

## SECOND HELPINGS

*A year from the 450  
and a world apart*

*By the Staff of Dirt Bike*

Last year, the first-ever Honda open bike was introduced. It was quickly slobbered over by a near shameless press and got instant rave reviews. When we received our test 450, we were quite puzzled that the bike could have received anything but negative reviews. And, in fact, it received a royal roast from us. The bike was not a good first effort and suffered from more than its share of ill-handling traits and bogus engineering.

Basically, we felt the bike turned like a three-legged toad and had virtually useless power. Nothing at the bottom, then a heart-rending blast at mid-range and a

flaccid stumbling at upper revs. This unfortunate package was laced into a foul frame and gifted (?) with a geeky four-speed gearbox.

By the end of the model year, all of the enthusiasm for the 450 had faded and those who had babbled about its alleged virtues were strangely silent and shame-faced.

Thus, 1982 was cautiously approached and the new CR480R was received with a great deal of skepticism.

We are delighted to report that the new bike is worlds better than the smaller and more confused 450. In fact, it's good

enough to come out the overall winner in the MX portion of our *DIRT BIKE Super Summer Shootout Special*. Clearly, the Honda is one of the most improved bikes of the year.

Still, as with anything, the 480R is not perfect. Let's get the problem areas out of the way before we get on to the good parts.

### GLITCHES AND GRIPES

The ever-tolerant staff of *Dirt Bike* does not, cannot and will not support four-speed bikes in any displacement size. You can listen to the arguments, all day long, about how you don't need a



## HONDA CR480R

five-speeder for MX, and we'll tell you that this makes the bike almost unusable for any other form of competition. It also demands constant fiddling with gearing changes for normal motocross, creating needless work and expense for the rider.

There is a great deal of adjustability to be found in the suspension of the Honda. However, both the forks and the rear shock have adjustable compression damping only. Honda is the only manufacturer to offer this odd feature, but it's a safe bet you won't see this next year.

We prefer adjustable rebound. This gives the rider the option of using heavy or lighter oils for the compression part of the stroke and then dialing in the desired rebound to match the compression rate.

We experienced fade in the rear end after 15 to 20 minutes of hard riding. Then, the rear wheel would start hopping badly. Not badly enough to force the rider to retire from the race, but enough to make him ever so careful after a few lurid tankslappers.

We also noted some headshaking when bringing the bike down from speed. Not anywhere as severe as the 1981 bike's, but enough to demand attention and some correction from the rider.

You'll find a flat plastic shield on the top of the airbox. Throw it away or it'll fall off of its own volition and jam the back side of the foam.

The flywheels are on the light side, letting the engine rev quickly. At first, this tends to make the bike stall when braking on tight corners. After a few hours of familiarization, most riders get used to it.

A typical Pro-Link single-shock setup is found on the Honda. When new, the spring is barely stout enough to do the job, even with a heavy preload. A heavier spring is a must. Then, when you get enough spring to keep from bottoming, the rebound damping is insufficient.

There's a small range of engagement/disengagement on the clutch. This takes a great deal of getting used to and you'll lurch off the line like a bozo until you get your hand trained.

Like most open class bikes, the Honda was not easy to start when cold. But when warmed up, it usually took no more than two strong kicks on the left-side mounted starter.

Shorter riders will have trouble getting a leg over the Honda; it has a sky-tall 38.8-inch saddle height.

