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2000

*It takes a little time to
get used to a KTM 125.
It does everything well,
but differently.*



KTM 125SX

Holeshot material

By the staff of DIRT BIKE

Face it; there are four reasons that anyone chooses one 125 motocross bike over another.

1. He likes the image. That race team has the coolest tattoos, the fastest riders, the hottest pit babes, etc.

2. He got a deal. There's a dealer on every corner and they're all having a gas war with 125 MX bikes.

3. He made a hideous mistake. He bought the worst bike, paid the most money and will be paying for his stupidity for years.

4. The bike is good. Secrets like that don't remain secrets long.

If KTM is going to sell any 125 MX bikes in 2000, it has to be for reason number four. Nothing else will work. A KTM 125 has never won a supercross, there aren't a zillion dealers pushing them on every corner and they can't count on stupid buyers—those are in big demand and there aren't enough to go around.

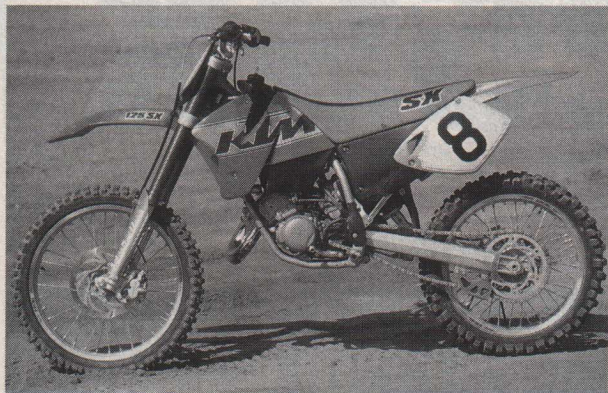
And you know what? In the perfect world, KTM *should* sell the a bunch of 125s. It's good, and the secret is out. Who would have guessed? Twenty years ago, Europe's last impact on the motocross scene was in the Open class. But today, the KTM 125SX is a legitimate contender; all it really needs is a McGrath who will ride for free.



If you want holeshots, you've come to the right place. There are a lot of things you can call the KTM 125, but slow isn't one of them.

2000 KTM 125SX

MOTOCROSS TEST:



Once upon a time, Europeans could only make Open bikes and four-strokes. Times change.



The PDS rear suspension has a lot of travel and isn't afraid to use it. Between the progressive spring and the progressive damping, the rear wheel is always moving, whether the bump is small or large.

WHAT MAKES IT SO GOOD?

KTM has an awesome 125 MX motor. That's really weird—it disregards most of the conventions that 125 designers hold dear. It has no Power Jet, but it does have a monstrous 39mm Keihin carb. Virtually all other 125s have 36mm carbs. The motor is huge; basically the same thing as the KTM 200. Right from the first version of the bike in 1998, nothing about the engine, pipe, cylinder or head looked like KTM copied any other 125s. This year, the bike's ignition curve was remapped and the reed block was changed, but otherwise it's the same weird motor as before.

But what a motor. The bike makes decent low-end and mid-range power. Don't ask us how. And on top, that 39mm maul really pays off. It pulls like crazy. If you hold it on longer still, the bike will keep on revving for a while, then just fizzle out. It's a screamer, but it's no ultrasound dog deafener like the Suzuki.

How does it stack up to the feared class champion, the YZ125? Down low, the YZ might pull a little stronger, then the two are about equal in the middle. On top, we have to give the ribbon to the KTM. That's impressive.

Jetting our test bike was really weird. In the space of a single day, it could change

its mind. On one fine Saturday, we raced it at Glen Helen in the morning and Perris Raceway in the evening. The jetting was fine at Glen Helen, then so rich at Perris that we had to drop the needle a notch. There was very little change in temperature, humidity or elevation (just mood, as far as we could tell).

BESIDES THE MOTOR...

If the war were waged strictly in the motor department, KTM would be unbeatable. But the rest of the bike has

SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED

- WP inverted fork
- Smaller reed stuffer
- New ignition map
- New clutch lever
- New master cylinder

something to do with the equation, too. Just a few years ago, when KTM came out with the no-link suspension and new bodywork, it was heralded as razor thin and agile. By the standards of the year 2000, the bike feels a little chubby. Not fat, just not skinny. It turns well and you can certainly throw it around, but CRs and RMs are just so *good* in that department.

