

FANTIC 125RC



RIVIERA RACER

Fantic's 125 RC is built for continental enduros.

Geraint Jones and Rick Kemp rode it in typical British conditions.

Photography by *Tim Leighton-Boyce*.

Italy has been producing some hot enduro machinery lately and the Fantic 125 is no exception. Fantic, who recently introduced the 75 and 125 to this country, previously only offered the Caballero 50 in this country. Yet it's got a reputation for getting a lot of power out of its small engines, based on their trials bikes which are really making people sit up and take notice. The 125 RC could do the same in the enduro scene. It can deal with most 175s on top speed, producing 26 bhp and weighing 202lb.

But the big question is: why 125? Until recently, 125



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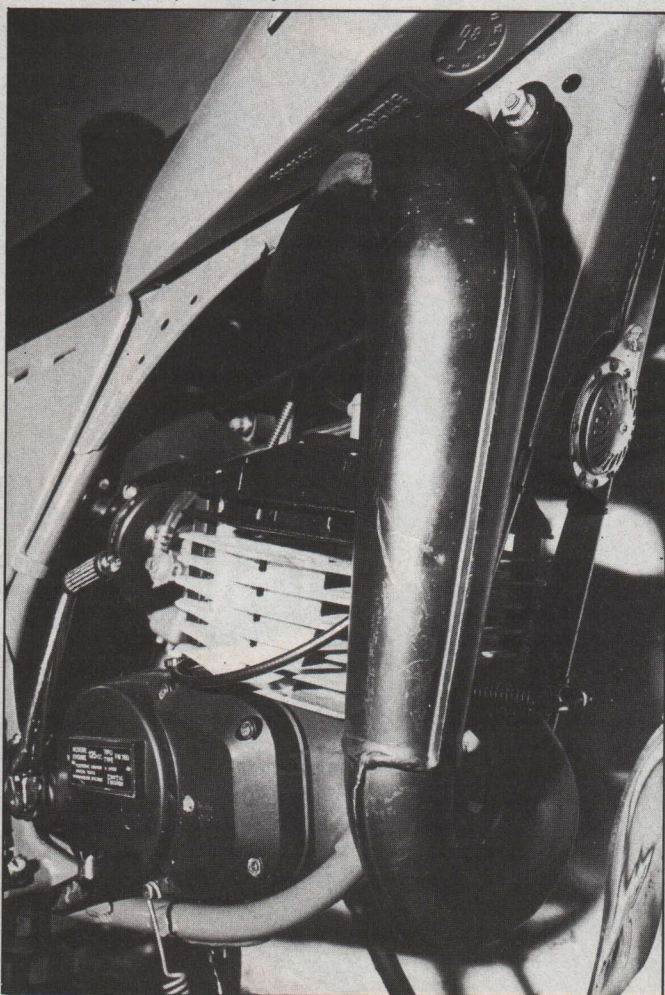


hasn't been a well-subscribed class, mainly because there aren't many 125s about which being rather peaky, aren't as easy to ride as 175s or 250s, though they may appeal to riders after class results.

The 125 Caballero is typically Italian – red and brash. As you'd imagine, it comes with all the goodies: Marzocchi forks, Magura twistgrip and levers. The rear units are Sachs Hydrocrossers, supporting a banana swing arm. Just looking at this bike tells you it ain't no *poseur's* trail bike – it's for real, it's all function, from the hard seat to the Pirelli enduro tyres.

The staggering power output comes from a 55.2 x 52mm bore and stroke, the single-ring piston running in a chrome bore with four transfer ports. Compression ratio is 14.5 to one and a 32mm Dellorto carburettor is responsible for feeding it. Electronic ignition ensures a fat spark. The power is transmitted to the six-speed gearbox via a wet multiplate clutch and primary gears. The 26bhp is developed at 10,500rpm and the torque curve peaks at 8,750rpm, at which point it's produ-

Above: After altering the suspension, the Fantic was easier to ride through corners and it held its line, too. Below: Big expansion chamber indicates the peaky nature of this motor.



cing 12lb-ft. A flywheel magneto provides lighting and there's a rear lever-operated stop light.