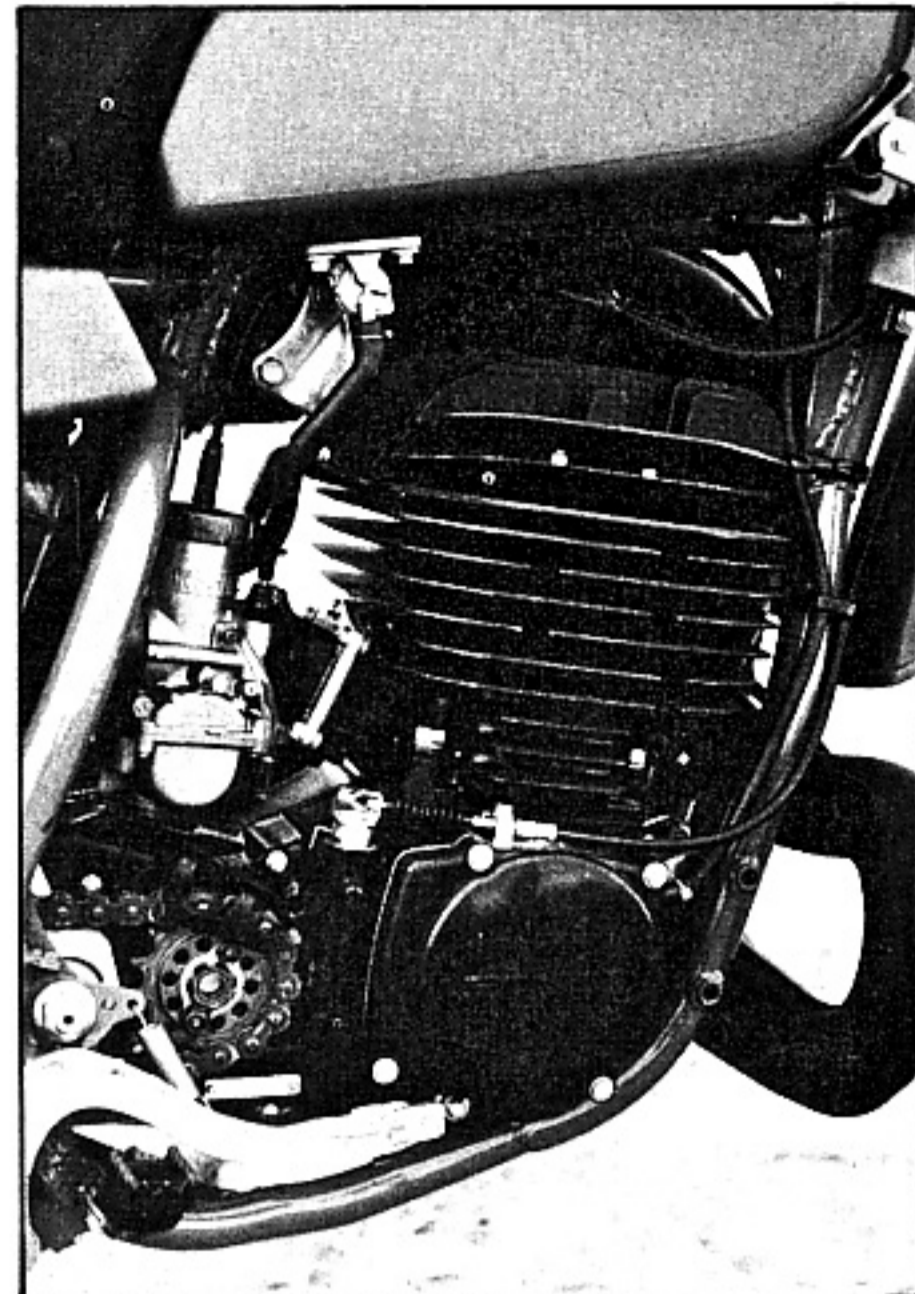
### NOW, FOR THE GOOD PARTS

With our snivels identified, filed and thoughtfully considered, it's time to move on to what makes the 480 a desirable mount. First off, it's a rocket. In a drag race with other open bikes, the Honda will just barely be edged out by a crisp-running RM465. But, from corner to corner, only the KTM 495 and the Maico 490 will pull it.

