



ISSUE #42



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KTM 790

TEST: KTM's new Adventure R comes with added RRRRRRR!

MONSTER INC

TEST: How Yamaha has tamed their WR450F for 2019

ADV COOL

TEST: Triumph's coolest adventure bike is a heritage model!



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Photos: Alessio Barbanti, R. Schiedl



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BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

I should have known better. In last issue's editorial I lamented that I need to ride more. Now, I could do with riding less! These past two months have flashed by in a blaze of test rides. I'm counting seven bikes tested, and the miles I've put in – way over 3000 I should say, as I've been up to the Scottish borders, to Yorkshire and twice into Wales. Yes, the Suzuki V-Strom 650XT put on over 2000 miles and the new KTM 1290 Super Adventure is sitting on 1400 miles already. That's before we add the days in the saddles of the test bikes.

Trying to squeeze all this into this issue, plus other stuff for balance, has been a major undertaking, maybe too much. Indeed too much, after this issue you and me are going to have to get used to editorial content being more evenly spread across the magazine and the website – that old 'continual publishing' concept. I'll be working hard with the RUST team to strategize how content gets placed and we'll probably need to make more use of mail alerts, so please forgive us, we're not spamming you, just trying to ensure you find all our stories.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this issue. Being so big don't bust a gut trying to read it all in one go, and don't leave it to one side either – just keep coming back to it and reading in bits. It's the big-little magazine that just keeps giving.

Is there a standout bike this issue? No! The KTM 790 Adventure R was every bit as dynamic and inspired as we've been led to believe, if you like your adventure fast and furious this is probably for you (although it does steady-away just as well). Conversely the Rally Raid BMW G 310 GS (which we've had to publish on to our website as this issue grew and grew) feels like the most complete travel bike that a small-bore could ever be – it's a real wonder and might help you (as much as it did me) to reset just what you think an adventure bike should be. There again, the Triumph Scrambler 1200 XE did that for me too – yeah, adventure should look cool as well be cool. And by heck, did I love screaming the wee Honda CRF250RX around the Brechfa Rally? And then there's the Fantic Caballero Scrambler 500, not to mention Yamaha's WR450F. All of them – quality, transformative machines.

I guess there's a time and place for everything, and we should appreciate all these different tastes. Hopefully you're enjoying your particular favourite flavour of dirt biking right now, we're in the riding season after all. So ride safe and I hope you enjoy the read.





AMA SX CHAMP 2019

Congratulations to Cooper Webb on winning the Monster Energy 2019 AMA Supercross title. It would be fair to say he wasn't expected to win, names like Tomac, Musquin and Roczen were the early season favourites. But the 23 year old from North Carolina prevailed. A former two-time 250SX West champ (2015-16), Webb's step-up into the 450 class had not been starred. In two seasons on a Yamaha YZ450F he'd placed 13th and then 9th, with one podium finish in each year. So he came into the Red Bull KTM team for 2019 very much as the understudy to Marvin Musquin. Only Webb clicked with the KTM 450SX real quick, found his groove and simply cleaned house. RUST was there from the beginning; this is Webb at his first official KTM test session, and check out our interview with him from the day https://youtu.be/hkjdoXP_HU

Image: JB



A RIDE IN THE WOODS

End of March, RUST took a long ride up to the Scottish borders to ride the Adventure Spec Challenge Kielder 500. Yep, nearly 500km on tracks and trails using a paper road book for navigation. Some 150 mostly newbie adventurers had an incredible weekend, even if temperatures dropped to a nippy -2°C. The local community benefited too, the local convenience store and petrol station reported the equivalent of three months trade in one afternoon. Needless to say the adventurous motorcyclists are very welcome to return...

Image: JB

RUST TRAVELS

A log of what we've been up this past two months (or so...)



JB'S STORY

If my log from RUST #41 was all about seeing off the winter, for this issue it's been about one super-hectic Spring testing season. One after another, the importers called offering new test bikes. I couldn't turn down not even one of them, although that's meant an ever-growing snowball of work at this end of the schedule (and delayed publishing).

But getting out riding has been awesome. Within a week I'd gone from racing the **Honda CRF250RX** through the Welsh forests to navigating the altogether larger **Suzuki V-Strom 650XT** around a Scottish forest. Two vastly different experiences, but I loved both. I like tear-arsing around on

the wee enduro, but I also like slowing it right down and appreciating the scenery on the big adventure.

There again, I have more conflicting mores when it comes to having enjoyed riding two **KTM über-ADV**s in their **790 and 1290 Adventure Rs** and then finding equal love for **Triumph's new 1200 Scrambler XE**. For me, all three make great adventure bikes and I'd be super happy touring off-road on all three.



But then Rally Raid Product's modified **BMW G 310 GS** again proved you don't need a big engine for big adventure – what a cracking tool that is!

Bottom line: it's all good. We have an embarrassment of riches it seems in the dirt bike and heritage bike market right now. So choosing your ride is getting ever harder...

WARREN'S STORY

JB has just asked me to pen 150 words on my last two months since the previous issue, and my first thought was – “a bloody blur!”

A big part of that time has been in designing a new workshop, and track, as part of the development here at **Casa Warren** (in Portugal). In the meantime, I have been setting up a makeshift workshop in the existing garage. Riding has been a series of long overdue product tests done over the course of the very wet three-day **Transalentejo Rally**, and putting in some laps at the local MX track.

I enjoyed a day of racing with my son at an **old school classic motocross** track near my house. Took me back to the good ol' days.

Every other spare moment I've had I put into adding the finishing touches to my **Husky FE350** long-term. I am really happy with the bike and the set-up. The few final adjustments have really fine-tuned the bike to a point that I don't think I have been able to achieve in my riding career yet, on any machine. I will be sharing this in the final feature, 'In search of the perfect set-up' in the next issue.

To finish the month, I am heading to the launch of the new **2020 KTM enduro range** in Spain. Look out for blogs and videos from the launch from May 21. 🇪🇸





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2019

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FIRST RIDE

KTM 790 ADVENTURE R

Words: JB Images: Two Fast Media

RUST has had its first ride on the KTM 790 Adventure R. KTM UK whizzed a bunch of journos over to the newly inaugurated Sweet Lamb KTM Adventure Bike Experience in Powys, deepest Wales, where we sampled both the new 6600 acre facility as well as the new machine.

We'll have a full report on the 790 Adventure R when we conduct our full test (road, dirt and rally) in July – yes, that's the earliest we could get a test bike – but for now based on a day riding off-road in Welsh mountains (2500ft being the highest) here's what we've learnt about this bike.



1. IT FEELS RIGHT

By which we mean the ergonomics are just about spot on. It feels like a regular dirt bike (not a road bike), with a narrow feel through the mid section (so you're not riding with feet miles apart), it has the correct natural positioning for your body when stood, with your head naturally placed above the headstock, and when you adopt the Chris Birch adapted standing position (kind of $\frac{3}{4}$ standing attack) it's pitch perfect – yet is equally comfy when sat cruising. The only limitation is when it comes to seated cornering (off-road) you can't get as far forward as you would on a regular enduro bike, so most off-road cornering you'd be better off stood up.





2. IT FEELS THE SAME

You'd think this being a parallel twin of approximately 800cc that it would feel different to all the other KTM adventure bikes. It doesn't. Like so many parallel twins these days it adopts an offset crank position to create a vee-twin feel. So jumping from a 1290 onto the 790, while you notice the power difference (that's something like from 160hp down to 90hp), the engine characteristic, the feel, is very similar. We could go further, to say that it seems with electronic aids and computer engine management a lot of engines are getting to feel quite similar these days. You can jump from bike to bike, crack the throttle on a gravel corner and all will give you that same digitally-manipulated serving of wheelspin (and slide). Which is both useful (less crashing) if getting to feel slightly homogenised!

KTM 1290 ADVENTURE R



KTM 790 ADVENTURE R





3. IT'S DYNAMIC

The size, weight, power and proportion of this bike are designed to work with a more active rider. You don't stand or sit on this bike, twist the throttle and let it get on with the job – no, the 790 likes a mobile rider. On gravel, exiting corners it could be very easy to just crack the throttle and spin the rear and hand over full control to the computer, but if you move your weight forward-back, inside-outside the 790 rewards you with a great feel for rear wheel traction, so rather than shedding expensive rubber knobbles in the fury of pointlessly spinning wheel, you can instead shift your hips back and out and feel the traction come back to you – making for faster, cleaner corner exits. Point being there's space on the bike to do all this, you can get right over the front or push yourself way back (braking hard) and the bike responds. It's still heavy by usual dirt bike standards, but not so heavy like a 1250/1290 so the rider's weight makes up a greater percentage of the combined mass, and this means your input has a greater effect. Rally riders will love this, but recreational riders will benefit, too. It's about control.





4. IT'S EASY

If, like us, you saw the video footage from the world launch in Morocco (all fast riding and big dune jumps) and thought the 790 is all about Billy Big Balls aping Dakar legends then KTM has sent the wrong message (or at least not the whole message). The 790 can do this (as you saw) but equally the 790 is a doddle to ride and very adept at doing slow stuff. With the options on ride mode, traction control etc you can dial in a really easy set of responses that are perfectly suited to newish riders, or riders who like a quiet ride. This bike has enormous potential and versatility, but it's up to the rider as to whether he uses its powers for good (adventure touring) or evil (racing).



5. WE'RE WON OVER

Those blobby bottom-heavy pannier fuel tanks and the beaky headlight make for a slightly odd look to the bike that can be initially off-putting. It's standard Kiska design if you ask us – they always like to do something a bit edgy, sometimes downright ugly, but at least provocative/challenging. Once you've ridden the bike the looks matter less, because the fact is the dynamic design and engineering work well and KTM has created a bike with great energy. Top riders will abuse it, make it do crazy things, but for regular riders this will make off-road adventuring that little bit easier, safer and so more enjoyable. So throw some panniers on it (probably soft ones now – the latest market trend) and get out there and just enjoy. This bike isn't about manufacturers' bragging rights or travel event campsite Top Trumps, it's for active riders who are looking for an active bike.

That's it for now. Full report will follow given a full test! 🇬🇧



SCRAMBLER XE

it's adventure by another name

We've been itching to try Triumph's new Bonneville Scrambler 1200s, they just look way too cool, and the XE with that 250mm of suspension looks way too capable to be ignored. And now we've tried one, an XE complete with Extreme Inspiration Kit, what do we think? Yeah, we've got so much to tell you!

Words & Images: JB

I'd been out way too long, enjoying myself too much. Now it had got dark and I was looking to finish up the last 30 miles of the ride a bit quicker. Only this being early April the night was decidedly cool and my Richa Bonneville jacket was at its limit in terms of insulation while my old Spidi 77 gloves were a little thin, too. I was feeling the chill. 'I could do with heated grips, right now,' I thought. You see, this is where adventure bikes score so well, they have all these gizmos, proper kitchen sink jobs they are. Five minutes later I looked down and spotted this discreet wee button on the left handlebar grip – what? Heated grips! Heck, when did scramblers get so practical? So I blasted on home, holding a nice 85mph (ahem), now with warmth radiating into my palms (ahem). The XE just notched up another win. ▶

▷ If you've read RUST for a while and seen our test of the Triumph Street Scrambler 900 (RUST #32) you'll know I'm a fan. But I'm also a pragmatist. As much as I love the Street Scrambler it is essentially a street bike – the suspension, being short travel and quite basic, totally compromises its off-road pretensions. Cool for the street, impractical in the dirt. Now Triumph has a new generation of Scrambler with the latest super-punchy 1200cc motor and you can tell just by looking at the suspension units they're addressing the 900's shortcoming. You can see it in the marketing, too – guys hoofing the bikes through deserts and all – these new Bonneville Scramblers are more than just styling jobs.

A QUICK OVERVIEW

I'm going to deal with the tech quickly. Partly because (as we often suggest) the Triumph website says it all and it's not difficult to click on that and get all the detail you need. And partly because I want to get on and discuss the riding.

So tech: The motor is new generation, eh? Yep, it's a full 1200cc eight-valve SOHC parallel twin with a 270° crank angle (for character), producing 89 horsepower and a fair 110Nm of torque (the latter at just 3950rpm). It looks air-cooled – check out the cylinder finning – but actually it's water-cooled and when you ride it slow off-road you'll know this as you hear the radiator's electric fan cutting in. It's got a slick six-speed gearbox and the clutch is surprisingly cable-operated.

The chassis is unique to these Scramblers, designed to meet both on- and off-road demands, being traditional tubular steel with aluminium cradles. Our test example being the top of the range XE has 250mm of suspension travel front and rear, with 47mm Showa USD forks and twin Öhlins piggyback shocks. The wheels are very off-road specific being wire cross-spoke type,



with a 21" front and 17" rear (allowing tubeless tyres – in this instance Metzeler Tourance). We like that Triumph haven't gone overboard with the width of the rear hoop, it holds a narrower 150/70 section tyre. With all that suspension the seat height is a moderately tall 870mm. On the alternative XC model, which has 200mm of suspension travel, it's 840mm. The brakes are a fancy Brembo monobloc 320mm twin disc setup (the calipers are radially mounted – and there's a fancy brake lever to go with that, too) with a 255mm rear disc clamped by a Brembo two-piston caliper.

Other numbers: the fuel tank is a slightly disappointing 16-litres (but that's the cost of creating such a pretty



shape) which given Triumph's claimed 58mpg average fuel consumption should see you within a whiff of 200 miles at a go. Meanwhile claimed weight (dry) is 207kg. That's actually a nice number, heavy for a dirt bike of course, but compared to the 242kg of the 1200 Tiger Explorer it's relatively light.

Then there's the electronic tech, with six riding modes (including off-road pro for the XE only), a fancy TFT dash, cornering ABS and traction control, not to mention a whole host of interconnectivity whether you're into music, GoPro film shooting or want something more practical like a navigation app. You can geek yourself out on the electronics for sure.

SO, THE RIDE

I'm glad that's the tech over with (hope you found it moderately helpful) – now the riding. First impressions – it's a big ship. The seat is tallish, although at 6'0" I

THE SCRAMBLER MAY NOT YET BE PERFECTION BUT TRIUMPH HAS MADE ONE STUNNING MOTORCYCLE THAT IS PURE PLEASURE TO RIDE

could get the balls of my feet down quite easily – shorter folk might prefer the XC's dimensions. And the handlebars are quite high being set on tallish risers, wide-ish too, as you'd expect for a scrambler. They feel a little too straight on the road, but when stood for off-road they're just fine. The seat is a flat bench type that allows you to move fore and aft quite easily. Being a trifle thin it doesn't bode well for long distances, but we dare say the aftermarket guys will come up with a gel type before too long. As it is, for two-up riding maybe it's best

to restrict yourself to shorter trips.

But despite being tall and big, it's not that big, it's slim-ish and the absence of bodywork further reduces its sense of bulk. And pushing it around with those wide bars and narrow-ish tyres takes very little effort – actually surprisingly little, it almost came to be a perverse pleasure. And when you ride up the road you're struck by how narrow the bike is around your ankles and how as you look forward your view is barely interrupted by the wide bars, modest dash and bar-mounted mirrors. Very quickly you're into the 1960s scrambler feel, it does actually feel pretty authentic (having ridden a fair few Brit twins from the 50s and 60s) while obviously being at the same time ultra-modern.

With certain adventure bikes punching ridiculous numbers like 160hp you'd think 89hp might feel a bit weak. But it doesn't, the Scrambler has good torque right off the bottom and so it launches itself pretty vigorously and

the lack of weight further helps here. You can hotrod away from the traffic lights for sure. The clutch is surprisingly light and the gearbox is slick as you'd like, so you can roost most traffic – while of course sitting there looking super-cool in the laid-back scrambler riding position.

Handling on the street is more secure than you might first anticipate, given the 90/90-21 front tyre, and certainly I can't recall any undue anxiety about swinging through bends and roundabouts. Likewise with the ABS backup I wasn't concerned about crash-braking either. Combine this with cornering traction control and the Scrambler is doing a lot to both keep you safe and riding virtually carefree. That's a nice feeling.

