

THE DIRTY PART + LONG-TERM TESTING

Long Haul Wrap Up

2007 Christini CRF250X

By Jimmy Lewis, Photos By Drew Ruiz, And Karl Kramer



Does the Christini ride on water?
Not exactly, but we tried.

All-wheel Drive technology on motorcycles is in a very funny place. It works. It has many advantages and only a few disadvantages. From our point of view it helps novice riders so much they don't even know it, and in the hands of experts who understand how to take advantage of the system, it is an incredible tool. And the Christini system is very durable, as we have now proven. But it has yet to grow into fashion. There could be the issues with the costs being high, the reluctance of any current motorcycle manufacturers to adopt the technology on a production bike or the hesitation of riders to wade into new territory. But maybe with a Dirt Rider stamp of approval, things will get rolling with both wheels. It is easy to say that we really like AWD motorcycles.

Our Long Haul Christini, built on a Honda CRF250X platform, has been one of our super-fun machines, thrashed and trashed the whole time we've had it. Just like anyone who's finally had the chance to drive a four-wheel-drive truck for the first time, you have to go and see what those extra driving wheels will do when you put the vehicle to the test. Same thing on the two-wheel-drive Christini. Just about every rider went out and tried to climb that hill they couldn't (which is kind of funny, this is where the AWD is the least effective and can be the most annoying), tried to get it stuck in the mud, and attempted log and boulder crossings they never would have on their own bike (and

the lower framrails prove it). Riders did 24-hour races (more than one). Attempted EnduroCross. Competed in beach races. Trail rode the snot out of the bike and even raced it around motocross tracks. So much in fact that we lost track of the hours on our bike—it went through four different hour meters and surpassed the life of one computer hard drive that was keeping track of all the information.

Though not without a few hiccups, the AWD system outlasted all of those things and is still spinning strong, we know because we checked. All of the minor bearing and chain issues we had with the bike in its early life were, in fact, parts that have since been superseded by better ones. This particular bike was one of the very first to roll off the assembly line back in April of 2007, so these teething problems would be expected on such a specialized, low-volume piece of equipment. The longer we rode the bike the fewer and fewer issues we had with the AWD parts, so much so we expect to be able to put another 250 hours on the bike with only minor maintenance since the last rebuild. Hopefully the rest of the bike can keep up with the front end.

In this final rebuild we replaced the two chains in the lower triple clamp, the counter shaft sprocket, and the main AWD drive chain—a lot of the reason being just because it was disassembled, and preventative maintenance is cheap. Total cost for these items was \$70.

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One nice thing about this bike has been that even when we have had an issue with the AWD system, it has never left us stranded. One time, the bearing in the front wheel went out and the bike started pulling to one side harder. We just disengaged the drive, which we do all the time when we don't want or need the AWD. Just flip the handlebar-mounted lever and keep riding. Another time, the chain running off the countershaft became too worn on a long ride. We just removed it and the whole front-end drive system disconnects and acts like a normal bike, albeit a little heavier: one of the common complaints of the system. The other issue for some riders is the heavier feeling steering and the steering damper-like feeling when you are spinning the rear wheel, often causing the front end to fight for ad-



These two chains reside inside the lower triple clamp.



These were the parts we chose to replace after our tear-down. It was basically the second time for the chains.



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Continued

ditional traction. The torque steer affect is minimal considering what you are asking the system to do. That is the genius of the Christini patents.

Since the last time we wrote about the bike we have made a few helpful upgrades. First was the addition of a TM Designworks disc guard, since the stocker was MIA. We should have replaced the chain guide at the same time as a preventative measure since we are always bending the stock one back into place. A Leo Vince stainless X3 enduro exhaust system (no longer available, you'll have to go Titanium!) made its way onto the bike off another DR project bike and it really complemented the LA Sleeve 270cc big bore kit that we have been running. Since we have the Rekluse Z-Start Pro clutch installed, all the extra torque is beneficial since the bike hooks up better than anything and little power is wasted in wheelspin. As a whole the combination really makes the bike feel slow because without spinning (clutch or wheels) and with a good load on the motor all the time, the CRF just does not rev up as quickly as most riders are used to. Turn off the AWD lever and then it gets spunky again. To extend our fun we threw on a Trail Tech Eclipse headlight and rewound stator. Now we can get practically anywhere, anytime.

The Honda CRF end of the bike has been holding up its side of the deal as well. We have been really good about oil changes with Silkolene Pro 4 SX in the engine and Comp gear oil in the transmission. We also scavenged a Bettencourt's Moto Rods Super Cooler, which is a larger radiator with a built-in oil cooler, from yet another project bike to boost cooling capacity and help keep the oil temps down, and it seemed to do the trick—so much so that the valves are in spec and have never needed adjustment! One last mod that put some spring back into the ride was a full rebuild of the fork and shock from Factory Connection. Even with limited experience working with AWD bikes, they took some suggestions from us and sent back an insanely good setting that is more compliant than the standard CRF setup and works better in the rougher stuff with minimal bottoming. It was especially noticeable in the front end when it was under a heavy braking load. And speaking of braking, one of the things an AWD bike does is not allow the front end to lock up since it's being pushed. So, if you don't lock up the rear, the front brake needs to be really strong, hence we installed a Galfer Tsunami 270mm oversized brake kit to help fight brake push and give better overall brake power without losing control. It was a noticeable change. We've tried a lot of tires and the Christini cares less about different rubber than any other bike, really. Wear on the front is not that much more rapid.

In the end we have been nothing but impressed with the Christini in our time with it and have made it into one of our ultimate hard-core trailriding machines. The future looks bright for Christini as there may be a limited production run, from a well known company, in the 2011 model year. This will bring the cost of a brand-new Christini AWD motorcycle, where systems are currently fitted to a KTM 300 two-stroke or a 450cc four-stroke, from about \$12,500 closer to the \$11,000 range. And for having the only AWD bike in your riding group, that is almost priceless.



This is all the stuff we bent, twisted or wore out.



Running Tally

Hours on Bike 220-250
 Modifications Total: \$3802.35
 Maintenance and Repairs Total:
 \$354.54 (not including tires)

TMDesignworks rear disc protector \$79.95
 MotoRods Super Cooler \$799.00
 Leo Vince Stainless X3 System (Titanium) \$699.00
 Galfer Tsunami 270mm oversized brake kit \$370.00

Silkolene Pro 4-SX 10W-40: \$13.55 per liter
 Silkolene Comp gear oil 10W-40: \$13.55 per liter
 Kenda Millville K771 80/100-21 front tire \$57.95
 Kenda Millville K771 110/100-18 rear tire \$70.95