

# DIRT BIKE

**125 POWER POP:**

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**EASTERN**

**ECSTASY:**

**FLOGGING**

**KTM'S 250**

**THUMPER**

**TWINS:**

**HONDA**

**XR250/500**

**PIPE FIX:**

**HUSKY 250**

**PE175**



# DIRT BIKE

JULY 1980

VOLUME 10, NO. 7



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**ON THE COVER:** — Enduro expert Gary Woodling splits through the woods on the Suzuki PE400T, leaving the rest of his minute behind. Photo by Brian George.



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## EASTERN ENDURO TEST: KTM 250GS

# WHITE LIGHTNING

*All They'll See at The Spectator Points  
is an Orange and White Blur*

**By the Dirt Bike Staff**

When we tested the KTM 175 in the April '80 issue, we rediscovered one of the most impressive bikes on the market. The 175 did everything right—handling, suspension, power—you name it, it did it, with no fuss at all. In the test, the staff decided that the KTM is one bike that could be literally removed from the crate and dropped on the starting line of any off-road race in the world, or at least that was the impression it gave us.

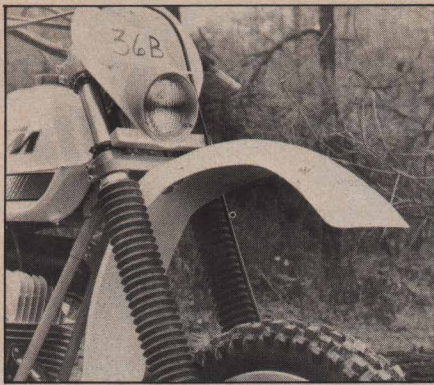
So, for the 250 test we wanted to do something weird. We would take delivery of the test bike one day before a 100-mile enduro, and ride it box-stock, only allowing minor changes for the sake of rider comfort. To make matters a little more interesting, we tested the bike in its native element, the steamy, soggy, gawdawful tight woods of the eastern U.S., the homeland of KTM since the first model back in '73.

We accepted the generous invitation

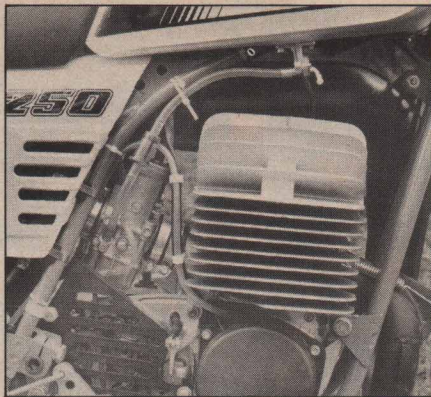
of Bill Spindler, president of the South Jersey Enduro Riders, to come on out and ride the 1980 Curly Fern Enduro. It wouldn't be a National this year, but Bill said that it wouldn't make any difference to the layout crew, and promised one tough mother of a run to try out any bike we cared to ride. "Just make sure it's waterproof and you'll be fine," which is the normal order of things back east.

With entry forms in hand, we set





**New Marzocchi forks feature 305mm of travel and are the best-working forks yet. Our routing of the brake cable didn't work.**



**The 250 motor puts out usable power in every direction. Brake pedal isn't just good-looking, it's strong too.**



about arranging for bike delivery to the antipodes, and while we're on the subject, bear with us as we get the many thank yous out of the way. Don Rosene (who asked us to mention his name; hi, Don) took care of the logistics involved in getting the bike from KTM America in Ohio to South Jersey, and once there we were treated to the use of the shop and parts department of Two Wheel World, in Woodbury, New Jersey, for any set-up or repair work we might need. Much thanks to Gary Noble and the crew for their assistance.

Once we and the bike were united, very few things were changed. The bars were cut down to 31 inches, which is the minimum width available with stock KTM bars and controls. The Magura levers were replaced with a pair of short aluminum DeHandlers, to lessen the chances of breaking a few fingers on the notorious Jersey Pines. Most riders save the additional expense by cutting down the stock levers, which is a perfectly acceptable solution. We held on to the stockers for spares.