There is of course little in the way of weather protection and yet it was quite comfortable cruising up to 90mph without any need to tuck down out of the airstream. That might not be the





SPECIFICATION

2019 TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE SCRAMBLER 1200 XE

ENGINE: Liquid-cooled 8-valve SOHC parallel twin four-stroke

DISPLACEMENT: 1200cc

BORE & STROKE: 97.6 x 80.0mm

MAX POWER: 98hp @ 7400rpm

MAX TORQUE: 110Nm @ 3950rpm

FUELING: Multipoint sequential electronic Fuel injection

STARTER: Electric

TRANSMISSION: Six-speed gearbox, wet multiplate clutch

FRAME: Tubular steel with aluminium cradles

FRONT SUSPENSION: 47mm Showa USD forks, fully adjustable, 250mm travel

REAR SUSPENSION: Öhlins fully adjustable piggyback shocks, 250mm travel

WHEELS: Tubeless, aluminum rims, cross-spoke, 2.15 x 21" front, 4.25 x 17" rear

BRAKES: Front discs – 320mm, four-piston Brembo (radially mounted) calipers – Rear disc 255mm, twin piston caliper, ABS

SEAT HEIGHT: 870mm

WHEELBASE: 1530mm

WEIGHT: 207kg (dry)

FUEL CAPACITY: 16 l

CONTACT: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk/

PRICE: UK from £11500 EU €14800 US \$14,000



case on a windy day, but you don't buy this kind of bike for high-speed motorway work.

OFF-ROAD

So here's the RUST-specific angle – the off-road performance. Can it do it? Of course it can. Point being it felt so good, way better than you could imagine. Those narrow-ish tyres really help here. The 21" front rolls easily over the undulations and over roots and holes and rides happily along ruts. The rear being a 150-section doesn't teeter or slide unnervingly down off-cambers nor does it claw up the side of ruts. Both ends are happy in their work.

And you can ride it in a pretty dynamic style. Rather than riding the lowest part of trail as you might on some big adventure bikes, I found I could zig-zag quite happily back and forth, therefore riding across ruts rather than in them. I'd place the tyres comfortably into the mini-berms on the

outside of corners almost as you would on an enduro – it rides like a 200kg dirt bike, not a 200kg road bike pretending to be a dirt bike.

And when you stop and select the off-road pro mode, the power delivery is just sweetness. In fact I liked riding the Scrambler in this mode pretty much everywhere (including the street) as it feels quite unfettered. There's no traction control and no ABS and it allowed skids and wheelies – proper wheelies without the front crashing down suddenly the way the traction control will create in the road modes. That's childish behavior, but in the privacy of your own empty lane what's the harm? And popping the odd wheelie is what Scrambling is all about, wouldn't you say?

Now then, it's not all good. My first bug-bear – the high pipes. They look lovely, and these being kit Arrow brushed-aluminium units they sound lovely too, but they do push your right calf away from the bike – meaning you

have to ride slightly bow-legged on the right side. Now this seems to be a lot less pronounced than on the Street Scrambler 900, but it's still there and it means you have only half the purchase on the right foot peg than you would otherwise have. And riding like this isn't long hours sustainable. You could get around this, to some extent, by fitting wider rally pegs, and if this bike were ours, yes we'd do that.

Second disappointment – the suspension. I love the long travel, I love the look and the tech – but these units on this test just felt too firm. Maybe the springs were too stiff or it's the damping that's too restrictive. Maybe they're setup to keep you safe at 80mph in the desert – to take the big hits – but doing 20mph in Kent's green lanes, which admittedly were surprisingly hard packed for this time of year, it was a jarring ride. I was looking for a little more plushness. Again, if this were our bike we'd be getting a specialist to respring/revalve both ends to sort that.



▷ **THE ADVENTURE**

Now those two misfires have not put us off this bike. Not for a minute. You see, not only is this bike as good as being our all-time ultimate Scrambler – it runs the BMW RnineT Scrambler right to the wire (only the BMW's sublime air-oil-cooled motor saves it from being roundly beaten) – it's also quite possibly our choice of ultimate adventure bike as well!



NOT ONLY IS THIS BIKE AS GOOD AS BEING OUR ALL-TIME ULTIMATE SCRAMBLER IT'S ALSO QUITE POSSIBLY OUR CHOICE OF ULTIMATE ADVENTURE BIKE AS WELL!

To explain. We love adventure bikes here at RUST, next to riding our enduros adventure is our passion. But the arms race in the adventure sector has led to massive skew in the market. For no good reason it seems adventure bikes now need to also be motocross proficient while possessing the power output of a factory world superbike of just a handful of seasons past. Selling on Top Trump bragging rights has pushed the latest adventure bikes into realms that have absolutely nothing to do with a casual sight seeing tour of Sierra Leone.

Back in the 1970s Ted Simon, on his Police-issue Triumph T100 clearly chose not bother Roger De Coster around Namur while on his way across Europe heading to the Middle East, neither did he check in with Greg Hansford at Mount Panorama while making a tour of Australia's East Coast. He just bumped along meeting all manner of people (and bedding the odd one too...!) and generally finding wonder in the world. No feet-up broad-sliding, no 25' table-top jumps, no 150mph motorway blasts. Yep, it seems adventure bikes have lost sight of their humble origins and so when you rock

up on an adventure bike these days you're more likely to be making a fair impression of the Millennium Falcon, in search of Stormtroopers to waste, rather than being the polite respectful visitor.

So this Scrambler, in being pretty off-road capable, now comes closer to being a real adventure bike than adventure bikes themselves. Without the acres of plastic that modern adventure bikes have, it is (again to quote Mr Simon) seemingly 'to a human scale'. And without all the gizmos (although it harbours a fair few) and without the screen and fairing between the rider and the environment, it connects the rider better with the world. And where adventure bikes

have become attitude to the point of try-hard, the casual laid-back cool of the Scrambler 1200 translates so much better to the adventure ethos. And here's a challenge for you – check out the XC model with the Escape Inspiration Kit and tell us you don't feel an urge to go discovering?

BOTTOM LINE

Bottom line? Triumph has nailed it. The Scrambler may not yet be perfection but they've made one stunning motorcycle that is pure pleasure to ride and creates that urge to just ride. This bike speaks to you, it looks so right too, so cool, you can't resist wanting it. And yes, we want it! 🇬🇧





SALUTA I CINQUECENTO!

Hey, it took a while getting here, but it's here now ready for the summer of 2019 – and it turns out the biggest Caballero Scrambler is one sweet ride...

Words & images: JB

We've waited a while for this model, it's taken longer than expected to get here as Fantic have worked overtime to get it super-refined, but the wait was worth it, the Fantic Caballero Scrambler 500 truly impresses. It's one sweet ride. If you've read our report on the 125 and 250cc Scramblers (RUST #39) you'll know these are exquisitely detailed, sweet handling heritage-scrambler styled road bikes. But with the 500 motor installed – we're talking a whole new level.

EAST WORKING WITH THE WEST

Given our previous test of these Caballero Scramblers, there's just the one aspect to update ourselves on – the bigger motor. The motor comes from Chinese manufacturer Zongshen (as does the 250) and it's a 449cc SOHC unit, and pretty techy given it's liquid-cooled and fuel injected, not to mention cat-equipped (so meeting Euro4 regulations) with a six-speed box in the transmission. And while it's built in China, the Italian Fantic squad have been through it with a fine-tooth comb spec'ing the cams they want, refining the ECU and FI etc. So it's not just an arbitrary engine drop-in situation. In fact, the first round of engine refinement was masterminded by

British firm Ricardo Engineering (who, among others, have helped McLaren with the tune on their road supercars), while Italian experts Athena worked on the ECU and FI and another Italian firm Arrow designed the cool exhaust system. Fantic themselves took over final stages of development to create the best, smoothest, engine tune possible. So Chinese made – like so much of our tech these days (so don't get sniffy) – but with heaps of European R&D.

The chassis we pretty much already know about, but check out RUST #39 for the full rundown.

A PERFECT BALANCE

Here's the thing, this 500 (as said, actually a true 449cc) motor is something of a peach. There's a sense of balance and refinement that shouldn't be a surprise, but is. Maybe because we've grown used to riding 650s and 690s, we're anticipating slightly lumpy torque-laden acceleration. But being smaller, with less reciprocating mass – and even that smoothed by way of a counter balancer – the power comes in a little more linear with a sweeter smoother build. It doesn't stumble at low revs either, and you can ride it right down to near tickover without the chain-slapping chugga-chugga that bigger singles often deliver. So



specs you can see what we essentially have here is the equivalent of a 450cc enduro bike engine, at 40hp it's what a CRF450L makes Stateside and pretty close to what European enduros are making, so on the cam the sound of the Scrambler 500 is unsurprisingly not unlike a competition-tuned 450 enduro. So instead of short shifting at around 5500rpm, you can hang on to the throttle and hold out for peak power at 7500rpm. It's pretty sporty and sounds even more so on the over-run as the exhausts spit and pop as the revs come down.

Now I read the odometer on the test bike more than a little wrong (which is forgivable given the whole instrument console is a bit titchy) thinking it said 1480 miles when in fact the total mileage at time of testing was just 148 miles. So wringing out the poor Scrambler through the gears was probably not the go, but is what happened. And consequently while

▷ you don't need to ride at a minimum 3500rpm all the time, riding smoothly at least 1000rpm lower means you can ride through town just that little more chilled.

And the bottom-to-mid is impressive. Clean pick up and decent acceleration are there and these combined with a slick shifting well-spaced six-speed gearbox mean you make easy and nimble progress. And again, for a single it feels smooth. The surprise is there's actually something of a screaming top end that goes with that. Often you have a choice – good low-end torque or top end rev – to have both is quite rare. When you analyse the





it didn't feel as tight as it might, it did struggle to rev-out in top, so while fifth gear reached 80mph, sixth kind of plateaued at 90mph. At the time, not knowing the real mileage it felt to me like it was over geared, but perhaps it was just too new, with more (considerate) miles on the clock it will loosen up and could probably make 100mph, not that outright velocity is what this bike is about. It was riding nice and stable at these speeds, mind.

A PROPER LIGHT SABRE

Now the 500 motor comes with something of a weight penalty, all that extra metal shifts the Scrambler up from 140kg as a 250, to 150kg as a 500 (claimed dry weights there). Back to back you might well notice this difference, but the only feedback I got was one of lightness and quick handling. The combination of a 19" front and 17" rear, with Pirelli Scorpion Rally STR tyres, is a fine, quality choice, while Fantic's 41mm USD forks and monoshock rear, while slightly firm (again this can be down to being brand new and not bedded-in), make for quick but predictable steering. And you have to appreciate the quality that's thrown into this chassis, check-out the CNC milled fork yokes, engine plates and the handsome chro-moly frame. Likewise the Byre brakes (being a





▷

subsidary of Brembo) worked well and given the short wheelbase actually best performance was obtained by using both front and back in equal measure thereby better balancing the bike.

Some people might be inclined to ride the Scrambler off-road – after all it's in the name. But really this feels to be a street scrambler at heart. I'm not sure the suspension set-up will suit either, and being a relatively short bike it's not best balanced for standing work, and in any case standing is compromised by the bulging exhaust mufflers under your right calf. Sat down cruising gently along hard pack trails or gravel, I can see that, but for rutty green lanes there are better options. There's a Rally model coming soon, with a full 200mm of suspension – that's more likely to be the off-roading / adventure choice.

TOP WORK

In all, we've got to give Fantic a big thumbs up for the Caballero Scrambler 500. We liked the smaller versions, but the 500 is for us the real deal, the engine performance marries perfectly with the chassis and it delivers exactly what it promises. The styling is exquisite and the engine is really well tuned. It ducks under the 47hp EU A2 motorcycle power limit, too, so this further enhances its attraction. Yeah, an excellent job. Oh, and fun to ride! 🍷

SPECIFICATION



FANTIC CABALLERO/FLAT TRACK

ENGINE: water-cooled single-cylinder SOHC four-valve four-stroke

CAPACITY: 449cc

CLAIMED POWER: 40hp at 7500rpm

CLAIMED TORQUE: 43Nm at 6000rpm

FUELLING: Electronic fuel injection Athena GET 40mm throttle body

GEARBOX: Six-speed, wet multi-plate clutch

FRAME: CroMo steel tube cradle

FRONT SUSPENSION: 41mm USD forks, 150mm travel

REAR SUSPENSION: Single shock, progressive link, 150mm travel

WHEELS/TYRES: 110/80-19, 140/80-17 Pirelli Scorpion Rally STR

BRAKES: front: 320mm disc, twin-piston caliper, rear: 230mm disc single piston caliper

WHEELBASE: 1425mm

SEAT HEIGHT: 820mm

FUEL CAPACITY: 12 litres

CLAIMED WEIGHT: 150kg

PRICE: Caballero/Flat Track 500 UK £6399



FANTIC

NEW FOR 2019 RALLY 500

- Single cylinder 450cc twin cam motor
- Arrow stainless exhaust as standard
- Headlamp guard & number board
- Lightweight aluminium swing arm
- Sump guard & radiator guard
- 2 way adjustable suspension
- Progressive link suspension
- Disengageable ABS
- CNC triple clamps
- Bybre brakes

THE STREET SCRAMBLER

- Choose your power 125, 250 or 500
- Arrow stainless exhaust as standard
- Progressive link suspension
- Disengageable ABS
- CNC triple clamps
- Bybre brakes
- Lowering kits now available
- 125 variants L plate legal

See full model range and find dealers at:

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A DESTINY WITH DAKAR?

No sooner was our man Chris Evans out of Dakar than he could very well be back in again. And, as he said in his last column, heading for the Middle East (we'll miss South America...). Meanwhile, in more relatable news, he's been sorting the restoration of his old Fantic 200 (just to make JB jealous)

Words: Chris Evans



So much has happened since I last wrote that I could easily fill up a column and a half, but editorial redlines won't stand for that, so I'll try and keep it as compact as possible...

DAKAR WITH DAVID, PERHAPS?

The first bit of exciting news was the announcement that David Castera has been made boss of the Dakar. 'David who?' some of you might be asking. Well he was the last man to ever win the daddy of all extreme enduros, the Gilles Lalay Classic, narrowly beating a young Cyril Despres. He then went

on to create a race in the south west of France called the Shark Xtreme and very kindly loaned me large chunks of it for my Pyrenees route. Following on from there he was appointed sporting director of the Dakar, something I had a small hand in, before leaving to become Cyril Despres' Peugeot co-driver, something I had a small hand in. When Peugeot pulled the plug on their Dakar programme he bought the Rallye du Maroc and I went to work for him, knowing that in the process that it would mean being sacked from the Dakar. And now he's back as the boss, meaning that little old me might well

be back in the Dakar fold.

The second bit of breaking Dakar news was the announcement that the Dakar would be moving to Saudi Arabia – something I suggested might happen in my last column. This has inevitably met with mixed reactions among Dakar regulars and a whole load of followers on social media. And it is easy to understand the polemic. I mean, it isn't a country universally approved of in the West. It again means another 'one country' Dakar (at least in the short term) and for many it isn't a dream destination. On the

other hand it does have a lot of desert, about four times the size of France, and a lot of that is sand dune, which is obviously the holy grail of rally-raid terrain. From a purely personal point of view it will be interesting to discover a new country and culture. I found working on the Silkway Rally (something I will be doing again this summer) fascinating. Going from Russia through Mongolia to China was an amazing experience and this year there's the added bonus of motorcycles competing on the event for the first time.



John Hall with Chris' tool collection in its entirety

“SINCE I’D CRITICISED MR BENTMAN IN VIRTUAL PRINT FOR SLINGING HIS HONDA TRIALS BIKE TOGETHER WITH SCANT REGARD FOR AESTHETICS MY FANTIC RESTORATION OBVIOUSLY NEEDS TO LOOK A MILLION DOLLARS”

SHOW PONY

Away from exotic locations to the more prosaic setting of a garage in Maidstone, the other thing that has got me very excited these last few months has been restoring my 1982 Fantic 200. For family reasons I knew I was going to have to spend quite a bit of time in the UK at the beginning of the year and needed something to keep me entertained. So I slung the Fantic, which hasn’t turned a wheel in the over 20 years, into the back of the van and dropped it off at the home of 10 times British sidecar trials vice champion John Hall. Mr Hall, as I call him, and myself go back an awful long way. He was a mechanic for numerous British Dakar riders and for many years provided assistance on Sport Adventure’s trips. Without wishing to sound over-sentimental he is someone I have enormous respect and affection for. The only problem is that we have widely differing views about virtually everything, so we can’t actually sit down and have a cup of tea and a chat. The only way we can really enjoy each other’s company is if we are



RIGHT Looking spiffily like new, JB not impressed **BELOW:** Presumably the extra length on the header pipe denotes 'works' spec (tape measure reads in metric and imperial to help our American readers)



doing something together. The Fantic therefore was the perfect pretext. Did I mention he is an excellent mechanic?

