



ISSUE #39



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FANTIC-ISSIMO

Fantic's new street scramblers are two gems

MOJAVE

Riding in Cali really is living the dream

NIGHTMARE

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Long Termer

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(OL)FACTORY



Dude, give me more time! Yeah, the speed of life at RUST has gone into overdrive. We have too much going on. There's a website review in progress, a new e-commerce site being launched imminently, we've been shooting a shed load of video as part of our start-up on film production, and we've a three-week trip to the US starting in two days time (the planning for that being so many on/off options, too many transatlantic communications, too many 'lets start again's). Getting a magazine together in the midst of this – not easy. No sympathy required though.

So excuse this issue for being a touch slimmer than usual. Also there's no Chris Birch interview – we'll have that in our next edition. But hopefully there's enough here to tide you over.

In the meantime, this is a lovely time of year to be riding (autumn in the northern hemisphere, spring in the southern). I jumped on the V-Strom yesterday to run a quick errand and charging along I was getting all these scents whistling up my nose. Late-summer country smells, they were, coming from the fully mature flora. That's something I love about bikes, something that you just don't get in cars. In a car you're behind a screen – that's one thing – but you're sealed in too, probably with the AC on and with the radio playing over the hum of that. Hermetically sealed as it were. On the bike, you often smell things before you see them. And smells have an amazing effect on memory.

As a kid I would go to the Isle of Man with my dad when he raced the TT. He'd get up at 4am for morning practice (which started at 5am). With a Manx Norton to ride that also meant (given it was so perishingly cold) heating the thick Castrol R engine oil that it used over a primus stove before pouring it into the Norton's cases and then bump starting and warming it up for another 20 minutes ('ruuum-baaaa', over and over). If you've ever smelt Castrol R, you'll never forget it. So sweet, so evocative.

In June in the Isle of Man you'd also find wonderful natural smells like that of wild garlic that grows in many places around the circuit (as I found later, making my own early morning laps on a Yamaha RD350LC). It's another beautiful smell, if I smell it anywhere else I'm immediately transported back to those days of my youth on the Island.

On a trip to Morocco back in 2008 I found myself on the edge of the Sahara in a rainstorm (seems I have a knack for bringing rain to deserts – see 'Mojave' in this issue) – and the smell of the desert as the rain pounded the parched earth was just transcendent, incredible. Brought tears to my eyes it did.

Yeah, I love riding bikes as much for the olfactory pleasures it brings as the fun of sweeping and swooping as we power along. And when the pressure of work gets too much, like about now, I think of the times like those above and I can remember the smells and I kind of relax. It's okay...

I hope you get to relax and enjoy your riding too. Until next time.

JB



RR

Sorry, you've probably seen this already, but it's worth a pause just to take in the sheer beauty and to understand what this is. The 2019 KTM 450 Rally Replica is what it is. KTM are making just 75 of them, so that means they're probably hand-built. When you consider how few and how trick these are you kind of get a grasp of the rationality of the €26,000 plus taxes price tag. It's the equivalent of being able to buy an almost exact copy of Lewis Hamilton's MCL33 F1 race car – for rally racers this is mana...

Image: KTM





TAR SEAL

Here at RUST we do like to get on the road from time to time, it's not just dirt tracks for us. Our Warren M. has done plenty of road but he'd never done track before the day we spent filming some footage for our upcoming promotional videos. After initial trepidations he took to the track like a duck to water (dammit), he even looked pretty tidy (double dammit). For sure there's a certain pleasure in getting pacy on the tar seal. And while you (thankfully) can't see his mug in this image you can tell he's wearing a smile a mile wide...

Image: JB

RUST TRAVELS

A log of what we've been up to – and will be getting up to this month.



RUST IN EVOLUTION

We've been gearing up (pun) for an exciting few months here at RUST. We'll shortly be launching our video production studio and have already shot our first few professional product **B2B and B2C show reels**. We're launching the first of our digital e-retailing sites, too, (www.bell-motorcycle-helmets.co.uk) – and yes as promised, we're offering our members – should we call ourselves Rustafarians? – or in plain English, our



subscribers, a **10% discount** off the retail price of any helmet.

The revenue from our e-retailing sites will go to **supporting the magazine**, video productions and paying the staff around here. We value your support so if you like the mag and are in the market for a lid check out our new site. We're not planning on becoming a product superstore but offering a well **curated range of products** we believe in through our sites. Watch this space as we add more product lines over the next few months – all available in the UK, Europe and the US

UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU!

In between the business stuff we've ridden the hell out of some really fun (and not so fun) bikes, been planning our three-week trip to the **USA** – or in our case we got so far and then ran out of time so we're winging it. We just had too many deadlines to meet but AIMEXPO and the Monster Cup in Vegas are calling and with fixed dates we have to go – ready or not.

First leg, **Denver to Vegas** over the Rockies... on foot, on bikes, who knows? Check out our social media and website feeds over the next few

weeks – it's going to be epic!

A very big thank you to **Garmin** for the Virb Ultra and 360 cameras – we got that right; to Marco from **Scott** for the adventure suits and other necessities and to Harold at **Giant Loop** for a momentous and good-humoured effort to get us our travel luggage at the very last minute – and I mean ridiculously last minute.

Oh, and while we're away our new digital team will be **upgrading** the current Rust Sports website to offer you all an even better reader experience... happy trails. 🇺🇸





A CAVALIER ATTITUDE

A Caballero – that's a cavalier in Latin tongues – is a 'courtly gentleman' by definition. Sharp-dressed for sure, but do these two have more to offer than just sharp looks?

Words & Images: Jon Bentman

Are these not two of the best looking bikes to have come to the market in 2018? Got to hand it to Fantic, they've simply nailed the scrambler and flat track styling – and those funky twin-pipe mufflers are a masterstroke. For a mass-production motorcycle this is good stuff.