Next we raised the shifter and brake pedal to keep away from the many stumps, and checked the whole bike for tightness and basic waterproofing. That's all. Tomorrow would be Sun-

day, and at 8:36, the test would start.

Sunday dawned bright and clear (what kind of a story would this be if Sunday didn't "dawn bright and clear"? I wish I had a dime for every time that line's been used), which was a considerable blessing, since we had three inches of rain on Saturday. The KTM's tank was filled up, the clocks were set, and right on schedule, at 8:36, we scooted off into the woods.

#### The Test

Right off, the KTM is an easy bike to get used to, which is a good thing, if you spend most of your time in the eastern woods. We started out with a mile of asphalt, a rare courtesy in an enduro, which gives you a chance to remember to turn the gas on, and also make certain that both wheels are securely attached. Which they were. After a quick sprint through the woods, the riders were dumped right in the middle of a deep whoopdied fireroad, the acid test of any suspension.

This year, KTM is using Bilstein shocks, a point which raises eyebrows among all who remember the old Bilsteins, those nasty yellow units which didn't work all that well. The new Bilsteins are completely redesigned, gas-charged and remote-reservoired, and actually work very well indeed. They

took the gnarliest whoops in stride, letting the rear wheel travel all of its 11.2 inches without packing up or hopping out of line, rivaling the action of a well-set-up pair of Ohlins. Having had little experience with them, we can't say just how long they'll last, but there should be no reason to change them till they're good and dead.

When we first looked at the forks, every reaction was the same—"They look just like last year's forks, don't they?" Externally they are just about the same—38mm tubes, no air caps, orange—but inside there's a big difference. Internally the forks have been reworked, and KTM's progressive damping system is the result. Among other changes, the damping rod now has eight little holes instead of two or four, and the new forks don't even need air caps to get the job done.

On first impression, the forks are way too soft. It's too easy to stand and pump half the travel out with the front brake locked up, and the first slow ride feels unusually plush. Too plush—not the kind of feeling that inspires confidence in the nasty stuff, but we certainly were surprised on that first trip through the whoopdies. All of a sudden, the suspension came alive, both ends of the bike happy as pie to go wherever you pointed it. Unlike the reactions of a standard too-soft suspension, the faster the KTM is pushed, the better the forks and shocks respond. Never a jolt through the bars, until you finally bottom one end or the other out, usually on a square-edged hole better than a foot and a half deep, and even then the suspenders snap right back in line without a hop or a lurch to mar the straight-line progress. KTM and Marzocchi really did their homework this time.

It wasn't very long before the arrows turned us into the trees, and the going started getting nasty. We didn't really know what to expect at this point, because after all, tight woods is not the place for a bike with better than 11 inches of travel, right? Wrong.

The 250 isn't as quick-turning as the older, shorter-travel models, but it is surprisingly nimble, just as long as it's turning under power. If the rider starts each turn just fractionally earlier than normal and then gives the rear wheel a boost with the throttle, the KTM will slash through anything that gets in its way—very quickly.

The best way to describe the handling is "just like a good-turning motocrosser," which isn't too surprising,



considering that the enduro model is nothing more than an MXer with a GS kit on it. The kit, which represents \$180 of the total retail price, consists of a VDO speedometer and all the parts, a Preston Petty headlight and all the wiring, the rear frame loop and fender, with taillight, and a Super Trapp spark arrestor. On any of the models, the size of the gas tank is optional, and KTM offers an 8, 10, or 14-liter unit to serve any kind of riding you may want to do. Our bike came with the 10-liter tank, which was good for right about 50 miles, on a new bike with stock gearing and jetting.

