





# OUTLAW

*Built for riders, not the government*

*By the American-made staff of DIRT BIKE*

Outlaws seem likable enough in the movies. They are always caught up in some good cause: stealing so that little Jimmy Bobby can get some snakebite serum in time; lying to sneak little Jenny Bobby onto a plane so grandma can see her win the Indy 500. Real outlaws don't seem to do much good—no good that we can remember, until now. In this real-life adventure, ATK is kind of an outlaw. It's making bikes that it *calls* dual-sports, but they are actually off-road competition machines in the DOT's and EPA's eyes. ATK didn't mouse the bikes up to pass the government tests manufacturers' machines have to pass to be dubbed street-legal in the land of the free. You have to pursue licensing the ATK dual-sport as you would any dirt bike. That means showing your department of motor vehicles that it's road-ready, which it is. There is really nothing illegal about ATK's ap-

proach. ATK plainly states in its literature that the bikes are non-certified. There's just some good old American defiance of pointless, revenue-grabbing rules going on, that's all.

ATK's outlaw ways probably won't inspire a movie, unless somebody rides one while he shoots his way out of a laboratory where they make animals try all kinds of bad flavors of corn puffs. There's a story here somewhere, though. It's a story of a real dirt bike with a license plate, the kind lots of us build ourselves. Only this time, ATK built it.

## SCHWARZETHUMPER

Austria's air-cooled, SOHC Rotax four-stroke has been the heart of America's best known dirt bike for ten years and it hasn't changed a great deal in that decade. Additional displacement, now 598cc, and an electric starter are the most recent updates to the engine, but even

these are several years old. The ATK engine's strong points have always been the ability to make arm-stretching amounts of power while retaining bank-vault-like ruggedness. Its downside is bank-vault-like weight, a characteristic that stands out more now in the age of genuinely light four-strokes. That the ATK weighs just 296 pounds suggests that the bike's trick frame saves some serious pounds.

The '97 incarnation of the 605 is mellow and relies on sheer size for power. It's a formula that delivers smooth, even throttle response and the kind of pulling power that lets you ignore the clutch and transmission most of the time; in some situations you can even neglect the throttle. Pick a gear and an engine speed and you have a nearly guaranteed rate of progress through or over the obstacles of your choice. Rev the 605 and you will find it's not just a tractor. It twists out more power than most riders need, but not as much top-end as the more radically tuned Husa-berg, Husky and KTM.

How did ATK manage to get hitch-free carburetion and strong, predictable power from its dual-sport when it's such a struggle for other companies? ATK tuned the bike to run well, not for the DOT and EPA tests for street-legal bikes that result in lean jetting, choked airboxes, restrictive mufflers and absurdly tall gearing. The gearing, by the way, is dirt perfect and street-usable. It's just two rear sprocket teeth taller than the dirt model. Nothing can bog the engine in first and things aren't too buzzy at 70 mph in fifth. Let 'er rip and you will be doing about 90 mph.

The SuperTrapp muffler comes with eight discs, the same number ATK puts on the dirt model. Additional discs let more power loose, but the bike is noticeable enough around town. Save the big stack for the track.

## SPAR WARS

ATK's new frame carries the company's interest in simplicity to the extreme. Most frames are comprised of a main member with numerous substructures and

◀ *Pro motocrosser, team manager and ladies' man Craig Mason would rather break his own bones than laws, but he dug the outlaw ATK. Craiggy says, "It doesn't feel like a trail bike or a street bike or a . . . what are they? Dual whatever? I'd moto this thing, baby!"*







