



FUTURE PROOF

2017 KTM ENDUROS
TESTED

RUST

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ISSUE #11



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COVER IMAGE
KTM





NEW BEGINNINGS

BY JON BENTMAN,
PHOTO: KTM

IT SURE HURTS not being at the KTM 2017 EXC launch. I've attended many of KTM's annual world launches, going back to 2003, and I knew this was going to be a big one. But commitment to work meant I had to let this one go, which has been doubly hard to take as our testers Warren and Josh have confirmed it was a belter – the new orange enduros are something special.

Of course they needed to be – as the rest of the enduro world has been rapidly catching up. Particularly, Yamaha's latest WR250F has shown that you can create a whole different feel to an enduro bike, one that's super-exciting, super-agile and extremely engaging – it made KTM's previous market-leading 250EXC-F feel old. Where some other manufacturers have followed KTM's design innovations, Yamaha created their own. Okay we're talking only the one model (*two with the new WR450F*) but the reverso-WR still did a lot to undermine KTM's reputation as market leaders and innovators.

So these 2017 EXCs were much needed to give back KTM their lustre. Listening to the RUST lads, reading their reports, it's clear KTM have made



the necessary jump. New frames and new, more powerful, but smaller-dimensioned motors have put the spring back into the KTM range. Sounds like KTM will need to sort the (*compression and rebound*) damping on that spring but the fundamental message is the new EXCs steer quicker and go quicker. And not by just a little, by quite a bit. Or to be exact, by enough to warrant selling your 2015/16 model and going for the new bike. After all that is the point.

The KTM 2017s certainly have opened the new model launch season with a bang, it's going to be interesting to see how the competition respond. Regardless, we can see enduro riders the world over enjoying their sport even more given the latest design innovations. More than ever, our bikes are communicating with us in the most intuitive responsive manner. And it would seem, given KTM's example, we've got the technology to keep the bureaucrats from stifling our sport for a good while longer. Cleaner emissions and more dynamic bikes, all at once. No argument there...





SHARING

WE ALL LOVE to ride, we love it even more when we get to share our ride. And that's what's drawn us to this image, taken at the inaugural Red Bull Minas Riders that took place in Brazil in April. Without being anything spectacular you can see here we have three guys sharing trail, obviously making good progress and without anyone having to ride in the dust. It has *'Perfect Day'* written all over it. Of course this was a hard enduro so no doubt things soon became much harder. Anyway, these three shone in the Silver class, finishing 1-2-3, led by (111) Ferreira De Oliveira of Brazil.

**Image: Marcello Maragni,
Red Bull Content Pool**





STONE ROSES

PART OF THE fun in riding adventure is finding new exciting landscapes. Riding through Portugal for Touratech's forthcoming ACT project (*this past week*) threw up all manner of vistas, perhaps none quite as dazzling as this location (*exactly where is to be revealed at a later date*). The abandoned ruined buildings and amazing rock colours gave it an otherworldly feel, almost alien. Alien – much like the visage that the Ducati Multistrada 1200 Enduro which leads the pack here, a bike which has now impressed on two consecutive adventure tours (*we must test one properly, soon!*)...

Image: Jon Bentman



Back Issues



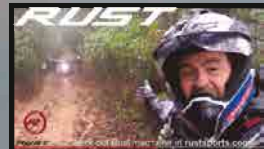
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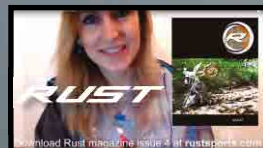
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ISSUE #1



AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL



ISSUE #2



HUSQVARNA 701 SPECIAL



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ISSUE #3



ISSUE #4



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ISSUE #9



ISSUE #10

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World Launch

FUTURE PROOF

2017 KTM ENDUROS



The motors have been completely redesigned, using die-cast cases to allow the crankshaft to be positioned closer to the bike's centre of gravity...

350EXC-F



It's major overhaul time as KTM seek to keep their EXCs ahead of the competition and below the limits of the emissions regulators. Mission accomplished?

Words: Warren Malschinger, Josh Snowden & Jon Bentman
Images: Marco Campelli & Sebastien 'Flash Included' Romero





The two-strokes avoid getting fuel injection for one more year at least...


Future Proof

KTM LOOK TO have hit all their targets, all our targets in fact. The totally revamped 2017 EXCs and EXC-Fs are lighter and more powerful – and so faster – lower (*even*) and easily better looking. And so of course they make the 2016 models look so last year, darling. This is KTM doing what KTM do best – pushing the envelope.

Of course we knew this was coming, KTM now seem to follow a standard cycle of five-year updates, and just as soon they revamp their SX and SX-F range of motocrossers we know, guaranteed, the next year the enduros will get the same treatment. However, as we've said before, there was a risk this year that the new bikes could be slower, heavier – as Euro IV/V emissions regulations loom on the horizon. But KTM have been canny. They've taken the 125/200EXCs out of the equation altogether, replacing them with two '*closed course competition*' models – the 125 and 150XC-Ws (*still enduros in KTM's catalogue, but not road legal*), and so they fall outside the new regulations. Meanwhile the 250/300 EXC two-strokes get major revamps, but avoid fuel injection for one more year at least. The latest four-stroke EXC-Fs, though, are apparently fully Euro IV compliant as they appear now. The new tech motors are meeting the challenge while being smaller and probably more powerful (*we have no figures for this – but we know that KTM made quite significant gains on the range of 'crossers, so this probably rolls over into the enduros*). So the 2017s are all new and it would seem, all good.



World Launch



The two-strokes benefit from a gear-driven counter-balancer to reduce vibration by a massive 50%

DETAILS?

How much do you really want to know? Now we could go through every detail for you here, but would you read it, do you care? *(Please write to us and argue your standpoint on this, usual address: editorial@rustsports.com)* And if you really want to know, everything we got told at the press briefing is already on KTM's global network of websites. So instead, we'll do a quick synopsis and then get a move on into the ride impressions.

To start, across the range, KTM claim 90% of the components are all-new. They also claim this is the first time they've introduced all new chassis and engines at once (*surely not?*). Across the board they've made typically 5kg of weight savings. They've been a bit sneaky in some cases – the EXC-Fs are now without kickstarts (*that's probably near-enough 2kg saved*), and they've knocked 0.5-litres out of the fuel capacity, only that doesn't count as they claim dry weights (*i.e. without fuel*). But actually, fair play, it's the tech that's made the difference, with significantly

250EXC-F

KTM 2017 EXC

What's new...

- New frames, 300g lighter, with revised flex characteristics
- New sub-frames, 200g lighter
- New swingarm, single-casting, 220g lighter
- New shock, WP PDS Xplore, 600g lighter
- New forks, WP Xplore 48mm, 200g lighter
- New engines, two-stroke and four-stroke
- New bodywork & seats
- Triple clamp off-set now 22mm
- Lower seat heights
- More ground clearance
- Kickstarts removed from four-strokes
- According to KTM, the bikes are 90% new...



