



*Southampton-based Rosie gets down on the waterfront for this KMX shot. Size and seat height of the bike suits riders of all sizes - unlike the skyscraper Paris-Dakar replicas.*

# At last,

# a proper



# trail bike

*Rosie Marston (no mean*

*rider on the English*

*lanes) takes to a bike*

*that stopped her in her*

*tracks at the NEC*

## KAWASAKI KMX200

**T**UCKED away in a corner at the 1987 Bike Show at the NEC, the Kawasaki KMX200 stopped me in my tracks. At last, a proper trail bike of reasonable dimensions — not many of those around in today's world of megasize Paris-Dakar replicas and over-tall, underpowered learners.

The 125 law was a bitter blow to trail riding. Virtually overnight the 175/250 class all but disappeared. An occasional attempt at a pukka trail bike has been made with Yamaha's XT350, Suzuki's enduro TS250 (in very limited numbers) and Honda's MTX200 but in the main we have only seen restricted 125s or 600cc street poseurs.

The other Japanese companies instantly responded to the new legislation by producing trick learner trail bikes but Kawasaki left their aircooled, twin shocked, two stroke KE programme fundamentally unchanged until 1986 when they introduced their market-beating KMX125. Produced in restricted and unrestricted forms this model soon became the best selling 125 trail bike. However, although an excellent performer, the 125 motor lacked the grunt and snappy low down acceleration of the 175/250 bikes so Kawasaki responded with the KMX200.

Physically smaller than many 125s, this compact machine also falls below the 225cc insurance ceiling of most companies making it an economical mount. In fact the KMX200 is already proving popular with trail riders and enduro competitors alike.





'KIPS' is Kawasaki's power valve system which monitors exhaust resonance and boosts power through the rev range.



## ● Engine and transmission

★★★★

THE 191cc motor borrows many features from the KX moto cross machines, including Kawasaki's patented electro-fusion coated bore, which cuts down on weight, disbursts heat quickly, increases bore life and is said to be extremely resilient to siezing. The disadvantage is a restricted re-boring of around 1mm.

The KMX also features the 'KIPS' (Kawasaki Integrated Power-valve System) power boosting system which works at both the top and bottom end of the rev range to improve performance. Major KIPS components include an exhaust resonator, two auxiliary exhaust sub-ports, two valves and a crankshaft driven ball ramp governor. At low revs the valves simultaneously open the resonator and close the sub-ports to increase low down power, then from 7000-8000rpm the valves close the resonator and open the sub-ports, thus boosting the top end.

All this high-techery results in a motor with strong feel all the way through the rev range and none of the peaky power associated with older two strokes. The motor is fuelled by one small 26mm Mikuni carburettor, complemented by a large air intake and with oversquare bore and stroke of 67 x 54mm with 8:1 compression ratio. Output is a claimed 30bhp. (Well up, incidentally, on the very similar, though discontinued MTX200 which peaked at between 20-26bhp depending on which report you read).

With a red line at 10,500rpm and peak power at 8500rpm, the 200 is fitted with a gear driven balance shaft to ensure vibration is kept to a minimum. Power then hits the road through a six-speed gearbox and chain final drive.

Starting never took more than a couple of kicks on full choke and I found the bike warmed up pretty quickly and was smoother than the 125 I had previously tested which was particularly snatchy from cold. I have heard reports of a low rev misfire on some KMX200s but there was none in evidence on our test machine.

Mind you, the engine sometimes produced hideous noises, particularly at tick-over. And shutting off the throttle quickly from mid-range could result in a horrendous clunk from the bottom end. The KIPS

box of tricks also causes some strange sounds around 6500rpm. This is obviously not an individual foible — it was the first question my KMX enduro-riding friend asked me. It is probably just a characteristic of the KMX as Kawasaki have had no reports of engine problems.

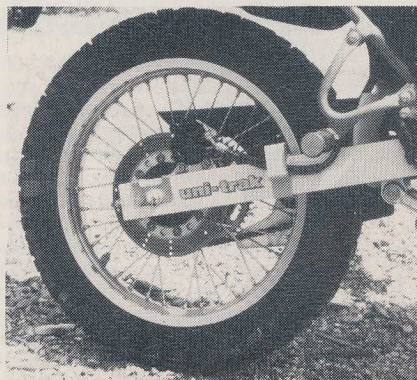
The small radiator coped adequately with road work, so long as the bike was not stationary for too long, and even when the temperature gauge rose, it soon settled down to the normal position. It was more essential to watch the gauge on the off-road lanes during slow sections but it never moved to much more than half way; and our test period covered a particularly hot summer spell.

