



IS THE 1993 **HONDA CR250** REALLY THE BEST BIKE MADE? It does almost everything perfectly

It's tough when you are the biggest guy on the block. You win all the races, garner all the trophies, sell the most bikes and have enough money to buy out the stock options of your competitors. That's Honda! Honda sits on top of the motorcycle world. They know it. They expect it. They accept nothing less.

The American consumer also expects the very best from Honda. From the day they sprang the "You meet the nicest people" ad campaign over 30 years ago, their name has been synonymous with motorcycles. Being the king of the motorcycle manufacturers has its pitfalls—and the biggest one is living up to the expectations of the consumer. It is literally easier to win a National or World Championship than it is to satisfy a paying customer. Paradoxically, Honda is blessed with the most customers, and the most critical customers. When you buy a Honda you demand perfection. The question that is on the lips of every rider waiting for the '93 Honda CR250 is, "Are we going to get perfection this year?"

That is what the MXA wrecking crew set out to discover when we began answering question about the '93 CR250.

QUESTION ONE: HOW GOOD ARE THE FORKS?

On most new bikes the first question that interested motocross racers ask is, "How fast is it?" Not so with a Honda! Most CR250 owners are positive that the Honda deuce-and-a-half will have more than enough oats. They aren't so sure about the suspension.

On one hand, it's natural to assume that with each passing year the Showa engineers would learn from their mistakes and produce a better fork. On the other hand, that hasn't happened in

the last five years. The '93 Showa upside-down forks are not much better than the '92 forks, and in the eyes of some test riders they were worse.

The first problem that serious racers will have to deal with is the stock spring rate. The 0.38 kg/mm stock forks springs are the same springs that Honda used last year. They weren't stiff enough then, and this year, thanks to new valving, they are way too soft. We switched to accessory 0.40 kg/mm fork springs, which your Honda dealer, Pro Circuit, Noleen, AMP or White Bros. can supply you.

Last year we got our Honda forks to work passably well (not better than KX, YZ or KTM forks, but better than stock CR forks) by raising the spring rate, lowering the oil height and carefully selecting clicker settings. We immediately had the Showa technicians put our '93 forks back to '92 hop-up specs (0.40 springs and 135mm oil height). No good! Too soft! Not enough compression damping and instant bottoming.

Our next solution was to run the stiffer 0.40 springs with the stock oil height (120mm). Still too soft. We turned the compression clicker all the way stiff. No help! Time to punt. We raised the oil height to 115mm. Too harsh! The dilemma was that we weren't finding a setting on our Showa dial that was getting good reception (fork-wise).

How good are the '93 Honda CR250 forks? Worse than our modified '92.

QUESTION TWO: WHAT ABOUT THE CR SHOCK?

Given the fact that we hated the forks (and that they defied backyard fixes), we found the rear shock to be considerably better than the forks. That's not saying much, and we

wouldn't rate the CR rear end as better than the '93 Yamaha or KTM. Our biggest complaint was that the shock wanted to blow through the compression damping and bottom over big jumps. The rear of the bike really seasawed through the major pounders. It was choppy in the braking bumps and chatter stuff.

The shock linkage has a flatter rate that starts in the same place as last season, but doesn't rise as much at the end. We liked this year's linkage better.

We would race the rear suspension in stock trim, but take extra care to dial the suspension up for rider speed, weight and riding style. For us we favored 100mm of rear sag with the compression adjuster on ten clicks out and the rebound on ten clicks.

