



RUST

**2017
Beta
Special**

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Beta





BETTER BETA

BY JON BENTMAN,
PHOTO: BETA

WELCOME TO RUST's 2017 Beta Enduros special edition. All Beta, front to back. And all good. I'll save the detail for the ride reports you'll find further into this edition, but in short Beta have been making good ground in recent years. Better bikes mean better sales (*oh, and better results on track*). And clearly open ears mean this factory is responding well, too, to customer (*and journalist – we'd like to think*) feedback. Year on year their product is getting better and better.

Two years ago I attended the 2015 model launch and while there was much to impress, there was one significant drawback common across all their models – sub-standard suspension. Great bikes, I said, once you've tackled the suspension. This year that caveat has been wiped clean away. Beta has stuck with Sachs as their supplier, but they've clearly worked hard (*together*) to nail the job. Nicely done, chaps.



Right now KTM/Husqvarna are stealing the headlines given their all-new 2017 enduros (*new frames, new engines*), but new doesn't automatically trigger 'good' or 'best', nor does it mean you'll necessarily find a like or love for the new products. Beta meanwhile have been gently refining their range and given they make 350, 390, 430 and 480cc four-strokes – not the now traditional 250s, 350s, 450s, 500s – their offerings are different, individual – rider-focused rather than race-focused. And which 300cc two-stroke is dominating in world (*grand prix*) enduro right now? Yes, Beta's.

There are many damn good reasons to be considering buying Beta in 2017. So please, read on, explore their range – and maybe this year you too might think red is right...



THE WONDER OF STEVE

Usually when a Junior moves up to the top ranks it takes a season or two for them to find their feet. Britain's Steve Holcombe took third in the World Juniors last year, this year he's already taken three outright wins in the premiere EnduroGP class. The West Country lad has been a revelation. His weapon of choice – the Beta RR300R Racing.

Image: Beta



SALVATION FOR SALVINI?

Alex Salvini is a former E3 World Champion. Being Italian you can imagine how it must feel for him to race an Italian bike. It's taken him a while to get to grips with the Beta RR430 but at the last round he was right on the pace – and the podium. There's more to come here!

Image: Beta



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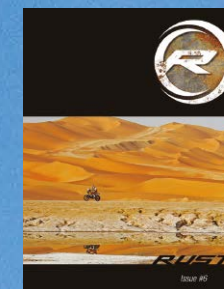
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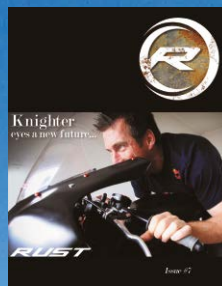
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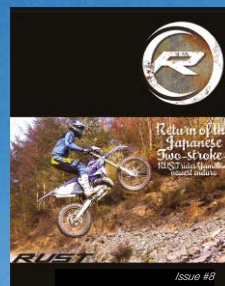
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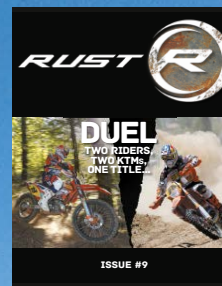
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HONDA CRF1000L AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL EDITION
RUST gets the exclusive world's first test of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin!



HUSQVARNA 701 ENDURO/SM SPECIAL EDITION
Test of the new Husqvarna 701 Enduro and 701 Supertmoto



YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL EDITION
RUST tests the all-new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia, Southern Spain...



2016 BMW GS TROPHY SPECIAL EDITION
RUST joins the GS Trophy riding across Northern Thailand on board the latest BMW R1200GS



MADAGASCAR SPECIAL EDITION
JB joins the Touratech United People of Adventure expedition to the island of Madagascar...



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BOOM-BOOM BETA

BETA ARE KICKING the trends – growing with every year, since 2013 their production has increased by 30%, and they're selling everything they make.

At the launch of the 2016 model range Beta planned to produce 15,000 units in 2015/16, this financial year they're upping that to 18,000. And this

expansion is coming despite a faltering domestic market. Italy is not in a good way at the moment, and while this remains Beta's biggest single market (*they commanded an impressive 34% of their domestic enduro market in 2014/15*), the growth has come in overseas sales – word is definitely getting around, the new Betas are the real deal.

