

Return of the
Japanese
Two-stroke-
RUST rides Yamaha's
newest enduro



RUST

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COVER IMAGE

Josh Snowden / Dylan Jones





SPRING FEVER

BY JON BENTMAN,
PHOTO: YAMAHA

IN THE NORTHERN Hemisphere, in RUST's office in particular, we are itching to get riding. Spring is here, the trails are drying and the event fixtures lists are swelling. I can't personally complain, having just come back from two weeks in Thailand blasting around on GSs. But my appetite is far from sated. I need more.

Warren, our publisher, for his part, could wait no longer so while his long termers are undergoing some transformative work – and frustrated by having seen me swan off for some quality saddle time – he's packed his kit and flown off to Portugal for a week on the trails riding KTM EXCs. I tell you, he was like caged cat before he left. The season is here – we want to get going.

The problem now being everything kicks off at once. And while we want to do everything, we can't. I've got dates clash after dates clash. My own Yamaha WR250F long termers needs to be cutting trail, I've got a programme of setting-up and training to get on with, but it's going to have to wait just a few more weeks. Man, it itches. I can't wait to get on that little blue screamer.

Meanwhile, we're seeing everyone else getting going. We're keen followers of motocross here at RUST – Warren was a proper racer, I was deeply involved with the MXGP scene (*as a journalist*) for a couple of years – and so we follow the AMA and MXGP scenes with real appetite – early season you follow every lap. Warren loves the AMA, I think MXGP is numero uno.

So I'm pretty sure Warren would like to see a gallery image given over to Ryan Dungey or Ken Roczen at this time, but as he's not here I'm going for Jeffrey Herlings instead. The kid's '*a unit*' as we might say in certain parts of the world – purposely missing an adjective there. He's always in conflict with someone somewhere and most pundits say he could do with slowing up a bit and falling off less. But he's a winner and when KTM – or is it his own management – finally let him out

of the kindergarten and to play with the big boys in MXGP then we should see all manner of fireworks. Again, we can't wait for that.

Meanwhile in this issue we've got a test on Yamaha's undercover enduro, the new two-stroke WR250 (*based on the US market YZ250X*). This, too, was a source of frustration. Three of us were going to take turns to ride it, being so keen to get out there, but – as fortune would have it – I ended up with my head down a toilet honking-up a week's calorie intake while Warren got called back to London for an urgent meeting. So '*new guy*' Josh Snowden got the bike all to himself. And yes, he came back super-enthusiastic. He liked the bike, of course, but like every one of us, he simply loves to ride, more than anything.

Quite contrasting with that, is a story we have about four guys riding vintage Harley-Davidsons across South America, with plenty of gravel to test their mettle – and metal. It was chilled but also quite the test. We like that. We were struggling to explain what it is we like about such bikes and such stories. And it can involve all manner of bikes, from old '*vinduro*' machines, through to the modern mass-produced retro-pastiche things (*Scramblers and such*), but we think it's something to do with the relaxed ride position, that kind of apes dirt bike handlebars. Could we categorise this area of interest? We've given it a stab: heritage. Well, it'll do for now. Anyway, you'll see a bit more of '*heritage*' in RUST over time, alongside the enduro, the adventure and the odd bit of motocross.

Do email us your feedback – editorial@rustsports.com – we're always keen to hear what you like (*and don't like*), and it'll help us mould the magazine better to your tastes. But don't expect too quick a reply, for as you read this I'm off again on another two-week adventure. In my mind it was set to be a relaxed almost-touristy ride, but now I've seen some YouTube video of where we're going I think it could be even tougher than the GS Trophy. Anyway, I'll bring back the story and let you be the judge on that.

In the meantime, I hope you're getting out there and enjoying the tracks and trails, too. Feel free to share your experiences and photos, video even. We have a Facebook page and I can think of no better use for that than to share our collective experiences, so post-away. See you in a fortnight...





THE HALF-CENTURY

That Jeffrey Herlings is still only 21 amazes us. This is after all his seventh season in grand prix motocross. Another number to amaze – 50. That's his total of GP wins, an average of seven a year. And after all that there's 2 – that's just the two world championships to date. Just? To be a double world champion is outstanding, but given those 50 wins, you'd think there'd be more.

But then there was the broken femur that stopped him in 2014. Then last year in the space for barely a month, starting in June, Herlings broke a collarbone, then skinned two fingers down to the bone (*yeah, modern motocross gloves could do to be of a stronger construction, do you think?*) and finally he dislocated his hip. Stuff like that stops a championship run dead.

Of course he could do to slow down – which he kind of is doing now, although it's not in his nature. So in 2016, he's taken six wins from six starts, while trying not to rush. But given he's a huge step ahead of the rest of the MX2 riders you have to wonder whether he should have been allowed to graduate to MXGP by now, he could have done so at least two seasons ago. There's some politics there, all right. Yeah, who does own the KTM MXGP team?

Anyway, keep on rocking it young man. Here's to 50 more and some MXGP butt-kicking starting 2017...

Photo: Ray Archer, KTM



THE LONE STAR

New Zealander Chris Birch is taking a break. This is, apparently, Kawah Wurung, in Indonesia – CB was out there for a trail ride in March – very nice it looks too. Of course Birch isn't just any old trail rider, the helmet colours tell you that. But then he's not a pack animal either.

Birch is an incredible talent and there was a point, having taken the extreme enduro scene by storm (*including a Romaniacs win in 2010*), where he looked on the verge of a long international racing career. Only that kind of a life has never attracted this man. Instead he retreated to his homeland and rebuilt his life around what he wanted. A day job (*he's an engineer*), family, a home, laughs with his mates in the local bike scene, spiced with the occasional international foray. Hence a one-off in the 2012 Dakar Rally (*he finished 27th*) and a few jaunts over to South Africa (*where he's managed to win the Roof of Africa three times*).

But he's happiest playing around, doing some coaching and, it would seem, demonstrating just how much you can abuse the KTM 1190R off-road (*see YouTube*).

We admire his values.

**Photo: Sergey Shakuto,
Red Bull Content Pool**





Enduro

Yamaha – just quietly – have a new two-stroke enduro. You might recognize it. *‘Old dog new tricks’* comes to mind, but actually Yamaha have done a more thorough job on this bike than you might have imagined...

Words: Josh Snowden
Images: Josh Snowden & Yamaha

Old, New Borrowed & Blue





YAMAHA SURE ARE hitting a purple patch right now. Wrapping up the 2015 MXGP title was something special, that's a nice bit of silverware to slot alongside Jorge Lorenzo's MotoGP crown – and to win the two most prestigious motorcycle racing titles in the same year, that kind of says something. And to back that up, Jeremy Martin's second (*consecutive*) AMA 250cc motocross title proves their 250 and 450cc four-stroke motocrossers are the cream of the crop at this time.

But that's motocross, not enduro. Only to be fair, Yamaha are coming good here, as well. Their new WR250F, launched in 2015, shares so much with the YZ250F and is without doubt a very competitive machine and has certainly set the E1 class alight. Then there's a new WR450F for this year and that's quite something, too, it just needs a rider of equal stature – being the big powerful beast that it is.

Whether any of that has any relevance to this test we're not so sure but certainly Yamaha are really looking increasingly 'on message' so any time they do anything we need to take notice. So when we hear that – of all things – they have a new 250cc two-stroke enduro coming into the European market, then we need to check it out, ASAP.



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Blue





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Blue

Only it's not exactly a 'new' 250cc two-stroke, and not quite a full-fat WR either. And actually, for the record, it's been 18 years since Yamaha last sold an enduro specific two-stroke, the 1998 WR250 being the last. This new WR has nothing to do with that bike, understandably, instead it's another chapter in the continuing story of the long-standing YZ250.

OLD IS THE NEW NEW

When we say long-standing we can call the YZ over a decade old, for it was near enough 2005 when it was last significantly updated – but we guess it suits the old saying, *"if it ain't broke don't fix it!"* There again, given the recent revisions to the plastics and graphics this new YZ-based WR250 actually looks surprisingly contemporary, and with the black rims it would fool all but the keenest of enthusiasts into thinking it was a brand new design.