We collected the Fantic from Waklin & Ward in Birmingham, on our way to Wales. The bike had been used for six events, including two enduro bike scrambles, so a new piston and ring had been fitted to ensure it was in prime nick. The Sachs units require a special high-pressure pump as they work in the area of 120-150psi, so Bunny Ward said he'd meet us the following morning with said item. Just as well, because, when we lifted the bike off the back of Charlie's Cortina, we realised how high it was. The tape measure confirmed a 40½in seat height.

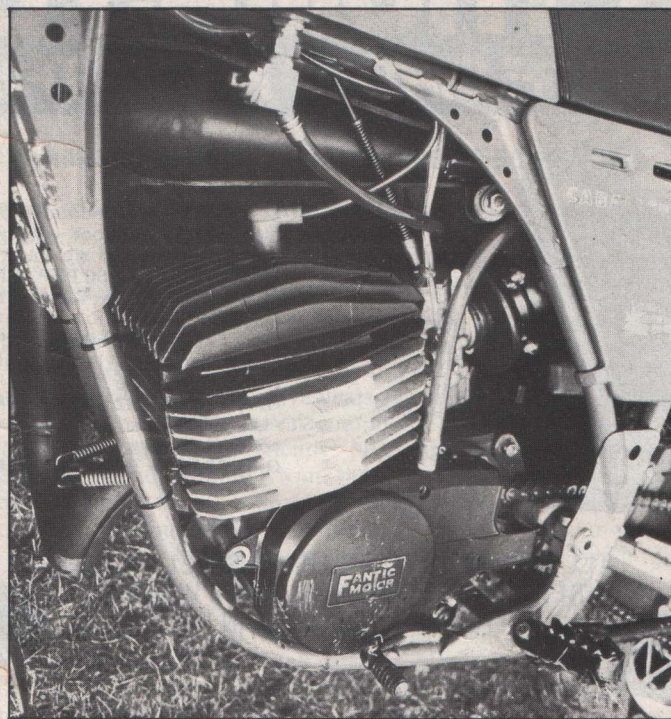
The going was typical of Wales in November – wet and heavy – hardly ideal conditions for a 125, particularly a Fantic built for its native habitat – hard, rocky and fast – but we began by riding the bike as it was set up. The motor starts very easily with the aid of the usual flip-type Dellorto choke, though some time is needed to get the motor warm – it just won't pull away otherwise.



Everything is light about the bike, except the clutch, and you find out why when the motor gets into the power band. Pretty peaky — if there's any difference between this and the motocross motor it can't be much. On the road you could be sitting on the tank with your feet on the front wheel spindle and the front wheel would still lift in the first three gears. Off-road, we were having the predictable problem of not being able to find grip; it was hard to move the bike at low revs because of the lack of torque and, once in the power band, the wheel just spins out. So maybe this is why the clutch feels heavy-duty; you've got to do a bit of slipping. We were running the tyres at 14psi which felt too hard, so we went down to 8psi with better results. But still the bike was too high — Geraint Jones found it hard to put it through tight turns because of the steering input, and difficult to get his foot in the right place.

The fork damping was also too stiff on rebound; the wheel didn't drop quickly enough when riding a series of bumps. So we dropped some oil out of the forks and pushed the stanchions through the yokes about 1½in, the maximum without restricting travel. The procedure for setting up the Hydrocross units is basically that the units should compress by one fifth of their free travel with the rider on board; we let them down a bit more than this to get an acceptable seat height without the units bottoming. A transformation was the result: the bike was now much more rideable, making it easier to cope with the fierce power band. A further point about the seat height is that the seat itself is supported on large rubbers, probably to ensure the air filter breathes properly, but the best part of an inch could be safely lost here. Filter access means unbolting the seat and the lid comes off after removing a rubber band — the seal is good and so is the foam element.

It's fast, but probably not as fast as the SWM 125. The Pirelli tyres are very good but the rear is only fitted with a 400 x 18, possibly because it

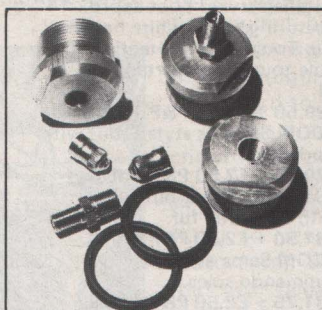


Footrest position is good and gear lever has a sprung tip.

might have trouble pulling a wider section tyre through the mud. The brakes are about average in performance and the conical aluminium hubs are light. The front cable is routed through the competition plate so it can't hang up on anything (like the headlight, for instance). The rear brake is a bit grabby but this was probably highlighted by the soft going.

