

australasian DIRT BIKE

APRIL 1982

\$2.00 (\$2.65 NZ)*

**YAMAHA
YZ250J**
PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

**KTM495, HUSQVARNA WR250,
HONDA XR250, YAMAHA IT465,
KAWASAKI AE80**

WE SALUTE QUAD JUMPERS

**JOHN HALL: FATHER OF
THE FOUR-DAY ENDURO**

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PEOPLE ENJOYING LIFE IN THE WRITE LANE

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 TYPESETTING: Novagraphics, who react well to prompting by temperamental editors

COVER: There's a bright feature ahead for this bike. It's got everything which appeals to buyers, let's be honest, and one of those things is that it works as a package.
Dargle track supplied by Alan Smith.

Dave King photo

***Recommended maximum retail price. You can get it cheaper by subscribing, but the way the postal workers carry on it's a bit suss.**





MORE AND LESS ALL ADDS UP

KTM 495 MC PRO-LEVER

Even the conservative KTM factory has joined the headlong rush into more cubes and less shock absorbers.

From some factories you expect some things; from Yamaha you expect continual new ideas and radical technology; from Honda you expect more cylinders and turbos; from Husqvarna you expect Swedish quality and precision. KTM has long been known for its ability to produce a bike which isn't anywhere near the front of radical new ideas, but which can usually outperform the rest anyway. With their 495 Pro-Lever things have changed.

What? KTM with a single shock rear suspension? And what's this? A conventional Yamaha-style reed valve? Hey, look here! It's a 495! A 495 KTM!

It can't be. In one model, KTM has accepted that they've had to keep pace with what everyone else is doing or else suffer the consequences. And if that means going to a single shocker, reed valve and the most horsepower, then so be it. Amazing, when you consider that they only produce about 70 dirt bikes a day, all up.

Our first glimpse of the mighty 495 KTM was at Amaroo Park during the 500cc race at the International Supercross: Gerard Rond had been brought out from Holland to ride it. In no time, he blew the rest of the field away and won the race easily. So easily it looked as if he was cruising: we can prove it — we've got the video tape. ADB spares no expense in creating its reference files.

Importer Bert Flood was on hand that day, spending much of it rubbing his hands together with glee and thinking how many 495 sales he'd score when all the people realised the 495 KTM was **THE** king of the horsepower heap.

Maico 490s, Yamaha 490s and all the rest — the KTM makes more horsepower.

Bert sure liked that idea, because he knew how highly the market valued peak horsepower. He was also pleased because he knew how trendy the market is for motocross machines: despite every test in the universe saying that Husqvarna's same old dual Ohlins work great, an average single shock would have buyers by the ankles every time.

On paper, the 495 KTM looked every inch a winner that day.

But here at ADB we work on averages. Averages like, 90% of the buying public is an average rider. No sense having a bike you can't handle. We had to ride the beast, in other words.

Into the ADB travel kit went the finest helmet, the best pair of gloves, the toughest shoulder guards, strongest boots, best shin protectors, most padded riding pants and our video system: if our collective brains were going to be pulped by this monster we were going to have it all in living colour. As Ansett's jet accelerated down the runway, a thought was spared for the rest of the passengers: they'd never feel true acceleration like we were going to.

**DIRT
TEST**





KTM495 PRO-LEVER

WHAT'S NEW?

What isn't?

The engine has a new barrel with an 8 petal full reed valve on it, and slightly revised porting to go with it. The pipe is all new and for the first time runs down only one side of the bike instead of crossing over from left to right. The bottom end of the engine has had a revision to the positioning of the cylinder studs to take the new transfer port layout and also accept the new casting for the offset inlet manifold.

The clutch has been improved, too: it was the same clutch on both the 420 and the first 495, but it gave a few headaches. It doesn't play up now. There is a dual ignition, meaning spark comes from two plugs to give better combustion. Who said the old CZ factory didn't know what it was doing back in the sixties?

Obviously, the frame is different with the new Pro-Lever shock system. It gets its name from the fact that the design is similar to Honda's. As a matter of fact, the KTM design is almost identical to Maico's: the shock is bolted to the frame at the top, then links to an arm at the bottom. This arm is connected to the frame at the front and the swingarm at the rear, and the dimensions between the three pivot points on it give it a progressive rising rate suspension.

Taking care of the shock duties is a new design Ohlin with a remote reservoir which is attached to the front frame downtube. Ohlins will be standard on all KTMs into Australia this year. Quality? You can't get better, and they're fully rebuildable.

