

KTM 250MX

WET, WHITE & WILD!

The lightest 250 yet
By the Staff of DIRT BIKE



Dry weight of the KTM (no gas in the tank) is 217 pounds, making it the lightest 250 we've tested to date.

Two things are clearly unique about the new KTM250. First, it's the spearhead of the water-cooled bikes from Europe. Secondly, it just might be one of the most beautiful bikes of the decade. Rod Bush, the chain-smoking KTM guru from Ohio, was quick to point out that "When the two-page ad showing the water-cooled 250 hit in *Dirt Bike*, we got a bunch of orders from KTM dealers . . . and the production bike wasn't even built at that time. No one knew how it would run, whether it would be fast, or what. But they all wanted one just because it looked great!"

In truth, the newest KTM is an eye-stretcher, with the cold white plastic being

complemented by just the right touches of natural aluminum surface, brilliant orange and electric blue. It borders on the edge of being garish but is saved by exactly the correct amount of restraint, and fortunately ends up as an exercise in balance. The bottom line is that this sucker would look great in your garage.

However, here at the well-lit and recently keel-hauled *DB* offices, we're much more concerned with how things work than how they look. A glance at our personal vehicles lends mute testimony to that statement.

LOOKS ASIDE, WHAT'S NEW?

Just about everything, as a matter of fact. The frame, engine, suspension and

even the wheels are all new-generation hardware. The emphasis is on saving weight, and on the KTM, it paid off. The KTM 250PL is the lightest 250 we've weighed so far. That's right! Even lighter than the ultra-trick Honda.

With no gas in the tank but vital fluids everywhere else, the KTM tipped the remarkably accurate and non-buoyant *DB* scales (calibrated to plus or minus .0000025 lentils per sprout) at a feathery-light 217 pounds. And consider that the bike came with a non-stock and slightly heavier front tire. In standard trim, the KTM is delivered with Metzeler 4Es on the rear and the very light new 3Es on the front. With 2Es (two-ply tires) at both ends, the KTM would have laid the scale needle at right around 213 pounds. Amazing!

Changes from the old model include:

- An all-new engine. The watercooling is not an add-on. Different cases are the base for the wet jug. Compactness gain is obvious; the weight savings in the tidy cases and narrow drive train is not.
- Porting is radically revised. The same holes that were used on the 1982 bike were not merely transplanted to the 1983 barrel liner.
- The frame is changed and some weight savings can be found here, too.
- The 40mm Marzocchi forks have in them a new damper rod that bears more than a passing resemblance to the hardware we liked so much on the 42mm units. The 40s are lighter than the 42s and plenty strong for a bike as light as the new KTM.
- Even the wheels are new. A lot of attention was paid to changing the hubs, which have been basically the same for

