

Ol' Blue

BY DAVID SWIFT

Carl Cranke's Six Days scooter shows the potential for virtually maintenance-free dirt riding—if you got the gumption from the very beginning.



Mr. Cranke conducts business from his specially constructed office.

Ol' Blue is a 350 Penton. It's called a "350" because it has a bore only a tad smaller than our test "400"—which displaces 356cc. It's insignificantly smaller displacement lets it ride the 350 class at the International Six Days Trial in Italy last September.

Ol' Blue is Carl Cranke's motorcycle, one he personally set up for the Six Days (see "Whole Test Narrative," February 1975 DR), a bike he has barely laid a wrench on since it was flown to America. After six months of being flogged by several riders, cowtrailed, desert-raced, endured, even winning the 350 Expert class at Hometown with lights blazing

and Italian mud still chipping off—Ol' Blue's motor is as tight and as powerful as ever. The rest of the motorcycle is every bit as sound, although covered with blue-black weld scabs here and there from Carl's eating the big bomb crater.

KTM gave Ol' Blue and the other Six Day Pentons "special attention," which doesn't mean magic parts. The factory made doubly sure things like clutches and Motoplats wouldn't fail, things the Trophy Team members would have also checked had they arrived in Italy in enough time.

Ol' Blue is a good example of the

reliability potential built into the cream of today's dirt bike crop, true, but more importantly he's proof that today's expensive motorbikes are in fact well worth the money—if you aren't afraid to roll up your sleeves, show some dedication, and spend some time and intelligence on your new machine.

For starters, Carl replaced the rear fender with the Preston Petty IT model, a fender that, if anything, is too strong. The front number plate/headlight is stock European. The chain guard was replaced with one he made, incorporating a chain tensioner.

The front hub was modified for quicker changes—a clip rather than a bolt holds the torque arm in place and tabs hold the pinch bolts down so only one wrench is needed.

The Penton folding shift lever (now available for Huskys and a similar stock item on the upcoming Hodaka Thunderdog 250) replaced the stock one—the stock one was mounted on the rear subframe for future reference. The brake pedal became a folding one, too. To make chain changes less a hassle, the right side case was cut to uncover the countershaft.

Both rims were replaced with Sun Metal rims after the Trial, since the Akronts weren't too terribly healthy after a six-day crash diet of Italian minerals.

All the cables were doubled and routed carefully for quick changes if they failed. Carl used Terry Cables and is still on the originals. In case of breakdowns of an electric nature, an alligator clip was placed in the rear wheel, attached to the valve stem with a small piece of fuel line.

Konis in the vertical were used in the Trial but afterwards Ceriani gasers with 110-pound springs were laid in the cantilever.

Special attention? Every part was Loctited or checked or somehow given reasonable encouragement to stay in place. Above all, he carefully jetted it to perfection.

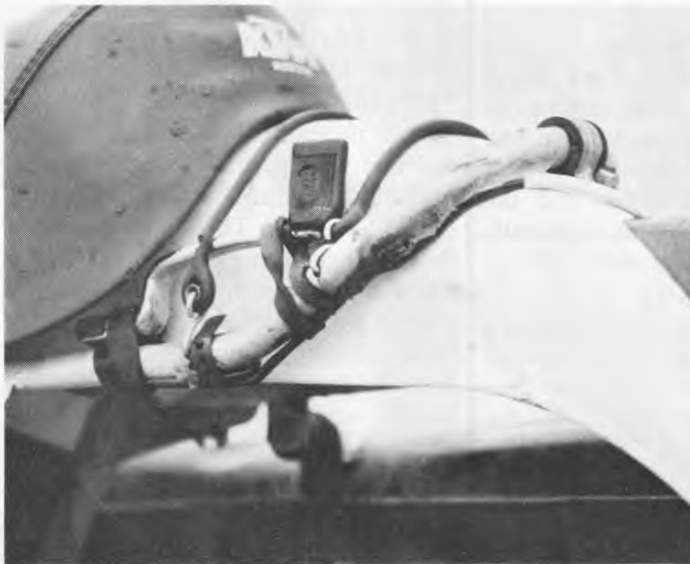
The result? Several thousand miles of carefree riding, with nothing giving a hint of letting go. Carl hasn't had reason to pull the head so he doesn't have the slightest idea what things look like inside. Right now he is going to give Ol' Blue a new frame and continue to ride him in the qualifiers, with our test Penton 400 serving as a backup. "I'm just going to run him until he blows up, says the Cranke. "Sometime in 1977, I suppose." ●



