







# SON OF THE MONSTER

*Exclusive! First test*

*By Rick Sieman*

**N**o doubt about it, the 1982 KTM 495 was the monster bike of the year. It had more horsepower than anything else. Sometimes it had more horsepower than *two* of anything else! It was also taller, longer and heavier than the other 500cc bikes and enjoyed the dubious distinction of being the most expensive of the lot.

Still, the Mighty 495 sold in reasonable numbers, especially to the people who just had to have the ThunderButt machine of all time. A certain percentage of these riders—the very strong ones—loved the KTM dearly. Others, with less arm strength, sold the bikes as soon as it completely intimidated them.

While the 495 did indeed have the gonzo engine of all time, it was not without faults. A heavy dose of vibration tended to prematurely tire hands and arms. Then, too, there was a big blast of power at mid-range that was hard to control. While the KTM 495 had—obviously—some low-end power, it was nothing compared to the violent lunge halfway through the powerband. This meant that the rider had to

work around the “hit.” Stay lower and short-shift to avoid the surge, or rev the motor past the blast. The latter was out of the question, as the 495 would then become far too violent to handle by anyone other than a gorilla like Finkledey. Most riders simply learned to adjust their riding style for the afterburner part of the power output, probably costing valuable time from the fear factor alone.

## MEET THE NEW MONSTER

During the recent European trek to cover the Trophee and MX des Nations, we had a chance to visit the KTM factory and check out the new machines for 1983 as they were in the final stages of development. One of the pre-production 495s was completed, and, in fact, would be raced by Kees Van der Ven in Switzerland in the upcoming 500cc race.

Seeing as the bike had to be broken in and adjusted, KTM agreed to let the *DB* rep ride and test the new machine as well.

Changes to the 495 are more than cosmetic. Gone are the 40mm Marzocchi forks that left us cold. In their place are the

new 42mm Zokes (aluminum), which *work*. These are the same units we tested on the 504 four-stroke some time back.

Nestled between these impressive forks is one of the strongest front brakes we’ve ever felt. It’s a Brembo unit, made in Italy, and it’s basically the same kind used on the 504. The 495 has had a marginal front brake ever since its introduction, and if any bike in the world has ever needed a good stopper, this one has.

According to the factory, the frame is all new, with the steering head pulled back. This was done to reduce headshake when decelerating from speed over bumps.

A blue safety saddle accents the white plastic nicely and this saddle is actually a bit softer than the previous bricklike offerings from KTM. The actual seat height has been reduced. You can now sling a leg over the 495 without ripping the inseam of your leathers.

Our test bike came with a White Power shock, which is standard for the European machines. The U.S. bikes get a Fox Twin Clicker. While the White Power is a very



## 1983 KTM 495

popular shock in Europe, it's difficult to get information for servicing here. This situation may improve, as the White Brothers (of four-stroke fame) have taken over WP shocks on the West Coast.

Detail improvements are many: The newest Magura adjustable throttle is welcome, as are the easily removable split-perch controls. Clutch pull on the new bike is far better than the previous grinder. The rod-actuated brake now runs inside the frame, rather than hanging outside the frame rails.

One very pleasant change is that the carb can now be reached for servicing and jetting changes without a major hassle. The forward side frame tubes have been eliminated. You can now simply stick your



*Pro-Lever rear end offers 12-plus inches of travel. U.S. bikes will come with a Fox Twin Clicker, European bikes with a White Power. Holes in swingarm are non-stock.*

paws in there and get things done without burns, scrapes, gouges or curses.

Most importantly, KTM informed us that the power characteristics of the engine had been radically changed. The same power on top, of course, but a whole bunch more at the bottom end and a mellowing of the powerful spike at mid-rpm.

### TESTING WITH KEES, THE KWICK ONE

Our testing took place at a magnificent track about a half hour from the factory. It was referred to simply as "Reiter's track." Georg Reiter is the Austrian 500cc Champion.

Kees Van der Ven, number three in the world for the 250 class this year, accompanied us to the long grassy track. Even though Kees is a 250 rider by choice, he enjoys riding the big bikes now and then.

After a number of break-in laps and a few basic adjustments, the bike was turned over to the DB rep to put in as many laps as desired. Impressions from the last 495 were still vivid in our memory banks, so the first few laps were treated with a great deal of discretion.

After familiarization and an increase on the shock preload (very simple on a KTM), more laps were put in and impressions mentally filed.

