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FUTURE SHOCK: KAWASAKI KX 125

APRIL 1980

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DIRT BIKE

HONDA XR 200: SUBTLE STROKER

BEAT THE CLOCK! ENDURO TRICKS

KTM 175: THE MONEY MACHINE



BIZARRE BIKES FROM EUROPE—PAGE 18

SUZUKI RACE READY RM 250T

ISSN 0364-1544





Improving the Breed
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ON THE COVER: — Jim Weinert gets sideways on the DB KX 125. For a complete test see page 44. (Paul Clipper photo.)

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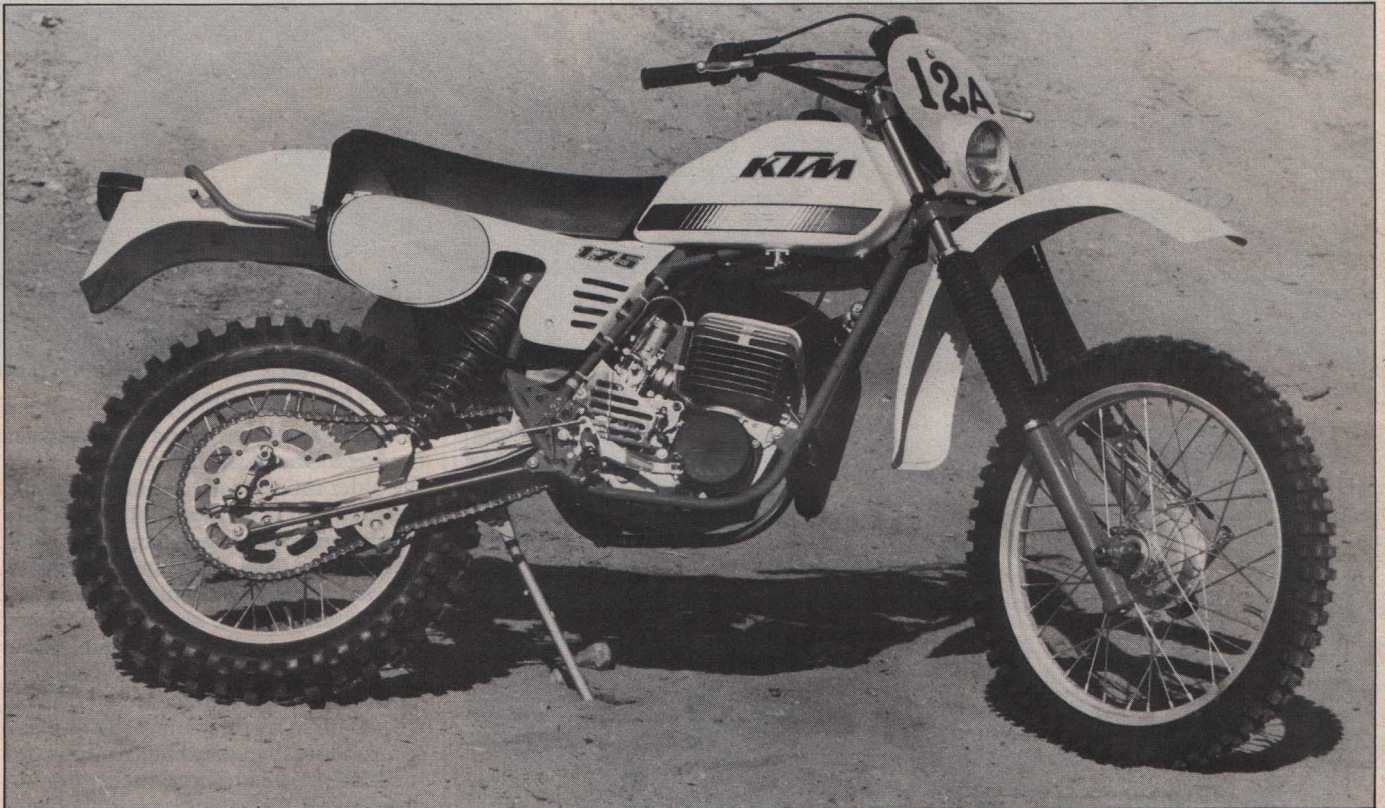


KTM 175 MC80

RAISING THE GOLD STANDARD

If you've got the bucks, the best is still available

By The Staff of Dirt Bike



It's a safe bet that the people at KTM have enjoyed their reputation all these years. And who wouldn't? Each year, dozens of medals are carried home from the ISDT by riders of the marque, many of them gold. In the days of Penton/KTM, the United States fielded an entire assault on the Austrian bike, which resulted in some of the best U.S. team achievements ever.