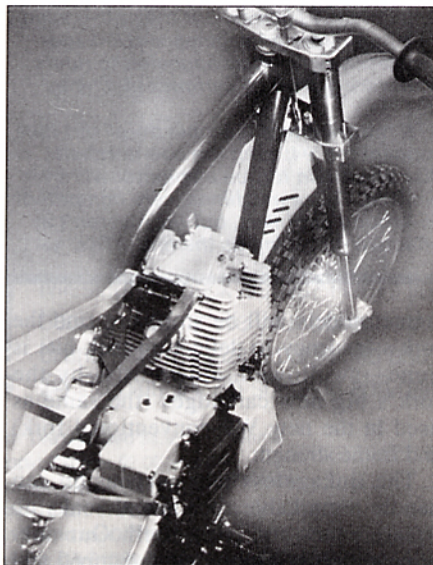
dozens of tubes. The ATK main frame has just three pieces, a 2.25-inch-diameter backbone, a two-inch down tube and a steering head gusset plate. The frame stops short of the engine's lower front and the backbone runs out to the side of the bike, like one spar of a perimeter frame. An aluminum subframe forms the rear section. ATK lists light weight, a low seat height and rigidity as the frame's major attributes. We are sure ATK is just as happy about its low production costs and eye-catching appearance. A fairly conventional-looking motocross-type swingarm pivots in the unusual frame, compressing a WP shock without help from a linkage.

Testing revealed that the frame is more than strong enough for typical off-road and dual-sport work. Even hard, high-speed pounding through whoops or sideways jump landings don't bring on the kind of vague tracking that comes when you force a fork, frame or swingarm to give, the kind of feel most dual-sports have. It's not the same as a recent motocross machine with supercross-firm suspension, an extremely stiff frame and far less weight stressing the whole package, but it is a full-on, for-real dirt bike, and it feels like one.

ATK used a simple approach to arrive at suspension settings for its dual-sport: use the same settings as the dirt-only

models. As a result, the bike can really be enjoyed in the dirt without changes to springs and valving. There is no excessive bottoming or hanging down in the travel like with many stock dual-sport suspensions.

The WP fork is built so that compression damping is adjusted from the left fork cap and rebound is adjusted on the right fork cap. The extra convenience makes finding a good combination for



#### 1997 ATK 605DS

Engine type	Air-cooled, SOHC, 4-valve 4-stroke
Displacement	598cc
Bore and stroke	97.0mm x 81.0mm
Carburetion	40mm Dell'Orto
Fuel tank capacity	3.6 gal. (12.3L)
Gearing	15/48
Lighting coil	Yes
Spark arrester	Yes
EPA-legal	Yes
Running weight w/no fuel	296 lb.
Wheelbase	59" (1499mm)
Rake/trail	27°/4.7"
Ground clearance	13.2" (335mm)
Seat height	37" (937mm)
Tire size and type:	
Front	80/100-21 Dunlop D905F
Rear	120/90-18 Dunlop D903

#### Suspension:

Front	WP inverted cartridge fork, adj. comp./reb., 11.8" (300mm) travel
Rear	WP aluminum piggyback shock, adj. comp./reb./prel., 13.2" (335mm) travel

Country of origin .....USA

Suggested retail price .....\$7695

#### Distributor/manufacturer:

ATK America  
P.O. Box 100  
Bountiful, UT 84010; (801) 298-8288

#### REPLACEMENT PARTS COST

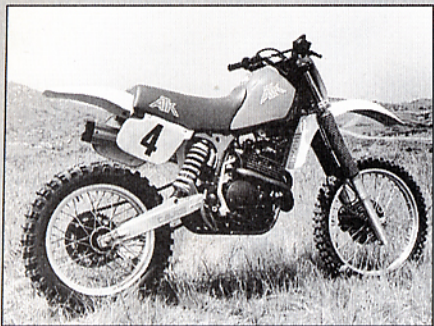
Piston (kit w/rings)	\$430.36
Ring(s)	143.94
Air filter	31.41
Clutch plate (drive)	10.71(6)
Clutch plate (driven)	17.18(5)
Front sprocket	47.38
Rear sprocket	45.00
Front brake pads	21.36
Rear brake pads	21.36

◀ The new ATK frame is massive in some parts and missing in others. It's light and surprisingly rigid.



## ATK HISTORY A MARQUE'S MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES

● ATK motorcycles appeared at a time when there really were no truly high-performance four-strokes, and high-performance two-strokes were becoming frighteningly complex. As the years and the company's owners changed, so did the bikes. Pick any period you like and you will find ATK had something unusual to offer the dirt bike world.