KTM's single biggest change for 2000 is in the suspension department. Last

SIGNIFICANT BUT UNCHANGED

- No-link PDS rear suspension
- Hydraulic clutch
- Side access air filter
- Brembo brakes
- Excel rims
- Regina chain

year's bike the last conventional fork holdout. No more. The entire motocross world has gone upside-down. We suppose that makes upside-down forks the *new* conventional forks. Whatever. The 2000 125SX has WP "top clicker" forks.

2000 KTM 125SX

They are similar to KYB forks in having the compression adjuster on the bottom and the rebound on the top. Odd—you don't have to adjust the rebound often, but that's the clicker that has a big knob and is easy to get to.

The bottom line is that the fork works. That's hard for us to admit—we were the last defenders of the old conventional fork. But virtually the same settings were good for 150-pound expert Mark Tilley and for 185-pound senior Ron Lawson. That's a good range.

WE LIKE

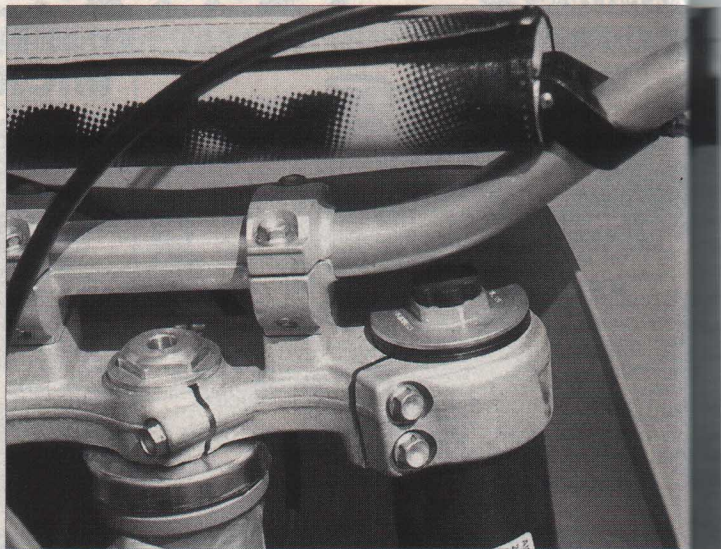
- Top end power
- Fork performance
- Front brake
- Aluminum bars
- Hydraulic clutch

Tilley and other fast guys had problems with the rear suspension, though. KTM uses a progressive spring. The bike doesn't have linkage, so a multi-rate spring and position-sensitive damping certainly make sense. But pros usually end up going to a straight rate spring because the rear end

compresses in turns and on

jump faces. Slower riders don't have the complaint—that is, until they hear the fast guys whining. Then they want everything that the pros want.

In stock form, though, the rear end is a little softer than the front. For most tracks, you can adjust the problem away by going a little high on preload (about 90mm) and adding a click or two of compression damping. Remember, to add compression damping to the WP shock, you