The ISDT isn't the only turf the KTM has come to enjoy. East of the Rockies, it's hard to pick your way across the pits of any enduro without walking by at least a few KTMs, and enduro riders being as frugal as they are, it's not uncommon to see a number of vintage Pentons at any gathering. In Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey there are so many of them, that they've become a permanent part of the landscape.

And they're not this popular because the KTM is an easy bike to afford. As a matter of fact, from the time John Pen-

ton brought the first 175 into the country, KTM has had a stranglehold on the dubious distinction of being among the highest-priced spread known to man, that elite group classified rather loosely as "European Machinery."

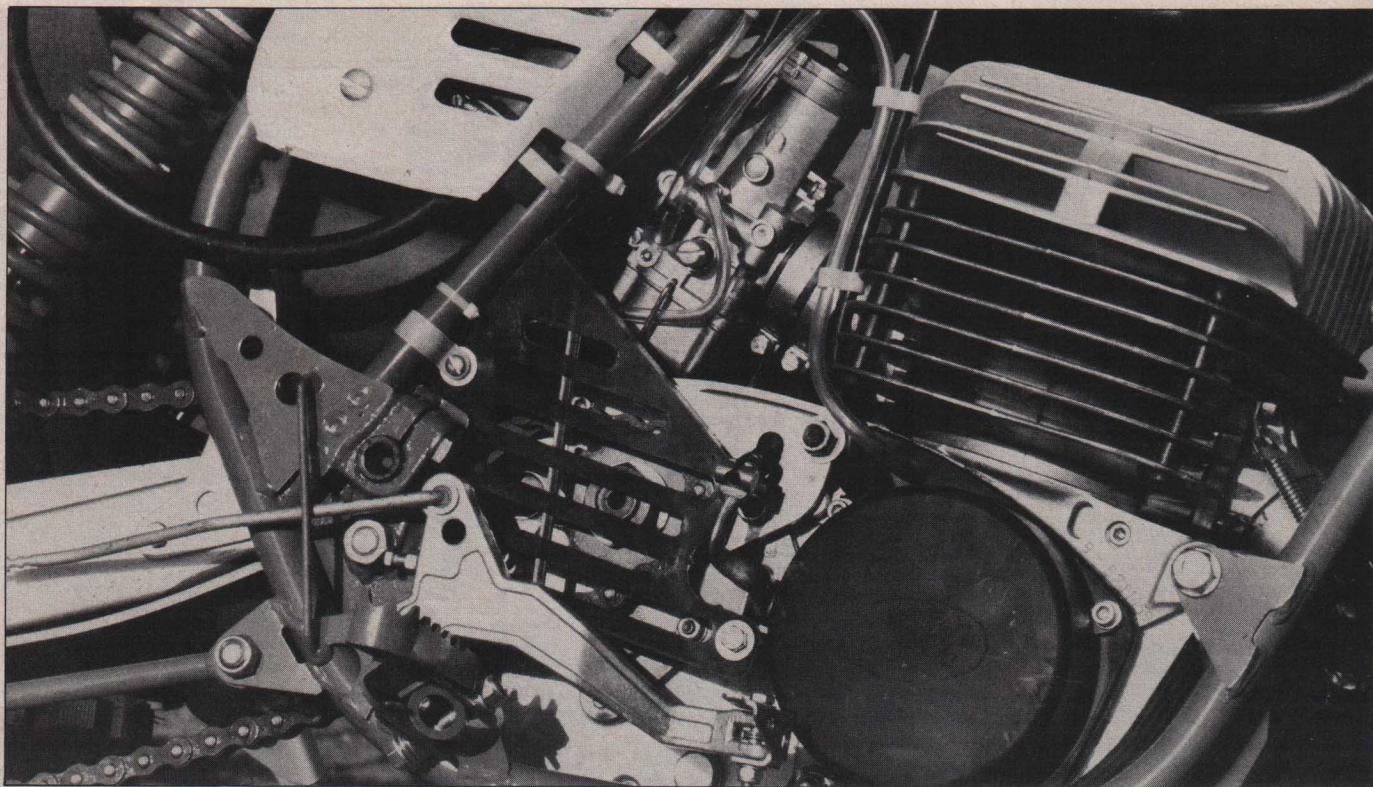
We've all heard many times in the past that anything European must be scrupulously maintained, lest it should scatter itself into a million pieces and send the luckless owner deep into hock in one quick trip to the parts counter. Indeed, in most cases, the price of the bike is nothing at all, compared to what what kind of parts bill a little bit of neglect can produce.

