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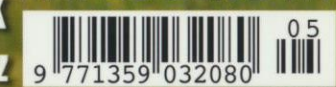
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Free Thinking...



You're holding the fattest ever issue of TBM - all 160 pages of it. That makes it officially Britain's biggest dirt bike magazine (at least in the amount of reading there is). We've been taking steps to improve the mag over the past couple of months and the changes are here to see. In this issue for instance, we have no less than *five* columnists (the humorous Chris Evans, the irrepressible Mark Williams, the knowledgeable Steve Plain, the unbeatable David Knight and now the unknown Alex Hearn - actually he's the editor of *Two Wheels Only* - just joking mate!). No other dirt bike magazine offers a broader spectrum of opinions.

At the back of this copy you'll also find that we've included a free 33-page supplement of our new *Trials Magazine* so you can get a taste of exactly what that publication would be like. As many of you may be aware, our intention was to produce a separate independent magazine catering to the trials enthusiast. This was to be aimed not just at competitive trials riders, but in

fact at anyone who had ever taken an interest in owning or riding a trials bike - whether competitively, or just for fun. However, no sooner had we announced our intentions of doing just that, than two weeks later another much larger publisher announced that they were planning a rival product - set to launch the week before ours and undercutting us on price. They say that imitation is the most sincere form of flattery. Personally I reckon it smacks of a lack of original thinking.

Anyhow, the result of all this is that we've decided to bring our project back 'in-house' and to give it away absolutely free. And although the supplement at the back of this mag represents only a tiny fraction of the independent-thinking, esoteric magazine we had originally planned - we think you may like it all the same, especially as it's completely free. Don't worry if you've never been into trials, I can assure you that not a single page of TBM has been harmed during the making of this month's extra-thick issue, and it's written very much in the TBM style so it sits comfortably within the mag.

Our intentions are to run with it for the next couple of months and then gauge the feedback we get. If you guys like it, we'll continue to include it in the back of TBM. But if you don't, it's history. So it's up to you. All feedback gratefully received at the usual TBM letters address or via email (letters@trailbikemag.com).

One final thought - the 20p price rise was already scheduled in for May and has got nothing to do with the extra pages this month. Don't believe me? Nah, I didn't think you would, but here's the proof. If you guys don't like the Trials Mag supplement and we take it away again, the price ain't gonna' go down...

SI MELBER

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It's already here but what is the new Honda CRF450X really like? TBM gets the first test...

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The story behind the picture...

HP SAUCE

BMW launch new 1200cc dirt bike..!

With their new R1200GS best suited to only occasional off-road use, BMW have now developed a more dirt-oriented version of the best-selling Boxer trailie - the HP2.

Clearly a very different machine to the regular GS, the

High Performance 2-cylinder, to give it its full title, weighs 30kg less than the GS, with a claimed wet weight of 195kg. But the slimming-down is only part of the story.

The new bike's tubular space-frame chassis comes with a Dakar

pedigree, having been based around that of the R900R rallye bikes. Gone is the Telelever front-end, replaced with a pair of regular telescopic forks giving 270mm of travel. The Paralever rear end is 30mm longer than standard and is fitted with an air-shock - a first on a production machine. Although not a new idea, air suspension is currently gaining in popularity, as the springless design allows a weight saving over a conventional shock.

As if it wasn't powerful enough already, the Boxer motor has been tweaked to give an extra 7bhp (now pushing out a claimed 105bhp) though the torque remains at 85lb-ft. Interestingly, BMW decided that a single 305mm disc, matched to a four-piston caliper, would provide enough retardation for the 195 kilo/100+mph machine. We'll see.

Continuing BMW's tradition of 'challengingly-styled' bikes, the HP2 comes with angular unpainted plastic panels and a translucent 13L fuel tank, whilst the traditional round headlight is reminiscent of GSs.

The HP2 is the first machine to be launched from the planned HP High Performance Series, and customer bikes are set to arrive late this year. But don't expect them to be cheap - BMW state that 'the price of the machines will be determined by their outstanding range of features; a much higher level of product substance; and comparatively small production volume.'

In order to prove the bike's off-road credentials, BMW will be entering HP2s in the infamous Baja 500 and 1000 races. And of course we'll give you our own view on the HP just as soon as we can get our hands on one...

If you want to stand out from the crowd, and er, everything else, the HP2 is the bike for you...



Off-Road Sport Under Threat

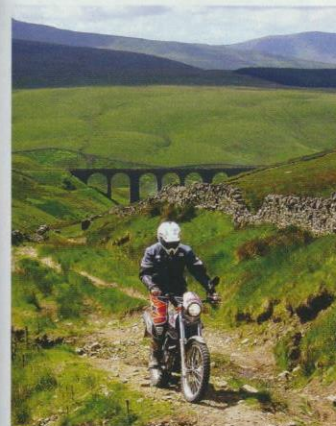


DEFRA have recently published new regulations regarding types of non-agricultural activities allowed on farm land during the 10-month qualifying period for the 'Single Farm Payment Scheme'. This has serious implications for the future of off-road motorsport events in this country and the ACU and MCIA are considering legal action in light of these changes. **See page 14 for the full story...**

GREEN DALES

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) has recently agreed to talks with local councils and green lane users in order to come to some compromise regarding the use of motorised vehicles across the Dales.

The Authority has admitted in the past that they want a total ban but that's unlikely to happen - so they've realised that talks are the only way forward. But with their minds already made up, it's up to riders to prove that a reasonable land use compromise can work, even on the most damage-prone tracks.



TUNISIA TROUNCING

KTM factory rider Cyril Despres continued his run of rally success with a comfortable win in the 24th Optic 2004 Tunisie Rallye.

The Frenchman struggled to find his rhythm on the first two days getting used to navigating without GPS - a measure introduced by organisers NPO to reduce speeds - but at the finish line beat second-placed Chilean Carlo de Gavardo by almost an hour!

Two American Baja 1000 specialists drafted into the Gauloises KTM team, Andy Grider and Chris Blais, came in third and fourth. They were so taken with the experience that they intend competing in the next round of the FIM Rallye-Raid World Championship in Morocco at the end of May. This event will see the return of Despres' main rivals Marc Coma (second on this year's Dakar) and Repsol KTM team-mate, Esteve Pujol.



NEXX PLEASE!



Answer the following multiple-choice question and complete the tie-breaker:

'The correct way through boggy terrain is...'

a - On flat grass avoiding the bog altogether

b - On the track avoiding the bog completely

c - Blez's route straight through the middle of the bog!

Tie-breaker: 'Blez's excuse for getting stuck was...'

Email your answer to helmet@trailbikemag.com or write to Helmet Comp, TBM, PO Box 9845, London, W13 9WP.

Last date for entries is 24 May 2005. Winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries received and TBM's decision is final. Now get to it...

TBM have teamed up with Nevis Marketing to give away a Nexx X20 Pro Spark helmet in red, size medium, worth £129.99. You'll find full details of this brand new helmet in Trick Bits (p72), but in the meantime if you want to win this one, take a look at this picture which was sent in to us by a 'concerned reader' and which features occasional TBM contributor Paul 'which way' Blezard and his long-suffering GS Beemer.

ICE ICE BABY

Following on from our 'Cold Play' article in March's TBM, Joe Treen from Canada sent us another picture from a recent outing. This is what he had to say: 'It was a great ride today. Only about 0-degrees C and sunny.

Beautiful! My 250 had leaking fork seals, so I didn't take it out. Rode a little Honda XR100 all day instead. Here's a pic one of the boys took as I

was dragging the handle-bars... Did I mention how much fun those things are? After about 50 passes, I finally chucked it down the road because the sidestand dug in and lifted the rear wheel off the ice.'

Nice one Joe...



TBM Dawn to Dusk

TBM is proud to announce that we will once again be sponsoring the Dawn to Dusk 12hr enduro which takes place nr Seven Sisters in South Wales on the bank holiday weekend of 27-28 August. With an expected entry of more than 500 riders, the TBM Dawn to Dusk is one of the highlights of the off-road calendar. For more info log onto the TBM website, where you'll find a link to the D2D site, or try dawntodusk.co.uk.



GIRL POWER

Calling all lady riders! Get yourself down to the KTM Adventure Centre in Devon on Wednesday 15 June for a one-day female-only off-road training day.

It all takes place in a 30,000sq ft indoor arena and the course is aimed at women with little or no off-road experience who want to give dirt riding a go, or improve their existing skills.

The day costs £189, which includes hire of a KTM 250EXC four-stroke, instruction from ACU accredited coaches, kit, equipment and lunch. For those that want to stay, luxury on-site accommodation is also available: £45.00 single, £35.00 twin (per person).

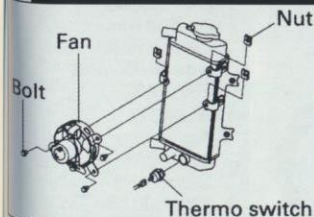
To book, call 01752 840 831 or for more info try ktmadventuretours.co.uk.

A LOAD OF HOT AIR

Honda CRF250X owners may be surprised to learn that the optional Honda cooling fan (part # 19000-KSC-000, fan set/cooling), has recently increased in price from under £145 to a staggering £400.

Late last week a reader rang the TBM office to inform us that he'd been quoted more than £400 for the kit which comprises of just an electric fan, a thermo-switch and a few nuts and bolts. A quick trawl of the web revealed that earlier this year, a UK Honda dealer was quoting the same kit for less than £150. When we checked the price with them, they quoted us the current price of £409.89 (inc VAT). And when we enquired about the dramatic price increase they said that they'd 'sold the first three kits at the cheaper price', but when they came to 'order the fourth kit the price [from Honda] had suddenly skyrocketed.' The dealer talked to Honda about the reasons for the price change and were informed that this was now the new price! So why the sudden increase? Over to you Mr Honda...

If you know of any other good examples of ridiculous spare parts prices, contact the TBM office via info@trailbikemag.com



MY FIRST BIKE

MIKE CARTER IS THE MAN BEHIND HUSKY SPORT - THE UK'S HUSQVARNA IMPORTER

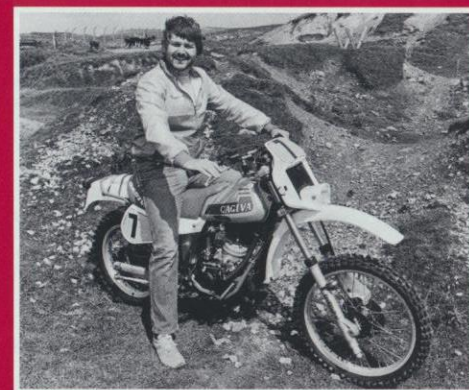
My very first bike was a well secondhand DOT (but Devoid Of Trouble it was not!). I can't tell you much about this bike as it generally didn't run for long enough to find out!

So, for this purpose we will call my first bike the 1968 Husqvarna CR250 (and yes they were called CRs before

Honda started making MX bikes) that I bought secondhand in 1972. £250 for an ex-Bryan Goss, well used example. Lovely to ride, great looking bike and pretty reliable to boot. But Bryan Goss I was not! As much as the desire was there, my abilities at MX were not a shadow of the great man himself.

I rode the bike all that year and part of 1973 in scrambles all over the Southern and South West Centres. Some wins at Junior level were hard earned in those days of £20.00 a week wages and two jobs to keep oneself scrambling. Yes, I was a sales rep selling tyres by day and a bouncer at the Top Rank in Southampton five nights a week to pay for my hobby. I don't tell my kids I was a bouncer as they will expect me to look like Warren Steele! [ex British supermoto champion and a former kick-boxing champion - ed]. Let no-one tell you off-road is expensive today - it was very expensive, relative to people's earnings back in the Seventies.

In that time I used to go to Bryan Leask Motors in Crawley for spare parts and general information from an excellent importer/dealer who obviously passed on his business-ethos to his son Perry who was, and still is, one of the nicest riders I have supported and dealt with (six national championships riding for Husky Sport).



From the Husky I moved onto a brand new KTM 250 for 1974 bought from Dennis Kelly in Wimborne for the enormous sum of £650.00. I can't remember where I got all that money from in those days? But credit where it's due, that was a fantastic bike then and I had a trouble free year, and rode lots of great meetings before joining Kawasaki to work as a regional sales manager - spoiling a great hobby by turning it into work. By the time Sunday came around and you had worked with bikes all week, the last thing you wanted to do was race one at the weekend.

So what happened to the '68 Husky? Well, it was bought by a customer I sold tyres to called George Denham, for his nephew to train on - a promising youngster by the name of Graham Noyce. Two legends rode that bike, but alas I was not one of them.

I suppose my life with Husqvarna went full circle when I became the importer of the brand in 1990 after the takeover of Husqvarna by the then Cagiva group. Nowadays I have plenty of bikes - but no time to ride.

But, I have booked a day off next week to go out on the new Husky Trails day at Oxford, so maybe I'll get the bug back and make a full time return to enduro - my first love in motorcycling. It's all been a great pleasure. See you out on the trails...

WILD WILD WEST



Places are now available for up to six experienced trail riders to take part in a unique 10-day expedition deep in the Nevada wilderness in July / August 2005. Covering approximately 1000 miles, the 'off-highway' route will combine historic single/dual track trails, providing a rallye-type

ride through forest, desert, canyons, rivers and mountains.

Suzuki DR-Z400s and full truck support are provided with spares, fuel, radios etc, but personal riding kit is required. For more info, contact Maurice on maurice.lifetime@att-global.net or call 01565 734008 or 07860 459925.

Due to over-ordering on the part of Yamaha UK, TBM has discovered that there's a surplus of unsold 2004 models still in dealers' showrooms. According to our source, this means there's BIG savings to be had on brand new 2004 Yamaha WR models in both road legal and competition form, perfect if you want to upgrade your current bike but can't quite justify a 2005 bike to your better half. To find out more, contact your nearest Yamaha dealer.



The Price is WRight

NUMBER CRUNCH

Even though overall motorcycle sales (registrations) have dipped slightly, down three-percent on last month, the off-road sectors are still on track.

The Adventure Sport category is up another one-percent, with the beefy 1200 Beemer selling an incredible 380 extra units last month - almost as many as all the other top five combined! It's also all change lower down the standings, with Honda's Transalp beating the Trumpet into third place by just one unit.

Meanwhile, the Trail/Enduro category is holding steady, with

the little Honda 125 still at the top of the tree with another 93 machines sold. The trials craze has finally

abated with the disappearance of the Beta Rev3, allowing Yamaha's DT125 to re-enter the race in fourth place only a bike-length ahead of the ever-green 450 Katosh. Complete figures are as follows:



ADVENTURE SPORT

1	BMW R1200GS	492
2	Honda XL125V	160
3	Honda XLV650V	119
4	Triumph 955 Tiger	118
5	KTM 640 SM	100

TRAIL/ENDURO

1	Honda XR125L	177
2	Honda CRF250X	138
3	Suzuki RV125	104
4	Yamaha DT125	95
5	KTM 450EXC	94



MERLIN MIX-UP

In the last issue of TBM we featured the 2004 WEC review DVD but we forgot to mention that the nice guys at Merlin Books supplied us with our copy. To remind you then - the DVD costs £16.99 - to get your hands on one, call Merlin on 01403 257626 or try merlinbooks.com.



MOTUL

fluidforce

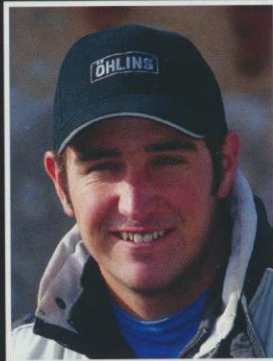


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5 MINUTES WITH...

20-YEAR-OLD AUSSIE RIDER JAKE STAPLETON IS COMPETING ABOARD A 250TM IN THIS YEAR'S BRAND NEW WEC JUNIOR ALL-POWERS CLASS...

WHAT WAS THE FIRST ENDURO BIKE YOU OWNED?

My first enduro bike was a 1999 KTM125. It was new and my dad helped me out with getting it. It was a really good first enduro bike and the only KTM I've owned.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST ENDURO?

A junior state championship race in a place called Luee Station in NSW. It was in 2001, I was 15 years old and I rode it on my KTM125. The event was kinda' wet and my result wasn't that great - I think I was about fourth. After racing motocross for many years it was just great to get so much riding in one day. I got more and more involved in racing enduros from that point onwards.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST ENDURO YOU HAVE EVER RACED?

The last round of the World Enduro Championship in Germany last year. It was really difficult, especially for me because I'd never ridden anything like that before. There were so many slippery climbs I must have fallen off a hundred times on the going. I think I finished in 12th and 14th in the 125cc class, which meant that I got points, but it was mainly because so many other riders recorded DNFs.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ENDURO?

Probably the Australian four-day enduro (A4DE). It's the only event that I've ridden three times. It takes place in a different area each year and it's great. Last year's event in Victoria was probably the best one I've ridden so far, partly because I did well. I won the 125cc class and finished second overall. It was dry on the first two days and then wet on day three before we had a really good motocross race on day four.

WHICH RIDER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON YOUR CAREER?

A rider called Damien Smith from back home in NSW. He lives pretty close to where I live and has really helped me as a rider. He has raced a couple of seasons of WEC and has won three A4DE titles. Because he'd ridden in Europe he was able to help me prepare for coming over here. Also, Stefan Merriman has been good to me and has been giving me advice lately about loads of different things.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BEST EVER PERFORMANCE?

I guess that would be from the WEC event in Portugal this year. On day one I finished five seconds off winning the Junior class and my test times were good enough for fifth in the E2 class. Knowing that I could have finished in amongst some of the biggest names in the sport was pretty cool.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST DISAPPOINTING RESULT?

So far I've not had any results that have been too bad, not in events that really matter. I had a bad day at the second round of the NSW sprint series a few years back, which was disappointing at the time because I had won the first round.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CRASH?

I've been pretty lucky and haven't crashed too heavily in the last few seasons. I did a lot of crashing when I was younger though. My top front teeth are all capped because I smashed them when I raced 80cc bikes. I also broke my wrist but I've not had too many injuries, or crashes since, thankfully.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED ENDURO MEMORY?

That would have to be the party after the race in Germany, the last round of the 2004 WEC series. It was crazy. Thousands of people crammed into an old factory, all drinking beer and eating sausages - I've never seen anything like it. I had a great time and certainly won't forget it in a hurry.

WHICH BIKE HAVE YOU ENJOYED OWNING/RIDING THE MOST?

I really liked my 125TM, which I raced last year. It was really easy to ride and a lot of fun. But I really like my 250 now as I've always ridden pretty smooth so I like having more power.

WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED TERRAIN?

Dusty, hard-pack, motocross style terrain is where I seem to get my best results, like in Portugal this year but I wouldn't say it's my favourite. I really enjoy racing in sand, but I'm not as comfortable in it as the stuff I grew up riding in back home.

WHAT DOES ENDURO SPORT NEED MORE OF?

I guess more publicity. Letting more people know what the sport is about and what it's like would have to be a good thing.

WHAT DOES ENDURO SPORT NEED LESS OF?

Mud!

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SPORT OF ENDURO WILL BE LIKE IN FIVE YEARS TIME?

If the WEC keeps heading the way it is we could have some pretty interesting events, with much more public awareness of what we're doing. I think that we'll start to struggle to hold onto some of the places we ride, no matter where we are in the world.

WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE IN ENDUROS?

I'd like to be world champion, that's my ultimate goal. For now I'd like to win the Junior World Championship class. Both are going to be difficult but I'll keep working hard.



25/21



**XC JACKET #10027 // S - XXL
BLACK, BLUE, RED, ORANGE**



**RANGER SHELL #10005 // S - XXL
BLACK**



**ASSAULT JACKET #10010 // S - XXL
BLACK, BLUE, RED, ORANGE**



**ASSAULT VEST #10003 // S - XXL
RED, ORANGE**



**CHILL GLOVE #03075 // 8 - 12
BLACK, BLUE, RED**



**TOOL PACK #59192 // ONE SIZE
BLACK**



**STORM PACK #11052 // ONE SIZE
BLACK**



**SPLASH PACK #59191 // ONE SIZE
BLACK**

RIGHT TO RIDE

Hard on the heels of their recent response to the consultation document 'Mechanically Propelled Vehicles on Rights of Way' (MPV/RoW), The Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has dealt another, potentially even more deadly blow to dirtbike sport. Mark Williams investigates...



It's difficult to know whether DEFRA's latest decision to ban farmers from claiming land subsidies if they allow their land to be used for motorsport is the latest in a long line of anti-bike measures from a Government which panders to an urban elite, or just another example of DEFRA's lack of understanding of the rural economy.

As its name suggests, the rather innocuously named Single Payment Scheme (SPS) replaces a variety of subsidy arrangements for farmers and landowners with a lump sum covering all agricultural and set-aside activities and, as such is broadly welcomed by the farming industry. However claiming core EU legislation as its motive, DEFRA has just announced it will not make payments on any land used for commercial activities that take place for more than 28 days each year, including clay pigeon shooting, car boot sales and country shows. And they will not make payments if ANY motor sport activity takes place on such land, even if it's

only once or twice a year.

Under the old rules, farmers were permitted to use their land for certain non-agricultural activities - including of course motor sport events - for up to 28 days per year without jeopardising their existing subsidies. So with the prospect of large sums of money being denied them, farmers will not be willing to hire out their land for all but the most lucrative major events, and the implications of this are clear: no more motorcycle trials, MX, hare and hounds or enduros that take place partially or totally on agricultural land. According to ACU chief executive, Neil Hellings, this 'is absolutely devastating, and taking into account our own events and those run by smaller bodies such as the AMCA, this will affect some 7,000 meetings per year.'

Gone to the Wall

At a stroke many thousands of sporting motorcyclists will thus be denied their legitimate recreational pursuit, dozens if not hundreds of specialist dealers may be forced out of business and several smaller importers could go to the wall. And these are not proposals or consultation issues as was the case with MPV/RoW, but regulations handed down by a single government department without any reference to those they affect.

Typifying the rock-and-a-hard-place dilemma of many landowners sympathetic to motorcycle sport, Hertfordshire farmer Richard Bott told TBM that he would 'probably have to cancel the three events I run on my land.' This includes the Benington Enduro, plus a couple of local trials, 'which bring in about £1200 in all. But I can't justify these events if I'm to lose an SPS payment of some £4000 for the 40 acres involved.'

In some areas where this new ruling will have a very real impact, local branches of the National Farmers Union (NFU) are campaigning to have DEFRA rescind this element of the SPS requirements (see below), and as Richard Bott noted 'the Department have a habit of making ill-advised policy announcements, withdrawing them when pressured by farmers and then re-announcing them in modified form.'

'Many thousands of sporting motorcyclists will be denied their legitimate recreational pursuit, dozens if not hundreds of specialist dealers may be forced out of business and several smaller importers could go to the wall...'

Indeed DEFRA spokesman Adam Sims was almost overly keen to point out that 'These rules will be reviewed at the end of 2005 in the light of experience, and in discussion with stakeholder representatives.'

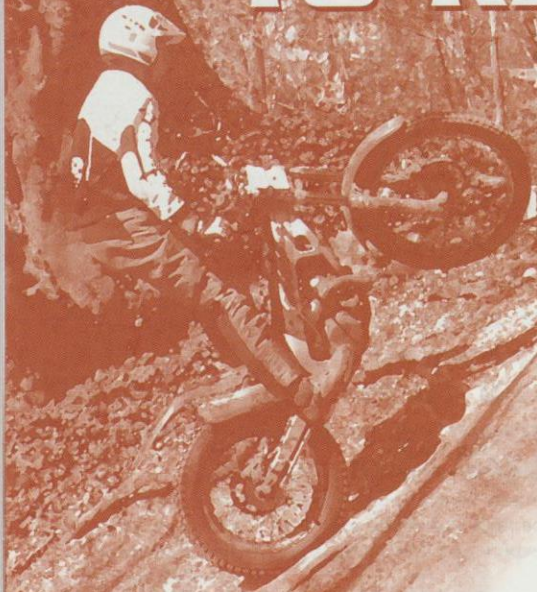
By which time of course an awful lot of damage could have been done, and could continue to be done whilst any re-drafting of the SPS rules is undertaken. And in any case 'stakeholder representatives' is political gobbledygook for vested interests which as far as dirtbiking is concerned increasingly means affluent urban refugees who have little time for the give and take which once characterised rural life... as the recent ban on hunting with dogs demonstrated.

DEFRA's Deceit

Sims repeatedly claimed that DEFRA is only implementing legislation as set out by the EU as 'interpreted' by the ministry's legal experts. However, because I really know how to enjoy myself, I trawled through the snappily named EU Council Regulation 1782-2003, but could find no mention whatsoever of 'motor sport'. Indeed under Article 44(2) the definition of what SPS payments will be made for is as follows:

"Eligible hectare" shall mean any agricultural area of the holding taken up by arable land and

RIGHT TO RIDE



permanent pasture except areas under permanent crops, forests or used for non-agricultural activities.'

So it is quite clear that DEFRA has in fact arbitrarily chosen to exempt some 'non-agricultural' activities from SPS eligibility, but not motorsport. When pushed, Mr Sims claimed that this was on 'environmental grounds', which is a bit rich when such things as car boot sales, clay pigeon shoots and, in particular, equestrian events generate as much or even more topsoil damage, noise and/or vehicle exhaust pollution as, say, a motorcycle trial.

Clearly no-one involved in off-road motorcycle sport is going to take this lying down and the Motorcycle Industries Association (MCIA), whose members stand to lose considerably from the SPS rules, issued the following statement:

'We are surprised by the sentiment and timing of the DEFRA rules. It appears to contradict the efforts of many within the "off-road" sector as well as a number of government intentions.

'It is logical that (as a consequence of these measures) we will see a significant increase in

"motorcycle trespass" and we can only hope that since this has effectively been forced upon our public by the government, the government will not use it as a stick to beat us with.'

More Pressure on Green Lanes

What the MCIA refers to is of course the likelihood that many frustrated MX and enduro riders will start riding on byways or, worse, still, tracks that are not legally open to vehicles - possibly on untaxed, unregistered bikes - thus exacerbating the problems that led minister Alun Michael and his officials to draft the 'MPV/RoW' proposals of which we are all so bitterly aware. Ironically, with their 'time limited' working parties and initiatives to promote and police responsible trailriding, LARA and the TRF have had some success in quietly persuading Michael behind the scenes to tone down his proposals... good work that could soon be blown apart.

It therefore seems incredible that the two arms of DEFRA - agriculture and environment - did not consult one another over this issue, but the ACU's Neil Hellings dismisses the deeply cynical view that forcing thousands more motorcyclists onto green lanes would strengthen Michael's case for clamping down further on trailriding. 'I do not believe that there is a conspiracy against motorcyclists,' he says, 'and heaven forbid if I'm wrong. But if you take into account that nearly half the sporting events in the car world are also going to be affected by this, the consequences are going to be felt far beyond RoW users. From my dealings with them so far, I genuinely think that no-one in the agricultural side of DEFRA had any idea of the popularity of off-road motorsport.'

And DEFRA's spokesman, Adam Sims rather brazenly acknowledged that 'when making its decision (we) did not consider the issue of which areas of land, such as "green lanes", that motor bikes might decide to use.'

TRF (and ex-ACU) Chairman Geoff Wilson doesn't care one way or the other, saying simply that 'it has to be resolved for the sake of all concerned. For we can be sure that at a time of an election the one place where blame won't find a home, even if blame there is, is with the government!' But he adds, 'for years motorcycle competition bodies thought that the best policy was to keep their corporate heads below the parapet so that maybe their activities could go on largely unregulated. It was a process of

appeasement with an unsound foundation. Whilst the TRF sought to establish a firm legal basis for recreational motorcycling on green lanes, elements of the motorcycle sport fraternity cautioned the TRF for upsetting landowners across whose land trails ran and relied on access by permission rather than access by right.'

Chickens Come Home

'Now it's come home to roost,' continued Wilson. 'When your head is below the parapet, no-one knows you're there, and the chances are you'll be run over anyway... without anybody noticing. Now is the time for the ACU and others to take the stand that they should have taken long ago and challenge this ruling.'

So what exactly are the relevant organisations doing to try and reverse this ruling? Hellings himself is furiously lobbying Sport England 'who also weren't consulted on this, but their CEO is now on board', as well as trying to arrange meetings with Sports and Tourism Minister Richard Caborn and Larry Whitty, the Minister of Agriculture. 'But with the election campaign in progress, this is proving difficult.' Indeed calls to Margaret Beckett's office at DEFRA, even by MPs favourable to motorsport, have so far met with a resounding silence. Lower down the food chain the department's civil servants strongly deny that the timing of the announcement was a crude ploy to divert attention from it... rather in the manner the MPV/RoW consultation paper was released immediately prior to Christmas 2003.

But at a meeting of the MCIA and ACU's Off-Road Motorcycle Group on April 14th, LARA representative Alan Kind announced that his organisation had mounted a legal challenge to the DEFRA ruling on the basis that it 'wrongly applied the EU rules.'

Having already taken counsel's advice,

'It is logical that (as a consequence of these measures) we will see a significant increase in "motorcycle trespass" and we can only hope that since this has effectively been forced upon the public by the government, the government will not use it as a stick to beat us with...'

LARA's lawyers issued a 'Pre-Action Protocol' to DEFRA informing them of this and proposing as a solution that they revert to the 14 days (for racing) and 28 days (for trials) per annum exemptions that existed under the old CAP subsidy regime.

'They are legally obliged to respond within 14 days,' explained Kind, 'and if they don't we have informed them that we'll seek a judicial review, which

counsel have suggested will go in our favour.' However if it comes to that, the earliest possible high court hearing would be in late June, by which time a vast number of sporting events will have been cancelled, and as several delegates at the meeting acknowledged, if you lose a venue once, you've probably lost it forever. But the cost of seeking a judicial review could be as much as £60,000, even more than the TRF is facing in the case of the 'Preshute 12' footpath case (see TBM114), and LARA, the ACU and MCIA are already talking seriously about launching a fighting fund.





RIGHT TO RIDE

Armageddon Date

Meanwhile farmers have to make their applications for SPS Payments by May 14th, which must include details of any land they plan to use for non-eligible activities, and already the list of casualties is mounting. One representative at the meeting noted that five out of seven grass-track meetings his group had planned for April alone had already been lost, and the second round of the Fast Eddy championship due at Donington Park on 24 April has also been pulled. Expect plenty more such announcements by the time you read this, and of course any landowners who choose to stick with motorsport events will massively increase the charges they make to promoters, costs that will have to be passed onto entrants and spectators.

And as if to foster a siege mentality, during the course of the ACU/MCI meeting Helling received a copy of a fax sent to all tenant farmers in the Duchy of Cornwall (prop HRH Prince Chuck) that there was to be no more motorsport on their land.

To my claim that some NFU executives are sympathetic towards motorsport, Helling countered that, 'unfortunately many farmers are sick and tired of illicit riding across their land, so

whilst they may be supportive of their members in not wanting to be obstructive to responsible activity, far more gets published by the NFU in respect of illegal riding than does about the commercial and community benefits of motorsport.' Plus, bearing in mind the current barrage of EU regulations they're having to shoulder, the rights and wrongs of a DEFRA ruling on motorcycle sport 'is very small beer indeed.'

The AMCA's Ken Wynstanley, a retired farmer himself, added that generally speaking, 'farmers traditionally go along with the NFU party line, and farmers are a very traditional lot.'

And although the DEFRA rules state, and their spokesman Adam Sims wished to emphasise, that SPS payments will only be refused on the 'land actually used for motor sport activities,' according to Helling many farmers believe that this is the thin end of the wedge 'and that they will eventually lose all of their subsidy.'

What happens in the next few weeks will be crucial to the off-road sporting calendar for the remainder of 2005, never mind the longer term. But TBM readers directly or indirectly affected by this situation - and that could eventually include all of us - can take action. The ACU is advising its members to encourage farmers affected by DEFRA's ruling to lobby their local NFU representatives about its inequities, and one delegate went as far as to suggest that in areas where there are marginal Labour seats, ACU and AMCA-affiliated clubs make it clear to their local MP that they will not get the motorcyclists' votes.

The trouble is would a new Conservative government be any less hostile to recreational off-road motorcycling than a Labour one, and could the Lib-Dems, the only party whose MPs actively support dirtbiking, actually benefit from any such protests? Only time will tell...

DEFRA's Draconian Deal

- Govt introduce new, EU-based rules with no warning or consultation, stating that henceforth there'll be...
- No subsidies for farmers allowing motorsport on their land, leading to...
 - The end of moto-cross, trials, hare 'n' hounds enduro etc, except on private, expensive, purpose-built sites, prompting...
 - An inevitable increase in illegal off-road riding, our only hope remaining with...
 - Cripplingly costly court cases, with no guarantee of success...

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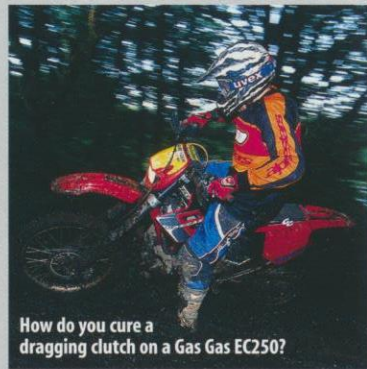
Life's a Drag

Dear Steve

I recently purchased a secondhand 2002 Gas Gas EC250 and love it to bits. However, the one slight niggle is that the clutch is dragging. Having stalled, the bike won't start in gear with the clutch in and also when it's hot (such as after pulling itself out of two feet of snow) it stalls at low revs. I've adjusted the clutch lever but it's had little effect. Please help.

James Vinter
Via email

I trust you're using light gear oil in the gearbox. If not, then you should be. Otherwise, it's time to break out the tools, James. Take the clutch apart and ensure that the metal clutch plates aren't distorted. Simply lay them on a dead flat surface to check, and if they are warped then you'll need some new ones. Take a look at the clutch basket - if it's been heavily grooved by the plates then this can cause the clutch to drag. It's possible to rub down the grooves, but if it's heavy wear then



How do you cure a dragging clutch on a Gas Gas EC250?

you may want a new basket. And you'll also need to check that the clutch centre nut isn't too tight as this can cause the clutch hub and the basket to bind. Use a torque wrench to check that it's as per the manual. My guess is that you'll find something wrong in one of these areas.

When refitting, don't forget a new gasket on the clutch cover, and refill the gearbox with light gear oil.

While you're in the garage working on your Gasser, James, you can also fit the new Michelins AC10s you've won for the best tech question..!

Matthew Reed
Via email

Matthew, assuming that the carb jetting is standard, I'd be inclined to check the accelerator pump. To do this you'll need to disconnect the rear sub-frame and remove the air boot from the carb. Look into the carb, twist the throttle and check fuel is being squirted from the accelerator pump. If it isn't, then you'll need to remove the carb and give it a good clean. Otherwise check for leaks on the exhaust and emission pipes, and try isolating the emission pipe if the problem persists.

Bar Hopping

Dear Steve

I've bought an Akrapovic tail pipe for my 2005 Yamaha WR450F, but now the bike backfires when you shut the throttle. Also when I require the bike to respond to a quick burst of throttle for a drop-off or taking off the lip of a jump the bike dies. This can be pretty frightening when you nearly go over the bars because the wheel's dropped into what you wanted it to clear. Please help... before I need medical help!



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Spinning Around

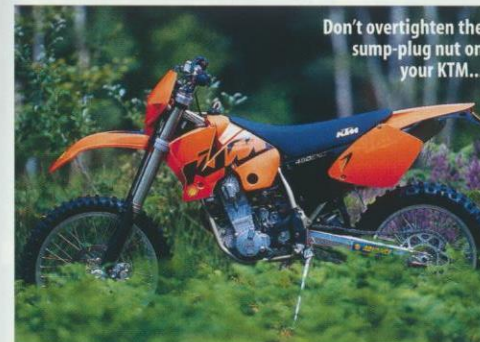
Dear Steve

The allen bolt drain-plug at the bottom of my 450EXC's crankcase has rounded off. How do I get it out in order to clean the filter and drain the oil?

Stuart Lawrence
Via email

Sadly, Stuart, your predicament serves as a lesson to all KTM owners out there. The drain-plug is quite 'soft' and therefore you should never tighten it more than is strictly necessary. It's imperative that you don't allow key fasteners to become worn (you can always buy spares) and never use ill-fitting tools. With the KTM sump-plug you should always clean it out thoroughly before you insert the allen key, and ensure that the 'key is well seated before you exert any pressure.

Right then, so what can you do? Well, first off I'd try tapping in an imperial allen key which is slightly larger than the original fitting. This should give you the purchase you need. Other, slightly more drastic measures include drilling into the plug and using a stud extractor to twist it out (as the Ed did when the same thing happened on his 'Berg). Or, at a push, you may be able to find someone who'll weld a nut to the plug and then you can simply use a spanner to turn it. It goes without saying that you should exercise caution whichever approach you take! Good luck...



Don't overtighten the sump-plug nut on your KTM...



Suzuki's DR350: Front brake wear is not uncommon...

Take a Brake

Dear Steve

The front brake caliper on my 1995 DR350S is well past its best. Is there another Suzuki model that shares the same caliper, as DR bits in breakers seems as rare as hens' teeth?

Andy Norton
Via email

Sadly, Andy, I don't know of any calipers which'll bolt straight on, other than the original obviously. To see if a caliper from another model will fit then you're best off asking a clued-up Suzuki dealer, such as Taylor Racing (01249 657575). Otherwise, use the internet for breaker's websites as I'm sure you'll find someone with DR parts. There are also internet and telephone parts-search services where breakers phone you if they've got the part you're after. But do you really need a whole new caliper? Could you not simply fit new pistons and seals?

Go with the Flow

Dear Steve

I'm having a problem with coolant loss on my mkII CRM250. After topping up the radiators and going for a ride, the coolant flows into the overflow tank (which I think is in the wrong position, behind the left-hand side panel), which then overflows onto

PLAIN & SIMPLE

the swingarm, chain, and tyre. Then when it's cooled the level in the radiator has dropped by about half a cup-full. Could this be the head gasket leaking slightly and pressurizing the cooling system?