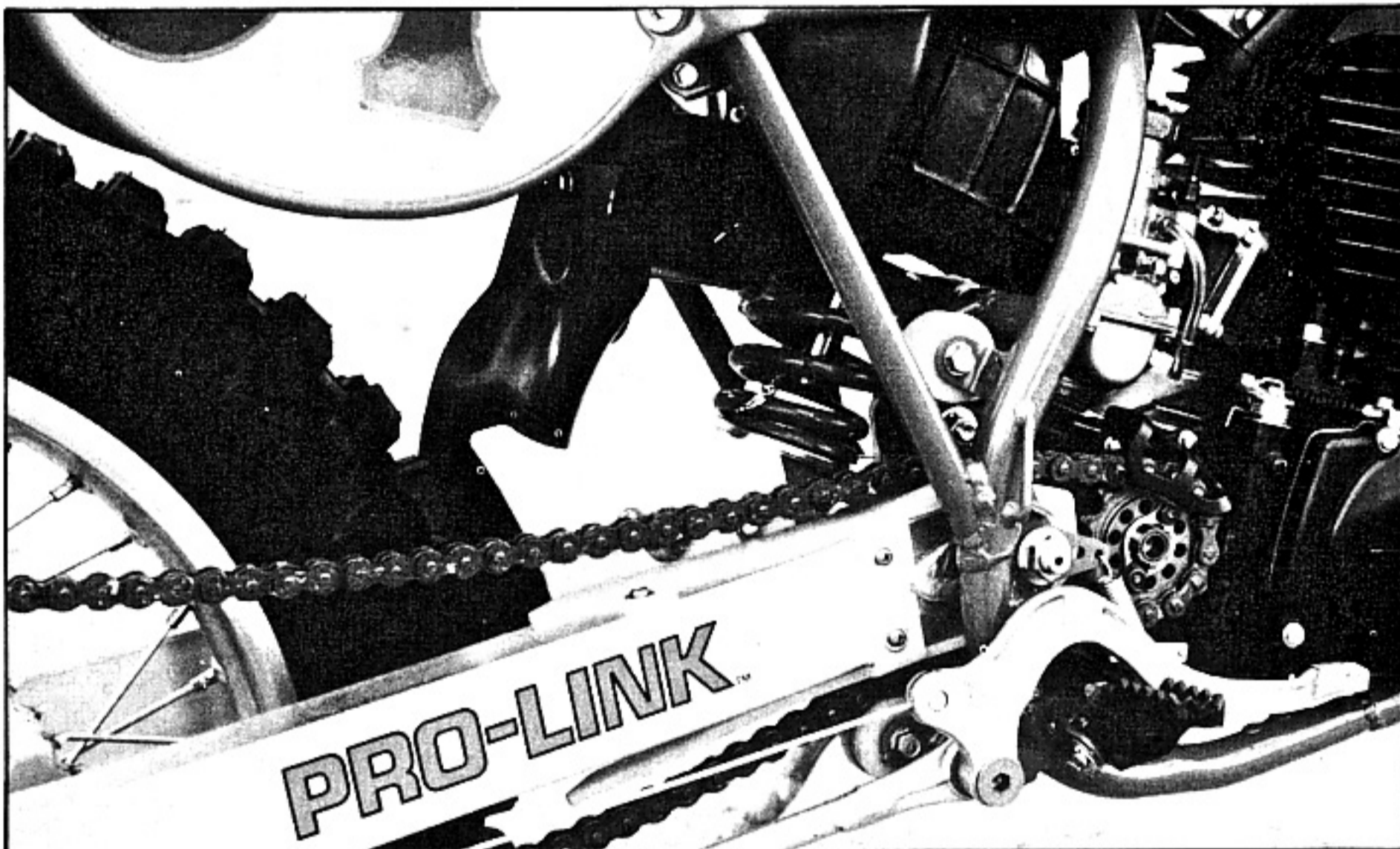
Part of the reason is that the Honda



*Good, workable horsepower lets the rider attack even the loose garbage on the outside of the berms. The sharp rake makes the 480 an easy bike to steer.*



*Because the pipe hangs low, it is easily damaged. Power on the CR is of the light flywheel effect variety; it builds very quickly.*



*Finish work on the CR is top of the line. Terrain is conquered in fine fashion with the Pro-Link. Our big complaint is that it doesn't have adjustable rebound damping.*

pulls so clean and hard from incredibly low revs. Power builds quickly, but not so suddenly that it gets the rider into trouble. We'd call the response just about the best of any big bike. It cracks off the bottom, hammers out a throbbing mid-range and flattens out a bit early. After a bit of practice, you can ride the bike a gear higher than you originally thought you could.

Second-gear starts are a snap, even with the miserly four-speed gearbox. Once you get the bike rolling a few yards, a quick shift to third will generally give the rider maximum thrust to the first turn. Second gear will work in all but the tightest turns on most tracks. Because the bike does not have to be shifted much, you can get some alarming velocity between the turns. If the engine even hints at bobbling, a small wiggle on the clutch will get it back on the crest again. A truly marvelous engine!



*Possibly the worlds worst tank stickers grace the Honda. Deluxe grips, levers and bars are designed with rider comfort in mind. The numberplate is vented for some unknown reason, making it tough to keep numbers on it.*

*The overall feel of the Honda is slim and light. This feeling makes it an easy bike to flick around in the air.*



# HONDA CR480R

Unlike the '81 Honda which was ponderous in the corners and would wash out without warning, this bike has some manners. While not razor sharp, the front end will not surprise the rider. As long as the rider has his weight reasonably well forward, the front wheel will not push or plow.

You cannot flick the Honda around like a lightweight, but it is a fairly nimble machine in the turns and "Ss." It also works well on high-speed sweepers and will accept an invitation to slide without protest.

Until the shock gets boiling, the action of the Pro-Link is excellent. We found the forks okay . . . nothing more. They felt harsh on the compression stroke and still bottomed out too easily when nailing a crusher. Heavier fork oil just aggravated the harshness, but would cure the bottoming out. Honda still has not made a fork



At the helm during the photo session was the calm and reserved Steve Schmitz. Aerial acrobatics settle his nerves; Steve defuses live bombs for a living.

that deserves a standing ovation.

