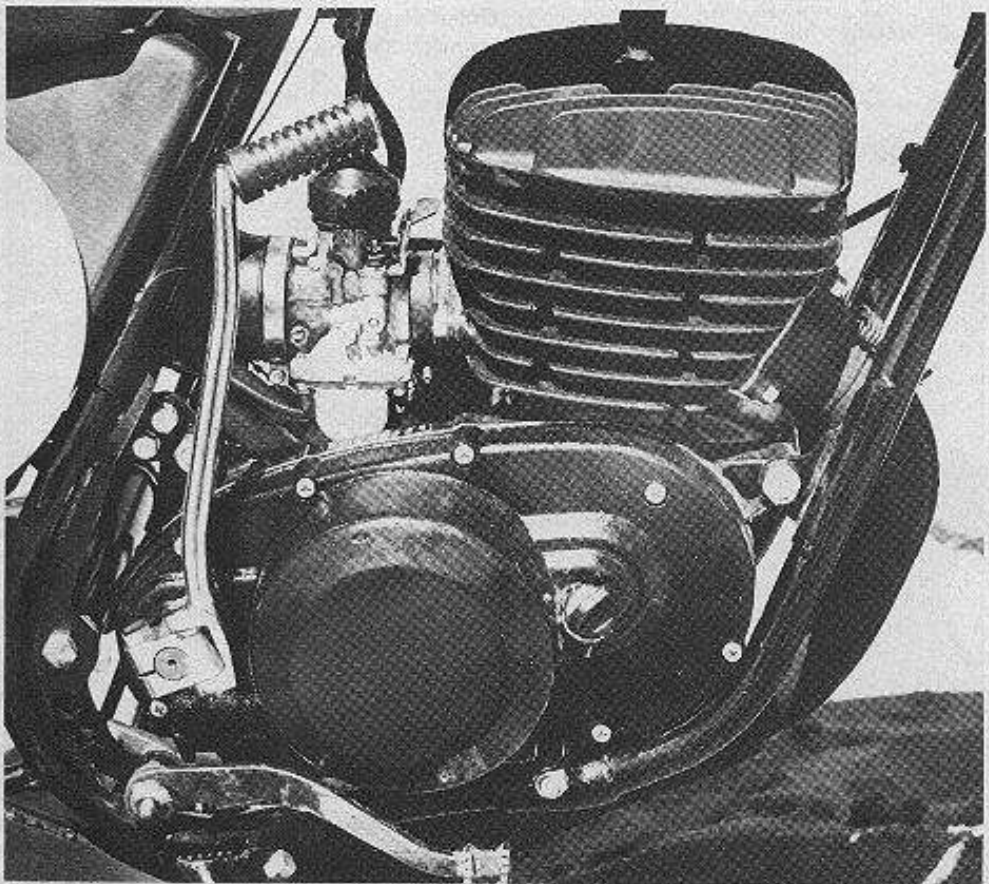
tells a different story. Although it could be said that it really isn't very much different from any of the other downpipes that come on motocross bikes, it does bring to mind the work that

Ole Petterson, now with Kawasaki, did in 1968-69 with Suzuki during the development of their RH 67 and RH 68 motocrossers. Up until that time, everything from Europe came over here with high pipes. Maico, CZ, Bultaco, Montesa, Husqvarna—they all had the pipes routed upwards. Petterson's Suzuki pipe seemed to change that almost overnight.

The frame on the 'Saki is a double-cradle unit. It does come directly from their F-11 enduro bike but you can rest assured that it is strong enough to handle tasks asked of it, from motocross competition. Steering geometry is very good although one tester felt that the front end should be about 1/2-in. longer. The footpegs are located about an inch rearward of their position on the Enduro machine. This assists the rider in distributing his weight more evenly over the machine for control.

The engine also looks like it was pirated off the F-11. In a sense, it was. The crankcases are unmistakably familiar. Everything else, however, has been 86'ed in favor of racing components. The crankshaft is new: a sturdier copy of the original. The transmission is a close-ratio unit with a very tall first gear. After spending considerable time in the saddle we feel that the ratios in the transmission are too close. The engine has a wide powerband

KAWASAKI F11M



Although it still looks like an F-11 enduro engine, the only things interchangeable are the cases and a few miscellaneous parts. Longish kickstarter facilitates starting the torquey two-stroke.