Their standout sales highlight? The X-trainer – it's by far their most requested model they say. It would seem they've got the mix on this crossover model just about right!

Not bad for a family owned and run business, with a staff number of just 150 – and now some 111 years old.



ECONOMICS

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GOING FOR GOLD

BETA HAVE BECOME the masters of the small, focused race team. In EnduroGP they run a tight three-man factory team and a factory-supported second squad (*Beta Boano*).

2014 was a big year for Beta, with Manxman Danny McCanney winning the Junior World Championship for the Boano squad, while Johnny Aubert took third in the E2 classification with an impressive eight podium finishes offsetting four no-scores due to injury.

In 2015 Brit Steve Holcombe became Beta's bright new talent securing third in the world juniors while Aubert suffered a pretty dreadful, injury-hit season.

This year has seen the factory squad – Aubert, Holcombe and Alex Salvini – take a major step-up. Holcombe leads the E3 championship by a small margin over Aubert (for a Beta 1-2), having taken eight wins to the Frenchman's three. But as well Holcombe has guided his RR300 to three outright wins in the premiere EnduroGP class and sits third in that classification, with Aubert sixth and Salvini (*Beta RR430*) ninth. Salvini is also currently fifth in the E2 category having hit the podium once this season.

RACING



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LESS SMOKE, LONGER LIFE

EVERY YEAR WE ask the same question – when will the end come for two-strokes? As surely the ever-tightening vehicle emission regulations will bring the end sooner rather than later. This topic came up again at Beta's launch.

And there was good news. Beta have squeezed their two-strokes past Euro 4 which comes into effect later this year, which means in theory their two-strokes have a reprieve at least through to 2020, when Euro 5 may (*or may not*) come into force. To pass Euro 4 they've had to fit a more restrictive exhaust, with catalyzer, but it seems they are able to supply a traditional expansion chamber for competition purposes, so business as usual.

Credit to Beta, too, for last year they adopted an automatic oil injection system (*autolube as Yamaha used to call it*) on their RR models. Back in the day such systems were cable operated via a second cable that ran off the throttle. Beta's system is more

TWO-STROKES



sophisticated, the CDI reads from a throttle position sensor and is able to inject a far more accurate supply than the old systems or premixing allow, meaning less oil consumed and less smoke. The oil tank holds enough oil for three-and-a-half tank fills so will last even the longest day's racing, while adding only 3-400 grams to the weight of the bike. A year down the line there have been no reliability issues and the system stays.

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2016 RRs the first
with oil injection





UPGRADES AND IMPROVEMENTS

UPGRADED FORKS

The Sachs forks are 5mm longer and they contain different oil (*by Liqui Moly – who supply the Beta factory race team*) – but the emphasis here is on progression and control

UPGRADED SHOCK

The Sachs shock now features a separated high and low speed adjustment system, each function is independent for finer adjustment

NEW TRIPLE CLAMPS

Stiffer – and lighter by 140 grams

NEW SPEEDO/COMPUTER

With fuel injection (*and electric start only on the Xtrainer*) battery condition is important, so the new digital unit now also gives voltage readings so you know if the battery is charging. Other functions: speed (*in km/h or mph, plus recorded highest speed and average speed*), trip meter and timer

NEW FUEL CAP

Now with integral breather

NEW FOR 2017





NEW RIMS

Last year black, this year silver – by Excel, with black spokes – lighter, although no specific weight-saving figures were given.

Euro 4 COMPLIANCE

All models will meet the latest emission regulations. This will mean two production runs of the two-strokes, with the second batch in September coming with a more restrictive exhaust, with catalyzer, to meet Euro 4 (*free-flowing competition pipe also being supplied*)

NEW CAMSHAFTS

Revised cam profiles for 2017 '*making them even easier to ride, while retaining their top performance*'.

NEW VALVE SPRINGS

'Softer' springs help to reduce friction, smoothing the bottom end power while adding some more to the top end too.

CAN for computer diagnostics

'Controller Area Network' diagnostics is market standard in the car world, can be found on various road bikes too (*BMW were an early adopter*) – now it's coming to dirt bikes too.

NEW FOR 2017

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RR350

2017 **TESTED** Beta Special

YOU CAN'T TRUST us journos, you know. I can't even trust myself. I look back at my reports from the Beta launches for the 2014 and 15 model years, and find I waxed lyrical about the RR350. This year – it was my least favourite. '*Fickle*' comes to mind.

