



ISSUE #32



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SCRAMBLED MESSAGES

Triumph & Ducati's new
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FREEDOM FIGHTER

RUST rolls with KTM's new
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Highs and lows as the
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S-Class Heaven

Mercedes's latest Vito is pure class





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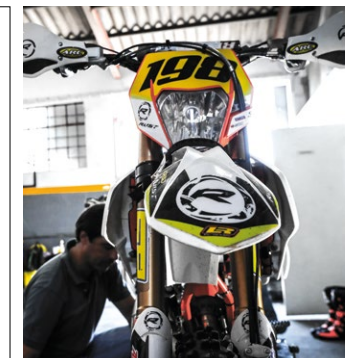


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SLOW PREMIUM

Welcome to the new look RUST magazine. It's very different, eh? It's all part of the upgrades we've been working on and will continue to implement across our communication channels. We're doing a little of what's sometimes called 'repositioning'. With our new website now containing so much more content, we're repositioning the magazine to be our top-of-the-tree premium offering. It's a different vehicle to what it was.

Before, the RUST output was pretty much just the magazine, the website was merely a holding pen for it. Now, our new website is major resource in its own right with so much content, some of it news-based stuff of immediate relevance and interest, some of it archive material that's very much worth the effort to share in an online format in perpetuity. The website will grow and grow in that sense. And come Spring 2018 it'll grow even more as phase two of the website overhaul will be delivered.

So for the magazine, with the pressure off on being the one mouthpiece of RUST, we've been able to reimagine its style and content. The idea being that the magazine is effectively our flagship. We'll take more time over the design and the content and apply the highest standards to making this the best magazine we possibly can.

I should then explain that whereas the previous editions of RUST were optimized for phone delivery, the new magazine is a different size and shape and without a doubt – while it's still phone-compatible – the optimal means to viewing it will be via tablet or preferably computer (and by heck it looks incredible on retina display). So please do try to view it on the bigger screens, it's worth it.

We are turning a corner, starting a new chapter, or whatever metaphor you care to think of. RUST is maturing, it is progressing. We're often asked to define RUST. We don't like calling it a magazine. We don't like calling it a brand, either. It is, we think, a state of consciousness, or perhaps a place in time. RUST is a place so many of us have reached. Where we've served our apprenticeships, charged through our salad days, crashed, burned and got back up again, then slowed down only to find that slower makes us faster.

And so this magazine is indeed part of slow culture. So take your time reading it, and enjoy the images we've carefully chosen to go with the words that we've crafted given hours of thought and planning.

We are still massive bike enthusiasts at heart, though. All this effort is nothing to do with media, it's still all about the motorcycle. On two wheels will always be our happy place. I hope you enjoy the read. And ride safe. 🏍️

JB



LAIA, LAIA PANTS ON FIRE...

It's that time of year when the Dakar Rally teams do their pre-race team photoshoot. Curiously, this year, it looks like KTM did not head down to North Africa for theirs. Their images have a distinctly Iberian flavour, which hasn't given the photographers, or riders, much to work with in terms of making the usual stunning images. So we flicked through the shots, going 'yeah, yeah, yeah...' without much enthusiasm until we struck upon this one of Laia Sanz. Sam, Toby, Antoine and Matthias all gave it their best but it's the lady in the group who's won the competition for best action footage. Laia – one fast lady – was 16th in Dakar last year. Top 10 in 2018?

Image: KTM / Future7Media

PEDRO POWER

A break-out image here from our photoshoot with our KTM 200EXC project bike. We should have recorded the sound, you'd have heard the wee KTM singing on full throttle as our main man Pedro Matos kept it totally pinned in at least fifth gear as he rocketed through the parched Portuguese countryside. He had it pinned from way back too, so he flew it over the brow that's behind him. Some sight. The KTM probably needs a new throttle cable now, he'd stretched it so far!

Image: JB





THE WALL

Friend of RUST, Stéphane Gautronneau spent 15 months travelling with a Wall of Death team to capture his 50-minute documentary, 'The Wall'. Here we sample that film and some of the images Stéphane caught along the way



➤ **R**UST first met Stéphane Gautronneau in Thailand on the BMW Motorrad GS Trophy back in 2016. Stéphane was one of BMW's official photographers and it was evident from the beginning that he was no ordinary photographer, in fact not the usual style for BMW at all.

Stéphane's style is to look with the eye of an artist, rather than that of the documenter. Looking for the emotional connection, he was as much fascinated by the fabric of life, the textures of Thailand as he was the action the GSs were generating. Consequently much of his work from that tour hasn't been seen, but at RUST we gladly used one of his images as the original cover of our GS Trophy special edition.

Now Stéphane has produced a 50-minute film about a travelling wall of death troupe. Called The Wall, the film documents, or arguably 'paints' – in Stéphane's unique style – 15 months in the life of Don Ganslmeier and his riders (the Motorellos) in their 'Motodrom'.

'Captain Don' is a student of Ken Fox, the legendary British Wall of Death rider (who trained Guy Martin for his world speed record on the Wall of Death) and uniquely runs four BMW R25s (which are now approaching 60 years old) in his near 100-year-old wall. In short, even the four-minute teaser we have here is a special view. The full-length feature will be something else.

Stéphane is one of life's outliers. Doing it different, breaking the rules, and ignoring the usual commercial constraints. But he has 'an eye', a unique creativity, and he holds strong to his beliefs. We like that. And his work inspires...



THE WALL



FREEDOM FIGHTER

2018 KTM Freeride 250F

Have we (at RUST) been big fans of KTM's Freerides? We have not. We've liked them, but we've not loved them. But that's set to change with the latest Freeride, the 250F. Smaller, yet slightly more muscular – yep, it seems a small adjustment to the mix can make a big difference

Words: Tom Sagar **Images:** Chippy Wood





It's been nearly seven years since KTM first gave us the Freeride (in 2011 for the 2012 model year, if you're struggling with the math!). That first Freeride borrowed its engine from the 350EXC-F, and two years later was followed by the Freeride 250R – a two-stroke (which in turn was borrowing and modifying the 250EXC unit). Now, both of those are consigned to history as KTM have replaced the pair with just the one model, the Freeride 250F (borrowing its power plant from the latest 250EXC-F). But more than a new engine, we're also getting a fair redesign – not huge changes on the face of things but some relatively small changes that have, in fact, made a big difference.

There was no world launch for this model but when KTM invited RUST to a test at the Tyn Twll Farm in the Berwyn Mountains in North Wales, we were all the more delighted – this is exactly where KTM filmed the new Freeride's promo-video and is a world-class venue for extreme-type riding. Of course with adjectives like 'world-class' being bandied about it was prudent to send our latest, and most talented tester – Tom Sagar. As a former European enduro champion and top-ten finisher at the Scottish Six Days Trial, Tom has an exact match for skills to that of the Freeride. A match made in heaven?

TOM GETS VERY EXCITED

When RUST's JB phoned and said 'your

next job is to test the KTM Freeride' I was very excited. I have never ridden any of the Freerides that KTM have previously made, although I've heard so much about them and, given my 'dual-nationality' (y'know enduro and trials background) I was keen to find out what this bike was all about, for myself. I was hoping to put the bike through its paces on as many different terrains as I could, and so I was doubly pleased to hear the venue for the launch was an old training ground that I've spent a great amount of time at, Tyn Twll Farm, the perfect place to test this machine with everything from rocky streams to high trails leading across the top of the mountains.

Of course I had my preconceptions, and like many I've found myself from time to time asking just what the bike is made for; if you're a competitor in either trials or enduro then like me you probably think the last Freerides' design and styling kind of left the bike between stools, neither fish nor fowl. But I must say when I arrived at the launch venue, the small cosmetic changes have made the new bike much more appealing. The first thing you notice are the new headlight and mudguard that have made the bike look more EXC. This has definitely improved the styling – adding a touch more aggression – and with the new colour scheme of the 2018 bike, this new Freeride is most definitely an eye catcher. Also fitted are EXC hand guards and a plastic sump guard which come standard, so for people that just want to buy and ride this means that this new Freeride is ready to ride (as against 'race') straight from the shop.

TOM CAN REACH THE GROUND

Aboard the bike, the cockpit is very enduro-like (as against trials-like), but the obvious first dynamic impression is being able to touch the floor flat-foot (with both feet) which can be a great confidence boost for those who are new to riding off-road – or are short in the leg, like me. This gives you great confidence when tackling tricky conditions, and I would be thankful for this throughout the day as we pushed the Freeride to conquer more and more extreme terrain.

With a nod to street riding, KTM has now installed an ignition key/lock allowing the rider who likes a bit of gentle trail riding to leave his Freeride fairly confident in the thought that it won't be hijacked the moment he turns his back to pay for fuel at a garage. This change of course prompted me to make a few futile pushes of the starter button, and pulling on the clutch, before realising that there is more to starting the Freeride than just the button. The ignition key is neatly

tucked away on the side of the headlight, so turn the key, starter button, GO.

And with the Freeride using (and adapting) the new DOHC 250F engine from KTM's EXC range the bike has no problem when it comes to the GO. That said, while twisting the throttle you can tell that the engine has been restricted to better suit this new role, but it can be derestricted from 20bhp to a punchier 26bhp if you so want. For this test we worked with the standard 20bhp setup.

LESS, OF EVERYTHING

We took off down the road and immediately you can feel how nimble and lightweight the Freeride is compared to a normal enduro bike, only with a lot less power. Everything felt quite normal as I entered what I would call a typical Welsh motocross track with lots

of berms and tabletops. This is where you would think the Freeride would be out of its comfort zone. And I have been around this track a lot in my lifetime, so knowing what an enduro bike rides and handles like here would make it a perfect comparison test. So I'll tell you it came as some surprise to find it was actually coping quite well. The Freeride was a lot of fun, and it responded well to nailing it around berms and hitting some sizable tabletops, which it cleared and landed quite comfortably.

The 2018 Freeride has been equipped with new WP Xplor 43mm forks which are a massive improvement on those of the old bike. You see, at this test I was lucky enough to take a ride around the same track on a 2016 Freeride and on that the forks never stopped bottoming-out. The other noticeable difference is the frame geometry; a longer steering head on the 2018 bike provides increased rigidity for better tracking stability and this has given the bike its biggest transformation.

The old Freeride 350F seemed to be very unstable, twitchy, and the forks would bottom out just looking at a bump, but KTM seems to have ironed these problems out. From a personal point of view – and being a rider who pushes the front hard when racing – I still thought the front end was a little soft. When sat on the bike, the front of the bike worked more than the rear and felt like it was on its nose all the time. A small revalve or maybe some stiffer springs would change the bike completely, but that's me being super picky, I'm sure beginner and club level riders will find the set-up more than acceptable.

THE TRICK IN THE TRAIL

After having a blast around the motocross track it was time to test the bike in something more akin to its own territory. There is a lot of technical stuff at this venue that can be a real test on an enduro bike, and it was over this that the Freeride shocked me as to how good it was, hitting some fairly



trick trials climbs and cambers and coming away faultless. The Freeride is equipped with Formula brakes – now upgraded to a radial four-piston caliper – and Formula hydraulic clutch system which were both surprisingly good and clearly better, stronger performing than the previous setup. One gripe I had was that the rear brake pedal was tucked underneath the clutch cover and with Alpinestars Tech 10s this was quite difficult to get on, a situation which could be rectified with either a bigger end on the pedal or a more sensible choice of boot! Anyway, the trials terrain is where you find the reduced power really comes into its own, being mellow and useable with plenty of torque. The retuned 250F engine – even with its 10,000rpm rev ceiling – proved itself to be the perfect block for this bike, and tuned up to the 26bhp that KTM say it can be, it would be some bike. But if I'm honest, its good enough standard for playing and trail riding.

