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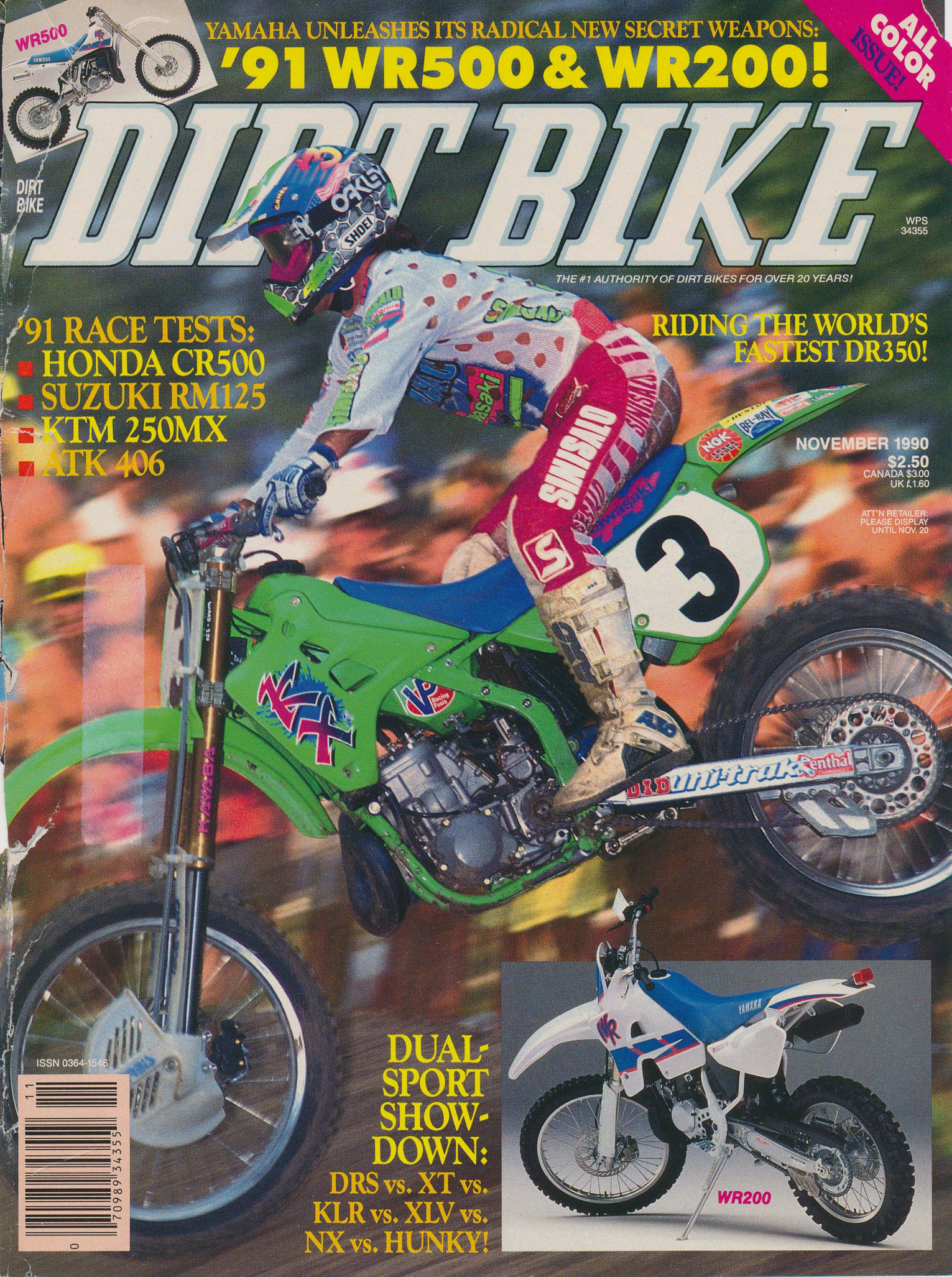
- '91 RACE TESTS:
- HONDA CR500
 - SUZUKI RM125
 - KTM 250MX
 - ATK 406

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KLR vs. XLV vs.
NX vs. HUNKY!