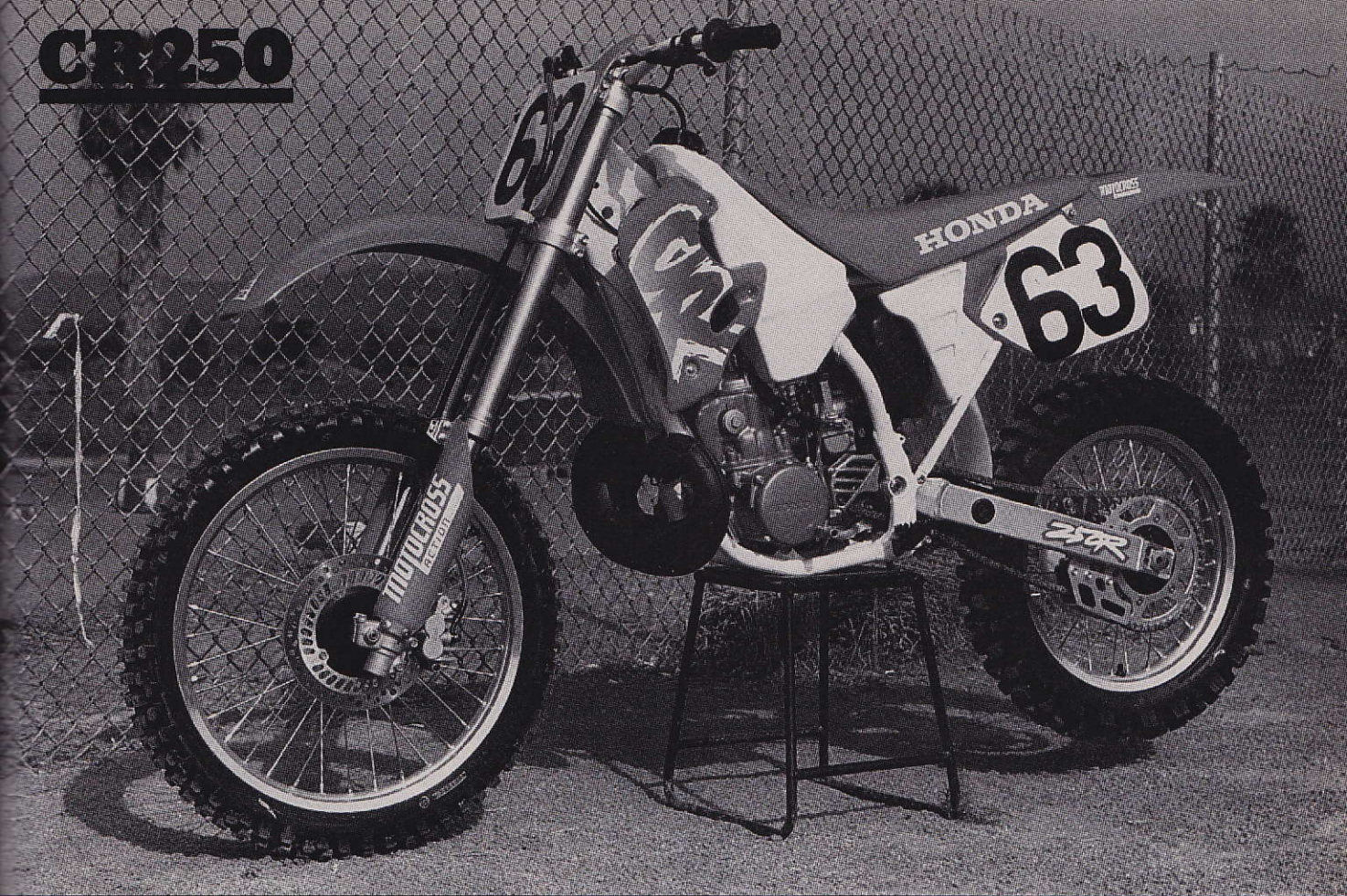
QUESTION THREE: HOW FAST IS THE '93 CR250?

If you have a degree in rocket propulsion you will be disappointed with the technical changes to the '93 CR250 motor. Werner Von Braun won't have to tutor you on the fine art of airbox and intake tract design. Honda put an inner liner inside the airbox (which is the same airbox as '92) to increase air velocity into the intake tract, and increased the size of the air boot (between the filter and carb) by 20 percent. With the exception of minor ignition changes, the only other noteworthy upgrade is a new reed block (with a vertical separator between the reed petals). The hoped-for result was better bottom-end power.