TICKING THE BOXES

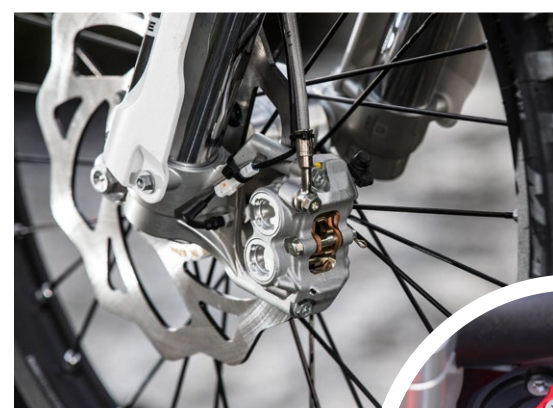
As the day continued we took to the hills on a long trail ride across moorland, grass land and mountain tracks. This is where this bike's name ticks the box, being able to take

it places that an enduro bike may be a bit too powerful for, or too heavy to manoeuvre (especially if you had to pick it up or got stuck).

As we rode the trail we came across a small uphill streambed which looked good to ride. So I rode down it first, which proved a touch slippery, then turned around and attacked it uphill. And after a couple of attempts I was riding it the whole way foot-up. One thing that did help while riding the rocky conditions were the tyres. Fitted as standard are Maxxis Trialmaxx tyres which, as the name implies, were very good while tackling the rocky trials conditions. Only, as good as they were on the rocks, when riding the grass slopes I would find no grip at all. This is where normal enduro type tyres would come into their own, but the Maxxis tyres weren't entirely horrendous and I wouldn't change them straight away, unless you were going to ride an enduro race. Fact is, though, I was more than pleased with the Freeride's performance – being able to ride trials type terrain while riding on a trail ride, that (for me) is what this bike is really about.

SUITS YOU?

At the end of day it was time to answer



FREERIDE – WHAT'S NEW FOR 2018

The old 250/350 versions have been replaced by one 250cc four-stroke version, with an engine taken from the latest 250EXC-F (highly adapted)

Power is now 20bhp as standard with an option to power-up to 26bhp

Weight is now 98.5kg, helped by fitting a lighter li-ion battery

Fuelling is now by Keihin EMS with closed-loop EFI working with twin catalytic converters for cleaner emissions

Brakes have been upgraded to a stronger radial four-piston caliper up front (260mm disc) and twin-piston caliper on the rear (210mm disc), still by Formula

Forks have been modernised to WP 43mm Xplor offering 250mm travel and separate adjustments – compression damping via the top of the left leg, rebound damping via the top of the right leg

The shock is now a WP PDS Xplor unit offering 260mm travel

The steering stem has been lengthened for more stability

Seat height is 915mm but via the shock this can be lowered by 25mm

Maxxis Trialmaxx tyres now fitted

New headlight and front fender

In-mould graphics

New speedo/dashboard by MAE

Ignition lock

Option to reverse the footpegs, to move rearward by 8mm for more traction



those all-important questions: what is the bike made for and who is it aimed at? KTM have built the Freeride to be the ultimate all rounder and, to be honest, they have achieved that. The bike coped with everything I threw at it. Only that does make it a jack of all trades, for a trials bike would be better at the trials and same goes with the enduro bike riding better in enduro conditions.

Can a compromise bike ever win? For sure, when we went for the trail ride over the mountains and saw technical bits on the side of the trail, there was none of my usual thinking 'I wish I had my trials bike'. With the Freeride it's a case of just get your head into trials mode and attack, within reason. This is where the bike came into its own; and to answer the question on people's mind, the bike is what it says it is, a FREERIDE.

Would I buy one over having one trials bike and one enduro bike? Personally, no. I would prefer to use a bike that is made for the discipline it's intended for, niche players for niche markets. But the Freeride is not aimed at me. Beginner riders would love it. I think would this would be one of the best first bikes for someone to learn on and still find enough performance potential in it to be able to ride decent events – enduro, extreme or even trials – at a sensible level. It's also great for gaining confidence and learning to ride tricky terrain before moving onto a big size bike.

It's also great for green lane (public trail) riding, being comfortable, inoffensive to other country users and easy to ride – and it comes ready (ie legal) for the road. And, without trying to offend anyone here, it can be an awesome bike for older riders. For those past their 60th birthday who find serious competition bikes too powerful, too tall, and who don't want to fall all the way back to cheap and cheerful small-capacity trail bikes or old twinshocks for their kicks, the Freeride must be manna from heaven. And for Long Distance Trials (very popular still in the UK) this machine is a proverbial weapon.

So the Freeride can suit the young beginner through to the aging veteran. One size can, to a surprising degree, suit all. And at the end of the day, it left me with a big smile. Overall, though it shocks me to say it, this bike is absolutely mega! 🍌

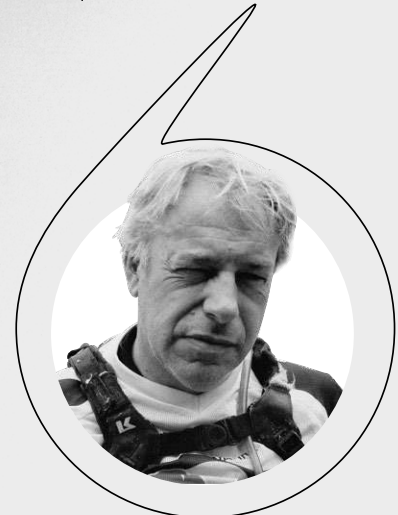


SPECIFICATION

2018 KTM Freeride 250F

- ENGINE** 24991cc, liquid-cooled single-cylinder DOHC four-stroke
- BORE & STROKE** 78x52.3mm
- FUELLING** Keihin EFI, throttle body 42mm Starting Electric
- TRANSMISSION** Six-speed gearbox, wet multi-plate clutch, hydraulically operated
- CHASSIS** Perimeter steel-aluminium compound frame
- FRONT SUSPENSION** 43mm WP Xplor forks, 250mm travel
- REAR SUSPENSION** WP PDS shock, fully adjustable, 260mm travel
- FRONT BRAKE** 260mm disc, Formula radial four-piston caliper
- WHEELBASE** 1418mm
- SEAT HEIGHT** 915mm
- DRY WEIGHT** 98.5kg
- FUEL CAPACITY** 5-litres
- PRICE** £6599 (UK) €7898 (EU)





CHRIS
EVANS
A+

END OF YEAR REPORT

Our friend Chris Evans – trail tours operator that he is – reflects on a good year on the pistes. That's something he puts down to Mother Nature, a Dutchman and not tweaking the nose of fate...

Four or five years ago, on the last day of the last tour of the year, I stupidly said at the morning briefing, "this is the first year we've been a whole season without anybody going to casualty, and I'd really like to keep it that way." Two hours later a call came through on my Bluetooth helmet speaker: "Hi Chris, its John here, I'm with Matt and he's broken his leg." More than a little disappointed that my 'unbroken' run had come to an end but also a little bit surprised at John's assured diagnosis, I replied: "How do you know?" Turns out John was a doctor...

As usual Matt wanted to discharge himself and get back to Blighty ASAP, despite Dr John's rather worrying assertion that he'd get better treatment in France. Let's just hope it was John's way of trying to persuade Matt not to leave hospital prematurely. Naturally he ignored medical advice, which it subsequently turned out delayed his recovery.

This year, on the last day of the last tour of the year, I found myself in a similar situation to four or five year ago. I kept everything crossed but this time resisted the very

strong desire to tempt fate. And incredibly it worked. Everybody survived the last day unscathed and I managed to get through a whole year without anybody hurting themselves sufficiently badly to warrant professional medical attention. Happy days. Realistically we all know that riding motorcycles involves a certain amount of risk and for that reason I've given up riding road bikes. People who don't ride motorcycles seem to think that the risk is the main reason we do it. I can't talk for anybody else but personally it is an aspect of the sport I could really live without.

So a good year as far as injuries were concerned, and looking back over 2017, a pretty good year all round. Because not only did nobody hurt themselves but personally I didn't fall off a bike at all. Okay, I laid it down a few times. Had to get off and push occasionally. But I didn't actually ping myself off into the scenery. The only time I drew blood was when a wayward bramble got stuck into my nose.

Obviously a lack of accidents isn't the only factor that goes into making for a good year – Mother Nature also plays a big part. I can't claim that a permanent ray of sunshine



follows Sport Adventure tours around rural France but I can only remember getting soaked to the skin once in over 45 days of riding. And even then I didn't actually get cold. Partly this is 'thanks' to global warming. I was looking through some old photos the other day and was amazed by how muddy everything used to be. There's a track where I live that used to have a boggy bit all year round. In winter you had to go round it, in summer pop the front wheel over it. But now, even after it's been raining steadily for a couple of days, you can walk down the track without getting your shoes dirty.

Another important element of a good year is of course the punters, and in this department I was particularly blessed. Inevitably when organising any event for people who, let's be honest about this, suffer from adult attention deficit disorder, you occasionally have to lay down the law. But this year I don't remember raising my voice once. It could be that I'm mellowing out in my old age but I doubt it. A more likely explanation was offered to me by a customer who works in marketing. He explained that small businesses tend to attract clients that are in some way similar to the proprietor. I'm not

sure if this theory is more insulting to myself or my punters but there is an undeniable logic there. My marketing man went on to advance the idea that over the 25 years I've been running trips, by the laws of attrition, my customer base has been whittled down to those people who can stand me and visa-versa. I've got no problem with that – everybody's happy.

I've also been very happy on the bike thanks to the acquisition of my Yamaha WR250F. Now I've banged on about this quite a lot over the year so I won't go into too much detail again here but essentially I really like the way the bike handles and this trumps all other considerations, such as the fact that the engine is very peaky compared to my KTM 350 EXC and that the WR is not nearly so easy to work on. The fitment of an Akrapovic silencer has improved the low down torque considerably (much more so than messing around with the mapping via the Star Trekky 'Power Commander') but I did fall seriously out of love with the bike the other day when the clutch cable snapped mid-tour. Fortunately I remembered that these things tend to let you down from the last time I rode a dirt bike with a

cable clutch, 20 years ago, so a spare was in the van.

And finally my year went very well because of the people I am lucky enough to work with. I use various 'openers' depending on where I'm riding and all do an admirable job but it is above all the replacement for the man I thought was irreplaceable, John Hall, that has made my life so easy and enjoyable. Ruud Van Ooyen, or Ruud Van Driver as we like to call him, used to run maintenance crews at Dutch oil refineries, so he is extremely methodical and doesn't mind working outdoors. I recruited him to the fold in desperation when I was blown out at short notice and went to knock on a nodding acquaintance neighbour's door. He has terrible taste in bikes, owning as he does an AJP and a 690 Enduro (what's wrong with the middle ground, Ruud?) but apart from that he is a fantastic bloke. My life might be based around riding a fast depreciating inanimate object but, be it punters, helpers or owners of hotels and restaurants, it's really all about passion and people, and I'm very lucky with what the French rather aptly term my 'entourage'. I wish you all a very happy and crash free 2018. 🍀



Road-book Enduro Tours in France

DATES FOR 2018

23/24/25 May	Massif du Morvan
30/31 May – 1 June	Pyrénées
13/14/15 June	Dordogne
27/28/29 June	Lozerien Bis
5/6/7 Sept	Cantal
19/20/21 Sept	Pyrénées
24/25/26 Oct	Dordogne
7/8/9 Nov	Trèfle du Morvan
21/22/23 Nov	Normandie



All trips are priced at £560 (payable to ABTA bonded and ATOL protected UK travel agency S&N Pickford). Price includes 3 days riding, 2 nights half-board accommodation, loan of road book and road book reader, support vehicle and driver, an opener and sweeper and a classy T-shirt. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like any further information.

Chris Evans, Sport Adventure,
15 Faye, 71550 Cussy en Morvan, France
Tel: 0033 662 487190
chris.evans@sport-adventure.com
www.sport-adventure.com





Street Scrambler

Words: Jon Bentman **images:** Jon Bentman & Alex Waters

It's just Street Scrambler and me.

I don't need nothing else, I don't need no fancy sh*t. It's just me and The Bike. We're going to find some space, get some air, we're going to wear some sh*t as we go – dirt is life – but, hey, enough already (time to flick the bird)... sayonara amigos.



