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Supermoto Magazine™

ISSUE No 1

Jan/Feb 2002

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Jo Guest!



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Muscle-bound Thumper...

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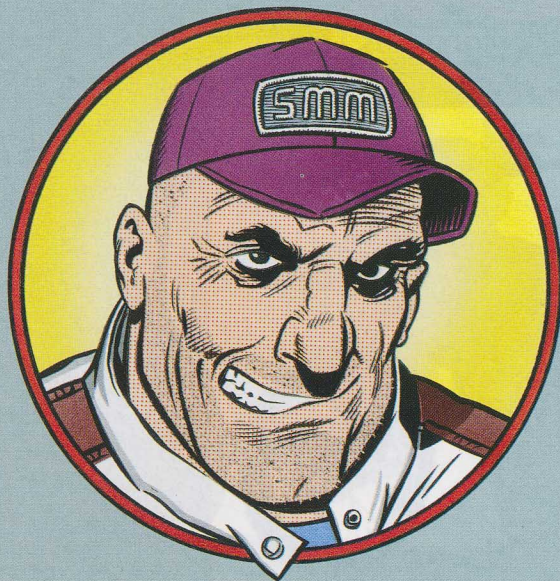
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Are You Having Fun Yet?



Welcome to this the very first issue of Supermoto Magazine. A magazine that's aimed at 'moto-heads' everywhere.

The UK Supermoto scene is currently enjoying a massive growth period. And not before time. Several reasons have been put forward to explain this phenomenon, from disillusioned sportsbike riders who fear for their licence every time they leave the garage, to the off-road enthusiast looking to make the most out of their dirtbike's versatility. This combined with rocketing superbike insurance premiums and the factories producing ever-more suitable dirtbikes (ripe for conversion), goes some of the way to explaining the present supermoto boom.

We aim to keep you informed of all aspects of tarmac terrorism that relate to the wonderful sideways world of SM. From road to race; track-days and hill-climb events; how to build your own SM and how to compete - and of course product and bike tests - our brief is deliberately wide. You name it, if it's to do with fat, sticky-tyred dirtbikes, we'll be covering it.

As the UK's only supermoto publication it's down to you the reader to let us know what you want to see within these pages. If we're doing it wrong we want to know. If you want to see something in particular drop us a line. Finally let's get out there and spread the gospel to the unconverted.

Are you having fun yet?

Dave 'Crasher' Cornish

Supermoto
Magazine

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SM guru Dave Lippett has been involved in 'the scene' from the very beginning...

COMMENTS



Hurry hurry! It's that time of year again. The fantastic spectacle of indoor supermoto racing returns to the Bercy stadium in Paris for the annual Guidon d'Or (golden handlebars). For those of you who've been living under a rock for the last 15 years, this event attracts all of the top European supermoto racers who take on stars from the GP, superbike and MX world. Amazing indoors sideways action ensures a great night's entertainment. Dust off those post-Christmas blues and treat your missus to a weekend in Paris on 19 January 2002. Contact: 0031 (0)1 41 40 31 28 for more details.

FAST FROGGIES!

Hot Dates:

Nora has provisionally announced its supermoto race calendar for this year. Details as follows...

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 24 Feb Blyton (non-champs) | 30 June Warden Law (Tyne) | 20 Oct Lydd (Kent) |
| 17 Mar Cadwell Park (Lincs) | 28 July Blyton (Lincs) | Please note some circuits |
| 21 Apr Three Sisters (Lancs) | 25 Aug Manby (Lincs) | have spectator facilities and |
| 5 May Wilton Mill (Northants) | 1 Sept Three Sisters (Lancs) | may charge an entrance fee. |
| 9 June Manby (Lincs) | 29 Sept (Anglesey) (N Wales) | Dates are subject to change. |

HOT HUSKY SLEDS

Husqvarna importer Husky Sport has announced that the production of the gorgeous looking Nox supermoto bike is on hold due to outside supply problems with carbon fibre and titanium components. To get around this temporary problem Husky Sport will be selling an interim Nox/570SMR hybrid called the 570SMR-R. This bike will basically be a Nox without the alloy tank, Ti goodies or carbon fibre panels. However the bike will retain the factory spec motor, titanium pipe, full road kit etc. No prices yet but expect the RR to be priced somewhere between the 570SMR (£5495) and the full monty Nox's seven and a half big ones. Be quick and there may still be some bikes available. Contact Husky Sport on: 01962 771122.



Soapbox

WNI e'd like to hear from you. Whether you fancy yourself as Britain's answer to the Chambon brothers or merely have a passing interest in SM. 'Dear Supermoto Magazine' will be a regular feature within the mag. This gives moto-heads everywhere a chance to voice their opinions on all things SM related. Drop us a line and tell us what you would like to see more of (or less of), and generally let us know your feelings on our

favourite pastime. If you think your bike is good enough to grace these hallowed pages, give us a call. It doesn't have to be a ten grand factory replica either. We may also be featuring a problems page for any technical problems etc (but please don't ring the office asking how to re-wire a Gilera Nordwest). Instead put pen to paper and send your offerings to:

**Letters
Supermoto Magazine
PO Box 9845
London
W13 9WP**

The Donington Park Exhibition Centre will host the all-new Dirt Bike & Supermoto Show on 25-27 Jan. With almost 100 exhibitors displaying what's hot for the coming season, it's your chance to stock up on goodies. Needless to say Supermoto Magazine will have a presence, come along and meet the crew, get a poster, or sign up for a sub. You might even walk away with a much sought after SM sticker! With SM demonstrations outside, call 01273 674321 and order an advance ticket, and we'll see you there...



INSIDE LINE

CCM competition

CCM has kindly offered one of our readers a day out at one of their superbly run Supermoto track days. To win this fantastic chance to thrash a big-bore CCM moto around the twists and turns of Three Sisters circuit, send in your best Supermoto (or related) photograph to the editorial address. We will then judge and print the winner in the next issue of SMM. Please bear in mind that the judges are easily bribed and we find that a discreetly folded 50 and a revealing snap of the wife usually does the trick. The prize includes the use of a CCM 604, fuel, loan of riding kit and as much fun as you could ever want in leather. Send your pics in with your name, address and phone number on the back to:

Photo Competition
Supermoto Magazine
PO Box 9845
London
W13 9WP

Rumours Rumours

We have heard from a reliable source (fat bloke down the pub) that 2002 will see a major player involved in the British Supermoto racing scene. Word has it that a televised summer series will be run on some of the UK's top circuits giving the sport a long overdue boost. Fat bloke also says he knows where to get some cheap cigarettes as well. Contact: Fat bloke at the Swan every night except Tuesdays.

SM Party #1

For those party animals that still haven't had enough over the recent holiday period, NORA are having their annual presentation bash on 2 Feb. The location is The Fox Inn near Grantham in Lincs - kick-off at

7.30 with the bar open until 1am. Tickets are available at a subsidised £10, which includes a slap-up carvery and disco. Drop John a line on 01926 613025 for more info and don't forget your tux.

SM Party #2

KTM fans should mark 1 - 5 May in their diaries as this is the date for the annual KTM festival which this year moves to Villars-sous-Écot in France. This event is a must for committed fans of the Austrian marque. As well as the usual dirt-bike stuff there will be a large supermoto presence including races, stunt contests, wheelie competitions and best of all, dancing girls. As if this wasn't enough, a huge all night party is planned to round off what is fast becoming *the* bash of the year. All you need is a KTM, a clean pair of orange boxers and the 60 quid entry fee. Contact Isabella Lutsch on 0043 7742 60 00153. Be there or be somewhere else...

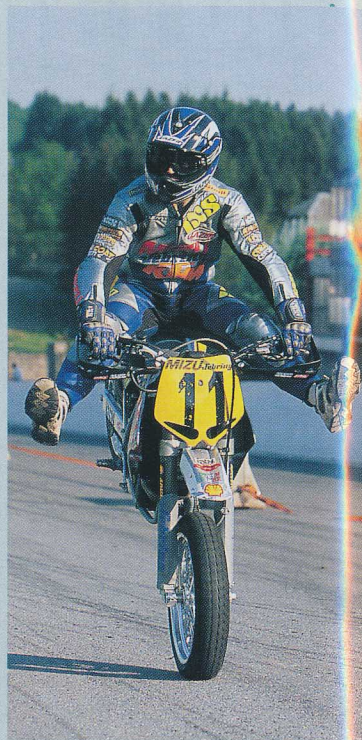
Speedway Supermoto.

As if supermoto racing wasn't scary enough on the second-rate British circuits we have to use, one promoter we know of is looking to get a supermoto/speedway race series up and running. The idea would be that four SM bikes start alongside each other for a speedway style sprint race. Okay this all may seem a tad weird but dirt oval racing (using MX bikes) is big news down under. No dates as yet but as soon as we know more we'll keep you informed. Our very own 'Chopper' Harris has already shown a disturbing, not to mention unhealthy interest. Rather you, than me mate.

Ex-speedway rider Peter Seaton is behind this mad-cap idea. Give him a bell on 01280 817276 and *don't* tell him we sent you.

Rubber Up

Recently launched in the UK are a new range of Maxxis Goldspeed supermoto tyres. Specifically designed in Europe for supermoto



racing, the Goldspeeds are available as slicks, full wets and intermediate versions. They also come in a huge choice of compounds from super soft through to hard. The hot news for this year however is the introduction of a fully street legal version of the intermediate race tyre.