### POWER

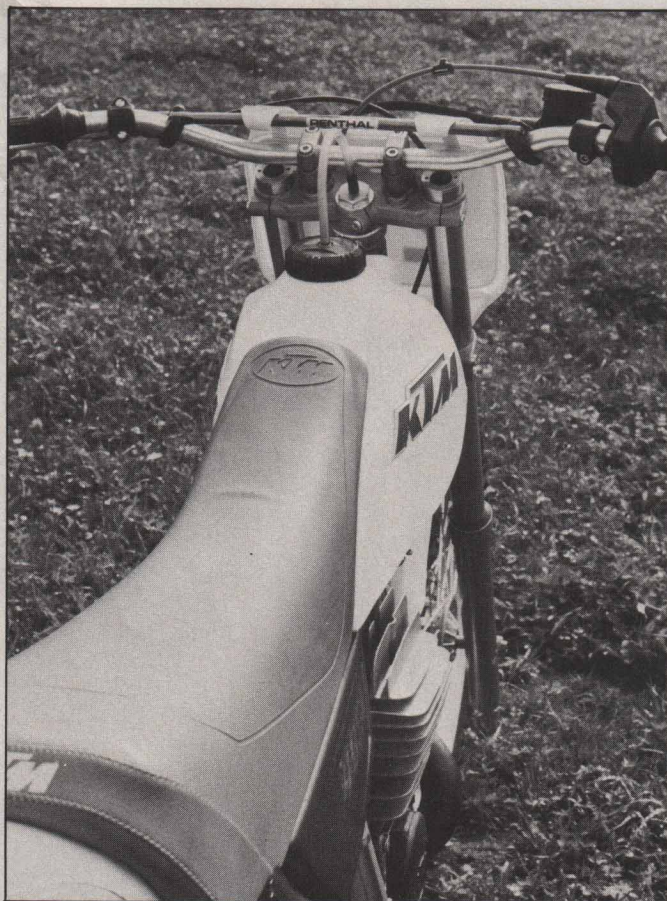
Surprise! The new 495 has a power delivery much like the '82 Honda 480. It pulls right from the bottom, cleanly and



*DIRT BIKE was assisted in the 495 test by one of the top riders in the world, Kees Van der Ven.*



*Powerful Brembo disc brake really hauled the 495 down from speed. It was unaffected by water or mud. New 42mm Marzocchi forks are primo.*



*Even with the new safety saddle, the seat height is about an inch less than last year's. New bar clamps are a welcome change.*



without stuttering or hesitation. Even if you're a gear too high, the engine won't flounder; it'll just pull a bit flat without falling on its face.

There's no weird rush at mid-range. Just more power as the throttle is opened. As the revs rise, the KTM pulls harder and harder . . . And the bike can be overrevved a bit in each gear, if necessary, without falling off the end of the power curve.

A dyno chart would surely show a bullet-straight line on the graph. This is the kind of power an Open class bike *should* have. It lets the rider stay in the upper gears in slower turns and smoothly accelerate out without stirring the gearbox like a flamenco tap-dancer. If you do find yourself a bit too low in the power curve, a light touch of the clutch will instantly bring the revs up to a working level.

The engine revs a bit quicker than last year's, but produces less vibration at the same time. We found no tendency toward stalling when under heavy braking, as displayed by a typical 480 Honda. All things considered, a magnificent motor.

Our bike came with a four-speed gearbox and we found no gaps between gears. If anything, we were guilty of riding the bike in a too low gear in most of the turns. Oh yes . . . the 495 will be offered in two versions: one with a four-speed box and one with a five-speeder. Pure MXers, no doubt, will want the four-cog version. A great deal more versatility can be realized with a five-speeder, naturally.

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## HANDLING

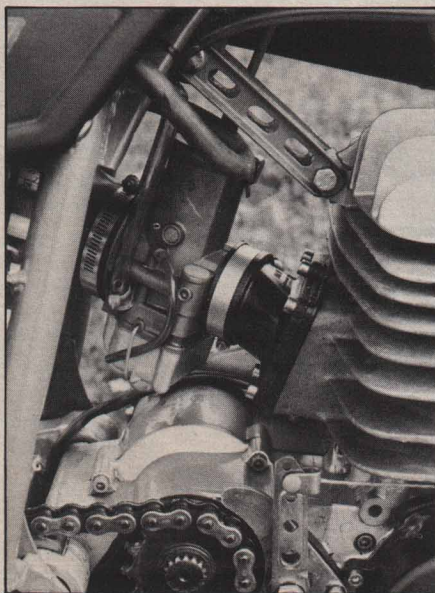
Straight-line stability is improved over the '82 bike and there's no headshake to speak of when breaking heavily over bumps. Definitely improved. Our bike came with a 5.10 x 18 Metzeler on the rear and a Pirelli up front. We mention this to justify our comments on the way the 495 turned. It just didn't seem as accurate as last year on the flat, tight corners, and we suspect that the Pirelli up front was the cause. There was no washout . . . just enough of a pushing tendency to take some confidence away from the rider. A 250 we rode that day (with an identical frame) did not display the mannerism. It was equipped with Metzeler's, front and rear.

In the air, the KTM was extremely stable and easy to jump. The near 60-inch wheel-

base contributes to this. There's no twitchiness to be felt. Everything is natural on the new KTM. Bars, controls, pegs . . . there's no reaching or groping to get things done. The new bars are back a bit and lower than last year. Also gone are the tiresome multiple blocks on the bar clamps. New one-piece bottom mounts are standard.