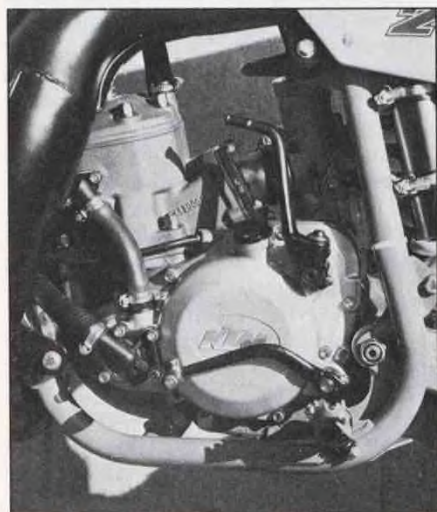
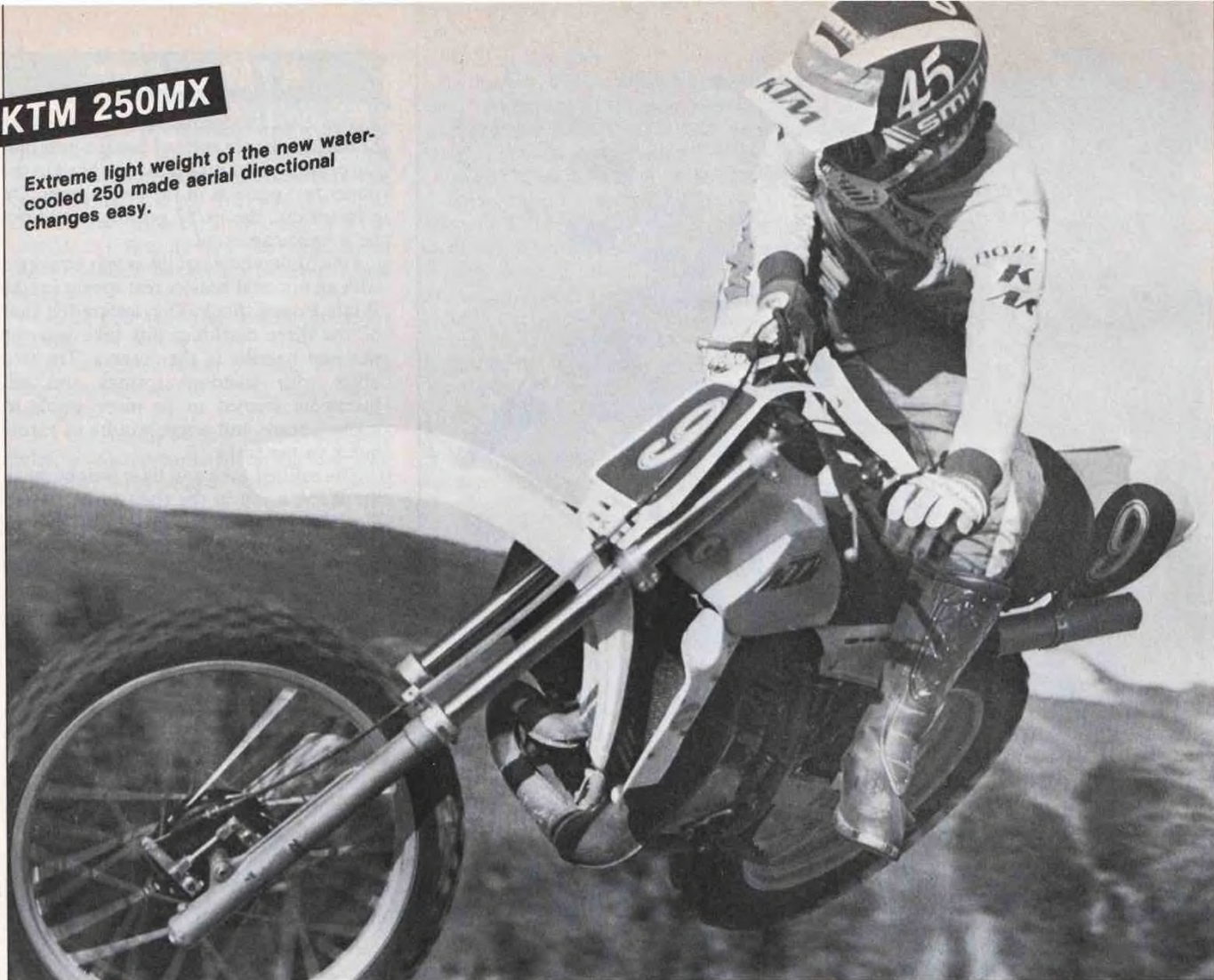


High voltage, indeed. The new KTM is just that . . . new, from frame to engine.



KTM 250MX

Extreme light weight of the new water-cooled 250 made aerial directional changes easy.



Compact engine has what must be the world's smallest kickstarter.

almost a decade. Both ends have the same sized hubs with 130mm diameter brakes. Also, both ends have twin-cam actuators, a first on any dirt bike.

- The rear suspension rate has been altered slightly and a White Power shock was on our test bike. It has both adjustable rebound and compression damping—all external.

- You can now get the filter out from the



Taller riders looked like Mike Bell on the KTM with its new lower saddle height.

side of the airbox, and it's a whole bunch easier to get the filter in and out than the old system, which required saddle removal.

- A blue safety saddle offers the softest foam yet from KTM. It's still firmer than anything else, but compared to last year's "plywood" saddle, it's a marked improvement.

