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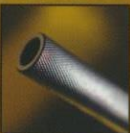
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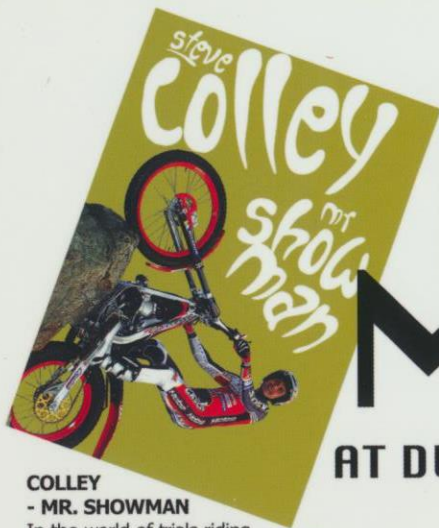
- ✦ ANDERS ERIKSSON
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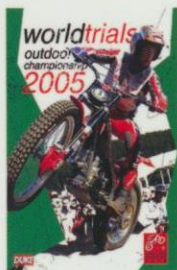
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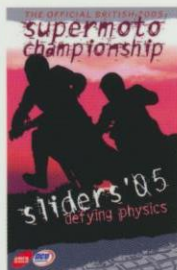
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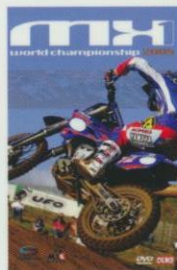
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For further information visit [www.husqvarna-moto.co.uk](http://www.husqvarna-moto.co.uk)

## Slow Riding & Fast Food...

**W**hat's the most important vehicle in the paddock? Surely it's got to be the ubiquitous burger van. Experts will tell you that prior to going riding your caloric intake should consist of plenty of low-GI slow-release carbohydrates such as wholegrain pasta or rice rather than fatty or sugary foods. But I've always found that a bacon sarnie washed down with gallons of sugary tea does the job very nicely thank you.

And I'm not alone. Turn up at an event and you'll always find the biggest queue is not for signing-on, scrutineering or even the porta-potties, but of course the one for the Salmonella-sellers. When it comes to food and riding... We are what we eat.

The other day the TBM team decamped to West Dorset to take part in the first round of the Southern Counties Enduro Club Championship. Logistically this required a couple of hours of prepping and loading bikes on the Saturday afternoon followed by three hours in the van, only broken up by visits to Hook Services, Popham Little Chef and the Sparkford Macey-Dees.

Fortunately we didn't go hungry in the meantime as Mel had thoughtfully remembered to bring along a kilo of plain-chocolate refrigerator cake she'd made the night before and we'd also invested heavily in crisps, chocolate digestives and high-amp energy drinks before we set off. Plus a few bananas for good measure (hey, it's important to eat healthily, right?)

Naturally I'd convinced myself that the following day's racing would see me burning calories faster than Paula Radcliffe's dog, so that it didn't really matter what or how much I ate, because I would still be in caloric deficit by the following evening. Hell, this was surely sensible preparation for what was to follow.

Arriving at our pub accommodation for the Saturday night just in time to imbibe a light three-course supper consisting of a goats cheese starter, followed by rich game pie with a short-crust pastry,

together with chips and veg. And followed up with the most mouthwateringly delicious steamed chocolate-and-poached-pear-pudding, all lubricated by several pints of Dorset real ale. I comforted myself with the thought that none of this eating really mattered because tomorrow was race-day and I'd be shedding pounds faster than a Spanish thumper.

Of course that meant that the following morning I tucked into a hearty fried breakfast (with all the trimmings), black coffee, orange juice and some toast and cereal, then (in the van on the way there) I downed a bottle of Lucozade Sport and even managed a couple of Mel's scrummy chocolate slices. Now I was *really* ready to race.

Except that there was no race. It had been called off because the carpark was waterlogged and the farmer's tractor had broken down trying to heave the first few vans into the paddock.

Oh no... But what about all that food I'd just eaten? All those calories, energy bars and even the healthy banana I'd managed to stuff in somewhere along the line...

As we sat there in a long queue passing the time by gently nibbling on the remainder of the refrigerator cake and discussing if we could ever remember an enduro being called off before, I found myself feeling the first tiny pangs of guilt about all the stuff I'd eaten.

Eventually an official arrived at our van window and confirmed the bad news - the event was off, we'd have to return to London with our bikes still clean in the back of the van.

Dejectedly we turned around and began the long and boring journey home. With no tall-tales to relate about our exploits and no bench racing to be done, it was a quiet and boring journey back. Hell there was nothing for it but to console ourselves by tucking into the remainder of the chocolate digestives...

SI MELBER

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This year's Lisbon-Dakar Rallye produced some stunning images including this pic of eventual winner Spaniard Marc Coma being tailed by one of the organiser's Telly-Helis...  
Pic: marccoma.com



PERSPECTIVE





Muddy Hell: Sometimes no matter what you do, the eventual winner is the weather. This might've been last month's cover shot had you been able to see the bike James was on...  
Pic: Si Melber

## WORLD CLASS »

Always "Ready to Race" right down to the last detail. No other manufacturer has won more World Championship titles in recent years.

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PERSPECTIVE

KTM

# Roman's Army

This bike is the first project in a full range of off-road bikes ranging from 125-550cc. So claimed Aprilia's off-road project manager Mariano Roman at the launch of the much anticipated RXV (enduro) and SKV (Supermoto) V-twins out in Sicily (see page 44 for the full story). As well as the RXV and SKV, there's the eagerly awaited new enduro / supermoto 250F due in early 2007.

Aprilia's intentions are clear - they want to 'become the biggest manufacturer in this (off-road) market' and gain a 6-8 percent market share in the off-road sector - entering into direct competition with Austrian giant KTM.

Backed by their own extensive research showing a 30 percent growth in the off-road market between 2000-4, Aprilia have already invested 50 million euros into product development and racing, with another 30 million still to come between 2006-8.

In addition, by the end of 2007 they will have in place a 100-strong team working purely on off-road products. This huge investment is due to Aprilia having become part of the giant Piaggio group back in early 2005.

And with Mr Roman claiming their new v-twin off-roader was 'made in a real maniacal and innovative way,'

let's hope this kind of thinking extends throughout the rest of the planned range...



Following rumours about its immediate fiscal future, Gas Gas has recently received a five million euro cash injection and gained a new financially solvent partner, both of which should provide the necessary shot in the arm for the cash-strapped Girona based manufacturer.

In a situation not too dissimilar to the former CCM management buyout scenario, British-based risk-capital fund company Collier Capital is now the new Gas Gas shareholder, owning 36 percent of the company's shares.

As a result it's hoped that the planned re-organisation will enable the Spanish firm to move forwards, and it's likely that the four-stroke enduro bikes will be much-improved as part of the factory production re-jig.

And the final boost for Gas Gas is an additional two million euro loan, which they have secured to fund their future R&D programme - rear light redesign anyone..?

# GAS RE-WORKS



'Needless to say I was shocked. I've been training really hard during the off-season and was looking forward to racing in the UK again.

I am disappointed not to be returning to the UK this year, having

made a lot of friends and gained a lot of support from fans and people in the industry. I'd like to thank everyone that has helped me over the years while riding in the UK.'

Good luck mate!

# BYE BYE WHIBBS

Anyone who's seen Paul Whibley competing in the UK over the last three years will know he's a decent bloke and a good rider so it's a shame he's off to the States shortly.

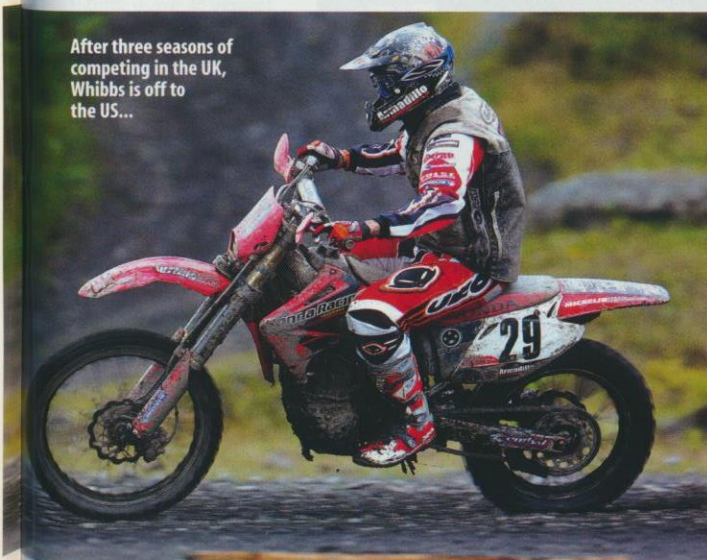
NZ born and bred Whibbers will be racing in the USA's GNCC series this season (with backing from Honda US), due to a last minute contract problem with his Fast Eddy/Par Homes Honda team.

The plug was pulled just two weeks prior the first round of the BEC when Paul, waiting for the final contract to come through, received an e-mail stating that the contract had been withdrawn.

Luckily for Whibbers former US GNCC champion Scott Summers and his manager Fred Bramblett heard of his plight and were only too happy to step in and help.

Here's what Whibbs had to say:

After three seasons of competing in the UK, Whibbs is off to the US...



# SNIPPETS

## RIDERS ON THE STORM

If you harbour Dakar dreams why not try the next best thing? The Desert Riders' Tour 2007 is a 3000km ride in the central Sahara.

Chris Scott, author of the best-selling Adventure Motorcycling Handbook is leading the fully supported expedition that will retrace the remote cross-country routes recce'd during the 2003 Desert Riders' Expedition DVD.

The terrain will include rocky pistes, stony plateaux and the lava fields of Algeria's Hoggar Mountains, plus the dunes and sand sheets of the northern Tenere Desert.

Taking place from 10 Feb



to 3 March 2007, the £2895 package includes food, fuel, flights and visas. Go to [adventure-motorcycling.com](http://adventure-motorcycling.com) for more info.

## OPTIC NERVE

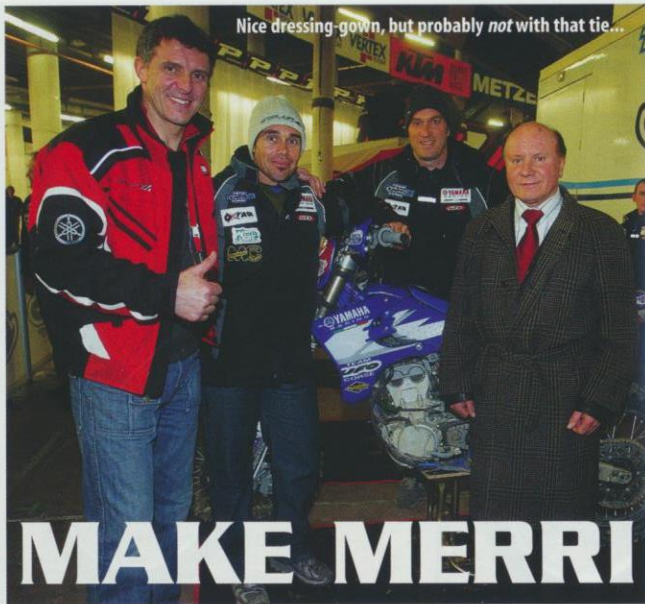
Fancy some desert Storming? There are still some places left on this year's Optic 2000 Tunisie Rallye. The seven day race takes place from 7-17 Apr and the last date for entries is 17 March so you'll have to be quick. Only experienced riders need apply. Costs are €6810, apply online to [np0.fr](http://np0.fr)

Multi world enduro champ Stefan Merriman has finally secured a factory ride for the upcoming season... with his old team!

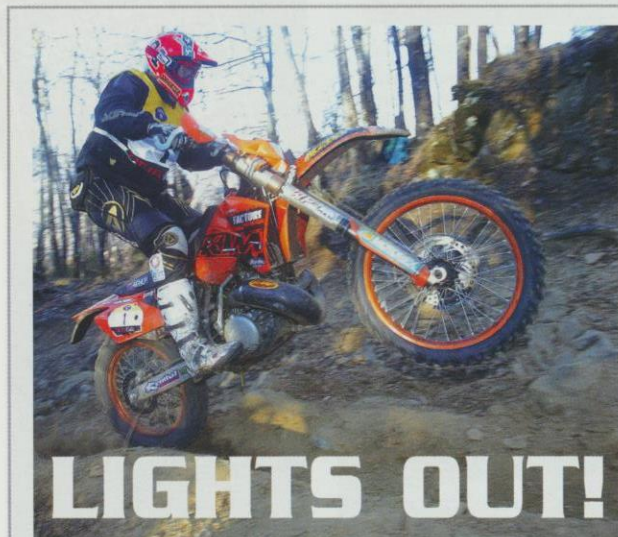
As reported in last month's TBM Merriman still hadn't been signed after parting company with the UFO Corse Yamaha team over two months previously. And despite intensive talks with both the CH Husqvarna and KL Kawasaki teams nothing had materialised for the Aussie big-hitter.

Merriman originally left Yamaha as he wanted a fresh challenge after winning four WEC titles, (rider and manufacturer), four national (Italian) titles and two Six-Days events aboard WR machinery.

However, he has decided to renew his contract with the Italian based team, competing in the 2006 WEC E2 class aboard a new alloy-framed WR450F, albeit on a somewhat reduced salary this time around. Merriman hopes to reclaim his E2 title after injury denied him victory last year.



## MAKE MERRI



## LIGHTS OUT!

It really was hell on earth for KTM factory rider David Knight when he lost the use of all his lights in the closing laps of the 2006 Hell's Gate enduro race in Italy last month.

But despite not being able to see much of anything, Knight unbelievably won the extreme enduro event, making it three wins from three starts. After topping the morning's qualifying race he went on to win by a three-and-a-half minute margin, netting himself a cool 8000 euros in the process - check out the story starting on page 108 for the full SP...



## E's ARE GOOD

Fed up of 'Buy It, Sell It, Loathe It' eBay? Okay, it's not that bad but trying to find a half-decent off-road bike at a good price on eBtag is becoming increasingly difficult.

So some clever chaps have come up with a new website called E-Bikes which claims to be the Internet's first online bike auction website. Backed by trials ace Steve Saunders the new site will work in a very similar way to eBay in that users will be able to bid on, buy and sell bikes online.

Due for launch shortly E-Bikes is offering users a free item listing for the first three months. Check out e-bikes.co.uk now...

## CHINA CRISIS

A new bike registration year always has its fair share of oddities and this year is no exception, with a distinct Far Eastern influence in the trail/enduro class courtesy of the Daijiang and Urban motor companies. These tiny Chinese concerns have bagged third through to fifth positions with their own brand of cheap 'n' cheerful 125s.

On the all-important sales front, overall figures have jumped from a not-so-good minus 11 percent this time last year, to a pretty encouraging plus 13 percent. This has had a positive knock-on effect in the trail/enduro sector, up as they are a full 17 percent on last year's figures and nine percent on last month's.

After the Adventure Sport category's buoyant 2005, things are a little slow to take off now with figures down 38 percent from last month, but this

is a pretty normal occurrence at the start of a new registration year and figures should pick up substantially again over the next couple of months.

With the big 1200GS Beemer still leading the way - albeit on 54 units - there have been a couple of new entries in the shape of factory super-motos - Suzuki's sexy little DR-Z400 SM and Yamaha's XT125X - in third and fifth place respectively.

Complete registration figures are as follows:

ADVENTURE SPORT/SM	
1	BMW R1200GS 54
2	Honda XL125V 29
3	DR-Z 400 SM 24
4	Triumph 955 Tiger 22
5	Yamaha XT125X 21
TRAIL/ENDURO	
1	Honda XR125L 61
2	Yamaha WR250F 49
3	Daijiang X-Dirt 125 S 31
4	Daijiang X-Dirt 125 27
5	Urban DZ125 26

The trouble with Chinese bikes is that as soon as you've had one... you need another one straight after!



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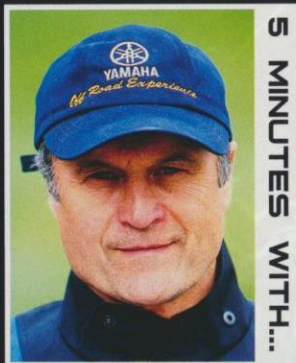
\*Cover subject to status.



## GEN-TLE GIANT

Reigning WEC champ David Knight proved he is king of indoor enduros by winning the second edition of the Genoa International Indoor Enduro in February. Easily the fastest rider he won the main event on his KTM 300 a full 15 seconds ahead of his nearest rival, Yamaha mounted Johnny Aubert, thanks in no small part to an extremely fast start out of the gate.

As well as winning, Knight also bagged fastest lap and earned 5000 euros for his efforts - see page 102 for the full story.



5 MINUTES WITH...

**GERAINT JONES IS BRITAIN'S WINNINGEST ENDURO RIDER, WITH NINE BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIPS TO HIS NAME. HE CURRENTLY RUNS THE YAMAHA OFF ROAD EXPERIENCE IN WALES...**

**WHAT WAS THE FIRST ENDURO BIKE YOU EVER OWNED?**

It was a 1979 400 Maico, supplied by Cee Gee Motorcycles of Builth Wells, though I had a good few motocross bikes before it. The first bike I ever had was a 197 James with girder forks that I bought from some friends in around 1965. It cost me £4. My brother Gareth and I used to spend Sunday riding it and the rest of the week cutting corks to go in the clutch.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST ENDURO?**  
It was the Welsh Two Day in 1976.

I was 24 and rode a converted Suzuki RM250 in the expert class. The weather was good and I finished fifth overall. I thoroughly enjoyed the event; it was a real adventure and gave me the bug to do some more enduros.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ENDURO?**

Having ridden enduros for more than 20 years it's hard to choose just one. Probably my favourite over the years was the Beacons Enduro run by WTRA in the Crychan Forest. During the Eighties the Beacons was always super-tough, very wet (as it was run at the end of the season) and saw very few finishers. It was a true test of man and machine and an event I won ten times.

**WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST ENDURO YOU'VE EVER RACED?**

It was a European Championship round at Povaska Bystrica, Slovakia in 1979. It was only my second international event and I rode as part of what used to be the British Enduro Squad. It featured two 90-mile laps, all off-road, per day. On the first day they ran it on the 'B' time schedule [ordinarily used when the A schedule will be too tight due to inclement weather] and the course was dry but still tight on time. It then rained all night and I awoke to find that the organisers had decided to run on the A schedule. I hardly stopped all day, only for fuel. I finished best Brit and eighth overall in the 500cc class.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BEST EVER PERFORMANCE?**

It would probably have to be at the 1983 ISDE held in Wales, where I

finished second in the 500 class to world champion, Swede Sven Erick Johnson. Although this was probably one of my best results I don't feel it was as good as it could have been. I'd been riding Maicos for the previous five seasons and had to change to KTM a month before the event as Maico went bust. At this time the KTM wasn't a good bike and we had a number of problems with it both before and during the event. I rode a 420 machine and it nipped up on the first special test. Then I still had to nurse it through the rest of the week.

**WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST DISAPPOINTING RESULT?**

Having ridden for so many years there have been quite a few. I was leading Weston Beach Race aboard a 430 Husqvarna in either 1985 or '86 I think it was. I had a good lead, only for the bike to start cutting out at the end of the straight. I had to stop on every lap to dry the plug lead out with a rag. I finished ninth though...

**WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CRASH?**

It was in 1982 at the Nant yr Hwch British Championship Enduro. I hit a tree stump hidden in some grass on a fast track. The bike went end-over-end and I ended up unconscious in the trees. I didn't suffer any serious injuries but I didn't finish the event.

**WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED ENDURO MEMORY?**

Riding the ISDE on home ground in Wales and finishing runner up in the 500 class.

## START ME UP

Rumour has it KTM are developing an electric-starter kit for their two-stroke enduro bikes. It's likely to be fitted to the 300 initially but could fit the 250 as well. Watch this space for more details as we get them...



**WHICH RIDER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON YOUR CAREER?**

It has to be Sven Erick Johnson. He was a multiple world enduro champion and a particularly good rider in wet conditions.

**WHAT BIKE HAVE YOU ENJOYED OWNING/RIDING THE MOST?**

There are so many it's a really difficult choice. The 1981 490 Maico is one which really stands out. It was a factory bike and the power was so tractable, yet so quick!

**WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED TERRAIN?**

It would have to be wet, soft and muddy - typical of what you find in Wales when it rains! It was my favourite because I could ride it really well and always had good results, whilst most others struggled.

**WHAT DOES ENDURO SPORT NEED MORE OF?**

More organisers to run events using new areas of land. And organisers really need more encouragement and assistance to stage traditional enduros.

**WHAT DOES ENDURO SPORT NEED LESS OF?**

People trying to stop off-road motorsport taking place in our countryside, making it more and more difficult for organisers to run enduros.

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

There will probably be more closed-course type events and less traditional timecard enduros due to the increased pressure from land restrictions. I also think that bikes will have to be a lot quieter!

**WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE IN ENDUROS?**

To continue to be involved with the sport, promoting, organising and, of course, doing some riding.

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# TBM



# Win... New Oxbow Kit

**W**anna' bag yourself some snazzy new riding gear? Well, look no further... TBM has teamed up with Oxbow to give away a complete set of their brand new 2006 kit, worth over £250!

The French off-road clothing manufacturer is little-known over here in Blighty but we've been using Oxbow products for a few years and we think it's darn good stuff.

And there's no doubt you'll stand out from the crowd in this eye-catching ensemble. The prize includes racing jersey, pants, gloves and goggles. We've also thrown in the trailriding backpack (as featured in the January issue), as we reckon it's one of the best-equipped, innovative bags on the market.

All you've got to do to be in with a chance of winning the booty, is clip the corner of this and next month's TBM (to collect the two tokens), and send them into us along with your name, address and contact phone number and we'll enter you into the free draw.

Closing date for entries is Friday, 21 April '06. We'll then draw one lucky winner from the battered TBM crash helmet. Simple!

**Send your two tokens & details to:  
TBM Oxbow Competition  
PO Box 9845  
London  
W13 9WP**

Good luck...

#### Terms & Conditions

This offer will run in the March-April (issues 127 and 128) for two months only. Closing date is Friday, 21 April 2006 - no entries will be accepted after this date. The winner will be notified by telephone before 1.5.06. All entries must contain the two tokens from the March/April issues and full contact details. Incomplete entries will not be entered into the draw. TBM's decision is final and no correspondence or discussion will be entered into. No cash alternatives will be offered and TBM reserve the right to alter, amend, withdraw or substitute any part of the prize. TBM employees, prize suppliers or any members of their families or households are not eligible to enter this draw. This draw, plus its terms and conditions, will be governed by English law. So There.



Oxbow Competition  
Token  
**1**

# Supersize Me!



**KTM have given their V-twin monster trailie a boost with a range of changes including a new bigger motor. TBM flew to the Canary Islands to test the new 990 Adventure and see whether bigger really is better...**

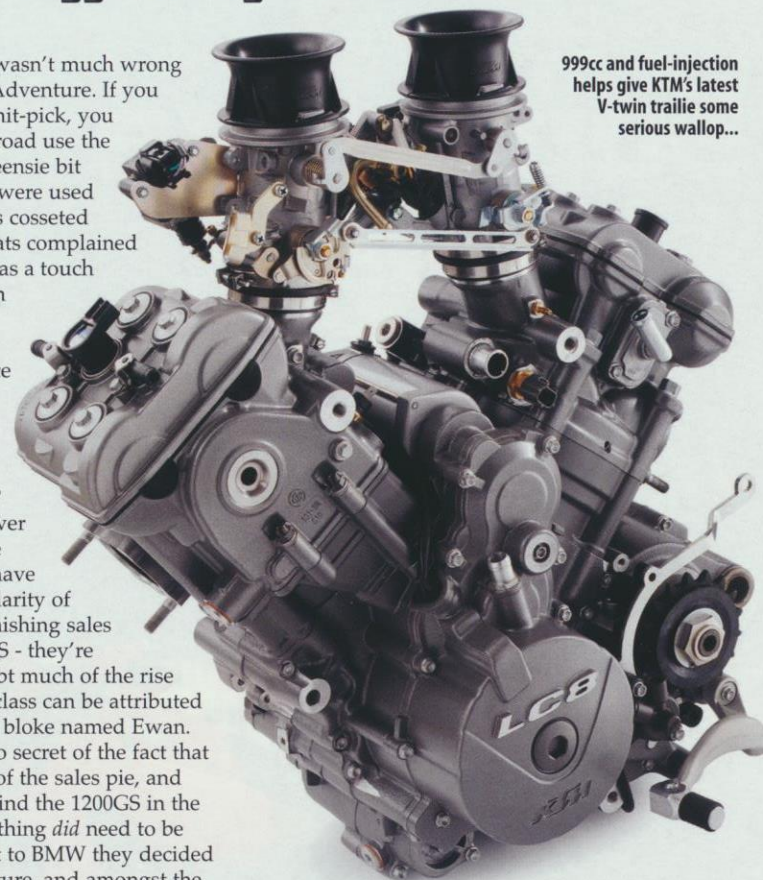
**L**et's face it, there wasn't much wrong with KTM's 950 Adventure. If you really wanted to nit-pick, you could have said that for road use the brakes could've been a teensie bit stronger, and those who were used to having their posteriors cosseted by Chesterfield-esque seats complained that the dirtbike perch was a touch 'uncompromising'. But in all other respects it was the ultimate big trailie, striking a sublime balance between on-road agility and off-road performance. So if it 'wasn't broke', why did KTM decide it needed 'fixing'?

Well, I reckon the answer is as simple as three little letters: BMW. You can't have failed to notice the popularity of big trailies, and the astonishing sales success of BMW's 1200GS - they're everywhere, and no doubt much of the rise in the 'adventure sport' class can be attributed to the boxer twin - and a bloke named Ewan.

The Austrians make no secret of the fact that they want a bigger slice of the sales pie, and with the 950 lagging behind the 1200GS in the sales charts maybe something *did* need to be done. So to take the fight to BMW they decided to freshen up the Adventure, and amongst the changes implemented was the fitment of the latest generation LC8 engine.

## Vee Eight

Launched back in 2003, the Adventure was the first KTM to employ their lightweight 75 degree V-twin LC8 motor, and since then it's also found home in the trellis frames of both the 950SM (in similar 942cc carbureted form) and the Super Duke roadbike (displacing 999cc, but employing electronic fuel injection). And it's this larger capacity, EFI-equipped format which is used in

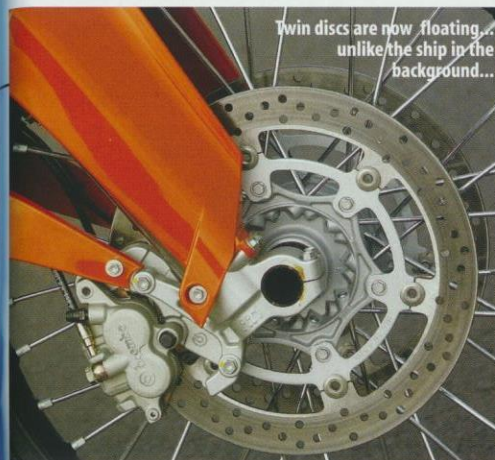


999cc and fuel-injection helps give KTM's latest V-twin trailie some serious wallop...

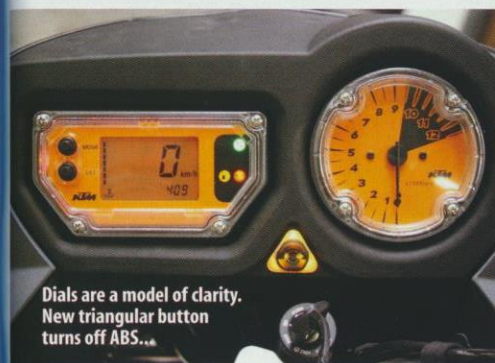
the new 990 Adventure - though with the Super Duke's 120-odd wheelie-inducing horsepower, the 990 lump required a certain amount of 'detuning' for the big trailie.