KTM off-road product manager Jochi Sauer discusses EU homologation
<https://youtu.be/ZXMANdQuflM>





350EXC-F



Future Proof

smaller motors and lighter frames and swingarms and a significantly dimensionally-reduced lithium ion battery that shaves almost a kilo in weight from the previous version.

We should detail those tech changes at least. The frames are 300g lighter – and we note KTM claim they have 20% more torsional rigidity (*that's resistance to sideways flex*) while being 30% less stiff in the longitudinal plane – a continuing line of development there, for some years we've seen commentary on how controlled frame flex makes for better feel and less stress for the rider. Meanwhile the subframes are 20% lighter at a nudge under 900g. And the swingarms, a single casting, are now 220g lighter. Note that the PDS shock has again moved closer to the centerline of the frame, by 5mm – you'd have to think the closer the shock loadings were to the centre of the bike the better this has to be for structural integrity, no?

There's new suspension across the board, too. Still WP, but redesigned and labeled 'Xplor'. The forks now have the compression and rebound circuits separated into the two legs, compression left, rebound right. Meanwhile the new PDS shock is smaller (*the shaft is reduced from 50 to 46mm*) and 600g lighter and we note that, significantly, rear wheel travel has reduced from 335 to 310mm (*that's an inch in old money*) – which probably contributes to the 10mm reduction in seat height, now 960mm across the range. Steering angle is unchanged at 63.5° but the fork offset has changed (*they do it every year*) now to 22mm, was 20mm. Whether this significantly rebalances the bike we'll have to see. We'd like to think so.





Compression is adjusted on the left fork leg, rebound on the right. Weird huh?

The rear brake has seen some subtle changes too. There's +10mm on the lever length and -2mm on the brake pistons (*down to 24mm*) and this may allow a little more sensitivity. If you've had the regular experience where braking into turns you've locked the rear brake and consequently stalled the motor, then this small mod may well be very important to your ride enjoyment, perhaps more than the rest combined.

There are other changes too. The seat is now even flatter, thanks to some judicious sculpting which sees the front of the seat lowered by 14mm and the rear by 8mm. The bodywork changes certainly refresh the bikes' look. The radiator-tank panels are pleasingly minimalist while there are distinct edges to be found in most panels that help define the aesthetic. With Kiska design there's been some hot and cold reactions to past designs, but this definitely registers at the hot end.

300EXC





450EXC-F

One very odd move though – back to cast triple clamps after getting milled units, at last, only last year. And, honestly, why can't KTM fit a bash plate as standard equipment – how much would it hurt their bottom line? Anyway, as said, there's plenty more detail and for that go to www.ktm.com or go to the websites of those media outlets who think to cut-and-paste the technical briefing notes 'in toto' passes for professional journalism (*ah, getting snarky there...!*).

KTM – 100% committed **With Warren Malschinger**

Before we give you our impressions of the bikes we tested at the launch of the 2017 KTM EXCs I feel that it's only appropriate to give you my first-hand impressions of the company first. A big part of any buying decision is the support that you are likely to be given by the manufacturer, how long the model you bought is going to stay current and the quality of the machine you're buying.

One thing's for sure – KTM as a company are not riding in the Sportsman class when it comes to R&D and have a real commitment to produce quality off-road machines. They are firmly committed to winning and this commitment came across by the bucket load with each and every staff member I spoke to. They want to win, not just occasionally but everything. There's a real passion in everyone involved and that can only translate well into the bike they produce.

The team is ruthlessly of one voice too, that the company's dirt bike heritage is a cornerstone to their image. The ground-up development of the



2017 EXC range is a testament to the importance they place on this market. What really surprised me was the constant message of the importance of the two-stroke range, not only presently but also into the future, notwithstanding the continuing pressures of homologation and tighter emissions targets that need to be met in the years to come.

When asked about fuel injected two-strokes this was the first time I've had a straight answer from KTM about their testing. In short the answer is that they will continue to develop their two-stroke bikes without fuel injection for as long as they can. They confirmed that they have prototype fuel injection solutions but are not satisfied that they're good enough at the moment to be a serious proposition. It's not only homologation that drives the two-stroke strategy, it's a real fear that the two-stroke riding experience will change too markedly with a fuel injected solution, so as to lose its appeal completely. KTM are adamant that they will fight to avoid this, using ingenuity and design evolution to meet the new standards rather than just throwing a fuel injection solution in as a fix.

The motto 'ready to race' in my opinion is not just limited to the bikes but is inked into the veins of the personnel at KTM too.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

As the draped sheet was removed from the bike at the press briefing we found ourselves taking an instant liking to the new design. The eye is drawn

**Future
Proof**



Left: New alloy subframe which supports the airbox, seat, rear mudguard etc, weighs in at just 900grams!

On the 250/300 two-strokes the electric starter now sits low down underneath of the engine.



The two-strokes remain carburetted while KTM continue to wrestle with the EU emissions issue...



first to the fuel tank, flat seat and sleek minimalist plastics – it speaks of speed, of purpose. The bike being revealed is a two-stroke and the tank is longer on the gear lever side and short on the brake lever side which aides in producing a very identifiable difference from last year's model. The engine is noticeably smaller and the bolt-on electric start has disappeared, the starter motor is now integrated into the motor just below the crankcase, a-la Sherco. It's slick and functional and condenses the motor package and boy it makes the engine a pretty thing to behold. Gone is the horrible plastic cover over the starter motor on the previous models that after a few rides looked downright tatty.

The shock being moved inboard by 5mm is

**Future
Proof**



surprisingly quite noticeable and there's only the smallest gap between the back tyre and the swingarm. The bike looks and feels flatter in the flesh, and skinnier and shorter – although in fact the wheelbase hasn't changed.

The message, reiterated throughout the briefing, on what drove the team at KTM to such a radical redesign of 90% of the parts of the entire range, boils down to two key things: weight saving and mass centralisation! There's probably a third motivation – the competition yapping at their heels, not that KTM would admit to that.

So do we like the look of them? You betcha!

There were still letdowns, though. Those dreaded Maxxis tyres for one. We can only guess that this is a cost saving measure on KTM's behalf. And on the cost saving topic we notice that the bash plate is also missing and we note the return to the forged triple clamps (*probably old stock*) a retrograde step after fitting the CNC machined ones for 2016. We're not too bothered about the bash plate, so often OE plastic ones need binning anyway, but the loss of quality triple clamps is a blow.

So after a good deal of banter over dinner, about initial impressions of the new designs, the general consensus is positive, and there was obvious excitement about getting to ride them in the morning.

