

SIX BIG BORES TAKE THE MX TASTE TEST

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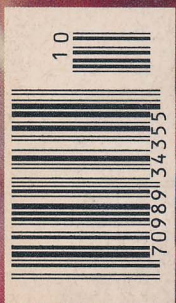
DIRT BIKE

**USGP:
WOLSINK WINS**

OCTOBER 1976
\$1.00
UK 50p

**YZ175C
NEITHER FISH
NOR FOUL**

**WOMEN'S
NATIONALS**



**ALL DAYS OF TWO DAYS
250 NATIONAL MOTOCROSS WRAP**

DIRT BIKE

VOLUME SIX NUMBER TEN OCTOBER 1976

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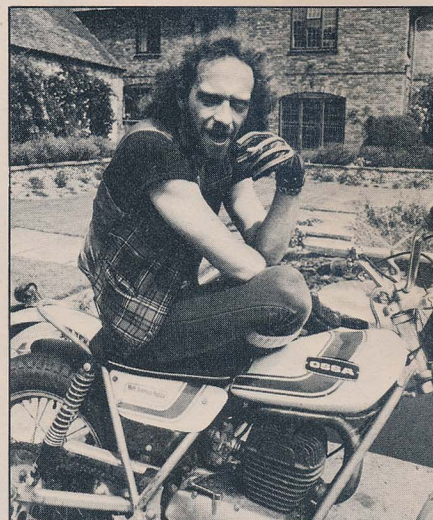
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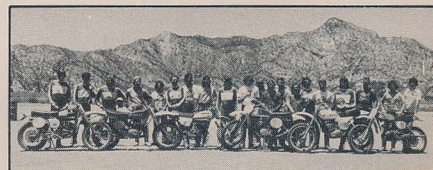
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ON THE COVER: Gary Jones shows the results of an afternoon of open class testing.
Photo by Bruce Woods.

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DIRT BIKE interviews IAN ANDERSON

by Woods and Weed

Tull's "mad biker" talks about Montesas, motocross, Marty Smith, and Sopwith Camels.

No, you haven't accidentally picked up a copy of "Modern Teen Rock and Roll Passion." Ian Anderson, the dynamic lead singer and flautist for Jethro Tull, is also an avid and concerned dirt rider, with strong ideas on the state of the sport both in England and America.

We, Woods and Len Weed, met

with him on a Beverly Hills afternoon to talk dirt. The results of the interview, we think, are both surprising and enlightening.

Tull's latest album, "Too Old To Rock and Roll, Too Young To Die," gives evidence to Ian's interest in bikes, though it deals specifically with street riding, something he

avoids. Who knows, there may be a motocross album on the way . . .

DB (WOODS): How long have you been into dirt riding?

IAN: Oh, in terms of wishful thinking, since I was about seven years old. We used to have on television, every week on Sunday

afternoon (or was it Saturday?) what we called scrambling. It was different from what you call scrambling, similar to what you call motocross — a tight, muddy course. But that was the great age of popularity of the English motorcycle sport, where every week, on the national television, on the BBC, we had it. It was as popular as football. Well, it obviously wasn't really, but nearly, it was a regular thing. In those days, it was long before the days of the . . . no, it was just about the time that the two-strokes were coming in.

DB (WOODS): *Greeves was just beginning to catch on . . .*

IAN: Yes, Greeves and Dots and the odd sort of bored-out James and that sort of thing. Mostly four-strokes, though, BSAs and the occasional Triumph or Ariel. They weren't very, it wasn't as it is now, factory-prepared for racing stuff. They were different from the street bikes, radically, but there weren't many special frames, you know, or light-weight components. They were basically 300-pound machines.

DB (WEED): *There was lightweight stuff about, what, '64, '65, the super BSAs that Jeff Smith was riding.*

IAN: By that time, you see, it had dropped from popularity completely. A situation has arisen which we ought to discuss at length, in terms of the sport . . . one I think could happen here, too.