To arrive at 999cc, the original LC8 motor was both bored and stroked. The cylinders were strengthened to cope with the increase in size, the pistons reduced in weight and revised cams slotted in above new model-specific cylinder heads. Replacing the old bike's carbs is a Keihin electronic fuel injection system, using 48mm throttle bodies, whilst three-way catalytic

## Supersize Me!



Twin discs are now floating... unlike the ship in the background...



Dials are a model of clarity. New triangular button turns off ABS...

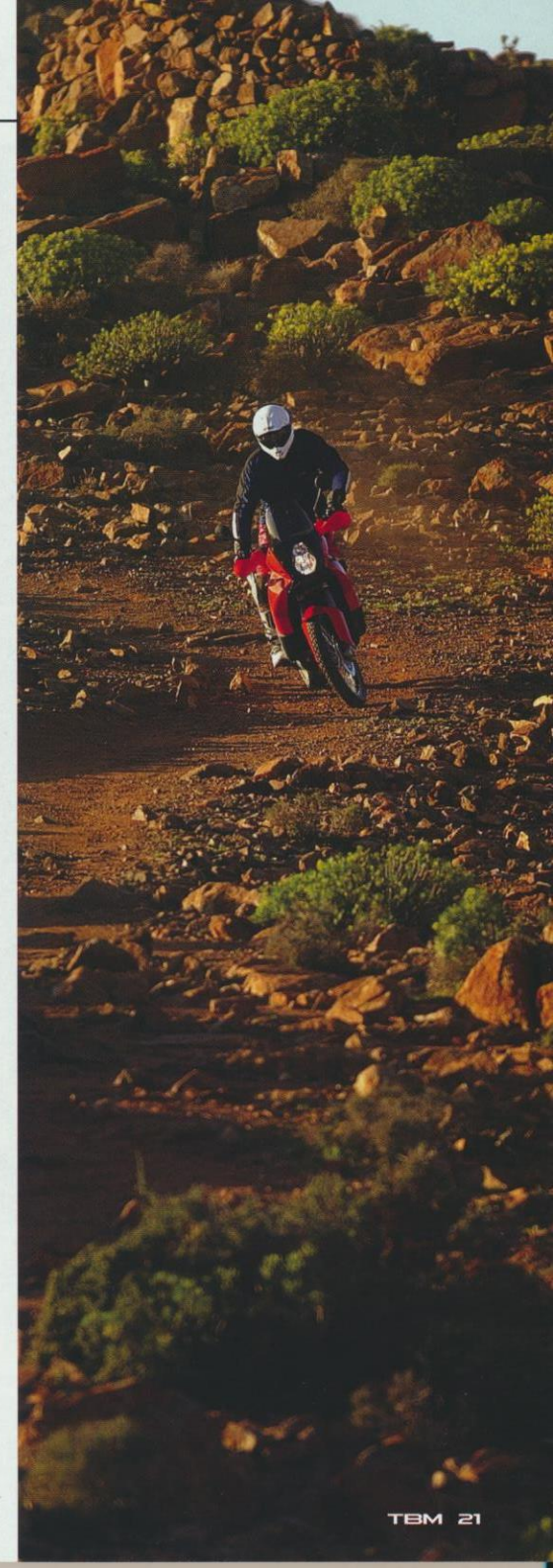
converters reside within the twin exhausts.

The result of this work is an increase in low-down torque (though peak power figures remain the same at around 98hp and 70lb/ft), whilst still placating the eco-freaks by remaining inside the Euro III emission levels.

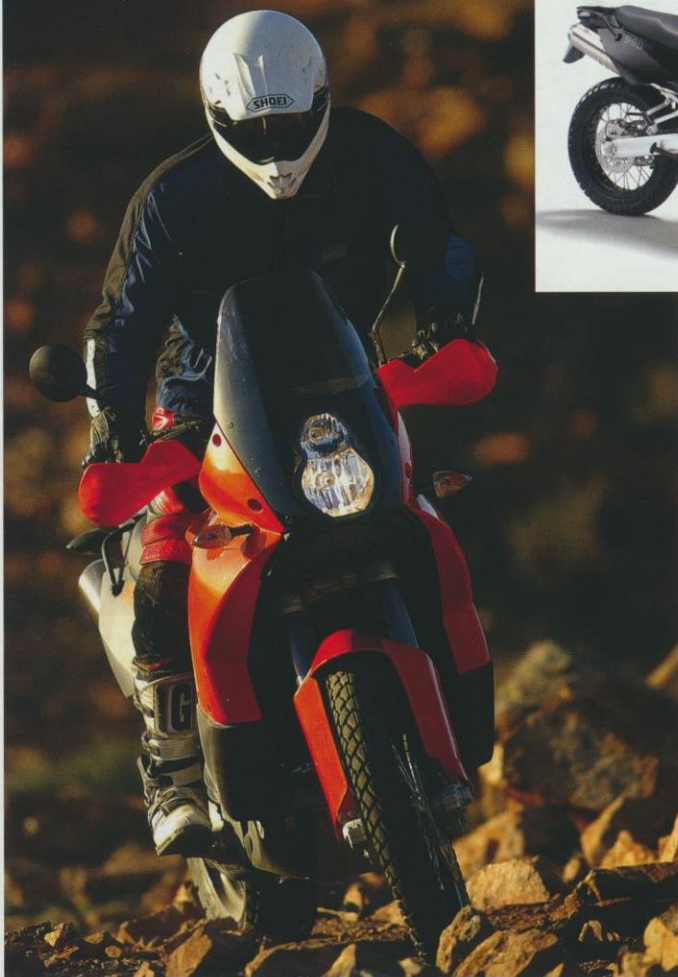
### Brake Light

The changes don't just extend to the new motor, though. The 990 Adventure is the first KTM to feature ABS, and it's something they've been working on for quite some time. In fact, they've been quietly developing the system with Bosch and Brembo since the original Adventure hit the streets three years ago and the result - so KTM claims - is the lightest two-circuit system currently available.

Anti-lock brakes are apparently now a must-have feature of high-end 'adventure sport' bikes on the continent and are seen as such a crucial safety feature that German insurance companies offer discounts to bikes so-equipped. Just as crucial is the fact that you can switch the system off, especially for off-road use (the more dirt



990 Adventure worthy of its name...



Also available in black-ish...



painted tank lowers are now given matt plastic guards and the tanks themselves have the colour (orange or graphite on the base models) impregnated into the plastic, rather than being painted.

Like the company's 2006 enduro models, the Adventure now gets some 'urban' graphics, though the S-model reflects the bike's Dakar heritage with a large 'Cheches' motif (the touareg headgear) adorning its blue bodywork.

Last year, no doubt after vertically-challenged owners toppled off their bikes every time they came to a set of 'lights, KTM lowered the Adventure's seat height by some 20mm - the standard bike dropping to 860mm and the S to 895mm. This year the seat heights remain the same, though the base

oriented S-model doesn't get the system), though the Austrians were at pains to mention that their ABS *will* work on the dirt. We'll see...

### Lookin' Good

I don't think anyone would dispute the fact that the KTM was always the *best* looking big trailie on the market, and the new Adventure retains its rallye bike styling, with a few detail tweaks to set it aside from the outgoing model. Previously

model gets a new stepped seat with the aim of improving rider and pillion comfort. The S keeps its lofty flat perch - good job too.

Other little modifications for the 990 include the ability to charge the battery without opening the battery box (thanks to an extended battery terminal), greater tyre clearance on the front fender, and indicators which are now shaped like spearheads, with clear lenses and orange bulbs... Lovely.

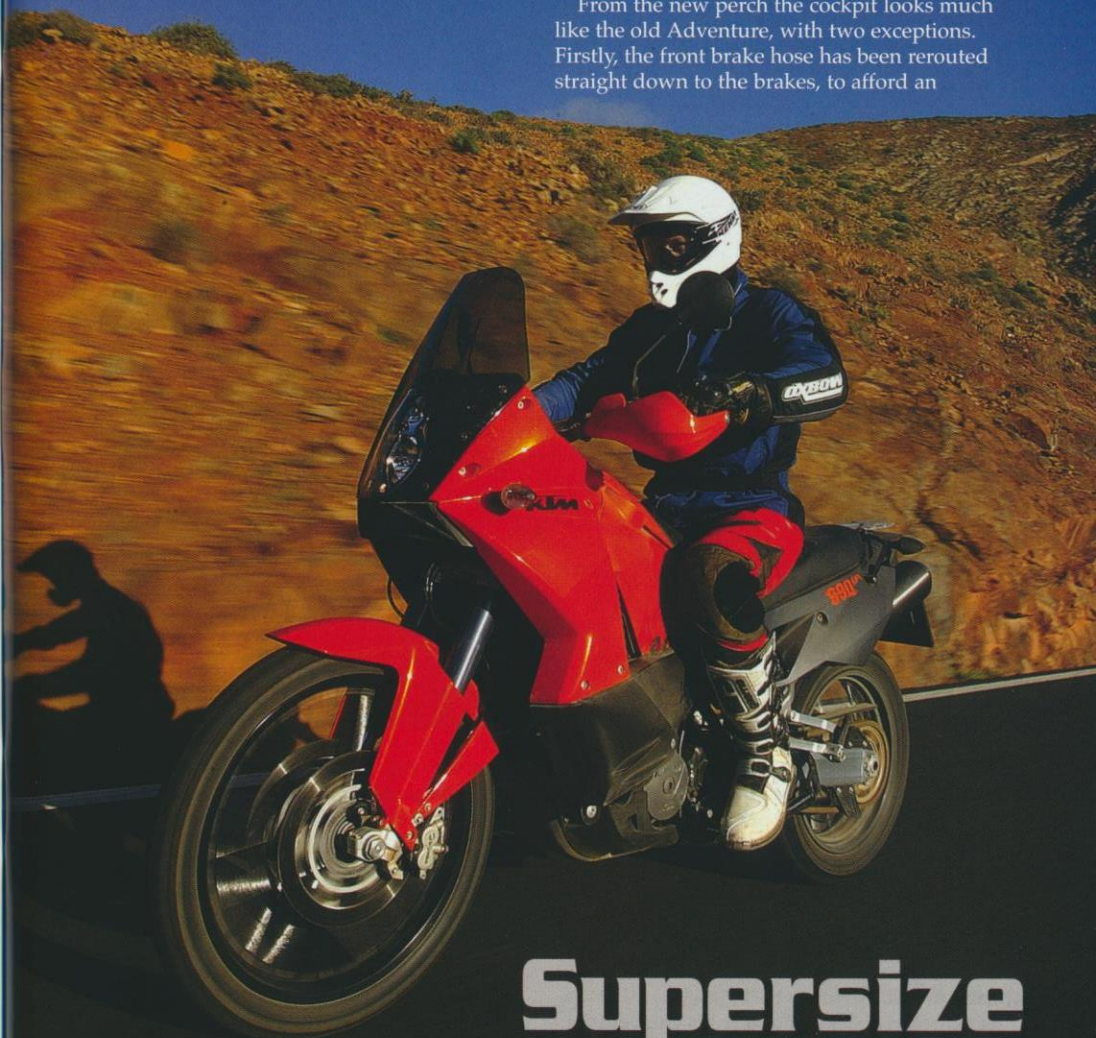
### Flying Visit

To launch the 990 Adventure KTM flew the world's bike press to the Spanish island of Fuerteventura. Fast flowing tarmac linked twisting mountain roads, the scenery flitting between giant sands dunes and razor-sharp volcanic rock. In between the blacktop, loose dusty trails wound their way through the terracotta red hills.

Thankfully the new stepped seat doesn't detract from the Adventure's 'giant dirtbike' appeal. Despite being relatively soft and contoured, it still allows you to move around on the bike and employ plenty of body English.

Is it any more comfortable for the long haul? Well, after a day in the saddle I've no complaints, though I didn't have too much of a problem with the old flat seat.

From the new perch the cockpit looks much like the old Adventure, with two exceptions. Firstly, the front brake hose has been rerouted straight down to the brakes, to afford an



# Supersize Me!

'Baby's got the bends...'

## Supersize Me!



uninterrupted view of the clocks. The old set-up wasn't exactly untidy - we've seen far worse - so it's nice to see this kind of attention to detail.

The second change is the addition of a small, backlit rubber button between the digi speedo and analogue tacho which indicates the status of the ABS. Start the engine, hold down the button, and the light begins to flash, warning that the system has been switched off. Turn the motor off, and the ABS defaults back on.

Admittedly, at first I didn't really trust the technicians when they said the ABS would work off-road. The last time I forgot to switch off an anti-lock system before heading for the dirt I ended up parking 240 kilos of motorcycle in a

there's a good level of control for off-road use. Likewise, on-road the new stoppers are an improvement over the old parts though don't expect sportsbike levels of retardation.

Anyhow, back on the dirt I turned the ABS on and... well, blow me, if it didn't work perfectly. There was the usual pulsing through the lever to signify the brakes were coming on and off, but it *did* stop the bike. Bumps did little to fool the system, and it was impressive how well it worked. Yet I still turned it off, because whilst it's infinitely better than any other ABS I've tried you can still brake *much* harder with it disabled. And whether or not it'll work in mud we'll just have to wait and see...

five-bar gate, after applying the brakes did absolutely nothing.

New floating discs have given the 990's brakes a little more bite than the old bike's solid mounted items, and

### Fuelling the Fire

The new motor certainly feels stronger up into the mid-range than the old 950 lump, but it still needs revving to get the best from it. Try to drive out of a tight mountain hairpin at anything less than 4000rpm and it responds not with a surge of power, but with a rumble an' a grumble. On the more flowing roads you can easily keep the free-revving motor above this level, it's only on the tight stuff that you have to dance up and down the - admittedly pretty slick - gearbox, and it's easy enough to ride fast using the upper mid-range.

Of course, the big question has gotta be 'is the fuel injection as good as the carbs?' And the answer, I'm afraid, is no. That said, it *is* hard to beat a well set-up carb for glitch-free delivery and I could certainly name bikes with far worse fuelling. Again the problem lies at around 4000rpm - there just seemed to be a slight hesitation, a little snatchiness if you rolled-on the throttle from these revs. I really only noticed it when meandering along a dusty trail, running

a gear too high leaving the tacho needle hovering around four grand.

Elsewhere in the rev range the delivery was just fine. Riding slower than walking pace, negotiating tyre-shredding rocks, the bike trickled along without lurching forward at every millimetre of throttle cable, and performed just as well on the open going. Nonetheless, given the choice I'd still prefer the Adventure to be fed by a pair of carbs, but hey, that's progress. Or rather, that's complying with eco-regulations, which I suspect may also have something to do with that one little glitch at four grand.

### Quality Control

In all other respects, the 990 Adventure retains all those qualities which made the 950 such a great bike. It handles beautifully - relatively sharp yet always stable - and the WP suspension keeps everything in check. It's plush, though not overly soft, and whilst fast road riders may want to mess with the clickers, the standard settings worked fine for both the trails and the tarmac.



Another area where the Adventure scores highly is in its dirtbike-like strength. Drop a 990 on the deck and it doesn't splinter into a trillion pieces and leave you stranded trying to fabricate a footpeg out of twigs and twine. This was ably demonstrated when one (foreign) journo dropped his bike ten foot down a rock-slab climb, into a hole.

With a little help from the gaggle of onlookers he picked the bike up, pushed the handguard back in place, straightened up the wonky silencer and rode back to the hotel! There were obviously a few scratches, and the bike had lost a mirror, but having witnessed this particularly spectacular dismount I was expecting the 990 to be going home in a van... in boxes.

## Evolution not Revolution

With the new modifications it's clear that KTM have shifted the (standard bike's) focus slightly, to allow for greater on-road performance. Thankfully, despite the option of the dirt biased S-model, this hasn't really detracted from the Adventure's off-road abilities, and nor has it turned the bike into a limp soft-roader.

Instead, the new 990 is really an evolution of the original and retains the qualities that made that bike so good. It's still really the only bike I'd choose to ride across continents, razz around off-road, then ride home again (especially as the bike happens to come with two years European Roadside assistance. Wahey).

Yep, I wasn't really sure that the Adventure

needed too much 'fixing', but KTM have managed to perform a few key tweaks on the bike to keep it fresh and, little fuelling glitch aside, great fun. Now all they need is two have-a-go luvvies to ride 'em round the world and they've cracked it...

**Thanks to: Shaun Sisterson of KTM UK and Eva Priewasser of KTM Austria for all their help and another great launch.**

## KTM 990 ADVENTURE (S-MODEL)

<b>Price:</b>	£8695 OTR (both models)
<b>Warranty:</b>	Two years, unlimited miles
<b>Engine:</b>	Liquid-cooled, 75° V-twin
<b>Displacement:</b>	999cc
<b>Bore &amp; Stroke:</b>	101 x 62.4mm
<b>Comp ratio:</b>	11.5:1
<b>Transmission:</b>	6-speed
<b>Front susp:</b>	WP 48mm USD fork, fully adjustable
<b>Rear susp:</b>	WP PDS shock, fully adjustable
<b>Brakes:</b>	Brembo two-piston calipers, twin 300mm floating discs
<b>Seat height:</b>	860mm (895mm)
<b>Ground clear:</b>	261mm (296mm)
<b>Weight:</b>	199kg dry, claimed
<b>Fuel capacity:</b>	22L



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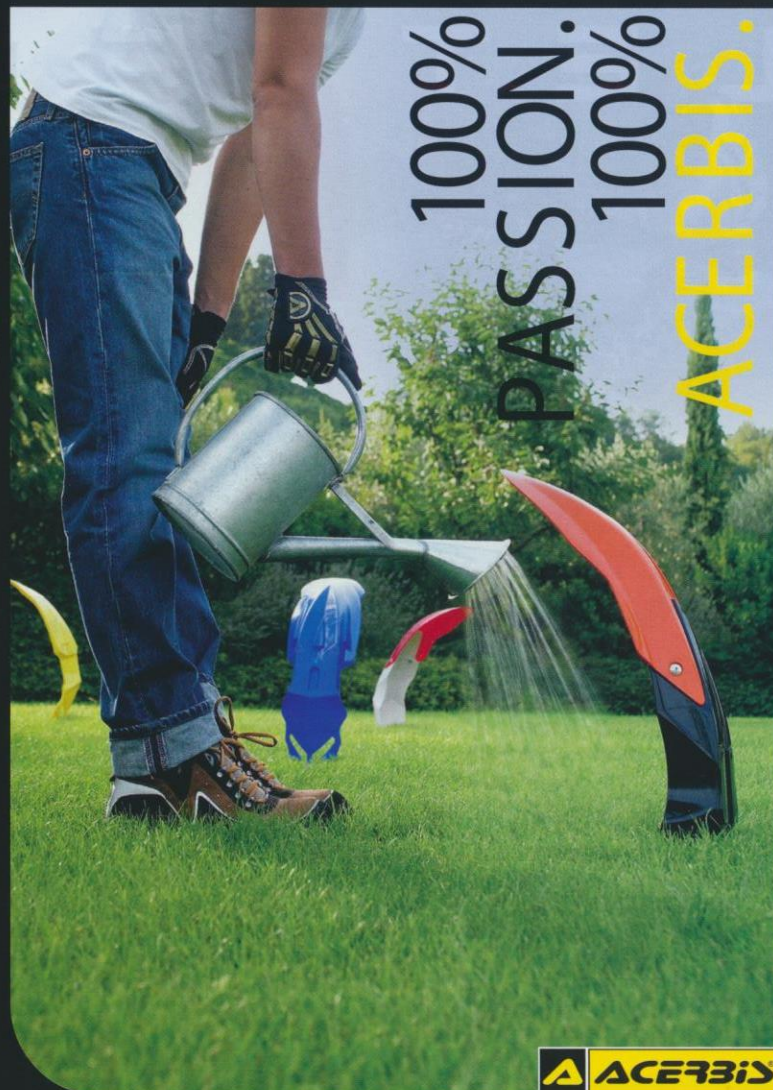


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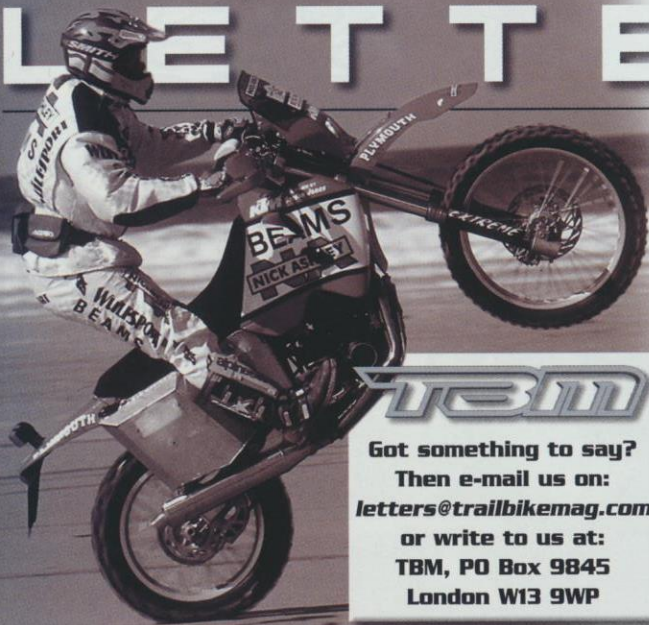
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## Race Against Time

Dear TBM

What great advice TBM gives (Go Racing, issue 124). I entered my first ever race at the age of forty-five-and-a-half on Sunday 5 February with the Wirral Offroad club.

It was 90 minutes of pure fun. I lined up on the beginners row with two mates and got a

cracking start (third into the first turn). Steve Ireland stood with the chequered flag out and his 'well done mate' as I rode past the finish about mid-field made me feel like I had won a WEC round.

I fell asleep in my armchair after a couple of cans of John Smith's celebration champagne and was in bed at nine pm. I had just passed David Knight on the last corner of the 'Tough



Steve Ireland's Wirral Off Road (WOR) events are a great way to start racing (See Race Against Time)...

One' when my kids woke me to take them to school. What a great day I had!

Phil Kirk, Merseyside  
 via email

Welcome to the mad bad world of racing Phil - if you thought that was tough wait until you qualify for the over 50s class...

## Minority Retort

Dear TBM

Having been converted 'from the road' about 16 months ago I can honestly say the time I now spend aboard my KTM 450EXC is the most enjoyable pastime imaginable.

I am completely outraged and gutted by the implications of the proposed NERC Bill which, when passed into law, will have massive implications on law abiding, professional and responsible riders. So I took it upon myself to contact my local county council highway department and they hadn't even heard of the NERC Bill.

What the hell are you, me and everyone else going to do about this? We have been misled, lied to and improperly represented by elected officials who have a sworn duty to act without fear or prejudice. I see an industry and at least 10,000 members of a minority who are being discriminated against.

The NERC Bill has received little or no national television/radio footage. What about a day of action? What about someone at a national level representing us all and confronting these officials? What about a media strategy? What about people actually getting off their bums and going down to London and

showing presence and some solidarity?

Imagine... Councils who have failed to correctly record Rights of Way, ill-informed ministers and blatant discrimination. The press would have a field day!

Come on everyone, come on the motorcycle industry - fight for our favourite pastime.

Stewart Bosworth,  
 Warwickshire  
 via email

We're right behind you Stewart. At the time of going to press the NERC Bill still hasn't been made law so we need to wait and see what happens. But as we've said before, we probably would consider a form of action not too dissimilar from what you're suggesting.

## Take The Wheel

Dear TBM

I would like to try my hand at the dark art of wheel building. Are there any publications/reference books you could recommend or maybe a wheel builder living in the Warrington area who needs a forty-something apprentice?

Oh, and how about doing a series on riding techniques similar to the ones found in the mountain bike mags? Correct body position, how to ride rocks, braking, throttle control etc. Just that I always found these useful when I was out mountain biking.

Geoff Booth, Warrington  
 via email

Well Geoff, wheel building is indeed a bit of a black art, hence



why there are professional wheel builders out there. Best bet for reference books/wheel builders in your area is to check out the Net but if you do decide to have a go at building your own wheels - best get your handiwork inspected by a experienced wheelwright.

Regarding 'how to..?' riding type features, check out TBM back issues 83-88 where we ran our 'Masterclass' series. Call 020 7903 3993 or order online at [trailbikemag.com](http://trailbikemag.com). We do intend running more in the future so watch this space...

## Mystery Man

Dear TBM

Enjoying the mag as ever! Just a few things - I would like to think that electric bikes are the way forward (as reviewed in issue 123) as they will allow us all to keep riding in the future because we will hopefully be classed as more of a mountain biker than a motorcyclist. The fact that they are silent will help in the battle to not annoy anyone else in the countryside.

Also, did I miss something as you now have an article written by 'The Patman'? He has just sprung up with no introduction of whom he actually is!

One other thing - have you seen a DVD called Terra Circa? It's bit like 'The Long Way Round' but the riders have to cross the Zilov Gap in Russia on old Suzuki DR350s, which looks like a real adventure.

Lastly, well done to Patsy and all the other finishers of this year's Dakar.

Joe Stephens, Ledbury  
 via email

Yeah, we know one of the guys from Terra Circa, and their budget for the whole trip (for all of them) was probably less than the cost of the fuel for the Long Way Round doctor's 4x4.

As for the Patman... Well some say he's like Top Gear's 'Stig'. Others say that he likes Country & Western music and wears a cowboy hat when he rides. All we know is that he's called 'The Patman'...

## Pester Power

Dear TBM

Great mag - keep up the good work as you're the only honest publication out there! But can we have more of the Patman? He makes me laugh out loud, much to my wife's irritation.

Now the flattery and general bull is done and dusted the real reason to write is to suggest an article on kid's enduros. My ten-year-old has just completed his first event (with no motocross background) and he loved it and wants to enter the next round.

I'm sure that there are parents

# LETTERS



like myself who read your mag that don't realise that kids can compete in enduros run under ORPA rules at ten years old and upwards. Promotion of junior enduros has got to be a good thing for the future of the sport and our representation at the highest level.

It may also swell your subscriptions with Junior fighting with dad for the latest copy of TBM (as we now do in my house!)

Simon Soanes, Chatham, Kent via email

Both Wirral Off-Road and the TBM sponsored Dawn to Dusk events feature kids classes...

## Go For Broke

Dear TBM

Imagine my anticipation as one of my long-term non-motorcycling (and slightly clumsy) friends finally passed his test at the fourth attempt. After years of me hypocritically harping on to him that road bikes are bad and dirt bikes are good, (mean-

ing I didn't want him going near anything more powerful than an asthmatic donkey), said buddy conveniently purchased from myself, my old (in outstanding condition I must add), DR-Z400. Err, no offence to any DR-Z owners out there!

So there he was, adorned with a shiny DR-Z and all the apparel to suit his first long awaited off-riding adventure... in the Cotswolds.

The usual mockery and tomfoolery took place as fuel and chocolate was purchased, and the pace was set slow and steady. An hour into the ride and all was well and smiles and laughter were aplenty. But after riding a short distance back down a lightly rutted RUPP, well, you can picture the scene. Said slightly clumsy buddy had forgotten to remove his hands from the grips while crashing to ground after a typical crossed rut, ground interface scenario. To cut a painfully long story short, my friend was now writhing on the ground with the agony of a dislocated shoulder and was unable to ride his lovely DR-Z home.

