

GP MACHINERY

MOTO-X FOX

FORKS

Jim Turner's GP Campaigner

By Jody Weisel

□ We started hearing the rumors about a year ago and made a trek up to the Campbell, California, headquarters (or should we say Fox-hole) of Moto-X Fox. We were treated at that time to a sneak peak at a set of blueprints. It all sounded good on paper: 44mm forks with 13 inches of travel. Forks so rigid, so strong and so well-constructed that they would travel from bike to bike with the owner.

The biggest forks on the track now belong to the factory RC400 and RC450 Hondas. The 41mm forks on the factory Hondas are 3mm larger than any production motocrosser, and six or seven millimeters larger than many. Fox's plans to unveil 44mm forks could only be scoffed at as a pipe dream. They would be almost a third larger in diameter than stock Husky forks. It is boggling in dimension.

A MILLIMETER ISN'T SILLY

Jim Turner is preparing to race the 250 World Championships on the continent this year. Turner, the California-born Canadian National Champion, is a purist. The Grand Prix dream has stayed with him through his years on the National circuit, and he is going to fulfill it. Moto-X Fox is going to help him.

We got a chance to ride Jim Turner's Grand Prix Honda CR250R before it was crated and sent to Holland. As an added bonus, the first production version of the secret 44mm Fox forks were bolted on, along with a new ultra-trick swingarm, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch Fox Airshox and the new CR250R torque pipe.

THE TESTBED

The CR250R was dead stock, with the exception of the test forks, shocks, swingarm and pipe. Which is to say that the cylinder remained untouched. The



Japanese motorcycle, American suspension, California rider and Canadian Championship are headed for Europe. If this is Tuesday, it must be Belgium.



The craftsmanship is superb, as well it should be for over \$400, and the beefy forks emanate stark function.

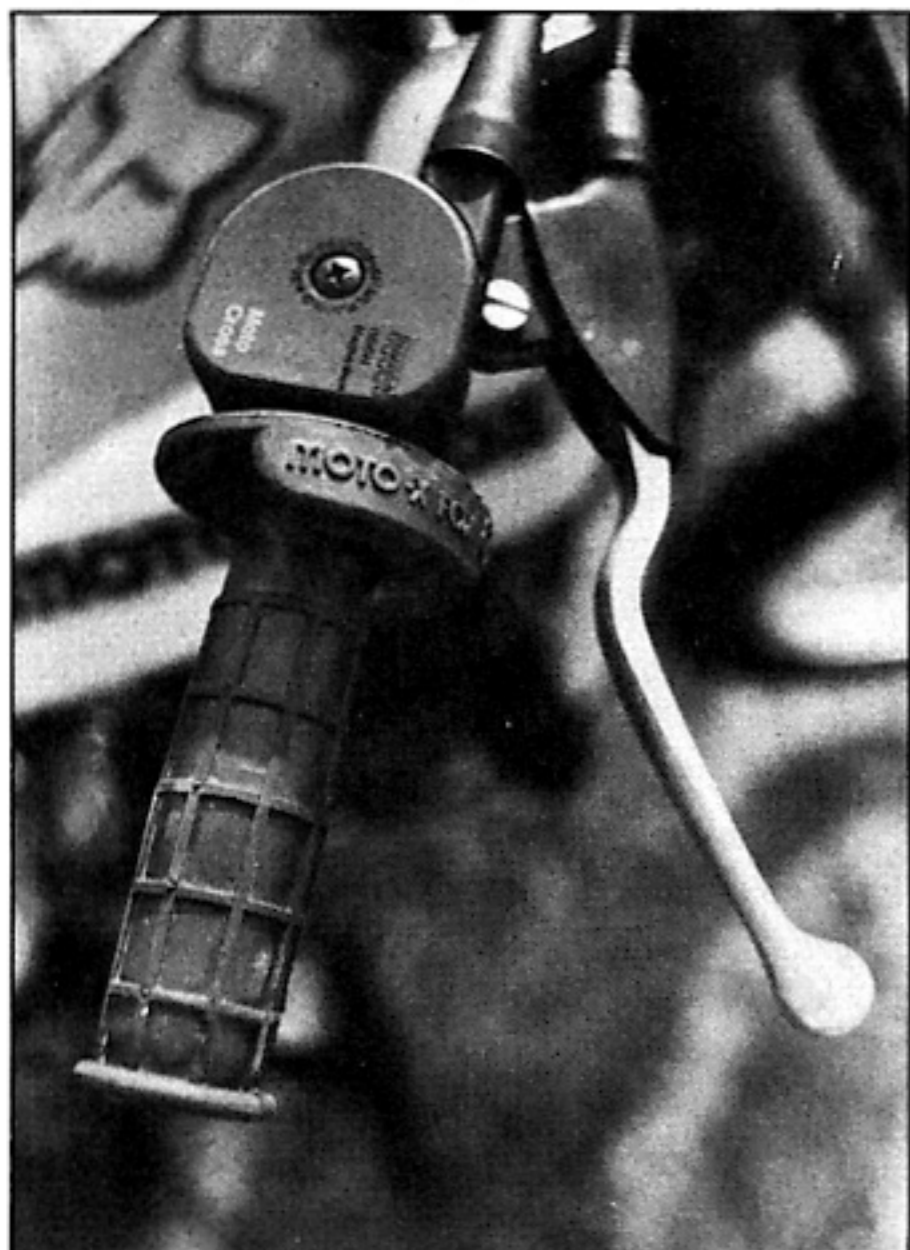
MOTO-X FOX FORKS



Most swingarms and forks flex in total-collapse situations. The Fox Forx and shox never budge an inch.