Stage one of the WR's build came last year when Yamaha USA converted the standard YZ250 to cross-country specification. A wide-ratio gearbox to suit open tracks, then changes to the engine tune effectively softened the power, while the suspension was re-valved and finally an 18" rear fitted to suit the off-road use and appropriate range of tyres. The finished article was renamed the YZ250X and it became a pretty popular choice for the blue powered enduro and



cross-country enthusiasts Stateside. Yamaha Europe have essentially taken that unit and – stage two – added a lighting kit, plus speedo and a few other items to homologate it for European enduro use.

So while the basics of this new WR250 are not too dissimilar to the 2005 YZ250, alloy frame included, you've got to hand it to Yamaha (*in Japan, USA and Europe!*), they've done a mighty fine job of creating an incredibly modern and aggressive looking bike. The black wheels, blue and carbon hand guards, black carbon headlight all help to create a really trick looking bit of kit.

By the way, the new LED headlight is something that has been around for a while on road bikes, but until now has not made it to off-road production lines. And it helps the new WR because its low energy requirement means Yamaha don't have to spec a more powerful, and power-absorbing, generator or lighting coil. Yet, in use, the low beam 'running' LED was brilliant when we left the open trails and rode into the relative darkness under tightly-knit evergreen forest. It ever so nicely enhanced the roots and ruts laid out in front of me.

Counterpoint to that, the biggest downfall (*aesthetically at least*) was the hideously large metal number plate holder which would



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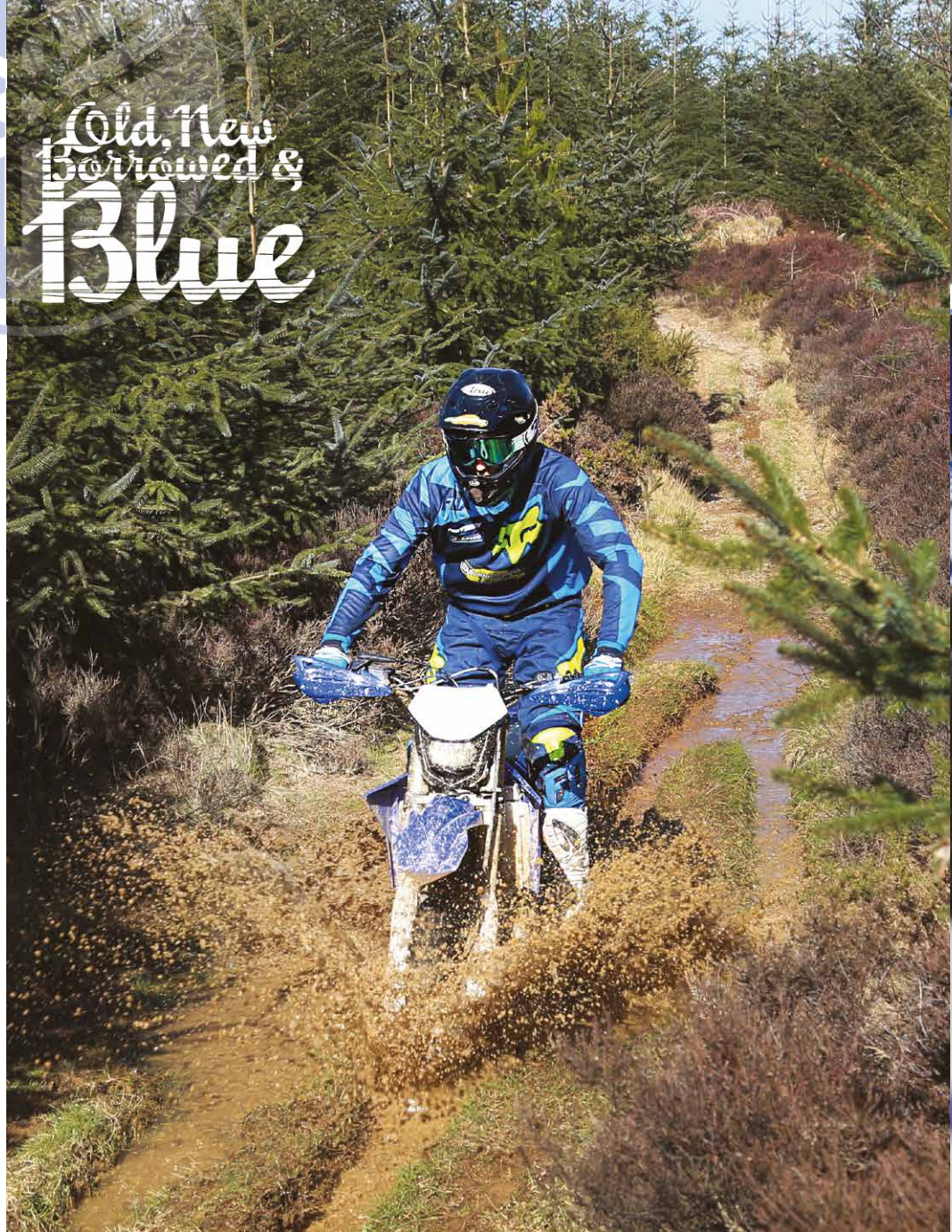
be my first thing to replace on the bike. Not only does it look bad, I would say it could possibly cause an injury in a fall.

A USER-FRIENDLY YZ?

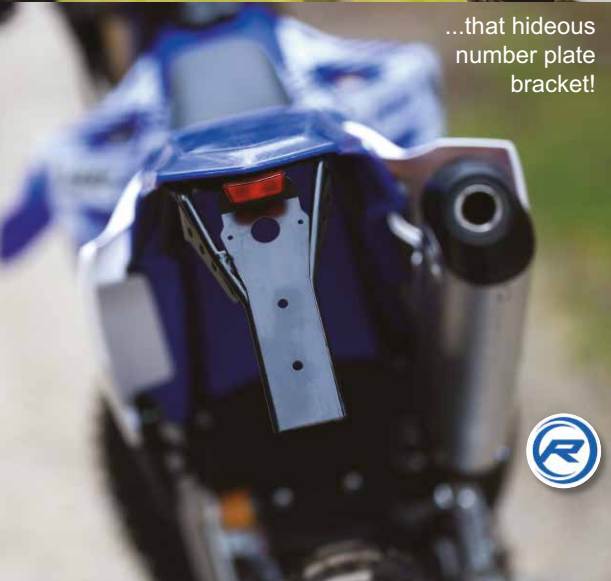
In detail, there have been no less than 13 changes to the YZ250 to turn the capable motocross machine in to a woodland weapon. For starters the engine has been altered with a reduced compression ratio from 8.9 to 7.9:1. In layman's terms, that equates to a more mellow power delivery. Yamaha also altered the exhaust port timing and revised the power valve to have a longer opening and so make smoother power. The timing on the WR250's CDI unit has also been adjusted to help produce a more enduro style power curve. Finally, the exhaust has been modified to match the engine changes and is now narrower (*both vertically and horizontally*) to enhance torque and to help stay out of harm's way. All the changes are designed to make the power more user-friendly and tamer for the slower and more technical enduro pace.

I rode the WR on a multitude of terrain types on offer at the Yamaha Off-Road Experience, run by enduro legend Geraint Jones and his son Dylan (*himself an ISDE gold medalist and Team GB team rider*). And

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Carbon headlight and carbon & blue hand-guards give the bike a purposeful look until you get to...



...that hideous number plate bracket!



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The man himself,
Dylan Jones, really
really good bloke...

what a multitude of terrain that was! Pure unadulterated enduro heaven. Llanidloes, in deepest Wales, is very famous for its enduro heritage. Every year the British Enduro Championship hosts a round in the Hafren forest and more notably the 2008 Enduro World Championship GP of Wales was held at the Jones' farm complex. Pretty much every local you speak to loves bikes. Llanidloes/Rhayader area is to UK enduro what the Isle of Man is to proper road racing. There is everything from woodland trails, forest fire roads and technical special tests.