Did they get it?

Yes. The '93 motor picks up a little cleaner than the '92 motor. Last year the CR was dead down low and then exploded with a vicious hit as the motor climbed into the midrange (it also

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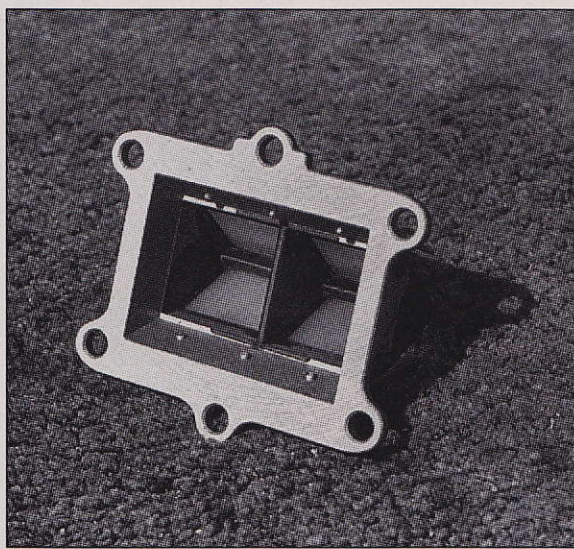
revved to the moon). The new intake mods produce a crisper pick-up from down low (although it doesn't have the low-end of the '93 YZ or '93 KTM) that mutes the midrange hit. The result is that the '93 CR250 has a smoother power delivery across the middle. There isn't really a whole lot more power, but the hard hit hump, has been reinforced on the lower end of the revs. The effect is that the '93 CR rolls on smoother and has a less violent transition into the middle.

Most test riders felt that the '93 CR250 motor was easier to ride than the '92. It is still an incredible motor, but the top-fuel dragster take-off is smoothed out.

What about the top-end? No problem. The CR250 is the king of revs. It can shriek, but the motor is better suited to short shifting and using the torque curve as much as possible.

QUESTION FOUR: HOW CAN YOU MAKE IT FASTER?

Gear it down. Pro riders can get full use out of the stock gearing, but most Intermediate and under riders will want to put one or two teeth more on the rear sprocket. Every time a test rider claimed that the '93 motor wasn't any different than the '92 motor, we would stomp him with the fact that the '92 motor didn't need to be geared down to make transitions from gear to gear. The mellower power delivery



▲ **Color wheel:** Honda seems to be spinning the color wheel and throwing darts at it. This is the third year in a row, and the seventh time since the CR introduction, that Honda has changed the shade. The switch to the new orangey color is the only visible difference between '92 and '93.

◀ **Power picture:** Honda felt that it had a big enough advantage in the horsepower wars to stay on top of the pack with only minor intake changes. The new airboot, airbox liner and reed block separator didn't hurt the power, but the degree of help is more of a smoothing out of the power than a major increase.

took some blast out of the CR's drive train—lower gearing can put the blast back in.

QUESTION FIVE: HAS THE HANDLING CHANGED?

No. The chassis is identical to last year's model (with the exception of thicker tubing in the frame). The beefy tubing increased frame stiffness by five percent (at the request of Messrs. Bayle and Mr. Stanton). The new stiffer frame really doesn't add a whole new dimension to the CR's handling for the average rider. Don't get us wrong; it

handles superbly. We weren't, nor was anyone other than Jean and Jeff, complaining about frame stiffness.

Honda handling is a little twitchy, but the trade-off of that is a bike that can do anything in a corner. It rails berms, dives to the inside, slices through ruts and changes lines with a glance. The best turning frame in motocross is not a trifle to fool with. Honda didn't.

After spending all of last year on the older brother of the '93 chassis, the test riders have come to accept a small

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amount of headshake under deceleration and a lively feel at high speed as the price you pay for accurate cornering and stealth fighter acrobatics in the air. It's a fighter plane, not a bomber.