Owen Coyle
Via email

Hmmm, it certainly sounds like a head gasket problem Owen, and that's probably the best place to start looking for the fault. Purchase a new cylinder head gasket, drain down the system and then remove the cylinder head and check the gasket for obvious signs of failure. Then re-assemble using the new gasket and be sure to torque the head down to the correct settings and in the correct order (you can find these in the owner's manual or by checking with a dealer). By the way, it's not unknown for CRMs to blow their waterpump seals though in this case it's unlikely to be the cause of your problem... Good luck...



Cut the Ice

Hi Steve

I ride a 2004 KTM 200EXC and love it. But every time we go out in the cold the bike suffers from carb icing, fuel consumption drops as if I have a fuel leak, and I have to keep the throttle nailed just to keep the thing running. Do you have any tips on prevention or cure?

Jonathan Airey
Via email

Move somewhere warm and sunny, that'll sort it..! Only kidding, Jonathan. First off, use decent petrol as this can certainly make a difference. Try a well-

known brand rather than filling up down at your local supermarket. Then you need to keep your carb nice and snug. Get hold of some bubble-wrap and wrap it around the carb, ensuring that it doesn't catch on any cables etc. Also make a deflector plate out of some plastic and mount it from the left side of the barrel back towards the carb. This should deflect the cold air away and allow the warm air from the engine to reach the carb.

Another mod that you can employ when riding in extreme cold (though carb icing most often occurs just above freezing), is to tape up part of your bike's rads to ensure that it gets up to temperature quickly and doesn't run too cold (especially important on two-stroke machines to prevent 'cold seizing'). It's simple to do, and can be removed in seconds if your bike starts getting too hot.

On the Rim

Dear Steve

I was wondering if you could give me some advice on tyre fitting. I know top enduro riders only take minutes to change a tyre, but it can take me hours! As there seem to be few dirtbike tyre retailers who also fit tyres, I was thinking about investing in one of the tyre changing 'devices' I've seen advertised. Are they worth the 50 quid asking price? Also, is there an easy way to protect the wheel rim from damage when using HD tyre levers? Any help would be much appreciated.

Neil Clarke
Via email

Neil, there is so much to be written on tyre changing that it could easily fill the entire tech column, twice over! If you send your home address to the 'tech' email then I'll post you out a booklet on how to change tyres. Tyre changing 'devices' can be a great help, especially when fitting mousses, and they make it much easier to 'break' the bead of the tyre. Just make sure that you get a quality product. Lastly, if you're concerned about your rims then plastic rim protectors are available through dirt bike dealers, and they're good 'n' cheap too.

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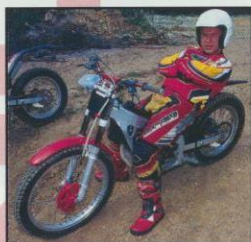
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DIRTY

Since I last wrote it has been busy, busy, busy - 'plus ca change' as the French would say. First up was my inaugural trail ride of the season in the Morvan and for once I was supremely lucky with the weather. At every café or hotel where we stopped, I was greeted with the same refrain; 'Oh Monsieur Chris, what luck you have. For the last three days everything has

CHRIS EVANS IS IN A REFLECTIVE MOOD...

been blocked by snow.' In fact, right up high there were still a few sunken tracks where deep drifts remained, but they only ever involved a couple of metres of pushing and shoving and we managed to complete the route without major incident - phew.

After that I dashed back to Blighty, loaded up Patsy Quick's van with my supermoto bike (for blatting around Paris on this summer) and then headed back to France with her and Clive Town for a quick run through my Lozere route, in preparation for three back-to-back trips I will be running in a couple of days' time. Although a bit of a holiday for me, and a chance for Pats and Zippy to stretch their 'bike legs' after their Dakar diversion, I also wanted to see if all the tracks were rideable and tidy up the road book a smidgen - make sure the distances were spot on, etc.

Before we could ride however there was a spot of emergency maintenance to be carried out to my faithful 450 EXC - a task Zippy and Pats tackled with gusto, and a fair amount of snorting derision, while I looked

on in embarrassed silence. Although only one year old, she already has 9000kms on her and has received precious little in the way of love and care, apart from having her tappets adjusted at my favourite Parisian bike shop - Challenge 75 - and monotonously regular oil changes. First job to be tackled was replacing the plastic chain-guide around the swinging arm spindle, and when Zip had finally got the worn bolts off, the full extent of the damage could be seen - two large grooves where the chain had rubbed through the metal. I suppose that would explain why water poured out every time I took the chain adjuster bolts out! After that it was just a case of replacing the rear wheel bearings, the two ally wheel spacers with some trick looking ones from Enduro Engineering, changing the rear tyre and chucking in some brake pads. I'd like to say that at the end of it all she was as good as new, but sadly that would be lying. Let's just say she was ready to tackle three days of intensive trail riding.

And guess what, when we finally got out there we discovered a few tracks right up high still rendered impassable by snowdrifts. What is it with me and snow this year? The difference of course was that instead of stressing about whether my punters would be able to get through, we all laughed like drains as we got stuck up to our mudguards and then refused to help pull each other out. Oh, what it is to have friends.

Despite being forced to miss out a couple of kilometres which we just didn't have the strength to drag our bikes through, we managed to cover

'IF MOTORCYCLES WEREN'T SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN EARNING MY DAILY CRUST I WOULD STRUGGLE TO SIMPLY GET OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING...'

virtually the entire route and make all the necessary changes to the roadbook. And as an added bonus I even persuaded Pats and Zippy to change my front mousse and tyre and drop the oil out before we all jumped back in the van - and headed in the direction of Clermont Ferrand. And while they continued back to the UK, I caught a plane bound for Nice and the start of the Tunisie Rallye.

Just like last year there were no Brit entries in either the car or bike categories, which I suppose proves (if nothing else) that sacking me as their UK correspondent 18 months ago hasn't made all that much difference - gloat, gloat! In general the bike entry was down in numbers this year, not least among the high echelons of the class where the lack of a serious rival made Cyril Despres' victory look almost embarrassingly easy. Quite why there was such a reduced turnout remains something of a mystery, especially as all the signs are that the 2006 Dakar will be as full up as it was this year. One possibility, alluded to by the French national daily sports paper L'Equipe, is the recent emergence of a number of new more 'exotic' bike events. The Spanish Repsol team for example had opted to give it a miss to compete in the Argentinean Los Pampas Rallye, held just a few weeks previously, while there was talk during the Optic of new races to be held in Mexico, Brazil and even China.

I'd like to be able to say that after such a hectic four weeks I will be enjoying a bit of well earned rest and recuperation, but sadly that won't be the case. After the three previously mentioned Lozere trips, I'll just have time to squeeze in a Morvan tour before heading back to North Africa for the Moroccan Rallye. It is a complete mystery how somebody as lazy as my good self manages to fill their time up so completely. I suspect the answer is that if motorcycles weren't somehow involved in earning my daily crust I would struggle simply to get out of bed in the morning...



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COMPLETELY RUTTED



Devotees of the TBM letters pages may've noted in the last issue Danny Taylor's waspish reference to my appearance in a less than worthy television docudrama. But as there is only room for one Smart Alec in this mighty organ I should add that the experience, however ill-advised at the time, at least stood me in good stead for the burgeoning career I am now enjoying as an off-road TV celebrity,

MARK WILLIAMS SPINS A 'WEB' OF INTRIGUE...

something I fear may elude the aforementioned Mr Taylor. Yes, I am now available for supermarket openings, political endorsements and currently negotiating with several leading dirtbike manufacturers to produce a signature 'Mark Williams Edition' knobby-tyred moped.

For in this overloaded media world, such is the ease with which humble scribblers, scoundrels and indeed anyone who isn't a complete half-wit (and even a few who are) can achieve their 'fifteen minutes of fame' that I had a second shot at stardom just last month. Well stardom is actually stronging it a bit, but by the time you read this BBC1 viewers may've been alarmed to witness a wild-haired and sweaty 'yrs trly' arguing passionately for fair treatment of we trailriders by the government and general public alike.

Prompted by the dreaded 'MPV on RoW' legislation, the occasion was a short BBC news feature. This featured a sting operation mounted by Gwent police, leading to the arrest of several blokes riding dubiously legal machinery on patently illegal terrain. My role in all this,

and that of a couple of other TRF riders including PR Officer and renowned Williams critic, Ian Packer, was to present the alternative and acceptable face of Welsh trailriding. And after lengthy e-mail exchanges I'd persuaded the BBC people to film us riding on the Gap Road just south of Brecon, not least because due to woeful lack of council maintenance, the byway is only open to vehicles for two months of the year, and March happened to be one of them.

This gave me the opportunity to explain to the interviewer that until relatively recently this old drovers' road was easily negotiable by vehicles (patches of tarmac are still visible in places), that just like any other 'road' the council have a duty to maintain it, that responsible use of road legal trailbikes causes damn-all damage to such tracks but that if they're only open for short periods, they will then attract heavy usage - especially by large groups of two- and four-wheeled vehicles which will almost inevitably cause irritation to other users and be far more likely to degrade the surface than if trafficked in small numbers less frequently throughout the year.

This pontification took place after myself, Mr Packer and my mate Roy were filmed bimbly along the southernmost section of the Gap and negotiating the extremely steep 'n' slippery ravine across which the Army had blown-up a bridge many years ago, something we achieved with, ahem, varying degrees of competence and grace.

At the time of scribbling I have yet to see the resultant footage, but cynic though I am I reckon the BBC crew gave our cause a decently objective crack of the whip and, if nothing else, showed the

MARK WILLIAMS

'LOCAL POLITICIANS ARE GUILTIER THAN MOST OF COWERING BEHIND THEIR E-MAIL ADDRESSES AND, FOR THAT MATTER, THEIR VOICEMAILS, WHEN CONFRONTED BY A DUBIOUS DECISION TO SLAP A TRO ON A BYWAY...'

sort of raw, majestic countryside that trailriding allows us to enjoy. At least for the moment.

But of course in a television environment where zillions of content-hungry channels vie for public attention, this little news item will've had little impact in the grand scheme of things. Nowadays many of us are too busy dealing with other types of media to even watch the box anyway. Which sort-of prompts the question, how many of you are all webbed up, then? And no, I'm not talking about the spiders that have been busy shrouding your precious dirtbikes in your garages during the winter recess (pansies, the lot of you), but the world wide web, the digital highway that was supposed to liberate us all from the draconian grip of vested interests and malign information management.

I was quite surprised to find that more than half the members of our local TRF group don't in fact have e-mail addresses, which of course makes the time and cost of communicating, especially with those who can't regularly attend meetings, more onerous than it might otherwise be. And as I thought about this I realised that I had my first e-mail account almost exactly ten years ago, which makes me a mature user in more senses than one.

However as I currently wrestle with the extra cost and complexity of buying broadband, I view the internet in its various forms with mixed feelings, especially when it comes to all things off-road. Generally speaking e-mail is a boon because it saves the time and cost of other forms of contact and used properly, gets straight to the point. But of course as a recipient you're routinely faced with a mailbox full of spam and irritatingly irrelevant or partial responses to queries you've made, responses that could actually have been properly sorted during a two minute phone call.

There is also the temptation to 'hide behind e-mails' the fact that one can't or doesn't want to deal with whatever it is someone's on about, and in my regular dealings with RoW issues, both locally and on TBM's behalf, nationally, this is often the case.

Local politicians who, I would suggest, are local

politicians because they couldn't cut it as national politicians, are guiltier than most of cowering behind their e-mail addresses and, for that matter, their voicemails when confronted by a dubious decision to slap a TRO on a byway, especially when they've done so without consulting the interested parties... other than, of course, the landowners through whose territory it passes. In some cases I've been sufficiently incensed by such wilful indolence that I've resorted to good old snail-mail which usually obliges the politician or civil servant (note that word 'servant', because we damn well pay their wages) to reply within 28 days or suffer the statutory consequences. But that's no way to achieve things in a hurry.

With my journalistic hat on and in the case of national issues, trying to get a straight answer out of DEFRA or the DfT involves endless e-mails and phone calls plus much time on government websites and being held in phone queues trying to find out exactly who is responsible for giving you what invariably turns out not to be a straight answer, thus triggering the whole process all over again. For example the piece elsewhere in this issue about the likely effects DEFRA's new edicts on the Non-Agricultural Use of Land will have on motorcycle sport took almost two full days of harrying civil servants and minister's spokesmen to stitch together, when a simple 'Actually all we're trying to do is stop people enjoying themselves' would've been quicker, easier and more honest to utter from the outset.

Not that this will concern most of you because you'll have doubtless found the web invaluable for buying off-road bikes and bits, entering enduros, booking trailriding holidays and, most importantly, luxuriating in the joys of the TBM website. But if and when the jig's finally up and the government have effectively banned us from the countryside on anything more dangerous than a space-hopper, at least we'll have more time to spend building our own websites and starring in our own little web-cam docudramas that no-one will bother to watch or care about. Except, perhaps, Mr Taylor of course...



Eh? A regular column in TBM? Me? Err, let me think about it... Putting the phone gently down to his Melberness I stared at the receiver for about 30 seconds. Hmm. My initial reaction of genuine surprise didn't last long before my ego started quietly purring. How flattering!

'NEW TBM COLUMNIST AND BIKE JOURNO ALEX HEARN HAS BEEN WELL AND TRULY BITTEN BY THE DESERT RACING BUG...'

My day job (in publishing) consists mainly of reading other peoples' copy, managing a disparate band of very individual individuals (something much akin to herding cats) and trying to produce a half-decent motorcycle magazine on time every month. It's great fun of course and much better than working for a living. But a column in TBM - now, that's a different kettle of fish. I feel I've finally arrived. But why, and what on earth am I going to write about every month?

The answer to the first question I guess is the Dakar. The answer to the second is I don't know, but I'll have a go and we'll see which one of us gets bored first. I cartwheeled out of this year's race after ten days and 3000 miles. To say I was a bit gutted would

be an understatement but hey, at least I walked away. It was my first attempt and as I write this, the Dakar organisers (ASO) still can't find my bike. In mid-April. Ouch.

But do you know what? Doing the Dakar is the single most life-affirming thing I have ever, ever done. I loved it. And while yes, it is hard work, and a bit frightening in places, and infuriating (because it's run by a French organisation), in others it's also a lot of fun. Riding one of the trickiest off-rovers you can buy against the stunning backdrop of northwest Africa? Yes please. Dirtbikes take you places you'd never normally go, this much we know. As does the Dakar, only much more so.

'It'll change you,' they all said, beforehand. 'No it won't,' I railed inside, while outwardly nodding in supposed understanding of what they were on about. They, those that'd been there and knew of course, were right. It's an event that leaves indelible marks on the humans that touch it - emotionally, physically, psychologically and financially. I've got 'em all, thanks. I'll show you if you're interested.

How on earth did I end up doing the Dakar anyway? It's not like I'm qualified - because I'm certainly not - but neither (reassuringly) are at least 60-percent of the field. I'm a trail riding punter, probably not

'DOING THE DAKAR IS THE SINGLE MOST LIFE-AFFIRMING THING I HAVE EVER, EVER DONE. I LOVED IT...'

dissimilar to yourself and if I'm honest, I don't even do that much trail riding anymore - not enough time, other commitments, can't get the bashplate off the CRF to change the oil, etc.

The truth is I decided, really on a whim, to do something I'd been talking about doing for years and at 36 I thought I'd better get on with it. And once I'd said I was going, I was going. It was simply pride. No matter how painful it got in the run-up (and financially, it really did) I grimly hung on, but without even contemplating the event itself - in other words, what it actually means to line up with 230 other idiots on bikes and race south towards Africa.

And the usual round of Christmas parties and after-work drinks saw my somewhat haphazard, half-hearted training regime go flying out the window. December was spent pretty much on the sauce and massively in denial, so by the time I got to Barcelona I knew I was in a spot of trouble. I didn't think I'd last more than three days. Neither, really did anybody else.

But somehow I did. So what did I learn and how have I changed? In a nutshell, I learnt that Dakar is not really about riding dirtbikes, or navigation skills, even though both are important and play a part. It's about determination, and how much you WANT to finish each day, that's all. If you want it bad enough, you'll do it. Of course, luck and judgement play a big part too and both ran out for me just when I thought I'd got the job sorted, but there you go - lesson number 5673 in the art of rally riding. The Dakar takes no prisoners and rarely shows any mercy.

I've now become a little more relaxed,

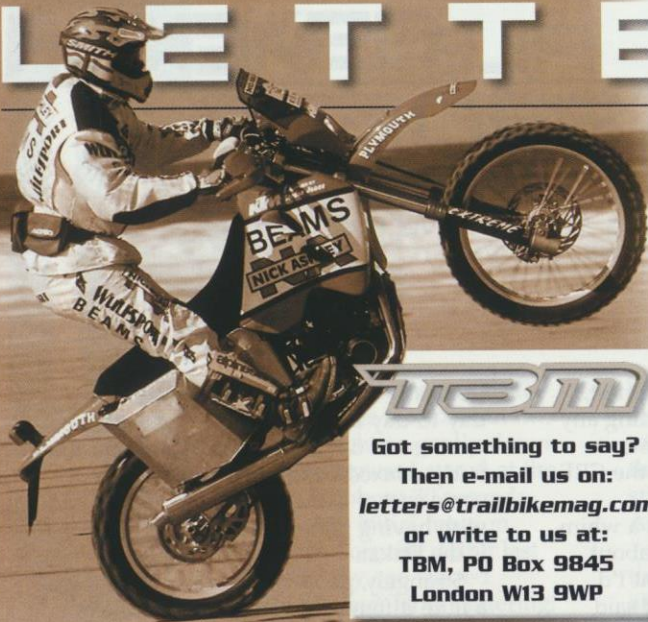
ironically enough because not much in day-to-day life can provide the challenge or stress of desert rallying. Mind you, I was fairly relaxed before, it's just now there's some sort of extra self-assurance that comes with having gone through everything that is the Dakar.

Strangely, people also talk and treat me a little differently. I appear to have earned a modicum of respect and this is the really odd thing for me to deal with; just entering that race seems to have ensured some sort of elevated status even though I failed to finish. I struggle to take myself seriously at the best of times, so it takes some getting used to when people really want to hear about my experiences.

I even had to give a talk recently - with Toby Moody, who does the MotoGP Eurosport commentary as well as work for ASO during the Dakar - for a roomful of wealthy London bikers. Against a 42-inch plasma screen of images playing from this year's event and over several courses plus several more bottles of fine wine, I spluttered my way through as best I could, trying to connect these people with some of the emotions and experiences I'd felt and had. Thank God for Toby, who talks very ably for a living, about this kind of thing. It was difficult, almost impossible.

I'd like to go again and this time try and reach Dakar, which is maybe where this column can come into its own and actually provide some useful insight rather than just a stream of egomaniacal consciousness.

But as I'm going to spend the rest of 2005 paying for this year's race, finding another 30k to blow again could be the first stumbling block. Like I said earlier, it's about determination, that's all. We'll see.



TBM
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What A Let Down #1

Dear TBM

I am livid! I want to let you know about an utter, utter, utter... nasty person. (I would have said ba**ard, but you wouldn't have printed it!)

I urge any other readers who are thinking of doing any green laning in Great Hockham near Thetford Forest to be on your guard. Last weekend I was up there and I parked as usual off the road down a lane. After a brilliant day riding I got back to my car to discover my two back tyres had been let down and a 'notice' from the 'police' left tucked under the wiper.

The notice looked as real as you can get and went something like this: 'Riding motorcycles on private property without permission or on bridlepaths is an offence. You have been complained about. Please do not repeat this activity'. So let's look at

the possibilities...

1 - The mowter-cross fuzz. If this were the real police, would they have left such a notice without knowing for sure what I was doing, ie, I might have been an old boy taking my dog for a walk who had just delivered a lawnmower to a close friend and still had my trailer on the back?

2 - Parking with intent of doing nothing illegal.

It is NOT private property, and I don't need permission, I was actually parked on the grass verge of a green lane where all the other people park. I wasn't riding on any bridleways and my bike is completely road legal, even to the point where I have one of those 'hey, give him a wide berth, big number plate coming through, even though we love those teeny tiny ones that are totally illegal'.

3 - Polite notice.

The 'police' notice says it was left at two pm, and a walker

we later saw told me that when they had walked past at 2:15pm, the tyres were already done. Aha, methinks our so-called copper might have had slightly valve-happy digits!

4 - I'd would have been happy with just the one. Two flat tyres, not just the one then? So, I couldn't just change to the spare, no I was gonna' have to take off one, and then use the jack on the other side to take the other off. Okay, so all I need is a pile of bricks to prop the other side up while I, err... The middle of Thetford Forest and not a pile of bricks anywhere to be seen, nor any logs or discarded air compressors.

5 - Help the Aged.

If I had been an elderly person or disabled without a mobile and simply gone for a bit of fresh air I would have been utterly and truly knackered. It was starting to get dark by the time I got my mate to take the wheels to a local garage to get them inflated and refitted.

All in all, a good old fashioned slice of top-notch vandalism by this red-necked 'pillar of the community' just trying to keep the countryside safe...

Nick Barrett
via email

What A Let Down #2

Dear TBM

After recently reading your article in the December 2004 issue (Doing The Rounds in the Dales), I was invited trail riding with the boys.

We set off from Hull at 6.15am and arrived just a couple of miles short of Dent. We parked the vehicles and trailers in a manner so as not to obstruct or hinder any road users or walkers. We got the five bikes off the two trailers, changed into our off-roading kit, secured the vehicles and set off for our ride.

We had a good day (apart from myself holding up the group - sorry lads). I just had to keep diving headfirst over the handlebars of my trusty XR250 into deep ruts and boggy stuff.

When we returned to the

vehicles some very sorry excuse for a person/persons had removed part of the inflating valve with cutting pliers on the offside tyre of each trailer. Thankfully they did not touch either vehicle but we did not return to Hull until midnight.

This has, you can imagine, created a little anger in us all. If we have caught these people in the act we would have let our feelings be known. We just couldn't believe that somebody could do this type of thing in the remote area where we were parked. So, bikers beware -

park your vehicles in well-lit areas so if you did have a problem it'll be a lot easier to get repairs done!

Mark Brockwell, Hull
via email

'Big' Trailie

Dear TBM

As I want to change my ageing Yamaha TTR250 I was really pleased to see the 250 four-stroke shootout test in the March issue.

I changed my mind a few times during the article, ending up with the view I should buy a newer version of my current bike. I only ride the lanes and have no great ambition to do enduros, and you said you wouldn't choose any of the 250s for trail riding. However, you didn't say what you would choose if you did have to use one for trail riding so I'm stuck.

Can you advise me on what to buy? One point I should make is that I am six foot, four inches tall and weigh over 16 stone. Oh, and I'm not interested in a KTM by the way - too high maintenance. And it must be electric start. Please help!

Brian Reed, Witney,
Oxfordshire
via email

Have you thought about a CCM 404 Brian? They have the benefit of a strong (electric-start) Suzuki engine, excellent suspension, a tall (adjustable) seat height and what's more, they're pretty cheap to buy secondhand right now! It's a great trailbike

The CCM 404: A great bike for the 'oversize' rider...



LETTERS



and should have no trouble hauling your 16-stone around.

What A Gas

Dear TBM

As a Gasser fan I was very interested but disappointed in the results of last issue's Sherco v Gasser test. Great way to test bikes though - a two-part hare and hounds swapping machines at the break. More of these tests please!

However, I wish the test could have been more exhaustive. I'd like to know how the dyno curves turned out - was the Gasser much

down on power or was it the nature of the curves. Can the bikes be altered with the electronics? Also, can we have comments and ideally tests of noise levels?

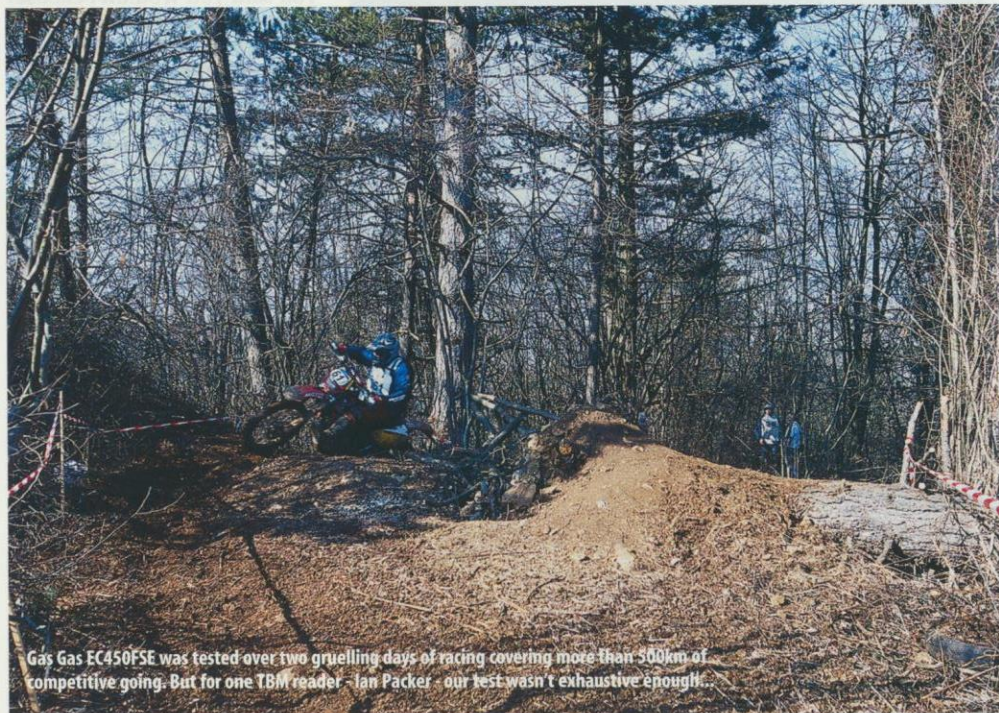
With regard to the handling problems I was wondering if the Gasser was just too plush at the back allowing too much rake and castor. I note that with the Gasser a change of style was probably required with the slipper clutch making it more two-stroke like. Would it still run wide if the engine braking had been present or if a little more rear brake was used? I assume the Gasser had Michelin comps on so they should be okay.

What I'm really asking is if the chassis has an inherent

problem or was it just a combination of setup and style? Being on the large size - six foot three inches and about 250lbs, bikes are never right for me as stock.

My EC300 needed re-springing and the bars raising but I have been delighted with its handling since setting up appropriately. I have been harbouring secret desires for a 450 thumper and was hoping to avoid orange sheep disease. Even though KTMs are great bikes, I had hoped the Gas Gas would've sorted the issues with the 2005 bike and produced a four-stroke as good as their strokers.

Ian Packer
via email



Gas Gas EC450FSE was tested over two gruelling days of racing covering more than 500km of competitive going. But for one TBM reader - Ian Packer - our test wasn't exhaustive enough...

Ian, in an ideal world, there'd be chance to 'power-check' every single test bike on the dyno, but the real world just isn't like that. The Sherco arrived just a few short hours before we were due to leave for France - and in the meantime there was the small matter of the deadline on Supermoto Magazine to make. In the end we put SM mag to bed at 10pm and were up again at 3am the following morning in order to catch our Eurotunnel train. Returning at 3.30am after riding for two days solid and then driving through the night, the bike had to be back at the importers the following day. But that's the nature of dirtbike testing in the UK, we'd rather have more time with the bikes but sometimes it's not possible.

As regards the Gasser being too plush at the rear, or not enough rear brake being used... Duh? We never thought of pushing *really hard* on the rear brake lever!!! C'mon Ian, what sort of mugs do you take us for...? All bikes work best when correctly set-up for the rider, however given that last year's Gasser exhibited a very similar trait, I suspect that this is a chassis limitation (or Gas Gas feature if you prefer) rather than a failure on the part of the rider to correctly work the rear anchor. One other small but significant point - the Sherco v Gasser test was carried out over a two-day, 500km enduro, not (as you suggested in your letter) a multi-lap hare n hounds where we swapped machines at lunchtime.

Chinese Whispers

Dear TBM

After reading letters in the March edition I thought I'd say a few words on Chinese bikes. At the moment there's loads of these on the market (just look on eBay) and they all seem to be basically the same thing, just with variations on brand name. I bought one similar to the one mentioned as my first greenlaner.

I have now covered around 800 miles, mainly on trails around Salisbury Plain, and the only thing I've changed is the rear tyre, oil and performed numerous chain adjustments.

The bike has disc brakes on both ends, a very firm rear shock, is 200cc (supposedly) and it basically does everything it says on the tin. I have taken it through mud and rocks etc and it's not terrible, although as anything



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LETTERS

other than a first bike to crash a lot etc I wouldn't necessarily recommend it.

The plastics are very brittle and break easily, looks and build quality is a bit dodgy. If you want a bike you can easily sell-on, then look elsewhere. A friend bought a second-hand XR250 for just less and it runs rings around mine, plus in a year's time will probably still fetch around the same price.

Jason, Salisbury, Wiltshire
via email

Body Heat

Dear TBM

Having cooked myself in my armoured jacket on the first vaguely summery day this

year I'm wondering whether I should invest in some body armour to wear under my shirt - hopefully to keep me cooler while still offering some protection.

As far as I know you last reviewed body armour back in April 2002. Is this still a good guide or are there now newer/better products available? And are you planning on doing another review soon?

Also, as I only do some trail riding would you recommend I go for a 'full on' suit like those from Scorpion, Dainese etc or would I be better off going for something more lightweight? Finally, as I'm a 'gurl', does anyone other than Acerbis do a ladies version?

Noeline Smith, Salisbury,
Wiltshire
via email

Noeline, we're not aware of any other female-specific body-armour out there, though that's not to say it doesn't exist. Mel has been using (and crashing in) her Acerbis Lady Fusion for the past six months and found it works fairly well, but it obviously offers no elbow protection. Here at TBM we're pretty much split down the middle in terms of the type of armour we like to wear. James goes for a close-fitting fully-armoured Dainese Safety suit, whereas I much prefer the protection and ventilation of traditional MX stuff. Mel wears a combination of MX armour and an armoured jacket. Pretty much all that we wrote back in our body armour review of April 2002 is still true, but it's well overdue for an update which will be coming in the next couple of months...

Top Marks

Dear TBM

Great mag and all that, but my main reason for putting finger to key is to have a quickish rant about the plonker who sent in the letter titled 'Dangerous Liaisons' in TBM 116.

This guy has a dig about Mark William's past, asking why you haven't made us aware of this... Is this man for real or what? What does someone's paid-up-for-in-full past have to do with bikes?

You are by the way quite correct - Mark is a national treasure and a damn good reporter and us guys in the TRF are very proud of him and the work he carries out

on all areas bike related.

I suggest Mr Danny Taylor, next time you go fishing for a job (yes it was that obvious), slugging off somebody of Mark's calibre and obvious experience is not the way forward. Rant over!

Steve Woods, Falmouth
Cornwall TRF ROW
Co-ordinator

Thanks very much for that, Mark, er Steve...

Dirty Dozen

Dear TBM

I've just got myself a Cagiva W12 350, but I can't seem to find out any information about the bike or where to get any trick parts for it. Can you or any TBM readers help me?

Mark Kipling
via email

Try the TBM Forum:
www.trailbikemag.com

Pipe Talk

Dear TBM

When you dyno'd the 250 thumpers way back in June 2002 the Yamaha WR250F's power and torque curves were significantly different from the 2005 model tested recently.

The 2002 curves were what you might call 'normal'. My own 2004 bike does not seem to have the massive flat spot identified on the 2005 machine. Which poses two questions - is this a problem new to the 2005 model? And why (unless Yamaha have

The irrepressable Mark Williams,
Yesterday...



produced a California-legal model for the whole world), would they not fix such an easily fixable problem?

J Nolan, Rochdale
Terrible Twos

Over to you, Yamaha...

Size Matters

Dear TBM

Firstly, loving your mag, keep up the great work! I've only just been converted to trail riding from the mad world of pocket rockets and superbikes.

Thinking it would be a bit safer and less chance of losing my licence I decided to buy a KTM 250EXC two-stroke for

green laning. After just two ride-outs I found myself laid up for weeks with a nasty blood clot on my knee after a bad fall.

In hindsight I've now given up trying to tame the beast and seriously thinking of opting for a more forgiving four-stroke. As I'm only five foot eight inches tall and weigh 11 stone I feel possibly a 400 may be slightly too much for me.

I've tried my mate's 250EXC thumper and found it much easier to ride but lacking a bit of mid-range power. What would you guys suggest?

Matt Jones, Hereford

Matt the 400EXC would be absolutely perfect for you...

As this picture clearly shows, not all body armour is designed to properly fit the female form...!



LETTERS

Real World

Dear TBM

Going over some old issues, I read your review on the KTM 400EXC v CCM404DS (issue 103). For Christ's sake lads, get real! How can you compare the two bikes when running on totally different sets of rubber? The excuse of 'we wanted to test them as they come' is a load of rubbish.

I rode with a CCM last week and even my KLX300R danced through boggy areas where the CCM got stuck. So don't tell me my KLX is a superior bike to the CCM!

Do your readers some justice - put bikes up against each other with the same/similar tyres. This should be the case with all comparisons. This would then give us lads a better idea on the bikes. March's TBM 250

thumper test saw no such issues.

After all, how long does a set of rubbers last us? These shootouts/reviews can be priceless, especially when you're looking to buy your next bike. Keep it up but keep it real...

Steve Hipkiss, Newport via email

Er, Steve, I've got news for you - your KLX300R is probably *twice* as good as a CCM at getting through bogs (if it was a CCM 604 it probably weighed 30kg more, ferchrissakes!), it had absolutely *nothing* to do with the tyres fitted. However as you feel so strongly about this and have obviously thought it through, what we propose is this: every time we get a test bike, we'll call you up Steve and you can come on over and fit (and naturally pay for) a new set of tyres - even if we've only got the bikes for

a few hours. Obviously you'll have to keep a huge number of tyres in stock (in every available size), but hey, no problem, you've worked it all out haven't you mate. And that way you can be sure that we'll always have matching rubber on our test bikes. That should help 'keep it real',

well, at least for you, anyway mate...

Head Girl

Dear TBM

I just wanted to say a huge thank you to all the guys who stopped to offer assistance in the middle of Grizedale Forest on Sunday 20 March. My shiny new CRF230 had mysteriously managed to burn its clutch out - nothing to do with owner's inability to ride a bike!

My wonderful husband (and mechanic) tried desperately to take the clutch apart, which was somewhere around three zillion degrees, so way too hot to touch, and without the special tool you need for a CRF clutch all we had was a screwdriver and two pairs of pliers.

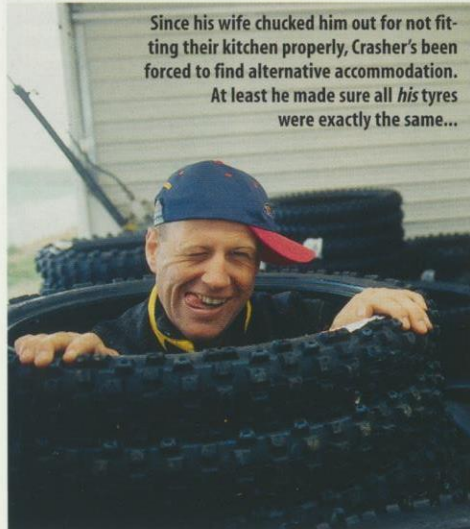
Then along came our unnamed knight in shining armour, with every tool under the sun. Our 'knight' eventually managed to get the clutch nut off so we could see just how bad things were. New clutch required but in the meantime, I had to learn pretty quickly how to ride without a clutch. Turns out you don't need it half as much as I thought you did.

Anyway, back to our knight in shining armour - didn't get your name, sorry, but wanted to say thank you properly, and not by giving you a b**w j*b as was suggested by someone, followed by umpteenth cries of 'I helped too!' So, thank you very much!

Debbie Bonser via email

Since his wife chucked him out for not fitting their kitchen properly, Crasher's been forced to find alternative accommodation.

At least he made sure all *his* tyres were exactly the same...



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RACE SPEC

With the launch of Honda's second X-range machine, Honda have brought their awesome 450 motor 'down to Earth'...

Manning the TBM (and Supermoto Mag) stand at one of last year's dirt bike shows, a punter sidles up and enters into conversation. He's clearly got a few quid to spend, so I put on my best salesman schmooze and steer things around to how he really ought to buy some back issues, a binder to house them and our old SLR650 supermoto

project bike to anchor his boat with. Sadly, he's having none of it and instead starts discussing the Honda CRF450R he's looking at buying to convert into an enduro bike. He asks my opinion on the scheme. Now normally when faced with such a question, I take a moment to mull it over in my head before replying with a carefully considered answer. But this time it took me all

of about two seconds to come back with, 'Er, yeah, it's an awesome bike for motocross or supermoto but definitely not for enduro'.

Now at this point our friend appears a little taken aback, so I qualify my statement with a few well chosen remarks about fearsome power delivery, way too much go, and how even a top level enduro rider such as our own Jonty Edmunds found that a converted 450R was just too vicious at times. His response was typical of the sort of bloke who uses aftershave with a name like *Horsepower*: 'Nah mate, it's *only* a 450 and I already ride a 525EXC!'

Granted, the 525's a powerful machine, probably just as powerful as the CRF, and it can certainly get you into a whole heap of trouble if you're throttle-happy. However, Honda's 450 MXer would take you to a whole new realm of trouble! For riding a 525's akin to having a play fight with your pet dog. It's a good bit of rough and tumble, and if you wind him up too much he might just bite. But in comparison, riding enduro on a CRF450R is more like prodding a wild Honey Badger... with a rattlesnake! Be sure you're wearing all your armour, and take a big bottle of Dettol!

STORY: BARNI; PICS: DAVE COLLISTER

X-Tra Terrestrial



450X is a bit too high-g geared (as standard) for nadsgerly going...