At the moment the Goldspeed name may not be well known in Britain but a sizeable number of Euro riders race on them and the European championships (and Northern Irish P&O championship) is backed by Maxxis Goldspeed. Hopefully we will be testing some of these new boots throughout the year. For more information on the Goldspeed tyres and prices etc contact Trevor Pope M/cs on 02392 521111 (for UK mainland) and P&O championship sponsors Trackside MX on 028 4062 2449 (for NI and Eire).



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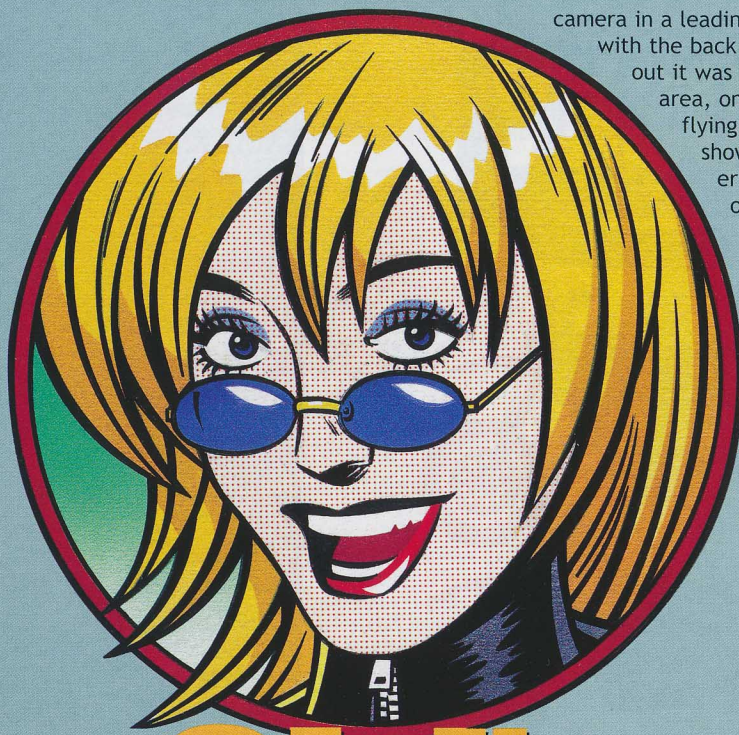
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Girl's TALK

Emma Wheeler begins a column on how she put the Emm into S-Emm...

Welcome to Supermoto - the sport, the lifestyle and the magazine - you know it makes sense...

I can't remember the exact date that I saw the light, only that it was four or five years ago and the guy responsible for my curious interest in these so called 'Super Motorcycles' was a certain Frenchman: Monsieur S Chambon. He was caught on

camera in a leading UK bike magazine with the back end hanging so far out it was in a different postal area, one hand off the bars flying the V sign and a shower of gold sparks erupting from the toe of his trailing foot.

'Crikey!' I thought, '...that looks fun'. Until then my only real taste of backing things in, was when I got home from work and had to reverse my pick-up into the garage. Little did I know at the time that I was standing at the top of a long and slippery slope leading to an unnatural interest in Morads, Excels, Akronts, disc offsets, caliper sizes and hub interchangeability. Plus of course the start of a huge collection of cut slicks, inter's and wets to rival a tyre distribution warehouse.

And so it came to pass that a set of 17" wheels and sticky Bridgestones found their way onto my tuned CRM and I discovered that my greatest love in life (well biking life), had a new and very interesting twist!

After ten years of road riding, a smidgen of MX, several enduros and a dabble in S5400 road racing, I had found something that combined the excitement of all four of these major motorcycling disciplines in one go. The most amazing thing of all was that supermoto actually gave me four times the buzz of any other type of biking - too good to be true?

No, honestly, I promise you I am not exaggerating. Try it for yourself. Street or track (or slippery supermarket car park after-hours!), SM bikes rock!

There are many reasons why you might have bought or created a supermotard bike, or why you have picked up this new magazine with the intention of acquiring one. If you find yourself a bit light-headed, giggling and twitching at the thought of a supermoto bike, be it for commuting, racing or just the occasional scratch around the local lanes on a sunny day. Just do it! You won't be sorry. Surrender to SM and this mag will hopefully be right up your gravel-strewn street.

We don't care why you ended up a Moto-head or how/why/when you intend using your motard, we just want you to share in that feeling of having stumbled upon something a little special and away from the norm (well, for now anyway!). And we want to make the whole experience a lot more accessible, amusing and enjoyable for you.

Maybe you've come from the traditional TBM dirtbike/enduro background. Had an MX, trail or enduro bike laid up for most of last year due to F&M and want to convert it? Maybe you just long for the totally balls-out look of a well-fettled SM - petite, poised, purposeful and ready to kick road-bike butt on the B-roads.

On the other hand it could be you've emigrated from 150bhp sports rockets and inside your mind, you're using the 'cheaper insurance, more fun for a short blast, safer to ride and less likely to get me nicked' routine.

Come on. Who are you trying to kid?! Remember, SM could also stand for Stunt Machine - there's many an ordinary, sensible geezer I've seen turn into a complete stuntmaster-flash due to the fact that SM bikes are the most agile, lithe and incredible handling machines out there. If you think motards are just lowly one-lungers with only 50-odd brake, think again. Their weight size and handling makes them the perfect stoppie, wheelie and slideways machine and that's only the beginning.

Here at Supermoto Magazine we're not trying to turn you into a hooligan, but we accept that there's always that chance...

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Trackdays were once the sole preserve of the serious sportsbike rider - but not anymore. With a growing number of supermotos turning up at tracks up and down the country, it was only a matter of time before an SM-only trackday was organised. And naturally we were there to join in the fun...

INI estling in the Lincolnshire Wolds between Louth and Horncastle is Cadwell Park. One of Britain's top racing circuits. Offering a technical, hilly and twisty track to excite even the most jaded riders - and at last here was a trackday just for supermotos.

At least in principal it was. But with the winter getting ever closer and wet tracks almost a dead cert, even track hardened supermoto guys and girls must have thought twice. In fact Track Time Promotions eventually filled the remaining spaces on the grid with a few sportsbikes. Ah well, at least it gave us a target to aim at!

A quick head count revealed a sizeable number of eager throttle-happy motoheads had turned up and we still outnumbered the sportsbike jockeys by two to one.



Lap- LAND



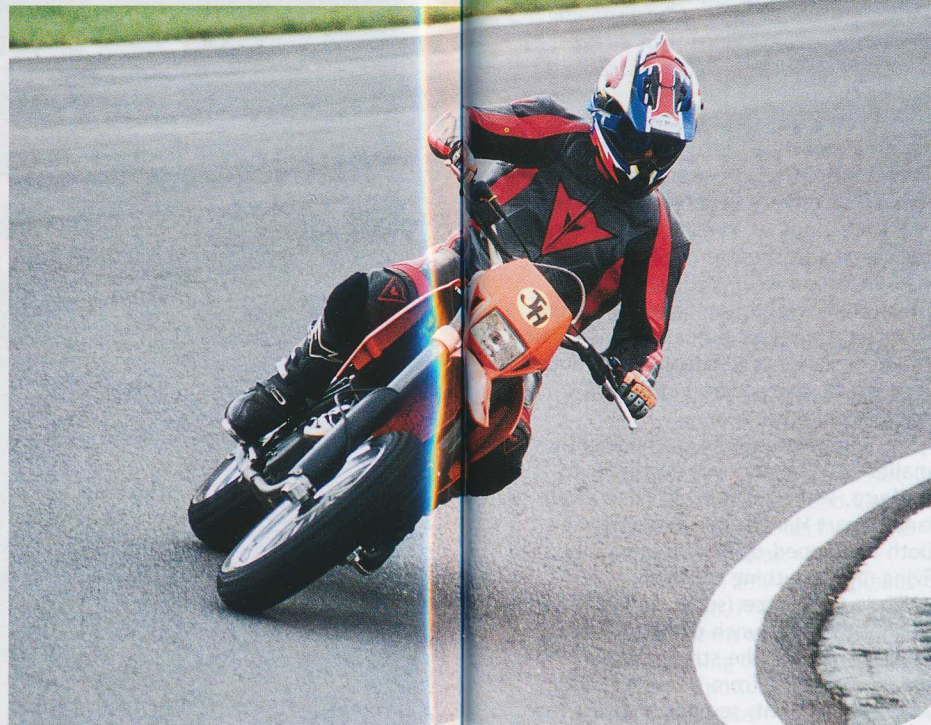
Above & Below:
Chopper guns his
Supercomp round
Cadwell's curves.
Top Right: SM's only!

The first track day that I can recall attending was way back in 1992, at the oh-so-flat Pembrey circuit in deepest Wales (well, flat compared to Cadwell Park anyway). That

was on my trusty motarded XT600 Yamaha and at the time I thought, 'yes this is the way to go', but then with my background firmly rooted in dirtbikes, I've never really been into the sportsbike scene anyway.

Now I know that in the UK the growth of our spectacular sport has been painfully slow to take off, but I can't believe that nearly ten years after I first tried it, it's only now just starting to get a hold. Anyway 'times they are a changin'' and these days supermoto machines (whilst not exactly a common sight) are becoming a more and more popular alternative to the bored/skint, Blade/R1 pilot looking for high octane kicks.

So, a total of 25 SM machines and riders braved the foul weather that met us at the Lincolnshire circuit, and with a varied mix of equipment in attendance ranging from CCMs to KTMs, Huskys to Hondas etc, a fun packed day was on the cards.