However, he was not as delighted as I thought he would be at the news of a free

air tour of the Cotswolds on his journey to Cheltenham General because no wheeled ambulances were available. Luckily for him the helicopter contains the same pain killing gasses and once again, smiles and laughter were aplenty.

'Whaddya reckon Bob? Five syllables... Sounds like Aa-aargh.'



And I'm happy to report that after two weeks off work, 15 issues of TBM read and several pounds gained, my mate is now ready to hit the dirt again.

Quite literally, in his case...

Ryan Harrison, Evesham via email

## Broadband Of Brothers

Dear TBM

Not only a great mag, but a great forum as well. And as the forum is now a year old I would like to share with you (and anyone else who wishes to read this drivel), what the forum has brought to me.

Firstly I have made so many new friends and riding buddies a dating agency would be jealous. I have been on training courses that were arranged on the forum. I have been put up in other members' homes when travelling the country and been guided around areas I would never have been to if it wasn't for other members. I have received lots of good advice (and perhaps given a little) on all types of servicing, repairs and basically anything dirt bike related.

If I need info with regards to the current Government debacle then the forum is the first place I look, as there are a number of knowledgeable listers on there who keep us well informed and up to date. And I suppose as the second highest poster I can go as far as to say it's as good as going to the pub every night and chatting about dirtbikes.

Oh, and here's a heart-warming story about the much often berated police and the

The screenshot shows the TBM Forum website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'SEARCH', 'MEMBERS LIST', 'PRIVATE', and 'PRIVATE MESSAGE'. Below that is a search bar and a 'Log out (Surrendering Wimp)' link. The main content area is titled 'TBM Forum :: Index' and lists various forum threads. Each thread includes a title, a brief description, the number of replies, the number of views, and the date of the last post. The threads listed include 'Forum Announcements', 'MERC Bill', 'CEPRA', 'Dirty Gossip', 'TBM Magazine', 'Tech Talk', 'I'm Going Riding...', 'Ride Reports', 'Rights Of Way', 'Trials', and 'Archives'.

power of the forum working together. On a recent trip to the Lakes (yes, you've guessed it, guided by a TBM forum member), I lost my video camera/digital camera and a kind person handed it into the local plod shop.

The police downloaded a couple of images from the camera and found my registration number on it. Obviously they then did a number plate check, got my address and then (I assume) rang directory enquiries and got my number.

As I live in the East Midlands and the camera was in Bolton I had to decide whether it was worth the round trip to fetch it or to just buy a new one. Within an hour of posting up a plea for help on the forum I had a few offers to fetch it. As I lost the camera on Sunday night I was more than thankful to have it in my hands again first thing Thursday morning - big thanks to 'Gixer771'.

But I suppose one of the

major highlights for me has got to be that I have been able to meet and talk to around 100 riders in my area. In about three months of the forum starting I posted up a thread trying to find local riders to ride with. You can imagine my delight when I received a large number of posts in reply. From that initial post I now am the Chairman of a fantastic group of fellow dirt junkies collectively known as Leicestershire Area Riders Fellowship (LARF).

We now have monthly meetings and organise local and countrywide trail riding days out. We also enter events as a collective and have done the Hafren (12 of us) and are doing the PJM (17 of us). Thank you TBM!

Ian Tyler-Bond, Leics via email

Ian, we've been amazed at how successful our forum has become in just a year - over 1100 registered users can't be bad! For all those of you who haven't yet experienced the ultimate in dirtbiking virtual reality, check out [trailbikemag.com/forum](http://trailbikemag.com/forum).

## Code Of Conduct

Dear TBM

I would just like to pass on some good conduct I observed while I was out trail walking on Sunday 29 January at a location near Redmires Reservoirs in

Derbyshire.

My wife and I were walking our two spaniels when we came to a large gate for vehicles and a small side gate for walkers. We were on our way through the small gate when over the crest of the byway came about six or seven dirtbikes. So, I waited and opened the large gate for them and every rider that came through slowed down, made eye contact and thanked me for my help.

Unknown to them I am also a greenlaner as well as a walker and this kind of conduct was just what we need to keep our hobby alive. Well done guys...

Steven Smith via email

## Holiday Camp

Dear TBM

Great mag guys! Anyway, just thought I'd share a mini adventure with you. My girlfriend and I drove from Uxbridge, Middx to Portugal in two days loaded to the gunnels with camping/riding gear and my KTM 525EXC.

Why Portugal? The start of the 2006 Dakar, of course - what else? The close-up stages were awesome and I found myself the only mad KTM riding Englishman crazy enough to follow the European stages of the rally whilst camping along the way.

Sadly in a flash the Dakar carnival had gone, leaving us to enjoy southern Portugal and Spain in all its glory. After three days of sun, sea, sand and San Miguel and looking at my KTM parked in a five-star hotel car park in Marbella it was time to turn to my trusted TBM mag.



# LETTERS



And there it was, the ideal opportunity - a local trail riding company in Malaga.

Following a short phone call I managed to book in for one of their guided tours with two days riding. With me on my bike and my girlfriend by the pool, life just couldn't get better. Sad to leave but with payments to make on my KTM it was time to head for home, although we did manage to stop along the way in Alicante, Barcelona, Andorra, Toulouse and Paris. Hard life ain't it?

KTM Nut Mark  
via email

## Heavy Smoker

Dear TBM

Roger Stead wrote in about his KTM 200 autolube in the February issue, saying his bike smokes a lot and is oiling plugs.

Autolubes shouldn't smoke any more than premix models.

Roger should check that the oil pump cable is properly seated at the pump end. They can get snagged on stuff and not re-seat themselves fully, pre-loading the cable and therefore over-oiling. I managed to blind a good proportion of the Devon TRF in a smoke cloud last year when this happened to me, after they'd been good enough to take me out for the day!

Otherwise autolubes should be utterly reliable. I've just sold mine after five years faultless service - a testament to KTM reliability as its one previous owner was a certain Chris Evans from TBM!

Dave Maddock  
via email

## Pipe Dreams

Dear TBM

I'm writing in response to a Tech query from Roger Stead in the February issue. A mate of mine had a similar problem with a KLX he owned.

He resolved the problem by

inserting a small plastic pipe (~5mm air line) into the rubber connector between the carb and the head then ran it to the airbox with a two-way valve somewhere in the middle. When hot starting, you open the valve then once started, close it again.

This solved my mate's problem and his bike started first time every time after fitting and all for a few pence. Full details of parts and fitting can be found on [klxzone.co.uk](http://klxzone.co.uk). Good luck.

Johnny, Haverhill  
via email

## Sand Blaster

Dear TBM

I've just watched Le Touquet beach race for the second year running and it's got me hooked so I now have a year to prepare to enter next year's event.

The thing is, I know how to set an enduro bike up for hare and hound type events as I take part in them on a regular

Beach Racing: Get yourself a real animal of a bike...

basis but (and it's a big but), what are all the essential things to do if I'm setting up and prepping a bike for such an awesome beach race?

I ride a Gasser EC200 but do not think it's man enough to dig its own track in deep sand, so I intend buying a 250 two-stroke 'crosser or a 450 thumper. Although the four-stroke will be easier to ride for a long time they are renowned for being hard to start when hot (I dare say I will fall off once or twice). So I'm thinking about a CR250 or something similar.

My only worry is it seizing up down the five-mile straight due to the mix being too lean! Anyway, could you maybe do an article on bike set-up (ie

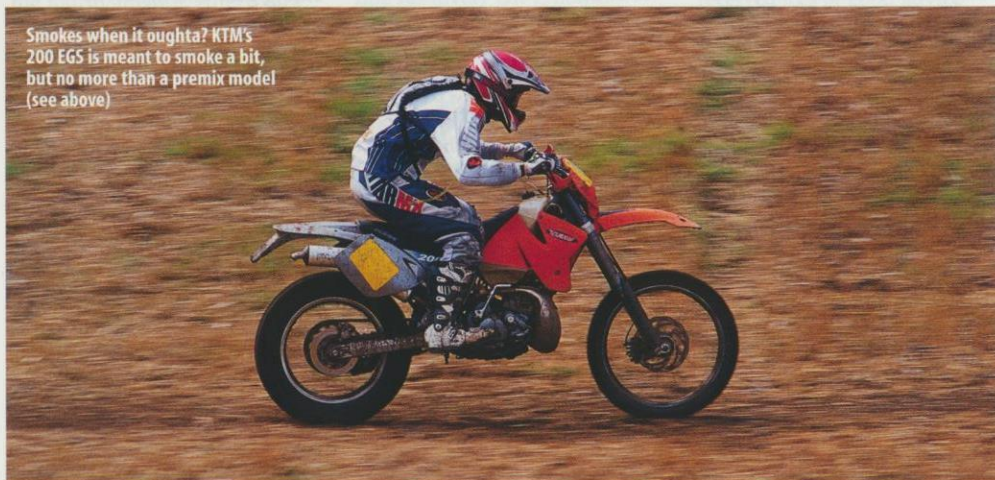


jetting), training and technical stuff please? It would give me the confidence in going into the great unknown. Thanks!

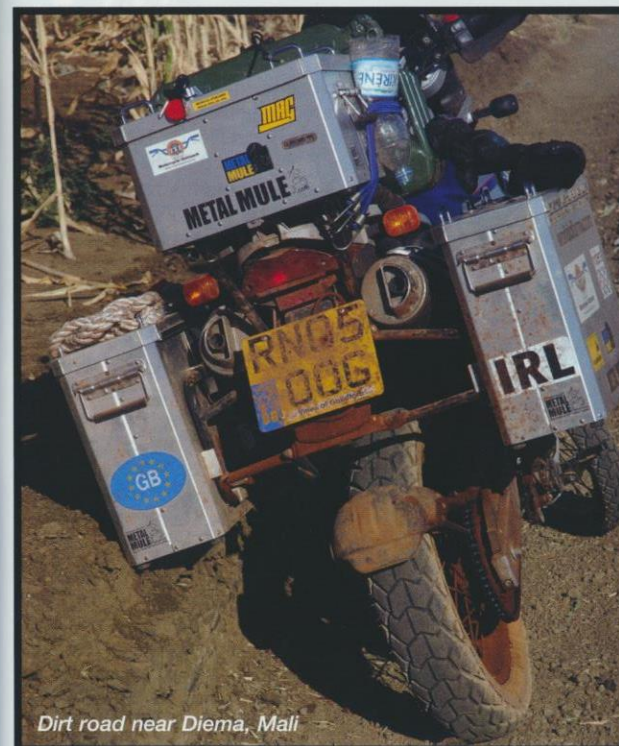
Lloyd Halsey, Berkhamsted  
via email

Stop messing around Lloyd and

get yourself a CR500 to blast down that straight! Seriously, any bike you choose will be in a pretty bad way afterwards, so buy secondhand and don't do too much to it. And get yourself to Weston this year and ask the racers how they set up their bikes - I'm sure you'll get lots



Smokes when it oughta? KTM's 200 EGS is meant to smoke a bit, but no more than a premix model (see above)



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# LETTERS

of good advice in terms of richening up the jetting. An article on this subject is planned however...

## Goggle-Eyed

Dear TBM

I did the well-organised WTRA Snow Run this year and finished better than expected - ie I finished. Top conditions, swift course, and no injuries. Though the usual blight of steamed up

goggles thwarted what was undoubtedly a gold medal winning performance. Hmmm.

Anyway, I saw in the February issue on page 104 a rather natty looking pair of goggles on the rider on the bottom of the page. Not sure if it was just me but they seemed to have some sort of heating element in the lense like that found on the rear windscreen of most cars.

Am I going mad or have I just invented something really good that I can patent and give up my day job and retire? If they do exist, any ideas where I

could get them, I have browsed the usual websites to no avail. If they don't exist then I'm off to the patent office.

How about the ultimate antifog goggle/helmet combination test in a future issue?

David Garland  
Via email

Don't give up your day job just yet David. The rider pictured wearing the goggles was a certain Mr Richard Hay. When we spoke to him, all he could divulge was that yes, his fancy eyewear *did* sport a prototype heated lense, designed to keep things mist-free. Keep your eyes peeled for them appearing in TBM sometime in the future...

## In Shock

Dear TBM

In response to Chris Millicent's letter in the last issue, it's highly unlikely his Honda TLR mono will be allowed in the twin-shock class of any trial.

As to the idea of grafting on a pair of twin-shocks, no, no, a thousand times no! Don't do it. First of all it involves too much work and secondly you still wouldn't be allowed in the twin-shock class as most clubs insist on bikes having twin-shocks as standard equipment from new. If they were to allow otherwise, some comedian would be grafting twin-shocks onto a modern Gasser and going for the win.

Moving onto the suggestion about easy trials, there are many around the UK and the Honda will be ideal. However do remember that if you are new to/or inexperienced at trials, the newer, better the bike

should be if you are to learn and get the best out of the events. Old bikes are harder to ride than new bikes, simple as that.

Mike Rapley  
via email



## Brotherly Love

Dear TBM

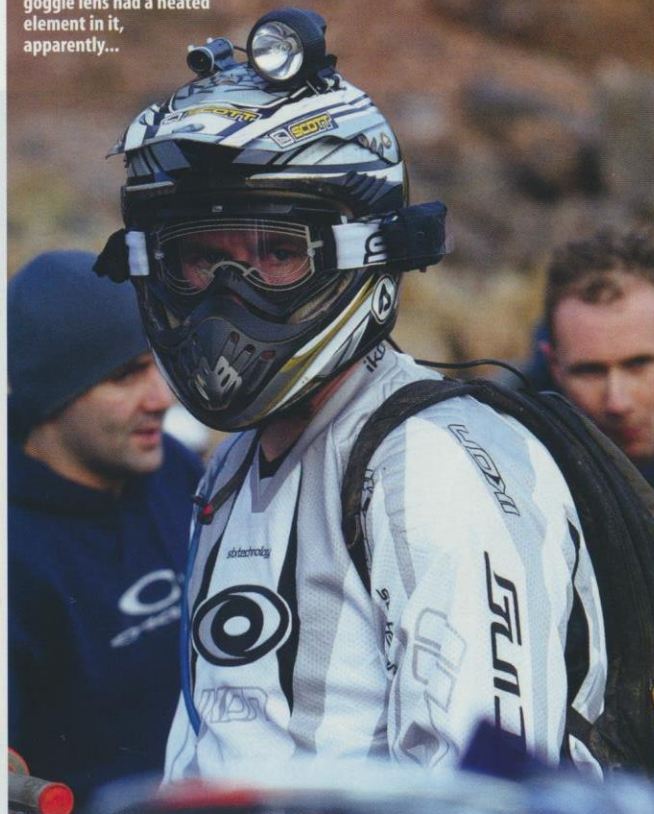
How my brother and I laughed at last month's 'Marshal Law' article after reading about *our* exploits in the Ceri hare and hounds last year.

Having had a few phone calls off mates who had read the story and rung us, it became clear that the story came across that I had pulled out the spark plug case. So I feel I need to vindicate myself from being portrayed as the daft one.

Let me explain (and its all on helmet cam as proof, although when my brother reads this I'm quite sure he will accidentally lose the DVD and wipe the hard drive!). I will have to ask him for a copy without raising suspicion before this letter gets published.

Anyway, on the day in question I had suffered a big off just prior to coming across my elder, more experienced and better all-round riding brother. He is an ex Northwest expert AMCA champ (circa very late Eighties early Nineties), fifth placed clubman BEC E2 2005. So imagine how surprised I was to come across him on a rough tractor path in the side of the forest at a

Heat and be Merry: Richard Hay's goggle lens had a heated element in it, apparently...



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# LETTERS



standstill looking rather hacked off to say the least.

I did the decent thing of course and stopped and asked 'what's the problem?' to which he replied 'bloody run out of fuel!' Now, on the previous lap my little 200 had gone onto reserve and as you do, you come in for fuel the next time at the pits. So I put two and two together and said to my elder bro 'did you go on reserve on the last lap and not come in for fuel? After a short silence he said 'So what have we got we can put some fuel in?' and this was when *he* pulled out the spare plug case and said 'put it in there'.

At this point I was wetting myself, although was still in control of my emotions as I didn't want to make it too obvious how funny it was, knowing my sibling's lack of

sense of humour when the joke is on him.

But when then he actually fell backwards down the steep bank (he was on doing backward rolls), I did feel like giving him a round of applause, which unfortunately resulted in the camera being turned off. So if anyone is interested in copies of the helmet cam footage it's available for a fiver...

Neil Parry  
Via email

The laddy doth protest too much, methinks ...

### A Right Charley

Dear TBM

Having not written for some time I thought it about time to make contact, this time in defence of Charley Boorman.

I don't know the man but he seems like a nice chap and is a

keen motorcyclist, having attempted the Dakar and been round the world, but I guess most people would know this already.

The thing is he seems to be getting a bit of a rough ride (no pun intended) at the moment. I think rather than having a pop we should try and use him and his exploits to show the positive sides to our pastime, as this type of publicity is what we need at the moment.

If he gets on mainstream TV it will make a change from the usual dirtbike items that aim to project a negative image with their biased reporting.

Neville Daytona  
via email

Don't worry Neville, Charley will be on our screens very shortly - starring in his very own TV series-DVD 'Race To Dakar'. Oh, and don't forget to buy his best selling book too...



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# TALKING

Chris discovers  
the joys of  
dirtbiking by  
proxy...

# DIRTY

It used to be that as soon as I came back from the Dakar I made it a point of honour to go and do something very stupid on a motorcycle. One year I remember entering a long distance trial in the west country with editor Melber and 'now in Oz' tester Garnham on a variety of 'novelty' bikes - Yamaha's TW125, a KTM 125EXC and a Gas Gas Pampera if I remember rightly. Another year I entered a trial that was much too hard for me and fived nearly every section.

This year, however, I was simply too knackered to rustle up the enthusiasm - all I wanted to do was collapse on the sofa - but at the same time I was reluctant to break with tradition completely. My ingenious solution? Go watch someone else do something very stupid on a motorcycle - namely Cyril Despres try and get the holeshot (and therefore the 'holeshot award') at the Le Touquet beach race. Last year he only just managed it by the skin of his teeth on his 660 rallye bike, so for 2006 KTM sent him something a little bit more potent - the brand new, and as yet unreleased to the general public, 950 Super Enduro.

Being a professional and all that, and wanting to check everything was in order well before Sunday's race, Cyril insisted that we were all present and correct at some ungodly hour on Friday morning for a shakedown. Essentially this consisted of surreptitiously creeping onto the beach at Dunkerque to see what it would do, mister. Which turned out to be quite a lot! Backing up the trip with a GPS zip-tied to the handlebars, Cyril managed to hit a terrifying 193kmh (or 120mph). With the baffles in!

He then took it round the local MX circuit to see what the suspension was like. Standing by the side of the track in the freezing cold it looked like it handled fine to me - certainly better than any 950 dirtbike had the right to - though it is possibly that the rider helped that impression a tad...

Then, when nobody was looking, I jumped - or perhaps pole-vaulted would be a more appropriate term - onto the big muther and took it for a nervous spin around the car park. Now some less scrupulous magazines might have been tempted to turn such a brief encounter into a full blown scoop test, but we're not like that at TBM Towers, so I'll simply tell you something you've probably already worked out for yourselves: It would appear to have a lot of poke - and on the ball bearing like surface of the gravel car park it was absolutely impossible to accelerate without spinning up the rear wheel and heading off at a right-angle to where I wanted to go!

Having confirmed that the bike had more than enough speed to do the job, Cyril's only concern was not to give the 950 too much of a handful off the line and dig the back-end down lower than the Channel Tunnel. So come the big day he was far from first off the line. It didn't, however, take him long to get into his stride and accelerate past the leaders with astonishing ease.

By the end of the 6km straight he had an almost embarrassing advantage and plenty of time to wave to the crowd. To be honest, to me it looked like using a very big hammer to crack a nut, but at least it allowed him to win the 1500 euro holeshot prize, which he donated to the school the late Fabrizio Meoni set up in Dakar.

**'Essentially this consisted of surreptitiously creeping onto the beach to see what it would do, mister.**

**The answer was a terrifying 193kmh...'**

After that little escapade it was back to Paris to wheel my somewhat less powerful 450 out of the garage and over to my all-time favourite bike shop, Challenge 75, for a major service.

One of the nice things about doing a lot of miles on the same bike is you're always discovering something new. On the way to Challenge, for example, I ran out of petrol and so can now tell you that the fuel tank will take exactly 8.09 litres of super unleaded. I can also tell you that in the car-burning suburbs of Paris, hooded youths get even more excited by the sight of a stranded dirtbike than by an unattended Renault Five! However, I would go as far as to say that if you are going to break down in an area full of firebugs, running out of petrol is probably the safest way to do it.

Once I finally got to Challenge I also found out what needs replacing on a dirtbike subjected to 16,000km and 390 hours of off-road use. The short answer is 'a lot'. The long answer is new clutch plates, a new throttle cable, a new cam chain and a new swinging arm. Actually the new swinging arm was pretty much down to me as I failed to replace the rubber swinging arm slipper in time and so wore away a substantial amount of the swinging arm with the chain!

My final discovery of the day then: That one of the not so nice things about doing a lot of miles on the same bike is that the repair bills are absolutely astronomical. And that *watching* someone else ride a bike, works out to be a hell of a lot cheaper..!



## LONG DISTANCE OFF-ROADING IN FRANCE



## REMAINING DATES FOR 2006

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# COMPLETELY

Having had his bike stolen, Mark decides he needs to get tooled up...

# RUTTED

In every issue of this otherwise relentlessly upbeat magazine, there is a little corner of gloom and angst... and I'm not talking about this column. Well not much anyway. No, I'm referring to the sorry inventory of personal grief that resides under the heading of 'Stolen' in the Classifieds.

Having one's pride and joy nicked, augurs feelings of disgust, dismay and violation in equal measure, although until it happens to you it's easy to dismiss such emotions as the over-sensitive reactions of a lumpen materialist. And I know, because I've just had my bike stolen.

Well actually even that's not quite true - and the trailriding fraternity will doubtless heave a joyous sigh of relief that Williams' much-lauded TTR250 is still safely in its garage swaddled in a cashmere blanket being gently serenaded by the local male voice choir. But I have, or rather *used to have*, another powered two-wheeler, namely a Suzuki AN125. Which is not some obscure grey import trailie, but a modest little four-stroke scooter.

And before you collapse into paroxysms of mirth and 'Oooh, you big girlie' ridicule, I should tell you that its previous owner was none other than pretty handy enduro-ist, Nick Ashley. And like me, Nick found on those occasions when he had to be working in London, it was cheaper and far more practical, and even faster from A-to-B, than a full-blown motorcycle. Plus it stood less chance of getting nicked. (And you'll have noted the consistent use of the past tense there).

Well these days I'm more or less permanently ensconced in the seething metropolis and the wee Suzuki was a godsend, not least because I could leave it at Paddington station with my helmet, gloves and waterproofs stashed under the seat whilst I chuffed backwards and forwards to God's Own Country. And because it was nine years old, and a bit battered and filthy dirty, it failed to attract the attention of the criminal classes. (Past tense again).

However things are obviously a bit grim up north London, and whilst I enjoyed an amusing little supper with a friend in Chalk Farm a few weeks ago, some scumbag helped themselves to it from outside her house. And this despite the steering lock and bloody great chain threaded through its front wheel.

But what, you might rather irritably ask, has this got to do with trailriding? Well I shall tell you. Being the deeply competent mechanic, or at least the penny-pinching cheapskate that I am, I naturally do as much maintenance on my bikes that I'm capable of. And being that

cheapskate, when the time came to service the Suzuki, I simply took the toolkit off my TTR and brought it up to London. And there it sat in the scooter's glovebox until I was due to go back down to Wales again. Which of course means that my tools got nicked, too. And therein lies the rub... And the following little story.

When I first began scribbling for this mighty organ, the aforementioned Mr Ashley advocated that I learn to love my tools (!) - a suggestion I didn't fully appreciate at the time. But as has so often been the case during our friendship, Nick was right. Because it was only when I set about trying to replace the stolen spanners, screwdrivers etc, that I appreciated the close personal relationship I'd developed with them over the past few years. 'Your toolkit is your friend,' claimed Nick, and as I have now discovered, it's as hard to replace a purpose-built set of tools as it is to replace an old mate.

Now as anyone who's bought a brand new bike, or at least a Japanese bike, will know, they come with a fairly rudimentary selection

**'I was now without a pair of fine-nosed pliers, several different flat-and Philips-headed screwdrivers, and a small saw, scissors, a coarse file and, most importantly of all, a bottle-opener...'**

of tools, some of which are small and robust enough to make ideal traveling companions in your bum-bag or fender-bag. (And some of which, like the double-ended screwdriver which breaks the moment you use it to try and undo a tightly screwed on clutch cover, are utter crap.) So the first thing I did when I planned to go out riding the weekend after my scooter went AWOL was to try and buy a replacement TTR toolkit. Which was a bit like looking for a singing sheep.

However I did manage to find something similar from my local dealer (er... not the singing sheep), but apparently a Honda 'pattern' kit - with two decent open-ended spanners and the vital ring spanner that'd undo the rear axle nut. There was also a spanner that just about fitted into the deep recess where an attractive residue of dried mud swaddles the spark plug, but the rest of it I just threw away.

The biggest problem I had was replacing the multi-tool pliers which I'd bought from a local

ironmonger - yes, they still exist in Mid-Wales - and then customized for my own use.

The brand is called 'True' and it came with a dinky set of screw-bits that slotted into a conveniently magnetic shaft. Unfortunately the shaft was only an inch long and so fairly useless in tight spaces, so I appropriated a three-inch extension from a cheap (and otherwise mickey mouse) mini socket-set I'd bought, probably when drunk, at an autojumble.

However 'True' seem to've disappeared, both the London bike dealer and the original ironmonger had received no stock in months and I was damned if I was going to pay three times the 24 quid it'd cost for the fancy-pants Leatherman brand it imitated. So now I was without a pair of fine-nose pliers, several different flat- and Phillips-headed screwdrivers, a small saw, scissors, coarse file and, most importantly of all, a bottle-opener.

The set of Allen keys grouped into a tough, pen-knife type housing was however easily replaced, as was a small, sturdy pair of broad-nosed pliers. Less so was a hideously expensive but very funky rubber-sheathed adjustable spanner which I'd bought - possibly also whilst drunk - at a bike show. This featured accurately-machined worm 'n' rack adjustment far superior to the run-of-the-mill chrome plated Chinese items we've all used to round-off bolt heads with, and because it had a stubby but ergonomically effective handle, it fitted neatly into my bag.

Naturally I couldn't find one anywhere and so after a 48 hour tool-buying frenzy, I was still missing two vital components.

By now you're probably thinking that I lead a very sad life relieved only by the occasional contact with precision implements. And the terrible truth is that you're absolutely right. But when you're miles from civilization on a dank, misty hillside trying to fettle a stuck carburetor, you need tools that are up to the job - tools that you've been able to carry with you in something other than a full-size cantilever box.

And until they went missing, I'd forgotten that my kit had been assembled and grown, almost organically, over five years and three different trailbikes in order to meet my very specific needs.

So if, like me, you breakdown or fall off a lot when you're riding the dirt, make sure you're covered for every running repair you're likely to suffer - and then some. Oh, and if you must make a fool of yourself by riding a scooter as well, then make sure you get a toolkit for that, too. Or at least a large, aggressive Rottweiler who'll sit guard on it whilst you eat dinner!



# HACKED

Alex Hearn has come out of hiding to make some apologies...

# OFF

This month I'm in a reflective mood. It must be the bum weather - albeit with the glimmering hope that spring is not that far away. And this has brought about some introspection. Plus, much to the derision of all at the TBM office (Mel in particular - she's got a sharp, but fair tongue that gal...) I haven't done any off-roading, due to the vagaries of my employ (I've been a bit busy...) so therefore haven't got anything new bore you with.

