



T. E. Lawrence died on a Brough Superior. If he had been riding a Desert Phantom he might have had a chance.

What Ossa has done is take their blue and orange motocrosser and modify it for desert flying. Actually, according to the distributor, Yankee Motors, quite a few of the eastern woods riders are into modified Phantoms too. Perhaps they should call the eastern version the Forest Fantom. How about Greenery Ghost?

Curious about what they did to turn a seriously phast motocrosser into a cross-country, enduro-type



Late afternoon sidelight reveals desert grunge attracted by tank that leaked after hooking up zoot tool carrier. Notice custom numerals, three to a customer.

machine? Thought you'd never ask. Otherwise we'd never get to lay all these carefully prepared notes on you.

First, they changed the color. Wine red with gold and white trim. Extensive tests have proved that red motorcycles go faster for sustained periods of time. They bolted on a spacious 3.2-gallon tank. The bike needs it. The 36mm Bing is a thirsty devil. Sixty-mile loops in a desert enduro (admittedly a fast one) left precious little liquid splashing about within the fiberglass container.

The wheelbase was lengthened for more straight-ahead stability by adding one inch to the motocrosser's 17-inch swingarm. The D.P.'s swingarm is made of chrome moly instead of aluminum. Same cylinder, but a Pioneer (enduro) piston is used. The two-millimeter-longer skirt improves

OSSA 250 DESERT PHANTOM



LONGER AND GOLDER MOJAVE MOTIVATOR

by the Staff of DIRT BIKE

the pulling capacity of what is already a very grunty race engine.

For additional flywheel weight a Stiletto (the old motocrosser) mag was used. That mag doesn't have a lighting coil. Riders who want or need lights for enduros can exchange the Stiletto mag for a Pioneer mag. Desert Phantoms after the first production run will come with the Pioneer lighting coil.

Lessee. Enduro piston, heavier flywheel. Only thing missing is wider transmission ratios. Ossa popped a lower 2.78 first gear in

place of the 2.60 so you can putt away in first. They left the rest of the ratios alone and they're just fine.

Gearing was raised from 12/53 to 13/50. Top end is around 70.

There's a coal shovel-type bash plate bolted on to protect the downpipe. The downpipe on the Phantom is higher than most, so ground clearance is fairly decent. The plate got scratched but never high centered in the rocks.

Brush cables for the foot levers were also added.

The desertizing added ten pounds

to the Phantom. Yankee claims 207 pounds without gas. We got 220 pounds with a gallon of gas in the tank and the tool kit on it.

Just like the motocrosser you get a couple of optional sprockets and jets along with a typical tool kit. Something new is the leather tool kit carrier. The purchaser sends his warranty card to Yankee and they send him the tool pouch and a pair of straps.

Suggested retail at test time was \$1475, a hundred more than the race Phantom. If you're interested you might better ought to act phast because Yankee told us they would probably have to up the price to about \$1600 soon. Seems all those WIN buttons just aren't quite making it.

The Desert Phantom kicks on the left side, like all Ossas. Nothing to it, once you get the program down. Just remember to let off the steam before jamming the kickstart lever into the footpeg. The engine will catch before impact. The bike started on the first kick 99 and 44/100ths percent of the time, even after being left out overnight in the desert and waking up with frost on the saddle. It even fired right up after two rather nondescript crashes. The kickstarter on some Phantoms seems to require an inner tube rubber band to prevent flopping, but ours didn't.

The downpipe has the same massive come-back-on-itself silencer tacked on the end of the pipe. It might be worth experimenting with silencers. The stock one robs some power. We bazooka'd the internals of our silencer out the rear end after putting about 300 miles on the bike.

We kept an eye on the two rubber mounts at the center of the pipe. We've seen them tear on the early Phantoms, but ours held up fine.

The first Phantoms were having problems with the Amal throttles coming off the handlebars. John DeSoto had it happen to him in a race. Russ Darnell drilled into his bar to secure his throttle assembly.

Wheels and rubber are the same on both bikes. Shoulderless Akronts with Pirellis — 3.00x21 and 4.50x18.

