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October 1995 issue 3

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WHO A!



UP, UP AND AWAY
On Suzuki's wild
TS200R.



SECONDHAND GUIDE To buying a used Trailbike

TRAIL BIKE

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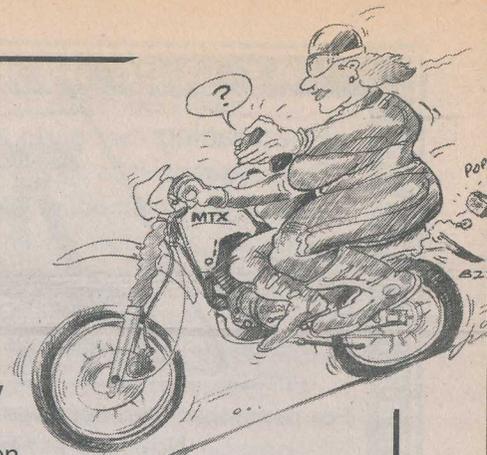
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The definitive guide to buying a second-
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How not to do it: Suzuki's TS200R
and the art of falling offP12

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C

AGIVA'S NEW ELEFANT is finally with us some 10 months after its debut at last year's NEC bike show. And despite the revisions being kept to a minimum, after seven days of hectic riding I can confirm that it's been well worth the wait. Worldwide demand for the Elefant is as strong as ever and we were happy to be asked to ride the first of the UK test bikes which you can read all about, beginning on page 40.

If you've ever wondered about how to get a recalcitrant partner involved in your favourite sport then turn to page 18 and read our feature on two up trail riding - you'll be amazed at what you can get up to on a trailie!

Getting a ride on the big Cagiva did rather throw out our plans for this month's issue and you will notice that there's no Honda XLV750R nor 80cc enduro bike test within these pages. But don't worry we promise to bring you these over the next couple of months.

Si Melber

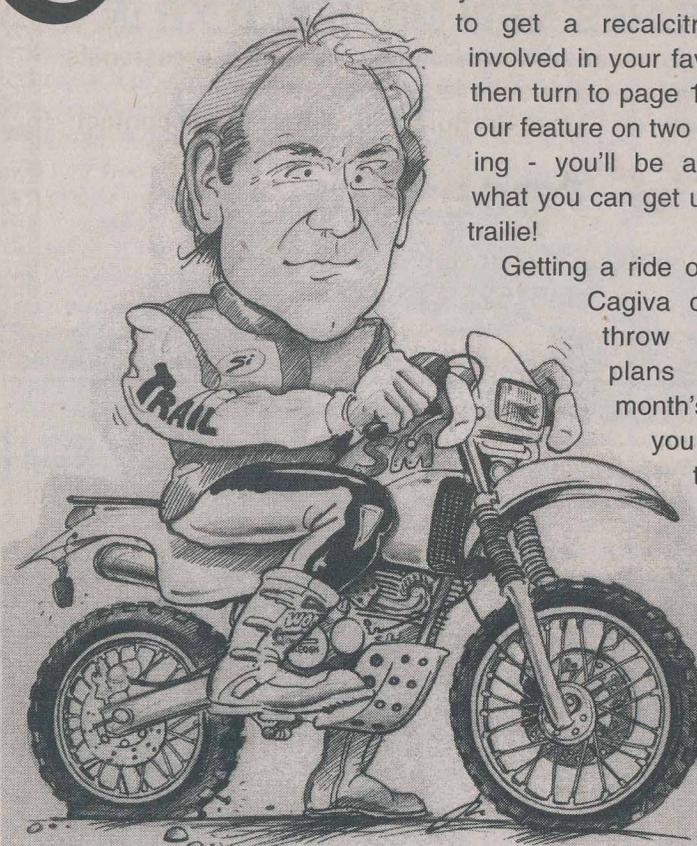


Illustration John Keogh

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News NEW BIKES FOR 96!

XR400R!

HONDA LAUNCHES NEW MID-SIZED XR IN USA

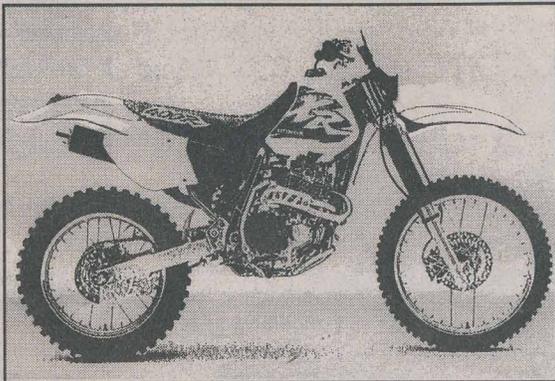
HONDA has launched an intermediate sized version of its best-selling XR range of dirt bikes.

The XR400R which was launched in America this month is unlikely to go on sale in Britain until 1997 at the earliest.

The XR400R retains the characteristic air-cooled, dry-sump motor in an oil-bearing chassis, which features a detachable rear sub-frame and suspension from the XR600. A pair of 43mm Showa forks give the new XR400R 11 inches of front wheel travel, while at the rear there's a multi-adjustable, remote-reservoir shock, giving just less than a foot of suspension travel - even though the XR has a seat height just half an inch taller than the 250 at 36.6 inches.

The engine which drives through a five speed gearbox, displaces 397cc, from a bore and stroke of 85x70mm, which with a compression ratio of 9.3:1 and a 36mm carburettor, is rumoured to produce around 38-40hp.

With demand for the 400 expected to be strong, as it represents an ideal size for both trail and enduro riders alike, Honda UK, may



well decide to import the 400 next year but a spokesman for Honda declined to speculate on any future plans as to whether it would be at the expense

of the 600 model which is getting a bit long in the tooth and remains unchanged for '96.

XR250R

In the meantime Honda have announced a number of changes to the XR250R, which adopts the dry-sump lubrication of its bigger brothers, along with a new carburettor and freer-breathing stainless exhaust. There are a number of other changes to reduce weight, improve response and decrease rider fatigue.

For the chassis, the new XR250R retains a semi double-cradle frame, with a redesigned swingarm now pivoting in the rear engine mount. There's also a new bolt on aluminium subframe for easy replacement and better

access to the rear suspension which features an uprated shock. Lightweight cartridge-style 41mm forks combine with more radical

HOW THEY COMPARE

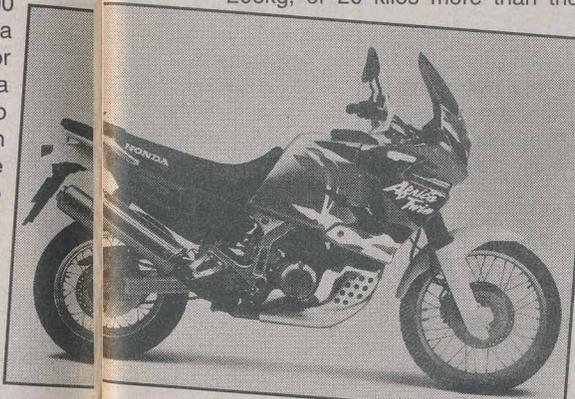
	XR600R	XR400R	XR250R
Eng	591cc	397cc	249cc
G/box	5-speed	5-speed	6-speed
W/base	57.3"	56.1"	55.1"
Seat ht	37.6"	36.6"	36.0"
Dry wt	271.2lbs	256.8lbs	240.3lbs

geometry to help speed up the XR's steering.

Improvements to the seat, tank and numerous other minor details help make the new model 2.5kg lighter.

Africa Twin

A taller screen, redesigned seat and a huge new silencer are the most notable changes to next year's XR750 which also benefits from a U-lock holder, a smoother operating clutch and new digital transistorized ignition. Available in Sparkling Red, Shine Silver Metallic or black, the Africa twin continues to pile on the pounds, the new model weighing an unbelievably porky 206kg, or 20 kilos more than the four cylinder 900cc



Honda FireBlade!

Dominator

Revisions to the NX650 are even less remarkable. A subtly redesigned fairing, stalk mounted indicators and curved rear mudguard help the Dommie shed 1kg, but the oddball cross-matched paint schemes surely aren't going to win it many friends. Colours for '96 are Magna Red (with Black and Ross White), Black (with Anchor Grey metallic), and Sardinia Blue (with Meteor Grey Metallic and Warm Silver).



In Brief

NEVER FORGET

The first batch of 1995 Cagiva 750 Elefants has arrived and is being despatched to dealers up and down the country, with a second batch due to arrive shortly. No news from the factory on the 900s yet, except to confirm they will arrive sometime this year!

PADDY-DAKAR!

Irish Rally of Discovery organiser Philip Gunn has confirmed his entry for the next Granada-Dakar rally beginning on 27 December. Team Ireland which consists of Philip Gunn, Richard Fair and Vincent Dooley will be competing on Honda XR650s and have christened the event 'The Cork to Dakar' since they have much further to travel than most of the other competitors. An Irishman has yet to finish the gruelling event.

DAKAR II

Britain's best hope of finishing the Dakar is current British Four-stroke Enduro Champion John Deacon. 36-year-old Deacon, a Plymouth bike dealer has obtained a factory KTM 620 Rallye with semi-works assistance for his assault on the world's toughest race, and will be detailing his attempt in the pages of TrailBike Magazine.

Husky

Changes to next year's Husky's are limited to a few minor modifications throughout the range. All enduro bikes including two strokes, adopt the right-way-up 45mm Marzocchi forks from the 610 model, which feature 12-way adjustable compression and rebound damping via a knurled knob atop each fork leg. They're also designed with a minimal underhang below the front axle to reduce the chance of catching on ruts, and come with new fork protectors which according to the Husky blurb are designed to act as 'air conveyors for the radiators'. The rear Showa shock has also been revalved giving a slightly larger range of settings.

With the exception of the old TE410 which now becomes a 400 (or 399cc) by the adoption of a new crank and piston, four stroke engine mods are limited to minor ignition changes, and an altered kick starter gear to aid first time starting.

Overall the most obvious change is the adoption of a fluorescent yellow front mudguard and all new graphics!

KTM

Not much change for the Austrian machines next year except for a change of livery, from the traditional white to bright orange.

All two stroke enduro models however get conventional Marzocchi magnum forks, and a revalved Ohlins shock. There are other detail changes to brakes, footpegs and engines, but information on the four strokes range for 96 has yet to be announced



Changes introduced the KDX Kawasaki revises new per head ang swingarm pension a height is



KAWASAKI

Confirmed for the 96 range of Kwackers include the re-tion of the ever popular KDX200 enduro bike (though not 220 that the Japanese get!), which was deleted from the si range at the end of '92. Next year's KDX is a complete-l model (the H2), with an improved 198cc engine, and a meter frame allowing a lower centre of gravity and steeper le (now 26.5 degrees). There's a new extruded aluminium and a host of other detail changes including uprated sus and brakes, contributing to the overall weight of 101kg. Seat tow 920mm, and prices have yet to be announced.

What's Happenin'

16 SEPTEMBER

WOMEN'S OFF ROAD DAY

The ideal opportunity if you're female and want to learn to ride off road in a non-competitive environment, taught by ACU-approved female instructors.

The event takes place at Peacock Hay MX circuit at Stoke-on-Trent, and there will be bikes and equipment available for hire if you haven't got your own. Complete beginners are welcome, as well as those who want to brush up on their MX technique. The day costs just £9.50 or £27 if you need a hire bike. Details from Marianne Walford on 01323 899958.

16 - 22 SEPTEMBER

RALLY OF DISCOVERY

Seven days of adventure gets under way on the roads, tracks and trails of beautiful southern Ireland. It costs IR £250, which includes all your accommodation and meals, as well as a prizegiving and gala evening.

If you've got a big trailie and can read a map it's the ideal way of seeing Eire with a few like-minded souls.

Contact Philip Gunn on 00353 21889462.

1 OCTOBER

HAFREN DIRT BIKE RALLY

Like the Cambrian rally this is an event aimed at riders of dual purpose trail machinery through the glorious mid Wales countryside.

With a semi-competitive format (mainly non-competitive liaison sections linking timed special tests), the emphasis will be on an enjoyable day's off roading on a mixture of open countryside and forestry tracks, all of which will be navigable on trail tyres.

Entry costs £30 which includes evening refreshments, and a prizegiving. For more info and a set of regs, call John Edmunds on 01597 840293.

Dear Trail Bike.

Praise Be

Greetings Trail Bike Mag,

Well you've finally done it - a mag for those using trail bikes for exactly what they are meant for. Brilliant, fantastic, awesome, and bugger me if your first issue didn't save me a load of hassle and expense - I was contemplating the purchase of a KMX200 but I have now contacted an advertiser in your mag and ordered a DTR200.

I wonder if you can also help me with a query regarding uprating the rear suspension for use in the trail bike class of enduros. Keeping a rear disc is imperative as I operate the rear brake from a hydraulic master cylinder as I have a wooden leg!

Keep up the very, very good work.

All the best
Bob Middleton
Grassington, N Yorks

Got an opinion?

Then write to:

TrailBike Magazine

P O Box 1555

Salisbury

SP3 4PF

The Knack

Dear Si,

I've just received the second issue of your mag and was very impressed except for one thing..... When is it going to go to A4 size? More please, I particularly enjoy the Rough Guide section and look forward to when you focus on Dorset.

I have a '78 XT500 and notice you describe it in guide as a pig to start. I was almost impossible to start from hot and I would have agreed with your classification.

Recently however, after an hour of fruitless kicking, I discovered the knack which you may like to pass on to your readers.

To start from hot, kick over once with the throttle wide open, then kick it again with the throttle closed and away she goes every time.

It works for me anyway.

Best regards
Nigel
Saxon
Lilliput,
Poole

Right-Guard

Dear Mr Melber,

I've just bought the first issue of TrailBike Magazine and found it a very interesting read - and looking through the bike guide I am quite interested in the TW200 and am not familiar with this bike. Is it a grey import?

Is it possible you may have



Fat-tyred fun on a TW200

information on this bike most importantly its saddle height.

I also have a liking for Yamaha's XT350 but am not keen on the high mudguard. Is it possible to fit a tyre hugging guard to this bike in any way to improve its looks.

Keep up the good work.
Yours sincerely
Malcolm Smart
Enfield

You're absolutely right the Yamaha TW200 (the TW stands for Trail Way by the way), is a grey import that's designed as much as a fun bike as a serious trail tool,

Bike.

and thanks to its fat tyres it can cope with practically any terrain you can throw at it.

It's powered by a simple, sohc, four stroke (198cc) engine with the convenience of an electric start, and a seat height of just 31.5 inches. If you want one try Rick at R.A.P. on (0181) 452 2672 as he's brought in a number of TWs, and expect to pay around £1,600 for a ropey one, £2,500 for something decent and £3,400 for a brand new one. Also watch out for our test of the TW in the near future.

As for the XT350 there's no reason why you can't fit a low mudguard such as one from an XT600 without much trouble.

Rack(it)

Dear Sirs,

Congratulations on producing an excellent magazine aimed at trail bike owners. I think your secondhand buying guide is easily the most comprehensive and informative guide that I've come across.

What would be interesting I'm sure, would be an in-depth

article on the heritage of a range of one manufacturer's type of bike eg

Yamaha's XT lineage - what do you think?

Finally I am desperately attempting to obtain a luggage rack for a DR400S such as an EMI, Tower or Rickman, however I know these are no longer available as an orderable accessory and I don't want a 'universal-type' rack, can you help?

David Smith
York

PS Will you offer binders to keep the magazine in?

Regarding the rack, we've had a good ring around all the dealers we know, but have failed to come up with the rack you're looking for, perhaps other readers may be able to help you on this one, and yes we will be offering binders in the not too distant future.



Like it

Sir,

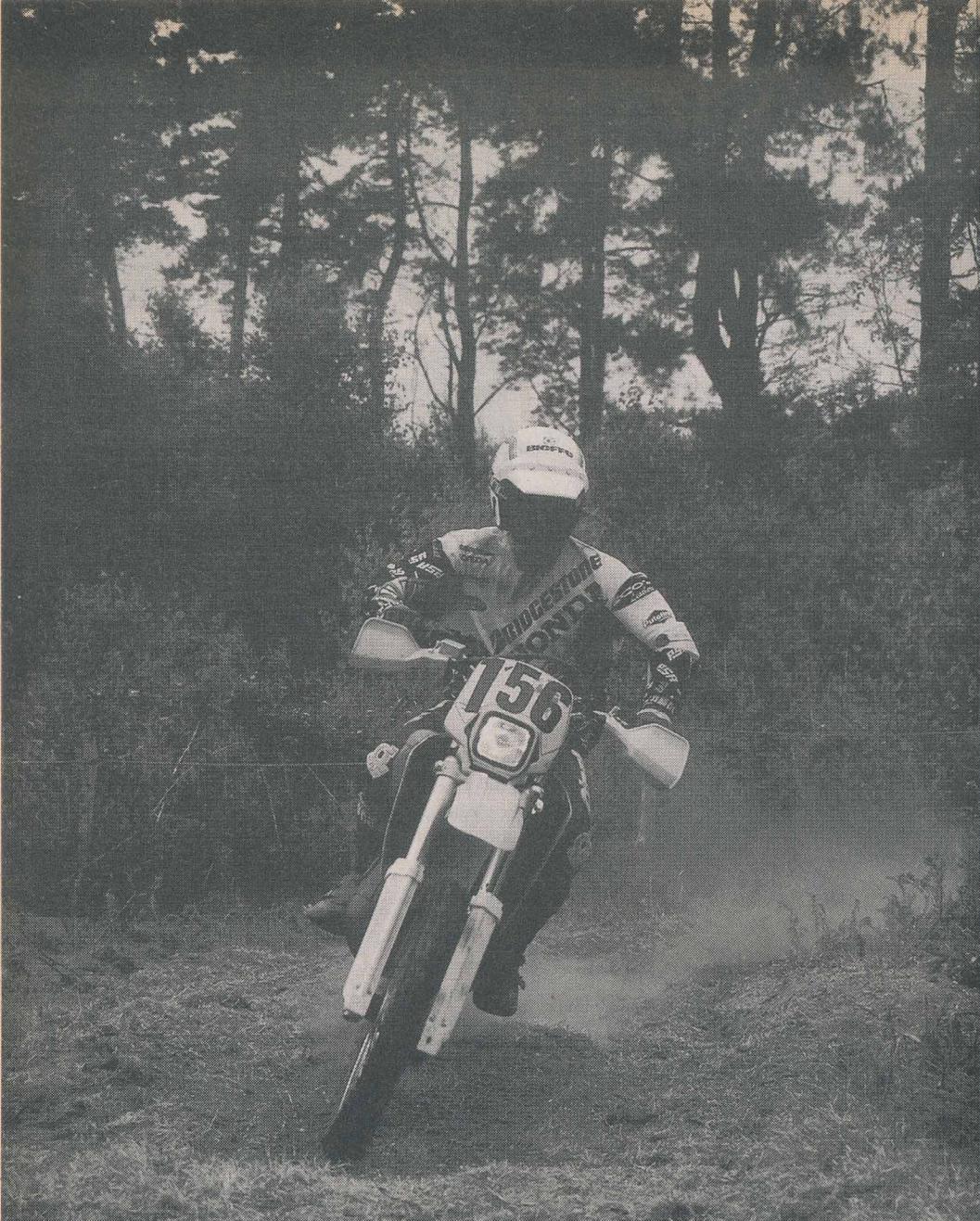
Re TBM - at last! Tremendous first issue, the second even better, good format, price, bike guide, articles etc.

Suggestions:- TRF feature, readers letters!!, hints and tips, road test anything old or new as long as it's a trailie. More from DT, PNB, MW etc.

Hopefully the manufacturers will seize the opportunity to advertise their products and give you some scoop road tests. I could go on and on but I'm sure you sense my enthusiasm for the mag is obvious.

Best wishes
P N Gray
Preston, Lancs

TRF article in the planning plus Trail Tips coming soon.



STROKE OF

GENIUS

TSR
200

Two Stroke trailies don't have to be learner-legal laggards. Dave 'Crasher' Cornish went in search of a bit of French, and came back wanting more

If you're thinking of buying a new lightweight trail bike, the choice these days is frankly very limited. A few fancy Italian trailies, a collection of learner legal tackle (KDX125, TS125R, DT125R), or the KLX250. Not much of a choice at all really, and all a bit under-powered for fast road use, even in de-restricted guise. The obvious thing to do is to look further afield and consider a grey import. The choice then becomes much greater. All manner of exotic trail bikes are available from various markets around the world; how about a KDX220SR or a DT200WR, RMX250S or a CRM250R? The list goes on, and remember, these are *real* trail bikes, fitted with autolube systems, indicators, a full set of instruments and all the other requirements to make them fully street legal.

Shaun Read from Norfolk decided to explore this option when the time came to replace his trusty TS125R. But instead of contacting a grey importer and seeing what was in stock, he simply phoned around some of the French Suzuki agents and placed an order for a TS200R.