Scrambled-X

When word got out that Honda were to produce an enduro version of the CRF450 we did wonder whether or not they'd be able to tame it down. Straight from the crate the red MXer makes big power (50bhp anyone?) and big noise with it, and the last time we rode a quiet-piped 450R it felt so restricted it would probably have been duffed up by a Serow. So how good, or bad, would the new 450X prove to be? Honda decided to fly the UK's motorcycle press out to the spiritual home of bikes - the Isle of Man - to let us all find out.

I love *The Island*. The riding's great, the scenery's great, and the weather's... well, as with the trails you get a good mix of everything. And as we stepped off the plane at Ronaldsway airport we were greeted with a bright blue skies and a beaming sun.

A hard 'n' bumpy MX track formed the base for the first day's riding (more to do with getting photos than typical CRF-X terrain), but with top enduro riders Paul Edmondson and Wayne

Braybrook present, we were soon following their lead and using some inventive lines through the trackside undergrowth.

From the off, the 'just run-in' bike felt tight and new. A few more miles were required to bed-in the suspension and free-up the motor, but nonetheless it was possible to get a feel for the bike's ergos. The riding position is fairly typical of modern Hondas, the peg position feeling neutral but the bars fairly close and low. Very different to European machines, it seems to suit shorter riders and those approaching six foot may well want to fit a set of bar-risers or replace the bars. Perhaps both. Conversely, the fairly high seat (and slightly more rounded than on the 'crosser) is far more suited to the taller rider.

The 8.6L tank looks to be lower and more spread out than that on the 250X. The left-hand radiator is *huge*, hanging down below the plastics and the front-end does look reasonably wide, again especially compared

to certain Euro machines. However, it's not something that I particularly noticed once on the move - though the rad did prove to be a bit exposed (as I found out later).

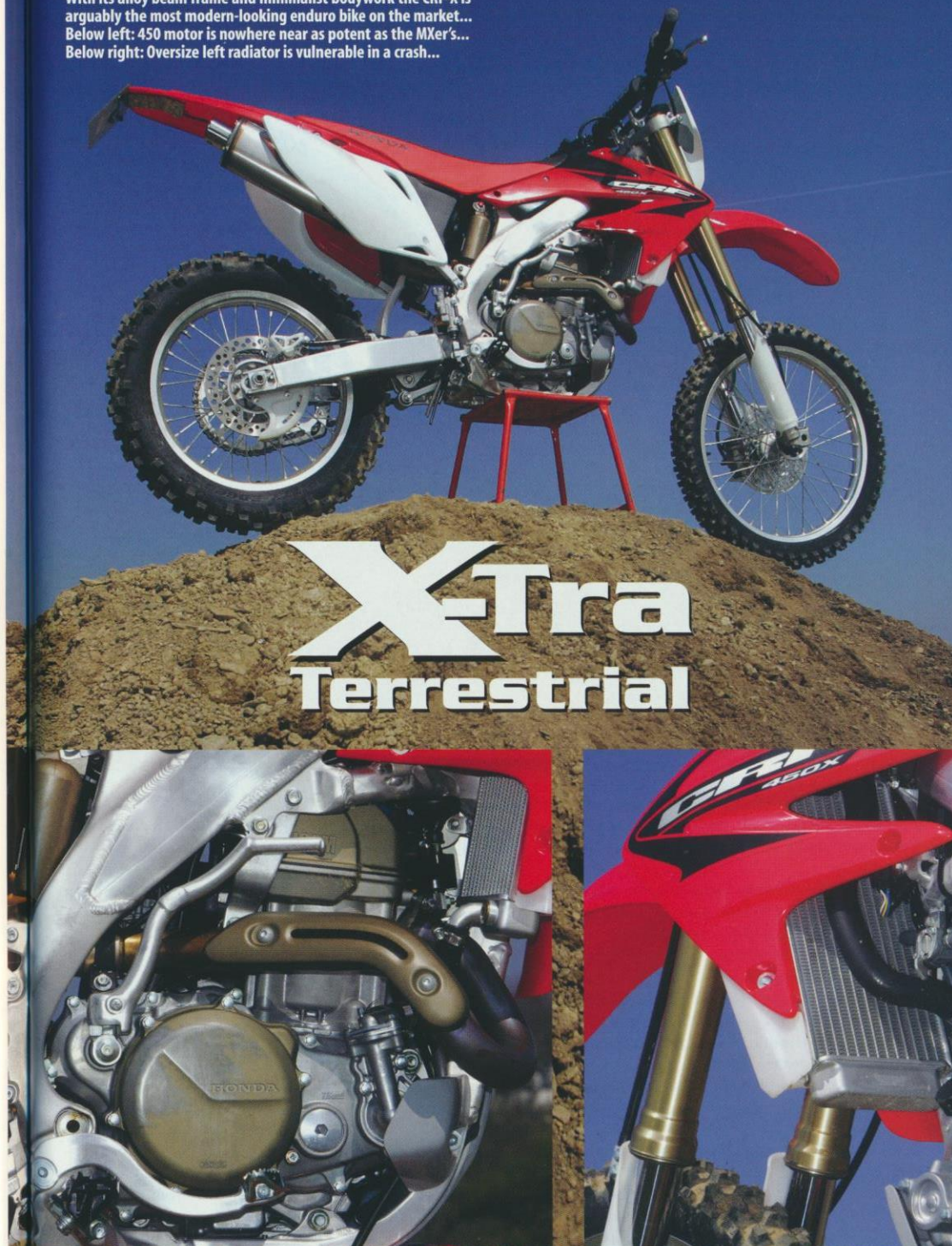
With the hard-pack MX track not terribly representative of typical British enduro terrain, and with me being pretty hopeless at motocross, I ended the day with an initial impression, but more importantly a thoroughly free'd up machine and high hopes for the next day's trail ride.

X-a-Size

In stark contrast to the first day, day two saw the weather close in and visibility was down to 'just past the front fender'. Steady rainfall meant that the trails were nicely slick and all looked set for a typical British trail ride. Hurrah.

Rock strewn ruts littered the first of the really long lanes, the effort required doing a great job of blowing away the early morning cobwebs and setting the tone for much of the day's riding. In typical Honda fashion, the 450X remained

With its alloy beam frame and minimalist bodywork the CRF-X is arguably the most modern-looking enduro bike on the market... Below left: 450 motor is nowhere near as potent as the MXer's... Below right: Oversize left radiator is vulnerable in a crash...



X-Tra Terrestrial

X-Tra Terrestrial



relatively composed, as steady as an enduro bike can be on such terrain, and the front-end soaked up all the blows rather than deflecting hither and thither.

Part of this stability could also be attributed to the bike's weight. Whilst Honda claim the 450X weighs only 113kg (dry) I suspect that they're being slightly optimistic, and the CRF certainly has a solid feeling about it. The 250X exhibits a similar trait (despite actually being quite light), though I suspect the 450 will prove to be slightly weightier than some of its competitors, especially when you allow for the lack of road kit.

The 450X uses the same Showa suspension units as the motocrosser, though they've been reworked internally to give a much plusher ride. And very nice it is too, giving good feedback on both the stony trails and wet grass, whether flying or just trickling along. For racing (in the dry especially) I'd perhaps be inclined to firm it up a touch, but on the day it suited the mixed

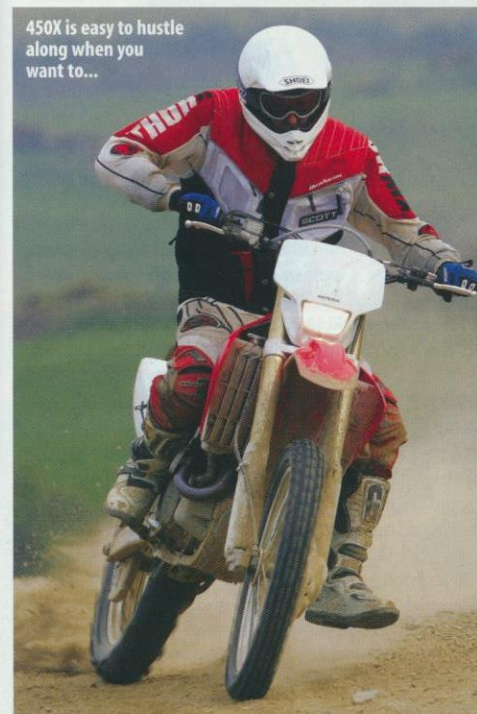
terrain pretty well. Whilst perhaps not as nimble as a KTM, Husky or Sherco, the Honda does tip into turns well with a nice neutral feeling to it. I didn't feel that it required any strenuous effort to get the bike turned, and nor did it fall into the corners like some of its sharper-turning classmates. In short it felt just right.

Stock X-Change

Thanks to a raft of motor changes (new head, smaller valves etc) Honda have done a great job of taming the 'beastly' 450R motor for the enduro bike - it's certainly nowhere near as intimidating as the MXer. Rather than the bike leaping out of your hands, the power builds smoothly and steadily from a mellow bottom-end, to a strong mid-range. Keep the throttle wide open and the bike continues to pull right through into the top-end without any discernable step in the power. It's particularly nice on flowing trails where you can hold the motor in the mid-range,



450X is easy to hustle along when you want to...



X-Race-Specs

Aside from the regular enduro modifications (lights, 18in rear wheel, larger tank, 'leccy start etc) what separates the enduro X-model from the MXer? Well there's...

- Smaller valves (by 1mm) and a revised camshaft, designed for a wider spread of torque.
- Heavier flywheel.
- Stainless header pipe (titanium on the R), with spark arrestor end-can.
- Throttle position sensor on the 40mm Keihin flat-slide carb.
- Frame designed specifically for enduro use, with altered steering geometry and shorter wheelbase.
- Coolant header tank mounted between the frame rails at the front of the engine, with plastic guard.
- Larger left-hand radiator, right-hand rad with cooling fan mountings.
- Increased seat height and ground clearance.
- Suspension settings revised for plushness, 7mm less travel on the rear.



X-Tra Terrestrial

and simply tweak the throttle to elevate the front-end over rocks and puddles. And whilst it's certainly not as feisty as the MXer, there's still plenty of oomph available. Most importantly it's useable oomph, easy to control and un-intimidating.

Combine this with the leggy, wide-ratio gearbox and it's easy to build up a good head of steam on the 450X. Between the trails we racked up a good few miles of road-work and the X was never found wanting. The quiet pipe - and it is pretty inoffensive - doesn't seem to have stifled the power too much and no-one felt the need to remove the spark arrestor. How much difference this alone makes to the power (at low altitude) is debatable, but if you really want more power then you can derestrict the 450 in the same way that you can on the 250X (by opening up the airbox,

and fitting an R-model cam etc).

Due to the bike running quite tall gearing (despite first and second being lower than the MXer's ratios), it wasn't always possible to chug up tricky climbs.

Obstacles that I'd normally attempt in second gear, instead required first. Because rather than clawing its way through at low revs in second gear, the bike often stalled. A touch more weight on the flywheel perhaps, or simply due to the bike's newness? I wouldn't like to say, but I'm sure that going down a tooth on the front sprocket would certainly make the X much more suited to slow, technical terrain.

X-Tra Strong

Typical Honda, the CRF450X feels particularly solid and well screwed together. Which is just as well really, as I hit the deck a couple of times during the launch - without managing to break anything. The first off was a low speed tumble down some slippery rocks, the bike going down hard on its left-side. Picking the bike up, the braced Renthal bars were still straight, not even twisted in the rubber mounts, and having pulled the dirt out of the clutch perch we were back underway. It was only after a further hour's riding someone spotted that the giant left-hand radiator was now banana-shaped. Yet despite being well and truly twisted it remained

watertight, and the bike kept its cool - testimony to Honda's renowned build quality - but the big rad does look a little exposed.

X-Appeal

After a day-and-a-half aboard the CRF450X I was left with an impression of a bike which is hugely competent in all areas, a machine which will appeal to a wide range of riders, both trail and enduro. Honda were clearly looking at the world-wide dirtbike market when they built the 450X, and as such it probably represents more of an all-rounder - a VFR for the off-road world rather than a highly-focussed FireBlade. That's not to say that an X won't be competitive (especially with a few key mods), rather that it's not quite as focussed as certain other 450s. And when



The 2005 Range of MOOSE Race Wear is here.

Direct from the States, the 05 range sees re-designs and updates on all the favourite kit like the fabulous new **M1** (main pic), and of course the XCR series.

PLUS, this year will see some brand new kits never before brought into the UK, including the 'SAHARA' shirts, classically described as "...a whole bunch of holes strung together with some really funky material!!!", just the thing to keep you cool when the heat is on.



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XCR Competition Drinks System £34.99 • Expedition Drinks System £44.50 • Buddy Tow £12.95
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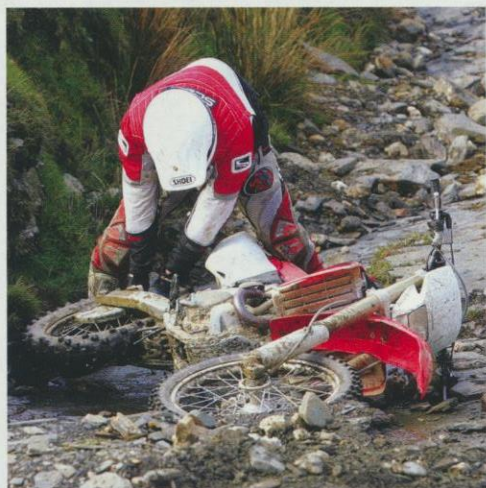
TRADE ENQUIRIES ALWAYS WELCOME. '05 CATALOGUE NOW AVAILABLE





X-Tra Terrestrial

Below: Barni remonstrates with a recalcitrant 450X as he attempts to extricate his TBM dub tie from the rear sprocket...



you're trying to shift units that's probably not such a bad idea.

So can we expect to see a swathe of red at enduro events from now on, 450Xs mingling with the hundreds of 250s already out there? Of course we can. It's eminently rideable, easy-handling, and comes with plenty of performance. It may not be as complete a package as some of the European offerings (especially when you

factor in the price of road kit on top of the £5470 sticker price), but then that's never stopped the 250X from selling! So I'm sure that it will tempt a good few people away from their current rides.

So now with the new 450X there's no need to convert a 450 MXer. Because whilst there's no doubt that a 450X can still get you into trouble, it'll probably get you out unscathed, too...

Coming Soon: We rate the CRF450X against the middleweight class's leading contenders in the ultimate 450 Enduro shootout...

HONDA CRF450X

Price:	£5470
Engine:	449cc, SOHC, 4-valve, dual start, 5-speed
Bore/stroke:	96 x 62mm
Susp F/R (travel):	47mm Showa (315mm), Showa (313mm)
Brakes F/R:	240/240mm, Nissin calipers
Seat height:	963mm
Ground clear:	348mm
Wheelbase:	1481mm
Fuel capacity:	8.6L
Weight:	113kg (claimed, dry)



NEVADA 1000 Wilderness Trail Ride Expedition

Invitation



Not yet ready for the Dakar/Optic 2000 (time, experience, expense) but done all the routine ride-outs and tours at home and abroad? This is only for certain trail riders! Not a Rallye or a race but a full-on expedition, it will push your personal experience, ability and determination to succeed. A unique and limited opportunity – real off-road motorcycling.

Start from the 'loneliest road in the USA' and head hundreds of miles deeper into the Nevada wilderness. Criss-crossing 10,500 foot passes and ridges, high desert and forests, on south to Death Valley, then back North again.

This year we will be running a unique 10-day expedition (maybe two) in July/August for up to six capable trail riders with full, experienced support. Essentially it is 'off-highway' using a complex of old historic trails. A spectacular journey to make.

The route will be planned with the full knowledge, co-operation, permits and approval of both the USA Forest Service and BLM (Bureau of Land Management) based on well-developed protocols and long-standing trail riding relationships with the expedition leaders.

We will ride as a group, in planned stages, including at least one marathon stretch with the Expedition Leader's decisions taking into account weather systems, local trail conditions and other factors in determining the day-to-day logistics.

Everything will be provided, except your personal riding gear. Satellite telephones and navigation support will be utilised along with approved safety and emergency medical capabilities. Working together as a group of enthusiast trail riders, helping each other as competent individuals, will 'push the personal envelope' – a Rallye without a race.

Your Expedition Leader will be the legendary 'Nevada Matt', a lifelong biker with 30 years experience of living and working in the Nevada outback and the last 12 years leading groups of trail riders from all over the world. Matt's partner, pal and expedition co-pilot is Maurice Summerson, a Brit with veteran experience from around the world.

Applications are invited for this limited opportunity in 2005. Likely date/s are commencing 18 July or 15 August.

SO: Are you ready for the 'Nevada Club' (unique annual expeditions planned)?

For more information contact Maurice.

maurice.lifetime@attglobal.net

Tel: 01565 734008 or 07860 459925



Sand Witch

At TBM there's no rest for the wicked, so we sent Mel off on her broomstick to Morocco to create her very own desert storm...

Mention airports to me and I go cold. Not because I suffer from aviophobia, but because every time I go near an airport, something always seems to go wrong.

Take my most recent experience. As I stepped off the plane in Paris ready to meet another flight to Morocco for five days of desert trailriding, I was already stressed as my transfer flight was due to take off in less than 20 minutes.

So right at that moment the last thing I needed was a bomb-scare! The 'bomb' turned out to be

nothing more deadly than an abandoned suitcase, but in these violent times nobody was taking any chances. The French blew it up anyway!

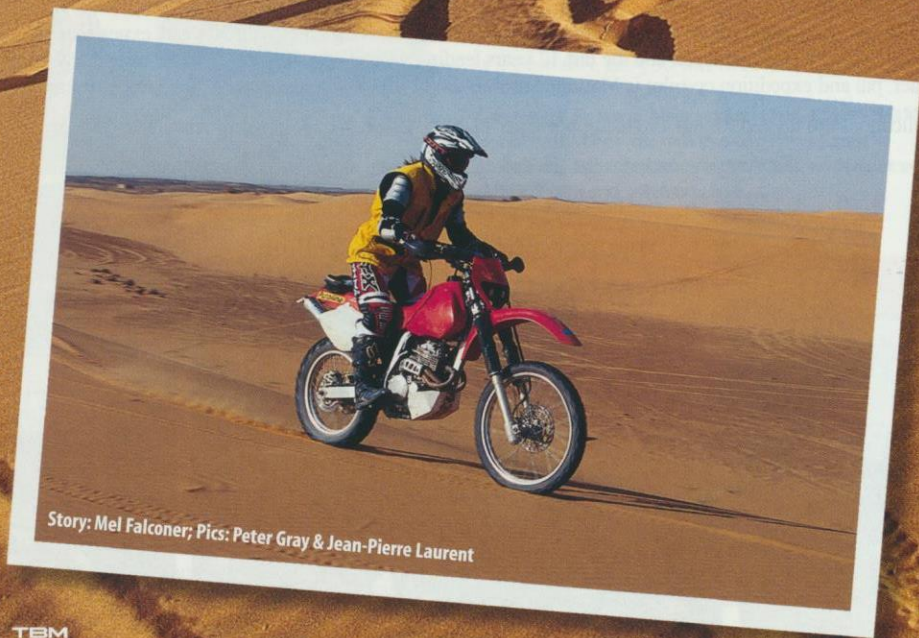
All of which doesn't help if you're trying to catch the only flight to Casablanca that day. In the immortal words of Humphrey Bogart, 'maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow...'

A couple of G&Ts later aboard the plane and things were starting to look up. But my good spirits were about to take a big nosedive.

After a second transfer I was stood arguing with Moroccan officials at Ouarzazate airport about the disappearance of all my riding kit! But not arguing too strenuously, seeing as they had already become rather suspicious about my 'journalistic' intentions within their country and the town itself had actually started life as a purpose-built garrison. So, not the best start to my desert riding career...

Arabian Knights

Luckily help was at hand in the form of Brad Cairns from Wilderness Wheels, the trail riding company whose tour I was joining midway through a trip.



Story: Mel Falconer; Pics: Peter Gray & Jean-Pierre Laurent

Off The ROAD

(Part Five)

Off The Road

(Part Five)

Brad is the first American I've met who can speak not only fluent French but decent Arabic too!

After stopping at their Ouarzazate base for the smallest replacement riding kit we could find, we were off on a two-hour road trip to the small town of Tinghir, famous for its beautiful Todra Gorge, which unfortunately I didn't get to see as I finally arrived after sunset.

Here I joined my fellow cohorts for the trip - Phil, Paul, Dave, Mani and Jean Pierre, with Brad and Peter from Wilderness Wheels acting as main guides. Thankfully it turned out that most people hadn't ever ridden in sand, let alone desert sand, so for once I wasn't going to be totally out of my depth come the following morning (well I hoped not anyway).

My bike for the tour was a trusty Honda 250 XR that, Peter assured me, was more than capable of handling anything I threw at it. I didn't think it wise to mention at that point it would probably be a case of me throwing the XR at things!

In order to give it a little more oomph when traversing the desert pistes, my 250 had been bored out to 280cc - apart from that the bike was completely standard. All of the tour bikes were XRs, with either 250s or 400s to choose from, plus you could have a go on Peter's XR650 (if you behaved yourself of course).

Although XRs are not the most cutting-edge tools available, they are virtually bullet-proof,

fairly lightweight (good for novices) and don't require much fiddling in the suspension department, making them perfectly suited to desert riding. The plastics weren't exactly mint but that stuff is kinda' immaterial if the bikes are well looked after, which all of these were.

On The Piste

After an early start on what was everybody else's third day in the saddle but my first, we were finally going to have a go at riding in sand. Contrary to popular belief, this particular desert, the Western Sahara, is only about 30-percent sand, with large gravel plains connecting a number of remote villages.

Morocco is slightly bigger than California in size, but Peter assured us that most of the desert could be navigated without the need for GPS if you knew it well, something I was hoping not to have to put to the test.

Standing between the sand dunes and us was an hour-long stretch of tarmac to Erfoud. I was

secretly glad of this, because although it was a little dull for the other riders, it gave me the chance to get a feel for the 280 and of course, get used to the 'prod-it-three-times' kickstart at fuel stops as I had a sneaking suspicion I was going to be doing rather a lot of kicking over when we hit the dunes.

However, my first encounter with sand was nowhere near any dunes. Cruising at about 60mph on the road, there was a big section of tarmac that had been completely covered by wind-blown sand, which was deep enough to cause a problem if (like me) you didn't see it.

And to make things even more fun, there was a big lorry lumbering along on the other side, leaving me nowhere to go, so I just scrubbed off as much speed as I could and hung on as the front wheel immediately started wriggling like an overexcited eel, straight towards the truck. First lesson learnt - pay attention and if in doubt, gas it a bit to get drive through the sand.

To get out to the dunes proper we followed

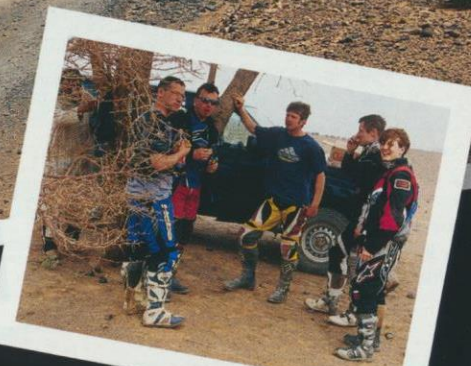
Unusually for Mel, she ran out of gas...



It's a date: meandering through the palm trees...



Cruising for a rather painful bruising a bit further on...



a gravelly desert piste. With the sun beating down and nothing for miles around, it was the first time I've really been able to just go for it off-road, keeping it pinned in top. But doing that requires intense concentration and plenty of stamina as you're standing up the whole way for maybe ten miles at a time, all the while riding over shiny black volcanic pebbles. When you're going flat-out, obstacles are on top of you very quickly so there's always the opportunity for coming a cropper.

Circles In The Sand

After a quick break at a bizarre 35m tall triangular building built by a wealthy (and presumably eccentric) German industrialist, apparently as an art sculpture, we had a quick lesson in 'sand blasting'. Apparently as soon as the front wheel of the bike hits sand it will dig in and you'll prob-

ably end up over the bars (but out here at least you're not going to make a nasty mess on some surprised trucker's windscreen).

The trick as I soon learned, is to always keep up your momentum and give it plenty of gas because if you slow down the front wheel just gets stuck. Also you must 'unload' the front-end of the bike by positioning yourself right at the back of the seat, especially if you don't weigh much as this gives the rear wheel a lot more grip. It's just like riding through muddy slop at home but the bike behaves a little differently as sand though quite fluid, is very thick.

Practising on some small dunelets this became apparent as I toppled over for the tenth time. It is quite nerve-wracking as the front wheel just tracks in the direction of the sand's movements as you pass over it and the instinct is to shut off and go slower.

As soon as I'd managed to get my wobbling a bit more under control on the flat (much to Peter's kicking leg's relief), then it was time to have a go at riding up and down dunes.

As these were small hillocks there wasn't a problem with just gunning it up to the top and sailing over, but that is where it all got out of

shape again. You can go down dunes in a straight line from the top but it's much easier (and safer a lot of the time), to descend at a 45-degree angle to the slope.

For those of you that ski, the technique is very much the same as carving your way down a long run, using the bike as your skis to make wide sweeping turns. It also looks quite elegant too.

The hardest part by far was judging just how much to give it to get all the way up the dune and then being able to throttle off enough at the top before you had decided the best path to pick for the way down.

For once, I wasn't being gung-ho with the throttle in a place which positively rewarded brash forwardness - amazing considering it's also one of my more endearing traits back at TBM Towers.

Turn On, Dune In, Drop Out...

There was little time to prepare however as after navigating the way to our auberge near Merzouga, it was time to go and play in the famous Erg Chebbi dunes. These pumpkin-coloured dunes are the largest in Morocco and literally

rise up from the flat desert floor, making a strikingly strange natural formation.

With all of Peter's advice ringing in my ears, it wasn't long before I flopped over again in the soft sand. But after about half an hour of painstaking experimenting I was finally beginning to get the hang of it, swooping up and down the smaller dunes mostly in second or third as the little 280 would run out of steam in a higher gear.

As well as shifting back on the bike, I found an exaggerated trials-style 'bum sticking out' method worked extremely well, especially when powering up the dunes to lift the front wheel clear of the sand.

The 400s were definitely more suited to dune riding as they had more lower-down oomph, essential for mounting an assault on the highest 200-metre tall dune, something I didn't attempt as the flyaway sand conditions meant there wasn't much chance of getting that far up it this time.

Mind you, the Saharan sunset more than made up for it, as I sat on top of a dune and watched the sands changing colour as nightfall approached, an absolutely breathtaking spectacle.

Dune Buddies

From its Ouarzazate base, trail riding company Wilderness Wheels is run by Peter Gray and Brad Cairns and offers one-to-seven day tours in sunny South Morocco.

2005 Autumn tour dates are as follows:

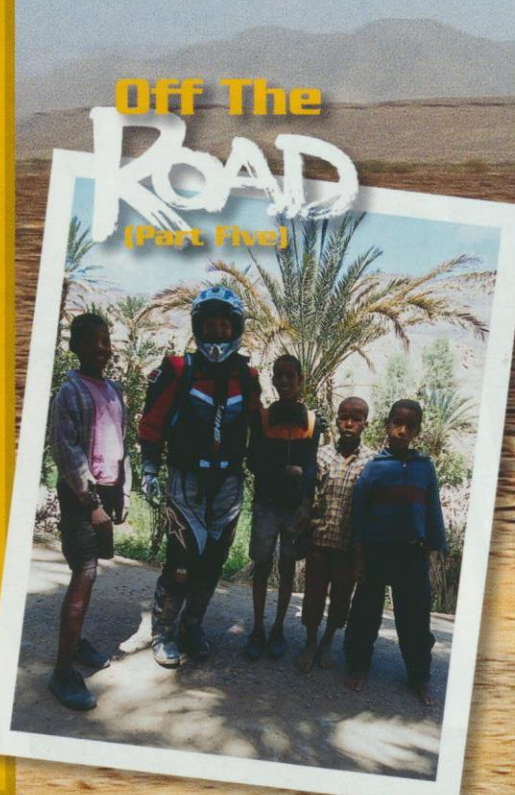
25 Sept - 1 Oct	Seven-day coastal tour
16-22 Oct	Seven-day desert tour
30 Oct - 5 Nov	Seven-day desert tour
13-19 Nov	Seven-day desert tour
27 Nov - 3 Dec	Seven-day desert tour
16-20 Dec	Five-day mountain tour
20-24 Dec	Five-day mountain tour
27 Dec - 1 Jan	Five-day mountain tour
2-6 Jan 2006	Paris-Dakar spectating tour (provisional)

These dates are for individuals who will then be grouped together with other riders. For groups of five people or more, the guys can offer flexible dates and itineraries.

The seven-day desert tour I joined includes five days riding and six days accommodation and costs £925. The five-day tours cost £450 and include three days riding and four nights accommodation.

All packages also include fuel, local airport transfers, full riding kit, assistance vehicle, guide plus all meals. There is also a new flight which goes direct from Gatwick to Marrakech for about £200 return, perfect for the mountain tours.

For more info, call Peter on 00 212 44888128 (office) 00 212 68730008 (mobile) or check out www.wildernesswheels.com.



Rock The Kasbah

The next day was by far the longest day in the saddle, covering approximately 200km mainly on piste to the small village of Zagora, situated in the lush Drâa Valley that follows the Drâa River, the longest in Morocco.

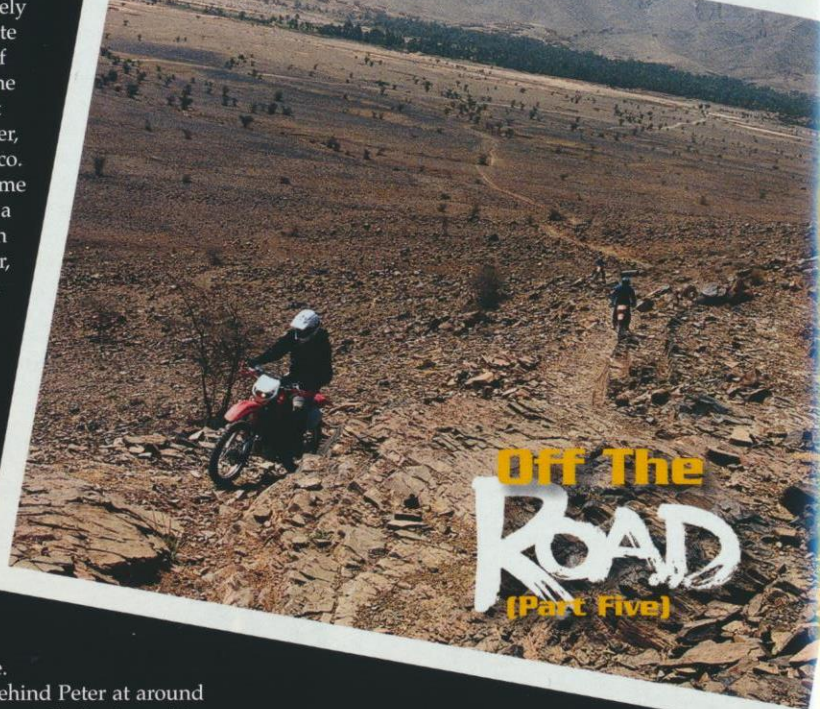
Unfortunately for me it was here I learned a very painful lesson in observation, or rather, lack of it. The terrain was fairly rocky and we started off on a winding track which was quite hard work to actually stay on course at a reasonable speed, as the going was interspersed with nasty areas of fine, beach-like sand, known locally as feche-feche.

Whipping along behind Peter at around 40mph, we were riding 'off-piste' on a big stony plain and my attention was distracted for a second by catching sight of a big sand dune in the distance. At that crucial moment, I failed to notice a rather large rock looming up quickly in front of me, and with an almighty whack I hit it square-on and launched myself into the air, hanging wildly onto the handlebars in an insane attempt to try and save it on landing, which of course, I didn't manage.

After madly slewing from side to side for about 20m in the sand I finally gave up the ghost and let go, taking care to throw the bike away from me as I really didn't fancy playing Twister with a hot XR. I finally landed another 15m or so down the road, slumped over forwards like a rag doll and with Tweety-Pie going in circles around my head. Ouch.

As a result it was the support vehicle for me for the rest of the day. Injury toll was a couple of fractured ribs, lots of deep tissue muscle bruising down both legs and some rather fetching deep grazes on my hip. A collision definitely worthy of first place so far this year in the TBM annual crash-fest awards!

Navigating rocky mountain goat tracks requires a certain amount of skill and a head for heights...



Off The Road (Part Five)

Delusions Of Dakar

Despite aching badly the next morning, I jumped back on my indestructible XR (the only thing that needed doing was a slight tweak of the front forks), and set off up the stunning Drâa Valley, awash with huge date-palm trees and red-earth-ern kasbahs. The going alternated between smooth tarmac and easy undulating tracks through picturesque villages.

On the last stretch of tarmac - a spectacular mountain pass - back to Ouarazate, I tried out Peter's 650. Thumping through the tight corners and blasting along the straights I could soon see why having this thing to rocket along the pistes on would be perfect, but only if your forward observation was considerably better than mine!

Although the riding is incredibly demanding, I have been well and truly bitten by the desert bug and can't wait to return, much to the Ed's chagrin as he watches yet another rider succumb to the inevitable Dakar dreaming.

There's no need to worry though Si - I think Patsy Quick's dust devil crown is safe for a good few years yet...

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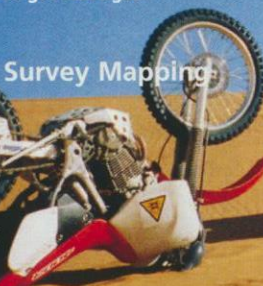
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SPORTS CLUB

A Clubman racer wants a bike he can really ride hard, whilst a Sportsman needs a machine he can grow into. Could the two be one and the same? TBM pitched the winner of our 250 four-stroke shootout - Husqvarna's TE250 - against our fave clubman enduro bike - the two-stroke Gas Gas EC200 - and took 'em both racing...

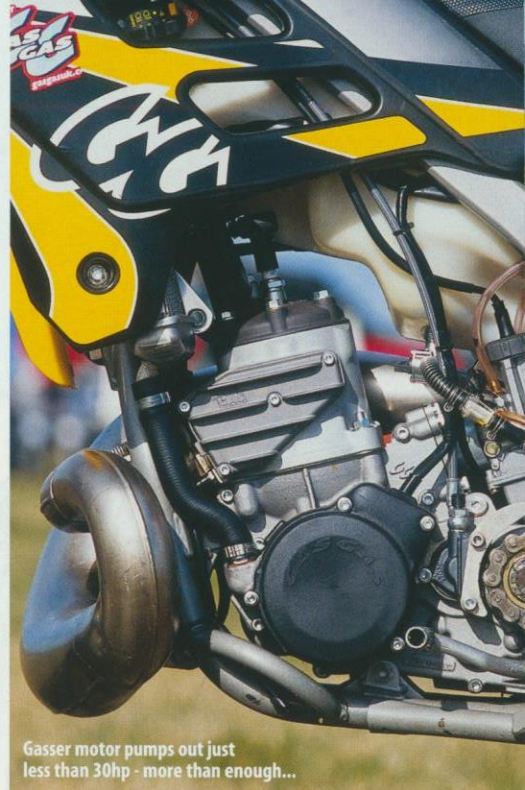
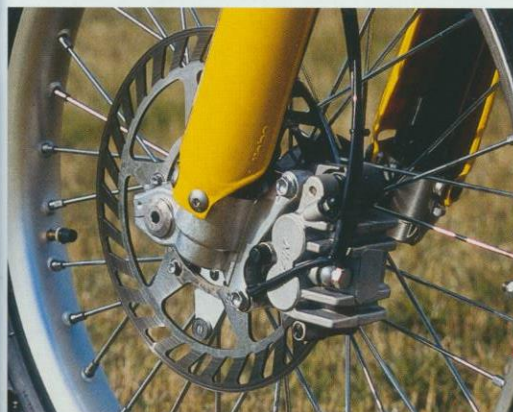
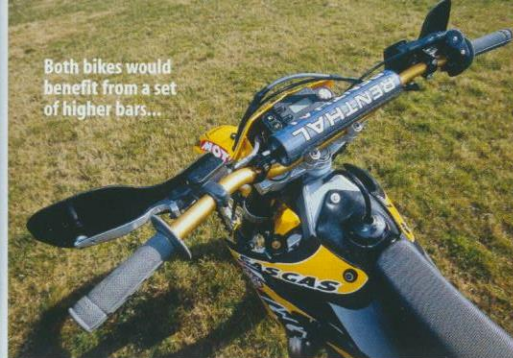
STORY AND PICS: JAMES BARNICORT

Gas Gas EC200 is one of the best clubman enduro bikes money can buy. Its light, functional and incredibly easy to ride...



SPORTS CLUB

Both bikes would benefit from a set of higher bars...



Gasser motor pumps out just less than 30hp - more than enough...

In the car world, it's widely acknowledged that there's only a certain amount of horsepower you can put through a regular front-wheel-drive chassis. Beyond this figure, which isn't really much more than a couple of hundred brake', things start to go decidedly squiffy. Torque-steer and wheelspin become a *real* problem as the laws of physics prevent the car from putting the power to the ground, making it a chore to drive fast. At which point you start going backwards - into lampposts, through hedges, that kind of thing...

Now you may well be wondering where I'm going with all this talk of hot hatches, tyre smoke and understeer, so I'll elaborate: in a similar fashion, there's only a certain amount of power that you can give to an aspiring sportsman/clubman racer before he/she starts getting overwhelmed. Having a surfeit of oomph often hinders rather than helps.

Just like the four-wheeler analogy, this amount of power is surprisingly low. In fact, I reckon it's probably somewhere less than 30hp. Which, by some strange coincidence, is roughly the output of the Gas Gas EC200, the bike which we rate as one of the best, if not *the* best, clubman enduro weapon out there. And the Husky TE250 which won our quarter-litre thumper test two months

ago has almost exactly the same power output. Let battle commence...