The brakes yield good progressive stopping power. On slippery downhills the rear binder wouldn't lock up and get sideways. Long as you keep it in the desert you won't have any problems. Runs through deep water at the Dunes halved the stopping power. A few hard applica-

tions brought the brakes back. Same thing happened after a 25-cent hosedown.

The 70-degree throttle takes a while to get used to, then it's OK for most riders, particularly since the D.P. revs slower.

Some shifts were missed, mostly going from second to third. The shifting is smooth but requires a definite snick. The distance from second to third seems longer.

Betor suspension. The forks felt stiff when we got the bike and 300 miles later they still felt stiff. It was a task just trying to compress the forks significantly when the bike was standing still. The shocks were OK but there are better available. Spring rate was fine for 195-pounders, a little stiff for 165-pounders.

The Phantom was the last of the good conventional shock location bikes. Long travel suspension, particularly for desert whoopdies, is a definite asset. Two Ossa-sponsored riders use different approaches. John DeSoto went to laid-down Boges on his motocrosser while Russ Darnell bolted on long travel Curnutts, long



Pretty new engine before being sand blasted.

a favorite with desert riders. Going to replacement shocks on the Ossa may be a problem unless you diddle around with fabricating new shock mounts. They're set up to accept larger than normal shock mount bolts.

Try this simple experiment if there's a Phantom handy. Grab the rear of the frame in one hand and the swingarm in the other and try to move the swingarm from side to side. If the bike has some miles on it you may feel some movement. Wear between the aluminum bushing and its nylon inserts sometimes leads to swingarm wiggles. You may not notice it unless you're an Expert.

Then you'll reach a certain point and say: that's it, I don't want to push it any faster. If the problem occurs it can be cured by chroming the aluminum after it wears a bit or by having a steel replacement bushing made.

We didn't get to hang onto the D.P. as long as we wanted. Yankee needed it for John DeSoto to run the Twenty Mule Team 200 desert race. Our testing was limited to a get-acquainted session at the Dunes, a two-day 240-mile desert enduro with plenty of fast open-it-up sections and another trip back to the track.

How'd John do in the desert?



Closeup of tool kit carrier. Tire sealer on handlebars came in handy.



Swingarm on the D.P. is chrome moly rather than aluminum.



Front wheel.



OSSA250 DESERT PHANTOM

PRICE (retail, approx.) \$1475

ENGINE TYPE:

. Single cylinder, two-stroke

DISPLACEMENT 250cc

BORE & STROKE 72mm x 60mm

COMPRESSION RATIO 13.0:1

CARBURETION 36mm Bing

HP at RPM No figure claimed

CLUTCH Wet, multi-plate

PRIMARY DRIVE Double row chain

TRANSMISSION RATIOS:

1) 2.78:1

2) 1.92:1

3) 1.43:1

4) 1.17:1

5) 1.00:1

FINAL DRIVE 5/8-inch chain

. 13-tooth countershaft

. 50-tooth rear sprocket

AIR FILTRATION Paper

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM . . . CDI (Motoplat)

LUBRICATION Pre-mix 32:1

RECOMMENDED FUEL Premium

RECOMMENDED OIL Full Bore

FUEL CAPACITY . 12.1 liters (3.2 gallons)

FRAME Chrome moly, double downtube

SUSPENSION 17.6 cm travel

. (7 inches) Betor

SUSPENSION 10.1 cm travel

. (4 inches) Betor;

. measured at the rear axle

WHEELS & SPOKES Akront alloy,

. shoulderless

TIRES:

. 3.00x21 Pirelli motocross

. 4.50x18 Pirelli motocross

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase 141 cm (56 inches)

Clearance 20.6 cm (8 inches)

Seat Height 84.6 cm (33.8 inches)

Handlebar Width . . 86.3 cm (34.5 inches)

Weight 99.8 kg (220 pounds);

. . weighed with oil and one gallon of gas

. 43.6 percent on front wheel

. 56.4 percent on rear wheel

BRAKES:

. . . Cable-operated drum, front 122 x 30mm

. . . Rod-operated drum, rear 150 x 30mm

INSTRUMENTS None

LIGHTS None

SILENCER Yes

SPARK ARRESTOR None

PRIMARY KICK No

WARRANTY:

Six months — magneto and coil; three

months — connecting rod and cases;

two months — frame excluding swing-

arm; one month — tank and crankshaft

Well, he finished ninth overall, fifth 250 and second solo rider in the four times round a 50-mile loop race. It was a day not without its aggravations. First, it snowed all over everything. Then John had a flat on the first loop. Then a footpeg broke off after getting bashed by a rock and he rode a one-legged loop. John handled all four circuits himself rather than teaming up with a partner.