Bearing in mind these are effectively entry-level bikes, to suit learners, then the design and styling is all the more impressive. After all, would a newbie really understand that US flat trackers historically ride on 19" wheels? Probably not, but this helps illustrate Fantic's desire for authenticity. Similarly, the modern rendition of the Caballero – such a success for Fantic in the 1970s and 80s as a 50cc learner enduro-

scoot – is a wonderful homage. And judging by the reaction of us so-called experienced riders – yeah, these Fantics qualify as more than just learner bikes.

MUCH-LOVED PAST

Of course these are modern days, so while the designs echo of a much-loved past, these bikes need to be fully regulations compliant in specification for today. That means safe, quiet and as clean as they can go on emissions. That translates into ABS on the disc brakes, fuel injection (on the 250s) and water-cooling and sufficient muffling (stylishly rendered by Arrow) to keep them virtually inaudible. And for utility's sake, unlike the old days we're talking electric (not kick-) starters, plus digital dashes. But as well, there's all the extra quality flourishes, from the 41mm USD





forks, CNC milled yokes, through to the LED lighting, even the Tomaselli alloy tapered-handlebars.

So much for the look, the spec – what about the riding? Curiously two out of our three riders said they preferred the 125 in this quick spin of a test! It's not often riders turn down more power, but it says something for the character of the wee 125 (the Flat Track model in these images) that they so enjoyed its ride. We understand the motor comes from Yamaha Minarelli, and it's perfect for the young learner rider. The power is almost flat, so it's unimposing, but rev-it-up and learn to use the six-speed gearbox appropriately and it'll turn a brisk pace – enough to hold off all but the most determinedly driven tin-tops around town. Flat out we got 60mph with the wind on our backs, 50mph with in in our faces. That's fast enough for the kids to start with.

SPECIFICATION

FANTIC CABALLERO/FLAT TRACK

ENGINE: water-cooled single-cylinder four-stroke
CAPACITY: 249.6cc / 124.5cc
FUELLING: Electronic fuel injection / Keihin 300mm carb
GEARBOX: Six-speed, wet multi-plate clutch
FRAME: CroMo steel tube cradle
FRONT SUSPENSION: 41mm USD forks
REAR SUSPENSION: Single shock, progressive link
BRAKES: front: 320mm disc, twin-piston caliper, rear: 230mm disc single piston caliper
CLAIMED WEIGHT: 130kg
PRICE: Caballero/Flat Track
125 UK £4899 **EU** €4990
250 UK £5399 **EU** €5790
500 UK £6199 **EU** €6590



**SPACIOUS?!**

The riding position is spot-on with both bikes, being spacious (hey, are we selling real estate here?) and relaxed like dirt bikes should be – only instead of a piece of polished mahogany to sit on (as you get with competition enduros) you get fairly plush full-width saddles. It would be sacrilege not to be able to make bikes of this stature (and just 130kg) handle decently – so it's as well they do, yep, nice and neutral – in fact positively accurate, with well-damped suspension too. The only surprise is the strength of the brakes, but we shouldn't be surprised there, with a whopping 320mm disc and twin-piston caliper these should be razor-sharp. In fact we'd call these two over-braked were it not for the safety net that is ABS.

Now the reason, we think, two of our riders preferred the 125 – styling aside, because the Flat Tracker is just so cool – could be that the 250 fails to make that quantum leap that lifts a town bike into a do-everything town-and-tour bike. The 250 motor (made by Zongshen) just doesn't quite have the power – despite a claimed 28hp – or the feel, for that matter, of a faster, longer-distance bike. It's performance feels to be about 10-15mph up on the 125 everywhere and it accelerates that much faster, but you could still see it getting hassled by cars on the open road, especially on hills. This 250 motor works well in Fantic's trail riding enduro models, but it seems we'll need to see the 500cc versions of these Caballeros and Flat Tracks to find real all-roads capability in the model range.

A little caveat here – our test bike came with just 240 miles on it, and it was definitely still new-bike 'tight', there's a fair chance with more use the engine will loosen-up and become that little bit faster and freer-riding. But based on this experience, for running around town, and maybe the edge of town, or for quiet country roads, yeah the 250 is a great machine. Just avoid the big roads!

EYE CANDY

So, what we have here are two absolutely exquisitely styled motorcycles. We want them just to look at them, and for sure whether you're a millennial (somebody tell me what that is) or a baby boomer (hi Dad!) these are 100% eye candy. They're also built to

RUST LIKES...

Brilliant styling
Top shelf components
Cute mufflers
Reasonable price

RUST IS COOL ON...

Just a little more oomph from the 250 please!

a super-decent standard, and what a lovely list of quality components they boast – Arrow, Tomaselli, Domino, Braking, Brembo – not to mention the CNC milled engine plates and fork yokes, it's top shelf all the way.

Great bikes for reasonable coin, but for us older 14-stone (that's 90-kilo, 200-pound) lard-asses, yeah we can't wait for the 500s...! 🍷



STILLWELL'S SUSPENSION SMARTS

#4 TUNING FOR SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

In off-road there are two extremes – rock and sand. In this article our suspension guru Alan Stillwell deals with both, and a little of what lies between...

Words: Alan Stillwell **Images:** Jon Bentman

I have just returned from a week in the Holy Grail of off-road riding in the US, the Rocky Mountains. The terrain there is so tough and specific I thought it was time for a column dedicated to bike setup for specific conditions.

We'll take a look at different terrain types and apply some of the knowledge you have learned through the baseline tuning we focused on in a previous column.