So with this slight malaise of the Hearn noggin in mind, this month's column is going to be about saying sorry. Because, as I review my slightly moribund dirtbiking career, buried deep in the recesses and nooks of my memory are a couple of guilty incidents which, obviously, I've chosen to ignore. Call me Cleopatra, Queen of Denial.

Now before I go on, I'm not proud of either of the two following events, and the first in particular shows an immaturity and stupidity that I like the think I've long grown out of. Ahem.

The first apology is due to a group of very decent, if a little straight (old school TRF I think, judging by the bubble visors, sturdy wax cotton and ample spares..!) riders from somewhere down south, 'round Andover way.

**'The only words that passed between me and my devious pal: 'We must never admit to or tell anybody about this. Ever...'**

About six or seven years ago, somehow a mate and I ended up on a day out with 'em. I should have known there was going to be trouble in the car park before we set out. My CRM250AR, with its aftermarket pipe, tiny numberplate and MX tyres was not met with approval. There was some tutting, general pointing and the die was cast. The two-mile wheelies on the road to the first trail just made matters worse, for some reason...

We must've started out with about eight or so riders. After an hour three had fallen by the wayside, maybe due to the slightly frenetic pace that our presence had caused the group's leader to adopt. The atmosphere wasn't good either - there was a distinct tension in the air and it was definitely a case of 'them and us'. Another hour, and there were only two of them left.

The final straw came when I saw an ideal opportunity to treat one of the guys to an impromptu muddy bow-wash, which I did, catching him a beauty... in the middle of a nasty section of two-lane ruts.

Unfortunately, he immediately fell off, snapping his brake lever in the process. That was it. Fuming, soaked and properly 'hacked off' he fixed his bike and cleared off with his mate. So, to this group of peo-

ple, who didn't deserve to have their day out spoiled by a pair of ignorant idiots, and especially for the bloke who fell off after I soaked him, I'm genuinely sorry.

The other apology is due to a proper, and old, friend of mine who I used to do a lot of trail riding with. The problem started when he bought a fully tricked-up Husky WR250 stoker, a bike (this was about seven years ago) that was a truly fickle and unreliable (and for him, unrideable, beast). After one particularly disastrous trip to mid-Wales, where we'd spent the whole outing trying to keep it going, my embarrassed mate swore he'd spare no expense getting it sorted.

On his return, he chucked the thing back at the importer with the instructions to 'sort it, no matter the cost...' which they duly did. Cue our next ride out, near Silverstone this time (with the same mate who helped upset the TRF crowd darn sarf).

While my Husky-owning chum was getting changed, we wheeled his bike out of the van. Now, all the way up he'd been going on about how fettled the bike was, how it would never be a problem again. So we disconnected his HT lead, which was awkward to get at, let alone see.

Helmets on, I started my CRM, my mate his RM250. The Husky, of course, didn't fire on the first kick. Or the second. Or third. And so on. With each passing lunge of his leg my mate's disbelief (and frustrated rage) grew. I looked round at my partner in crime and all I could see was his shoulders gently shaking, as the hysteria grew within him. He had the giggles, and his goggles were filling with tears. As were mine. It was painful. And funny. Too, too funny.

Eventually, the meltdown occurred. His helmet got ripped off, and thrown into an adjacent field. The majority of his riding gear swiftly followed. Then, with a stream of proper expletives (he was a touch Victor Meldrew-like in character) the poor sod started dismembering the recalcitrant beast he'd just a half-hour previously been so proud of. As he pulled the tank clear, the HT lead flopped out, though luckily he just thought he'd snagged it himself, not making the connection between our slightly weird, contorted facial expressions and his lack of forward motion. Half-an-hour later, the bike started first kick. The only words that passed between me and my devious pal through the whole thing: 'We must never, ever admit to or tell anybody about this. Ever...'

To make matters worse, later in the day, we rode through a travellers' camp. Huskyman was the last one through, and received a warm bucket of urine, soapsuds and baby nappies for his trouble. More tears of laughter ensued from us.

So, my dear old mate, I'd like to really say sorry from the bottom of my dark heart. What we did was mean, cruel, and thoughtless. But also incredibly funny at the same time. If it makes it any better, I don't think I'll be going to heaven...

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# Heart two heart



Aprilia's gorgeous and groundbreaking V-twin enduro bikes were finally revealed to the press in Sicily last month and naturally enough TBM was there to try them out...



FIRST CHECK



Heart  
two  
heart

**A**prilia's latest marketing campaign is a clever little visual pun. The image used to promote the company's new V-twin dirtbike shows an X-ray of a human chest with two hearts beating within. The symbolism is clear - two hearts are better than one...

On the face of it a lightweight in-line V-twin has much to offer the trail and enduro rider. No wider than a conventional single, but more powerful, smoother and with the promise of greater performance, economy and reliability for an equivalent capacity. It sounds so promising...

### Camel Too

Slotting a V-twin into a dirtbike chassis isn't wholly original thinking. In the past, manufacturers such as Brough, AJS and Harley Davidson

can all lay claim to building V-twin off-riders of one sort or another. And of course Honda and Cagiva have been dropping Vees into big trailies for years, while KTM and Highland have recently joined the party. But it was another Italian manufacturer - Moto Morini - who back in 1981 launched the first mid-sized V-twin trail bike of the modern-era in the form of their 500cc Camel trailie. And then followed it up a few years later with the 350cc Kanguro.

The difference with the Aprilia V-twin however is that it's been pitched squarely at the competition sector (the growing 'enduro' market) together with the much larger leisure market which supports it. And you've got to admit that it's a brave move on Aprilia's behalf, taking on the likes of KTM's well-established EXC,



APRILIA RXV450/550



Aprilia have thrown away the rulebook on dirtbike design and come up with their own spectacular alternative. The compact EFI-fuelled V-twin is smooth and effortless, but lacks a little midrange punch. Left: Underseat silencer doubles-up as the inner rear guard. Slash-cut twin tailpipes and LED rear light are gorgeous details. Above left: Multi-function digi dials...





Heart  
two  
heart

Honda's CRF-X and Yamaha's WR-F in the 450 (as well as open) class with a new - and as yet unproven - product.

Sensibly, the first thing Aprilia have done is to single-out their twin(!) by making it appear totally different from the competition. You can't help but be impressed by the way the RXV looks in the metal. From its sexy cross-braced swingarm to the unique slash-cut underseat pipes and LED rear light, from any angle the thing just looks sensational. Turn up on one of these babies at your local ride-out, and people are going to want to know you. Aprilia should be applauded for thumbing their nose at conventional design and opting instead for a radical and innovative re-think of the basic dirtbike appearance. There's no doubt in my mind that the RXV's looks will influence future design of dirtbikes from other manufacturers - sending one or two designers scurrying back to their cad-cam systems.

But although individual design (some might even call it *quirky*) is arguably an Aprilia trademark, it remains to be seen exactly how practical the RXV turns out to be. Particularly in a muddy country like our own. Cast your eye over the photos and you'll see that there are an awful lot of exposed nooks and crannies on the RXV (not least of which is the valley of the 'V' itself) which look like they might potentially shelter a whole heap of crud. And at least one area (just forward of the silencer box) where you won't be able to use open cell foam for fear of it melting.

And while we're at it I have one or two other issues concerning the Aprilia's practicality as a serious off-roader. First-off there's no kickstart as a back-up to the electric-start. The RXV's not unique in that respect I know, but remember we're talking about an Italian motorcycle fitted with Italian electrics. On at least three occasions a couple of the press bikes failed to fire up on the button and had to be bump-started. This behaviour is not exclusive to Aprilias (many Italian bikes suffer the same symptoms), but I know for a fact that punters hate it. It's one of the reasons they cite for buying Japanese, and Aprilia will have to address this problem, if (as they claim) they want to be considered serious players in the global market. When I spoke with the RXV's Project Manager Mariano Roman he told me that they'd twice upped the spec of the battery (to 8amp-hours) which was now he claimed 'sufficient'. I have to disagree. Perhaps in future Aprilia will adjust the engine mapping

to allow the ignition to be retarded slightly more (helping improve the hot/cold starting). Clearly a look at the area of starting wouldn't go amiss.

And one other point which no-one at the brief press launch seemed to pick up on, is the fact that the Aprilia's innovative and complex frame design - which mates extruded aluminium side spars with a steel trellis structure - hangs the V-twin motor from the chassis without the need for lower frame rails. This neat design works fine in terms of handling, but suggests to me that the fragile engine cases might be vulnerable in certain situations. For example extreme care will have to be taken when riding up and down large rock steps, to avoid clouting the motor.

Because the stock plastic bashplate is only going to be able to fend off so much attention. And the way I see it, even an aftermarket alloy or carbon guard will have to mount to the bottom of the engine rather than the frame - compromising its effectiveness.

### Hearts of the Matter

But let's ignore such issues for the moment and simply revel in the fact that what we have here is a 'competition' off-roader powered by a super-smooth V-twin engine. Which let's face it is enough of a novelty to bring a smile to the visage of even the most jaded bike hack.

Certainly you can appreciate the Aprilia's fuel-injected smoothness, its lack of any real vibes and its innate flexibility, when you get the bike on tarmac. I can see a lot of riders (particularly road riders new to off-roading) really going for this particular benefit of the Aprilia. And you can almost see the RXV defining a new sub-category of 'mid-trailies'.

With the exception of its twin cylinders and compact dimensions, there's nothing particularly revolutionary about the 77 degree, dry-sumped, liquid-cooled, fuel injected, SOHC, eight-valve motor which powers the RXV. But Aprilia are no strangers to building great V-twins and it's clear that they've worked hard at minimising the size and weight of their powerplant. To that end they opted for a single-crank design and like other manufacturers, have specified lightweight materials (titanium for the valves and magnesium for the case covers) to keep weight to a minimum.

And certainly when you ride the bike it feels no heavier than a single. Aprilia are claiming a dry weight of 118kg which is ballpark for a bike like the WR450F, say, and I'd bet that once the 7.8L tank has been brimmed it's gonna be some-

RXV is likely to find itself more at home on the trail in the hands of experienced riders rather than on a racetrack...



where near the 125-127kg figure. But frankly that's where comparisons with a 'single' begin and end, because the RXV's engine feels unlike any single I've ever ridden... Nor does it feel like any V-twin I've ever ridden, for that matter.

The thing about using a V-twin in this sort of application is that although it restricts the design of the bike in one sense (you have to package your frame around two cylinders, two exhausts etc - resulting in a longer wheelbase), it also opens up a host of possibilities.

Possibilities like greater power, smoother running, less noise, increased efficiency, prolonged service intervals, improved reliability (thanks to

longer clutch and gearbox life) etc. And that is what makes the RXV potentially so exciting.

However if you're expecting this particular V-twin to be characterised by great gobs of torque and cobby, almost lazy power, then think again. Aprilia have used the natural 'balance' of the V-twin to allow them to run an absurdly light flywheel. Which in turn has made for an incredibly free-revving and responsive engine. Such is the RXV's propensity to rev that it sounds like a sort of mini-Ferrari when you twist the throttle.

And because the Aprilia lump has been designed with both off-road and supermoto in

## Heart two heart

were bikes which had been built to humble the competition in their respective classes in terms of out-and-out power, but which didn't have the benefit of the surging torque you find (and need) in an equivalent dirt-oriented single.

In some ways the 450 was better in this respect. Its power output was milder and felt slightly torquier than the fearsome 550 thanks to slightly different cylinder dimensions and a higher compression ratio. And when it came to putting that power to the ground it was much more effective and (I found), far easier to pilot around the excellent special test which Aprilia had laid on for us.

But the other problem with having such a revvy engine is that although revs rise very rapidly, they also die-back just as swiftly. Shut the throttle on the RXV on the way into a corner and you can find that the engine can occasionally stall, locking the back wheel on a loose surface. To be fair this was a problem I only found when riding the 550, but in truth the combination of a rapid-fire power delivery, high power output and very little flywheel effect, made the bike extraordinarily difficult to pilot at walking pace - particularly over the smooth rocks where the photos were taken.

In terms of chassis, suspension, brakes, riding position and all the other important details, again it's pretty hard to come up with definitive answers because of a lack of time spent on the machines. What I can tell you though is that the chassis feels very stable - doubtless thanks to a wheelbase which is 10-15mm longer than most of the opposition's machinery. The suspension felt well damped but on the stiffer side of things (more KTM than Honda). And the brakes were typical Brembos - the same as KTM - 270mm on the front, 240mm on the rear. Riding position was fine and well thought out (though the seat height at 996mm is pretty high): you sit behind a set of braceless bars and in terms of the cockpit the RXV is well appointed with large digi dials, and modern switchgear (with the exception of an old-fashioned cable clutch). Oh and it's particularly quiet. A peculiar advantage of the V-twin, apparently.

### Living With It

As with any new bike, there's always the 'what if' fear-factor which comes with ownership of an 'untested' new model. One of the points Aprilia stressed at the press briefing was their determination to provide quality back-up with these

mind (the SXV model was also at the launch), the engine has been tuned to produce oodles of power. Now depending upon your point of view this is either a good or a bad thing. My own opinion is that this sort of power delivery works far better on a supermoto bike than it does on a dirt bike. On the rough the RXV's engine is inclined to spin-up very quickly which promotes wheelspin at the expense of grip.

Disappointingly, despite travelling thousands of miles to get to the launch, we didn't have very long to ride either of the bikes, so I'm reserving judgement until we can get an RXV onto UK soil. But my overriding impression was that here

# FIRST CHECK



Heart  
two  
heart

new models. They are claiming that the RXV and SXV will have a dedicated warehouse with specific logistics and spares delivery available anywhere in Europe within 24hrs. Furthermore particularly close attention will be paid to the customer/dealer relationship with plenty of factory support available in the unlikely event of problems coming to light. This is extremely encouraging to hear, and shows a sensible commitment to their new product.

What's more Aprilia claim to have designed the bike with access in mind so that all the usual servicing and maintenance routines (such as valve-adjustment, plug changes etc) can be carried out easily. Not something you can say about all other dirt bikes, that's for sure. And servicing should cost no more than the equivalent single.

Nevertheless I can't see too many serious enduro racers queueing up to invest six grand on an RXV. It's too unusual, too expensive, too different in my opinion - and though racers love 'an edge' over the competition, they're also a

fairly conservative bunch at heart.

So who is going to be the RXV's customer? Well, I can see this bike appealing to the slightly more adventurous and - let's face it - well-heeled trail rider/occasional competitor. The sort of person who runs their own company, has a few quid behind them, and can afford to splash out on something *really* spectacular. These guys (and they *are* generally male, usually in their late 40s and can afford to pamper themselves), they like to look good. They'll use their bikes not just for trail riding but also on overseas trail holidays, and they'll probably enter the odd UK rally or enduro event - partly, just to be seen on the RXV. For them the Aprilia is just the ticket.

It possesses the wow-factor like no other machine out there. It's well built, well specified and well trick. And it's fast - and that'll simply add to the bike's kudos. Because unlike oddball bikes from the likes of Vertemati or VOR say, the Aprilia may be *unusual*, but it's not quirky.

Much more importantly than that it's built by a mainstream manufacturer with a reputation for building some of the best loved V-twins in the world. The first batch is already sold out and frankly demand is expected to exceed supply for quite a while yet.

Yep, I can certainly see how owning a bike like this would make your heart - or even *both* your hearts - beat a little faster. Despite some reservations, I reckon the Aprilia makes a welcome addition to the off-road marketplace. It's a little different but that's precisely the reason why some people will love it - with all their hearts...

## APRILIA RXV450/550

**Price:**  
**Engine:**

£6050 / £6150  
Liquid-cooled, dry-sumped,  
SOHC, 8-valve, 77° V-twin  
449cc / 549cc

**Displacement:**  
**Bore x stroke:**  
**Comp ratio:**  
**Fuel system:**  
**Clutch:**

76 x 49.5mm / 80 x 55mm  
12.5:1 / 12:1  
EFI 38mm / 40mm bodies  
Wet, multiplate, cable

**Gearbox:**  
**Frame:**

5-speed  
Steel trellis with alloy spars

**Front susp:**  
**Rear susp:**

45mm USD forks  
Single shock with linkage

**Fuel capacity:**  
**Seat height:**

7.8L  
996mm

**Wheelbase:**  
**Colours:**

1495mm  
Aprilia Black / Fluo Red



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**On their round-the-world travels in their trusty motorhome, TBM contributors Jim and Dot Jones parked up in Utah to experience the trails of the Wild West...**



# HIGH PLAINS DRIFTERS

**E**scalante, in Utah, has been the location for many a Western and John Wayne movie. In fact, every town in the area lays claim to old 'Duke' filming an epic in their backyard, and with a landscape of sun-scarred buttes and endless dusty trails it's easy to see why he chose the area. On our American odyssey we found ourselves in Escalante for the very same reason - the awesome terrain - but we weren't hitting the trails on horseback. Instead we had our pair of trusty Yamahas to take us off into the Wild West.

## Straight to Hell

Arriving in Escalante, we immediately spotted signs for the Hells Backbone Trail on Main Street and the trail came right into town. So we saddled up the bikes and headed on out. Almost immediately the gravel turned to dust as the track meandered its way through farmland. The trail was barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass so we took things steady until it entered the Dixie National Forest and opened out, climbing higher and higher through the Pinon pines and oaks. Down in town the temperature had been a balmy 28 degrees and we were glad of the cooler air at the higher altitude.

After several miles we reached a junction with a fire road and followed the track for about six miles to a campsite beside Lake Posey where the local dirt riders come to spend the weekend. Here in the States trail riders carry their dirtbike or quad on the back of a pick-up and, after parking at one of the many trail-head camp sites, enjoy a weekend riding the well marked and numbered trails which wind through the woods. Surprisingly, the bikes don't need to be road legal, insured or have lights, but the riders do have to be licensed or if they are under 16 be accompanied by a fully qualified adult rider. Nearly all of the National Forests



across every State have this kind of recreational facility and it's something we can only dream of getting back in Blighty.

Returning to the original trail, we rode along the top of a ridge with sheer drops on both sides of the track. To the left was forest as far as the eye could see, while to the right were multi-hued cliffs of Navajo granite cut by the water flowing in two creeks now far below. The Box and Death Creeks had cut a horseshoe-shaped canyon aptly named Box Death Hollow. At a mere 25,000 acres it's small by Utah standards, but it is 1500 feet deep. We rode carefully trying to take in the view without getting too close to the edge nor run into the occasional herd of cows who munched on the wild flowers growing beside the track.

Around a sharp bend we came to the Hells Backbone Bridge which crossed the deep rocky canyon. As we were peering over the edge we heard the unmistak-

**HELL'S BACKBONE BRIDGE**

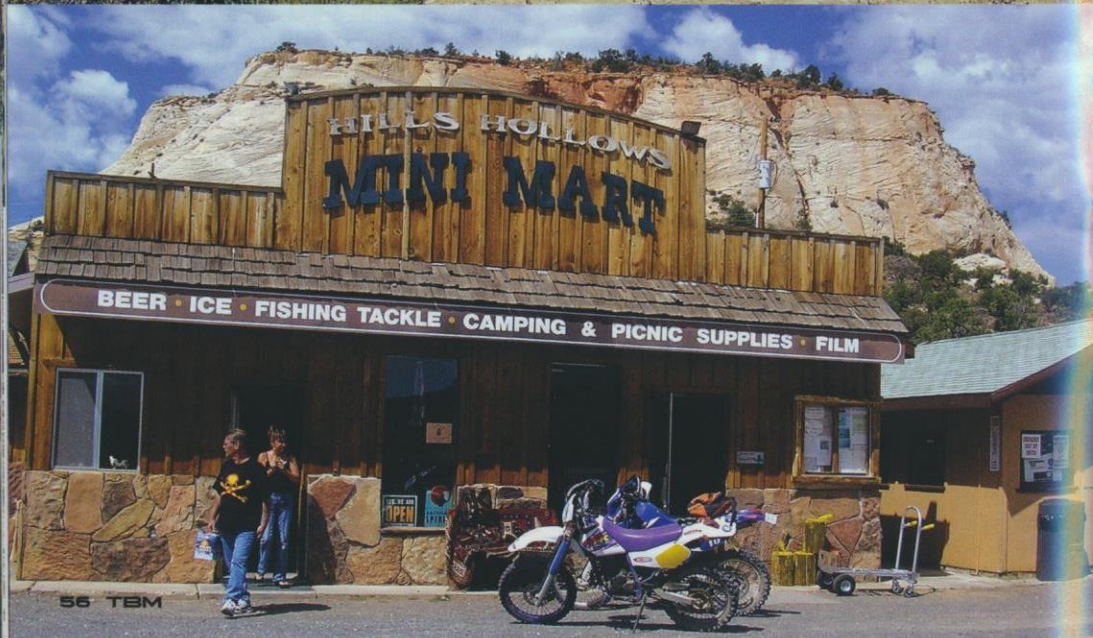
able sound of approaching thumpers, and were soon joined by three trail riders from Southern California. Riding KTM 525s and a Honda CRF450, Dan, Damon and Kevin were enjoying a week's holiday in the area and were amazed to find us parked up. They explained that they never meet any other bikers on the trails as although there are more dirtbikes and quads in the US than any other country, with so much land to ride on you rarely see a soul.

The three went on to explain that they were actually in a group of five and that they take it in turns to drive their support truck. This meant that, unlike ourselves, they weren't really limited

by their bikes' fuel range and could plan a route to get maximum time on the trails. They meet the truck at pre-arranged GPS points and at the end of the day simply load up the bikes and drive to the next town. What a great way to enjoy your riding.

Having said our goodbyes, we followed the route down through the forest to Boulder. The Burr Trail begins there though unfortunately the gravel road has been covered in tarmac for the first 30-or-so miles, so most riders transport their bikes out there then ride the many more difficult side trails, like the worryingly-named Wolverine Loop Road.

## HIGH PLAINS DRIFTERS



However, after refuelling at a quaint store we decided to return along the tarmac 'Scenic Byway' which has just been classified an 'All-American Road', apparently the highest designation for an American highway, and one of only 20 in the country.

By now it was early afternoon and the sun was beating down as we enjoyed the narrow, twisting, and undulating road which follows a ridge before delving deep between high cliffs of red sandstone. Here the tarmac traces a creek through the canyon, with cottonwoods and willows making a contrasting splash of green against the rocks, before the valley opened out and the road wound onto the high plateau once again. It was no hardship to have to ride this stretch of tarmac as the views were spectacular and there was very little traffic.

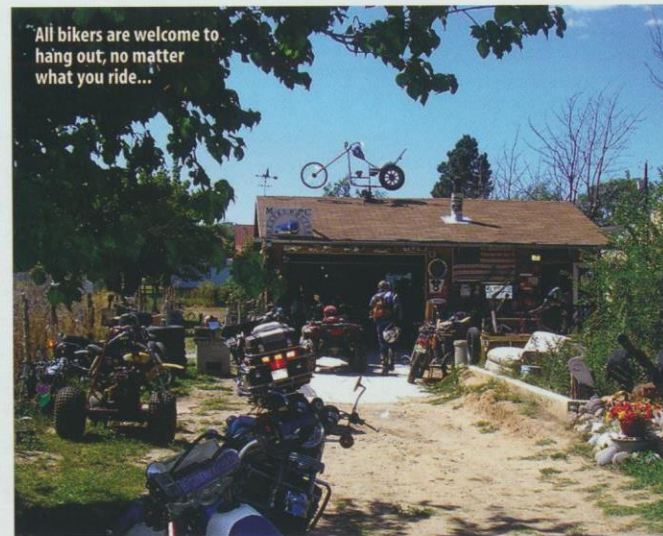
All too soon we were riding back into Escalante and dropped in on the local bike shop called Desert Doc. The owner is from Chicago but decided to seek out a more relaxed lifestyle and relocated to Utah.

Claiming to be the only workshop for 200 miles, he gets lots of visitors from around the world drop in on him and although we found his accent hard to understand he had some good tall tales to tell.

### Rock Hopping

The following day we opted to tackle the 57 miles of the 'Hole in the Rock Road'. An early start was necessary as the ride was due south and the temperature would be rising steadily all day under a clear blue sky. For the first 30 miles the track surface across the Kiaparowits Plateau was graded gravel so the miles quickly passed by. After crossing a couple of 'Texas gates', cattle grids to you and I, the surface became more natural and the track much narrower as it dipped down into dry creek beds full of deep soft sand and crossed loose stony outcrops where at last we could enjoy some real trail riding.

At Dance Hall Rock we stopped to top up the bikes from a fuel can we had strapped onboard and enjoy a rest, just as the Mormon pioneers did in the 1870s when they journeyed along this route to find more fertile lands beside the Colorado river. Here they stayed for a few days



to rest the oxen and cattle, not to mention hold square dances under the huge red rock outcrop that provided welcome shade in this harsh landscape!

Leaving the 'Rock we came to the best part of the ride as the trail climbed over the huge red sandstone outcrops and dipped down into steep sided gullies made by long dried up creeks. There was plenty of evidence that the 4x4 drivers struggle here: small rocks piled up to form ramps, car body parts lying beside the trail and black tyre marks on many of the rocks. We'd been warned that the last six miles was slow going and hot work but in reality we had a great time skipping over the grippy rocks.

All too soon we arrived at the parking place at the end of the trail and we signed the visitor book where travellers are asked to record their date of arrival and indicate their means of

Utah offers the trail rider plenty of wilderness...

## HIGH PLAINS DRIFTERS



At the top we stopped to catch our breath and marvel at the astonishing view back down to the plateau below. At this altitude the air was cooler and the track wound through the trees following the line of cliffs.

As the trail began to descend we stopped again to enjoy the view as the setting sun turned the landscape a deep crimson colour. Watching carefully where we placed our front wheels we made the hair-raising descent downhill to arrive on the main trail at Hurricane Wash. Now all we had to worry about was our fuel and whether we could make it back to town. The short answer was no and as Dot's Yamaha fizzled out I was left to ride on to the garage and fill our petrol can to refuel her bike.

transport. Already that morning three people had arrived by boat and one by aeroplane (that's definitely cheating). Apparently he had landed his microlight nearby.

Those who'd arrived by boat had done so on Lake Powell, its deep blue waters far below us at the bottom of the tall cliffs. When the pioneers arrived at this point they were faced with the sheer cliffs that fell hundreds of feet down to the river (the lake was only formed when the Colorado was dammed). So rather than turn back they blasted a hole in the rocks, down which they lowered their wagons on ropes.

The soft sandstone walls still bear the grooves made by the wheel hubs of the wagons as the men, dozens were needed, slowly lowered them down to the river. An information board explains how they accomplished this feat and how they managed to lower animals, people and all their belongings. Once down the cliff they crossed the river and continued south across the fertile plains and founded the town of Bluff.

The return journey was northwards, so the sun was at our backs but the dust was really kicking up. Marked as a 'motorcycle only trail' the surface was loose stones and the narrow track twisted and turned as it climbed up the side of the escarpment for over 1500ft

### Cliff Hangers

A few days later we once again travelled south on the other side of the Colorado river but this time the sky was cloudy and rain was forecast. Our destination was Muley Point, which claims to have the best view in the world, and we rode carefully along the sandy track that follows the edge of the Cedar Mesa (cliffs).

Neither of us could believe our eyes when we reached the 'Point. Even though the visibility was poor the view was just awesome. Here the sandstone cliffs drop vertically for over 1000ft to a deep red plain below. And into this plain the San Juan river has cut wide winding gorges another thousand feet deep. To the east was the Valley of the Gods and to cap it all in the far distance the sandstone buttes of Monument Valley that have been made famous by all those Western movie makers. But our attention was drawn to the bottom of the cliff where a tiny red

line was winding its way across the plain amongst the sage brush. Checking the map we realised that this was the trail we had come to explore and so we headed to the gravel road that would take us down the cliffs - a thousand feet in three tortuous miles on loose stones.