One place where Honda shines, though, is in the stopping department. That front grabber is as strong and progressive as you could want. Too strong for a beginner. Once accustomed to the rear, you'll learn to like its qualities; a bit grabby, but powerful.

Last year, the 450s were plagued with clutch, gearbox and kickstarter reliability problems. Only the clutch problem remains, but it's a whole lot better than in '81. If you slip the clutch badly more than a few times, or ride a lot in deep sand or mud, your clutch will more than likely start slipping and require new springs. Or plates. Or both. This area still needs some development.

## BITS AND PIECES

Lots of neat rollers and guides keep the chain running true.

Detailing on the 480 is stunning. The brake pedal, for example, is a near work of art.

A new, stronger swingarm is on the 480. Some cracking problems (isolated) were noted on the '81 bike.

Stronger wheels are found, front and rear, with the front having semistraight-pull spokes.

One pain: The front brake cable always seems to slip down in the lower holder on the fork leg. Even safety wiring will not stop the inner part of the housing from moving. This can make the front brake grabby and possibly even lock up the front wheel if left unchecked. A Terry cable is almost a must.

First-rate levers and controls are on the bars.

As with all Keihin carbs, there is no replaceable needle jet, limiting the jetting changes to the pilot, main, and needle positions. Also, it's *real* hard to find any jets at your local Honda dealer. This is a genuine problem.

Those stock tires work decently for a while, but a pair of Metzlers sure wouldn't hurt.

The headpipe hangs down a bit too low. We've seen more than a few heavily dinged at the track.

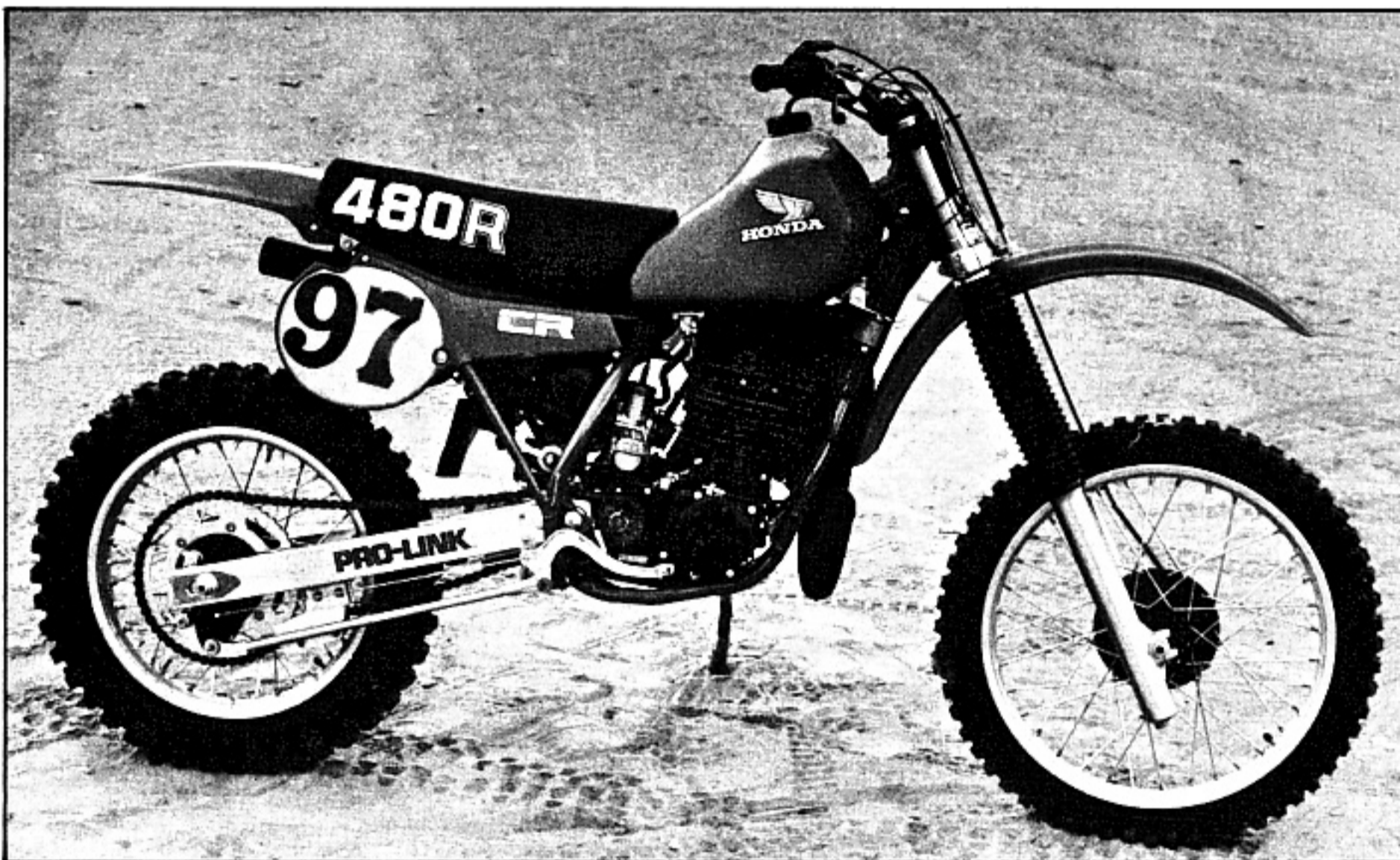
Maybe it was just us, but we noticed (imagined?) a tendency for the rear end of the 480 to hop to the side when leaving a jump if the jump wasn't hit square-on and with the power on.

