

SCOTTISH SIX-DAY TRIAL: FULL COLOUR REPORT

DIRT BIKE RIDER

June '86

£1.00 USA \$2.75

ISSN 0262-5628



KMX125 RIDE IMPRESSION

**We ride
Andy Nicholls'
YZ250**

GEORGES JOBE
The Counter-attack



**Plus your chance
to win one!**

**Luscombe/Leek
Fantic Trials
Outfit Tested**

**MAKING
A KX80
QUICKER!**

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Editorial, Advertising and Marketing office: Dirt Bike Rider, Bushfield House, Orton Centre, Peterborough PE2 0UW. Tel: 0733 237111; **Classified Advertising:** 0733 236644. Telex No: 32157. **Back Orders and Circulation:** Bushfield House, Tel: 0733 237111 ext 430. £1.50 per copy, inc P&P.

Subscription: UK & Eire £16.00 for 12 issues. Overseas surface mail £17. Airmail Europe £22.50 (other airmail rates available on request) Payment by cheque, postal order, international money order, sterling draft, credit card, payable to Dirt Bike Rider. Send to Dirt Bike Rider, Competition House, Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire. **US subs** \$33 for 12 issues from Lee Cowie, Motorsport, RR1 Box 200D, Jonesburg, MO, 63351. **USA. Printed by** Nene River Press, Oundle Road, Peterborough. **Originated by** Arty Type, Whittlesey, Cambs. **Colour separations** Lumacolor Magazines, Orton Southgate, Peterborough. *EMAP 1986.



You can have the Kawasaki KMX125 in any colour you like so long as it's boring white (main pic) or stunning Team Green (inset).



SETTING STANDARDS

Kawasaki's KMX125 was debuted last year amid much hype. Could this be the bike to topple the Yamaha DT125 LC from the top of the 125cc trail chart? Team DBR has had a chance to sample both the restricted and unrestricted versions.

THAT the Yamaha DT125 has remained top of the class for so long says much for its design. The DT has been around now for some years, first in aircooled guise and for the past three years with liquid-cooling.

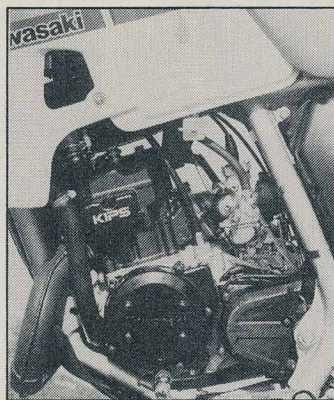
In that time it's seen off the challenges of Honda and Suzuki. Now it's about to face another threat. Only this time, the threat looks a whole lot more serious. Make no mistake, Kawasaki has done its homework.

The KMX looks the part. Unashamedly carrying lines stolen from the motocross styling department, the overall design package is backed up with some sales-catching mechanicals. There's the rear disc brake for a start. Then there's the tall Uni-Trak rear suspension. All up, the effect is eye-catching; here's a 125 trail bike that doesn't look like a 125.

With such styling and mechanicals there's only one colour for the KMX and that's

green, but in the interests of choice – or perhaps as a subtle dig at Yamaha – it's also available in white. Not that we can see there being a big demand for the white bikes.

Having a restricted and unrestricted version of the same bike side by side is almost being spoilt for choice. Not that we were complaining. The Army – we used their land at Borden in Hampshire – had marked out a mile long course through the trees, much of it based on past Natterjack Enduro trials. There was a good, if not too demanding, mixture of tight forestry and open trails with plenty of variety in turns.



KIPS: Nothing dozy about this, it's an effective power valve system that gives both the 12bhp restricted and full grunt versions a sensibly wide power spread.

Obviously the DT has to be the bike on which to base any comparisons. Kawasaki's KIPS

power valve system still actually works on the restricted 12hp version (it doesn't on the Yamaha) and that immediately puts it ahead of the DT in the power stakes. While it feels marginally better at the top end of the rev range, the big gain is down the bottom, going into the mid-range.

When you're screwing 12hp out of an engine this is important. Nevertheless, the engine has to be revved and clutched and the six-speed gearbox used to get the best out of it.

The unrestricted KMX, however, is something different. It's very crisp off the bottom and keeps pulling right through the rev range. In this respect, the engine is in a (125cc) class of its own. It'll explode out of turns like none of its rivals bringing new meaning to 125 class trail riding.