Similar in appearance to the UK-imported 125 the TS200 has the advantage of a more powerful engine, and better specified suspension, yet many of the parts are interchangeable with the 125. Common to both machines are bodywork, chassis, wheels and most of the engine, but the differences in spec are what makes the 200 interesting.

The 200's engine is a liquid cooled, two stroke single with a bore and stroke of 60x57mm. This compact unit uses an electronically controlled powervalve, and draws fuel and air through a 30mm Mikuni carb bolted onto a crankcase-mounted reed block. Twin radiators are fitted in place of the 125's single item (which can be marginal in sticky off road going), and a thermostat makes

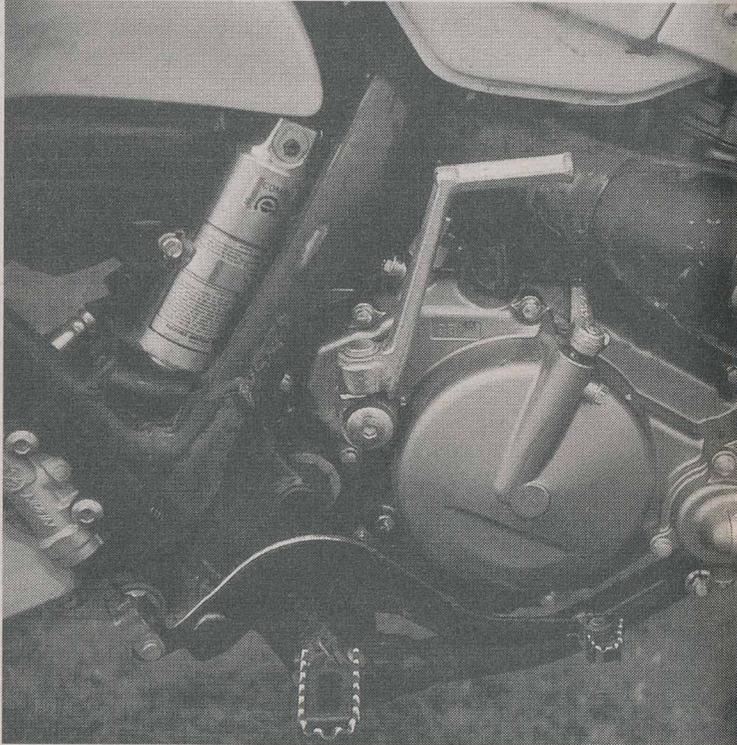
STROKE OF GENIUS

Visually, there's not much difference between the 125 and the 200, though this one is kitted out in enduro trim....



for a quick warm up while helping to prevent cold seizures (most enduro bikes don't come fitted with a thermostat). The transmission is a widely-spaced, six speed unit with the three lower ratios designed for off roading and the top three cogs designed primarily for road use. The shift action is up to Suzuki's usual high standard, and the final drive is by chain using a 520 heavy duty O'ring (as opposed to the 125's weedy 428 item).

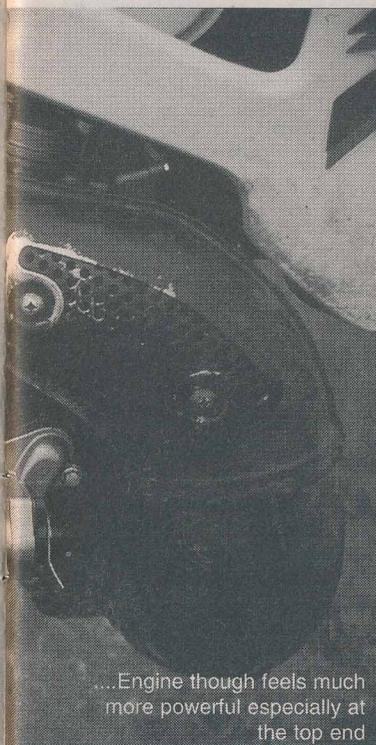
The biggest visual difference between the 200 and the 125 are those upside down Showa forks (adjustable for compression only) in place of the 125's right way up items. Despite the fashion seemingly changing from one year to another, there's no doubt in this installation they work well, and certainly look the 'biz'. Plastic guards help protect the sliders from rocks and debris and guide the brake hose out of harms way. At the rear, damping is controlled by a remote reservoir shock (adjustable for spring preload and compression damping), connected via a 'Full-Floater' linkage to an alloy swingarm (steel on the 125). About the only evidence of cost cutting at all on Suzuki's part is the use of steel rather than alloy wheel rims, in 21" and 18" sizes, front and rear respectively. To slow



the bike down from its 90+mph capability, discs are used at both ends. a twin piston sliding caliper grips the front rotor while a single piston caliper manages at the rear.

TSR 200

Our initial encounter with the 200 was at the Herringfleet enduro, where just chucking a leg over it in the paddock for the first time, it felt rather softly sprung. But a few short laps of the enduro course dispelled any doubts we had about the suspension's apparent lack of stiffness and its ability to absorb harsh bumps - the upside down forks working brilliantly, never bottoming out once. The initial fork action is soft and most of the travel is quickly taken up by smaller bumps, but towards full compression the forks stiffen



...Engine though feels much more powerful especially at the top end

up nicely, coping easily with larger ruts and dips. Likewise the rear suspension soaked up the abuse handed out without any complaints, and felt up to the task demanded of it.

Back in the paddock I handed the Suzuki back to Shaun its owner, who asked for our opinion. 'Well yes the bike is lightweight, has a punchy motor, good suspension and brakes to match. Not bad at all'. I said. But it was only later, after thinking back to what I'd said, I realised I was talking here about a trail bike and not a full blown enduro racer. With this in

mind, the TS200 is really not just a good bike, but a brilliant one, and in any comparisons with more serious off roaders the 200 can hold its head high. It is easily capable of winning the trail bike class in this sort of event without any modifications and most clubmen could do just as well on this bike as on a competition machine, with the added bonus of having transport on which to ride to work on Monday morning.

A couple of days later I had the opportunity to ride the bike again at a rather more relaxed pace on some easy green lanes. This showed how docile the 200 could be when required. Tricking along on a whiff of throttle the bike carburetes smoothly, yet retains the ability to press on at pace when required. The TS was proving itself to be a real dual purpose machine. Mechanically very quiet thanks to its water jacket, and even though fitted with an aftermarket silencer, only a hard-core, anti-bike, Kagoule-wearing Nazi could really take offence to this while out trailing.

With its relatively meaty midrange, it can be encouraged to climb slippery slopes without the need for too much throttle, but at the top end, power comes in fairly suddenly, with the consequence that the front end can get a little light if you give it too much welly. The test bike had been fitted with a set of motocross tyres which off road gave us the opportunity to use the brakes hard without the constant risks of lock ups.

While on the subject of tyres if you've never ridden off tarmac on anything other than dual sport rubber, you owe it to yourself to try some decent enduro or knobby tyres on your bike and be prepared to be amazed at the difference it makes. This simple and cheap modification will transform any tarmac-only machine into a hard-charging, late-braking, berm-bashing dirt demon. And off



road, not only do they afford more grip but they're almost certainly safer also.

Away from the dirty stuff the TS makes a great back lane scratcher; though unfortunately the same tyres which allowed such liberties to be taken on the rough, had the opposite effect on tarmac. The TS's light weight and strong midrange had the rear Barum squirming in protest. In town the 200 is a blast. It's a real hooligan's machine - wheelies are only interrupted by inconvenient traffic lights and roundabouts are attacked with plenty of throttle and masses of ground clearance. Faster road sections gave us the chance to rev-out the TS through all its six speeds, and cracking open the throttle you really can feel the powervalve working, as the engine revs rise, transforming the exhaust note from a muted crackle to a hard-edged rasp.

The TS accelerates hard through the gears until the performance begins to tail off before maximum revs are reached in top gear. The end result of this throttle abuse is 90mph on the speedo and an empty fuel tank after barely 70 miles

(9.5litres to bone dry). Longer trips on dual carriageways aren't quite as much fun since the lightweight TS (at just 115kg) gets buffeted around by trucks and side winds. At least the motor has enough performance to cruise at a steady 75-80mph - something most 125 riders can only dream about.

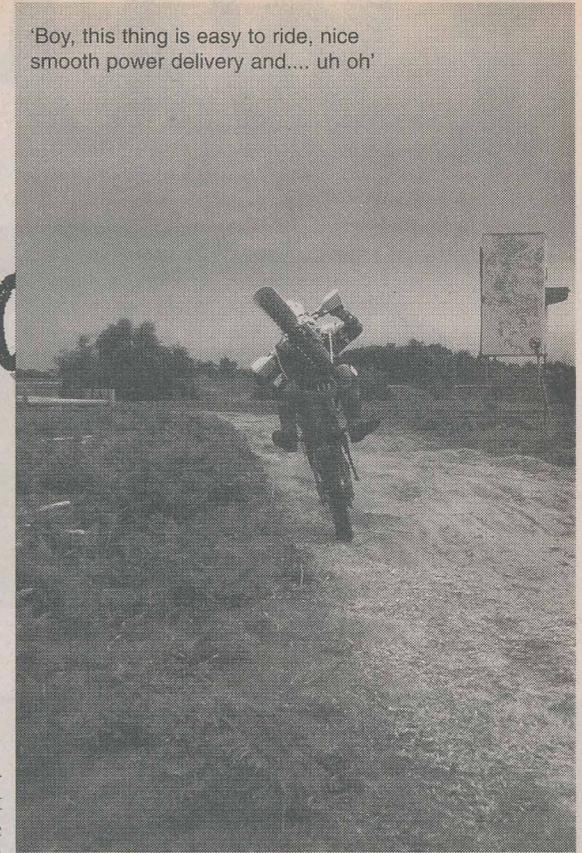
In reality of course, the lack of any form of weather protection, and the limited tank range, not to mention small physical size and susceptibility to cross winds make the TS unsuited to long haul trips. It's not that the Suzook is too slow for most traffic conditions, far from it, but the TS is no different in one respect to most lightweight trail bikes; those qualities that make it a great off roader, count against it on longer journeys.

But to consider the TS200R as merely a slightly more powerful version of the 125 is to not really do it justice. Taken as a whole the TS is not only more powerful than the 125, but better suspended and consequently, feels much nicer both on and off the dirt.

STROKE OF

TSR 200 GENIUS

'Boy, this thing is easy to ride, nice smooth power delivery and.... uh oh'



As an alternative to the officially imported lightweight stokers it makes a sensible and attractive proposition, and with a retail price of around three grand in France it's certainly worth a second look.

Until recently the French equivalent of the ACU (the FFM), in conjunction with Suzuki France, ran a class in the national enduro championship solely for the TS200R and DR350. This series proved very popular, with all levels of riders enjoying close racing on essentially stock (and therefore reliable) machinery. And with all the riders limited to one make of tyre the emphasis was placed firmly on riding skills, fitness and endurance rather than any machine advantage. Now how about something like that in the UK? Is anyone in the ACU listening?

Price £3000 (approx)

Engine Liquid-cooled, two stroke, 199cc single with electronic powervalve

Weight 115kg

Plus points

light weight, more power than 125, quality suspension

Minus points

limited availability, limited range, short haul only

TWO'S COMPANY

Two up trail riding.
Twice the effort
or double the pleasure?

To many hardened trail riders, the thought of heaving two people and a bike through engine-deep mud all day, sounds like a recipe for a heart attack... It probably is so don't even entertain the idea.

No, two up trailing means looking at the problem from a different perspective. Two up runs generally take place during the summer months for some fairly obvious reasons. Firstly it's a good bet that the weather will be good; if not bright sunshine, then at least hopefully warm and not raining. The last thing a pillion new to the game wants, is to be lashed with rain, or slowly losing the feeling in their outer extremities due to sub-zero temperatures.

Secondly the lanes will be dry, hard and consequently easier to use than during the other eight months of the year when they're wet, slippery and technically interesting (a trail riding term for get off and push, if you haven't fallen off already).

Lastly, the beautiful countryside should be open to view in all directions for most of the day rather than the low cloud which can cloak some of the pretti-

est parts of this septic isle.

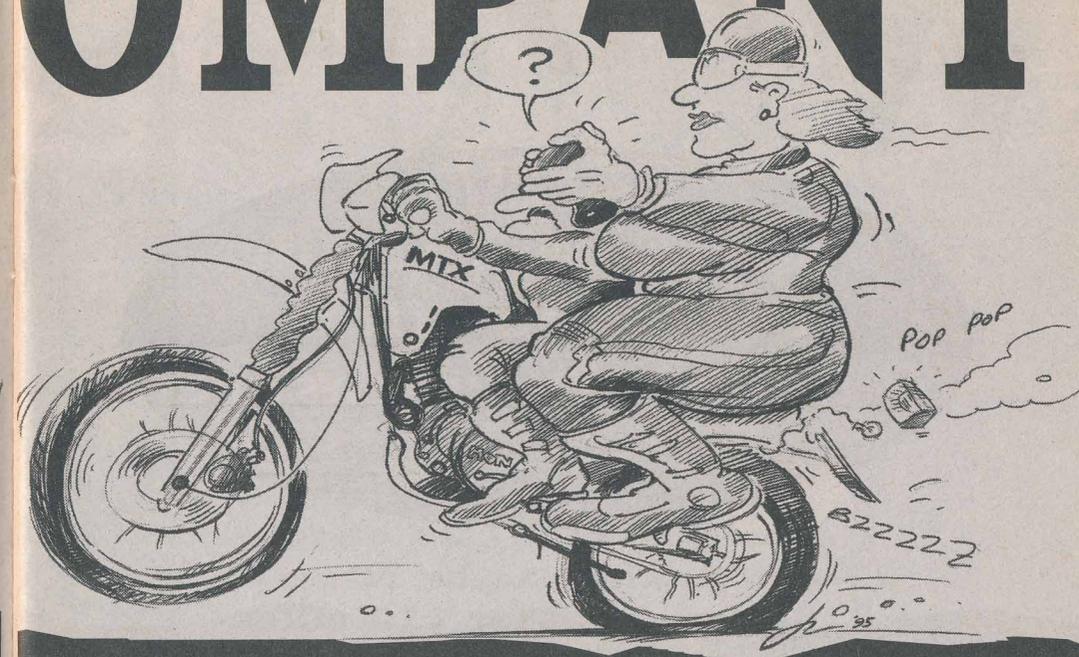
'If all the factors come together then a good time is nigh on guaranteed.'

So says Leo Crone, a County Durham born trail bike fanatic, who for the past few years has been organising his own two up trail runs across his favourite north country terrain.

'It seemed to me trail riding was considered a very macho affair. In all the time I'd ridden unsurfaced roads I'd only known two women take to the trail, and there seemed to be a growing number of large trail bikes (over 700cc), owned but not ridden in anger off the tarmac. Added impetus was finding a girlfriend not too afraid to try the pillion seat off tarmac as long as she had some other female company to natter to.'

'It goes without saying that you have to choose your lanes carefully' says Leo.

'Bearing in mind that I advertise these runs as a leisurely day out' he adds 'I try to avoid bike swallowing bogs, deep fast flowing fords and very narrow lanes with a hand's width gap between overgrown hedges and bramble bushes, because what



seems like fun for one can be a real nightmare for two....or at least the one on the back. So hard stony tracks like the Yorkshire Riggs or old Roman Roads are best and anything muddy or with fords is avoided.

'Lunch also has to be early, like two to two and a half hours after the start and tends to be a lengthy affair. By the time everyone's parked up, disrobed, ordered and eaten their lunch and had a good natter, a couple of hours have slipped by.

'Likewise I look to finish about one to two hours after lunch as the fun factor can start to wear thin with an increasing number of dusty pillions totally pre-occupied with thoughts of a long soak in a hot bath.'

As far as bikes go it appears just about anything will do. 'On the day' continues Leo, 'I've seen a lot of bikes I'd never consider capable of two-up riding used and abused. The KMX200 or KDX200 while not ideal will manage it, though on those it seems like two's a crowd. Mind you,' he adds 'even they seemed spacious compared with one rider and his rather

large and domineering wife who rode all day long on a sorry looking MTX125. She spent the whole day perched on the rear mudguard telling her henpecked husband to slow down!'

The current crop of mega trailies represent the best bet for serious two up riding with Yamaha's XTZ750 SuperTenere seemingly the most popular choice among Leo's punters, with BeeEmm's trusty GS a close second.

'As with all large, heavy machinery, they handle well when the going's hard and dry, but the first hint of mud or wet grass has the back ends sliding everywhere, and the pillions shrieking with excitement - at least I think it's excitement!'

So there you have it. A family day out (some riders take young daughters or sons along in place of their wives), in wonderful countryside, conducted at a leisurely pace with a late start, early finish and a civilised lunch.

If you want to follow Leo's example, all you need do is pick a day in summer, choose the easiest lanes and go for it. □

Wales



Tales

PART TWO

Last month our man Blezard went through Hell and high water on the first day of the Welsh Two-Day Enduro, finishing the first 160 miles with bruised kidneys, a squashed finger and a severe case of conjunctivitis. Can he make it through another 130 miles of Two-Day torture?

It was amazing to watch the sidecar competitors changing their rear tyres in the ten short minutes allowed for mechanical-ing before the start on the second day (no outside assistance of course). I confined my bike maintenance to a quick squirt of chain lube but took some time on an anti-fogging preparation for both goggles and glasses.

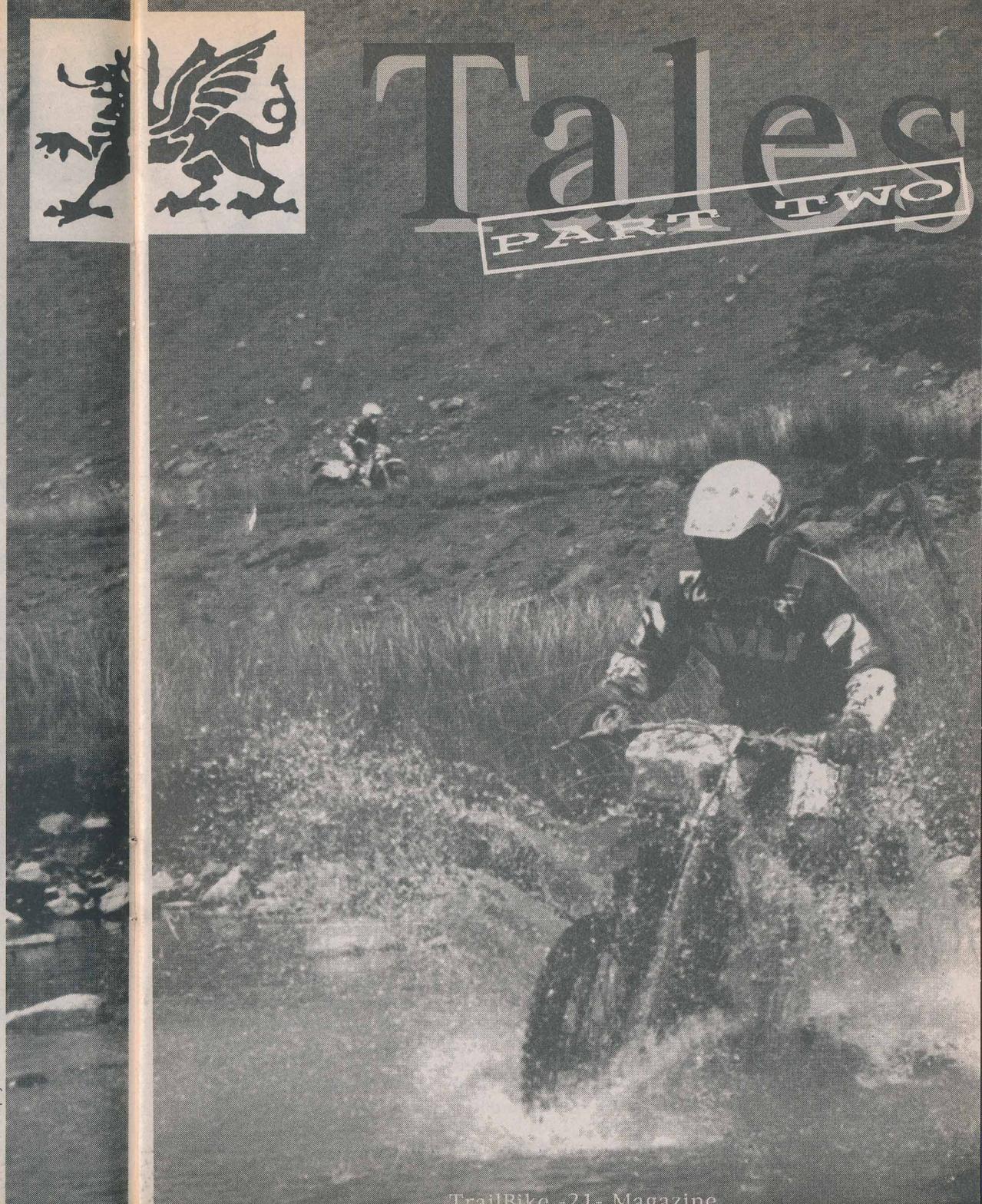
It was really disorientating wearing my knackered old 'bins' off-road for the first time in over ten years, and my tight-fitting Bell helmet added extra torment as the side-pieces of the glasses crushed my ears painfully.