Future Proof

250EXC-F



World Launch

Future
Proof



450EXC-F

The Bikes

KTM 450EXC-F

More power, but easier to ride

With Warren

Normally I would test the small bikes first and work my way up the fleet but today I turn that on its head and head for the 450EXC-F. I've just spent over four days and 700km on the 2016 bike (see last issue of *RUST*) so I'm keen to compare the new package to the 2016 model.

KTM have set up the fleet on standard settings and are quick to let us know that they will assist in making adjustments as needed by each rider, which are then reset to standard on return to the service area. The standard suspension settings on the bikes is set at 15/15 compression and rebound as standard front and back. With plenty of sharp rocks to deal with and running tubes, not mousses, we're also contending with overinflated tyres – above 15psi, so pretty hard.

I set each of the bikes to suit me which includes rotating the throttle forward a ¼ inch to get a better over-grip on the throttle, I move the bars to their maximum forward position (*four clicks*) and position the levers parallel with the control area of the bars for a better feel when standing.

I ask the tech guys to check the sag before I head out on every bike so I have a consistent benchmark to evaluate the performance of the suspension from one bike to another. After an initial test I choose to reset the front forks to 14 on the compression and 19 on the rebound and



I maintain this on the 450 and the 350 EXC-F. I stick with the stock settings on the rear.

I have never truly loved the WP forks on the previous years' models, which you'll know if you've read my previous reviews. They just blow through the first part of the stroke making them deflect off small square edged rocks, roots or pretty much anything, and then feel pretty soft in the mid part of the stroke. This issue hasn't been solved with the new twin chamber 48mm Xplor forks which feel quite consistent with previous fitments. I don't want to be over critical and I have to take into account that the terrain was super rocky, technical and with the tyres overinflated to avoid punctures. They'll need testing again so we can get a more reliable feel for them running in local conditions with the correct tyre pressures set. I suspect, though, the suspension tuners will be doing good business for another year revalving these suckers.

With all my tinkering done, I set the engine map to position 1 which is the standard setting and headed out onto the 45-minute loop that ends with a cross test in front of the paddock.

The first thing I notice is that the bike feels smaller than last year's. I remember that the footpegs have been raised and being over 6ft this makes it seem like the handlebars are just a little lower than I'd like. It's not that pronounced that it's uncomfortable but I'd be looking to lower them again – and good news is that KTM have a solution for this, you can swap them with the SX

450EXC-F**Future
Proof**

Warren's appraisal of the 2017 EXCs
<https://youtu.be/a0K02x9reL0>



Future Proof



ones and hey presto situation fixed. Josh was quite happy with the pegs as they were but I've reservations and with the additional ground clearance I still think they might be a little high for me. Conversely for a slightly shorter rider this would be a win. The added ground clearance and higher footpegs mean that getting tangled up in deep ruts would be a thing of the past.

The first part of the test loop is single track and tight. As I transition to the seated position I can absolutely feel that the ergo's have shifted from last year's model, the flat seat feels good and allows you to get your weight forward way easier. The bike feels very direct into the turns, it tracks true and with a quick blip on the throttle it changes direction and sits into the corners really well. The bike seems ideally shaped to allow the rider to find the optimal contact points with the bike, whether standing or sitting. It's not long before I switch the

RUST's QUICK CHECK

	2016 450EXC	2017 450EXC-F
Dry weight	111kg	106kg
Seat height	970mm	960mm
Wheelbase	1482mm	1482mm
Steering head angle	63.5°	63.5°
Triple clamp offset	20mm	22mm
Ground clearance	345mm	355mm
Suspension travel	300/335mm	300/310mm

2017 KTM 450EXC-F - £7749 - July 2016
2017 KTM 500EXC-F - £7848 - July 2016

450EXC-F



World Launch

engine map to position 2 (*sport*) and I find it an instant improvement in a straight line as well as through the tight corners. I wanted to gear the bike down on last year's model but the engine mapping on position 2 seems to do this without the hassle!

I can't really notice any weight saving per se, KTM claim 106kg ready to race. What I can tell is that the handling in all situations is much improved and when matched with the power delivery on map 2 this is a very different beast from last year. It's smooth, sharp and precise. The 450's power has been smoothed out over the past few years and although it feels more powerful this year it's not a fire-breathing monster, it delivers the snappier power evenly through the curve. The track didn't really afford the opportunity to get the 450EXC-F up into the top-end but there's load of grunt left on the throttle.

I'm impressed with the versatility of the bike. I think it's a proper race machine and in the right hands will be hard to beat in E2 (*and in the 500EXC-F variant, in the E3 class*) but that said I think that it will fit just as easily into open terrain weekend trail riding. The weekend warrior is going to like the reduced engine inertia under braking; the reduced vibration at the bars and the new softer grips. It's a much-improved product over last year's bike. I think the bike touring companies are going to love this machine, too, with the better engine durability and longer crankshaft service intervals as a result of the engine redesign.

450EXC-F

Future Proof



Future Proof



350EXC-F



The DOHC 350 cylinder head is both lighter and tougher for 2017, helping to delivering the power right up to the 12,000rpm redline...

KTM 350EXC-F **Still the mid-size king** **With Warren**

It's onto the 350EXC-F next. Same set up procedure as the 450 and head out of the pits. I grab a handful and head off. It's not 50 yards and the change from the 450 is so noticeable that it catches me by surprise. Remember I said I didn't feel the weight reduction on the 450? Well, boy oh boy can I feel the difference on this baby!

I'm instantly more at home on the 350 and roll the throttle on a little more aggressively than I would have dared on the 450 as I head to the first turn, its a four-foot bank into a 90-degree turn. I grab the brake and the bike responds beautifully and again I'm taken aback by the lack of engine



inertia compared to last year's bike which I also liked, but this is a vast improvement – no doubt that's a result of the redesigned engine positioning (*back and up*) combined with KTM's focus on centralising the masses of the moving parts of the motor. And wow!

I think that the 350 always lacked the engine refinement, not to say the clout, to compete with the 450 in high-level competition – but I'm left wondering if the new bike will change all of that. If the 450 felt responsive to directional changes then the 350 is even better and responds instantly to the slightest shift in body weight making it easy to navigate through the trees without fuss.

Although on paper the 350's quoted as being 2kg lighter than the 450, on the bike it feels more like it's 10kg lighter. The 350EXC is currently KTM's bestseller and I have no doubt that based on the performance and enjoyment of riding this bike that this trend will be continued this year with the renamed 350EXC-F (*all four-stroke henceforth to be known as EXC-Fs, EXCs being the two-strokes*). I can't go so far as to say that it feels like a two-stroke but it's not far off.

The new engine design also creates space for the lateral counter balance shaft that produces a noticeable reduction in vibration at the footpegs and handlebars – KTM claim up to 50% – all I can say is that its noticeable over last year's model. The combination of the new engine dynamics and intelligent design manifests into a bike that feels

**350EXC-F****RUST's QUICK CHECK**

	2016 350EXC	2017 350EXC-F
Dry weight	107.2kg	104kg
Seat height	970mm	960mm
Wheelbase	1482mm	1482mm
Steering head angle	63.5°	63.5°
Triple clamp offset	20mm	22mm
Ground clearance	345mm	355mm
Suspension travel	300/335mm	300/310mm

2017 KTM 350EXC-F - £7649 - July 2016

350EXC-F



Future
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light, stable and fun to ride.