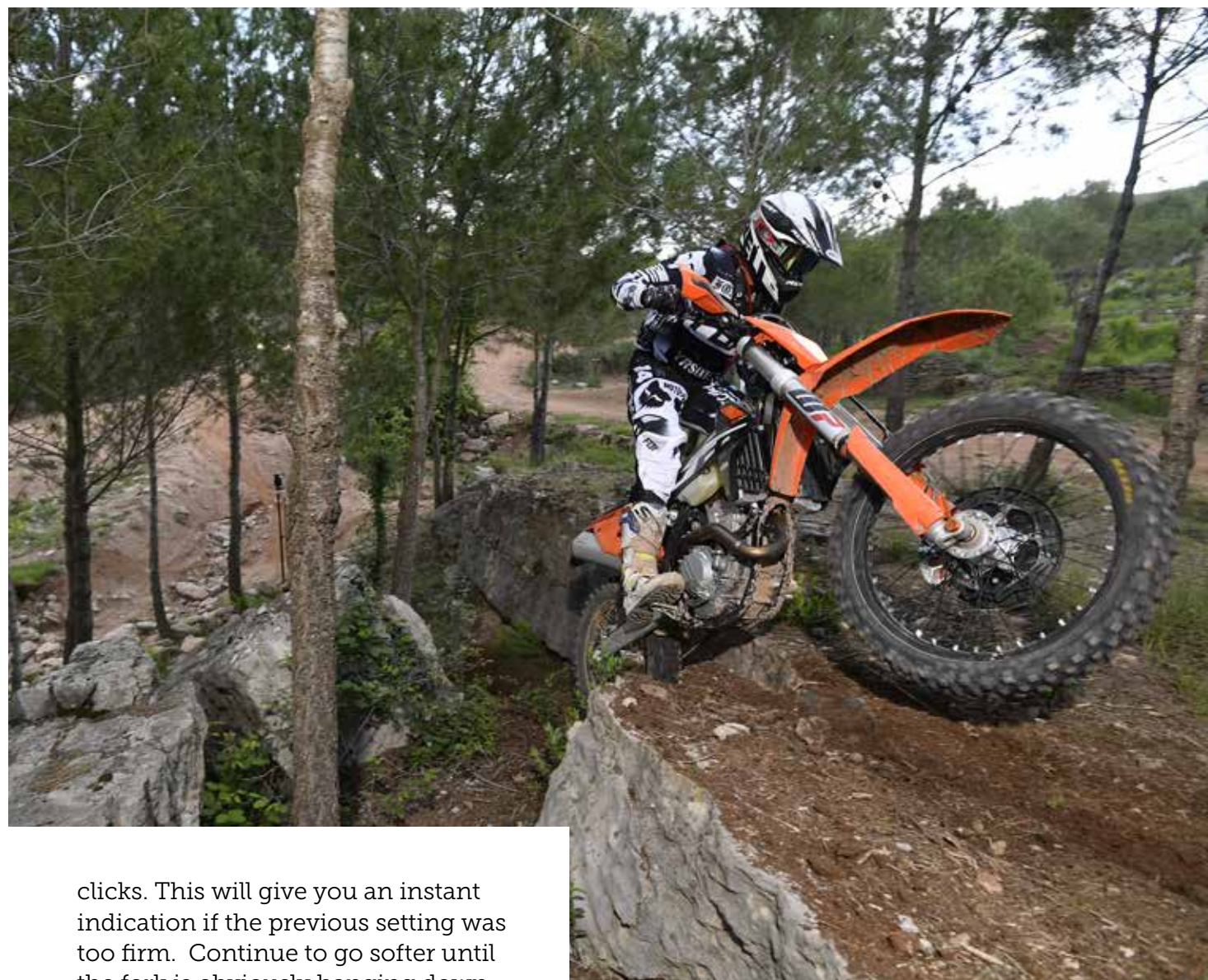
ROCKS

Mountain riding can only mean one thing – rocks! When I set up a bike to handle rocky terrain my main goal is to keep the tires in contact with the ground as much as possible. Given that you are usually trying to climb steep inclines, or descend the same, making sure your tires are gripping becomes job one.

Take a look at a typical rocky section of the places you ride. Rocks tend to have friends – lots of them, usually close together. Your bike needs to absorb each one and reset to full stroke quickly. This means adjustments from your baseline for both compression and rebound.

On the compression side, you want the bike to be able to take rock hits and drive through them straight on, with no deflecting. If you feel the bike consistently 'pinging' off rocks and deflecting, chances are you are too stiff on your compression clickers. (I am making the assumption that you have done your baseline tuning as per the previous articles and have installed the correct spring rates – if not, go back and review my prior setup tips).

To test how far off your compression damping might be, make a big move on the clickers and go softer by 4-5



clicks. This will give you an instant indication if the previous setting was too firm. Continue to go softer until the fork is obviously hanging down in the stroke, and has become mushy feeling. Go back stiffer two clicks at a time until you arrive at a best setting.

Now do the same on your rebound. This is where you will notice big changes in how the bike will drive through successive rock impacts. In general, the faster your rebound the quicker the fork will 'reset'. When you have gone too soft/fast on rebound the sensation you will feel is one of the bars 'springing back' at you. This is the indication that you have reached the end of the adjustment range, now go back stiffer a couple clicks at a time until the overall feeling of the forks is one of smooth, controlled movements that keep the bike feeling balanced,

under control and not diving or bucking.

Much like the forks, tuning the shock is very similar, with one exception. In rocks, you will make most of your shock compression adjustments with the high-speed adjuster. The HS is the circuit that responds to sharp, quick impacts. As with the fork, when this adjustment begins to feel mushy, and the shock hangs down in the stroke it's time to go back stiffer until you are in the sweet spot. I would suggest adjustments of no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ turn either way; most HS adjusters are sensitive and have a limited effective range.