You can always count on Yamaha to provide a very comfortable and rideable chassis. I'll hold my hands up to being a big KTM fan, but as soon as I set off on the WR250 I felt at home and knew exactly

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what was going to happen next. It's a little different to the KTM, it's not the light-switch-fast tight-turning type of machine, but the upside is that it tracks true and stable through the faster trails. The stock suspension felt perfect for a day up the mountains; I'm close to your average weight rider (80 kilos, 175lbs) and I never once felt as though it was too soft, which often is the case with stock enduro bikes. The stock handlebars were a good bend as well, and I liked the sleek-designed wraparound hand guards. I'm often wanting to change those items right out the crate but the boys in blue sure do know how to build a great handling bike, with the right ergonomics.

YAMAHA WR250

What's hot

It's a racer – the faster the better!

Light & simple

Surprisingly modern looking

Best YZ to enduro conversion yet

What's not

Still a bit of a handful for clubman riders

No electric start

Lacks refinement – doesn't like 'slow'

Taillight bracket from hell





In fact the WR250 took me back to my youth motocross days. It's the kind of two-stroke machine you have to ride like a, er, two-stroke! Like an old school two-stroke that is. Early on in the day we decided that it was running a little too rich on its base settings, feeling as though someone had left the choke half on – the blue smoke which followed me around said the same. Maybe that was something to do with its American birthplace, but after we lowered the needle to the main jet to lean it up, the WR became a much more usable bike. Still, that being said, you couldn't afford to just tootle around all day or else you'd end up in one smoky mess and more than likely with a fouled plug. Not an experience I can recall with a modern KTM or any other modern European enduro for that matter.

Ah yes, and unlike all the modern European enduros – it's kickstart only. Of course two-strokes aren't difficult to start so the need for e-start isn't pressing and of course no e-start makes the bike lighter and simpler, too. So do we miss it? Mostly no, until the time when we stall on the hill, with the kickstart facing the hill, then we do! But given the likely range of use this bike will be put to, it can carry the omission pretty well okay.



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STRONG IN THE FAST STUFF

So it was, naturally, on the quicker going where the WR250's strengths really came in to play. It's comparable to KTM's 250XC on power – not too little and not too much. While I'd love to tell you it is the bog-hopping WR you are probably hoping for, I'd personally say, despite the WR designation, the spirit of this bike is still in the cross-country racer that Yamaha USA intended it to be. The power delivery is still best in the mid to top-end range, lacking a little grunt off the bottom. This bike is screaming out for a weighted flywheel but sadly Yamaha Europe never fitted one, that doesn't mean you can't fit one yourself (*GYTR, Yamaha's performance offshoot, list one – for a princely £206*).

The gearbox has been modified, too, in essence becoming a wide-ratio box with altered 3rd, 4th and 5th gears. I found I was able to leave the WR in third whilst navigating most of the trails we rode. Only on the fire roads did I ever touch fifth gear. It's not perfect though, climbing up a shaley hill, I found there was too much of a jump between second and third gear, meaning I had to be more circumspect on gear choice and the speed that choice necessitated. But going back to my previous comment, a flywheel weight would vastly improve the situation.

One other European addition to the WR is the removable side stand, handy for enduro work, and handy that you can unbolt it for a



bit of motocross play (*more of which later*). The change to the 18" rear is a must, of course, for when you hit the rocky stuff. That little bit of extra tyre makes all the difference, especially if you're planning on running tubes over mounds. While the WR is incredibly tooled up considering only a slight price increase against the YZ, I think the one thing this bike is missing is a skid plate.

IT'S A DO-IT-ALL

Yamaha have done a mighty fine job of adapting their motocross machine to suit off-road. Yes, it's not quite a full-on enduro but this arguably no bad thing. The standard YZ250 can be quite the beast, even on a motocross track, whereas I'd suggest the softened power of the WR would actually better suit a lot of clubman motocross riders. Now you wouldn't dream of taking a 250EXC to a motocross – the enduro-supple suspension just doesn't suit modern motocross tracks, but the WR would, I suspect, do it in style. It'll do cross-country racing (*especially faster open type*) really well, too. The stable steering geometry of the YZ-chassis really suits flat-out stuff. And for faster expert-level enduro riders it's a good match too. It's a brilliant do-it-all machine in this sense. Okay, with its old school two-stroke (*keep it*

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lit) nature, maybe this isn't the ideal trail riding tool, but its scoring points at the fast end of the spectrum – and it stands to find a niche that for once KTM haven't yet filled. Yep, if you're a keenly competitive kind of rider, the WR250 is smiles all around. Good job Yamaha!

SPECIFICATION

Yamaha WR250

Engine: Type liquid-cooled single-cylinder two-stroke

Capacity: 249cc

Bore x stroke: 66.4 x 72.0mm

Compression ratio: 7.9:1

Ignition: CDI

Carburation: Keihin PWK38

Transmission: Wide ratio five speed

Chassis: Aluminium cradle type

Forks: 48mm KYB AOS, 300mm travel

Shock: KYB Monocross, 315mm travel

Front brake: 250mm disc, Nissin twin-piston caliper

Rear brake: 245mm disc, Nissin caliper

Front tyre: 90/90-21 Metzeler

6 Days Extreme

Rear tyre: 110/100-18 Metzeler

6 Days Extreme

Wheelbase: 1446mm

Seat height: 976mm

Fuel capacity: 8 litres

Weight: (YZ250 103kg, WR N/A)

Price: £6749

Contact: www.yamaha-motor.eu/uk





HAS ROYAL ENFIELD MADE THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL BIKE?

Words: Jon Bentman
Images: Royal Enfield

We'll not see it in the West anytime soon, but for the Indian market Royal Enfield have made their first truly all-new bike in about... half a century! It's called the Himalayan and it's an adventure bike!

"WE WANTED TO create a motorcycle that would use the energy of the Himalaya and go with the flow of the Himalaya – rather than try to dominate them – that was the starting point of the project."

Royal Enfield's CEO Siddhartha Lal is quite the dynamic boss and very involved on a personal level, having joined the Himalayan project team on location in the UK and up in the Himalaya, very happy to put in 12-hour riding days himself. But it's significant he's not let corporate ego or ambition cloud the vision of the project. The Himalayan is no power-statement of a bike; in fact the complete opposite, *'rugged, reliable and robust'* suggests Mark Wells who heads RE's Product Strategy, and that very much appears to be what's been delivered.

For those of us who fear that as a (*global*) society we're abusing technology – abusing the planet for that matter – for narcissistic gain, then RE's design and development with the Himalaya seems founded on a very agreeable *'tread lightly'* ethos. RE have





HAS ROYAL ENFIELD MADE THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL BIKE?

applied their newest technologies, including computer modelling and CNC milling to create an all-new engine, but it's no fire-breather, instead a long-stroke 411cc air-cooled single that makes a very gentle 25.5bhp. There's a counter-balancer fitted too, for smooth running. It's also capable of 70mpg – and that from a carburettor. The engine will also accept a stretched-out maintenance regime, with oil changes coming at 6000 miles. With those credentials it deserves an eco rating.

The chassis was developed in conjunction with British frame-specialists Harris Performance, which RE acquired back in 2015. Harris have a long history in motorcycle racing, and typically produce bespoke high-end solutions but, again admirably, here they've worked on a low-cost but durable solution, developing a steel semi-cradle frame, married to long travel forks and RE's very first monoshock and linkage rear suspension set-up.

The chassis addresses so many adventure concerns. A 21" front wheel is matched with 17" rear for assured off-road handling, and there's a decent 220mm of ground clearance while maintaining a low 800mm seat height. The bike also comes with luggage frames, specifically designed for both hard and soft luggage, there's even an optional fuel can than can be fixed to the frames should the 280-mile range of the 15-litre tank not be enough.



It's also designed to be easy to maintain and fix, CEO Siddhartha Lal explaining that in India there's no national roadside assistance agency – it's down to the local workshops and you.

"We've made it simple enough so it's possible to mend a broken part yourself and to start even if the battery is dead – seriously, you can push start it and run the headlamp even if the battery is missing."

It has all the makings of the perfect low-budget overlander, or 'travel bike' as



Chris Scott, the much-respected author of the Adventure Motorcycling Handbook (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) would describe. We suspect Chris would very much approve of this machine.