The narrow red track followed the base of the cliffs and lead us into

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# HIGH PLAINS DRIFTERS

another steep-sided canyon. Riding through waist-high wild flowers, stumpy juniper trees and golden-leaved oak trees, the trail criss-crossed a creek as it wound through the canyon.

We eventually arrived at the Grand Gulch Primitive Wildlife Area, where signs stated vehicles were not welcome. The GPS indicated that the main gravel road was only two miles due east, however it seemed to disregard the high cliffs that prevented us from going in that direction! The road was on top of the cliffs and we were at the bottom, so there was nothing for it but to turn around and enjoy the return ride.

Keeping an eye on the ever-darkening sky above we sped along a dirt road through the Valley of the Gods to reach the main road that lead to the town of Bluff. We were relieved to find that, even though the town looked like it had seen better days, the garage was open and we joined a queue of Harley riders at the pumps.

Checking on directions, Dot asked the lady attendant where the turning was for the Comb Ridge Road. 'Honey, that ain't nothing but a bit of dirt,' she replied, 'you don't want to go that way.' Oh yes we did, so we turned off the highway to join up with the Mormon Trail of 1880, now called Snow Creek Trail.

It's always nice to find that the last leg of your ride is better than expected and we sped along a single-track sandy trail that led us up over rocks and through the forest. At a leisurely pace we covered this trail in two hours - the Mormons took two weeks. We had wondered about how we would get back up onto the Cedar Mesa but the track climbed slowly, gaining height with every twist and turn and it was almost a disappointment when we arrived at the tarmac.

Our ride, almost 125 miles, had taken a lot longer than expected and it was almost dark when we arrived back at camp. Despite this we

were soon discussing where we would go the next day. Should we explore the Deer Creek Trail or tackle the longer ride up to the Bears Ears? There's just so many choices dirtbiking in Utah, though I guess if we spent too long in the saddle we'd end up walking just like John Wayne...

**For more information on Utah trails click onto: [utah.com/playground](http://utah.com/playground) or [ut.blm.gov/monument](http://ut.blm.gov/monument)**

## Utah Saint

This area of Southern Utah is classed by many as the capital of off-roading, and with several National parks, goodness knows how many State parks, and over nine million acres of National Forest it's a real dirtbikers' playground. Heading south from Escalante was the Smokey Mountain Road with its numerous offshoots. The Cottonwood Road following the scenic Cockscomb monocline, and the Johnson Canyon and Skutumpah Road passing through the cliffs which make up the Grand Staircase are just a few of the great rides in this area.

The Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM) is a two million acre piece of land which President Clinton saved in 1996, declaring it a National Monument to prevent the wholesale strip mining of its massive coal deposits. With no human habitation it's a wildlife and plant paradise. And as nearly 80 percent of Utah land is managed for public use by Federal and State agencies there's plenty of space in the state for recreation...

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# Bjorn Again



Six months after the near-fatal accident that prematurely ended his 2005 season, seven-time world champion Anders Eriksson tells TBM about his long road to recovery...







# Bjorn Again

**A**ugust 25 2005 is a date Anders Eriksson will never forget. On a mid-summer's day in Heinola, Finland, the factory Husqvarna rider's season came to an abrupt and incredibly painful end.

Taking one last ride on his 450cc Husky prior to the start of round seven of the WEC, Anders collided head-on in fourth gear with his Finnish team-mate Mika Saarenkoski. Suffering a compound fracture of his left femur, shattering his left kneecap, breaking his left collarbone and wrist, coming close to losing his left big toe and narrowly avoiding serious internal injuries. His career changed forever.

'I don't remember anything of what happened,' explains Anders honestly, reflecting on the accident that sent shockwaves through the WEC paddock. 'I didn't even remember thinking 'God, this is going to be a bad one.

However, I clearly recall testing the bike and thinking that I was happy with everything, but that's the last thing I can properly remember before the collision. All I know was that I was aboard my bike in fourth gear, looking forward to the race that weekend... and the next thing Karolina, my partner, was next to me. I asked if I had crashed because I could hear my team-mate Mika screaming close by and I knew something was seriously wrong'.

'All my injuries were to the left side of my body. My big toe was smashed in several places and I lost a lot of skin from under my foot. I still have the boot I was wearing. There was a big cut in the front of the boot where my gear lever was pushed backwards into my toe. Then it passed out through the boot sole almost taking my big toe with it. It must have been an unbelievable force because it's hard to stick a screwdriver through a boot, let alone a gear lever!'

'I also badly smashed my kneecap and suffered a compound fracture of my femur



Far left: As a seven time world champion, the tough Swede has got nothing left to prove. But that hasn't stopped him aiming to get back to full physical fitness again. So far Anders hasn't been back on a bike, but he's planning on being ready for the first round of this year's WEC...  
Left: Ouch, that's got to smart a bit...

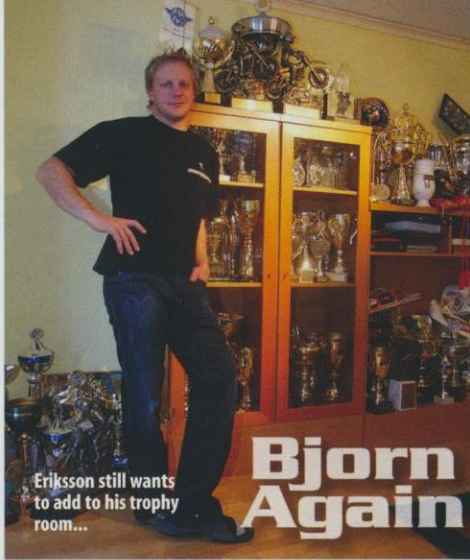
Below: Anders is a changed man... not least in his altered physical appearance...



(where the bones come out through the skin). I broke my collarbone as well as a few bones in my wrist. My lung also took a big impact but luckily it wasn't punctured.

'To give you some idea of the force of the impact, my femur broke through my carbon-fibre knee-brace from the inside, but before that, it tore through my thigh muscle, causing serious internal bleeding.

'Initially the damage to my femur was the most serious, because you can die from the shock of breaking your femur. But the damage to my kneecap is what will cause me the most problems in the future - it took a long time to fix in surgery.



Eriksson still wants to add to his trophy room...

## Bjorn Again

'Before my accident I hadn't missed a round of the world championship in 15 years due to injury, not since I started racing really. I had broken my collarbone twice - once playing ice hockey and once riding my bike, but both of those were during the off-season. I guess I've taken all my injuries at once now.

'The doctors were very positive about my recovery when I first arrived in hospital in Helsinki, Finland. It was four or five o'clock on a Friday morning and I was told that they were going to get me ready for surgery. The next thing, the operation was off as there had been a big car accident, so they delayed my surgery. So although the left side of my body was smashed to bits I was thinking then that my injuries couldn't be *that* serious, not if they were going to operate on others before me.

'After the surgery the first information I was given was that the operation had been very

successful and that I should make a full recovery. That was the news that made me, Karolina and my parents cry with happiness.

'Operation-wise they fixed my femur first, then my kneecap and then my collarbone. It took 15 hours, which is a long time and isn't too good for your body. During the first week in hospital I was on so much medication that I wasn't thinking at all about what happened. I was living hour-by-hour, day-by-day and doing whatever I was told to do. I had to make sure my left lung didn't collapse so I had a mask put over my face and air forced into my lungs, which was horrible. They gave me a bottle half full of water with a pipe in it and I just had to blow bubbles constantly and every day they took pictures of my lungs. I was in intensive care for one week.

'In total I was in hospital for a week and a half. I also had to undergo a skin graft operation

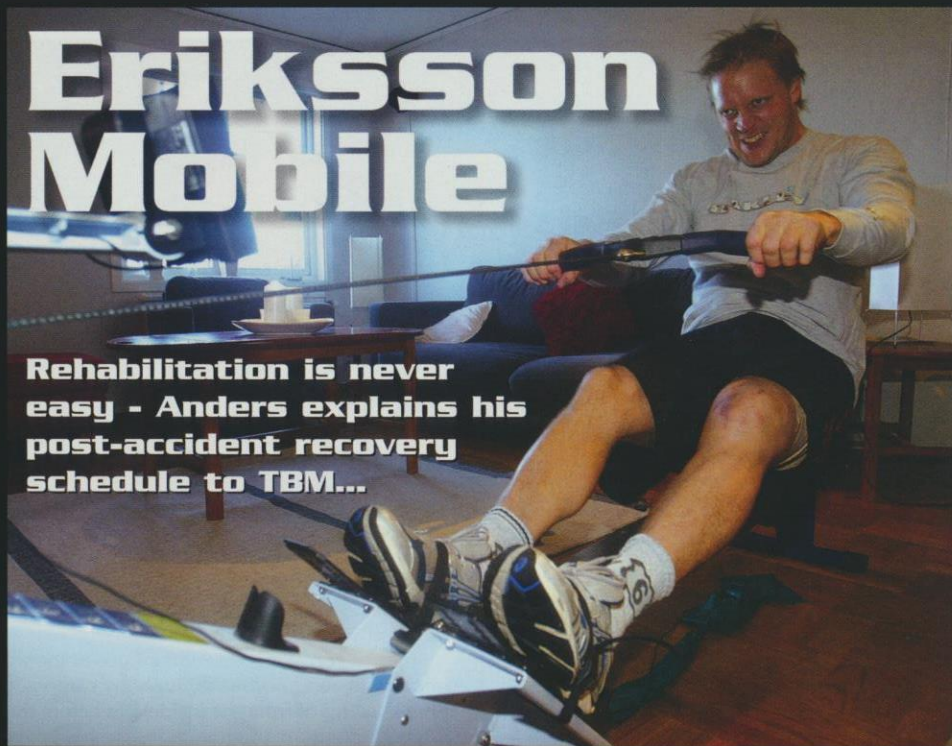
just two days after the first operation. This was because there was so much initial bleeding and soft tissue damage to the muscles around my femur they had cut it open so the blood could drain out following the operation. So to cover the opening they took skin from the inside of my right thigh - the worst scar I now have is on the outside of my left leg.

'After all this Karolina and I were flown from Helsinki to Gothenburg and then travelled by ambulance to the hospital in Skovde. Because there is a rule in Europe that states that the hospital has to pay for a patient's first journey home I was put on a regular flight. I was on a bed over the top of seats at the rear of a normal plane - that wasn't an enjoyable trip.

'I was then back in hospital in Sweden for two-and-a-half weeks continuing my medication. I started with the physiotherapist as soon as I arrived, just working on being able to sit up

# Eriksson Mobile

Rehabilitation is never easy - Anders explains his post-accident recovery schedule to TBM...



'Normally I head to Spain in February to start my on-bike training for the opening rounds of the world championship,' says Anders. 'Because of my injury and the fact that the WEC series starts in Sweden this year,

there's no point in me going to Spain because I'm not riding a bike yet. So now I am spending every day trying to increase the movement in my knee and improve my strength, especially in my left leg.

'My normal routine now is getting up at 6.20am so that I have time to have breakfast and get ready before catching the bus to my local hospital in Skovde. I start my exercises there at eight o'clock and have a special programme, which includes warming up, working on the strength of my leg muscles as well as a lot of stretching. I also have to work on increasing the movement in my knee. It takes between two and two and-a-half hours each morning.

'Then I return home, grab something to eat, and then rest for about an hour and a half before doing 30 minutes on the rowing machine followed by an upper body workout. Then basically my training is over for the day. In the evening when I relax in front of the TV I try and do some stretching or light weights every hour, just to keep the leg and knee active before going to bed at around ten o'clock. I stick to that routine four days a week, as well as fitting in some light exercise on the weekend.

'At the end of a day I am really tired - I often feel worse than if I had ridden two really hard



days of a world championship race. The worse thing is the stretching. It's not really stretching because it is really quite violent. My physiotherapist has to put all his body weight onto my knee joint to get it to move, which causes a lot of pain.

'Dealing with the pain and constantly working on my knee and leg makes me so, so tired. Sometimes it's so bad that it is a huge effort just to get off the couch and go upstairs to bed.

But I have to work hard now so that I can hopefully live without any pain in the years to come'.



in bed. I then had one more operation as one of the pins in my kneecap was almost coming out of my skin so they had to put me to sleep again to adjust it.

'I have since learnt that the body fixes the worst injury first. You can live without your collarbone, so my body started to mend my femur first and then my kneecap. That is why the surgeons decided to plate my collarbone. Normally you can race again after six weeks if you have broken your collarbone but you could see from my x-rays that my collarbone didn't really start to heal for nearly two months.

'Getting home was great to start with but in hospital they do everything for you. For instance the toilets were designed for a disabled person, which I was effectively. So once I got home I realised just how difficult the next few months would be. The first exercise I did was to walk to the mailbox but it just took so much effort. After a couple of days I walked to the end of my street and then finally around the block. I can't explain how much of a boost that gave me.

'Thankfully, there haven't been any major setbacks and I haven't missed one day of reha-

bilitation since the accident. I have some weeks where I don't gain any movement in my knee, which is disappointing. Other weeks I get five or so degrees more, so it is getting better.

'It has been a difficult time. But I've never spent a lot of time thinking 'why did this happen to me and Mika?' Of course there *are* times when I wonder why, but then I focus on my rehabilitation. You have to stay positive.

'There hasn't been one day during the past six months that has been worse than all the others but there have been many moments that have been difficult to deal with. I've shed plenty of tears but I have always kept my spirits up and haven't suffered with a lack of motivation. Every day I get up, do my work and look to the next day - I know that getting fit and strong again isn't going to be easy.

'The reaction from the Swedish media was amazing - in a very positive way. All the biggest newspapers and the TV stations came and interviewed me. That was really difficult though. I planned to give one press conference but that didn't work. As soon as I arrived there were people wanting to interview me so I spent one

# Bjorn Again



whole day having to speak with them. Because of the hospital rules I had to do all the interviews outside, which was really tiring.

'There's no way that anyone can deal with an injury like mine without the support of many, many people. Karolina has been incredible. I know that it has been hard for me but these things are often every bit as hard on those that are close to you. She has always been strong, which has helped me more than I can explain. Not only has she been there to help me do the things I can't do, she has kept me positive, which I think is the biggest thing. You really realise who are your friends at a time like this.

'Another thing that has really helped me has been the messages of support I have received on my website from fans all over the world. I can't thank those people enough.

'I have a great medical team around me as well. I have a masseur and also a doctor in Gothenburg based at a special athletic clinic there, where I have had two further operations. The first was to take out the pins from my kneecap and the second was keyhole surgery to clean the inside of my knee and cut away muscle that was sticking to my femur.

'I also work closely with my physiotherapist in my local hospital in Skovde. Every third week I go to Stockholm to the Swedish Sports Institute where I stay for three or four days and get new exercises, then I bring those home and do them.

'My goal is to see if it is possible to compete in the first round of the world championship in Sweden in March. Some of my doctors have already told me that it will not be possible and some have said that it might be, but if a doctor says maybe, then to me it *is* possible.

But when I return to racing I will be ready - ready to race again. It wouldn't give me any satisfaction knowing that I made it to the start of the race just so that I could do one lap or three special tests.

I know that my results haven't been what they should have been in the last few seasons. I have been doing more or less the same thing for the past ten or 12 years - getting up, going running, riding my bike, going to Spain before the start of the world championship etc. Now I have a break from it all. It is a break that I

didn't want, but it has given me a lot of time to think about the changes I can make. And if I can get my leg so good that it won't affect my riding I think I can start again with fresh motivation when I come back. Then I can hopefully regain the three or four percent that's been missing to become world champion again.

'I'm 33 this year and I strongly believe that if my leg allows me to compete at the highest level again I have two or three good years left in enduro. Many athletes come back stronger from injury and that's what I hope will happen to me. Nobody has the answers but that is what I want to do - come back stronger'.

**You can wish Anders well with his incredible recovery by visiting [ae-racing.com](http://ae-racing.com)**



WORDS: MEL FALCONER; PICS: MEL AND BARRI

# HUSQVARNA TE250

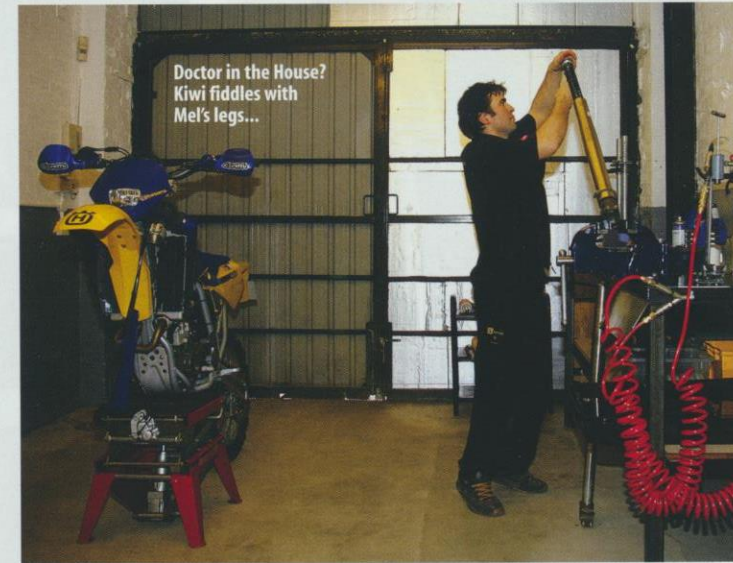
**A**s the old saying goes there are two things that are certain in this life - death and taxes. In my case, there's a third... falling off every dirt-bike I get on. So, half-crazed with excitement at having landed a Husqvarna TE250 as my first ever long-term test bike, I had conveniently forgotten how the Husky's seat height makes for one lofty perch. And then in turn how easy this makes it for a certain bird to fall off it even more than usual... especially while stationary!

Y'see, last month's 250 thumper shootout aboard my stock-as-a-rock '06 TE was only the second time I had been out on it, and the heavy conditions meant I was spending a fair bit of time picking it up, and was pretty tired as a result. So it when it came to actually being able to stop and have a quick rest I was mortified to discover I couldn't even do that with a modicum of panache.

And seeing as I'd hounded the UK importers Husky Sport for a TE ever since swinging a leg over one back in April last year I couldn't very well wobble around for the year looking for nature's equivalent of a lorry kerb every time I needed to stop or take a dab.

A cunning plan was therefore hatched which saw me heading down to the chromium-plated county of Essex a couple of weeks later to put the beloved Husky into the capable hands of 'The Doctor'.

No, not some Gallifreyan Time Lord with a dodgy taste in scarves, but in fact someone far



weirder... suspension specialist Chris 'Kiwi' Hockey, now known professionally as 'Dr Shox' (his calling cards are in all the local phoneboxes apparently).

My reasoning was thus: I was determined to get the most out of riding what is easily the best quarter-litre thumper in its class, so I was advised the only way this was going to happen was to get the bike lowered and set-up correctly for my needs. I was also curious to find out how much of a difference personal bike tailoring would really make in a situation where I (and most other riders), would need it the most, like in a difficult/demanding enduro. Oh, and it might just make the rest of the TBM wrecking crew think twice about wanting to borrow a 'mini-bike'...

It all started off just like a visit to any doctor's as Kiwi needed to know my 'case history' - how



Kiwi's never happier than when he's got latex gloves on and a rod in each hand...



After a day's work on the suspension, Mel can now touch the floor easily. Would've been cheaper to have got her some built-up heels tho'..!



much riding I'd done as well as certain vital statistics like my height, body weight and telephone number! Suffice it to say, I'm a lot lighter than the other pie munchers at TBM and possess a somewhat smaller frame than your average dirtbike rider, so this information was crucial in order to achieve the best outcome.

Sitting me on the bike, Kiwi ascertained how much he would need to lower it without compromising the travel too much, also taking into account what sort of terrain I regularly rode. As he explained, if the travel is reduced too much then a big braking bump could catapult me off - not good.

To make the job easier it's helpful to know the stock settings or what work's been carried out

on the bike before undertaking any suspension mods, otherwise you may find yourself trying to improve something which can be dialled out with a simple adjustment of the clickers.

The fully adjustable Marzocchi 45mm forks were tackled first. As well as shortening them, Kiwi also decided to re-valve them. The reason for this was that he reckoned the forks were a bit too harsh for me as standard but a change of

spring wasn't needed, re-valving alone would do the job nicely. By managing the oil flow within the compression/rebound valve (where it is slowed down by a flexible shim-stack damping is created, and the shim-stack can be altered to achieve different effects, depending on rider requirements.

The actual benefit to the rider is that this re-valving process should then provide a plusher, more controlled ride and as Kiwi assured me, would be most noticeable when riding over lumpy roots, bumps and rocks.

At this stage all I noticed was just how much

oil is actually in a fork - there seemed to be gallons of it as it was taken apart. And just how painstaking a procedure it is to do all this. After what seemed like hours (and really was), both forks were finished and slotted back into place on the TE. The final thing was to tighten everything back up and adjust the torque settings (measured in Newton metres). The standard TE250 settings are 18.4Nm (top and bottom), but Kiwi set mine at below the recommended settings - 17Nm for the top and 14Nm for the bottom as he felt that the regular settings were too tight and could cause distortion of the forks.

## The Doctor Will See You Now...

**B**ack in 2001 foot and mouth disease was pretty much a disaster for most of the off road riding community but for Kiwi it offered a golden opportunity to start up his own suspension business.

After riding mostly KX and YZ 'crossers in his early enduro career, he soon got fed up with the unforgiving MX set-up of the bikes in enduro conditions. 'I was finishing races feeling completely beaten up,' he recalls. 'I visited loads of supposed suspension specialists but couldn't seem to find anyone who could set my bike up properly for enduro terrain. They just weren't taking into account stuff like rocks and roots so it made for a really bone shuddering ride.'

Determined to sort this problem out for himself Kiwi experimented with many alterations/settings during 1999/2000 but could only dedicate himself part-time to the task. So when foot and mouth came along a year later he decided to take a year off and get it cracked once and for all.

He headed over the Channel to Belgium and Technical Touch, the European distributors for Kayaba suspension components who support nine-times motocross world champion Stefan Everts.

After acquiring various different setting configurations from them, Kiwi came back to the UK to perfect his enduro set-up.

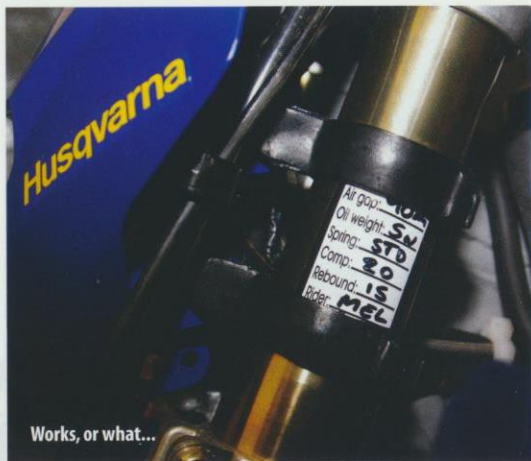
And the rest, as they say, is history. Kiwi set up his Endurotech (now renamed Dr Shox) suspension business in 2002 and a year later became a Husky Sport team rider, currently



competing in the E1 class of the British Enduro Championships.

Oh, and in case you're wondering why he's called Kiwi? 'It's really boring actually. My sister, who's a year older than me, couldn't pronounce 'Chris' when she was starting to talk and she somehow thought the babysitter who looked after us at the time called me Kiwi, so it kinda' stuck from thereon in'.

Personalised set-up and re-valving is available for all types of suspension, and Kiwi also offers specialist lowering, suitable for enduro/trail/supermoto riding. For more info and pricing call Kiwi on either 01206 233444 / 07971 447085 or check out drshox.co.uk.



Works, or what...

was a little trial and error involved here as the pre-load was first adjusted and then the rear of the bike compressed to check it wasn't too low/high. Always ensure you're wearing your boots when doing this, as it needs to be set to your height/leg reach when in your actual riding footwear.

But after eight hours of work the TE was finally finished. Hopping onto it with my boots on, I couldn't believe how low it was - for the first time I could put my boot flat on the floor with the other foot up on the peg. Pure bliss! The finishing touch was the rather swish factory-style settings sticker slapped onto the fork leg.

But the acid test was still to come - how would the Husky feel out on the rough stuff? So, it was just four days later when I eagerly signed up for a few hours' training at one of Geraint Jones's enduro schools at the army testing ground down on Slab Common in Bordon, Hants.

In totally non-TBM style, we actually arrived early for once and I plonked myself into the Sportsman group. Starting out on some fairly tight and twisty woodland trails I was a little sceptical as to how much real difference all of Kiwi's tinkering would've made. But for once the cynic in me was silenced as the newly reworked suspension simply soaked up the bumps and glided over some big roots smoothly.

Beforehand my biggest worry was that there wouldn't be enough travel left and it would bottom out in the numerous dips and holes, but again nothing of the sort happened and the front end definitely felt more supple.

Another tip I gleaned was that if you clean the outside of the forks with brake cleaner prior to re-installing them this helps prevent over-tightening - stopping the clamp from binding.

Finally it was now the turn of the rear Sachs shock to receive the Kiwi treatment. For this it was decided that again, the spring was perfectly adequate, but it needed to be shortened, as well as setting-up the spring pre-load correctly.

Apparently some riders who want a 'quick fix' seat height reduction simply adjust the pre-load (wind the spring down) until the rear of the bike is low enough for them. But this is not ideal because apart from affecting the bike's geometry it also holds the suspension in the wrong part of the stroke.

Once the shock was shortened, it was put back into the Husky and then the pre-load was altered in order to set the sag correctly. There

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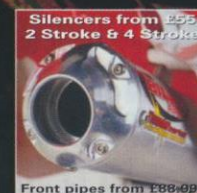
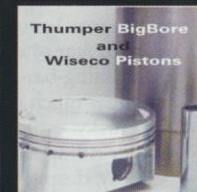
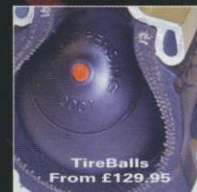
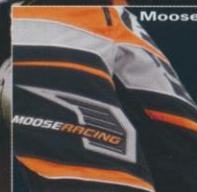
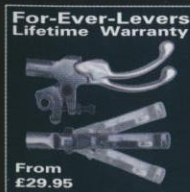
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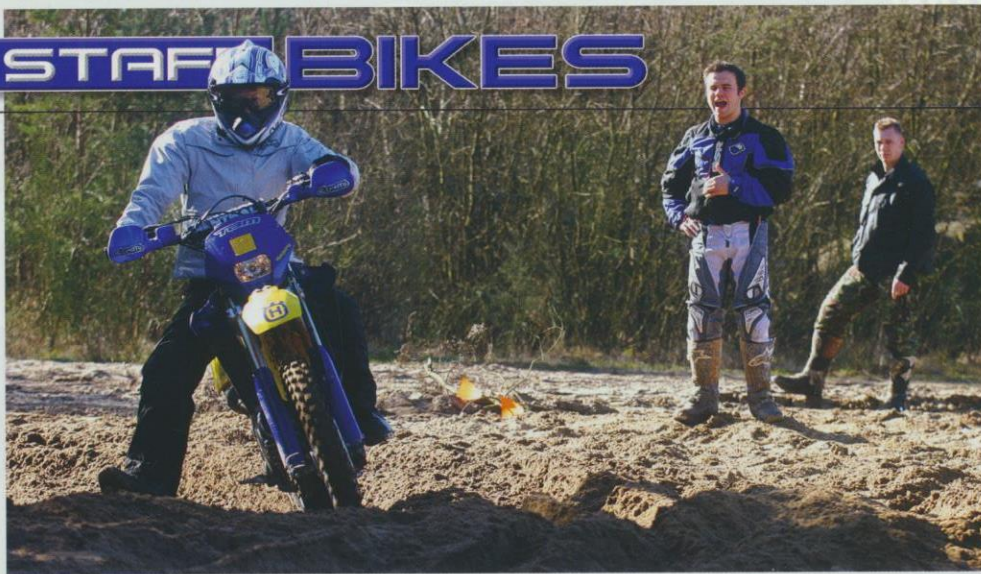
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# STAFF BIKES



He's a good instructor, but Mel wasn't all that impressed with Dylan's estimation...

