



# Kawasaki KX 250

**If you haven't anything good to say, then mumble incoherently.**

When the demigods of motocross tally up votes for most fanciful Japanese 250 of 1976 chances are that metal-flake green will win few awards. Despite what anyone may say, it will most likely be due to its color and styling rather than its performance. Oh, many a self-appointed authority will lead you to believe that the KX 250 is possessed of many heinous handling habits. In truth, that putrid lime green metal-flake tank

alone would etch a subconscious scar upon any tasteful psyche.

Since market sales depend upon word of rumor rather than word of Allah, Kawasaki may hurt some on their 76 dirt squirts. Too bad. Under that exterior coat of malaise, the KX 250 is every bit as good as most of the current crop of six-of-one, half-dozen of the other Japanese motocrossers. Only Suzuki's new RM 250 demonstrates certain superiority, as it does over every other oriental 250 and a number of European ones.

Like its competition, once the KX has reached a state of motocross preparedness, you'll barely recognize it. Hoorah, too bad every youngster couldn't ride one in a prepared state before making the trek to the local dealer. Last spring we had the opportunity to ride Wayne Cooke's



Kawasaki prepared KX. For the actual physical differences, the total chance was remarkable. Seemingly, much potential resides underneath the lacquer.

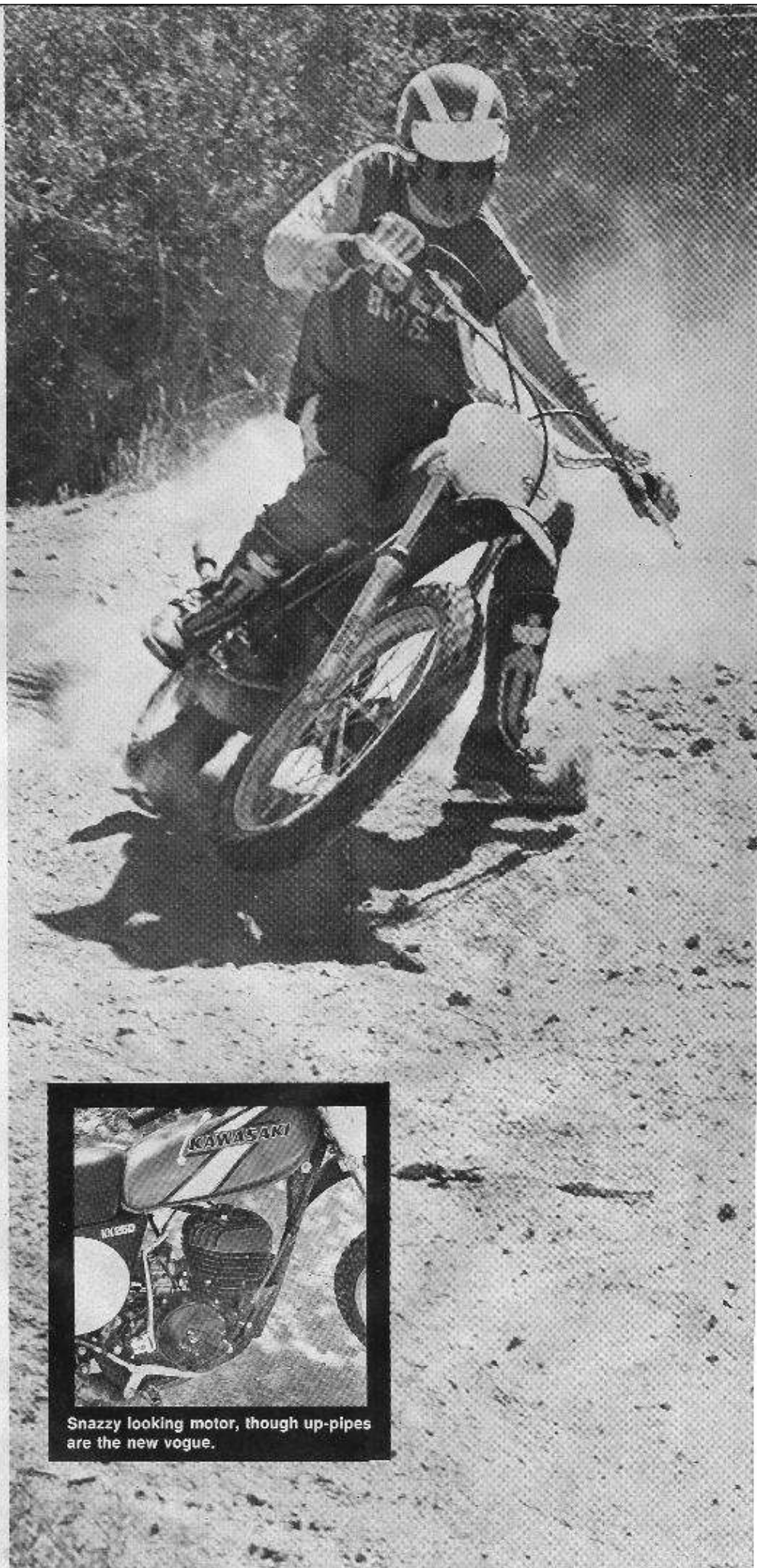
After the first problem of an appearance which tends to make one not want to ride it at all, there are a few other institutional problems with the KX 250. These are the same problems common to every Japanese motocrosser, to a greater or lesser extent. The KX comes with Dunlop Motocross tires, 3.00x21 and 4.60x18. These are certainly the worst motocross tires available today. The front is useless and the rear barely as good as a decent 4.00. Any potential that the KX has for turning or accelerating is hidden by the tires.