Kawasaki's new generation dirt racer: a finely hewn competition bike

and such tightly packed coggerly is not necessary. The only explanation that we could come up with is that the engine is in a mild state of tune, that is, there is nothing radical about it. As speed tuners modify it to get more horsepower, the powerband will narrow, necessitating the close ratios that are standard. When you shift you can hardly tell by engine rpm that another ratio has been engaged, but when you notice that the ground below you is nothing more than a blur, you will realize that you are moving along smartly indeed. The clutch is a wet, multi-plate system with a very light feel. After starting the bike for the first time, a staffer pulled in on the lever to engage first gear and was embarrassed when he suggested to a nearby Kawasaki engineer that the cable was not hooked up to the clutch arm. He should have checked. The cable was indeed connected to its proper arm.

Seating is highish. If you stand less than five-eight you may have difficulty in planting your feet on the ground firmly. Nevertheless the relationship between the handlebar, seat and footpegs proved good for all who rode the bike. Comfort

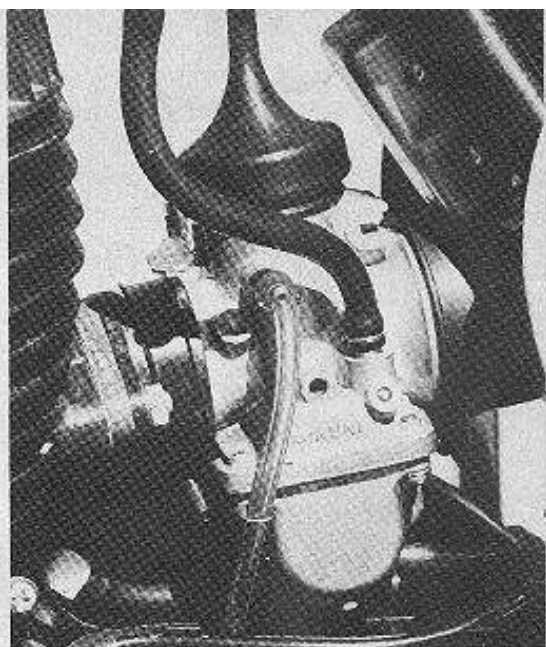
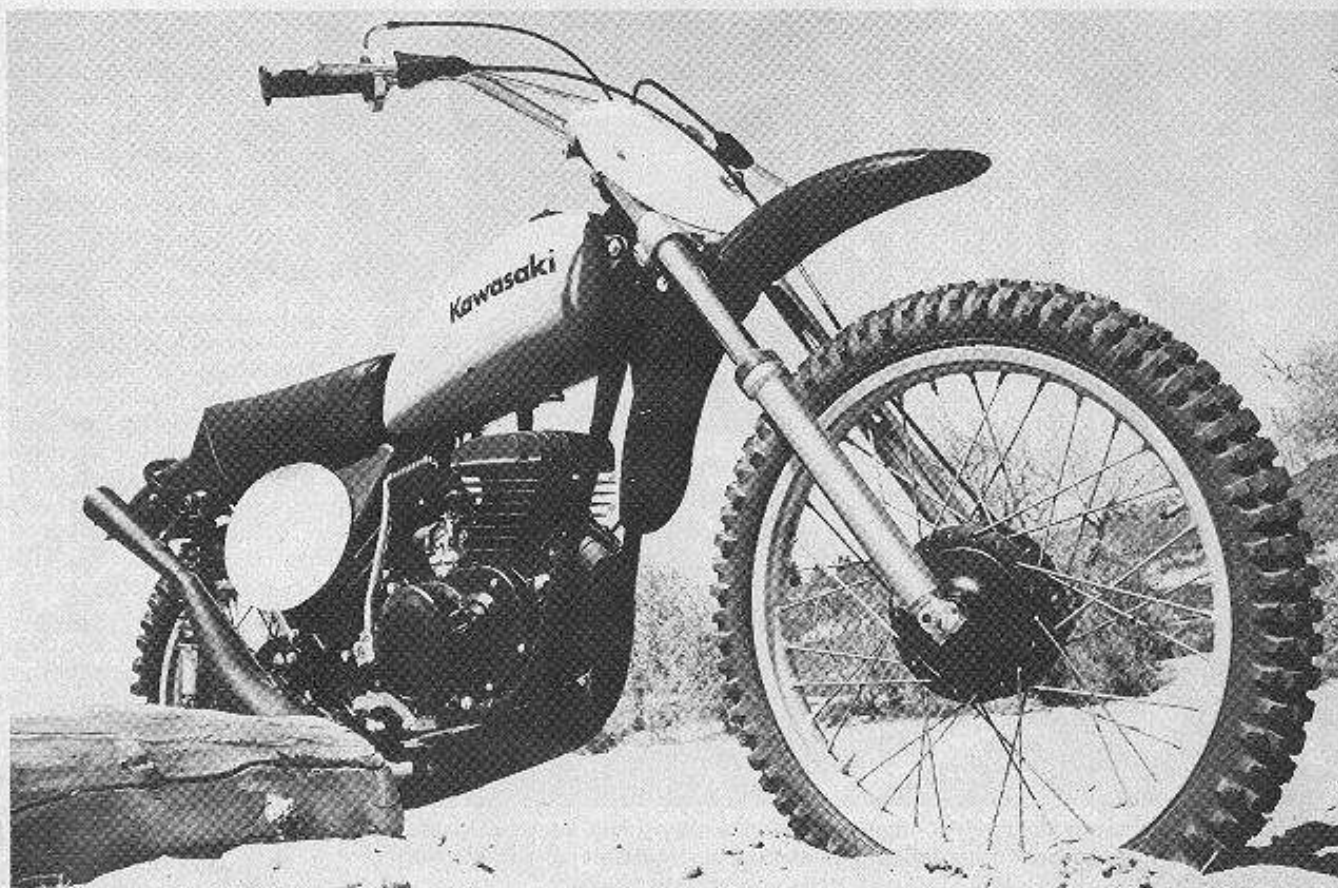
is one area which hasn't always been good on Japanese scooters. At first glance, the Kawasaki's seat appears to be way too narrow for prolonged riding, especially for those who have a more than generous *bahunka*. We are surprised; the bike provides us with a firm, comfortable seating position.

