

FIRST TEST: SUZUKI'S SURPRISE NEW RM250B

# DIRT BIKE

IND

NOVEMBER 1976

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'77 KTM/PENTON  
MC5: ALMOST  
WORLD CHAMP!

THE SUPERBOWL OF MOTOCROSS:  
WHAT, NO LIONS?

US 125 GP: MARTY'S PARTY!

PLUS Gassin' with Gary Jones, Fixin'  
your forks, and assorted sundries



# DIRT BIKE

VOLUME SIX NUMBER ELEVEN NOVEMBER 1976

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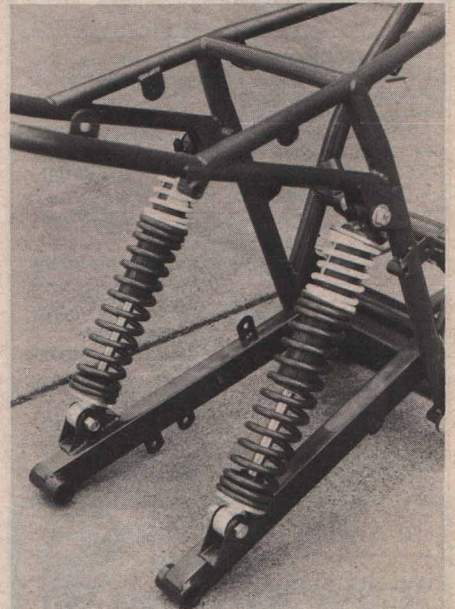
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ON THE COVER: Standing in line at the Superbowl by Regis Moore

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## A MOTOCROSSER BY ANY NAME:

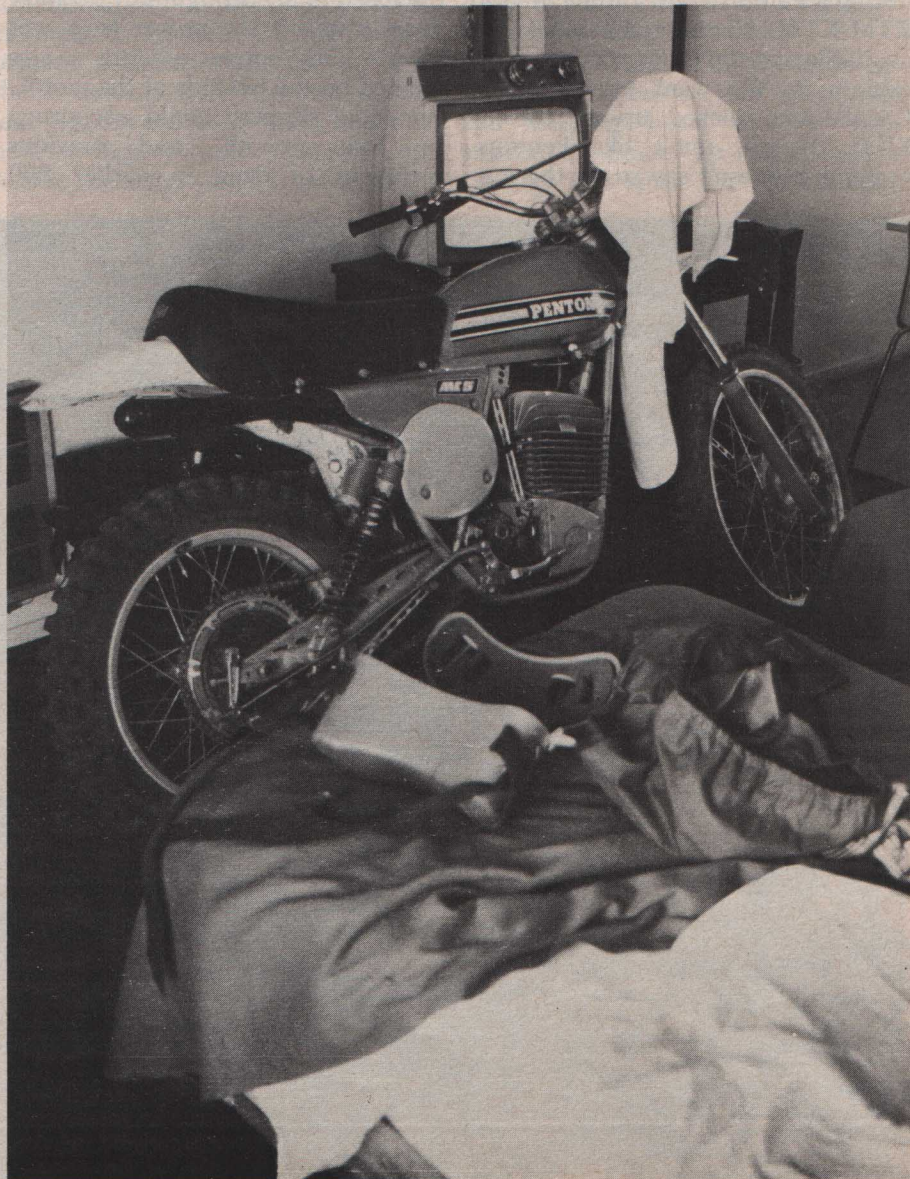
You may be wondering what is a Penton is a KTM is a Penton-KTM? In order to fully understand what an Ohio-California-Austrian motorcycle is you will have to understand the relationship between two men — Ted Lapadaikas and John Penton. If you are able to understand that relationship then you should be President of this country.