The brake anchor arm has to be lengthened to accommodate the longer swingarm, and a roller was added to handle the chain tension at full tilt.



The new straight-pull Magura throttle and Fox grip make the power come on easier.



The swingarm comes complete with axle and chain adjusters. The sano pinch bolt makes life with the rear wheel a lot easier.



Nothing looks askew until you spot the big fork legs and the long swingarm dangling in air.

rest of the bike was carefully prepped, but bristled with trickness only in the cleanness of its preparation.

The forks have 13 inches of travel, but you can get optimal damping rods in 11, 12 and 13-inch lengths. The forks are currently being produced to fit Yamahas, Hondas and Suzukis. Riders with other brands will have to wait for the production run to get around to the European marques, or modify the existing setups.

The forks come complete with triple clamps, bar-backs, cable guides and axle. All you have to do is unbolt your stockers and slip the Fox forks on. In fact, the brake anchor peg will be cast directly into the slider just like the stock forks. This eliminates the messy bracket and peg system used on Simons forks.

The muthas are massive, but they weigh the same as Honda CR250R forks. They use lightweight, thin-wall, chrome moly, heat-treated 4140 steel. The oil capacity is a gluttonish 550cc of five-weight oil per leg. Fox recommends Bel-Ray LT-100 shock oil. The suspension support is provided by one straight-wound main spring, one top-out spring and a negative spring. The fork/slider overlap is eight inches.

AIR IS LARGELY NITROGEN

Rigidity is the byword of the Fox forks, and finding out what rigid forks are really like makes the current stock OEM equipment seem flexible. With eight pounds of air in the forks and the full 13-inch kit, the bike should be so tall that you couldn't dream of riding it. Instead, the plushness of the forks and the generous sag make the bike only marginally taller than the stocker. The difference is that the forks have the kind of responsive feel that allows it to follow the terrain, whether it is potholes or giant whoops.

We tried the forks out on the worst possible track conditions: a plowed, dirt clod track. With repeated passes through the rough, the forks stayed straight and tracked over the clumps with a minimum of wag. Out on a stocker it was like dancing on marbles.

The other benefit of the Fox forks showed up in the corners. When you aimed the Fox forks to the right at speed, the bike didn't hesitate, wallow or wiggle, it shot to the right. The stock forks seem to give in to the pressures of momentum, drag and oblique forces. The result was a slower response to commands to turn.

The Fox forks aren't for everyone. As a matter of fact, they will hardly get the workout they demand in the hands of a Junior or Beginner rider. The only guy
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who can really appreciate the fine handling edge is the fast, fast rider who takes it to the limit. The fact that these are forks for the best riders shouldn't stop a rider who is looking for a little edge. The cost alone is going to prune the potential buyers down to the most serious. \$439 is the exorbitant retail price. If you need the forks, it is worth it. What the Fox forks offer is durability, reliability, rigidity, travel and quality. No other accessory forks can touch the Fox forks. While Betor, Simons, Kayaba Pro-Line and Marzocchi have their share of the market, Fox is offering forks better than all of them, and better than what the factory riders have to boot!

A BAKER'S DOZEN

Even if you could save up the \$400-plus for the forks, the 13 inches of travel wouldn't do you much good. Excessive travel on one end really only works well when it is matched on the other end. Moto-X Fox didn't forget all of the Suzuki and Honda owners with the urge to go out to 13 inches. The key to doing this is a new swingarm. For the Fox Brothers, that meant not just a swingarm, but the strongest, biggest and most rigid swingarm ever. The result is that the new Fox arm, when paired with 17.75-inch Fox Airshox, gives between 13 and 14 inches of rear wheel travel. It sounds like a lot, but that is what the factory Suzukis had last year.

On a loose-handling motorcycle like the Honda CR250R, the Fox arm really helps improve the overall handling picture. It does this by stretching the Honda wheelbase out two inches. With more travel and a longer wheelbase, the Honda becomes more predictable, steadier and less twitchy.

The swingarm will retail in the \$200



range. It is really sturdy and well-constructed. The arm resists flex not only in the vertical plane, but also from side loadings. The arm is so much larger than stock that Fox includes a new long axle to bridge the gap. On the Honda, an additional skateboard-type roller had to be added to the frame, up under the air box, to keep the chain from sawing through it.

TURNER'S MOTOR

Jim Turner made no major changes to his engine. His Honda runs the stock porting, carb and transmission. He is using the new 1979 engine, which has a broader and torquier powerband than the pipey '78 model. The only addition to the motor was a Moto-X Fox pipe. The overall tuned length was changed, along with the rear cone angle. The transformation of the powerband was dramatic. Each gear became even stronger/longer. The bike felt like an Open bike in terms of power delivery. The spread would seem to be, and Jim hopes, perfect for the varied terrain and mud found on the Grand Prix circuit.

GRAND PRIX PREPARATION

Keith Bontrager, Jim Turner's mechanic, has carefully prepped the Honda for the strange new world of European motocross. Keith didn't try any fancy or exotic tricks. He carefully prepared the bike, dialed in the suspension, and took care of details. The wheels have been beefed up with Sun rims and a heavy-duty Fox spoke kit. A straight-pull Magura throttle was used to protect the throttle cable from crash damage. A couple of Metzellers and a few Fox decals finished the bike up. Racing means finishing, and Jim Turner is going to Europe to finish. Moto-X Fox, at 520 McGlinchy Lane, Campbell, California 95008; (408) 371-1221, can do the same for you. III



Thirteen inches of travel at each end isn't for the faint of heart or short of leg. The rigid Fox swingarm lengthens the CR wheelbase and greatly improves the twitchy Honda handling.