So, what's the attraction? Just ask the man who owns one. No, better yet, borrow his bike and go for a ride—that is, if he even lets you get close to it. And in one short ride, you'll know what it's like to ride a bike that seems to do everything well, at any speed you choose to ride it.

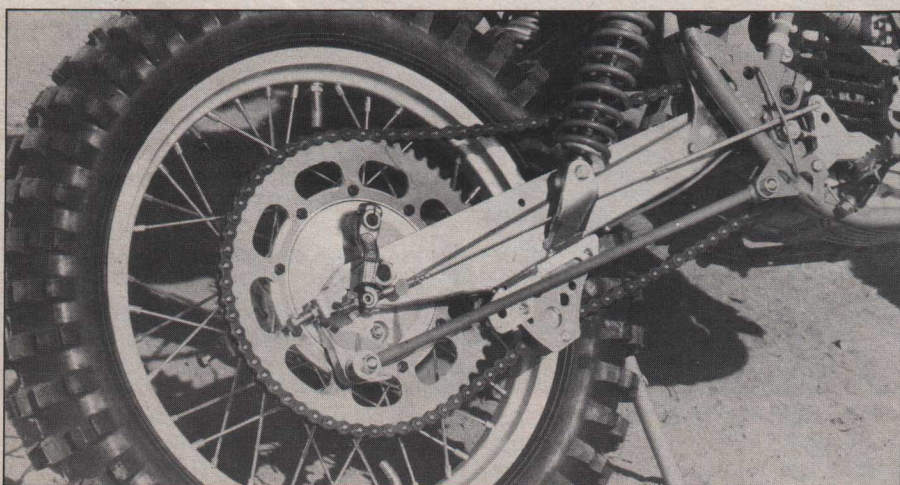
Spend a little more time aboard, and you feel like a hero. Everything happens with a lot less effort—it's no trouble to snake your way through tight trees, no body English, no weighting or unweighting, no dabbing in every turn, and everything seems to be going by a whole lot faster than it used to. Spend a whole day in the saddle and you're coming very close to a religious experience, and, sooner or later, you're going to have the eerie feeling that there's no reason at all for you to be on that seat, because, boy, you are riding a bike that doesn't need anyone at the controls, and it would be just as happy to cruise through these trees without all that excess weight on the saddle.

Think we're full of it, don't you? Just ask a KTM freak, he'll tell you all about it.

One card-carrying member of the DIRT BIKE staff, who incidentally has a suspicious loathing for anything



The same basic cases as the first 175, with a few minor changes—the mag cover is plastic, fins have been shaved down.



Extruded aluminum swingarm made it's debut in '79, is a very strong, light unit.

European other than machines of West German heritage, summed it up rather nicely. We quote: "When it comes to enduro bikes (gag), it's not all that hard to find one that you wouldn't mind riding all day, although in most all cases you're thinking, '... I'll have to put in some lighter fork oil, and I've got to change that front tire and put on some higher bars, and damn! I wish I had a pair of decent shocks lying around...' but the KTM isn't like that at all. As a matter of fact, after riding around a little bit, I felt so confident that I wouldn't hesitate to enter a run on that bike stone-stock. And I never do that..." And that is what the KTM mystique is all about.

Basic mechanics

Enough of this shameless slobbering.

There were a few things we didn't like, and we'll talk about them a little later.

The motor is the same basic unit as the one that came off the boat in '73, refined and modified over the years. By the seat of the pants, the power output hasn't changed too much, and while the 36mm Bing carb allows the engine to rev out to a respectable top end, the 175 still has a surprising amount of low-end grunt. It would be interesting to see how the bike would perform with a smaller carb, say a 30 or a 32; also, a smaller carb would help out with the altitude sensitivity of the stock carb, which seems to be able to tolerate a 2500- to 3000-foot limit before it becomes necessary to reject.