For this exercise, keep your low speed adjuster near your baseline and only adjust it after dialing in the HS. For rebound, it's pretty straightforward. If rebound is too slow, your shock will 'pack' in successive bumps and the jarring feeling will be obvious. If you are too soft/fast on rebound, the back will unload too quickly and have a tendency to kick. Make clicker adjustments here 4 at a time, then 2 at a time for fine-tuning.

SAND

Sand is the polar opposite of tuning for rocks! Here, soft and fast suspension is a no-no, and you'll enjoy a quick trip over the bars if you are not careful.

If you are tuning for sand, I would urge you to flip the TV on and watch some moto races from some of the most famous sand circuits. You can instantly tell who has their setups dialed. Watch the bikes closely, you will

see that the well balanced sand setups follow the whoops very closely, and in some cases the suspension appears to be moving in slow motion. That is exactly the case, as you will want your compression stiff enough at both ends to keep the bike from 'wallowing' and sinking down into the bottom of the whoops. If this happens, there is too much spring force generated and the bike (especially the shock) will kick back excessively, throwing both the bike and rider off line.

Using the rules above, run your compression clickers stiffer 4 at a time until you feel the bike staying up in the stroke. The sensation will be that the bike is 'riding tall' and that is exactly what you want.

On rebound, the feeling of the bars coming back at you will be easy to identify when the rebound is set too soft/fast. As before, once you have found the best range you can then fine

**ASK ALAN**

If you have any comments or questions for Alan, or would like him to address any specific topics, please do drop him an email at SP@rustsports.com. He'll endeavor to address these in his ongoing series.



tune by adjusting 2 clicks at a time.

One important note on the shock – most of your adjustment here on compression damping will be done with the low speed adjuster, the opposite of our rock example. However, if you have your HS adjuster too soft/fast, it will be difficult to attain a precise LS adjustment. Keep this in mind. When you find the right zone you will be amazed at how the bike floats across the whoops, riding high and the chassis feeling balanced and calm. It takes some testing to find the sweet spot, but your speed can dramatically increase with the right tuning here.

MUD

If your ride or race is a mudder, it is

very easy for your bike to collect 20-40 extra lbs. of mud. This will cause the suspension to sag excessively, and as it is pulled deeper into the stroke it will become harsher. Try running your clickers a bit stiffer to hold the bike up better. Mud will also make the bike feel sluggish on rebound, so lightening/speeding up your front and rear rebound adjustments is the way to go here.

DRY/SLICK

In these conditions you are constantly searching for traction. Too stiff suspension will not allow the bike to squat and transfer weight to the tires. Try softening the compression front and back. Additionally, in these conditions ruts and holes tend to become square

edged, and softer compression will help keep the bike in line.

On rebound, this is where I suggest running the rebound as fast/light as you can tolerate it. Light rebound allows the tires to reset and helps push them into the terrain. Find a flat, dry slick sweeper corner and play with your rebound adjustments. You will be surprised at how much effect they have on your traction.

DEALING WITH MIXED TERRAIN

Where I live in Arizona we have both the rockiest, nastiest terrain you can think of, and the deepest soft sand whoops – both on the same trails! It's tough to tune for this. I get asked quite a bit about where to adjust for these conditions. Assuming you have determined a good setup for each of

the above conditions I recommend you set the bike for whichever type of terrain will help you go faster. In my case, I am fine with dealing with a slightly fast rebound setup in sand whoops to ensure I have plush, rock eating suspension.

Nothing is more frustrating than dealing with a bike that pings off every rock you hit. Evaluate what is most important to you on your setup, and lean that way. If you go through the testing and tuning I have described here, you will be able to adjust your bike in 2-3 minutes at your truck/van before your ride, and the enjoyment factor will go way up.

I hope this has given you some direction with your tuning efforts. Keep It Pinned! 📌



HUSQVARNA FE350

Well, sometimes things go to plan. Warren M. completed his stage one build on his FE350 and got to the start of the R3 rally raid in Macao, Portugal. Only from there things soured somewhat. The bike's fine, it's the monkey behind the handlebars that's the issue (isn't it always?)

Words: Warren Malschinger **Images:** Ricardo Andres

LONG TERM

PART TWO

Dilemma, dilemma, dilemma: it's almost three months since my last ride in the R3 rally raid event held in Macao Portugal and I'm struggling to put words to paper. I'm conflicted. Why? Because while I really want to like rally raid, at the moment I just don't. Truthfully, I'm not entirely sure that it's because I'm not really that good at it or frankly I just don't like it.

In the van heading home after the

event conversation turned to why we like riding dirt bikes and after a few minutes it became quite evident that primarily I love riding – point and shoot – not navigating. I just can't seem to get my head around reconciling the limitations of having to navigate with that pure thrill of free riding. I love free riding and point-to-point racing more. Hare and Hounds, Enduro, Bajas, Motocross and free riding all come naturally to me, where the focus is on-



the-flow, you as a rider in unison with the bike, reading the terrain, finding your lines, constantly trying to improve and focusing on the enjoyment you find within that.

Macao was my third attempt at rally raiding; each event has been held over different terrain and as a result I've had mixed feelings. One was super wet and technical, slow and UK-esque; that one suited me and I did well even though it was my first time out. The next one was fast and sandy and I loved it. But this one I didn't. This last event, after a few hours in the saddle on day one I was feeling no joy. I hadn't thought about riding all day, the constant requirement to focus on the road book holder, ICOs and terrain to make sense of the short distances and constant change of directions changed my riding position and focus. I just wasn't comfortable on the bike, I had to sit down more often than I like (or risk a big crash) and found reading the road book at speed dangerous – and that's the point it's not about speed it's about precision, it's not about free riding it's about obeying rules. I ride dirt bikes to get away from rules.