The first thing Mr Hall asked me once we'd got the bike out of the van and into his garage was, 'what do you want it to be, a reliable runner or a show-pony?' This wasn't actually a question I'd asked myself. I mean obviously it needs to run, but since I'd criticised Mr Bentman in virtual print for slinging his Honda trials bike together with scant regard for aesthetics it obviously needs to look a million dollars as well. Plus, as Mr Hall pointed out, it won't be nearly as nice to ride as my reliable-runner Montesa 315.

So we were already erring to the side of show pony when a few photos I posted on a Fantic restoration



Chris Evans

Facebook page elicited a certain amount of excitement. Apparently the top mounts on the rear shocks are 'factory', as is my exhaust pipe – which would explain why it was such a bastard to get off. Current opinion is either it's a factory bike, a bike modified to factory spec by the UK importers or a privateer bike modified by someone using factory specs. I have a hunch the latter is probably the most likely scenario but whatever the case might be it has clearly pushed us in the show pony direction.

A direction very much aided and abetted by Mr Hall's incredible network of blokes in sheds spread across the south of England providing the most amazing services. There's a chap near Virginia Water doing the most incredible things with a vapour blaster who can ceramic coat things at very reasonable prices. There's someone in the South West (confusingly called Bradford Ignitions) who can rewind your stator, there's a shop in Surrey

called In Motion Twinshock Trials (actually a very large and well laid out shed) where you can buy virtually everything you need to restore a Fantic 200 off the shelf and finally there's Eurocarb, the other side of Reading who will look at your Dellorto, tell you what needs replacing and then it sell it to you. Not only were all of these people friendly, knowledgeable and helpful they were also in no way ripping you off. The only bad experience I have had to date is with a company that zinc plated all the bolts in a very haphazard fashion. Zinc-plater apart it's been a thoroughly enjoyable experience, Mr Hall and I have barely touched on politics and we've got the engine back in the frame. The bike doesn't actually run yet and there's still at least three more days work left to go but I think its going to look absolutely beautiful at home in my bedroom. I might even ride it up and down the road a couple of times before I push it up the stairs. 📺



ROAD BOOK ENDURO TOURS IN FRANCE DATES FOR 2019

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4/5/6 Sept	Cantal
23/24/25 Oct	Massif du Morvan
6/7/8 Nov	Dordogne
20/21/22 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

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CRAIG'S DARE TO DAKAR

As seen in RUST #41, our man Craig Keyworth is set on competing in Dakar 2020. Having finished in the Rallye du Maroc in 2018, this year he's set a few challenges to get himself match-fit for this next Dakar. That's meant events including Merzouga (a Dakar qualifier), the Scottish Six Days Trial and Romaniacs! Here we catch up with Craig on his return from Merzouga and prior to setting off the SSDT...

Interview: Craig Keyworth **Images:** JB & CK



Part Two: SSDT!?

The SSDT - 'The Scottish' was first run in 1909, and has been running ever since (with breaks for the two world wars).

It is a world-class event, one of a kind and the equivalent of the TT Races for the trials scene. The trials world championship is where you'll find the white-hot heat of the elite going foot-up head-to-head (or should that be toe-to-toe?), like MotoGP, but the enormity of the natural rock sections of the Scottish and the sheer length – six long days – makes it the most unique and seriously intimidating 'natural' challenge.

It registered on my radar as in preparation for my Dakar in 2020 I'd drawn up a quick mental list of events that would give me the best bike time, be multi day events requiring stamina, solid bike prep and take me out of my comfort zone. Aside from the requisite qualification rallies there were a good few other contenders, of which the SSDT is naturally one.

A WOBBLER

Now I've wobbled around Lincolnshire on the trials bike for a few years, I'm not a bad trials rider, but I'm by no means a great one. Dougie Lampkin need not worry about his Belstaff sponsorship. Mid level clubman rider is probably being modest on a good day, and generous on a bad day. I do have fun on a trials bike though, and, I'm afraid to say, this isn't always a popular approach in many of the clubs I've ridden with. So I tend to be the lad who's making the most derogatory comments at the expense of myself and the small group I'm riding with, plus sometimes anyone who seems a bit too grumpy – this is commonly referred to as 'taking the piss'. A lot like my school reports – if I were to concentrate a bit more I'd get much better scores. It's much more fun among the jokers at the back though, eh!? This is playtime after all.



**A LOT LIKE MY SCHOOL
REPORTS – IF I WERE
TO CONCENTRATE A BIT
MORE I'D GET MUCH
BETTER SCORES**



Whilst sat on the now slightly famous 'open plan' workshop toilet, I stuck a ballot entry in for the Scottish, as well as convincing a couple of mates to do the same. Safe in the knowledge that you never get in on the first attempt... One of those old trials misgivings it seems. A few weeks later, and I'm in. But none of my mates are. Oh...

As ever, I turned to Google: "How good a trials rider do you need to be to complete the SSDT?" I should probably have checked this before, but the answer I was looking for was there. "In theory a decent clubman level rider should be able to get round, but..." Perfect. No need to search anymore...

What's (maybe) interesting about the events and push bike races I've done in the past is that as well as racing in the UK I just went over to the Alps and did some events I fancied there - some rounds of the Grundig DH World Series for example, then came home when I ran out of cash or needed to go back to college. I was 17/18 and just got up and went on my own; I'm not sure I asked if I was 'allowed' (I was living at home with my parents).

It was about the adventure, the unknown wrapped up into the circus that is racing. Whole transient towns



springing up in the middle of sleepy mountain villages, shiny kit, vans and trucks with the back drop of beautifully unforgiving mountains. Super cool dudes stood shoulder to shoulder with wizened mountain men in the little Alpine bars drinking Aperol Spritz in their off season from being ski instructors. I'd found myself. The beauty of this is that the circus is exactly that – moving. Every time a slightly different venue, region or challenge. The problem of course is that you're then forever chasing those early adventures.

Getting back to the Scottish; I'd watched the Ross Noble SSDT TV program from last year and hats off to Ross – he finished, even with the pressures of tours, his day job and his first entry, he got round and finished the week. There are a lot more detractors that don't get off their backsides and will sneer at people, than there are folk who've finished a Scottish, so well done Ross.

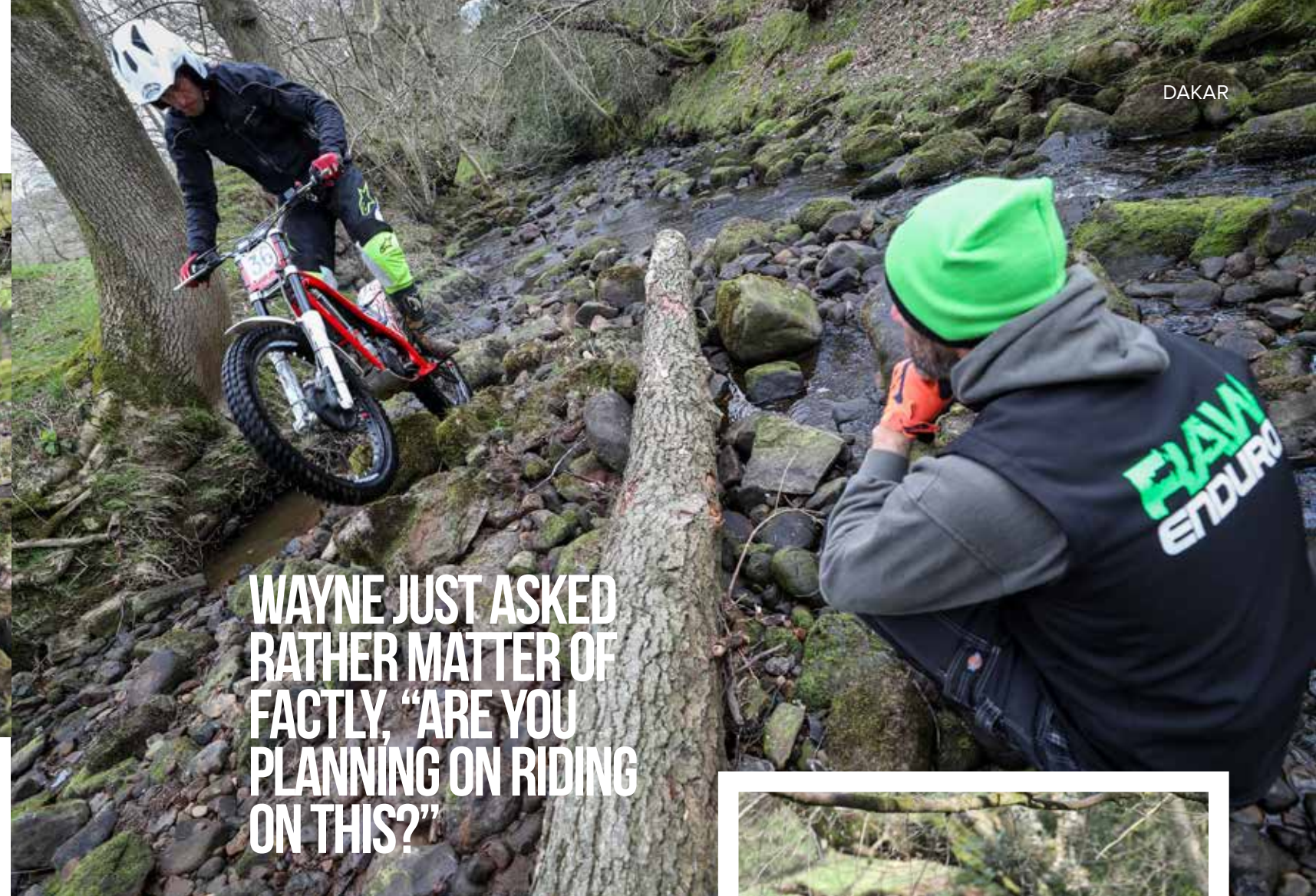
My plan, which isn't complex, is to crash through the week taking as few fives as possible. I'll be the happiest rider if I'm getting cleans, I'm sure. If I can

clean one section a day I'll be made up. Dougie last year ran totally clean up right up until the last day, where he put one foot down. One dab in a whole six days. Amazing.

WAYNE'S WORLD

Victory favours the prepared, and I needed all the help I could get, so in preparation catch up I picked up the phone and burdened some proper talent. Wayne Braybrook (trials and extreme enduro rider of some note) has supported my rally efforts to date, and was pretty solid with advice and motivation at various points. I've done some enduro training days with him and I love his approach. I'd mentioned I was doing the Scottish and he'd made the mistake of offering to help me out with a few pointers, so I managed to grow this into a day with him at Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire. Lincolnshire is not renowned for rocky riverbeds. Nearly all of my trials have been ridden in Lincolnshire...

So two days after my return from Merzouga Rally 2019 I was in a borrowed van heading North up the



WAYNE JUST ASKED
RATHER MATTER OF
FACTLY, "ARE YOU
PLANNING ON RIDING
ON THIS?"

A1(M). As the beggar here, I was tied by Wayne's other RAW Academy bookings and his enduro series schedule. I'd gone as far as starting an otherwise dirty and dusty trials bike, given the tyres a quick squeeze and thrown it into the back of the works van.

Tired, fatigued and I'd got a bit of a sore shoulder/upper arm after a little crash in the desert, plus all of the other standard excuses too. I'd spent about 50 hours of the previous week riding a rally prepped 450 enduro bike through huge sand dunes. Then driven home. I pushed a bit here and there and just missed out on my target of a podium in enduro class, coming home 4th and 28th overall. Respectable. Tiring. Not trials.

I was typically late to arrive and Wayne was up and out, waiting in what is a pretty stunning location up by Gouthwaite Reservoir. Not far from where, many moons ago, I'd raced my



downhill bike in what was then the NEMBA DH series. Long time ago that! I apologised for being late and quickly got into my kit. JB was there with an array of cameras and some youthful enthusiasm, having ridden up from RUST HQ that morning (only a near six-hour ride on his Suzuki V-Strom XT).

I was given exactly 30 seconds to compose myself before I was riding up a rocky river bed, being filmed by JB and watched eagle eyed by WB. I know I'm wobbly. Did I mention I've got a poorly shoulder?

DO IT AGAIN. AND AGAIN.

WB: "One more time Craig, but try and relax, you're riding like a novice....
"Right, I can work with this."
I knew I was gripping the bike unnecessarily. I knew I was tense and I knew it looked terrible which made it even more frustrating.

Wayne watched me pick a line and ride it a few different ways, and then we'd walk through it. We dissected every rock and turn, why I should change an approach, how I should look to minimise risk and where the grip is. I'd have another go. I was slowly heading back into trials mode. Almost.

Wayne was keen to get me working. We stepped it up a notch. He was keen to see me get the bike wedged in some big rocks, not just for his amusement, but so I'd a taste of the physical demands of wrestling a trials bike from the grip of the kind of mess I'll inevitably spend a good amount of time in during the week of the Scottish. I was looking for footpeg catchers, looking for safe grip on rocks I'd instinctively



just try and launch over, and probably fail, or come into the next rock too fast and offline. Most importantly, I was looking to get the bike to work when getting out of a section, rather than my skinny cycling arms doing all the work. I'm a pretty diligent student and was obligingly getting the bike wedged firmly pretty much every time I tried to get up the difficult section. I verified, between heavy breaths, that I was SUPPOSED to be getting stuck – and Wayne was polite enough to confirm...

Wayne had never seen me ride a trials bike, and has a good few (many!) Scottish rides under his belt (with a top-three result I understand). He confirmed I was not wasting my money and was keen to point out that he was trying to compress a recommended three years of prep into one session!

PUNISH YOURSELF

There's a more 'normal' route to a successful completion and it seemingly doesn't usually start on the toilet when you're looking to punish yourself (hmm, maybe that doesn't sound right). Yes, this sounds worse than it is! The

philosophy and approach obviously differ to your average local club trial, with the sections much longer, plus the 'non stop' rule – you must continue to move forward at all times. A real shame as I'm great at 'track stands' and could stay in one spot almost indefinitely, also at roll backs, which aren't allowed anywhere! Both of my signature moves are useless to me.

We discussed my bike, how its shabby appearance and lack of any maintenance, routine or otherwise, might need a look into. Actually, after pumping up the tyres (apparently you CAN have too little air in a trial tyre) Wayne just asked rather matter of factly, "Are you planning on riding on THIS?"

Well, no actually. Seemingly one of the biggest pitfalls to the average clubman, after poor fitness and bike prep, is the administration of getting around. These are big days on a bike in trials terms, and the clock is always ticking. For me it's a sort of busman's holiday, but I'm advised by a number of finishers that I must push on and not fall into the trap of thinking I'm actually on holiday.

With this in mind I'm back into an area I really am pro at – convincing myself to buy a new bike. I've only ever ridden my Gas Gas two-strokes in trials, so we decided that I should buy a new one (that's me, my inner self and what I take to be encouragement from the assembled crowd of self confessed bike perverts). There were however none available. Anywhere. So in a fortuitous turn of events – as they're renowned for being perfect for being able to 'make pace' on the open going (the bit I'll probably do OK at) – I found a new and rather pretty looking Honda Montesa 4rt in Repsol colours. You can never have too many bikes...

NEXT TIME

Who knows? We'll see how Craig gets on at the Scottish (do also check in on our blogs on the website). Maybe also Craig will have news on his chosen machine for the Dakar. And then there's the small matter of riding the Romanians. It's all happening a bit fast...



— *meet the new* —

KING^{OF}SMOOTH

2019 YAMAHA WR450F

Yamaha's mighty WR450F has been that, mighty – like high and mighty – almost since its inception. Great for experts, only not so good for clubmen. But their 2019 WR450F could very well change all that...

Words & Images: JB

Sometimes you just need to stop, take a moment to really observe. At first glance the 2019 Yamaha WR450F looks like a modest development of the 2018 model (which was in effect the third year of production of the reverse-cylinder WR that debuted for the 2016 model year). But if you really stop, take a look and – as importantly – sift through the details in the spec sheet, then you'll see this is pretty much an all-new model.