Actually I think the reaction is dependent upon location, on the type of terrain we ride. This year's test venue simply didn't suit the RR350, there were no grass tests and much of the going was steep, hard, rocky, technical – palm-tearing stuff, and really nowhere





where you could get this little screamer wound-up. This was not its playground.

Still, yes it was light, revvy and an okay ride in most respects, but the torquier bigger capacity four-strokes nailed its ass. It remains a no-holds-barred racer, to get the most from it you need to be the kind of guy who keeps the throttle pinned (*a 250F / E1 type*). You're probably a young dude too, for that kind of racer attitude is exhausting to maintain. There was a German tester with us, he rated it his favourite, so obviously it's an age/taste/speed/cultural thing...

WHAT'S TO KNOW

RR350

- 349.1cc
- DOHC and four-valves (*Titanium*)
- Revs to 13,000rpm
- 111.5kg
- 8.0-litre tank
- 940mm seat height
- Rev-hound racer...

POINT OF INTEREST

RUST: So will you make a 250F?
BETA: No.

RR350



RR390



2017 Beta Special TESTED

THE RR390 WAS a great bike to evaluate the 2017 suspension upgrades, for it was the easiest four-stroke to ride leaving your faculties free to fully appreciate the chassis upgrades.

Having missed the 2016 launch this was my first ride on the much-improved Sachs suspension – and it is exactly that, much improved. Not only is the action plusher but the front-back balance feels about right too, in past Beta launches the bikes have felt tail-low (*or front high, if you prefer*), but now the bikes feel to sit level with a correct match for spring and damping rates front and back. The settings feel on the softer side of firm and it was noticeable on downhills you could feel the front tyre (*and rim*) pushing (*and banging*) into the track as the forks dived. But that's preferable to the unyielding forks as we had for the launch of the 2015 models.

The riding position is conventional, kind of neutral – albeit I had to rotate the bars forward to get a little more room in the cockpit (*nothing unusual in that*). The handling feels a touch slower – or is it more stable? – than a KTM but remains agile enough. It's a comfortable ride, all told. If I was picky, the bars feel a little narrow.

Now this seems odd to relate, but the front mudguard on all the Betas seemed a touch too long, poking way out front, ideal for stopping mud flicking into your face but it felt (*to me*) to obscure the view of the front wheel a little too much – giving a feel to the front end like a Gas Gas of about ten years back! Maybe that's a personal observation – and looking at the photos I can't reconcile what I can see and what I felt – but it

felt to disguise that immediate sense of connection with the front end you may feel with say the KTM. I settled into the ride after a while and the feeling went away, but it was disconcerting, at least to begin with. We'd be interested to hear if anyone else finds this, too.

The Nissin brakes are strong. On the baked hard pack, with dust covering, this meant I locked the front a few times and on one occasion went flying over the bars when I locked it and folded the front down a rut – such are the risks us clubman-level test riders face. Once I'd recalibrated though, the brakes were fine and I also found occasions to be thankful that they were as strong as they were.

The RR390's engine is a peachy unit. Again I'm contradicting myself here. In 2015 I wasn't warming to the 390 unit at all – thinking it to be the poor cousin to the 430 – but over the technical terrain of this test venue, its mix of power and torque was spot-on. It was easier to get up to speed than the 350 as it was pulling harder from lower in the rev range, but it was no handful.

To call the RR390 a great trail bike would be correct but also a travesty – its versatile enough to also be a great racer, for the clubman level rider it would be ideal. We've known 400s in the past, and those who owned them – be they trail rider or pro racer – remember them with much fondness. It is a great capacity and that Beta keep one in their range is a damn good thing.

WHAT'S TO KNOW

RR390

385.6cc

DOHC and four-valves (*Titanium*)

111.5kg (*Same as RR350*)

8.0-litre tank

940mm seat height

Easy to ride trail bike come racer

POINT OF INTEREST

Probably the nicest, most manageable of the four-strokes in tight technical terrain

2017
Beta
Special
TESTED



RR390



THE RR430 RIDES much like the 390, only it's the 390 on steroids – it seemingly has the same manageable power curve, only it peaks that much higher. In fact it's the best test of Beta's assertion that their bikes are designed to be easy to ride. So while we might talk of the RR430 as a racer – one of its jobs being to bash bars in the incredibly competitive E2 class – it is indeed an easy racer to ride.