So here's a top tip from Tomasz Pessanha at F2R. Helping me with my road book positioning after day one he told me there should be no more than 5 degrees variance between your line of sight and the road book or you risk it all not watching where you're going. So sitting most of the time becomes necessary – argh! Unless you're short, if so then things work pretty well.

The majority of accomplished rally raid riders, especially the older ones have managed to transition into the sport quite happily. Not able to compete competitively with young guns in a flat-out race, rally raid evens the playing field. A competent veteran with good navigation has an equal chance against a slim-hipped youth. I'm not sure that's all important to me, what is important





▷

to me is finding the improvement in myself every time I ride. Flow is about pace and pace is about finding your natural speed and rhythm, the release of endorphins, the sense of freedom, friendship and the reward of a cold beer after a good day's ride.

So I'm just not feeling the love for rally raid – I want to, but I'm not. Am I going to quit rally raiding? No, not yet! I want to prove to myself that I can do it and do it well before I would consider packing the road book away. I have a goal to ride one of the major rally events, right now that looks like the Tuareg Rally in March 2019, in Algeria. I really hope that a major adventure like that will keep me motivated to continue rallying for the adventure of it all. But somehow, I kind of know inside of myself that I going to prefer to spend my time following tape with the throttle open and a smile on my face.

I get the feeling but I'm going to



be swapping places with JB. Having worked with Jon now for the last four years I have a sense that he is far more suited to this sport than I am. That said, perhaps the wide-open spaces and longer 'Cap' focussed navigation rallies like the Tuareg will find an appeal – lets wait and see.

NOW, ABOUT THE BIKE...

That brings me neatly to my FE350 long term Husky and a huge apology to Tomasz at F2R who supplied me with their F2R 'Pro Navigation Bundle' www.f2r.pt/BUNDLE003. This trick bit of kit has all you need (and more) to ensure you stay on course (except the necessary skills – ahem). Not only did F2R supply the bundle but they fitted it for me trackside too. These guys are passionate about what they do and Tomasz is one of the nicest people I've ever met. A true gentleman who combines his love of IT and

engineering with his love for rallying. He and his team not only support their products at the races, they volunteer as marshals, provide rider support and participate too.

They turned my FE350 from a pure enduro machine to a proper RR racer and in return for their generosity I had a massive off in the rocks an hour or so into day one and banged up the kit (and myself) pretty badly. I can at least vouch for the robust design and functionality of the F2R Pro Bundle. I had to bash the holding plate straight with a very large rock to get it to align (sort of) back over the handlebars and used all my spare zip ties to hold it together for the rest of the day. While it looked completely destroyed both ICO's and the road book still functioned without a hitch. The crash shook me up pretty badly and damaged the bike substantially and as a result I managed to finish last in the Competition class after losing loads of

▷





time at the CP while the doctor gave me a once over and fed me a few painkillers which got me to the finish at least.

The FE350 has since been left abandoned in our workshop in Evora and sits quietly waiting to be loved again – and I do love it. But, at RUST there's no time for dwelling on things too long. A shoulder surgery later (for once not bike injury related) and the launch of our new e-commerce satellite site, video studio services and with loads of travel scheduled (USA) the FE350 will have to wait a little longer until its wheeled out again.

I want to start the next stage of the project build along with some free riding in November and unburden the FE of the rally gear. I love the FE350 for what she's made to do best – and that's not to go rallying. I want a race bike and that's what I am going to turn her into. The FE350's future is in free-riding and racing the odd European Baja events in 2019.

The F2R Pro Bundle will be transferred onto either a 2019 KTM 500 or Husky 501 which is what I will hopefully be riding in the Tuareg. Of course – first things first – I will be back to compete in the last round of the R3 in Portugal on December 7-8. If at first you don't succeed – try and try again. I think that phrase shows my age.

Until next time. Wazza. 🇬🇧





RICHA Toulon leather jacket

RRP: £269.99 / €339.00

Contact: www.richa.eu www.nevis.uk.com

Belgian clothing company Richa have come up with the goods with the Toulon, proving once again that you don't need to spend a fortune to achieve a good balance of style and functionality. Trying it on for the first time it looks and feels great with its 'worn-in' look (echoed in the cotton lining) and the supple cowhide (buffalo leather?!) will only improve with age. This isn't a case of style over substance however as it has a full complement of D3O armour ready installed at the shoulders, elbows and back – without looking or feeling overly bulky. The quality of materials and construction is impossible to fault, especially at this price! For the chillier months there is a removable hood which zips in and out in seconds if it's not really your thing or on a warm day.

If I'm being picky the back armour could extend further down to the lower back but if that's an issue then you can always remove it and wear your own back protector underneath.

JB and I are already big fans of the brand having tried and tested the long and short version of their Richa's Scrambler jacket and in our eyes, they can do no wrong. It really does make you ask yourself why you would spend more – and we haven't really looked closely at their adventure gear yet!

If you own a heritage bike you really need to have a closer look at the Toulon, 270 quid for a high-quality leather jacket with decent protection is hard to ignore and with a range of different coloured strips on the sleeves you might even find the one to match your bike!



RICHA bobber gloves

RRP: £74.99

Contact: www.richa.eu www.nevis.uk.com

If you are tempted by the Toulon jacket then you might want to take a look at the Bobber gloves from Richa which provide the same levels of style, comfort and affordability – the perfect match. Made again from cowhide with CE approved knuckle protectors and the now seemingly obligatory smartphone / touch screen friendly material on the underside of the index finger, the Bobbers are without doubt a quality glove. We like the zip and button-over closure options at the wrist that lock your hands nicely into the glove whilst the cowhide outer and polyester inner provide plenty of flexibility and feel. You could wear these from early spring to late summer as they are nicely ventilated and only need a pair of full on winter mitts for the cold months. Nicely fitting and super-comfortable – again, highly recommended.