WR200



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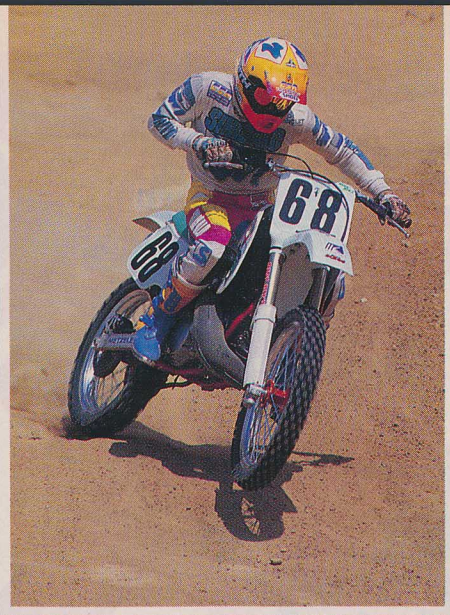
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ON THE COVER: Why didn't Jeff Ward win the 250 championship? He tells all on page 56, while Yamaha's new enduro surprises are on page 30. Wardy photo by Chris Hultner. Cover design by DeWest, separations by Valley Film.



Acceleration out of hard-packed turns is incredible. The bike hooks up and hauls, despite the killer hit and intermediate tires. A smooth power rush and rear shock action allow the '91 Katoom to hook up better than past efforts.



This is definitely the year of the Ugly Dirt Bike (UDB). KTM's version is white with mint green seat and graphics and a blood-red frame. Their whole line of MXC, DXC and EXC '91s got the mint treatment, along with the moniker "Mint Condition."

What the heck does that mean?

To most of us, it's something you read in the used-bike section of the classified ads. In that case, "mint condition" translates to "low mileage, because this bike is so evil I'm scared to ride it." Ads selling old Suzuki TM400s and Yamaha YZ465s usually contain the words "mint condition," and rightly so.

Coins are minted, but the only time anyone rushes out to buy one is when a mistake is made. If Denver minted a few two-headed buffalo nickels, collectors and investors would come out of the woodwork with wads of cash, but, for the most part, dirt bikers steer clear of two-headed two-strokes.

The Mint 400 is still around, but bikers

Mint and pepper: KTM's new color scheme was very carefully chosen. The red frame stands for power, strength and dynamism, and mint green correlates to maturity, stability and ingenuity.

haven't raced it in years. Nah, that's not it.

To the horse-racing crowd, mint is associated with the Kentucky Derby. Here, guys with "Colonel" before their names stagger around with huge wads of cash, betting on horses and spilling mint juleps on their white suits and shoes. No, styling and naming a dirt bike after the consumption of a vile green liquid doesn't make us want to rush out and bet \$4229 on a long shot.