This is life with the Street Scrambler. Maybe we don't have to be quite so aggressive about it – apologies there to those of a nervous disposition, and kids please don't talk to your folks like that – but the Street Scrambler asks over and again, 'what do you need all that bullcrap for?'

It is eternally rewarding, this bike feels so right it has to be wrong. Can 54hp really feel this good? Can 120mm of suspension travel really make a Scrambler? Actually, none of that matters. Nothing matters. The Street Scrambler just tears up all the rules, does things its way, and does it so spot-bollock-on that it strips your soul bare.

Riding the Street Scrambler is to remember

what biking was, when you were a punk kid, when riding your bike was your first real taste of freedom, when you'd go without food and drink just to have another gallon of gas. It recalls a life before cellphones, before the Internet, before 24-hour news and Jihadis. You'd blow out of work on a Friday afternoon and go explore every tarmac'd corner of your part of the world. You'd feel the wind on your chest, blowing up your nostrils, watering your eyes and you'd want it to never end.

And a bit like that punk kid that you once were, the Street Scrambler doesn't actually look all that much. It's smallish, its green for God's sake (green?) and its stats would make it the bogey card in any game of Top Trumps.





SPECIFICATION

TRIUMPH STREET SCRAMBLER

ENGINE: Liquid cooled SOHC eight-valve 270° crank angle (parallel) twin-cylinder four-stroke

DISPLACEMENT: 900cc

BORE & STROKE: 84.6 x 80mm

MAX POWER: 40.5kW (54bhp) @ 6000rpm

MAX TORQUE: 80Nm (59lb.ft) @ 2850rpm

FUELING: Multipoint sequential EFI

STARTER: Electric

TRANSMISSION: Five-speed gearbox, wet multiplate clutch

FRAME: Tubular steel cradle

FRONT SUSPENSION: 41mm Kayaba forks, 120mm travel

REAR SUSPENSION: Twin Kayaba shocks (adj. preload), 120mm travel

TYRES: Metzeler Tourance 100/90-19, 150/70-17

WHEELS: 32-spoke wire-laced wheels

BRAKES: Front disc 310mm, Nissin twin piston caliper – Rear disc 255mm, Nissin twin piston caliper, ABS

SEAT HEIGHT: 790mm

WHEELBASE: 1450mm

WEIGHT: 206kg (dry)

FUEL CAPACITY: 12 l

COLOURS: Jet Black, Korosi Red/Frozen Silver, Matt Khaki Green

CONTACT: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

UK PRICE: £9125



But like the punk kid it has... well... spunk.

The motor fell off God's own workbench. That dude knows how to tune an engine. Forget revs, forget horsepower, give it Torque, He said. And He did, a solid 80Nm of the stuff – and not somewhere in the mid-range or top end, no, right off the bottom at 2,800rpm. So it Launches (yeah, with a cap-L). Make it Smooth, He said. And it is, smooth like a snake's ass. And give it long legs, like a long legged woman dressed in black (He being a Mungo Jerry fan) and so when you're there at a leisurely 3700rpm in top (fifth gear) its hauling an easy 70mph.

This bike has character. There's a throb to it, the way an old Harley has, it's lazy power. With the wide bars you just chill out, and despite the limitations of the suspension it's one laid-back ride. And it don't need to go fast because with 900cc and that much torque it don't need to.

Does it do off-road? It says Street Scrambler, doofus – read the print! It doesn't say Dirt Scrambler, it says Street Scrambler. But

you know, because we are still just a little bit punk, we did take it down some tracks and you know what? It was cool. It was sh*t if you caught a big bump but the geometry, the ergos, made it good for the relatively smooth stuff. Lazy-ass steering angles work okay off-road and that's the case here. So while it won't make an enduro, as a Travel Bike (@Chris Scott) it nails the brief.

Anyway... there's no time for this sh*t. Less talk, more riding.



STUFF ABOUT THE...

TRIUMPH STREET SCRAMBLER

Did you know the modern, retro Bonneville has already enjoyed a longer model life than the 1960s original that it apes? The old Bonnie had a life of 15 years (1959-74 – technically it was longer, but let's ignore the terrible decade of attempted but ultimately futile resuscitations that followed the factory's closure). The new Bonnie meanwhile has been with us already for 17 years. That's crazy stuff. Heck, even the Scrambler edition has been with us since 2006, that's 11 going on 12 years. So it's no Johnny Come Lately. Our point? No point; just an interesting fact.

This is, though, a brand new Street Scrambler. When Euro 4 took force in 2016 Triumph needed to implement a new cleaner engine and so the 'old' 865cc unit got pensioned off and now we have this new (exactly) 900cc water-cooled eight valve, fuel-injected lump in its place. Euro4 could have killed it, strangled it in effect, but in fact Triumph's development of this high-torque (+18% on the previous motor) T100 unit has made it arguably their best Bonnie motor yet. Given a 270° crank angle it has that vee-twin style rock 'n' roll feel that you'll never find in the original (1959) 360° lump and by setting the power output low and the torque high they've imbued it with a truckload of charisma.

And this power really suits the Street Scrambler application, for anyone who's ridden a BMW F800GS will know low-end power delivery is what off-road bikes are all about (because alas, the old 800GS doesn't have it!). Match that with a faultless fly-by-wire throttle, a lighter torque-assist clutch

and a clean-shifting five-speed gearbox and it makes the Street Scrambler a delight to ride, on back roads or on main highways for that matter.

Triumph certainly like to build quality into the bikes and you'll see this everywhere you look on the Street Scrambler – it's a joy to look at. And that's also reflected in their choice of Kayaba for the suspension. However, being that this is a Street – not a dirt or a desert – Scrambler, know that this suspension is limited in its stroke to just 120mm front and rear. That is not very much in off-road terms, and we found the shocks to be a bit lacking in damping, creating a choppy ride over rough roads, and certainly this setup is not enough to make it a credible off-roader. But if you choose your trails carefully and slow the heck down when the bumps get too big then it will cope well enough. The option of the 'bench' seat (one of 150 accessories Triumph make for the Street Scrambler) would probably be a good call for off-road, too.

The Scrambler styling criteria clearly have made for a smaller fuel tank than you might want for extended rides. Some 12-litres isn't that great and although we got a decent 58mpg from our mixed riding, that's still only allowing an absolute range of 150 miles. So cue purchase of a rack and Rotopax clip-on fuel cans for the serious travel rider...

We do, though, very much like the instrumentation on this bike. It's a lovely speedo dial and the digital information display within sits unobtrusively. And when it comes to scrolling through the various rider aids settings (such as ABS and traction control) this is quick and intuitive. The essence of a simple bike is never disturbed.



Desert Sled

Happy place.

Hey, this Desert Sled is one sweet ride. It certainly looks the part, very 70s scrambler come desert racer; but it's no in-yer-face bad ass, and there's no swagger, no brag, no menace. Instead it engages the world with wide-open arms and a cheery 'Ciao!' Si, la vita è bella!



So you sit there, in a bubble of happiness, the free-revving vee-twin thrumming away underneath you, those 70s style motocross bars (high-and-wide like they were on Roger's RH, not low-and-wide like today's RM-Z) allowing you to embrace the road – the whole country – in your reverie. There's no question this bike has tech – it has to, to squeak through the latest Euro 4 emission and safety regulations – but it doesn't bother you with all that, the forward view is pure scrambler simplicity, just the smallest (offset) digital speedo to disturb what is a pared-back view of the road.

This isn't scrambler life as we know it, it's adventure as it should be. A comfortable, capable platform where you can swan along

taking in everything around you, instead of concentrating on the bells and whistles creating all kinds of unnecessary distractions in the cockpit. It's got plenty of speed and the motor delights in spinning up as you vary the octaves with the help of the slick-shifting six-speed 'box (gotta love the Duke's exhaust note). But speed isn't adventure any more than it is scrambler. So chill, kick back and enjoy the ride.

And when you stop, it says 'like me' it might even suggest 'love me' to every stranger around. It's no Bavarian battering ram, it's a sweet-talking mandolin-playing Latin – conquering the world with love, not menace. So people look on in appreciation, not in awe. Smile, it suggests. And they do.



**STUFF ABOUT THE...
DUCATI DESERT SLED**

Ducati really have done their homework on off-road. That's shown in their imperious Multistrada Enduro super-adventure, but it can be seen here in the Desert Sled, too. Just take the suspension – 200mm both ends (and we're talking quality Kayaba again, including decent adjustable 46mm USD units up front). This makes for a serious adventure-capable machine. There's a whole heap of ground clearance, too.

That suspension feels to be proper quality. At first the ride feels firm, like a sport bike on the road, but this actually seems to work fine and when we got on the dirt it meant the Desert Sled responded well when it hit some hollows and bumps at speed – stuff you'd need to slow to a crawl for on the Street Scrambler. And this will also work well when you start loading up the bike with travel gear or maybe a second bod. It feels to be proper stuff.

The beautiful 19"/17" gold-anodized hoops come with decent Pirelli Scorpion Rally STR tyres, which will work well in any conditions with the exceptions of wet grass or slick mud. The brakes look gnarly – a beefy radially-mounted four-piston Brembo caliper looks set to seize the huge 330mm disc with a vice-like grip, but actually there's plenty of feel and progression and the back-up of ABS.

The motor, an 803cc 90° L-twin is very different to the Triumph. It's tuned for power, not torque, and so pumps a very healthy 75bhp, albeit at a revvy 8250rpm. Where the Triumph is thumpy and strong, the Ducati is light and breezy, not to the point of buzziness, but it prefers rev to lug.

The one downside to the long-travel suspension is that the Desert Sled can feel top-heavy. Not excessively so, but with the steering lock limited by the USD forks and with the engine up high you do need to concentrate when pulling a U-turn. And if you're trying to pull a skid turn in the dirt be aware that the fuel tank puts your weight a ways back, and so unless you're a big fella you'll find as much probability of the front washing out as the rear spinning around. The Street Scrambler, here, is a doddle to turn.

The fuel tank will again be a limitation on long distance wanderings. The capacity is bigger, 13.5-litres, but we found the fuel efficiency to be worse than the Triumph, and turning 51mpg we again have a 150-mile range. Cue more Rotopax sales.

But we loved riding the Desert Sled. We like that the slightly fussy speedo and instrument pod is off-set (leaving space for a GPS?) and we liked the quilted bench seat, albeit at 860mm it is a whopping 70mm higher than the Street Scrambler – but this is the price you pay if you want to ride off-road properly (and if you can't deal with that then buy one of the other, lower, Ducati Scramblers). And there is always a low-seat option at 840mm.

SPECIFICATION**DUCATI SCRAMBLER
DESERT SLED**

ENGINE: Air cooled four-valve vee-twin four-stroke

DISPLACEMENT: 803cc

BORE & STROKE: 88 x 66mm

MAX POWER: 54kW (73bhp) @ 8250rpm

MAX TORQUE: 67Nm @ 5750rpm

FUELING: EFI, 50mm throttle body

STARTER: Electric

TRANSMISSION: Six-speed gearbox, wet multiplate clutch

FRAME: Steel trellis frame

FRONT SUSPENSION: 46mm Kayaba USD forks (fully adjustable), 200mm travel

REAR SUSPENSION: Side mounted Kayaba shock (fully adjustable), 200mm travel

TYRES: Pirelli Scorpion Rally STR 120/70-19 170/60-17

WHEELS: Aluminium, wire-spoked rim

BRAKES: Front disc 330mm, Brembo four-piston radially mounted caliper – Rear disc 245mm, single piston caliper, ABS

SEAT HEIGHT: 860mm (840mm option)

WHEELBASE: 1505mm

WEIGHT: 191kg (dry), 207kg (wet)

FUEL CAPACITY: 13.5 l

COLOURS: Red Dusk, White Mirage, Black Edition

CONTACT: www.ducatiscrambler.com

UK PRICE: £9650



ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW...**ALEX WATERS**

There is no denying these are both handsome beasts – the Desert Sled oozes 70s Scrambler cool while the Street Scrambler, with its muted green and black colourways, harks back to the previous decade with an understated nod to the TR6 Bonnie / Steve McQueen era.