While those tires are having a hard time gripping the ground, the suspension makes matters worse by not allowing them to touch the ground more than intermittently. The forks sadly lack any kind of appropriate damping qualities. They bottom, top, and hydraulic lock in certain situations. Too bad. They happen to be the most rigid and well-built of the current crop of Japanese forks. Add some appropriate damping (by obtaining a #1 Products fork kit) and they will be more flex free than any of their competition.

Poor forks tend to throw weight onto the rear wheel. Unfortunate, since the shocks are slightly under-sprung even for a good front end. Too, after a 4.60 Dunlop's worth of testing, the Kayaba gassers showed a definite absence of damping. Like everything that comes with these new DeCarbon gas shocks, they work reasonably for the first half a rear tire (though they fade noticeably in motos over 15 minutes) and progressively expire from there on. Kawasaki's vertical shock stance actually seems to help them last a little longer than on the RM Suzuki, for example.

Put the rotten tires together with poor forks and sacked out rear shocks and you have a pogo stick on ice. Scary. Not too pleasant to ride. Too bad. Primary difference between Mr. Cooke's machine and our '76 KX was and still is tires and suspension. Sure, his bike was lighter and faster, but the biggest difference was in keeping it on the ground. In fact, when reasonable suspension and tires are added to the KX it, if memory serves correctly, actually turned more easily and controllably than the real racer.

By merely substituting an IRC 3.00x21 to the front (we swiped it from an RM Suzuki) the KX's manners were improved to a controllable level, i.e., "it turns kind of funny, but



Snazzy looking motor, though up-pipes are the new vogue.





it turns." A decent rear tire assisted in keeping the bike from picking alternate directions at inopportune moments. As one person put it: "It always goes where the rear wheel is pointed, whatever direction that happens to be at that milli-second." Stock, the KX has a certain tendency to go very straight through rough terrain. Difficulties arise when the bike is in the air, at which time it sometimes picks a new direction to go straight in. Possibly a very skilled rider could learn to use this to advantage. Possibly. Better to straighten up the suspension and give the whole procedure a break to begin with. Prosthetics is suffering from extremely inflatable times.

Once the KX is properly shod and suspended it is quite easy to ride. The boost-ported motor supplies excellent torque and throttle response. It's not the sort of bike where choosing a quantity of throttle is a difficult decision. Power builds smoothly or explosively depending solely on how the throttle is used. For a tight, difficult motocross course it will be as quick as any 250 because of its torque. A matter of getting off corners smartly. On a wide open, TT style track, the KX will need help on the top of its rev range to keep up with some of the competition. It just doesn't rev quite like the factory model, which incidentally was about the quickest 250 any of us ever desire to ride. Bottom end on the two motors was similar, but those top 3-4,000 rpm were a completely different story.

One area of motor improvement will undoubtedly be the pipe. First of all, the stock one is considerably too loud. The flared "baffled" end of the pipe emits a painful bark. In general, the exhaust note only adds to the overall impression of rudeness. And by all appearances the pipe doesn't have too much volume, which could limit the engine's ability to rev. If nothing else the stock setup limits the KX to an extremely reliable rev range. Piston and crankshaft problems should be quite infrequent.