All the plastic is new. The tank has a new shape and is fastened to the frame at the front with two bolts and big plastic washers. Side-covers are no longer integral numberplate models because the new rear guard has numberplates instead. This is a step in the right direction because it stops the numbers being obscured by a rider's leg and because it is stronger to resist accidental breaking.

The chainguide on the lower edge of the swingarm is new: a big aluminium plate either side of a nylon rubbing block. The front hub is now aluminium instead of magnesium, and is made in France (of all places). It features a floating cam idea which used to be on old Husqvarnas: this means you no longer have to worry about centring the brake shoes. The Marzocchi fork legs no longer have pinch bolts on the LHS, which makes it quicker to get the front wheels out. Not that you motocrossers have to worry about that.

WHITE KNUCKLE TIME

Riding a big motocross bike for the first time is usually a nightmare. If you're not looking at the front wheel pawing the sky, you're desperately trying to find the brakes to pull them up in time to make a corner. And if you're not doing that then you're cautiously waiting for it

to get itself pointed in the right direction after pussy-footing around a corner before you pull the trigger.

How many guys have you seen rush out to buy a 465 YZ then spend the remainder of the year trying to control it and ending up twice as slow as they were on their RM125s?

The bottom line on these bikes is how well everything can get along. With a bike producing as much horsepower as the KTM, it becomes critical that the rest of the bike does its part to help the rider. Fortunately, handling has always been one of the KTM's finest qualities.

Let's put it this way. You headed out of a corner and finally the thing seems pointed in the vague direction of the next corner so you twist the throttle. Not a lot. Just a bit. The KTM leaps away like a stallion who's just seen the bad guys coming over the hill, and before you know it you're right there. In the middle of the next corner. The slightest bump on the track is translating itself into the tiniest little shake of your arms, which in turn translates itself into the tiniest little twist of the throttle as you frantically try to brake. Everything is fighting you, it seems.

The only line in the corner is suddenly there and you've got no time to try for it. But in desperation you do anyway. Then suddenly you're around it! Brilliant! In celebration, you twist the throttle again, like a fool.

Suddenly, there's the next corner! I don't remember any straight... got to try to get around here somehow... don't like the look of this... it's too late... oh. I'm around! How did that happen?

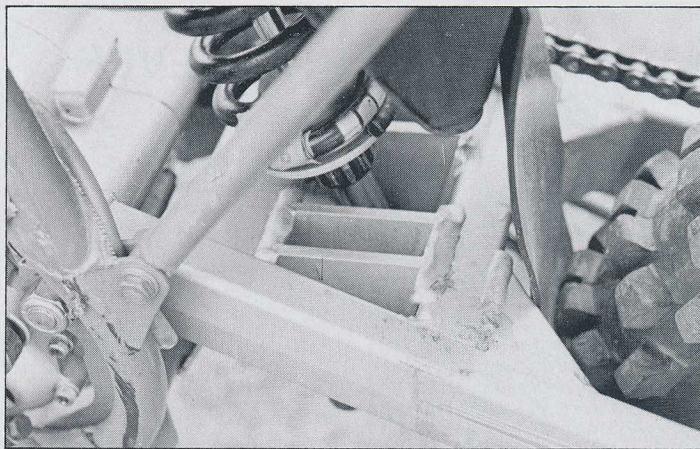
After a while you learn that in a corner the bike has absolutely no bad traits. Even when you think there's no chance to get around a corner, you'll do it with no fuss. You learn to trust it, even with that awesome power. It'll take either an inside or an outside line, it'll sweep through berms or flick off nothing. The engine no longer is something to be afraid of.

It's too bad KTMs are so expensive, because if a rider is going to learn to ride a big bike he's far better off on a bike like this than anything else. We're in a whole new era of muscle machines, that's for sure. Gone is the white knuckle terror most riders felt with big bikes in the past, to be replaced by a unit which is more mellow, easier to get along with.

HANDLING

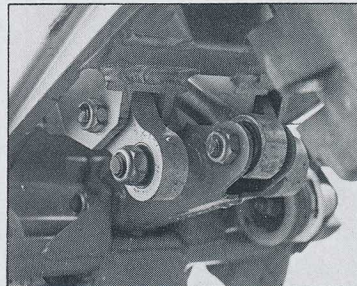
Compared to Japanese big bikes, the KTM feels as if it's glued to the track. They'll skitter about across the surface as their freaky power tries to find bite, while the KTM simply digs in and goes. We ran a Metzeler front tyre and a Pirelli Sandcross rear and our track surface was hard packed dirt with loose powder on top. The KTM managed to get around the corners no fuss, but applying the power took some learning in order to get around fastest.