Lap- LAND

Phil of Track Time Promotions headed the safety briefing and I think he must have thought 'What am I doing here? It's going to be a disaster!' I'm convinced he thought we were all a bunch of reckless hooligans out for mischief. And I guess he wasn't too far wrong...

As the briefing got underway, Phil warned us not to cut across the grass in order to overtake! Maybe he's seen me ride before. Oops.

Anyway the one thing we were allowed to do was wheelies. On most track days this is a big no-no and would be greeted by a rapidly waved black flag followed by a trip to the exit gate. But this time it was positively encouraged. Typical. When it comes to wheelies, I'm about as useful as an MCN road test.

Phil seemed to have little idea that a supermoto bike does actually take much the same lines as the big boys, we just brake later (much later), turn quicker

'I'm convinced he thought we were all a bunch of reckless hooligans...'



Lap- LAND

(much quicker) and get the power down sooner (all 40 to 50bhp of it). But to be fair to the organisers, this SM lark is a totally new concept to them - and to be honest we're grateful that they took the risk of running such an event.

We were split into two groups, which I guess was a good thing as this allowed some of the sportsbike riders to watch the spectacle from the relative safety of the pit lane wall.

The first of the morning sessions were wet which managed to trip up SMM's very own Emma Wheeler on her once pristine CR330. Well done

'Emma lost the front end coming out of the left-hander on the mountain section...'

Emma for breaking the ice for everyone. Apparently wee Emm lost the front end coming out of the left-hander on the mountain section - which

I'm told has claimed many an unsuspecting rider due to the overhanging trees making the corner a little on the greasy side. (Track tip #1)

Andy Mack was another unlucky rider who also came to grief. Andy is not unlike our very own 'Crasher' Cornish who also likes to check out the scenery on a regu-

lar basis. (Track tip #2 stay well away from them both). Anyway, as is typical with an SM bike, there was little real damage (apart from the owners' egos) and they were all soon up and running again with nothing more than a few scratched plastics to worry about.

After the morning rain had disappeared the afternoon sessions saw a rapidly drying track and the real fun could begin.

Apart from the two stunt riders mentioned above, very little time was wasted with spills - and as a result, maximum track time was spent enjoying Cadwell's challenging curves.

Nick Hudson and Brendan Tingle were demonstrating their big-bore Honda four-strokes' considerable capabilities; both were strong contenders in the NORA championship last year.

Sheridan Coulter was on the slightly smaller 520KTM and was putting it to good use, while regular trackday attendants Stuart Harris and Ullyse Dormoy (both on hopped-up Supercomps), were giving me something to chase.

Honda CR500 ace (so he tells us), Rob Vaugner led the bunch of two-strokes, although most of the stoker 'boyz' were initially suffering from being seriously under-g geared. This seemed to bring the



motard team-spirit out in everybody and Honda sprockets were very much the commodity of the day.

First prize for the best double act went to a couple of YZ426F riders doing synchronised wheelies across the mountain. Not the fastest way around Cadwell I might add, but certainly the most spectacular.

Despite a few empty places on the grid, Phil reckoned it will go down as one of the most entertaining days for the Track Time Promotions team. And of course the staff of Cadwell (who

still haven't stopped laughing), said they would be happy to see us return in the near future.

Finally, the one thing that did strike me, was the wonderful sense of camaraderie in the pits - with everybody helping each other out with their problems. Something that isn't always the case with other sports.

Talking to Emma and Nick after the event, they say that this is the norm, as most of the riders are NORA-race regulars and everybody just gets stuck in and helps out.

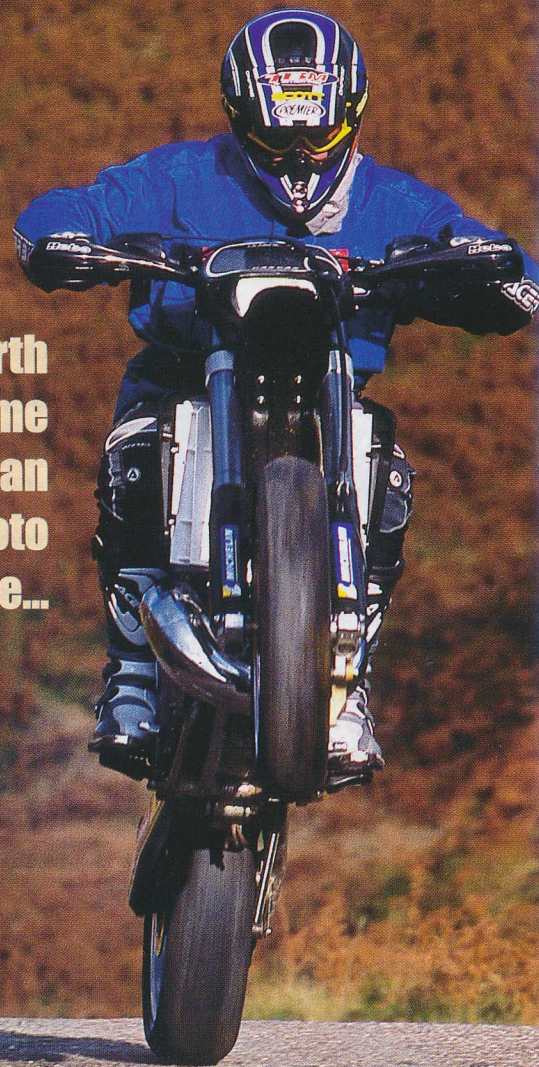
The result of this end of season thrash looks promising. Track Time Promotions (and a few others including ourselves!) plan to hold similar SM-only track days throughout the year.

This will also include an SM training school at Cadwell in March (the day before the NORA round). Needless to say we'll be there to pick up some tips (*you certainly need it, Ed*). So what are you waiting for? An SM track day offers the frustrated barstool racer all the fun without any of the hassle of either competing or running the wrath of the boys in blue. You know it makes sense...

Above: Feast your eyes on the variety of machinery on display. Left: Uurgh what's that on your tyre mate...?

Smells Like Teen SPIRIT

Crasher went up north
in search of some
Mediterranean
supermoto
sunshine...



Story: Dave Crasher Cornish, Pics: SM Magazine

Less is more:
Gas Gas SM250
is a model of
lightweight
simplicity...



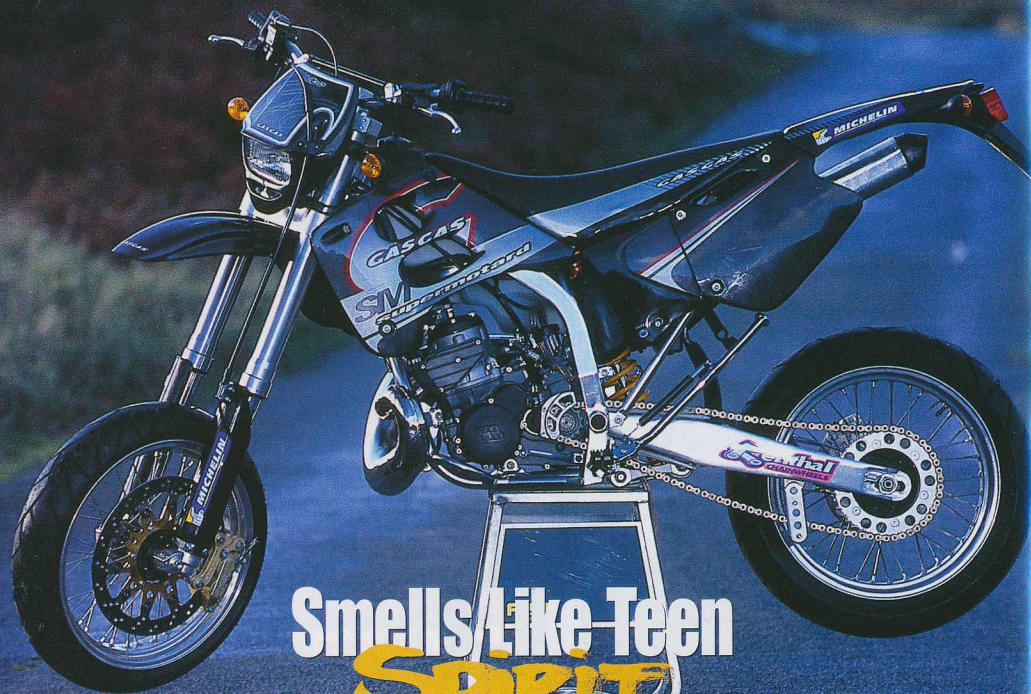
Gas Gas may not mean much to the average road rider but to the serious dirtbike junkie the name is synonymous with trick, high performance two-stroke enduro racers and jewel-like precision trials machines. Over the last ten years the small Spanish factory has gone from strength to strength and to keep up with a flourishing demand, has recently moved into a much larger and more modern production facility.

Due to the boom in all things supermoto, this year the British importers have decided to bring in the complete new range of Gasser Supermotard bikes. From the 50cc 'Rookie' right through to the all-new hi-tech fuel injected, electric start 400cc thumper - there's now an SM bike for every age and wallet.