But one of the biggest improvements by far for me was I could now stop and hold the bike without fear of doing a 'Del Boy falling over-the-missing-bar-counter' type stunt. The other was how much control I now felt I had over the Husky, especially when it came to trying to master riding a berm correctly in deep, soft sand.

Sadly, despite the excellent tuition offered by none other than Dylan Jones (for those of you that remember, the poor guy had the pleasure of instructing me when I first learnt to ride off-road), I didn't quite get the hang of it!

The next real test will be a strenuous hare and hounds event on completely different terrain so this should hopefully be where my new and improved TE will really shine.

Now some of you will no doubt be thinking that this kind of specialist work costs a small fortune, but happily you'd be wrong. I

personally think that just over £200 is a very reasonable price to pay for something that has basically enabled me to ride my chosen bike with far more confidence.

All of the work is fully reversible, but just bear in mind that'll it cost the same to put it back to standard. However there are plenty of shorter riders out there who won't mind buying a professionally lowered bike, as it'll save them the hassle of getting it done.

And the changes won't be stopping there - far from it. But just to reassure you I don't intend to get silly, I just want to make a few more subtle mods that should improve the TE still further and ones that the majority of riders would consider doing too. Stuff like replacing the oversized 9.2L plastic tank with something smaller and less bulky. I'm also planning on replacing the standard braced handlebars with some rather tasty Pro-Taper fat bars, which should improve matters up top.

Oh, and just a slight plastics change is also on the cards, as I reckon the Husky will look sooooo much sexier in the Centennial red and white colour scheme. After all, it's a woman's duty, nay right, to try and change her nearest and dearest into something better so why the heck should my new love escape unscathed..?

**Mel**

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## Preparation, preparation, preparation...

**There's an old cliché about racing which goes along the line of: Fail to Prepare? Prepare to fail!**

Talk to any successful Dakar competitor and the one thing they'll all agree on is that when it comes to bike prep - you simply cannot do too much.

Now for most people the Dakar Rally with its extremes of temperature, punishing schedules and hostile terrain is so far removed from their average day's racing as to not bear any comparison. But in fact there are similarities, it's just that for the average Joe, the level of danger for failing to prepare your race bike properly

is nowhere near as great.

On the other hand whether you're riding in a desert rally, or just a local hare and hounds it inevitably involves a degree of cost. Fuel, insurance, spares, time, transport, food, accommodation, all of these are 'running costs' which add to the total cost of racing a dirtbike.

Alright, you may say, you own a tatty old race bike which cost you under a grand and which only gets maintained when it's lucky. Doesn't matter. If anything, it's those guys who

ought to be paying the most attention to this advice. So now's the time (before the year gets properly underway) to get your bike fully prepared for the coming season.

Because, a well-prepped machine means that you can start each race with a clear head, not worrying whether your bike is going to go the distance.

### Chain Gang

Take a look at your bike's chain and sprockets. If they're more than 18 months old, remove them immediately and order up a new set (both front & rear sprockets and a chain). Don't look how worn they are, just do it. And don't skimp on prices, go for a high quality O-ring or X-ring heavy duty chain from a reputable manufacturer and fit it



with (preferably) a soft link rather than a split-link. Ensure that your new chain is adjusted correctly (most are usually too tight) and you can hopefully

forget all about snapped or de-railed chains, broken crankcases and mangled clutch slave cylinders on hydraulically-clutched bikes. A complete set of high

**Tooth Decay? Start the season with a fresh chain and sprocket set...**

quality items will cost about 100 notes, but even the cheapest set of broken cases is going to cost a hell of a lot more than that.

### Tyred Out

What's the point in starting the season with a worn out tyre? I mean what does that say about your riding abilities - that you aren't even good enough to warrant fresh rubber. At this time of year you need all the grip you can get, so order up a couple of sets of good quality tyres. At the very least, you'll always have a spare set on hand in case you slash a sidewall or need a tyre in a hurry.

And while you're changing tyres why not invest in some ultra-thick heavy duty tubes or mousers. Punctures are a pain right, so it's best to try and

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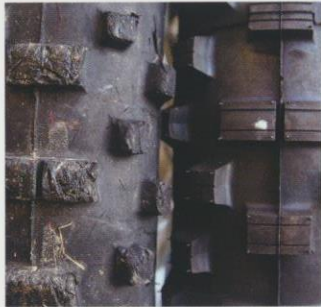


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# TRADE SECRETS



avoid them. Your old tubes won't last forever - a valve can rip out at any time - so start your race with peace of mind.

## At the Bar

Okay, lets get your bike's riding position sorted. Are you happy with your bars as they are, or could they do with being higher/lower or of a different bend?

Nowadays there are all sorts of different adjustments available to tailor your riding position. Many bikes offer adjustment at the clamps, and aftermarket suppliers can sell you different height bar adjusters.

Meanwhile, a fresh set of bars in a slightly more comfortable bend can make all the difference in terms of fatigue/arm pump etc. Anyway, bars should be treated like any other consumable item, they get bent and weaken every time your bike gets dropped, and should be replaced every couple of seasons. I've seen the effects of a set of alloy bars which snapped on landing from a smallish jump and it wasn't pretty.

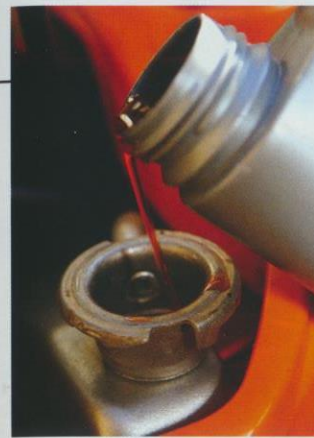
Once you've got some new bars in place, slap on a fresh set of grips (lockwired in place of

course) and some new handguards and you're ready for the competition.

## Fluid Force

I'm assuming you stay up to date with your bike's required oil changes (engine oil on a four-stroke, and gearbox oil on a two-stroke - both in the case of the CRF), but what about other fluids? Have you ever flushed your brake or clutch fluid through? Or changed the coolant? Especially in winter!

Both of these are important in terms of protecting your own safety - not to mention the bike's engine, and both are relatively easy to do in the space of an afternoon. Think about it. If you're always complaining about a spongy front brake, a sticking clutch or your bike has



Cooler King: Ensure that your bike has the correct mix of coolant in the radiators...

ever boiled over, then it's worth addressing these items.

## Nice Pad

Okay, if your brake pads are pretty well worn, don't even think about starting a wet or muddy race at this time of year without installing a new set of pucks. Not only will they wear

out much faster in mud, but you also risk losing your brakes and/or damaging the bike's discs. If there's still a bit of meat left on the pads (say they're over half-worn), pull 'em out and replace with new ones, but don't throw them away. Instead, lockwire them together (through the loops), and sling 'em in your spares box which you carry with you to all your races. You do carry a spares box don't you?

## Don't slack

Cables (and particularly throttle cables) will stretch a little during use - that's why there's adjustment built into them somewhere along their length. So while you're doing your pre-season prep, check the condition of the throttle (and clutch) cable, and either renew them for a nice

silky feel, or at least adjust them so there's not too much slack.

Slack in the throttle cable (particularly on a four-stroke) can make the power delivery jerky, and the bike then becomes incredibly difficult to ride.

## Ready to Race

Okay, once you've done your pre-season race prep, there's just one last vitally important thing to do. Test your bike. I don't mean start it up on the side-stand and twist the throttle, I mean go and ride the thing somewhere - anywhere, even if it's just briefly down the road - to ensure that all the changes you made are working and properly bedded in. That way you won't get any nasty surprises come race day. Well not from your bike, anyway...

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# STAFF BIKES TM EN250

STORY: BARNI; PICS: MEL FALCONER

TM's first outing reveals its winning potential...  
...Albeit not in our hands!



Last month I promised that I'd be reporting back on my first race aboard the TM with an initial riding impression and some general findings. And I'm not going to welch on that deal, well not entirely. It's just that I haven't actually been racing...

We headed off to go racing. Heck, we even got within sight of the startline. Yet the paddock had turned into a quagmire overnight and after towing a number of vehicles onto the field, even the farmer's tractor cried enough. Half the entry was still queued up along the access road as the start time came and went, and sadly, with no way to get the riders into the event and the medics stranded at the end of the tailback, the organisers had to call the whole thing off. Gutted.

But fear not, dear reader, for I *have* been out on the TM. In the week prior to the ill-fated SCEC event, Mel spent half a day at one of Geraint Jones' enduro schools at Bordon in Hampshire and I rode shotgun on the EN250 to take a few snaps. And, to put not too fine a point on it, I was really impressed with the bike on my first acquaintance.

Last year's machine apparently made great gobs of power all the way through the rev range, to such an extent that even riding it a gear higher than necessary couldn't soften its bite and, like a jealous girlfriend, the throttle was

something to be treated with respect. Yet, as I followed Mel and her training group around the woods at Bordon this wasn't the impression it gave. The TM was more than happy to pull taller gears, and when the course opened out I simply rode the massive, but accessible, mid-range pull.

Although there was very little chance to open her up properly (meaning I was doubly itching to go racing), but when I did it was obvious how TM gained their reputation for powerful stokers - the thing just ripped.

Chassis-wise, the Paioli forks and Ohlins shock definitely felt firm, though never harsh and I can see them being really good at a faster pace. The combination of a Nissin master cylinder and Brembo caliper seemed to give far better 'lever feel' than the straight Brembo systems found on certain other Euro bikes, though I might have a bit of a fiddle to see if it can be improved further.

## Bits and Pieces

After my quick spin at Bordon there were a couple of little additions and modifications that I wanted to make to get the bike race-ready. First off, the slightly trivial matter of covering the bar clamps with a barpad wasn't quite so straightforward. As the clocks are mounted over the clamps this was gonna require a bit of a re-jig if I wanted to retain the little digi speedo - which I

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UFO handguards now grace the TM's bars...



ordered a pair from importers MD Racing.

Named after the famous Stateside MX track, the UFO parts have a funky modern shape and should give plenty of coverage for not only my hands but also the bike's brake and clutch master cylinders. I'll let you know just how the handguards, and more importantly my hands, hold up.

One thing which certainly won't be surviving the season is the TM's Gas Gas-esque rear light. In the same way that Ferrari used to blight the interior of their supercars with

switchgear from a Fiat Uno, the TM's old fashioned light unit looks somewhat at odds with the quality of the other components. So I'll be fitting something a bit more sleek and stylish.

But there's only so much prep and preening a bloke, and a bike, can take and with any luck I'll have been out on the TM again before next month. Though this time I'm not going to tempt fate, and Mother Nature, by telling you when and where... **Barni**

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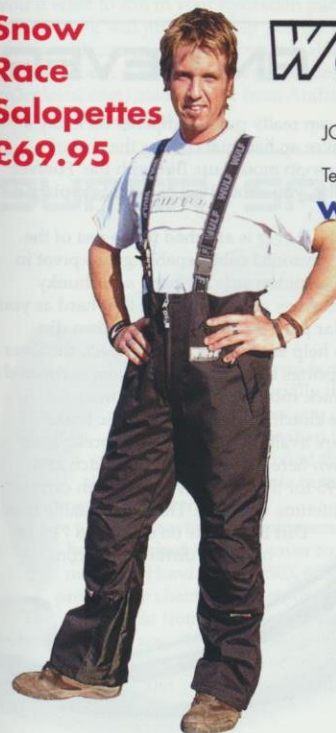
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## BIT ON THE SIDE

Need a bit more range on your dirtbike but don't want a big wide tank getting in your way? Or maybe you've already got an oversize tank and still you need to go further without refuelling? Then what you need is a rear tank, like this one from American company Baja Designs.

The plastic tank mounts onto the left-hand side of the bike in place of, or behind in some cases, the sidepanel and the fuel line splices into your existing pipe/s. The tanks vary in capacity from 4.5L to 5.6L, depending on bike and model of tank, and are available for 2000-onwards KTMs and early WR-F/YZ-F Yamahas. The orange one here is a 5.6L item for a KTM.

The Baja Designs tanks cost £105, which includes VAT and delivery, and you can buy online at [plautotech.com](http://plautotech.com). Alternatively, phone Plautotech on 0845 838 0706 and tell them TBM sent you...



## FUEL CELL

'Long Lasting - Never Crashing' claims the website for new energy drink, Advanced Cell Therapy. I assume they mean there's no 'come-down' from the all-natural 'high' the drink gives you, but if they really do claim that it'll stop you from eating dirt then it's definitely the drink for dirtbikers.

Unlike many energy drinks, ACT isn't chock full of caffeine and sugar, instead it's crammed full of vitamins and 'targets specific metabolic pathways to create optimal balance and performance at the cellular level' - whatever that means. But what you wanna know is does it work.

Having thoroughly mixed a sachet with half-a-pint of water I took a sip. And like most things that are good for you, it tasted a little weird. Jilly Goulding would describe the aftertaste as 'cherry with a hint of old fork oil'. So I downed it...

Funky flavour aside, I did feel that bit more sprightly after drinking ACT, though as it doesn't give you the kind of immediate high-energy buzz other energy drinks provide it's a little hard to quantify just how much of an effect it had. I certainly didn't feel quite as drained as I thought I would after riding an event, though.

With it's slightly strange taste it's not really a drink you'd want to run in your hydration pack, but a glass in the morning will probably help you get through a day's riding with energy to spare. Individual sachets cost £1.20 (there's a bulk discount) and you can order ACT from [m2cglobal.com/made4u2](http://m2cglobal.com/made4u2), or from Andrew Murray on 07737 886282. **Barni**

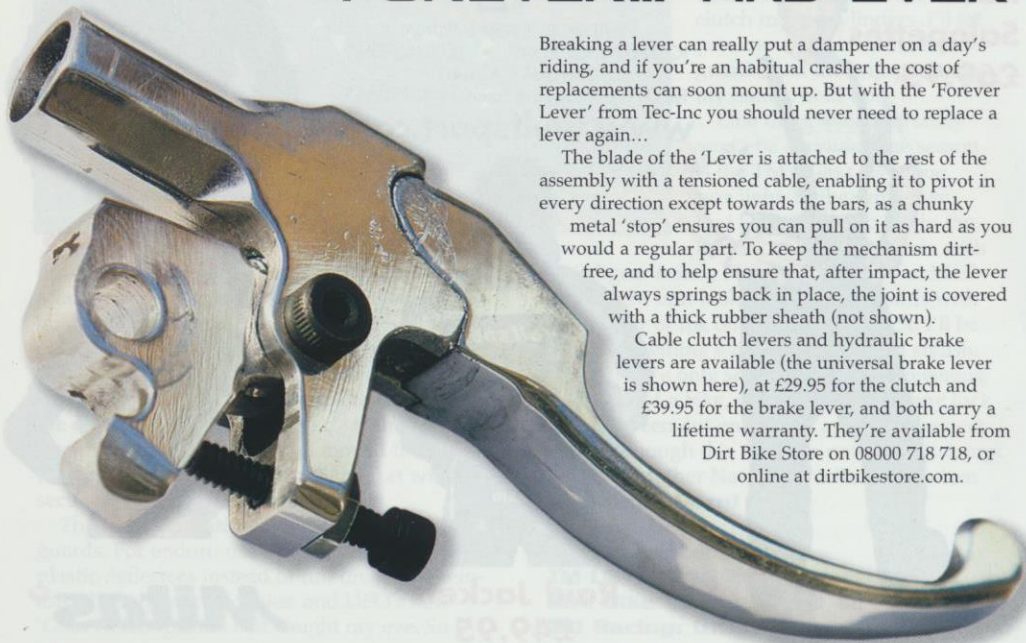


## FOREVER... AND EVER

Breaking a lever can really put a dampener on a day's riding, and if you're an habitual crasher the cost of replacements can soon mount up. But with the 'Forever Lever' from Tec-Inc you should never need to replace a lever again...

The blade of the 'Lever is attached to the rest of the assembly with a tensioned cable, enabling it to pivot in every direction except towards the bars, as a chunky metal 'stop' ensures you can pull on it as hard as you would a regular part. To keep the mechanism dirt-free, and to help ensure that, after impact, the lever always springs back in place, the joint is covered with a thick rubber sheath (not shown).

Cable clutch levers and hydraulic brake levers are available (the universal brake lever is shown here), at £29.95 for the clutch and £39.95 for the brake lever, and both carry a lifetime warranty. They're available from Dirt Bike Store on 08000 718 718, or online at [dirtbikestore.com](http://dirtbikestore.com).

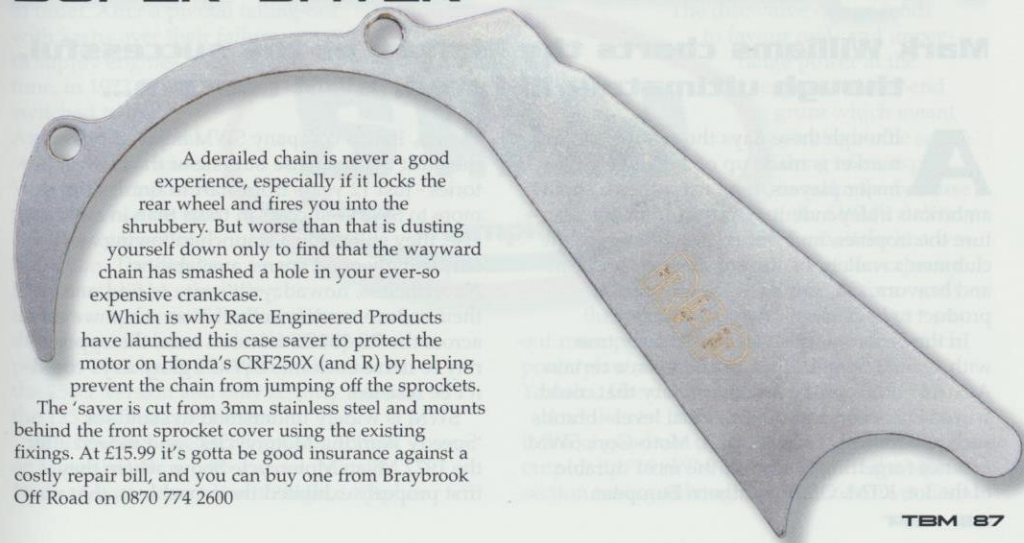


## SUPER SAVER

A derailed chain is never a good experience, especially if it locks the rear wheel and fires you into the shrubbery. But worse than that is dusting yourself down only to find that the wayward chain has smashed a hole in your ever-so expensive crankcase.

Which is why Race Engineered Products have launched this case saver to protect the motor on Honda's CRF250X (and R) by helping prevent the chain from jumping off the sprockets.

The 'saver is cut from 3mm stainless steel and mounts behind the front sprocket cover using the existing fixings. At £15.99 it's gotta be good insurance against a costly repair bill, and you can buy one from Braybrook Off Road on 0870 774 2600





# SWMing Against the Tide

**Mark Williams charts the history of the successful, though ultimately ill-fated, SWM concern...**

**A**lthough these days the serious enduro market is made up of a relatively few major players, time was when a small, ambitious independent manufacturer could capture the trophies, and thence the contents of the clubmen's wallets, by dint of sheer enthusiasm and bravura. Oh, and a sufficiently decent product to back it up.

In the Seventies this was particularly true with several Spanish, Italian and even a certain Austrian outfit producing machinery that could win at European and international level - brands such as Montesa, Bultaco, Beta, Moto-Gori, SWM and not forgetting of course, the most durable of the lot, KTM. Of the southern European

brands, Italian company SWM enjoyed possibly the most meteoric rise but one of the briefest histories - just 12 years from start to finish - but due more to SWM's success in trials than in anything else, they still enjoy a staunch following and surprisingly good spares availability. Nevertheless, nowadays it's rare to find one of their enduro models in the UK so when we came across the RS-250GS featured here, the opportunity to delve back into SWM's glory days couldn't be resisted.

SWM is widely understood to stand for 'Speedy Working Motorcycles', and indeed after the 1972 Milan Motorcycle Show, where they first properly exhibited their machines, that was

the official factory line. But the real origins are slightly more prosaic. The marques founders, Piero Sironi and Faustus Vergani, took the first letters of their surnames, butted up the first letter of Vergani's hometown of Vimercate against that first 'V' to form a 'W', and added the 'M' for Motorcycles.

Both Sironi and Vergani were passionate riders, the former a motocrosser of some considerable accomplishment whose racing career was cut short by a serious accident in the Fifties but who went on to compete for Italy in ISDTs, most notably on the Isle of Man in 1965. His friend, Faustus Vergani, also a nine-time ISDT gold medalist, worked in the technical department of Gilera, concentrating on two-stroke engine development with a particular bent for, the then radical, disc-valve aspiration.

In the late Sixties the pair began toying with the notion of building their own machines and started work on a prototype in Vergani's garage in Vimercate, north east of Milan. This used a square-section chassis similar to that used by Morini at the time and a six-speed, 125cc Sachs engine taken from a Hercules. In July 1971 the pair had managed to attract sufficient funding (with help from Franco Acerbis of competition plastic fame), to start small-scale production in their own factory in Milan.

Using 50, 100 and 125cc Sachs powerplants, SWM initially concentrated on enduro models plus a few motocrossers essentially built to order. After a pivotal falling-out with Sachs over their failure to supply engines on time, in 1973 SWM switched to the Austrian-built Rotax strokers which gave Vergani the opportunity to invoke his passion for rotary-valve induction. The engines Rotax supplied to the little Italian company were built to Vergani's design specification and offered superior power - 29.5bhp @ 8400rpm in the case of the 250cc version and only slightly less for the 125 at a buzzy 9750rpm!

Both engines used CDI ignition (Bosch or Motoplat), Bing carbs, and employed Nickasil-coated barrels with high, 14:1-plus



compression ratios. The porting of these rotary-valve engines was quite complex, with a single intake port lowdown in the crankcase and controlled, as the name suggests, by a revolving disc with a cut-out which allowed the charge to be sucked directly into the crankcase.

There were also four transfer ports and a 'booster' port which maximized the volatility of the compressed mixture before it ignited.

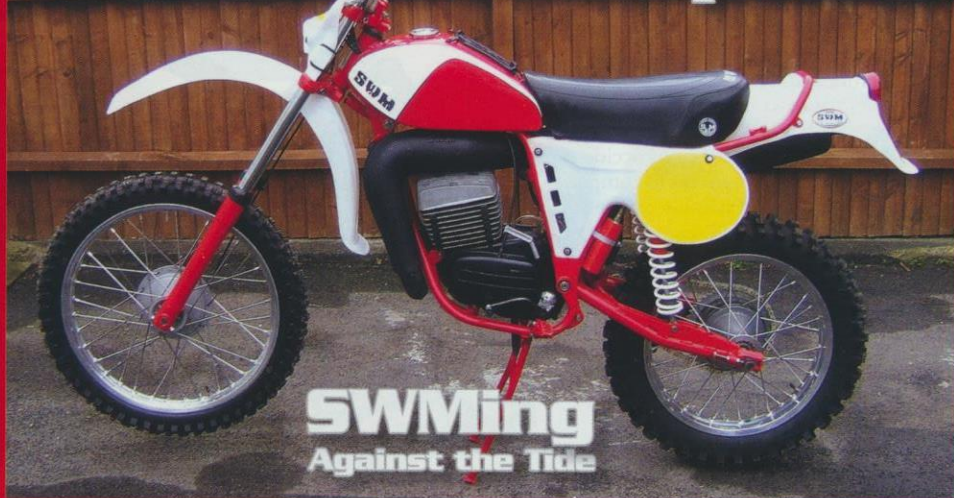
The disc-valve design tends to favour mid- and upper-range power at the expense of low-end grunt which meant you had to be something of an expert to make the best use of the SWM's delivery.

But the bottom line was that in any given capacity, the SWM/Rotax motors - with their extremely short-stroke design - put out more power than virtually any other stock powerplant at the time, including anything Yamaha, Honda or Suzuki had to offer.

And the rest of the bike was more than able to make good use of the engine's prodigious output. By '74 SWM had abandoned the square-section tubing although their more conventional



## Italian Masterpiece



**D**ave Martin has some very fanciable bikes in his garage including a bright red, tricked-up and utterly pristine Laverda Jota, an early Honda XL250 and a very late Maico 250 mono-shock, water-cooled motocrosser. But pride of place goes to a 1980 SWM 250GS Enduro. Apart from having hens' teeth written all over it, this was the most pristine machine I've ever seen in nearly three years of scouring the country for Archives material. Needless to say given the unmarked paintwork, scratch-free plastics and gleaming alloy rims, Dave hadn't yet ridden the bike either on- or off-road, although in the few months he'd owned it the bike had enjoyed quite a chequered history.

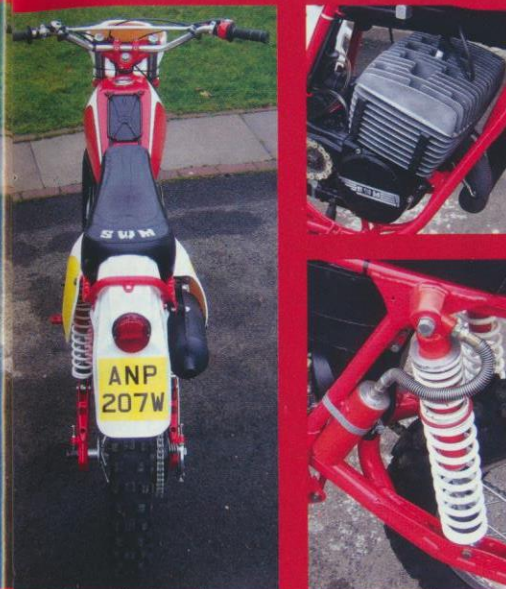
Dave originally came across the SWM last autumn when he was scanning eBay for something to start riding the odd enduro on, after a lapse of some years. 'A mate of mine had one years ago,' he explained, 'and I always liked the look of it. The bike appeared to be in excellent condition and had, according to the bloke who owned it, just been through a complete re-build. So I kept bidding and finally won it.'

However Dave, who lives in Leicestershire, couldn't get down to pick it up from the

vendor in Southend until the following weekend, and in the few days in between, and to all parties' utter dismay, the SWM was stolen. (I say 'all parties' because by this time I'd already heard from Dave's son, Anthony, about this rare beast and was looking forward to featuring it in TBM). And for a while that seemed like the deeply unsatisfactory end to the story.

But fast-forward to mid-January and Anthony got back in touch to say the SWM had been recovered, together with several other stolen bikes, in an Essex lock-up. Needless to say I got back on the case pronto and a drizzly Sunday afternoon in late February was considerably livened up by the sight of Dave's bike gleaming, almost defiantly, in his garage.

It's a 1980 model which differs from earlier GS/RSs inasmuch as the rear shocks are by Corte e Cosse, with the gas reservoirs strapped to the rear subframe, and the Grimeca SLS front brake is located on the offside rather than nearside. Dave believes that the Rotax-based engine was slightly less fierce in its delivery than the '76-79 models, although I noticed that it wore a 32mm Bing carb which I'd been led to believe had been dumped in favour of a Dell'Orto by 1980. The only items that were definitely not stock were the slightly spindly but perfectly



balanced centrestand - such a sensible accoutrement if you need to change an inner tube in the middle of nowhere - and the British Wassel handlebars.