Join the Club

The modern 250 four-stroke class has come on in leaps and bounds since its inception back in 2001 (essentially when Yamaha launched the WR250F), and we were mightily impressed with the winner of our latest mini-thumper shootout, Husqvarna's TE250 (TBM 115). In fact, we were so taken with the little Italian bike we wondered how it would stack up against the highly regarded Gasser.

Could it be that a twofifty thumper is now the preferred mount for the clubman enduro racer? And whilst we're at it, which bike would prove the best for a Sportsman rider to enable them to progress through the ranks? Now before you all write in to complain, or stew in indignation, we know that this is an inter-class test, that the two don't strictly compete head-to-head in enduro competition. But what about all those Hare 'n' hounds events which don't run capacity classes? What about events where you're grouped by ability rather than bike or capacity? And what of those riders who simply want to enjoy their riding, regardless of which class they enter? Surely these guys are going to buy a race bike

2005 Husky TE250 is sensational looking, well-equipped and a real blast to ride thanks to a lovely linear power-curve...



SPORTS CLUB

Husky comes better equipped as standard...



We love the TE's dual-start DOHC engine, it's incredibly compact and revs to the moon...

that they can ride to the best of their abilities, a machine which is easy to pilot, and one that doesn't intimidate? We certainly reckon so.

Club Land

Over the years Gas Gas' EC200 has never really proved all that popular in the sales stakes, and we're at pains to figure out why. It could be a capacity thing, after all 200s have always been in the same class as 250cc strokers and why would you want to start out with a capacity disadvantage? Well, at the first round of the British Enduro Championship this year there were just as many 200s entered by clubmen as there were 250s, and the Clubman E2 class was actually topped by a 200. Okay, the fact that most of these machines were built in Austria rather than Spain isn't the point, rather it shows that not everyone is swayed purely by displacement.

What I'd put the Gasser's sales chart woes down to is that the EC200 doesn't actually FEEL all that fast. It's certainly nowhere near as feisty as its KTM classmate - you can push it that much harder without feeling out of shape - and as the Gas Gas importer puts it, 'people take a ride on the 200, say what a great bike it is and then go and buy an EC250 thinking that what they need is more power...'

For 2005 the EC200, along with the other Gas Gas two-strokes, underwent a few detail changes, albeit nothing too drastic. A nip here and a tuck there resulted in a bike which is now *slightly* lighter than last year's machine and *slightly* quicker turning. To be honest, we were hard pressed to spot much of a difference in the way the new bike rode and were simply glad that its easy-going manners hadn't been spoilt.

Sporting Chance

In a similar manner to the Gas Gas, we've always been impressed with the TE250. Essentially, 2005 is the second full model year for the bike because although we tested a 2003 model early on that year, they weren't really available in significant numbers until the 2004 season. At the risk of covering old ground (the TE's history was detailed in issue 115's 250 4T test), those early bikes were lightweight (the lightest in class), rev-hungry machines, which steered quickly and provided an enjoyable, involving ride. The only real hiccup was just that, a hiccup. For the TE employed a spluttery Mikuni carb which slightly spoilt things thanks to its rough throttle response.

Thankfully, the 2005 model now uses a Keihin carb rather than a Mikuni one and as our 250 shootout showed, the throttle response is now

spot on. The Marzocchi/Sachs suspension has always felt good, and the bike still revs to the stratosphere. So will it feel quite so good up against a bike as competent as the Gas Gas? Only one way to find out...

Clubbing It

In order to gain the Sportsman point of view we knew that we had to race the bikes at an 'easy-going' event. Mel, TBM's 'Sportswoman', suggested that a Chiltern Hills Enduro Club (CHEC) Hare and Hounds was probably just

right, and as it happened, their season opener was particularly suited to Sportsmen - not to mention half-an-hour from the door of the TBM office. Result!

Situated on an old airfield, the course used the adjacent farmland, a small section of woods and even a few of the concrete service roads in its four-mile length. As promised it was a simple lap, and although the woodland was festooned with tricky 'white roots' many agreed that the toughest challenge would be finding traction on the mud-slicked concrete.

With both bikes coming ready prepped there was very little to do short of check the fuel and add our own special brand of race numbers: Numbers-On-a-Roll (trademark TBM). Queuing for the start, our lash-up duct tape numbers were the source of much mirth for those around us, though I'd have thought they'd expect nothing less from the lacklustre TBM crew. Clearly, for once, our reputations had not preceded us..!

Mel started the day aboard the Husky, whilst I rode the Gas Gas, the plan being to swap bikes at the lunchbreak (terribly civilised, I know). And so

when our start time ticked around Mel thumbed the TE's starter button and I kicked the EC into life. Unusually, it took a few good boots before the motor caught and rather than zapping off onto the course after the rapidly disappearing Mel, I sat and allowed the motor to warm up.

Having watched the early riders come back around I headed out onto the course with the rear knobbly spinning all the way up the concrete track. A gentle left-hander and the course led into the woods, where I followed a group through the trees. All the while the Gasser was willing me to

On the Dyno



The dyno often reveals a bike's strengths and weaknesses...

SPORTS CLUB

As is so often the case, the dyno provided a bit of a surprise for the TBM team. For we really thought that the mild mannered Gas Gas was going to be eclipsed on power by the ultra revvy Husqvarna, but that simply wasn't the case. In terms of peak power, there's only 0.3hp in it (the EC taking the win with 27.8hp over the Husky's 27.5) but that doesn't tell the whole story.

First off, dyno operator Nick usually conducts power tests in fourth gear on six-speed bikes such as these, but the Gas Gas simply wouldn't put the power down in fourth. The manner in which the two-stroke (and to some extent, most stroke) delivered its power meant that the rear knobbly was spinning up on the dyno's knurled-surface roller, and top gear had to be used to get a true power figure. Just one of those things when putting knobbly-shod bikes on a dyno, I'm afraid.

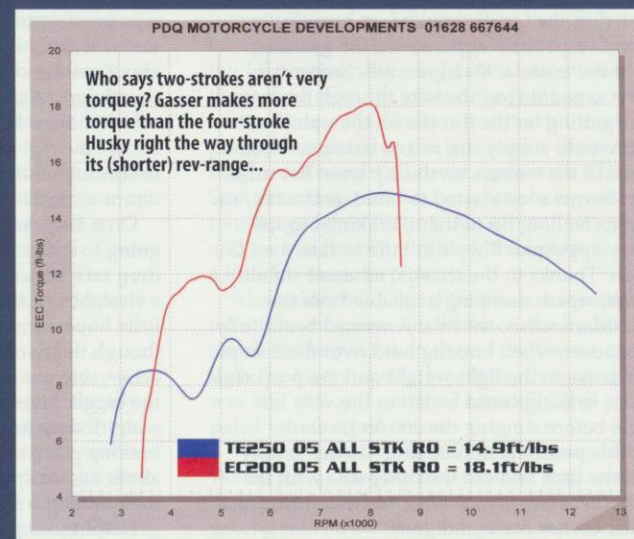
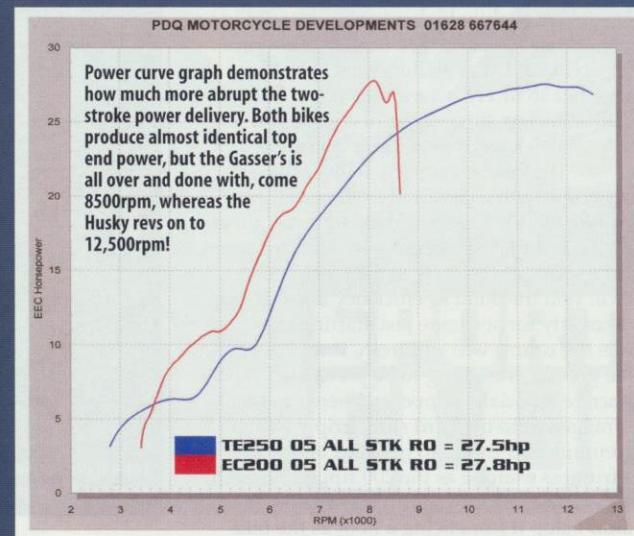
Then you only have to look at the two curves to realise that these bikes ride in a very different manner. The Gas Gas makes more power than the Husky right through its rev range (for the equivalent rpm), until it stops revving at 8200rpm. At this point, as with any two-stroke, the power drops away abruptly. If you haven't slipped home the next gear by then - you're stymied -

'cos there's virtually no over-rev. Making more power in a (much) shorter space of time makes the Gasser the more involving ride as the Husky's power characteristics are very different...

The TE250 has, as you'd expect of a thumper (particularly a DOHC one), a much more extended powerband. From its mid-range onwards, the curve is smooth, steadily-building power all the way through to 11,500rpm. And whereas the Gasser's power suddenly dies away, the Husky clings onto it longer - from 10,000rpm to 12,500rpm the dyno shows an almost flat line across the graph!

A similar story is played out on the torque graph, where the Husky maintains its broad spread of torque for far longer. But for those who think that two-strokes don't make torque, just look at the figures. The Gas Gas has the beating of the Husky all the way through its (albeit shorter) rev range, and has the far healthier bottom-end pull of the two! Interestingly, both bikes are making peak torque at around about the same revs, just over 8000rpm, though unusually, this is at the top-end for the Gas Gas.

So whilst the overall figures are fairly close, looking at the curves it's obvious that these are very different bikes to ride.



press on, and once back out onto the open going I gave the throttle a good hard tweak. The rear tyre scabbled for grip, the rear-end stepped out in that wonderfully controllable manner which epitomises the 200's rideability, and we took off down the short straight. Even this early on I could tell that the EC was gonna be pure fun...

Part of what makes the Gas Gas such a great bike to ride is its riding position and the ease with which everything works. Unlike some other bikes we've tested, you don't climb aboard the EC200 and think, 'hang on, this feels weird'. From the off, I felt right at home on the Gasser though if I really had to nit-pick - and I do - I'd perhaps prefer slightly higher bars as standard; it's about time Gas Gas opted for a decent braceless set-up like KTM et al. But when everything gels together so nicely it's a minor point. The hydraulic clutch is super-light, just what you need on a small capacity stroker, the throttle equally so. The gearbox is slick, with each cog slotting home with a click, rather than a clunk. And unlike the 450 Gasser tested last issue, there was all the feel that you could ever wish for from the brake lever(s). Top stuff. Whilst a clubman rider will find this kind of efficiency a real bonus, it's a necessity for someone just starting out.

While the course was still fresh, it was clear that the ground was going to be pretty slick, and the concrete especially slippery. Where mud had been dragged onto the hard stuff, grip was at a real premium and trying to get hard on the gas was a fruitless exercise as the 200 ripped through its rev range with a sniff of throttle. However, that didn't stop it from being a hoot as the bike fish-tailed wildly right through the gears. Once on the dirt, the Gasser hooked up beautifully. This was especially apparent on the greasiest part of the track, a 90-degree, off-camber turn. Here you could coax the bike through the corner before getting on the throttle on the uphill exit and it would simply dig in and drive. Awesome.

Most of the corners on the lap were flat turns, where berms soon started to build, and with fast straights leading up to them, braking bumps quickly appeared. They did little to faze the EC though. Thanks to the chassis' inherent stability and the superb damping available from the 45mm Marzocchis, the bike remained beautifully poised, even when braking hard over the bumps. And thanks to the light weight and the powerful Nissins, braking could be left to the very last minute before slinging the 200 on its ear.

At this point the nimble little Gasser simply railed the turn and out the other side with the minimum of fuss. No drama, no headshake, just another corner come and gone.

Through the woods it was a similar story. With

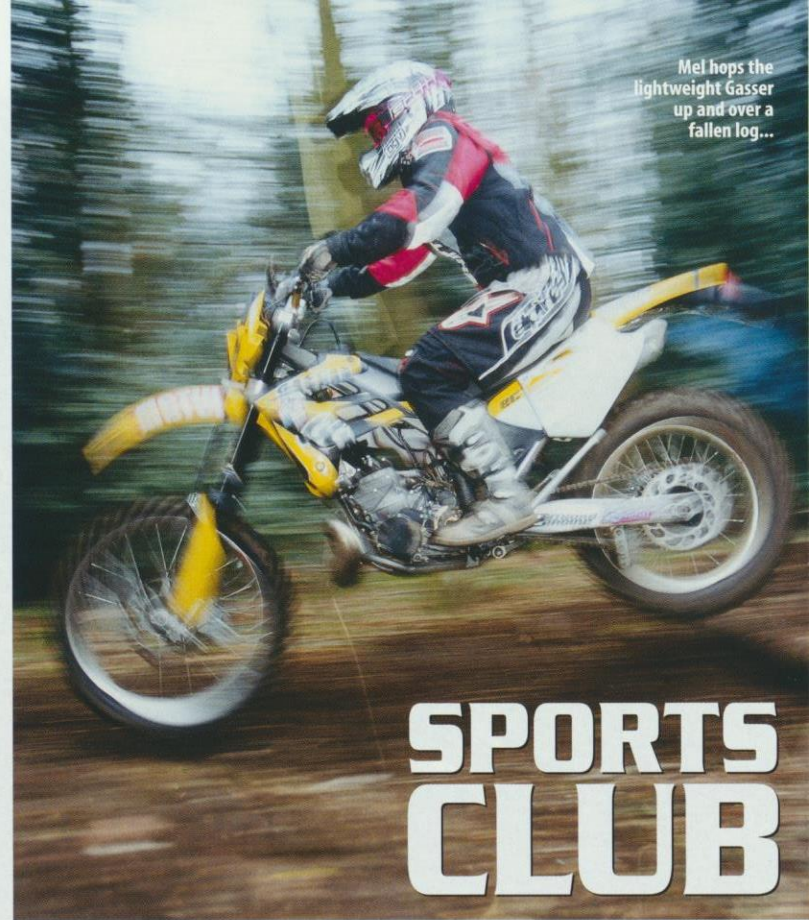


For a 'mere' 250 four-stroke, the Husky has good reserves of power for tackling slippery climbs...

a clear run along the tight single-track going it was possible to really dominate the bike and throw it around without worrying too much about getting out of shape and clattering the woodwork. Again it's this eminent rideability which makes the EC200 a bike for everyman. It allows the clubman to push harder yet still feel in control, while its unflappable nature won't daunt a sportsman when the going gets tough.

On a fast, open course the 200 was obviously going to suffer against bigger machines in the drag race between corners. And suffer it does - in a straight line blast across a field there was really little hope of matching the mid-sized thumpers though the twofifty four-strokes are a more achievable quarry. But assuming you haven't let the bigger bikes get too far ahead, you can simply wait 'til they roll-off, then just sail past their braking point and nip up the inside. The 200 isn't about all-out speed, it's about corner speed and maintaining a good average.

Helping keep the EC on the pace through the turns is that wonderfully damped suspension.



Mel hops the lightweight Gasser up and over a fallen log...

SPORTS CLUB

I'm sure that both Clubman and Sportsman level riders would find it firm without being harsh, plush without being squidgy, and in fast yet slippery conditions it was impossible to fault. From the tight, rutted 'n' rooty sections of woods to the fast undulating fields not once did I think 'Hmm, just a few more clicks of...'

Of course, another great reason to ride a small and light machine is that they don't beat you up as badly as the bigger bikes do. And after an hour-and-a-half aboard the forgiving little Gasser I felt just as fresh as I had at signing on. The Husky was really going to have to do extremely well to beat this.

Sporting Times

By the end of the hour-long lunchbreak the sky had clouded over and the wind had picked up, boy had the course changed. Now in the reverse direction, the ground was tacky rather than slick and even the concrete offered decent traction.

After the Gas Gas the Husky felt tall, a little weighty and a touch wide. Perhaps not the most

inspiring start. There's no denying that the EC200 is lower, lighter and thinner than the TE, but then being a lanky so-and-so I don't mind a tall bike; the TE certainly rides light for a four-stroke; and the feeling of width around the front-end, well, erm... I guess the Husky's just that bit more portly! Compared to the two-stroke, the seat height and weight all count against the TE as a Sportsman bike, a lower machine being easier to manage when footing through nadgery going and, as Mel herself admitted, the lighter Gasser's a little bit easier to pick up!

Alongside the major differences, I also picked up on the minutiae. For instance, the hydraulic clutch felt heavier than that of the Gasser and, with the bike virtually box fresh, the gearchange was still stiff and notchy. Thankfully, this soon paled into insignificance.

Wahey, so that's what 12,500rpm sounds like! Whilst the quick-, but low-revving stroker was all done and dusted by 8000 revs, the Husky's just getting into its stride at that point and across the fields it was really singing. I'd hazard a guess

SPORTS CLUB



that it was probably just as quick on the open going as the EC200, but as the Gasser's digi speedo was set to tell the time I never clocked a speed. Given a bit more space, such as on a fire road, I'm sure the Husky would've had the beating of the 200 - it certainly felt that way.

Despite the bike's quick revving motor, because there's a broader spread of power than the two-stroke it felt that bit less manic to ride, though obviously less snappy. Just like the 200, to make fast progress you must never let the Husky sink down into the bottom-end as there's little in the way of low-down pull, and just occasionally I found myself firing out the clutch as I did on the Gasser. But when the TE does start to drive it's an uninterrupted blast all the way to the stratospheric top-end. The end of the lap was marked with lap scoring transponder posts, with the course doubling back on itself to head into the woods again. Pulling away from the lap scoring I'd get the bike partly turned into the corner, hook second gear and pin the throttle. On a 450 I'd have been on my ass, but the TE simply

dug its rear tyre into the ground and pulled all the way through until another gear was slotted home. It was just so easy, so fuss free that you could do it with confidence corner after corner, just pick a gear and pin the throttle.

Tipping into the turns, the TE felt amazingly nimble, easily as fast steering as the Gasser, though you notice the extra weight in the transition from upright to cranked over. Just like the Gasser, a higher set of bars would be a welcome addition to help give a bit more leverage but you only had to *think* about turning the Husky, flat - or bermed-corner, and it did it. Part of this is down to the 'sharp' chassis though I was surprised to see that our bike had the forks pushed way up through the yokes. We're not talking millimetres here, but something like an inch of fork was showing past the top clamp! Quite why the bike came this way I'm not sure. We know that the TE turns rapidly enough as it is, and while not unstable it can be a little bit 'flighty', so why make things worse? Well, actually I'd have to say that on this going it didn't seem to have an



adverse affect on the bike's stability, and whilst it wasn't quite as stable as the Gas Gas, it certainly wasn't the liability I was expecting when I first noticed the forktops.

Where the difference between the Husky and the Gasser was really apparent however was through the woods, and it's as much a difference between two- and four-strokes as it is between these particular bikes. Here the TE simply didn't feel quite as taut as the 200, the extra weight and slightly softer suspension making it harder work and more physical than aboard the Gas Gas. But it's not so much a criticism, more that the two-stroke Gasser just does it that bit better!

Sport For All

After another hour-and-a-half's racing - this time aboard the Husky - it was time to call it a day, well most of the entry was already packing up! And so back at the van we both sat down and thought about which was the better bike for our own level of riding ability. For the novice/Sportsman racer such as Mel, we both agreed it's

a pretty easy call - the Husky takes the honours. Part of that must be down to the Husky's civilized nature, items like its electric-start just make it that bit easier to live with. But in fact the real reason the Husky takes the Sportsman title is because while it has the same amount of peak power as the Gasser, it spreads it out over a much broader rev range, making it a little less snatchy and aggressive to ride.

Sure, I'd argue that the Gasser's chassis is perhaps more suited to the Sportsman rider than the TE's as it's just so manageable and forgiving, whereas the Husky can be a little bit wayward at times. When things do get technical, or everything gets a bit out of shape, the Gasser's more likely to get you through unscathed.

However, as mentioned right at the beginning, ultimately it comes down to power and whilst the TE's certainly got some go for a twofifty thumper, at the end of the day it's still *only* a 250 and unlikely to intimidate. It's got an engine that will almost 'grow' with the rider's abilities, allowing them to exploit more and more of its power until they're keeping the throttle pinned more or less everywhere.

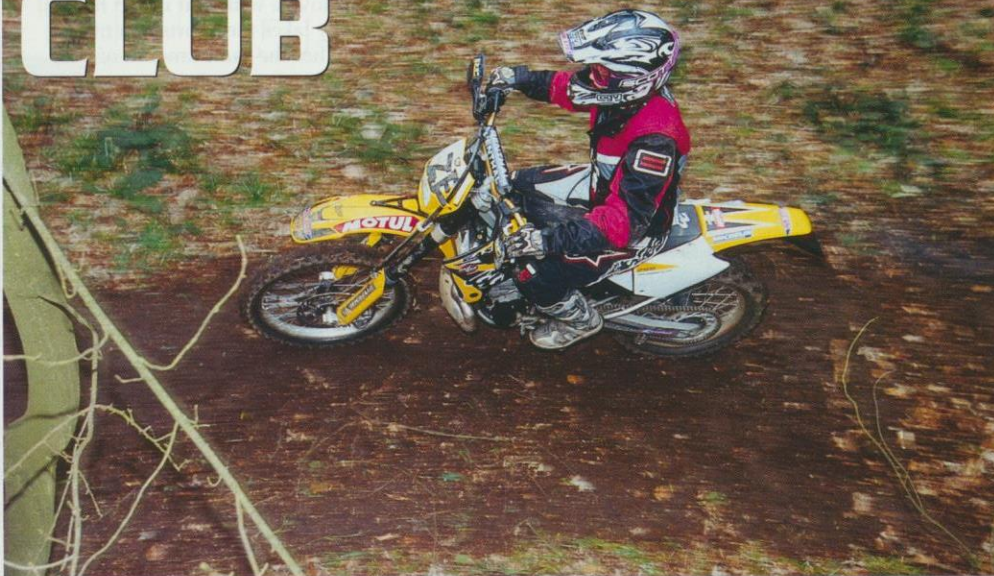
But for the moment it's not a matter of how easy it is to ride fast, but rather how easy it is to ride *fullstop*. Because with a broad spread of power you can worry less about being in the right gear, and more about the terrain. And should you tweak the throttle at the wrong moment, the result isn't quite so abrupt nor disastrous as it is with the Gasser, something Mel particularly noticed, riding in the woods.

I was actually quite surprised at how well Mel got on with the Gasser. My initial concern was 'would she be able to start it?' thanks to the high kickstart and Mel's height. But she raved about how easily it fired up, 'it's as easy as an electric start' she enthused. I also wondered how she'd get on with the abrupt power delivery and the relatively narrow powerband. Yet despite admitting finding the TE 'a bit easier to ride' she really got to grips with the EC's feisty performance and she seemed to really like the little Gas Gas. The only problem is that since then, she still hasn't stopped talking about the Husky!

Club Class

Picking the Clubman's choice was just that little bit harder. Frankly, I hadn't expected it to be this close, but the way in which the Husky revelled in a good caning and handled so well made the decision much trickier. In fact the TE's performance was mighty impressive, and if I could rely on the basic science of lap times it might be more clear-cut. But with a reversed course and improving conditions the timings became irrelevant.

SPORTS CLUB



So here's what it comes down to. Both bikes are easy to ride fast, both are damn good fun, and frankly it really depends on whether you're a two-stroke, or a four-stroke fan (not to mention the £1300 difference in the price). However, for me, the Gas Gas EC200 is *the* bike I'd choose as the Clubman racer.

The TE's motor runs the 200 donk close in terms of performance, so it's really the chassis and the overall riding experience which wins it for the Gasser. The bike rides beautifully light and virtually glides over the terrain, but you could say that of virtually any stroker, so what really sets the Gas Gas apart is that it's got a great feeling of efficiency and balance. The brakes are powerful and positive, the steering quick yet stable, and everything works together so well that you end up wondering why more people haven't cottoned on to it yet. Other than fine-tuning the riding position, there's nothing I'd change in the way the bike rides. Out of the two, it's the bike I could ride harder for longer, and that to me is the mark of a great clubman race bike. It's as simple as that...

Thanks to: John Shirt at Gas Gas (01298 766813), Mike Carter and Dave Plummer at Husky Sport (01962 771122), Nick and Larry at PDQ in Slough for the dyno time (01753 811060), Gas Gas and Husky dealers Keep Biking in Brackley (01280 705100), and all at Chiltern Hills Enduro Club (chilternhills.info) for another great hare 'n' hounds event. Cheers guys...

HUSQVARNA TE250

Price:	£5499 + otr
Engine:	249.5cc, DOHC, 4-valve, four-stroke, dual start, 6-speed
Bore/stroke:	76 x 55mm
Susp F/R / (travel):	45mm Marzocchi (300mm) Linkage Sachs (320mm)
Brakes F/R:	260 / 220mm, Brembo calipers
Seat height:	965mm
Ground clear:	335mm
Wheelbase:	1470mm
Fuel capacity:	9.2L
Weight:	123kg (as tested)

GAS GAS EC200

Price:	£4262.38 + otr
Engine:	199.4cc, reed valve, two-stroke, kick start, 6-speed
Bore/stroke:	62.5 x 65mm
Susp F/R / (travel):	45mm Marzocchi (295mm) Linkage Ohlins (310mm)
Brakes F/R:	260 / 220mm, Nissin calipers
Seat height:	940mm
Ground clear:	N/A
Wheelbase:	1476mm
Fuel capacity:	9.5L
Weight:	115kg (approx, race ready)

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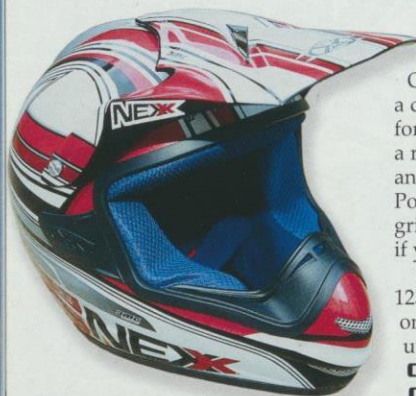
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On the downside, at 1360g it's slightly heavier than the claimed 1250g and the vents are non-adjustable. Mel's going to be wearing one for long-term testing, so we'll let you know just how it stands up to some decent abuse.

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HAVE NO FEAR

No Fear are best known for their MX gear and T-shirts, but they also produce a range of trail/enduro gear. And what we have here are their Cargo jacket and Combat pants.

Leaning more towards trail than enduro use (thanks to a lack of venting), at just £65 the Cargo is the 'value' jacket in the range, though it still comes with plenty of handy features. The zip-off sleeves can be stored in the back pocket, there's a large storm-flap and high, padded collar to keep out the elements, and the fit is drawstring-adjustable.

We particularly like the zips that extend part-way up the sides of the jacket, which, along with the double main zip, mean that the jacket doesn't bunch up when you're sat on the bike. However, whilst the cargo comes with plenty of pockets they could do with being a little more capacious, and with bigger openings too!

If it's storage space you're after, the Combat pants have that covered. There's a huge pocket on each leg which'll easily hold OS maps, spare gloves and more, though again the openings are a little small. As is the norm with this style of riding kit, the legs fit over your boots, with the inner lining running down inside the boot. But unlike regular trail pants, the Combats feature zip-off legs so that you can turn them into shorts should you wish to indulge in a spot of freestyle, er... trailriding!

The pants come with a zip and buckle fly, there are belt loops around the waist and a softly padded lumber panel. Overall, they look to be nicely finished, especially for their £65 price tag, and come in three colourways: black, charcoal, or indigo, whereas the jacket comes in only two-tone black/grey.

Cost: £65 Cargo jacket / £65 Combat pants

Contact: No Fear Europe 00 33 442 163 604
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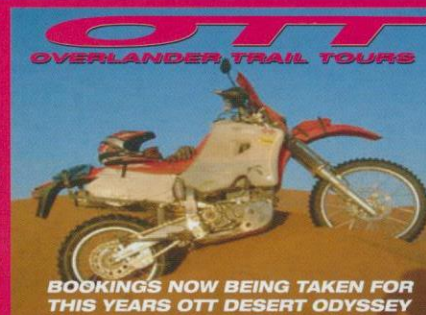
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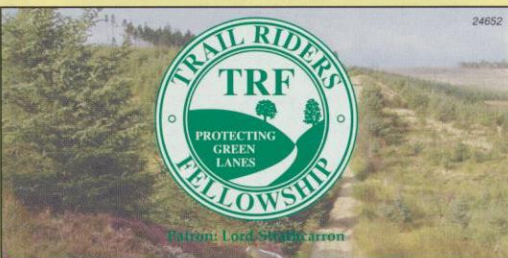
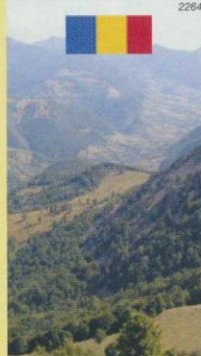
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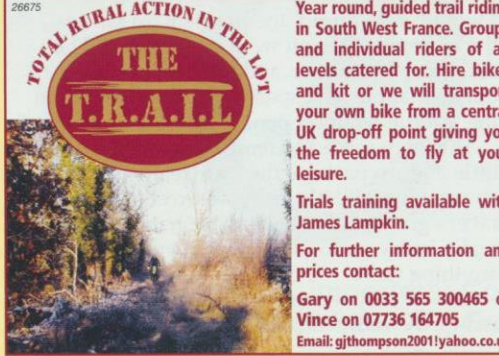
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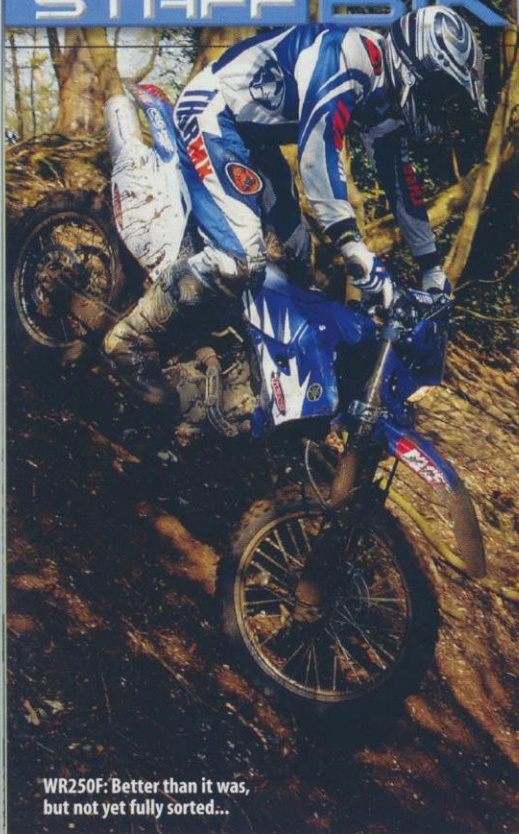


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STAFF BIKES WR250F



WR250F: Better than it was, but not yet fully sorted...

You know how it is - there are fun tests and not-so-fun tests. Let me give you an example of both. Fun test: it's June, the sun is shining and you're on a loamy enduro course. The 450 you're riding has just hooked third gear on the way out of a bermed corner and as you shift your weight back the front end starts to climb. You look good, the photographer's camera goes click and he gives you a big smile and a thumbs-up. All is well with the world.

Not-so-fun test: it's January, the sleet is horizontal and you can no longer feel your extremities. The CCM 644 you're riding is equipped with trail tyres and a particularly grabby front brake. As you sling it into a corner for the 20th time for the photographer, the front end lets go... swiftly followed by the rear. Then as you plant your outstretched leg the sound of ripping fabric comes not from your riding jeans, but your knee ligament. You just manage to save it and look up to see the smudger talking on his mobile phone. Doh!

Fortunately for me, this was shaping up to be a fun test. The sun was shining, the pressure of work was off and thanks to the fitment of an aftermarket CRD pipe to our long-term 2005 Yamaha WR250F, I knew I had a load more midrange to play with. The dyno had confirmed that our bike's missing power had been found, now all we needed was a road-test to confirm that it felt as good on the dirt as the dyno had predicted it would.

I signed up for one of the excellent Chiltern Hills Enduro Club events and on a crisp, but warm late April day, took my place alongside 240 other riders. The WR-F fired-up first push of the starter (after we renewed the broken electric-start button after a session with Mell!) and I was off on an excellent flowing ten-mile lap through the Bucks countryside.

With its newly reinstated power the WR felt really strong in the midrange accelerating briskly between slippery corners and with plenty of grunt in reserve for the few short sharp hill-climbs. In fact all was going well until it stalled unexpectedly on a short straight, and then fluffed a couple of times when I let the revs drop. It felt like it was choking up.

I revved it a couple of times and it seemed to clear, but for the rest of the morning session if I let the revs drop too low it struggled before revving clean again. It felt like it was running too rich and after finishing the morning session a look at the sooty deposits on the exhaust confirmed we still had a bit more work to do to get the jetting spot on.

Obviously, no sooner had I stopped than I had yanked the tank and seat and got the top off the carb in order to drop the needle...

Er, no. In fact I settled down for a bacon sarnie and a cup of tea in the sunshine. I'd decided that however important the jetting changes were, they'd just have to wait - and I would 'ride round' the problem. In fairness, the afternoon session went much better. The bike ran a bit crisper, and the course had dried out so that our WR spent a lot more time with the throttle wound open.

This only served to remind me what a great little enduro package the 250F really is. So strong for a 250, it's really an excellent little racer - good suspension, stable handling and really ballsy motor, why would you want anything more?

Now if only we could sort out the jetting issues, the next test should be *really* fun...

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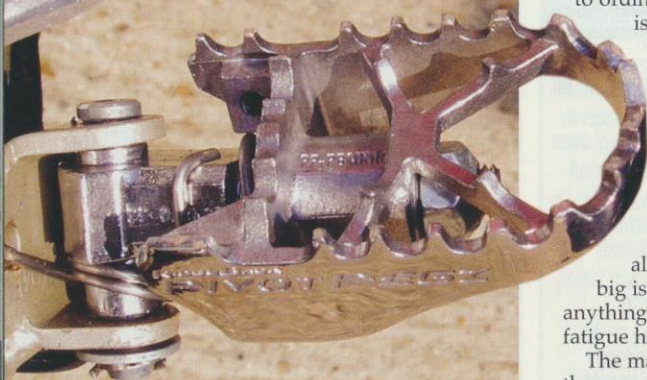
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STAFF BIKES 400EXC

In the dim and distant past, dirt bike footpegs didn't used to move at all. Now, with the new PivotPegz, aside from the usual peg movement, you get up to 20 degrees of twisting movement - forwards and back...



to (among other things) operate the rear brake lever, and gear shifter without losing full contact with the footpeg. Well that's the theory anyway, but how would they work in practice?

I was a bit anxious that they might feel a bit weird - you know, sort of *loose* underfoot - before I actually tried them, but I needn't have worried. In fact they don't feel all that different to ordinary footpegs most of the time - which is exactly how you want them to feel.

However, what I did notice on a short lap of an enduro course was that I immediately felt more 'connected' with the bike. As the KTM rocked forwards and backwards over bumps, your feet remain fully in contact with the flat side of the pegs. For sure the claims made about making it easier to operate the rear brake and gear-lever are all true. And while this is probably not a big issue for most people, most of the time, anything which lessens the amount of rider fatigue has got to be a good thing.

The manufacturers of Pivotpegs claim that these pegs provide faster and smoother body-weight transfer, superior foothold, reduced vibration and less boot wear. But the biggest advantage I noticed with the PivotPegz was that during cornering I was able to get my inside boot securely back onto the peg that much quicker because as your boot presses back onto the peg - the peg tips forward until it's flat against the sole of your boot. Meantime while your inside leg is stretched out in the corner, the pivoting outer peg lets the bike ride over bumps without you losing solid contact with a critical part of the bike. Excellent.

And the more you think about it - the more it all kind of makes sense. The pivoting action allows you to retain optimal contact through the flat of the pegs during most riding manoeuvres, yet the feel is very natural because the support remains constant and the pressure you exert is always focussed through the same point - the footpeg mount.

It might've only been a short test in duration, but what I discovered made me want to try 'em out on a much longer ride and in varying conditions. Radical redesigns like this only come along every once in a while, and these are one of the best improvements to a stock dirt bike I've tried. For certain there's a small weight penalty but on this first appraisal it seems to be more than worth it. For more info contact 01306 632962.

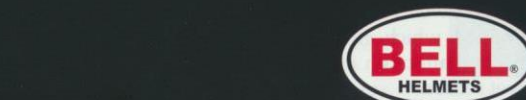
Meantime our KTM is well overdue for a bit of attention - and a proper oil change. I wonder if we'll get around to it in time for next month...

After last month's instalment, our Katosh was in need of a little bit of TLC... But as usual this being TBM, there was no time for any of that, so we topped up the oil with half a litre of Motul's finest synthetic and set about bolting on some new goodies. That's more like it.

We'd been itching for the opportunity to try out a pair of the innovative new pivoting footpegs - PivotPegz they're called. You've probably seen them advertised but, like us, didn't know anyone who'd actually tried them on their own bike. We planned to rectify that.

These Aussie-designed, stainless footpegs cost £124.50 and come with a two-year anti-breakage guarantee (three months on the springs and bushes), and fitted onto our KTM using the new split-pins with no unnecessary fiddling. As you need to retain the original footpeg pin and spring these were thoroughly cleaned to remove every last trace of sand and grit - the whole job taking little more than ten minutes.

Once the PivotPegz are in place you'll find that if you stand up and move your bodyweight forwards or back they will pivot approximately 20 degrees from the horizontal, always returning to a central position thanks to the inbuilt spring. The beauty of this movement is that it allows you



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SPEED



'THEY WERE MORE ANNOYED THAT THE MX TEST WAS RUBBISH AND THAT THE CLUB SHOULD HAVE PUT MORE EFFORT INTO IT. BUT I THINK THEY SHOULD JUST SHUT UP AND GET ON WITH RIDING..!'

A

t the end of my last column I said that I hoped my run of good form would continue to include the opening two rounds of the FIM World Enduro Championship. Well, with both the Spanish opener and the second round from Portugal now behind me, I'm happy to say that it did! And as things stand I'm leading the Enduro 3 world championship by some 25 points and couldn't have asked for a better start to the series.

KNIGHTER'S WINNING STREAK CONTINUES...

I knew that I was riding well going into the first race in Spain but until that first event had passed there was no point in being too confident.

