





# ATK 605 DUAL SPORT

**PUSH-BUTTON  
DIRTBIKE  
FOR  
THE  
STREET**



**C**YCLE WORLD HAS JUST DONE A FULL ROAD TEST on a dirtbike. It was even taken to the dragstrip and the dyno just like all our test streetbikes. What's going on? Well, this particular dirtbike comes with just enough lights and switches, along with a mirror and a horn to justify a license plate—barely. This is the off-roader's Superbike, a Honda RC45 or a Ducati 916 for the dirt crowd, and it's made right here in America.

ATK's new 605 Dual Sport is not for everyone. To start

off, it's expensive—make that *oh-my-gawd* expensive—priced at \$7895. And, honestly, it is not really made for the street. This is a dirtbike, the same as the ATK 605 Cross Country right down to the suspension valving, that you can operate on public highways without fear of citation—observing applicable traffic laws, of course. But it doesn't have a speedometer or an ignition key or a fork lock.

ATK has filled one of the smaller holes in the motorcycle market. Dirt-oriented dual-purpose bikes have become





electric starter, well worth the extra 18 pounds and \$800 that it costs, especially if you've ever had the pleasure of trying to persuade a big kick-start Single to fire up on a cold morning. For traditionalists or those with an innate distrust of batteries, there is also a kickstarter. Next on the appreciated-feature list is the bike's quiet exhaust note. The muffler on our testbike had a core about an eighth-inch smaller than the updated mufflers that will come on production bikes. ATK claims this will unleash a few more horsepower with no noticeable noise increase. In pre-production form, our ATK churned out 34 horsepower, 2 more than the Honda 650. What is hard to see from a dyno chart is how much more respon-

# ATK 605

sive the ATK is. When you grab a handful, there is zero lag. By comparison, the XR-L, heavier and taller-g geared, feels sluggish.

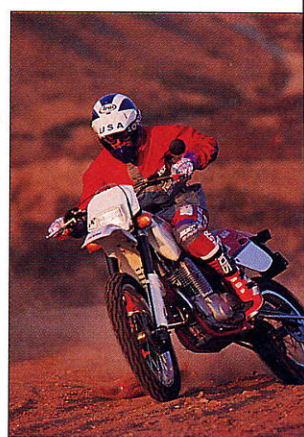
Warm-up time is quick. Pull in the light-action clutch, click the Thumper into gear and you're off. On the street, you may be doing a wheelie, depending on how hard you get into the throttle. Power is robust right off idle and the engine pulls hard through midrange, though it flattens out a bit on the top end, probably due to the muffler. Overall gearing, tailored for the dirt, is low for the street; keeping up with the flow of traffic on the freeway at 60 mph, the motor revs at a level that transmits an annoying vibration through the bars. Go slower, or flirt with the law and push it up above 70, and the vibration isn't too bad. For comparison, the Honda >

more and more popular, headed by Honda's XR650L, CW's unanimous pick as Best Dual-Purpose Bike since its introduction in 1992. But the ATK 605 makes the Honda feel like a streetbike. If the XR-L is a 75/25 dirt-to-street mix, the ATK is biased 95/5.

Although ATK is not a new company, its owners, now based in Utah, are (see page 76). The 1994 Dual Sport we received was bike number 000001 off the assembly line, a pre-production unit intended to help sort out teething problems. We ran into a few, but nothing dire. The kickstand inserts pulled out of the swingarm, and the rear-turnsignal clamps were too large, prompting the signals to slide around on the frame rails. These problems have already been fixed; such is the advantage of a small company.

One of the 605's most endearing features is its

**Not for off-road use only. ATK's new dual-purpose 605 is essentially the Cross Country model with a lighting system, a mirror and a horn; enough for a license plate in most states. If the seat and plastic look familiar, that's because they're patterned after a KTM four-stroke's. The seat/fuel-tank juncture is narrow, no small feat considering the tank holds more than 4 gallons.**





# ATK 605



XR650L is more suited for the street, with less vibration, a wider-ratio gearbox, softer suspension and a cushier seat.