The engine is also a revelation, it's got torque and pulls hard from low-down and while I found the engine a little under-geared on map setting 1, flip the switch to position 2 and, like the 450, the bike responds as if it's spent a few hours in the workshop being re-geared. This bike is going to be far more forgiving than the 450 and I certainly feel like I'm quicker round the course on the 350 – and, as we all know, confidence is key on a dirt bike. So if I had to part with my hard earned shekels on a 2017 four-stroke I'd head down to my local dealer and slap down my cash on the 350.

Now I know Josh loves the 250EXC-F and I'm sure he will put in his vote for the 250 over the 350. My final word is that the 250 is probably equally as good if not better than the 350 for a rider under six-foot and lighter than 80kg but given I'm neither, then the 350 suits me just fine, and I feel it would be a better choice for us larger-boned of the species.

KTM 250EXC-F

It's not a matter of size

With Josh

Fitting in with the rest of KTM's 2017 developments, the 2017 250EXC-F has undergone some major changes. Every single moveable part within the heart of its engine has been changed. The engine case has been completely redesigned in a way to create a more compact and centralised shaft configuration. For instance the clutch shaft has moved 11.1mm to the rear and 26.9mm higher. In engine terms on an already successful



motor, that's some serious adjustment! If it ain't broke don't fix it some may say, but one of the main lessons we learnt at the 2017 EXC launch was that KTM are 100% committed to the future. If there is a way they can progress, then you can be damn sure they will!

KTM have knocked another 1.5kg from the engine's weight on last year's model bringing the weight down to less than 27.6kg. Impressive figures when you consider this engine delivers class leading torque and power figures across the whole power band.

One of the main issues I think owners struggled with last year was the battery and electric start. During the cold winter months you couldn't just press the button and fire her into life, there was a sequence you had to adhere to. For 2017 KTM have noted the problem and will be supplying the bikes with much lighter – by 1kg! – lithium ion batteries, which are more a lot powerful, and also a strong Mitsuba starter motor. Problem solved.

As ever, KTM sure know how to create a nimble and agile chassis. Growing up on PDS, maybe I'm a little bias to this system. But for an enduro machine I'd nearly call it a must-have feature. Riding rocks and logs, there's no niggling linkage to catch and also it gives the bike a much more positive feeling. I was worried at first about the raised foot peg positioning, but for me it worked. As always with enduro machinery, for me the suspension felt too soft. But this is usually sorted

Future Proof

250EXC-F





Future
Proof

250EXC-F

Redesigned 250EXC-F motor weighs in at 27.6kg, a full 1.5kg lighter than last year...



by a mere changing of spring weights. Riding the 2017 250EXC-F I couldn't help but feel this is the perfect all round package. The engine felt strong from top to bottom and in all honesty more than enough. When entering slow tricky sections, never did I feel that there wasn't enough smooth power on the bottom end to get me out of trouble, which is quite surprising for a small capacity four stroke. Almost like a tamed 300EXC. If I was to be super-critical, then the four-stroke engine braking of the 250EXC-F was a little unsettling at times through a tight twisty gully (*stress the 'little'*) when compared to the



World Launch

two-strokes but by no means was this an issue, nor one that cannot be resolved.

Out on the trails you could comfortably cruise in fourth and fifth gear, yet still have enough power left over to wheelie that tricky upcoming rock. I think the 250EXC-F really came in to its own when you put the hammer down and started to push on. Being a small capacity manageable four-stroke that is designed to have usable power up to 12,800rpm, you could really charge on and still feel fully in control. It's a case of you riding the bike, not the bike riding you.

There are pros and cons to every model in the range (*there wouldn't be a range otherwise*), but personally the 250EXC-F is my favourite for its do-it-all nature.

RUST's QUICK CHECK

	2016 250EXC-F	2017 250EXC-F
Dry weight	105.5kg	103kg
Seat height	970mm	960mm
Wheelbase	1482mm	1482mm
Steering head angle	63.5°	63.5°
Triple clamp offset	20mm	22mm
Ground clearance	345mm	355mm
Suspension travel	300/335mm	300/310mm
Starting	Electric & kick	Electric only

2017 KTM 250EXC-F - £7499 - July 2016

250EXC-F



future
proof



Future proof

300EXC
▼



KTM 300EXC

The sound of speed
With Josh

Like the entire 2017 KTM enduro range, the 300EXC has undergone a full engine redesign. It has all new architecture and also has had the mass centralisation treatment to help create a better and more stable ride. There are two big standout developments to the 300EXC's design: The first being the addition of a counter balance shaft, which in turn has reduced handlebar and footpeg vibration by 50%! The second has been the rehousing of the electric starter. Gone are the days where it looked like some kind of after-thought bolted to the side of the engine, the 2017 300EXC now houses the starter motor integrally below the engine. This should also increase the reliability of the starter motor.

RUST's QUICK CHECK

	2016 300EXC	2017 300EXC
Carburetion	Keihin PWK36S AG	Mikuni TMX38
Dry weight	102.1kg	100kg
Seat height	960mm	960mm
Wheelbase	1482mm	1482mm
Steering head angle	63.5°	63.5°
Triple clamp offset	20mm	22mm
Ground clearance	355mm	370mm
Suspension travel	300/335mm	300/310mm
Starting	Electric & kick	Electric & kick

2017 KTM 300EXC - £7199 - June 2016



World Launch

The 300EXC was the first bike I rode at the test and what a treat it was. The enduro loop consisted of rocky mountainous trails and I'll admit it, I was grinning from ear to ear. Being a little rusty in the saddle, I found that the 300EXC's immense torque enabled me to chug along comfortably. Coasting down the track at a reasonably quick pace, I came across a 10ft rock bed and I was left with two choices, stop or jump it. A dip of the clutch, blip of the throttle and the bike cleared the lot without breaking a sweat. I was sold.

Despite being the largest capacity and most powerful two-stroke in KTM's enduro line up, the 300EXC never once felt too much. Which is incredible really. It offers a very usable and safe power. The counter balance shaft was very noticeable and helped to create a very smooth riding bike. Granted, you couldn't ride the bike like a 125 – not even Taddy Blazusiak himself could do that, it's a different kind of two-stroke riding. A pleasurable experience. It's comparable to driving a Bentley in some ways. You've got the power right there should you need it, but in reality you can maintain a quick pace ever so gingerly.