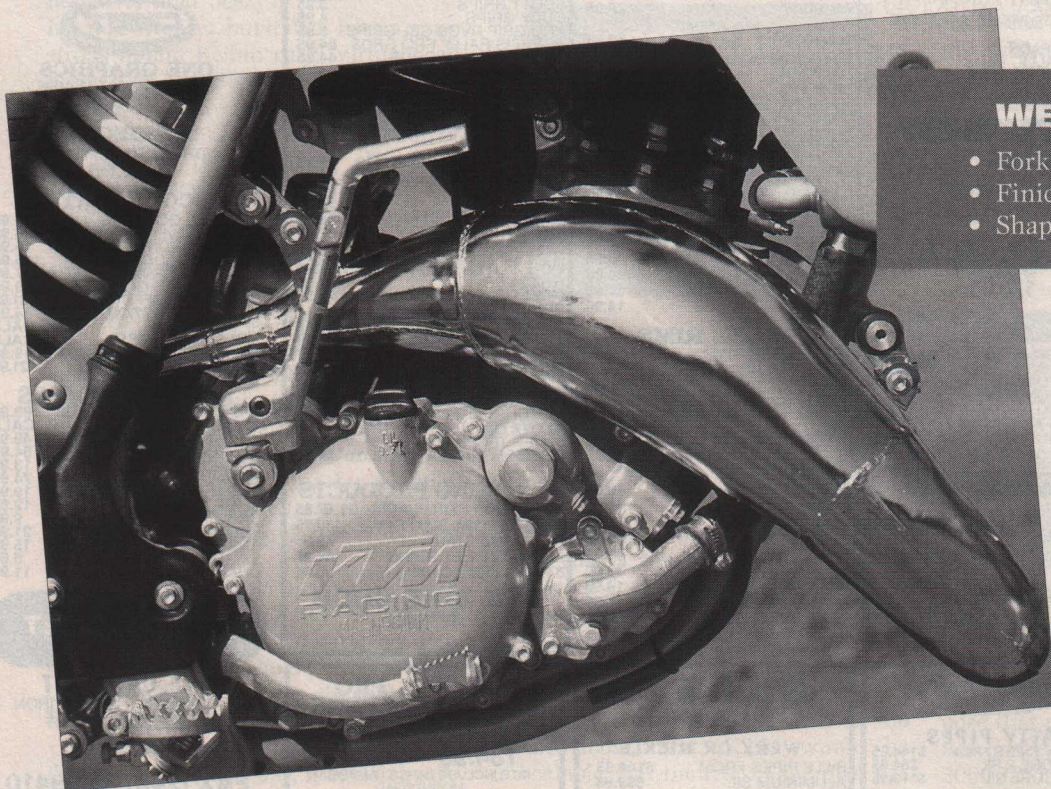
Okay, this year KTM is supplying its musical assembly line with inverted forks—what they call the “top clicker.” No change back to a conventional fork is scheduled for months.

have to turn the knob counterclockwise. The rebound clicker is the other way around. It's all a giant conspiracy to confuse magazine editors who hop from bike to bike (everyone else is fine).

WE DON'T LIKE

- Fork adjusters have little effect
- Finicky jetting
- Shape of “shorty” clutch lever

Attention all cheaters. It's a big motor for a 125 because KTM uses the same cases and castings for the 200.



MOTOCROSS TEST:

KTM 125SX

Engine typeReed-valve, liquid-cooled two-stroke
Displacement125cc
Bore & stroke54.3mm x 54.0mm
Carburetion39mm Keihin PWK
Fuel tank capacity1.9 gal. (7l)
Gearing13/50
Lighting coilNo
Spark arresterNo
EPA legalNo
Running weight w/no fuel209 lb.
Wheelbase57.5" (1461mm)
Rake27°
Ground clearance15.2" (385mm)
Seat height36.4" (925mm)
Tire size and type:
Front80/100-21 Bridgestone M77
Rear100/90-19 Bridgestone M78
Suspension:
FrontWP inverted cartridge, adj. reb./comp., 11.6" (295mm) travel
RearWP aluminum piggyback, adj. preld./reb./comp., 12.6" (320mm) travel
Country of originAustria
Suggested retail price\$4998
Distributor/manufacturer:
 KTM Sportmotorcycle, USA
 1119 Milan Ave., Amherst OH 44001;
 (440) 985-3553

WHERE'S THE JUICE?

KTM still has a hydraulic clutch. We still like it. But this year we hate the lever, which is too short and has a weird bend. But then we like the front brake. This is the most powerful Brembo brake we've ever tried. At least it *was* powerful until the fork leaked oil on the pads. We've never seen so much oil come from one fork leg.

We also like the aluminum handlebar, the rubberized seat cover and the side access air filter. We usually like KTM's tough graphics, but this year they aren't quite as durable as usual. We hope that's not a trend.

Still, all the items like levers, chain and sprockets on the KTM are super high quality—much better than the O.E. stuff from Japan. The bike is well built. It's also fast. It also has great front suspension (when the oil stays put), good rear suspension and good handling. That kind of news can't be kept a secret for long. The KTM 125 probably won't win any supercross mains in the year 2000. But that doesn't mean it couldn't. □

WILDERNESS ^{survival} rule
 #1: use your HEAD.



It doesn't take a genius to realize that when you're riding off road, dirt can feel as hard as asphalt if you should happen to take a fall. Which is why smart riders always use their head. And prove it by always wearing a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing.

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