On the dirt, it's a whole different game. The 605 is at home off-road, with an extremely roomy layout that is comfortable

and makes for easy sitting-to-standing transitions, though the 38-inch seat height is a challenge for riders under 5 feet, 8 inches. Handling is clicked up a notch from past ATKs. The rake was pulled in a degree-and-a-half, and the motor was moved an inch lower and a inch-and-a-half forward. This makes for a better-turning bike that is still very stable. The 605 gobbles up fireroads. Rain ruts and rocks have to be pretty large to deflect the front end. Sliding the bike is graciously simple; smooth, easily controlled power helps here, and >

## INVENTING ATK

### A LOOK INSIDE AMERICA'S OTHER MOTORCYCLE COMPANY

**G**IVEN THE HISTORY OF motorcycle manufacturers in the U.S., starting a motorcycle company is a notion that ought to be worth, at the very least, several bad cases of ulcers. After all, lots of Americans have done it. Most of them failed. Only Harley and the Davidsons have made a continuing impact.

The difficulties involved in motorcycle entrepreneurship, and the sorry histories of those who have tried and failed, seem not to have bothered any of those involved in the quirky voyage of the Good Ship ATK, however.

You remember ATK, America's other motorcycle company? Founded in 1983 by amazingly creative engineer/enthusiast Horst Leitner, ATK quickly became known for its offbeat design. Where else, after all, would you see a rear-brake rotor mounted on the countershaft? Leitner, who now builds bicycle-suspension systems through his company AMP Industries, in Laguna Beach, California, came to attention in 1978 when he produced the drivechain-torque eliminator that gave the company its name. Leitner says the device, in his native German, is called an *antitension kettenantreib*. Boiling that term down to its most essential consonants yielded the letters ATK, and they became the company's name.

Leitner produced the first ATK motorcycles in a small plant in Tustin, California. He says, "We did very good. We sold a lot of motorcycles, all on custom order."

One of the enthusiasts who bought an ATK was Ken Wilkes, a businessman and entrepreneur who is also a motorcycle enthusiast.

Says Leitner, "He saw the potential to grow, so in 1987 we went into partnership and moved to the City of Commerce. I didn't like it there—the commute, and all—so I sold him the rest of the company."

That was in 1989, Wilkes recalls, though his involvement started in 1987. "I created a business plan and invested more than \$2 million to develop ATK motorcycles," he says.

Those motorcycles saw considerable success, including four-stroke motocross championships and high overall placings in the Baja 1000.

"It worked quite well in the beginning," Wilkes says of ATK, "but then the company needed another injection of money. In 1992, the Whites of Utah loaned ATK \$100,000 to help pay bills and promised to invest at least \$500,000 more. Instead, they called in the loan, and since all ATK stock plus my personal guarantee was pledged for the loan, I was forced to give ATK to the Whites."

Frank White, who, with his father, Dale, bought the company from Wilkes, remembers things differently. They both rode ATKs, he says, and were enthusiastic about the product. "We got to know that group pretty well," he says, "and one day when my dad was there he mentioned that Ken ought to sell the company. That's how all this got started. That was January 1992."

To the accompaniment of acrimony that continues to this day, the transfer of ownership of ATK was completed a year later. In March, 1992, the company was moved to a 14,000-square-foot facility in Bountiful, Utah, with former *Cycle World* Senior Editor

**ATK  
America's  
new production  
facility  
operates  
two production  
lines—four-  
strokes on  
one side,  
two-strokes  
on the other.**



Ron Griewe shepherding development of a new line of bikes.

Frank White, who denies that he and his father ever promised any funds beyond their original investment, says of the change-of-ownership, "It was kind of like a soap-opera atmosphere, there were a lot of surprises," not the least of which was a last-minute mutual decision to drop a clause that would have precluded Wilkes from competing against ATK. With that clause gone, Wilkes, who professes bitterness about the way the sale of ATK was approached and consummated, started the American Dirt Bike Company, which is producing an all-new machine he calls the Avenger.