And with Warren

My last ride of the day was on the best selling 300EXC. It's good, really good, and familiar. This new 300 is exceptionally strong and is going to suit wide open spaces but there again could easily become scary, it's that quick. The engine map

Future Proof

300EXC



300EXC



Future Proof

makes a significant difference and I chose to stay in the standard map position 1. This is the only bike I prefer to ride in the standard map position – not even the 450 is as brutish.

That said, it's precisely why the 300s have been so popular. This is a torquey beast and you could chug along happily over most obstacles or climbs, but twist the throttle and the awesome power delivery is instant. I have a 2015 Husky TE300 in my garage and the power increase on this year's model is significant. The 300EXC handles every bit as well as the 250 and it feels stable and sure-footed. The two-strokes feel unsurprisingly better through the tight stuff compared to the thumpers and the 300 comes in as my second-favourite bike on test. Would I buy one? Yes of course, but I would buy the 250 over the 300 this time around.

KTM 250EXC

Best of breed

With Warren

The test track has been designed by KTM's off-road product manager, Jochi Sauer, and I'm sure his horns come out when he gets to set the test loops. Just ask a few of the casualties from past events known to be found gasping for breath lying next to their bikes muttering incoherent curses, grappling with themselves on whether to continue or simply throw in the towel. Jochi's a former European Enduro Champion (*from before there was a world championship*), he's also a veteran of the likes of the Roof of Africa, so he loves super-testing technical riding – and clearly he loves to test such skills of those with the



temerity to turn up for a KTM world launch. So the afternoon session saw Jochi open a new section of the loop at the end the original lap, labeled 'Difficult!' I'm not sure about the exclamation mark behind the word, but when there's a choice to head back to the paddock or into the unknown 4.5km "Difficult!" section I choose the unknown.

The loop offers an ascent, or more aptly a number a winding ascents across rocks and more rocks as you wind your way to the summit. Part of this section reminds me of the wooden banked turns often seen at the Romaniacs prolog – except that they are cobbled rocks banked in looping turns left and right, so I'm slaloming from one rock face to another when abruptly I encounter a gully with a 90° face on the left and around 35-45% rock wall on the right with loads of boulders wedged into the gully.

This would have been ideal testing terrain for a 2017 trials bike but alas I'm on the 250EXC and I'm pretending I'm Graham Jarvis – or rather Johnny Walker, this being KTM. I wind up and down the banked rock wall, zigzagging in and out of the rocky gully – all in a low gear and feathering the clutch; this is where I decide that this is the best bike on test. The 250's low end torque is so impressive that where normally the clutch would be pretty busy its just not needed and the bike handles the slow climb in second and third gears without feeling like I'd prefer the 300 – the motor is sublime. The new Mikuni carb I think makes a

Future Proof

250EXC



As a dyed-in-the-wool stroker fan the 250EXC 2T came out on top in Warren's ratings...



250EXC

huge difference and the throttle response is excellent throughout. The Mikuni carbs are less susceptible to climatic conditions, and changes in temperature and altitude, and so faffing with setup is hopefully a thing of the past.

When I finally summit, the track pivots into a steep downhill along a single track and then through the trees before opening out into a fast section and descending again into the valley and the paddock below. It's on the downhill that I feel the chassis comes into its own and I start to wonder if this bike is going to have a serious competitor this year. I'm seriously skeptical that there's another bike out there to match this 250. Competitors beware!

As I hand back the bike its clear to me that this is my favourite bike of the day, by a country mile. We all know that the top extreme riders detune their 300s for extreme competition – my view is

RUST's QUICK CHECK

	2016 250EXC	2017 KTM 250EXC
Carburetion	Keihin PWK36S AG	Mikuni TMX38
Dry weight	101.9kg	100kg
Seat height	960mm	960mm
Wheelbase	1482mm	1482mm
Steering head angle	63.5°	63.5°
Triple clamp offset	20mm	22mm
Ground clearance	355mm	370mm
Suspension travel	300/335mm	300/310mm
Starting	Electric & kick	Electric & kick

2017 KTM 250EXC - £6999 - June 2016

**Future
Proof**



that this 250 may just be worth them taking another look at – who knows we might just see Johnny or Taddy onboard a 2017 250EXC in place of the customary 300.

And this is why – it's the motor, always the motor; this 250 is the complete package. Where it previously lacked the necessary 300-esque low-end grunt, that could see you chug through the rough stuff, this bike has no such shortcomings. There is oodles of low-end power and it's useable to boot. There was no having to ride the hell out of the clutch and throttle. This bike is no screamer, it's a capable race machine that's 'point and fire' when needed but has manners in the rough stuff and will flatter just about any rider.

It's the most stable of the bikes over the fast sections as well as the tight stuff, and on a longer enduro or hare and hounds this bike is going to protect the rider from fatigue better than any of the bikes in the range.

KTM 125XC-W

Minimal fuss, maximum fun!

With Josh

Following the withdrawal of the 125EXC due to ever-tightening homologation laws, the new 125XC-W has been brought to the table in mighty fine form. Essentially it's a 125XC, yet with the twist of added headlights and a wide-ratio gearbox – cue XC-W. By law this machine is strictly built for closed-course competition racing, but (*in certain*

Future Proof

125XC-W



125XC-W

RUST's QUICK CHECK

	2016 125EXC	2017 125XC-W
Carburetion	Keihin PWK36S AG	Mikuni TMX38
Dry weight	94kg	91kg
Seat height	960mm	960mm
Wheelbase	1471mm	1471mm
Steering head angle	63.5°	63.5°
Triple clamp offset	22mm	22mm
Ground clearance	355mm	370mm
Suspension travel	300/335mm	300/310mm
Electric start	No	Yes 150 / Optional 125
Road legal	Yes	No

2017 KTM 125XC-W - £6099 - July 2016
2017 KTM 150XC-W - £6299 - July 2016

markets) the customer could quite easily register the bike themselves and the 125XC-W has clearly been built in such a way as to accommodate this. It's all a matter of ticking the correct boxes.

One of the major changes to the 125 this year is a redesigned engine cases. Saving 2kg on previous models, everything has been made lighter and smaller. That being said, there has been no compromise on power. The crankshaft and clutch shaft has been brought a little higher and closer to the centre of gravity on the 2017 models which aids a tighter mass centralisation. These modifications and developments create a much more stable and smoother ride. A Brembo hydraulic clutch is now standard on the 125 model and so there will be no more chasing round the paddock trying to find a drop of elusive Magura

RUST



blood red fluid.

For those sharp enough to have studied every line of KTM's tech notes, you will have noticed that there is potential to retrofit an electric start on the 125XC-W. The bikes are incredibly easy to start with the traditional kickstart method but the magic button could prove handy in saving precious seconds in competition. The electric start will not be fitted as standard to the 125XC-W but will be available as a Power Parts add on.

Riding the 125XC-W, I couldn't help but feel like an enraged teenager, reminding me of back in the days where my only worry was getting my homework in on time and riding motorcycles on a week-end. Incredible fun! Yes, you had to ride this bike like you meant it, and by that I mean keeping her singing, but in all honesty there was enough low end torque for when the going got tough. Just obviously not as much as the bigger bikes.