There's always something, or more to the point *someone*, that comes along and messes up your plans if you start thinking that it's going to be your year.

With some riders avoiding competition prior to the start of the WEC, while others compete in the Italian, Spanish, German or Swedish national championships, you never know exactly how fast your classmates are going to be until Sunday night after the first round of the series. Thankfully, they weren't as fast as me...

Spain was, well, a bit of a weird event really. Firstly it rained, which no one was really expecting although we've had plenty of wet season openers in past years. Secondly, and I don't know how to write this without it sounding big headed, but I won easily. With the event featuring an enduro test that took close to two-and-a-half hours to walk, a Mickey Mouse MX test and an extreme test situated in the

city, winning by more than two minutes on each day was something I would never have expected. I know that I like it when conditions get wet, but I didn't think that it was *that* wet in Spain, certainly not as wet as it could have been. And although I enjoyed the tests, the likes of Mika Ahola and Marko Tarkkala should have been faster than they were.

But Mika, who is the rider I expected to push me the hardest, DNF'd day one with a mechanical problem, and did me a huge favour. So starting the season in this way was great, not only for me but also for the Farioli team and all the team's sponsors who had worked really hard making sure everything was ready for the GP of Spain.

I knew that in Portugal I'd have to work harder to win. With conditions much drier than in Spain, Marko and Mika were both set on beating me. It was no secret that they didn't like being beaten by so much in Spain, I know I certainly wouldn't have liked to have been beaten like that, so in Portugal I expected them to pull out all the stops. In fact Mika said in Spain that he'd be able to challenge me as soon as a grassy MX test featured in one of the events. Well, there was a grass MX test in Portugal, but guess what? He still didn't beat me..!

Things were much closer between myself and my class-mates in Portugal though, but I still won both days - day one by 30secs and day two by 25secs. Certainly not as big a winning margin as in Spain, but a win is a win, and I certainly wasn't riding beyond my limits to do so.

The extreme test in Portugal played right into my hands and was where I was able to open up most of my

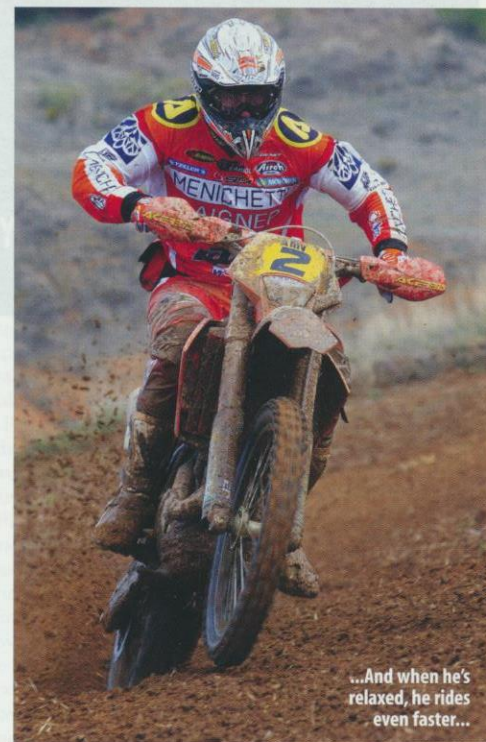
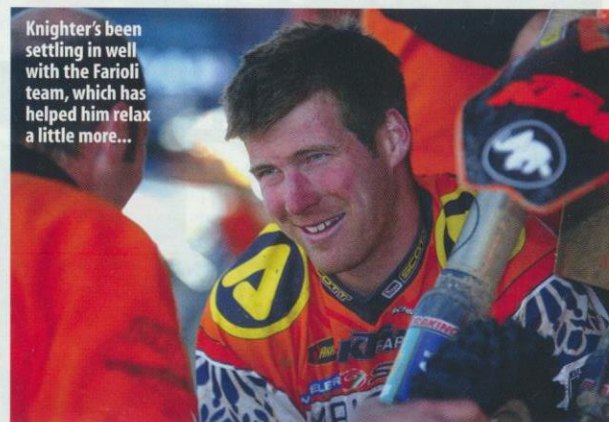
advantage. It was also where Marko Tarkkala, my team-mate and the rider closest to me in the E3 championship, ended up stuck in a bush - twice(!) - losing around 30secs and dropping from second to eighth on day one. With Mika having failed to score points on day one in Spain and Marko scoring very few on day two in Portugal, winning both days in Portugal meant that I already have a whole day's points advantage in the championship. Not bad after only four days of racing. If the two Finns keep battling against each other, and taking points from one another as well as messing up now and then, it will certainly make my job much easier.

On the whole the two opening rounds of the world championship were pretty good, and not just in terms of my results. With my team-mate Ivan Cervantes winning the E1 class on both days in Spain and Portugal, as well as Italians Alex Belometti and Alessandro Botturi having also visited the podium this year, the atmosphere in the Farioli KTM team is incredibly relaxed at the moment.

The only thing that I didn't like about the first race of the season in Spain was that some riders were whingeing about the extreme test. I think they were more annoyed with the fact that the motocross test was rubbish and that the club should have put more effort into it before working on the 'spectator special'. But I think they should just shut up and get on with riding! After all, it's the same for everyone.

The extreme test in Spain was essentially an indoor enduro course, but outdoors. Featuring pretty much all the obstacles you'd expect to find at the Barcelona Indoor - logs, rocks, jumps, sand etc - certain riders reckon that extreme tests shouldn't be a part of the WEC. Maybe they have a point, but each WEC event this year will feature one, so instead of moaning about them being too difficult I think they should get practicing, like I've been doing with jumping. Some riders would prefer Extreme tests to have a cash prize for the

Knighter's been settling in well with the Farioli team, which has helped him relax a little more...



...And when he's relaxed, he rides even faster...

fastest times, rather than counting towards the days results. But I decided to leave the riders' meeting in Spain where the subject was being raised, rather than saying something that would have aggravated the other riders. No doubt the debate will continue to rage, but I certainly won't be losing any sleep over extreme tests...

'05 MOTUL BRITISH ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP

ROUND 2: CLWB BEIC MODUR DYFED,
BRECHFA ENDURO, 17 APRIL



SPORT

An eight-hour day is what the Dyfed Dirt Bike Club had originally planned for the Championship class riders at the second round of the '05 BEC series, the Brechfa Enduro, held near Carmarthen in West Wales. Organising their first ever British championship event, the DDBC were forced to cancel the last planned lap of the day due to the wet Welsh weather, resulting in a shorter, but every bit as challenging, event. Yep, the Brechfa marked a welcome return for another 'proper' Welsh, forest-based enduro to the series.

The Event...

Few riders really knew what to expect from the second round of the series, and with good reason - the forest hadn't been used to stage a round of the national championship since '98. Previously the home of the ISCA enduro, an event run by the now all but defunct Caerleon club, the course was laid out by a small group of experienced riders - and it showed. This event was certainly no trail ride!

Featuring three time checks per lap, giving a total lap mileage of approximately 32 miles, the

Brechfa featured one cross-country test, which was within the first check of the lap. All riders arrived at the first test of the day shortly after the start, with both the Championship and Expert classes timed on every lap.

Starting on a forest road, before heading up a steep but fast climb, the test soon entered its 'technical section' as it weaved its way through, around and over some extremely challenging forest terrain. Featuring both high- and low-speed sections, the slippery forest floor was littered with tree roots and stumps, which caught out more than a few riders - just like enduro tests used to do!

Of the three time checks two were seven miles long and the other 18. All featured little road-work, and what started out as a challenging but enjoyable 'proper' enduro ride developed into some pretty difficult going. The last check of each lap was the tightest on time for the Championship class, and only a handful of riders went clean on the last check of the day thanks to one particularly tricky climb. Due to the congestion on this check, the organisers decided to scrap all penalties from the check. Had they not have done so, the event would have had a very different set of results!

And The Winners Are...

Coming into the event off the back of two WEC victories, it came as little surprise that David Knight topped the overall results aboard his D3-Racing KTM. Posting the quickest times on all four runs through the cross-country test, Knighter again proved that no matter what the conditions he's the rider to beat. Well aware that it would be a long day in the saddle, and that his 525cc thumper wasn't the easiest of machines to manoeuvre around the forest, Knighter started cautiously and only really did enough to ensure another maximum points haul to extend his championship lead, finishing the event with a 16 second win.

Behind him and mirroring his performance from the Breckland Enduro, where he finished as

runner-up on both days, Honda Racing Fast Eddy PAR Homes rider Paul Edmondson was back on a 250cc two-stroke having raced aboard a quarter-litre thumper while on international duties. Although just a few seconds slower than Knight on each test, Edmondson found himself outpaced by 125cc KTM rider Ed Jones on the first test of the day, before upping his pace and moving comfortably ahead of the Welshman on the second, third and final tests. By finishing as overall runner-up Edmondson topped the Enduro 2 class to strengthen his position at the top of the 250cc two-stroke/450cc four-stroke category.

Clearly enjoying competing in his favourite conditions, Ed Jones came out all guns blazing on the first test of the day, despite being one of the first riders onto the test and as a result having no ruts to use. Posting a time equal to David Knight's, Ed was determined to make the most of his woods riding skills and was never headed in the E1 class. Finishing five places ahead of his nearest E1 class rival, Ed secured his position at the top of the E1 championship.

With one E3, one E2 and one E1 rider making up the overall top three, New Zealander Chris Birch took fourth aboard his 250cc Husqvarna. Placing ahead of Sandiford Honda rider Wayne Braybrook by the narrowest of margins in both the overall and Enduro 2 results, Birch was one of the riders to benefit from the scrapping of the penalties from the event's final check.

Making it five Enduro 2 class riders within the overall top seven places of the Championship class, Braybrook was followed home by Gas Gas rider Paul Whibley. Some five seconds behind Braybrook, Whibley just managed to edge ahead of Honda's Euan McConnell who in turn placed ahead of the second highest E1 class rider, Daryl Bolter.

Having never finished a really demanding, wet, Welsh forest-

Paddock Pointers

✓ The Dyfed Dirt Bike Club deserve a pat on the back for taking the plunge and organising a round of the BEC series - their first ever BEC event. Unsure, if they could pull off such an event, if the comments of the majority of the Championship class riders are anything to go by the Brechfa will certainly be extremely warmly welcomed again next year.

✓ Forestry Commission Wales is enabling enduro sport to happen in Wales and is actively supporting events like the Brechfa. With the sport of enduro heavily reliant on the Forestry Commission's managed estates, FCW supporting organised competition can only be a good thing for all concerned.

✓ The fact that it well and truly tipped it down during the Brechfa Enduro meant that the Dyfed Dirt Bike Club learnt first-hand just how much harder organising a BEC event can be when conditions turn bad. Considering the weather they had, most reckoned they did a very good job!

'05 MOTUL BRITISH ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP



David Knight hustled his fiery 525 KTM around the Brechfa to win the overall...

based enduro before Bolter was clearly pleased with his second-in-class result and now sits just one point behind Ed Jones in the E1 championship standings.

Surprise, surprise...

The stand-out performance at the Brechfa Enduro was that of Husky Sport Husqvarna rider Chris Birch. With the Breckland coming as a bit of a shock to the system, (Birch finished 26th and 20th in the overall Championship class), the New Zealander found the slippery Welsh event very much more to his liking. Producing four consistent special test times, Chris was placed



fourth in the overall standings, and finished runner-up to Paul Edmondson in the Enduro 2 class.

Paddock Pointers

☒ With so many events now decided on special test times alone, having the Brechfa end with all but a few riders losing time was something welcomed by most of the Championship class. However, as a 'proper', old fashioned style enduro, the scrapping of the final 'tight' check was seen as a disappointing, but understandable, decision considering the weather conditions.

☒ According to a brief note in the event programme, illegal riding in the Brechfa Forest is still a big problem, something the DDBC are keen to eradicate. With Forestry Commission Wales having given enduros a second chance in the forest, any rider caught riding illegally will now have their machine confiscated and be banned from all ACU motorcycle events.

AND THE WINNERS SAID...

'I really thoroughly enjoyed the event, it was absolutely spot on. But it did get pretty difficult towards the end of the day because it got so cold I couldn't feel my hands. Considering how bad the weather was, and that it was the first time the Dyfed Dirt Bike Club has run a BEC event, it's hard to fault it.

They put on a really enjoyable course, and a lot of work went into the test. I hope that they decide to run the event as a British championship round again - just next time with slightly better weather!

David Knight - D3-Racing KTM

'I'm happy with my result and I really enjoyed the event. It wasn't easy, that's for sure, but I felt that I rode well and put in four good tests. The course was really challenging, but very enjoyable. I felt that I could have done another lap but it was probably best that we didn't.'

Ed Jones - ET James

'It was a mega event. The tight checks were a real challenge, but enjoyable. It's been a long time since I've done an event like this and I've really enjoyed it. I wouldn't like to do it every weekend, but I think to have the occasional really challenging race is good for everyone.'

**Paul Edmondson - Honda Racing
Fast Eddy PAR Homes**



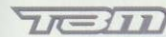
HUSQVARNA HAFREN FOREST ENDURO 2005

ROUND 3-EUROPEAN ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP
16-17 JULY, LLANIDLOES, MID WALES



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'05 MAXXIS FIM WORLD ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP

ROUND 1:
GP OF SPAIN, GUADALAJARA,
SPAIN 2-3 APRIL

Everyone's Talking About...

As with the start of any major championship, the days leading up to the opening round of the '05 Maxxis FIM World Enduro Championship were filled with speculation - who would finish the nine round series as a champion? In the E1 class most agreed that as many as ten riders could win races during the coming months, but no-one was prepared to take a guess on who'd scoop the title. In the E2 class everyone agreed that it would be a two-horse race between Finn Samuli Aro and Australian Stefan Merriman. But in the E3 class David Knight was the paddock's clear favourite, without exception!

As well as pre-championship guestimates, the weather and the event's special tests were the most talked about subjects in Spain, with the 'do we really need extreme tests in enduros' debate again being raised by several of the series' top riders. With the organising club having clearly put a lot of work into the inner city extreme test,

the event's motocross test was sub-standard. This annoyed several riders as they felt that an extreme test should only be added to a race after a good motocross and cross-country test is marked out.

As for the weather, well, it was pretty miserable. With everyone prepared for clear skies and dry conditions it didn't turn out that way as rain put a dampener on the event, in more ways than one.

What was great to see in Guadalajara was the amount of teams and trucks in the paddock, and the number of bikes within parc ferme. With privateers and the introduction of the Enduro Junior class having swelled the number of WEC entrants, the opening round of the series had a much more vibrant atmosphere than it did 12 months ago.

Of all the trucks within the paddock, it was the Gas Gas Poland articulated lorry that proved the biggest talking point. Looking more like a five star luxury hotel on the inside than a race transporter, the massive truck featured a drop-down tail lift that carefully placed the team's Suzuki jeep inside the back of the vehicle. Rumored to have cost upwards

SPORT

both days. But there were two things that made Ivan's winning rides even more impressive. Firstly, it rained in Spain (!), conditions in which the former motocross rider has often struggled. Secondly, the event featured a technical cross-country test, again something that has troubled the long-haired Farioli team rider in past seasons. Seemingly unfazed by the wet stuff, or the fact that he was more often than not the first rider onto each of the event's special tests, Ivan made few mistakes and posted quick test times. Starting both days on the pace and then remaining both fast and consistent, Ivan rode every bit as well as he did 12 months ago to claim an early lead in the Enduro 1 championship, much to his and KTM's delight.

It was Frenchman Marc Germain, competing aboard his Yamaha France WR250F, that claimed the runner-up spot on day one. Some 48 seconds behind Cervantes, Germain, as a known wet weather performer, proved that despite having made only occasional WEC outings in '04 he still has the speed to finish on the podium. Never really a threat to Cervantes, Germain only just managed to stay in the second place position as he squeezed himself between the Spaniard and third place rider Paul Edmondson.

of 200,000 euros, the part Polish Motorcycle Federation funded transporter certainly turned heads. The fact that it had just two Enduro Junior riders working from beneath its huge awning lead many to joke that it must have been paid for with proceeds raised from the stolen bikes from last years ISDE..!

And The Winners Are...

After topping the opening event of last year's series, Spaniard Ivan Cervantes was expected to win in Guadalajara. Armed with KTM's new DOHC 250cc four-stroke, highly motivated and riding with the advantage of competing on home soil, Ivan claimed maximum points on

Finishing the day just two seconds behind Germain, Paul Edmondson started the season in the way he'd planned - by finishing on the podium. Struggling a little to adjust to riding a 250cc four-stroke in the mud, Eddy managed to pull himself up the class results after a slow start to the day. At the end of just over 50 minutes of special test action Edmondson was just one second ahead of Bartosz Oblucki and a further two seconds up on Italian Alex Belometti. Things in the E1 class were certainly tight!

On day two Cervantes was again a class above the rest and was joined by two different

Paddock Pointers

✓ KTM's long awaited 250cc DOHC four-stroke proved both reliable and extremely competitive in its maiden WEC outing, claiming the top spot in the E1 class on both days. Looking very much like it's ready to go into production, the orange 250F could well be the machine to top the E1 class this season.

✓ Numerous riders commented that they could see the influence that former world enduro champion Giovanni Sala, acting as official course inspector, had on the event. Arriving in Guadalajara one week beforehand, Gio commented that he really needs to arrive at events even earlier to ensure that things run smoothly, and that he was now working harder than when he was a rider!

✓ The increase in the number of non-factory supported teams and privately-entered riders at the WEC opener was encouraging to see after the championship entry had shrunk to disappointingly low numbers in recent seasons. With the Enduro Junior class helping to add volume to the WEC entry, only time will tell if as many riders compete every round.

'05 MAXXIS FIM WORLD ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP

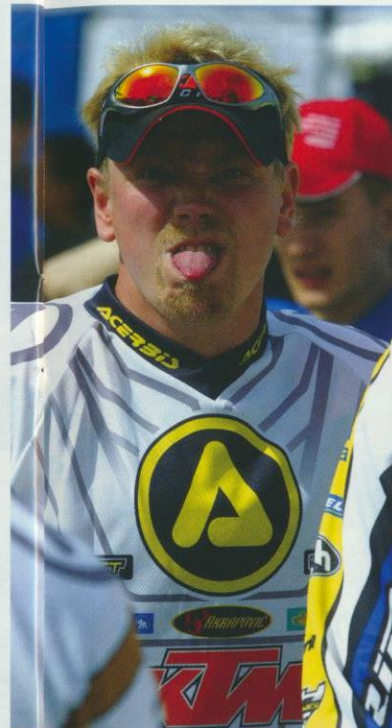


The Event...

The opening round of the '05 World Enduro Championship proved to be a much tougher event than expected. Situated on the outskirts of Guadalajara, 55km from Madrid, the terrain was relatively flat and open featuring short, sharp climbs rather than rolling hills. Course inspector Giovanni Sala commented that with the exception of a few hills, the time controls could be ridden on a Vespa! But heavy rain during the opening day made it a much more challenging event. Run on B schedule due to the bad weather, the event featured four time checks and three special tests (one motocross special, one cross-country test and one extreme test as is now an FIM minimum requirement) as well as one or two single track climbs that proved troublesome for several riders.

The cross-country test was one of the longest seen on the WEC for many years. Taking two to three hours to walk, the test wound its way across the Spanish countryside and was where the event was won or lost as far as the top riders were concerned. With the test being so long, the difference between a good run through and a bad run was often as much as a minute, or more! Just like the going, it featured a few tricky climbs, and was ridden within the first check of the lap along with the motocross test.

While the cross-country special was a 'proper' enduro special test, the motocross test came in for much criticism from the riders. Pegged out on a flat featureless field, it had to be heavily modified by Giovanni Sala before the event and even then was boring, causing problems for the riders when broken marker tapes resulted in some people missing the corners. By comparison the extreme test, which was like an indoor enduro course outdoors, was extremely challenging with numerous man-made obstacles. Featuring rocks, sand, trees, steps, jumps and water-holes, most riders were a little dubious before the event but commented afterwards that they'd enjoyed riding it.



no-one expected the young KTM rider to feature so close to the top of the E2 class results, although he was still some 48s behind Merriman.

For Aro the opening day was a bit of a shock to the system. Having spent weeks training in the dry conditions of southern Spain, the fact that he'd never ridden his 450cc KTM in mud before meant that he didn't get the best from it. Inconsistent on the tests, Samuli managed to finish on the podium despite being over a minute off the pace of Merriman.

Day two saw Merriman comfortably quicker than all other E2 class riders as he claimed the day win to give him the perfect start to the season. Injuring a finger when he parted company with his bike on the extreme test made things a little more difficult for the Yamaha rider but nonetheless he still topped the class by over half a minute.

Behind him Samuli claimed the runner-up spot, with Planet squeezed into fourth by Husky rider Anders Eriksson.

To finish more than two minutes ahead of your nearest competitor is something that is all but unheard of in WEC these days but that is exactly what David Knight managed in the Enduro 3 class.

Armed with a full-factory KTM, and the determination to claim his first ever world championship title this season, Knighter simply proved too strong for his class-mates and claimed a massive winning margin on both days, to start the season with a perfect result.

Not needing to push himself too hard, Knighter kept extending his lead with each passing test - on both days. Winning every test in the E3 class, he finished the weekend as the fastest overall rider. But this wasn't officially recognised as the 'Scratch' class (awarded to the rider with the fastest time overall) has now been scrapped!

David's team-mate, Marko Tarkkala, claimed the runner-up

riders on the podium. Claiming the runner-up spot aboard his two-stroke TM was Sweden's Rickard Larsson. With Mark Germain dropping to sixth and Edmondson to fifth, Petteri Silvan took third to give KTM's new 250cc thumper two podium places on day two of its debut event.

Despite admitting that he was feeling anything but confident about his chances of topping the Enduro 2 class in Spain, Stefan Merriman started the season as he'd finished '04 - on winning form. Concerned about his speed - having performed below par at the opening rounds of the Italian Enduro Championship - Stefan proved he needn't have worried about being off the pace!

On day one, instead of Finn Samuli Aro challenging him, it was the relatively unknown Frenchman Fabien Planet who pushed the Aussie ace the hardest. Despite having been nurtured by former WEC rider Eric Bernard for the past few seasons,



Paddock Pointers

☒ Spaniard Arnau Vilanova decided mid-way through the first day that life as a full-time WEC competitor wasn't for him. Pulling out of the event and the championship, Arnau said thanks but no thanks to his boss Paul Edmondson and the Honda Racing Fast Eddy PAR Homes team, and headed home. His reason for quitting? Arnau said that he hadn't enjoyed being away from home and that he only wanted to race in the Spanish championship.

☒ Swede Rickard Larsson criticised the organisers for not having alternative routes up some of the hills after the TM factory rider lost time on day one when he got stuck behind other riders. Rickard, who finished eighth in the E1 class on day one after dropping two minutes, would have placed as runner-up (as he did on day two) had he not been held up.

☒ The promise by WEC promoter, Alain Blanchard, that all events in '05 would be timed with transponders didn't materialise in Spain due to 'the system not being ready'. Having been used at the opening rounds of the Italian Enduro Championship, it was decided that until the set-up is fully functional and glitch-free, conventional timing should be used instead.



'05 MAXXIS FIM
WORLD
ENDURO
CHAMPIONSHIP

spot on day one, with Husaberg-mounted enduro veteran Mario Rinaldi placing third. On day two Husqvarna rider Mika Ahola finished a distant second to David, a disappointing mechanical DNF having put him out on day one. With Tarkkala in third it meant that KTM riders held the top two spots in the E3 class after the opening round.

Newly introduced for 2005, the Enduro Junior class (for riders under the age of 21) saw a few new names in WEC, with Spaniard Cristobal Guerrero topping the class on both days. With all capacity machines mixed together in the 'EJ' class, Guerrero was followed home by his 250cc two-stroke Gas Gas mounted team-mate Oriol Mena on day two, with Brit-based Aussie Jake Stapleton in third.

In the tough conditions, all of the junior riders lost time and Guerrero placed comfortably ahead of the rest of the under-21s, with 21 riders finding things too tough and failing to finish.

On day two Guerrero again proved to be the class's quickest rider, finishing one-and-a-half minutes ahead of Stapleton, with Husqvarna rider Daryl Bolter making it onto his first ever WEC podium. Whilst all of the riders within the top ten managed to stay on time on day two, Guerrero's combined test times would have placed him seventh in the E2 class!

Surprise, Surprise

Although known to be a lover of wet, challenging events, the ease with which David Knight topped the opening round of the '05 WEC took everyone, including David himself, by surprise. While many were expecting a strong performance from the Manxman thanks to promising early season results, nobody expected him to be quite as fast as he was. Making many of his rivals, riders that are extremely fast, extremely talented and extremely well supported, look like they were WEC first-timers, David schooled everyone in the art of how to stamp your name on a world championship round.

While Knight's dominance of the E3 class confirmed what many had predicted, little-known Frenchman Fabien Planet made a name for himself by finishing as runner-up to Stefan Merriman in the E2 class on day one, and then backing up the result by placing fourth on day two. In previous seasons, Planet had only produced the occasional strong result aboard a 125cc machine, though he appeared to be right at home on a 250cc two-stroke and proved to be the big upset of the E2 class. Paying his own way in the WEC series this season with the help of his loyal sponsors, the KTM France rider also proved that a two-stroke, and a LIGHTLY modified two-stroke at that, can still be extremely competitive at the highest level.

SPORT

While some produced strong results, the number of riders that struggled at the season opener was high. In the E1 class eight riders failed to reach the finish of day one, with the E2 category losing 12. Many others lost time and simply gave up! Thanks to the wet conditions, the riders that had spent much of their pre-season training in the sunnier climes of southern Spain seemed to suffer the most.

Better Luck Next Time

A number of riders made disappointing starts to their championship campaigns, including the man many tipped to challenge David Knight for the E3 title - Husqvarna's Mika Ahola. Failing to reach the end of day one due to a mechanical problem, Mika managed to bounce back on day two but was all too aware that the loss of 25 championship points so early on in the season is something that is going to make his job a lot harder in the next few rounds.

But while Mika was able to re-start on day two, fellow Finn Petri Pohjamo wasn't quite so lucky, as the TM-mounted former 125cc world champion parted company with his 450cc four-stroke on day one, badly injuring an elbow. Petri was on a plane home to receive surgery before the end of the second day's competition, his likely three-month lay-off coming as a huge blow for the Italian squad.

Also suffering injury was Valtteri Salonen. The young Finn crashed and badly cut his knee, despite the fact that he was wearing knee braces. Having received stitches to the wound, he tried to compete on day two but left the Spanish event without scoring points.

Simone Albergoni and Bartosz Oblucki did post some points on the scoreboard, though far fewer than were expected. The two riders, who'd battled it out for the runner-up spot in last year's E1 class, failed to finish inside the top five of the E1 class on either day.

The Manufacturers' Race

As far as the manufacturers' race was concerned, the season opener was all about KTM. With Ivan Cervantes topping both days in the Enduro 1 class, David Knight both days in the Enduro 3 class, and Fabien Planet setting tongues wagging with his performance in E2 it's easy to see why the KTM factory team were wearing big smiles after the event.

Add to those impressive results the fact that Samuli Aro finished third and second in the E2 class, Petteri Silvan placed third in E1 on day two, and Marko Tarkkala finished second and third in E3 and you can see why the Austrians had cause to celebrate in Spain.

Despite poor performances from their Enduro 1 class riders, Stefan Merriman upheld Yamaha's honour in Spain with his two wins in the E2 class. And Gas Gas managed to leave their home race in good spirits due to the performance of their Enduro Junior rider, Cristobal Guerrero.



RESULTS - DAY 1

ENDURO 1

1. IVAN CERVANTES (KTM) 55:13.29
2. MARC GERMAIN (YAMAHA) 56:01.65
3. PAUL EDMONDSON (HONDA) 56:03.64
4. BARTOSZ OBLUCKI (YAMAHA) 56:05.04
5. ALESSANDRO BELOMETTI (KTM) 56:07.18

ENDURO 2

1. STEFAN MERRIMAN (YAMAHA) 54:11.60
2. FABIEN PLANET (KTM) 54:59.67
3. SAMULI ARO (KTM) 55:19.91
4. HELDER RODRIGUES (GAS GAS) 55:41.76
5. BJORNE CARLSSON (HUSABERG) 55:51.33

ENDURO 3

1. DAVID KNIGHT (KTM) 52:34.71
2. MARKO TARKKALA (KTM) 54:54.34
3. MARIO RINALDI (HUSABERG) 55:08.39
4. ALESSIO PAOLI (TM) 55:25.19
5. ALEX ZANNI (HONDA) 55:37.46

ENDURO JUNIOR

1. CRISTOBAL GUERRERO (GAS GAS) 1.00:05.79
2. ORIOL MENA (GAS GAS) 1.04:44.28
3. JACOB STAPLETON (TM) 1.02:25.48
4. MARC BOURGEOIS (HUSQVARNA) 1.04:55.60
5. JULIEN DUBAC (HUSQVARNA) 1.05:56.02

RESULTS - DAY 2

ENDURO 1

1. IVAN CERVANTES (KTM) 54:36.50
2. RICHARD LARSSON (TM) 55:06.50
3. PETTERI SILVAN (KTM) 55:06.82
4. ALESSANDRO BELOMETTI (KTM) 55:37.39
5. PAUL EDMONDSON (HONDA) 55:55.79

ENDURO 2

1. STEFAN MERRIMAN (YAMAHA) 54:16.81
2. SAMULI ARO (KTM) 54:51.35
3. ANDERS ERIKSSON (HUSQVARNA) 55:20.41
4. FABIEN PLANET (KTM) 55:26.47
5. ALESSANDRO BOTTURI (KTM) 55:51.74

ENDURO 3

1. DAVID KNIGHT (KTM) 52:43.82
2. MIKA AHOLA (HUSQVARNA) 55:15.34
3. MARKO TARKKALA (KTM) 55:16.06
4. XAVIER GALINDO (KTM) 55:28.18
5. SEB GUILLAUME (GAS GAS) 55:35.01

ENDURO JUNIOR

1. CRISTOBAL GUERRERO (GAS GAS) 56:20.60
2. JACOB STAPLETON (TM) 57:51.67
3. DARYL BOLTER (HUSQVARNA) 58:01.42
4. ORIOL MENA (GAS GAS) 58:41.93
5. KUKASZ KUROWSKI (GAS GAS) 59:01.01

'05 MAXXIS FIM WORLD ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP

**ROUND 2:
GP OF PORTUGAL,
FATIMA, PORTUGAL
9-10 APRIL**



SPORT

Everyone's Talking About...

Prior to the second round of the FIM Maxxis World Enduro Championship the paddock was a much calmer place than it had been in Spain, one week earlier. The relaxed, laid-back atmosphere was more like that of a national championship event than a world championship race.

With the weather vastly improved and most riders' pre-season nerves now settled, the frantic last-minute activity that saw riders clocking up lap after lap around the 'training track' in Spain was replaced with competitors calmly checking their machinery.

Talk prior to the race surrounded the event's special tests. The motocross test, which became the cross-country test so that it could be ridden un-timed on the opening lap, featured some spectacular jumps, including one downhill leap that saw riders fly over the edge of the steep descent and land on a slope which couldn't be

seen at take-off. But it was the extreme test that most were concerned about, as the part natural, part man-made section required riders to ride through what smelt like raw sewage.

Crossing the disgustingly smelly water at least half-a-dozen times, the riders were promised that the water wouldn't harm them if they fell in it. However, the organisers' decision to base the test around the stagnant stream baffled everyone.

And The Winners Are...

Spaniard Ivan Cervantes further extended his lead in the Enduro 1 class in Portugal by taking the class victory on both days. Full of confidence after his winning performance in Spain and reveling in the dry conditions, Ivan claimed another 50 points with two near-faultless rides and in winning day one posted the quickest overall time of any rider. Finishing just under 30 seconds ahead of his nearest competitor, Italian Simone Albergoni, Cervantes won all but one of the special tests in the E1 class

on day one, before winning a little over half the timed tests on day two. Despite appearing like he wasn't really trying, Cervantes proved blisteringly quick in Portugal.

Desperate to get his world championship bid back on track after a dismal performance at the season opener, Simone Albergoni had to work hard for his second place finish, as Cervantes' teammate Alex Belometti, on a 125cc two-stroke and not a 250 thumper, pushed him hard every step of the way.

However, Albergoni proved fast and consistent on both days to claim two runner-up spots for his efforts. Finishing behind Simone by less than three seconds on each day, Belometti proved that he's adapting quickly to life at the sharp end of the E1 class in only his second full season of WEC action.

Having topped the E2 class on both days in Spain, Stefan Merriman was expected to do the same in Portugal. But it didn't happen. Still suffering with the finger he injured in Spain, he failed to finish the first day after badly tweaking his knee on the cross-country test, handing the win to Samuli Aro and also losing his lead at the top of the E2 Championship.

Merriman's DNF should have

The Event...

Situated 130km from Porto, the Natureza Motor Club course was both challenging and enjoyable, with no riders losing time like they had in Spain. With three laps ridden on each day, the course comprised a mixture of rocky climbs and single track, with the paddock based at the newly built Fatima sports complex.

Thanks to clear skies and warm weather on both days, the Portuguese event was enjoyed by most riders. The motocross test was laid out on a flat, grassy field whilst the extreme test saw several hundred spectators gather to watch the riders tackle the difficult mix of steep climbs, tight turns, and imported rocks and logs. The cross-country test was almost Scandinavian in appearance as the course was littered with small rocks, while in other areas the ground was baked hard by the sun and incredibly slippery.

The course was split into two checks, the first included the extreme and motocross tests, while the second included the enduro test.

PADDOCK POINTERS

✓ WEC full-timer Helder Rodrigues claimed the best 'home' result in Portugal finishing seventh in E2 on both days. However, former Gas Gas factory rider, and part-time WEC competitor Paulo Goncalves wasn't far behind on his Honda, finishing ninth on day one and eighth on day two in the Enduro 2 class.

✓ Beta claimed their highest WEC result of the season so far in Portugal thanks to Finn Jari Mattila placing sixth in the E2 class on day one. 'Party Boy', as he's known, dropped to ninth on day two but still performed much better than his Italian team-mate Maurizio Magherini, who is way off the pace in the E3 class.

✓ Enduro Junior Spaniard Cristobal Guerrero was impressively quick in Portugal, recording test times that would have seen him finish fifth in the E2 class on day one and seventh on day two. Expect Gas Gas to retain the youngster's services for the 2006 season.

'05 MAXXIS FIM WORLD ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP



resulted in Samuli Aro claiming the day win with ease, but in fact Frenchman Fabien Planet pushed him every step of the way on day one to take a well deserved second place, just under 12secs behind the Finn. Finish-ing a further 12secs behind was Italian Alessandro Botturi.

On day two Stefan Merriman returned to the action to top the results, something that surprised many. Deciding that riding simply for points would probably be more dangerous than going for it and trying to win, the pint-sized Aussie topped the class by the slimmest of margins - less than two seconds up on Aro. For Samuli, a slightly off-the-pace opening extreme test resulted in him finishing second and not first. Third place went to Planet, who despite winning the day's first test simply wasn't as quick as he'd been on day one, finishing 30 seconds behind Aro.

David Knight knew that winning in Portugal wouldn't be anywhere near as easy as it had been in Spain. But posting the quickest E3 test times on all but two of the tests on each day, Knight

No slippery slopes here for double E3 class winner David Knight ...

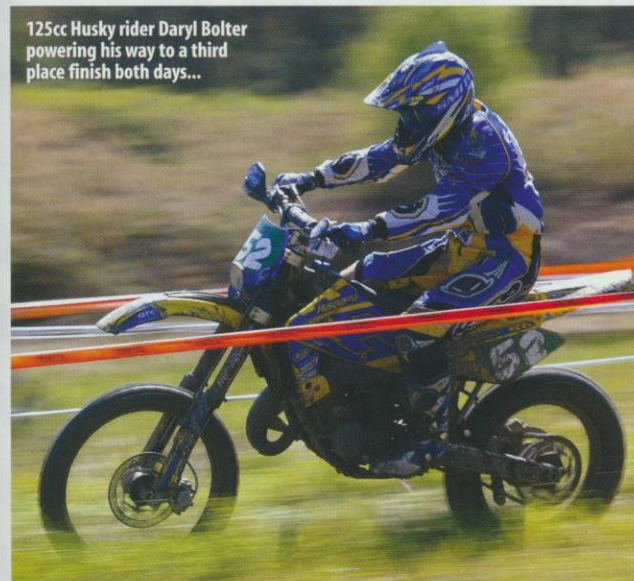


won by around 30 seconds on both days.

Italian Alex Zanni finished in the runner-up spot on day one, which came as a bit of a surprise. Having failed to consistently challenge for a podium place in the E2 class last year, Zanni took full advantage of Marko Tarkkala's bad fortune and a few slow tests by Mika Ahola. Nevertheless, Zanni earned his result, even managing to beat Knight on one test! Less than 2.5secs behind, Mika Ahola claimed the third place spot, finishing just five seconds ahead



125cc Husky rider Daryl Bolter powering his way to a third place finish both days...



of Seb Guillaume on his Gas Gas.

On day two Ahola moved to the runner-up spot but the Husqvarna rider only just managed to place ahead of countryman Tarkkala, with less than a second splitting the two riders. After a great day one performance, Zanni dropped to sixth on day two.

As in Spain, Spaniard Cristobal Guerrero was incredibly quick in the Enduro Junior class, and would have placed

well in the E2 class results.