Frank White says ATK America expects to have about 200 dealerships in operation by spring, and that the company will produce about 1700 machines in 1994, about 60 percent of those powered by Rotax four-stroke Singles, the remainder powered by Rotax two-strokes.

Response to the redesigned ATK has been very positive, White says, and he adds, "We can't get them out of here fast enough" to satisfy demand. Asked if the company is going to make money, he answers, "Yeah, we are. The future looks great."

So the voyage of America's other motorcycle company may have had some course changes, but it continues nevertheless.

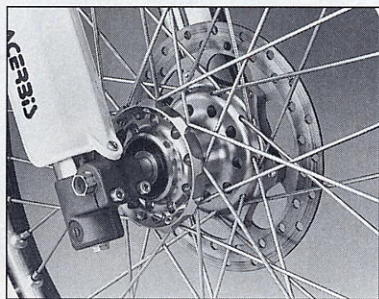
—Jon F. Thompson



# ATK 605

makes starting off on slippery hills less of a task.

Suspension rates are straight off the Cross Country model, yet we'd swear they were specifically calibrated for dual-purpose duty. Both ends are surprisingly plush, especially the rear, compared to past ATKs. Lengthening the shock stroke from 3.25 to 5 inches has allowed the use of a much softer spring, which translates into the rear end

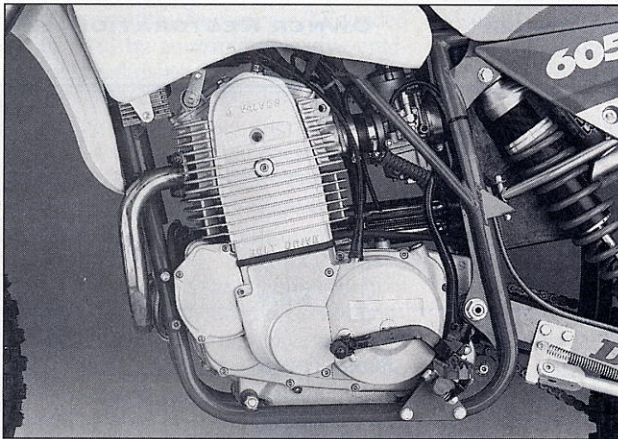


**Beautiful gold-anodized billet hubs stand out. Stainless-steel spokes were laced to Akront rims on our testbike; production will switch over to DID rims after the first 50 bikes.**

being much more compliant than before. It took a lot of force to budge the older, 9.2-kg. spring; the 605's WP shock now has a 4.2-kg. spring.

Up front, the fork is a new WP internal-bleed unit, the same as on '94 KTMs. There's more adjustability than with older WP forks, easily accessed by turning the clickers for compression and rebound damping.

Brakes have not missed out on the revamp, either. Switching over to Nissin calipers and master cylinders has paid off for ATK, as has moving the rear brake from the countershaft sprocket to a conventional rear-hub location. The previous brake setup, novel as it was, always worked

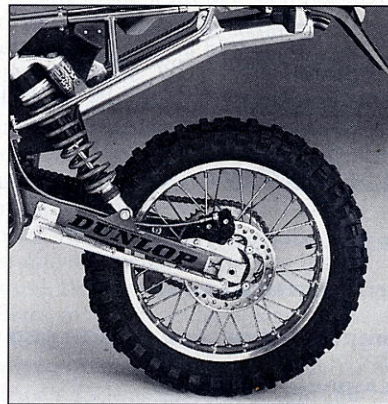


**A time-proven, air-cooled Rotax motor puts out smooth and linear power, with tons of torque on tap. This is the same four-valve motor that is used on most 600cc dirt-trackers.**

better on paper than out in the field; the new rear brake is progressive and strong. The front brake is good, but not great, especially on the street, where you have to pull plenty hard on the lever to get decent stopping performance.