Alex Waters





SUZUKI

LONG TERMER PART THREE

V-STROM 650XT

The Suzuki V-Strom 650XT gets its adventure baptism – literally as you can see – as JB goes Adventure Cannonball (a new adventure riding concept in the UK). But it turns out the trails to Morocco are now blocked...

Words: JB **Images:** JB & July Behl

It's easy to bite off more than you can chew when you go off-road, especially when you are least expecting it. So there I was with a few hours in the afternoon available for a shakedown ride with the V-Strom. Workshop time over, off-road prep done, it was time to see how it felt on the trails. And there, on the Ordinance

Survey map was a wee byway (a short legal trail) not 30 minutes from my home. So kit up, throw small boy on the pillion (my son Archie being at a loose end) and head off for an adventure (bit of an overstatement there, but you have to hard sell to the kids these days, eh?).

Maybe I should have taken a quick walk to check the trail before pointing ►



▷ the V-Strom down it, but hey it's a 'green road', never too hard eh? What the heavily overgrown hedges hid were two vicious step-downs (so glad I fitted the SW-Motech sump plate!) and at the bottom of the descent two real deep ruts hidden in tall grass. So you can imagine the sound track to that, something like: "ow, ow, ow (thorny bushes), thump, thump, scrape (step-downs), whomp (bellying into the ruts) – sigh (that's the sound of resignation to something of a grovel to get back out again)."

Grovel, as challenging as it might be, really doesn't count as adventure to small boys brought up on Call of Duty. I wouldn't call it my finest hour as a father, but at least we didn't get stuck and actually I was impressed just how much traction the Metzeler Karoo Streets found given a fair helping of slick mud at the bottom of those ruts. However inching along at 10mph doesn't really give you a handle on likely off-road performance. Fortunately the following trails were much better and we could at least bumble along those at about 20mph, and while the thorns kept up their attack the V-Strom plotted along quite happily.

A later run along the wider trails of the Pilgrims Way further underlined that the V-Strom was going to be okay on the trails. It's no DRZ, or RM-Z for that matter, but no liability either.

CANNONBALL?

So next challenge was to give the V-Strom a proper exercise at the Adventure Cannonball ride in Salisbury at the end of August. Robert Hughes (of www.rallymoto.co.uk) and his faithful crew had mapped out a 125-mile loop that took in the trails around the Army tank ranges that cross back and forth over the Salisbury Plain in Southern England. The course was designed to be entry level, for those who have not taken their adventure bikes off-



road before and might be a bit shy of throwing a £17k GS into a gully (and I don't blame them).

The course was plotted on an excellent road book that Robert supplied together with a roadbook holder (manual type made from the ubiquitous plastic sandwich box) and mount. We then uploaded an awesome ICO App (called Rally Blitz) onto our phones (which were also mounted on Robert's excellent roadbook holder) and off we went.

That said, maybe we should back-pedal a bit and recall the night before. I met German mate Wolfgang on his BMW HP2 (how envious?) late afternoon at Dover Docks and rode, using the smallest lanes, cross country to a rendezvous with other mate July (pronounced as in the month – he's a dude) at a pub in Hampshire. It was



going well until Wolfgang ran his long distance rally tanks dry (I know...). So Wolf got to do a fair bit of HP2 pushing (he refused a tow) while July got a few extra drinks in for himself given the extended wait. Fuel sorted (yeah, much later) we then rode into a rain shower that turned into a downpour and with 10pm fast approaching it was an emergency stop for a B&B for the night.

Anyway, back to the Cannonball; the V-Strom took the ride in its stride. Where allowed, you ride it up to an easy 50mph (and a bit more, eh?!) on gravel. The Metzeler despite their street bias gripped well and the V-Strom showed no signs of nervousness. In fact it rode without any qualms at all. Ahh, except one. Where I'd lowered the footpegs with the SW-Motech off-road footrest kit the heel of my boot would occasionally rest



JB'S TOP FIVE OBSERVATIONS ROAD BOOK RIDING

- 1 Not strictly road book, but never trust water, especially not standing muddy water you don't know the depth of. But whatever happens a fair strategy is to look well ahead, keep a steady throttle and be losse-limbed ready to rebalance at any moment. And keep close to the edges.
- 2 ICO Apps like RallyBlitz are amazing, turning your annoying mobile phone into the most useful device ever. Odometer and CAP headings are shown to GPS-allowing super-accuracy. The only issue being your phone's resistance to water, mud and possible sudden impacts, but for gentlemanly events like Adventure Cannonball they're spot on.
- 3 When you get to a difficult-to-read road book instruction (usually at a junction), seconds or even minutes spent stopped and making doubly sure of the correct route are always the right answer, rather than hazarding a guess and blundering on.
- 4 Try to learn to read your road book tulip instructions once and well, rather than keep looking down for reassurance – that's always the time a rock strikes your front wheel or you disappear into a rut.
- 5 In road book a steady pace always wins out ahead of raw speed – probably until you get to a Dakar level of competition that is. Which is why older (wiser) riders enjoy road book.



on the sidestand, enough to actuate the automatic cut-out switch. Naturally this happened at the most inopportune moment, when ankle deep in a giant mud puddle, but I was able to keep my balance (feet-up) and stab the electric starter to get restarted without a soaking foot-plant.