Winning both days, the Gas Gas rider was extremely aggressive on all three tests, edging ahead of Aussie Jake Stapleton by five seconds on day one and 45secs on day two. Finishing second on both days, and winning a test along the way, Jake showed that an Enduro Junior class win can't be too far away, while Daryl Bolter again finished as the class's best 125cc rider with two spirited rides taking

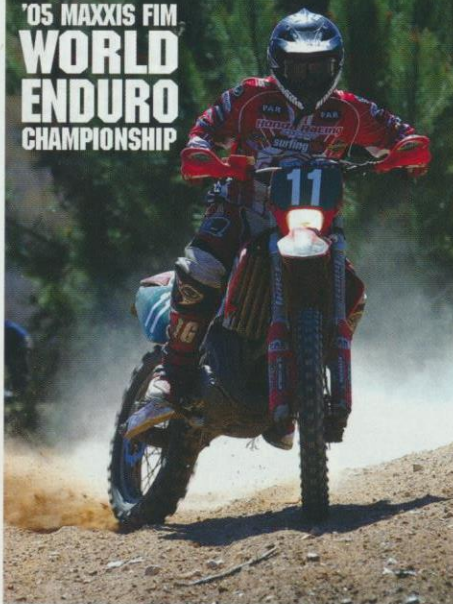
Paddock Pointers

Despite having three special tests each lap, the total amount of 'test time' on each day was around 30 minutes, half of what it is at many WEC events. Whilst this wasn't a problem for those doing the winning, riders that needed to catch up time found it very difficult to improve their position.

Onlookers joked that the Husqvarna CH Racing team's decision to select Italian Andrea Belotti to race a 250cc two-stroke in E2 must have come after a heavy night's drinking, as the portly youngster finished in a lowly 15th on day one and 16th on day two.

WEC series promoter Alain Blanchard told riders in Portugal that even if they were unhappy with any aspect of an event they shouldn't share their views with the media. Needless to say his comments angered many riders who told him that if he listened to them, and took on board what they were saying, they wouldn't have to 'moan'!

'05 MAXXIS FIM WORLD ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP



him to third place on both days. After failing to finish the first day, Honda rider Si Wakely placed tenth on day two.

Surprise, Surprise...

There weren't many surprise performances in Portugal, rather continued impressive results from a number of competitors, especially Cervantes and Knight. Meanwhile E2 privateer Fabien Planet again posted strong results to prove that his impressive performance in Spain wasn't simply due to the wet conditions.

There were, however, a few riders that really suffered at the hands of lady luck in Portugal. Having been unable to finish either day in Spain, Valtteri Salonen, one of Finland's most promising young riders, again failed to score any points after he shattered a gearbox sprocket on day one and then had the gearbox on his 450cc Honda pack up on day two.

The Manufacturers' Race...

KTM was by far the dominant manufacturer in Portugal. With Cervantes again topping the E1 class on both days, and Knight doing the double in E3, strong podium finishes by Aro, Botturi, Belometti, and Tarkkala meant that that the trophy presentation was a mass of orange.

Likewise, the championship leader board is decidedly orange-tinted. With Cervantes comfortably ahead in E1, his team-mate Belometti sits in second. In the E2 class, the top two places are also occupied by KTM riders. And just like Cervantes and Belometti in E1, Aro and Planet are proof positive of just how competitive KTM's machinery

is right now - both four- and two-stroke.

What's more, the fact that KTM also hold the top two spots in E3 (with Knight and Tarkkala) shows just how serious the Austrian marque is about winning in 2005. The best of the rest in Portugal were again Gas Gas and Yamaha, as the only other manufacturers to top podiums.

And as for the rest...? Well, they have got some serious work to do if they are going to stop KTM from completely dominating the 2005 season...

RESULTS - DAY 1

ENDURO 1

1. IVAN CERVANTES (KTM) 29:15.69
2. SIMONE ALBERGONI (HONDA) 29:35.26
3. ALESSANDRO BELOMETTI (KTM) 29:37.72
4. PAUL EDMONDSON (HONDA) 29:56.05
5. MARC GERMAIN (YAMAHA) 29:57.65

ENDURO 2

1. SAMULI ARO (YAMAHA) 29:39.04
2. FABIEN PLANET (KTM) 29:50.48
3. ALESSANDRO BOTTURI (KTM) 30:02.24
4. ANDERS ERIKSSON (HUSQVARNA) 30:07.57
5. BJORNE CARLSSON (HUSABERG) 30:23.05

ENDURO 3

1. DAVID KNIGHT (KTM) 29:17.55
2. ALESSANDRO ZANNI (HONDA) 29:49.10
3. MIKA AHOLA (HUSQVARNA) 29:51.48
4. SEBASTIEN GUILLAUME (GAS GAS) 29:56.48
5. ALESSIO PAOLI (TM) 30:07.25

ENDURO JUNIOR

1. CRISTOBAL GUERRERO (GAS GAS) 30:17.89
2. JAKE STAPLETON (TM) 30:22.88
3. DARYL BOLTER (HUSQVARNA) 30:43.76
4. ORIOL MENA (GAS GAS) 30:54.35
5. PAULO BERNARDI (HONDA) 31:01.43

RESULTS - DAY 2

ENDURO 1

1. IVAN CERVANTES (KTM) 36:26.66
2. SIMONE ALBERGONI (HONDA) 36:47.94
3. ALESSANDRO BELOMETTI (KTM) 36:50.38
4. PETERI SILVAN (KTM) 36:58.44
5. PAUL EDMONDSON (HONDA) 37:13.06

ENDURO 2

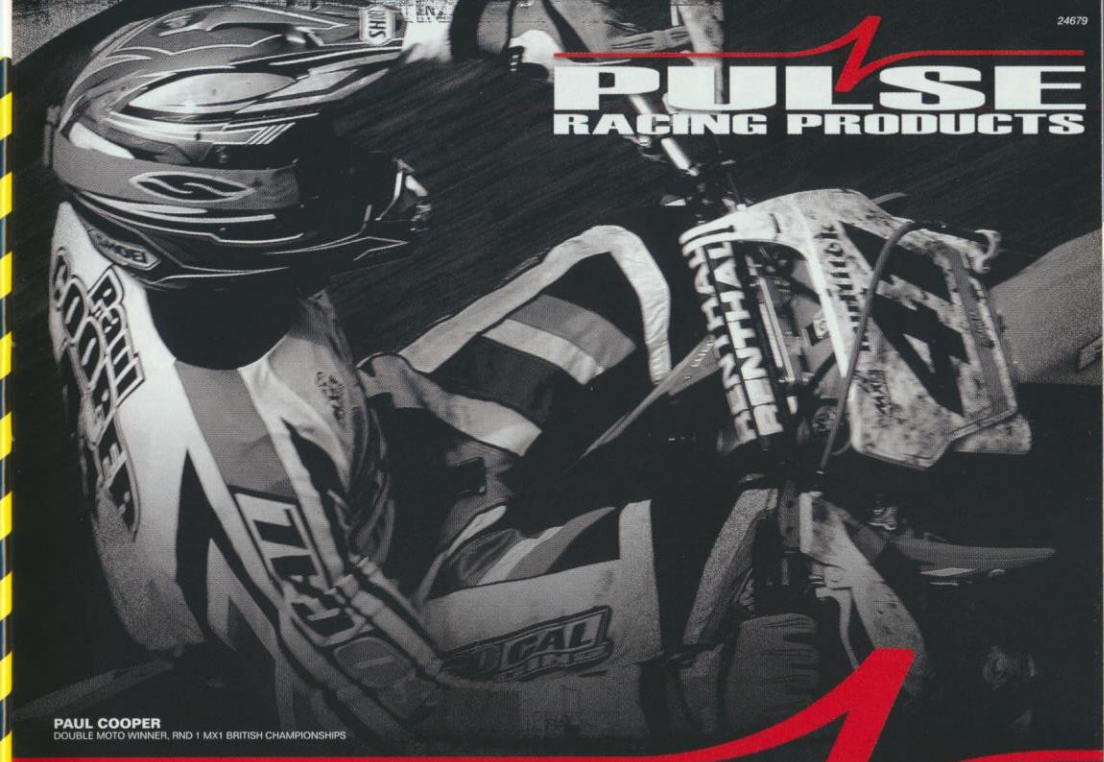
1. STEFAN MERRIMAN (YAMAHA) 36:11.52
2. SAMULI ARO (KTM) 36:12.93
3. FABIEN PLANET (KTM) 36:42.16
4. ALESSANDRO BOTTURI (KTM) 36:58.03
5. ANDERS ERIKSSON (HUSQVARNA) 37:01.59

ENDURO 3

1. DAVID KNIGHT (KTM) 36:15.88
2. MIKA AHOLA (HUSQVARNA) 36:41.07
3. MARKO TARKKALA (KTM) 36:41.91
4. XAVIER GALINDO (KTM) 37:03.11
5. THIERRY KLUTZ (GAS GAS) 37:10.97

ENDURO JUNIOR

1. CRISTOBAL GUERRERO (GAS GAS) 37:20.71
2. JAKE STAPLETON (TM) 38:04.86
3. DARYL BOLTER (HUSQVARNA) 38:30.59
4. ORIOL MENA (GAS GAS) 38:41.46
5. PAULO FELICIA (GAS GAS) 38:41.76



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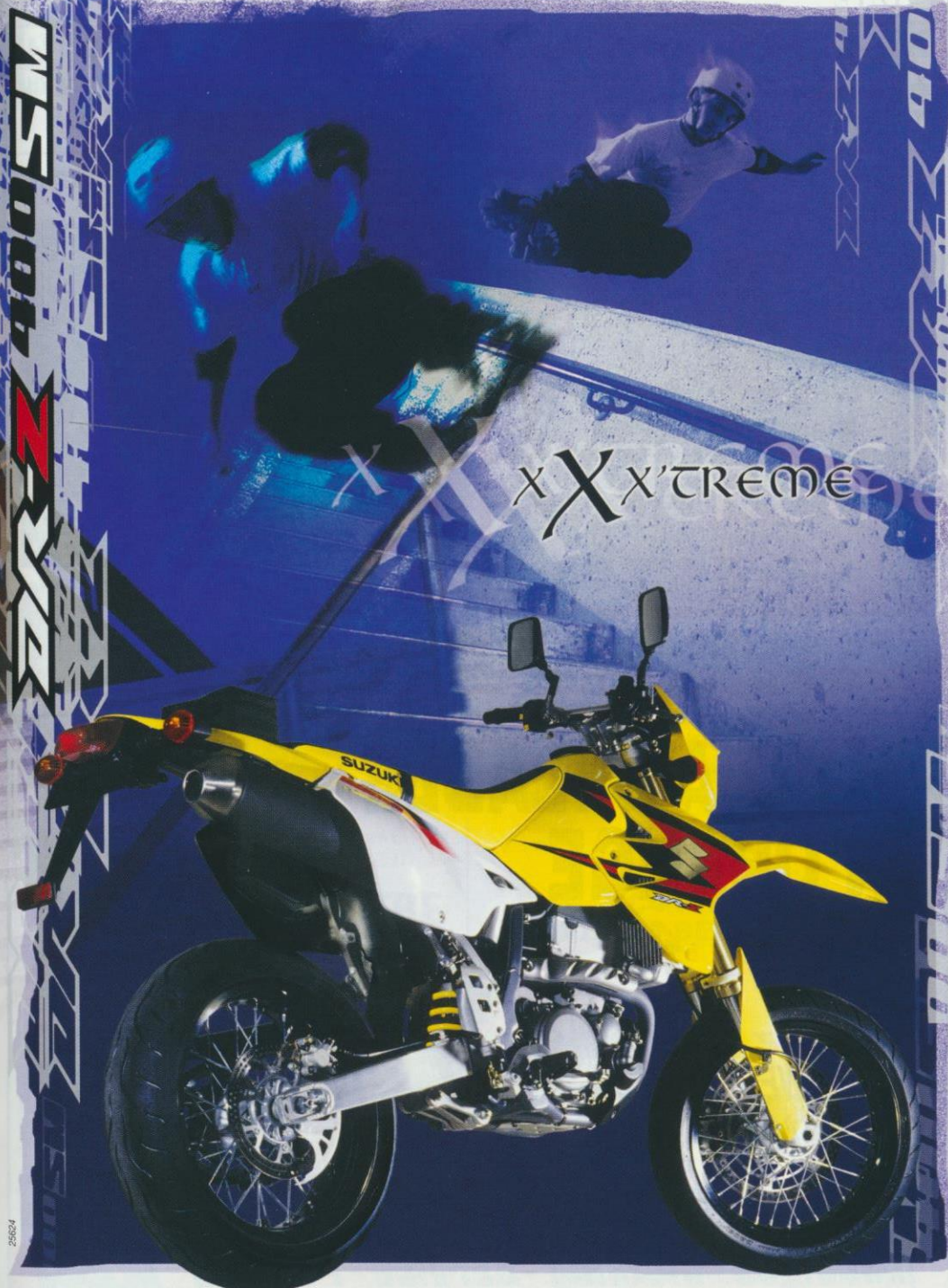
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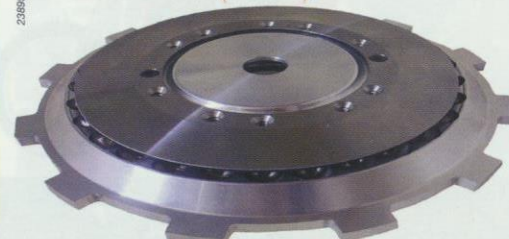
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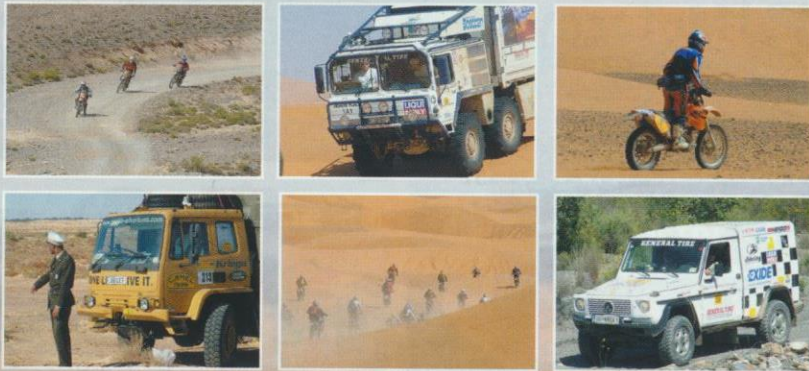
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KWACKER'S CRACKER

Mark Williams tells the story of the original Kawasaki KLX250

In the couple of years that TBM's been running this series, it seems extraordinary that we've never featured any kind of Kawasaki. And whilst it's true that the Mean Green has never really devoted its efforts to off-roading with the same determination as the remainder of the Big Jap Four, that isn't to say that they haven't produced some worthy machinery.

Moto-cross in particular was exercising some of the finest minds in Kawasaki's R&D department back in the early Seventies, and in fact they were the first Japanese company to establish their own off-road design facility where it mattered - in America - back in 1971. Under the expert eye of Japanese chief Hank Hosoi, three influential people in the form of Jerry Macell, Englishman Dave Macey and the improbably named Chuck Berry helped develop the successful 450cc racer eventually sold as the Jerry DeSoto Replica, as well as a host of smaller capacity machines. They were also instrumental in working with Britain's Don Smith to develop a trials bike using the same basic light 'n' narrow big bore 'stroker.

Kawasaki went on to manufacture a number of MX and trials bikes suitable for the serious clubman and indeed, expert rider throughout the Seventies, foremost amongst these being star MXer Brad Lackey, who bagged a string of trophies on both 125 and 250cc Kwackers.

Trail and enduro-wise, it's a rather different story. Perhaps as befits the smallest of the Jap manufacturers, Kawasaki were always a little behind the curve and although their products were always well-built and in many instances innovative, their dirtbikes never really made headlines. Nevertheless I fondly remember the old KE100, 125 and 175 'strokers with their torque-laden, disc-valved induction and sturdy features. Although as a company what Kawasaki lacked in comparison with the competition was a four-stroke trailie or a serious two-stroke enduro.



Whereas Honda had their extremely competent dual purpose XLs and latterly XR's, and Suzuki led the field with their range of PE enduros, Kawasaki were left - in more senses than one - trailing behind the field with a range of bikes that lacked anything larger than the KE175, which was rather hard to effectively modify for serious enduro use. No doubt mindful of the ground they were losing to the opposition, in 1978 the company launched what was to a cynic's eye, little more than a hastily cobbled together, knobby-tyred version of their KZ200 roadster, the KL250. But that's where this story begins.

As you may've guessed, this new bike was powered by a bored and stroked KZ200 motor, still oversquare at 70x64mm and with a compression ratio slightly decreased to 8.9:1, which managed to cough up a claimed 21bhp at 8000rpm - three more ponies than the KZ allegedly. The extremely frugal, if decidedly basic, single-cam KZ motor, originally designed for a rugged, low-maintenance commuter bike, wasn't a bad choice as the foundation for the KL250, and shorn of its electric starter it was actually fairly light for its day. Fortunately the designers at Kawasaki's Iwata HQ - this bike certainly wasn't designed in California - resisted



KWACKER'S CRACKER

KLX is quite a pretty little bike, if you like that sort of thing...

the temptation to merely modify the KZ's chassis and stick on a pair of plastic fenders as had sometimes been the case with early off-road 'playbikes'. No, the KL had its own single front tube/backbone frame, a decent set of dual spring-rate rear shocks and leading axle front forks with 7.28in of travel - good enough in 1978.

The bike was very much a tarmac inclined, dual-purpose machine though, with a steel tank, massively heavy - if effective - silencer and indicators that stuck out on chrome stalks just waiting to be broken or bent. Still when it arrived on these shores in '79, it was something of a steal at £799 when Honda's XL250 cost £100 more. But its 280lb dry weight and lacklustre performance never endeared it to the discerning off-road crowd, which explains why two years later Kawasaki did the decent thing and announced

a pukka enduro version, the KLX250 B1. (Interestingly enough, and with the importer's co-operation, specialist British framemaker, Bob Gollner, built a batch of KL250-engined trials bikes which also attracted quite a lot of attention in the late '70s, though not many sales).

Although given a quick glance, the new model was something of a lookalike, the KLX differed from its forebear in a number of substantial ways, most significantly in the engine room. Fitted with a new 10.7:1 cylinder head and revised cam timing, Kawasaki now claimed that the motor produced 23.5bhp at a slightly higher 8500rpm, but more importantly a wider spread of torque was available, maxxing out at 14.9ft lbs at 7500rpm. Even so, a look at the figures explains why the engine needed handfuls of revs to keep it going in a purposeful manner. With a 4mm



Motor was originally based on the KZ200 road bike lump...



Swingarm was taken straight from the MX parts bin...

larger throat, the Mikuni 32mm carb and a freer-flowing exhaust system, obviously contributed to this pokier power output. The gearing was revised to provide a slightly taller fifth without sacrificing the luggability of bottom.

Electronic ignition and a sturdy, multi-plate clutch meant that the KLX was reliable and easy-to-ride under most circumstances, but the chassis was now capable of delivering serious fun in the dirt. Adding an inch-and-a-half to the old KL's 55in wheelbase, but steepening the rake to 28 degrees and reducing the trail to 121mm meant that the new bike was more stable on loose surfaces but also turned quickly enough when required.

Showa front forks, which extended well below the axle line, offered two-and-a-half more inches of progressively-damped travel at the front end, whilst a brace of semi-laid down Kayaba shocks - not dual rate though this time - permitted almost ten inches of movement out back.

And those shocks were attached to a dreamy, all alloy swingarm that was as beefy as it was beautiful and was lifted from the mighty KDX400 moto-crosser. This was a big ticket item to find on a domestic dirtbike in those days and gave an impression that the KLX250 was even more businesslike than it actually was. Buttressed

CLASSIFIED MATERIAL

Basket-case KLX was restored to standard useable condition...



KWACKER'S CRACKER

Every month I scour the 'For Sale' pages of this very magazine hoping to find inspiration for a future Archives subject, but it's rare that I hit pay-dirt. Last month, however, I couldn't resist an ad for what turned out to be Simon Williams-Tulley's 'rare, good example' of a 1982 KLX250, a description that for once was supremely accurate.

In fact Simon, a newspaper photographer living in the Wirral, had only owned the bike since last Autumn, but he knew all about the bike's history from his near neighbour, Dave Parker, who'd restored the bike after it had been stolen from its original owner and damaged. With just 5000 miles on the clock it had then lain, unused and in a sorry state for many years and was presented to Dave as a virtual, if complete, basket case.

With the exception of the all-but-impossible to find tank stickers, Dave rebuilt the bike to stock condition, which included having the badly dented tank repaired and painted, and

rebuilding the corroded top-end, all of which involved sourcing a number of hard-to-find new parts, and he certainly made a great job of it. Buying the bike was essentially Simon's baptism into trail riding, 'but it's really too good for that, and I'm afraid of breaking or damaging something that I won't be able to easily replace.'

He cites a rear light lens that cost a cool £25 from Cradely Kawasaki, one of very few specialists that still carry a dwindling stock of parts for these old Kwackers. However after we'd found a nearby UCR where we shot the accompanying pics, Simon let me have a brief spin on the KLX and there was no doubt that it still had all its faculties, and then some.

I was quite surprised how responsive and revvy the engine was (remember this is a single cammer with just a brace of valves), and with its light clutch and fairly slick gearbox the bike moved along at a decent clip. Moreover although the track we were using wasn't beset by any loop or ruts, it was rocky enough to prove



the compliancy of the suspension and the directional stability of its chassis - which was about as finely developed as it got just before monoshock suspension became the norm. I was also impressed by the size of the thing, which for my rangy frame wasn't typical of the comparatively compact dirtbikes of its era. Only the weak front brake really demonstrated how far we've moved on since the early '80s.

The only fly in the Kwacker's ointment was a reluctance to start in the first place, but since Simon had decided to buy a DR-Z400 for his rather more serious off-road antics, the KLX had been standing for some time, so perhaps it wasn't surprising. And at least it kicked over easily!

Simon had priced his bike at £950, which I reckon was fair for such a scarce model, and one that though accurate in almost every respect, wasn't exactly mint. (Worn paintwork on the silencer, aftermarket bars and the aforementioned tank detailing are all that I could nit-pick). By the time you read this it'll probably have been sold - he'd already had some serious enquiries - but just in case it's not and you fancy owning something really out of the ordinary yet entirely practical on today's terrain, Simon can be contacted on 0151 652 6273.

The KLX was afflicted with a particularly small and ineffectual front brake...



to what was pretty much the original KL250 single downtube frame, the suspension and the lovely DID alloy rims were only slightly let down by the brakes. Blagged from the then current KDX250 MXer, they were significantly smaller than the KL's at 4.7in and 5.1in diameter respectively. And whilst such items might've been okay for a bike making a few circuits of an enclosed track, on a machine that might be ridden all day across taxing and often watery terrain, they weren't really up to snuff.

Nevertheless a lot of thought had been applied to the KLX, as evidenced by the large, comfy seat, fender-mounted toolbag and the well designed plastic fenders, racy sidepanels and headlamp surround. In the interests of weight-saving and ergonomics Kawasaki had wisely junked the tachometer, slimmed down the exhaust system and replaced the silly steel indicator stalks with nifty little rubber-mounted ones.

All-in-all the KLX hit the scales at 242lb dry - and if you can't be bothered to do the maths then that's almost 40lbs less than the KL. It was also a lot lighter and a tad more powerful than its only other four-stroke competitor at the time, Honda's XR250. Which begs the inevitable question, why

FROM THE ARCHIVES

didn't it sell better?

Well the short answer, at least as far as this country is concerned, is that with no real experience of marketing a real (if somewhat 'soft') enduro model, Kawasaki Motors (UK) brought precious few into the country and then priced them out of the marketplace. At £1199 the KLX was more expensive than Honda's well established XR250 and was not much less than Yamaha's mighty XT500 cost back then. Barmy, really.

However anyone who did have the ackers and the inclination to buy one certainly wouldn't have been disappointed, for it was a comfortable bike with a class-leading 12in of ground clearance and a solid feel to it (always a hallmark of Kawasaki Heavy Industries' products, I reckon). Yes, the motor was certainly bullet proof - provided you changed the oil regularly - and the bike was both adequately powerful and nimble where it needed to be. Which in common with most such bikes purchased back then, was actually on the green lanes rather than blatting round an enduro course, although some KLXs did see active competition duty.

The KLX250 B1 remained available in some markets well into the late Eighties and eventually spawned the liquid-cooled DOHC KLX250R which Kawasaki launched in the early Nineties and eventually transmogrified into the KLX300R.

After that it was all downhill, the UK importer not even bothering to bring in the badge-engineered version of Suzuki's DR-Z400, whilst its worthy stablemate, the KDX220R (two-stroke), was quietly phased out of the range last year. But when they put their minds to it, the original KLX250 showed that Kawasaki can sometimes get it right. I just wish they'd do it a little more often.



KWACKER'S CRACKER

With regular oil changes the SOHC motor proved plenty reliable...

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TRIALS

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15-PAGE 5 BIKE SHOOTOUT

MONTESA V GAS GAS V BETA
V SCORPA V SHERCO
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PLUS MUCH MORE...



TAKE FIVE!

STORY: SI M, RAPPERS, JOHN SUNTER;
PICS: BARNI

As far as we can tell this is the first time all-five top-selling trials bikes have been independently tested in a single shootout with a novice, experienced and an expert rider all ready and willing to offer their opinions...

Nothing gets trials riders, trials commentators, and especially (some) trials importers, more worked up than a magazine proposing to test all-five of the best-selling trials bikes in a giant shootout. I'm not quite sure why that should be. After all we live in a competitive world where bikes, services and yep, even *magazines*, are forced to compete for their custom. But if you say you're going to test one make of bike against all the others and

(heaven forbid) try and pick a winner, well, World War Three just about breaks out.

The strange thing is it's the easiest thing in the world for prospective owners to compare the bikes for themselves - just turn up at your local club trial and ask for a go on each of the machines from any one of the riders who is riding round on one. In my experience, trials riders are such a friendly bunch they'll gladly let you spend a few minutes getting the feel of their



machine at the end of a section, and probably value your opinion. Ironic then that while the sport of trials is for the most part incredibly good-natured, some of the people who work in it seem so awkward to deal with. Go figure...

Devils in the Detail

As usual we take such things in our stride here at TBM, choosing to leave politics out of the equation and preferring to look at the bigger picture. We don't care whether the bikes are

two-stroke or four-stroke, at the end of the day they're all competing for the same slice of our domestic competition and leisure market. So just how big is that market? Well we reckon it's not much bigger than about 2000 bikes a year. Not big, but enough to sustain five manufacturers.

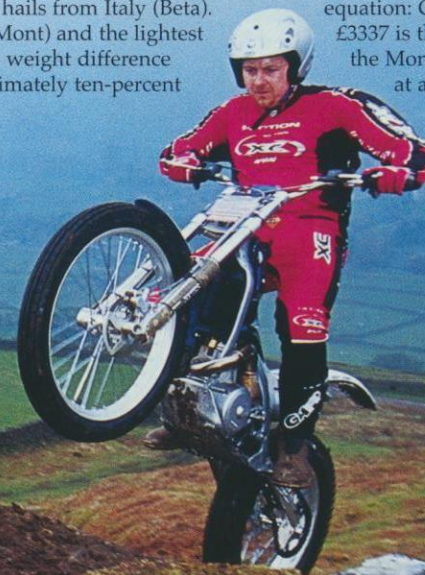
Those manufacturers are (in no particular order of preference) Gas Gas, Sherco, Montesa, Scorpa and Beta. There is currently only one four-stroke in our line-up - the Honda/Montesa, though Sherco are about to launch their own four-banger

in 320cc guise - and the Mont is also the only bike that forsakes a traditional carburettor for a more modern fuel-injection set-up. Two of the bikes come from Spain (Gas Gas and Sherco), one is the result of a joint Spanish/Japanese partnership (Montesa, owned by Honda), one is a result of a Japanese/French tie-up (Scorpa, which uses a Yamaha engine), and one hails from Italy (Beta).

Between the heaviest (Mont) and the lightest (Gas) there is a seven kilo weight difference (which equates to approximately ten-percent

of their total weights when fully fuelled), though it's interesting to note that the four-stroke Mont weighs less than a kilo more than the heaviest two-stroke: the Beta. And both have alloy frames!

Of further interest is the fact that the same two bikes which occupy opposite ends of the weight spectrum are also at opposite ends of the price equation: Gasser's Pro 250 which retails at £3337 is the cheapest bike on test, whilst the Montesa 4RT is the most expensive at a not inconsiderable £4399.



TAKE FIVE!

Second Opinion: Mike Rapley

Take five trials bikes and be asked to make an appraisal of them and it will inevitably result in a winner and a loser. And that's not fair because it is only a personal opinion and one only has to look at the five bikes in question to see that all five are superb trials machines, each of which has many fervent supporters.

However, the name of the game as requested is to give an opinion, so here goes.

Top of the Pops, the best 250 trials bike in my opinion, waaaaaiiiiiitttt for it - the Beta Rev3. Why? Its riding position is the best of the lot; the relationship between 'bars, 'pegs and rider is spot on. It steers neutrally, the suspension is good and allows the rider to feel what the wheels are doing, especially the rear wheel, and the engine is grunty without being lumpy. But, it has some minus points. I thought the gearchange was poor and I don't like the left-side kickstart, simply because I have a bad left knee and have to get off it every time and kick it with my right leg. Could

I live with that personal disadvantage? Probably, but only if there was no alternative. However, there are plenty of riders with bad right knees for whom the Beta is brilliant. Build quality is pretty good but the chain tensioner is poor and still those electrics give trouble, though to be fair to importer John Lampkin, he honours all claims.

Number two in my list is the Montesa 4RT. It beats the other two-strokes in my opinion (and I've just bought one) because it is so different - so fun to ride; incredibly powerful yet extremely controllable. It feels (and is) the heaviest of the lot but if I hadn't seen the weigh-in for myself, I would not have believed that the Mont weighs less than one kilo more than the Beta. Build quality is the best among these five and at Clubman level the bike is very competitive. However, it will catch you out on grassy climbs, suddenly losing grip. Be positive and determined and it will go where everything else will go, but YOU have to be the boss. Faults? None except the clutch master cylinder needs to be replaced with

one from a 315 for improved feel and action. Pluses? Hopefully good resale value based on past models, excellent spares back-up and it's a Honda with a Mont badge.

Come in number three, the 250 Gas Gas. I originally had the Scorpa in third place, but the Gasser edges it out on general rideability. Smooth, linear power, particularly good front suspension from the Marzocchi forks, and, being the lightest of the five bikes, it's undoubtedly the easiest to fling around (if only I could!). Gear selection is poor, and Gas Gas have a reputation for mixed build quality, though I think it is getting much better as time progresses. Good riders have shown that to succeed at top level, a Gas Gas is often the answer, but importantly they seem to work just as well at novice and intermediate level as well. Incidentally, I've rarely got on a Gasser and been happy, but this machine really suited me.

The Scorpa comes in at number four - but could have been equal with the Gas Gas if it wasn't for the odd handlebar arrangement. Can't tell you what is wrong, but they feel too narrow, too far forward, and simply did not suit either the bike or my style.

However, the old-fashioned feel to the grunty Yamaha engine really suited me. Don't like the high mounting of the kickstart which has always been a Yamaha problem for us shorties, and of course getting at the carb is a job for the workshop with a cup of tea, the radio and plenty of time. Suspension seemed neutral and allowed the rider to feel the ground, but when I've ridden a Scorpa in the past, I've always felt it was a bit short, therefore I was taking care down steep drops - didn't want to go over the bars!

And finally number five, the Sherco. Which is a shame because it's the best looking bike of the lot. Frankly there's nothing wrong with it except that I can't ride it. To me it feels numb. The suspension doesn't tell me anything and I can't keep it following a path, but there are hundreds out there being ridden every week to success. As I said at the beginning, it's all down to taste and if there has to be a number one, then equally there has to be a number five. The Sherco is the fifth, it does everything well enough, but unfortunately, not with me aboard, it's as simple as that!

Beta felt grunty on the climbs...



TAKE FIVE!

On the Edge

Our test location was Fremington Edge, high above Reeth in North Yorkshire located at the junction of Arkengarthdale and the achingly beautiful Swaledale. This is the home of the infamous Scott Trial and the part of the world that put the 'Back' into Back of Beyond. Offering our testers plenty of bare rocks, long shaley climbs, tricky descents and slippery grassy sections, it proved the ideal playground to compare and contrast a mixture of machinery.

But before we come onto the machinery in more detail, best we acquaint you with the TBM (or rather, T-Mag) test crew.

Novice Rider

With just three and a half years of competitive trials riding under my belt (on a variety of new and secondhand machinery), I'm living proof that you *can* teach an old dog new tricks - even if he can't perform them all just yet! Though the first trials bike I rode was way back in '77 - a handsome Beamish Suzuki RL250 - my interest in trials has really only blossomed recently, to the point where I now get excited at the thought of low-pressure tyres and cheap secondhand kit. Although there's an argument to be made that no man should ever be seen in lycra - let alone one approaching his 40th birthday - I'm not about to let that put me off scoring some new kit. As the novice rider in our triumvirate I was expected to do no more than make the others look good. It was a feat I managed with gusto, I was assured...

Are You Experienced?

If you're already into trials you'll know that Mike Rapley (or Rappers to give him his real name) has been around since the birth of the sport itself. In fact at the very first observed trial he marked God down for a controversial single dab on the final section (the climb up and out of Mt Ararat), as he swept by on his Ethereal-Peerless. This

cost God the overall win and he vowed to make all Rappers' hair fall out - bit by bit.

Last year Rappers competed in no less than 50 trials. Think about that for a moment, there's only 52 weeks in the year, so putting aside Christmas and Easter that means the chances are that he rode on the weekend of either his wife's birthday, his daughter's birthday or his wedding anniversary. In which case he's either very brave or very foolish. And having seen him ride, I can confirm that it's probably both.

Beta is the only one of this bunch to feature a right-side chain and (hence) a left-side prop-stand...



John Boy

25yr old John Sunter is an affable young Yorkshireman who hails from a long line of trials riders. His sister rides trials, his dad rode trials and for all I know his great aunt probably rode trials. He's a very capable rider but more importantly he's a bloke you can trust - a bloke who can swiftly analyse a bike's he's testing and isn't afraid to speak his mind. That's why we chose him to give our expert opinion on these bikes. And although (just two days before our test) he'd become a contracted Montesa rider, his willingness to pick a winner other than the one he's contracted to ride, reinforces his independent credentials. You'll go far mate...

So with the team in place it was onto the bikes for our test session.

Beta Rev3, £3495, 77.4kg

I began with the Beta and I must confess that at first I hated it. The left-side kickstart felt unusual, the bars felt a bit too wide and the motor seemed only so-so in terms of power. In fact it all felt a bit old-fashioned to me. But the others loved it and I kept returning to the Beta all afternoon to see if it would change my mind. Hmmm, it steered quite

Beta's motor features a heavy flywheel weight for the UK. Left-side kickstarter's not to everyone's taste...



Gas Gas Pro is one of those bikes which is incredibly easy to ride at any level...

TAKE FIVE!



off; the bike I felt would offer me a really competitive ride and bring me on. But don't just take my word for it, here's what the others had to say about the Beta:

Rappers: 'It's the best of the two-strokes, with a very grunty engine which allows you to feel for grip. The suspension feels quite soft but it's the best at allowing you to feel the ground contours. I don't like the left-side kickstart though...'

Sunt: 'The chassis is very good, it feels like a solid ride. The weight's not an issue, it's good to trick-ride as well as being useful in the normal straight-line stuff. The motor's got quite a heavy flywheel fitted for the British market and you can take that off to make it feel zippier for advanced riders, or leave it on to let the motor run-on. The riding position feels very upright - especially on hill climbs - other bikes are more stooped. This allows you to keep a lot of weight over the back wheel to get plenty of grip. It's got the best linkless shocker and it's a good-looking bike, the best of the lot. I don't think the brakes are quite as good as last year's - the calipers have been changed and don't work as well, but it's a tremendous all-round package.'

Gas Gas TXT Pro 250, £3337, 71.7kg

Gas Gas' Pro is the lightest and arguably sexiest of all contemporary trials machinery, and like all Gassers this is a bike you can simply jump on and ride no matter what your level

of ability. I found it incredibly easy to use - very reassuring for a novice - whether it be tackling a hop-up over a large rock, or just drilling it up a steep climb, the Gasser was the bike that felt the least intimidating to ride. However, the gearchange was stiff and the motor felt like it needed a touch more flywheel weight, it kept stalling at awkward times and even winding up the idle speed didn't cure it. But it turned nicely in the sections and could be balanced very easily. In terms of suspension and brakes it was spot-on

Gasser is comfortably the lightest of all five bikes on test, and to be honest, it looks and feels it...



for me, and the bike handled extremely neutrally. Here's what the others reckoned to the Gasser.

Rappers: 'The Gasser's motor feels the nicest to ride - quite sharp but tame at the same time, it's very forgiving. However the gearchange is poor - possibly because the lever is too short. The riding position is excellent - it makes you feel like you're properly above the bike rather than 'in it', giving more control. The forks are very good but you'd expect that of Marzocchis. And the Gasser was probably the best at going up small rock steps.'

Sunt: 'The Gasser's easy to trick ride, it felt light and the suspension was good too. The motor's very revvy, but it does work on the low-down stuff, though I found it kept wanting to stall. It's a comfortable ride, definitely on a par with the Montesa, suspension-wise, with nice forks. The back wheel's very easy to move around, you can get inch-perfect positioning, and almost 'dance' it over sections. But the stiff chassis means you have to work harder to keep it online. The build quality's okay, but if riding it a lot it would need constant maintenance work, however it seems fine for a once-a-week rider.'