Day two consisted of doing a slightly shorter version of Day 1, but in the opposite direction, so the first off-road obstacle we were confronted with was the previous afternoon's purgatorial Bwlchciliau special test in reverse. I didn't ride it any faster but at least managed to avoid falling off this time ending up three minutes quicker. The venerable Ralph Venables was there helping with the marshalling; at 81 years young Ralph is a living legend and actually looked a lot fitter than I was feeling; he seems to have been reporting on off-road events since Ben Hur was racing chariots.

Next up was the worst of the previous day's checks and in this direction the organisers rated it a full ten out of ten on the difficulty scale. Yikes!

I'd barely started the first tricky hill when I managed to get

Mick Murphy



Wales Tales

PART TWO

balked by another rider and toppled off the XR because I couldn't get my leg over quickly enough - so to speak. The bloody bike yet again refused to start for ages so I was already tired and running late with the day hardly begun! Next obstacle was a pair of stuck sidecars; I chose the wrong side to pass them and ended up having to

footrests, just paddling a lot faster than me with giant-sized military regulation strides either side to steady their bikes as they slipped and slithered along. I was already too knackered to emulate their style but when I got to the next check I wished I'd made a bit more of an effort, because even with all the faffing about I



Day two and Blez gets a soaking in one of the numerous stream crossings on the Strata Florida section

'plough my own furrow' for several hundred yards through the forest.

Then there was another really slippery downhill section and I was soon being caught by faster clubmen and I pulled over to let them past. It was interesting to watch the technique of three army lads on XR250s - they weren't doing anything clever like standing on the

was only two minutes late. Curses!

After being caught out by the tight scheduling on the rocks and rivers of the Strata Florida section the day before I really turned up the wick for the return journey but within a mile was stuck behind one of those bally sidecars again. Luckily I chose the right rut to follow it in and just managed to squeeze past as the

track widened for a few seconds. I really attacked the river crossings and was rewarded with a comprehensive soaking as the bow-wave came right over my head - but in the hot conditions it was rather refreshing. The schedule wasn't quite



as tight as the day before because we were riding uphill but I actually covered the six miles quicker and to my surprise arrived at the next check with two minutes in hand.

I managed to get through the day's most snotty bit of bog in the following Blaenycwm check without too much difficulty thanks to some well-positioned marshals pointing out the best route through. But a few minutes later, after a couple of miles of fast forest trail, I saw a familiar-looking red car parked up and the feeling of *deja vu* got even stronger when I recognised the entry to the same bit of bog I'd just struggled through! I turned around and retraced my steps back down the forest trail for a while (with great caution) but ended up turning around again and doing the bloody bog twice! I asked the marshal where I'd gone wrong. "I thought you looked familiar" quoth he, before informing me that I'd missed the arrows pointing left off the forest road and been round in a great big circle - a good ten minutes wasted - aaargh!

The forest roads were particularly dusty on Day two, and very dangerous. There are only two ways to ride them in the company of others; either you hang right back to give their dust time to clear, or else you sit right on their number plate, but off to one side, just ahead of their dust trail. Compared to my 'certified duffer' status in the snotty snuff I'm actually rea-

sonably fast on this Cambrian-style going and was clocking over 70mph on several occasions, but some of those regular enduro boys are just bonkers! At one point three of them came past me elbow to elbow in a cloud of dust - talk about blind faith in your fellow rider! It's all too easy to go straight off the edge of a mountain, as apparently top man Rob Sartin did in company with four others - more haste less speed and all that.

Then there was another one of those steep, slippery slopes covered in loose logs. God I hate them! I just dithered too much at the bottom, did not attack hard enough and got baulked by another rider half way up. Even though I managed not to stall for a change, it was several minutes and more purgatorial pushing before I could get going again, during which time about a dozen riders came by. It would probably have been quicker to go back down the hill and have another run at it. By the time I arrived at the next check I'd

I really attacked the river crossings and was rewarded with a comprehensive soaking as the bow wave came right over my head

dropped 14 minutes behind the Sportsman schedule.

On the Pont Rhydgaled road-only check I took on juice at another quaint Welsh petrol 'shop' and still had time for a cup of tea and a cake in the A470 lay-by. Bliss! Hearing the friendly proprietor and his wife switch effortlessly into the

beautiful Welsh language transformed my brief stop into a full-blow cultural experience.

On the penultimate 15 mile Waun check I missed another set of arrows off the forest trail into the woods and went on for about two miles before realising my mistake. Re-tracing my steps with extreme caution (again!) I met two more riders who'd done the same thing and by the time we found the right route that was

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another ten minutes down the drain - Disastersville!

My last major hiccup was on another long climb which I should have just roared up no problem, but again I didn't attack it hard enough, lost momentum and came to a halt on a really steep and slippery section about half way up. The XR can be a bugger to start at the best of times, but if you can't get a full swing on the kickstart (in this case because of the slope of the hill) you haven't got a hope in hell of starting it. With a yawning abyss on the left side I had no chance of straddling the bike and ended up wedging the back wheel against a tree and kicking it with my left foot, and after much swearing the obstinate old b.....anger finally burst back into life. By some miracle I just made it to the next check right on my minute.

After a final top-up from 'Q', our man with the petrol can, the last hurdle of the day was the 'moto-cross' special test, done in the same direction as the day before. Being knackered, I didn't ride it as well second time around and narrowly avoided coming a cropper a couple of times so it was a hell of a relief when I finally passed the time-keeper shiny side up. From there it was only a couple of road miles back to the finish at the Llandrindod lakeside. Made it!

I'd overcome ridiculously high gearing, hot-starting problems, conjunctivitis-inflicted 'Cyclops syndrome' and a manifest lack of off-road ability to finish the Welsh two-day at my first attempt and it was a damned good feeling, I can tell you. You may think it sounds as if it had all the attraction of banging your head against a brick wall - (nice when it stops) - but it was a lot better than that, honest.

The combination of the beautiful countryside and wonderful weather and the fantastic mix of twisting tarmac, fast forest tracks and challenging woodland trails really did add up to some kind of ultimate trail ride. It was 'Intense' as our American friends say, but I wouldn't have

missed it for the world.

Mind you, we were lucky! Oh yes! Welsh two-day regulars assured me that this was one of the easiest ones they could remember. (I learnt long ago that 'easy' in enduro parlance equals 'bloody hard work' in trail riding terms and that when expert enduro riders talk about an event being 'hard' they mean 'bloody impossible' for normal human beings).

Back in the paddock my travelling companion Ian Pearce had scored an excellent gold award and 13th place in the clubman 250 class on his E-reg KDX250. I chatted to several other competitors, including former British champ Geraint Jones, who'd just won another gold medal with fourth place in the Experts on his WR250. I also made the acquaintance of three kindred spirits from Derbyshire. The youngest of their steeds ('nags' would be nearer the mark) was at least fifteen years old and none of the lads will see thirty again. All three were as knackered as me but equally happy to have finished the Welsh at their first attempt. With a restoratory fag in hand, Ken "Youth" Wilkinson related how they'd mistakenly entered as Clubmen, naively imagining that 'Sportsman' was for complete off-road novices.

Ken had actually done extremely well to win a silver award on his old twin-shock Suzuki PE250, although he complained that the extra-long suspension he'd concocted made it rather top-heavy. His mate, David Ainsworth was riding the same 1980-vintage XL250S which he'd used for the Cambrian Rally, and had fondly imagined that the Welsh was going to be a similar sort of thing. "I think I'll stick to them rallies in future" he gasped, still getting his breath back. As we were talking, the third member of the Derbyshire triumvirate, Andrew Gough, arrived back, having just completed the course on his 1975 DT400. When the other two pointed out that Andrew's got an artificial leg fitted below his right knee, I nearly fell over.

What a bloody hero! For that outstanding achievement he should have been given a special trophy.

Down at the Llanerch Inn I met Yoshi Adams who had blitzed most of the clubman field (5th place and a Gold) on the self-same KMX200 he rides to work every day. He also came 8th in the Cambrian with it and said he'd never ridden a pukka enduro tool. Greg Mills nearly went one better by entering the expert class on a KMX125 with standard trail tyres, but the poor thing cried 'enough' and seized towards the end of the second day.

Similar stories of superb performances on old nails emerged at the prize giving in the Llandrindod Pavilion later that evening. Gwyn Barraclough and Paul Hodgkins both did incredibly well to come 9th and 11th in the clubman four-stroke on Army-issue Harley Davidsons, but their

colleague Sean Skinner's 2nd place on an identical bike was simply mind-boggling!

Thirty-something Nick Ashley (son of Laura) was pleasantly surprised to win a gold on his Kawasaki in clubman open, proving that you don't have to be a wimp to work in the rag trade. (Nick's also one of a handful of Englishmen to have done the Tunisian rally, and runs around London on a Cagiva Elephant).

Last Easter Katrina Price won best lady rider in the Cambrian on an army Armstrong and in the Welsh she claimed the same prize, but this time riding a pukka KTM 125. In coming 5th in the 125 Experts she also beat 95% of the men - Katrina's so good it seems unfair that other women have to compete with her - she must be one of the best female riders in Europe, if not the world.

Gill Myers and Patricia Schek still beat



The sidecars continued to be good value for money. Here Martin Hearle and Nathan Jones blast their 500cc Kawasaki Wasp outfit up a hill

Wales Tales

PART TWO

me of course, as did Patricia's 62 year old dad, 59 year old Bob Perring and uncle Tom Cobbley and all. Then again, 74 riders (out of 300 entrants) failed to finish altogether, and I did beat a handful of those who did, so in the absence of anyone else giving me anything I awarded myself 'Best Performance by a One-eyed Journalist with a Wing-mirror', for which the prize was a good meal and plenty of beers. (Actually, I was the only person in the whole event with a wing mirror which I like to keep on for the road; I just swivelled it out of the way on the woodland sections.

For the record, the overall winner was Carl Tiley on a 250 Husqvarna, closely followed by Chris Walton riding the same 350 Husky four-stroke on which he set fastest time in the Cambrian and Ady Smith was third overall and best 125.

Finally, my own thanks to Ian Pearce, without whom I could never even have started, to Q for refuelling, to Richard, Whizzo and their crew for help and liquid refreshment and most of all to Mid-Wales ACU centre for putting on such a fantastic event. If you're a fun-loving off-roader the Welsh is one of those events you owe it to yourself to do at least once in your life, and for me ranks right up there with the MCC classic trials and the Le Touquet beach race. Next year I'll treat myself to a clean air filter, a new spark plug, proper enduro gearing and some decent contact lenses and try to beat a few more of the old men and girls. See you there.

NB The Welsh Two-Day is unique in running on a Thursday and Friday rather than a weekend. For further info and advice contact Zembrzuski Motorcycles on 01597 851811



62 year old Herbert Schek lifts the front wheel on his DR350 on the first special test of day two making Blezard look like the old man

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H O N D A X R 5 0 0



Developed from the original XL250S in the late 1970s, the XR500 was the enduro version of the roadgoing XL500 and the pokiest of all Honda's twin-shock four-stroke singles.

Paul Blezard recalls the joys and horrors of three turbulent years of ownership with this superb 'do-anything' big banger.

When I first saw the XR500 for sale in Bunny Ward's shop in Birmingham back in 1981 I knew that fate had intended it to be mine. I had just finished my *magnum opus*, a 50,000 word dissertation on the problems of Planning and Motorcycle Land Use as part of an MSc in Town Planning, and had taken my 200 page

come to Ward's to be bound. (It must be the only shop in the country to combine printing and binding with selling off-road motorcycles!)

I think I paid about £900 for the XR which was a US import in mint condition with only a few hundred miles on the clock. It was the first off-road bike I had

ever owned and made quite a contrast from the cafe-racered CB450 'Black Bomber' which I'd been running around on for the previous seven years.

As a 'Not for highway use' enduro model, it was similar to the XR200s of the era: six-volt electrics, one-filament head and tail lights, no horn or brake lights and twin-shock rear suspension. Unlike the XR200 however, it had the notorious 23 inch front wheel used on contemporary twin-shock XL250s and 500s and unlike later Honda enduro models it came with a road legal metal tank and speedo.

I loved the XR from the first time I rode it, but it was a while before I took it off road. First it had to earn its keep as a despatch bike in London for which its superb power to weight ratio was perfect - though the knobly tyres, off-road gearing, wide bars and lack of legal niceties were not exactly ideal.

Over a period of several months I gradually transformed it into an all-round go-anywhere machine with a series of sensible modifications. I had a 21 inch rim laced to the standard front hub to give me a much wider choice of tyres, with the

bonus of much quicker steering without any noticeable loss of stability. The



Blezard storms up Simms Hill during the 1983 MCC Exeter trial aboard his modified XR500. Note leather saddlebags, homemade handlebar muff, and ubiquitous single wing mirror. - Oh dear!!

standard SLS (single leading shoe) front brake was prone to fading so I had a set of Ferodo green racing linings

fitted which improved matters substantially, the only drawback being a nasty tendency to lock at slow speeds if not used carefully!

At first I rode around London with an aerosol-type foghorn clamped to the bars but this was not very practical and I ended up with a root and branch solution to the minimal equipment and electrics: I bolted on the complete 12 volt system from Honda's XL250-based RS250 roadster: alternator, flywheel, crankcase cover, regulator-rectifier and wiring. I acquired all these things from various breakers for reasonable sums along with a set of XL500 switchgear, horn and headlamp. I also bought an XL250 rear wheel to facilitate quick switching between on and off-road tyres and gearing. However, the XR500's magnesium rear hub is larger and quick-release, so to make the XL250 brake work, required a bit of bodgery to fit a torque arm.

The standard bars were so wide that I couldn't even get the bike down the alleyway to my greenhouse/workshop; I started by chopping an inch off either end but ended up replacing them with a set of 'Vincent straights' which I much preferred. I also acquired a stainless steel exhaust which saved several pounds of *avoirdupois* over the standard system but was a bit on the rorty side. (When the silencer finally fell to bits about a year later and I was forced to go back to the standard set-up I was astonished by the instant increase in power - I reckon the stainless system was stifling about 5bhp, but I'd never noticed, probably because the increase in decibels made it 'feel' faster.)

The icing on the cake to my wondrous

beast was a low alloy front mudguard and a handlebar screen acquired from a visiting Canadian. It transformed high-speed comfort with no noticeable effect on the handling, and I have since used the same screen on everything from Kawasaki Zephyrs to my current XR600 - (it only takes a couple of minutes to fit using my patent coat-hanger attachments!)

I used the XR500 for my first forays to French endurance races - Le Mans in April '82 and the Bol d'Or in September the same year. I remember hammering the XR along at a steady 90mph down the A1 to London and then discovering to my horror when I got there, that the oil was almost off the bottom of the dipstick..... I quickly realised that you need to keep an eye on the oil level if you're doing a lot of high-speed work. On the trip down to the Bol d'Or in September '82 it gave a very good account of itself on twisty French N-roads in company with all sorts of exotic beasts including a race-tuned Rickman Kawasaki, a Laverda 750SF and a Ducati 860GTS and after some enjoyable exploration along trails and dirt roads behind St Tropez I met up with a bunch of Crazy Scotsmen and two French girls on a CB900 and we thrashed our way to Grenoble together. One of the Scots had a Guzzi Le Mans and we had an outstanding ride down the spectacular Gorges du Verdon in the Alpes Maritimes. He'd stomp me on the long straights and stuff me on the brakes into the corners but I had the edge on corner speed and power-to-weight ratio coming out.

In October 1982 I entered my first road race on the XR at the MCC's Silverstone meeting having ridden there from London via a trail park in Durham. I

After a year of thrashing and crashing I started to have a few problems with the XR

had a Metzeler enduro tyre on the front wheel and a worn out Dunlop Red Arrow on the back. The scrutineers made me take my trusty screen off, but that was just as well as it turned out! I went pretty well in practice scraping the footrests through the corners and in the first race got into a dice with an old Velocette Thrupton which I could beat on the corners but which then came past me on the main straight. On the third lap I out-braked myself big-time on the entry into Woodcote corner and found myself sliding horizontally across the track with feet and hands still in place at the controls! I had a soft landing in the bales and the only damage was a bent handlebar; after I'd got that straightened out the scrutineers agreed to let me out again on condition that I 'cool it' a bit! Just goes to show the advantages of trail bikes when it comes to crashing though!

In 1983 I did the MCC's classic Exeter and Land's End Trials on the XR both of which I enjoyed immensely, although I remember falling asleep briefly towards the end of the Exeter and woke up just in time to avoid falling off! It was only when I had to borrow a friend's Suzuki SP370 to do the MCC Edinburgh Trial that I truly appreciated the XR's engine balancers - the SP shook so much that one of the engine bolts came right out! And why wasn't I using the XR? You may well ask....

Well, after a year of thrashing and crashing on and off road in which the XR never missed a beat, I started to have a few problems with about 12,000 miles on the clock. To cut a long story short, I had to have the bike re-bored and got carried away with hot cams and gas flowing. The re-bore was crap and I ended up a few months later having to have the whole engine re-built. The memory of the £500 bill (in 1984) is engraved on my brain; the

parts alone came to well over £300 and that was just for gaskets, cam-chain, followers, piston and rings and a second-hand crank and head. And the bike still looked like a heap afterwards!

All the extra tuning (perhaps combined with incorrect carburetion) seemed to provoke the XR into an unfortunate habit of kicking back viciously when it didn't feel like starting. I took the bike to watch the Le Touquet beach race in

February 1984 and I vividly recall the

bugger kicking back on me in a petrol station on the way to the ferry. It sprained my ankle so badly that I could hardly walk and my mate Rod-the-mad-Irishman had to start it for me for the rest of the journey.

I also remember having a memorable ride to Paris in the small hours with my French girlfriend suffering agonies on the pillion. I'd made up my own passenger footrests, but the seat certainly wasn't suitable for two-up touring! I think it was on that trip that I fitted a 'tablier' or 'apron' beloved of Parisian DRs. They're great for keeping you warm and dry in town, but literally flap themselves to destruction if

A few months later the engine cried 'enough' for the third time...

ferry. It sprained my ankle so badly that I could hardly walk and my mate Rod-the-mad-Irishman had to start it for me for the rest of the journey.



you use them on the open road, as I discovered.

A few months later the engine cried 'enough' for the third time, whereupon I swapped it for a pile of cash and a much healthier XL500 on which I had another whole series of adventures.

I came to the conclusion that tuning these engines for high-mileage road use was a bad idea, although people like Vernon Glashier (on a Hossack) and Robin Riley (on a Hagon) performed miracles on single cylinder racers fitted with these

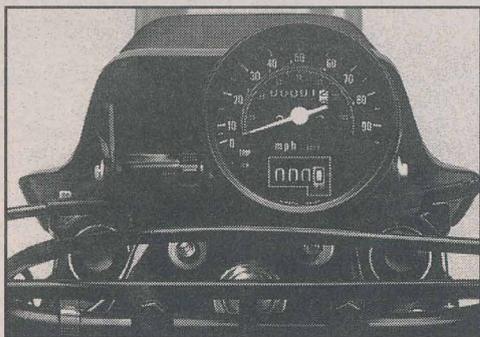
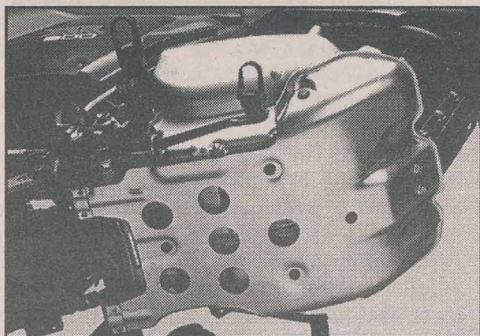
self-same motors. Their popularity in racing made secondhand engines expensive, but also meant that all sorts of tuning goodies were readily available.

Robin Riley regularly used to beat open class machinery on his and reckoned it was good for 130mph. He also used to run without a balancer chain to gain a couple of bhp, which is all right for a ten lap thrash around Brands but not really recommended on the road, as I discovered when my balancer chain broke on the way to Swindon one time. It didn't do any



XR500 designed as a lightweight enduro mount with limited roadgoing accessories. Puny six-volt headlight was not much use after dark

...One Careful Owner...



TOP: Sturdy alloy sump guard protects engine internals from knocks and bumps. These days most manufacturers consider them an unnecessary weight penalty
 ABOVE: Simple speedometer is clear and easy to read on the move

damage mind, I didn't even realise what had happened at first, I just wondered why the bike was suddenly vibrating so much more than usual.... When I got home I investigated the source of the vibration, and found the balancer chain lying in the bottom of the sump!