What that boils down to is you



TOP AND RIGHT

The Ohlin shock mounts at the bottom to an arm which attaches at either end to the frame and the swingarm, to provide a rising rate progressive shock absorption. It's similar to the Honda system, which is where the name is derived — Pro-Lever instead of Pro-Link. We don't think Honda sales are threatened, and that's why there has been no lawsuit.



corner the KTM with both ends, even though its steering is as precise as you'd ever wish. Remember how we once explained the difference between steering and cornering? Well, this KTM steers like a dream. Pick an elusive little lip of dirt in a corner and you'll hit it every time; if you need to steer through a certain point on a track, then you've as good as steered there.

To corner best, you combine this steering precision with the engine, which can take care of where you put the rear of the bike for optimum cornering. In a wide, flat corner, it takes some getting used to: it's hard to get it to flick around the steering stem like a Maico — you must be aware of what the rear end is going to do.

But in the straights and over bad holes, the KTM is in its own realm. It tracks like a greyhound on heat and every lap will have you blasting around the track using identical lines. The only place we had any problems was on off-cambers,

where a sudden twist of the throttle made the rear step-out on the downhill side.

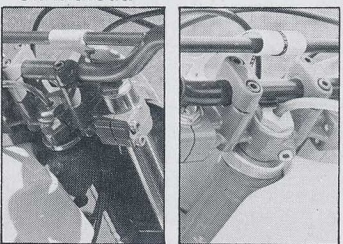
Oh, yes. There was one other problem.

With a bike as fast as this, it becomes more important than usual to stop. The KTM's brakes are more than up to the task. That all-new front hub sure does its job, and if anyone bothered to compare they'd find it was as good as the YZ's current twin leading shoe stopper.

But at the back, the brake is too good, if anything. It was too easy to stall the engine under brakes. Bert Flood commented that you needed to pull them apart all the time and clean everything up: that way, it would take the shoes a ride or two to conform to the shape of the hub and get its maximum power. As it stands, if the KTM's rear brake only had 80% of its current stopping power it would be perfect. How's that? Complaining about a brake which works too well.

RIGHT
Marzocchi 40mm forks are up front, with new aluminium alloy forged sliders for extra strength, thinner walls and less unsprung weight. No pinch bolts on the left side.

BELOW
In these two shots, you can see the handlebar mounting spacers, which you are better off without.





KTM495MC PRO-LEVER

Test Bike: Bert Flood Motorcycles,
1109 Whitehorse Road,
Box Hill, Vic, 3128.
Phone: (03) 88 5202
Retail price: \$2995

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	Single cylinder, air-cooled, reed valve, two stroke.
Bore & stroke	92.25 x 74 mm
Capacity	494.35 cc
Lubrication	Premix
Air filtration	Oiled foam element in still air box
Electrical	Motoplant CDI, dual spark plug
Carburetion	40 mm Bing
Starting	Primary kick, LHS lever

TRANSMISSION

Clutch	Wet, multi-plate
Primary drive	Gear, 31:79
Secondary drive	530 chain, 14/52 sprockets
Gear ratios:	
1st	14:35
2nd	15:24
3rd	18:21
4th	20:19
5th	14:48
Transmission shifting	LHS, 1-N-2-3-4-5

FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Frame	Split cradle chrome-moly
Suspension:	
Front	40 mm Marzocchi air/oil forks with 300 mm wheel travel.
Rear	Pro-Lever single shock system using Ohlins shock giving 335 mm wheel travel.
Rake	28°
Trail	125 mm (4.96")
Wheels and brakes	Sun rims both ends, aluminium alloy hubs with single leading shoe brakes, cable front, rod rear.
Tyres	Metzeler Motocross, 3.00 x 21 front, 4.50 x 18 rear
Footpegs	Folding spring loaded steel
Mudguards	Acerbis white plastic
Silencing	Adequate for Australian GCRs
Numberplates	Three, with the side plates integral with the rear guard
Kill button	No

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	1500 mm
Seat height	960 mm (38")
Ground clearance	360 mm (14.25")
Dry weight	108 kg (235 lbs)

KTM495 PRO-LEVER

SUSPENSION

We know you can't wait any longer. You have to know: does that tricky new single shock work?