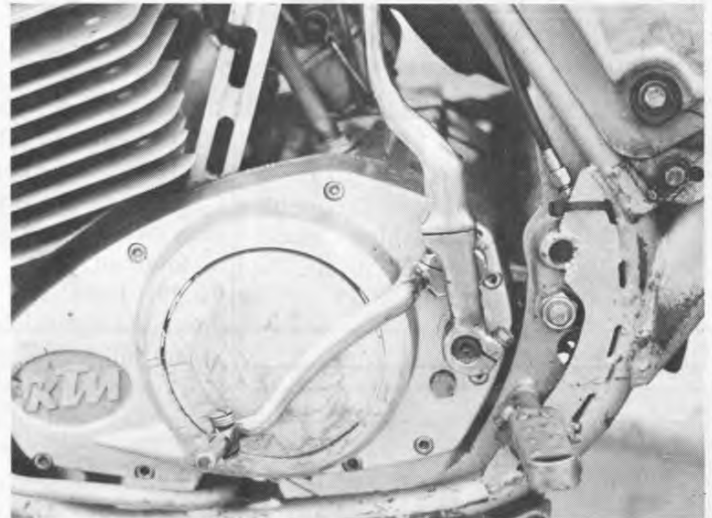
Jesus clip on the front torque arm saves much tire changing time.



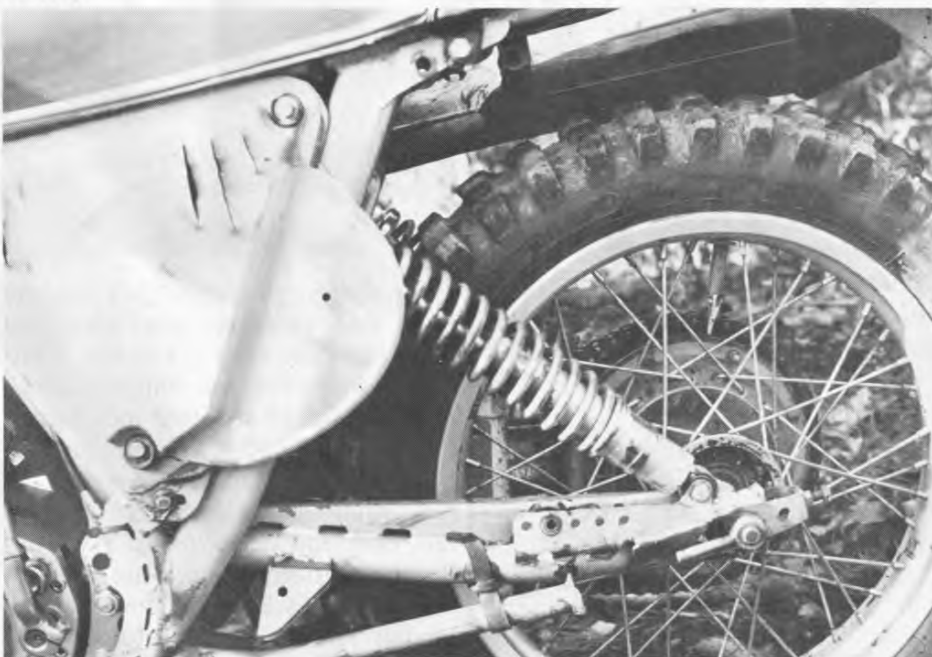
Cranke's own chain guard features a built-in chain tensioner, a must for cantilever suspension.



PP IT fender is strong enough to bend subframe. Spare shift lever reeks of wisdom.



Penton folding shift lever prevents bushes from changing gears.



Holes in airbox cover improve induction. Alligator clip on rear wheel is for emergency electrical problems, honest.



Double cables everywhere are routed for quick changes.



Folding lever adaptation on brake pedal makes bushes think KTM shifts on right.