It has a different bore and stroke to the 390, in fact it has a shorter stroke, but it doesn't feel any revvier, or particularly more powerful. It is of course more powerful, but in a super-nice way. It is power even a clubman can use – and therefore appreciate. Rather than blowing the extra horses in wheelspin or mad wheelies, it seems superbly capable at applying that to the ground, finding traction and punting you and bike up the trail in the best possible way. Quick and efficient.

On the enduro test loop – probably a three-four minute circuit, up hill and down through trees, with a bit of rock, but also flowing and undulating – that power and the tweaked suspension made for a bike that really pushed itself into the ground, when accelerating or braking, making it feel so secure. And not being a full-house 450, not being the snarling animal, it was possible to ride it that much faster, confident in it staying on track.

In the briefing, Beta quietly spoke of the efforts

RR430



2017
Beta
Special
TESTED





they've made in developing the smooth characteristics of their fuel injection (*in association with French firm Synerject*) – which was rolled out across all the four-strokes only last season, having debuted in 2015 (*model year*) with the RR350 – and this combined with the soft cam timing, not to mention soft valve springs certainly seem to be wrapping the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove.

Every test of the RR430, from 2015-2017 – I'm happy to say – has been consistently complimentary – so maybe it suits all types of terrain, all types of rider. It really is a great bike.

WHAT'S TO KNOW

RR430

430.9cc

DOHC and four-valves (Titanium inlet, steel exhaust)

112.5kg

8.0-litre tank

940mm seat height

Forget the 350s, this is a proper E2-lite

POINT OF INTEREST

Do we really need 450 power in E2?
In the world champs, leader Matt Phillips rides a mere 300, while KTM's lead rider Taylor Robert rides a 350...



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RR430



2017 Beta Special TESTED



THE RR480 IS a bored 430, with a 5mm bigger piston it goes from 95x60.8 to 100x60.8mm. That's pretty much job done.

Those dimensions make for a capacity of 477.5cc, so you could just as easily call it a 475 – and that would better describe what it is, a bike that is exactly a halfway house between a 450 and a 500. Punchier than a 450, not as thumpy, not quite as big and lazy as a 500. Happy in the middle is exactly what it is.

Whether you would be as happy as the rider depends mostly on where you ride. No question, in the enduro test we rode the 480 was over-clubbed, you could feel the inertia particularly on the downhill, it made you squeeze that front brake just that much harder. Made you sweat.

RR480



RR480

2017 Beta Special TESTED



Valve train revisions include softer valve springs for reduced friction, revised cam timing and titanium inlet and steel exhaust valves

But for big open going it'll be great. It's got the clout but feels just that bit lighter and more maneuverable than a full-on 500.

Big dudes will like it too. And rally types. And that is enough.

WHAT'S TO KNOW

RR480

477.5cc

DOHC and four-valves

(Titanium inlet, steel exhaust)

112.5kg *(Same as RR430)*

8.0-litre tank

940mm seat height

For trail or wide-open fast stuff, yeah, just right!

POINT OF INTEREST

Top three riders in EnduroGP E3 – all ride two-strokes. It's damn hard to ride the big ones fast...





BETA'S TWO-STROKES HAVE earned respect. They're well-developed, well made and certainly competitive.

They're also a very different ride to the four-strokes. Okay, that's obvious, but we're not just talking engine characteristics here, it's the whole feel of the chassis. Lighter by about 10-kilos (*again, obvious*), but they sit lower – by 10mm on the stat sheet, but even more when you sit on them, put a 100-kilo rider in the saddle and they settle well-down in the suspension. Even the handlebars seem that much lower placed. Sit next to any of the four-stroke RRs on one of the smokers and you'll be looking up to them. But by the same token your feet are firmly on the ground and when it comes to footing your way through a seriously technical section, that's no bad thing.

The Betas are also a little bit different to the benchmark KTM two-strokes. Again, they're just that little bit mellower, less peaky, smoother, more manageable. The RR250 is the racer of the two two-strokes. It skittered around the enduro loop quite happily. Only the rider wasn't quite so happy, coming off the four-strokes that skittering could be quite unnerving. You have to recalibrate.