Let's put it this way, because in the backs of all your minds you'll be comparing it to the Japanese versions anyway. It works better than the old YZ Monoshock (pre Swing-Link); it works better than Kawasaki's Uni-Trak; it will last a million years longer than Honda's Pro-Link; it isn't as good on the little bumps as Suzuki's Full-Floater; and it's a shock absorber ahead of the new Maico (i.e., if you get a Maico, you'll probably find that you'll need to replace the Corte-Cossos with an Ohlins unit, which will mean a cost of about \$400 or whatever).

Is that a clear enough categorisation? Suzuki's Floater is still king of the rear suspension systems.

But let's think about KTM's design philosophy for a minute. Gerard Rond, apparently, is their World 500 GP hope, and has been providing feedback on how the Pro-Lever system should work. As well, European tracks are famous for being harder and bumpier than ours, and their riders are traditionally much better than ours. We know that while Gerard was out here riding the 495 he had both ends of the suspension set up so hard that no-one else was able to even ride the bike, let alone use it properly.

It's obvious that the Pro-Lever has been designed for all-out maximum racing, not club level stuff. Sure, it can be softened anywhere in a range of two inches of spring preload and one of 27 damping adjustments, but the shock is meant to work best when it's pushed to its limits. To set the spring preload the rider sits on the bike and you get it so there's only 85-95mm sag.

With the 495, you're better able to do just that.

We'd have to say the usual cop-out: designed to be used by experts. But we'd also have to say that because of the forgiving and safe nature of the total package that it's a good investment from Joe Average's viewpoint.

But anytime you'd hit anything with the power on, there was no noticeable impact. That Ohlin sucked up everything, just as Ohlins have always done.

Up front is a pair of 40mm Marzochis. With 10 weight Bel-Ray fork oil measured 190mm from the top of the tubes with the springs out the forks compressed, they were fine. There was a hint of a jolt when you'd hit a sharp ledge, but in everything else they worked fine. These forks are larger diameter than the old KTM495's Marzochis, and there are no pinch bolts on the left side leg where the axle slides in. The sliders are now aluminium in place of the old magnesium, which means they can be made thinner yet still have more strength, which

RIGHT

The seat rides up onto the tank, similar to a YZ. Good idea. Seat foam is firm, and the profile is narrow. Seat height is meant for good, tall Aussies.



in turn means less upsprung weight.

HORSEPOWER FACTORY

What the Electricity Commission should do is buy a couple of KTM495s and connect the countershaft sprocket to their turbines and use them as spare powerhouses. This engine puts out a multitude of power right through the range.

Adding a reed valve has meant power comes in at low revs and stays there right to the top. There's no noticeable surge in the powerband, even though you think there is, as suddenly you're going too fast. There's no doubt that big motocross bikes give you the ultimate high. Drugs? Who needs 'em!

The starting procedure is more of a system than any KTM we've ever ridden before. Still fitted with Bing carbs, which is fine by us here at ADB these days of our new-found, laid-back attitude (mainly we both used Bings all through 1981 on our 125cc enduro bikes with nary a hint of a problem, which made us eat our words. Ah, moto fashion changes once again), you turn on the fuel and then hit the tickler until fuel splashes out onto those pristine, expensive KTM cases. Don't stop with the tickler until all the cases are covered and enough fuel has come out to splash on your boots.

Then you fold out the new style kickstart lever, prod it until the piston is just over TDC, then give it your best kick. Not a halfhearted whimper, a real man's kick. It'll start first or second kick. From warm, no flooding is necessary. Twin plugs stream spark into the combustion chamber and the thing sets up its intimidating thunder. Not a lot of vibration for a 495, either.

The 5-speed box is geared tall in 1st, which means you can use it well in those tight corners. On starts, 2nd or 3rd is possible, with practice. The clutch action is light, so no worries about slipping or fanning. The rest of the ratios follow in perfectly adjusted increments. A gear for all occasions, eh? We suspect a few of these monsters will find their way into enduros. It'll mean the demise of bogholes and hills.