What keeps it from coming to the West? Homologation restrictions – it'll probably need the added cost and development time in applying fuel-injection to meet EU/US emission regulations. That's a shame given the emission regulations probably aren't worth the paper they're written on, such has been the automotive industry's ability to cheat the tests. We can't see that a 25bhp 410cc single sipping fuel at 70mpg is doing any great harm...

Anyway, there you have it. Maybe you won't sell your 1200GS or 1290 Super Adventure, not even your 660 Ténéré, anytime soon to make the switch.

But as a legitimate budget overlander we think Royal Enfield look to have done a top-job. It's about finding 'an equilibrium between man, machine and terrain' suggests Siddhartha Lal. And also the planet, we might add (*being the conflicted supreme super-consumers we are*)...

**HAS ROYAL ENFIELD
MADE THE ULTIMATE
TRAVEL BIKE?**



ROYAL ENFIELD HIMALAYAN SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type: Air-cooled, SOHC, single cylinder, four-stroke

Displacement: 411cc

Bore x Stroke: 78 x 86mm

Compression: Ratio 9.5:1

Maximum Power: 24.5bhp (18.02 KW) @ 6500rpm

Maximum Torque: 32Nm @ 4500rpm

Ignition system: TCI, multi-curve

Clutch: Wet, multi-plate

Gearbox: 5-speed constant mesh

Lubrication: Wet sump

Fuelling: Carburettor with throttle position sensor

Engine start: Electric

Electrical system: 12 volt - DC

Frame: Steel, semi-duplex split cradle frame

Front suspension: 41mm telescopic forks, 200mm travel

Rear suspension: Monoshock with linkage, 180mm travel

Front tyre: 90/90 - 21"

Rear tyre: 120/90 - 17"

Front brakes: 300mm disc, twin-piston floating caliper

Rear brakes: 240mm disc, single piston floating caliper

Wheelbase: 1465mm

Ground clearanc: 220mm

Seat height: 800mm

Kerb weight: 182kg

Fuel capacity: 15 litres



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www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XFKJabHLI4



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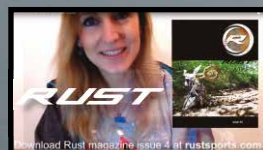
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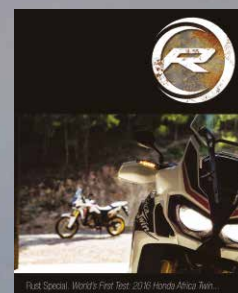
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YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL



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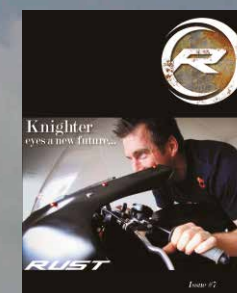
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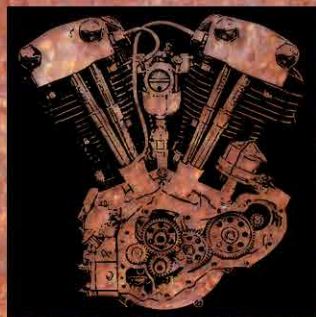
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Adventure



IRON



MEN



4 MEN, 8 cylinders, 3000 miles, no mercy...
Across Patagonia to Tierra del Fuego on vintage Harleys.
Are they mad...?

Words: Matthias Grubbel Images: Volker Wybramietz

IT'S EARLY DECEMBER 2004 in Wurzburg, Germany. Four Harley-Davidsons are being strapped down in their crates. Destination: The end of the world. The itinerary: Buenos Aires to Ushuaia via Ruta 40. The challenges that lie ahead include broken down planes, cracked gearboxes, bottomless gravel, winds from the Antarctic, not to mention the sheer madness of dirt riding on heavy, vintage machinery. This is classic Adventure Sport with a twist. Welcome to the madness that is Iron Men...



Adventure

HARLEY-DAVIDSON motorcycles are unreliable, right? It's a prejudice that is at least as outdated as the one that says all Scots are penny-pinching or all-Bavarians-wear-leather-pants. Where does this prejudice come from? Well, a lot of it has to do with the recreational drugs and the 1970s. Let me explain...

The centennial history of the Milwaukee brand demonstrates that until well into the 1960s Harleys were bought mainly for their dependability, not just in the US but in Europe as well. The decline set in with the rise of the chopper cult during the Hippy era, when many unskilled hobby mechanics started to realise their Easy Rider fantasies in their dad's garage. The resulting creations often looked wild but rarely performed as well as they looked. And these home-builds forged a public image that still sticks to the brand like tar (*although I'd wager the AMF management of the company from 1969 to 1981 might also have something to do with the decline – the AMF years saw bad management and some shocking bikes while build quality sunk to an all-time low – JB*) Nevertheless, there was no turning back and at least those days can be considered as the beginning of a worldwide phenomenon of individualising Harleys, today called customising.

'Two riders were mounted on 1946 and 1947 Knuckleheads, the third on a rigid Panhead, only the photographer had a modern(ish) scoot: an enduro-like modified 1995 sportster...'

So back in 2004 four guys set about proving to the world that the image of Harleys as unreliable boulevard cruisers was misplaced. Actually these guys had a vested interest in proving the worth of their machinery – three of them were staff members of the German Harley accessories company W&W Cycles, the fourth was a photographer brought in to document the trip. And the bikes they chose to travel on were as bonkers as the guys themselves.



3000 miles from
Buenos Aires, Argentina
via Rio Negro and
Patagonia to Ushuaia,
Tierra del Fuego...
That's a long way with
only a sprung seat
for comfort...





Two riders were mounted on original Knucklehead models from 1946 and 1947, ie without rear suspension and with minimal fork travel. For these bikes the 5500km that lay ahead, of which 2000km would be on gravel roads, should prove a merciless punishment. The third bike was a Panhead – again a rigid frame model – completely assembled from accessory parts from the W&W Cycles warehouse. Only the photographer who was hired from outside had a modern(ish) scooter: an enduro-like modified 1995 Sportster. No helicopter assistance, no 4x4 support, no TV crew, no doctors, just four guys on four old bikes on a five-week trip to Patagonia and ‘Fireland’ in South America looking to silence the Harley critics once and for all.

Jumped start (*Amsterdam to Buenos Aires*)

Three weeks after the bikes had left Europe, the four riders Joe, Paul, Tommy and Volker leave for Buenos Aires, to straddle their 74 cu.in. V-twins. Paul’s riding a ‘46 rigid Knuckle on 19 inch wheels and Joe’s on a ‘47 Knuckle – both feature hand-shift, foot clutches and long-range five gallon tanks. Next is Volker’s heavily modified off-road Evo Sportster – this has huge carrying capacity for Volker’s photographic equipment. Last is Tommy’s Panhead, well proven in an earlier outing to Panama!

Only there’s bad news right at the start: at Buenos Aires airport we meet the DHL manager who regrets to inform us that the bikes are in fact still in Europe. The plane has developed a fault and is stuck in Amsterdam. There’s no Plan B just yet. But at least passing through Argentine customs is a cinch. The climate is hot, but damp, and the locals receive us with overwhelming warmth and friendliness. Alberto, and his buddy Flavio have organised a grandiose ‘asado’, meaning an orgy of steak, steak and more steak. They even make room in their homes so we forget the Harleys for the time being and think about our bellies. A couple of hunks of charred meat and some cold ones later, we fall into a blissful sleep...



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Argentine Asphalt! *(Buenos Aires to Pedro Luro)*

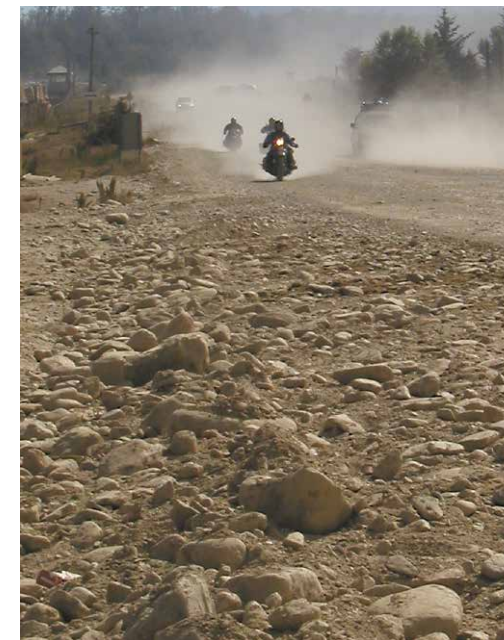
Next morning we awake to the news that the bikes have arrived in Buenos Aires. After uncrating them the equipment goes on the bikes. Tomorrow we'll roll!