Yankee wanted to keep the bike stock except for rider preference items. John switched to Boge shocks, put in a Twin Air filter and fitted his own handlebars. That was it for modifications. Oh, yeah. He forgot

to bring his goggle defogger and his hands froze. One other thing. The engine never missed a beat.

The power on the D.P. is both strong and grunty. You notice the longer wheelbase in the corners but it's a trade-off for making haste straightly. The flywheel and enduro piston make it possible to roll the throttle on and off while staying with one gear. Short shifting was no problem at all, and hills were a gas. Just turn it on and try to forget about the rocks you're bouncing off. Back off a little for an uphill turn? OK. There'll still be something there to keep you going. Never did have to go back down and try over again.

The Ossa clutch is a bear for punishment. (Get it? Ossa. Bear. Oh, skip it.) Slipping the clutch between wheelstands and hole digging in really soft uphill sand didn't faze it.

When we headed out for the enduro we toyed with the idea of dropping the gearing for more low-speed grunt. It really wasn't necessary, which is good since we didn't bring a wrench big enough to change it anyway. Be prepared is our motto. Stock gearing tops out at around 70, about ten mph faster

than the MXer. The fast desert guys will probably gear up while the enduro guys may go down.

BITS & PIECES

Gas tank cap has breather. There's a petcock on both sides of the tank.

Pegs are folding, serrated loops, but they aren't spring loaded.

Dust covers around the hand levers with one easy-open snap.

You can't screw the gas cap down all the way with the leather tool pouch in place. Result: gas leaks all

over the tank and your leathers. Yankee is going to look into curing this with a different cap gasket.

Saddle is very plush. Seven hours later you still feel good, or at least your bottom does.

Yankee is partial toward using their Full Bore 50 racing oil (a high scorer in DB's oil test) at 32:1.

The tool pouch is roomy and accepts the entire stock tool kit plus a couple of plugs, safety wire, gray tape, a Polish Swiss army knife and one Hohner Blues Harp (key of G).

Fiberglass fenders survived two mild crashes but plastic is better.

Spokes didn't loosen after 240 miles of desert rocks and sand.

They still come through with a paper air filter. K & N and Twin Air offer alternatives.

The forks may have been harsh because of gunky fork oil. John DeSoto told us that some pretty grim looking stuff drained out while they were prepping the bike for his race.

SUMMATION

Because of the abbreviated test (or elongated impression) we didn't get a chance to let our usual crowd of derelicts and back-slappers climb on. Two staffers rode the Desert Phantom. One, who didn't much like the Phantom motocrosser (a minority of one among thousands . . . hundreds . . .) did not like the Desert Phantom much either. Figures. Said he never really felt confident on it and it seemed wide. The other staffer, who rode the two-day enduro, ate it up. So there you are. While one staffer can easily live without it the other wants it back for whadda you call it, oh yeah, extended testing.



It is unique, whatever else you say about it.

Riders who thought the motocrosser was too quick for them on the racetrack may find the D.P. just right for them if they're into occasional motocross mixed in with enduros, cross-country or cow-trailing.

Time keepers can hang some lights and a speedometer on it and take to the woods phastly. Just to confuse things Ossa has a Super Pioneer in the wings. This uses the Phantom chassis with the SDR/Pioneer enduro engine, lights and speedo.

The Desert Phantom has a super engine and should prove dependable, but it's going to need some long travel shocks or forward mounting to make things easier to keep up with straight-headers like the gas Girling Huskys and the monoshockers. Make the suspension change and you can phly with the phastest of 'em.



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