That new transfer port layout and reed valve have smoothed out the

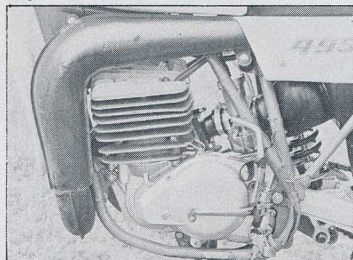
BELOW

Basically, this is the same rear wheel setup as the old 495, except for the chainguide. This one is more comprehensive. Between the aluminium sideplates is a rubbing block. The rear brake was too strong, if anything. Fully floating — big deal.



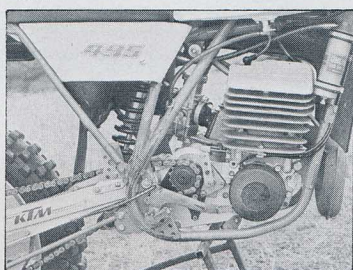
BELOW

A folding gearlever and a new clutch — new plates in it, anyway. This one won't slip or drag. There is a primary kick start system.



BELOW

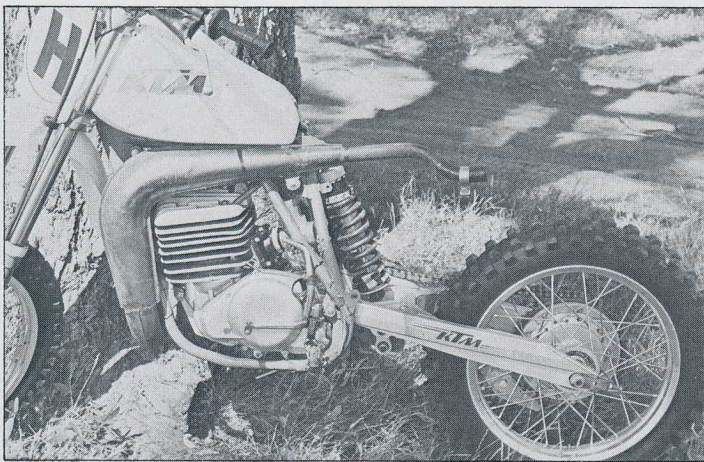
Mounted under the tank is the Ohlin reservoir. We lost one of the hose clamps which hold it on.



RIGHT

The tank is now retained by three bolts, the two at the front having enormous plastic locating washers. The cap can be a bear to undo, but that doesn't matter a damn on a motocrosser. Don't know why we even mentioned it. The KTM logo is a metal plate screwed into the tank plastic. Won't bubble. Are you listening Japan?





LEFT

The whole rear section unbolts in minutes for you to perform maintenance or adjustment on the Ohlin shock and the three pivot points.

power and put a lot more traction down low in the powerband. It just pulls and pulls. It's a fourteen-year-old gone mad. Midrange is where you'll do most of your work, though. Even though it revs like a 250, that's scary territory.

Actually, a lot of situations will probably call for revving: sometimes in the midrange all you get is unwanted wheelies because it hooks the back wheel up better. Get higher in the powerband and you get a degree of wheelspin which makes it easier for the rider to keep it where he wants.

But it's hard to quantify this much power and say where it is and how best to use it. Probably the best way to use it is just ride the bike as much as possible so that you're not intimidated to use it fully. When you know how the bike's going to react to a violent twist of the right hand, then it doesn't matter much who you're racing, does it? Not with these horses on your chariot.

Every time a big bore like this comes along (it hasn't happened all that often yet) we figure that maybe we're fooling ourselves sticking with a 125. Maybe there is a chance for the Clark Kents of this world to own a monster.

Maybe what we need is a KTM495 on the Editorial Expenses sheet.

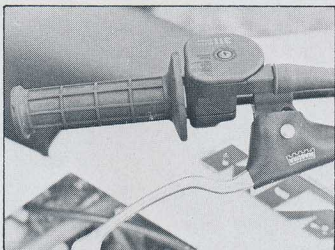
SETTING UP AND DETAILING

For the life of us, there isn't a lot of setting up with this bike. Sure, you need to get the suspension dialed in and get the carburettor tuned in to your riding area, but apart from that there's precious little else. Not that there'd want to be: who pays \$2,995 for a bike which is only half right? Did we hear you say "The Swedes!"? Whatever.