Did I like the RR250? Not so much, but then I'm a long way from being a super-keen 20-something warrior-racer. This bike isn't meant for me. Doesn't mean it isn't ace, though.

RR250



2017 Beta Special TESTED



WHAT'S TO KNOW

RR250

249cc

Two-stroke, reed valve, power valve and all that jazz

104kg

9.5-litre tank

930mm seat height

For when you just have to go
waaaaaaaaaaaah!

POINT OF INTEREST

Beta are the only competition enduros with automatic oil injection (*no premix*) – they're cleaner (*say Beta*) as the oil is accurately controlled via the CDI which injects according to a throttle position sensor (*no more sloppy extra cable spliced off the throttle to the oil pump*).

RR250





THE RR250 MIGHT not have been made for this tester, but the RR300 certainly was. This bike is the proverbial get-out-of-jail-free card. Short of walking on water there is nowhere this bike cannot go.

Beta thoughtfully put on a 20km trail ride in the afternoon of the launch and the RR300 was my pick for the ride. That was on account I was the last rider back from lunch and this was the only bike left. Remarkably it proved the ultimate choice all the same. Tour leader was an extreme enduro fan and so he rode his little group up and down every near vertical surface and hill he could find. Which was just fine by the RR300.

This bike can rev down to about 1rpm and not stall, and will in fact accelerate gently and surely from there. It will float over just about any kind of carnage you care to imagine, be it rut, root or rock. One point of the track there was a huge hole (*a metre deep*) between root steps and I swear the RR300 simply levitated over it – on a four-stroke a total stopper. The RR300 also has the tenacity, sheer stick-ability of Velcro. Our last hill was a monster, pocked with roots, with trees everywhere so there was no straight line up and, of course, near vertical. The RR300 tractor-ed up it from a standstill, swapping lines in an instant and simply refusing to loop out. It made it seem effortless.

When things did go wrong (*pilot error, of*



RR300



2017 Beta Special TESTED

RR300



course) the RR300 could be lifted up or clear in an instant. It feels like half the weight of a four-stroke, not just 10 or so kilos less.

Is the Beta better than a KTM 300EXC? Yes, quite possibly so. It's mellower, less revvy, and so damn well glued to the ground and conversely so floaty when it needs to be. And boy it steers nicely. Four-strokes are just awesome in the right conditions, but when things turn downright apocalyptic there's nothing as dependable as a 300 two-stroke. And this is quite possibly the best...

WHAT'S TO KNOW RR300

293.1cc

Two-stroke, reed valve, power valve and levitation valve

104kg

9.5-litre tank

930mm seat height

Reaches parts other enduros cannot reach

POINT OF INTEREST

The RR300 has a switch for two power modes (*sun/rain*). Rain mode equates to super mountain goat. Even with another 20 years development it is unlikely four-strokes will be able to replicate the extreme capability of the 300cc two-stroke enduro



THE BOTTOM LINE

Favourite bike (and best two-stroke): RR300
Best four-stroke: RR430

Those are of course personal favourites. At the launch we had a big guy from Canada (6'5") who fell in love with the RR480. A not-so-tall German guy who rated the RR350. This is why enduro manufacturers make a full range. It must be tough for motocrossers when they're so often limited to just two machines, 250 or 450 four-stroke.

But as before, really we should champion Beta for their original thinking, for not making KTM-clones. They deserve their sales successes on account they bring bikes of individuality to the market. We miss those weird 70° four-stroke motors that Husaberg used to make, but in the 390, 430 and 480 Beta are in essence plugging that gap. These are bikes that not only mark the owners out as free thinkers (*not 'sheeple'*) but also deliver to those owners – in performance and in terms of reliability and durability (*just try to look past the almost translucent plastic bodywork – heck, it really would help if Beta could do something about their plastics, solid colour there please Stefano*).

Mattighofen Inc. is the powerhouse of enduro, we can't deny, but Beta are so damn cool, ice cool. That probably comes from being Italian, but it is so much more. Perhaps its something to do with giving the customer not what they want, but what they need...