Yamaha hasn't given any definitive details on this (percentages and all) but so much has changed. It looks similar but that's a new engine, a new chassis. And so when you get to ride it – yes, a lot has indeed changed. In WR history this is a significant milestone. ▶





▷ Of course what's confusing us here is the lack of product launch – we're used to manufacturers singing from the highest towers, flooding social media with teasers, doing a little razzle dazzle – getting us all excited. Instead, on this occasion, we've come – alone – to a farmyard in a very wet and wintry Wales, wheeled out a solitary example – don't frighten the cows – and got on with it! So without the preamble, without the build up, the story here really does come as something of a surprise.

Yep, within yards we could already tell here was something special. Within ten minutes we were pretty much sold. If we weren't such paupers we'd be asking: How much? Where do we sign? Yamaha has made a new WR450F that, while not quite night and day different to the last version, is so far removed as to be a very different animal. The 'old' WR we personified as being a touch brutal, even Yamaha called it "not for the inexperienced". Great for rally we said, but for big guys only when it comes to

**"IN MORE THAN ONE WAY
THE WR450F IS DEFINITELY
SPECTACULAR; SPECTACULAR
ENOUGH TO CAUSE A FEW
CONCERNS WITH CERTAIN
COMPETITORS"**



enduro (talking in a European / woods context). This new one – well, it's got its enduro mojo back. And more than that, in more than one way it's definitely spectacular; spectacular enough to cause a few concerns with certain competitors we're sure...

WHAT'S NEW?

The motor is new. Same concept as before, being a reverse cylinder set up, but so many details have changed. Essentially it's the new motor that went into the 2018 YZ450F, now modified for off-road. That new motor featured an all-new, lighter cylinder head, with new cam profiles. Down below there's a new crank, the piston now features box-bridge structure while the gudgeon pin has been DLC coated. The gearbox has been fettled with wider surface areas on



the cogs and dogs, the clutch plates are updated and there's a stiffer outer plate.

Significantly the Keihin fuel injection has been replaced by a Mikuni setup. The radiators are bigger (but slimmer) and even the exhaust has been made shorter for better mass centralization. And, good news here, the Power Tuner gadget has been pensioned off, now you can alter the WR's tune by using a phone App, a pretty fancy one too with neat graphics. By the way, we note the kick-start has now gone – some weight saving there!

The chassis is new, too. Again, it looks like the last one, still being a bilateral beam frame, but the details are much changed, with more bracing in the upper frame for more rigidity, redesigned rear frame spars and the engine mounts have moved, so the engine sits a little more upright. There's even what Yamaha call 'a larger absorption zone' (whatever that is?). Meanwhile that off-road necessity, the sidestand, is now a thoroughly European type being tucked high and tight into the left side of the bike.

Around all this, the bodywork has been significantly slimmed, most notably around the radiator shrouds, while the seat is 2cm narrower at the mid section and lower through the rear section; the seat height is in fact 10mm lower. As well, the air box has been revised so it's a no-tool job to open it up and swap the filter. Yet, while the

bodywork is slimmer the fuel capacity has been increased, now 7.9 litres (apparently expandable to 8.5-litres if you remove an internal funnel).

As you'd imagine, the Kayaba suspension has again been updated, taking the units from the new motocrosser and modifying these to off-road use. The forks – twin chamber type – now feature a slightly firmer spring (was 4.5, now 4.6Nm) and there's more oil, too. The shock has the same weight spring (46Nm) but the coil has dropped 350 grammes while there's 30cc more fluid in the reservoir to combat (heat) fatigue.

In fact when you check the numbers there are so many changes. That engine bore and stroke has changed just a smidge, it was 97.0 x 60.8mm to give 449cc, but it's now 97.0 x 60.9mm to give a full 450cc. Small difference there, but its confirmation of change. Likewise the compression ratio has been raised from 12.5 to 12.8:1. Numbers like these might make you think that Yamaha has been tuning the beast up all the more, but not so (as we'll explain later).

Likewise the chassis numbers are changing too. Wheelbase in 2018 is listed as 1465mm, now it's 1480mm – this in part would seem to come from a relaxed steering head angle which has been let out nearly a whole degree (now 27°) while trail is slightly more at 116mm (was 114mm). Seat height, as said, has been lowered from 965 to

THE YAMAHA WR450F'S *Best bits*



1. THE POWER TUNER APP

This should make things easier, especially as we're talking Wi-Fi here, not a plug-in. The App works with a Communication Control Unit (part of the WR's race kit) which as well as adjusting the fuelling and ignition maps will also give useful information like intake and ambient air temperatures, maintenance scheduling, system diagnostics, engine run time, it'll even keep a race log. So while you can dial the power down with the blue button, you can dial it down more with the App. How gentle would you like your 450?

2. THE REDUCED STATURE

The old WR450F was a big beast, tall and sometimes vicious. This new one is lower in the seat by 10mm, but by being 20mm narrower in that seat it's also again much easier to get boot to the floor. The narrower radiator shrouds mean you can get your weight further forward for cornering, while the lower rear frame rails mean it's easier to sling a leg over. It really is significantly smaller.

3. THE SUSPENSION

Kayaba are a quality brand and their SSS dual cartridge USD forks are positively benchmark for the industry. They can be stiff when brand new (on our 2015 WR250F we backed off the compression adjusters both on the fork and shock totally until we had about 10 hours on them) but once bedded-in they are sublime and they can keep their performance for long service intervals. On the 2019 WR450F they gave magic carpet smoothness.

4. THE COHESIVE DESIGN

In the past the poor WR450F has suffered for being a bit awkward with some details. Sharp motor, clunky headlight, sticky-out sidestand, and bulbous bodywork. It wasn't far wrong – hey, in Australia the WR450F is the top selling dirt bike – but it needed tidying, focus. This 2019 model has that focus, it's sleek and purposeful, and someone in their R&D he knows enduro – or perhaps he just knows who to talk to.



▷ 955mm. And all-up weight (fully fuelled) has dropped from 123 to 119kg. With a new fuel capacity of 7.9 litres we make that around 113kg dry. KTM suggest their 450EXC-F weighs 106kg without fuel. Certain sources suggest further weight savings can be had by swapping to a li-ion battery. All in all, the Yamaha has dropped the kilos and the bulk. They allude to 250-size proportions, which is a touch optimistic (probably 250 dimensions back in 1999!), but absolutely it is smaller.

THE RIDE

Point being, while still being a significant motorcycle (you know, big bike) the WR450F is most certainly a lot less intimidating than it used to be and you could say – let's say it – it's a whole lot more user friendly. The old WR450F experience was akin to being a monkey on the back of startled stallion. Pretty wild, certainly very exciting. But you knew you were the monkey, and as a monkey you were no match for the pure bred you were clinging to. With the new WR450F it is at last not only working with you, but flattering you. Even if you're just a club rider. Really.

The engine feels way tamer than it was, without in any way being emasculated. It still has the speed. In a way we're almost relieved it doesn't have a sixth gear because when you hold onto the revs in fifth it's already incredibly fast. Mumbo for sure. But it doesn't light up the way it used to. You



could live in fear of the bottom end snap of the old WR, in sketchy slippery going it was hair-trigger stuff. There's none of that nonsense with the new WR450F, this is civilized stuff, there's authority still, but you – not it – determine the pace. We hauled up some honking nice climbs and on these the WR450F is pure joy – just get balanced and pour on the coals, in fact you pour on only so much because it flies.

The important thing is the finesse is there. You can play with the throttle and what you get is what you asked for. Yet the power is so big you also have that wonderful choice – lug or rev. You can be two gears above where you should



SPECIFICATION

2019 YAMAHA WR450F

ENGINE : liquid-cooled DOHC single-cylinder four-stroke

CAPACITY: 450cc

BORE & STROKE: 97x60.9mm

COMPRESSION RATIO: 12.8:1

FUELING: Mikuni fuel injection, 44mm throttle body

IGNITION: TCI

STARTING: Electric only

GEARBOX: Five-speed

CLUTCH: Wet multiplate, cable actuation

Final drive Chain

FRAME: Semi double cradle, aluminium

FRONT SUSPENSION: USD 49mm Kayaba SSS dual chamber, travel 310mm

REAR SUSPENSION: Monoshock Kayaba, linkage, travel 318mm

FRONT BRAKE: 270mm disc, twin-piston caliper

REAR BRAKE: 245mm disc

TYRES: 90/90-21 130/90-18

CLAIMED WET WEIGHT: 119kg

SEAT HEIGHT: 955mm

WHEELBASE: 1480mm

FUEL CAPACITY: 7.9-litres

PRICE: £7599 (UK) €8799 (EU) \$13,299 (AUS) \$9599 (US)

CONTACT: www.yamaha-motor.eu



**“LIGHTER, SMALLER,
LOWER, LESS VIOLENT,
MORE ACCURATE,
MORE AGILE, MORE
COMFORTABLE. MORE...
JUST MORE, THE WAY
LESS IS OFTEN MORE”**



▷ be, but the WR450F shrugs it off and pulls you through anyway. Allied to this is the new lighter clutch, which despite being a cable actuation is actually remarkably light.

And added to this – the good news keeps coming – the reduced bulk of the new WR450F means you’re not left physically struggling. It’s no longer skyscraper tall, barge-wide. It’s lower and narrower, so you feel more comfortable and more able to be the boss. The more we rode the WR450F the more we started carving the forest. It now turns in a very balanced way, there’s a sense of evenness front to back that was missing before, and yet it turns tight while still being super stable at speed, like a properly balanced bike should.

By the way, it’s still loud for the rider given the air box is right under your chin booming away. It didn’t seem as loud as the WR250F’s air box curiously enough, but still earplugs are recommended. That loudness is for the rider mostly, away from the bike the noise is respectfully muted.

Now for the cream, the icing, the coup de grace... Behold the Kayaba suspension. Which. Is. Simply. Sublime. Oh boy, those KYB technicians deserve a huge bonus, for this suspension set-up is divinity itself. There’s subtlety and control of the highest order and it stands to elevate an already excellent package into something ethereal. Okay, maybe we’re getting too prosaic there, but this has to be – based on one day’s

testing admittedly – the best OEM suspension we’ve ever tested, and this bike wasn’t even fully run-in. So good you just stopped looking at the bumps, the rocks, the ruts, the suspension was dealing with it all single handed. When going through the whoops, where you might mistime and nosedive into the up-face of the next whoop... that was just not an issue, the forks absorbed the hits with not so much as a shock through the bars. You could just ride into everything. We didn’t even look at the clickers. For a rider who weighs close to 100kg in his gear (and admittedly isn’t that fast, real middle-league aging clubman) this was just perfection, although no doubt a tuner could improve them even more.

Ahh yes, there’s that one small omission we’ve made. We’ve got to give credit for so much of this impressive performance to ‘the blue button’. You see Yamaha has included a two-



map option for when you're riding. A standard map, and when you push the button on the left handlebar – and it lights up blue – a traction map. It's that traction map that works so well in the woods. It tames the power, but it doesn't take it away, the bike still revs out, still shifts like a good 'un, but without the old fear factor. In standard map the WR450F is still so much tamer than ever before and we'd use this mode for say sand riding and big open fast stuff, but in Wales, 95% of the time (that 5% was just for scientific purposes – so let's say 100% of the time) we'd ride with the blue light on.

Were there any negatives? Got to think... Did we mention the Metzeler Six Day enduro tyres fitted as standard? Nice touch. Yeah, that's not a negative. Ahh yes, hot starting was a bit of an issue. Typically when we start our enduros these days the trick is to just press the starter, nothing else. But with the WR, curiously, it liked the smallest crack of the throttle to get it lit. Once you had it figured (or were told how) then it wasn't a problem.

And one more negative, quite a significant one. For Europe, the new WR doesn't come EU homologated. It is being sold, in essence, as an off-road competition bike. That could be a real issue where an enduro includes legal highways. In the UK we have an exemption that allows competition enduro bikes to be registered – something undertaken by the owner, not the manufacturer – so you can



2019 Yamaha WR450F

still register and ride the WR legally on the road, but in other countries more extreme action might need to be taken. Hopefully this won't take the shine off the sales pitch.

JUST WOW

You know, what shines through is the thoroughness of Yamaha's revisions. They've got experience in enduro that spans decades – DTs in the 1970s, ITs in the 1980s, the WR two-strokes in the 1990s and since the 2000s the WR-Fs. Every now and again they go slightly off the boil, but when Yamaha bring their A-game, as they have here, then we're blown away. There's clearly been

attention given to rider feedback, as well as the attention to detail and the sheer quality that Yamaha has bestowed upon this WR450F.

Simply to look at, this is one handsome bike. The bike is sleek. And the details speak of Yamaha's Shifu-like understanding of the sport. The airbox is no-nonsense. The sidestand is properly tucked away. The new skid plate is far more protective (offering the water pump a place to hide) but also fits so much better, so it'll pack less mud. The headlamp unit is so much slimmer front-to-back, and so is now not offensive the way the old one was. That map switch – it operates on the fly,

no need to hold a steady throttle or to stop, switch off etc, just hit it whenever you need.

The new WR450F is lighter, smaller, lower, less violent, more accurate, more agile, more comfortable. More... just more, the way less is often more. Its still a 450, still one of the most powerful 450s, too – so lower-order European enduro riders might still want to approach with some caution – but everyone else, from desert racers in Australia and the US, to trail riders everywhere, and to European enduro riders of some standing, this is some bike – you really want to ride one. Just wow. 🍷



HONDA CRF250RX

RUST has a 2019 Honda CRF250RX on long-term test (oh yeah!). As replacement for the CRF250X it's both long awaited and much anticipated. So how much is it race and how much trail?

Words & Images: JB

This Honda CRF250RX has about as much in common with its predecessor, the CRF250X, as the X had with the XR250 that went before it. Okay the frame looks similar, both are lateral beam type in aluminium, and the colour – yes, red – but after that, this is an all-new bike, with an all-new demeanour.

It's one helluva trade-up, in evolutionary terms, that takes us on a transition from a 28hp gentle trailie to a 45hp screaming banshee of a racer – in one giant leap. The RX is all about sharp race-winning potential; it has the capability to take on the best of European enduro tackle and quite possibly win. But before doing that, maybe we should figure if it's the best from Japan, as we can't overlook that other Oriental wunderkind, the WR250F.

THE TECH

How much we should go on about the tech is debatable, after all there's Honda's own website with all the data, so why copy all that info? What's significant – we should cover that, though. Like the motor. It's no longer a Uni-cam (kind of SOHC), now a twin-cam (DOHC) unit. It seems when it comes to extracting

maximum go from a small four-stroke unit this is the way to go, not to mention the fitting of Titanium valves with oval springs and twin exhaust ports (and so twin exhausts).

This motor debuted in the 2018 season in Honda's CRF250R motocrosser, it got updated for the 2019 season (improved, with 9% more top end honk) and it's this very engine that sits in the RX, with very few modifications. The motor, physically, seems all but identical, it's the electronics package that's changed, having been given new ('softer') ignition and fuelling maps to suit off-road application. Otherwise, the top end performance and just about everything is identical to the CRF250R. So for an off-roader it's one potent package.

Likewise Honda has done the minimum to adjust the chassis to off-road. There's an 18" rear wheel, a larger 8.5-litre tank and a sidestand while the suspension has been given off-road settings, including a lighter spring rate in the forks. It is then barely an off-roader and certainly a long way from a conventional enduro bike – don't be fooled by the lighting kit so neatly applied by Honda UK, this thing is no trail bike – to use the cliché, it's weapons-grade. ▶

LONG TERM

PART TWO

WHAT WE DID...

The Honda's very first run was the Brechfa Rally, one super-chilly late winter weekend. Just 190 miles of fast trails over two days – a nice way to run-in the motor, maybe! After that we shot over to Yamaha Off-Road Experience in even-deeper Wales to check out its performance against a class benchmark – the Yamaha WR250F. As a way to get to know the little red rooster we figured a good eight hours in the saddle might do it.



▷ THE RIDE

It is, though, a Honda – and it's rare that Honda make downright evil bikes (although by heck they can make potent ones, like the legendary CR250). And with this CRF250RX, for all the potency it maintains a sense of civility. There's a lot of power to discover, but the long and linear rev of this engine means it's delivered without surprises, you dial in only as much or as little as you want.