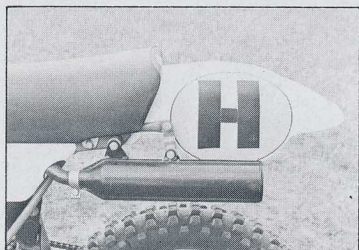
It comes with the good tyres, for a start: Metzlers. Rims are Sun, with rimlocks, not studs as on KTM's enduro machinery. Levers are Maguras. Suspension is as good as you'll get. Plastic ware is Acerbis, which again is as good as you'll get. You'll need to replace the front numberplate with a rectangular one, but the rear guard has those spooey integral numberplates which are this year's moto-fashion. The seat has a factory-fitted Yamaha-style extension which goes halfway up the tank to protect your name. You don't even have to have a contract with a tank sticker company to keep the good looks of the tank up to par, because the KTM logo is screwed to the tank.

LEFT

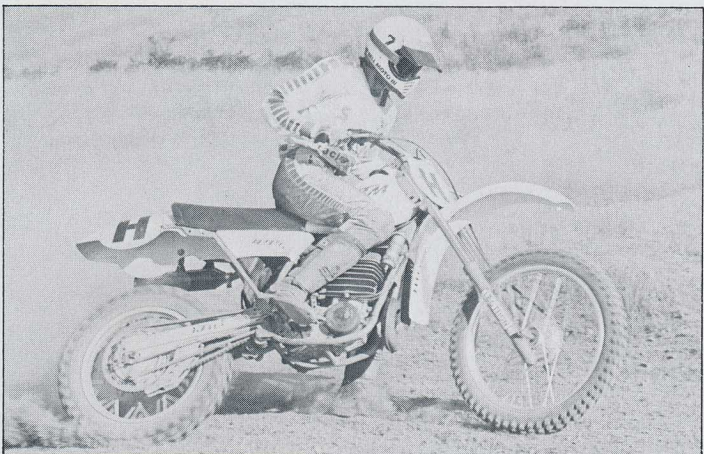
For once up with the forefront of Moto-Fashion, KTM contracted Acerbis to design this integral numberplate/rear guard. Trick?



ABOVE
Maguras, as per usual. The bars are good and strong.



ABOVE
The mounting bracket for the muffler is substandard. Ours actually broke.



So, what do you need to do? Nuts are all nyloc. Frame is good stuff — no legends of KTM frames breaking up. Swingarm is tough. Chainguides are all good. Some people think the clutch lever is a bit tough to pull in: you'll really only need to do it once per race on this beast. Remove those handlebar spacers like we mentioned. Maybe you could fabricate a better silencer mounting bracket than stock.

But to get the most out of riding it, you simply get it out of the crate, bolt it together, dial in the suspension and carb, then head off for a season of racing hardcore motocross.

On previous KTMs, we've experienced wear problems with the cam through the rear brake backing plate: it wears an oval hole in the magnesium. Keep it lubricated well and frequently cleaned out. Maintain the bottom Ohlin mounts. Swear a lot at the small airbox as you try to remove and install the filter. Curse the frame configuration as you fiddle with the carb. Comment how chintzy the bushing is for the rear brake lever where it mounts to the frame. Watch the engine paint flake off at the steam cleaner. Find out how super strong the bars are, as they resist bending no matter how hard you fling the bike away.

The point is, the bike will perform the task. It'll beat a motocross track silly, yet it will keep the rider in shape. We were surprised, actually, at how many laps we put in on the bike. Normally, two laps brings us back to the pits wanting to trade-in our forearms on a new set and wishing we had six pairs of lungs and an airconditioned van to retire for several hours. Somehow, despite thinking we'd have to fight the power every inch of the way, the KTM didn't seem to be a tiring bike to ride.

Anyway, it'll do all that for you. But some people balk at the price and say that for the money it would want to be perfect. It isn't. A few detail things are nowhere near Japanese equivalents. Cables. Cable guides. Carb access. Muffler brackets. Tank cap. Working on big-ends. The way the engine paint flakes off. Little things like that.

Dollar for dollar it won't give you 50% more than a Japanese bike.

But then if you're after a KTM that's not on your list.

CONCLUSION

We've gone on long enough. Time to say what we really think.

If we were to get a big motocross bike, this would be it. Fullstop. A KTM495 offers a far better blend of power and handling than anything else on the market, Maico included, and Husqvarna notwithstanding. Dollar for dollar, most people are better off with either a YZ490 or an RM465.

Who cares. Fun for fun, power for power, safety for safety, the KTM should be the bike you sit on at the start line.

You can send all those letters whining about ADB's KTM bias right now. But we understand. You haven't ridden one.