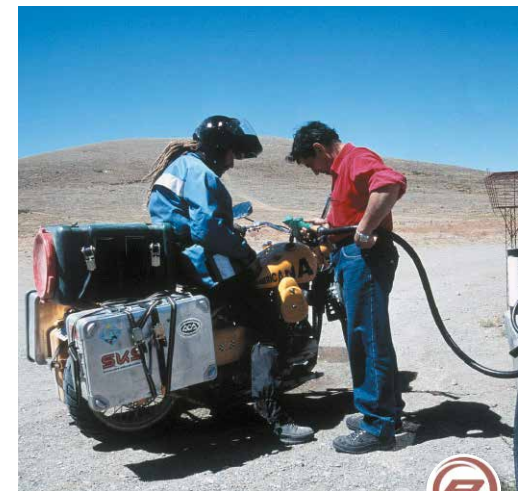
When tomorrow arrives it's raining buckets. So we decide to finish packing in a more leisurely manner and don't get seriously rolling until the afternoon. We manage 400km on the Ruta 3 to Azul with a stopover at 'La posta del viajero en moto', a travellers must-see. It's a humble shack filled with stickers, presents, graffiti, pictures, postcards from bikers from all over the world. The day ends in the now traditional way: asado, beer, bed. The following day the landscape changes from flat to flatter. So we roll along to our own tune... eight cylinders thunder through Bahia Blanca to Pedro Luro. That's 550km in one hit.

Acetylene-torch, Anyone? *(Pedro Luro to Puerto Piramides)*

The first breakdown occurs. Despite extensive testing on home soil, Tommy's rear brake and the springs of his solo seat go kaput. Not funny on a rigid framed machine. While Tommy battles on unsprung and semi-braked, W&W Cycles headquarters ship our first UPS emergency kit with much needed spares.

'Patagonia Starts Here' says the long awaited sign on the side of the





road, and as we depart Argentina we start to think that we are finally underway. Volker's Sportster doesn't think so: it slides to a halt, two spokes have broken and punctured the tyre, but the flat is quickly fixed and an hour later we move off again. Leaving Viedma we face nothing. Okay, there is a road under our wheels but to the left and right there is nothing but featureless plain. Cow skins are drying over fences, the relentless heat blow-dries our faces and scorches the skin, the bikes rumble along. So in San Antonio we decide to hang a left to the coast. Las Grutas, a little resort town promises refreshment. Not refreshing is the hand-soldered internet connection. No photos get sent again today.

All next day we cruise across a lot of nothing, until we get to the Valdez peninsula a kind of island shaped chunk of rock sticking out into the South Atlantic: alpacas, ostriches and armadillos line the road, which are a strange sight to our European eyes. Today we stop in Puerto Pirámides for the night – and some minor surgery: Tommy drops the hand pump in Volker's gas tank while pumping fuel from one tank to the other. Guess who gets to extract it, again. To end the day, we chow down in full view of the ocean: sensational!

Penguins & Peninsula (*Valdés Peninsula to Esquel*)

A fun little tour around the peninsula, and we get the full Monty: deep, treacherous gravel, killer winds and evil dust obscuring the gravel track. A short break in Punta Norte where we get to see penguins, sea lions, sea elephants, many of them with newborns – cute! Two wheeled reality is back soon: Paul's primary chain needs adjustment, wind and dust or not. A little later black smoke splurges from his bike's tailpipe. This low-revving gravel-travel is fouling the plugs. New plugs in and VRRROOOOM, the bike's 74 cubic inches breathe freely again. Back in Puerto Pirámides we do a major service on the bikes, tomorrow

it's gonna be a lot of miles.

By noon next day we blaze through Trelev, from there to Ruta 25, due west 180km across the steppe. Big, wide open, hot, desolate, a short gas stop in Las Plumas keeps us going to the Valle de los Martires which is an eye opener for all of us. The Valley of the Martyrs is a mix between Monument Valley and the Grand Canyon, crammed with completely wacky formations – buttes, needles, and all kinds of desert scenery; it's the perfect setting for a bike movie. Out there there's endless barren steppe and the mountains, and yet near the road, along the Rio Chubut there's lush vegetation. And it gets even better: sunset in Los Altares, a

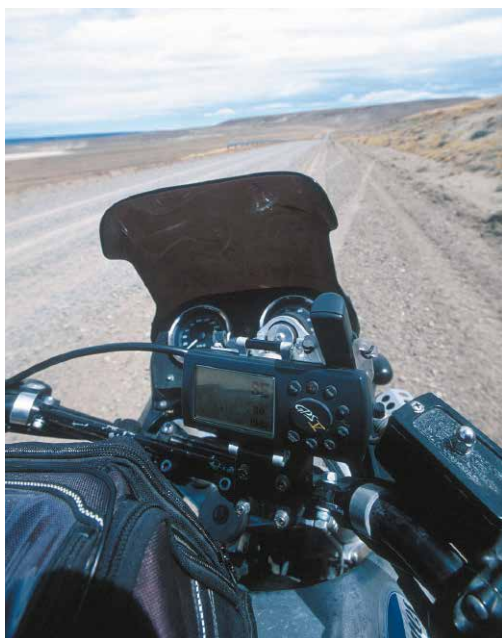
cold beer in our hands. Monumental scenery. In fact the only things that keep getting smaller are the towns. While the straights are getting longer. It's 200 bend-free kilometres from Paso de los Indios to Tecka, a one-horse town with one gas station. This is travel the South American way.

At last we hit the mother of all gravel roads, the infamous Ruta 40.

We lay the first rubber on this legendary road and even the big twins' rumble gets a touch more solemn. Along the Rio Techa the four riders roll towards Esquel for some much needed laundry, picture sending e-mail and bike servicing. Tommy has found someone who knows someone who knows a guy that can weld his saddle. While the welding is going on in some shack, Ricky from Bariloche brings the long awaited spare parts for Tommy's rear brake. Paul and Tommy have it fixed within an hour. To celebrate the day we separate a couple of cows from their steaks, and drink the bar dry.

Rocky Roads (*Esquel to Perito Moreno*)

Next comes 400km of Ruta 40. Apparently 40 in Spanish means 'a lot of gravel' or something like that. Right from the start we get the feeling that the Ruta 40 separates the men from the boys. A biker from Brazil, on his



way up from the south on a Yamaha brings us news: the 40 is in a hopeless state, and the wind howls along it as if from a turbine. Hey, this sounds like fun! Well, we didn't ship four Harleys from Europe to South America to go Sunday driving. The day ends in a place called Rio Mayo, with an asado, for a change. The local radio (it is actually next door) rocks our getaway with Joe's and Volker's favourite Metal bands. Bad to the B-b-bone...

Meantime the Ruta 40 rocks on. It is a nightmare of round pebbly gravel and larger chunks of rock. More than 25mph is impossible for the rigids. Volker on his 'modern' Evo Sportster can go faster which is a good thing. He rides ahead, stops and takes pictures of us as we scramble past. Crappy road, great pictures, trouble-free bikes today.

We reach Perito Moreno after five hours of butt-massage and gravel-surfing. We dine on home-made chorizo-ham-cheese-olive-toasties. And spend a great evening with some hitch hiking Argentinos and Israelis. Hitch hiking, a great idea – if you wanna stick your thumb in the wind, you get all the wind you want here. But finding cars or trucks to pick you up is more of a problem. They do come along but you have to wait...

At breakfast time we hear that the Ruta 40 is possibly better from here onwards. And, lo and behold, the gravel gets friendlier, 30, 40, even 55mph are possible at times. The land is as barren as ever – albeit here and there decorated with buttes and dead volcanic cones. It's an other-worldly landscape we are riding through...

