

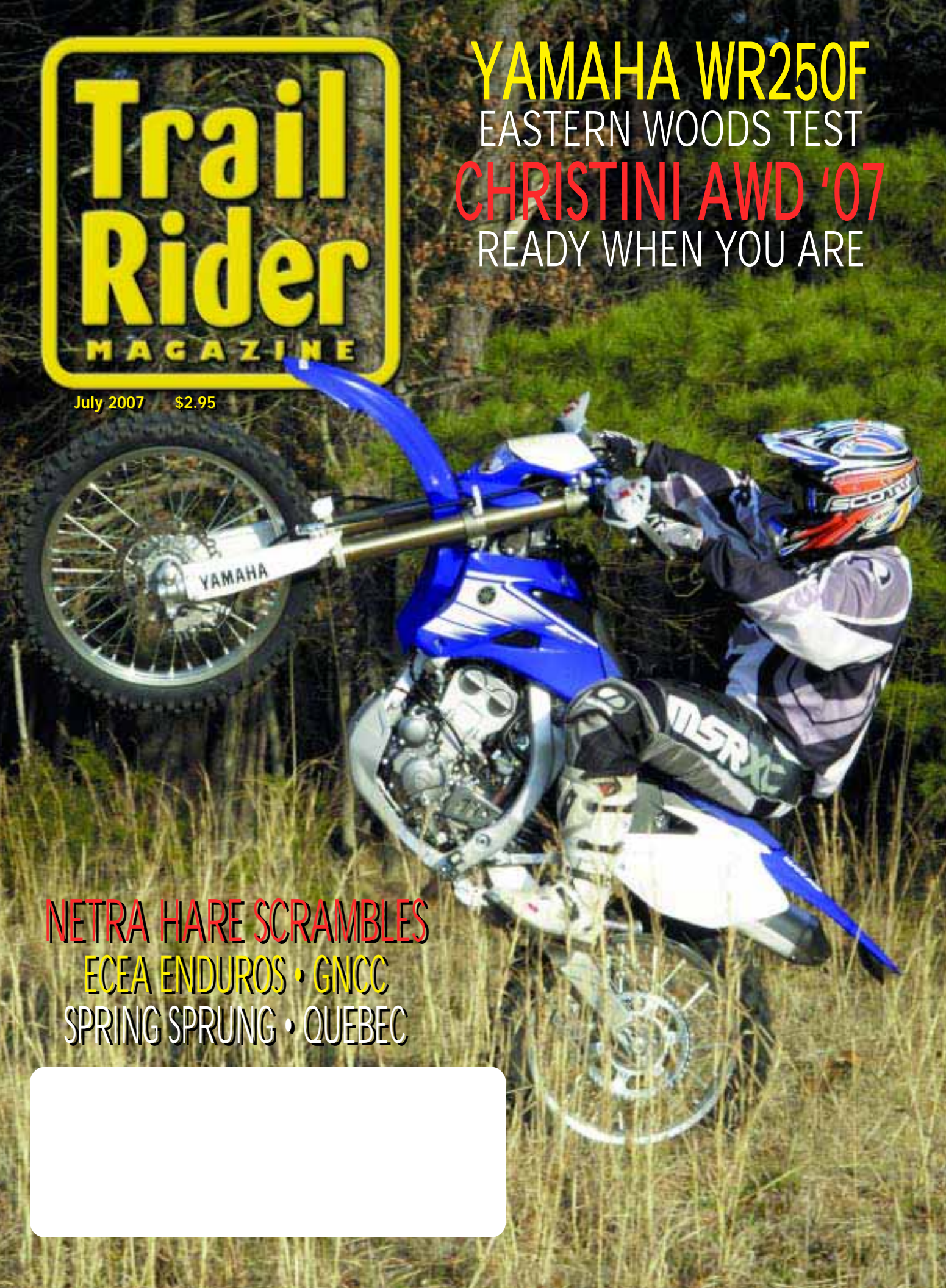
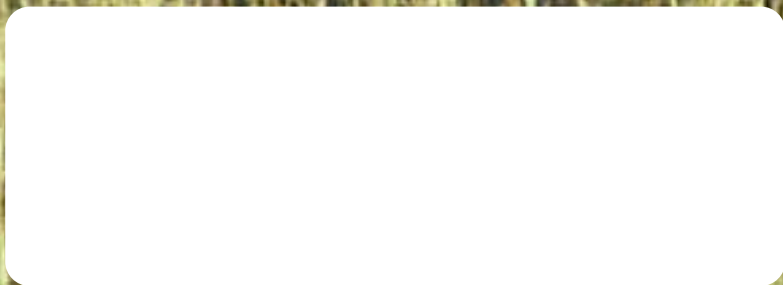
Trail Rider