There were two different maps available on the 125XC-W which was a fantastic asset to an already good 125 two-stroke and the difference was certainly noticeable. One map was suited riding out on the trails where the power delivery was a little smoother and less pronounced, and the other transformed the bike in to a lively E1 two-stroke competition machine.

For me personally, if I had an open budget, I'd definitely keep a 125XC-W in the shed for the days where you want to head out to the track and ride like a man possessed. It's the kind of bike

The electric start will not be fitted as standard to the 125XC-W but is available as a Power Parts add-on...



The wide-ratio six-speed gearbox will give the 125 rider plenty to play with to keep the little stroker on-song...



Warren's appraisal of the 2017 EXCs
<https://youtu.be/a0K02x9reL0>





Future
Proof

which essentially gives you the feel of what riding motorcycles is all about. Fun.

Alongside the 125XC-W, for 2017 KTM will produce a 150XC-W. This bike has undergone the same development as the 125, the only difference being a larger bore – and will also come with the electric start fitted as standard. KTM have now also scrapped the 200EXC. I know this may come as a shock and be an upsetting piece of news for some. But in reality, the 150XC-W is a bike that can just about fill the void.

With the 150XC-W you get the same fun feeling of the 125, but on top of that, there's a little more torque to play with. Personally having ridden the 200EXC, I don't think the 150XC-W is a direct replacement (*it's 50cc down for a start*), however it is a great bike. If you that feel the 250EXC is too much and the 125XC-W isn't enough, the 150XC-W will be a perfect machine. If anything it's more the big boy's (*and girl's*) 125!

2017 KTM EXC

WHAT'S HOT
Superb upgrade
More power never hurt anyone
Light is right
Great redesign on the bodywork
250EXC is best (*Warren*)
250EXC-F is best (*Josh*)

WHAT'S NOT
WP Xplore forks need sorting
Maxxis tyres
Cast triple clamps



Back Issues



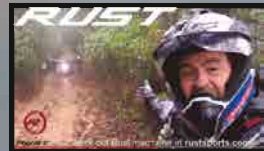
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www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX4-14sloHE



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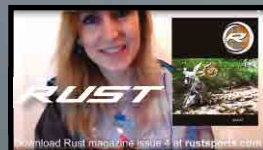
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www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLpIT6Z-ACQ



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntK07I63tuA



www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_co4hGeECA



ISSUE #1



AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL



ISSUE #2



HUSQVARNA 701 SPECIAL



YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL



ISSUE #3



ISSUE #4



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ISSUE #7



GS TROPHY SPECIAL



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ISSUE #10

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NEW WORD ORDER?

Words: Georgia Wells
Pictures: KTM, Husqvarna,
Future7Media & Rick Wells

As mentioned before in RUST, EWC has become EnduroGP. More than a name change, there have been structural changes and quite a shake-up in the rider list. But what's the real impact? With round three (*in Greece*) kicking off as this issue gets published, here's a look at the world enduro scene – for better or for worse?

GARCIA





SNAPSHOT: A PRESS conference last July at the inaugural Belgian GP in Saint Hubert: the FIM and series promoters spoke, in no uncertain terms, of a ‘complete restructure’ of the Enduro World Championship. The reaction from the paddock? Disgust, horror, vexation – certainly neither excitement nor hope. The only positivity in the room was to be found from those chairing the meeting. And with time there was more consternation not less, as throughout the remainder of last season team-managers and riders alike complained about the proposed plans.

In the end the plans were watered down. Instead of the original idea, where the ‘top riders’ of each class would move into the new-fangled EnduroGP class, leaving E1, E2 and E3 potentially very sparse, it was settled that the whole series would be renamed – from Enduro World Championship (EWC) to yes, EnduroGP. And confusingly, there would now just be a new ‘Scratch’ class, also named EnduroGP in which the riders would be ranked, while still remaining in their engine capacity classes. Not such a radical proposition, after all many national championships have for years run an Absolute/Overall/Scratch class alongside the capacity class structure. And of course the riders seemed excited at the prospect of the chance to win two titles in one season.



EDMONDSON



TEAM ROCKSTAR HUSQVARNA



NEW
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BETRIU

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ROBERT

JUNIORS

So, as the off-season set in and SuperEnduro shot into the spotlight with its high-intensity (*indoor*) racing and wild atmosphere, things were quiet on the EnduroGP front. Before anyone knew it, it was April and the new season was upon us.

Madness in Morocco

In many ways, having Morocco as the opener was a genius move. It may not have been a deliberate decision, but the bizarre nature of this North African country took everybody's minds off the 're-vamped' championship. Such was the shock to everyone's system of not only the beautifully warm weather, but the chance of bumping into a wild camel round every corner. There was therefore far too much distraction to really notice what was happening. Concentrating on anything when you're so aware of the poverty around you, plus trying to walk tests through yards of broken glass and all manner of other unspeakable detritus, was a task in itself. The question was more: "Would the GP of Morocco be a success?" Rather than, "Will the new structure work?"

Surprisingly, the paddock felt comparatively unchanged. Apart from the new logo, it felt like the same old reassuring EWC. Even the departure of legends Renet and Meo was softened by the arrival of so many new and promising riders, as well as those returning after injury-induced absences.

But the first stumbling block for the

organisation came on the Friday night in Agadir. The superbly situated Supertest, set on the sizeable sandy beach, could have been the perfect way to kick off the season. A stunning sunset providing the National, Youth, and Junior riders with an awesome backdrop to display their prowess. But then, something highly unusual happened, the sun disappeared into the sea.

While some seemed to understand that this was a natural and regular occurrence, others seemed completely shocked by it. Night unfolded and the floodlights failed to illuminate. The Supertest died a death when the world's fastest riders were forced to circulate at snail's pace. Contrary to the opinions spurting all over social media, this monumental blunder was not the work of the FIM or the series promoters, but the locals. Race Director Pedro Mariano had pleaded with those in power, but every time he was met with a brick wall or a: "we'll do it later". This debacle further served to distract from the new format.

It was only on Saturday morning that the new order became apparent. Instead of running in class order, the riders started roughly in the order that they finished in France (*the final round*) last year. And this new 'scratch' order made the first race weekend of the year pretty exciting. All the



BELLINO

NEW
WORLD
ORDER?

MCCANNEY



SANTOLINO

NEW WORLD ORDER?



D McCANNEY



PHILLIPAERTS



HOLCOMBE, J McCANNEY & WATSON



top riders were bunched together, with barely a moment for spectators, journos, and team personnel to relax – quite the opposite of the old system where at lengthy intervals you'd see a few top riders as they'd come through leading each class. The other downside to this was the dust – the kind of dust that seeps into every pore! And while the Extreme Test in Morocco (*Camel-Tour and Kasbah central*) was actually a decent and challenging test, the flat Cross Test was encased in thick red dust. With all the quick riders running together, it became a battle of the bravest – who was most willing to go flat-out with their eyes closed?