Another of the ATK's attributes is its weight. Although not light by dirtbike standards, 316 pounds with a full, 4.3-gallon tank isn't bad, especially compared to the 345-pound, gassed-up weight of an XR650L. And, finally, a dual-pur-

**New stuff out back: Recalibrated shock gives a better ride; conventional rear brake offers more consistent stopping; dual-purpose muffler knocks the edge of the Thumper's bark. Far-side turnsignal could use better insulation from the muffler.**



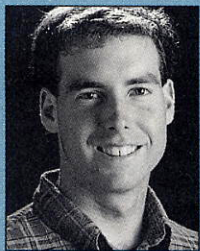
pose bike-maker has fitted a decent-size fuel tank. The ATK has enough range for off-road exploring, about 160 miles while moving along at a good clip.

Also on the standard-equipment roster are some excellent finishing touches. The gold-anodized, machined-billet aluminum hubs are beautiful as well as strong. An Answer Pro-Taper handlebar is stock, as are stainless-steel spokes and an O-ring chain. Of course, for almost eight grand, you expect good components.

In the end, that's the big question. Is the 605 worth its asking price? Which begs another question. What's your definition of a dual-purpose bike? If you're looking for a 50/50 dirt/street bike, or even a 75/25 mix, then ATK has missed your boat. But if you're after a dual-purpose machine that strictly adheres to the dirtbike-with-lights dictum, then the ATK 605 is about dead-nuts perfect. This bike can be raced competitively in off-road races; it will do a good job of carving up twisty pavement through a canyon; and it will take you to the corner store for a quart of milk—if you carry a lock and chain.

It all boils down to how much dirt you want in your dual-purpose bike, and how much you're willing to pay for it. ☐



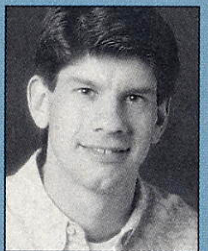


HEAVEN FORBID THAT I SHOULD HAVE only one motorcycle to ride. My list of riding requirements for that poor bike would be difficult to fill. It would have to be a tough trail bike. It would have to be capable of doing well in enduros and hare-and-hounds, maybe even the occasional motocross. It would have to tackle back-country adventures and some long Baja trips. And it would

have be to a good enough streetbike for commuting and a little corner carving.

The ATK Dual Sport comes pretty close. I'd have a hard time coughing up the almost eight grand it would take to own the 605, and I'd have to add some kind of keyed ignition, or at least a fork lock—the crime rate in Bountiful, Utah, must be very low. Still, I don't mind tinkering with a worthwhile bike. And that would appeal to me much more than trying to shave 30 pounds off a Honda XR650L or upgrading its suspension so it would be race-ready.

—Jimmie Lewis, Off-Road Editor



THE *CYCLE WORLD* OFFICES JUST AREN'T the same without Ron Griewe. His spicy colloquies and foul-smelling cigars always added that certain something.

When the Ogre resigned his post at *CW* to join reformed ATK America, he pledged to build a "real" dual-purpose bike, in his words, "a dirtbike with lights."

The ATK 605 Dual Sport is just that. But for all its off-road attributes, the 605 is one unruly streetbike. In an urban environment, the 605 is rowdy and uncomfortable, about as practical as going grocery shopping in Danny Thompson's stadium off-road truck. And at freeway speeds, engine vibration isn't just annoying, it's downright unbearable.

Even if I could afford to buy one (I can't), I'd have to surrender my driver's license long before the check cleared. Hard-edges and vibration aside, this bike is that much fun.

So from where I sit, Griewe was right on target.

—Matthew Miles, Managing Editor



LET'S LAY THE CARDS ON THE TABLE. This ATK is no roadbike; I doubt even if it's fully street-legal in some states. The Dual Sport 605 is for the serious dirt rider who goes off on all-day excursions and wants to link some favorite trails with short road sections; maybe go into town for a burger and a fuel fill-up. For that role, the ATK is ideally suited.