The pull from the low end isn't obviously strong but it is consistent, it doesn't bog, instead it digs deep and delivers. If it's not coming fast enough then dip the clutch and get the revs up, then it truly leaps forward. Mid-to-top brings only more creamy-linear delivery. At first, while the engine was tight, it all felt like it was too little, and too short. Fifth gear is found early as the gearing is close ratio and short. But when the engine loosened up and the full range of the rev was discovered (14,400rpm is a long-long way out) you find there's a heap more on tap. Sometimes you think you're fully tapped out only to find another

3mm of throttle cable and with that the motor winds up another octave! It is some engine, for sure, and wrung out it makes sweet music, at least for those that like high-pitched screaming four-strokes.

Handling is also so very Honda and not a little unlike the CRF250X. It rides stable and kind of low feeling. Maxed out on fire roads it was impressively stable – not a worry – but it was equally happy flicking through the tight stuff. Perhaps not quite as sharp turning as a KTM, but there's not that much bulk to this bike so quick steering in this category is all relative – you're not really wanting for more turn-in, that is for sure. The low-riding feeling reminded me of how the old CRF250X used to feel great on a grass test, it kind of hovered along and you felt a lot of confidence and a lot of feedback from the tyres; the RX is similar, a bike you can press into a turn with your outside thigh and knee

and gently push it deeper, tighter into the turn.

The suspension is very good. It bedded in quickly and with no time spent on the clickers – just riding exactly as it came out of the box – it felt pretty damn good, smooth and competent. Perhaps it could be a little more supple on the small choppy roots, but equally with some time and attention applied to the adjusters that could come in any case. But out of the box, it felt good, real good.

Ergonomics are surprisingly comfortable for a 6'0" rider. It's probably more rangy than you first think, and there's no feeling of being scrunched up or pushed too far over the bars. Talking of the bars – Renthal Fat Bars (a nice fitting) – these feel low but suitably so, so you're more connected to

what's going on. Seat-footpeg-handlebar spacing all felt good, too. Very natural – so very Honda.

It's kind of odd. The RX is almost twice as powerful as the old X, yet it's no mad axe, it retains the old bike's accessibility and ease of use. It lacks the six-speed wide-ratio gearbox, the hydraulic clutch and a few of the trimmings we expect from an enduro (although, as said, Honda UK have plugged most of the gap there) – and is clearly meant to be a cross-over machine for motocross and cross-country type events – but enduro is easily within its capabilities. Put the engine mapping into the smooth option (there are three: smooth, standard and aggressive) and the X-type nature is all the more apparent, the RX really can be very peaceable, and a real traction-master.





THE COMPARISON

So, we pitched the RX against a new 2019 Yamaha WR250F. The WR got a few updates in 2018, including boosted bottom-to-mid thanks to a new cylinder head design with reshaped ports and a shortened intake funnel, and a new frame, essentially that of the 2018 YZ250F which features a wider central beam.

It still largely feels like the old WR250F, but the new motor character is obvious, it punches a lot harder off the bottom. And while the chassis has been updated the general responses are largely the same. Compared to the Honda, the Yamaha feel taller, and in tight stuff, tippier!

Here at RUST we had a 2015 WR250F for about three seasons and grew to love that bike. Most notably it came with a full Akrapovic titanium exhaust, and just as at the original launch, we preferred the way the WR ran on that pipe – the Akra seems to smooth out the motor, it runs sweeter bottom to top (and sounds better too – without being that much louder). Our test Yamaha on this occasion had the stock pipe fitted and this, explained Dylan Jones of the Yamaha Off-Road Experience, accentuates the new bottom end torque hit and so at YORE they too prefer the power delivery of the WR with the Akra. ▷

MODS SO FAR

Even though this isn't our bike, we couldn't bring ourselves to trashing the OEM plastics. So opted to put these carefully away (to refit on that imaginary resale) and fit an Acerbis full replica plastics kit, to which we added a set of X-Grip frame protectors and X-Ultimate hand guards (all of this stuff is great quality and fitting is a doddle). The standard sump plate looks pretty good so we've left this for now. Our planned custom graphics weren't available in time for this test (as you can see), but will come from LR Designs ready for the next outing. Likewise, we rode on OEM Dunlop AT81 tyres – which are a cross-country off-road spec tyre – but will be changing to European competition homologated (as required by ACU rules) Metzeler Six Days for regular enduro riding.





Riding around a short course in the woods, swapping between the Honda and Yamaha, here's what we found:

1. The Yamaha's front end felt more planted – this could be a tyre thing (Honda: Dunlop, Yamaha: Metzeler).
2. The Honda's linear power delivery made pulling up a slippery uphill switchback a lot easier than on the Yamaha where the thumping bottom end was sort of all or nothing – you needed to be on top of things with the Yamaha.



HONDA CRF250RX



3. The Yamaha's six gears make no difference in the tight stuff, but once on open trails it gives the blue bike the longer legs with less rev.
4. The Honda feels to ride lowish, the Yamaha taller.
5. The Honda's 8.5-litre tank is wider than the Yamaha's 7.5-litre unit, so it's that much broader across the front. For European short-lap enduros we could probably have got away with the motocross tank and had an altogether slimmer set-up. It's not a big deal, but you'll notice it.
6. Yes, the Yamaha which we've often typified as a screamer, feels like grunter in its current tune when matched with the Honda.





LONG TERM

HONDA CRF250RX



▷

One thing was for certain; the Honda was in for the fight. While still having a five-speed gearbox and still being not much more than a lightly modified motocrosser it was able to match the enduro-specific Yamaha in a woods environment. Dylan says the Yamaha actually better suits a more experienced clubman rider, rather than an absolute beginner as it's quite a hi-po machine and certainly in the slippery winter conditions we rode in, the Yamaha took a little more input than the Honda to navigate its way around the tracks. That's not to say the Honda is so much easier to ride, or better, but the two are very different.

In what was quite a short test we couldn't establish a clear winner, but we could tell that the Honda is right on the money and every inch a match for the Yamaha, which pretty much makes it a match for anything in the class.



SO, FOR NOW

For now we're super-happy with the Honda. It's that sweet mix of being real easy to ride – as 250cc four-stroke enduros should be – and actually very competitive, too. It suits this older, slower clubman rider, but it stands to make him faster and more competitive too, as it asks little and delivers big. We can't wait to try it in a local enduro. 🇮🇹

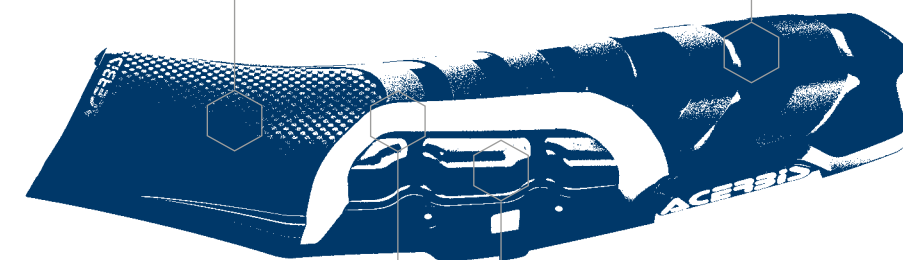
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RIDING THE BRECHFA RALLY

You'd have thought after nearly freezing in the 2018 Brechfa Rally – and positively dying at the controls of the Yamaha Ténéré 660 – we'd have steered clear of the 2019 event. Not so, we went back for more, only with a much lighter bike! It was still brutally cold and for two-thirds of the event it rained, but you know, it's still so much fun and the people are so welcoming, it's hard to think of a better thing to do on a winter's weekend (we clearly have limited imagination)... ▷

Words & Images: JB

When the paddock looks like this you need a little self-motivation to get out there and do it. That or a Honda CRF250RX, which had JB enjoying every minute!



1

1

Waiting for the start, there's no point standing in the wind and the cold, so most crowded into the old cow barn for some shelter.

2

It looks fairly empty in this shot, but at the end of each lap the barn and the burger/tea trailer kept body temperatures up and spirits high while riders waited for their minute

3

Waiting for the start the sun came out – just to fool a few. Full waterproofs were the call! Note the humble environment, if you're after glamour this isn't for you...



2



3

Spare a thought for the guys who organize these events, in this case all volunteers. So while three nights prepping the Honda felt like a fair effort that's nothing compared to the months of preparations the Dyfed Dirt Bike Club put into the event. Dylan Williams (Clerk of the Course) explained the first permission requests are made a full six months before the event. Route plotting starts about a month out, a fortnight out the arrowing begins, the weekend before the special test gets taped and arrowed, then the Friday before the Saturday start there's the last run around to ensure the course is all in place. That involves a core working crew of 20 but over the weekend of the rally the team swells. There are 12 riding marshals, 10 static marshals, seven people controlling the special test then the team who are manning the check as riders start and finish each lap. So three nights fiddling with the CRF – that's nothing...

4

Rally has evolved into something of an enduro-lite type competition. Where adventure bikes and trail bikes used to roam it's now become a game for enduros.





5

5

The Dyfed club put together a 35 miles lap, including an eight-minute special test, all repeated three times on each day. A lot of it was through managed forest. When the sun shone briefly it was quite pretty!

6

To give the enduro bikes a bit more challenge there were green-arrowed (optional) enduro loops where traditional deep Welsh ruts were to be found in abundance. This bit is an easy section.

6





7

Logging roads make up part of the course. The temptation would be to ride these flat out. But we didn't, no. Of course not...

Are amateur motorcycle clubs still valid in these days of professionally run events? On the basis of the Dyfed Dirt Bike Club they are, for the good they put back, as Dylan Williams explained:

"As a club we're not in it to make money, we donate all our profits to charitable causes. Since our inception we've raised over £40,000, and £6000 of that last year went to a children's ward at a local hospital. It's about giving back to our community and putting dirt biking in people's good books."

It goes further than that, too. Ten of the static marshals at the Brechfa came from the local Llangrannog Rowing Club – there's an exchange here, the rowers support the bikers at the Brechfa while the Dyfed DBC guys support (and sponsor) the rowers in their annual Celtic Challenge rowing race across the Irish Sea. Great community action.





8

There really isn't anything to get you into too much trouble with rally but as with all off-road you have to expect a little groveling from time to time.

9

As the event includes the use of public roads and public space the local Police have to be notified and they get involved – in a good way, you kind of get the impression this is one of their more enjoyable jobs, eh?

10

If the rain doesn't get you wet, then the water splashes will.



9



10





11

The Brechfa Rally

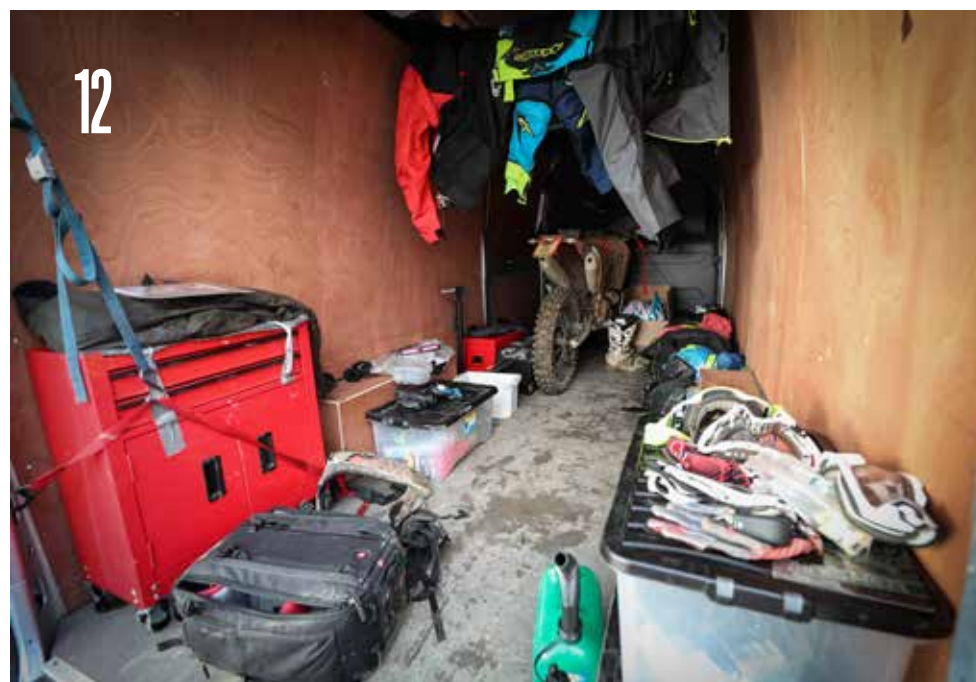


11

Sometime you just chill out – after all, the lap is loose on time so you can opt take your time and check out the countryside.

12

RUST had more van that was really needed, but it at least offered plenty of space for hanging/drying all the kit.



FANCY A GO?

The All Terrain Rally Challenge is a five round series, Brechfa being the opener. Remaining dates for 2019 are:

July 6-7: Ryedale Rally (Yorkshire)

August 17-18: Beacons Rally (Wales)

September 21-22 Circuit of Mann (Isle of Man)

October (dates TBC): Hafren Rally (Wales)

To find more information including classes, rules etc go to www.rallymoto.co.uk

RYEDALE RALLY

July 6-7, 2019



To register go to
www.enduro-neec.org.uk





LONG TERM

PART FOUR

HUSQVARNA FE350

Our long term Husqvarna FE350 hasn't stood still, but race developments have stalled while Warren has been establishing a permanent base in Portugal. And with 2019 season plans modified the FE350 is to get a new stablemate...

Words: Warren M.

The evolution of our Husqvarna FE350 and my constant tinkering with it has me in love. Perhaps it also has to do with the fact that I am riding more than I have in years and that RUST has a new garage / workshop in Portugal that is so much more pleasant a place to spend time in than its functional but basic predecessor.

While JB's garage upgrade is coming to an end (translation: already jammed full of the family's outdoor detritus – JB), mine is just beginning. I'm hoping to finish the work by the end of the summer and to keep heading out each week riding. My plans for the Bajas championship here in Portugal seems to be playing second fiddle to life demands. I have been pretty ill for the past two months with a ▶

▷ lingering chest and sinus infection; my son's preparing for his 18th birthday and A-level exams; we're in the middle of house renovations, and a family health emergency back in Aussie had Mrs M. on a plane same day and gone for a few weeks, leaving the lads to fend for ourselves.

It looks like I might just make the mid-season round of the Bajas at the end of May and only because it's close to my home here. There'll be a big break in the calendar over the summer (it's just too hot to be racing) before it kicks off again in September with the season

coming to a climax at the Portelegré 500 at the end of October – I won't be missing that one!

My son will be at Uni by then, the renovations should be complete and hopefully life will return to being a more mundane and uneventful affair. Great for getting out and riding.

After complaining I was wearing out the FE350 by riding so many hours, JB and I have been knocking around the idea of me possibly making the 2020 season a two-bike affair – one race bike and one practice bike – and me doing the Baja championship properly. I liked



the idea and so I placed an order for a new 2020 FE350 this past week. I'm loving the current 2017-19 bike so much that I did not want to replace it with two new 2020 bikes sight unseen. I know there are a few changes due on the 2020 bike but I'm going to wait and see what I think of them before I make a further decision on the second bike.

The take away point is that I am sticking with the FE350 as my primary choice of enduro machine. The motor is wonderful and as I have tinkered with it I have found a near perfect setup for me. It's only taken a few years to find the right bike and then find the right set-up, but I couldn't be happier. Riding is all about confidence and I am riding with more confidence now than I have since I was in my teens and it's mainly down to the bike being so predictable, responsive and smooth.

In my feature 'In search of the perfect setup' – set for RUST #43 – I provide some insights into my approach to setting up a race bike and what works for me and perhaps what may work for you. 📌



FAST AND FUTUREPROOF

Fitness above 40

Our Warren is a fitness nut. Loves a gym, been going for years. So based on his progress specifically over the last four years with RUST, going between gym, track (and hospital!) he's putting down in a series of articles his fitness tips for the over forties

Words: Warren **Images:** JB

FIRST AN OVERVIEW

As the first article in this series I wanted to address my fundamental approach to fitness and nutrition in an overview, rather than jumping in to providing you with programs and menus first without any context.