Our next stop is Bajo Caracoles: a couple of houses, a gas station, doubling up as an inn. Paul's chain needs attention again, the fine dust eating away at the links. One of them needs to be removed now. We're not amused by the call from W&W Cycles headquarters that our pictures lack action. Guys, the Ruta 40 is some evil piece of road: gravel varying in size between walnuts and human fists, man-eating tracks and potholes that can swallow the back end of a bike. One false move or loss of concentration means disaster here. Or worse.

Adventure



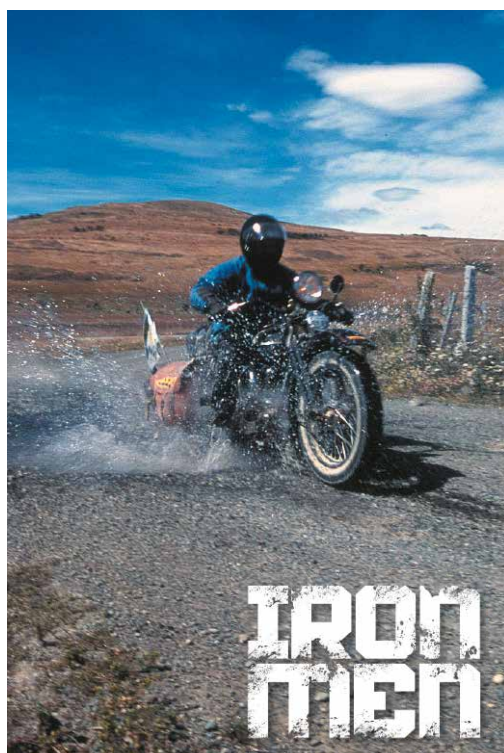
Tossed in Oil (*Bajo Caracoles to Tres Lagos*)

The Ruta calls. We plan 230km for today. We only make 50. On down-shifting, Tommy's rear wheel locks up. Under the gearbox a fat puddle of oil. "No look good, hombre!" By divine intervention a pickup arrives on the scene a short while later. Two German climbers we had met at the inn, ferry the broken Pan back to Bajo Caracoles. In a tyre shop we discover that the transmission housing is broken from top to bottom, right through the mainshaft bore. Nice material for the 'action' pictures, but a serious setback for the Iron Riders. Using our satellite phone we organize a replacement gearbox to be courier-sent to El Calafate from Germany. For a thick wad of dolares we get the Pan and Tommy trucked to El Calafate as well.

Next day the others get up early, pack their bikes and return to Ruta 40. It is the same bitch as before: for a couple of metres it is manageable, then simply catastrophic sections follow. Volker is moving ahead to take pictures. But no pictures this time: he loses control in deep gravel and takes a spill. Only minor damage, though: left turn signal broken, the gas tank has some extra dents not intended by its makers, and he's kinda shaken. After a smoke and some deep







breaths Volker has calmed down enough to go on.

For the night we head for the Estancia Las Tunas. It's supposed to be "right by the roadside" which turns out to be 28km of dirt track. It's worth every metre of this, however. A house over the emerald green Lago Cardiel is our destination. Breathtakingly quiet, the intoxicating scent of Tomillo Patagonico (*a local scented flower*) assails our nostrils. An old gaucho is busy under a '51 Chevy pickup – and fixes Joe's saddle bag, while he's at it. This must be a dream. Here comes dinner: Champagne, pumpkin soup a la crème, steak in breadcrumbs on eggplant stew. For dessert we get treated to lemon sorbet and coffee. We sink in our freshly made beds, the happiest men on earth.

Even the sweetest dreams end: It's our old friend, Ruta 40 again. The vintage bikes are serenely unfazed by the gravel attacks – just Joe's stem nut shakes loose, but is found again and fixed. 140km later we arrive in Tres Lagos, Spanish for '*lots more gravel*'. We put in another 15km and get a decent rest on the estancia '*La Margerita*'. Owner Fabio is delighted to see us, we are knocked out by his collection of ancient machinery rusting away in his back yard. Among various pieces he owns is an original REO Speedwagon (*a pickup truck first made in 1915*), which brought his predecessor on the farm all the way from Buenos Aires some 70 years ago and after which the rock group were named. Gotta love Patagonia, it is a mixture of hellish gravel and the most amazing people.



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Glacial Progress (*Tres Lagos to El Calafate*)

On and on, Ruta 40 doesn't change. We cross the Rio Leona, same gravelly hell as on the other bank. The Rio Santa Cruz is no better but at last, after five days of suffering, the gravel ends: we're back on the old blacktop. Asphalt, and the smoothest of all road surfaces. It's a black stairway to V-twin heaven. Praise be with you. We can even shift up a gear or two! The kilometres rush by. Bienvenidos to El Calafate, centre of Patagonia tourism; here we reunite with Tommy, muscle his Pan off the flatbed truck. We don't think twice about the jammed rear gate, over it goes by sheer willpower. All we need now is a new gearbox. It's Sunday and nothing is happening.

Monday rolls around. No news about gearboxes. On Tuesday it transpires that the gearbox is stuck with customs in Buenos Aires – there's something wrong with the documentation. Seems there is a law in Argentina against the import of reconditioned gearboxes. Talk about interesting laws! Right, this is Latin America. We get a 'customs agent', part with another 200 dollars and drown customs under faxes.

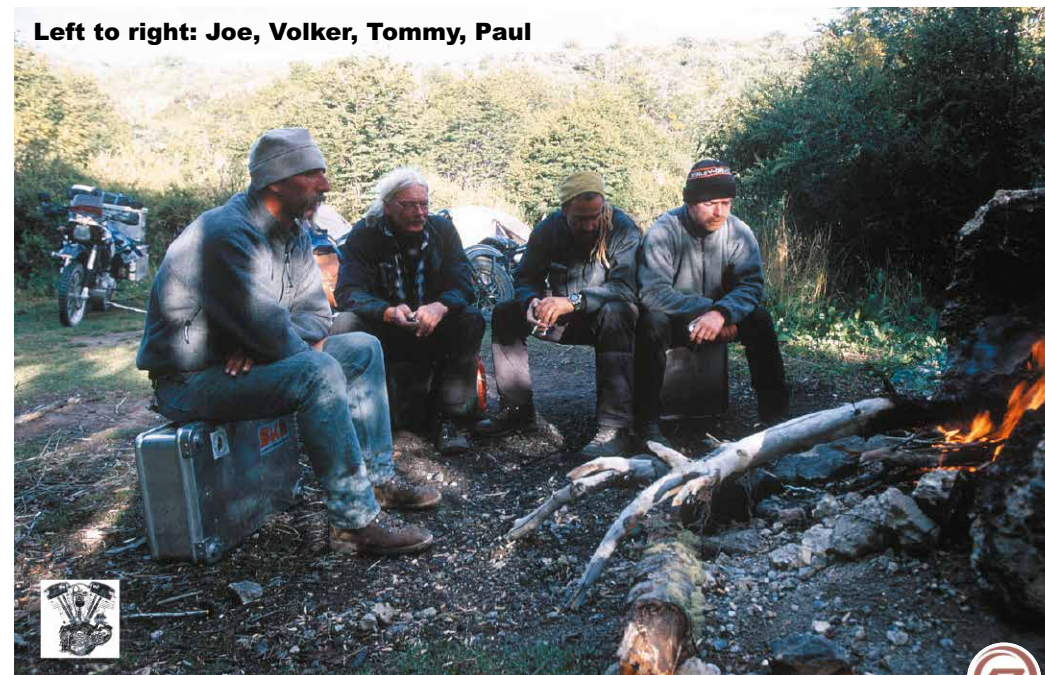
While Tommy stays on the case, the others take a day off to visit the Perito Moreno glacier in the Cordillieres. This baby moves at the speed of two metres a day into Lago Argentino, Spanish for 'make that on the rocks'. While we purvey the scene, house-sized chunks of ice break off the glacier and thunder into the blue waters beneath. Grinding, whining, rumbling, popping noises everywhere, it's just like being on a trusty American V-twin. Dinner is ingested right by the lake, and we choose to spend the night there, too. It's cold and eerie with the silence punctuated by creaking noises followed by violent 'crack' sounds that pierce the tranquil night air.