- The steering has been pulled back, and rake and trail have been increased.

ON THE TRACK

The very first sensation to strike you when riding the new KTM is one of ultra lightness. A great deal of what little weight there is seems to be centered very low on the chassis. It even feels lighter than—dare we say it?—the 250 Honda, which, in fact, it is.

The bike is so nimble and feathery feeling that you almost don't notice the power. There's plenty of it, from a strong early mid-range to spooky high revs. Vibration seems to be nearly absent, giving the overall impression of smoothness. Again, much like the Honda 250.

It takes quite a few laps before you realize that the bike *can* be short-shifted. Our test bikes—all three of them—were geared wrong. The rear sprocket is a 52-toothed item. This gave us a ferocious top end and made the gearing too tall. Going to 54 teeth would have been an ideal jump. Dropping one on the countershaft would be too much.

With this tallish gearing, second-gear starts were difficult except under ideal conditions. A first-gear start is not the hot ticket to arrive in the first turn in good position.

Once rolling, however, the KTM had fierce acceleration. In fact, from second gear on up, it would pull right alongside

KTM 250MX

a crisp 1982 250 Suzuki, still the speedster of the 250 class in spite of being a year old. Surprisingly, the bike pulled as hard in the upper two gears as in the lower gears. On a fast track, the 13/52 gearing would not be a handicap at all.

One of the three test bikes was equipped with an optional heavier rear spring for the White Power shock. Our testers felt that of the three machines this bike was the sharpest handler in the corners. The two bikes with standard springs and adjustments seemed to be more stable at higher speeds and weren't quite as razor-quick in the turns.

The refined rake and light weight make the KTM a joy in the tight turns. It can literally be flicked through S-turns without conscious effort. The newest KTM does not sap energy from the rider like most fast 250s. You merely point it where you want to go and pull the trigger. To say it's a joy to ride the bike aggressively would be an understatement.

SUSPENSION REFINEMENTS

New 40mm Marzocchi forks do the job up front. These are basically the same setup as the Kees Van der Ven works bike we tested in Austria a few months back. Very impressive. They have the inherent lightness of the 40mm units with the damping qualities of the 42s that DB found so supple in recent tests. We never even played around with oil levels or air pressures. The forks were fine as delivered.

At the rear is a White Power shock with externally adjustable compression and rebound damping. The rebound knob can be reached easily at the bottom of the shock, while the side panel must be removed to get to the compression clicker. We felt that the WP shock took the big hits in a superior fashion, but was not quite as supple over the small and medium bumps as a Fox Twin Clicker. When we backed off the preload or compression adjustment, we found that the turning qualities suffered. It's best to leave the WP firm and adjust your riding style accordingly.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

The saddle of your new KTM is fairly low and somewhat like the shape of the new YZ. You sit "in" rather than "on" the bike.

When standing on the bike, the narrowness is welcome. Nothing is in the way to rap the inner legs or hinder fore and aft movement.

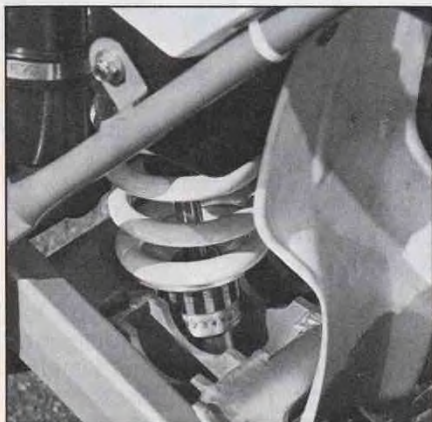
The kickstarter is short and mounted high on the left side. A strong kick is needed to get things spinning, but the bike was a very easy starter; the first kick most of the time.

Shifting was typically KTM. It took a firm, deliberate prod to keep from hitting a false neutral. After an hour or so of riding, no gears were missed.