Front wheels consist of conical hubs laced to Sun rims with heavy-duty eight-gauge spokes, and Metzeler tires wrapped all around. First-rate equipment, by any standards, but we had our problems. The rims come with rimlocks installed, instead of the bead pins which are an optional Sun accessory, and it would be good to consider using the pins, especially on the rear wheel. We ran the bike stock, as you well know, and after about 30 miles the rear tire slipped just enough to tear the tube and flatten the tire, which does little to improve straight-line stability. Rimlocks just aren't strong enough to keep

the rear tire solid in wet, perfect-traction running, and sheetmetal screws or bead pins would have taken care of the problem, had we used them.

One good point came of the experience, though. Our token New Jersey staffer has a running streak of DNFs due to bizarre mechanical problems in that state, and in this case chose to continue on a flat tire rather than chalk up another one. The rear end of the bike did its best to stay sideways for the last 60 miles of the run, and took enough of a pounding to completely destroy the tire, but, and this is the good part, not one of the spokes loosened up, and we had zero problems with the hub. We can attribute this to good, strong parts and a minor miracle. The squirrel in the saddle certainly didn't help much.

The brakes on our test bike functioned very well, considering the general sloppiness of the run. It had rained three inches the days preceding the event, and the run turned out to be a series of sprints between mudholes. Both brakes lost a little of their effectiveness after the first dunking, and then stabilized at a point best described as "strong enough," which is just about the best you can ask for in wet

conditions. We rode the bike a few times after the enduro, and after the shoes had a chance to dry out, the stopping action was top-notch.

Before we forget, let us mention, in passing, that the KTM has a very good motor. Power is no problem, as the bike is capable of covering the distance between the turns much faster than the rider is. Not to say that the bike is any faster than a good 250 should be, but the combination of good gear ratios, a tight engine and an excellent rear tire (when it's not flat) makes the 250 a bike that's willing to pull up to practically anything on a fireroad, and then pull away.

In this run, the torque was especially useful for puddle-jumping, something we had to do a lot of. It was no more difficult to do a wheelie than to just crank the throttle wide-open, and with a little balance, said wheelie could be carried through a small pond, if the waterproofing held out.

If you want more than just grunt, just let the bike rev out a little more. After about 6000 rpm everything tears loose in a rush, and a good rider can scare the living daylight out of himself. A bad rider would do well not playing around in the high revs.

A curious note. By the simple swapping of a certain bolt on the clutch side of the lower end, the KTM 250 can be changed from a five-speed to a six-speed, and then back again. This would have its advantage in motocross, allowing the rider to do away with the very low first gear, or in any case where a rider decides he has too many gears. All the change does is block out first gear and neutral, and then opens up a neutral between second and third. Don't know how useful it'd be, but it's a nice touch all the same.

The stock carburetor is a 38mm Bing, and ours seemed to be jetted spot-on for our near-sea level riding. Out of the 2.8-gallon tank, we went about 48 miles before filling up was necessary—not too bad for a new 250.

The air box takes air in from under the seat, and is reasonably waterproof. After the run it was obvious that a certain amount of water and mud had splashed in, but very little got through to the filter, and none got through to the engine. The filter is very easy to get in and out for cleaning, and is large enough to pass all the air the motor should need.

#### Bits and Pieces

We anticipated problems with the  
*[Continued on page 70]*

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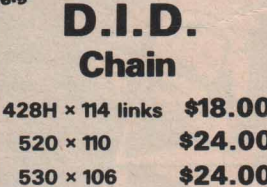
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[Continued from page 25]

front brake cable, and cut a hole through the number plate to keep it from hanging up on the speedo. No luck. By the end of the test, the cable was hanging up on the top edge of the Petty headlight/number plate and causing front brake problems. The cable could stand to be a little shorter, but, at any rate, the new owner of a KTM should pay close attention to the proper routing of the cable.

The gas tank uses a petcock with two positions, "ON" and "RESERVE." Bravo! There are far too many "enduro" bikes on the market today without a reserve on the tank. Until you need it, you have no idea how important it can be.