There is this personal problem, you see, but we don't talk about these things except in bars and under our breath. Suffice it to say that there is a motorcycle built in Austria by KTM. KTM is Kronreif-Trunkenpoltz-Mattighofen. Mattighofen is where KTMs are built but is also a portion of the name. Therefore it is actually Kronreif-Trunkenpoltz in

Mattighofen. Or KT in M.

Anyway, east of the Mississippi KTM motorcycles are sold through Penton Sportcycles, founded and operated by none other than John Penton. You all know who John Penton is, right? He had much to do with the founding of many aspects of motorcycling in America. Did you know that he and Dick Mann put on the first professional motocross in America? Or that it is rumored that he talked KTM into making real motorcycles? John is well known for a wide variety of accomplishments in our sport, but of late even better known for one general accomplishment — being outspoken. Eastern KTMs are rightfully known as Penton-KTMs.

You may never know the full truth 'til you sleep with her.



# PENTON/ KTM 250 MC5

*"I'd give an RM and  
a leg for that honey."*

Opposite: The Penton/KTM split is stylishly symbolized. Californy, she gone!

Out here on the West Coast, KTM's are now distributed by Ted Lapadaikas. Ted recently gained the distributorship from John Penton as a part of KTM's effort to increase their control of motorcycle sales in America. Ted Lapadaikas is also a long and upstanding motorcyclist, participant in many International Six Day Trials, long-time importer of Sachs, DKW and Puch motorcycles. He, too, seems to have an Aryan motorcycle fascination. In fact, to the uninitiated, John Penton and Ted Lapadaikas might seem much the same. Don't ever say that out loud.

All this blah-blah is to tell you that you need not cross the Mississippi to buy a Penton or a KTM, whichever you prefer. The stickers are available from either distributor for a nominal charge. Other than that they are one and the same. Which doesn't fully explain why we as Californians are testing a Penton-KTM rather than a KTM-KTM. The fact that one was available and the other was not does explain it. We went to visit Carl Cranke and picked up a Penton-KTM. If you don't like Pentons pretend it doesn't say so on the gas

tank.