I'd like to say we completed the 125-mile course in fine style. Only while we had no issues and positively enjoyed the trails (a great mix of gravel tracks and small lanes leading through some seriously pretty villages) we didn't complete it, as Wolf and July decided an extended lunch stop (lamb chops with all the trimmings) was order of the

day, and that put us so far behind the pack we had to short-cut to the finish. But hey-ho, the V-Strom was flying so no worries. Of course at the finish was another meal, Robert's team catering for us a bowl of chilli, followed by a stroll to a pub and a stagger back for a night under canvas.

Next morning it poured down and didn't stop (a nice wet pack-up) and it wasn't a difficult decision to opt for a steady ride home instead of a slithering ride across some chalky trails that made up the second day of the event. All up though, the Adventure Cannonball was spot on. A great picturesque ride, with a little challenge in the navigation and a

need for a little attention and technique on the trails (but nothing arduous) – this is definitely a much needed fillip to the UK adventure scene and a great first step for those new to the game. Yeah, RUST will be doing more of these!

GOOD NEWS AND BAD...

So the V-Strom proved an easy trail companion. It's not been truly tested as yet, but it has the manners and the easy-going nature that shows it'll find its way anywhere, it's not too big or too heavy, and no part of it really stops it going into the fun stuff. Maybe you need to ride a bit slower from time to time – and watch the ground clearance

– but an adventure bike it is, for sure.

The bad news – well, we were planning on heading down to Morocco and riding the Trail Desert Challenge. Only that's been cancelled for 2018. A bundle of guys cancelled their entries and the remaining numbers were not enough to warrant the level of support that's necessary in such an event. Damn! So now we're looking for a new challenge. That shouldn't be too difficult, but with a three-week sojourn to the US now booked for October, it's going to be later in the year, maybe even be early next year? We'll see.



WE'RE RIDING THE CANNONBALL!



ROBERT HUGHES EXPLAINS ADVENTURE CANNONBALL (www.rallymoto.co.uk)

Adventure Cannonball is about getting people out on the big bikes to do light off-road, a bit of navigation, get into the road book system and have a bit of fun! And it's not too hard, we don't want to damage bikes; that's one of the primary concerns – if you've got one of these big expensive adventure bikes you don't want to be throwing them down the road. So the course we create for the Adventure Cannonball is much easier going on the off-road and also the road book is much easier to read with better clues in it, like street names and numbers – not stuff you'll find in a regular rally road book.

So we get people on their adventure bikes into the off-road knowing they'll have a good time, that they'll be relatively safe. And knowing the terrain is going to be rideable is an important thing.

The trails are the hardest things to find. You can find lots of trails, and we do a lot of reccy-ing, but often we'll have a great trail that ends in a mud puddle – and that's then off the map, we're not going down there. Or you get a great trail that ends down a rocky gorge with ruts in it, and again it's off-limits for the big bikes. So the riding is harder to find, but not impossible, as with the Wales 500 where we

use a lot of forest track to make up a near 500km course.

But we do get adventure. It's surprisingly remote up here even in the heart of southern England, you look around and you're as far from everything as you want to be. That's part of it, getting away from it all, the freedom. The other great thing about road book is you can ride on your own, you don't have to have a leader, half the fun is the navigating, doing it for myself, doing your own pit stops as it were, choosing where to get fuel or stop to get a bite to eat, it's you riding, at your pace on your terms.

Our goal is to try and organise one Cannonball a month. We

have a few new venues, too. There's a team of four of us creating these, one is mapping a course in the Peak District, one is doing the Lake District, one is doing Keilder – because we want to spread them over the country.

And finally it's about the camaraderie. We had a great atmosphere last night when we all sat down to eat chilli under the gazebo – like a bivouac in the desert almost – and then we headed down the pub for a beer or two (can't do that in the desert!). What a great evening! And we're doing this because we love it as well, this kind of thing on these bikes, it's a lot of fun and enjoyment.



DARCY O'GARA TRIUMPH TIGER XCA800

The Wales 500, earlier this year, was my first event with Rally Moto, then I did a road book caper a couple of weeks ago – a very casual affair – so this is my third event of this kind – it's a lot of fun!

I quite like the navigation, it's an added challenge on top of trying to ride off-road, but I enjoy the off-road bits more.

I'm riding a Tiger 800 XCa, with all the creature comforts. I have Mitas adventure tyres on it and it's a capable bike, although for me not so confidence inspiring unless you know it can do it. For me the Triumph is more of a tourer, but it's good to know it can do this.

You have to be prepared to get your bike dirty, and there's the chance you might drop it. But once you've dropped it the first time you're okay with it.

Things like the Hellas Rally, something a bit hardcore, is an objective, a next step. But I think it's good to do a mixture of things, so I also want to go on a European tour with mates, but it's a matter of finding the time for it all!

This was a great event. We got round the whole lap, there were some good little trail gems along the way, a mate fell off and we stopped and sorted it all out. I think we all eventually have an off and it's never too bad, and it's a good community for sure.



WE'RE RIDING THE CANNONBALL!

JASON DUKE, NEIL DICKER & GEORGE HENDERSON KTM 1090 AND 1290 ADVENTURE RS

Neil: We all brought our KTMs from Crescent. We came together as a group because I was entered in the KTM Adventure Rally in Wales and I asked the boys at Crescent if anyone else was going from down our way, and so they put me in touch with these two.

Jason: This is our second event together. I only took my bike test this year, to go to the TT. I've done 3000 miles total since then, most of those off-road! I bought the 1090 because road bikes looked boring, and I live close to the plains, so this bike makes sense. I did a bit of riding when I was young, but then you have a family and all. Now I'm at a stage where I can afford one and get on with it! And I'm loving it.

We're enjoying this event. It's something new, and a social more than anything. We missed the start and got lost straight away and had a lovely ride around but eventually, yeah, we got the hang of it!