In the handling department the KMX suffers from the inevitable road/trail compromise. The suspension does feel too soft for serious dirt abuse, although it's certainly no worse than the opposition.

If we had one query after our brief impression it was the steering. The front-end felt heavy compared with a DT. It didn't inspire ultimate confidence in tight forestry work. But we'll reserve final judgement until a full test.

Comfort-wise, the KMX feels

good. The handlebars are sufficiently high for taller riders not to feel cramped, while the footpegs are reasonably positioned, if a little too forward.

Like its motocross cousins, the safety seat offers good protection up front yet still allows a rider to get well forward for more precise turning in the rough. However, one fault which Kawasaki will no doubt be looking at quite closely is the seat's tendency to detach itself unaided!

The front disc is just like that of its bigger four-stroke trail brothers the, KLR250 and 600. It's sufficiently progressive for the dirt, yet strong enough for road use. The rear disc, on the other hand, is styling overkill. It lacks feel and as a result rear wheel lock-ups are all too easily induced. Hardly the stuff for learner riders.

Obviously it's difficult to offer a definitive opinion on the KMX, in either version, until we've had a chance to run them head to head with our own Yamaha DT125. However, from our brief impression we have to say the outcome will be close.

While the Kawasaki feels much stronger in the engine department, we feel the Yamaha might still hold an edge in overall manners, especially steering. Whatever, the KMX125 is most certainly setting new standards in 125cc trail bikes. Stay tuned for a full comparison test.

TECHFAX

IT WAS A long time coming, but Kawasaki's KMX is the trickiest 125 on street and trail. Well worth the wait. Team Green claim the KMX is packed with KX motocrosser technology. And with disc brakes front and rear, reed valve liquid cooled power plant, Uni-Trak rear suspension with long travel front teles and radical styling its hard to disagree.

In unrestricted form the KIPS (Kawasaki Integrated Powervalve System) equipped two-stroke single pumps out an impressive 23bhp at 9500rpm. The two-stage KIPS system helps give an extra wide power band, with a smooth delivery all through the rev range.

Engine on the 12bhp learner bike is identical to the full power version, only difference being a restricted exhaust system.

Its lightweight aluminium cylinder has a special Electro-Fusion lined cylinder. This process uses special wires exploded against the internal cylinder wall. These fuse in position, forming a thin but tough lining that helps keep down weight, effectively dissipates heat and is claimed to give long service life.

Transmission is six speed and the

clutch wet, multiplate.

Frame is a semi double cradle with single front downtube. It's constructed from lightweight high tensile steel. The engine is protected by a tough bashplate and passenger footpegs are sensibly frame mounted – rather than being bolted to the swing arm like its KE125 predecessor.

The box section swing arm looks like aluminium, but it's actually constructed from high tensile steel. KX style Uni-Trak with genuine rising-rate linkage has an aluminium rocker arm with steel linkage. All of this pivots in needle roller bearings.

There's no damping adjustment, but the gas shock unit has a five position spring pre-load adjuster. Rear wheel travel is 230mm, likewise the 35mm leading axle hydraulic front teles.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price inc VAT (restricted)	£1149
Price inc VAT (unrestricted)	£1169
Engine	reed valve liquid cooled two-stroke single cyl
Capacity	124cc

Bore & stroke	54mm x 54.4mm
Carburation	Mikuni VM 26SS
Ignition	CDI
Max power (unrestricted version)	23bhp @ 9500rpm
Max torque (unrestricted)	1.8kg-m @ 9000rpm
Max torque (restricted)	1.2kg-m @ 6500rpm
Transmission	six speed
Clutch	wet multi plate

CYCLE PARTS

Tyres:	
Front	Dunlop K260 2.75 x 21
Rear	Dunlop K260 4.10 x 18
Brakes	
Front	230mm dia disc
Rear	210mm dia disc
Suspension:	
Front	telescopic fork, 230mm wheel travel
Rear	Uni-Trak, 230mm wheel travel

DIMENSIONS

Weight (dry)	99kg
Wheelbase	1375mm
Ground clearance	295mm
Seat height	865mm
Fuel capacity	9.3 litres

Supplied by: Kawasaki Motor (UK) Ltd., 748/749 Deal Avenue, Trading Estate, Slough, Berks, Tel 0753 38255