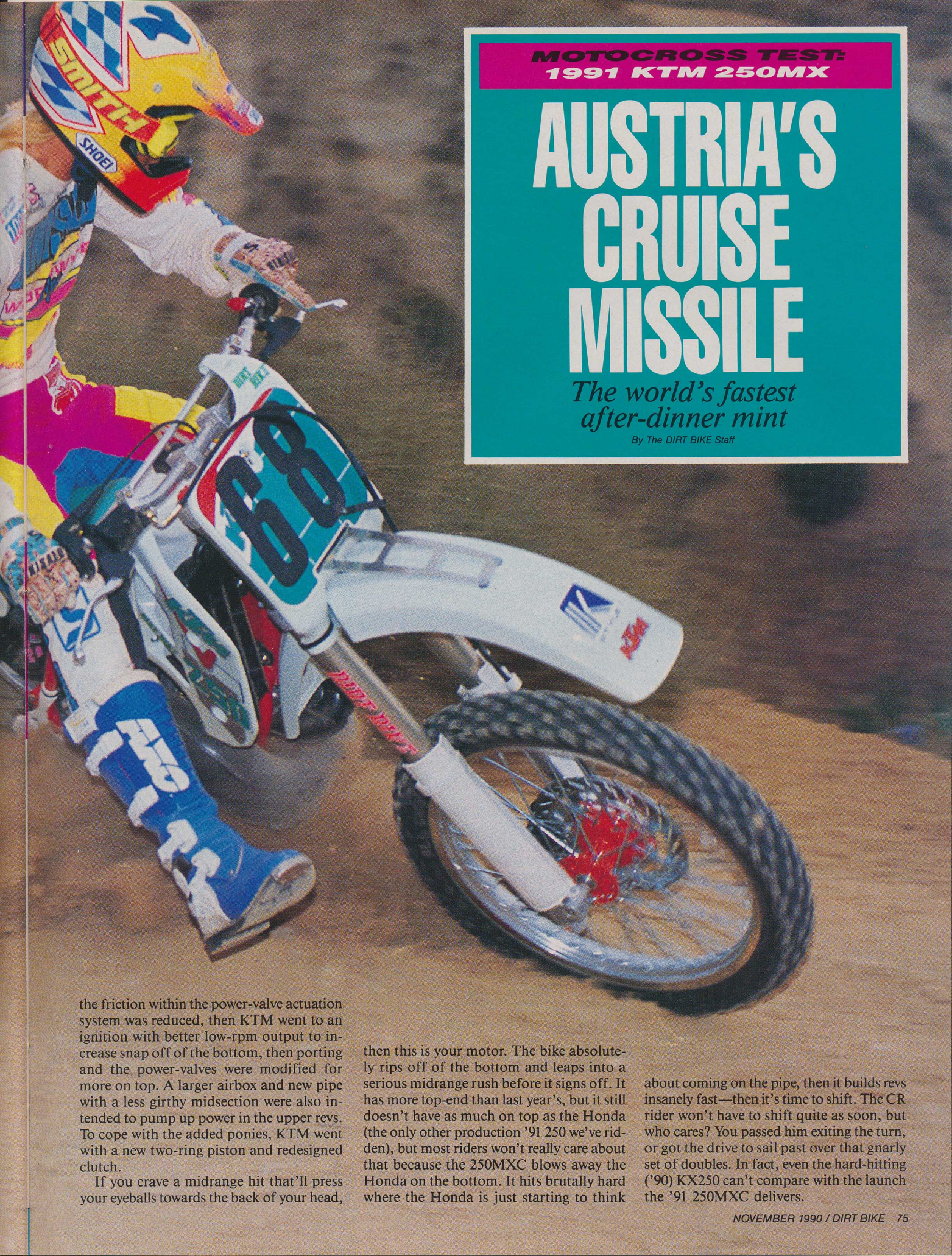
Let's face it: KTMs have been long shots for the past decade, as far as most American riders are concerned. We want suspension to complement the American style of riding, while KTMs have stuck to the European philosophy, where bikes tend to ride low in the travel and double jumps don't ex-

ist. These things were on our minds as we first laid eyes on the 1991 KTM 250MXC. The Japanese bikes we'd ridden so far were incredibly ugly, but they were a total rush to the other senses.

Certainly, the new KTM was just as ugly as the J-models, but would it please the senses on the track? Is it a mint missile or another long shot? During testing, would we find out what "Mint Condition" really means?

MAGICAL MOTOR

Last year's long-stroke motor was all mid-range, so KTM made several changes to coax more low- and top-end out of the '91. First,



**MOTOCROSS TEST:
1991 KTM 250MX**

AUSTRIA'S CRUISE MISSILE

*The world's fastest
after-dinner mint*

By The DIRT BIKE Staff

the friction within the power-valve actuation system was reduced, then KTM went to an ignition with better low-rpm output to increase snap off of the bottom, then porting and the power-valves were modified for more on top. A larger airbox and new pipe with a less girthy midsection were also intended to pump up power in the upper revs. To cope with the added ponies, KTM went with a new two-ring piston and redesigned clutch.