MAGAZINE

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YAMAHA WR250F
EASTERN WOODS TEST
CHRISTINI AWD '07
READY WHEN YOU ARE

NETRA HARE SCRAMBLES
ECEA ENDUROS • GNCC
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PRODUCTION

The Christini All Wheel Drive is ready to ride!

After six years of development, testing, refinement, sweat and tears, the long anticipated Christini All Wheel Drive Motorcycle is finally in full production. In March of 2007, a Christini AWD250R bearing serial #002 was boxed up in Philadelphia and shipped to a waiting customer in southern California. The lucky recipient, Robert St. John, had been in constant contact with Christini ever since seeing news of the bike in action at the 2006 World Enduro last July. After a short but favorable test ride in January, a very excited St. John took off his helmet, flashed a huge grin and asked "where do I send my deposit?" He would soon become the first official owner of a production Christini AWD motorcycle. If you are wondering what happened to serial #001, it is being held back and will likely be auctioned off for charity at a later date.

In case you're reading about it here for the first time, Christini is a Philadelphia-based company that started exploring all-wheel-drive technology by building an AWD mountain bike. The bike had some success, mostly as a novelty since powering it with the half-horsepower engine only the best of us can provide (how hard can you pedal?) didn't do a lot to show off the system's capabilities. A motorcycle was a natural extension of the mountain bike business, and after much calculation, trial and error, a prototype machine based on a Honda CRF450R was created. Trail Rider rode this first prototype back in August of 2004, and though it was a little rough we could see amazing potential in the technology.

Since then, a series of prototype machines were built based on the Honda CRF250X and R models. We rode a number of these bikes, all of which changed radically month to month as the design was perfected. It was at this time the decision was made to produce the Christini as a kit to add to a production bike. The Christini company would provide a modified frame as a swap for the stock



Steve Christini with his latest creation—the first Christini AWD-powered KTM 400EXC, now a running prototype, and soon to be a retail reality.

frame, plus all the parts necessary to adapt the system—for example, the forks are heavily modified externally and a completely different set of triple clamps are built for the bikes. Plus a different front wheel and other assorted bits. It's actually a great system, since the basic kit can be adapted to fit virtually any bike made. Work right now is being done on adapting the kit for KTM dirt bikes.

The Christini AWD system went into the testing phase of production in mid 2006 when Christini obtained Wall

Street funding. The Christini AWD made its racing debut in July of 2006 when six-time ISDE gold medallist Chris Smith won the A250 class at the ECEA Shotgun enduro, a very promising start for a very promising technology.

After that first win, Smith was contracted for testing and evaluating the new technology and giving real world feedback for development purposes. Chris went on to campaign the fledgling machine at the World Enduro in Hancock last year. Riding an otherwise stock Honda CRF250X fitted with a Christini AWD kit, Smith managed to finish 10th in class during the sloppy mess of day one. Such a result is amazing when you consider Smith had not ridden competitively in eight years and was up against the most talented riders in the world, riding some of the finest purpose-built racing machines available. "It was like riding a family station wagon against Porches out there," said Smith, very pleased with his results.