Setting off on a damp November morning, and not having ridden for a while, the Triumph immediately feels familiar and confidence inspiring. Power comes from low down, it feels torquey and smooth right off the bottom with a lovely throaty burble from the high-level exhaust, only the slightly harsh

ride quality from the rear shocks threaten to spoil the experience.

Switching over to the Ducati and it feels like a different proposition straight away. The difference in ride height is obvious it feels more like a big enduro / small adventure bike with a slightly more urgent power delivery throughout the rev range.

These differences are further compounded by handling characteristics. The Street Scrambler feels like a road bike with effortless point and shoot cornering while the Desert Sled has that off-road biased vagueness synonymous with longer forks and knobbly tyres. Counter-point: off-road the Ducati feels more accomplished. Tall and slim

allowing you to ride standing up comfortably for extended periods whereas the Triumph's high-level exhaust stops you from getting nicely balanced up on the pegs.

I loved every minute of riding both these bikes. The Triumph has that lovely ease of use and familiarity, and with a couple of minor changes could easily be a longer distance weapon with some genuine dirt road ability. The Duke is a more serious proposition off-road and a whole 'lotta fun as well. You could easily tour both of these bikes with some soft luggage, a tent and a mix-up of road miles and gravel tracks for some good old-fashioned fun – and isn't that the point of a scrambler?

“You could easily tour on both of these bikes with some soft luggage, a tent and a mix-up of road miles and gravel tracks for some good old-fashioned fun”





METAL

Triumph Street Scrambler & Ducati Desert Sled

**COMING HOME**

Home is where the heart is. Only the heart is fickle.

When the heart remembers its youth, when it remembers how your brain was so uncomplicated back then, then nothing will connect with your soul quite like the Triumph Street Scrambler. You simply crave it. Want it. Lust for it. It is in so many ways impractical. But if you wanted a bike to travel the Earth, a companion to fly you high or drag you out of the depths, then the Street Scrambler is it.

When the heart says love is everything, then it's the Desert Sled that answers the call. With adventure bikes becoming crazily techy, way too overpowered, too expensive and just so damn imposing, here's a bike that looks like an adventure bike really should. Simple, approachable, easy. This is travel not with acres of metal armour but with soft panniers, of course made of leather. And it says, simply, 'hello friend'. 🍷



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Richa Scrambler Jacket

£179.99 / US\$250

Contact: www.nevis.uk.com

One of our favourite pieces of kit of 2017 is this jacket from Belgian manufacturer Richa. The quality is superb with a waxed cotton outer shell from British Millerain that gives an overall look and feel that belies the 180 quid asking price (in the UK). It has built-in armour in the shoulders and elbows with a pocket for an optional back protector underneath the removable cotton-quilt liner.

Even the detailing impresses, with antiqued brass poppers and zips, and quilted detailing to the shoulders and elbows. We tested this during our Scrambler feature and it was warm and – as claimed – waterproof throughout. The usual high-end name brand jackets of this sort come at two-and-a-half times this price, but we could find no quality deficiencies with this jacket, and by heck the styling is spot-on. An amazing price point for a beautifully made, highly functional and great looking jacket.

Alex Waters





Draggin Twista Kevlar Jeans

£219.99 / AUS\$319

Contact: www.thekeycollection.co.uk

Three years ago I was on the search for a pair of Kevlar jeans – that didn't look like Kevlar jeans. I wanted something I could commute in and spend all day wearing around the office without looking like I was off to a heavy metal gig after work.

Yep, Kevlar jeans until relatively recently were usually baggy, heavily stitched affairs with sometimes questionable styling, but fortunately these days there are any number of companies producing 'regular' looking jeans that offer some protection in case of a spill. Jeans are never going to offer the same level of safety as a set of leathers or a full adventure suit but for everyday riding around town or light off-road work they are just the ticket for ease of use.

Three years later the Twistas I sourced from Australian company Draggin Jeans are still going strong. They're also still a current product, which makes this test report even more relevant. The Twistas have Kevlar lining in the seat and knee areas with pockets for adding optional knee armour. They have a bit of stretch in them and while slim-cut you can fit base layers underneath them, and they fit over both my adventure and sports bike boots. I have worn these in all weathers on many types of bike and they always look the part while wearing well over the years.

Retailing in the UK at just over £200 (in Australia: AUS\$319) they aren't cheap but offer good value compared to some rivals and Draggin have a well-founded reputation for quality gear. In all, I can't fault them. Recommended.

Alex Waters

Alpinestars Tech-T Trials Boots

£249.95 / €329.95 / US\$349.99

Contact: www.alpinestars.com

A pair of trials boots is always handy to have in the locker. Great for trials obviously, but they double their use in so many other ways, working particularly well in adventure and scrambler rides. I've had two pairs of A-stars No Stops before these Tech-Ts, and both got so much use, the second pair I eventually gifted to our 'Doing a Runner' adventure-seeking Andy Dukes after he bought his Honda CRF250L and realised he had nothing to wear with it! (Another perfect match). But now I have a pair of the No-Stop's successor, the Tech-Ts and I'm happy again. While similar to the old boot, A-stars have given this boot a modern update, there's quite a bit more detailing and with better ankle design they fit your foot and leg better than the old No Stop – and they don't sag, so look sharper. The three-buckle closure makes them quick to put on, while the fact they're made of full grain leather probably makes them more comfortable than a man-made fibre boot. Yes, a true adventure boot will offer more protection and will probably be waterproof (for a while), but it won't do for the occasional trials rides I have planned. No, I like the versatility of these, and the slipper-like all-day comfort. They're a great trials boot, for sure (ask Toni Bou), but it's the versatility that I value.

Jon Bentman





AN S-CLASS VAN?!

Mercedes Vito Sport 119 CDI LWB

You may travel coach, my friend. But I, I demand business class. Mercedes are putting more luxury than ever into the humble van. And yes, we like...

words: Alex Waters **images:** Jon Bentman

With RUST's trusty but sporty Ford Transit otherwise engaged, we needed another set of wheels to transport two bikes and gear from distributor to location for the Scrambler feature in this issue. Mercedes were our knights in shining gunmetal-armour, kindly agreeing to lend us their latest Vito Sport. We requested the LWB version as we needed to get two medium sized bikes and associated kit stashed inside.

In recent years there seems to be a whole new level of car-like refinement filtering down (or is it up?) to vans. Each van range now has its top of the line fancy option, be it a Transporter Sportline with VW, the Custom Sportvan with Ford Transit or the Vito Sport here with Mercedes. These vans are pumping out serious horsepower,

a fair 190hp with this van, so they can haul ass when needed, but are also offering the creature comforts of a high-end saloon. And they're becoming increasingly economic with fuel economy that beats that of family cars of only recent history. We love them!

Our Sport version, here, accordingly has Mercedes' '7G-TRONIC' seven-speed automatic transmission complete with paddle shifts (very Lewis Hamilton), stop/start technology (a nod to the greens there), driver assist (not a Cornish Pasty holder but a sensor that detects and alerts to driver fatigue), cruise control, ESP (no, it doesn't read your mind, but a computer micro-manages the van's load and performance to ensure maximum safety) and a host of exterior styling touches like colour-coded bumpers, not to mention the 17" alloys (gotta have alloys). You can even choose between front or rear wheel drive and the 2017 range offers



IN BRIEF

Mercedes Vito Sport 119 CDI LWB

PRICE AS TESTED: £28,870+VAT

MAX LOAD AREA 4.38m²

MAX LOAD LENGTH 2831mm



up to 120kg more payload than the previous generation Vito.

Both bikes loaded easily (minus wing mirrors) with excellent access from both sides thanks to the twin sliding doors and multiple tie-down points. The 190hp power plant offers plenty of grunt even when hauling around 400kg+ of motorcycles – that's nothing to this motor – and works well with the auto box, which we liked a great deal. Some might like the 'driving experience' of a manual 'box, but we've got enough on our minds without trying to optimise gearshifts on the transport legs of our day. That said, playing with paddle shifts is cool fun if you're in the mood.

The cool aspect here is the performance doesn't come at a great cost to the environment. Mercedes claim up to 47.1mpg for this engine, while we found we achieved nearer to 40mpg. But bearing in mind much of our driving was country roads driving in the auto mode and with a full load this is still impressive.

WE LIKED:

Performance, economy and handling.

Sliding door access on both sides

Refined cabin space and useful driver aids.

WE DIDN'T LIKE:

Nit-picking time: that colour-coded rear bumper looks cool but is just asking to get scratched when loading – go careful with the ramp.

The point of difference we found with the Vito Sport over its competitors in this class is just that: class. The Sport element is incidental to the high quality spec. After our Transit and even compared to the VW Transporter you could detect this van has a very apparent higher level of sophistication. Can a van be elegant? The style cues such as the chrome grill echo the style of Mercedes' executive saloons, and the cab is like a saloon, beautifully appointed, so comfortable. And the motor is quiet and smooth, the 190bhp punch comes delivered in a silk glove. In fact you don't race the Vito Sport you just let it casually waft you along. And by heck it looks smart, to the point of restraint – it'll not look out of place double-parked on Park Lane. It's a bit posh, eh?

Yep, with those luxury supportive seats, a quality stereo and car-like handling the Vito was a great companion for the feature, doing everything we asked of it with ease. And no, of course we didn't want to give it back... 🚫



KTM 200EXC

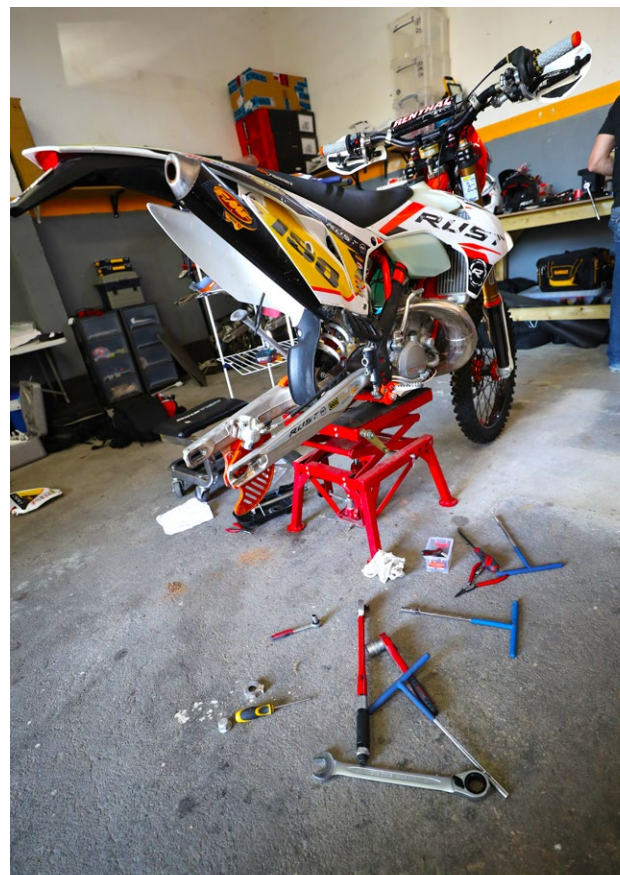
The KTM 200EXC was for 20 years (1997-2016) a staple for enduro clubmen. It offered that magical mix of small bike with big bike performance. RUST bought one of the last, a 2016 model, and has over the last year been optimising its set-up – and now we're ready to share our findings. Here in part one, we're looking at engine and drivetrain upgrades

words: Warren Malschinger **images:** Jon Bentman

Just a little bit of heaven! That's the only way to describe this iconic machine. In fact this piece of history will not leave RUST's garage – its simply will not go on sale – ever! When KTM announced that it would stop production of the 200EXC in 2016 we had to have one in the collection before it was too late and we're stoked that we managed to find a new one.