'87. Some of the first ATKs were built around Honda engines to test the company's unusual countershaft disc brake and anti-chain torque device. Many ATKs were sold as frame kits. Engine supply problems led ATK's founder to strike a deal with Austrian engine builder Rotax.

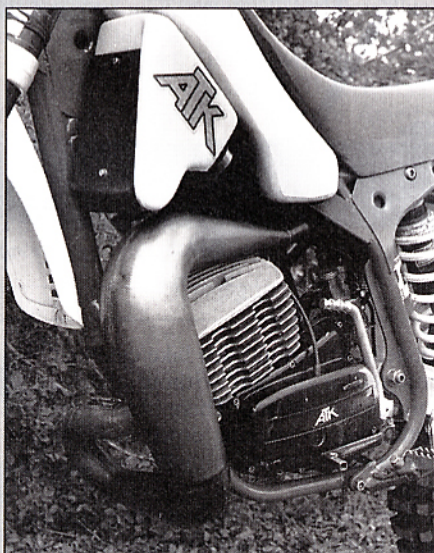


'88. Early Rotax-powered ATKs had things that weren't available in production thumpers of their time: serious power, light weight, motocross-ready suspension and the option of electric starting, which was an unheard-of feature on high-performance machines at that time. The '88 electric-start 604 weighed just 2 lb. more than a '96 electric-start Husaberg 501!

most sensible conditions easy, but we didn't find anything in normal riding that made us stray far from the stock settings. Our most extreme adjustment was cranking the compression in all the way to control bottoming for a trailside jump fest that cropped up (we don't try that with too many dual-sports). It helped, but it didn't solve the problem completely. ATK loyalists used to the conventional-

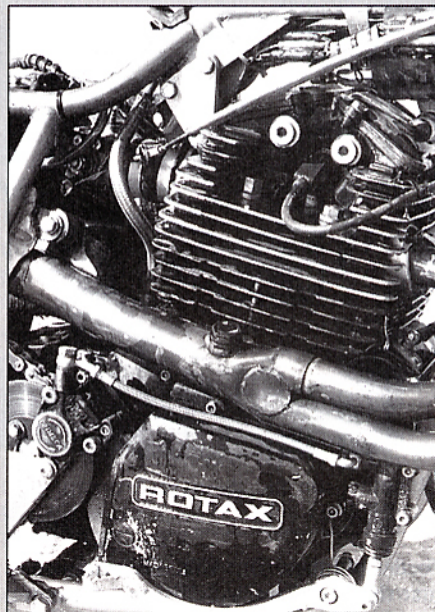


In '89 ATK founder Horst Leitner sold the company to motorcycle enthusiast/businessman Ken Wilkes. Wilkes broadened the '90 ATK line to include specially equipped enduro and motocross models, temporarily ending the ATK tradition of offering do-all dirt bikes. The motocross models featured quicker-turning frames and slender bodywork.



Also during the late '80s, ATK offered its first two-stroke models. Unlike ATK's four-strokes, the rotary-valve 250 and reed-valve 406 weren't the horsepower kings of their classes, but their air-cooled, non-power-valved engines and linkageless rear suspensions appealed to riders who were put off by complex machines.

ATK returned to the simple do-all dirt bike concept for '94; even the countershaft disc and chain torque eliminator were omitted. These machines were competent all-around dirt bikes, but they weren't as effective for racing as the first ATKs. ►



By the time its '92 models appeared, ATK had yet another owner—a corporation with a new vision of what ATKs should offer. This incarnation of ATK returned to the philosophy of unspecialized machines, but abandoned the company's traditional dedication to simplicity. Fuel-injected models were developed and machines were available with countershaft disc brakes and conventional rear wheel brakes. ●



frame models will be stoked to find the fork's tendency to deflect on rock hits is gone—swallowed, apparently, by the fork's big new cartridges (the same as used in the new WP conventional fork) and frame strength.