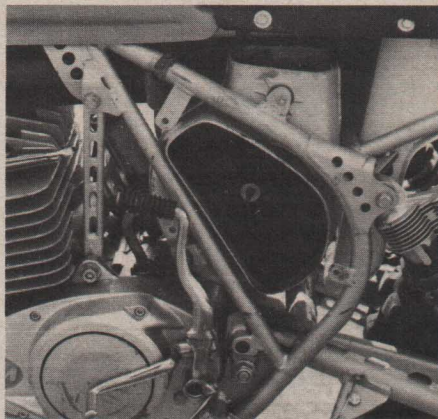
#### TECHNOLOGY: THERE TODAY, HERE TOMORROW

Penton/KTM motors function by moving large volumes of gas-air at the relatively high actual compression ratio of 8.0:1. Incoming cool mixture tumbles into a trenched combustion chamber through two large transfer ports on each side of the cylinder. Once the new mixture is burned, the waste is ushered out through a siamesed exhaust port. An actual compression ratio above the average two-stroke allows energetic exhaust timing without harming the powerband of the motor.

Large crankshaft flywheels combine with a small flywheel Motoplat electronic ignition to provide more flywheel effect than we have come to expect on 250 motocross machines. The results are primarily beneficial and will be discussed later. Straight-cut primary gears transmit the power to a wet clutch with copper-asbestos plates located on the left side of the motor. Repeated slipping could encourage no fade at all, and previous problems of drag in earlier 250

motors seem to be mostly taken care of.

Six gear sets reside inside magnesium cases and are changed via a drum and pin mechanism. Though all current KTM 250s are supplied with all six speeds operable, our prototype test machine had first gear blocked out. A consensus of testers felt that first was certainly unnecessary for motocross and probably undesirable. At the end of long straights when the rider pulls the clutch and downshifts rapidly while braking, first could acciden-



Air filter changing is easy. One bolt and pry it out.



tally be engaged, producing unhappy results. MC5 owners might consider modifying their own transmissions to block first, unless they plan to use the bike for purposes where the gear might be useful.

Shifting action itself is quite positive, though the throws are slightly longer than encountered on many Japanese units. Long or short shift throws are purely a matter of personal preference and those who prefer the less "push button" method felt that the Penton's action was ideal. Powershifts, that is with only



Despite the Penton's seat height, the only stretch is to throw your leg over.

slight hesitation at the throttle and no clutching, could easily be accomplished. The rubber shift lever cover must be wired into place or it will soon roam off into the hinterlands. Without it the lever will suddenly be a little too high and much more slippery. It should be noted that our test bike was a well-worn veteran, which is both a credit to it and an explanation for such compliant shifting.

The result of six gears and a large clutch is a wide motor. Foot to foot the KTM 250 is two inches wider than any other 250. This forced KTM to put the pegs higher to avoid having them drag when the bike is leaned. Their effort is only partially successful. In bermed corners, where the suspension is compressed, peg dragging is not infrequent.

Frame construction on the MC5 is entirely new. The previous, shall we say stopgap, LTR design has been superseded by a thoroughly LTR engineered frame. Curved tubes provide a stress cradle for the top shock mounts and transmit shock loadings toward the steering head. A new swingarm still swinging on needle bearings angles downward

and then bends horizontally in its last four inches in order to accommodate longer shock absorbers.

Redesigned M-4 Marzocchi shocks with larger shafts and reservoirs help the rear axle through 9.8 inches of motion. We judge damping and springing to be close to ideal since the rear end of the MC5 afforded us the plushest, most controllable action we have ever encountered.

New braces connect the critical tank-seat junction area to the engine cases for reasons other than you might expect. Though these struts do reduce vibration, their true function is to distribute the loads being delivered to the top tube of the frame by the rear suspension. One stress vector tends to push the top tube in the tank-seat junction area toward the motor. The struts distribute that load to its desired end. Interestingly enough, this alloy piece is part of the same forging as the rear backing plate brace.