If you crave a midrange hit that'll press your eyeballs towards the back of your head,

then this is your motor. The bike absolutely rips off of the bottom and leaps into a serious midrange rush before it signs off. It has more top-end than last year's, but it still doesn't have as much on top as the Honda (the only other production '91 250 we've ridden), but most riders won't really care about that because the 250MXC blows away the Honda on the bottom. It hits brutally hard where the Honda is just starting to think

about coming on the pipe, then it builds revs insanely fast—then it's time to shift. The CR rider won't have to shift quite as soon, but who cares? You passed him exiting the turn, or got the drive to sail past over that gnarly set of doubles. In fact, even the hard-hitting ('90) KX250 can't compare with the launch the '91 250MXC delivers.

This is one kick-butt midrange motor, but it isn't a handful on hardpack. The KTM engineers did a great job of balancing the porting with flywheel inertia to produce a smooth-building blast of power. Even with

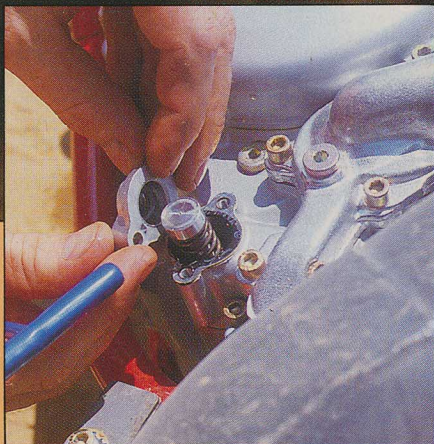
the intermediate-terrain Metzeler tires, which don't work all that well on hardpack, the KTM launches out of corners without doing anything scary. As a bonus, power-valve preload can be altered to make the hit come on sooner for loamy conditions or later for grass tracks (see "250 Setup Tips"). Shifting is positive but lacks the light touch of

the Honda gearbox. The clutch holds up well to abuse and disengages smoothly. In-gear starting reveals a touch of drag, but no more than a Yamaha or Kawasaki.

STICTION-REDUCED SUSPENSION

KTM has taken a real beating in the past for its suspension being too soft, too harsh and not adjustable enough to suit the Amer-

KTM made a big push to provide an instantaneous hit and Japanese-like suspension settings. They got the motor right, but our more aggressive riders immediately wanted stiffer fork springs and higher fork oil level.



KTM 250MXC SETUP TIPS

• Former GP mechanic Jim Lewis and desert ace Scott Harden have lived a year with the '90 and the '91 KTM 250s for several months now and they have tips for getting the most out of the bikes.

• Owners of '90s can upgrade their suspension with stiffer springs and '91 valving package, sold as the Pro Kit. This includes the '91 cartridge and a longer, more progressive hydraulic stop (bottoming cone). Re-valving the shock for a higher ride height, to match the front, is also a KTM option. Recommended sag is 90mm for fast guys, 95mm for everyone else.

• Standard oil level is 130mm. To raise to 120mm, remove the bar clamps, loosen the pinch bolts on top triple clamp, remove the rebound adjuster knobs and spin off the fork caps. Cinch the forks in the bottomed position with a tie-down. There's a hole about 1.5 inches down on the plastic cartridge tube. Stick a screwdriver in it and spin the spring to release spring tension. Remove the D-rings and preload collars. Remove the screwdriver and springs. Slowly push the cartridge to the bottomed position and adjust oil level. Reinstall in reverse order.

• Stiffer springs are shorter (less active coils), so you have to add preload spacers. Standard preload is 7.5mm, but .46 kg spring preload is 5mm.

• Loctite front and bottom motor-mount bolts and the sprocket bolts.

◀ Adding or removing washers (which reside inside the power valve spring cover) allows the owner to tune the hit of his 250 or 300. KTM redesigned the system to reduce friction and enhance throttle response.

• Silicone-seal the corners of the right power-valve cover to prevent seepage.

• Carbon reeds from the 125 give the '90 250 more snap and over-rev.