The aim from the beginning was to progressively transform the 200 into one of the very last 'factory' 200s to ever be built (and it may well be the first as we're not sure the 200EXC ever became a works racer, with the possible exception that Shane Watts may well have raced one in the year he took the AMA GNCC title by riding every enduro from KTM's catalogue).

We've always loved the 200s – they are fast and light and in the right hands can be thrashed, thrown about and made into the best 'dance partner' across difficult rocky or snotty terrain. We love that KTM have always built them as full sized bikes, not so much a toy as a weapon. The light 125 chassis with the 193cc motor produces excellent low-end grunt and smooth useable power throughout the powerband. This motor is an absolute beaut and you can add a few extra horses too without much fuss.



If you've not ridden a 200 before (which is increasingly the case as four-strokes have dominated clubman choices for the past decade) it can take some adjusting to. This past two years Warren has been riding a load of bigger bore machines, and in-between his long term TE300, and so finally getting around to putting this bike to work was, he said, both a real pleasure and a pretty big adjustment.

The power delivery (or lack of it) compared to the bigger machines is very different. It can feel a bit weak at times, but it tracks lightly and confidently and we noticed when riding with our 2015 Yamaha WR250F the 200's pace was very similar but where the WR would be hitting stuff hard(ish) the 200 would simply skip along – so it can match the new 250F's speed, but the style of operation is very different.

Now we're sure that everyone will have their own opinions on what constitutes the perfect setup (and we'd invite you to send us your ideas – editor@rustsports.com) but here's the detail of our build of what we feel is a near perfect 200-race bike. Minus the cock-ups we made along the way, of course.

200

MAXIMISING THE PERFORMANCE

1 ON THE PIPE

We've found over the years that unlocking the secret potential in the 200's motor is not so difficult. Almost always it's possible to find a sweet spot with little more than a few minor adjustments. The stock pipe on the 2016 has excellent characteristics and unless you're chasing horsepower it delivers a smooth predictable pull bottom to top, you could leave well alone. However, for improved low end we would pair the FMF Gnarly expansion chamber with the stock silencer (the stock silencer performing slightly better than the aftermarket FMF muffler). For more outright power, bottom to top, and a substantially more aggressive power characteristic we fit either the Pro Circuit Factory or Platinum pipe and silencer combo. This is Warren's first choice pipe on the 200, it suits his aggressive riding style and he likes the 'hit' it gives just off the bottom.



2 STAY COOL

Next up we replaced the stock 1.1bar radiator cap with a high-pressure cap (1.8bar) and replaced the stock radiator hoses with a set of Samco Sport silicone radiator hoses which feature a thermostat bypass option. The Samco Sport hoses are all manufactured in the UK and come with a lifetime warranty. The bypass hose kit removes the thermostat and so ensures that the coolant moves through the motor more freely and keeps the engine temperatures down. Given that we seldom ride in extreme temperatures (higher than 30°C or lower than freezing) we've found that this improves the overall operating temperature of the motor and aides significantly in preventing overheating. We've found the Samco Sport hoses to be bombproof and upgraded clamps top off an excellent low cost upgrade.

3 LO-CARB DIET

Those mods complete, we then added a 38mm Lectron power jet carburettor. A lovely piece of kit and if we had only a very limited budget it would be the first upgrade part we'd buy, combined with a K&N air filter (see the Lectron Carb review in this issue for more details).

The K&N air filter is also a hidden gem, its sleek flat waveform construction reduces the volume of the filter in the housing, which improves airflow substantially, and as we all know, more air equals more power. The filter technology is also vastly superior; it's easier to clean (and environmentally friendlier) and is pre-formed to create an exact and easy fit. No more guessing if the filter's in place correctly.

4 FEEL THE FORCE

Next is a Moto Tassinari V-Force reed block and some very slight engine port polishing. And replacement of the stock piston, with either a Vertex piston and ring set or a Wossner kit.

We like both, although on this occasion we used the Vertex kit.

We have avoided adding a high compression head (the kind with options for different inserts with different squish) to the 200 as yet but this is something we'll get to eventually, once we're satisfied with the overall performance package and power delivery of the motor. Having the motor setup in a way that works for you before adding a head in our opinion is key. The head then allows you to use it to vary the power delivery characteristics by using the inserts to match the racing conditions. However even without the head these few upgrades add an additional 4-6 horsepower depending on the final setup – and absolutely turn the 200 into a proper screamer.

5 THE LANGSTON SETTING

The one thing we did not get round to doing, given the usual time constraints, was adjusting the power valve to what is known hereabouts as the Langston setting. As you might deduce this is a power valve setting favoured by one Grant Langston in his days as a top AMA motocrosser, and which is essentially bottom end biased. Warren ran this on his 125SX of old and he really liked the characteristics of the setting, so we will get to this – probably before we add the high compression head (all in good time, eh?).

200

DRIVETRAIN & ELECTRICS

1 SLEEK SPROCKETS
As the old adage goes – ‘if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it’ and with Warren that means he sticks with what has worked for him over the years – he’s become a creature of habit. So he defaults to the same suppliers every time. In the case of sprockets suppliers that means US manufacturer Dirt Tricks and their super-lightweight Zirconium SE chromatic rear sprocket, in this case a 46-tooth rear, matched to a stock 14T countershaft sprocket. Let it be said this wasn’t ideal gearing but was a case of force majeure as we found we had run out of stock (in the RUST workshop) of our Dirt Tricks 13T sprockets. This set-up came back to haunt Warren at the Trefle Lozerien, where it felt too long, so the answer would be say a 14/48 or 13/48 for real snap!

2 LINKED-IN
Our first choice in chains is always the Regina’s Z link chain. Its seal rings have a unique conical shape on their inner side that helps trap lubricant and improves durability and seal. These chains are super long lasting and more importantly we’ve have never had a chain issue since we started using them. A quick tip is to always mount the master link clip on the inside of the chain to reduce the risk of the clip inadvertently getting prised off in a ‘lay down’.

3 SMALL BATTERY
Just as KTM have done with their latest models, we replaced the stock battery with a new JMT Lithium Ion type that is almost a full kilogram lighter and offers superior performance in both hot and cold weather. It’s worked flawlessly since we fitted it and it’s available from KTM Power parts.



4 BETTER SPARK
We replaced the stock spark plug with high performance iridium-type, an NGK BR9EIX. Warren typically swaps between the 9EIX for fast high-speed stuff and the 8EIX for trail riding, given that the 9EIX can be a little cold for slow speed riding. In any event we’ve never had a fouling problem with either of the plugs, they’re long lasting, stable and for a few bucks a year more than the stock plug a worthwhile upgrade, especially if like us you choose to run the Lectron carb and K&N air filter combo with a higher air/fuel mix ratio.



200

PEDRO'S VERDICT

Have the mods worked? For an impartial evaluation we got our buddy Pedro Matos from Horizon Adventures to test the bike around our 7km test loop near Evora in Portugal.

Pedro: I'm a four-stroke rider, my day-to-day bike is a KTM 350EXC-F, so this is a new experience for me. But right away I was impressed, although for my first lap I was making lots of adaptations to how it works, after that I felt very confident riding it. It's actually an easy bike to ride and that's probably because the power is there right from the off. I think this might have something to do with the Lectron carb, because it pulls almost like a four-stroke, strong and even. I wasn't expecting that.

The joy of the bike is that it's not too powerful, and with the chassis set-up that it has – which we'll come to next time – you

can exploit all of its power. On bigger four-strokes you really can only do that on roads or fire trails, but on the 200 you use more of the power more of the time. And so you can go flat out, yet you remain in charge thanks to the even power and the superior suspension on this bike. That's you in charge, not the bike. For sure it's a fun bike. Not my choice of trail bike, but for enduro racing I can tell it would be ideal, being fast enough but not at all tiring for the rider. 🏍️

NEXT TIME

In our next instalment we get into the chassis and suspension modifications that make this 200 an expert's weapon. For now check out our more detailed review of the Lectron carb in this issue...



A-Kit



Pro-Kit



Intermediate



Weekend
Warrior



*8 Time World
& US National
Champions*



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THE NO CARB DIET

More a lo-carb diet. Lectron's 38mm high velocity power jet carburettor makes two-stroke jetting a chore of the past. Our Warren M. asks whether it makes the fuel-injected bikes of the now (and future) unnecessary too...?

words: Warren M & JB images: Jon Bentman

Not everyone is going to be seduced by the new generation fuel-injected TPI and TEi Austrian two-strokes, either because they can't afford one or simply just don't want to accept this darn right ugly new world we live in these days. For many there's a significant amount of nostalgia attached to riding a two-stroke, and when those certain folk think of two-strokes they expect to see that lovely old mechanical wonder that is the carburettor attached to its bore or crankcase.

But is there another alternative to fuel injection, something that can transform a stock non-fuel injected smoker into a tree hugging green machine? Is there an alternative that removes the necessity to faff around with jetting every time you encounter a change in elevation or weather, or improves fuel efficiency, throttle response and wait for it – adds a few ponies to boot? Here at RUST we felt compelled to see if we could find that viable alternative. Did it exist, and if it did, could it rate as a practical alternative?

Shockingly we have found it, and equally shockingly it's not a brand new prototype product but something decades old. It's an

un-temperamental carburettor that doesn't use a needle and jets to measure-out the fuel, instead a metering rod. It's called the Lectron 38mm High Velocity Power Jet Carburettor (quite a name).

Whaaaaat?

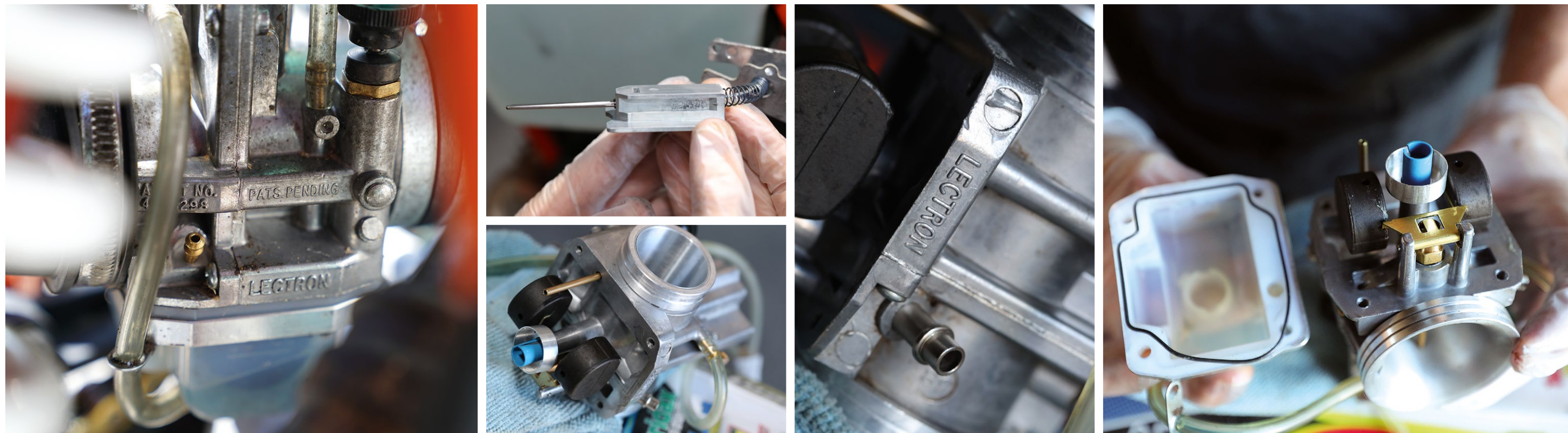
SO IF THE LECTRON CARB HAS A ROD, NOT A VALVE – THEN HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Lectron carb uses a tapered, half cylindrical shaped metering rod that automatically adjusts the proper amount of fuel required for various throttle positions. We've struggled to understand just how, so we read up on Lectron's sales literature hoping that would help. Kind of, it did. It said:

'The metering rod that vaporizes the fuel is positioned behind the air cut-off slide so its directly exposed to the manifold pressure of the engine. In the majority of carburettors this is not the case as the needle is positioned in the centre of a round slide or on the end of a flat slide, keeping it out of the manifold pressure.