Gasser's motor is the revviest of the bunch...

nicely, it was small and easy to position precisely where I wanted it to go (at 1310mm its wheelbase is nearly an inch shorter than most of the others), and it didn't FEEL like the heaviest of all the stokers. What's more the engine just loved to lug (which I appreciated), and the brakes and clutch felt nicely weighted. Bit by bit the Beta was winning me round and creeping up in my rankings. It began as my last placed bike but by the mid-afternoon it had crept up into third place and finally it became the bike I didn't want to get

TAKE FIVE!



to feel slightly 'strange' but in fact I found it one of the best/easiest bikes to ride of all. Part of that is down to a very neutral handling chassis with a riding position that suited me (but not the others - due to very high bars). But part of it is almost certainly Scorpa's choice of powerplant. Yamaha's tireless TY-Z may be long in the tooth but it still provides a wonderfully grunty and fluid power delivery, which makes it easy to coax up almost impossible climbs and as an extra benefit it virtually never stalls. That's just as well because the Yam lump has a high and slightly awkward kickstart, which has to be rocked over-centre before you can use it. As an extra benefit I found the high riding position let you angle the bike (beneath you) more than some of the others, and the front brake was the best of the bunch. Here are the others' opinions:

Rappers: 'I absolutely love the engine - it's an old-fashioned stoker lump with lots of low-down usable power. It's good on climbs and light on the front end, but spoiled by the handlebar shape and width. The Scorpa enjoys a tight turning circle but on steep descents it feels a bit 'short'. Which is not normally a bad thing but on the rocks we were riding over I was conscious of trying to avoid going over the bars.'

Sunt: 'The Scorpa's engine was the best for straightforward (non-trick) riding. It's easy to ride slow, but also easy to open up and has plenty of power. A six-speed gearbox means four useable gears for sections. I felt that

the suspension and bars didn't suit the riding position - it's quite upright which would suit taller riders better. Also the suspension set-up was too springy, but it is adjustable. Brakes were spot-on and the clutch good. I have a niggle with the billet aluminum footpegs which can wear down and become polished, so don't offer as much grip as steel ones. You need to keep filing them down. But the build quality was excellent - and the Japanese engines are always good.'

Scorpa 250, £3595, 75.05kg

You've got to applaud Scorpa for their determined stance of going their own way in the face of stiff competition. Their trials bikes don't follow current fashion in terms of design or styling, but very much set their own trends. Aside from the different look, the packaging is also very compact and much of the componentry of a higher quality than the other bikes on test here. That doesn't necessarily make them better, but certainly different. I was expecting the Scorpa

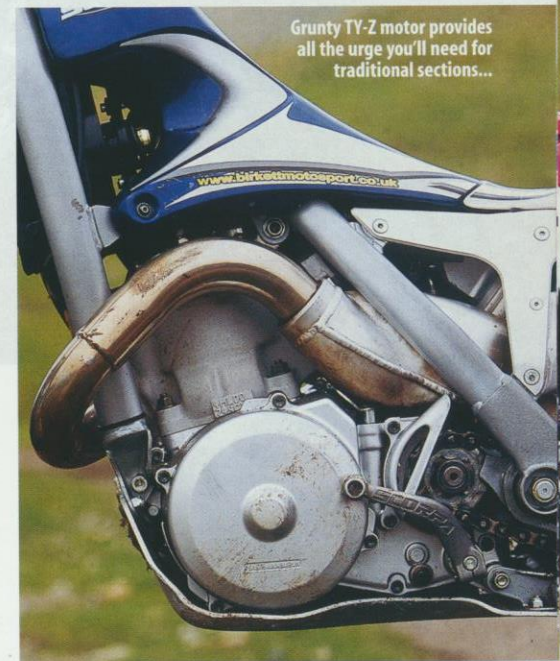
Scorpa's looks are easily the most distinctive...



Sherco 2.9, £3650, 74.3kg

Unfortunately a Sherco 250 wasn't available for this test so the importers provided us with an otherwise identical (but obviously slightly larger capacity) 290 model that they claim is actually their bigger seller. From the point of view of design the Sherco is the most straightforward of the bikes here (no bad thing, that) - it reminded me a lot of the previous generation of Gassers (the TXTs) which were great machines in their time. And in terms of handling it felt very much like the TXT as well: neutral, well composed but (I felt) slightly larger and more reluctant to turn than the others. Part of this may be down to the extra grunt of the 290 lump (it didn't feel particularly powerful to me until you really opened it up), though I can't really say. However I confess I didn't get on as well with the Sherco as I did with some of the others. The handling felt a bit slower and more cumbersome, the brakes only okay, and the engine slightly reluctant to rev (not helped by a slightly stiff throttle). And while it did absolutely nothing wrong, to me it didn't exhibit any particular trait that marked it out as better than any of the others. But here's what the others had to say on the subject.

Grunty TY-Z motor provides all the urge you'll need for traditional sections...





TAKE FIVE!

Rappers: 'I found the Sherco very light and nimble though I wasn't able to get any feeling of the 'ground' through the suspension - and couldn't feel what the back wheel was up to. The engine's very powerful (quite a handful in fact), and it's the nicest looking bike here, very pretty.'

Sunt: 'The Sherco steers very well, it has a longer rake on the forks so it's more stable on loose going. The front suspension has no adjustment and feels a little bit dated, but the rear suspension is as good as the Gasser's.'

It's got a five-speed gearbox, so you're limited to three gears through the sections - most sections were tackled in second gear, where it has nice power, and gives good levels of grip. I didn't like it to start off with, but more time spent on the Sherco meant it felt a lot better towards the end of the day. It's very similar to Montesa as in the fact that you know you have the bike between your legs due to its wideness - which is good as you have some feel. The brakes are also very good, but the front forks let it down a bit - an upgrade would improve things. Overall I found it easier to ride than the Scorpa.

Montesa 4RT, £4399, 78.05kg

And so we come to the Montesa, the only four-stroke of the bunch and the bike I was most interested to ride. Having watched Dougie Lampkin struggle on sections with the thumper I imagined that it would take a lot of getting used to for a novice rider like me. Not a bit of it. Once you get used to having to stroke the kick-starter through its action rather than prod at it (and hearing the bassier-sounding exhaust note when it fires), riding the 4RT is a breeze. Despite what you may have heard or read, in many ways the four-stroke was as easy (if not easier) to ride as the two-strokes - particularly on the loose rocks that littered our test area. Thanks to the steady drive of the motor, the Mont would

track cleanly through sections and wasn't easily knocked off course. On the slippery stuff the drive and grip were both excellent and while the Mont certainly felt different at times, it didn't feel awkward. Two things I did notice: when you wanted to pick the front end up (to clip the top edge of a rock for instance) you had to open the throttle slightly sooner and fractionally wider than you would with a stroker. And, once the front wheel was airborne the front end reacted more to throttle variations than it would with

Sherco is arguably the best looking bike of all of them...



a two-stroke. Overall however, I was pretty impressed with the Mont, it was surprisingly easy to ride and like all Hondas, beautifully built. Here's the thoughts of the others.

Rappers: 'Although the Montesa is heavier than all the other bikes, it's not noticeable when you're riding it. The Mont tends to flatten climbs - storming up virtually anything in third gear (easier than the strokers). However I found the standard factory recommended tickover (1800rpm) a bit too high as it made the bike want to push-on, especially on downhills. They will work with considerably less tickover so I know this isn't a big problem. The Mont's gearing as standard is too high for most club riders and definitely benefits from being lowered by two teeth on the rear sprocket, which slows everything down and makes life that bit easier. Build quality is first rate but the standard footrests are too small and the clutch master-cylinder doesn't allow enough feel.'

Sunt: 'The Mont is very easy to ride, the suspension works well with the chassis and follows the ground well, you just need to worry about steering it and not correcting mistakes. The engine is very smooth, very nice and torquey



290 motor has all the oomph you'll need...

TAKE FIVE!



with strong versatile power. I found the standard gearing good, but it might not suit everybody. There's no doubting that the Mont is heavier than the rest, but the ride makes up for that. The Montesa's bars make for a good riding position -

Four by Two

I suspect that there will be a lot of trials riders watching and waiting to see whether they will want or need to go four-stroke in the near future in order to remain competitive. In terms of regulations requiring it, the answer is a resounding NO. The FIM had initially decreed that World Championship trials should be all four-stroke affairs by 2007 (this date has already been put back once), and now it looks increasingly likely that they will be forced to accept a joint two- and four-stroke World Championship - though no-one is absolutely certain at this stage. However what we can be certain of is that club trials will continue to accept and (just as likely to be won by) two-stroke machinery for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless it's clear that quite a number of good clubman and expert riders have embraced four-stroke technology with a view to getting a foothold on the best way to ride thumpers from

very relaxed, but the standard footrests are not great.'

Summary

So what sort of conclusions can be drawn from having all five makes of trials bikes together at once and testing them on the same terrain and conditions? Well firstly I was surprised at how difficult it was to split them in terms of any meaningful conclusions. I'm not just saying that, they really were all incredibly good at what they were designed and built to do. Something you'd expect given the specific requirements of a sport like trials. On the other hand each of them had their own good and bad points and it's this that in the end produced our winners and losers. Before I go into detail let me just add that each of the testers had a free vote and their brief was to consider the bikes from the point of view of which was best suited to their way of riding.

My own top five would place

the Beta at the top with the Gas Gas Pro alongside it as first equals. I like the tractability and stability of the Beta and the sturdiness of its chassis and overall build quality. On the other hand the Gasser is lighter, slightly more

very early on. So if the question is 'would I do better on a four-stroke?' rather than 'do I have to ride a four-stroke?' then the answer is slightly different.

There's no doubt that the Montesa 4RT feels different to ride - and that in itself is no bad thing. If you've been used to riding stokers all your life then the added challenge of getting used to a different style of power may be just what you need to keep your riding fresh. In terms of competence at the beginner/intermediate and even expert level the Montesa is more than capable of mixing it with the stokers (some things it's better at, others it's not quite so good). And there's no doubt that there's a lot of high technology packed inside those Honda crankcases. If you're one of those people that can afford to ride the latest bit of kit and enjoy the experience of breaking new ground then go ahead - the 4RT makes sense for you guys. One of the things about the way it rode which I really liked was the fact that you could ignore the clutch and simply ride the bike on the throttle: it picks up from nothing and is virtually impossible to stall. Interestingly I also felt that it had no more discernable engine braking than

Montesa 4RT is the first four-stroke of the modern era, yet weighs less than a kilo more than the two-stroke Beta...



manoueverable and half-a-generation ahead in terms of bike design. There's 170-quid difference in the price (in the Gasser's favour) which may just swing it for you, however I suspect that you'll either prefer the Beta's torque and stability,

the two-strokes, and that in certain sections it was definitely easier to ride than the stokers simply because of the way the four-stroke power feels much more linear (broader but smoother).

However, let's not kid ourselves. Trials riders would stop using air in their tyres if it wasn't free and the majority of blokes I see out and about at trials, spend less on their bikes than they do on their haircuts (and that's saying something). The fact remains that trials is (and has always been) at the budget end of off-road sport - in many ways that's part of its attraction. And the idea of spending nearly a grand more for a new trials bike which, while it may be different, as yet offers no clear advantages in terms of winning (certainly not at the highest level anyway), is an anathema to them. The fact remains that a two-stroke trials bike is all you really need right now. Certainly when you factor-in the ease of maintenance into the equation, the choice becomes even simpler. Whether that will continue to be the case remains to be seen, but the truth is that rumours of the two-stroke's demise appear to be exaggerated...



SOHC lump features battery-less electronic fuel-injection

Five bikes: Take your pic...



TAKE FIVE!

or the Gasser's rev and flickability as much as any price differential.

There's also a tie for third place in my book between the surprising (and up to the minute) Montesa and the traditional (but exquisitely detailed) Scorpa. Don't let the additional (initial) cost of the Montesa put you off considering one of these remarkable new machines. Four-stroke triallers may or *may not* be the future of the sport, but the jewel-like design of the EFI-fuelled Honda engine is a reason for ownership in itself. Riding the Montesa is not the strange sensation I thought it would be and in fact the four-stroke power delivery confers an ease of progress for those struggling in the talent department.

I loved everything about the Scorpa, from its quirky look to its riding position and especially its grunty engine. It worked really well for me, but I have to accept that not everyone felt the same. All of us loved the engine though and the Scorpa remains one of those bikes that sits just outside the

mainstream but will always attract its fair share of admirers. And with good reason.

In my last place comes the Sherco, not by much but purely on the basis of finding it slightly more difficult to ride than all the others. For me it was eclipsed by the agile Gasser, the easy-to-ride Beta, the novel Montesa, and the beautiful Scorpa. It came close to them all in terms of performance, but not quite close enough.

So, here then are the results of our shootout - our top five in the order that each of the riders chose them. And like every TBM shootout, we've picked a winner. Yes, we know that this is not how things have been done in the arcane world of trials, but hey, that's exactly why we did it!

Si Melber
(Novice)
1- Beta/Gas
3- Mont/Scorpa
5 Sherco

Mike Rapley
(Intermediate)
1 Beta
2 Montesa
3 Gas Gas
4 Scorpa
5 Sherco

John Sunter
(Expert)
1 Beta
2 Montesa
3 Gas Gas
4 Sherco
5 Scorpa

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• ross dandy - micheal brown - gary mcdonald - james dabil - ben hemmingway

• wayne braybrook - mika vesty - shaun morris - dan hemmingway

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Trials Magazine grabs five minutes with Albert Cabestany, shoots five quick questions and gets five very honest replies...

T-Mag: After so many years with Beta, why did you finally decide it was time to change teams?

AC: 'Well, I think many things have helped make this change. I spent a lot of time in Beta. In Spain the team were like a family, but with the factory in Italy more recently there have been a lot of problems. Not all the problems could be solved, especially when I did not understand what some of the problems were. I had spoke many times with Sherco, it's not the first year that we had had contact. I always thought that it was a good bike with a good potential, and also with Mr Paxau as chief technician, I knew it's a guaranteed thing that the bike is going to work well. They also offered me a good team and they are a young team with high hopes, and they want to win the world championship with me, so that was also important.'

T-Mag: Has it been difficult to adapt to the Sherco?

AC: 'Well it's been quite fast, because I have just two weeks before Sheffield to start working with the bike, but I think the results arrived sooner than some expected. I would like to have won immediately, but I know that it is the first year and it is going to be difficult, so that's the reason why I have signed for two years. But I think I am already confident with the new bike. The only problem is that I've been making the changes with the bike while we have been making the indoor series.'

So I didn't have the time to make a full set up before the indoor series began. I have learnt a lot with Mr

Paxau and also all the changes we've made, we'd done in the right direction, so that's very important.'

T-Mag: Have you made many changes to the Sherco or is it very similar to Jarvis' 2004 bike?

AC: 'I let Mr Paxau work by himself, when he looked at me riding the bike, he knew exactly what I wanted, so it's been very easy. From what I can understand it's quite similar to what Graham used last year or at least what Graham has now, as he has the same material, I don't know if he's going to use it or not, it will be his decision and it is the same for me I can choose exactly what I want.'

T-Mag: Are you happy with the results that you've achieved so far?

AC: 'Yeah, for sure the best thing is to win, but I think that second place and also being so consistent in the podium has been a good start. I have also been thinking a lot about the bike, so we are ready for the outdoor season, not just for the indoor trials, so I think I can be satisfied so far.'

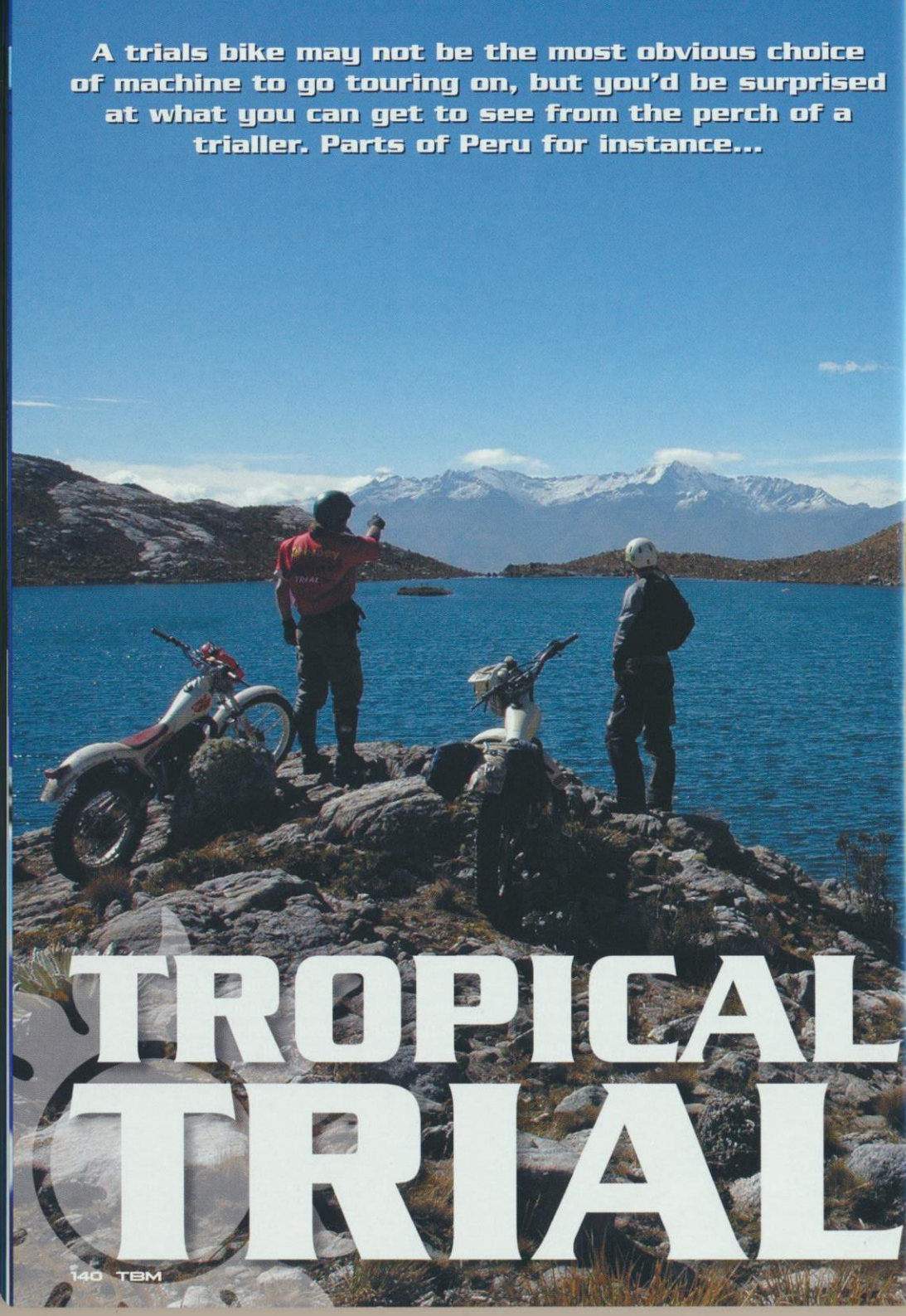
T-Mag: Finally, what results are you hoping to realistically achieve in the outdoor world championships, do you think you're in a position to win this year?

AC: 'Yeah, I think we can challenge for the victory. I think we have showed our level indoors, and we have had more time to be ready for the outdoor championship. For sure the early rounds we will be learning how it all works. A new team, a new bike, it will be very different, but at least we had two Spanish championships before the World series started, so that was a good help for us.'

T-Mag: Thank you and good luck for the rest of the season.

AC: 'Thank you, you will see if what I have said is correct very soon.'

A trials bike may not be the most obvious choice of machine to go touring on, but you'd be surprised at what you can get to see from the perch of a trialler. Parts of Peru for instance...



TROPICAL TRIAL

TRIALS
MAGAZINE

STORY & PICS: FERRIS TULANE

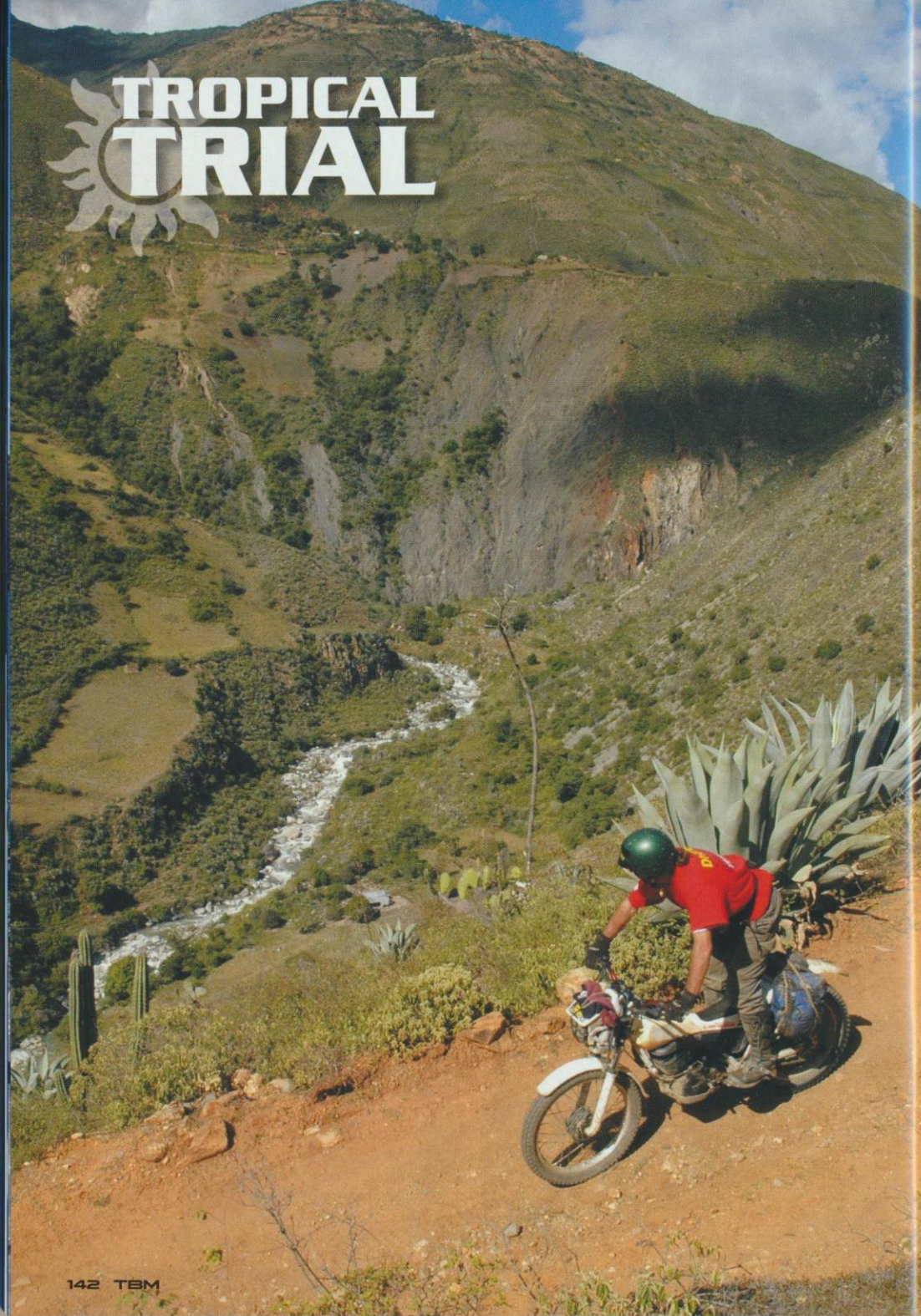


The landscape is unreal. We stop to take in the view. On the horizon the snows of the Sierra Nevada are unnaturally striking, even seen from afar. One peak dominates the skyline - climbing to over 5000m, Bolivar mountain is *huge*. 'Valia la pena' (worth the effort) our tour guide cries, as the last rider arrives and cuts his engine. We stop and stare in awe at Mother Nature and her intense beauty.

After so much effort the poor Yamaha TYs (asthmatic at altitude), are allowed to cool down leant against rocks. We cast our gazes over the Lagoon of Albarega, which sparkles in the sunlight at 4200m and supplies crystal clear water to the town of Merida, in the bottom of the valley. Merida, the capital of the Venezuelan Andes (founded in 1558), was our starting point yesterday and will see our return this afternoon. Ahead of us a descent of 2600m - and a goat track. It is going to be interesting!

Everything started a few days earlier, triggered by an email. Jean Luc, happily

TROPICAL TRIAL



installed with his wife for the past 13 years in Venezuela, invited me for a little 'trials ride'. Happy owner of El Hoyo del Queque, the trendiest bar in Merida, the couple, who hail from Lyon in France, had recently inaugurated a 'posada' (guest house) near their home, 15km from the town. It is there in the valley of San Rafael de Tabay that Jean Luc has built his trials centre, equipped with a workshop, a jet-wash, and a permanent mechanic, Hugo.

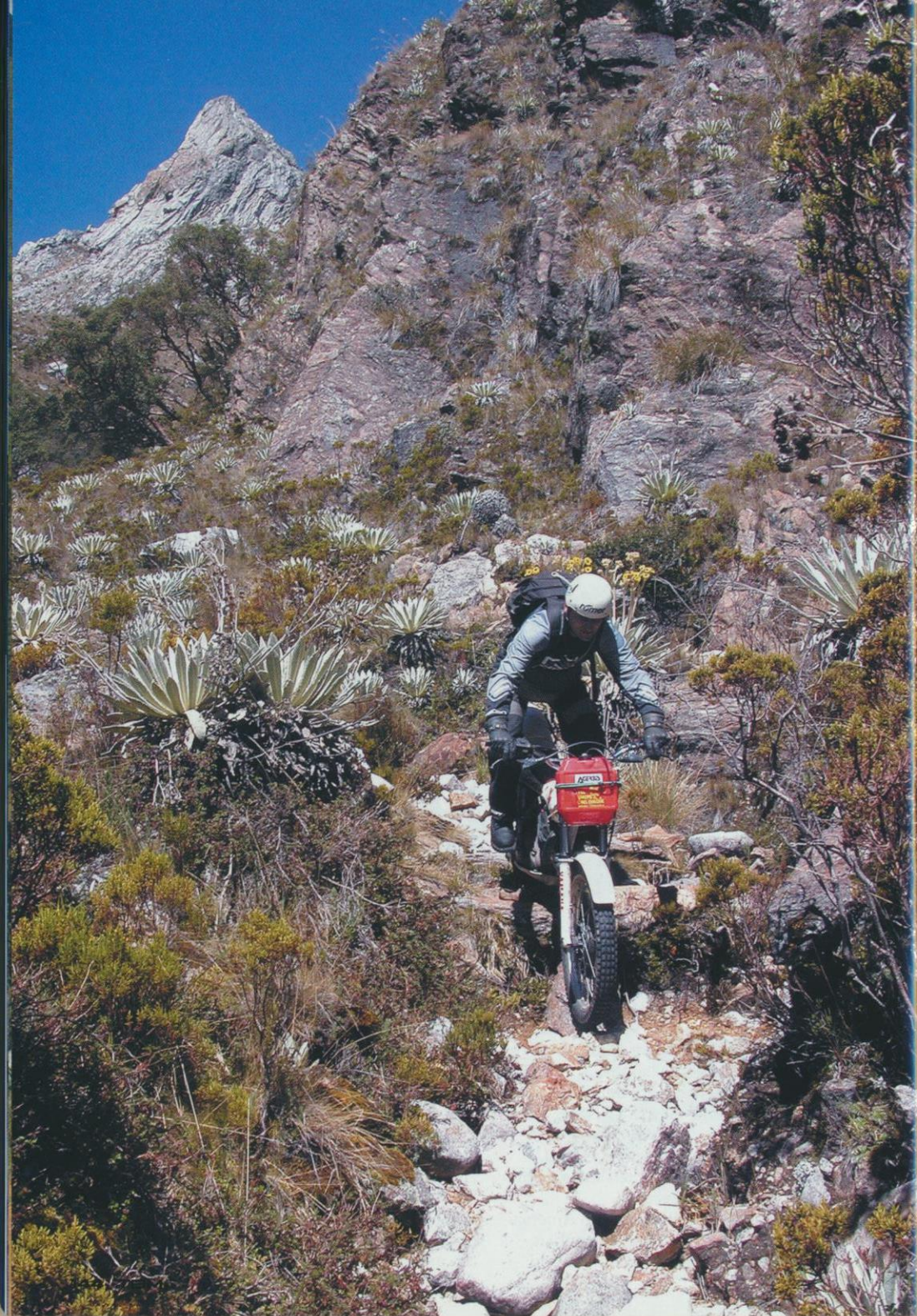
A dozen tracks lead from the posada. Barely had we started on our ride than I quickly got a feeling for what was on offer. 'Where I will take my clients' smiles Jean Luc, 'only donkeys and good walkers can go. A trail bike or an enduro machine - forget it,' he laughs.

Obviously the level of difficulty depends upon the group. Darwin, the local trials star will be one of the guides. Venezuela has a good level of riders on a Latin American level, and like Brazil and Colombia they try to send a team to the Trial des Nations each year.

Trials enjoyed a boom period in South America between 1975-85, but then nothing. 'Here there are a few old Montesas, some Yamaha TYs and



a few Merlins (a Spanish-Italian hybrid with a Cagiva engine), but more recent models are almost non-existent,' says Jean Luc. But that's no problem, the simplicity of the Yamaha TY250 makes it perfect for here. A broken disc or a holed radiator could turn a nice ride into a nightmare in the hills of Paramos. That's without even talking about unfindable spare parts - where again the old TY scores highly. 'With the TY, which shares its engine with the very popular DT, you will find piston rings in the local corner shop of every town' he adds cheerfully.



TROPICAL TRIAL



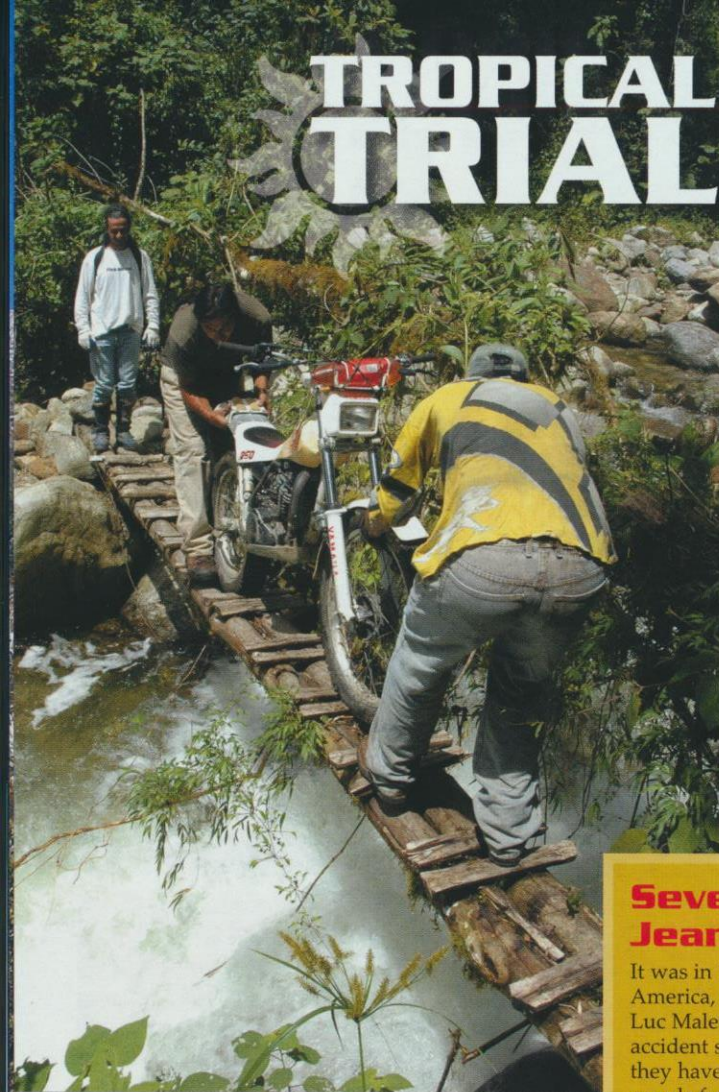
A nature lover, Jean Luc is keen to highlight the eco-tourism aspect of his centre. He promises to respect other track users, the goat tracks and the scenery he rides through. 'Slow down in front of the horses and donkeys, say hello to the locals, close all the gates behind you and avoid going off piste. All are essential if our passion is to survive. The idea is to live in perfect harmony with the Andes and enjoy total freedom for up to five days.' For that length of time the food and fuel is sent ahead, not by truck or bike, but by donkey. The rest of the time the bikes are fitted with two saddlebags (water and food) and a handlebar-mounted fuel tank of four-litres. Which kind of calms your ambitions to be Dougie Lampkin!

Today the group is made up of local trials riders, nine plus me. We leave from Santa Rosa at 2000m to reach the Cueva del Diablo (cave of the devil) at 3700m by a tricky little track. Local lad Herbert struggles on his 1982 Montesa 349. Heavy and with dodgy brakes it fouls two spark plugs even before the start. Herbert is therefore soaked in sweat, and his brother Leonel has the same bike, though his is running better. The big Chui handles his little '78 Montesa 200

The Man From The Peru: Venezuelan Trials Tours

- There's a range of tours available, starting with a day's outing, all-inclusive (that's accommodation, a Yamaha TY, fuel and guide) costing approx £56, with an extra day available at approx £35.
- The posada has rooms with fantastic views for 25,000 bolivares a night (£7)
- Flights cost around £300-450 from London to Caracas (return), to which you need to add a flight from Caracas to Merida (£50) or there's a bus which is cheaper!
- Also available is a 14-day package called 'Andes-Llanos-Caraibes', which offers eight or nine days riding in Merida, two days in Llanos (watching wildlife) and two days in Choroni in the Caribbean. Cost is about 800 euros per person for six people. For more information contact Jean-Luc via email: jlmalet@yahoo.com. Website: www.turismocatalejo.com

TROPICAL TRIAL



Severine and Jean-Luc Malet

It was in 1991, during a bike trip in Latin America, that the lives of Severine and Jean Luc Malet changed for the better. A serious accident saw them stuck in Venezuela and they have never left. After the accident the couple from Lyon - who have just received their Venezuelan nationality - travelled to Merida on their old XT500, found their own private paradise and settled. Severine gave birth to Inti and Tonatiu, they opened a restaurant they named El Hoyo del Queque, started a travel agency called Catalejo (distant horizons) and recently opened the posada of the same name. The posada is a lodge built in a valley in front of the snowy Humbolt Mountain (4942m) where Severine can accommodate up to 25 people. For years Jean Luc has offered activities such as canoeing, horse riding, piranha fishing (!) and hunting, and the trial centre is a long-running project. For safety reasons, groups are limited.

like a bicycle. As it turns out it's a good choice in the rocks. Forroro - unusual name which means 'burnt maize' - warms up his old '75 TY250. The shocks are leaking oil, but our man is smiling. Meanwhile Hugo, Jean Luc, Oscar, Darwin and his brother Chiqui are trend setters with their brace of '85 Yamaha TY250s. Myself, being the guest, I've been thoroughly spoilt with a brand new TY!

And so off we go for a big adventure. The fallen trees, which look easy, are made slippery and incredibly tricky by the ambient humidity. We manhandle the bikes across the Rio Albarega over two tree trunks tied together. With the engine cut, one person manages the front brake while walking backwards, while another pushes

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from behind. Not a place to make a mistake.

At the end of the track the team eat the sandwiches carried in the saddlebags and drink from the stream. On coming back to the posada the conversations continue late into the night, around a fire. 'Tomorrow a Spaniard arrives - my first customer,' declares Jean Luc with pride and confidence. He will take him to the paramo El Escorial. At this time of the year the area is covered in flowers - it will be magnificent.

The following days' outings are equally as spectacular. We visit the village of Los Nevados (2700m), lost in the Andes, where the ancient way of life continues. There follows an epic ascent to the Lagoon of Santo Cristo, frequently covered in mist in August, but in the dry season from December to April, the sky is an azure blue.

At that time of the year the visibility is panoramic and it's not unusual to see as far as Lake Maracaibo, some 80km to the north.

Jean Luc also offers a climb of some 4000m (that's 12,000ft or so) in a day! Starting from the lake, which is at sea level, the ride climbs to Torondoy, then Mucumapis before reaching the peak of El Aguila (4118m) where the horses of El Libertador, Simon Bolivar, crossed the country towards the famous battle of independence.

This trip changed me, and my outlook on the sport of trials. I have discovered a beyond compare sport - freeride trials. I returned home with the spirit of exploring magnificent scenery on the friendliest of all motorcycles - and where off-road motorcycling takes on a whole new dimension. Maybe one day, you'll do the same...

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What's the Story?

STORY: RAPPERS; PIC: ERIC KITCHEN

Whilst Ulsterman Sammy Miller remains the most successful solo British Trials Champion ever with 11 successive titles won between 1959 and 1969, the rider that brought his incredible run of successes to an end was Gordon Farley, pictured here during his second British Championship winning year of 1971 in the Allan Jefferies trial.

Sammy recalls: 'I won the final round in 1970, the Knut Trial, but effectively lost my title to Gordon earlier that year at the Perce Simon Trial when the condenser failed on my Bultaco, leaving me stranded out on the moors in the New Forest.

'I decided there and then to call it a day as far as chasing championships; I reckoned I had won enough titles for the record to stand for many years, which has proved to be the case' said Sammy when Trials Mag caught up with him recently.

But for Farley the win was the culmination of a deep-seated desire to succeed. 'It meant a hell of a lot to me at the time' said Gordon, who now owns two motorcycle dealerships in the Guildford area. 'Sam was a pain in the backside, winning every year. He was always that little bit better than the rest of his contemporaries. We could beat him now and then, but he was always so consistent, so to take the title

from him meant so much to me. I won the Championship again in 1971 and continued to ride for three more years, finally retiring in 1974 having been a professional trials rider for ten years for Triumph, Greeves, Montesa and Suzuki.'

However, Gordon made a brief comeback in 1978 during a six month spell when he competed with great success locally - though he admits he struggled when it came to the bigger events. 'I did the Scottish that year - a year when it was incredibly difficult. Martin Lampkin won, losing 99 marks and I finished 45th. I didn't like that and I found the event very difficult and I haven't competed since.'

So will Gordon Farley, twice British Champion ever ride competitive trials again? 'I'm 60 in June this year' he says, 'and I've promised myself I'll have a go just to see what it's like. It'll be in the Senior class of course. I'm still involved in trials, my wife and I observe regularly and my son wants to ride a bit further afield now, so I could yet be renewing some old acquaintances.'

And the reason for the cool shades in our picture? 'I suffered badly from hay fever then and thought that sunglasses would help. They didn't' said Gordon, happy to recall his success from 34 years ago.