To sum up, I would recommend an unadulterated XR500 to anyone, but with the benefit of hindsight there are a few sensible precautions to take. Bearing in mind that the sump capacity was designed for the 26bhp XL250, regular changes (every 1500 miles) of good quality oil are a must - otherwise the cams will wear out the head and the followers will lose their hardening. Keep an eye on the balancer chain - it's quite easy to adjust if you follow the instructions in the Haynes manual - and an O-ring drive chain and a chain-oiler are recommended, as the combination of big single stomp and no cush-drive knocks hell out of a standard chain in no time. Also beware leaks from the head gasket - this can be avoided by opening up the bolt holes in the top engine 'hanger' plate, oh, and one final thing; don't get too carried away with wheelies - the first and only time that I've been right over backwards was on my XR!

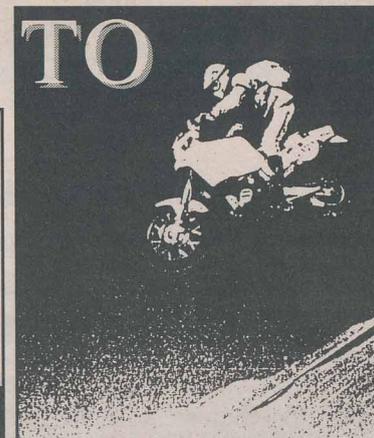
Honda XR500 Specifications

Engine	497cc, ohc, 4-valve, single
Bore & stroke	89x80mm
Compress ratio	8.6:1
Transmission	5-speed
Seat height	34.6 inches
Fuel capacity	2.6 gallons
Weight	269lbs

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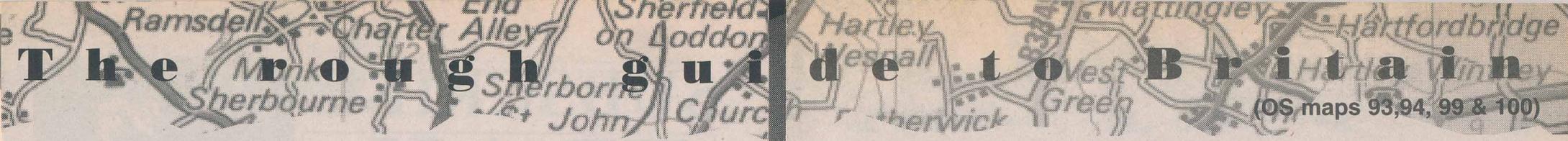
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...way up by a tarmac road. Ignore the left spur half way up as it's a bridleway, and instead continue across the tarmac and back on to Lund Road to its finish where it joins Blakey Road. Here, there's a hard choice; left takes you to the next trail, right takes you into Hutton-le-Hole and quite possibly the best ice cream shop anywhere in the North York Moors!

I'll presume you have foregone the ice cream (no chance - Ed), and instead are heading north along Blakey Ridge, which divides Farndale on your left from Rosedale on your right. After about two miles the remains of the old iron kilns can be seen on your right, sunk into the opposite side of Rosedale, with the line of the



The North Yorkshire Moors offers spectacular geography, living history and most of all unspoilt beauty. Leo Crone describes a trail ride through 'Gods own country'

Empty moorland, secluded valleys, forest, dale and high plateau. To describe the North York moors to a visitor is to describe the raw beauty of nature itself. History and geography come together here like nowhere else in Britain.

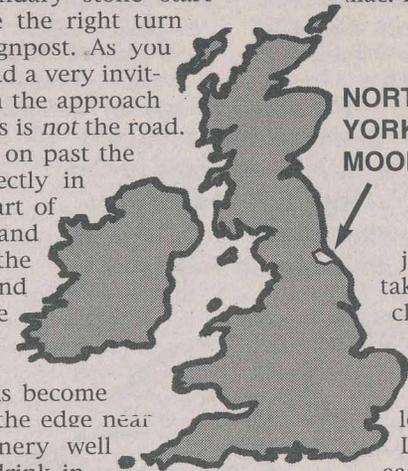
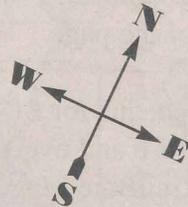
The North York Moors has a history of settlement that dates back to Neolithic times, though many of the place names have Viking origins. The Romans settled here, and their influence can be seen in the network of minor roads that criss-cross the moors. Few people live on the moors themselves, the main towns are all located at the edge of the uplands, each preserving its own robust and independent character.

The Ancient market town of Stokesley with its

wide high street lies just nine miles to the south of Middlesborough town centre. To begin this route you need to take the road out of Stokesley past the church towards the mini roundabout, taking the second exit over the bridge on the River Levin, and at the next roundabout follow the third exit signposted B1257 in the direction of Helmley.

Once in Great Broughton, watch out for the crossroads at which you need to turn left for Ingleby Greenhow. About two miles down this winding country lane take the right turn signposted Chope Gate (pronounced Chop Yat locally), and 500m further on turn left at the 'Unsuitable for Motors' sign (at 578,061).

The unsurfaced road looks a straight



TOP: Sturdy alloy sump guard protects engine internals from knocks and bumps. These days most manufacturers consider them an unnecessary weight penalty

ABOVE: Simple speedometer is clear and easy to read on the move

Honda XR500 Specifications

Engine	497cc, ohc, 4-valve, single
Bore & stroke	89x80mm
Compress ratio	8.6:1
Transmission	5-speed
Seat height	34.6 inches
Fuel capacity	2.6 gallons
Weight	269lbs

blast, but watchout because two hairpin bends await the throttle happy. Past the hairpins the lane drops down to a ford, and once through the ford, take care as you pass the Norman church of St Andrews on your left, and the entrance to the 16th Century Ingleby Manor.

The lane meets the road on a bend at which you should bear right and at the next T-junction turn right again. As you pass the village boundary stone start braking ready to take the right turn with the dead end signpost. As you continue down this road a very inviting lane bears right on the approach to Bar k Foot Farm. This is *not* the road. Instead, carry straight on past the farm to the gate directly in front of you at the start of the climb onto Rudland Rigg (593,061). Past the first gate, carry on and up Bank Foot to the next gate (on the left), after which the gradient steepens, the rocks become larger, the drop over the edge near vertical and the scenery well worth halting for to drink in some of the fabulous views. Take advantage of the break in the climb about half way up to admire the view from Turkey Nab. Looking north over the village of Battersby you can see the monument to Whitby's most famous son, Captain James Cook, which stands on top of Easby Moor.

Another 500m of loose stone sees the end of the climb, as Rudland Rigg flattens out with Ingleby Moor to the east, and Greenhow Botton to the west. Two miles from the top of the climb, the Rigg passes over Bloworth crossing - the route taken by Rosedale lead-mine railway, first used in 1861, and now a footpath. Over the length of Rudland Rigg, numerous tracks and paths cross at many points, but only two are road legal. These appear as a

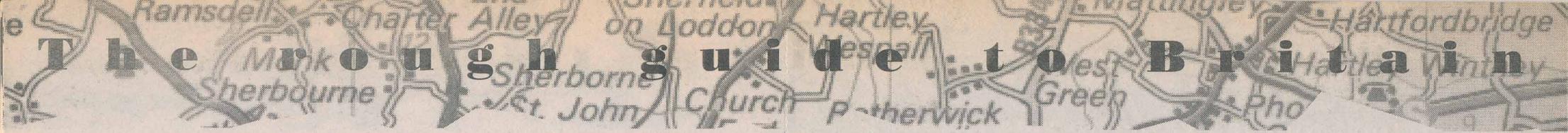
crossroads about two and a quarter miles from the old railway crossing.

The eastern lane, Monkett Bank, leads down to Farndale, a dale renowned for its fields of wild daffodils, a very old and friendly pub (the Faversham Arms), and quite possibly the hardest bog to traverse in the whole of the North York Moors.

Another two to three miles sees the end of Rudland Rigg and the start of tarmac. Bear left and you're now on the Bransdale road heading towards Gillamoor. If you're there at dawn or dusk, watch out for wild deer!

Where the road splits, take the left fork towards Gillamoor (which is left at the T-junction), and at the church, take the right turn after the churchyard wall, down to, and over Lowna Bridge. As the road starts to climb and bear right, look to your left for a stone track called Lund Road. This is a nice easy climb which is bisected about two-thirds of the way up by a tarmac road. Ignore the left spur half way up as it's a bridleway, and instead continue across the tarmac and back on to Lund Road to its finish where it joins Blakey Road. Here, there's a hard choice; left takes you to the next trail, right takes you into Hutton-le-Hole and quite possibly the best ice cream shop anywhere in the North York Moors!

I'll presume you have foregone the ice cream (no chance - Ed), and instead are heading north along Blakey Ridge, which divides Farndale on your left from Rosedale on your right. After about two miles the remains of the old iron kilns can be seen on your right, sunk into the opposite side of Rosedale, with the line of the



railway clearly visible as it snakes its way from them around Rosedale Head.

It's at the head of Rosedale that you take the right turn signposted, strangely enough, Rosedale. If you come to a left turn signed Westerdale you've missed it which is quite easy on Blakey road with its wide, sweeping bends, long open straights and lack of traffic. One mile after the turn, look out for a left for Danby and the implausibly named Little Fryup dale. This lane which is a favourite of mine,

takes you over Danby High Moor, where if its a clear day you can see all the way down to Danby dale and Fryup dale - if it's misty, you're lucky if you can see your front mudguard!

Dropping into Little Fryup dale you arrive at a large road junction where you turn right. The road drops into a little glade, bear left up the hill, but not too fast as your next right turn signposted Street is at the top of the hill.

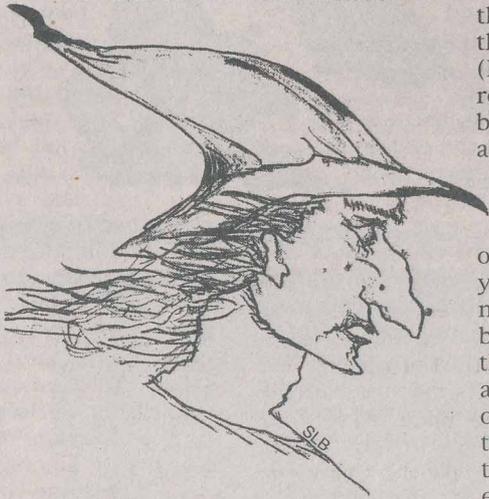
Now you descend into Fryup Dale and the road passes over a bridge and through the small hamlet of Street. At the first junction out of Street bear right, and at the second, turn left and start the climb out of Great Fryup Dale, but at the top take a break and sneak a look behind you at the magnificent view below.

Back on the bike the next lane (at

743,047), should be self evident. Continue over the road and onto unclassified country road '33G' leading onto Glaisdale Rigg, and where the tracks meet, bear left towards Glaisdale. Along its length is the occasional sign stating 'No Motorcycles'. These are for the benefit of a well known local motorcycle 'personality' who had taken to riding around the surrounding moor on an unsilenced motocrosser!

The next gate divides the moor from Glaisdale village, your next port of call. At the crossroads go

The small village of Commondale is reputed to have been home to Old Mally, one of the many witches said to have lived in the North York Moors



straight on to a delightful cobbled ford which not surprisingly can be a little slippery, but even so don't use the old bridge, this being one of three which cross the Esk in Glaisdale, the oldest of the three (Beggars Bridge) reputed to have been built in 1619 located at the other end of the village.

Hopefully you will emerge out of the ford with only your tyres wet, and now keep the hedged bank on your right as the lane swings right and starts to climb out of Glaisdale over the old railway bridge through a gate situated at the climb's steepest point (as

usual) and into a large farm yard. The road bears left through Park House Farm to meet blessed tarmac on the opposite side of the gate exiting the yard. Rake Lane is typical of roads in this area - nar-

row, undulating and with blind bends and crests, so take care as the local hunt has been encountered on this road as Oscar Wilde put it 'the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable.'

At the T-junction, turn right up the bank ignoring the left turn for Danby but keeping an eye on the left verge for the start of Lealholm Rigg (773,088). At its start there are traces of tarmac before it resumes its natural state of stone and pot-holes. At the western end of Lealholm Rigg (736,093) stands Danby Beacon, where as a rule there are marvellous views of the north coast and three dales. Unfortunately on my last ride there I could just about make out Danby beacon 15m in front of me. Be warned the weather in this part of the country can be very unpredictable.

After admiring the view for a while (weather permitting) take the road on the right which lacks white lines but makes up for it with white sheep. It ends at the Danby Loftus road, and here you should turn right. Just over half a mile from the junction the road goes round a 90 degree bend to the right while the next lane goes 90 degrees left. A word of warning for those of you riding these trails for the first time. Commondale (aka Jobe Cross) is a difficult lane thanks to extensive 4WD misuse leaving it deeply rutted for about 500m. To avoid it, instead of turning left onto it you stick to the tarmac road and at the junction with the main Whitby to Scarborough road (A171) turn left again. Three miles further on take the next turning signposted Castleton, and two miles down this road the track comes to a cross-roads. Here you turn right, but if you've made it along the green lane then you go straight on towards Commondale village.

This small village is reputed to have been home to Old Mally, one of the many

witches said to have lived in the North York Moors during the 18th and 19th Centuries. Her trade mark was drinking milk straight from the cow's udder while in the guise of a large hare!

Once through the village, carry on to the next cross roads (at 630,100), where you turn right onto Perry Cross Rigg over the cattle grid on Brown Hill from which Lonsdale Plantation can be seen by the roadside on your left. Unclassified country road TK9G runs down the moor-side edge of the plantation boundary fence to a gate between the banked moor-side and an old stone wall. Go past the line of houses called New Row, over the unmanned railway crossing (take care), and on to the T-junction. Turn right and this road passes through Kildale which is mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086.

Staying on this road eventually brings you to the A173 so take a left, then take the third exit at the roundabout. If things start to look familiar, it's because you're now back in Stockesley, but before you look around for a pub with a log fire and a decent bar snacks menu there's one last lane to try.

Go over the bridge (over the River Levin again), and take the left turn before the garage which leads to a ford. Watch out for the little step near the opposite bank, and once through bear right then right again over the large bridge which brings you finally back into Stockesley town centre.

NB If you are trying these lanes for the first time on your own, tell someone the route you're taking, and what time you're expected back, since there are a number of places where if you have a heavy fall you may not be found 'till the following day. Good luck and good riding.

Cagiva's 750 Elefant blends an intoxicating cocktail of lazy touring potential and easy go-anywhere ability with 'don't mess with me' type styling. Now it's easier to ride thanks to a redesigned saddle. TrailBike Magazine's Si Melber was the first to try it out

LOW

JOB

CAGIVA ELEFANT 750

September may seem a strange time to be introducing the latest 1995 version of the Cagiva Elefant, especially if, like me, you remember sitting on one at the NEC bike show way back in October last year. But it's a measure of the demand for all Italian bikes, and not just in the UK either, that has seen the Cagiva factory fall seriously behind with its scheduling and supply of bikes to customers world wide.

Despite essentially superficial changes, the new Elefant has been eagerly awaited by customers up and down the country, eager to try out its more user friendly stance. The biggest difference of course is the reduction in seat height by 2.5 inches (down to a more manageable 32.9 inches - or 835mm if you prefer), allowed by the fitment of a new slightly broader, and much lower saddle which now wraps itself around either side of the big plastic gas tank, TDM-style. Viewed from the rear-three-quarters, it gives the bike a new appearance, accentuating the height of the petrol tank and chrome handlebars, and the swoop of the cut down seat.

And though not everyone appears to like the look of the new perch with its blotchy, rag-rolled colouring, all agree reducing its height is a thoroughly sensible mod.

Up till now the Elefant has really appealed to the sort of die-hard enthusiast that like their trailbikes BIG with a capital 'F'. With its meaty motor, an all up weight heavier than a nightclub full of bouncers, not to mention a seat height tall

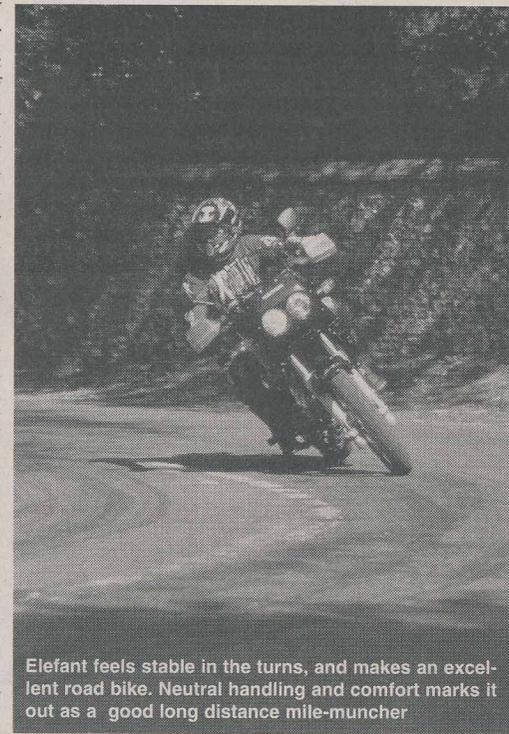
enough to necessitate using an oxygen mask, they're not for the faint hearted. Not that shorter riders are unable to cope with the Elefant's gargantuan proportions, it's just that certain manoeuvres like for instance halting on a downhill junction, are enough to make your eyes water. For my wife who measures a slightly above average 5'6", that's meant that until now she's been unable or unwilling to try out arguably Cagiva's nicest bike. But with the introduction of the new 'Lowrider' '95 model, all that has changed. What to me, has just meant easier paddling around on

the trail, to her has opened up a new avenue of motorcycling, and I suspect there are many like her.

Aside from the new seat, changes to the '95 model are distinctly minimal. They include a larger, more efficient oil cooler, an anodised, (now charcoal coloured) ally sump guard (and correspondingly coloured hand guards), a low fuel level warning lamp (in place of the sidestand warning lamp), and a general tidy up of some of the wiring and block connectors which are now frame mounted and

should help improve electrical reliability.

In most other respects of course the Elefant remains the same as it's always been: that is a sturdily built trailie powered by Ducati's enigmatic, belt driven, desmodromic, air-cooled, sohc Vee-twin. In this guise, normally aspirated and displacing a capacity of 748cc from a bore and stroke of 88x61.5mm. Cagiva claim a power output of 60-odd horsepower



Elefant feels stable in the turns, and makes an excellent road bike. Neutral handling and comfort marks it out as a good long distance mile-muncher

LOW JOB

which seems a little optimistic given the fact that there's a catalytic converter built into the huge silencer transforming the engine note from a typical Ducati roar to the sort of sound you get after consuming five pints of real ale, a jar of pickled onions and a curry.

To ride it though is to discover that the change in seat height has meant more than not having to ride in your tallest Cuban heels. For a start despite the lower saddle, the footpegs and bar positioning has remained unchanged, which gives the new Elephant a rather unusual riding position rather akin to the posture adopted by the bike-mounted Peelers: ie a straight back and an upright stance. To me it feels a little bit like the BMW F650 riding position

with your knees bent and the handlebars high, and you feel like you're sitting in the machine rather than on it. Of course this won't be to everyone's liking. If you're over six-feet tall and have no problem with the original seat height you're hardly going to find the new more cramped riding position an improvement. Though there is however, a beneficial effect to all this, since lowering the rider's weight has meant a corresponding lowering of the C of G, with the consequence that the Elephant turns a little easier, and feels less top heavy on the road.

Tackling a series of bends the Elephant still requires a fair degree of rider input, and once cranked over, a sway of the hips to bring it upright again - though it's a fairly effortless procedure once you get into the swing of things. The steering is positive and though not particularly quick, the trade off is stability in the turns, the Elephant refusing to be deflected off line even on the bumpiest of corners. Much of this can be put down to the solid chassis and conservative steering geome-

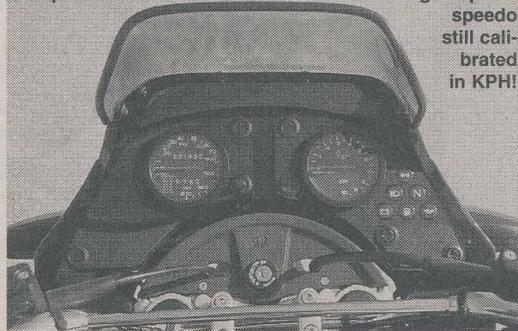
try, since the suspension on the test bike left a bit to be desired. The unadjustable 45mm Marzocchi forks which have seen service on the Elephant for a number of years, felt in this instance to be too harsh, giving an uncharacteristically choppy ride on the road. The rear suspension was if anything, the opposite, with a very soft ride, a squeaky shock absorber, and some amazing graunching sounds emanating from the area of the rear wheel when riding two up, even after adjusting the shock to a firmer setting.