The front forks are reworked enduro versions. Perhaps the word reworked is a poor choice in this case. Redesigned is more like it. Similar in appearance to its predecessors, these polished aluminum units offer over six in. of well dampened travel in and out. No amount of abuse could produce the slightest sign of springiness or hydraulic lock. They never bottomed or topped out. On the rear end a pair of aluminum-bodied shock absorbers work just as well as the forks. At last, quality shock absorbers are now coming en masse from Japan.

The machine's brakes, on the negative side, are too aggressive. The first time you tromp the rear brake it will probably lock up and kill the engine. Some practice will be needed to make it work well. But the potential is here, for this full-floating binder is as strong as anything we've tested to date. The rear conical hub design helps keep unsprung weight to a minimum. The front brake is very sensitive, yet controllable. Its full-width hub is laced (as is the rear) to the popular, mudless D.I.D. rim. Control levers are made from malleable aluminum. Footpegs are serrated and self-cleaning while they fold back at 45

Continued on page 74

Long-travel front forks have special dampeners and springs, thin-wall stanchions, and work well. Tires are Dunlop Sports.

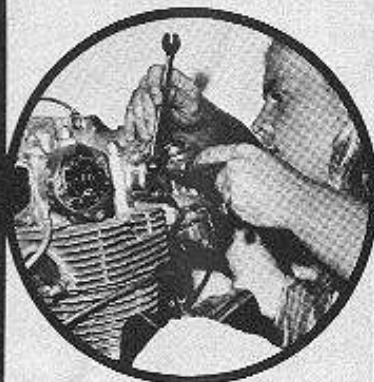


Mikuni carburetor has impeccable manners.



Green plastic fuel tank makes the bike unmistakably Kawasaki.

BE A PROFESSIONAL MOTORCYCLE MECHANIC



PREPARE FOR A HIGH-PAYING FUTURE

There's a nation-wide shortage of professional motorcycle mechanics. As a result, trained men have their pick of high-paying jobs. And the future looks even better.

Read what *Mechanix Illustrated* had to say after a complete investigation of the country's job market: "Among the workers whose job chances will grow are . . . mechanics, especially guys who can fix motorcycles."

NTI can give you the training you need to become a professional motorcycle mechanic. You'll use the latest equipment, learn the most modern techniques, and, after you're trained, NTI's nationwide placement service will steer you to dealers who are looking for men.