DB (WOODS): *I wanted to get to that. Why don't you just start in . . .*

IAN: All right! We have this situation today, of course I should point out that it's only the average kid who gets into the sport. I'm not really into competition, you know, the insurance won't allow it . . .

DB (WEED): *We wondered about that . . .*

IAN: . . . Anyway, I mean, I do it for fun, though I ride competition bikes . . .

DB (WHOEVER): *What do you ride?*

IAN: Several bikes. I have an Ossa Phantom, a '74, though it has the '76 swingarm and cantilevered shocks, and all the fiberglass bits taken off and Petty bits put on . . .

DB (WOODS): *There's a new one coming out, a big-bore Phantom . . .*

IAN: Well, that isn't in production yet. I've just come back from the Ossa factory, you see, I know some things you don't even know, I know what they're doing next year. They



"I made some cracks . . . telling DeCoster to watch out, that Graham Noyce is going to be giving him some trouble . . ."

made me promise not to tell . . .

DB (WOODS): *Well, we would like to find out what they're doing with the Super Pioneer next year . . .*

IAN: Oh, that's the bike! The 350, it's a great bike, it's got gas Girlings, forward shocks, you know . . .

DB (WOODS): *But, we're digressing . . .*

IAN: A short digression, yes, yes . . . (At this point Ian was interrupted concerning a call to be placed to Roger DeCoster. We questioned him about it.)

IAN: Well, actually, I was in Belgium recently and we, I had met a friend of his and we were chatting about motorbikes and music and things. I made some cracks about telling DeCoster to watch out, that Graham Noyce, in a year or two, is going to be giving him a hard time. He's given him a hard time already this year.

DB (WEED): *He's diced with him pretty well.*

IAN: Yes, and in England, you see, and I realize we're digressing again,

you don't begin by being a high school motocross champion on a one-two-five or anything. It's like straight off the deep end. I mean, hardly anyone rides one-two-fives. There is a Schoolboy class, but we'll get into the economics of that later.

DB (WEED): *I understand that once you're out of Schoolboy, at 17, there actually is no 125 class there . . .*

IAN: There are some older guys who ride them, in order to compete in Grand Prix competition. They're guys who normally ride 250s or open class bikes but who ride the one-two-fives at the International level merely because the going isn't quite as tough. I mean, because there are only a couple of GP riders in that class that have it all sewn up. Like Gaston Rahier, no one can beat him, ever . . .

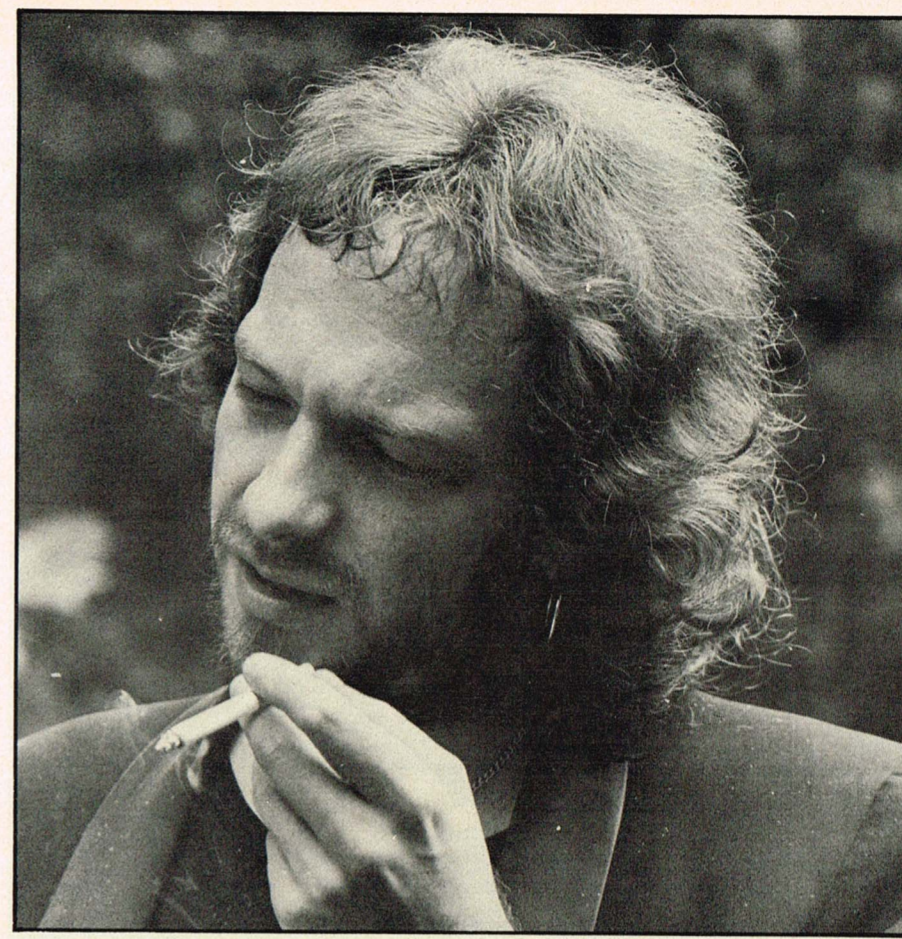
DB (WEED): *Except for perhaps Marty . . .*