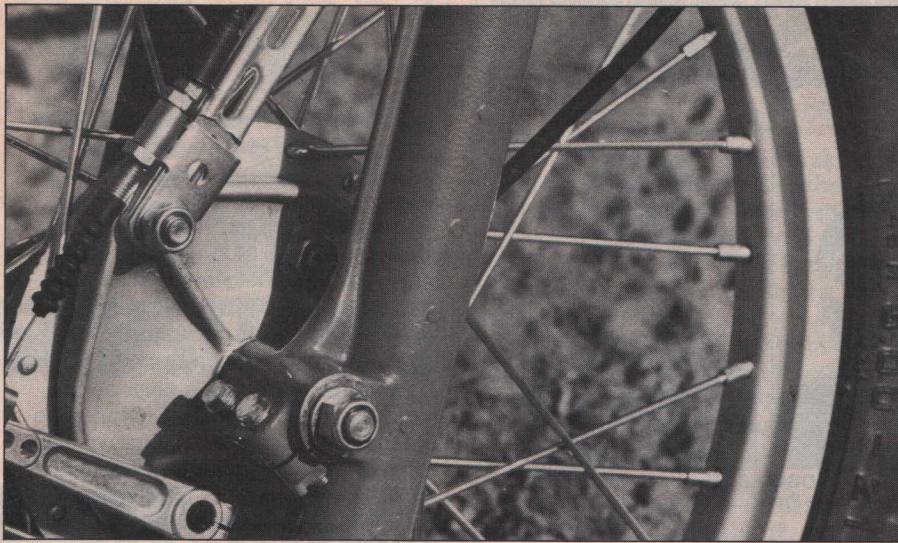
The torquey motor is helped out by the transmission—six gears, well-

spaced, without any long gaps between the cogs. One of the characteristics of the older models was decidedly notchy shifting, and it wasn't all that difficult to miss a variety of gears in a day's ride. This has been changed, and our test bike shifted smoothly, up or down, with or without the clutch. We missed a couple of gears when the bike was being broken in, and as soon as we had become accustomed to the lever throw, we had no more difficulty. Also, to accommodate the Scott boot wearers on the staff, we had to raise the shifter a notch—and then they were all happy.

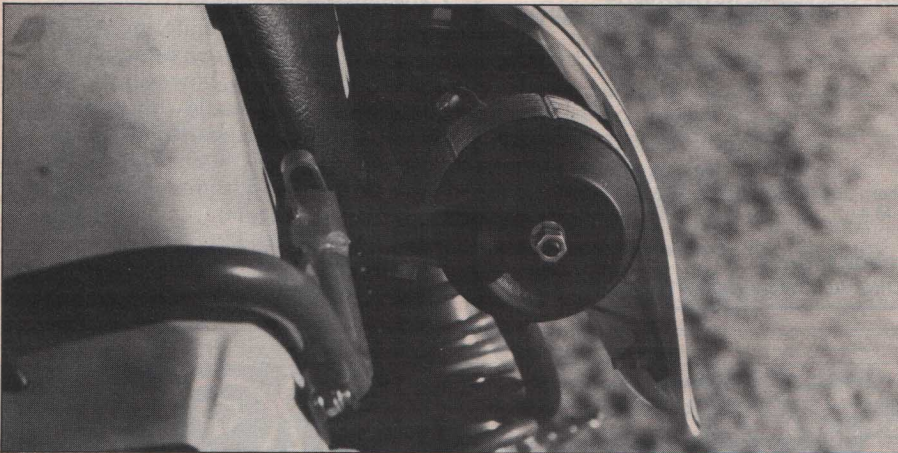
Backing off from the motor, the pipe looks to be the same basic design as the earlier models, but now wearing a Super Trapp muffler on the back. The Trapp is a good feature in theory—the addition or subtraction of the stainless steel discs being a tuning feature, allowing the owner to lean or richen the performance to whatever is required. The Trapp comes stock with 12 discs, and any way you look at it, the bike is noisy. We added an accessory resonator (available from the Super Trapp people), which cut the noise somewhat, but it would be best to use the resonator, about five discs, and another ST accessory known as a "Quiet Core," and then jet the carb to run with the combination. A Super Trapp set up in this manner can be as quiet as anything, but you may wind up sacrificing a little bit of top-end power.

The KTM comes with a huge air box, which does its breathing from under

(Continued on page 67)



Marzocchi forks are almost identical to the Can-Am units, feature different valving. Brake cable attachment is state-of-the-art.



Super Trapp silencer/spark arrester comes stock with 12 discs; was a little too loud for our tastes.