Previous Penton/KTMs have incorporated a box section to connect the steering head to the rear subframe. Since air was drawn through this space for the air box,



the frame was known as the "snorkel." A year ago it was the vogue, but the new frame discards it in favor of four tubes protruding rearward to the upper cradle and rear subframe.

Magnesium Marzocchi forks connect to the steering head through tapered roller bearings which are sealed by double O-rings at each end. Front fork action was accommodatingly plush and a complement to the rear suspension. No complaints were registered concerning their 8.8 inches of motion.

Fenders are plastic and at least difficult to break. The front one is a bit flexy and short.

The front number plate incorporates a guide for the front brake cable to keep it from looping over the fork clamps. Rear number plates are barely visible behind the rider's legs, enough to tick off any scorekeeper. The rear plates also serve as muffler guard on one side and air box cover on the other. On the right the rider feels little or no heat from the exhaust pipe. On the left, three 6mm bolts reveal a Twin-Air filter held in place by a wingnut. Recent air boxes have a larger ridge to slip

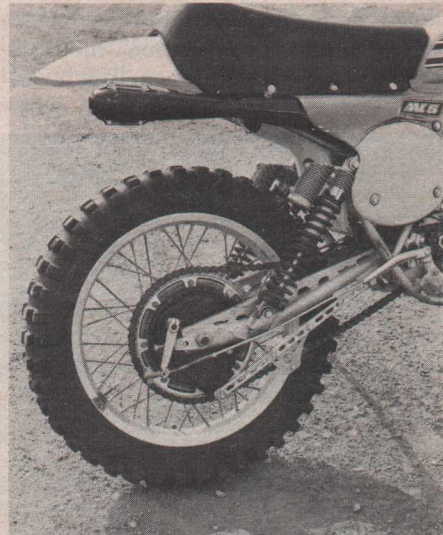
the filter over, easing placement.

No one much cared for the padding in the seat and not many more liked its shape. It is not but should be a matter of common knowledge that far better foam than is available through small, independent molders such as Motorcycle Design Services in Stanton, California. The Penton's seat has an aluminum base, which is all a good molder needs to go on. Recent improvements in the seat brackets help the thing stay in place longer when people try to use it for a lift.

Unfortunately, the gas tank is of rather thin fiberglass. The result is light but hardly durable in a crash. Thicker fiberglass would be more break-resistant but would approach the weight of steel. Two petcocks leak a little and provide a reserve for the indiscreet. The petcocks are reportedly vulnerable to attack by angry handlebars from either side.

Pleasant accessories abound on the MC5. Magura throttle, controls and grips draw varying praise. The first two are universally acclaimed, at least. Metzeler tires hardly ever produce a complaint, unless you

have to pay for them. And someone deserves a great big kiss for equipping KTM/Pentons with Sun rims. These are certainly a significant additional expense to the importers and the boys ought to be reinforced for their no-compromise attitude. If you see John or Ted, at least give them a pat on the back. Also, KTM/Penton is the



Marzocchi shocks have larger shafts and reservoirs. Chain guide moves up and down.



## PENTON 250 MC5

Price (approx. retail, West Coast): \$1795

Engine . . . Two-stroke, piston-port single

Displacement . . . . . 245.47cc

Bore & Stroke . . . . . 71mmx62mm

Compression Ratio . . . . . 8.2:1 actual

Carburetion . . . . . 38mm Bing

Standard Jetting:

165 main, 283 needle jet, 40 pilot

Horsepower:

32.4 hp at 8000, 34 hp claimed

Clutch . . . . . 7-disc wet-type

Primary Drive . . . . . Gear, 2.76:1

Transmission Ratios:

1) 2.57

2) 1.78

3) 1.33

4) 1.04

5) 0.88

6) 0.75

Final Drive:

530 Renold; 13-tooth countershaft, 52-tooth rear sprocket

Air Filtration . . . . . Twin-Air, oiled foam

Electrics . . . . . Motoplat (small flywheel)