QUESTION SIX: WHAT ABOUT THE BRAKES?

Nobody has brakes as good as Honda. They offer excellent adjustment, minimal maintenance, superior feel and enough power to rip chunks of concrete out of an interstate highway.

QUESTION SEVEN: WHAT DID WE LIKE & DISLIKE?

We like the new orange color. We are not painting our bedrooms that shade, but we like it better than last year's putrid pink.

We hate it when numbers barely fit on a side panel. The manufacturers of racing motorcycles ought to attend a race every now and then to see that most of us are forced to hang numbers onto the sidepanels with baling wire creativity. To make matters worse, Honda sends its bikes to the U.S. with red number plate backgrounds. Bo-

Big hits: Showa can't get it right and the hop-up shops can't really fix them, which leaves the Honda owner riding the greatest all-around motocross bike ever made on the worst all-around suspension of the year. The end result is less than satisfactory. ►



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What we would change: If we had our druthers we would add stiffer fork springs, lower gearing, a 172 mainjet, build larger side number plates, add white backgrounds on all the number plates and raise and lower the oil height until the forks start to work.



Good stuff: Honda has a new whirlpull throttle (like Kawasaki's), tremendous motor, awesome brakes, razor-sharp handling, bulletproof clutch, super ergonomics, incredible reliability and a nifty 18" rear wheel (a rarity). The '93 Honda is a clean machine with only one major flaw.

gus. Give us bigger number plates and a background color that is acceptable with scorekeepers around the country (read: white).

Until motocross bikes come with hydraulic center stands, racers everywhere will be picking them up to get them on crates. Kudos to ATK, Yamaha and KTM for their grab handles. Jeers to Honda's sidepanels.

Stock tires are the almost universal K695 rear and K490 front. This is a good all-around combination for a showroom bike.

The good stuff: Awesome clutch. Better starting in '93. Strong chromoly bars. Thicker seat cover. Firmer seat foam. Stronger swingarm welding. An 18-inch rear wheel.

Last year our Honda broke clutch plates and clutch baskets. So did a lot of people. The quickest fix (for those of you with '92 Hondas) is to pour 850cc to 900cc of oil in your tranny (instead of the recommended 650cc). For '93 Honda has increased the oil capacity (to 850cc), added an extra opening between the gearbox and clutch case and added oil holes in the clutch hub. We think that clutch problems are a thing of the past.

Tank decals will last about as long this year as they did last year. That's no improvement, but Honda has had good luck with its decals over the years.

Stock gearing is too tall. Add one or two teeth to the rear.

We ran a 172 mainjet instead of the standard 175, and dropped the needle one notch to clean up the low-end.

The footpegs are wider, but only 6mm wider (that's a quarter-inch). Why bother? Most of the weld-on footpeg kits make stock pegs up to 15mm wider. Let's step up to the plate next year.

An anti-splash gas cap has been added to keep fuel from gurgling out of the vent hose. It's a solution to a problem that we didn't know we had.

Most test riders believed that the '92 CR250 didn't shift as well as the '91 model. The drop in shifting efficiency didn't knock Honda out of the top spot in the shifting ratings, but it was something that bothered the CR development team. For '93 Honda worked on the shifting shaft and pawls to improve the tranny. It's back to its old self.

QUESTION EIGHT: WHAT DO WE REALLY THINK?

The MXA test crew believes, unequivocally, that Honda builds the best motocross bike in the world. It has shifting that is silk-upholstered, a clutch that is more Trigger than plow-horse, a broad spread of power that runs from the midrange into the stratosphere and ergonomics that are second to none. Every rider who throws a leg over a motocross bike should be riding a Honda. They are perfect machines with Old Faithful reliability. Strong words, huh?

We don't really mean them. All the above statements are true, but the fly in the ointment is that the Showa suspension components detract so much from Honda's good works that the end result is a bike that is so much better than its suspension that you can't use it to its fullest. □