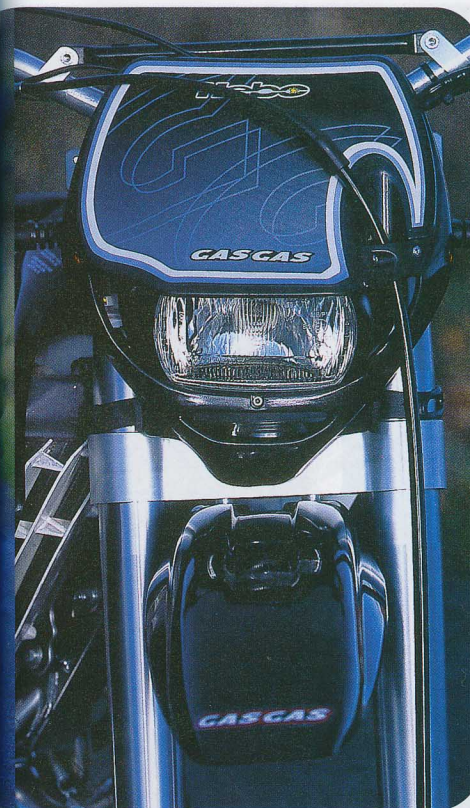
New thumper aside however, it is for their superb stokers that Gas Gas are predominantly known. So the launch late last year of their SM250 Supermoto, using what is essentially a lightly modified 250EC enduro bike promised to be a treat for petrol-heads everywhere.

Derby County

I arrived at the Gas Gas workshops deep in the Derbyshire countryside to find a nicely prepped 250 Supermotard ready



Smells Like Teen
SPIRIT



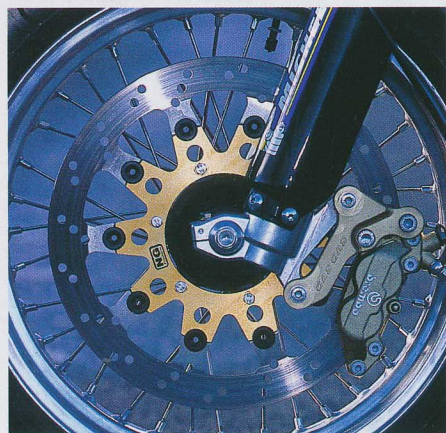
hubs which in turn carry a fully floating 320mm NG disc on the front and the more usual dirtbike-sized 220mm item at the rear. Brembo supplies the four-piston caliper at the sharp end and the rest of the braking kit comes courtesy of Nissin. So the Spanish built Gas Gas is actually a very international affair with parts sourced from all over the world. Shopping around obviously pays off, it would appear.

Nevertheless what we have here is basically a motarded, road-registered, EC enduro racer no more, no less. And as such, it's a no-compromise, 'take-no-prisoners' kind of bike. There's no oil injection system - too much weight, way too complicated. No, the Gasser is a serious bike

for the serious moto-head. So despite wearing all the road-legal paraphernalia - speedo, indicators, full lighting kit - the SM250 is still

a seriously intense experience for the committed two-stroke fan. And I spent a cold but highly memorable day aboard the thing, trying to get its measure. With only a few short hours of winter sunshine at this time of year, I hurriedly kitted up and set out in search of some demanding roads.

it's a no-compromise,
'take-no-prisoners'
kind of bike...



Above: Think carefully before hauling on the awesome Brembo/NG brakes. This thing doesn't take much stopping!
Right: High quality kit needn't cost a fortune. Gasser is testament to that...

Above: Street legal, but not necessarily street sensible! SM250 is a model in minimalism...



for play: polished, fully fuelled and just waiting to be hammered down some picturesque back roads.

A quick shufty over the bike is like reading a 'Who's who?' of the European off-road USD suppliers. Beefy 45mm USD Marzocchi forks offer 295mm of well-damped travel. This is matched at the rear by a sumptuous Ohlins shocker working through a progressive linkage (via a serious-looking alloy Delta-Box swing-arm), to give 320mm of super plush movement.

Highly polished Morad rims are laced onto Gas Gas's own

Bad Vibrations

The view from the rider's perch is decidedly racy. Slim and purposeful, the firm enduro seat butts right up to the filler-cap at the front, then stretches neatly back over the rear mudguard, offering unrestricted movement forwards and backwards. The alloy bars and wide serrated footrests give a real dirtbike 'attack' position, but also offer a comfortable and natural riding layout.

A prod of the alloy kick-start is quickly followed by a raucous 'brapp, brapp' from the enduro silencer's end cap. It's patently obvious that the SM250 is a thinly disguised dirtbike. Actually most of the din comes from the nickel-plated single-skin Messico expansion chamber which resonates with every blip of the

Smells Like Teen SPIRIT



Above: Rider's eye view is as basic as it gets...

Far right: Good ergos encourage you to be generous with your body English...

light throttle. However the exhaust note is just about on the right side of acceptable (especially for true two-stroke aficionados) and as long as you don't go mad in built-up areas (difficult), it shouldn't attract too much unwanted attention.

Once the motor was sufficiently warm (after a couple of minutes) I pulled in the super light hydraulic clutch, snicked into first and pointed the Gasser's stubby front mudguard in the direction of some of the best biking roads in Britain. The enduro-derived ratios mean that



cruising is an uncomfortable, vibey, and to be blunt, none-too-pleasant experience. Vibrations intrude mostly through the wide serrated pegs, the seat is on the firm side of hard, and to cap it all the motor feels as though it's straining against the leash, just waiting to be given it's head and thrashed...

sixth gear comes up in a frenzied blur of slick up-shifts, and it's then that the SM250's uncompromising nature becomes all too clear. Straight line



'haul on the brakes at any speed and the results are stunning...'

So that's exactly what I did. Click down a gear, yank on the throttle and the result is instantaneous. The Gasser leaps forward like an angry dog and heralds its arrival with a mechanical bark. Revving out in the gears the motor rewards you with a real surge

of violent acceleration that only a well-sorted stroker can deliver. Not smooth and controllable in the way of most thumpers, but peaky, raucous and eye-wateringly rapid - though somewhat short lived - before you need to click into the next of six well-matched ratios.

Not surprisingly the SM250 gives almost exactly the same sensations as riding a competition enduro bike on tarmac: rapid... eager... yet unrefined, raw, and occasionally scary. But for all its uncouth vulgarity, the SM version has a few advantages over a pure dirtbike.



Foot down, knee down, whichever is your bag, there's a corner just waiting to be blitzed on the SM

Haul on the brakes at any speed and the results are nothing short of stunning. With only 110kg to reign in, the four-pot Brembo

bites hard onto the big floating rotor and almost launches you over the bars. It took some time for me to re-calibrate my brain to allow for the bike's awesome braking capabilities. In fact on more than one occasion the Michelin Pilot front tyre locked up on the damp, potholed, B-road, despite being pretty good rubber. On such a cold day the tyre was always going to struggle to retain any heat, but all things considered, the Pilots coped well enough for some pretty serious fun to be had.

Here we Go

Gassing the throttle and working the alloy gear lever is the only way to ride this Spanish flyer. Ridden in this way the bike is not only big fun, it's completely addictive. Chase that powerband and the rewards come thick and fast. But let the bike slip out of the power or try and lug it up hills in the taller gears and you're simply wasting time. There's a gear for every occasion and you need to be in it in order to make the most of the Gasser's potential. Don't misunderstand me - it only takes a second for the bike to be back in the meat of the powerband, but the real fun lies in keeping it there all the time. Back road lunacy is all about, and thankfully the rest of the bike is well up to the challenge of that fiery motor's frantic power output.

There's no hint of flex from the nickel-plated perimeter frame and the rest of the high-spec running gear offers a finely balanced, responsive but stable ride that some manufacturers struggle to achieve. Clearly the Spanish design engineers have been working through their siestas to come up with this package. All of this compliments the potent race-based two-stroke mill, allowing the rider to make

'Chase that powerband and the rewards come thick & fast...'



Smells Like Teen SPIRIT

the most of the impressive power to weight ratio.

On the right roads the SM250

Gasser is a true thoroughbred. The ride quality, road holding and razor sharp handling need to be experienced to be believed. Undiluted supermoto in its

rawest state. However, if you're after a sensible ride-to-work bike, look elsewhere. Because I simply can't think of



Smells Like Teen
SPIRIT

any other road legal bike that demands such a 'no compromise' attitude from the rider.

Of course this is all very well for a quick, 'brain out' half hour thrash down a twisting country road, but back in reality the Gas Gas would be a literal pain in the butt to live with. Raucous and vibey, the motor guzzles expensive pre-mix, and creature comforts are non-existent. As for extended trips...? Forget it.

Above: Flat chat the Gasser tracks straight and true...

This bike offers a pure supermoto adrenaline injection with no pretensions. Nothing more, nothing less.

Back To Basics

No frills then but plenty of thrills. What you see is what you get. Which to be honest, is no bad thing. You see the Gasser is totally unpretentious. Its uncompromising nature will appeal to the purist who craves high performance at any cost.

Left: '...Sorry officer, just trying to stop the plug from oiling...'

True two-stroke SM fans will love its raucous, wheelie-prone manic acceleration. Thumper owners will not!

This is the kind of bike that, thanks to legislation, has all but disappeared off our roads. The law-abiding Japanese no longer produce performance street legal stokers so it's left to small concerns like Gas Gas to cater for the die-hard pre-mix pilot.

Personally there is no way I could live with a bike like this. As a day to day proposition the Gas Gas SM250 is just too intense. I could see myself getting on first name terms with the local Feds if I had one of these beauties tucked away in my garage. And whilst I can't deny that it's fantastic fun to thrash down a series of demanding switchbacks, at the end of the day, practicalities do have to be taken into consideration.