The filler cap on the gas tank is a very tight fit, and occasionally, with tired hands, it was very difficult to remove. The cap should be molded with larger ridges for better gripping.

All KTMs come with a Motoplat CDI these days; these require virtually no maintenance at all, and help make their bikes very easy starting machines.

Chain is the good stuff—530 Regina—and should last quite a while with reasonable care. Just as long as you don't enter too many mud runs—we neglected ours during the enduro and managed to stretch it to the limit.

The swingarm is made out of an aluminum extrusion, and is very strong—no flexing or twitching here. It rides on caged needle bearings and has a zerk fitting for grease gun lubrication. Use it often.

The Super Trapp exhaust system is rather loud with the stock number of discs (ours had 12), but by removing discs you can quiet it down somewhat.

All the controls and levers are by Magura, and are first-rate. The grips are Maguras also, and although many riders complain about them, they're not as uncomfortable as they look.

### The Results

All in all, it sounds like a pretty good bike to most of us, but when the subject of price comes up, most people cringe. And with pretty good reason: \$2500 is a lot of money.

Fortunately there are a lot of ways to justify the purchase. You won't have to spend any money on accessories. No tires, controls, shocks, or fork kits—the KTM doesn't need it. By riding our tester in competition stone-stock, we feel that we've proven that there's nothing you need to do to the bike, aside from anchoring that rear tire a little better, and that's a matter of per-

sonal preference.

With the right kind of maintenance, you shouldn't be buying parts all that often. The KTM is a very reliable bike. A piston kit may cost \$90, but there's no reason why you shouldn't get at least 2000 miles of hard riding out of the stocker, and probably more. All it takes is a little work after every ride.

And, it must not be very hard work, or maybe the price isn't as high as we might think, because KTM still sells every bike they bring into this country. There's a message in there somewhere.

### KTM 250 GS Specifications

NAME AND MODEL	.....	KTM 250 GS
ENGINE TYPE	.....	Two-stroke single
BORE AND STROKE	.....	71x62mm
DISPLACEMENT	.....	246cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY)	.....	38 bhp at 7400 rpm
CARBURETION	.....	38mm Bing
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:		
MAIN JET	.....	170
NEEDLE JET	.....	272
JET NEEDLE	.....	4K2
PILOT JET	.....	45
SLIDE NUMBER	.....	120
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	.....	Premium
RECOMMENDED OIL (MFR.)	.....	Any high-quality two-stroke
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	.....	10.3 liters (2.8 gallons)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	.....	Plastic
LUBRICATION	.....	Pre-mix
AIR FILTRATION	.....	Oiled foam
CLUTCH TYPE	.....	Wet, multi-plate
TRANSMISSION	.....	Six-speed
GEARBOX RATIOS:		
1	.....	14:36
2	.....	18:32
3	.....	21:28
4	.....	24:25
5	.....	26:23
6	.....	28:21
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	.....	13/52
IGNITION	.....	Motoplat CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	.....	No
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	.....	Bosch W310SIS

SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/QUALITY	.....	Yes/yes/moderately loud
EXHAUST SYSTEM	.....	Up-pipe, through frame
FRAME, TYPE	.....	Double downtube
WHEELBASE	.....	1445mm (55.5 inches)
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....	300mm (11.5 inches)
SEAT HEIGHT AT TANK	.....	900mm (34.7 inches)
STEERING HEAD ANGLE	.....	28 degrees
TRAIL	.....	N/A
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	.....	228 pounds, approx.

RIM MATERIAL	.....	Sun aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZES:		
FRONT	.....	3.00x21 Metzeler
REAR	.....	4.50x18 Metzeler

SUSPENSION:		
FRONT, TYPE AND TRAVEL	.....	Marzocchi forks, 305mm (11.7 inches)
REAR, TYPE AND TRAVEL	.....	Bilstein shocks, 290mm (11.2 inches)

INTENDED USE, MFR.	.....	Off-road, enduro
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	.....	Austria
PRICE, APPROX.	.....	\$2532

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