This didn't stop me gawking though, especially at the incredible level of detail you just don't see on modern enduro tackle. The split in the duplex frame below the exhaust port is reinforced by two narrow tubes which reach back under the engine, the 'banana' swing-arm is exquisitely gusseted for added strength and the beautifully painted alloy tank has a tub let into it for a toolkit, which is in turn protected by a clever QD rubber and plastic lid. Further evidence of Sironi and Vergani's attention to detail, to say nothing of their pride in their products, is the profusion of SWM logos cast or stamped into virtually every component from brake plates and exhaust system to seat cover and mudguards.

Dave's SWM is almost too good-looking to ride, especially given the quality of the paintwork on the tank which it would seem sacrilegious to scuff, but he does intend to use it for the purpose it was built. And with an expensive Stan Stevens engine rebuild in its immediate past and a plethora of brand new cycle parts, it would seem a shame not to.



semi-duplex, molybdenum-steel chassis were both strong and lightweight. Marzocchi suspension at both ends - with remote gas reservoirs on the twin rear shocks from the mid-70s onwards - was capable of taking considerable punishment when the bikes were ridden fast over harsh terrain. But some riders, particularly in America, opted to switch to Works Performance or White Power units to ease the ride quality and marginally improve manoeuvrability. Other components reflected SWM's demand for top quality and included Grimeca brakes and hubs, Akront alloy rims and, of course, Acerbis plastics.

By this time, SWMs were making a major impact in ISDT-type events and one-day enduros



# FROM THE ARCHIVES

**SWMing**  
Against the Tide



success, they also produced 125 and 250cc GTS roadsters, as well as a 50cc moped, primarily for the domestic Italian market.

By the late Seventies, and with the assistance of world champion Joel Robert, the marque had fully developed a range of motocross bikes and having already come fourth in the world series courtesy of Jean-Claude Laquaye, were starting to make inroads into the all-important American market. But as many before them had discovered, deep pockets and the ability to keep winning were

essential if you're going up against the Japanese Big Four, and SWM's impact was mixed. Part of the problem was that as far as the average clubman was concerned, the bikes weren't that easy to ride. The peaky Rotax engine and harsh suspension were the main culprits, and although re-jetting the Bing carbs would improve tractability, this was somewhat at the expense of top-end.

Although SWM motocrossers were exported to America right up until its demise, in 1977 the company introduced 125 and 320cc Rotax-powered trials bikes (dubbed TL and TLR) which proved more successful for them on both the domestic and world stages. Developed by the legendary Sammy Miller and Charles Coutard, they and other riders such as Bernie Schrieber, Martin Lampkin and Thierry Michaud all won national championships on SWM trials irons. In 1981 they won both the British championship and the Scottish Six-Days.

Although the quality of their products was not in question, by the early 1980s demand for

who also organise events and can help with technical queries. Check out [swm-moto.org](http://swm-moto.org) if you're interested.

Finally, if you come across one of the later, four-stroke SWMs you'll at least find parts easy enough to source owing to the ubiquity of an engine that was used by Armstrong, Harley-Davidson and CCM to name but three. And even the earlier 'strokers are well catered for by a number of specialists, most notably Peter Knight whose excellent website can be found at [rotax.co.uk](http://rotax.co.uk).

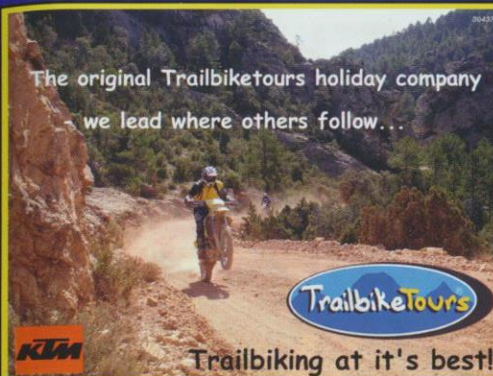
at all levels. Works riders like Renato Anesi and Paschal Bernini, under the stewardship of competition director, Alfredo Manfredini, were winning trophies by the bucket-load and in 1975 SWM grabbed the Italian 'Vaso d'Argento' (Silver Cup).

By '79 SWM were regularly winning national titles across the continent and that year the company's riders also won the World Enduro Championship. Here in Britain one of my own heroes, Alan Brick, had a class win in the 1980 British Enduro Championship on a six-speed 125cc SWM which was tuned to do over 80mph on forestry fire roads! Rather him than me.

SWM's enduro range, somewhat confusingly dubbed 'RS' and/or 'GS', had by then expanded considerably with beefy 320 and 440cc engined versions in addition to the 250, 175, 125 and even tiddly 50cc models. And like many other European factories buoyed by competition

## SWMing Pool

A wealth of SWM enthusiasts means that spare parts for the Italian bikes are in relatively good supply. Martin Mathews runs an outlet in the UK ([motoswm.com](http://motoswm.com)) and although he specialises in the trials models, he does have some spares for the enduro machines. There's also a well-established user group - I hesitate to call them a 'fan club' but their enthusiasm is impressive - with links to spares and other SWM-oriented suppliers



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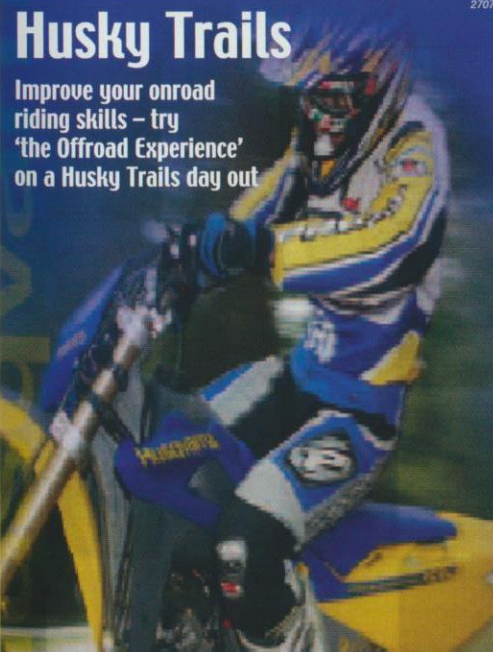
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# FROM THE ARCHIVES

a 125cc enduro bike costing over £1400 (when a Suzuki PE175 could be had for a little over £800) meant that sales, at least in the UK, had dwindled to a trickle. Moreover, fuelled by environmental concerns and legislation, public taste was starting to migrate to four-stroke power and, unable to afford development of their own engines, SWM again looked to Rotax for their motivation. The now-familiar 350 and 506cc belt-driven OHC engines, as originally developed for KTM, soon found their way into SWM chassis but in outright racing conditions, these machines proved uncompetitive compared to the 'stroker-powered models that preceded them. A move to a disc braked front-end and the launch of a Dakar-style model in 1983 failed to generate much demand, at least in the vital export market. Meanwhile the factory were still successfully campaigning their two-stroke models and even experimented with water-cooling.

Having already overstretched themselves producing and marketing too many different models in too many markets, SWM developed



cash-flow problems in 1983 and the following year the company went into liquidation. But as I noted at the start of this story, SWMs command considerable loyalty amongst their followers and there is still a healthy supply of parts available if you know where to look.

So really there's no reason not to own, ride and enjoy an SWM in the 21st century always assuming, of course, that you're lucky enough to be able to find one.

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**Bore & stroke:**  
**Displacement:**  
**Comp ratio:**  
**Max power:**  
**(claimed)**  
**Transmission:**  
**Chassis:**

5-speed  
Single downtube, duplex  
sub-frame

**Front susp:**

36mm Marzocchi  
10ins travel

**Rear susp:**

Marzocchi 10ins travel

**Brakes:**

Front 4.7in SLS drum,  
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**Wheels:**

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Rear 4.50 x 18in

**Wheelbase:**

55.8in

**Seat height:**

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**Ground clear:**

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**Fuel capacity:**

2.1gals

**Dry weight:**

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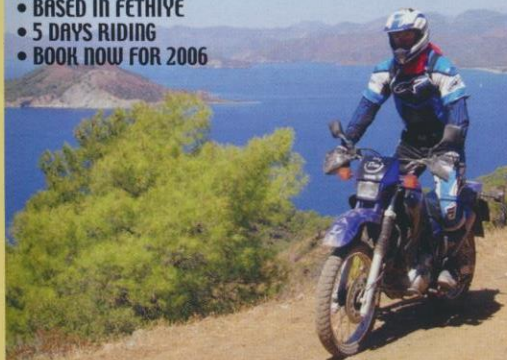
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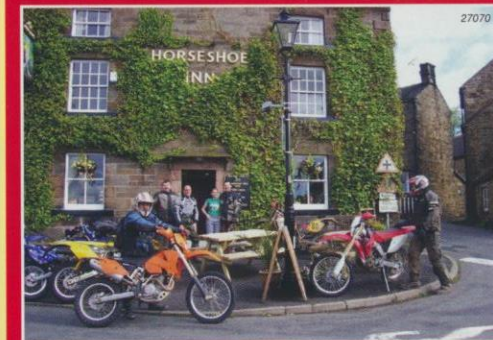
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# KNIGHT

On the Road again... The glamorous side of racing is not all it's cracked up to be...

# SPEED



If I had a pound every time someone said to me 'I'd love to do what you do for a living, travelling all over the world, staying in nice hotels, living the good life,' I'd double my annual salary no problem at all.

Although I do roam all over the world, and do frequent lots of hotels (some nice, some complete hell holes) and certainly enjoy what I do, some people often forget that getting to the top of the sport, and now making sure I stay there, certainly hasn't happened by accident and often isn't anywhere near as glamorous as it may seem from the outside.

While trips to the USA, Africa or even Italy might sound exciting I'm sure that most who think 'I've got it easy' would soon change their minds if they spent a month in my shoes.

Last month, for example, after winning The KTM Tough One I had a 12-day European road trip to do. Although I do fly as much as I can because it's normally the cheapest, easiest and quickest way of getting from A to B, on this

**'Travelling with someone else always makes a boring trip more bearable, especially playing games like who can keep their bare arms outside the van the longest while driving in minus ten degree weather...'**

occasion I had to drive. And when I say I had to *drive* that's exactly what I mean - I drove.

Firstly to Austria, then onto Italy and then home again. It's not something I do too often, thankfully, and it's not something that I mind too much either. But something that can be fun at times, can also be a real pain in the ass, especially when there's a list of stuff as long as a WP front fork that needs doing back home.

Anyway, after getting the boat home to the Isle of Man on the Monday after the Tough One I had just enough time at home to wash my bike, kit and van before spending the best part of a day sorting everything out in readiness for the upcoming trip - and I've not washed a WEC bike of mine in more years than I can remember!

Plus, knowing that I would compete in an arena enduro, do some testing with studded tyres in the snow, and then race at an indoor enduro I pretty much emptied the content of my garage into the back of my van. But before I left I spent half a day planning when I would be

able to get out on my 525 before the first round of the BEC.

There's been that much going on lately I don't even remember what day it was that I set off for Austria, I think it was on a Wednesday. Accompanied by a mate I got the ferry from the IoM, drove to Dover, got on a second ferry and then drove to the KTM factory in Mattighofen.

Travelling with someone else always makes a boring trip more bearable, especially playing games like who can keep their bare arm outside the van the longest while driving in minus ten-degree weather.

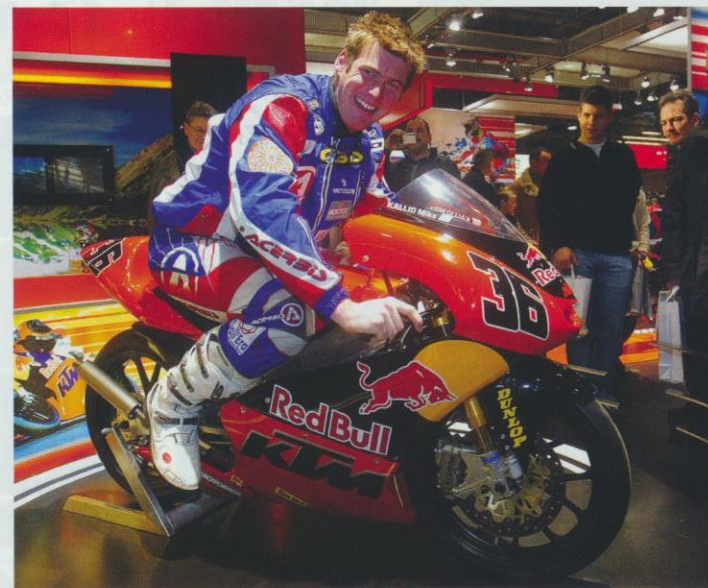
After meeting with the enduro team co-ordinator Alex, and the guy that builds my engines, Kemppi, I had lunch in a smoky Austrian restaurant before driving another three hours to Vienna in readiness for a motorcycle show, where I rode around in sub-zero temperatures doing arena enduro demonstrations for two days.

Then I was back on the road again. With my travel buddy having flown home from Vienna (wimp), the ten-hour drive to Bergamo, Italy saw me arrive just in time to drive another four hours to Turin, where we did our tyre testing for three days. After that it was back to the Farioli team base in Bergamo before getting everything ready for the Genoa Indoor Enduro.

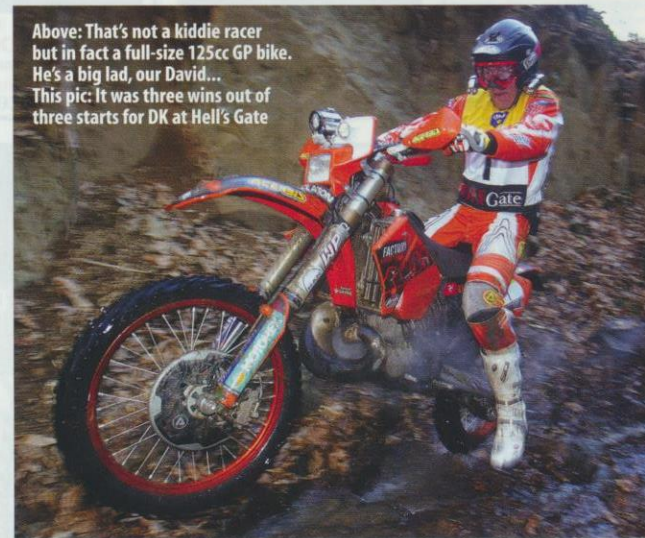
And after that I needed to get home. Fast. With so much stuff to organise at home before the first round of the BEC and ahead of the first round of the WEC, I simply couldn't afford to be away any longer.

So it was back behind the wheel of my VW Transporter and having left Bergamo mid-day on Monday I was home Tuesday, which gave me exactly two days at home before having to fly back to Italy for Hell's Gate. Phew.

Despite the hours spent driving, flying and staying in hotels the trip was definitely worth while - both financially and in terms of results. Winning both the Genoa Indoor Enduro and Hell's Gate means that this year has started in the best possible way.



Above: That's not a kiddie racer but in fact a full-size 125cc GP bike. He's a big lad, our David... This pic: It was three wins out of three starts for DK at Hell's Gate



And despite having picked up an annoying left ankle injury, which means I'm having physio every night, things are looking good for me again this year. If I'm completely honest I've probably done a little bit too much riding but after the first BEC and then WEC round I'm not going to go near a bike during the first two weeks of April. After that the travel will start again with four events in Europe in almost as many weeks.

Racing bikes for a living is great but more often than not, the racing is the easy bit... **DK**

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WORDS & PICS: JONTY EDMUNDS



Vilanova was on  
the rocks in more  
ways than one...



**A**sk any WEC rider the importance of a good result at a pre-season event and almost all will give the same answer – 'it's crucial'. After a hard winter's training and countless hours of testing and practice, a good result not only gives a huge confidence boost, it also sends out a very clear warning signal – this season I mean business. And at the Genoa International Indoor Enduro David Knight fired a salvo to the WEC paddock with a comprehensive victory.

Yep, it was a real shot across the bows. After just three laps of practice, big names such as three-time ISDE winner Mika Ahola, newly-signed Aprilia factory rider Alessandro Botturi and Gas Gas factory pilot Seb Guillaume must've realised that their chances of victory were virtually non-existent – for they were a full five seconds a lap slower than Knight!

## Names and Places

As the first international enduro event of the year, the Genoa Indoor Enduro attracted many of the world's best riders, despite there being a few top names missing from the program. E1 world champion Ivan Cervantes stayed home to compete in the opening round of the Spanish Cross-Country Championship, though class-mates Alessandro Belometti and Simone Albergoni were both riding. Finn Mika Ahola competed aboard a Honda for the first time after parting company with Husqvarna at the end of '05, and UFO Corse Yamaha fielded a



Knigher was just unbeatable...

**DAVID KNIGHT: 'THE RACE WAS PERFECT FOR ME. I GOT A GREAT START, RODE HARD FOR A COUPLE OF LAPS, AND THEN EASED OFF. I COULD SEE HOW FAR AHEAD I WAS SO I JUST KEPT A SAFE DISTANCE AHEAD OF THE OTHER RIDERS. OBVIOUSLY I WANTED TO START THE SEASON WITH A WIN AND THAT'S WHAT I HAVE DONE. IT'S BEEN A GREAT EVENT.'**

team. Two of their riders were former MX racers, and were taking part in the indoor' as their very first enduro - definitely a baptism of fire. Australian Stefan Merriman had returned to Europe from Australia just a few days earlier, and although he didn't ride he did announce that he'd again be competing for Yamaha in 2006.

Making his debut Aprilia outing was Alessandro Botturi, who, with no fewer than seven mechanics assisting him, was certainly getting the VIP treatment from the Italian manufacturer.

### Organised Chaos

The racing in Genoa was predictably wild, chaotic and entertaining. During each of the qualification and semi-final races many riders struggled to deal with the track, or, with plenty of bar-banging action, each other's presence on the track! And while the majority of the big-name riders made it through into the final, several found themselves having to compete in the last chance qualifier.

For Italian Botturi a dream debut aboard the

Aprilia never materialised. In fact he was lucky not to have ended up in hospital after needing to be helped off the track following a sizeable crash, having completed just one lap of his heat race. Fellow WEC regulars Petri Pohjamo, Valtteri Salonen, Jake Stapleton, Peter Bergvall and Britain's only other competitor, Euan McConnell, also failed to make it through to the final.

To say that McConnell had an eventful time in Genoa is a huge understatement. Getting to ride his factory-prepped 450cc TM for the first time, the event was also McConnell's first indoor enduro. Despite his best efforts, he had more than his fair share of spills and ended up underneath the TM on more than one occasion. When he was upright, Euan was clearly on the pace but lacked the experience, and time on a four-stroke, to get into the final.

### Final Demands

The final was over almost as soon as it started. Knight, lining up on the far outside of the track, timed his start to perfection and had pulled a bike length ahead just metres from the

start-gate. Cutting across his competitors as he darted to the inside of the first turn, three corners later David was the length of a straight ahead and clearly not going to be troubled by anyone.

As David got his head down and opened up a 15s lead, the riders behind him seemed to spend more time tripping each other up than trying to close-down the runaway Manxman. It was anyone's guess as to who would finish runner-up and for a while Knight's Farioli

KTM team-mate Andrea Belotti held a surprise second ahead of a gaggle of French and Italian riders.

While Simone Albergoni and Alessandro Belometti, two riders who were expected to place highly, battled one another at the tail-end of the field, French rider Johnny Aubert sneaked into the runner-up spot aboard his 450cc Yamaha. An experienced supercross rider competing in his first ever enduro, Aubert quickly learned that a steady pace



The indoor scene is growing in popularity

**W**ith indoor- and arena-enduros growing in popularity across the world, the obstacles designed to challenge the riders are becoming increasingly similar. Rock, log, and water sections are now commonplace, with differing combinations and quantities of sand, gravel and mud, (and even snow and ice), being used to try and make each circuit unique.

While the Barcelona Indoor Enduro sent its competitors up into the seating area of the Palau Sant Jordi a few years ago, this year's Genoa track was the first indoor enduro circuit ever to feature a man-made hill built specifically for the event. The organisers created a very short, very sharp, rock-littered climb, which caused problems for more than a few of the competitors. Before they reached the hill riders first had to deal with a tricky

30 metre section of rounded rocks, with only a two metre stretch of clear soil before having to fire up a 20 foot long climb so steep it was almost impossible to walk up.

In fact, several WEC regulars needed assistance from the marshals after getting it very wrong. Making things worse, once at the top of the climb the riders then had to negotiate an equally steep, equally tricky descent.

'It wasn't a problem if there were no other riders stuck on the uphill,' explained race winner David Knight, 'but if one rider got stuck then it was more luck than judgement as to whether you'd get up it. It's good that the organisers came up with something new because there is only so much you can do when designing an indoor enduro track.'



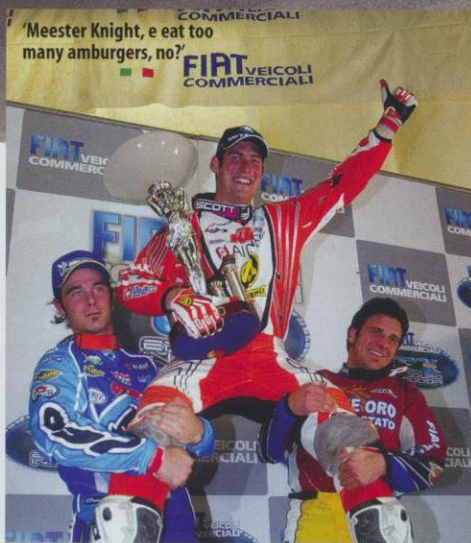
with no mistakes could see him on the podium.

Behind Aubert, Belotti faded which allowed Albergoni, who after several laps had finally made it past Belometti, to inherit third.

Knowing that it'd take a stupid mistake or mechanical failure to throw away victory, Knighter eased his pace with two laps to go, whilst doing enough to maintain a comfortable lead. Weaving his way past tired and weary lapped riders, David took the chequered flag more than 15s ahead of his nearest competitor. In doing so he claimed an all too easy win and collected 8000 euros for his efforts.

Holding onto the runner-up spot was Frenchman Aubert. An impressive result from the enduro first-timer, Johnny seemed a little overwhelmed by the fact that he'd finished second to Knight and surprised many of the established names with his performance. In third, disappointed at having not been able to take the fight to Knighter was Albergoni.

There were three different nationalities and three different manufacturers represented on the podium but it was Knighter who had the biggest grin on his face. The Manxman had dominated the event and I guess the rest of the paddock should take that as a warning of things to come...



#### RESULTS

1	DAVID KNIGHT	KTM	6.59:47
2	JOHNNY AUBERT	YAMAHA	7.15:26
3	SIMONE ALBERGONI	HONDA	7.17:25
4	ANDREA BELOTTI	KTM	7.28:23
5	SEB GUILLAUME	GAS GAS	7.29:89
6	ALESSANDRO BELOMETTI	KTM	7.34:65
7	FEDERICO MANCINELLI	SUZUKI	7.59:83
8	THIERRY KLUTZ	SHERCO	8.03:54
9	MAURIZIO MICHELIZ	YAMAHA	8.05:16

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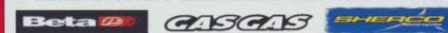
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# ON WHEELS

HELL'S GATE, ITALY,  
11 FEBRUARY

STORY AND PICS: JONNY EDMUNDS

COULD THE HOME RIDERS MOUNT A  
CHALLENGE TO THE BRITISH DOMINATION OF  
THE ANNUAL ITALIAN EXTREME ENDURO..?  
WHAT DO YOU THINK...



You know it's hard when Knighter looks out of control...

# HELL ON WHEELS

Last year, the podium at the Camel Hell's Gate extreme enduro was an all-British affair, with David Knight, Wayne Braybrook, and Juan Knight finishing one-two-three. This year, David was again expected to take the trophy and complete a hat-trick of wins at the event staged in the mountains of northern Tuscany. But who, assuming he did pull it off, would join him on the podium?

As far as the event organisers were concerned those most likely to 'Fight The Knight' were home grown. The 'great team Aprilia' composed of Botturi, Passeri and Zanni placed at the top of their list of possible vice-champions. Simone Albergoni was another they ranked highly, as was the 'powerful UFO Yamaha Team'. But what about the Brits? It seems they have very short memories in Tuscany...

## Hell Hounds

Starting the event seemingly as underdogs, Wayne Braybrook, Paul Edmondson and Graham Jarvis were all clearly determined, and reasonably confident, that they would prove the organisers wrong. Each motivated

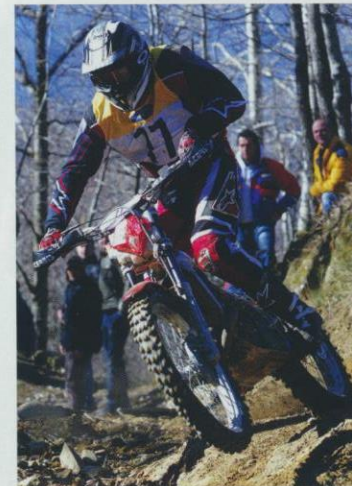
in quite different ways - Wayne hoped to keep Knighter honest, Paul wanted to make amends for a disappointing Tough One result and Graham simply wanted to finish his first international enduro event with the best possible result - the fact that (in the end) Botturi, Passeri, Zanni and Albergoni failed to show suggested that the organisers' patriotic confidence was a little misplaced and that it was the Brits who should've have the shortest odds.

But before any rider could lay claim to finishing, let alone winning, Hell's Gate '06 there was the three-hour morning enduro to deal with. A formality for the big-name riders, but for the large number of Italian club riders that started the race it was to prove extremely challenging.

Making things even trickier was the icy going, after clear skies and sub-zero temperatures during the night left the course frozen solid. This resulted in more than a few scary moments for the competitors, and several sets of bent handlebars. And the three timed special tests showed that some riders were only interested in doing just enough to qualify for the main event while others were serious about qualifying with the best result they could.



Below: A couple of riders entered on trials bikes...



Topping the list of qualifiers was - surprise, surprise - David Knight. Not knowing how tight the enduro would be on time, DK chose to ride shotgun with Wayne Braybrook for much of the first lap, before eventually placing 16 seconds ahead of Braybrook at the head of the results.

Behind Wayne, Italian Maurizio Micheluz, Frenchman Johnny Aubert, Paul Edmondson and Italian Fabrizio Dini finished third, fourth, fifth and sixth. Reigning British Trials Champion Graham Jarvis qualified in eleventh.

With all of the Brits, and the top Italian and French riders, passing through the morning race as expected, the riders were soon fitting their night lights and preparing themselves for the main Hell's Gate race. The course was much the same as in previous years and those who'd raced it before knew exactly what to expect. Those who didn't, such as first timers Edmondson and Jarvis, could be sure of one thing: that the four-lap race was going to be anything but easy.

## Bunch of Hellions

Starting MotoGP-style on a staggered grid, Knighter lined up on the inside flanked by Braybrook, with the 28 other qualifying riders

equally spaced out behind them. With 8000 euros on offer for the winner, and a KTM SX65 and a KTM 50 offered as runner-up and third place prizes, even if winning wasn't on the cards digging deep in the hope of finishing on the podium was certainly worthwhile.

Unsurprisingly Knighter jumped into an early lead, closely followed by Braybrook. But with less than five minutes of the opening lap completed, on the first of the many rock-littered riverbeds, Wayne passed the defending champion and for the first time in the event's history a rider other than Knighter lead the field! Struggling to find grip, David made sure than no-one else passed him as he and Wayne took off at the head of the field.