'On the Lectron carb, the increased air velocities in the venturi aids in creating a stronger fuel pickup signal at the fuel-metering rod. The airflow moves more rapidly past the needle in this tapered bore design,





more so than in a conventional straight bore carburettor.'

We just about understood that, although we wouldn't want to be tested on it. So we read on:

'The shape and contour of the surface of the metering rod controls how much fuel is drawn up in response to the extremely strong fuel pick-up signal. Conventional carburettors have multiple overlapping fuel circuits whereas the metering rod in the Lectron carb has one smooth continuous profile that produces a smooth consistent throttle response and eliminates flat spots often found as a result of overlapping fuel circuits found in conventional carburettors.'

We decided that as much as that's plain English we're clearly just not mechanically minded enough to fully understand. We get the gist, but that's it. Instead we've taken comfort in knowing that back in the 1970s Kenny Roberts fitted Lectron carbs to his Yamaha TZ250 road racer and won two grand prix and placed runner-up in two more – so clearly Lectron have form. And while that might be 40-year-old evidence,

and probably the carb then was nothing like the one now, anytime you can call-in King Kenny as a referee you'll get our vote... And our money. So we acquired one and set off for the workshop to see if we could make it work...

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Besides being a pretty sexy looking bit of kit, the Lectron shouts 'high tech' with its long, thin flat slide and transparent float bowl. The Lectron carb's slide is longer than usual so the carb is a little taller than stock and as a result you need a longer than stock throttle cable (manufactured by Motion Pro – so top quality). A stock cable will not work.

Also in the box is a small tuning dial about the size of a Pound or Euro coin – or a Dime in the US. This is also an optional extra but a pretty good value low cost tool and makes adjusting the metering rod really simple.

INSTALLATION

Warren M.: The first job was to replace the stock throttle cable with the extended Motion Pro cable. This required removing

the fuel tank to follow the cable routing instructions that come included in the box. That done I removed the three screws on the top of the slide of the carb and removed the assembly (top cover, spring and gasket). I put the slide to one side and fitted the carb onto the 200EXC by inserting the carb into the air box boot first – I wouldn't recommend trying installing the reed side first. It's pretty fast and easy to install. A tip here is to make sure that the reed boot seals onto the Lectron carb correctly – they have machined out a groove for the boot to slide into to create an airtight seal.

Next, I installed the throttle cable into the slide assembly and inserted the slide with the flat side of the metering rod facing the engine (it only goes in this way so its pretty much idiot proof). I then checked the throttle actuation to make sure it worked properly – you should hear a good snap as the slide hits the bottom stop.

The next step was connecting the fuel hose and allowing the fuel to fill the float bowl. The see-through float bowl is one of the really unique features on the HV Lectron carb; it

allows you to see the fuel level. There are two lines etched into the float bowl that indicate the correct float measure (in-between the two lines is the perfect setting). I took a look at the level on my carb and it was right on the money without any adjustment.

OPERATION

Still Warren M.: The bike fired on the first push of the starter button, no choke and without any adjustment at all! The bike idled well and the throttle response was immediate and snappy. I took the bike out for a quick ride (five minutes) – Lectron suggest testing under load, not just running the bike on the stand.

I checked for any low-end bogging (none) and pinging at the top (none). What I did need to do over the next few test runs was to turn in the idle screw three turns to get it to idle consistently the way I like. I also had to adjust the throttle cable slightly to give the throttle a little more play, but other than that the action was crisp and exceptionally responsive.

The next test was to race the bike – and

that was for three days in the Trefle Lozerien in France. And the carb performed flawlessly. It didn't matter if I was riding in the valleys, or ascending up onto the limestone plateau or descending the almost 2000ft sub-vertical cliffs from the top of the Gorge du Tarn. I had not so much as a hiccup or gurgle from the carb.

I never had the occasion or the need to make any adjustments to the power jet or use the metering rod adjustment tool to tune the carb, but if I had done it could have been done on the fly without the need to remove the carb. Simply loosen the boots, twist the carb and loosen the slide cover assembly to access the metering rod and reinstall. It's as easy as that.

If you found that you did need to tune the carb then there are three possible adjustments available to you: 1. using the idle screw (in for faster idle and out for slower); 2. the power jet screw located at the back of the slide and adjusted with a flat screwdriver like the idle screw. The power jet screw either increases or reduces the amount of fuel between half and full throttle; and 3. the metering rod which adjusts the amount of fuel from bottom to half throttle.

SO IT WORKS?

Warren M.: Of course! Frankly, I remain perplexed as to why these carburettors aren't at the top of everyone's aftermarket product wish list.

Sure you can get the stock carbs to work anywhere – but why would you want to mess and faff with tuning or have to worry about blocked or clogged jets?

For less than a new aftermarket pipe you can have the benefits of a fuel-injected alter-

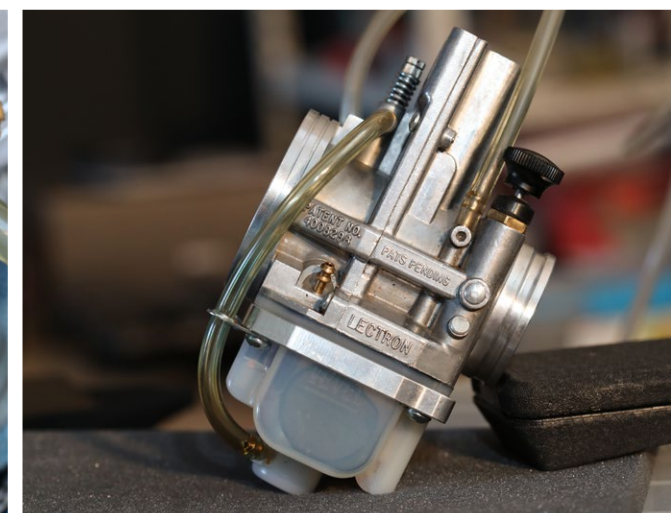
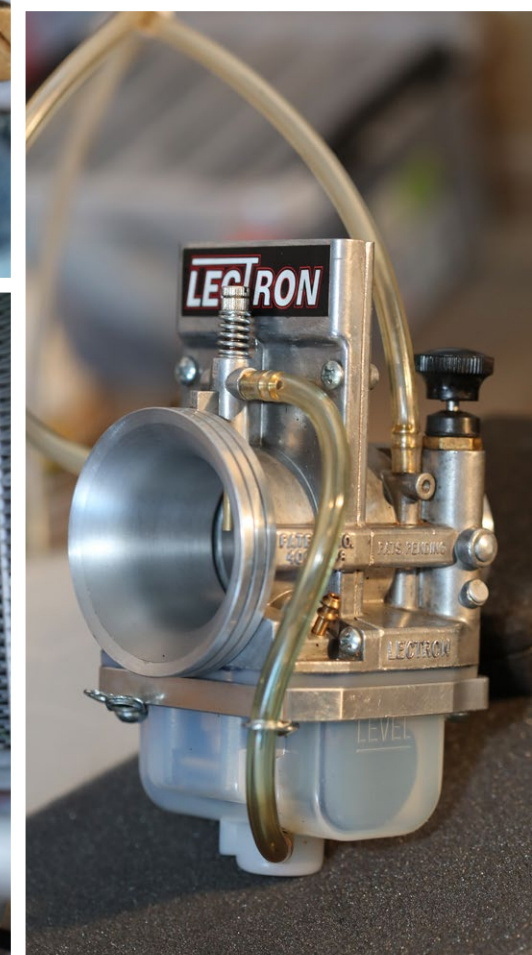
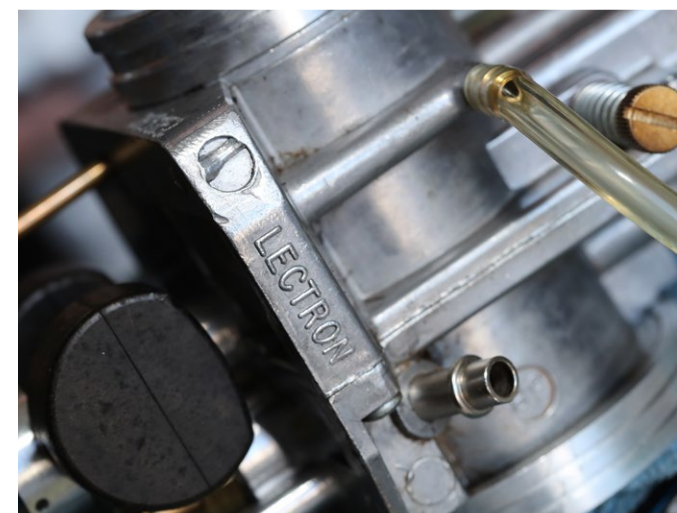
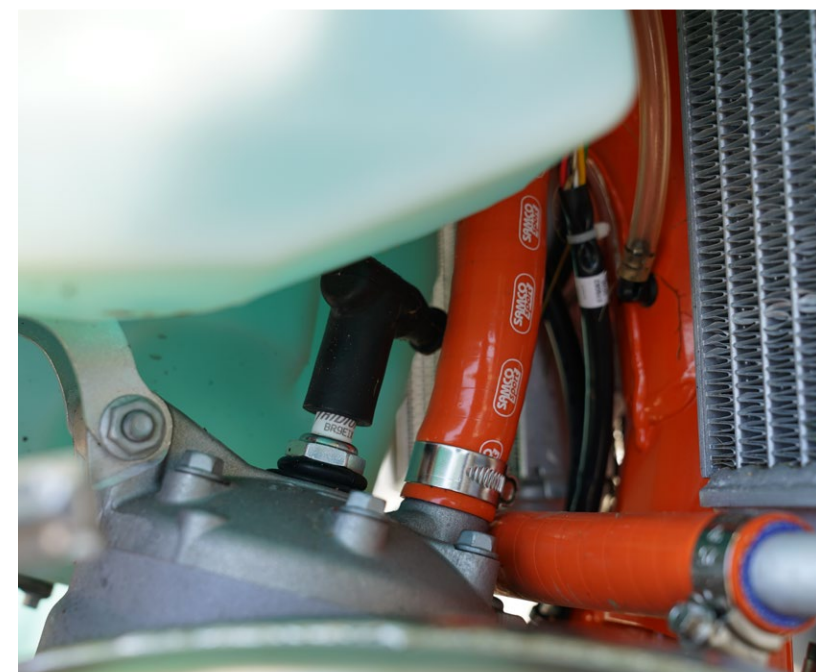
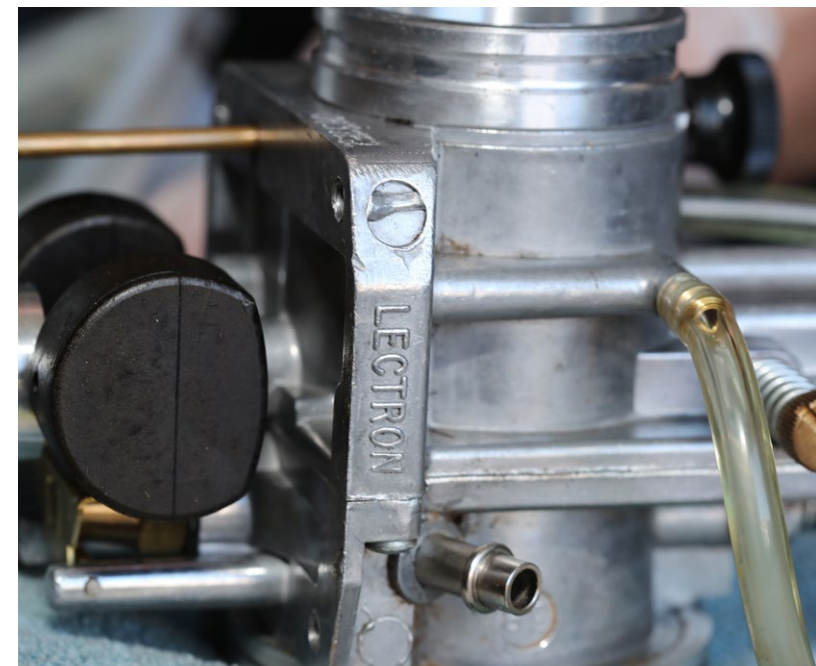
native. In fact I wonder if the lack of electronics actually adds to the appeal of these carbs over the new fuel injection – simplicity is king and with no electronics to worry about you remove the possibility of electronic gremlins.