The forks are oil-damped only and could really do with air assistance (Waklin & Ward supply air caps to fit all the Marzocchis). With altered damping they performed quite well on our test, but over a series of fast ripples they'd slow up. The Hydrocross units offer 10.8in of travel — not as much as you'd expect from the height of the bike.

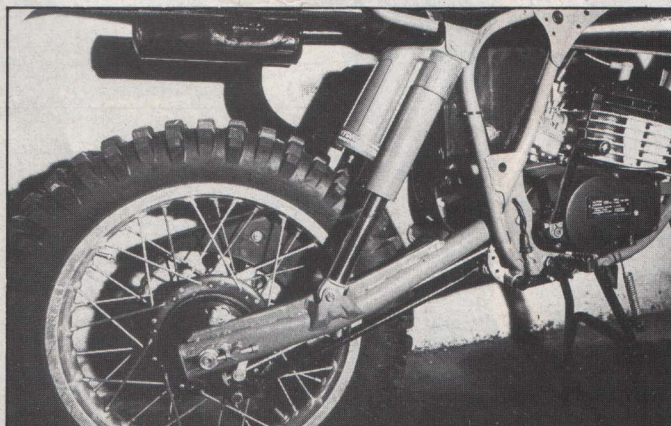
The air-adjustable units are slightly impaired by the adjustment method and the fact that they aren't balanc-



Air fork kit from Waklin & Ward.

ed. If you don't use the special pump and gauge, all you'll do is let the air out, though if you do have too little air in the back end the chain is held in check by a guide in front of the rear sprocket, a roller below the swing arm spindle and a big slipper on top of the swing arm. There's also a chain-guard which keeps most of the mud from the back tyre from getting to the chain.

Fantic has untypically fallen down on a few design details. For one, the wheel



Sachs Hydrocross units are good but need careful setting up.

adjusters use a forward-facing Allen bolt which fills with mud at the earliest opportunity so, apart from the usual tools, you have to carry something for clearing out Allen screw heads. A tool case is provided in the 1.7 gallon thermo-plastic tank but it's too small to be of much use. As they've bothered to put one on at all, they should make it big enough to carry all the necessary tools, or maybe they think a set of Allen keys is all you'll want. The final silly thing is the engine kill button — it's mounted on the lighting switch, but on the blind side between the clutch lever and the bar, and is not at all easy to reach.

At £1498 the Fantic is expensive; it makes a good enduro scrambler, but is not ideally suited to the type of events we get in this country. You could make certain modifications but, at that price, you shouldn't have to.

FANTIC 125 RC

Price inc VAT:	£1498
Warranty:	Sale of Goods Act
Engine:	Two-stroke single
Capacity:	124.4cc (55.2x52mm)
Lubrication:	Pre-mix petrol
Comp ratio:	14.5 to 1
Carburation:	32mm Dellorto
Ignition:	Electronic
Max power:	26bhp at 10,500rpm
Max torque:	12ft-lbs at 8,700rpm
Primary drive:	Gear
Clutch:	Wet multiplate
Gearbox:	Six-speed
Final drive:	5/8 x 1/4in chain
Mph/1,000rpm:	na
Fuel capacity:	1.7 gallons
Electrics:	Flywheel magneto, 25/25w headlight, stop/tail light
Frame:	Double cradle
Suspension:	Leading axle Marzocchi fork (f), 9.8 in travel Swing arm with Sachs Hydrocross units, 10.8in travel.
Brakes:	Drum/drum 4.9in drum (f) 4.9in drum (r)
Tyres:	Pirelli 3.00 x 21 (f) 4.00 x 18 (r)

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase:	57½in
Seat height:	40½in
H'bar width:	33in
Grnd clmce:	13½in
Rake/trail:	na
Dry weight:	209lb
Importer:	Barron Euro-trade Ltd, High St, Hornchurch, Essex.