ALL: (Laughter).

IAN (still laughing): Ah, bullshit! No, because Marty Smith, he's wasting his only chance, which is to go into 250s, and he's not going to be able to ride open class . . .

DB (WOODS): *We hear that's what he's going to do next year, go to the 250 class in Europe . . .*

IAN: He's the same as Noyce, really,



it's a lack of experience. I mean, you put Noyce on a California dust track and he'd have no chance at all, that's not his type of riding. (NOTE: *Noyce looked pretty good at Carlsbad, however.*)

DB (BOTH): *Right.*

IAN: . . . But on the tougher, twistier course he is obviously a good rider, that's what he's used to in Britain. Marty, however, had a good race at Hawkstone, in England . . .

DB (WOODS): *He's had a few wins, already. But Vic Allan is the guy who I'd like to see win one, I'd love to see CCM win one . . .*

IAN: Yes, we've got to get one soon. That's a strange situation as well. They've only just got that bike sorted out, I mean now it's just gotten to the point where it can regularly complete a race. (NOTE: *The works CCM is sorting out bugs that will be avoided in later productions.*) Fifty percent of the time Allan hasn't finished, you know; bits drop off, that sort of thing. Which is a shame, because for a four-stroking monster, it's quite a light bike, the only competitive four-stroke there is . . .

DB (WOODS): *It's certainly quick enough. Uh, we'd better get back to the . . .*

IAN: Right. What I was going into

"I've just come back from the Ossa factory, you see, I know some things you don't even know . . ."

was the price. I mean the reason that the one-two-five class doesn't happen in England is that on the Schoolboy level, there aren't many who can afford the cost of a one-two-five bike. They've really got to . . . you know . . . well, the Bultacos won't start . . .

DB: (Laughter).

IAN: . . . So they're . . . I have one, I know. The Montesas don't seem to make it and the Ossa is OK, but there aren't any of them around. It's just in the last year or so that they started importing Japanese bikes for the Schoolboy class. Up till then they'd been riding BSA Bantams, lightened, made into, well, a modified old-fashioned bike. And little Suzuki street bikes that have been doctored a bit. But this made it fun for the kids. Suddenly all these fine Japanese motocrossers started coming in, but the cost, over here, is \$750 to \$800, for the Suzuki RM . . .