## ● Chassis and brakes

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THE semi-double cradle frame is made from steel tubing, the engine being rigidly mounted in five places. Both pillion footrests and radiator are frame mounted, whilst a bash plate is bolted to the underside.

Rear suspension comprises a box section swinging arm and bottom link Uni-Trak. This type of monoshock reduces the centre of gravity and also provides space for a large airbox without sacrificing ground clearance. The rocker arm is aluminium alloy, the swinging arm linkage of steel, and all linkages pivot in needle bearings. The gas shock absorber has screw spring-preload adjustment which



A 17in rear wheel is fitted to the 200 — a lower seat height, okay, but choice of tyre is severely limited.

provides 230mm of travel. Set on the softest setting (as supplied) this gave a lovely soft ride and also meant the seat sank considerably, enabling my short legs to reach terra firma. Front suspension also affords 230mm travel via 35mm telescopic forks. Air valves are provided but the forks run on Opsi.

The riding position is comfortable for road and trail riding with narrow, enduro type handlebars allowing you to crouch forward at speed. Terminal bum ache set in soon after 100 miles but as this coincided with fuel stops there was at least chance for recovery. The seat itself is perfectly comfortable, but the useless seat strap (thankfully a rarity on most modern machines) is situated just where you sit. The balancer certainly works, as vibration was not apparent and only when I stopped after a long fast ride did I realise my fingers were tingling.

Today's trail bikes certainly handle well on the road. Silly angles of lean are possible and I had to curb my 'racing line' enthusiasm and remind myself that I was "only on a trail bike". I did find the 200 tended to fall into corners but being a light-weight bike it was no problem to change line. A very civilised machine at slower (40-50mph) speeds, ride it fast and the KMX provides excitement all the way as you ride in and out of the KIPS system.

Dunlop K550 tyres gripped well on tarmac and were surprisingly good on the gravel and dry lanes but I suspect, as with most trail tyre patterns, they will clog up quickly in mud. I cannot understand though, why Kawasaki have saddled the 200 with a 17" rear boot instead of the more sensible 18" as fitted to the 125. All it achieves on the 200 is a slightly lower seat height and a severely restricted choice of replacement tyre. As I feel more 200s than 125s will see dirt, it would seem sensible to fit the smaller machine's rear wheel.

I know 200cc trail bikes are not touring machines, but I was impressed at how easily the KMX covered over 500 miles one weekend, cruising easily at around 65-70mph with enough acceleration left to pass most slow traffic. The 125 had needed 'red line' treatment to keep up with M25 traffic but even flat out the 200 was a good 2000rpm down on the 10,500rpm red line. I'm no advocate of small bikes on motorways but at least the 200 (as was the 125) an extremely stable machine at speed, surprisingly unaffected by buffeting. And at the other end of the scale, slow

KMX  
200





Spot the difference. The KMX200 on the far left is £300 more than the 125. However, it does have more mid-range power even though the bikes are virtually identical apart from that extra 75 cubic centimetres.

Attractive cockpit layout. 2440 miles on a trail bike on the test fleet left the Kawasaki looking like it had received a 'hard time'.



speed stability was excellent. It even became a personal competition to see how long I could balance 'feet up' in traffic.

The two tiny disc brakes with single piston calipers worked well around town but it was a different story stopping quickly from speed, when the brakes were totally inadequate. More than once I was braking hard and praying at the same time! This surprised me as the KMX125 had felt almost overbraked, but closer examination revealed that the 200 has a smaller diameter rear disc! The KMX200 also has an odd sensation when slowing down from around 70mph (7000rpm) as knocking off the throttle slightly has the momentary effect of speeding the bike up.

The KMX200 was as much at home on the Derbyshire trails as on tarmac. Being such a quiet two stroke, even the cows didn't move as we passed by. The steering felt heavier than on tarmac but this helped keep the bike on line over rough lanes. With quick, snappy acceleration, it was also possible to hop over small obstacles with ease. The super soft suspension also came into its own offering a smooth ride with surprisingly more feel than I had from the 125.