Neil: And we've joined the club now so we'll look to do more of these next year and maybe the odd overseas ones too. George has done some overseas riding, and Iain (Wynn, on a V-Strom 650) as well – the Hellas Rally in fact – so they're old hands. It's new to me, I've done a lot of green laning on 450s, but this is different. On the 1290 it's a case of choosing your lanes wisely, you can't just go gung ho. But when it's tailored to suit the big bikes like today it's lots of fun.



IAIN WYNN SUZUKI V-STROM 650

A V-Strom, yeah why not?! Actually it's my second V-Strom. Before that I had a TransAlp and before that a Blackbird!

I ride to work every day on this bike so I have to live with it. And I'm only 5'5" so it suits. I needed something big enough to take a pillion, as the wife likes to go on the back, and its got enough room, yet it's still a small bike.

Today, true to Burt's word, we got around fine, the bike was fine, the tracks were smooth. I love this bike, it does everything and today it rode round with the big KTMs quite happily. 🍷





MOJAVE



A day in the high desert – that’s something special to someone from leafy old Kent in the UK. But having grown up on epic images of desert riding published in the mighty Dirt Bike magazine of the 70s and 80s (thanks Clipper, Rick, Mr No-It-All et al) it was a dream come true to actually ride that region (decades later). What a place!

Words: JB **Images:** Olivier de Vaulx

1



STORMY SKIES

We went to the high desert because in June the low desert was searingly, unbearably hot. It was still a sweltering 100°F when we got to the Hesperia Track (a two-hour drive out of downtown LA), but incredibly these huge rain clouds soon appeared and it cooled dramatically.





2



SAND & ROCK

Geology is still 99% a mystery to me, so how these rocks appear in the formations they do, even modest ones like this, I don't know. And why is it some of these bushes have seemingly burnt while others thrive. Mysteries...

3



TRAILS

You could wonder about such things (flora, geology etc), or you can go ride. So we ride, and that's my guide Ricardo Barbosa of 3Bros KTM letting me look like I know what I'm doing. Trails in the high desert start with these Jeep tracks, but the fun is had on the single tracks the likes Ricardo has spent years finding and memorizing – he rides this desert on knowledge alone, no GPS, no maps...





4



OLIVIER

This is our photographer Olivier de Vault. He's a Frenchman, came out to California a good few years back, and loved it so much he brought his family out and made it his home. He loves dirt biking and rode his CRF250X with some panache. These were also new tracks to him, so he's got his GPS 'laying breadcrumbs' so he can revisit them again.





5



FLORA

Being about 10-20° cooler than the low desert there's quite a bit of green stuff up here. Mostly bushes, like saltbush and creosote bush (named because it smells like the stuff, it's not a source of the liquid), I'm not sure I saw any Joshua trees that are the famous Mojave palm, but the tall stems of the beargrass (not seen here) were cool to see (see Gallery in RUST #38). There's plenty of places for the rabbits and coyotes to chill out. Glad we didn't find any rattlesnakes though...



6



HILL CLIMB

Ricardo has ridden desert for most of his riding life and he loves these climbs. He had his 450XC-F wrung-out to conquer this climb, then nonchalantly rode back down again. A moto version of fine art.



7

**NO PAIN NO GAIN**

Of course if you see a rock garden you can't help but want to emulate Jarvis, Walker and the rest. Not that I have the skills. It looks like I've body-slammed that rock, but no I'm just grimacing because trying to lever the 350XC-F over these boulders is more than my puny bod can deal with.



8

**RAIN**

So we copped a bit of the wet stuff, and after the heat of LA it was joyful. Riding frequently in Wales I'm used to getting saturated, but that's usually freezing, this was warm shower stuff, cooling, not chilling...

9

**BIG ROCKS**

Yeah, there's no riding over these. But again, how is it they got there, stacked like that? Write to me if you have the answer.





10



CHILLIN' WITH RICARDO

It's always a pleasure to find a local guru – someone who's given a lifetime of service to his local community. Ricardo is an LA guru for sure, helping people into discovering the joys of dirt riding in the deserts of the California state. He races, he sponsors, he teaches and he guides. But overwhelmingly he's one super-nice guy, an ambassador for the Cali lifestyle for sure!



11



OASIS?

There was water in the sky but on the desert floor as well, rain's gotta fall and it's gotta collect somewhere too. So you find a valley and then you find a flattish bit and then you find this. It's the isolation of the desert surround that makes it so special.



12



MORE GEOLOGY!

Olivier takes a break. Pines, yuccas, rocks, sand, water. I should have paid more attention at school – more of this would make sense then. Yep the High Desert is a stunning place. Got to go back there again soon.



A rider in full protective gear, including a helmet and goggles, is positioned on a KTM 350XC-F motorcycle. The bike is parked on a gravel path that leads towards a body of water. The rider is wearing a black and red suit and red boots. The motorcycle has a yellow and black livery with 'KTM' and '350XC-F' visible. The license plate is 'KS18 GZF'. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, creating a sense of a rural or forest setting.

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Thanks - huge thanks to Dean Clements at Fantic UK for prepping and trucking the two Caballeros up to Bruntingthorpe for us, just awesome mate; to Ricardo Barbosa again for the incredible ride in the Mojave high desert and for supplying that sweet KTM 350XC-F of his (and for riding it out when I mauled the front tyre so badly, ahem), to our constant mate Alan Stillwell for coming up with his copy – so clean – month after month, and sharing the knowledge; to Tomasz Pessanha and his guys at F2R for all their help with their excellent rally road book kits; to the guys at Honda (including KCS), KTM and Ducati and to Nigel at www.clubmotolondon.co.uk for the BMW and Patsy Quick and Harry at Desert Rose Racing – all their help with the video projects you'll see soon...

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