Turning off the tarmac and onto the chalky byways that characterise this part of Wiltshire, the Elephant felt quite composed, with the front suspension soaking up the dips and ruts that pockmark the surface of the flinty trails, and the rear tracking smoothly in its wake. Of course there's no getting away from the bike's sheer bulk, any trailie that weighs 188kg before you fill up its mammoth fuel tank is going to be a bit of a handful on the dirt (though it's

worth bearing in mind, it's still ten percent lighter than Honda's bulky Africa Twin)! Nevertheless the Elephant felt sure of foot on the dusty trails, powering up the loose chalk climbs, and scabbling over obstacles in its way. A small river crossing nearly proved to be its undoing though when the solid-looking river bed turned out to be nothing of the sort, allowing the Elephant to dig its way in up to its axles. It's at times like this that you appreciate the lower seat height which allows you to paddle the bike easily, and the benefit of a good pair of waterproof boots.

If there's one thing that comes across from riding the Elephant off road, albeit in predominantly dry and dusty conditions, it's that it truly is designed to be a dual purpose machine. Okay it's heavy and there's a lot of weight over the front

Simple dashboard now has a low fuel warning lamp but

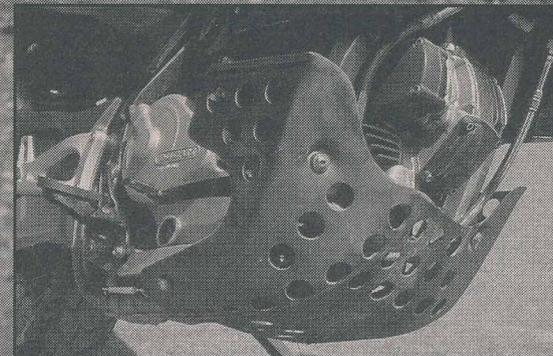


speedo still calibrated in KPH!

speedo still calibrated in KPH! Of course there's no getting away from the bike's sheer bulk, any trailie that weighs 188kg before you fill up its mammoth fuel tank is going to be a bit of a handful on the dirt (though it's



ABOVE: Elephant can be fun in the dry
BELOW: Air-cooled Ducati motor sits behind black-anodised alloy bash-plate. Engine responds best to revving but can be noisy.
RIGHT: Combined rack and grabrail is sturdy if small



LOW JOB

wheel, but the suspension copes really well with the rough. The bashplate is solid and can handle the knocks, and the rest of the components feel tough enough to withstand the bike regularly turning its

wheels off tarmac.

But the reality of the situation is that most will rarely venture from the blacktop, spending the majority of their lives as nothing more than butch roadbikes.

Certainly the Elefant can play that role well enough. Our one came in a lustrous metallic blue paintscheme, the twin headlights give a good spread of light in the dark and the engine is docile enough to tick over from cold.

As an A-B machine the Elefant is comfy, easy to ride and as friendly as a big St Bernard dog. And, as long as you're not in a hurry, plenty fast enough for most situations. It will top 110mph, and feels quick provided you're prepared to rev it; for despite pulling from as little as 2,500 revs it really begins to get a move on between 5-8,000 rpm when power comes on strongly.

What it does lack however is a sixth ratio in its positive shifting gearbox. It seems odd that the 900 version with its torquier engine should get six-speeds, whereas the 750 has to make do with just five. At motorway cruising speeds you're always looking for an extra cog to reduce the fuel consumption and the strain on the engine. Not only that but a sixth gear would go some of the way to alleviate a lot of the

mechanical noise that comes up from the Ducati motor beating away beneath you. Not noted for being the quietest of units, this one seemed particularly noisy, clattering and thrumming whenever the throttle was opened. The brakes too could be noisy, particularly the single front 296mm disc which required a good squeeze to elicit any retardation at all and squealed in protest every time it was operated. The spongy lever which could be pulled right back to the bars didn't really invoke a lot of confidence either while the rear brake was the opposite, locking up at the slightest provocation.

As a tourer, the 750 Elefant excels. The fairing works well (better than before as a consequence of the lower seating position), and the bike's whole set-up lends itself to covering large distances comfortably. For solo use there's plenty of room behind you on that big sculpted saddle for a backpack or other bag, and two-up the seat is both roomy and comfortable. Behind that there's a small rack-cum-grabrail which though not very large is strong enough to support a heavy pack, and larger racks are available as aftermarket accessories. The footpegs have removeable rubber covers which help minimise the effects of the Vee-twin engine - though vibes from the Ducati motor never feel unpleasant. In front of you is a standard range of dials and warning lamps (though there's no clock like there is on the 900), and the trip reset is still too small and needlessly fiddly. At least with a 5.3 gallon tank and generous fuel consumption up in the mid-40s, the fuel stops should be at least 200 miles apart. Further if you're careful.

For an outlay of £5,850 (or £6,550 for the 900), the Elefant seems pretty good value, bearing in mind it comes with a two year warranty and it's cheaper than both the SuperTenere and the Africa Twin. It's a roadbike, trailie and tourer all rolled into one. It's comfortable, economical and easy to ride, and with its new lower seat height should now be more accessible to a larger number of people.

Given the existing problems with sup-

ply and demand, it makes you wonder whether Cagiva wouldn't have been better off raising the seat height by a few inches!

CAGIVA E750

Price: £5850

Engine: Air-cooled, 748cc, sohc, Desmodromic, V-twin, Ducati

Transmission: 5-speed gearbox, chain final drive

Suspension: 45mm Marzocchi forks, Boge adjustable shock absorber

Brakes: 296mm front disc with 2-piston Nissin caliper, 240mm rear disc with 2-piston Brembo caliper

Weight: 188kg, 414lbs

Seat height: 835mm, 32.9"

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the TRAILBIKE GUIDE

We don't claim this to be the definitive guide to all the trailbikes ever made, merely the sum total of our collective knowledge, trawled from the depths of dim and distant memories and assembled in some sort of order that you may find useful. What we do know is that no-one produces a guide to trail bikes that is as comprehensive as this, and that if you think there are revisions we should make, bikes that need adding to the list or merely things we've got wrong please feel free to write them down on a scrap of paper and stick it up your nose. Thank you.

APRILIA

Italian concern assembling rather than actually manufacturing bikes. In their short history they've enjoyed much competition success, and the products are generally well made, up to the minute and above all stylish.

RX125: w/c, 2-str, single. Superb, modern trailbike in both learner legal and full power form. Peaky and powerful engine with great suspension, and massive amounts of pose. Useful off-road. *Verdict:* A modern Italian DT.

Tuareg 50/125: w/c, 2-str, single. Smart little trailbike with Paris-Dakar styling cues designed to encounter nothing more hostile than Rome's potholed streets.

Tuareg 125 Rally: w/c, 2-str, single. Outrageously good looking Paris-Dakar styled trailie with a high spec inc USD forks, fully adjustable suspension etc.

High seat height more than made up for by poseability.

Pegaso 125: 242lbs/110kg, 124cc, w/c, 2-str, single with a claimed 31bhp.

T u a r e g

600/650: a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered single, e/s. Paris-Dakar lookalike with a high specification (USD forks etc), and flashy paintjob. Reasonably light and not overly tall for this type of bike, nice machine if you can find one. *Verdict:*

Posing tackle that works.

Pegaso 650: 1992-on, 348lbs/157kg, w/c, dohc, 4-str, e/s single, with a claimed 50bhp. Stylish and quick trailie using poky 5-valve Rotax engine, good for about 110mph with cornering to match. Lighter than the BMW F650 and the Pegaso's twin exhaust is much better tucked in, but it has a much higher, less comfortable seat (36 inches) and fewer layers of paint. 19 inch front wheel limits tyre choice, and beware iffy sidestand, cunningly hidden fuel tap and small reserve. Capable big trailie both on and off the road and good value. *Verdict:* Flying horse, flies high.

ARMSTRONG

Grew out of Jeff Clews' CCM company of Bolton and CanAm/Bombardier bikes for the army. (Bombardier were originally a French Canadian company that manufactured snowmobile engines - they are now a massive worldwide engineering company that owns Rotax, among others).

250: a/c, 2-str, singles (Bombardier engines).

500: a/c 4-str, singles (Rotax engines) with left hand kick starts.

CCM: A few enduro bikes based on the moto-crossers).

NB: Armstrong sold out to Harley Davidson who now build 350cc electric start versions of the old 500s for the army.

ATK: a/c 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered singles. US-made, high quality motocrossers with unique engine-sprocket mounted rear brake on some models. Any genuine trailies?

BARIGO: a/c, 4-str, sohc, Rotax-powered



TRAILBIKE GUIDE

singles. French-made range of specialist on/off road bikes built by Patrick Barigault. They specialise in supermotard bikes and desert racers, both of which have had some competition success, though they also do a trail/enduro bike. The same basic rotax mill that in MZ guise churns out 32bhp produces a claimed 60bhp when tuned to Barigo's specification... but they say it's reliable. *Verdict: Gallic charm.*

BMW

Traditional air-cooled, pushrod boxer flat twins. Some rare collectibles: early pre-G/S ISDT boxers which weigh only 320lbs! Genuine Paris-Dakar machines. Specialist builders: Schek and HPN. UK expert: Jon Watson-Miller at Bracken motorcycles in South East London (0171-231-9438).

R80G/S: 374lbs, a/c, 4-str, 797cc, twin. One of the first mega-trailies. Launched in 1981, Monolever rear end, kick and optional electric start. Special big-bore versions of which took Hubert Auriol and Gaston Rahier to four Paris-Dakar wins. Original 'Paris-Dakar' version of G/S was just the standard model with a big tank and bore no relation to the real desert racers, which were built specially by Herbert Schek. The most trailable of all the Beemers distinguishable by its high front mudguard and simple instruments. *Verdict: The one to go for.*

R100G/S: 1988-on, 220kg/484lbs, a/c,

4-str, twin, e/s. More powerful 60bhp engine complete with double-jointed drive shaft (Paralever) and much improved

suspension front and rear. Colours were white/blue and black/yellow (the wonderful 'bumble-bee') with mini-fairing. One of the most versatile motorcycles on the planet with neat panniers, clock and heated handlebars all available from the BMW catalogue. Superb go-anywhere tourer with surprising off-road-ability but a bit thirsty on the motorway

(35mpg). *Verdict: A two-wheeled Land Rover.*

R100GS: a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. Revised in 1991 with proper fairing and more garish paint job. Final revision for UK in 1993 with 'P-D' version when humungous plastic tank (already available on the continent) finally became legal, also sported a set of external fairing crash bars. Single-seat with extra large rack available as option. Last officially imported in 1994. *Verdict: Big and butch.*

R80GS: a/c, 4-str, twin, e/s. Small bore version of the above with same dimensions and 50bhp.

R1100GS: 1994-on. 209kg/461lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, 8-valve, 1086cc, twin, e/s, 5-speed, 80bhp. Mega-Monster trailie based around the brand new four-valve boxer engine mated to Telelever chassis. Huge stomp plus ABS which can be turned off if desired. Superb road bike but not nearly as off-roadable as the old boxers. Recall in '94 for problems with Telelever ball joints. *Verdict: The first trailie superbike.*

F650 'Funduro': w/c, 4-str, dohc, 652cc, single, e/s, 48 bhp (claimed). Aprilia-built, Rotax-engined trail bike launched in 1993 to bring BMWs to the masses. Based on Aprilia's Pegaso, but with four valves instead of five, more expensive, heavier and more 'roadified', with larger tank, stainless exhaust and much lower seat, although still eminently trail-able. Great fun to ride on or off road, and surprisingly quick - these babies will make a genuine 46bhp at the rear wheel. Beware clunky gearboxes, 19in front wheel limits tyre choice. Sold like hot cakes thanks to legendary BMW build quality. *Verdict: Solid and sensible.*

CAGIVA

Italian manufacturer that now owns Ducati, Husqvarna and Morini.

W4: w/c, 2-str, 50/80cc, single, 6-speed gearbox trail moped. Looks like a pukka enduro tool but restricted model wouldn't pull the skin off a rice pudding. 80cc version much better bet.

Super City: 125kg/276lbs, w/c, 2-str, 124cc single, e/s, 7-speed, 34bhp. Outrageously styled super-moto available in learner legal and unrestricted flavours. Even the full power model is hard work

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due to peaky and raucous engine inherited from the Mito sports bike. Fast and handles well with sticky road tyres. Could be fun for humiliating bigger bikes on the road but otherwise pretty pointless. Makes a TDR feel civilised. Off road? Only for super-moto racing, for which it had its own class in France. *Verdict: Teenage kicks.*

WMX500DE: 1986-88, w/c, 2-str, single. Strange specialist desert racer with large tank, limited lock and high quality components. Very few around.

W8: 264lbs, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single, 6-speed, 31hp. Excellent trailbike version of above but with a couple of ponies less and no upside down forks. very few sold in UK.

T4: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 450cc, single. A few imported to UK in 1989 by Moto Vecchia. Fore-runner to W12 and W16. Plastic tank holds 4 gals. e/s option as well as kick-starter. Alloy rims and swing arm. Poxy rose joints on gearchange broke early on. **W12:** a/c, 4-str, sohc, 350cc, 4-valve, single, e/s 6-speed, 25bhp. Simple, no frills trailbike (as used by Italian army), a bit like an Italian XT350 but not as tough. Very few were sold in UK. *Verdict: Something different.*

W16: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 601cc, 4-valve, single, e/s, 34bhp. Tasty looking, but a little underpowered at only 34bhp for new learner laws. Looks similar to Yam XT600E but lighter, lower and more colourful - and less robust off-road.

Elefant: mid-eighties. o-a/c, 4str, desmo, V-twin. Engine originally derived from Ducati Pantah. Started as 650cc in mid-eighties, grew to 750cc by 1988, though there was a smaller 350cc version available to suit learner laws in other countries.

Elefant 350: o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s. Middleweight version of the lovely 750, with much less power but almost the same weight. Not many imported for the simple reason that no-one really wanted one. *Verdict: Curiosity value only.*

Elefant 750: 1988-1990. 188kg/414lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s. Distinctive looking big trailie with white/red/blue/blue paintwork, angular styling and gold anodised rims (21 inch F, 17 inch R). 750 motor was nice, but suf-



fered from poor carburetion at bottom end thanks to Bing carbs. Nimble handling and good off road ability.

Elefant 750/900 (Second generation): o-a/c, 4-str, desmo, V-twin, e/s, 60bhp/68bhp (claimed). Second generation Elefants from 1991-ish are bigger, and slightly heavier than their predecessors. Lovely torquey engines are based on the Ducati 750 and 900SS. 1991 versions (distinguishable by Lucky Explorer paintscheme), were higher spec than later ones, with Ohlins suspension and electronic fuel injection. Although they have a high CofG the new generation Elefants make a great touring bike for the road, but they're a bit monstrous off-road - more like a Super Tenere than the original Transalp-sized 750s. *Verdict: For those who like to be seen and heard.*

ENFIELD INDIA

Bullet trail: a/c, 4-str, ohv, single. Indian made version of the venerable Royal Hen, now with 12v electrics and sprung saddle option. *Verdict: Strictly for masochists everywhere.*

GILERA

Now defunct part of the Piaggio group with legendary road-racing history. **50/125:** a/c, 2-str,



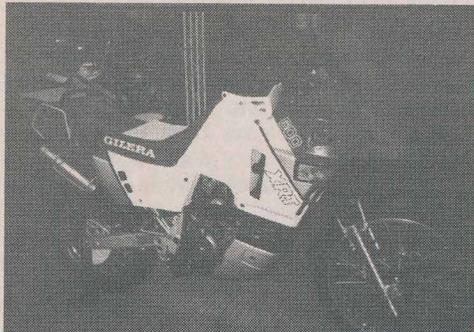
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single. Learner bikes - not officially imported.

RC 600: w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s. Nice-looking P-D styled trailie with unimpeachable Paris-Dakar winning pedigree. Shares engine with Northwest. Quite a few still for sale brand new from selected Italian specialists. Good value at approx £3500. Watch out for fragile plastic.

Nordwest: 140kg/308lbs, w/c, 4-str, 558cc, single, e/s. Supermoto version of the RC 600 with 17 inch cast alloy wheels, USD forks, and serious brakes. Superb 'street scrambler' with drop-dead looks, but not as powerful as the Pegaso or F650, and engine can be vibey. Still a few new ones around. *Verdict: Wonderful style.*

XRT600: w/c, 4str, 558cc, single, e/s.



Clumsily styled, Paris-Dakar influenced big trailie that uses the stock Gilera lump in yet another manifestation. Big, heavy-ish and extremely rare in the UK. *Verdict: Ugly duckling.*

HARLEY DAVIDSON

Not the V-twins, but a mish-mash of European-made stuff with the H-D badge.

H-D 90: a/c, 2-str, 90cc, single. Aermacchi-made 1970s mini-trail funbike. Very rare these days. passable off road. CCM sold the rights to the Armstrong army bikes to H-D circa 1992, and H-D duly won the British army contract. Now electric start (after heavy squaddie casualties with the old left-side kick-starts) and reportedly more robust but down-sized from 500 to 350cc.

HONDA

XL = a/c, 4-str, trail.

XR = a/c, 4-str, enduro.

MTX = a & w/c, 2-str, trail.

Basic beginners' bikes: XL100S, XL125S, XL185S. 1970s-80s. All use basically the same sohc air-cooled engine in twin-shock chassis (but with different gearboxes). Great bread-and-butter trail bikes, but getting a little long in the tooth nowadays. As with all small Hondas, frequent oil changes are the key to a long, trouble-free life.

Cub 90: Whacky off-road 'scooter' for whacky off road riders, different, but lacking any lights or credibility! *Verdict: For planet-e.*

MT50: a/c, 2-str, single. Many a 16 year-old's first bike. Unburstable moped-legal trail bike. Staple fare for trail parks. *Verdict: Fun in a small package.*

MTX 125: 227lb/103kg, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Learner-legal monoshock trail bike with an unfortunate propensity for brewing up in serious off-roadery. No longer imported. Definitely not as robust as the XLs.

MTX200: w/c, 2-str, 198cc, single. Bigger brother of 125, but never quite lived up to expectations. Quite rare and prone to boiling up - no cooling fan. Be very careful replacing ceramic seal on the water pump. Questionable reliability especially with old ones. *Verdict: Good for making tea.*

CL250S: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Bit of an oddity sold to farmers in the early Eighties, for on and off road work. Unusual in that it featured a 5-speed gearbox with a range of both high and low options. More roadified than most trailies with low saddle and front mudguard, and chromed (twin) shocks. boxy styling and front and rear drum brakes makes it rare but not highly desirable. *Verdict: Conversation stopper only.*

TLR200: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 199cc, single. Pukka outdated trials machine with road legal ability. Ideal for really snotty green lanes and long distance trials events, but not as comfy as some trail bikes and not really built for speed. Still available new as personal imports at fairly attractive prices.

XL100: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 99cc, single, 6-speed. very basic, cheap to insure learner trailie. Later versions were smaller all round with more basic instruments. *Verdict: Good starter machine.*

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XL125: 231lbs, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Basic, twin-shock learner bike used by legions of beginners in the 70s & 80s. Usually badly treated, unusually they still survive.

XL125R: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Monoshock version of above, analagous to 250R and 500R. Later, Italian-built monoshock Dakar version with big tank and electric start can be found as grey import.

XL185: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 185cc, single, 5-speed. One of the definitive original green laners. Twin shock version only, but can be upgraded with later 125R parts, including chassis!

XL250: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Started life way back in the 1970s with the Motorsport, a basic twin-shock trail bike not unlike Yam's XT500. *Verdict: Capable plodder.*

XL250S: 1978-on, 261lbs, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 248cc, single. Which sported a four-valve, twin-port head pumping out all of 26bhp, but still with 6-volt electrics at first; twin shocks and crappy SLS front and rear brakes and an unusual 23 inch front wheel, giving little tyre choice. Later versions adopted the Honda Pro-Link rear end and 12-volt electrics. Good all rounder, but better on the road than off it. Comfy saddle and decent build quality make this a good secondhand buy if you can find one. Because this was the bike from which the legendary RS250 despatcher's tool was derived it means you can bolt the complete 12-volt RS250 flywheel, generator and engine cover straight on to any of the 6-volt XL or XR 250s and 500s. The accelerator-pumped carb of the RS will also give a useful power increase to the 250.

XL500S: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Practically identical to the XL250 apart from the bigger cylinder and head and a longer frame although it is possible to squeeze the bigger engine into a 250 chassis. Only 32bhp, but loads more stomp and the same crappy front brake - green racing linings help a bit, but beware low-speed lock-ups! Fortunately the 23 inch wheels can be re-laced with 21inch rims which actually improves the handling and provides a vast increase in tyre choice!

Beware starting problems and low revs misfire caused by furring of the alloy earthing plate - solution is to take a lead direct from engine to coil.