The Honda 480 is a slim bike and the rider can easily move around, with nothing to snag his body or legs.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

It's great. In fact, the dynamite power of the engine and the basic good manners of the chassis just about override the problem spots we mentioned. There are a few fork kits coming out about now and the shock can be helped. Or replaced.

While the Honda may not be the ultimate weapon for other kinds of racing, for pure MX it is the bike to beat this year. Just look at the results sheets. □



## HONDA CR480R

ENGINE TYPE . . . 2-stroke, air-cooled, reed valve  
 BORE AND STROKE . . . 89mm x 76mm  
 DISPLACEMENT . . . 472cc  
 CARBURETION . . . 38mm Keihin  
 FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:  
 MAIN JET . . . 178  
 JET NEEDLE . . . 28K  
 PILOT JET . . . 68  
 SLIDE NUMBER . . . 3.5  
 RECOMMENDED GASOLINE . . . Premium  
 94+ octane  
 FUEL TANK CAPACITY . . . 2.5 gal.  
 FUEL TANK MATERIAL . . . Plastic  
 LUBRICATION . . . Pre-mix  
 RECOMMENDED OIL . . . N/A  
 OIL CAPACITY/TRANS. . . 0.75 qts  
 AIR FILTRATION . . . Foam  
 CLUTCH TYPE . . . Wet plate, multi-disc  
 TRANSMISSION . . . 4-speed  
 GEAR BOX RATIOS:  
 1 . . . 1.625:1  
 2 . . . 1.211:1  
 3 . . . 0.952:1  
 4 . . . 0.792:1  
 GEARING, FRONT/REAR . . . 14/54  
 IGNITION . . . CDI  
 PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? . . . Yes  
 RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG: BR8EG NGK  
 SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER/  
 QUALITY . . . Yes/no/good  
 EXHAUST SYSTEM . . . Up-pipe, left side  
 FRAME, TYPE . . . Chromoly, double downtube

WHEELBASE . . . 1505mm (59.3 in.)  
 GROUND CLEARANCE . . . 340mm (13.4 in.)  
 SEAT HEIGHT . . . 980mm (38.6 in.)  
 STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE) . . . 27.5°  
 TRAIL . . . 107mm (4.2 in.)  
 WEIGHT WITH 1 GALLON GAS . . . 236.5 lbs.  
 RIM MATERIAL . . . Aluminum alloy  
 TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:  
 FRONT . . . 3.00-21 Bridgestone M-21  
 REAR . . . 5.10-18 Bridgestone M-22  
 SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:  
 FRONT . . . 305mm (12 in.), leading axle,  
 adj. compression damping  
 REAR . . . 305mm (12 in.), single-shock,  
 Pro-Link, adj. compression damping  
 INTENDED USE . . . Motocross  
 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN . . . Japan  
 RETAIL PRICE, APPROX. . . \$2248  
 DISTRIBUTOR:  
 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.  
 100 West Alondra Boulevard  
 Gardena, California 90247  
 PARTS PRICES, HIGH WEAR ITEMS . . . N/A  
 OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS  
 CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF  
 MACHINE IN MIND:  
 HANDLING . . . 99  
 SUSPENSION . . . 97 front/97 rear  
 POWER . . . 98  
 COST . . . 95  
 ATTENTION TO DETAIL . . . 99  
 EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK . . . 99