**IF YOU'RE READY TO
TURN PRO, call toll free
800-639-0938
or return the coupon.**

National Technical Institute
4810 Calvert Rd., ^{7PC}
College Park, Md. 20740

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Age _____

KAWASAKI F-11M

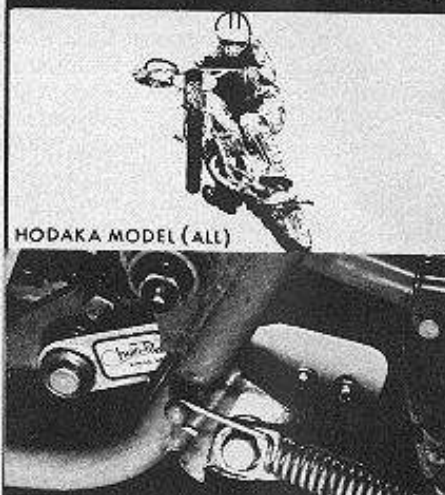
degrees to prevent injury in case you go down. Fenders are highly flexible break-resistant items that have been copied from American products, in Japan.

Riding the Kawasaki 250 MX is an experience you won't soon forget. There are certain things that one must accustom himself to but it takes a little effort to do so. Power is instantaneous, being amplified through the quarter-turn throttle. You don't really notice any particular rpm at which things start happening. Pull comes on very low in the rev range and just grows in strength until it is time to hit the next gear. The most usable power starts slightly over 4000 rpm and zooms on up past the 8000 rpm redline. Much of the credit here must go to the Mikuni carburetor whose precise fuel delivery provided us with first-kick starts, not to mention good high-rpm performance throughout the test. You can't ask a carburetor to do more. The type of power that the 250 MX delivers differs from all other bikes we have tested except one, the Honda Elsinore. Most 250's deliver a pipey, delayed-reaction power when compared to the almost dangerously quick zap of this new breed of Oriental ring-ding. When exiting a corner only judicious throttle should be applied to maintain traction. When zipping down straightaways the throttle should be rolled on to avoid excessive wheelspin. When slamming into a berm, if the throttle is jammed open upon impact, the front wheel may well leap into the air, requiring the rider to redistribute body weight in a big hurry. Observe these aspects of performance as a warning for small-bore racers. Don't expect to jump off your 125 and onto the Kawasaki and ride well. You will definitely have to go through a transition period.

Handling is good. It is almost effortless to put the bike exactly where you want it. If you don't like the line you've taken through a turn, with a blip of the throttle or a flick of the body and presto, a new line. Due to generous fork rake, the front end of the Green K has a slight tendency to wash out. Sliding the body forward just a little alters this characteristic to the point where the front wheel sticks to its given line like duct tape on a saddlesore. This thing really tracks!

If you are thinking of purchasing one of these Greenies, be patient. The first 200 of them are going to be distributed to selected dealers for their sponsored riders only. As soon as Kawasaki is assured that all of the bugs are out they will be produced in somewhat limited quantity. The ones you can buy will be identical to the one we tested, down to the last nut and bolt.

CUSTOM CHAIN TENSIONER FOR TRAIL BIKES by



HODAKA MODEL (ALL)

only \$14.95

Chain-Tite Tensioner is custom designed for each specific model.

Chain-Tite Tensioner gives you longer chain and sprocket life and improved throttle control.

Chain-Tite Tensioners are made from Quality materials such as:

- New double wearing surface urethane guide blocks.
- All parts plated to guard against rust.
- Built to last.
- Simple add-on installation no welding.
- Adjustable guide block for maximum chain contact.

MODELS AVAILABLE

OSSA PIONEER	175-250	1969-1973
YAMAHA	360	1970-1973
YAMAHA	250	1971-1973
YAMAHA	125-175	1969-1973
KAWASAKI	350	1970-1973
KAWASAKI	250	1971-1972
KAWASAKI	125-175	1971-1972
SUZUKI	250-400	1971-1973
SUZUKI	125-185	1971-1973
HONDA	100-125	1970-1973
HONDA	250	1972-1973
HODAKA	90-100-125	ALL

Send check or money order to Chain-Tite
Fairgrounds Rd., P.O. Box 144, Manlius,
New York 13104.

Dealer Inquires Invited Include year of
bike _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

N.Y.S. residents add 7% sales tax.

CHAIN-TITE
PC A Division of Filtertech