But come the end of the day the riders seemed positive about the new way of doing things. Mathias Bellino, who became the first man to win an EnduroGP class, was understandably all for it: *"I think this is the best solution for all of us! I can focus on becoming E2 champion, but also I can try to become EnduroGP champion. It means I can compete with all the best riders, even if they are in a different class to me. It's quite a good system because in some terrains maybe the small bikes will be faster, and some the bigger ones will be faster. It's quite fair for everyone."*

Portuguese Men of Wa(te)r

As the GP of Portugal came around, just one week after Morocco, it was all change. Gouveia, on the edge of Portugal's highest

mountain range – the Serra da Estrela – is just about the polar opposite of Agadir. Clean, welcoming, and efficient.

But the most crucial difference here perhaps, was the weather. Enduro is rarely glamorous, and if you'd been under any illusions prior to Portugal, one lap on the Cross Test would soon have you covered in mud and splashed from head to toe by puddles. So the organisers, after suffering a bit of a hit in Morocco, had yet more negativity to cope with. The tests were water-logged and needed some serious alterations in order for the racing to go ahead. Understandably everyone felt apprehensive about racing in such treacherous conditions. But after the shambles of Agadir's Supertest, Friday night in Portugal was a roaring success! Superb racing, no rain, and the best atmosphere since Italy last year. The key to the buzz was the knowledge of the fans – they were all watching the clock as each pairing raced across the finish line. They knew *'the time to beat'* and when Bellino smashed it out of the (water) park, a huge roar of appreciation went out.

Under leaden skies at the start of the race weekend the big question was: would the stand-out performers of Morocco going to be able to repeat their performances? In short; yes. Bellino and Matthew Phillips



NEW
WORLD
ORDER?



NEW WORLD ORDER?



D. McCANNEY



continued their epic dog-fight, with the likes of Alex Salvini and Eero Remes snapping at their heels.

But what was more fascinating was the attack from the Britpack. If you've been following enduro for a while now, you'll know just how brilliantly talented Steve Holcombe is. Close to title-winning form last year in the Junior class, Holcombe is now with the factory Beta squad. The youngster from Devon didn't take long to make his mark with his 300RR – taking top honours in the EnduroGP class on Day 2 in Portugal. Holcombe has settled in well with the team, sharing meals with his team-mates and training with them; but you have to wonder how Aubert and Salvini are feeling after the newest member of the squad managed to make them look mediocre. And if one great Brit wasn't enough for you, E1 is overflowing with Anglo-talent.

Yamaha's new signing Jamie McCanney fought it out with his brother, Danny, and EnduroGP's newest face: Nathan Watson. The three look likely to be embroiled in battles all season long, but with Jamie and Danny both recovering from off-season injuries, it was Watson who took the spotlight. The former motocross rider had already impressed in the Italian Championship earlier in the year, where he beat some seriously top names, but no-one quite expected him to be so strong not only in the sand and dust of Agadir but in the rain and

mud of Portugal.

Fabio Farioli's factory KTM team made an extremely wise signing in the smiley blond lad from Nottingham, along with American Enduro-X star Taylor Robert. In fact it's KTM's two newbies who have so far outshone their elder counterparts – Cervantes and Nambotin. The photoshoot images in the back of the pit garage show Nambotin and Cervantes standing tall as Robert and Watson sit beside them. It was no accident that this image was to portray the elder statesmen and the new blood. But with Cervantes sadly distracted by personal problems, and Nambotin out once again with injury, it could have been catastrophic early doors for the orange team. Thankfully, the newcomers are more than willing to take on the mantle.

Reset?

The 'bizarre' opening rounds left many wanting to hit the reset button in time for round three in Greece. The unusual setting of Morocco and the apocalyptic rain of Portugal seemed to throw everyone in at the deep end – but are the ones who came up swimming likely to be the dominant riders for the rest of this long and testing season? Well, in short, yes. While some may be surprised by the form of the newest riders in the field, they have already proved their



ROBERT

NEW
WORLD
ORDER?



BLAZUSIAK



SPANDRE

NEW WORLD ORDER?



WATSON

credentials in national championships and in the opening two rounds of the season. Their form is unlikely to waver, even when the season reaches its most difficult point in Scandinavia in June.

Only we should expect the experienced riders to come back up the order to bring the fight to the young upstarts. Johnny Aubert, hampered by injury on Day 2 in Portugal, has a real fire in his belly, a fire which has not been seen for years. He is a serious contender for the E3 crown, and a Top 5 in EnduroGP. The problem for Aubert, however, is not just team-mate Holcombe but the ever-impressive Antoine Basset who, on his privateer KTM, has been running higher and stronger than some of Farioli's factory and factory-supported boys.

Manuel Monni is also more than capable of proving that TM have more than one title contender this season. And while reigning champ Remes has thrown down the gauntlet in E1, we can expect that there could be more than just the aforementioned hard-charging Brits chasing him down. Italy's Gianluca Martini has already become the first man to put a Kawasaki on the podium in donkey's years, and his wild riding style (*it's always a good idea to step a little further away from the track when you see him coming*) will either see him crash and burn or continuing to charge to podium contention.

Nambotin, Cervantes, Mickael Persson, and Anthony Boissiere will also look to

feature on the E1 box as the season draws out. And the mass migration to E2 in 2016 has made the class more competitive than ever, expect Loic Larrieu and Cristobal Guerrero to be ready to pick up the pieces if the epic power struggle between Bellino, Phillips and Salvini comes to blows. And how will Taylor Robert fair in the forests of Northern Europe? His incredibly neat riding style seems to have paid dividends in the opening rounds.

Another benefit of the EnduroGP class is that it somewhat masks the sadly small size of each individual class. These days, with even the biggest manufacturers decreasing their enduro presence, it appears harder than ever for talented riders to earn their place in the championship. If, like Basset, you are lucky enough to be able to run your own team, you can prove your prowess from the dubious comfort of a drafty awning in a small corner of the paddock. At first glance, at least, it can look as if enduro is dying.

Factory KTM, previously a team housing six to eight riders, now has just four full time riders, plus Laia Sanz competing in the sparse EW rounds. Rockstar Energy Husqvarna, formerly a powerhouse of the paddock, has also scaled down to just four riders. Sherco have effectively amalgamated two teams into one (*although to great effect,*



RAUCHENEKER

NEW
WORLD
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BLAZUSIAK



REDONDI WORLD CHAMPION

NEW WORLD ORDER?