I have addressed some key points for you to consider for yourself and think about. What is it that you are trying to achieve? Having a clear mind and understanding of what you want to get out of training is a key point before you begin. Set realistic goals that you can click off like laps, this will get you comfortable with your new surroundings and routine. It will build consistency and confidence that will improve both your mental and physical agility on the bike and positively impact on your riding capability.



MINDSET

Things change, for us old-timers they have already changed and will continue to do so at an alarming rate and seemingly at a faster pace as you get older. Weight is more difficult to keep off and finding motivation can sometimes be a challenge. And in general – things hurt!

It is also important to recognise that the brain lies! You can't do what you used to do in the gym, you need to be smarter than that. If you try and maintain the same regime you did in your twenties you will never make consistent fitness work for you. The result will be an injury or just getting sick and tired of being sore all the time. Take your time and build up to where you want to be – it's more rewarding to be able to stick with a program that provides you a good balance of sustainable fitness. There is no greater force to being able to improve your riding – while making your life in general more functional and rewarding – than a balanced health program.

Having the right mindset is crucial to a successful lifestyle and age is just a number. I count myself lucky, I've never been massively overweight or lacked motivation but I have struggled with consistency, I think we all do. It is important that you set a goal for yourself, not one for anyone else, or what you feel you should be able to

achieve, just simply one that you CAN achieve. Each small win should leave you feeling satisfied that you have accomplished the task you have set yourself.

BE REALISTIC

Over the past 40 years or so, I have tried so many training regimes, new fads, nutrition variations, and in the end I discovered that I had to first recognise why I could not stick with them. I had to know what was holding me back and what my weaknesses were and try to establish my own mindset when it came to exercise. I had to forgive myself when I failed to maintain my consistency and establish a pathway to being able to adjust my lifestyle so that I managed more frequently to find the motivation I needed to make the effort to stay fit.

THE KEY IS TO BE REALISTIC.

Do you dream of the Dakar? Do you want to be able to finish a two-hour Hare & Hounds at a consistent pace in the expert or clubman class? Or do you want just enough oomph to get out there and enjoy a good day's trail ride with your buddies on a Sunday morning and a good beer afterwards? Whatever your goal, that's okay.

I am not a qualified trainer or fitness coach and my intent in sharing training and nutrition tips with you over this series of articles and videos is merely an insight from someone who has loved riding for over 40 years and has gained a little insight into what can make a transformative difference in your enjoyment of riding as well as your ability on the bike. Not to mention that it makes riding safer. Mental agility when you're tired helps you make better decisions in dangerous situations.

EMBRACE YOUR PERSONALITY

For me, I have come to recognise and embrace my personality on and off the bike and use this knowledge to develop a program that works for me.

I am highly competitive and keen to make sure I am able to ride at the best pace I can for as many years as I can. I'm a risk taker and I like to live life to the limit, and my approach to training is no different. I have had the benefit of many personal trainers over the years, a few nutritionists and have experienced the outcomes of their directed approaches. I've taken those elements that have worked for me and discarded those that I felt were not helpful and have now come up with a personal program and training methodology that is begged, borrowed and stolen to sculpt a specific program for me as an off-road rider/racer. I hope you will find something of use to you, even if it's





only to do as I have done and borrow snippets from what I am going to be sharing with you.

MOTIVATION

1. Take small steps – it makes it easy to maintain motivation.
2. Spend some time on getting to know yourself. Knowing what to expect from your mind is like taking a track walk. If you know what's coming you can prepare for it.

PROGRAMS

My training program is a pretty simple hybrid that combines R.U.S.T. (Random Unilateral Strength Training), functional training, a few cross-fit principles, cycling and riding.

I will be sharing programs and nutrition tips starting in the next issue and online at www.rustsports.com

NUTRITION


I recognise that each of us is vastly different and what may be reasonable for one person might be a bridge too far for another. My personal affliction is that I live with a devil on one shoulder and while I'm able to be pretty disciplined most of the time I have an innate yearning to let the dogs loose from time to time. I've come to accept that this is part of who I am and in so doing I have some to realise that a good balanced life (in my case going from



one extreme to another) is best managed by keeping the extremes less severe. Now I'm able to enjoy life by having the occasional party and riding the way I want to with the fitness I need.

Hopefully my nutrition tips will help you rationalise a gradual change to getting the best out of the food you eat and will prove helpful in finding what works for you.

NEXT TIME

Well, that's it for an introduction. Next time we'll get properly into designing your own personal fitness programme 

A DISCLAIMER

Given the nanny states we live in I would like to advise you that you should ignore everything I write or say. You should not watch any of the videos and for your own safety please do not follow any of my comments on nutrition. In fact, please be careful that you don't strain yourself lifting any of the devices you may need to. Seriously... if you are in any doubt about your state of health please consult a health professional, take out insurance and always train with a health and safety officer present. I take no responsibility whatsoever for anything I say or do and for any of you that decide to follow my ramblings you do so at your own risk.



SUBSCRIBE!

MARV'S LOOKING AT YOU, AND HE AIN'T HAPPY

Why isn't Marv happy? Could be because he lost the 2019 AMA SX title. But it's not that. It's because Marv sees, knows, all. And he knows you haven't subscribed to RUST yet. And in our moto-universe that's a bad-bad thing. It shows your ignorance, your lack of care. So make Marv happy, get educated and find your own happiness (maybe even love) in one simple action – by hitting the **SUBSCRIBE** button.

The subscription is **FREE** and it takes just seconds to sign up – we ask only for your email. That's it! It's totally free, guaranteed no spam, no junk, no strings – just a friendly email from us whenever you need to be alerted to a new issue. You do that and maybe – maybe – Marv won't put a hit on you.

It's the smallest act of faith and support and it helps secure this magazine's future. So please do it. And why not right now? Hit the link below!

WWW.RUSTSPORTS.COM





TCX COMP EVO 2 MICHELIN BOOTS

Contact: US/RoW: www.tcxboots.com UK: www.nevis.uk.com

RRP: UK: £399

First of all these are a very modern and beautiful looking boot, they look great. You may be expecting something special given the Michelin name, but I suspect this is much more marketing than anything else and in my opinion it doesn't bring anything significant to the boot.

Now Warren and JB had me wear these boots as being a trail tour guide I get to ride long hours and big distances, so I'm a good tester for products such as these. And so far I've ridden in these boots for around 1500 kilometres.

My first impression was that the Evo Comp 2s were really comfortable and easy to adjust to your foot and to fit with knee guards – especially given that nowadays knee guards have been getting so much bigger, always a concern with the boots. The straps are good and easy to tighten and when you're in and out of boots every day this is definitely a big plus.

Although these boots aren't made for walking (opposite to the song!) they are comfortable and were sweet even on those first days, so no blisters, no calluses! Like many a technical boot, they are a bit noisy when you walk due to the double flex control on the back. On the inside the boots are also great, very modern with very good finishes. They look like a sportswear shoe.

The performance has been very good, I like

the high level of protection they offer as well as the comfort – no small praise given my last boots, a pair of Gaerne SG12s, are a hard act to follow. There is the odd issue though. On the area of the instep I find these boots are bulky and on the 500EXC I use for the tours I had to adjust my gearshift and brake levers. As well, I definitely felt that in the area of the instep they were not quite grippy enough. It seems to me that they should have built that patch in another material or at least with some relief so that in the area of contact with the shift lever there exists more grip.

Back to the positives – the boots have been very water resistant. Running through puddles of water and on rainy days the boots have kept my feet dry, which is a very positive and important aspect given long riding days. And after 1500km you can see the only obvious wear has been some abrasion on the left sole.

In all, these are a good looking, comfortable boot that while not claimed to be waterproof have so far not let water in. You may have to make some adjustments to match your shift and brake lever but the upside is that you can easily wear these boots for 12 hours without any problem or desire for taking them off. This is as you may imagine is very important to me! And finally, given the extended test so far, I'm impressed they still look like new!

Pedro Matos





ACERBIS X-SEAT

Contact: www.acerbis.it

RRP: EU: €189.99

More class than arse! Buying and fitting an Acerbis X-seat (comfort/soft) is definitely not a bum steer. This is the only seat that I have used that over three days riding or more has left me feeling human rather than sporting a severe case of monkey butt – especially in the wet!

The comfort seat is easy to fit, has loads of grip, and is waterproof so does not take on water like the OEM ones do. The X-Seat is unique in that it uses internal expanded foam that is moulded in a one-piece shape (no base, no staples, no vinyl cover and no upholstery foam) so it keeps the bike light in wet conditions. More importantly it's comfortable, it has raised ridges that align under each bone in your bum cheeks and creates an airflow channel down the middle of the seat to keep the ventilation at optimal levels – and did I say that it keeps the seat dry? That translates into a dry and happy rear end. All of these features combine to make it a superb investment in personal comfort.

I found the shape of the seat to be slightly flatter than the stock seat (I liked it) but it felt narrower so bigger bottoms may not get on as well with this seat a skinnier one would. The grip was better than OEM but not as harsh as a gripper seat. It won't be pulling down your trousers but I felt it aided in my transitions over the seat during a race. It also felt like the seat would be less prone to wear and tear from knee braces, which can be brutal on stock seat covers.

The downside is the price – yes it's pricey, but if you want hours of comfort then perhaps it's worth it to you, for me it's definitely worth the investment.

Warren M.





SUZUKI

V-STROM 650XT

LONG TERMER

PART THREE

We needed an event that would prove the worth of the Suzuki V-Strom 650XT. We found it in the Kielder 500. In all some 1100 miles in four days on road and track in rain and shine. Easy....

Words: JB **Images:** JB & Adventure Spec

Time is the enemy these days. It runs by way too fast; we have too much to do in too little time. And so it unravels our best laid plans. So it is with the Suzuki V-Strom 650XT long term. Plan was for it to ride the adventure class at the Rallye du Maroc, but then the class got cancelled, and with it being the end of the 2018 season there was precious little else to point it at before the year rounded out. Fortunately Suzuki hasn't pressed for its return. So as the new year thawed, or nearly thawed, we at last found a challenge worthy of its capabilities.

The Kielder 500, at the end of March, was the first of a trio of competitions that come under the banner of The Adventure Spec Challenge as run by Rally Moto UK. The 2019 series brings three weekends of rally road book competition to the UK adventure bike fraternity. No light enduro bikes are allowed, this is about true adventure bikes riding for two days in the wilder parts of the UK. Kielder was the first, up there on the Scottish borders, next comes the Wales 500 and the IoM





▷ 500 on the majestic Mona's Isle is the finale, in September. The 500 bit refers to the approximate distance of each event, being about 500km. These are no speed events; the competition is measured on accuracy of navigation (each competitor is GPS tracked), while the terrain is not extreme either, being designed to be ridden by adventure bikes on road tyres (predominantly being gravel tracks).

You can see the V-Strom XT is a perfect fit. And so the RUST entry went in for the first round, the Kielder 500, pretty sharpish (or pretty late if you're Robert Hughes the organiser, but early by our standards...). The fact was it wouldn't just be a 500 for the V-Strom, as with riding up to the venue and back the total distance wouldn't be 500km, instead 1100 miles (nearly 1800km).

GETTING THERE

This being an adventure event we took an adventure strategy. No van, no trailer, no hotels – just bike, rider and some canvas. The Suzuki was as good as ready to go. The modifications I'd made in 2018, using parts from SW Motech and R&G, together with a set of Metzeler Karoo Streets, meant all I needed was to load it up with my Giant Loop Coyote Roll Top Saddlebags, a Touratech camera/tank bag, and my latest addition, a Cool Covers seat cover to help with the long hours in the saddle. Long time RUST buddy July Behl came along too, for laughs and company, resting up his BMW RnineT Scrambler in favour of his KTM 1190 Adventure R.

The 400 miles trip from Kent to Northumberland was despatched

in stages. 4:30am start from our respective residences to a 5:30 rendezvous and coffee at the Thurrock services on the M25. Then a motor on up north to Peterborough for an 8:00am breakfast at an American diner. Then more highway/motorway work up to Harrogate, and a spur off into the Yorkshire Dales for a seriously scenic back roads final leg up to Kielder.

The Suzuki didn't even blink. July likes a brisk pace on his KTM, so the V-Strom was set at 85mph all the way up to Harrogate. Despite being a mere 650 this was no bother to the V-Strom, although it dented the fuel consumption figures a fair bit, showing about 57mpg for the journey. The engine on the V-Strom is sublime in being so smooth; it hooovers up highways as easily as any 1200, doesn't

feel at all breathless, and leaves the rider fairly relaxed. Got to say the Cool Cover helped here too, and I didn't register any butt ache.

In the Yorkshire Dales, sometimes working along on single-car width roads, again the V-Strom was just fine. There's a fair deal of torque as well as rev to this motor and it can deal with anything the road throws at it and there's just the minimum of gearbox stirring. The handling on the Karoo Streets was of course just fine, as good as any road tyre, given the modest block height. As a platform for sightseeing it was as good as riding an automatic.

RIDING THE KIELDER

Day One didn't go quite to plan. Starting way into the second half of the



entry and stopping for photos, as ever, pushed us to the tail end of the pack. Meanwhile some earlier rain had left those tracks that were running over clay, soil or grass a little tricky for the low-profile Karoo Streets. It didn't pay to push my luck and I rode at a near crawl through these sections. Finding a guy with a horizontal Triumph Tiger 1200 (also on road tyres) suggested this was a prudent MO. There were also steep off-cambers on many of the trails, falling away into deep ditches, so pushing your luck could lead to serious consequences, so again riding tricky sections trials-style made good sense.

When rain came in the afternoon we hit calamity as my iPhone (which I was using as an ICO – distance reading device) isn't waterproof and one clumsy attempt to slide it into the protection of my tankbag wiped out the distance reading. Turned out my riding companions, July and Andy Slater (nicknamed Harry as he rode an Royal Enfield Himalayan), weren't navigating for themselves. July had no clue as to where we were, while Harry could only offer a compass he wore on his sleeve for assistance. Well, we at



least knew which way north was.

Of course there's an easy answer to such situations – follow the tracks left by the pack. This mostly works but gets tricky when too many people have taken the wrong turn at ambiguous intersections. Here you have to become a modern day Indian scout, looking for the most used option and checking for evidence of U-turns. The rain eventually stopped and we found a distinct enough crossroads to reset the ICO-iPhone.

Only then we ran into a fresh crash scene where an enterprising Alex Golden had not only launched his 1200 GS into a bog but as good as sliced his nose off in the process. While two men of stern constitution literally taped his nose back into place the rest of us played He-Man in trying to push-pull-heave his GS back up onto the track.

So, very typical it seems of JB & July adventures, we ran low on time and were diverted off the final section and told to short cut it back to the finish.

Day Two ran better. July and Harry decided on a day of eating and mild sightseeing over one of competition. So the Suzuki and I were able to roll free and fast. In drier conditions the Karoo Streets were getting good bite and when Dutchman Michel Langmuur flew by



▷ on his KTM 990 Adventure, with buddy Paul van de Pol in hasty pursuit on his Yamaha Ténéré 660, there was nothing for it but to go with them. On the gravel the V-Strom on its Karoo Streets felt secure and there was no issue in matching the KTM for speed. Only in the technical sections, especially where deep holes challenged the Suzuki's soft suspension, was it difficult/impossible to keep up. But any time lost in the slow stuff was made up on the gravel, the Suzuki can really fly on this stuff. Hats off to Michel, though, he was combining speed and navigation to an expert level.

Now if there was one standout challenge to the event it was easily the camping. Overnight temperatures dropped to -2°C (28°F) and with my sleeping bag rated to only 0°C (optimistically I'd say) I was laying my Giant Loop bags and Scott Dualraid suit over the sleeping bag to try and retain some warmth. The upside was the camaraderie that went with this as each



morning, together with Michel and Paul (the flying Dutchmen), Scottish Steve, Harry Enfield, Mark A-C and even Jordan Gibbons from MCN, we would be stamping our feet, sharing coffee and counting the minutes until the kitchen opened for breakfast.

AND BACK AGAIN

The return trip was almost brutal. The 400 miles nearly all on highway/motorway with conducted with just

coffee/piss/fuel stops to break it up. Again, the Suzuki soaked it up, no issues.