KTM 175 MC-80 Specifications

Name and Model	KTM 175 MC-80	Wheelbase	.58 inches
Engine Type	Two-stroke, piston port	Ground Clearance	13.5 inches
Bore & Stroke	63.5x54	Seat Height at Tank	37.5 inches
Displacement	172cc	Steering Head Angle	28 degrees
Horsepower (Claimed by Factory)	N/A	Trail	N/A
Carburetion	36mm Bing	Weight With One Gallon Gas	218 pounds
Factory Recommended Jetting:		Rim Material	Aluminum alloy
Main Jet	175	Tire sizes:	
Needle Jet	280	Front	Metzeler 3.00x21
Jet Needle	4K2	Rear	Metzeler 4.00x18
Pilot Jet	45	Suspension:	
Slide Number	230	Front, Type and Travel	Marzocchi
Recommended Gasoline	Leaded premium	air/spring	10.6 inches
Recommended Oil (Mfr.)	Any quality two-stroke oil	Rear, Type and Travel	Bilstein
Fuel Tank Capacity	2.7 gallons	reservoir	11.4 inches
Fuel Tank Material	Plastic	Intended Use, Mfr.	Off-road/enduro
Gas/Oil Ratio	Per manufacturer's instructions	Country of Origin	Austria
Lubrication	Pre-mix	Price, Approx.	\$2082
Air Filtration	Oiled foam	Parts Prices, High-Wear Items	(1979 prices)
Clutch Type	Wet, multi-plate	Piston Assembly, Complete	\$55.07
Transmission	Six-speed	Rings Only	\$9.62/\$6.16
Gearbox Ratios:		Cylinder	(liner) \$40.79
1	14:36	Shift Lever	\$10.55
2	18:32	Brake Pedal	\$14.44
3	21:28	Front Sprocket	\$8.65
4	24:25	Distributor:	
5	26:23	KTM America	
6	29:21	1906 Broadway	
Gearing, Front/Rear	13/57	Lorain, Ohio 44052	
Ignition	Motoplant CDI	Overall rating, from 0 to 100, various categories, keeping intended use of machine in mind:	
Primary Kick System?	No	Handling	99
Recommended Spark Plug	Bosch W310SIS	Suspension	96
Silencer/Spark Arrester/Quality	Yes/yes/moderately loud	Power	92
Exhaust System	High-pipe, through frame	Cost	88
Frame, Type	Double cradle	Attention to Detail	95
		Effectiveness, Stone Stock	97

(Continued from page 29)

the seat. An equally large filter is held in with one spring clamp, which hooks tightly to the top of the box. This is a very simple, yet effective method, and it greatly reduces the hassle factor when it comes time to clean the filter.

A 520 chain replaces the 530 model of years past, a feature that some will appreciate, considering that now you can steal your buddy's master link when yours disappears. On the other hand, it takes a lot of abuse to wear out the bigger chain, and such problems were minimal on the older bikes. It also costs a lot more to replace a 530.

The chain is guided on its journey by a pair of huge plastic and aluminum guides, which look as if they would be at home on a Sherman tank. This system made it possible for KTM to do without a spring tensioner, which is one less moving part to have to worry about.

Tubes, springs and oil

A good, long look at the frame of the KTM has caused a few jaws to drop. This has to be one of the most complex designs we've seen yet. Five separate frame tubes start out at the steering head and become the backbone under the tank; one pair curve gracefully around to meet the downtubes aft of the cradle; two more bend around the air box and strengthen up the shock/swingarm mount area; and the last joins the rear frame loops at the seat/tank junction. The rear fender is mounted on a non-essential frame member, which is removable; two bolts on either side of the seat mount. The KTM motocrosser frames are identical, without the rear fender loop. The whole confusing package comes together to produce a very strong unit, with absolutely zero flex.

Said frame, also, is painted orange. Since the forks are standard Marzocchi Orange Flavor, we have to assume that KTM paints the frame to match. Call us purists, but we would have painted it silver, along with the fork sliders, and then everything would have matched the swingarm.

Color aside, the frame is an impressive unit. Perhaps 1980 should be referred to as "The Year of the Frame," judging by the few '80 bikes we've seen to date. Maico has come out with a radical departure for the new year, and Yamaha has gone to a double-down-tube design—both brands showing stunning improvements in handling manners. Considering the strides in suspension performance over the last few years, chassis technology will probably be the new frontier. And welcome, too.