D McCANNEY

it has to be said). It's easy to be blinkered in the paddock and notice only this shrinking of the top teams. Many people will try to tell you that this is the end. But when you really look around you realise, it's not all doom and gloom. Honda RedMoto Racing (*formerly HM Zanardo*) have a large and impressive line-up for 2016. TM Racing may only 'officially' be running Remes, Monni and promising young Swede Oliver Nelson, but they are also selling pit space to two more Junior riders – Josh Gotts and Henric Stigell. Yamaha are adding a rather lovely shade of blue into the mix with their small but fast factory-backed squad, plus the 'Outsiders Yamaha' team, whose huge truck and talented line-up belies their self-deprecating name. GasGas have managed a comeback despite a horribly trying 2015 which saw the company in serious financial doo-doo. The Spanish factory has already managed three podiums this year with young Portuguese rider Diogo Ventura. Johansson MPE Yamaha, the team which saw Persson champion last year in EY, are helping many young riders on their way to success this season, already securing three podiums in the Youth Cup.

The bottom line is, if you really look at the paddock as a whole, and you look beyond the big names, there are more and more teams putting their money on the line because they believe in having a presence in this sport. And while the three 'senior' titles

are a little low on entries, you need only to look at the Junior class to be filled with hope. EJ has 18-21 entries for every round of the season, and although occasionally talent comes in from elsewhere (see *Watson and Rauchenecker – motocross*), the Junior class is an extremely effective ‘feeder’ class with some of our biggest names coming from the Under 23 class in recent years.

The rocky ride

The organisation has endured a rocky ride in the back-to-back season openers, but they came through with success and limited complaints. The new format seems to be working for riders and fans alike, certainly keeping things fresh and exciting. As we head into the next phase of the season it will be fascinating to see how the battles develop, and although the majority are playing it cool when it comes to the EnduroGP title, to be crowned ‘*the best of the best*’ will be an irresistible enticement for this field of highly competitive, motivated, talented riders.

It may be the case that top teams such as KTM have to limit their budget (*MotoGP doesn’t come cheap!*), but the fact of the matter is that the teams are still here, Japan are once again chasing enduro success. Rockstar Energy Husqvarna have adopted a uniform look for their teams across



BELLINO

J McCANNEY, BELLINO & WATSON





EnduroGP

NEW WORLD ORDER?



ROBERT



WATSON



AUBERT

motorcycling this year; the motocross riders, Dakar riders, and enduro riders all have the gear and same hashtags to use across social media. It makes them appear as one big family but the crucial part is that enduro is included in this family, adding to the prestige and the exposure of the sport. We still have an exceptional championship which needs to be supported rather than criticised. Only time will tell, but the signs are looking up. We've come a long way since that meeting in Belgium. As the old saying goes: *"Don't be afraid of change; you may lose something good, but you may just gain something even better"*.

EnduroGP 2016 standings after two rounds

Enduro GP		
1	Matthew Phillips, Sherco, AUS	66
=2	Mathias Bellino, Husqvarna, FRA	61
=2	Steve Holcombe, Beta, UK	61
4	Eero Remes, TM, FIN	48
5	Alex Salvini, Beta, I	42
E1		
1	Eero Remes, TM, FIN	80
2	Nathan Watson, KTM, UK	62
3	Jamie McCanney, Yamaha, IoM	62
E2		
1	Matthew Phillips, Sherco, AUS	74
2	Mathias Bellino, Husqvarna, FRA	65
3	Taylor Robert, KTM, USA	53
E3		
1	Steve Holcombe, Beta, UK	77
2	Antoine Basset, KTM, FRA	64
3	Johnny Aubert, Beta, FRA	57



Confessions of an MX Snapper



KEN DOLL

WORDS AND PHOTO
BY GARY FREEMAN

THAT'S KEN ROCZEN running away from a cloud of dust. Thanks so much for tuning in. Well done everyone – another triumph. See you next month.

All right, there was a bit more to it than that. It's Monday 4th August, 2009 and wee Kenny Roczen (*aged 16*) had just secured second overall in the deep-deep sand of the Lommel, (*Benelux*) Grand Prix – beaten (*only just*) in both races by the super-efficient rider and all round good-guy, Marvin Musquin.

Now just as a side *'thing'* the Americans have taken to pronouncing Marv's name Moose-Can. Why? Because he told them to in a video interview.

Now I'm not sure, but I think his name is really pronounced Musk-An and each time I hear Moose-Can . . . it somehow eats at me, ya know? Drapes, faucets, sidewalks . . . cilantro. What the hell is cilantro anyway!? Yes, it's coriander. Then why not say coriander!!!?? I know it's Spanish for coriander and the USA borders Mexico but, refrigerator, trunk, candy, potato chips, I-raq. Why is it I-raq and not I-taly? Fleshlight. Stop! Everyone stop! I meant flashlight and I said fleshlight. Let's stop there and move on . . . slow-ly.

So Ken's exhausted from the day before, but turns up with his mom right on time at our photoshoot location. I'd asked him to bring his Lommel race kit to offer a little grittiness to the look and feel of the images. We were shooting in derelict industrial site after all and why mess up new kit with industrial filth hey?



About the derelict thing. There comes a time with derelict buildings when they're either demolished, or renovated – hopefully in a tasteful way rather than that gob-wash *'we're having new age fun with a vintage feel'*, craft beer, oyster barbecue way. (*I've even lost myself now*). Well, in short, although we'd deliberately chosen derelict over whatever the opposite of derelict is, what we didn't realise was; the day of dereliction had begun – and a JCB JS370 *'arrived'* through the building's outer wall. Definitely a 370 because the 330 only has a 236.8 kNm bucket tearout and this bitch's bucket was way more. (*Don't test me on that – you know I can land a plane*).

Ken ran. I ran. (*That's I ran, and not I-ran, as in Persia*). We all ran (*even JB*). We ran from the froth-dripping and really rather angry JCB JS370, plus *'Leffe'd up'* driver. Run for your life Ken! It's too late for us, but save yourself!

Ken lived and went on to become the 2011 MX2 World Motocross Champion, 2013 AMA 250cc West Coast Supercross Champion and the 2014 Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Champion. Others on the shoot were lost to a 271.8 kNm bitch-slap. *#waddawaytogo*.

(*The above was supposed to be a sober comparison between Ken and Marvin's career progress. Nailed it.*)



Back Issues



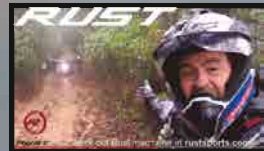
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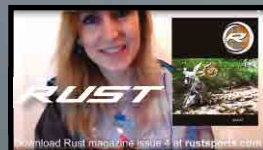
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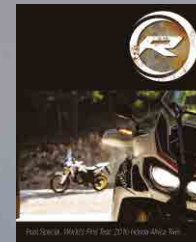
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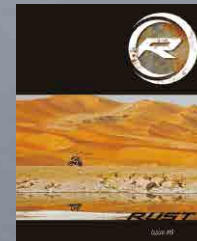
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