And that kind of sums up what adventures bikes are about. No vans needed. Big distances made in comfort and then a chance to ride in the wilderness with a minimum of fuss maximum of fun. And if the going gets tricky, just slow down. For sure an enduro bike would whip around such terrain stood on one wheel at ten times the speed, but adventure – and events like the Adventure Spec Challenge – are not about racing. This is seeing the world, along the track less travelled. And in this environment I have to say the Suzuki V-Strom 650XT shone. 🇬🇧

JB'S TOP FIVE OBSERVATIONS V-STROMMING HACKS

1 I gotta say the Barkbuster hand guards are just the business. At the Kielder 500 it seemed every second bike wore them. There's a reason: the fit and finish is top class, these are quality items. The Suzuki's have never come loose, and you can tell they're super-strong. I've not crash tested ours, but they're equally useful at keeping the rain and cold at bay! We got ours at www.rg-gracing.com

2 The Cool Covers seat cover proved excellent. The fit is impressive, the quality equally so. And judging by the noticeably cool waft of air under the JB butt on the chilly mornings there's definitely the benefit of air circulation as well as improved comfort with this product. For £75 (in the UK) it's a budget route to obtaining luxury comfort. Check them out at www.coolcovers.co.uk

3 The combination of a tall seat option from Suzuki and SW Motech Evo footrests (set in their lowest position) has really opened out the V-Strom's cockpit making it super comfortable for a six-footer without

needing to add handlebar risers. The lower footrests also allow, I think, a better feel for what the tyres are doing (as they can do in trials). Go to www.motohaus.com to find a UK stockist.

4 Riders get hung up on fitting the gnarliest adventure tyres. But, except in the wettest of conditions, mid-knob sized tyres like Metzeler Karoo Streets and Pirelli Scorpion Rally STRs can work just as well while giving better grip and longer life on road. They can also be less noisy on tarmac too. A great compromise tyre where you need your bike for day-to-day road riding as well as for weekend adventures. Find out more at www.metzeler.com

5 I miss a centrestand. The V-Strom XT doesn't come with one as standard, and while I know you can fashion a prop stand that will work with a sidestand for chain lubing etc, for me, especially when it comes to loading luggage, nothing beats the security of the centrestand. Weight penalty or no, for adventure bikes it's a damn useful thing to have.



ADVENTURE SPEC'D THE KIELDER 500

The Kielder 500 was a triumph. It allowed 150 riders – about 90% of them for the first time – to ride their adventure bikes in a true adventure environment. On gravel across the wild open tracts, on single track through forest, the Kielder 500 combined adventure bike friendly off-roading with a road book navigational skills test – a concept that created maximum fun and satisfaction. And along the way everyone found new friends and new inspiration. This is, after all, what adventure bikes are for... ▶

Images: JB & Martin Lynn/Adventure Spec







MY KIELDER 500

▷ July Behl (rider 150, RUST contributor)

Rock on Kielder 500! Let's call a spade a spade; I'm no GS Trophy wannabe, I'm a traveller on a motorbike who loves to venture off the beaten path, however difficult it may be. Soak in the experience. Stop for photographs. Have a wee chat. Fairly laidback. After riding the length of the Americas (PanAmScram), I now want to explore more of our beautiful country, ride the TET, go off grid, and whilst Kielder Forest is not necessarily off grid, it is off-bounds to motorcyclists except for events like the Kielder 500, and that is what attracted it to me in the first place. JB's covered the details of the event etc in the rest of the article, so I'll just share a few of my personal highlights with you.

1. BEFORE THE EVENT – I hadn't ridden my KTM 1190 Adventure R in ages and so it was a pleasure making sure the bike was prepped for the event. Half the fun is the prep, the build up, the chats with mates on the phone, route planning, pit stops, keeping an eye out on social media for the latest gossip and updates on the event etc... It was just brill.

2. THE 4:00AM START FROM LONDON TO KIELDER – not so much!

3. ON THE WAY TO THE EVENT – No matter how big or small a ride is, let's admit it's great fun riding with mates and it was great fun sharing the road with JB again. We took the longer route to Kielder via the National Parks



and stopped for rather indulgent meals along the way. I think we had the equivalent of three full English breakfasts on the ride up. A bit of photography, hanging out with the locals oop North – all of it was just grand.

4. THE EVENT – Congrats to Burt, Dave Lomax (of Adventure Spec) and the team – what a cracking event! The camaraderie and banter between strangers was extraordinary. The buzzing atmosphere at the start of the event and the stunning route, with everything from fire roads, to overgrown grassy bits, ruts, a wee water crossing, loose gravel, hard packed gravel, switchbacks – all of this through the beautiful Kielder forest – what's not to like?! The atmosphere at basecamp was buzzing with energy throughout the event and there were tired bodies

but happy souls all around. And we were fed like Vikings – portions the size of Jersey were on the go. So good food, cracking company, stunning routes, beautiful forest, new mates would sum up Kielder 500 for most participants, if not all.

5. AFTER – What goes up must come down? No nob chat here but the dwindling levels of excitement after the event. Riding in pissing rain on the motorway back from Kielder to London, could've been more fun had we not decided to stick to the motorway due to time constraints. Nevertheless, I'd rather be out on my bike with mates than sat in front of the computer screen.

All in all it was grand and I can't wait for the next event at the IoM in September. There's one happening in Wales, but I can't attend, as that's been pre booked as family time.



MY KIELDER 500

Robert Hughes (organizer)

► **T**he Kielder 500 came about because we love this kind of riding, we love big bikes and because it's so difficult to find places to ride them, especially on something like a 240km course.

Kielder Forest is a fantastic venue because of the terrain and the tracks, which are mostly hard pack. It's not so suitable for small bikes – enduros – it would be too fast. We want to keep the speeds down; it's about the experience, the environment and the long distance.

We've worked hard on safety. Every rider gets a tracker so we can see them on our main organizational screen back here at the base. That means we have full visibility of the event. You imagine setting 150 bikes and riders out into the wilderness and you don't know where they might end up. So we can track all the bikes on the screen and just as importantly we have our medics and mobile marshals on screen. So if anything goes wrong for a rider we can talk the medic and marshals through, we have all their coordinates, so we have a fast response and in all this is a much safer way of doing things.

As well the trackers mean we can measure the navigation exercise, we can track how far the riders have gone,



can see how fast they're going – which meant a few words of caution to a few who were going too fast – and we can see when the riders are going off course. One rider got lost, we could see he was going round in circles in the middle of the forest, so we got a marshal to him and guided him out.

I'm delighted with the event. This is



what we wanted, we wanted big bikes, everyone in one place making it very social, we wanted food in the evenings – everyone having a good fun time.

We've built a lot of road book holders for these events, so everyone can have a go – you don't to go out and buy the equipment. For so many of the riders, maybe 95%, this was the first time they've done anything like this,

it's been the first opportunity to ride their adventure bikes off-road, and between the riding and the navigation they've loved it. And with our dedicated Facebook group for the series it's been great to read the feedback and the sheer enthusiasm the events are generating.





MY KIELDER 500

► Jeremy Morse (rider 77)



This was all new territory for me, I've done the smallest amount of green lane riding, but that was years ago, nothing since. So I turned up literally with a brand new BMW R1250 GS (JB – yep, it raised a few eyebrows!) and it was one steep learning curve, especially at the beginning. But I loved every minute of it, you can feel yourself learning the new skills, it's been absolutely fabulous, so I've signed up already for the Wales 500!



Paul van de Pol (Netherlands, rider 115)



I came here with my good friend Michel (Langmuur) as actually it's not that far for us – a short ride to the ferry, the ferry across the North Sea, then a short ride this side, too. We can't access riding like this anywhere near us, the next best possibility is Spain. And it's been awesome riding: tough, challenging, but it's not a race – and there's the roadbook to master – so it's all fun. There has been just endless off-road sections, so it's been brilliant. We'll come back next year for the Wales 500.



THE ADVENTURE SPEC CHALLENGE

The Facts

It's a three-round series: Kielder 500, Wales 500, IoM 500.

Each event is a weekend (two days), with a total course distance of around 500km, predominantly off-road (mostly gravel tracks) but with road linking sections.

It is a navigational competition. Riders follow a paper road book and through an electronic tracker they are marked on the accuracy with which they follow the road book. It is not against the clock and riders are encouraged to ride at sensible speeds given most of the tracks are open to the public – excess speed is recorded and attracts penalty points.

The series is for adventure bikes ('road legal bikes') with a minimum weight of 140kg. Common sense tells you that a CRF250L is eligible, being at the lower end of what an adventure bike can be, but say a KTM 500EXC is not – that's a competition bike (and yes, Adam Reiman and his Motology

mates might hack around the world at great speed on their 500EXCs, but that's la-la film-making for you, who really wants to go RTW with oil changes every 15 hours?). Otherwise anything goes, including modern street scramblers and supermotos, pretty sure there was an NC750 somewhere in the mix too.

The trails can be ridden on road tyres (and many do), but if wet some caution is required. Proper 50/50 adventure tyres are probably the call, for a more carefree ride!

The events are very social with onsite camping, meals and bar. Here at RUST we'd like to encourage riders to ride – as against van/trailer – their bikes to the event. The trails are not there to destroy you, there's no race and, heck, aren't adventure bikes specifically designed for this kind of thing: highway and byway...

Want to know more?

Go to www.rallymoto.co.uk





Ahh, another long termer! New to the RUST garage is this KTM 1290 Super Adventure R. Pumped to the max, it's kind of the last word in super adventuring. It's so much bike it's left JB a little bewildered.

MAXED OUT

Words & Images: JB

I honestly don't know what to say. Or where to start. This KTM confounds me in every dimension. There's so much to it. For a start: 160hp. I never had a road racer that powerful. Am I ready for this much in a tourer come dirt bike? Not sure. It's got electronic aids coming out of its ass, so many I haven't even begun to comprehend what they're all doing. And boy is it tall? 890mm – seems more, I'm on tiptoes everywhere, and for the first time I'm understanding how shorter people feel, and think – yeah, you have to judge cambers and make sure the foot going down is on the upside, eh? ▸



I'm way too simple, binary, for this, so I've elected to stop thinking and just ride. In fact I've already put over 1200 miles on it, chasing out to Wales and back (twice), all on road. It's a consummate mile muncher, or shrinker – you arrive everywhere earlier than you anticipate. It'll cruise at any speed between zero and a zillion and even in top gear going say 90mph you crack that throttle and it goes hyperspace. On the road it doesn't need gears, just the one – sixth – is enough. And despite making speedy transits it seems to be quite frugal, the onboard computer says it's turning around 56mpg. Fuel range says 250 miles after a fill up, but I'm stopping at around the 200-mile mark mostly and putting in around 17-18 litres into that 23-litre tank, which is about 50mpg so the computer's probably about right on all counts.

Comfort is good. The footrests initially feel high (especially after the V-Strom XT with its lowered pegs), but the riding position is long distance comfortable. KTM suggest the seat has 3D foam padding which sounds pretty high-tech but I've

found I've increased the comfort even more by throwing a dead sheep over it (okay, just the skin). Vibrations are minimal, and certainly don't interfere with comfort. Handling is pretty damn good, too, and I'm surprised just how much confidence I'm finding in it despite its height and the skinny 21"/18" wheel combination, even on wet roads.

I've ridden a 1290 Super Adventure R off-road before and been impressed just how good and manageable it is, those wheel sizes help I'm sure, while the off-road rider mode tames the 160 gee gees. But we'll be fitting at least some 50/50 adventure tyres, if not more aggressive ones, before we take this one off road.

But where we'll take this bike, fettle-wise, I'm not sure. KTM help/don't help by having the most expansive catalogue of aftermarket parts you could wish for and we could go anywhere between hard-core racer and comfy two-up tourer with this bike. For now, it's just so immense I'm still trying to get my head around it all. An embarrassment of riches, no question! 🇨🇪



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WHAT COLOUR IS THE EQUATOR?

July continues his southward journey across the Americas. His odometer reads not in kilometres, nor miles, instead calories...

Words & Images: July Behl



PANAMSCRAM THE STORY SO FAR

In 2017 July Behl (Dehli born, Derry raised) realised a long-held dream, riding the length of the Americas – Alaska to Argentina. Although he had a KTM 1190 Adventure in the garage, for this trip he chose a BMW RnineT Scrambler. With five months to make the journey, July was there for the good time; culinary-inquisitive, socially engaged, this was not a journey where you measured miles – more the waistline (growing, not shrinking). You can read up on his story so far in RUST issues 27, 29, 35 and 41. We join him here at the global midpoint that is the Equator, riding with companion Aussie Simon on his Triumph Tiger 800...

Who did we think we were? Royalty? Celebrities? Rocking up at a South American border on a Sunday and that, too, at lunchtime! This was cultural blasphemy at its hilt. Border crossings are more of an art than science – a bit like sex, I suppose – one gets a tiny bit better and more confident after each crossing or experience (my wife will vehemently disagree with this statement, on both counts). The takeaway here is, try and avoid doing what I did, preferably have more than ten words of Spanish in your language ammo reserves, and most importantly no (I mean know) the difference between two similar sounding words, e.g. Caliente means hot and also means... horny! Exactly! So, when you're engaging in polite conversation with a female border official and want to express 'How hot the day is?' and instead end up saying, 'How horny the day is?' depending on your good looks and willingness, either things will get exponentially expedited or significantly stressful. Either way, adventurous! I'll write a dedicated article on border crossings for those who want to go into the intricacies of each one and spare the rest of you beautiful readers who don't. ▶



**ISIS CALLING...**

It was about 3:30 pm by the time the border formalities were complete at Rumichaca – the Colombian/Ecuador border – and there was no way we were getting to Quito without riding at night, which neither of us was a fan of. Anyhow, close to sundown we decided to ride to Lago San Pablo, which seemed like a scenic place on the map for a stopover. Just like everything else on the PanAmScram, this decision too was ‘on a wing and a prayer’ – if it looked good on a map, it must be good. Whilst I’d put together the whole trip in less than a couple of weeks, it had been in the pipeline for a decade and I wanted to make each day count! So if it meant riding a little longer or farther, for a better view, a better meal, better interaction with the locals etc I wanted to do it, no matter how knackered I was, and tired we were.

You see, Tom Tom doesn’t have maps for Ecuador and we were relying on



I WAS SPORTING A JAMES HETFIELD/METALLICA GOATEE, WHICH IN HINDSIGHT COULD HAVE BEEN - GIVEN MY NATURAL TAN - MISTAKEN FOR AN ISIS GOATEE



Maps.me (free offline sat nav service on your phone), which like every other sat nav service is good but not perfect. I know there are maps and compasses, but we all have our strengths and navigating isn’t one of mine. Not only did we want to stay at the scenic lake but also wanted to find accommodation overlooking it, which was a bit of a struggle as it was off peak season and most of the hostels, campsites and hotels were closed. Our first attempt at my brilliant suggestion of just heading towards the lake landed us in somebody’s backyard. These poor people were so confused and, I gathered, a bit frightened that they peered at us through their windows for a minute before drawing the curtains – and what sounded like bolting the doors. Thinking about it, I was sporting a James Hetfield/Metallica goatee, which in hindsight could have been,

given my natural tan(!), mistaken for an ISIS goatee – I bet the family were burning up the rosaries that night.

Our second attempt at finding accommodation took us up a steep dirt track for miles before ending in a dead end. The situation had gotten so pathetic that it was hilarious and I had tears streaming down my cheeks. A 180-degree turn on a fully loaded bike, on a steep hill, in the dark, is not a lot of a fun but hey ho, we were living the dream. After a few more unsuccessful rounds, we finally found a hotel but it was way out of our budget – about \$135 USD for two people including breakfast. We bit the bullet and boy, was it grand – no condom-infested toilet, cum-stain free linen, hot showers, twin beds, restaurant and bar onsite. We shone like new pennies. The next day at checkout when I questioned the guards why it was kept open in the off peak season





despite no business, I was told a lot of these properties were owned by high ranking cartel members and it was another way for them to park their cash – you learn something new every day.