DB (WEED): *They're about \$900 here . . .*

IAN: But in England, with the

current exchange rate, the price is equivalent to way over a thousand American dollars. That's a lot of money, 600 pounds sterling, I mean, no way! What with the average income and all, what we're really talking about is the equivalent of a \$1500 bike! Which is out of the reach of the average kid, unless his dad buys the bike for him, which is unlikely because motocross there isn't an upper class sport. The kids who do it, their fathers are bricklayers, or own a tobacconist's shop, or something. If they do get one, the one-two-fives that are around, great as they are, need a lot of work, they're going to fall apart . . .

DB (WOODS): *The better the bike is the more attention it needs . . .*

IAN: Right, and this is destroying, I think, what the nature of the sport is all about, which is that kind of backyard mechanic level of fooling around, because the parts aren't available. And worse. I mean, the mechanics who work where they import the bikes know nothing about them as often as not. So kids tend to go straight into the bigger classes, where the engines don't undergo such stress and basic maintenance is more the thing. Partially because of this, the standards aren't as high there — your average high school rider on his one-two-five could likely blow off the average weekend 250cc rider in England!

DB (WOODS): *Of course, the average 125cc rider in America doesn't leave his bike stock, either, some of them are worth a fortune.*

IAN: Yes, well, the changes, since the mid-'60s, in motocross technology, have been immense. They amount, in just one area of the sport . . . it amounts, in just one weekend, to more changes and found knowledge in one weekend of racing than existed before that time, since the beginning of the first motorbike.

DB (WEED): *The last five years have been incredible.*

IAN: In trials too. The latest, the 348 Montesa Cota, is now \$1600, but that would be equivalent to \$2000 U.S. I mean, I actually rang up and said, "Could you get me one of those?" They said, "No way, the waiting list is arms long." Well, the bikes came in and they're still sitting around the depots because no one can afford them. The technology has outstripped the economic means relative to riding in amateur

competition, which is ridiculous. I mean, there's no provision at all, now, you know, there's hardly any souped-up Bantam kind of racing, or trailbike racing formulas, like those that exist in motorcar racing. I mean, that's what we need in England now, in order to make the sport something that everyone can participate in again. No one outside of the few enthusiasts even know what's going on . . .

DB (WOODS): *It's been pretty well promoted here, too much, I think sometimes . . .*

IAN: Yes, but what that does, what it must do, is make more people aware of the sport. I went to a race in L.A., in the Coliseum. I mean, Heikki Mikkola was there, took a few laps, then fell off. He was obviously there just to show his face. He wouldn't run the risk of missing out on an important race through injury by hurting himself there. It's a PR thing, but it gets people involved.

DB (WOODS): *Motorcycling in general, here, I'm afraid, is heading for a glut point, where the bottom may just fall out.*

IAN: That sort of reflects what it has become, as opposed to what it was and, I think, should be. Rather akin to your World War I fighter pilot in his Sopwith Camel, with his leather helmet and silk scarf, getting into the machine, taking his last swig of whiskey from a cut glass decanter, and going off to take on the Hun. That feeling doesn't exist anymore, partially because those bikes don't exist, even in terms of street bikes. The latest Triumphs, you know, have electric starts and that kind of shit. They're bad imitations of what the Japanese are selling.

DB (WEED): *What about trail riding in England?*

IAN: Well, we have "green lane" riding, it's not trails but small roads that one can legally putt along. When it comes to trails, they always belong to somebody. In Scotland and Yorkshire and such there are endless tracts of land, where one can ride off the road and into oblivion! Wild ground!

Which is why most of the trials riders come from around Yorkshire; you can ride a mile from the center of town and get into the Yorkshire moors.

I bought 75 acres of woodland that I ride, that's why I bought it. My next-door neighbor, a farmer,



" . . . this person got out, with a cowboy hat on, and did the John Wayne walk, carrying a Winchester repeater, a sort of cheapo tommy-gun, and went crazy . . . "

just bought a bike. I convinced him it was a better means of transportation than a horse. He tears around now on a Suzuki TS185 or something, which is . . . absolutely lethal. But he hurtles across plowed fields, unafraid. He rides in his leather vest, shirt sleeves rolled up, with his house slippers! He's pleased because he says he can ride around his farm now without putting on special clothes! But that, if you like, is the spirit of motorcycling, too. I mean, I wouldn't do it . . .