I ran the 200EXC on an 80:1 pre-mix using Amsoil Sabre and could have gone slightly leaner if I had wanted to, even so the usual smoking of a two-stroke is nearly eliminated. So for the tiny amount of premix I would have needed to carry if I was out trail riding I was left considering if fuel injection was worth it? I would really have liked to test the fuel range so I could have had a really fair assessment on just how much further I could run the 200 over a stock carb but I'll get to that soon enough and report back.

In short, it's a five-star product that's transformed the 200EXC into a hassle free, almost-green machine, a smokeless smooth operator. 🍷

K&N AIR FILTER

We decided to pair the Lectron carb with a K&N air filter. Engine power comes from a good dollop of both fuel and air and we wanted to give the 200 the best of both worlds to maximise the available power. The K&N's sleek design frees up significant space in the air box while increasing the filtration surface (and hence efficiency) due to its cotton weave design. Its fits into the stock air filter cage but is so sleek that it occupies only a fraction of the space that a foam filter does and as a result allows for more airflow through the box. Nice...





END GAME

EnduroGP 2017 - Season round-up

There was a big race to grab the enduro world championship titles at the end of 2017 – probably because the fear was they could be the very last...

Words: Georgia Wells

Images: KTM / Husqvarna / Yamaha / Honda / Future7Media / Rick Wells



The sun has set on a tumultuous 2017 EnduroGP season, but despite everything thrown at the series this year, it refused to go down without a fight. The final two rounds saw thrilling battles, fantastic venues and huge crowds, countered with utter despair as the sport's politics threatened to sink the ship, before positive signs that – while some are abandoning ship – others in the paddock are not willing to let this world championship die a death. Let us talk you through the final acts of this dramatic year....

ENDURO, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

As soon as the Finnish GP was over in mid-March, everyone's attention turned towards September's visit to Hawkstone Park. As the second grand prix of the season to follow a new format, there was a lot of excitement and anticipation around how it would all work and whether it would be a success.

It's been a long time since world enduro last visited the UK, so only a handful of riders in the current line-up remember the muddy Welsh forests of 2008. Thomas

Oldrati was just a Junior when he podiomed at the British GP, and the top riders back then were the likes of Stefan Merriman, Anders Eriksson and (Hawkstone Park event organiser) Paul Edmondson. David Knight, who took a double podium nine years ago in Wales, made a comeback for the new British GP but his fight was short-lived as he picked up an injury and was forced to retire.

Hawkstone Park's location made it a perfect spot for a compact and accessible event. The enduro loop (ridden as six timed runs – 'sprints') around the woods initially appeared a straightforward weave through the trees, but deep in the forest was a fiendishly steep climb littered with roots and loose dirt. Similarly, the cross test (also ridden six times) looked like a classic motocross with decent jumps and sweeping berms, but by the time Sunday's GNCC rolled around it was becoming deeply rutted and extremely tiring for both body and mind.

On Saturday morning the atmosphere was electric as the riders prepared for the sprint format, with the Juniors and Youth doing six runs through the cross test while the EnduroGP and Enduro2 classes simultaneously



ran six times through the enduro test. Then followed a short lunch break, after which the two groups switched over. The format worked wonderfully, with the fans feeling as though they'd had a full day of action even before the lunch break. With the two tests so close together spectators could move around easily and see whichever classes and tests they preferred.

Despite dire warnings that Sunday's three-hour (cross country) race would sort the men from the boys and leave riders in ruins and completely exhausted, it would turn out to be less about physical strength and more about mental strength and tactical riding. The riders were required to carry out at least two pit stops, and after the first hour, when the riders began to enter the pit area for their first stop, it was fascinating to see the different approaches. For Honda, TM and the Spanish RFME team the pit stops were smooth and calm, but for KTM and Husqvarna it was a far more frenetic affair with fuel being spilt and riders becoming agitated. For Beta the first pit stop ended in disaster as Steve Holcombe lost time trying to fix a damaged



rear wheel, and with it losing the chance of taking the title at his home round. Meanwhile Holcombe's team-mate Salvini exited with engine failure. Similarly, Sherco's Matt Phillips lost all hope of securing a top-three position in the championship when his bike expired on the first corner after the mass start.

THE CREAM WILL RISE...

Despite the new format, the cream once again rose to the top and it was the usual cast of characters who came away from Hawkstone Park with the biggest points haul. That said, the Rockstar Husqvarna team sprung two big surprises, the first being a debut victory from Pascal Rauchenecker – the young Austrian clearly had the focus and determination to conquer the three-hour GNCC.

Husqvarna's second surprise was Christophe Charlier. As the Frenchman crossed the finish line it was clear something was very wrong. The former motocrosser has enjoyed an excellent rookie season in EnduroGP and was keen to prove he could tackle any type of race, but two heavy crashes during the GNCC race had left him battered and bruised. The second crash, where he went over the bars and hit a tree, should have been the end of his race but the crowds watched in awe as he battled on and took the chequered flag for an outstanding second place. He pushed his bike into the parc ferme and promptly collapsed, lying on the ground as the rain came down, his face cut and his eye swollen, his FE350 practically unrecognisable with bars bent and most of the plastics missing. This act of heroic determination from EnduroGP's newest star contributed to him being awarded the Rookie of the Year 2017 prize at season's end.





EnduroGP 2017

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DARK CLOUDS...

On to the season finale, less than a month later, and the pressure was palpable as every title except EY was still left to be decided. The legendary town of Zschopau in eastern Germany played host. Everything was meticulously planned and riders were ecstatic to have what they described as ‘real enduro’ back on the calendar. By that they meant tightly-packed woodland, mud, crazily difficult liaisons and unpredictable weather conditions. The extreme test was short but with loose, rocky climbs and a run through a riverbed, while the enduro test, previously used during the 2012 ISDE, was everything an enduro fanatic could hope for. But the tests were deemed so challenging that the threat of rain kept the organisers wondering if last-minute modifications would be needed. Thankfully the rain largely stayed away and two fantastic days of racing were attacked with gusto.

No rain, but dark clouds still hung over EnduroGP. For months the rumours had been circulating: many of the biggest teams in the paddock were so dissatisfied with the championship and its 2017 class format that they had been threatening to leave. And it wasn’t just the teams, individual riders such

as Matt Phillips had also announced they’d had enough and would be bowing out.

So, in an attempt to placate the team managers, the FIM and ABC Communications (the series promoter) scrapped the proposed 2018 American GP and promised to keep the series on European soil until such time as a financial recovery has taken place. This calendar revision had been suggested by Husqvarna’s team manager Andy Hölzl at the Spanish GP, but the Austrian said it was ‘too little, too late’ and he withdrew his team from the 2018 championship.

Meanwhile, the promoters soldiered on, introducing new features in Germany. Small but effective measures such as a live broadcast of the Supertest and a pre-event press conference with some of the top riders. On the German side of things they were ready to please the crowds at the Supertest with laser lights, fireworks, Rammstein on the stereo, and beer flowing. They also added a nightly party at a makeshift festival site in the town with a DJ and yet more places to eat, drink and be merry. All of the above made Zschopau an extremely welcoming place to be, and gave the final round the feeling that, with a few tweaks, EnduroGP could become a more popular and accessible sport.

PRESSURE MEN

Saturday morning came and the parc ferme had been set up within the walls of Zschopau’s imposing Wildeck Castle, another great idea which drew locals in for the spectacle alone. Phillips, Holcombe, Garcia, Salvini and Betriu congregated outside the castle (like modern day knights), waiting for their minute, sharing jokes and wishing each other luck – unforced, natural, sportsmanship that is almost unique to enduro.

At the end of the first day, after yet another flawless display of riding, Britain’s Steve Holcombe was crowned EnduroGP champion. Such is Holcombe’s dominance, on Day Two, when by his own admission he could have been a little fragile, he made it a double win.

Over in Enduro2, EJ, and EW, the battles were hotting up: Josep Garcia was feeling the pressure from not one but two McCanney brothers; the Junior title contenders were separated by just one point; and the Women were closer than ever as Maria Franke gained an advantage on home turf.

The German tests provided an excellent backdrop for an end-of-season showdown; their ever-changing nature meant few could pull a decent advantage as rivals exchanged

errors and crashes throughout the long and challenging days. With just one test left to go, Junior title rivals Brad Freeman and Davide Soreca had just five seconds between them; whoever finished ahead would be crowned the champion. That’s what you call pressure! In the end it was Freeman, perhaps inspired by fellow Brit Holcombe, who became world champion for the very first time.

Over in Enduro2 the enthralling, season-long battle between Jamie McCanney and Josep Garcia came to a head with the Spaniard taking the crown in style. The resultant jubilation in the KTM pit on Sunday evening was a stark contrast to the disappointment earlier in the day when Laia Sanz, shockingly, had lost out on the EW title following a freak mechanical failure. Home favourite Maria Franke had toppled the queen, and after another extremely consistent season so had Brit Jane Daniels, dropping Sanz to the third step.

After a weekend of extremely intense racing everyone was reunited at the prize giving, where drinks were flowing, medals were collected, and season-long rivals celebrated together. It had an ‘end of school’ vibe; one last chance to party all together, no-one too sure when they’d next see each other.

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▷ The German GP collected the award of ‘Organisers of the Year’, and indeed this final round was the perfect end to 2017, showcasing exactly what future EnduroGP rounds should be like. But will there be a future? After such a top notch event, and such a complex and enthralling season were the highs simply ‘too little, too late’?

2018?

Would everyone return, business as usual? For the last couple of races the team managers had been extremely tight-lipped about their plans, as had the FIM and ABC, but on Saturday night in Germany a surprise press release was issued. In addition to the ‘affordable’ calendar of entirely European events there was to be a crucial change in format, a class restructure, back to... E1, E2, E3, and yes, a scratch EnduroGP class. 2016 all over again! The response from the paddock was unanimous ‘THIS is what we’ve all been asking for! This is how it should’ve stayed!’

But again, is this too little, too late? Two of the biggest factory teams in the paddock, KTM and Husqvarna, confirmed they are withdrawing from EnduroGP in 2018, other smaller squads are also threatening to leave. And that has got to be a major concern. Not only does their lack of presence reduce the prestige of the sport, it obviously puts a strain on the riders and squeezes the number of seats available.

Great talents will, inevitably, lose out. And that is the most depressing aspect of all. Several riders who have abandoned grand prix motocross in favour of world enduro could now see their careers halted in their tracks. Bellino, Redondi, and Rauchenecker are looking to America where more prize money and media coverage could make up for the lack of world championship status. And for the freshly crowned, outstandingly-talented Josep Garcia? A contract with KTM which will see him unable to fight for another world enduro crown, and forced into events potentially beyond his comfort zone. For it has now been confirmed that KTM and Husky have left EnduroGP and will participate instead in the newly created WESS



(World Enduro Super Series) championship – a series which takes in hard enduro events such as Erzberg and Romaniacs, and ‘endurance’ style races such as the Trefle Lozerien and Red Bull Knockout. Paddock whispers suggest that the Austrian megabrand have essentially created this new championship themselves, and with formidable line-ups for both KTM and Husqvarna, the 2018 WESS title seems highly likely to go to them. But, for now at least, EnduroGP remains the only place where you can become an ‘FIM approved’ true world champion.

RECOVERY?