XL250R/500R: 1984-on, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The cylinder heads were now blessed with Radial Four Valve Combustion (RFVC), vastly superior Pro-Link mono-shock suspension, beefier forks and much better TLS front brake in a 21 inch wheel, and 12-volt electrics - a much better bet all round than the 'S' models if you can afford them. Only snag with the TLS front brake is that it will not stop you from rolling back on a hill! The CR motocrosser front end will fit straight into the XL headstock so long as you use the whole assembly. Beware top end seepage of oil between head and barrel. The XL250R finally lost its metal tank and was developed into the XR version. Early XL500 engines were very popular in single cylinder road racing, so second hand spares are hard to come by. Frequent oil changes are essential to avoid the dreaded knackered head syndrome caused by the camshaft running direct in it although bearing conversions are available. Some 250s suffered from dodgy gearboxes and frequent top end problems. *Verdict: Cheaper than an XR.*

XL350/400: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Grey import originally built for French and Japanese markets - a big-bore version of the 250 rather than a sleeved down 500. *Verdict: Very rare.*

XL600R a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Larger version of 500R later swapped its drum front brake for a disc.

XL600LM: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Paris-Dakar version of above with big tank, flashy twin headlights, red painted engine, tubeless gold spoked rims and glory-be, electric start. Unfortunately it didn't go as well as it looked - one of the magazines put one on a dyno at the time and got only 26bhp at the rear wheel. *Verdict: Nicely individual.*

Honda XRs: Most not officially designed for road use (except for the XR-Ls), but virtually all have been registered for the road by owners, with varying degrees of legality.

XR75/80: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small

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wheel mini-bike with poky engine for teenagers, but we know of at least one street-legalised one used as a fun green-laner after modification with big wheels.

XR100: 68kg, a/c, 4-str, sohc, 99cc, single, 6-speed. Mini off roader based on XL100 engine but with 19 inch front and 16 inch rear wheels. Great, fun bike on which to learn basics. World champion road racer Kenny Roberts uses them to teach sliding techniques to GP hopefuls.

XR200: a/c, 4-str, sohc, single, 5-speed. Early twin shock bikes (originally based on the XL185) made brilliant green laners. Still fairly popular though later mono-shock versions are better and more plentiful. Drum bakes let it down though some late Japanese spec models come with discs. Light enough to pick up if need be. *Verdict: Still a great trail bike.*

XR250(R): a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Based on both XL250S and 250R with identical frames but more suspension travel, disc front brake and slightly hotter cam giving small power increase. Early monoshock with twin carbs could be a sod to start when hot - go for the later single-carb model. The XR250 makes a very good off-road all-rounder - light weight and adequate power (30bhp claimed) makes it perfect for trail riders and clubman

enduro riders alike, and tolerable on the road. All Honda 250s need to be revved hard if you want to get a move on. New ones come with electric start and there's now a Baja version available with huge twin headlamps, among other detail changes. *Verdict: Popular and versatile trailie.*

XR250L: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Grey import with road-legal lights, speedo and indicators. Slightly heavier than R.

XR350: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Mid Eighties (monoshock) version, only imported for a very short time and now rare in UK. Much the same as the 250 but with extra poke and unfortunately extra



weight.

XR500: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. bigger version of XR250, as used by Eddie Kidd for wheelies. Early version was developed into the XR550RR on which Cyril Neveu won the 1982 Paris-Dakar rally.

XR600: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Several versions since 1984, mostly imported from USA until Honda UK started importing in 1994. Early versions easy to tell by drum rear brake and twin carbs. All are great off roaders, with pukka suspension and lightweight chassis. Not much fun on the road because of the vibes, lack of creature comforts, and twitchy handling. And some can be real pigs to start. Often the bike of choice for overlanders but beware, rear subframe is not built to take a lot of weight. Honda UK have not homologated the latest continental-spec version even though it comes with proper speedo and head and tail lights (but no indicators) so they're still not officially road legal and sold by Honda dealers 'for off-road use only' - but it's easy to road-register as an individual so can still be ridden away from the shop. Great wheelie-pulling ability, and very light compared to something like an XT600. Has become the privateer's desert rally bike by which all others are judged - light, relatively simple and very robust. The best noise/power compromise is to keep the main body of the original baffle, but take out the inner core - this looks and sounds 'kosher' but liberates most of the power. Official HRC hop-up kits with big bore (630cc) and hot cam are available but not recommended for off-road use or long-distance reliability. Tons of other tuning parts available. *Verdict: Definitive 'pukka' big banger.*

XR650L: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 644cc, single, e/s. Grey imported, fully street legal version of the XR600 using electric start Dominator engine and some of the roadgoing niceties. Slight weight penalty, but a real beauty if you can find one. Balancer shaft makes this a much nicer animal on the road, and not much worse off it. *Verdict: Worth searching out.*

NX125: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 123cc, single, 6-speed. Mini-mini Dominator for continental learner market, based on the XL125

motor. Popular commuter in France, not seen much over here.

NX250/350: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Mini-Dominator, much smaller and lighter than big brother and surprisingly quick (85mph) thanks to a relatively highly tuned water-cooled engine. Ideal for the vertically challenged and for doubling up as an economical commuter. 350cc (Sahara) version built in Brazil for South American market.

AX1: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Japanese home market version of the NX250, built for the street only, with cast wheels and twin tail lights.

NX650P Dominator: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 644cc, single, e/s. The definitive civilised big-single four-stroke trail bike, with genuine off road ability. Torquey 44bhp motor with handy electric start - early versions had kick-start as well. Classy cosmetics make crashing expensive and despite the mini-fairing still much more tiring than something like a Transalp on M-ways. Nevertheless a good touring bike providing you don't want to go too fast. Watch out for rotted wheel rims on early models. Plentiful in UK but high build quality means second-hand prices are quite steep.

XLV600VP Transalp: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 583cc, V-twin, e/s. Called the Rally Tourer, its name befits its description. True dual purpose machine, great all-rounder. Engine based on the VT500, and larger versions now power the Bros and Africa Twin. Unburstable and torquey motor churns out a claimed 55bhp but can be tricky to work on unless out of the

f r a m e . Expensive cosmetics worth protecting if you're going to venture off road. Early versions easy to spot



due to hub rear brake which was prone to going oval. Suffers from rotting wheel rims (like Dominator) in certain cases,

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and single front discs (identical to CBR600s) can wear fast. Slight facelift in 1993 improved fairing protection slightly. Later versions also come with handy centre stand which was an option on earlier models. Beware handlebar rubber-mountings wearing out giving 'twisted' and remote feel to bars. Sensible secondhand prices. *Verdict: Superb trail bike for touring on.*

XLV750: a/c, 4-str, sohc, V-twin. Mid-80s precursor to Transalp but featuring shaft-drive, and distinctive red engine. Never officially imported into UK, but quite common in France.

XR650 Africa Twin: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, V-twin, e/s. Even closer to HRC P-D specials, mass-produced monster trailie that was extremely popular in Europe in 1989. About 100 were specially built for HRC-supported mass entries to Paris Dakar.

XR750 Africa Twin: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 742cc, V-twin, e/s. Bored out from 650cc to 742cc in 1990 to make an impressive but rather top-heavy Paris-Dakar styled mega-trailie. Much more expensive than the competition at the time, though they had high build quality and came with trick on-board computer. Better off road than you'd imagine, especially on fast and dusty trails.

XR750-S Africa Twin: w/c, 4-str, 6-valve, sohc, 742cc, V-twin, e/s. Lightened, lowered and improved 1993-on version of its forbear. Superb, top quality all-rounder but still relatively expensive.

HUSABERG

KTM owned Swedish range of mainly competition four-stroke machines which use what is basically a two-stroke bottom end mated to a four-stroke barrel and head. Light, powerful and can be vibey.

FE350: w/c, 4-str, 349cc, single, e/s. Cross between a balls out enduro mount and a trail bike. Beautifully made, fast and light. Left hand kickstart negated by new electric boot. *Verdict: A serious tool.*

FE501: w/c, 4-str, 501cc, single, e/s. As above but more so.

FE600: w/c, 4-str, 595cc, single, e/s. As above but even more so.

HUSQUARNA

Previously Swedish, but now Italian-

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owned company (Cagiva) manufacturing a range of (essentially) competition bikes (Enduro and Motocross), not to mention a rather nice line in lawnmowers. Both two and four stroke machines are renowned for their power to weight ratio and high quality components, though left hand kickstarts can be awkward.

WRE125: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Modern, superb, high specification trailie with powerful revvy motor and top-notch suspension. Though classified as a trail-bike it makes a better clubman enduro mount than pure green laner thanks to tall seat height, and peaky top-end power delivery.

JAWA-CZ

Penta 125: a/c, 2-str, 123cc, single. 12 bhp learner legal trail bike from the Czech manufacturers - unknown quantity.

KAWASAKI

KE = a/c, 2-str, trail.

KL = a/c, 4-str, trail.

KLR = w/c, 4-str, trail.

KLX = w/c, 4-str, trail/enduro.

KMX = w/c, 2-str, trail.

KDX = a/c and w/c, 2-str, enduro then trail.

KE 80/100: a/c, 2-str, 79/99cc, single. Very basic disc valve learner trailie with drum brakes both ends. Has been around for donkey's years and value will be dropping as new learner laws come in. Ideal second hand bike for the vertically and financially challenged to start trailing with.

KE125/175: a/c, 2-str, single. Early twin shock, disc valve trailie dating from the Seventies. Popular then, but most will have rotted away by now. Easy to learn on many were used as farm bikes. Later versions styled to resemble KDX. Lengthy production run means Kawasaki must have got it right. *Verdict: Long lived.*

KMX125: 216lb/98kg, w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Very able little trail bike powered by reed valve and KIPS power valve engine, which can easily be de-restricted to double power output to a lively 24bhp.

KMX200: 1987-92, 221lb/100kg, w/c, 2-str, 191cc, single, 6-speed. Big-bore version of the 125 with a claimed 30bhp, which makes a much more able all-rounder capable of motorway cruising

and a top whack of nearly 90mph. Not as reliable as the 125 and if used 'in extremis' off-road the suspension, and especially the forks are not as good as later generation KDXs. Fuel range to bone dry is only 90 miles with 10 mile reserve, and KIPS valve can give trouble, as can clutch and radiator (no fan fitted!). 200 also lumbered with a 17 inch rear wheel, so it's quite common to fit the 18 inch from the 125 to improve off-road tyre choice. KMX also suffered from indifferent build quality, and could be fragile off road. Pads and discs wore out if you so much as looked at them. But seat height is much more accessible for shorties than KDX. Has not been imported for a few years now, if in good nick, an excellent trail bike for most conditions.

KDX125SR: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. 124cc. Similar engine to the KMX (with KIPS power valve) but with the stronger competition-derived 'perimeter', square-tube chassis. Later ones had upside-down forks, but were slower than cheaper KMX in restricted form.

KDX175/200: a/c, 2-str, single. originally sold as a competition only machine with no speedo or horn and a plastic tank when they were still illegal on the road. Fine for enduros but a bit uncivilised on the road. Peaky and raucous, the first models were however lighter, lower and torquier than the later w/c models.

KDX200: w/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. Based on KDX125, completely redesigned from a/c version with increased suspension travel, revised Uni-Track rear end, and more top end power. Basically a clubman enduro bike, very few haven't been raced.

KDX220R/SR: w/c, 2-str, 220cc, single. As above but updated for '95, and with more power and torque. The SR is the street version. *Verdict: Yummy.*

KL250: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 246cc, single. Late seventies twin shock trail bike derived from the 200cc road bike commuter. Pretty basic (no balancer shaft), but also pretty reliable, and extremely



frugal.

KLR250: 1987-on, 260lbs/118kgs, w/c, 4-str, sohc, 249cc, single. Reliable if rather unexciting trail bike with just 23bhp on tap. Despite the complexity of w/c engine they're very robust, and easy to service. More than capable of economical daily commuting, but not very fast on or off the road. Revived as a budget trailie alongside more expensive KLX having been dropped when they first came in. *Verdict: Excellent starter trailbike with good manners.*

KLX250: a/c, 4-str, sohc, 246cc, single. Enduro version of the early twin shock KL, with less road manners.

KLX250: 1994-on, w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, 249cc, single. The four-stroke equivalent of the KDX, with similar motocross-derived perimeter chassis. Looks the business with handling and suspension to match, but performance of the 25bhp street-legal trail version is a bit flat. The lighter 30bhp enduro version is a lot more satisfying to ride, but early ones had carburetion difficulties, and both need to be revved hard to produce their power. Quite tall in the saddle.

KLE500: 392lb/178kg, w/c, 4-str, 8-valve, dohc, 498cc, parallel twin. Slightly oddly styled 'town trailie' which shares its engine with the EN500/GPZ500 whose motors were in turn, effectively one half of a GPZ900R. The revvy little KLE makes 50bhp but is far less trail-friendly than the torquey Transalp and more tiring on the road especially with its uncomfortable (pink) seat and minimal fairing. Quite fast for the money and pretty good around town, but definitely not going to suit everyone's taste or backside. *Verdict: Unique.*

KLR600: 1984-on, 430lbs, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 564cc, single. Big banger trail bike which



started out with a kickstart but became the first big trailie to be fitted with an electric boot. Some had balancer chain

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problems and early ones overheated due to poor siting of the thermostat, but otherwise a fine handling road machine with plenty of trail-ability. *Verdict: Sensible thumper.*

KLR 650: 1987-on, 286lb, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bored out version of the 600. Like the KLR 250, recently re-introduced as a cut-price all-rounder now that insurance rating system no longer unfairly penalises over-600s. *Verdict: Competent rather than spectacular.*

KLR 650 & (Tengai): 1989-on, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bored out to 651cc in 1987, Kawasaki have never had any success in the African rallies, but the Tengai (launched in 1989) is their be-fairinged homage to the genre.

KLX 650: 337lbs/153kg, w/c, 4-str, dohc, 651cc, single. Bigger version of the 250 with the same drop-dead motocross looks, but with USD forks. Early ones were designed without enough clearance between the rear wheel and the mudguard which meant the wheel hammers into the CDI box at max compression with expensive consequences. No bashplate either. Not as torquey as the Dominator or the Pegaso but great for smooth dirt roads or gravel-strewn tarmac. Ideally suited as a supermoto or town bike. Fast and furious, but not much plonkability. Enduro version and later models didn't suffer the same suspension problems. *Verdict: Good but not good enough.*

KTM

Mainly enduro two and four-strokes of dubious street legality. Older enduro bikes are sometimes trailed, but generally rather fast/peaky/specialised for green lane use.

400: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Trail bike version of an existing enduro bike, but with the added civility of a balancer shaft. Fast and exciting on forest roads, but not much of a chugger. Great on the road though lack of screen may be a problem for some. Tall seat height and left-hand kickstart make it tricky for shorties. Top notch suspension, but not as light as it looks. Also quite pricey. *Verdict: Specialist tackle.*

620: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. As

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above but more so.

Duke: w/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Strangely-styled but quite unique Supermoto version of KTM's big-banger. Stylish little headlamp fairing contains two small headlights, and of course the bike rides on 17 inch wheels with wide, sticky rubber. Lots of fun, lots of cred, but expensive and rare since they're only imported in strictly limited numbers. *Verdict: Street rod.*

LAVERDA

DR650 Atlas: a/c, 4-str, sohc, twin. Strange overweight trailie produced from the dying embers of the Italian Laverda concern. Using the Montjuic engine as its source the Atlas' only claim to fame is the inexplicable 'Soft Ramble' sticker that graced the swingarm. *Verdict: Rare with reason.*

MORINI

Camel: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Oddball twin shock, V-twin trailie utilising the heron-headed Morini lump. High saddle and limited spares can be a problem, but otherwise quite robust and great fun if you can master the left-handed kickstart. Not very plentiful, but fairly cheap. *Verdict: Eccentric transport.*

Kanguro: a/c, 4-str, ohv, 344cc, V-twin. Looks like an accident between an XT350 and a Transalp. Lovely engine is a bit dated really, but the Kanguro (couldn't they spell Kangaroo?) is definitely worth a look if you're after something a bit different and don't mind the left-hand kickstart. Sold very slowly and remained in production for a number of years, so it's possible to still find new ones, and they're very cheap for an Italian bike. *Verdict: Strangely alluring.*

MOTO GUZZI

350TT: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Middleweight Guzzoid with all the attraction of chicken pox. *Verdict: see below.*
V65TT: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Middleweight Guzzi trailie of average ability. Hard work on the dirt... and on the road. Not many around. *Verdict: Masochists only*



need apply.

Quota: a/c, 4-str, ohv, V-twin. Big Guzzi that like Triumph's Tiger is really just a road bike in trail bike clothing, but without the Triumph's impressive on road performance. A truly monstrous beast with a seat-height that requires a ladder if you're under 6ft. It makes even the Tiger feel small by comparison. Agricultural engine with torque reaction from the shaft and dangerous lack of ground clearance both on and off road. Good fuel consumption thanks to fuel injection and high gearing, are about all it has going for it. Incredibly expensive when it was launched, but prices did come down. Strictly for straight dirt roads and motorways. Should come with a government health warning. *Verdict: Proves that big is not necessarily beautiful.*

MZ

Ex-East German manufacturer with a reputation of making stodgy but solid bikes. A few a/c, 2-str, 250 ISDT specials around, though most road MZs are robust enough to be 'trailified'. Cheap and cheerful. *Verdict: Worth a trip around the Bloc.*

500 Saxon Country: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, Rotax-powered single. Old-fashioned looking trail bike, that's really just a roadster with a set of trail clothes on. Expensive for what it is. *Verdict: Obsolete.*

ROCON

340RT: a/c, 2-str, Sachs-engined, 340cc, single. Obscure Canadian bikes using a snowmobile engine with a pull start and an automatic gearbox. Manufactured during the seventies with a twin shock chassis. *Verdict: Wild, but bizarre.*

SUZUKI

TS = a/c then w/c, 2-str, trail.

PE = a/c, 2-str, enduro.

SP = a/c, 4-str, trail.

DR = o-a/c 4-str, trail.

RV125: a/c, 2-str, single. Strange looking fun bike from the seventies with small wheels and balloon tyres designed for riding on sand. Looks a bit like a full size monkey bike. Quite fun, but rare and more than a bit odd.

TS120 Trailcat: a/c, 2-str,

single. One of the first purpose built trail bikes to come into the UK in the early Seventies, with unusual, Land Rover style high and low ratio 3x2 gearbox. Lightweight and easy handling twin shock chassis. A bit of a collector's item if you like that sort of thing. *Verdict: For anoraks only.*

TS125/185: a/c, 2-str, single. Early seventies twin shock trailie with distinctive high level pipe which was unusual at the time. Not many left now.

TS125/185ER: a/c, 2-str, single. Peaky learner bike from early Eighties still with 'twin shocks' *Verdict: Not bad considering.*

TS250: a/c, 2-str, single. Much the same as the early 125 but with punchier 250cc motor, and low-level chrome front mud-guard.

TS250ER: a/c, 2-str, single. Early Eighties trail bike that's a bigger version of the 125 with twin shocks and electronic ignition.

TS50: a/c, 2-str, single. Undistinguished twin shock trailie.

TS50ER: a/c, 2-str, single. As above.

TS50X: w/c, 2-str, single. Modest trail moped with a roaring 3bhp on tap, and 'full floater' monoshock suspension. Good for a 50 though.



TS125X: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Very competent learner legal trailie. Better than the equivalent DT at the time. *Verdict: Good secondhand buy.*

TS125R: w/c, 2-str, 124cc, single. Latest version of above with power valve fitted that just needs connecting up to get full power.

TS200R: w/c, 2-str, 199cc, single. Grey import with its own French championship. As above but with more poke. Not many around.

TRAILBIKE GUIDE

PE175: a/c, 2-str, single. Basic twin-shock clubman enduro bike from the seventies, styled on the RM motocrosser. Poky at the time, but not by today's standards. Last ones had 'full floater' suspension. Reasonable number of tatty ones still about that can be had for not much money.

PE250: a/c, 2-str, single. Similar to 175 but with a better spread of power. Lots of fun, but noisy as hell.

PE400: a/c, 2-str, single. As above but with more power than most people could use in this chassis off-road. *Verdict: Wild.*

SP370: a/c 4-str, sohc, single. Early eighties twin shock trailie that seemed to go on and on. Frugal, robust and reasonably reliable despite lack of balancer shaft. Good, cheap hack.

SP400: a/c 4-str, sohc, single. As above.

DR125: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Small and not very powerful trailie but with the benefit of being robust, reliable and frugal. *Verdict: Slow but solid.*

DR125 Raider: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but with false header pipe and (marginally) bigger P-D style tank.

DR200: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. As above but despite bigger motor, still a bit underpowered. Not sold as street legal.

Beware rear wheel collapse on early ones.

DR200

Djebel: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single, e/s.

Japanese home market version of above with more street mods (including electric boot), and less trailability.

DR250: o-a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. Grey import baby brother of the 350 we get here in the UK, only with USD forks and a brilliant ride height control making it more accessible to little people. *Verdict: Worth searching out.*

DR350: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Superb little trailie with dry-sump motor, excellent suspension, but tiny petrol tank. A bit cheap in places, but lightweight and fairly robust. Better off road than on it.