The linkageless rear suspension can handle remarkable speeds and soaks up square edges and rocks well. Our only gripe with it is a loose, underdamped feel

in the initial part of the compression stroke. It's actually handy on sharp, repetitive bumps, but rolling bumps get the rear end moving up and down more than we would like. Turning in the compression clicker helped a bit, but we ended up with



# OUTLAW

too much compression damping at the end of the stroke without getting exactly what we wanted from the initial travel.

## GET YOUR COPY

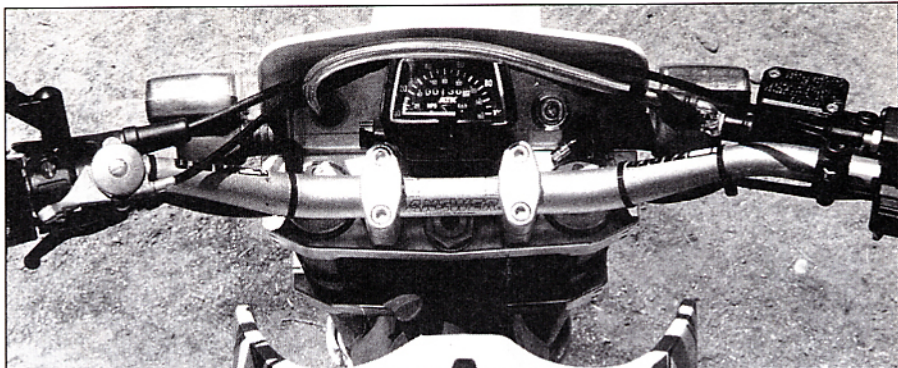
We were pleased to find that ATK copied some parts of more conventional dirt bikes. ATK wisely engineered proven geometry, engine placement and ergonomics into the new chassis. The bike steers quickly and accurately for a machine of its size, and its Dunlop DOT-approved tires have the bite of motocross knobbies. The turning effort is so low that you seldom realize that you are on a big, heavy four-stroke, and it doesn't get nervous at higher speeds. When it's time to get rid of speed, the brakes work remarkably well, considering the weight and velocities they have to control.

ATK makes a big fuss about the bike's 36.5-inch seat height, which would be an accomplishment with roughly 12 inches of fork travel and over 13 inches out back. We liked the idea, but feared it would bring the pegs and the seat close together, a situation that makes sitting-to-standing transitions harder than on some machines. Fortunately, the ATK guys were fibbing, and the actual 37-inch seat height (with correct sag for a 165-pound rider) results in a mild bend at the knees when sitting and enough peg height to bring you back with ten toes, no matter how rocky or rutted the trails get.

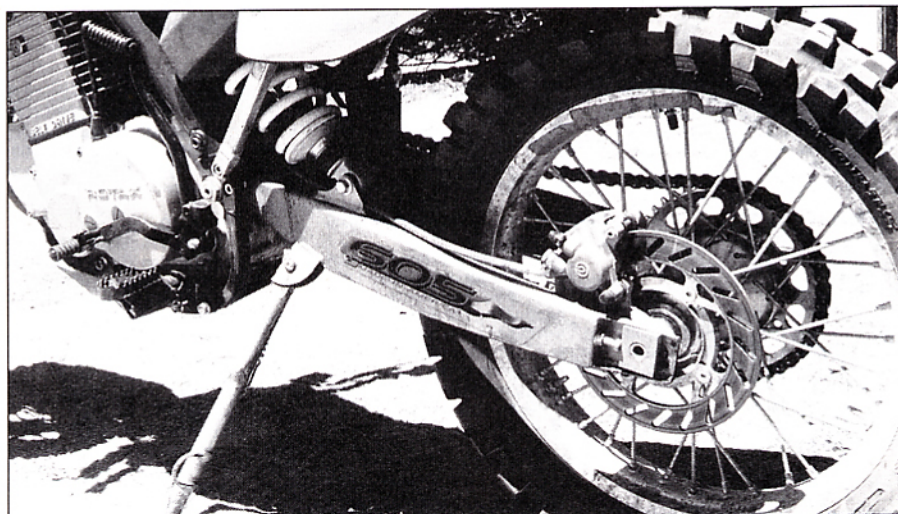
By ditching the gargantuan 4.2-gallon fuel tank of its predecessor and wrapping the machine in slim, smooth bodywork, ATK managed to make the machine far less massive than some of its classmates. The view from the controls and the splay of your knees is delightfully motocross-ish. The sight of the frame's top tube, angling to the side of the bike, occasionally prompts a fright reaction, but you shouldn't be looking there anyway. ATK warned us that street-only riding could leave fuel in the tank well opposite the petcock and offered a dual-petcock conversion kit. If you hit bumps or crash as often as we do, the new 3.6-gallon tank will distribute its fuel well and take most riders as far as they want to go.