DB (WOODS): *Have you had the chance to ride in the States at all?*

IAN: I did once in the desert, around Bakersfield. I went up to find Captain Beefheart's Magic Band, the band was supposedly living around there. So I went on my Rickman Six Days. I even got chased off a mountain. This guy came up after me in a jeep. I was riding in

deep snow, at the top of this mountain with a narrow winding trail going up. All of a sudden this jeep came up and stopped, there was nowhere he could go on top, and this person got out, with a cowboy hat on, and did the John Wayne walk carrying a Winchester repeater, a sort of cheapo tommy-gun, and went crazy, saying, "Get off this land, you motorcycle hippies" or something like that. I went down the hill wondering how he would get back, because there was no place to turn around at the top. It was a long way to reverse down! I waited an hour at the bottom and he never did come. He may still be up there, you know, lost in a fit of redneck aggression.

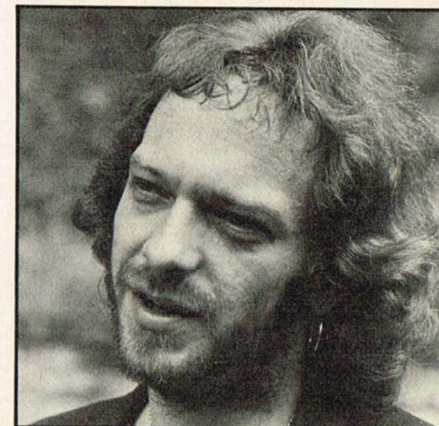
DB (WOODS): *Let's get back to what you were saying about formulas, production classes for bikes.*

IAN: Well, out of necessity, I can see that kind of thing being good. Like the average kid with his Yamaha trailbike, that he's allowed to make certain modifications to, and then race for fun . . . At which point it could be a \$700 sport again. People could have fun and be introduced to it, and still be competitive. It would

have all of that old haphazard glory. It wouldn't interfere with the more serious levels, you see, but would make it approachable on the level of you and your bike and however many tools you can stick in your pocket.

DB (ONE OF US): *Yeah, I think a lot of people would do it . . .*

IAN: If you had an amateur "Ride the Bike You Rode To The Event" thing on before the experts' class, in a trials or something, it would be a lot of fun. If I were a dealer I'd try to organize that, give free entries for every trailbike I sold. They'd all the sooner be coming back for spares, at least turn blinkers and things. It



" . . . your average high school rider on this one-two-five could likely blow off the average 250 weekend rider in England. "

would pay off for everybody, I think.

DB (WOODS): *It could be applied to MX too, as long as there were limits set on how you could modify . . .*

IAN: Yeah, I think . . .

DB (WOODS): *It would really be a kick, competing on a bunch of 125 trailbikes, in a motocross.*

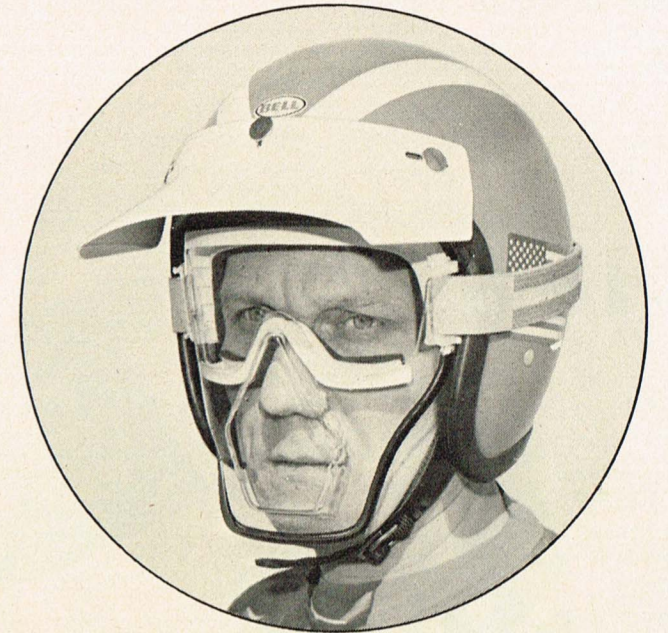
IAN: The only thing is that it would not be good on your California courses, they're too fast. If you changed the level of the course, a bumpy, tight, twisty course, it would be fine. Really loose and fun. Perhaps a sort of combination of trials and motocross. Racing against each other over trials-type terrain, would be suited to a modified trailbike class.