The promoters insist that the series can recover, and that it will come back stronger and healthier. Some manufacturers are preparing to make hay while the sun shines, with GasGas announcing a star-studded



CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS

2017 ENDUROGP

ENDUROGP

1 Steve Holcombe (GB, Beta)	350
2 Loic Larrieu (FR, Yamaha)	302
3 Nathan Watson (GB, KTM)	259

ENDURO2

1 Josep Garcia (ES, KTM)	350
2 Jamie McCanney (GB, Yamaha)	344
3 Eero Remes (FI, TM)	309

EJ

1 Brad Freeman (GB, Beta)	330
2 Davide Soreca (IT, Honda)	326
3 Albin Elowson (SE, Husqvarna)	221

EY

1 Andrea Verona (IT, TM)	317
2 Leo Le Quere (FR, TM)	301
3 Ruy Barbosa (CL, Husqvarna)	289

EW

1 Maria Franke (DE, KTM)	141
2 Jane Daniels (GB, Husqvarna)	122
3 Laia Sanz (ES, KTM)	119



line-up of top name riders for next year. But there are very few other positive news stories. The squeezing of the paddock will see a financial strain on organisers as big sponsors previously linked to factory teams are likely to withdraw their support and we will see riders jump ship to rallies or back to motocross; the previously-packed Junior class will shrink too as the youngsters struggle to find backers and can see only limited prospects for the future.

The saddest part of all is that for the vast majority of people in the paddock this sport is not just a job, it's a passion and a way of life. Nobody here is making big money, gone are the days of the 'million euro contracts'; teams, mechanics, riders, media, families and fans have come back year after year because this sport is in their blood and they simply can't imagine life without it. For the riders, who put their heart and soul into training, who sacrifice so much to be on the start line every weekend, who dream of being world champion, for them to be told 'there's no place for you here anymore' is the greatest tragedy of this whole saga.

We at RUST stated that 2017 would be the make or break year, but we're now being urged to believe that 2018's superb calendar of events and class restructure could bring the series back from the brink. We're going to have to hope it's an outstanding season, because this sport simply cannot be allowed to die.



THE CHAMPS

ENDUROGP
STEVE HOLCOMBE
(GBR – Beta)

Britain's Steve Holcombe is so good that he made winning the EnduroGP class look easy.

Throughout the season it was very rare to see Holcombe put a wheel out of line – or make any mistakes whatsoever. The smooth, almost trials-like, riding that he displayed when he first arrived on the world scene in 2015 has been adapted over the years and he now incorporates a more aggressive style, especially when riding on his favoured terrain – mud. Last year, when Steve won the E3 title in only his second season in the world championship, he was just 20 points away from becoming scratch champion.

Determined to prove he could beat the strongest riders in the world, he entered the newly created EnduroGP class. Starting 2017 on a high with a remarkable second place in Finland, he went on to achieve one of the most consistent performances ever seen, with 13 podiums and a worst finish of fifth place. Try as they might, his rivals – the likes of Loic Larrieu, Nathan Watson and Matthew Phillips – simply couldn't topple him. The 23 year old has the steely determination of a champion coupled with a sheer love of having fun on his bike. It has proved to be an extremely strong combination and after two titles on the bounce, the youngster from Devon has firmly put himself into the realms of Enduro Superstar.



THE CHAMPS

ENDURO 2
JOSEP GARCIA
(ESP – KTM)

Josep Garcia may have snuck in under the radar for some, but in 2014, back in the days before TBM became RUST, I wrote an article predicting that he would be enduro's next star. Thankfully, the young Spaniard hasn't disappointed, taking his first world title after two seasons fighting it out at the top of the Junior and Youth classes. Garcia has the sort of dazzling talent that only comes around perhaps once a decade, and his dramatic arrival into enduro had a similar effect to that of Marc Marquez in MotoGP.

In fact, Garcia began his career in Red Bull Rookies, the junior series which runs alongside MotoGP, and was very nearly talent-scouted for a career in circuit racing before his great friend and mentor Ivan Cervantes tempted

him back to enduro. As a Youth Cup rider Josep was always incredibly wild, exciting but nerve-wracking to watch as he saved a crash on virtually every corner – or sometimes didn't! His spills often resulted in injuries that set him back on his quest for titles.

When he was picked up by KTM for the 2017 season the Barcelona boy took the opportunity very seriously, arguably it was this new 'factory' role that took him from wild child to fully-fledged champion. Adding more focus and precision to his riding allowed him to beat two of the most consistent riders in the class, Jamie McCanney and double-champion Eero Remes. And whilst 2017 has seen a more sensible version of the 20 year old, he is still one of the most thrilling riders to watch.

ENDURO JUNIOR **BRAD FREEMAN** (GBR – Beta)

In the aforementioned 2014 article I pitted Garcia against none other than 2017 EJ champion, Brad Freeman. Indeed, Freeman has also showed potential from a young age and appeared to have a natural talent for the sport. Despite opportunities to join the world championship as early as the 2015 season, he opted to stay in the British and European championships before attacking the world stage.

In the past, fragility held the young Brit back and he was often injured. Even this year, a nasty injury ruled him out of the season opener, but that wasn't going to stop him from snatching the title at the final round.

Freeman's comeback earned him a lot of new fans and impressed many people including his team manager, Jarno Boano, who previously managed fellow Brits Steve Holcombe and Danny McCanney. 2017 clicked for Freeman and the frighteningly-fast 21 year old excelled on every terrain, keeping a level head and giving British fans yet another reason to cheer!

EJ is probably the hardest class in the entire series with the world's brightest young stars often separated by fractions of seconds; to be champion in the Junior class is to prove emphatically that you have the potential to go on to yet more great things.





THE CHAMPS

ENDURO YOUTH **ANDREA VERONA** (ITA – TM)

This year's Youth champion has such star potential that his team have already signed him up for a further three years; an amazing deal which even the most experienced champions can't secure in the current climate. Just two years ago Italy's Andrea Verona was riding a 50cc in his national junior championship when Team Italia, a project funded by the Italian Federation, saw his potential and helped to push him through the European Championship before collaborating with TM Racing to bring him to the World Championship.

The 18 year old has the kind of complex character that makes for a fascinating champion; his unwavering focus and steely determination completely belie his years. His 125cc two-stroke may have been wailing its little heart out as he took it through its paces over every terrain, but Andrea

himself remained an oasis of calm throughout the season. Few people know that he broke his arm just before the Italian GP, an injury which could have abruptly stopped his already impressive title campaign in its tracks. But Andrea cut the plaster cast off just hours before starting his home race in Spoleto...and went on to take a double win.

In the Youth class the riders are allowed to 'drop' their four worst results, but such was Verona's dominance that he was able to take his debut title in July, three months before the end of the season. Despite a further injury at the end of the year, the tall TM star took nine victories and proved that his unique combination of sublime skill and mental maturity put him head and shoulders above his ebullient class rivals.

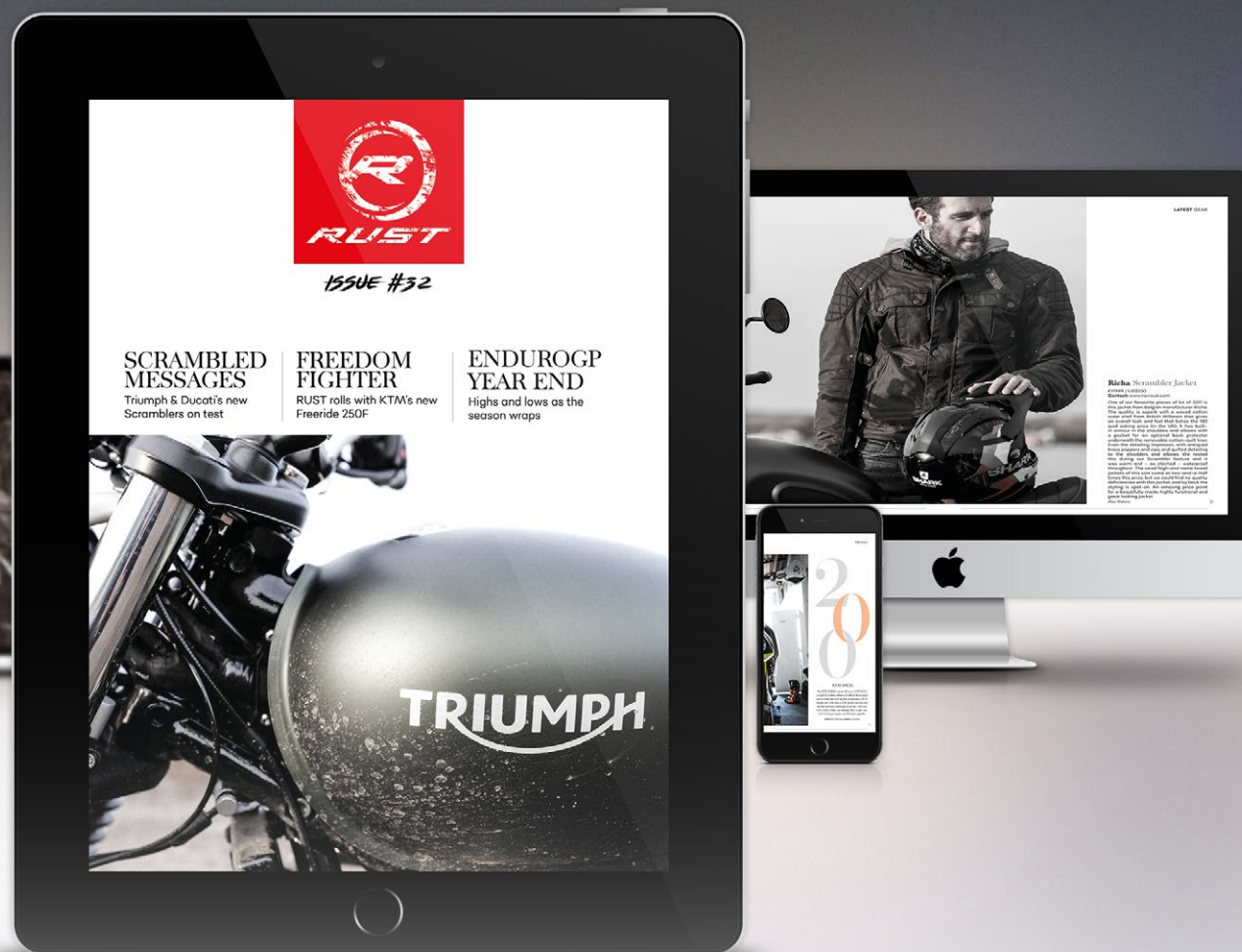


ENDURO WOMEN **MARIA FRANKE** (DE – KTM)

With EW having just three rounds after the cancellation of the Slovakian GP this year, the championship could have been left feeling flat. Instead the urgency to score points created one of the best battles the class has ever seen. After winning her home race in Spain at the start of the season, Laia Sanz appeared to be on the path to her sixth EW title, but after Germany's Maria Franke took a surprise victory at the Hungarian GP it was suddenly all to play for.

Maria, a former motocrosser, brought a lot of pace when she joined the enduro paddock, and this season it seems she created the perfect combination of speed and technical ability. In 2016, after finishing second to Sanz, it was already clear that she had the potential to be a champion. On home soil in Germany, Maria had incredible support from the crowds and this gave her all the strength she needed to topple the 'Queen of Enduro'. An impressive double win from Franke and a shock mechanical failure for Sanz gave the 26 year old a well deserved first world enduro title.





BACK ISSUES

Since our start 24 months ago in November 2015, RUST has amassed 45 issues (that's 32 regular issues plus 13 specials). And given you're reading the 45th issue that can only mean there are 44 back issues, ready and waiting for you – conveniently stored on our website.

They're all there, available to read online or as a PDF download, just go to our website www.rustsports.com and hit the magazine tab and you'll find them all neatly stacked, as said, ready and waiting.

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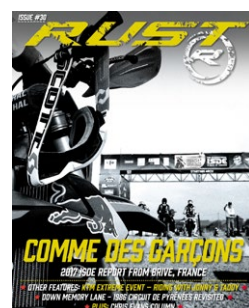
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Enjoy

Jon Bentman
Editor



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