FINDING FREEDOM

On our way to Quito, we stopped off at the Equator monument to take the customary photographs and soak in the fact that we'd now ridden half the length of the world – a wee achievement. In busy Quito, our first stop was at Freedom Motorcycle Rentals, a motorcycle rental and tours company owned by Frenchman Sylvan and American Court. Upon our arrival, Sylvan shouted, "Welcome, help yourselves to stickers, a T-shirt, cold beers and stay with us!" We couldn't have asked for a warmer welcome. There was also Salina, the Chief Security Officer, who was a hot bitch. She had quintessential Latin American looks, beautiful brown skin, was in her prime but took her own time warming to us. After a while she took a shine to Simon, and why not? He was single and charming. What goes on tour, stays on





▷ tour and that's all I'll say. Good for you, Simon.

We needed new tyres, Simon's starter motor was being troublesome and I needed my suspension adjusted – "No problem, you're here now and we'll fix you and your bikes," said Sylvan. We didn't know Sylvan and Court from Adam, but in an instant they made us feel at home. Their spirit of generosity and hospitality makes one feel proud of the global motorcycle community. We didn't accept their offer to host us, as it just didn't feel right, but we did take them up on fixing the bikes and sorting the tyres. A word of advice on tyres: buy them in Colombia, even if you have to carry them, as they're way cheaper and there's more choice. I didn't know at the time but subsequently found out it and now, having read this you won't make the same mistake.

Those of you with vivid imaginations and envious of Simon and Salina's adventures, don't be, as she was quite literally a bitch. They just played together, as you do with a pet. Anti-climax, indeed! 'Freedom' do call her the Chief Security Officer though.

Over the course of the next few days, we went on a street food and drinking spree. We were recharging ourselves for the second half of the world. We hung out at local market squares, parks, bars, with street food vendors, the boys at 'Freedom', and it was just brill. Avoid the restaurants at the main market square and instead venture out to shacks and small local restaurants as both the food and vibe is way better. On the food scene, one of the things I absolutely loved and recommend was their giant corn kernels and pork scratchings salad/ trail mix/ appetiser – just like Fish

& Chips, Lamb & Mint, Pie & Mash, July & Fiona, JB & Wolfgang etc this was a match made in heaven.

On the last day in Quito, there was a delay in sorting the bikes out, as a result we ended up staying at Freedom and were treated to plenty of lager and ribs by the boys. Thanks again to everyone at Freedom for all their hospitality and for fixing the bikes. You must drop in say hello to them if in Ecuador and more importantly, rent bikes from them and go on their tours. From what I've heard they're fab.

VIA LA BALZA

The Freedom boys suggested a few routes to Peru, and Sylvan said, "If you want the easy/main route stay on the national highways and you'll arrive at the big border. However if you want the adventurous/more challenging route,

go to Vilacamamba via the back roads and then through the Amazon to the sleepy border town of La Balza."

Of course, we chose the latter option – and it was gold. It took us two days to ride the 784km through the back roads to Vilacamamba also known as the 'Valley of Longevity' due to the fact that most people live well over a hundred years in this village surrounded by the Amazon mountains on one side and the beach on the other. The reason for the high number of centenarians is credited to the rich biodiversity of the valley and the fact that the fruits and vegetables here contain the most powerful anti-oxidants protection in the world. Researchers and scientists travel from far and wide to the valley to unearth the secrets behind the lifestyle of the locals. It also draws the eccentric bohemian types who come to the valley





to 'find themselves'. The locals have a motto of 'living simply so that others can simply live' and this is evident in the shops and spas in the valley selling wellness products and services, mostly to American tourists and expats who were seen and heard everywhere.

And did Simon and I make the most of our time in the Valley of Longevity? Were we thriving? Did we feel like we were going to live to be 100? Us in harmony with our surroundings? No, we were explorers, charting our own paths. Ha! Despite all the antioxidants and the rich biodiversity, we were laid up. Arse water!! You read that right. It was bad – the only thing charting its own path was the trail of uncontrollable faeces out of my bottom, and Simon too was down with a bad case of man flu.

So, to explain: on the last riding day to the valley we'd started without breakfast to make up time. As we were riding in such remote parts it got to about noon without any food or water, I was so hungry it felt like I was digesting my intestines with each passing mile. Finally we came across a little settlement with what looked like a restaurant. Too early for lunch. They were all closed. Damn you South American meal times. On the side of the road, were about three wee BBQ type shacks prepping to open – but not open. With my best refugee on a BMW look, I somehow convinced one owner to serve and it worked. I think it was more a case of a plonking ourselves on her bench staring and salivating looking at the food like two hungry Labradors that did the trick. Ribs, beef



kebabs and pork chops were flowing, but unfortunately she was handling raw and cooked meat with the same tongs and that's what I suspect was the culprit. The food was gorgeous and plentiful, and the lady was kind and considerate, just not clean. I spent the night curled up in the foetal position, when I wasn't in the toilet – which to be fair was the chunk of the night. I felt fragile, violated and more like in the valley of death. To be fair, in the five and a half months that I spent in the Americas, this was the only time I was ill, which isn't bad at all.

Fortunately, in this instance we had en-suite toilets in our rustic hostel. Just like every other place, we'd arrived in Vilacamamba without any bookings. Sat on the square, just watching the world go by, I noticed a bohemian bead bracelet seller and ending up talking to him and his mate (Emmanuel) about their life, travels, the beads etc, and as part of the conversation Emmanuel said, "Come to the hostel I stay at. Very nice. Parking for moto. Big party tomorrow night. Good weed." He had us at parking for moto.

Cannabis is another popular product of Vilacamamba and all the locals we met along the way to the valley consistently said two things, "Beautiful place. Good weed." Anyhow, at the hostel the evidence of the cannabis being "very good" was crystal when we met 'Mental Mary' – as the locals liked to describe her. Mary was Dutch by heritage and moved to the valley about 20 years back to find herself. She was lovely, rode a 125cc motorcycle, clearly was not mental but high as a blimmin' kite. It was like Groundhog Day – we had the same conversation with her three times within an hour. Short term memory loss was a bit of

theme at our hostel. It was like a 'wake and bake' factory and the residents were so 'baked' that despite being there for weeks, didn't remember each other's names and instead called them by the country they originated from – easier to remember. It was a bit like "Argentina, come let's go smoke some weed with Colombia. Where's Mexico today? Britain is still shitting and Australia is down with flu."

We didn't end up going to the big party which was a restaurant opening next to our hostel, however we did manage to spend a few hours at a local café listening to live instrumental music with our new hostel friend Dieter, a Chilean pilot and harmonica enthusiast in his late 20s. Dieter too was travelling the world in bite-sized chunks attending and partaking in various Blues festivals along the way. The café was in an idyllic setting, a few miles from our hostel, nestled between the mountains, made of straw and mud and had a wee stage with a fire in front of it. It was an open mic night and hippies from all over the world were taking





turns singing their native music and playing various instruments. I've been to a plethora of concerts and music nights, but this by far was the best – so pure.

TO THE BORDER

After two eventful days in Vilacamamba, we bid farewell to our new friends and made our way to the border via the Amazon. We took a combination of the Route 682 and backroads and rode at elevation of close to 3200 metres in places. This ride had everything from long stretches of dirt roads, water crossings, jungles, broken tarmac, some good tarmac, clay, mud, mountain passes, certainly was one of the riding highlights in Ecuador, and we would've missed all of this had the Freedom boys not told us about it. One did have to be careful on long stretches of the dirt track, as a slight distraction or loss of control of the bike would've ended up going down the sheer drop that caressed the narrow dirt track. It was remote and it was lush. Also, except for one motorcycle, jeep and a minibus we didn't see anyone else the whole day. I would go back in a heartbeat to ride this route.

We got to the La Balza border at about 4pm and unlike other borders on the PanAmScram, this was a shack. When we arrived the only border guard present was sleeping and had to be woken up. You could tell he wasn't used to people turning up and confessed that hardly anyone ever used this border. As we were the only ones to deal with we were done within half an hour and then he unlocked and lifted the barrier to let us through to a bridge/no man's land between Ecuador and Peru. This last day in Ecuador was the prefect farewell to this amazing country. Despite all the sickness and silliness, the people and country looked after us very well. More to be ridden in Ecuador in the near future. 🇪🇨

NEXT TIME

Peru. This is a story being told in real time. In fact the story is taking longer than the journey itself. July – will you put down those sticky ribs and get on with it?!

**BOY WAS IT GRAND:
NO CONDOM-INFESTED
TOILET, STAIN-FREE
LINEN, HOT SHOWERS,
TWIN BEDS, RESTAURANT
AND BAR ONSITE**





California cruisin'

Words & Images: JB

RUST's US trip wasn't all off-road roosting. When we got to the West Coast we couldn't help ourselves but to indulge in a local passion – cruisin'. A trip from LA down to San Diego on Brit and American iron proved a great interlude while the dirt gear got cleaned up at the Laundromat...





1



1. INDIAN LOVE AFFAIR

Warren took one look at the Indian and claimed it. If he was going to live a dream of Cali' cruisin' it had to be on American iron and he just soaked in the style and design cues of this new classic. And of course he took full advantage of relaxed local laws (or was it absence of cops?) to go, er, 'native'.

2. ME TOO!

JB wasn't impervious to the attractions of a little freeriding, either. There is something magical about riding with the wind in your hair (while you've still got it). The trick of course is to not look like you're enjoying it too much...

3. SUNSET BOULEVARD

Actually this was Laguna Beach, but when you see a Cali sunset you stop quick and take it all in – it really is quite special. Of course you have to shoot as well as look – so JB got Warren to push the Scout Bobber onto the boardwalk.

2



3





4. SUN SOAK

This shot is as it came out of the camera, no fancy Photoshop tricks. We had to pinch ourselves, it was so pitch perfect.



5. STAR SPANGLED

It was just there, a wind-ripped red white and blue, we couldn't resist composing at least one image like this...

6. BLACK LIGHT

The Indian looked incredible in the light of dusk, just amazing. If you'd just bought the bike and parked it there you'd be 100% convinced you'd made the perfect choice. Visually stunning machine.

7. NIGHT LIFE

Warren was the cat that got the cream (no birds – married man and all). Forget health and safety for just ten minutes, in that climate, that environment this was motorcycle nirvana – even for a confirmed dirtbike guy.



5



6

8. FORECOURT

The Speedmaster arrived the next morning, along with wall-to-wall sunshine. Such a different take on cruising to the Scout Bobber it took a while to adjust our mindsets. But very quickly we started taking second looks, started picking up on the details – and the sheer shine of the Triumph.



8



9. PALM

Heading into downtown San Diego we passed this beach. Too nice to just ride past, so we stopped and hung around. Then we actually managed to lose each other when riding out – we still don't know how. But it didn't matter, just another excuse to ride up and down the strip...

10. OLD TOWN

Old town San Diego is enchanting. Low rise, and these avenues of weatherboard bungalows with just walkways between their front gardens make for a special atmosphere. And all just a few paces from the beach. And the culture was 100% Bohemian, artsy, foodie – kind of hipster in a sun-kissed beach-bum style. Being utterly uncool Brit and Saffie old boys we can't say we fitted right in, but we certainly loved the style and the fish tacos at Single Fin just added to the experience. Sublime.





11

11. STREET SCENE

We could have walked the neighbourhood, but riding it was more fun – honestly what is more fun than riding bikes, any bikes? Warren's been into riding with rolled-up sleeves ever since JB showed him how French enduro aces always ride like this, even in the depths of winter. See, even us old guys want to be cool.

12. HIT THE BUTTON

Warren eventually condescended to riding the Triumph. He made a play of finding the starter, the controls and all, but after a while – secretly – he kind of liked, or at least respected the Speedmaster. It's just something he won't admit in public.

12



13

13. U-TURN

Using the pedestrian crossing as a U-turn opportunity confused the hell out of the locals – both in their automobiles and on foot (in San Diego they actually walk places, not just to their cars) – but you tell us: did Warren (a) turn on his Saffie charm or (b) just ignore them?

14. BELL

The Bell Moto 3 is a sore subject in the RUST office. This was JB's pick for the job, but when Warren fell out of love with his original pick of helmet after one day he collared JB's pick instead. In the off-road variant (check for the plain colours and toweling – not leather – lining) the Moto 3 is one lovely lid.





15. PLUM

You can tell quality paintwork by the way it works so completely in every different light. In the San Diego twilight the Speedmaster's red tank turned a warm plum colour, while the chrome tank badge and cap set off a contrasting deep reflective gleam. Meanwhile the simplicity of the instruments and comfortable sweep of the 'beach bars' (Triumph's name for the handlebars) just set the scene for a comfortable evening cruise.



INDIAN SCOUT BOBBER

This is a work of art. You need time to take it all in, then you need to ride it, and then to look again. You need to do both to appreciate all the details as the visual and the kinetic interlink.

The motor – you can see this visually too – is very modern. It reminds me of when Harley-Davidson launched their V-Rod. That was a cruiser with what felt like a superbike motor. The Scout Bobber is a bit like that, only not so muscular (it doesn't have the cubic capacity) but certainly it's a modern engine and 100hp is actually pretty fair for an 1100cc vee-twin, but expect linear power and torque curves. So you don't ride it off the bottom so much as let it rip. It still makes a deep basso rumble, but with a higher pitch mixed in. It is smooth, though, and slick. The standard pipes obviously answer to the authorities – with something less restrictive it would be interesting to see how it would perform and sound.

Warren loved the Scout Bobber and chose to ride it over the Speedmaster. That's based on looks as much as anything. The Indian guys have put so much effort into bringing together a design that works on a 360° basis;

everything links, every part has interconnectivity with the next, it is one cohesive design. The detailing is exquisite for a mass production machine.

The Scout Bobber lives for an urban life. It's a bit of a pose, for sure, but there's enough genuine design and engineering to pull it off, it's not embarrassing and the looks it attracts are admiring and inquisitive. And you need to keep it in town, because for real road trips that riding position and that short travel suspension make for a compromised ride. I wouldn't call it outright uncomfortable but I certainly wouldn't consider it for touring. Maybe for smaller, lighter people it works better. But in town it certainly works, you sit relaxed yet in command so you can give it a quick spurt to clear the traffic when you need, or you can just gently thrum along, and it has a modern set of controls and engine and chassis responses to keep you safe if others aren't so alert.

In downtown San Diego it was fully within its environment. It has that same intoxicating mix of modernity and historical background. It has its own identity for sure...

www.indianmotorcycle.com/en-us/scout-bobber/





16. SUNSET 2

Another killer sunset, this time we've set one of the beach lifeguards' lookout posts against it. There's something a bit robotic in the design, don't you think – maybe George Lucas had a hand in their design.





▷ TRIUMPH SPEEDMASTER



You expect the arrival of The Fonz at any moment: heeeyyy! The Speedmaster is all Fifties Americana. Okay, it's British, but Fonzie rode a Triumph too, after all Triumph were Stateside and kings of the street scene back in the Fifties (and even had their moment in the AMA Flat Track sun in the late Sixties).

Like the Indian guys, you get the idea the design and engineering team put a lot into their cruiser. The Scout Bobber is thoroughly modern take, but the Speedmaster is a proper historical reenactment, only with modern design and technology mixed in. The 1200cc motor makes only 76hp – down on the Scout Bobber – but it punches so hard off the bottom you'd never know it was the less powerful. It really rocks this power unit, it's a joyful lusty beast – that 270° crank angle helps – so that you just can't stop playing with it, cracking that throttle repeatedly, traffic light to traffic light is a three-braap (first-second-third) stanza.

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk/motorcycles/classic/bonneville-speedmaster

The candy red tank is a keynote in kitsch, yet this is a design that is so faithful to its Fifties origins that to call it a pastiche would be wrong, it's too well executed for that. While not being an immediate European taste, after you've ridden it for a while – especially if that ride is a cruise down to San Diego – then you start understanding and liking its style. And like the Scout Bobber, it rewards you with every visual investigation. It's a superb design job.

It does then have the look, the rumble and the presence. Leave me with this bike for too long and I swear I'll be wearing turn-up jeans, check shirt and unzipped leather jacket before too long (and of course the open-face helmet). I'm Bonneville British all the way, but given the right environment – west coast US or south coast France – I'd be giving the Speedmaster serious consideration. Yes, this Brit thoroughly exudes Cali laid back cool.

17. AND GOODNIGHT

We'll choose this as the closing shot of the San Diego cruise. At this moment life was perfect. We'll not speak of the surprisingly cold, long and borderline uncomfortable ride back to Newport Beach, some of it on a super-busy freeway. No, we'll not mention that nightmare, just remember that dream day...



THANKS

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