Back to those orange forks. If they remind you of any Can-Ams we've tested lately, you're right. They're exactly the same, yet different. (?) We suspect that

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KTM specifies different valving internally, because even though they are the same 10.6-inch units used on the Can-Am, they do the job much more smoothly. Under power, the KTM skips smoothly over any obstacle, while the Can-Am—a very good bike in its own right—will occasionally let a particularly hard jolt right through to the rider's arms. Of course, the whole story could be a lot simpler than that—a light oil in the Can-Am forks will bring them right up to snuff. Either way, the Marzocchis are an excellent fork.

Holding up the rear is a pair of Bilstein gas reservoir shocks, mounted to an extruded aluminum swingarm, very similar in appearance to the Suzuki RM arm. The shocks feel a little stiff at first, but once the bike is up to a moderate speed, that initial stiffness is a blessing. As in all KTMs, the suspension isn't geared to slow running. In a tight, crawling switch-back turn, the ride can be best described as harsh, however the good handling qualities allow most sections to be taken at a higher-than-normal speed, letting the suspension do the job it was built for. It sounds like a lot of smoke-blowing, but the harder you ride a KTM, the better it feels.

The rear suspension rewards such efforts with a rock-steady ride—never a

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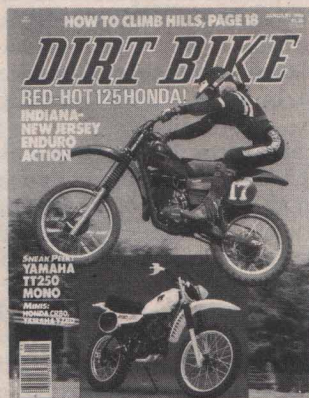
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twitch or a twist in the up-and-down motion of the arm. It rides on a set of needle bearings, and is equipped with Zerk fitting for grease-gun lubrication. Give it a squirt after every ride.

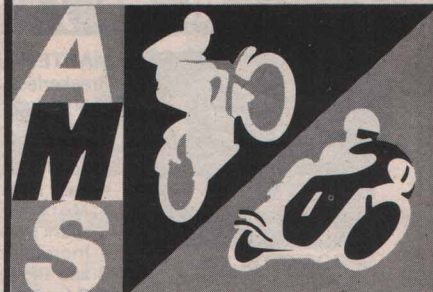
Our first impression of the brakes was that they were a little less than adequate. Occasionally we overshot a turn and would up in the weeds, but after a reasonable amount of break-in time and a couple of adjustments, both sets of shoes settled in nicely. As a matter of fact, after testing the bike in both zero-traction and total-traction conditions, we would have to rate the KTM brakes as being among the most progressive and strongest units on the market.

Front and rear tires, as always, are Metzlers. For western riding, there is hardly a better tire available, and from our experience they work well in anything. Of course, we've said all this before . . .

Bits and pieces

Seating position is excellent, good and neutral, but a lot of the testers complained that the stock bars were too wide. Five minutes' work with a hacksaw. Levers and throttle are by Magura; the throttle is a straight-pull number that does a good job of keeping the cable out of trouble. Grips are Magura block-pattern, which everyone

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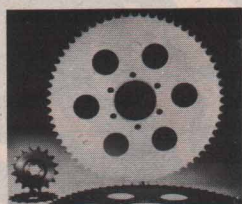
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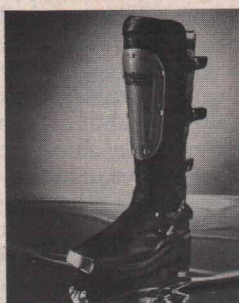
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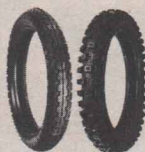
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eyed suspiciously as being too hard, but oddly enough, no one complained.

The front brake cable is a work of art down at the hub, passes through a beautiful guide at the lower triple clamp, and then everything goes to hell. Because of a relatively short length, the cable must run under the speedo, and this forces an unnatural bend when the forks are compressed. There should be another guide or two, to enable the cable to run on the outside of the number plate/headlight.

That headlight, by the way, is a Preston Petty unit, with a neat little switch on the back for the on/off work.

And speaking of switches, that super-strong rear brake pedal also operates a brake light switch! When was the last time you saw that on an enduro bike?

The front hub incorporates an internal drive for the VDO speedometer, and the cable is pretty well protected behind the left fork tube. Both hubs are conical, by the way, very light and strong.