## FULL-LENGTH FEATURE LIST

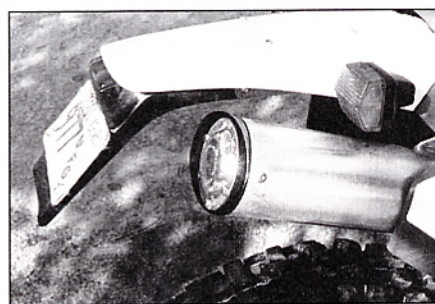
It's normal to expect a lot when you pay \$7695 for a dirt bike, but the ATK offers enough to overwhelm weak-willed slobs like us, even though there are Hondas and even KTMs that can offer similar performance at considerable savings. The bike's complete dirt-readiness, from suspension to tires to gearing, and nearly complete street readiness will appeal to anyone who has spent the time and money needed to make some dual-sports work in the dirt or any dirt bike legal for the street. If you are the type who eventually adds numerous accessories to your machines, you will be pleased to find that



**ATK coolness:** Slim shape, powerful brake, sano street-legal setup, abundance of choice components. **ATK weirdness:** SideWinder frame, cylindrical ignition key, dissimilar control-mounting hardware. ATK's dual-sport models are not DOT-/EPA-certified for street use, so you have to show your DMV that the bike is properly equipped. All the street-legal stuff any state could want is there. The key kills the starter and lighting electrics, but not the ignition circuit. Crashes that wad the key switch or starter button won't strand you, but the bike is fair game for any thief who can kickstart it. Shane Trittler is the only person who can't steal it.



**Did ATK ask Deion Sanders if the 605DS should come with a kick or electric starter?** Unlike most current dual-sports, it has both. Heat from high-rpm slow going melted the clutch cable housing where it touched the engine under the tank. The clutch cable didn't seize, but the cable end pulled off inside the engine. Not too cool, considering the bike's Deion Sanders-like price.



◀ **The tunable, high-performance Super-Trapp exhaust you would probably add to the bike is there already.** It's acceptably quiet with the stock eight discs, but it makes the mighty 605 feel like a 400. The bike would pull like a two-stroke 500 with a hotter cam and an open exhaust. New for '97: the muffler doesn't fry the fender and the rear wheel won't eat the license-plate bracket.

**ATK's new 605 dual-sport may be the most fun licensable bike you can buy.** Affording the thing is the hard part. ▶

ATK installs an impressive collection at the factory, including billet hubs and triple clamps, high-performance exhaust systems, Answer Pro Taper bars, premium-quality DID O-ring chains and Dunlop DOT knobbies. The final irresistible morsel on the ATK appetizer plate is the unique design and rarity of the machine. Having a bike that gets approving glances from dirt bikers and non-riding boobs on the street is strangely entertaining.

## SURPRISE ENDING

After riding the ATK 605DS, we can say that there is such a thing as a real-life outlaw with a good cause. The way we

see it, making a dual-sport bike that is really a dirt bike is no worse than making dual-sport bikes that are barely usable in the dirt in stock trim. The '97 ATK 605DS is a do-all dirt bike in the mold of the original ATKs—not as race-oriented, but at least a notch or two more serious than its conventional-frame playbike predecessor. It can hang with motocross bikes on a tough trail ride and heave roost all over most stock dual sports. Then you can ride into town for some dinner. If that's a crime, then we will all turn ourselves in. □