Behind the leading duo it was clear that some of the home riders had no intention of finishing the race. Nearing the end of the first river section, those who were serious about finishing the event were already scrapping for positions while others were happy to sit back and wait for spectators to come and help them. In the thick of the action Edmondson and Jarvis were separated by a few bike lengths.

As lap one neared its close, Braybrook's lead,





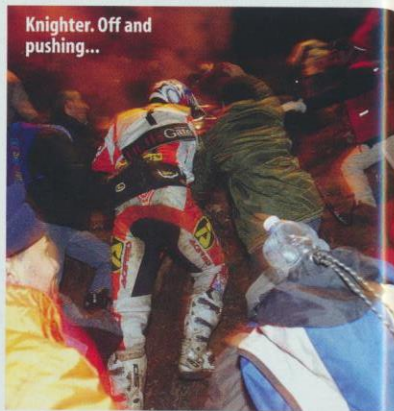
# HELL ON WHEELS

**'I DIDN'T KNOW THAT DAVID HAD PROBLEMS. EVERYTHING WENT WELL APART FROM THE FIRST LAP. I FELT REALLY GOOD EARLY ON BUT WHEN I BENT MY GEAR LEVER, AND HAD TO STOP TO CHANGE IT, DAVID WAS TOO FAR AHEAD TO WORRY ABOUT. I JUST RODE MY OWN RACE AND AM WELL CHUFFED TO HAVE FINISHED SECOND AGAIN.'** WAYNE BRAYBROOK

which had grown to around a minute mid-way through the lap, had been reduced to mere seconds as a bent gear lever hampered his progress. Stopping to replace the offending part at the end of the lap, Wayne saw the last of David as the KTM rider set off ahead of him on lap two determined to stamp his mark on the event.

And that is, more or less, exactly what David did. Five minutes ahead at the end of the second lap, the gap then stretched to more

Knighter. Off and pushing...



than ten minutes at the end of lap three as Knighter clearly had the race under control. For Braybrook it was a case of 'what if?'. Looking extremely comfortable in the lead on the first lap, and subsequently untouched in second place, could Wayne have pushed Knighter all the way to the finish if he hadn't have bent his gear lever?

Behind the leading duo was French rider Gregory Eyries. Little known to the enduro fraternity, Eyries was for many years one of France's top trials riders and was proving that he had exactly what it took to finish Hell's Gate. Unfortunately for the Frenchman on lap three Edmondson, having pulled ahead of Graham Jarvis, passed him for third.

Initially it seemed that a British one-two-three was very much on the cards but a clearly tired Edmondson had to stop for fuel at the start of the fourth and final lap, and Eyries re-passed him.

## Hell to Pay

The last lap of the race was the most eventful for a number of riders, especially Knighter and Edmondson. Having started the fourth lap comfortably ahead, David had to call on all his years of experience, skill and determination to remain at the front of the race. No sooner did day become night, than Knighter's lights failed...

Swapping his helmet for one worn by a spectator, Knighter had lights again (albeit just one) and continued on his way. Able to see about as much as if he were carrying a torch,

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**HELL ON WHEELS**

Eddy grabbed the final podium spot right at the final climb...



**'EVERYTHING WAS GOING GREAT UNTIL MY LIGHTS FAILED. I KNEW I HAD A GOOD LEAD BUT WHEN THEY DIDN'T COME ON I KNEW THINGS WOULD GET DIFFICULT. I TURNED MY HELMET LIGHTS ON AND THEY WERE POINTING ALL OVER THE PLACE. I GOT THEM POINTING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION BUT THEN AFTER ABOUT FIVE MINUTES THEY TURNED THEMSELVES OFF.' DAVID KNIGHT**

he obviously had to take his time as he negotiated his way down riverbeds and over waterfalls, whilst ever-mindful that Wayne would be catching him. Not wanting to finish second having lead for so much of the race, nor see another rider claim the 8000 euros, David maintained the best pace he could and shortly after 6:30pm he arrived at the bottom of Hell's Peak - the near-impossible climb that lead to the finish.

Failing on his first attempt to scale the climb after hitting a tree stump and losing all forward momentum, Knighter was soon attacking the hill for a second time as a small group of Brits appeared from nowhere and

started dragging him to the top. Having managed to stay out front despite struggling to see through the darkness, Knighter took a well-earned victory and in doing so made it three wins from three starts.

**Hell Raisers**

No sooner had David made it to the finish line than Wayne appeared at the bottom of the climb. Unaware that David had run into lighting difficulties, the Honda rider was soon enjoying the vocal encouragement of the spectators and the

muscle of the British helpers. Cresting the top of the hill just three-and-a-half minutes behind David, Wayne placed as runner-up for the second consecutive year.

Fifteen minutes then passed before the next rider appeared at the bottom of Hell's Peak. Frenchman Gregory Eyries had remained ahead of Edmondson but on attacking the hill failed to reach the waiting spectators half-way up the climb and was forced to go around for another attempt.

As he neared the bottom he met Edmondson blasting his way towards the base of the climb. Having been unable to catch the Frenchman during the last lap of the race Eddy certainly wasn't going to miss his opportunity to finish on the podium and, on reaching the safety of the British supporters, was literally dragged to the top of the hill.

With Eyries finishing the race close behind Edmondson, two other riders also managed to remain less than 40 minutes behind Knighter - Sherco-mounted Brit Graham Jarvis and French Dakar racer David Casteu - and the four Brits and two Frenchman were to be the event's only finishers.

And so it seemed that the organisers got their predictions slightly wrong. Because whilst some of the Brits entered the 'fight' as underdogs, unlike the native riders, they certainly knew how to finish it...

**RESULTS**

DAVID KNIGHT	KTM
WAYNE BRAYBROOK	HONDA
PAUL EDMONDSON	HONDA
GREGORY EYRIES	YAMAHA
GRAHAM JARVIS	SHERCO
DAVID CASTEU	KTM

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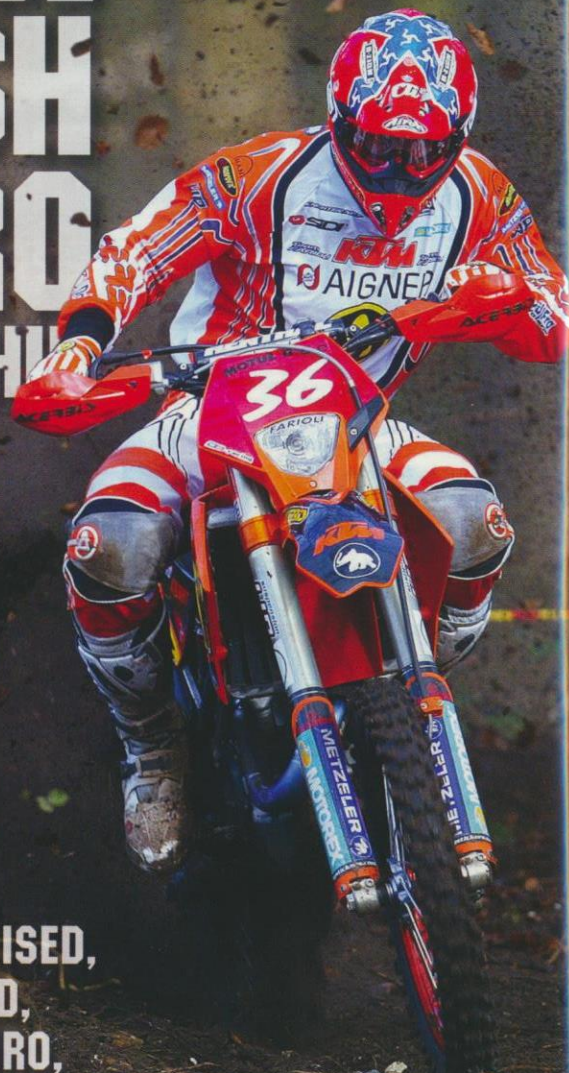
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# '06 MOTUL BRITISH ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP



**ROUND 1:  
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EMG FORD SPONSORED,  
BRANDON PARK ENDURO,  
26 FEBRUARY**

## The event...

Whilst the old two-day 'Breckland Enduro' was tough, its one-day replacement turned out to be even tougher. In fact, it proved to be one of the most physically demanding enduros many riders had ever competed in.

With five laps of a 25 mile course, each lap

was split into two checks - the first a short five mile check which contained the event's special test, and the second a 20 mile check which got tighter on time with each passing lap.

A large amount of 'fresh' going was mixed in with many familiar tracks and trails in the longer of the two checks, and the event's all-

new special test was every bit as challenging as previous Breckland tests.

Situated just five minutes from the start, the test weaved its way through several separate sections of forestry, with



Si Wakely rode well to finish fifth overall...

**DAVID KNIGHT: 'I'D SAY THE EVENT WAS THE MOST PHYSICALLY DEMANDING RACE I'VE EVER DONE IN THETFORD FOREST. I RECKON IT'S JUST ABOUT THE BEST I'VE EVER RIDDEN AT THE OPENING ROUND OF THE BEC AS WELL. I WAS EXPECTING IT TOO BE TOUGH, AND IT WAS, BUT I'VE REALLY ENJOYED IT.'**

occasional grass paddocks thrown in for good measure. The Championship class riders were timed through the sandy and (by the end of the day), extremely rutted test on laps one, two, three and five, and few riders managed to complete all four without mistake.

## And the winners are...

Manxman David Knight was on top form at the opening round of the '06 Motul British Enduro Championship, the Diss MCC organised Brandon Park Enduro, to finish the event almost one minute ahead of Honda's Paul Edmondson. TM-mounted Australian Jake Stapleton took the final podium position.

Stamping his mark on the BEC opener, Knight comfortably topped each of the four

## Paddock Pointers

✓ The Diss MCC organised Brandon Park Enduro ran like the proverbial well-oiled machine. The special test was impeccably prepared, the check times perfect and the event proved to be a 'proper' enduro, with the ability to remain on time equally as important as special test speed.

✓ Judging by the performances of E2 class riders Paul Edmondson, Jake Stapleton, Euan McConnell, Si Wakely and Wayne Braybrook, the battle for the 2006 E2 championship is going to be an entertaining and close-fought contest between manufacturers Honda and TM.

✓ Experience prevailed over youth in the Enduro 1 class as seasoned BEC competitors Chris Hockey and Richard Hay claimed the top two spots, finishing clean on time and just ahead of the class' younger riders

The winter training has paid off for Aussie Jake Stapleton who fought a ding-dong battle with Paul Eddy - just losing out in the end. But he'll be happy with second in class (E2), and third overall on his 250 TM



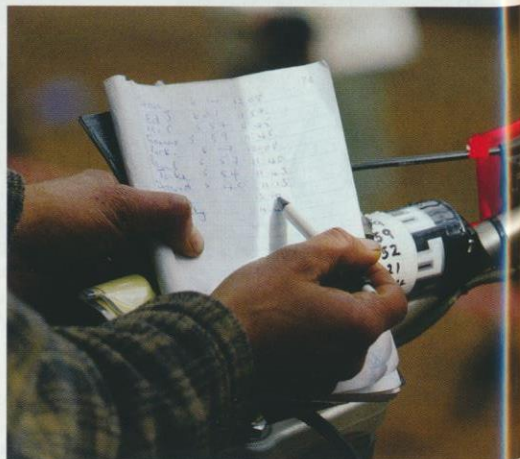
## '06 MOTUL BRITISH ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP

**PAUL EDMONDSON: 'IT'S BEEN A GOOD EVENT FOR ME AND CERTAINLY A TOUGH EVENT FOR ALL RIDERS. OBVIOUSLY IT WOULD BE NICE TO BEAT DAVID BUT IT'S A CASE OF DAMAGE LIMITATION AT THE MOMENT AS HE'S RIDING SO WELL.'**

timed special tests to win the Enduro 3 class and place 54 seconds clear at the top of the overall Championship class results.

Unchallenged, despite the best efforts of Edmondson and Stapleton, Knighter muscled his 525 KTM around the rough and rutted tests in spectacular style, making the challenging 'special' look easy and showing exactly why he's currently the world's fastest enduro rider.

With Knight never really threatened, the battle to top the Enduro 2 and Enduro 1 classes was where the real action took place. At the



Knighter...



**CHRIS HOCKEY: 'IT'S BEEN A GREAT WEEKEND FOR ME, I CERTAINLY CAN'T COMPLAIN WITH MY RESULT. PASSING RIDERS ON THE TIGHT CHECK GAVE ME A REAL BOOST OF CONFIDENCE SO I JUST KEPT PUSHING HARD. I USED MY MINUTE ON THE LAST TWO LAPS AND FINISHED AS ONE OF TWO RIDERS IN THE E1 CLASS TO GO CLEAN ON TIME.'**

end of the day just over 20s separated the top three E2 class riders - the class win eventually going to Honda rider Paul Edmondson. During his career, Eddy's taken the overall win at the BEC opener seven times, and despite it being ten years since he last topped the Breckland results, Paul showed that he's still one of the best in the sand of Thetford Forest.

But it was TM's Jake Stapleton who took the early lead in the E2 class, finishing three seconds ahead of Edmondson on lap one before Paul reversed the tables on lap two. Having clipped a tree stump (which all but removed his left peg), Stapleton found himself unable to push hard round the second test, but on the third lap he was again the

## PADDOCK POINTERS

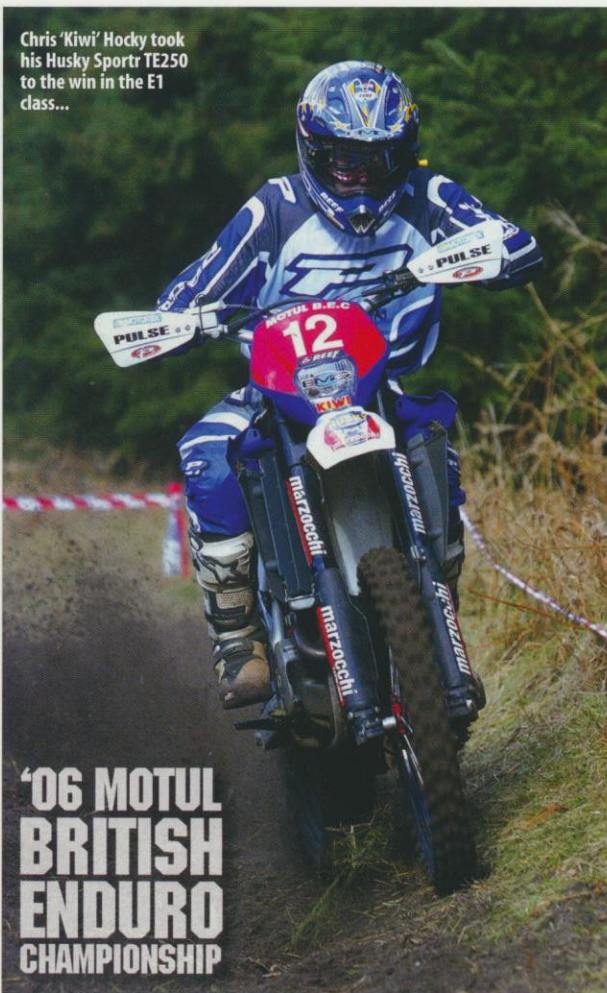
☒ Husky Sport Husqvarna and CH Racing Husqvarna rider Daryl Bolter was a spectator at the Brandon Park Enduro having recently been diagnosed with a broken Scaphoid bone in his right wrist.

Daryl will have to undergo surgery to fix the break and is likely to be out of action for up to three months.

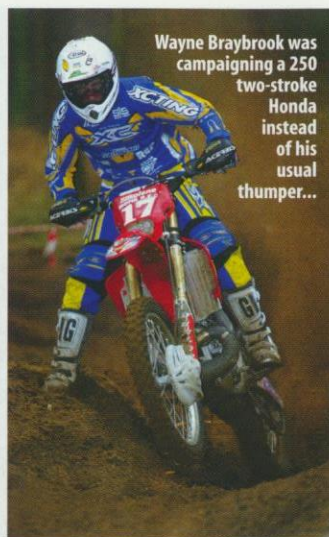
☒ Clerk of the course, Andy Waters, added two minutes to the Championship class riders' time allowance for the final check of the event after ACU officials became 'nervous' that David Knight would be the only rider to clean the check. Had the day's time schedule remained unaltered David Knight and Paul Edmondson would have been the only two riders clean on time.

☒ The '06 Brandon Park Enduro was officially the last enduro event that the Diss MCC will hold in the Brandon Park area of Thetford Forest. The club's still able to run an event in the part of the forest where the John Banks Enduro is held, though they've yet to decide whether this will become a BEC round in 2007.

Chris 'Kiwi' Hockey took his Husky Sportr TE250 to the win in the E1 class...



'06 MOTUL BRITISH ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP



Wayne Braybrook was campaigning a 250 two-stroke Honda instead of his usual thumper...

fastest E2 rider, finishing ahead of Edmondson by the narrowest of margins.

The fourth and final test proved to be decisive, as going into the special' the pair were separated by just one second. Despite making no real mistakes, Stapleton placed seven seconds behind Edmondson to finish the event as runner-up in the class.

Having turned a slow start into a strong finish, Edmondson showed that he's going to be a difficult rider to beat in the E2 championship this season and although unable to match Knighter's pace on the tests,

Paul was every bit as quick as the Manxman on the tight check.

In the Enduro 1 class things were just as close, with the end-of-event tight check deciding the finishing order of the 125cc two-strokes and 250cc four-strokes. For much of the day it looked as if 125cc Honda rider Jason Thomas was going to be the man to beat as he outpaced reigning E1 champion Ed Jones on each of the opening two special tests. Although he crashed on the third test, Jason went on to finish as the class's fastest rider on test times alone. Ed Jones posted the second quickest times, with Andrew Edwards third, but all three riders lost time on the final check, resulting in Husky Sport's Chris Hockey claiming a well deserved win. Class newcomer, Richard Hay on his KTM, was the only other E1 rider to remain clean on time.



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# THE PATMAN

**D**o ya talk to yourself when you're out riding? Like at the start line for instance? Now personally, I wear earplugs for a multitude of reasons. Not the least of which is so I don't get distracted by things like... well like, motorcycle noises for example. That's not to mention the things that others may want me to hear that the earplugs help me to resist.

Like the little psych-outs that happen during those critical pre-start moments. Like when my buddy in the over-30 expert class looks over his shoulder points at my ride, and says 'Hey Pat, isn't that some coolant dribbling from your overflow hose?' (Classic... everybody knows that one).

Only to me it sounds like 'Aaa Paa, ennnt mmmppph kewl eht?' Which as we all know, translates into, 'Hey Pat, that new scooter's pretty cool eh?' So I nod and grin and give him the big thumbs-up sign.

'Yeah, right, I'll catch your tired ass before you get to the checkpoint!' I think to myself.

Perhaps you're just feeling great to be alive and out on the scooter. Ya got some new clothes, a freshly aired helmet, maybe new boots.

**'Like when my buddy in the over-30 expert class looks over his shoulder, points at my ride, and says 'Hey Pat, isn't that coolant dribbling from your overflow hose?'**

'These boots feel great!'

Wait a second... there's something in my boot. Is that a rock? I think maybe it's a wrinkle in my sock. Maybe I left one of the tags in there...

Uh-oh, I think I can feel my fingernail hitting the end of the glove... I hope it doesn't tear.

Hey, there's a breeze in here... my shirt's come untucked!

These clothes suck!

Or maybe you're tryin' to remember that advice ya got from the last Gary Bailey training DVD... 'OK... elbows up... head over the front... Slide up on the gas tank...'

The gas tank? Did I remember to turn the fuel on?'

Of course I did... I better check though... No time! there's the five second board... I gotta check...

'Oh yeah, there goes the flagman, he's gonna try to fool us with that lame-assed delayed start again.'

'... .. Dammit!'

He always gets me with that stupid shit!!

Do ya hear music? You know what I mean. That song that won't go away. That last song you heard... 'They've come to snuff the rooster...' or maybe it was that new Shania Twain song. Well, more like the video (who cares about the words). Or heaven forbid (and this is the worst) '...*Flintstones, meet the Flintstones they're the modern stone age family...*'

I dunno know what the pros are thinkin'. If I did, maybe I wouldn't be wallowing at the back of the pack so much. Come on you pro guys, what's happenin' in the custom painted Shoei? Is it like being one of those rally car navigators? 'TWO HUNDRED

YARDS! HARD RIGHT! DOWN TWO! TWENTY YARDS! SIX WHOOPS. THIRTY! STAY LEFT! JUMP! NAC-NAC.'

Then there's the flashbacks... like the time the service guy from your local bike shop rang, sayin' 'Sure I'll put that old tube back in... it'll probably make one more race... Maybe.'

Or perhaps as you ride by a familiar spot in the trail, you think to yourself, there's that tree I hit last lap. There's the mark my footpeg left. Don't look at it... DON'T LOOK AT IT. LOOK AWAAAYYY!

Sometimes it's just plain 'ol talkin' to yourself.

'Wow, check out those Babes!'

'They're all lookin' at me.'

'I gotta make this uphill jump, I just gotta.'

'...Mckelvy said he made it.'

'Fourth gear, wide open ...uh?'

'Uh-oh... this is gonna huurrrr!'

'...Ooommph...OWWW... uughh ... mmmph

'..... Where am I?'

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With their rainbow colours and wacky graphics, brochures looked a little different back in 1993. As did the bikes that year. Boxy styling, painted engines and USD forks were the fashion...

# CONTACT



...But by 1994 things had calmed down a little, and as this brochure testifies, Gas Gas were making the most of winning the World Trials Championship the previous year...

# GAS GAS



# OLD GOLD

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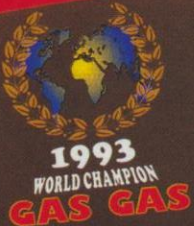
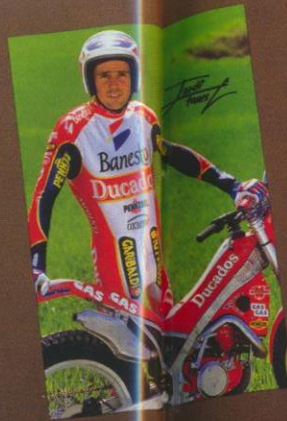
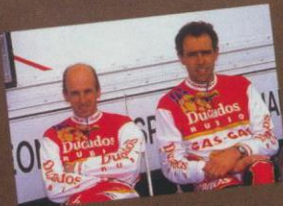
In late 1992 the signing of the world trials champion Jordi Tarres to Gas Gas from the Italian Beta concern was the turning point in the Spanish manufacturer's great history, as Tarres took them to their first world trials championship aboard the new 1993 250 contact 'T'. (The 'T' designation obviously stands for Tarres).

With the help of the very popular Spaniard Ammos Bilbao, ongoing development throughout the year saw the basis of this machine win Gas Gas the 1993-95 world titles.

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Open a 1994 sales brochure and you'll see that Gas Gas were keen to play up the fact that Jordi Tarres was now on board and contributing to the bikes' continuing development...



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 Cesar Pancot - Subcampión de Europa de Pilotos

# OLD GOLD

the engine perform more efficiently - the 1992 model used normal induction directly through the barrel.

A new hydraulic clutch also improved performance, as there was no loss of adjustment on the lever when the clutch got hot. Nowadays this is a standard fitment on all trials bikes, but back in 1993 this was pretty revolutionary stuff.

The chassis was chrome plated and made from mild steel tubing as opposed to the alloy framed Beta, Montesa Honda and Yamaha designs of the time, with many people claiming that steel framed machines were more flexible between the legs than their alloy framed counterparts.

As a result, the Girona based manufacturer turned into the rider's choice of brand worldwide with sales shooting up the charts and the rest of the manufacturers began the race to copy the popular Gassers. The bikes were sold in yellow for the 125 and 160, red for the 250 and

white for the powerful 320.

The following year (1994) saw a return to the conventional Paioli front forks after the USD ones went out of fashion, along with the argument over unsprung weight being better at the top of the fork stroke than at the bottom of it.

With a new lower, lighter frame and a separate removable tank cover the 1994 machine was an evolution of all the ideas that Tarres wanted in a trials machine. The new tank cover gave easier access to the air filter and carburettor and made maintenance a lot easier. On this bike Tarres was virtually unbeatable.

Although Gas Gas continued with the 125, 160 and 250 models, the big 320 was dropped from the line-up to allow more time to develop the 250.

'If it ain't broke don't fix it' seemed to be the motto for 1995, as the Gassers only received minor modifications, such as front forks now manufactured in-house and a lightweight alloy rear subframe. The alloy swingarm was now curved (rather than straight) to allow more suspension movement without sacrificing seat height. And after many requests, the 330 was also re-introduced.

It was also the year that Tarres won his third world championship and Manxman Steve Colley gave Gas Gas their first ever UK trials title...



Tony Davis

## What's the Story?

STORY & PIC: MIKE RAPLEY

**G**rey Mare's Ridge in the Scottish is famous for being the scene of Gordon Jackson's one-dab winning ride in 1961, but this picture of Tony Davis (taken three years later), shows a top grade Greeves factory rider in his prime and who is today still deeply interested and involved in the sport as Chair of the Victory Trial Reunion Dinner.

Tony's father Les, was landlord of the Air Balloon inn at Birdlip for some 13 or 14 years in the Fifties and Sixties and as the national Cotswold Cups Trial started from there for a fair number of years, it was no coincidence that the young Davis boys, Tony and Malcolm, should have an interest in trials riding. Les was also a leading ACU official, eventually becoming the Chairman of the Trials Committee and a Director.

Tony's first trial was on a 197 Greeves in the Minety Val Club's Boxing Day trial, just ten days after his 16th birthday. Trials riding was a sport that came naturally to him, and competing was no mystery either as Tony had previously been a keen horse rider in his early teens, taking in show jumping competitions as well as being an avid follower of the local hunt.

Such was his aptitude on a trials bike that it was not long before he was offered a BSA factory contract and signed to ride a 250 in 1960, going on to win the trade supported West of England trial that year.

When fellow BSA rider Jeff Smith declined to ride the newer 343 version, Tony took over the ride and stayed with BSA until 1964 when he was attracted by a Greeves factory ride, the extremely wet Scottish of that year being one of his first rides on the Thundersley two-strokes.

Greeves provided Tony with his trials mounts

for a few years and by the time the Villiers engine was replaced by the Sachs engined Pathfinder version, Tony had notched up 16 national trial wins and second place in a further 18.

He was four times a winner of the Mitchell Trial as well as a victor in the Hoad and Perce Simon Trial over the same weekend. And the Kickham and Lyn Traders also went his way, as well as some popular continental trials including the Bergamo and St Martins events.

Comerfords Bultacos and Beamish Suzukis followed the Greeves factory rides until after

23 years in the saddle, Tony called time on his trials riding. 'I was working for the Home Office at the time arranging liaison between the courts, Police and Probation Service and the time needed for my sport simply was no longer available.

However, I still had the BSA and for a further few years I rode occasional Pre-65 trials and since my retirement from the Home Office I've maintained my interest in the sport. Taking over the Chairmanship of the Victory dinner has been particularly enjoyable and allowed me to stay in contact with many riders of my generation.'

Tony remembers the trial in the picture well. 'I had a good week, though it was incredibly wet. I can't remember my result but I had a Special First, though it was somewhat spoilt by Malcolm [Tony's brother] beating me by two marks. There was always a lot of competition with us two, particularly in Scotland where it was important to be the best between us!'

Now employed by a friend to run a fencing business, Tony is fit and well and enjoys line dancing, which he instructs several times a week. 'It keeps me fit and I get to meet great people, just as I did at trials...'

**'Such was Tony's aptitude on a trials bike that it was not long before he was offered a BSA factory contract...'**



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