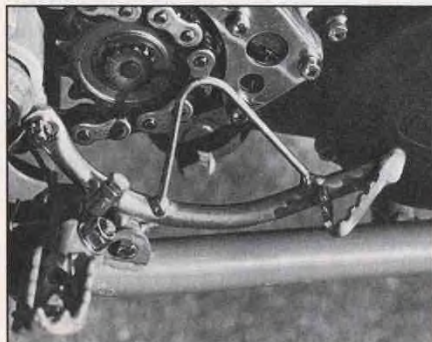
Brakes were super. Just the right amount of pressure hauled the bike down from speed, without any hint of lock up or chat-



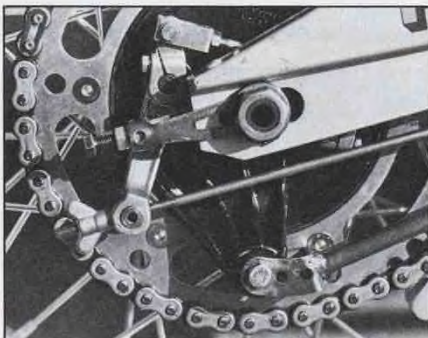
Dave "Hollywood" Hollis getting loose for the DB cameras.



Rebound damping adjustment knob resides at the bottom of the White Power shock.



Unusual brake pedal has small tubular guide to keep your hoof out of the countershaft sprocket.



Both hubs share the same double-leading shoe setup.

tering. Shoes are identical at both ends, as are the hubs.

You might notice that the swingarm on our test bike is not the same style as the bike featured in the ads. The factory felt that the slimmer swingarm hadn't had enough field testing. The old arm was proven; if the new arm holds up after a period of GP testing, it'll find its way onto production bikes. No sense having any hassle on a new bike.

Clutch pull was lighter than on previous KTM's.

Our bike ran clean and strong. The Bing 38mm carb appears to be very happy on the new bike.

As our initial testing period was very brief, we cannot comment on the long-term reliability. Our annual *Shootout Special*

will fill in that gap.

If the new KTM is anything like the old one, the addition of Boyesen reeds will improve the low end. We didn't have time to try this proven modification

HOW DOES IT STACK UP?

As we mentioned, our test period with the new KTM was far too short to delve as deeply as we usually do, but the machine is impressive. If the KTM has its usual reliability, it looks very much like it'll be right in the deadly serious forefront in the search for the best 250 MXer of 1983.

So far, it's lighter than the Honda, has a superior suspension at both ends and is competitively quick. Our long-term test 250 will be in our hands within a few weeks and it'll be raced against the rest of the contenders. Place your bets! □



THOUGHTS FROM A KTM OWNER

By Jim Learnihan

• I've ridden an air-cooled KTM for some time now and have been satisfied with the bike. The strong points have been simplicity and reliability. You can go a whole year of racing on the same piston and rings.

So, it was with mixed feelings that I rode the new 250 water-cooled machine. After all, change just to be in style may not necessarily be better. I had doubts that the changes would be to my liking. I like European-style power more than the typical Japanese-type revvers.

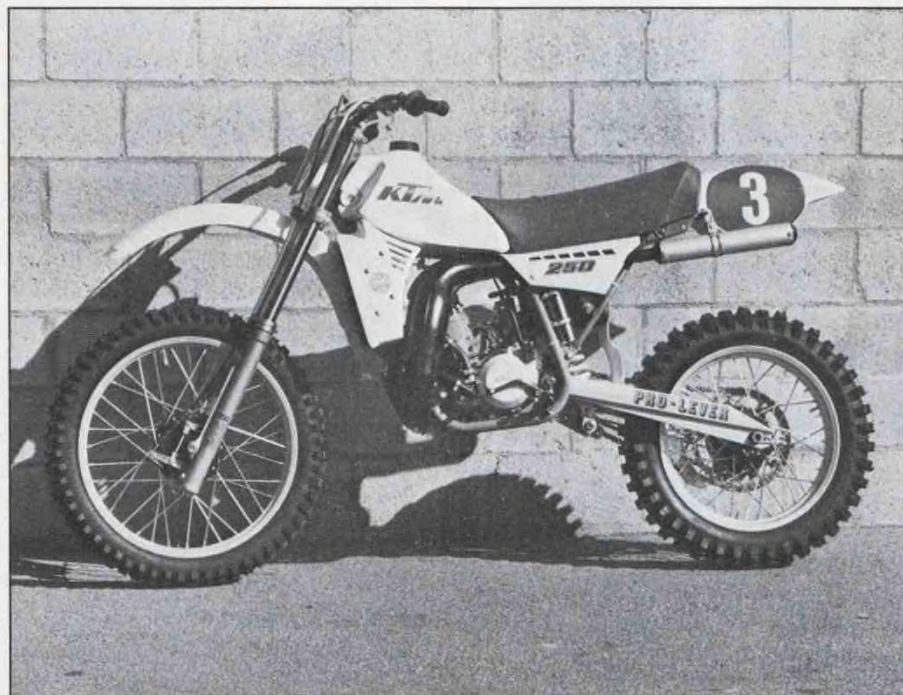
After riding the new KTM 250 for a whole day, I was impressed and definitely not disappointed. The first thing I noticed was how light the bike felt, especially compared with my air-cooled 250, which I've been racing this year.