What you do need to be in the hunt isn't unlike what's needed on other Japanese motocy bikes. The tank is heavy and keeps the bike's profile bulbous. A smaller tank of light material would save the better part of ten pounds and make a better knee grabber. Too, the stock seat is a mite rigid. A change of foam would be a welcome improvement. Handlebars are surprisingly well shaped but the grips are useless. Hand levers are typical—they might bend a little. Foot controls are good. Both are of alloy and fall readily to toe. Down by the shift lever the countersprocket is





covered by a louvered plate. Easy for changing sprockets.

Both brakes expand after you push or pull on a lever which is connected to another lever by a cable. All levers seem to be of appropriate lengths as the brakes do a good job of coming as close to stopping the bike as

is desired. Both hubs are conical aluminum, quite strong and heavier than one might suppose. Rims are DID and didn't seem to bend much.

There are many other nice things about the KX 250. Why, it has an electronic ignition so you don't have to adjust anything there. The air-

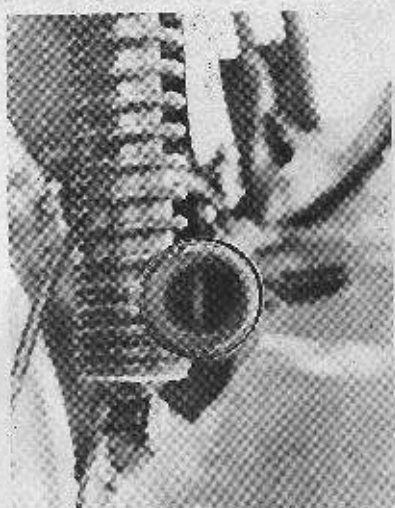
box is actually pretty good and comes with a foam filter inside. Clutch and throttle cables have accessible and adjustable junctions. There's a dipstick to check trans oil (how about that?). One good fuel tap. A rubber boot over the carb top. A spring loaded kill switch on the left handlebar. Decent footpegs. Fins on the underside of the cylinder head, even.

We can't lie to you. The KX 250 isn't any prize right out of the crate. But, what is? The major difference between the KX 250 and any number of other econo-crossers is that before you do what is necessary to race it, it seems worse than most.

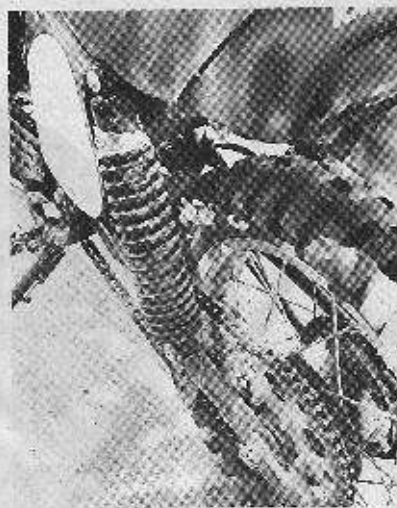
And now the crowning inconsistency: for the price we've seen KXs going for lately, if we had the big four to choose from and we had to pick one, it would probably be the KX 250. If that sounds wishy-washy to you, it's only because all of them lack a certain something. ●







**Pipe: too loud, too loud, too loud.  
We're getting hoarse.**



**Shocks: pretty fair a while. Better  
than yore, for sure.**



**KAWASAKI KX 250 A**  
Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd.  
McGaw Ave.  
Santa Ana, Calif.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Engine . . . Piston port/two-stroke/single  
Bore/stroke . . . . . 70.0mm/64.9mm  
Displacement . . . . . 249cc  
Compression ratio . . . . . 7.9:1  
Carburetion . . . . . Mikuni VM34SC  
Final drive . . . . . 13/48 (3.69:1)  
Lubrication . . . . . Premix 20:1  
Warranty . . . . . None

**DIMENSIONS**

Wheelbase . . . . . 1,417mm  
Ground clearance . . . . . 225mm  
Peg height . . . . . 297mm  
Seat height . . . . . 893mm  
Running weight . . . . . 105 kg.  
Fuel capacity . . . . . 9 litres  
Oil capacity . . . . . Transmission: 1,000cc

**COMPONENTS**

Forks . . . . . 195mm Kayaba  
Shocks . . . . . 160mm Kayaba  
Frame . . . . . Single downtube steel  
Hubs . . . . . Conical alloy  
Rims . . . . . DID  
Chain . . . . . 520 DID  
Ignition . . . . . Electronic CDI  
Tools . . . . . A few  
Air filter . . . . . Foam  
Sparking plug . . . . . B9EV  
Fenders . . . . . Plastic  
Muffler . . . . . Hardly