Because of the slightly lower seating position, the KTM has an overall lighter feel to it. The only minor thing to consider is the front of the new safety saddle. It's raised up a bit too much for shorter riders and tends to lift them up while they slide forward. Taller riders had no complaints about it.

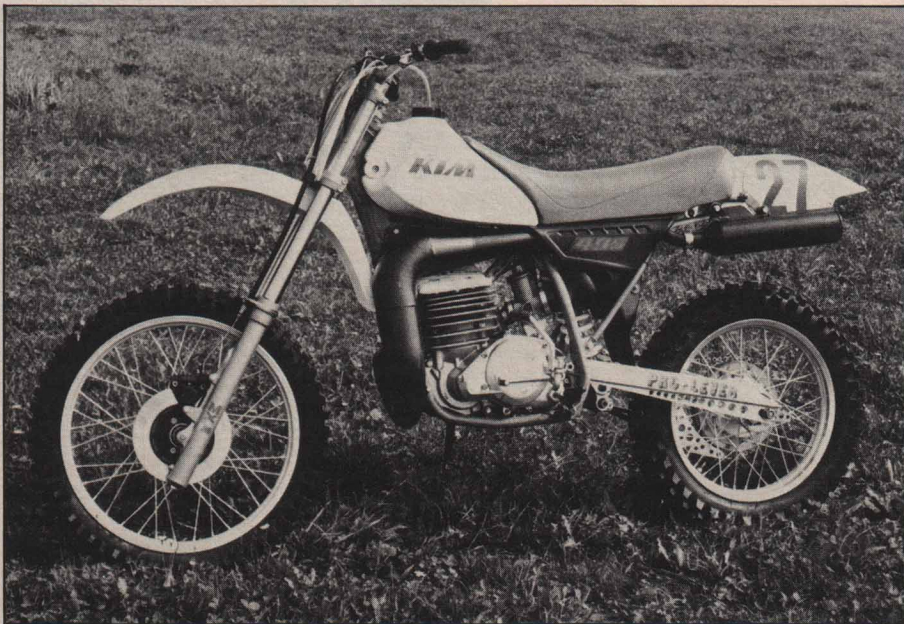
When moving around on the KTM, you notice that the bike is very narrow and nothing gets in the way or rubs you wrong. Just about the only complaint we have of this department is the lack of a heat shield on the forward belly of the pipe. It can get a bit toasty.



Carb is a magnesium Bing with a clip-top cap.



Even though Kees is a 250 rider (ranked number three), he rode our production test bike to an eighth in the second moto in Switzerland.



The 1983 KTM 495 hit the scales at 241 pounds, with about four inches of gas in the tank and oil in the forks and gearbox.

## SUSPENSION

Those new 42mm forks felt great to us. Just about as good as a Yamaha set of 43s, in fact. They ate the small bumps comfortably, dealt with the medium bumps according to the book and handled the crushers without any clanking. Good legs, these.

The White Power at the rear needed more tuning, but time did not allow for this. For what it's worth, the WP handles the really rotten bumps quite well. Its only failing is the hammering it delivers when accelerating over stutter bumps. The Fox shock that will come on the U.S. bikes is much more sensitive to small and medium bumps than the WP, but it does not deal with the gruesome bumps as well.

Adjustments on the forks are limited to oil type, level and air pressure. At the rear, both the Fox and the WP offer adjustable damping settings and conventional preload rings. You should be able to get either shock to do what you want. This year the Pro-Lever has been altered slightly to give a steeper rising rate to help prevent bottoming. This was accomplished by moving just one hole in the main rocker link.

## BITS AND PIECES

Our four-speed test bike shifted flawlessly. A nudge of the boot was all it took to slip from gear to gear. We could even bang the shifter through the gears without using the clutch, if necessary, something we'd never do on any previous KTM.

Starting the big bike was much easier than the older models. Compression has been lowered a bit and a quick (and firm) whack at the lever is usually all that's needed to get the fire lit.

A single plug head now gets the sparking accomplished. Last year dual plugs did the job.

A new numberplate up front adds to the looks and trimmer side panels clean up the mid-section.

A good cable stiffener keeps the hydraulic front brake line from wandering. A small reservoir is mounted on the bars.

Carburetion is by Bing. We had no complaints with its performance.

The muffler is steel and very heavy. The accessory manufacturers will be happy for another year.

## FIRST OF THE KILLER BIKES FOR 1983

Clearly, the KTM 495 is greatly improved. Good enough, in fact, to race at international level and do well. The very same production bike we tested was raced by Van der Ven at the Motocross des Nations in Switzerland. All Kees did to the bike was put on his own White Power shock from his 250 bike. Everything else was left stone stock. And, in spite of an ailing knee, he managed an eighth in the second moto against the finest riders in the world on factory machinery.

That speaks more clearly than anything we might say about the effectiveness and improvements of the new KTM 495.

It's still a monster . . . but now it's a friendly one. □