Bargain Racer

On the other hand, as a race bike the Gasser is powerful, light and easy to



handle. And at £3890 (plus OTR charges) it's nothing if not a real bargain. You get a well specced bike that offers serious performance for relatively little money. Add up the cost of Ohlins, Marzocchi, Messico, 17inch Michelin shod polished rims, Brembo and NG brakes and it becomes clear that for a racer and occasional scratcher, the SM250 is extraordinarily good value for a production supermoto bike.

Frankly it's refreshing to find a company like Gas Gas offering a thrilling alternative to cams and valves. And it

'...Frankly it's refreshing to find a company offering an alternative to cams & valves...'

just goes to prove that whatever the cynics might think - there's plenty of life left in the not so humble two-stroke...

Plus

Performance
Brakes
Handling
Addictive power delivery
Quality components
Fully street legal
Lightweight
A real bargain

Minus

Pre-mix only
Thirsty
Not practical for daily use
Bit noisy
Comfort?
Vibes

GAS GAS SM250 Supermotard

Price:	£3890 + otr
Engine:	Liquid cooled, two-stroke (kickstart) single with power-valve. 249.49cc
Displacement:	66.4 x 72mm
Bore & stroke:	Keihin PWK 38mm
Carburettor:	Six speed, hydraulic clutch
Transmission:	Cro-moly perimeter cradle with alloy subframe
Frame:	USD Marzocchi/WP 45mm, 295mm travel
Front susp:	Ohlins shock, with linkage 300mm travel
Rear susp:	Brembo four-piston caliper, NG 320mm fully floating disc
Front brake:	Nissin single piston caliper, Nissin 220mm disc
Rear brake:	1475mm
Wheelbase:	900mm
Seat height:	9.5 litres
Fuel capacity:	110kg (approx)
Dry weight:	Gas Gas on 01298 25460
Contact:	

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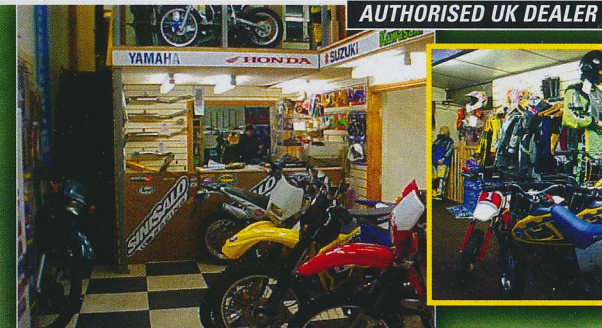
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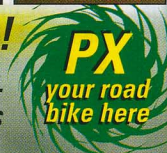
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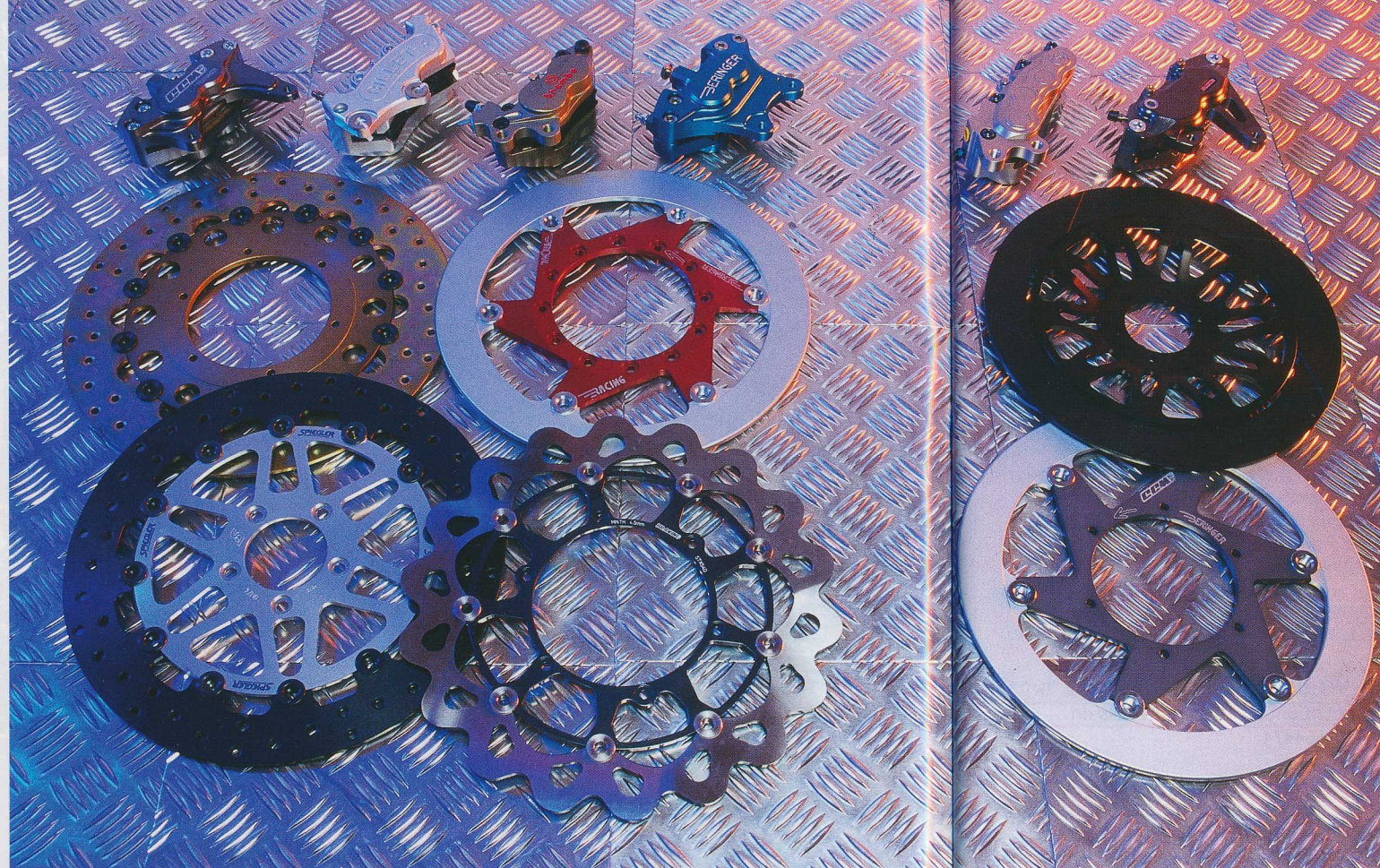


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Anchors AWAY

Dinner plate-sized discs and matching calipers are where it's at...

INo self-respecting supermoto bike should be seen wearing anything other than a gargantuan race quality front braking system. And whilst this top-notch hardware doesn't come cheap, the results of fitting a carefully matched oversize front disc and specialised brake caliper are nothing short of amazing. We managed to get together some of the best, most drool-worthy pieces of braking kit available for this specialised market. Feast your eyes on this lot, then get your cheque-book out!

Brembo

Probably the best-known manufacturer of race spec brakes. Brembo supply dozens of top car and bike teams with their famous trademark gold race quality braking components. At one time Brembo had

the race brake market sown up, but recently other companies have been muscling in on the Italians' turf.

Brembo importers GPR supplied us with a 320mm fully floating disc and billet four-pot caliper to fit the popular Suzuki DR-Z400. The 5mm thick disc features a rough-cast stainless swept area with a gold anodised mounting spider. The GP spec billet four piston caliper comes complete with pads and will require a mounting bracket to fit onto the fork leg. GPR are currently working on a range of bolt on kits for specific supermoto applications.

Final kits will include, caliper, pads, disc, all mounting hardware a stainless braided Goodridge hose and brake fluid. These kits will retail at around £700. Discs are £170.47, billet caliper £306.00 (both plus VAT). Contact GPR on 01908 226691.

Spiegler

These German-made brakes may not be quite as well known as some of the opposition, but the quality is as good as it gets. Popular with specials builders in their homeland, Spiegler are the brakes of choice for the well-heeled and discerning Motard rider. The calipers in particular are nothing short of a work of art in light alloy. The eight-piston billet caliper features a single pad per side and weighs in at a featherweight 680g, a lighter (484g) four-pot version is also available and is particularly suited to the lighter-weight supermoto bike. The 320mm Spiegler floating discs are made to the same high standards and are available with either ductile iron or stainless steel swept areas mounted to a machined billet carrier. Ready-made supermoto kits are also available which include a 320mm floating disc, eight pot caliper, hose and all the mounting hardware. These retail for around £570. Eight piston calipers (inc bracket) cost £300, with the four-pots (inc bracket) coming in around £266. A Spiegler floating disc can be yours from £137. Contact Spiegler importers PDQ on 01753 811060.

PFM

These British made race discs are gaining a well-deserved reputation in the road race world (especially with TT riders). CNC machined, the cast iron rotors are fixed to the alloy centres using a simple but trick looking dog-drive and snap ring system. This also eliminates the need for the wear-prone buttons used on more conventional floating discs. Whilst there is no specific supermoto kit available at the moment, distributor Demon Tweaks are currently working on a bolt on, boxed kit as we speak. 320mm Floating discs start at around £152. Contact Demon Tweaks on 01978 664474.

Beringer

Seeing as supermoto is basically a French invention it seems only fitting that some of the best braking kit is made over in France. Standard equipment on the Swiss-built Monnier XR supermotors, Beringer is a name that is well known to most 'moto-heads' and no self respecting

French motard bike is complete without a bright red (and now blue) disc and caliper conversion. A 310mm fully floating cast iron disc sits on a CNC machined hard anodised spider and is available in blue or red. The beautifully crafted four-pot caliper is hewn from solid billet and features titanium fixing bolts. Beringer can supply specific supermoto kits, which include a four-pot caliper (inc pads), and 310mm floating disc for £498.98 inc VAT. Contact Jack Lilley Motorcycles on 01932 246055.