'Sam was a pain in the backside, winning every year. He was always that little bit better than the rest of his contemporaries...'

FREE CLASSIFIEDS

BIKES

CCM 604E DS, 2001, MoT, 5900 miles, Datatag, c/w SM wheels, £2800 ono. Tel (mobile) 07963 048133 or 0115 847 8925 (Notts)
KTM 450EXC, 2003, taxed, alloy bashplate, clutchcases, new rear tyre and good front, all lights, maintained regardless of cost, £3495. Tel (mobile) 07785564094 or 01823 276031 (Somerset)
KTM 525EXC, 2003 model, one owner, UK bike, new c+s, extras, trail use only, well maintained, exc cond, £3650 ono. Tel (mobile) 07968 495130 or 01332 741415 (Derbys)

Yamaha WR250F, 2004, Leo Vinci exhaust, frame/rad/handguards, Fatbars, full Yamaha road kit, vgc, £3,995 ono. Tel (mobile) 07968 478670 or 01874 658659 (Powys)

Honda CRM250 AR, 2000, W-reg, white/black, T&T, 5000 miles, bashplate, exc cond, £2650 ono. Tel (mobile) 07962146849 or 0151 355 2343 (Chester)

Suzuki DR-Z400S, 2001, X-reg, T&T, 4600 miles, new c+s/front pads, Yoshimura exhaust plus original, exc runner, very reliable, £2400 ono. Tel (mobile) 07890 090737 or 01993 703504 (Oxon)

Yamaha XT225 Serow, 1995, M-reg, T&T, new silencer, good cond, £1550. Tel 01985 218684 (Wilts)

Sachs ZX125, 2002, 1000km, never been off-road, dry weather only, stored indoors, £1600. Tel 07891 574430 (Northants)

Suzuki DR650SET, P-reg, 3000 miles, exc condition, service history, Supertrapp tail pipe, road and off-road tyres, £2100 ono. Tel 07795 283427 (Essex)

Husqvarna TE610, 1998, hi-spec competition model, kick-start, 6-speed, well maintained, ideal for supermoto conversion, £1500. SM wheels available. Tel 01257 791314 (Lancs)

Honda XL600R, F-reg, MoT, many new parts, exc cond. Tel 01264 358431 (Hants)

Beta 40RR, 2005, only ridden twice, as new, big saving on new, £4600 ono. Tel 01246 567556 (Derbys)

Gas Gas EC250, Y-reg, new tyres/pads/chain etc, will T&T for buyer, green lanced only, £1800 for quick sale. Tel 07743 074397 (Lothian)

Honda CRF250X, taxed, bashplate, handguards, some spares, light use only, retirement forces sale, £3550. Tel 01594 529238 (Gloucs)

Gas Gas Pampera, 2002, taxed, little use, superb cond, must be seen, £1950. Tel 01202 717039 (Dorset)

Yamaha WR400F, 2000, set up for tall/heavy rider, Ohlins shock, high seat, bar risers, flywheel weight, good cond, £2400. Tel 01280 812691 (Bucks)

Yamaha WR450F, 2004 model, Q-pipe, Talons, plus loads more, all original bits, phone for details/pics, £4500. Tel (mobile) 07832 337498 or 01978 752677 (N Wales)

Kawasaki KLE250 Super Sherpa, 2000, T&T, 6000 miles, new tyres/battery, hardly used since imported, smart little bike, bargain at £1695. Tel 01997 421911 (Scotland)

Kawasaki KLX650, 1993, new exhaust/c+s/CDI/battery and forkguards, great fun on- and off-road, £1200. Tel 01503 250875 (Cornwall)

CCM 604E Sport, 2000, X-reg, 6400 miles, new tyres/cam belt pulleys, regularly serviced, good cond, offers around £2395. Tel 01626 835416 (Devon)

Yamaha WR400F, 1999, little use, new c+s to replace originals, Renthals, handguards, always serviced, bargain at £1850. Tel 01347 822870 (N Yorks)

Honda XR250, 03-reg, fully road legal, 2400 miles, £2700. Also Moto Gori 175cc, log book, needs repair, £395. Tel 01200 425603 (Lancs)

Yamaha WR250F, 2003, T&T, road legal kit, many spares, Fat bars, bash plate, frameguards, vgc, £3250 ono. Tel 01594 529238 (Gloucs)

Honda XR400R, 1999, proper ignition, Trailtech, good cond, £1850. Tel (mobile) 07779 520190 or 01283 713326 (Staffs)

Yamaha Serow, 1991, 17700km, Renthals trials bars, Acerbis barkbusters, new 520 c+s/pads/shoes and tyres, £950. Tel 01462 790276 (Herts)

Husqvarna WR360, enduro/trailie, lots of recent parts, needs piston and rebore but otherwise exc general cond, call for details, £1000. Tel (mobile) 07740 160953 or 01942 879585

(Manchester)

Honda XR400, 1999, 6000km, CRD bashplate, White Bros E-series exhaust, CRD header, Acerbis headlamp, plus original exhaust/head light etc, regular oil and filter changes, £2000 ono. Tel (mobile) 07734 721705 or 01747855039 (Dorset)

KTM 250EXC 2T, 2003, road reg'd, taxed, 38 hours/7500km use, standard bike, green lane use, unused for 14 months, injury forces sale, £2995. Tel 07967 658928 (Lincs)

Gas Gas Pampera 250 mkII, 1999, T&T, two owners, new c+s, well maintained, some spares, could deliver, phone for details, £1175 ono. Tel 0115 952 1645 (Notts)

Honda XR400R, 2003, 5450km, owned from new, green lane use only, Mikuni carb, sump/handguards, new baby forces sale, £2795 ono. Tel 01296 584833 (Bucks)

Husqvarna CR250, 1999, just about all replaced, ready to roar, two-stroke heaven, £1795 ono. Tel 01268 699748 (Essex)

Suzuki DR350, 1994, T&T, new c+s, Acerbis tank, very reliable, good cond, £1400. Tel 01428 682651 (Surrey)

Yamaha WR400E, X-reg, taxed, trail use only, new tyres/c+s/pads, some new plastics plus graphics kit, £2250. Tel 07939 998576 (Denbighshire)

Yamaha TT600R, 2001, red/white, T&T, 4700km, road/green lane use only, good standard cond, £2000 ono. Tel (mobile) 07712 338943 or 01242 576809 (Gloucs)

Suzuki DR-Z400E, 2003, 2100 miles, road/green lane use only, Leo Vince exhaust, Renthals, hand/sumpguards, superb bike, £2995. Tel 01428 724308 (Hants)

Honda SL230, reg'd 1998, T&T, 5000 miles, low seat height, elec start, Renthals, bashplate, brushguards, 70-80mpg, good cond, £1300. Tel 07917 190318 (S Yorks)

Honda CRM250 AR, 1997, T&T, 16500km, DEP system, Boyesen reeds, IMS pegs, bashplate, new tyres, exc cond, £2200 ono. Tel 07711 004416 (Chester)

Beta Alp 200, 03-reg, yellow, 6000km, alarm, new rear tyre, road use only, £1950 no canvassers. Tel 01204 883659 (Lancs)

Suzuki DR-Z400E, 2000, T&T, Renthals, sump/handguards, new battery/pads, good cond, £2150. Tel (mobile) 07801 821466 or 01633 674388 (Gwent)

Bultaco 350 Sherpa, 1980, new clutch/decals, not used in competition, good cond, offers around £600. Tel 07876 648180 (W Mids)

Yamaha WR400E, MoT, recent tyres plus new DEP silencer, exc cond, £2400 ovno. Tel 01977 708315 (Wakefield)

BMW R80GS, G-reg, black/yellow, too many mods to list, loads of spares, phone for more info, £2600. Tel 07976 353913 (Yorks)

Suzuki DR-Z400S, 2003, 53-reg, 4000 miles, full Suzuki service history, Suzuki warranty still remaining, lot of extras including Scottolier, almost as new, £2995. Tel 07973 231879 (Hants)

Honda XR400R, 2003, 1300km, Renthals, CRD pipe, light use, exc cond, £2995. Tel (mobile) 07793 939299 or 01883 652349 (Surrey)

Yamaha YZ426F, very little use, some spares, immaculate cond, ready to race. Tel 01993 771159 (Oxon)

Yamaha WR200R, 2000, X-reg, T&T, Fatbars, new graphics/seat cover, Acerbis barkbusters, frameguards, cracking bike in vgc, £1895 ovno. Tel 01429 282289 (Co Durham)

Beta Alp 4.0, reg'd Nov 2003, 2600 miles, like new, genuine reason for sale, £2495 no timewasters please. Tel 07970 656417 (Gwent)

Honda XR400, late 2002, taxed, 1500 miles, two owners, new chain/tyres/pads, standard bike in exc cond, £2800. Tel 01495 722849 (Gwent)

CCM 640 Sport, 1999 model, reg'd 2000, low miles, mature owner, inc Talon/Excel supermoto wheels, new tyres, immaculate cond, £3200 ono. Tel 07761 256368 (Hants)

Cagiva W16 600, N-reg, T&T, 16000km, new c+s, ideal green lane bike, £1000 ono. Tel 01243 839008 (Sussex)

KTM 525EXC, 2004, 1800 miles, light green lane use only, sump/handguards, serviced to schedule, immaculate cond, £4300. Tel (mobile) 07966 670655 or 01225 445378 (Somerset)

Honda TLR250R-G, 1986, T&T, full lighting kit, never trialled, good cond, £1500. Tel 01271 812022 (Devon)

Husaberg FE400, 2002, taxed, dual start, regular oil/filter changes, new pads/battery/fork seals/tyres, exc cond, £2395 ono. Tel (mobile) 07771 520146 or 01489 799899 (Hants)

Suzuki DR600S, taxed but no MoT, 38000 miles, new top-end, couple of dints in tank but otherwise good condition, £600 or WHY. Tel (mobile) 07876 216688 or 01925 723626 (Cheshire)

Gas Gas EC300, 2003 model, 52 reg, only 1350 miles, sump/handguards, well maintained, nice condition, £2100. Tel (mobile) 07970 003003 or 01795 430832 (Kent)

Honda CR125, L-reg, MoT, well maintained, new clutch, plus MX gear, £950 ono. Tel 01440 704922 (Essex)

Honda XR400R, 2001, X-reg, red/white, T&T, 14500km, Renthals, bashplate, barkbusters, some spares, phone for details, £1800 ono. Tel (eves) 020 8683 2347 (Surrey)

Honda XR400R, 1999, V-reg, white, T&T, 5600km, FMF Q-pipe, all original plus Talon/Excel/Braking supermoto wheels, exc cond, £2700. Tel 01264 335097 (Hants)

Yamaha TT600, 1990, T&T, lights, new front tyre/rear fender/fork seals/gaeters, seat recovered, very nice machine, cheap at £995. Tel 02380 333955 (Hants)

KTM 450EXC, 2005 model, taxed, many extras, mint condition, £5000 or p/x for KTM 300EXC. Tel (mobile) 07981 106431 or 01795 790260 (Gwent)

Honda XR280R, 51-reg, T&T, new tyres/c+s, very good bike, £2350 ono. Tel (mobile) 07977 654826 or 01332 691019 (Derbys)

Yamaha YZ426F, 2002 model, road reg'd, both MX and SM wheels, Braking disc, Magura m/cyl, FMF header, £2600. Tel Matt on 07779 341871 (Essex)

Gilera Apache 125, 02-reg, exact bike featured in TBM84, new small-end/c+s/tyres, not used off-road, must be seen, £1350. Tel 01306 628297 (W Sussex)

Honda XR650R supermoto, 2002, Renthals, Akrapovic system, CRD bashplate, plus off-road wheels, mint cond, £3500 ono. Tel 07941 233845 (Worcs)

Honda XR400R, 2003, taxed, only 1400 miles, lots of extras, light trail use only, vgc, £2950 ovno. Tel (mobile) 07764 233581 or 01977 682168 (N Yorks)

Yamaha XTZ750, 1994, Dynojet stage II, K&N, Laser, Motad, Renthals, many more extras, A1 cond, can email pic, £1900. Tel 01495 725217 (S Wales)

Kawasaki KLX 250E, 1993, T&T, new Talon c+s/wheel bearings, Renthals, regular oil/filter changes, exc greenlaner, £1350 ono or may p/x XR/DR-Z/WR400. Tel (mobile) 07776 242726 or 01935 476895 (Somerset)

BMW 1150GS, 2002, black, hard luggage, Hepco & Becker engine bars, £6300 or p/x Gas Gas EC 300/250. Tel (mobile) 07977 980802 or 01772 783826 (Lancs)

Yamaha WR426F, 2001, Werx graphics/seat, all guards, recent X-ring c+s/tyres/pads, maintained regardless of cost, spare CRD can/large tank/seat, £2900. Tel 07974 978177 (Devon)

BMW R100GS, 1993, low miles, new rear shock/tyre, panniers, exc cond, £1800 no time wasters. Tel 01782 848034 (Staffs)

Yamaha TTR250, M-reg, T&T, elec start, CRD front pipe/sump guard, handguards, Michelin enduro tyres, Renthals, exc cond, £1695. Tel 07792 945157 (Somerset)

Suzuki DR350S, 1993, enduro model with plastic tank etc, DR-Z plastics, frame powder-coated 12 months ago, green lane use. Tel (mobile) 07740 192658 or 020 8776 0615 (Kent)

Yamaha TTR250, 2002, blue, 1500km, taxed, elec start, garaged for five months, clean bike, £2550. Tel (mobile) 07951 534358 or 01895 471517 (Middx)

Gas Gas Pampera 250, 2002, 02-reg, 2000 miles, mature rider, £1775. Tel (mobile) 07966 753890 or 01327 877094 (Northants)

Honda CRM250 mkII, 1991, T&T, DEP system, frame/sump-guards, recon suspension, spare cables, light trail use, above average cond, £1500. Tel 07974 804371 (Cheshire)

VOR 530, 2001, originally a supermoto but now with MX wheels/suspension, little use, vgc, £2950. Tel 01604 495185 (Northants)

Honda CR125, 03-reg, taxed, lights, spare plastics, super cond, £2400. Tel (mobile) 07793 449860 or 01527 523550 (Worcs)

KTM 950 Adventure S, new in June '04, Gauloises blue, as new, cost £8650, bargain at £7250. Tel Steve on (mobile) 07929 930740 or 01530 459644 (Leics)

Gas Gas EC300, 2002, one owner, no expense spared on mechanics, no time wasted on cosmetics, call for more details, £2000 ono. Tel 01225 444844 (Avon)

Honda XR400, 2002, 52-reg, taxed, 2800 miles, handguards, front discguard, factory-fitted pillion pegs, fair cond, £2400. Tel (mobile) 07931 536106 or 01302 539880 (S Yorks)

Yamaha XT250, 1981, strong and reliable, used for hare 'n' hounds, new knobblies, suit learner, bulletproof. Tel 07796 536487 (Dorset)

Husaberg FE400E, 2001, T&T, bashplate, handguards, c/w Husaberg MX pants, new bike forces sale, £2400. Tel 020 7231 9124 (London)

KTM 200EXC (GS), 2002 model, road reg'd, autolube, handguards, green lane use only, exc cond, £2550. Tel 01483 302018 (Surrey)

Yamaha WR250F, June '03, road reg'd, brushguards, Renthals, new c+s, green lane use only, good cond, £3295 ono. Tel (mobile) 07770 801711 or 01205 722468 (Lincs)

Yamaha XT550, red, MoT, starts first kick, superb example, maintained regardless of cost, proper old trailie, £1250. Tel (mobile) 07766 700870 or 01544 231871 (Hereford)

KTM 525EXC, 500km TRF green lane use only, factory suspension/frameguards, lots more extras, some spares, mint cond, cost £5650, sell for £4000. Tel (mobile) 07787 558869 or 01328 829518 (Norfolk)

Yamaha WR426F, 02-reg, T&T, full lighting kit, new tyres/c+s/rings/camchain, frame/handguards, vgc, £2795 ono. Tel 07708 359670 (Essex)

Yamaha XT225 Serow, 1997, 4IG-5 model, white/green, T&T, only 5000 miles, road use only, very clean, £1950. Tel 020 8464 5778 (Kent)

Honda XR250, 2002, 1700 miles, light green lane use only, lovely condition, ideal green laner, genuine reason for sale, £2350 ono. Tel (mobile) 07802 914043 or 020 8651 2229 (Surrey)

Yamaha TT350, 1990, Renthals, new air/oil filter and kickstart shaft, road and off-road tyres, very clean bike, £895. Tel 07966 112883 (Cheshire)

Suzuki DR-Z400, Oct 2001, lightweight kickstart model, one owner, well serviced, original plastics/c+s, some extras, exc cond, £2350. Tel 01475 689586 (Scotland)

Yamaha WR250F, 2003, many spares and extras inc FMF system and Fatbars, ready to race, £3000. Tel 01594 529238 (Gloucs)

TM 250 4T, 2003, on SORN at present, elec start, recent full engine service, clean and tidy, new bike forces sale, £2800. Tel (mobile) 07711 013534 or 0161 474 0773 (Cheshire)

BMW F650GS Dakar, 2000, Y-reg, blue/white, 6000 miles, alarm/immobiliser, Scottolier, Touratech panniers, tankbag, no off-road use, £3500 ono. Tel 07768 501400 (London)

Honda XR250R, red, T&T, Fatbars, very recent Michelin AC10s, can email pics, £1995 ovno. Tel (mobile) 07970 598117 or 01562 824704 (Worcs)

Honda XR400R, red, T&T, 3000km, one elderly owner, new rear tyre, original cond, £2500 ono. Tel 01732 885233 (Kent)

Honda XR400R, 1998, S-reg, white, MoT, must sell hence £1775 ono. Tel 01787 282032 (Suffolk)

CCM 604E, 2001, 51-reg, Rotax motor, grey/white, MoT, 3300 miles, recent tyres, light trail and road use, good cond, £2300 ono. Tel (mobile) 07876 152807 or 01529 421241 (Lincs)

Honda CRF450R, 2003, road reg'd, 700 miles, lighting kit, many extras inc CRD pipe and enduro tank, green lane use, £4300. Tel 01722 742578 (Wilts)

Gas Gas Pampera, 2004, taxed, stainless fittings, Talon sprockets, O-ring chain, as new, £2300. Tel 01834 813744 (Pembroke)

KTM 400 LC4, 2000, X-reg, orange/silver, MoT, low miles, elec start, new c+s, light/robust thumper, vgc, £2400. Tel 01233 851112 (Kent)

Honda XR250R, 1998, T&T, 8000km, £1500. Also Honda XL600R, 1984, T&T, 30000km, £850. Tel (mobile) 07855 107113 or 01608 663004 (Warks)

Honda XR200, 1982, road reg'd, good cond, offers or p/x for modern trials bike. Tel 01538 300343 (Staffs)

Suzuki DR-Z400E, 2000, IMS tank, CRD exhaust system, plus all usual extras, absolute bargain, £1800. Tel 07759 187500 (Essex)

Honda CRM250 AR, 1998, yellow/purple, T&T, new DEP exhaust, good clean bike, great green laner, £1850 ono. Tel 07771 982246 (Cornwall)

Honda CR500RX, 1999, road reg'd, FMF system Gnarly/Turbine Core II, approx eight hours' use, c/w spares kit and original exhaust, make great supermoto, £2000 ovno. Tel 07970 937499 (Berks)

Kawasaki KLX300, 2003, taxed, 500 miles, CRD sump/frameguards, well maintained, plus spares, exc cond, £2650 ono. Tel (mobile) 07904 061294 or 01525 852589 (Beds)

Husaberg FE450e, elec start, mousses, bashplate, handguards, WER steering damper, superb cond, £3900. Tel (mobile) 07770 575030 or 01565 652400 (Cheshire)

Gas Gas EC200, 2002, one owner, FMF system, frameguards, skidplate, good cond, £2200 ono. Tel 01473 830489 (Suffolk)

FREE CLASSIFIEDS

Honda XR440R, 1997, T&T, recent rebuild, new clutch, CRD exhaust, Renthals, lots of extras, reliable, good condition, £1900. Tel (mobile) 07919 374178 or 01772 460698 (Lancs)

Honda CRF250X, 2004, road reg'd, green lane use only, sump/handguards, Trailtech computer, £4150 ono. Tel (after 3pm) 07736 525142 (Surrey)

KTM 250EXC, reg'd Jan'03, under 1000 miles, light green lane use only, full road kit, one careful lady owner, £2,500. Tel 01242 72552 (Gloucs)

Suzuki DR-Z400S, reg'd 02, full service history. Tel 07989 374980 (Gloucs)

Suzuki DR250RS, DOHC model, 1995, MoT, electric start, adjustable seat height, excellent well maintained bike in great condition, must be seen, £1400 ono. Tel (mobile) 07841 741500 or 01386 554572 (Wores)

Husqvarna WR360, 1998, T&T, 5000 miles, road legal, decompression kit, White Power, Ohlins, vgc, £1800 ono. Tel 07733 322218 (Herts)

Husberg FE400e, 2002, well cared for, hand/sumpguards, low use forces sale, registered with plate T 3ERG, £2695 or £2495 without plate. Tel 07974 396407 (N Wales)

Montesa 315R, 2001, Lampkin rep, well sorted trials bike complete with new 11X tyres, plenty of feet up fun for £1595. Tel 07974 396407 (N Wales)

Yamaha YF5200 Blaster quad, 2004, blue, nerf bars, bashplate, new tyres, frame just painted, good condition, £2200 ono. Tel (mobile) 07906 313353 or 01992 440749 (Herts)

Yamaha TTR90, 2003 model, suit 9-12 year old, immaculate cond, £800 ono. Tel 01330 820806 (Aberdeen)

Honda XL250 Degree, K-reg, T&T, 12000km, elec start, new c+s, road and trail, £995. Tel 01604 494736 (Northants)

KTM 525EXC, 2004 model, 04-reg, very low hours, never been raced, fun use only, vgc, £4200 ono. Tel 07989 588665 or 01257 473409 (Lancs)

Honda CRM250 mkII, 1997, purple/yellow, T&T, hand/sumpguards, Renthals, DEP silencer, many spares, £1300. Tel (after 6pm) 07831 599212 (Herts)

KTM 200EXC, 1999, T-reg, T&T, full road kit, sumpguard, well maintained, good cond for year, £1695 ono. Tel Neil on 01737 762359 (Surrey)

Kawasaki KE100, 1998, S-reg, green with purple seat, 2200 miles, cheap to run, good condition, includes Haynes manual, £600. Tel 01367 820688 (Oxon)

Honda XR750 Africa Twin, 1998, R-reg, T&T, 15500 miles, FSH, exc standard cond, £3100 ono. Tel (mobile) 07866 367592 or 01432 273046 (Hereford)

Suzuki DR-Z400E, 2000, T&T, one owner, Renthals, CRD bashplate, frame/handguards, good tyres/c+s, good condition, only £2150. Tel (mobile) 07801 821466 or 01633 674388 (S Wales)

Yamaha TTR600, 2000, W-reg, red/white, MoT, 6600km, Arrow can and standard, gold taper bars, recent tyres, usual green laning etc, £2050 ono. Tel 01296 688065 (Beds)

KTM Adventure 640, 1999, MoT, low miles, new tyres/pads, gel seat, FSH, vgc, £2250. Tel (mobile) 07710 782442 or 01805 625463 (Devon)

Yamaha WR250E, 2003, taxed, elec start, new plastics/graphics, bashplate, DEP can, well maintained, £3100. Tel (mobile) 07786 866596 or 01782 714194 (Staffs)

Honda XR650L, L-reg, MoT, electric start, Acerbis 22L tank, rear pegs, indicators and proper lights, £1550 ono. Tel 01204 669147 (Lancs)

Honda XR750 Africa Twin, S-reg, black/gold/silver, T&T, 19000 miles, new c+s/battery, £2650 ono. Tel 01204 669147 (Lancs)

Suzuki TS250X, rare water-cooled non-powervolve trail bike, T&T, genuine 20000 miles, very well maintained, loads of history, £695. Tel (mobile) 07798 806145 or 01622 843386 (Kent)

Suzuki RM80, 1995, just rebuilt, first time starter, vgc for year, £600 ono. Tel 07843 236008 (Herts)

Yamaha Blaster 200, 2001, workshop manual, kill-switch, £1750 ono or p/x for KTM EXC. Tel 07843 236008 (Herts)

Lifan LF125, Honda XL125S copy, 2001, Y-reg, red, T&T, 1200 miles, digital gear indicator, reliable, economical, vgc, £800 ono. Tel 01978 860728 (Denbigh)

Honda XR250 Baja, 1996, T&T, elec start. Exc cond, £1800. Tel 01787 269226 (Suffolk)

Tel (mobile) 07766 006870 or 01287 637140 (Cleveland)

Suzuki DR-Z400, 2001, Y-reg, black, T&T, Arrow exhaust, new c+s/pads, few extras, well maintained, £2300 ono. Tel (mobile) 07921 500297 or 01636 684744 (Notts)

Husqvarna WR250, 2004, Anniversary model, little use, approx 1500 miles, original front tyre/c+s, exc cond, £3300. Tel 01271 879356 (Devon)

Honda XR280, 1990 model, road reg'd, MoT, Wiseco piston, new tyres, Renthals, handguards, UFO plastics, lovely runner, some spares, exc starter bike, good cond, £1150 ono. Tel (mobile) 07855 643941 or 01258 454216 (Dorset)

Suzuki DR350SEX, 1999, T-reg, black, T&T, 6000 miles, recent c+s/tyres, mirrors, indicators, quiet exhaust, good original cond, £1850 ono. Tel 07775 883377 (Notts)

Husqvarna TE450, 2004, elec start, shop serviced, Fatbars, mousthes, spare rear wheel and filters, £3500 ovno. Also Yamaha TY80 child's trials bike, ready to ride, £600 ono. Tel (mobile) 07812 081813 or 01245 269591 (Essex)

Honda XR250, 1995, M-reg, MoT, very good original cond, £1450 ono. Tel 01482 870435 (E Yorks)

Beta Alp 200, Sept' 03, only 550km, mint cond, delivery possible by arrangement, absolute give-away at £2450. Tel 07624 495931 (IoM)

Yamaha WR400E, 2001, Y-reg, T&T, one owner, very tidy, phone for details, £2500. Tel (mobile) 07841 656688 or 01225 768183 (Wilts)

Kawasaki KX300R, 2000, T&T, Renthals, header, Dynojet, Datatag, O-ring chain, good cond, £1895 ono. Tel 01706 219971 (Lancs)

Honda XR250, 1998, S-reg, elec start import model, MoT, low miles, elec display, indicators, regularly serviced, reliable, good cond, £1750 ono. Tel 01706 219971 (Lancs)

Beta Alp 200, 52-reg, 2700km, new front tyre/pads, good c+s/bearings, little scuffs otherwise good, £1750. Tel 01824 750659 (N Wales)

Kawasaki KDX220R, 2003, taxed, road kit fitted, green lane use only, vgc, £2650 ono. Tel (mobile) 07788 567091 or 01905 757950 (Wores)

Honda XR400R, 53-reg, one owner, new tyres, sump/handguards, stunning looking bike, exc cond, £2950 ono. Tel 01443 411065 (Mid Glam)

Husqvarna TE410, 1998, T&T, 3500 miles, three owners, full electrics, some green laning, good cond, £1950 ono or looking for 250cc of same standard, prefer Honda. Tel 01962 620728 (Hants)

CCM 604 Sport, 1999, black/yellow, MoT, low miles, light use, £2100. Tel (mobile) 07836 713334 or 01483 414530 (Surrey)

Yamaha WR250E, 2002, under 1000 miles, green lane use only, new tyres, handguards, very good original cond, £2700 ono. Tel 07989 580191 (Bucks)

Honda CRF450R, 2003, enduro spec, road reg'd, 18in rear wheel, lights, exhaust insert/noise restrictor, £3200. Tel 07940 197911 (Surrey)

KTM 450EXC, 2005 model, only 17 hours' green lane use, Tag bars, sump/brushguards, as new, £4650. Tel (mobile) 07889 810651 or 01474 874490 (Kent)

Yamaha DT175MX, MoT, owned since 1992, call for full details, £950. Tel 01604 713728 (Northants)

Honda XR400, 2003 model, taxed, 2100km green lane use, Renthals, barkbusters, new tyres, few extras, nice bike, £2500. Tel 07966 155762 (Notts)

Yamaha WR400E, 2000, full road lighting kit, new c+s, White Bros exhaust, spare plastics, green lane use only, £1695 ono. Tel 07764 180158 (S Yorks)

CCM 604E, 2000, road reg'd, new c+s/tyres/belt etc, Talons/Excels, off-road use only, exc cond, £2500 ovno. Tel 01324 829611/829881 (Stirling)

Honda XR400R, Y-reg, recent service, new brake pads/road legal tyres, Datatag, bashplate, handguards, £2395 ono. Tel (mobile) 07973 144775 or 01977 798503 (W Yorks)

KTM 525EXC, 2003 model, green lane use, new c+s, exc cond, £3650 ono. Tel (days) 01594 837309 or (eves) 01594 810170 (Gloucs)

Gas Gas EC450FSE, 2004, new c+s, exc cond, £3000 ono. Tel 01787 269226 (Suffolk)

KTM 300EXC, 2001, only 200km green lane use, sump-plate, brushguards, some spares, immaculate cond, £2650. Tel (mobile) 07889 810651 or 01474 874490 (Kent)

Honda CRM250 mkII, 1991, light green lane use only, good standard cond, £1395. Tel (mobile) 07748 633723 or 01489 780609 (Hants)

Suzuki DR-Z400S, 2002, taxed, 3000 miles, Renthals, CRD sumpguard, handguards, new c+s/rear tyre, £2425. Tel 07960 091732 (Derbys)

Yamaha WR250E, 2003, 53-reg, taxed, elec start, many extras, very little use, never raced, mint cond, £3250. Tel (mobile) 07970 889306 or 01978 824917 (Wrexham)

Gas Gas EC250, new piston/rings/wheel bearings/tyres, front suspension overhaul, very well maintained, £1795 ono. Tel 01643 708837 (Somerset)

Husqvarna TE250, 04, only six months old, dealer serviced, swap for Gas Gas two-stroke of same year or make me an offer. Tel 01458 210413 (Somerset)

CCM 604E DS, 2001, yellow, 4400 miles, Rotax engine, electric start, WP suspension, exc for all-round use, vgc, £2400 ono. Tel (mobile) 07931 167125 or 01325 310150 (Co Durham)

Honda Dominator, 1987, black, new shock, stainless exhaust, with road and enduro silencers, good cond. Tel 07789 371013 (Carmarthen)

Wanted for Honda XL185, right-hand sidepanel, seat foam and cover, and exhaust system. Tel (eves) 01200 423762 or email balldavid5@aol.com (Lancashire)

Wanted parts for KTM 495, various bits needed to get back on the trail. Tel Michael on 01284 850809 (Suffolk)

Wanted 125-185 four-stroke off-roader, for 14-year old, under £700. Tel (mobile) 07887 751361 or 01252 873434 (Hants)

Wanted Honda trial bike, 125 or 250cc, £100-150. Tel 01507 608365 (Lincs)

Wanted Beta TR32 trials bike parts, electrical parts wanted, anything considered inc complete bike, will travel for right parts. Tel 07949 454674 (Gloucs)

Wanted Yamaha DT175MX or IT200/250, must be in good original cond. Tel Martyn on 07979 921980 (Leics)

Wanted KTM 125EXC, must be road reg'd, poss p/ex for my 1996 BMW coupe. Tel (mobile) 07977 035346 or 01493 664877 (Norfolk)

Wanted supermoto wheels for CCM 404, with discs, condition not important as long as they're straight with no dents. Tel (mobile) 07834 492276 or 01722 711738 (Wilts)

Wanted Gas Gas top-end, barrel, piston, head from 2001/02 model. Also seat and plastics, cash waiting for right parts. Tel 01330 825197 (Scotland)

Wanted Yamaha YZ465, good bike for twin-shock club racing, would swap for my 2000 WR400E, W-reg, good cond. Tel 01225 311567 (Somerset)

Wanted XT500 motor, stripped, running, or a little broken. Tel 01323 833951 (E Sussex)

Wanted plastic tank for KDX220/200, 1996-2004. Tel 01908 673454 (Bucks)

Wanted dented tank to fit 1985 XT600. Also racks for same, maps of North Africa and second person for trip to Timbuktu, leaving Nov. Tel (mobile) 07796 365630 or 01564 794549 (Warks)

Wanted FMF Gnarly pipe for KTM 200, must be in good cond. Tel 01538 300343 (Staffs)

Wanted Lucky Explorer fairing and tank for 1994-on Cagiva Elefant E900, or any information on where I can find them. Tel 07941 130647 (Notts)

Wanted any spares for 2001 Honda XR400. Tel 07791 554349 (S Wales)

Wanted Honda XR600R, must be in exc standard cond with genuine indicators, mirrors, Honda exhaust, standard plastics, large rear light if poss. Tel 01904 490764 (Yorks)

Wanted Suzuki TS125X parts, airbox cover, 1/h sidepanel, exhaust, carb, will consider anything inc whole scrap bike. Tel 01905 778681 (Wores)

Wanted wheels for Kawasaki KDX220/200, must be straight and round! Tel (mobile) 07970 929089 or 01925 714297 (Lancs)

Wanted Keihin PWK 35 carburetor, in good condition. Tel (mobile) 07970 929089 or 01925 714297 (Lancs)

Wanted workshop manual for Honda NX650 Dominator, RFVC

engine. Also good aftermarket exhaust and throw-over panniers. Tel 07980 480032 (Oxon)

SPARES

Marzocchi Magnum 50mm enduro forks, good cond though require seals, £200 plus courier. Tel James at TBM on 020 8840 4760 (London)

Supernoto wheels for Husqvarna TE610, E550. Tel 01257 791314 (Lancs)

CRD Absolute Power silencer for TTR250, stainless steel, with unused Noise Catcher baffle kit, no dents, good cond, £85 plus postage. Tel 01772 497505 (Lancs)

Alpinestars Tech 4 MX boots, red, size 11, eight months old, good cond, £60 ono. Tel 07906 211751 (Kent)

Avon Distanzia road tyres to fit Honda XR400R, front 3.00-21, rear 120/80-18, used once, exc cond, any offer considered. Tel 01933 388784 (Northants)

Alpinestars Tech 8 MX boots, blue/white/black, size 11-12, worn four times, exc cond, cost £190, accept £120. Tel Andy on 07751 891356 (Lincs)

Renthal Twin-Wall bars, 32" long, 3" high, £30. REP alloy fuel cap for DR-ZE, £10. Black nylon tool roll, new, £5. Acerbis Klima jacket, £20. Tel 01380 729982 (Wilts)

Axo Goretex jacket, large, £40. Acerbis Impact jacket, large, £50. Alpinestars Tech 6 boots, size 10, £70. Simisalo Goretex trousers, 32in, £30. Tel 07977 271980 (Warks)

Complete FMF Q-pipe to fit KTM four-stroke, £250. Also front-end for KTM 640, with 320mm disc, £280. Tel 07816 604132 (S Wales)

Brake and clutch levers for 2003 Gas Gas EC200, new, £10 the pair inc postage. Also KTM 5XC mirrors, new, £12 inc postage. Tel (mobile) 07811 689597 or 01452 856487 (Gloucs)

Breaking Honda Transalp 600, 1997 model, good exhaust, rear disc etc, all parts available but gearbox blown. Tel 01302 859857 (S Yorks)

Exhaust system for 2005 KTM 200EXC, fits 2003/04, used once, mint cond, £100. Tel 07811 213445 (Co Durham)

Parts for 1999 Yamaha YZ125, Apico metal frameguards, vgc, £25, Skidplate, £20. Steahly 11oz flywheel weight, £35 or £70 the lot plus postage. Tel 07801 014843 (Surrey)

Exhaust system for Yamaha YZ426/400F, £100 ono. Tel 01274 694482 (W Yorks)

Hepco and Becker pannier frames for Cagiva E900, vgc, cost £190 new, OIRO £130, can post. Tel 07941 130647 (Notts)

KTM supermoto wheels, from 250-520EXC, gold Talons, polished Morads, Dunlop rubber, £520. Tel 07971 809164 (Notts)

DR-Z400 parts, white rads in white (?), air filter, standard sumpguard, all new, £25. Tel (after 6pm) 01430 441960 (E Yorks)

Active reaps for Suzuki RMX250, model 637, bought in error, not for Jap import RMX250S model, brand new, never fitted, £12 inc postage. Tel 00 353 6440966 (Ireland)

Standard exhaust for Honda CRF250X, only two hours' use, £60. Tel 07981 791263 (W Yorks)

Off-road wheels from 2004 Honda XR400R, used twice only, inc tyres/sprockets/discs and spacers, immaculate cond, £280 ono. Tel (mobile) 07941 224319 or 01796 878650 (Wilts)

Single bike trailer, suitable for trail/enduro, spare wheel, ramp, light board, good cond, must sell hence only £60 ono. Tel (mobile) 07745 365535 or 01604 847871 (Northants)

Leo Vince X3 Ti exhaust system for KTM 250EXC 4T, exc cond, £325 ono. Tel 01332 664269 (Derbys)

Supernoto wheels for KTM, gold Excels, gold Talon hubs, black spokes, wave discs, new tyres, £650 ono. Tel 01332 664269 (Derbys)

CDI unit for 1999 Honda XR400, £40. Also head- and base-gaskets for 1990 Suzuki RMX, £15. Tel 07789 917114 (Oxon)

Vee-rubber front tyre, 275-21, £15. Also Bridgestone M401 MX front tyre, 80/100-21, £25. Both in exc cond. Tel 01604 891423 (Northants)

Stolen KTM 640 Adventure, 2001 model, grey/orange, reg K80 KTM, VIN no VBKGL4011M741318, engine no 0158422189, stolen 21-04-05 from Fowlers carpark, Bristol. Any info please contact Ian on (mobile) 07887 711542 or 01749 841180 (Somerset)