Lubrication . . . . . Pre-mix, 32:1

Recommended fuel . . . . . Premium

Recommended oil . . . . . Hi-Point

Fuel Tank Capacity . . . . . 1.8 gallons

Frame:

Chrome molybdenum steel, double cradle

Suspension:

Front: Marzocchi fork with 225mm travel measured, 220cc oil capacity (flushed)

Rear: Nitrogen/oil Marzocchi, 250mm travel measured

Wheels & Spokes:

Front: Sun rims WM1, stainless spokes, 4mm

Rear: Sun rims WM2, stainless spokes, 4mm

Tires:

Front: 3.00x21 Metzeler

Rear: 4.50x18 Metzeler

Dimensions:

Wheelbase: 143.5cm + 2.5cm (56.5 inches)

Swingarm length . . . . 48.0cm (19 inches)

Ground clearance . . . 30.0 cm (12.0 inches)

Bars, height . . . . . N/A

width . . . . . 83.7cm (33.5 inches)

Pegs, height . . . . . 33.7cm (13.5 inches)

width . . . . . N/A

Seat Height . . . . . 90cm (36.0 inches)

Weight . . . . . 88.5 kg (213 pounds)

Brakes:

Front: Full width, cable-operated

Rear: Full width, rod-operated

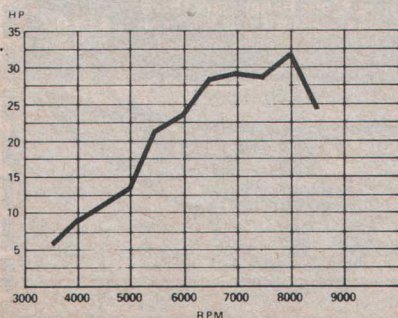
Instruments . . . . . None

Lights . . . . . Coils in ignition unit

Silencer . . . . . MX only

Spark Arrestor . . . . . None

Warranty . . . . . None



only dirt bike to come with a 530 chain. Not only is it stronger, but it also provides a vent for slime in its extra width.

### "GOD ONLY KNOWS OUR EFFORTS AND SORROWS."

John Penton, 1976

And of course there are a few bitches. Like the rear brake, for instance. When you do locate and hold onto the pedal the brake is a might insensitive and takes a period of rider brain adjustment. But the pedal itself proves to be narrow and the serrations quickly pack with mud, rendering it quite slippable. It also pivots on a bolt which can pinch its action if overtightened. The bolt also tends to become mud-packed, making things worse yet.

We encountered a difficulty which we are not willing to fully blame upon the motorcycle. A situation where we were perhaps slightly negligent, but where our neglect shouldn't have caused the problem. Though the spokes on the front wheel were checked regularly and remained generally tight, two pulled away from the magnesium

front hub, breaking the casting. After the break we found four mildly loose spokes opposite the fracture. These could have precipitated it or been a result of it. We don't know. But you had best keep an eye out, Penton/KTM owners.

It would be a happy day when more manufacturers equip their bikes with primary kickstart. KTM could be one.

### "SHE CAN DANCE A CAJUN RHYTHM JUST LIKE A WILLYS IN FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE."

Grateful Dead

OK, we know Grateful Dead quotes are camp in this day and age, but; to the subject at hand — the sensation of a Penton 250 at speed.

Speed itself is a relative thing. What is fast to one may be slow or beyond conception to the next person. If speed has the same meaning to every rider of every skill, it most certainly does *not* have the same meaning to every motorcycle. The human is inherently more flexible than the motorcycle. So, commonly a rider of a particular

*Continued on page 80*







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**PENTON**

*Continued from page 29*

skill level may find a particular cycle well suited to his or her desires, where a different rider may not be able to handle it. Suspension, power characteristics, gear ratios and myriad other facets of dirt cycle design are usually suited to a particular skill level. It may be a computer-determined Mr. Average or a factory's top racer to whom a motorcycle's subsystems are well-suited.