Next morning after breakfast we take a little trekking tour up to the glacier. Then by boat we get even closer to the glacier and actually step on the ice. Meanwhile in El Calafate, Tommy struggles with the local Internet to get hotly expected photos to Germany. Ten minutes a picture calls for a radical byte reduction.

The gearbox was supposed to arrive on the afternoon flight, but it never showed up. Tommy loses his composure, only to hear that the



Left to right: Joe, Volker, Tommy, Paul



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gearbox will be at the hotel at 8pm. At extra cost. By now we've spent almost US\$1000 on that 'box. But at 20:00 the thing duly arrives and we start to bolt it back in place where it belongs, daylight fading quickly. Next morning the last nuts and bolts are torqued down with less than ideal tools. The socket for the primary sprocket is substituted by a chisel from the hardware store. Using a hammer, we get results quickly, the southern way. Bang on the primary, start the motor, VVrrooommp-vrrooommp! Ruta 40, here we come.

Escape to the Border (*El Calafate to Puerto Natales*)

Blacktop all the way to El Cerrito then a switch to gravel again... today with winds like a 'V-Rod on Nitro' blowing in our faces. Between clouds of dust we look out for the turn off to Chile.

After one wrong turn and 30 minutes of fruitless gravelling, we make it to the border. The customs officers wave us through, no problem. The road in no-man's-land is worse than anything we've seen so far, but after the sign "Bienvenidos a Chile" things start to brighten up. We tool along to the border town of Cerro Castillo. Here we pass Aduana and Migracion in a record breaking 20 minutes. This calls for beer. Followed by beer and then more beer. The last 100k's to the Torres del Paine National Park wait until mañana.

9:00 next morning the four of us are on the gravel again... which soon changes to dirt road, hard and smooth as concrete. Under ice-blue skies our Milwaukee irons roll across a guanaco filled landscape, winding their way ever closer to the majestic Torres del Paine. Oh my god! This is so beautiful it hurts the dust-encrusted eyes. We find a spot for the night near the Laguna Azul, very likely the most breathtakingly beautiful camping-ground in the world.

Around the campfire we get the feeling that there is definitely no better place to eat noodles and tuna from the can. The next day Chile shows

its best side. The roads are mucho better than their Argentine counterparts, the hills greener, the trees more numerous – and while the things you buy cost more of your hard-earned, they seem to be better quality. We find this out in Puerto Natales, a central trading post on the north-south turnpike. Very welcome is the speedy Internet connection – and the fresh squid we have for dinner.

Chain Reaction (*Puerto Natales to Rio Grande*)

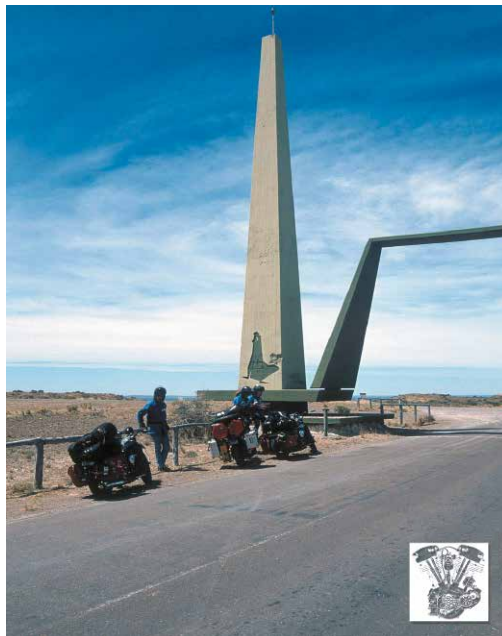
We relish the flat concrete surface of the Chilean roads – speeds of 50mph are no problem. South of Puerto Natales we encounter strong headwinds. We flatten them with cubic inches. Joe's Knuckle needs a little attention. His front brake needs retightening. Tommy fears for his

wheel bearings – but there is no problem. By 3pm we arrive on the shore of the Magellan Straits in Punta Arenas, Chile. The last ferry of the day just vanishes on the horizon. We set up camp. Time for a chain service.

Joe and Paul take to the tools. Joe loosens up the wrong bolt, tries to tighten the chain and BANG snaps an adjusting screw. Darn! After some heavy cussing we use the time-honoured way of adjusting the chain tension with a tyre-iron. Bingo! Our collection of Harley fans grows by the minute. Israeli naval officers, their wives, an Englishman on a 650 BMW all stop by to say hello. Englishman forgets British understatement for a minute: "*You're real heroes, guys!*"

We make it onto the ferry, say goodbye to continental South America and the rusty vessel takes us to Tierra del Fuego, port of entry is Porvenir. The bay stinks, we book rooms for US\$6.00, home-cooked chicken dinner included. Not bad! The main street sports a couple of bars, and we get in the mood to party, but landlady Linda warns: "*The chicas in the first bar are ugly, but in the other bar up the street they're even worse!*" We avoid the chicas, turn in early and are on the move

.....
'After two hours of sea-sickness we see the
harbour lights again - the skipper has decided to
turn back and postpone the sinking of four
Harleys in the Beagle Channel to a later date...'
.....



again at 8am next morning. Eight big cylinders shake, rattle and roll through Porvenir.

The road is better than ever, 40mph no problem. Just the right place for Joe's rear brake to seize up, grinding a 10m furrow into the gravel. It pays to be meticulous when adjusting your drive chain.

It's another border to cross, back to Argentina. We breeze through customs, fill up on cheap Argentine gas, stock up on Quilmes beer, and scoot off on smooth black stuff, Rio Grande bound, the Atlantic ocean in view all the time. In Rio Grande Paul decides to get to the bottom of his Knucklehead's shaking. Just in time – the primary case is full of exploded bits of chain rollers. Time to install the spare chain we brought all the way from Japan, er, Germany, er Japan.

Can Harleys Swim? *(Rio Grande to Ushuaia)*

The next day we shake, judder and jump on a pothole collection called Ruta 3 into an enchanted forest. Wind-bent trees, branches in all shades of green, overgrown by moss and silvery lichen... sunrays feeling their way through low hanging clouds and wisps of mysterious fog. Why didn't they make Lord of the Rings here we wondered? The next village's name... spookily it's called Tolkin.

On we roll, across a hell of dust. No rain for days, no wind, every vehicle kicks up giant plumes of dust that hover for minutes over the road blocking our vision. The last 40k to Ushuaia are blacktop again, which we take as a good sign. We follow the scenic detour over the alpine-like Paso Garibaldi and finally there it is – surrounded by snow-capped mountains, snuggled to the awesome Beagle Channel – Ushuaia. We made it. We actually got there. Strangely we feel no euphoria. Now it's over already.

To cheer things up, we have lunch Ushuaia style. Then we move to the Rugby Club campgrounds, where supposedly all the bikers meet. Not today. We get the best spot near the river, feast on BBQ sausages and beer. The river rushes by and after several beers the four of us fall into a deep sleep.

We are a couple of days ahead in our timing, so we get ideas: how



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about going to Navarino Island with the bikes, or take a plane trip to the Antarctic? No flights, but Tommy digs up a skipper with a sailing vessel large enough for the bikes. For the trip we need clearance with the Chilean Consulate. The consul is helpful. *"You want to go to Navarino? No problem!"*

But he has doubts over the accessibility of our destination, Puerto Toro. Only a dirt track, *"a path maybe"* leads there. Nothing to shake an Iron Rider. Skipper Mono agrees to carry the four heavy bikes on his sailing vessel *"Mago del Sur"* (Southern Sorcerer) for US\$2000. Not cheap, but we're not here every weekend. He tells us to just come down to the yacht harbour by six pm.

The yacht harbour is an L-shaped affair of loose planks. Mono's boat is moored in the third row. The other boats need moving, but no owners in sight. We leave for a quick pizza.

On our return no boats have moved, Mono is gone as well. Hours later Mono returns, moves his boat to the end of the planks. He bridges the one metre gap with two planks 20cm wide. Somehow the four bikes get on board without contact with the salty stuff. Everything is lashed down heavily, the channel is known to be choppy.