Chris Smith's racing and involvement moved the Christini out of the "concept vehicle" phase. Lessons learned from the 2006 World Enduro and other events that followed, such as the Maxxis EnduroCross, Red Bull Last Man Standing (Chris Smith was the only four-stroke to make the night show, eventually finishing in 8th place), GNCC, AMA National Enduro, and numerous local events have made their way into the production motorcycle that is now available from authorized Christini dealers.

Since last summer, the bike has received a steady stream of refinements to virtually the entire mechanical system to get it ready for retail production, addressing every aspect from handling, reliability, performance, and weight. There have been so many critical updates to the system that the current bikes are almost totally different from what we rode in 2004. Actually, what is being shipped right now is totally different from the prototypes we got to ride last summer, so the company has been moving very quickly lately.



by Paul Clipper

AWD



*The heart of the Christini system: the modified frame and AWD front end, here for a Honda CRF250X.
Below: The race bike stable awaiting maintenance.*



Production kits for the Honda CRF250X and R models are now available, only through authorized Christini dealers. Christini is working hard to build a strong, service-oriented dealer network across the US and is accepting applications for dealers wishing to add this exciting new technology to their showroom floor. A complete list of dealers is available on the newly redesigned Christini.com web site. You can also check out videos, photos, and get all the tech info you could ask for.

Christini-powered machines are being campaigned in several race series, including select GNCC races and the AMA National Enduro series by development rider Ben Smith. Ben recently finished first in the E1 class at the Tennessee ISDE Qualifier on a Christini AWD250R. Aaron Kopp has been working locally to develop the soon to be released AWD450X version (based on the Honda CRF450X platform). Christini will field a four to five man team in the 2007 World Enduro in US and Canada this summer. We expect Christini's logo to be very familiar to at least East Coast racers by the end of this season.

The much-anticipated Christini KTM AWD kit was debuted at the 2007 Indy Powersports Expo on a 400EXC. The 400EXC is now running and is currently undergoing initial testing, with plans in the works to have prototype KTM-based 250/300 two-strokes in the field for testing in early summer. Christini plans to enter at least one KTM in the 2007 World Enduro North American rounds. Production dates and a retail MSRP have not yet been set for the KTM, but a late summer, early fall release is likely. Initial interest is strong and Christini is currently accepting \$500 refundable deposits on KTM kits.



A Christini kit getting assembly-tested at the Philadelphia R&D facility. By this point, everyone at Christini is able to take apart a CRF and put it back together blindfolded and quite asleep. Soon we'll see the shop full of KTMs.



One of the Christini machines is being campaigned locally by Ben Smith.

While we were taking photos for this story we checked out some of the kit assembly going on at Christini, and we were very impressed at how much more sophisticated yet simplified the new kits are, compared to what we'd seen last year. Christini seems to have most, if not all, of the bugs out of the kits, compared to the prototypes, but we still would like to see an OEM treatment of the Christini AWD system. As in, we'd like to see how the system would fare with a power take-off straight out of the engine, which would eliminate the need for the external chain drive, simplifying the system and lowering weight yet more (the latest systems are said to add 15 pounds to a bike, at most).

Maybe we'll get to see our dream of an OEM Christini system machine. We'd be surprised if the major manufacturers weren't taking a close look at what they're doing in this warehouse in Philadelphia. We still believe the next decade is going to see an explosion of AWD motorcycles, on the street as well as dirt, and so far Christini is at the leading edge of the technology.

You can get a chance to check out all wheel drive for yourself. Christini will be offering demo rides at many high profile events, including the ninth annual Quarry Run Two Day National Dual Sport event in Hancock, NY, Friday, August 10th through Sunday, August 12th, hosted by the Bear Creek Sportsman. For more info, check out www.christini.com or call 215-351-9895. ▲