• Team KTM uses Pro Circuit pipes for more on top and shortens the silencer down 20mm for more low-end snap. Repack the silencer every three or four races.

• Flipping the recessed clutch washers over increases spring preload on '90s.

• Use Duralube 80/90 gear oil and change it every two races.

• Jetting is #175 main, R2066N needle (second groove) and #50 pilot. For desert riding at sea level, go to a #185 main. KTM uses 92-octane and Duralube at 40:1. Trick Racing Fuel allows you to go down one or two sizes on the main.

• Use the stock air filter with Twin-Air oil for engine life and performance.

• KTM uses a Brake Snake to keep debris from fouling the brake pedal.

• Europeans use sintered brake pads exclusively. Racers in muddy locals can get longer brake life and better power out of the sintered pads, but the metal pads build heat quickly. Brake draggers need not apply.

• If you feel your rear brake is too touchy, chamfer the leading edge of the pads.

• Acerbis has a stadium plate for the 250s/300s, which have three mounting tabs already in place.

• Removing preload washers from the power-valve governor spring makes the power-valves open sooner. Adding washers moves the hit into the upper revs. Work in 0.5mm increments. •



ican consumer. The company set out to destroy that stigma in '91. Both the front and rear ends have been totally reworked to fight stiction and try to provide the kind of action the American dirt biker demands. New Teflon-coated guide bushings, seals, external wipers and cartridges reduce fork stiction, and the shock got the low-friction treatment as well. Spring rates are increased at both ends over 1990 (from .4 kg to .44 front, and from 5.2 kg to 5.4 rear). Valving is more progressive and the clickers have a

wider range of adjustment. KTM's goal for '91 is to provide a bike that the average rider will like but give the heavy rider or pro the opportunity to dial the suspension with stiffer springs and a few clicks on the adjusters.

We went to .46 kg fork springs immediately, as the bike rode too low in front with the standard springs, causing a harsh ride and funky handling. With the stiffer springs we got a more smooth and level ride, but the new-generation White Power forks did not even come close to delivering as plush a ride as any other '91 we've ridden so far (CRs,

YZ125, RM125, ATK 406/350). Pro rider Pete Murray was pumped with the suspension set at 3/3 (comp./reb., forks) and 5/4 (comp./reb., shock), but lesser riders complained of midstroke harshness in the forks with these settings. We dropped fork compression to #0 and got a plusher ride but experienced bottoming on G-outs, so we raised fork oil level to 120mm (from 130mm). This helped the bottoming, but the ride still was not as plush as the Japanese machinery.

Nobody complained about action with the White Power shock. It delivers a plush ride initially and firms up through the mid-stroke. Murray was impressed with the action and the quick low-speed rebound,



1991 KTM 250MX

Engine type	Case-reed, power-valved, liquid-cooled 2-stroke
Displacement	248.6cc
Bore and stroke	67.5mm x 69.5mm
Carburetion	37mm PJ Keihin
Fuel tank capacity	2.6 gal. (4.0 L)
Gearing	14/50
Lighting coil	No
Spark arrester	Optional
Green sticker legal in stock form	Yes, w/SA
Running weight with no fuel	223.5 lb.
Wheelbase	58.4 in. (1483mm)
rake/trail	27.7°/4.8 in.
Ground clearance	15.2 in. (386mm)
Seat height	37.2 in. (945mm)
Tire size and type:	
Front	90/90 x 21 Metzeler All Cross
Rear	120/80 x 19 Metzeler All Cross
Suspension:	
Front	Inverted WP 4054 cartridge, adj. reb./comp., 11.8 in. (300mm) travel
Rear	Pro-Lever, WP aluminum piggyback, adj. comp./reb./prel., 12.6 in. (320mm) travel
Country of origin	Austria
Suggested retail price	\$4229
Distributor/manufacturer:	
KTM America	KTM America
1906 Broadway	930 Fesler St.
Lorain, OH 44052	El Cajon, CA 92020



KTM 250MX

which helps hookup on hardpack and eases preloading over supercross obstacles. Traction on hardpack is phenomenal, compared to past Katooms, and the shock soaks up everything flung at it. However, the rear chatters more than most under braking on hardpack.