Just after midnight the *"Mago"* leaves port, passing the luxury cruise ship *"Bremen"*. Out in the channel it immediately gets rough. The wind speed accelerates to 60 knots! The same speed as Paul's pizza on its way back out. Faces turn from white to green and back. The crossing is supposed to take five hours, but after just two hours of seasickness we already see the harbour lights again – the skipper has wisely decided to turn back and postpone the sinking of four gravel-battered Harley-Davidsons in the Beagle Channel to a later date.

The four Iron Riders celebrate their scooters' happy rescue by having their umpteenth beer-and-BBQ. The next day there is just time to buy a couple of presents, penguins are the great favourite, and before you can say: *"Hasta luego Argentina y Chile, muchas gracias por una aventura inolvidable!"* we are back on the plane to Europe.

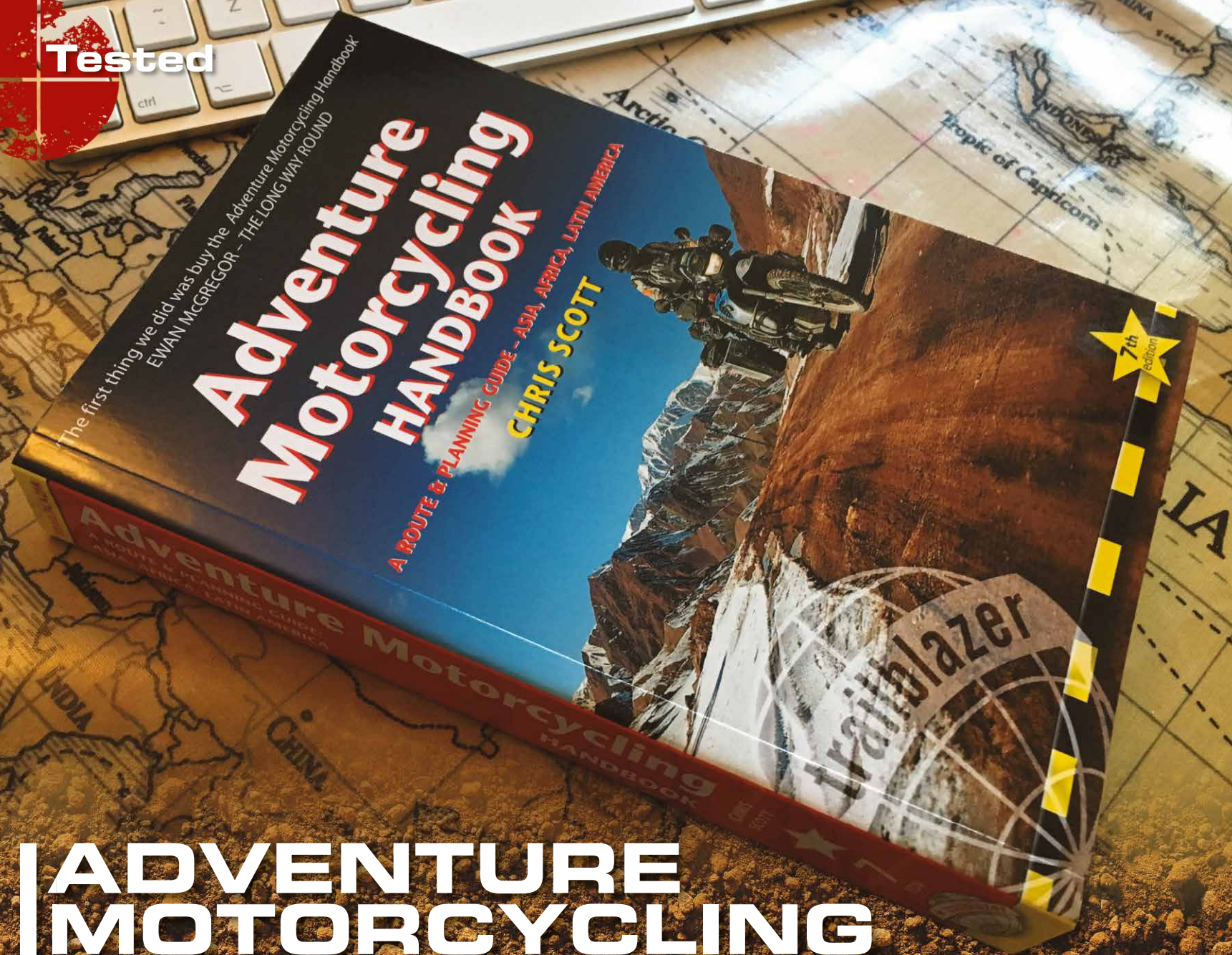
What a trip!



Thanks to: Joe, Paul, Tommy & Volker, the staff of W&W Cycles of Würzburg, Germany and Harley-Davidson motorcycles for making this adventure possible...



Tested



ADVENTURE MOTORCYCLING HANDBOOK

Adventure Motorcycling Handbook - Seventh edition

Chris Scott

US\$24.95 / £15.99

Trailblazer (www.trailblazer-guides.com)

WHAT CHRIS SCOTT has done, while not exactly the impossible, is at the least difficult – he's made a great book better. The seventh edition of his authoritative guide on all things adventure riding – now a surprising 25 years in print – is his best yet.

'AMH' has lasted so long precisely because Scott does take the time and care to update it regularly. And also because he's established an enviable network of experienced contributors – who feed back to Scott up-to-date information and advice on motorcycle travel in all four corners of the world – it is almost certainly the most reliable and considered source of information for adventure riders probably on the whole planet.

The basis of the book is as a route and planning guide, on which it delivers so well; Scott is equally as thorough as he is practical as he is eloquent. But it's the depth as well as the range that sets it apart. There are 'picture books' that set out adventure motorcycling in a far more eye-catching manner, and we'll not take anything away from them, we need them too, but Scott's book is the ultimate tome.

Okay, given that AMH is the size of a





slightly longer paperback and fairly 'longhand' in presentation, it is then a touch analogue in an increasingly digital age, but three-quarters of the world is still analogue. There's an analogy we can apply: break an alloy luggage rack in Namibia and you're pretty much hamstrung, break a steel rack, though, and you'll find a bush engineer with welding torch who'll have the rack heated, re-bent or welded-up in no time. Scott is no technophobe, but he – and his contributors – understands the world outside of the digital, global-courier serviced, network.

What's better about the seventh edition? Well, to contradict everything I've just written, by the inclusion of some glorious full-page full-colour photography to accompany the updated ride reports Scott's made it visually more appealing! Photos are access points, you see. But as well those sections which will naturally date, such as on bike choice and advice on access to countries around the world, have all been revised. And as AMH is over 350 pages, an update is no small task.

Bottom line, if you only ever buy one book on adventure riding then make it this one.

Jon Bentman



ADVENTURE MOTORCYCLING HANDBOOK



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www.rustsports.com
Warwick House
The Grange
St Peter Port
Guernsey
GY1 2PX

Editor: Jonathan Bentman
editor@rustsports.com

Designer: Andy Riley

Contributors: Josh Snowden (UK),
Chris Evans (France), David Knight (IoM),
Gary Freeman (UK)

Commercial Manager: James Linane
james.linane@rustsports.com

Managing Director: Warren Malschinger

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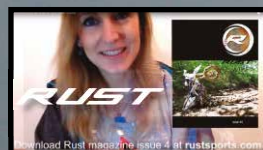
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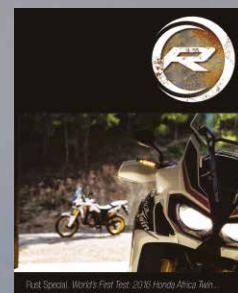
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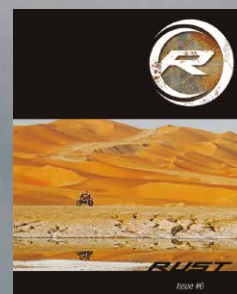
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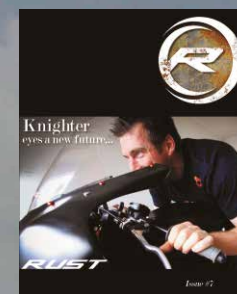
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