Braking

Braking is another Italian manufacturer producing top race quality braking systems for all forms of bike sport. The real star of the Braking range is the 320mm Wave Disc featuring a semi-floating set-up. A CNC alloy spider is attached to a stainless steel petal-shaped laser-cut disc. Apart from good looks, the claimed advantage of this unusual design is that the leading edge of the disc de-glazes the pads every pass. This is claimed to give a more consistent and hence stronger braking action. Standard pattern 320mm race discs are also available. The

four piston billet caliper is finished in anodised blue and includes a pair of Braking's own sintered pads. These calipers bolt straight onto the fork leg and avoid the flex that can occur with an adapter bracket. Prices for the Wave disc are £149.80, semi-floating 320mm disc £137.72, four-pot caliper £212.80. Standard caliper spacer bracket for big disc conversions start at £42.00 (all prices plus VAT). Contact Talon Engineering on 01935 471508.

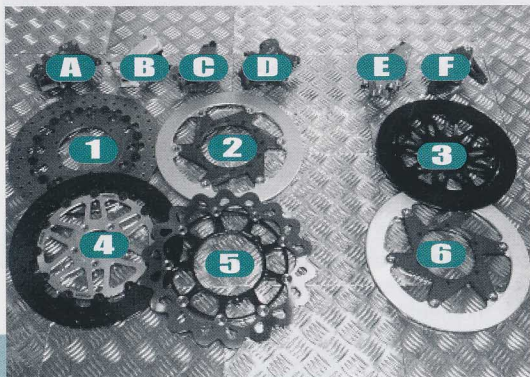
Harrison

British made Harrison four- and six-piston calipers are beautifully crafted from solid 6062-T6-grade aluminium and come with individual pads. Harrison claim that there is no specific advantage (or necessity) in changing the bike's master cylinder when fitting one of their slim-line race spec calipers. Available in a choice of finishes and colours, the Harrison Billet caliper requires a mounting bracket for some models. Prices start at £297.98 for the Billet original four-pot, and range up to £319.60 for the top of the range 2K1 six-pot. Contact Demon Tweaks on 01978 664474.

CCM

CCM offer this official upgrade kit for their range of bikes. Made in France for CCM by Beringer, the kit consist of a four-pot billet caliper and matching 310mm disc both bearing CCM's logo. The disc carrier is pressed rather than billet and the caliper is more of a massed produced item than the normal Beringer stuff. Still a high quality bolt-on kit, both caliper and disc are finished in CCM grey and offer a serious alternative to the more expensive systems. Priced at £299.99 (inc VAT) the kit is only available for CCMs fitted with WP forks. Contact your local CCM dealer or call CCM on 01254 296321.

So there you have it! We don't claim to have included every make of supermoto brakes, but these are the most popular and will give your conversion truly awesome stopping capabilities. We will be testing some of these products within these hallowed pages throughout the year, so watch out for a full report soon.



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 - B - HARRISON
 - C - BREMBO
 - D - BERINGER
 - E - SPIEGLER
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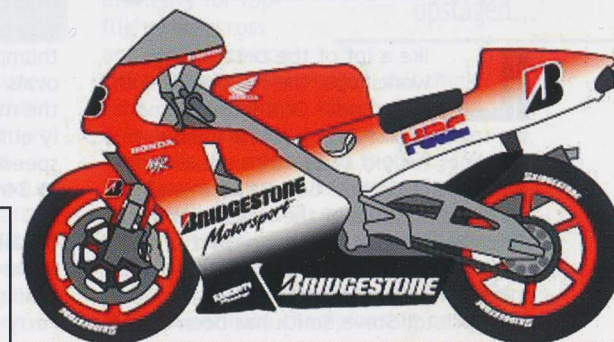
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Scoring Some SPEED!

Maximising the performance from your supermoto is the job of the tuning shop. And in the first of a series of features on specialist tuners, Paul Blezard paid a visit to Kent-based HM Racing...

Like a lot of the best tuning workshops, the HM premises in Green near Orpington are nothing special to look at - just a jumble of buildings tucked away down a back alley off the High Street. But inside there's an Aladdin's cave of the latest high tech machinery for fettling every part of an engine, plus the all-important dynamometer and exhaust gas analyser. Proprietor Steve Smith has been at the

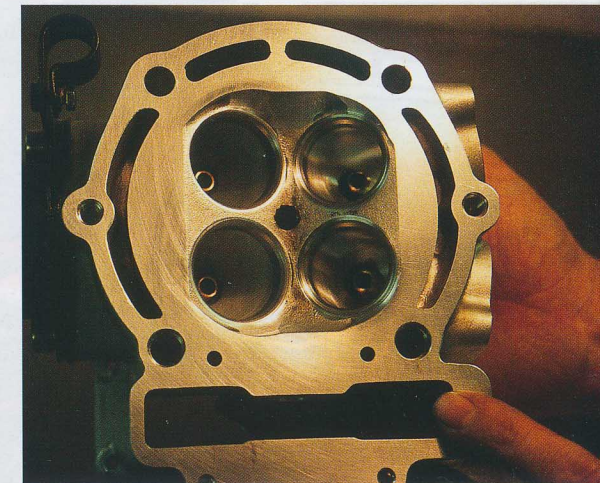
current site for ten years but has been tuning engines since he was a speedway rider back in the 1980s. He actually started his racing career in motocross aged 17 and moved into grass track when he was 21, before finally taking up speedway at the ripe old age of 25. He rode professionally for Hackney Hawks and King's Lynn speedway teams but by his own admission was better at ice racing; 'I crashed everywhere and broke 20 bones in speedway and I was just pleased to make the first team'. Steve soon found that he had more talent for tuning speedway bikes than wrestling the brake-less thumpers around the timber-lined dirt ovals at 70mph. Getting the best out of the methanol-fuelled engines was actually quite a challenge since even in high-speed long track guise they are limited to 34mm carbs and 500cc.

Championships Abound

Steve moved on to motocross and started tuning engines for Perry Leask in 1993. Perry went on to win five national MX



Above: on the workbench Steve Smith compares a couple of Husky heads before and after an HM tune



Middle left: HM Racing's workshop includes the obligatory dyno for checking power outputs...

motocrossers in the mid-'90s when Huskies were the four stroke machines to have. In fact from 1994-2000, HM-tuned machines were the top finishing Huskies in British motocross, enduro and Supermoto championships and the company actually has 22 championships to its name.

However, since its mid-90s hey-day the Husky motor has been somewhat up-staged on the rough by the new generation of Yamahas and KTM's (although that could soon be redressed by the new electric start 400 and 450 models). But there's still plenty of life in the 570 motors yet for racing on the flat.

'Since its mid 90s heyday the Husky motor has been somewhat upstaged...'

As Steve told me, 'By today's standards the old Husky motor is a bit heavy for top-flight motocross and enduro compe-

tition, but for supermoto I still think Huskies are the best bikes'. Steve's knowledge and experience of Husky motors is unsurpassed in the UK. Official UK Husqvarna importers Husky Sport recommend HM, and Steve Smith has tuned all their racers with so far, a 100 percent reliability record. Paradoxically, Leyton Haig was in the running to win the 2001 NORA supermoto championship on an HM



more and more customers who've transferred from big road bikes to supermotos, Steve Smith made a wry observation to me. 'Motocrossers are very tight but sportsbike and supermoto riders think £1,000 for a Gold Tune is cheap when they see how much work is involved - they're used to paying that for an Akropovic exhaust system'.

Power with Reliability

Unless you have the budget of Ducati's WSB team, it's not much good having huge horsepower if you have to re-build your engine after every meeting. HM pride themselves on both the spread of power that their engines give and on their reliability. Steve recently got his hands on an ex Thierry Van

den Bosch engine (Top Euro SM rider) and was pleased to discover that it had no more peak power than one of his own, and quite a lot less mid-range. 'And Van den Bosch's team had to change the rockers every five meetings whereas we don't change them from one season to the next' he told me.

Electric or Kick?

We talked about the pros and cons of the more civilised, road-oriented electric buttoned and balanced engines used in the TE610E and SMS Huskies as compared with the lighter and more basic kick-start only competition-oriented machines (TE, TC and SMR). As standard, the kick-start engines make more power (about 47bhp at the rear wheel compared to 39) thanks to having higher compression and a bumpier camshaft.

But in tuned form the electric start motors can make just as much, if not more power thanks to being blessed with slightly more favourable valve angles. HM do a series of tuning packages on both engines, ranging from a basic 'Bronze' to the 'Gold' that brings both engines up

tuned KTM until he broke his hand racing on the continent before the final round, which at least proves that HM are not a one-marque tuning shop.

Steve showed me around the workshop which was full of 'before and after' examples of his handiwork; pistons, valves, guides, heads and cams. And along with the traditional lathes and welding equipment there was a Quadrant Scientific 'cam doctor' on one bench which is used to minutely measure camshafts, all linked up to the HM computer system - the electronics alone cost £1500. HM do more Huskies than anything else but they'll tune any bike. Steve's recently got over 60 rear wheel bhp out of a KTM single and he's looking forward to getting his hands on one of the new CRF450 Honda motors. As one highly satisfied customer said to me, 'HM are not fitters, they're engineers - if something needs making, they'll make it'.