The bike was easy to place anywhere I wanted without any effort—almost like riding a minibike. The power is sort of a combination of European and Japanese. It revs out far and hard, but still pulls smoothly from the early mid-range. You can rev the bike like a 125 if you have to, or you can short-shift it like last year's machine.

I don't know if the very light weight made it feel special, but the suspension at both ends was just right in standard setup for me (I ride the Vet's class). The White Power shock handled the big bumps better than anything I've ever ridden, but I think the Fox Twin Clicker handles the small bumps better. The forks are simply the best I've ever ridden with.

Both ends had great brakes, the best I've ever seen on any KTM to date. All things considered, the KTM 250 is the cleanest-looking water-cooler around. Everything is out in the open and easy to get to. It's a neat, well-thought-out bike. Even the air filter is easy to work on, unlike my 1982 bike.

Change for the sake of change doesn't impress me, but this time it looks as if the changes were for the best. I'm going to buy an '83 and keep my old bike for practice and mud races. The new bike is too pretty to get all dirty. •



KTM 250MX

ENGINE TYPE: Water-cooled, single cylinder, 2-stroke
BORE AND STROKE 71mm x 62mm
DISPLACEMENT 245.5cc
CARBURETION 38mm Bing

FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:

MAIN JET 190
NEEDLE JET 280
JET NEEDLE 802
PILOT JET 50
SLIDE NUMBER 215

RECOMMENDED GASOLINE Premium
92-plus octane, leaded

FUEL TANK CAPACITY 8.5 L (2.4 gal.)

FUEL TANK MATERIAL Plastic

LUBRICATION Oil in gas

RECOMMENDED OIL Duralube at 50:1

OIL CAPACITY, GEARBOX 500cc

AIR FILTRATION Oiled foam

CLUTCH TYPE Wet, multi-plate

TRANSMISSION 5-speed

GEARBOX RATIOS:

1 14:28
2 16:26
3 18:24
4 20:22
5 22:21

GEARING, FRONT/REAR 13/52

IGNITION Motoplat CDI

PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? Yes

RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG Bosch WOL8

SILENCER/QUALITY Silencer, fairly quiet

EXHAUST SYSTEM High-pipe, left side

FRAME, TYPE Single down, split cradle

WHEELBASE 1485mm (58.5 in.)

GROUND CLEARANCE 350mm (13.8 in.)

SEAT HEIGHT 950mm (37.4 in.)

STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE) 28°

TRAIL 105mm (4.10 in.)

WEIGHT WITH NO GAS 217 lbs.

RIM MATERIAL Aluminum alloy

TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:

FRONT 3.00 x 21 Metzeler 3E

REAR 4.50 x 18 Metzeler 4E

SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:

FRONT 40mm Marzocchi forks, air/oil

telescopic, 300mm (11.8 in.)

REAR Pro Lever, single W.P. shock

adj. comp. & reb. damping, 310mm (12.1 in.)

INTENDED USE Motocross

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Austria

RETAIL PRICE, APPROX. \$2786

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Lorain, Ohio 44052

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BRAKE PEDAL N/A

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