

Killer KX500

**A big-bore
motocrosser
with lights
and license?
Call it
wretched
excess
wearing
knobbies**

TODAY, CHILDREN, let's talk about playing marbles with live hand grenades. This is the Morton's Monster Machine, a Kawasaki KX500, and we're going to ride it on the street.

Morton brothers Tim, 28, and Chip, 31—the former a desert racer, the latter a closet mad scientist—have taken Tim's old Baja racebike, a 1993 KX500, and transformed it into a dual-purpose bike with a different purpose.

This sickest of streetbikes started innocently enough. A set of Excel gold rims



replaced the pretzeled stockers, Bridgestone D-P tires installed. The frame was powdercoated metallic gray and bud-dyeps were added to a reinforced rear subframe. Acerbis plastic replaced the thrashed standard body pieces. The motor, all powervalved 499cc of it,

remained basically stock excepting an FMF pipe and ISDE muffler, which takes a small bite out of the bark.

Tricking the California authorities is a custom Baja Designs street-conversion kit, which has all the necessities to pass Highway Patrol regulations.

When it's time to bring the beast to life, leave your loafers and tennies at home—serious stomp is needed on the kickstart lever. Then the real fun begins. Once underway, you are punished with a ride that is stiff and unbearably jerky. The 16/42 gearing is good for 110 mph, but first is so tall you feel every surge of the coffee-can-sized piston. And don't look for such niceties as a speedometer or odometer—the dash comes complete with an on/off switch. Just as well, really, because the Mortons' Killer KX requires an eyes-forward riding stance at all times. Throttle control is a must; the bike can and will spin its big back knobby at any moment, leaving incriminating black stripes. Get traction and it's Wheelie City, USA. Heck, crossed-up, in-the-turn, burning-out power-wheelies are available too, some skill required.

Vibration will shake spare change out of your pockets. After some experimentation, the Mortons' preferred dampening method is "to have a chick on the back." Seems the extra weight of a passenger reduces vibes, even if it further hinders front-wheel ground contact.

You say this KX500 would be more appropriate at the Carlsbad Raceway starting gate than at a Sunset Strip stop signal? The Mortons might say you missed the point entirely. —Jimmy Lewis