Having dealt primarily with the off-road fraternity in his early days but now seeing

'HM pride themselves on the spread of power that their engines give...'

Once the work has been carried out an owner can expect serious power with excellent reliability

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Right: Zupin crankcase cover replaces the more fragile original...

to a full 601cc (from the standard 577) and nearly 60bhp at the rear wheel. It costs more to get the electric start engines up to that level of power though, simply

because they're starting from a lower level of tune in the first place.

It is possible to get a staggering 75bhp out of the Italian singles, as Steve has proved with his supermono racer, but inevitably some reliability has to be sacrificed and he doesn't recommend that level of tune even for supermoto racing. Reliability is something the HM engines are famous for, even when putting out 50 percent more power than the standard machines. In fact Steve reckons he's seen more problems on standard engines than ones he's tuned.

'Huskies are pretty robust engines, but when we do see problems, it always seems to be with standard ones', he says. I suspect that this is down to both

'It is possible to get a staggering 75bhp out of the Italian single...'

the quality of the parts Steve uses, and the care with which he bolts the motors together although he was too modest to say so himself.

Having spoken to quite a few motard Husky owners, most problems with the Italian-made machines seem to be down to poor electrics, bits falling off or bad design like the deeply irritating sidestands and leaky petrol taps. As one owner memorably said to me, 'Owning a Ducati is good preparation for having a Husky'. Steve Smith says simply, 'I don't want to sound like an apologist for Huskies, but they're basically pretty sound. There are worse bikes out there, and after all, they are Italian'. 'Nuff said.

Suspension Sorcery

As any supermoto rider who's ever had the pleasure of 'whupping the ass' of a sportsbike rider will tell you, horsepower isn't everything - you've got to be able to use it. That not only means having a good spread of torque rather than just top-end power but also suspension that enables the power to get to the ground.



Scoring Some SPEED!

HM's suspension wizard Perry Leask has been racing for 30 years - he started when he was eight - but retired from serious motocross a couple of years ago. He still does the odd meeting though, as much to test the latest HM developments as anything. He's only ever done two enduros, but one of them was the Welsh Two Day and he came second in the four-stroke class at his first attempt!

Last year (2001) Perry rode an HM-tuned YZ MXer that was bored out to 450cc and made 53bhp at the rear wheel 'with loads more mid-range'. He also did one supermoto meeting on the YZ in 2001 but plans to do a whole season in 2002 on an HM tuned Husky. Perry's worked on race suspensions for 20 years and is still more than capable of giving any suspension a thorough work-out. HM is an official Ohlins Service Centre but they also do Hyper Pro systems.

Perry pointed out that the Husky SMS electric start supermoto model uses the motocross linkage in a far from optimum position 'They've compromised the suspension - you lose most of the first two



inches of travel too easily in order to get a plusher ride. It can benefit quite a lot from an Ohlins unit, although it's not cheap at nearly £600. HM can also do quite a lot to minimise front end diving by re-valving the forks and changing the oil. On the competition-oriented TE forks that are built to withstand hard landings from a great height, it's worth partially closing down the two-stage compression system for road and supermoto use because you simply don't need the same 'big bump and jump' capability.

Perry's natural ability on a dirt bike coupled with HM's tuning and race preparation skills should certainly make him a force to be reckoned with in the 2002 Supermoto championships, and I look forward to seeing him in action this year. And if I get half a chance, I'll blag a spin on his bike!

Here's one we did earlier...

Phil Harman's rather trick blue and yellow TE610 is the third Husky supermoto single he's owned, and they've all been tuned by HM. He started a couple of years ago with an electric start SMS but after much tuning and suspension modification, he sold it to get the lighter, higher, kick-start only SMR, because even after all the mods he still found that he was running out of ground clearance on track days. The SMR solved the ground clearance problems but last summer Phil decided to create his ideal Supermoto road and track machine. (The SMR is currently for sale).

He used a TE610 enduro bike as a base because it was a much cheaper option than starting with the rather pricey SMR given that he already had a top-quality set of super moto wheels going spare. The bike has become a sort of unofficial rolling test bed for HM Racing and they've tried out all sorts of ideas on it. Between the engine tuning, the trick suspension the tyres and wheels the complete machine would cost about £8,000 if you had to buy everything new.

Phil told me, 'We've tried to engineer out everything that ever caused a problem on the SMR'. So in addition to the 60bhp HM Gold Tune, Phil also got Steve Smith to tackle the problem of oil starvation caused by his penchant for pulling prolonged 80mph wheelies. 'Steve put an engine up on the bench at 45 degrees and demonstrated that at that angle the oil pick up at the front of the engine just wasn't getting any oil. He's moved it to the back of the engine and added an extra Jawa oil filter from a speedway bike'. The engine bolts are stainless throughout and a Zupin crankcase cover has replaced the fragile standard one which is rather too easily pierced by the gear lever in the event of a spill. The only drawback is that it doesn't have a sight window in it, so Phil checks the oil level with a zip tie - he changes it (the oil, not the zip-tie) every 2-300 miles anyway, and there's



down the front of the frame. So Phil has fitted a big breather pipe and a plastic catch tank. Future plans include adding a Scitsu racing rev counter and a wire-less digital speedo.

The Harman Husky was ready just in time for the lads' annual ride to the big international supermoto meeting in Mettet and it had just one hour's running-in time on the HM dyno before Phil rode it to Belgium. By the time he got back it was thoroughly run in! In fact, on the subject of running in, Steve mentioned that some owners actually fail to get the best out of their engines because they don't give them

enough stick. Apparently early FireBlades were notorious for suffering from owners who molly-coddled them from new. 'They would never make decent power because they hadn't been revved hard enough and had glazed the bore', Steve told me, whereas those that were bought by head-bangers went a whole lot better!

On dry track days Phil fits Dunlop GP slicks and has lapped Brands in 57 seconds on the newly, slowed-down circuit. 'There aren't many sportsbikes that can stick with us' he told me, 'and last time we went out in the wet at Brands, we were lapping quicker than half the race teams that were there testing' he beamed. Phil's currently toying with the idea of doing some road racing next season on the rather special supermoto machine - he daren't do pukka supermoto because previous prangs have left him with rather fragile legs (*what, with 18 stone to support? - Ed*).

Phil's guaranteed to be doing plenty of track days next year. So, if you ever come across a larger than life 18 stone character with a manic grin (*and spindly legs! Ed*) riding a bright yellow and blue Husky with HM stickers all over it, then you'll have to be very good indeed to stay in front of him, whatever you're riding. You have been warned.

For more details on HM Racing call them on 01689 862398, or try their website: www.hmracing.co.uk

Phil took no chances before lending the bike to Blez and scrubbed-in a fresh set of tyres...

a lockwired R-clip holding the oil cap in place.

The suspension is set up much as it was on Phil's SMR, keeping the standard Marzocchi front forks but

re-worked to cope with his 18 stone. The bike also uses an SMR sidestand because the TE610 original is obviously too long.

Braking is taken care of with a Beringer 320mm disc and Magura master cylinder. 'They've actually made it harder to do rolling stoppies because they're so fierce' Phil told me but I've out-braked fully kitted R1 racers going into Druids at Brands Hatch with them'.

The Talon hubs are laced with Excel rims, and an Ohlins shock raises the back end to maximise ground clearance although Phil still gets the pegs down.

Steve recently tried an Uptite exhaust system on the bike but while it gave 5bhp more at the top end it lost 2bhp in mid-range and was deafeningly loud, so for the time being Phil has stuck with the heavily modified standard system. This has the added benefit of keeping the kosher-looking EU stamp on the silencer. He's still hankering after the extra 5bhp though and is hoping to get the best of both worlds with a bit more development on the stock system.

When doing wheelies or stoppies (which Phil does a lot by the way) his previous Huskies used to blow oil out of the breather at the front which then ran

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TANGERINE Dream

Take KTM's sexy,
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supermoto race
kit and what
have you got?
Dave Cornish
finds out...

Story: Dave Crasher Cornish Pics: Si Melber

TANGERINE Dream



Some people are just too trusting. Take supermoto specialist Freddy Trott for example. Not only does he loan us his immaculately prepared KTM 520 race bike for the (ahem) 'artistically' posed cover shot, but then he positively encourages us to take the bike out and

give it a damn good thrashing, just days before he's due to ride it in the last round of the 2001 NORA supermoto championship. But who am I to argue? Anyway, even without the addition of

the swervy Ms Guest, the 520 KTM is sex on wheels. And we wanted to ride it...

But first a history lesson. Launched in late 1999 (as a 2000 model), the eagerly awaited new generation of Austrian thumpers were, and still are, in high demand and they still fetch top dollar

(if you can find one). The lightweight electric-start, counter-balanced, single cam, four valve motor features a six-speed box in enduro trim (four-speeder in MX guise) and is extremely compact for such a potent power-plant. In fact the 520 lump is actually 12mm narrower than KTM's own two-stroke motors.

When the bike was first introduced to the press, the factory were pretty cagey about the intended life-span of this superlight race motor, and overhauls were expected to be required at around 100 hours. KTM also warned that the bike was strictly not suited to prolonged tarmac thrashing. Reason being that there's no clutch damper

Above: Oooh! Suits you sir. Top Right: Digital speedo shows big numbers...

'Up close it is petite, svelte and muscular with that sexy fat-tyred look...'