LIFE WITH THE BREATH MINT

Handling is excellent. It corners like a CR250R and doesn't headshake. The suspension and chassis combination provides excellent stability, and the bike works well on stadium obstacles or sand whoops. It feels very neutral in the air and does not twitch on hard landings. It flat works well everywhere.

This is the best-fitting KTM to come down the pike. The seat is more rounded at the front and is very comfortable, and the cover offers more grip than in the past. Average-sized riders rave about the ergonomics, although taller riders will prefer a slightly taller bar (like a Renthal #950). The pipe doesn't stick out as far as the '90, which toasted the rider's leg in corners. All controls are easily reached and manipulated, although some testers complained about the brakes being too strong.

Metzeler's new All Cross tires give decent traction on intermediate terrain but lack knob height to be a great sand or mud tire. The rear wears quickly on hard terrain but doesn't chunk knobs like a Dunlop 695. For hardpack, Dunlop K490/D704s or Bridgestone M23/M22s are the hot setup.

KTM's new management is really striving to produce a high-quality product. Savvy riders had to remove paint from the frame to keep the motor mounts tight in the past, but now the frame mounting surfaces are masked during painting. Vibration is much lower this year, making the bike more fun to ride. Quality control is much better, with more production-line inspections. The added attention to detail shows, and the bike is very easy to maintain. During photo sessions, we crashed the Katoom several times, and the Acerbis plastic came through unscathed. Stout stuff.

MINT CONDITION?

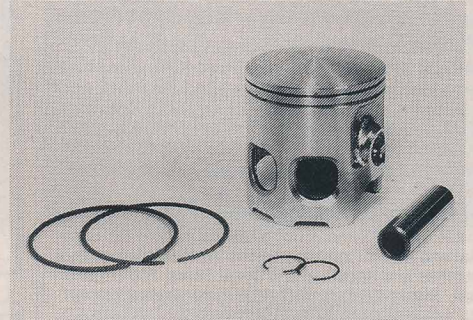
So, what does "Mint Condition" mean? The 250MXC is so good that, when the owner finally decides to sell his, it definitely won't be listed in the paper as "low mileage." No, it'll have plenty of miles on it but will no doubt look better than its Japanese counterparts of the same vintage. The Katoom is an excellent bike, with an awesome motor, great handling and an almost-perfect shock. It is Kentucky Derby fast but was flawed at the mint. Lack of perfect fork plushness is the KTM's two-headed buffalo, but there will no doubt be plenty of riders who'll flock to the mint with a wad of cash in hand. For years, Honda has proven that people will live with marginal forks to get a kick-butt motor. KTM definitely has the mill with the hardest, most manageable hit, so far. □



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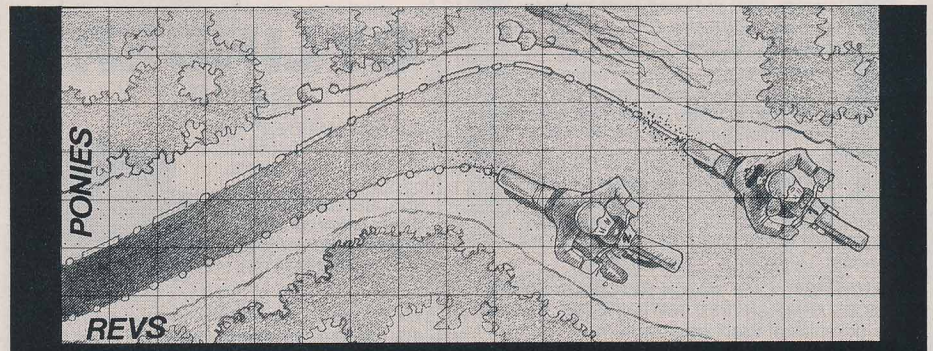


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