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Front disc brake not very powerful and wears out rapidly. Can look tatty quite quickly. Unfortunately kickstart only (until 95), and high seat height rules it out for sub six footers. Engine feels unburstable and will rev and rev though some have been known to drop valves occasionally. *Verdict: Great trail bike.*

DR350(E): o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Enduro version of above which is slightly 'harder' all round. Available in the UK but very few sold, and no 'leccy start available. *Verdict: Rare but good.*

DR400S: 287lbs, a/c 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 396cc, single. Updated SP400 from the mid-Eighties with alloy petrol tank, but still twin shock and 6-volt. Beware camshaft rattles at high mileages. Very economical, but without the benefit of balance shafts. Watchout for things shaking loose like engine bolts or perhaps your leg. *Verdict: Shake, baby shake.*

DR500S: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. Foreign market, bigger-bore version of the 400. None known in the UK.

DR600S: 136kg/299lbs, o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 589cc, single. Classic big banger with modern monoshock rear end and balancer shaft motor. One of the best (and most sensible) of the DRs, but a bit overgeared and heavy. Can be a bugger to start when hot till you get the knack. *Verdict: Good secondhand buy.*

DR650RSE: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 640cc, single, e/s. More road than trail bike, longer, heavier than earlier DRs and with civilised half fairing and twin silencers. Good road bike, but first gear very high for trails and despite half decent suspension, still a bit of a handful on the dirt no thanks to its seat height.

Engine sounds like a tractor and vibrates like one. Carbs can give iffy running at low revs. *Verdict: Okay I s'pose.*

DR650: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single, e/s. Latest version of above without the half fairing or twin



exhausts. Still overgeared, still rather tall, but with the best suspension in class. Not very refined and feels a bit cheap, but definitely heading in the right direction.

DR750: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The original 'Dr Big' - Suzuki's first attempt at a Paris-Dakar style big trailie. No-one has built a bigger single - except Suzuki themselves. *Verdict: Not for the faint hearted.*

DR800: o-a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, single. The ultimate ultimate. Monstrous single with gargantuan tank, massive seat height and weird styling. Could win awards for ugliness, but pretty good handler and surprisingly nimble. Massive tank gives good range. Dropped from the UK range in about 1993, suffered badly from Norwich Union's capacity-based insurance grading, but should be much cheaper to insure now. Many engines found their way into singles racing. But there's a few around if you really must have one. *Verdict: Why bother?*

TRIUMPH

Tiger: w/c, 4-str, 12-valve, dohc, 885cc, triple. Brilliant but expensive road bike from the new Triumph factory, styled to look like an off roader for the German market. Grunty engine makes it quick on the road but don't bother venturing off road, as suspension leaves a lot to be desired. Rear linkage hangs down below frame rails and catches on practically everything. Tall seat height makes low speed manoeuvring tricky. *Verdict: A trailie in name only.*

YAMAHA

DT = a/c & w/c, 2-str, trail.

IT = a/c, 2-str, enduro.

WR = w/c, 2-str, enduro.

XT = a/c, 4-str, trail.

TT = a/c, 4-str, enduro.

TW = a/c, 4-str, trail/fun.

BW = a/c, 4-str, trail/fun.

DT125/175: a/c, 2-str, single. The DTs are the bike that brought trail riding to the masses! Started out as a basic twin shock trail bike back in the late Seventies before adopting can-

TRAILBIKE GUIDE

tiler rear ends. They built up a reputation for being an extremely competent trail tool and taking an amazing amount of punishment. The 175s were dropped when the 125 learner laws came along in 1981. *Verdict: Still one of the best trail-bikes ever.*

DT125(LC): 1987-on, w/c, 2-str, single. The DT came of age with the adoption of watercooling, motocross styling, and most important of all, a power valve. Lost some of its torque but gained a revvier motor and lots more top end together with sophisticated suspension front and rear. In 12bhp restricted form they're as flat as a pancake, but unrestricted make a capable 24bhp. Although in the fashion stakes they've been overtaken by trickier looking tackle, they still top the sales chart because of their hard earned reputation. still good at off roading though they're taller and peakier than ever. Stripped down and tuned up they will pass as a good clubman enduro mount. *Verdict: The king lives on.*



DT200(R): w/c, 2-str, single. Grey import big bore version of the 125. Extra oomph makes it easier to ride. *Verdict: Competent all rounder.*

DT250: a/c, 2-str, single. Late Seventies cantilever shocked version of the smaller bikes, more power but less agility.

DT400: a/c, 2-str, single. Hairy chested version of above, not many left now.

IT125/175/200: a/c, 2-str, single. Early eighties enduro tool. Useful off road, but a bit hairy on it no thanks to drum brakes. Use of premix is a bit of a pain, 175 is the better bet if you can find one.

IT250: a/c, 2-str, 246cc, single. Less peaky, bigger bore version of above with

enough power for any off road activity. At the time it boasted more power and much less weight than the equivalent water-cooled RD250LC twin!

IT425/465/490: a/c, 2-str, single. Fire-breathing, hard to tame, monster stroker for serious enduro freaks. Only for those with lots of skill or very large gonads. Not the most reliable bike in the world. *Verdict: Melts visors at 50 paces.*

WR200: w/c, 2-str, single. Brilliant clubman enduro bike with lightweight chassis and 'soft-tune' engine, but plenty of power. Rear suspension oversprung, and they need gearing down for low speed trails. Good if you like your bikes tall. Easy to ride with a nice light front end. *Verdict: Modern classic.*

WR250: w/c, 2-str, single. As above but with 'hard-tune' engine. Essentially the enduro version of the YZ motocrosser but with wider ratio gearbox and more fly-wheel. It also came with a lighting coil, but no lights! *Verdict: Peaky and poky.*

WR500: a/c, 2-str, single. As above but using air-cooled YZ motor.

TDR 250: w/c, 2-str, parallel twin. A TZR250 in trail clothing. Great road bike with demon brakes thanks to dinner-plate sized front disc, and all or nothing power-band. Peaky motor makes it difficult to use off road apart from on fast fire roads, supermotard or competition road rallies for which it is ideal. A thoroughly uncivilised motorcycle - raucous, peaky and excruciatingly uncomfortable with an unquenchable thirst for fuel - and absolutely fabulous. Beware seizures on left hand cylinder, and high speed wobbles on the road. Has a few passionate and delinquent supporters. *Verdict: For petrolheads everywhere.*

XT125: a/c, 4-str, single. Learner legal motorcycle without the need for restriction! *Verdict: Reliable but intensely boring.*

XT225 Serow: a/c, 4-str, dohc, single. Small but perfectly formed grey import trail bike with kick and e/s versions, but sadly not both together, although retro-fit kick is possible. Light, manoeuvrable, and easy to ride. Brilliant attention to detail such as mini indicators and sensibly placed grab handles marks this out as a

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superb green laner. Small engine needs to be worked hard especially on the road to get decent performance, but its a small price to pay for such a good bike. Reasonable numbers brought in so far. *Verdict: Makes sense.*

XT250: 248lbs, a/c, 4-str, 249cc, sohc, single. Early Eighties Cantilever shock trailie of some note. Light and strong with balancer shaft engine, they can still be found for not much money and make an excellent secondhand buy if in good condition though occasional early ones suffered valve problems. Nice and low though not very fast. *Verdict: Good all-rounder.*

XT250: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Foreign market mini XT350 with all the benefits but slightly lighter. Rare

TT250-R: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single, e/s. Modern lightweight trailie/enduro that is Yamaha's version of the Honda XR250. Revvy motor and a rea-



sonable spread of power, but rather expensive.

TT250-R RAID: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single, e/s. As above but slightly more roadified, with large, single, (Baja-style) headlamp and protective guard.

XT350: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Plain Jane trailie that's better than it looks. Early versions boasted 31bhp, but later ones emasculated to 17bhp due to noise regs. Chassis and suspension a bit limited but nevertheless still pretty competent. Plenty of bottom end, not too tall in the saddle, and excellent economy (80mpg possible if you try hard). Long production run means it must be good, but demand for secondhand ones ensures prices stay fairly high. *Verdict: Carry-on*

trailing.

TT350: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Grey import enduro version of above, with improved suspension, more power, and more basic instrumentation and lighting. Not that scarce considering, they make a nice trailie with similar reliability to the XTs. *Verdict: Nice one.*

XT500: 304lbs, a/c, 4-str, sohc, single. The original big banger trailie that started it all. Produced for years and years, even when superceded by later versions. Twin shock, 6-volt, character building bike that could often get into more trouble than it could get out of. All sorts of special parts were produced for it for the would be overlander over the years. Vibrates like a jack hammer, and very basic by modern standards but the lack of sophistication is part of its charm, and the low seat height makes it much easier to 'paddle' than some of its more monstrous successors. Can be horribly unreliable and a pig to



start, but its easy to work on and plenty still around. Classic buffs have inflated the prices, but don't pay over the odds. *Verdict: Your dad would love it.*

XT550: 1982-on, 292lbs, a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, sohc, 558cc, single. Updated version of above with 4-valve engine, twin carbs and cantilever rear end. Smoother than 500 but hard to get excited about, and some had gearbox problems. Not many around now. *Verdict: Not as good as the original.*

XT600 Tenere: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Superb Paris-Dakar inspired big trailie with unburstable engine, supple suspension, mammoth tank and comfy saddle. Loved by overlanders the world

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over. Huge touring range, and clever attention to detail (for instance air filter positioned under tank to avoid being clogged by sand and dust). Later versions inherited a full fairing but lost some of the attention to detail. Feels like riding a great big cosy armchair, and regardless of Yamaha's claims to the contrary seems to have more power than later 'cooking' versions. Real off road ability in most hands. *Verdict: Best of the big Yams.*

XT600E: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. No frills version of the much loved XT. Heavier and more sluggish than the original thanks to steel rims and generally lower spec. Unsophisticated especially in the suspension department, but thoroughly crashable and a respectable plodder. Heaps of grunt. *Verdict: Not as good as the original.*

TT600: a/c, 4-str, 4-valve, dohc, single. Grey import enduro version of above, with improved suspension, more power, more basic instrumentation and lighting, and plastic tank. A few around, they make a more suitable serious trail bike than an XT. *Verdict: worth looking out for.*

XTZ660: w/c, 4-str, 5-valve, dohc, single. Another attempt at making a long-distance overland/road version of the venerable XT. Heavier, with less range and not much more power than the original. Less crashworthy than the first and the taller saddle may put some off. Nevertheless it's had a lot of succes in desert racing form and with some mods is eminently trailable. *Verdict: Another good Yam.*

XTZ750 Super Tenere: w/c, 4-str, 10-valve, dohc, parallel twin. Yamaha's answer to the Africa Twin. Cheaper build quality makes it a good value, comfortable all-rounder on the road with plenty of touring potential and 200 mile tank

range. Engine is strong but lacks a little bit of bottom end, and gearbox is atrocious to use. Genuinely fast and not too bad off road especially in the dry, but the standard



exhaust is rather wide (catching on ruts). Decent suspension, but a bit bouncy on the road. *Verdict: A good try.*

TDM850: w/c, 4-str, 10-valve, dohc, parallel twin. 'New sports' road bike with trail styling developed from the XTZ750 but with much gruntier 850cc lump. Lower seat height, much torquier engine and better brakes and handling. Early versions had appallingly clunky gearbox and exhaust collector box rules out an after-market centre stand. Not really a trail bike unless it's high summer nice and dry and the trail is easy. Soft suspension limits speed off road. *Verdict: Brilliant trail influenced roadie.*

TW200: a/c, 4-str, 18bhp, single, e/s. Fattish-wheeled fun bike which makes a brilliant and economical (though odd-looking) trail bike for the short of leg, with both electric start and kick. Surprisingly good on the road, and makes a competent



commuter (70+mpg possible), but let down by lousy SLS front drum brake and needs an extra gear. Suspension a bit basic and tyres can be expensive. Gearbox sprocket a special part due to outrigger bearing. Will embarass pukka trail bikes in the right hands. *Verdict: Strangely attractive.*

BW200: a/c, 4-str, single, e/s. True beach balloon-tired version of above but not street legal. Not recommended for anything other than sand. *Verdict: Sand sled.*

BW350: a/c, 4-str, single, e/s. Hairy-arsed version of above. *Verdict: Get out the bull worker.*

Classified ads

Bikes

XT500, + XT500, one taxed and tested, other spares/repair, also included spare wheels, forks etc, £750 ovno takes the lot. Tel Peterborough 01733 325548 or 01832 272081.

Husqvarna, 420cc, Y-reg, road registered, quick off road or on, not for faint hearted, fair condition for age, has everything for MOT, £420 ono. Tel 01327 342165, ask for Bob.

Honda MTX125, J-reg, 92, good condition, one owner from new, £1,075. Tel 01689 834020.

Husqvarna 500, two stroke single, twin shock, 'monster', new reeds and tyres, but auto box knackered. Find manual box and this is a fantastic machine. Space needed, £175. Tel Rob 01905 381488.

Yamaha XT350, 1990, not used off tarmac, good condition, average mileage, MOT and tax, Datatag, £1,400 ono. Tel 01234 219454 (eves) Bedford.

Kawasaki KMX125, B1, 1986, 12 months T&T, standard bike, surprisingly rapid and very reliable, since ownership much replaced or rebuilt, great looking little trailie for £795 ono. Tel Jon on 01603 661034

Kawasaki KLX650, L-reg, black, 1600 miles, vgc, very limited use, need a smaller bike, £3,300 ono. Tel 01480 436069 Huntingdon, evenings.

Gilera NordWest, blue, L-reg, 3,200km, standard bike, excellent condition, very

reluctant sale, £3,000 no offers. Tel 01254 232458 (Lancs).

Cagiva 900 Elefant, M-reg, burgundy, 6,800km, heated grips, Baglux tank harness & tankbag, centre stand £4,950. Tel 01254 232458 (Lancs).

Yamaha XT600E, 1991, red/white, Scottailer, VGC, commuter use only, MOT, £1,995. Tel 01268 711451.

Honda XR600R, 1988, E-reg, road legal, MOT, 6 months tax, in mint standard condition, £1,900 ovno. Tel Bournemouth 01202 417328.

Honda NX250 Dominator, Small is beautiful, not bashed, crashed or thrashed,



metallic blue, Californian import, cherished plate, low mileage, £2,000, breaks my heart to sell. Tel 01582 462956 Harpenden, Herts.

Yamaha XTZ750, H-reg, 15,000 miles, Krauser top box and centre stand. New chain, sprockets and Chaintec recently fitted, £3,000 ono. Tel Preston, Lancs, 01772 735407.

Cagiva Elefant 900ie, Lucky Explorer, J-reg, 30,000 miles, MOT, vgc, owned and

Classified ads

maintained from new by engineering lecturer, Datatool alarm, heated grips, Scottailer, recent new battery, £4,000. Tel 01206 549753 (Colchester).

Yamaha Autoquad 250, to race £1050, to play £750, also Yamaha IT465, 95% original, needs clutch sorting, £275, also Honda CR500, 1986, complete rolling chassis, £175. Tel andy on Selby 01757 630038.

Honda XL185R, just built, rebored, new crank, T&T April 96, £450. Suzuki PE175 rolling chassis £100. Also wanted, Husky disc front end (40mm forks). Tel Cleobury, Mortimer, 01299 270493.

Yamaha IT175, B-reg, very good condition, MOT, s/steel fasteners, workshop manuals, £550 01625 613600 Cheshire.

Honda XL250S, 1979, twin shock, black enduro plastics, inoffensive to horses and ramblers, good cheap and reliable bike, £375. Tel 01895 824030 Middlesex.

XT600 Tenere, 90, G-reg, 10,000 miles, Micron, Goodridge, Scottailer, O-ring chain, Avon Gripsters, maintained regardless of cost, T&T, excellent condition, blue & yellow, £2,000 ovno. Tel (01977) 705092 or car 0378 961536.

KTM620EGS, 4-stroke, 1700km only, M-reg, 1995, balancer shaft model, indicators, full lights, sump guard, KTM's trail bike, good condition, £3,800. Phone 01777 710660 (Notts).

Yamaha XT250, 1984, unfinished project, good engine/gearbox, genuine 3,800 miles only, little off road use, Metzeler multicross tyres, suit owner with knowhow and time,

FAST LANE

HILDENBOROUGH, KENT

Honda XR650L, K reg, elec start, pristine, road use only, the ultimate real trail bike.....£3995

XTZ750 SUPERTENERE, K reg, 8,000m, mint, big top box, alarm, excellent tourer/trailie.....£3795

Husaberg 600 enduro, M reg, 4 stroke enduro, road legal - just!, very serious bike, as new.....£2995

DR350SR, L reg, 94, pristine condition, 7,000m, road use only, the definitive green lane trailie.....£2895

Honda CRM250 Enduro, K reg, fully road legal by Honda!, CR engine/chassis, very rare and competitive bike.....£2895

Honda 650 Dominator, G reg, black, 17,000m, great compromise, great on road, very capable green laner.....£2795

DR350S, K reg, blue, 5,000m, immaculate example, road use only, big tank.....£2695

Yamaha XT600E, J reg, Super Moto!! 17" wheels the lot, highly tuned Farnham engine, hot cam, big bore etc, very fun, very fast.....£2795

Yamaha DT200WR, H reg, fully road legal by Yamaha, YZ engine/chassis, very fast.....£2300

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all sensible offers considered. Tel 01782 304599.

Wanted

Wanted. Yamaha XT350 exhaust header pipes, also dials and instruments. DT125R ones will do at a push. Tel 01722 790545.

Wanted. DT125MX petrol tank in original paint either red or black, must be very good condition to complete a full restoration, and must be able to post. Good price paid. Tel Mark 01276 824091 (Cornwall).

Wanted 80cc trail bike for 12 year old boy, up to £200, fair condition please. Tel 01305 783103.

Desperately seeking Cagiva Elefant 650. 1985/1986 model, anyone with one for sale I will be happy to give you lots of loot. Call Tom (daytime) 0181 224000, or evening 01753 523845.

Wanted DR350, XT350 or DT400, but will consider any trail bike. Cash waiting for right bike. Tel Luton 01582 492758.

Wanted up to 125cc trail or road bike, a runner if poss, up to £100. Phone Ian on 01737 245394, eves only.

Wanted for Triumph Tiger Cub trail project: T20SS crankcases, speedo and bracket, 2.5 gallon tank, forks and yokes. Tel 01385 795454. Consider complete project bike if T20SS.

Wanted Suzuki SP370 gearbox, clutch, kickstart and exhaust silencer. And a mate wants a pair of shocks and exhaust for a Honda XR250. Tel 01992 466846.

Wanted big trail bike in good condition in exchange for Lotus 501 exotic sports car, tax, MOT, will deliver, value £2,800. Tel Paul 01460 281426.

Swop Suzuki RGV250 T&T, many new parts, value £1700, for trail bike, XTZ, 600cc preferred or may consider other plus cash. Tel Derby 01332 382790 or 205120.

Wanted Honda XR250 engine or complete bike considered, any year, runner preferred. Also KTM250 engine parts wanted. Call Mat on 01952 606260.

Wanted, Suzuki PE400 1980 (+/-), spares desperately needed, especially flywheel, will travel, please help. Tel James 0131 2296184 (Scotland) Ochayethenoo.

Wanted, full or part set of vgc black plastics and a spare rear wheel for a DT125R (1992 model), also information with regard to uprating the swinging arm/shock for use in the trail bike class of enduros - keeping a rear disc is imperative due to wooden leg.

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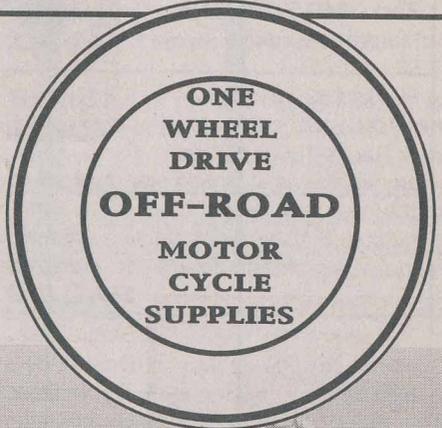
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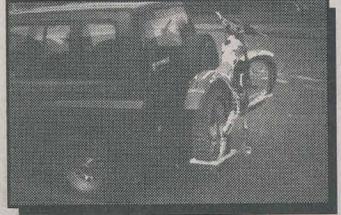


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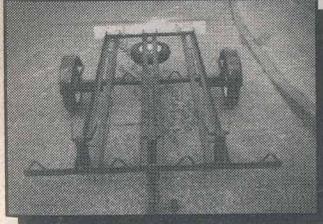


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KAWASAKI

Kawasaki's little KLR often gets overlooked by the press. But, claims Roger Evans, it's definitely worth a second look

The Kawasaki KLR250 is to my mind one of the great forgotten trail bikes of the last few years. Not seen out on the trail much, and easily dismissed as being underpowered and overweight the KLR has nevertheless, got a lot going for it.