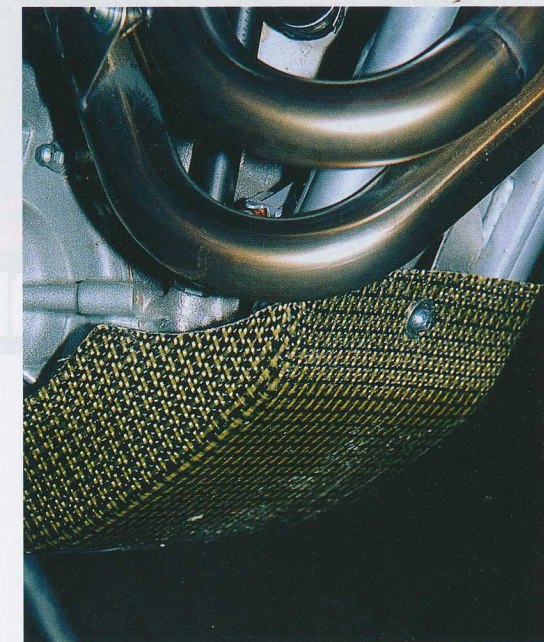
(or rear cush drive), a minimal oil capacity and the higher geared enduro box features rather narrow fifth and sixth gears. Luckily for the budding motard converter long-term durability fears have been largely unfounded. Clearly KTM has been wisely over cautious with the expected overhaul schedules for this lightweight magnesium race motor. However for purely race use, a four speed 'crosser' could be the way forward for a 520SM conversion.

Hey Good Lookin'

If first impressions count then this Trott-tweaked 520SM should be a mathematician. To see it in the metal it is simply drop-dead gorgeous. A combination of polished alloy and anodised gold, set off by KTM's traditional orange plastics. Up close it is petite, svelte and muscular with the sexy fat-tyred look (the rear's a five-incher). The matt grey castings of the compact motor are nicely understated and the attention to detail (even as standard) on Austria's finest has to be seen to be believed. Wide supercross-style footrests, polished alloy swing-arm mated to KTM's linkageless WP shock and a substantial pair of matching WP USD forks out front, all add to the impression of quality.

This particular 520 started life as a box-fresh EXC enduro bike which had never seen dirt. It features all the usual bolt-on extras: highly polished 17" Morad rims are laced to the gold anodised billet Talon hubs by heavy duty spokes. A trick looking 320mm Wavy Braking

disc is gripped by a race specification billet four-pot caliper from the same company. This is connected



Right: Billet CNC machined alloy, Titanium and kevlar. Only the best...



TANGERINE Dream

Above: Oi - did you spill my pint? Aggressive looks are part of the appeal...

by a stainless braided hose to an FP radial pump master cylinder. This trick looking brake pump has a neat hinged lever that folds up in the event of a spill. And for double security a pair of the ubiquitous Acerbis wraparound brushguards have been fitted to the standard Magura tapered bars.

ististically sunny winter's morning the KTM looked absolutely stunning. Throwing a leg over the plank like seat, it's immediately obvious that the bike's roots are firmly embedded in KTM's race department. Slim, light and purposeful with a hewn-from-solid feel, I couldn't wait to get kitted up and get out for a day's hooning around the back roads. Hit the starter button and the motor bursts

The full titanium Arrow race exhaust system required a re-jet and Freddie claims that this set-up uncorks the 520 and releases a few extra ponies. Out at the rear the standard issue KTM cookie-cutter disc is retained alongside the OE Brembo caliper.

Gearing has been raised to enable the bike to hit around 100mph. More protection is offered by crash bobbins on the front and rear wheel spindles and a sexy looking Kevlar sumpguard keeps the expensive cases free from stone damage.

Sitting behind the standard enduro headlamp

'Once under way the amount of mellow, grunty power available is simply immense...'

unit is an aftermarket PanOram multi-function digital speedo/trip computer which even records the fastest speed reached (102.7mph we managed). All of which adds up to a serious looking supermoto bike and one which looks equally at home on road or track.

Out in the wilds of East Anglia on an uncharacter-



You too can be Kinigadner. Powerful and grunty motor makes this a cinch..

immediately into life with a sonic-boom from the titanium silencer's tip. Christ this thing is loud. It's almost

certain to gain you some unwanted attention in built up areas, but this is a race bike after all, and race bikes are noisy beasts.

Pull in the super-smooth, hydraulically-operated clutch, snick the folding tip alloy lever into first, a touch of gas and the taller SM gearing requires a little sliding of the plates for a smooth getaway. But once under way the amount of mellow, grunty power available is simply immense. Acceleration is so rapid that it's a juggling act between the light throttle and your left foot. Get it right and the bike rockets down the tarmac in a blur of well-timed gearshifts. Get it wrong and the front mudguard will try and snap off your helmet peak.

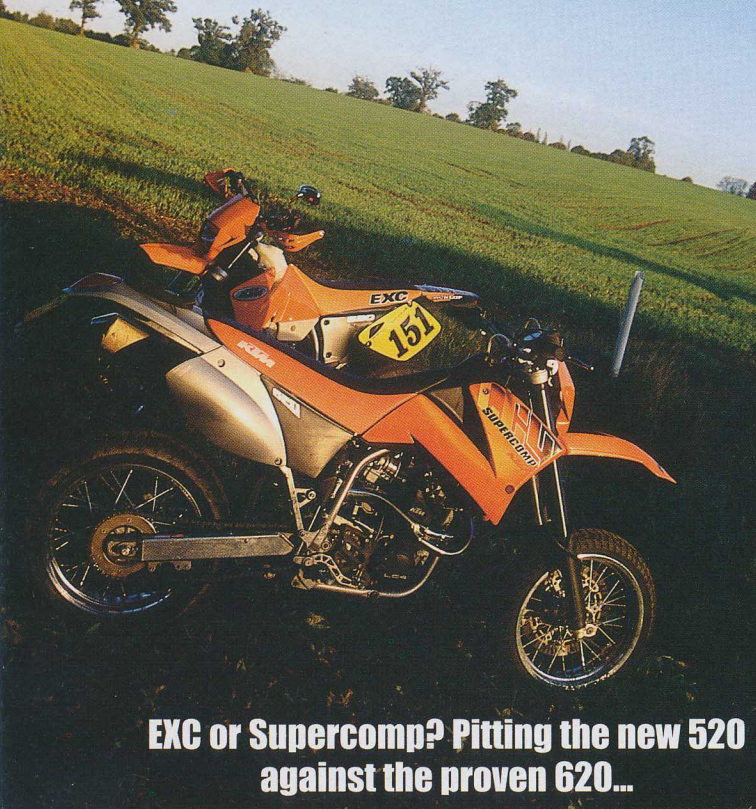
In the first three gears the front wheel will rear up on a handful of gas and even a nobber like me can wheelie like a pro. Bloody amazing, and it's only in the higher ratios things begin to calm down a bit.

Even then, acceleration only tails off nearing maximum revs. On this gearing the bike will hit over a ton but still has manic acceleration. Whilst the motor will no doubt pull taller gearing for a track day perhaps, for everyday use this set-up is ideal. Instant get up and go from any rpm in any gear. Drop down a cog, yank on the braceless bars and be a wheelie god. Carburetion is also spot on, despite repeated attempts to catch out the big 39mm Keihin - the flat-slide FCR fuelled the 520 perfectly. No coughs, no hiccups just a seamless instant transition from throttle open to rapid eye watering acceleration. All of this with barely any noticeable vibration.

Sure you're always aware of some serious explosions way below and compared to say a Rotax BMW or Aprilia, the vibes are definitely noticeable. But for a com-

'Get it wrong and the front mudguard will try and snap off your helmet peak...'

New For Old?



EXC or Supercomp? Pitting the new 520 against the proven 620...

The question had to be asked: which makes the better supermoto machine - the new 520 or the tried and tested LC4? We wanted to know, so in the interests of journalistic integrity, we brought along a brand new KTM 620 Supercomp for comparison.

The LC4-powered Supercomp has been around in various guises for over a decade and in factory-built SM trim the old motor comes without a counter-balance shaft and is kick-start only. Out on the twisting country roads the LC4 feels much more stable than its younger brother - at all speeds it feels more planted, has a more comfortable seat and a roomier riding position.

Set against this however is the fact

a 520 and spending well over a grand to convert it. Plus the LC4 has a fine reputation for durability - it's nigh on bulletproof - and of course can be tuned to release big horsepower. And in the Duke and SM640 versions (which are counter-balanced), the engine feels a bit smoother and carburetes a little cleaner.

Ultimately however the LC4 engine is showing its age. Physically it's a big lump and that requires a sizeable chassis as well. In the final analysis we preferred the 520EXC - it may be prone to headshake, require more maintenance and cost considerably more to build, but it feels a whole generation better. And that makes all the difference...

that usable power is only available much higher up the range - down below about 3500rpm the LC4 lump feels rough and unwilling to rev. This coupled to its wider-ratio five-speed box means that to get any reasonable performance out of the old girl she really has to be caned through the gears. And when you start caning her she vibrates quite badly.

The 520 on the other hand has a much better spread of power, loads more oomph low down and a smoother countenance.

Ultimately there's very little difference in speed between the two, but the new bike feels much lighter and livelier.

The KTM factory however are keen to persist with the old LC4 donk and of course it's much cheaper than buying



Supermoto Magazine



Model: Jo Guest
Bike: 2002 KTM 520EXC
Photographer: Ben Swyre
Location: Wandsworth studio, London