Our bike came without a skid plate, and there doesn't seem to be any provision for an accessory item. It would be a good idea to put something on there; there are some expensive cases, boy.

There is a light plastic guard over the countershaft sprocket, even though it doesn't seem to have much purpose. A case saver is bolted down right in front of the sprocket, obviously protecting the clutch linkage and the mag cover, which looks suspiciously like a Preston Petty item, also.

Paying the price

The KTM 175 is one of the two \$2000-plus enduro machines available (the SWM 175 lists for \$2239). By anyone's standard, that's a high price, especially considering that an IT or a PE costs at least \$600 less. Is it really worth it? That all depends on whether or not it's possible to make an IT or PE work like a KTM, with new tires, suspension, or whatever is necessary.

The key word is handling. Most of our testers mentioned the motor only when asked about it, while everyone babbled about the handling. In the hands of a good rider, the KTM can work miracles, and with a novice aboard it will inspire confidence by the bucketful. A lot of people will tell you that a Maico is the easiest bike to win races on, and there's a lot of truth in that statement, because the Maico works so well on a motocross track.

Well, the KTM has been the king of the woods for a long time working on exactly the same principle: Anyone can ride it, and win on it, expending the least amount of energy in the process. And whether or not you can afford it all depends on how easy you want to win. □

RIDING IMPRESSION

By Gary Woodling

Two thousand dollars for a 175? Come on, Clipper, who buys 'em? Arabs? To run around on their oil fields? ... 20 minutes later ... Hey, Paul, you mean she only costs a little over two grand? What a steal!

That's how fast you change your mind, after riding one. But let's talk about detailing first! Check out that precision European craftsmanship! Superb quality steel and alloys. Artistic welds. Top-name suspension components and controls. Cross-three and cross-four spokes, and Lordy, it's even got Metzlers. The price is already more realistic!

The ride? Instant happy feet! High-speed cross-country habits are predictable and stable. Cross-grain ruts are smoothed out, but still not as smooth at low speeds as a Husky. Turning is good, but requires a watchful eye from the rider. This is due to the long travel and high bars rather than a result of incorrect steering geometry. But, this can soon be adapted to and used to produce a ride near the speed of light through tight woods.

Suspension? Fork damping was ideal and a kit might be a step backwards. The front was complemented by the rear and the shocks should last a full year of hard racing. The Bilsteins are really plush compared to some Ohlins-equipped bikes. Spring rate was OK for my 175 pounds, but is ideal for lighter clock-watchers.

Power? Oh, the power! Since I haven't ridden an '80 Yamaha IT175 yet, I'll compare it to a '79 IT, which almost everybody gets a chance to ride, sometime in their life. The IT has more bottom-end grunt, but the KTM has better mid-range and will rev farther. Top-end horsepower is about equal.

What this results in is a super-wide powerband that is predictable with no sudden increases or jumps in power. The only catch is that the powerband is much higher than your normal Japanese grunter. After you get used to it, you'll realize that it's the fastest way through the trees. It is by no means pipey! Only a revver.

It is an Expert's machine! Beginning riders will be intimidated by it. "B" riders will love the handling and suspension, but have mixed emotions about the powerband. Experts will take it to bed with them.

Regular maintenance will have to be increased between races, and the up-keep bill will be higher than on a yellow, red or green machine. But on the trail, where it really counts, DNFs will

be rare and low scores common.

The KTM is in a class by itself. Not because of its superb ride or power, but because of its price. I can dance and sing all I want without having ridden a PE, IT or KDX. They all cost about \$600 less, which puts them in a different ball game, and they won't cost anywhere near for upkeep in dollars or time. So, I'll tell you what. If the 200 class were really home, and if I were as rich and famous as the other DB staffers, I'd buy one and race it! Heck, I'd buy it even if I wasn't as famous as they are! But first I'd get on a first-name basis with my local loan officer. □

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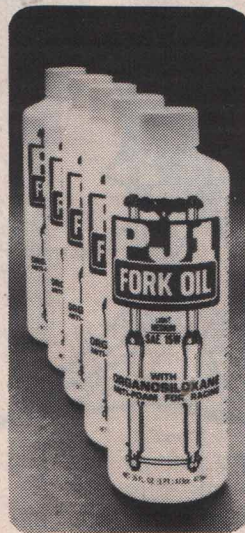
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