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CONCLUSION



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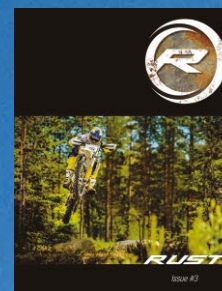
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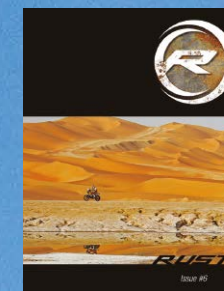
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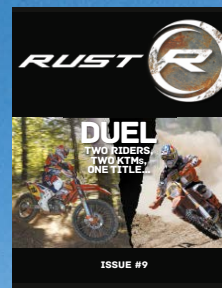
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Test of the new Husqvarna 701 Enduro and 701 Supertmoto



YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL EDITION
RUST tests the all-new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia, Southern Spain...



2016 BMW GS TROPHY SPECIAL EDITION
RUST joins the GS Trophy riding across Northern Thailand on board the latest BMW R1200GS



MADAGASCAR SPECIAL EDITION
JB joins the Touratech United People of Adventure expedition to the island of Madagascar...



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Video



RUST

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thumbnail to go direct to the Rust Sports youtube channel...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0K02x9reL0

2017 KTM MODEL RANGE LAUNCH

Warren Malschinger and Josh Snowden go to Portugal to ride the extensively redesigned 2017 KTM enduro range...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=54lfOS3nMtc

STILLWELL PERFORMANCE

Alan from Stillwell Performance explains their A-Kit tuned forks for RUST Magazine's long term Husqvarna TE300 and KTM 200EXC test bikes...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVYqp3biTnc

2016 BMW GS TROPHY THAILAND

Montage of scenes from the South-East Asia GS Trophy featuring comments from Kurt Yaeger, Tom Wolf and our man Jon Bentman...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XEKJabHLi4

2016 BMW GS TROPHY THAILAND

Kurt Yaeger describing the journalists attempts to ride up a massive mud slide on the journalist only first day acclimatisation ride out...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrOoVPEKiE

JONNY WALKER INTERVIEW

JB asks the extreme enduro specialist some pertinent questions about his rivals Graham Jarvis, David Knight and in-race hydration...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvyUxbymuMU

DESERT ROSE RACING

Patsy Quick and Clive 'Zippy' Town talk about rally navigation and latest Dakar weapon the 2016 KTM 450RR Rally bike...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBn2qbfopY

THE TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

Read the story behind the ethos of the Trail Riders Fellowship in RUST Magazine Issue 5 available FREE on the website www.rustsports.com



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

2016 HUSQVARNA LAUNCH

Warren, JB and Si give us their views on the latest Husqvarnas direct from the Wealdon Off-Road centre down in deepest Devon...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=_L8ePyI2E4M

2016 V-STROM 650XT

Seve Hackett explains the revisions to the Suzuki 650 V-Strom in order to make it more suitable for all-out adventure riding...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=yriJw_FU910

2016 YAMAHA WR450F

JB tests the new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia and finds that it's packing some heat and demands a good deal of respect...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I54XQQYoPo

2016 HUSQVARNA 701

Testing the new Husky 701 Enduro and the 701 Supermoto on the road and on the track...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooPAurYxQzY

2016 KTM MODEL RANGE LAUNCH

JB, Warren and Si brave the intense heat in the British countryside (I know...) And tell us their three favourite bikes of the day...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNw

2016 HONDA AFRICA TWIN

Exclusive first test of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin... Read the story in the RUST Magazine Special Edition at www.rustsports.com



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

2016 HONDA AFRICA TWIN

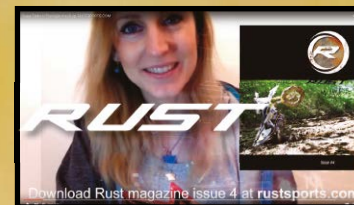
Jon Bentman discusses the finer points of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin with Tom Myers of Touratech USA



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntK07I63tuA

HONDA CB500X ADVENTURE

Jon gets an exclusive ride on the Rally Raid Products latest adaptation of the CB500X for the adventure riders out there...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_co4hGeECA

SUPER STADIUM MASH-UP

Pitgirl gives us her rundown of the 2016 Superprestigio and Superenduro season...



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RUST

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