DB (WEED): *Instead of destroying the sport, then, the price thing may be good, moving it back toward where it should be?*

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IAN: Yes, like the old competition bikes. It was all rough and ready type of stuff. They rode grossly unsuitable bikes, compared to today. I'm seriously considering getting an old Ariel or something, just to ride for fun. The competition bikes are better than I am, the ones that I have.

DB (WOODS): *We have in road racing here a Vintage Thumper class, bring out the old Gold Stars and stuff.*

IAN: That's a sort of looking backwards thing, appeals just to the enthusiast. It's not really applicable

to everyone. That sort of feeling can only be reached with modified trailbikes, now, they're all there is.

DB (WEED): *What are the chances of a rebirth in the British motorcycle industry?*

IAN: Shaky. Nobody can get started without snagging one of those big political contracts, supplying bikes to the army or police or something, to get started. Most of those contracts go to Japanese companies now.

DB (WOODS): *Didn't Rickman sell bikes to the police for a while?*

IAN: Yes; they made a bike

especially for the police . . .

DB (WOODS): *A Bonneville engine?*

IAN: No, it was the two-stroke. It was a sort of small-bore country policeman's bike. All painted white and everything. Like my SD125, which I bought over here for about \$699 or something. Good engine on that, one could do a lot with it . . .

DB (WOODS): *A poor pipe, though . . .*

IAN: Poor lots of things, but it was really a good bike, infinitely better than the average street/trail bike.



"The bikes are better than I am, the ones I have . . ."

And a value, too, for what they are selling for.

DB (WEED): *They're probably losing money on every one.*

IAN: Now, that was good fiberglass, high-quality stuff, as compared to, well, to my Ossas. The first time I fell off my Phantom I smashed both front and rear fenders. Just broke like straw . . . ridiculous! But when I was at the factory recently, the first thing I saw, when I went in, was a stack of new nylon fenders, front and rear, and I said to the guy, "Hey, hey, you've finally done it!" And he nodded, and I said, "You've been reading those American motorcycle magazines, haven't you?" And he said, sort of sadly, "Yes, yes . . ."

DB (WHOEVER): *It's nice to know you're needed . . .*

IAN: Yes, isn't it.

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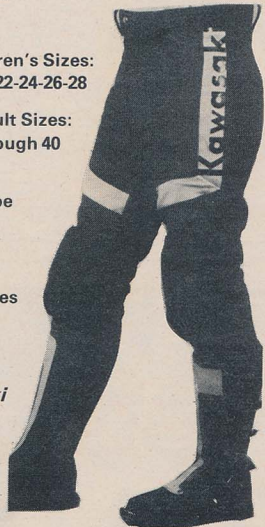
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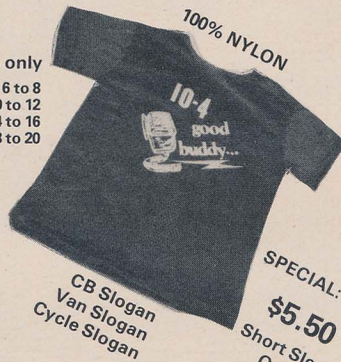
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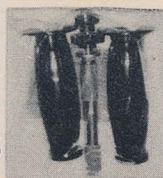
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