How so? Both simple and not so simple. Powerband might be the foremost item. A proper combination of flywheel and horsepower allows the rider with less than perfect throttle control to apply more power to the ground with fewer low-sides than a Novice could normally expect. A proper combination of horsepower and flywheel allows the Expert to apply the Penton/KTM's numerous horsepower to the ground with less wheel-spin. And the most vibration-free motor we have encountered won't tickle your fancies.

Of course, without suspension the perfect motor would be less than perfect. 9.8 inches of rear wheel travel works hand and hand with the motor. Combined with an inch less fork travel, that suspension provides an exceptionally plush ride. Plush is comfortable is less rider fatigue. Every person who rode the Penton/KTM mentioned how relaxing it was to ride. Most felt that they would be much less tired in the course of a full moto on the MC5 than on their current mount. During a 30-minute moto most riders find a rising tide of fatigue cutting into their skill and their lap times.

Another contributing factor is a neutral sort of non-demanding handling. That is, the MC5 is equally happy to ride the outside of

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a corner or cut sharply to the inside. There was a tendency among testers to describe its handling as Maico-like. This is probably due to the October test of the 440 Maico. Had they been reversed chronologically, the Maico might well have been described as Penton-like. Maico-like or Penton-like, the motorcycle could be described as extremely stable and smooth over bumps and with a front wheel which tends to follow the line of sight of the rider. Jerking or yanking on the bars is out of order — looking in the right direction is enough to execute a turn.

### DIS- OR EX- TINATION

Ten years ago there were a couple of alternative ways to go dirt racing. Econo-racers were represented by the likes of the Bridgestone 100 racer. Real-racers were exemplified by the Penton 125. Ten years ago there was little decision. If you could afford the Penton, you bought it. Things are different today. It becomes difficult to measure horsepower versus horsepower or dollar versus dollar. Subtlety is difficult to quantify.

### COHABITATION? SURE. BUT WHAT ABOUT MARRIAGE?

Why you should buy a Penton/KTM 250 may not be immediately apparent on a test ride. In the end one should not buy the MC5 for any of the things it may be in a comparative sense: faster, plusher or more prestigious. Penton/KTM motorcycles are bought in the same way as marriages are formed: from faith, commitment and a little insanity. What the bike can do as mistress is small indeed compared to its potential as a wife. Give a little, get a lot.

But for those of you desiring more specific answers, it would be fair to classify the Penton as the easiest to ride and most comfortable of the genuinely competitive 250 motocrossers. And that's for any rider from Beginner to Pro. Its excellent powerband, slick shifting and posh suspension make it so.

And it is also only fair to say that the Penton is lighter, wider and has slightly less pure horsepower than another bike you might read about in this issue. What this may mean to you is in question, but keep in mind that Guenady Moiseev rides one basically stock in Europe. Who can argue with him?



## Petty designed the "Works G.P. Grip" that Brad Lackey wants to hold onto.

Champion riders like Brad Lackey and Jim Pomeroy both use Petty's new rider designed G.P. Grips. The grips that enable them to hold on longer with less strain. Brad used G.P.'s while finishing second overall at Carlsbad. Jim is currently using them during his pursuit of The World 250 Championship in Europe.

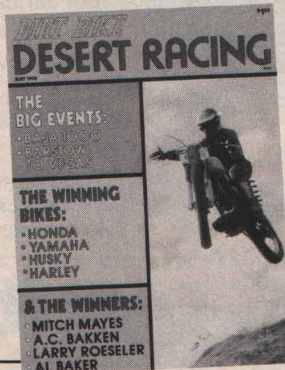
After his fierce Carlsbad finish, Brad walked up to Preston, held up his hands and paid the G.P. Grips the supreme compliment when he said, "Look man, no blisters!"

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Photo by Chet Hyberger

For more information, write Preston Petty Product, Inc., Dept. , 403 North Main Street, Newberg, Oregon 97132



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