We were not able to do as much off-road riding as hoped, but as recommendation, a colleague who rides enduros is well pleased with her 200 and says she finishes much higher up the field than with a de-restricted DT125.

## ● Equipment

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THE controls and instrumentation are identical to the 125 but I did not suffer the same problems. The smaller machine had liked loads a choke from cold and it required 12" long fingers to hold the spring loaded handlebar lever on!

Thankfully the 200 did not rely so heavily on the choke. Neither did the brake hose foul the tripmeter as it had on the 125. However, I was not too impressed with the electrics on our particular 200cc test machine but it did look to have received a hard time. The indicators initially would not work, then would occasionally before finally settling down to be reliable. Conversely, the rear light worked at first then decided, for no apparent reason, to

work only sometimes. A check of the wiring didn't reveal anything and we suspect the switchgear was at fault.

By contrast, the headlight was excellent, never gave any trouble and afforded good night vision. In daylight, the two large mirrors offer good rear vision, even remaining clear at speed.

Other good points on the equipment side are the folding gear/brake lever trips, the sturdy side stand, fork gaiters as standard and a neat little rear rack. However, I am surprised handlebar lever protectors were not fitted just to finish the package.

## ● The price you pay

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I REALLY cannot see why 75cc makes the KMX200 £300 more than the de-restricted KMX125 — a virtually identical machine. However the 200 is priced the same (at £1699) as its only class-mate, the Suzuki DR200 (enduro/Trail), but has the advantage over the Suzuki of being road legal.

Fuel consumption was higher than the 125 and averaged out at 56mpg over the test which comprised all types of riding. Conversely the 200 used much less two-stroke oil.

Spares prices were the typical mixture of reasonable and expensive. I was surprised that the silencer is only £44.53, when one for my KE175D3 is over £70. Horrifically, each indicator assembly is £19.04, whereas the unit for the GPx500 is only

around £5.00. Other examples of damage/consumable spares: front brake lever £5.07; clutch lever £5.59; air filter £4.29; brake pads (per set) £12.99; final drive chain £43.85; front forks (complete) £357.95; headlight unit £33.41; rear light unit £15.95; exhaust front pipe £66.79; petrol tank £119.32; radiator £111.89. (All prices exclude VAT).

Service intervals are a standard 500 miles and every 2500 thereafter, and although depending on your workshop's labour costs, should work out around £45.00.

## ● Conclusion

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WITH an inaudible exhaust note and tasteful black/red livery this makes it a less garish alternative to the bright green KMX's, particularly if you are sensitive to the image of trail riding in the countryside. I certainly like the styling which although scoring high pose value, still offers a functional package for the on/off road rider.

Additionally, for a watercooled machine it has the most unobtrusive radiator — you could almost be forgiven for thinking it was aircooled from a distance — which will be less vulnerable to trail damage.

Yes, I really think Kawasaki have got their sums right with this model, the first proper dual purpose bike for a long time and I only hope nothing happens to spoil that.

## ● Specification

<b>ENGINE</b>		Carburation ....One Mikuni	rear .. Uni-trak,	285mm (11.2")	
Type .....	Liquid cooled, single cylinder, 2-stroke with piston reed valve induction	VM26	230mm travel	Seat height ..... 860mm (33.8")	
Capacity .....	191cc	Gearbox .....	six-speed	Dry weight .....	
Bore and stroke .....	67 x 54.4mm	Clutch .....	Wet, multi plate	100kg (221lbs)	
Compression ratio .....	8.0:1	<b>CLUTCH</b>		Fuel tank capacity .....	
Max. torque .....	2.57 kg-m/7500rpm	Battery .....	12V4ah	9.3 litres (2.06gals)	
Max. power .....	30bhp at 8500rpm	Headlight .....	60/55W	<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Ignition system ..	Capacitor discharge	<b>CHASSIS</b>		Top speed .....	76mph
		Frame .....	Semi double cradle	Fuel consumption (av.) .....	56mpg
		Suspension front ..	Leading axle telescopic fork	Price .....	£1699
			230mm travel	Machine supplied by:	Kawasaki UK Ltd, 748/749 Deal Avenue, Slough
				Wheelbase .....	1375mm (54.13")
				Ground clearance .....	