I'm currently on my second KLR and I suppose that qualifies me as a bit of a

cradle frame which will stand up to a fair amount of abuse, although I was a bit alarmed at the crease in the frame tubes under the engine, but a quick look at a new KLR in the local Kawasaki showroom revealed they all look like that - phew!

Suspension at the rear is by Uni-Track linkage with the single shock absorber adjustable for preload and damping. At the front the 38mm forks are air adjustable, and suspension travel front and rear is 230mm - a bit less than some of its rivals, but adequate enough.

Comfort is an important feature on any trail bike if you're going to spend all day in the saddle, and the KLR has a nice, wide, comfortable seat and a good riding position. Wide-ish bars that are easy to steer and foot-pegs and levers that are just the right size to give a good purchase

when wearing bulky off road boots without protruding too much, complete the well thought out ergonomics. And for long journeys I find that the pillion footrest frames make good heel rests with my toes still on the main pegs.

Another good feature of the bike is its 11 litre fuel tank (nine litres main and two litres reserve), good enough for about 150 miles in total, and considerably better than some of its rivals. Also fitted are a set of easy to read instruments, a barely adequate sump guard and a largish tool bag just behind the saddle.

KLR250

The 12 volt electrical system is neatly laid out with battery and master fuse under the left side panel, though it's prone to collecting a lot of crud flung up off the back wheel (more about which later). The headlamp throws out a good beam of light and the flexible indicators are mounted well up out of harms way.

Riding impressions count for a lot, and despite the KLR's weight and limited power it feels really nice to ride. Tooling around on backroads, commuting to work, marking out horse endurance events and trail riding is what the KLR is best at. Enduros and really muddy or boggy conditions should either be avoided or attacked with a certain amount of gung-ho.

So what sensible mods can be done to the KLR to make it more user friendly? Well for a start removal of certain items helps reduce the weight. Mirrors, indicators, helmet lock, pillion footrests, side stand switch etc. Whatever you can do without really. The standard trail tyres can be put carefully away with the rest of the discarded items ready for resale time and replaced with something more chunky such as Michelin T61s or Continental's enduro tyres. Both tyres are block-tread knobblies that come in a 17 inch rear, give good grip off road and are safe at speed on tarmac. My last Continental tyre lasted over 3000 miles.

Next comes the gearing. By replacing the front sprocket with one with 14 teeth (down from 15), the bike's overall gearing is reduced making it a much better prospect off road. It becomes more responsive in all gears, and acceleration is improved. The down side is that top speed comes down from 85-ish to just over 70mph and the revs go up as well increasing fuel consumption, but then the choice is yours.

While you're attending to the front sprocket, it's a good idea to take a look at the sprocket cover. This is a solid plastic affair with a hole that looks like a vibration

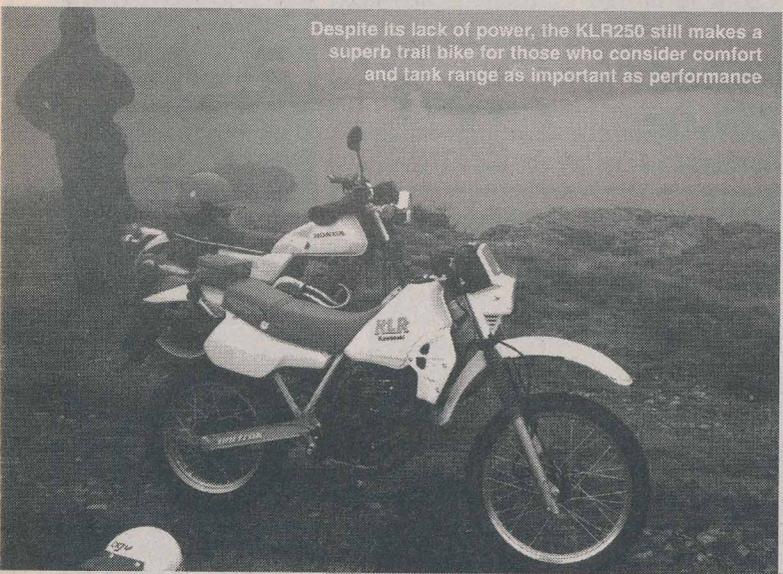
damping pad fitted inside it. Removing the damping pad and cutting out the slots in the cover ensures mud and gunge won't build up and clog up the front sprocket or worse, throw the chain.

As mentioned earlier the battery suffers a bit from mud and water thrown up from the rear wheel, and I've found that a cover made from an old inner-tube stretched over the battery and cable-tied in place prevents any dampness from reaching the electrics.

In the suspension department, at the rear Kawasaki advise for harsh conditions the shock should be wound down to 37-42mm from the top of the threaded portion and the damping adjuster set to number three. This seems to work well for me and I'm six foot tall and 12 stone. At the front end, dropping the forks about an inch in the yokes has lowered the seat height a useful amount so I can get my foot down quicker, and also sharpened up the steering considerably. I've also fitted a fork air balance kit, and with six psi in each fork leg can regain some of the lost inch of fork extension when required. I haven't touched the engine, but am reliably informed that the bike is rather restricted in European form by being over silenced. Fitting a different system should save a bit of weight and liberate two or three horsepower.

In summary then the KLR250 is a comfortable, reliable trail bike with a good tank range and adequate performance. There are those who doubted that it would be much use in somewhere like the Yorkshire Dales, or the Lake District, but mine has been up Walna Scar and twice completed the TRF's Coast to Coast Run needing nothing more than fuel and chain lube. If you're after a four stroke trailie that's easy to ride, and won't reduce you to a physical wreck by the end of the day then have a look at a KLR250. It's cheaper than some of its rivals and good fun too, and after all that's what trail riding's about isn't it?

Despite its lack of power, the KLR250 still makes a superb trail bike for those who consider comfort and tank range as important as performance



nut, but it's like this: I've ridden all the main opposition at one time or another, and keep coming back to the diminutive KLR thanks to its combination of simplicity and ruggedness. By opposition I mean the KLX250, DR350, Cagiva W12, XR250 and several two-strokes. I'll tell you what I know about the KLR250 and see if I can convince you.

Powered by a liquid cooled, four valve, 249cc single the KLR produces a modest 23hp, which is about seven down on most of its rivals and at 118kg it weighs the same as a Suzuki DR350.

The engine is housed in a steel semi-

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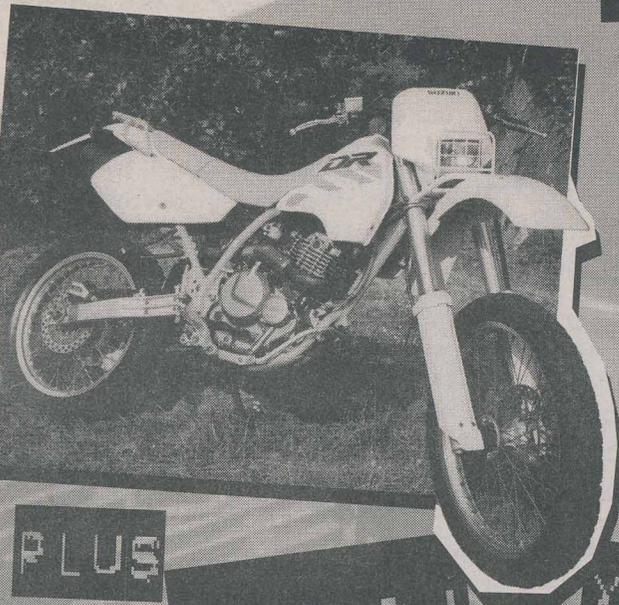
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TRAIL TALES...

IT'S SPAIN IN SUMMER, A TRAILRIDER'S DREAM.
BUT MAC MCDIARMID IS GOING DOWNHILL FAST !!

The vulture hung majestically on the thin clear air, wings the size of wardrobe doors, beak like a machete and 'dinner' written all over its evil beady eyes. I could have sworn it winked at me.

'You've got to be bloody joking'

croaked Charlie.

'You said we needed trail bikes not bleeding mountain goats' someone agreed.

'I didn't come here to be a bloody bird's breakfast', stuttered someone else.

'Hell of a view though isn't it?' I countered defensively.

Somewhere in the valley below us wound a tiny filament, no wider than a hair. This was a track - not just any old track, but the one we were supposed to be on. About 4000 feet of vertical space separated us from it.

'It's no problem' I lied. 'Besides, we came here for adventure didn't we?'

Above us the vulture chuckled and reached for the salt.

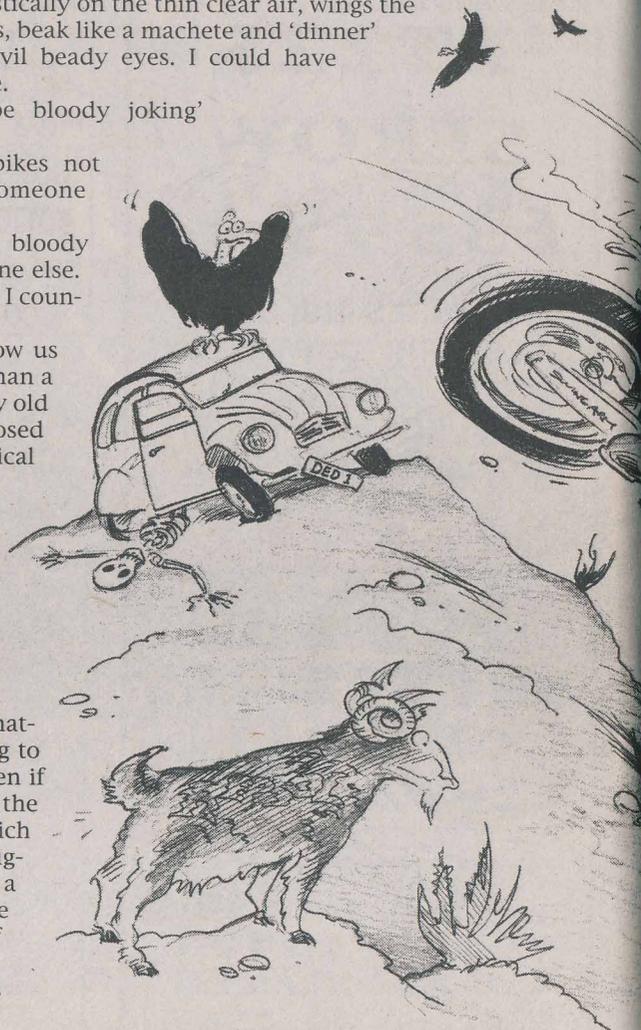


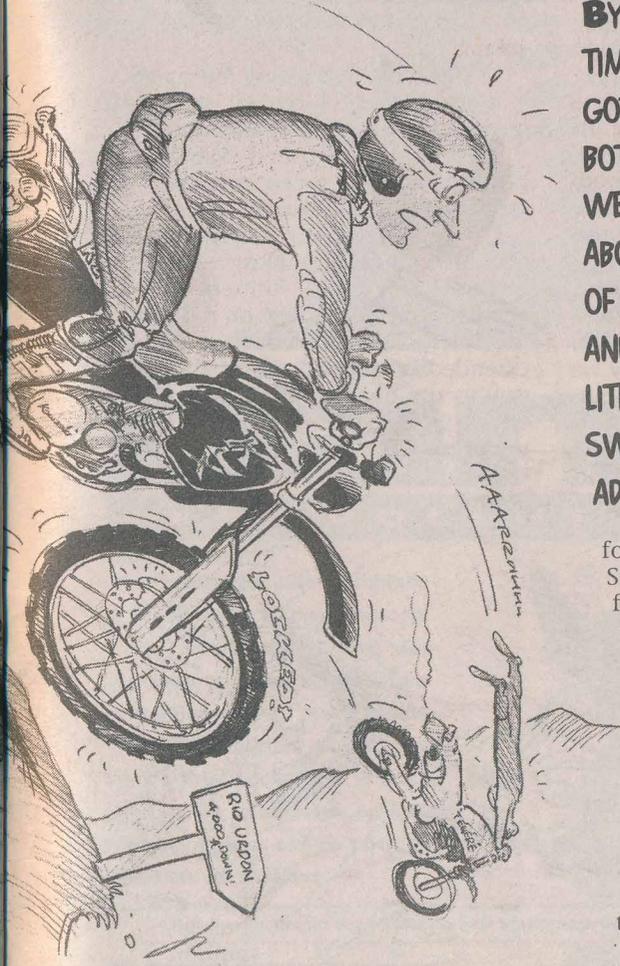
Illustration John Keogh

It was Tuesday, not that it matters. There were five of us clinging to the side of *Horcadura de Canto*, ten if you counted the bikes. The trail - the map said it was a *sendera*, which seemed to be Spanish for 'cliff' - zig-zagged down the precipice on a merely vertical trajectory, before steepening and tumbling out of site. We struggled on down, mainly because there was even less prospect of getting back up.

The scene was the Picos de

Europa, the biggest lumps of rock entirely in northern Spain. They rise to more than 2500m at *Torre de Ceredo*, are snow-capped most of the year, and very, very serious. Only an idiot would treat them with disrespect. We had plenty of those.

Which is how we came to be on a trail that was impossible according to the maps, the locals and the law of gravity, not to mention common sense. One slip would see us plummet into the Rio Urdon 2km below - which is the best incentive I know for not making one. We carried, pushed, slogged and heaved the bikes down. Sweeney took some pictures to make the coroner's job easier



('Let the record show death by stupidity' I imagined him saying). By the time we got to the bottom we'd used about 2cc of petrol and two litres of sweat and adrenaline. My brake light had been on for so long, the lens had melted and congealed Dali-style over the rear mudguard.

The next face took us to *Espinama* at the far end of the *Vegas del Toro*, a pass bisecting the Picos range. The route climbs 4000 feet in the space of about two miles. We paused part way up to take in the view and a much needed fag. Our old friend the vulture and its mate glided lazily by, the odd cowbell tinkled in the distance, and alpine flowers bobbed in the breeze. Nothing else

BY THE TIME WE GOT TO THE BOTTOM WE'D USED ABOUT 2CC OF PETROL AND TWO LITRES OF SWEAT AND ADRENALINE

moved in this colossal spectacle. 'Bet there's a bloody 2CV round the corner' joked Davey. 'Those things get everywhere.'

There was, and this one had. I felt how Columbus might have done if he'd arrived in America to find Michael Jackson moonwalking along the beach.

The track became steeper and 2CV-free. The KMX boiled over and was given a drink of Coke, then, er... recycled Coke when the *Real Thing* ran out. Mark who is six foot

four, and needed to be, paddled his SuperTenere heroically, its resale value falling faster than the boulders which regularly toppled off the track behind us. 'How can anything with 70bhp need three people to push it everywhere' we all enquired.

We arrived at our proposed lunch stop in *Espinama*, just in time for tea. It was at this point that the KLR650 belonging to Paul - 'I've lost 20lbs already today, and each one of them's been brown - picked up a nail in the car park, what turned out to be the only puncture of the week.

From here the plan had been to take the *Gargantua del Cares* back to

TRAIL TALES...

Arenas and home. It turned out that much of the route lay in the National Park which then occupied about one third of the Picos range (now it takes in most of it). A park warden indicated that thrashing trail bikes on his patch was a bad idea. Seeing as he did it with a gun we decided he was undoubtedly correct and beat a hasty retreat.

Lunch on the next day saw us at the top of the *Fuente De* cable car..... without using the cable car. A crowd of Japanese tourists who'd each paid a million Pesetas for a dangle through the pea-soup mist peered at us politely with their zoom lenses, but still managed to look cheated. Then to *Espinama* once again, and up a fast rocky blitz on the other side of the valley. The sheer unfettered joy of it all caused me to lob the KMX into the trees once again. Then it did its customary impression of a coffee percolator.

Sunday was the big one. Rise early, buzz down 30km of tarmac to *Potes* deep in the south-western corner of the Picos, then 170km of high, rough wilderness in God's own front garden. And oh how we prostrated ourselves upon his altar. Alan-the-horticulturist took to examining peat bogs from the inside; Martin-the-paramedic dislocated his thumb, then fell off again to confirm the diagnosis; and Charlie-something-in-the-city practised his tube drill; throw a KLR600 down an escalator then run in front of it to see if it can catch you. It did.

By now the locals were sort of getting used to us. We were variously regarded as escaped lunatics or bug-eyed creatures from Mars, but the general view was

that we were probably harmless except to ourselves. Asking them for directions though, was a waste of time. They either didn't understand 'trail bikes' capabilities', or they had a cousin called Carlos who used to be a Montesa works rider, and promptly sent us up a sheer cliff, which was even worse.

By the last day of the trip, most of the collected had succumbed to dirt fatigue. It was left to Martin and I to strike more blows for two-wheeled freedom. Martin, being a member of the TRF, considers it his sacred duty to open up the impassable.

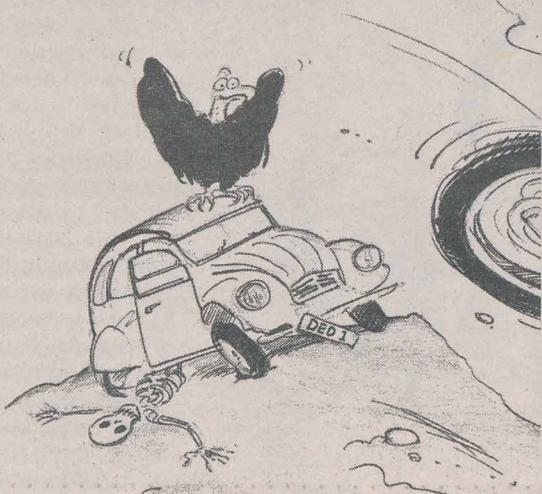
'This looks promising' he cooed.

'What does?' I replied staring at an impenetrable wall of Spanish jungle.

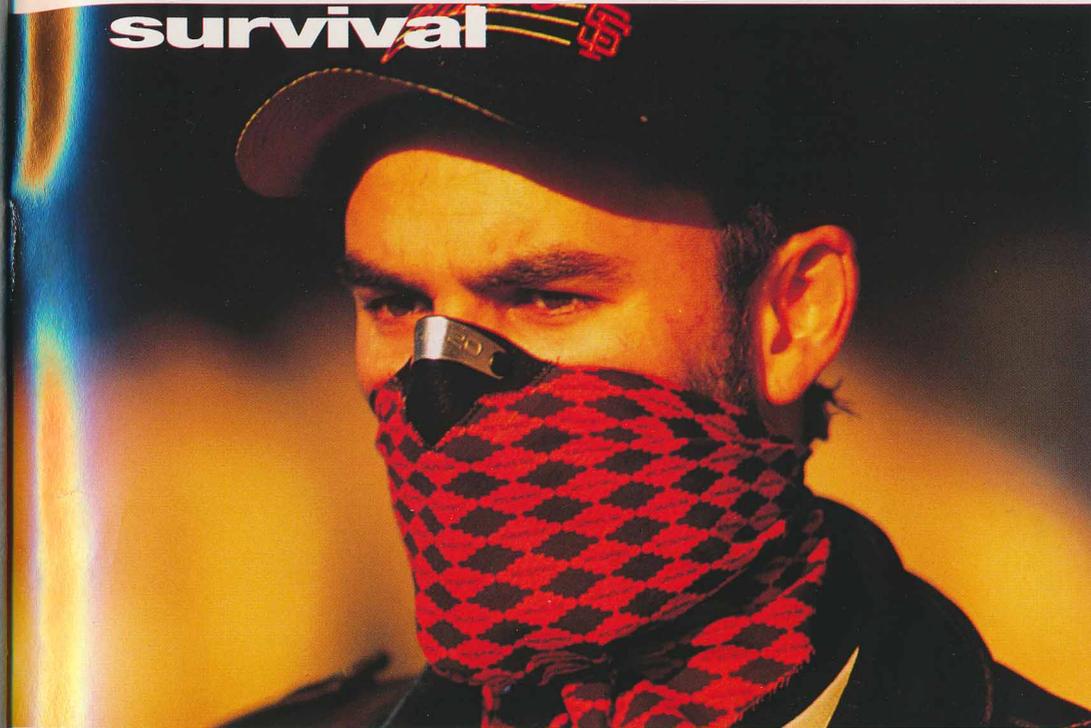
'This' demonstrated Martin, disappearing into the green barricade with a freedom-fighter's flourish.

'This' - was an airless mesh of entwined vines, brambles, trees, logs and rotting dead things, knitted with a fine needle and laid to rest on a fly-infested precipice. the panorama from the saddle extended in a rich, verdant sweep all the way to the handlebars. A farmer greeted us as we eventually toppled from this undergrowth. 'Buenas dias' he said as though camouflaged foreign bikers emerging from his herbaceous border were an everyday event.

Back at base, the KMX fell off its stand and bent the clutch lever. Five minutes later it fell off again and broke it this time. Somebody produced a cold beer to round off the week. 'Nice timing' - I thought - 'on both counts'.



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