But just as the street-oriented, rally-style pretenders of the late 1980s weren't true dual-purpose bikes, neither is the ATK. It's just too much of a dirtbike. Between its brick-hard seat and jack-hammer vibration, extended highway trips on the 605 will have you searching for Preparation H sponsorship before much more than a gallon has been drained from the fuel tank.

If you want a dirt-biased dual-purpose bike and spend more than 10 percent of your riding miles on asphalt, here's my expert advice: Buy a Honda XR650L. I'll take a cut of the \$3000 you save as my consultation fee, thank you very much.

—David Edwards, Editor-in-Chief

## ATK 605

### SPECIFICATIONS

#### GENERAL

List price	\$7895
Importer	ATK America, Inc. 1164 West 850 North Centerville, Utah 84014
Customer service phone	801/298-8288
Warranty	none

#### ENGINE

Engine	air-cooled, four-stroke Single
Bore x Stroke	97.0 x 81.0mm
Displacement	598cc
Compression ratio	9.5:1
Valve train	sohc, four valves per cylinder, threaded adjusters
Valve adjustment intervals	5000 mi.

Carburetion (1) 40mm Dell'Orto

Oil capacity 2.75 qt.

Electrical power 120w

Battery 12v, 9ah

#### CHASSIS

Weight:

Tank empty	290 lb.
Tank full	316 lb.

Fuel capacity 4.3 gal.

Wheelbase 58.5 in.

Rake/trail 26.5°/4.3 in.

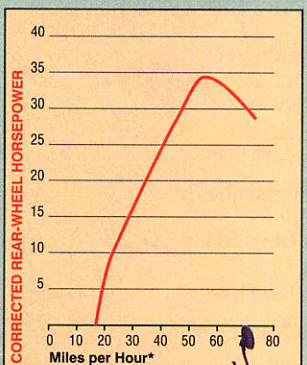
Seat height 38.0 in.

Ground clearance 11.5 in.

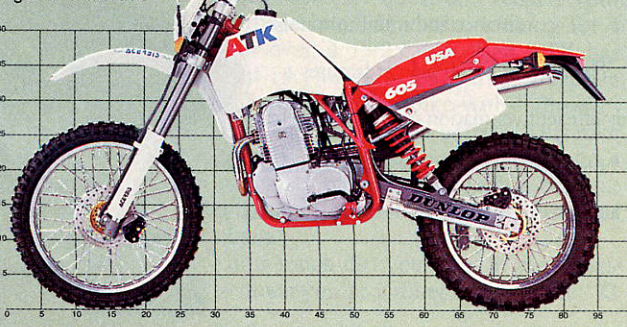
GVWR na

Load capacity (tank full) na

#### HORSEPOWER/TORQUE



\*Usual torque/rpm figures not available



#### SUSPENSION/TIRES

Front suspension:	
Manufacturer	WP
Tube diameter	40mm
Claimed wheel travel	11.8 in.
Adjustments	compression and rebound damping

Rear suspension:	
Manufacturer	WP
Type	single shock
Claimed wheel travel	13.6 in.
Adjustments	compression and rebound damping, spring preload

Tires:	
Front	3.00-21 Dunlop Enduro D903F
Rear	120/90-18 Dunlop Enduro D903

#### PERFORMANCE

1/4 mi.	14.04 sec. @ 89.91 mph
0-30 mph	1.8 sec.
0-60 mph	5.1 sec.
0-90 mph	14.1 sec.
0-100 mph	na

Top gear time to speed:	
40-60 mph	3.4 sec.
60-80 mph	4.1 sec.

Measured top speed 94 mph

Engine speed at 60mph	5168 rpm
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#### FUEL MILEAGE

High/low/avg.	50/43/46 mpg
Avg. range inc. reserve	198 mi.

#### BRAKING DISTANCE

from 30 mph	39 ft.
from 60 mph	156 ft.

#### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated	na
60 mph indicated	na