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2021 YAMAHA WR450F

ON TEST



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DAKAR DOUBLE

Congratulations to the Monster Energy Honda Team on Honda's sixth Dakar victory. It was a great team effort as detailed in the report we've posted online <https://rustsports.com/how-we-won-dakar-2021-by-honda/> Great shot here, too, picturing one of the unluckiest guys in this year's rally – 'Nacho' Cornejo who crashed out of the rally win when almost within sight of the chequered flag.





BRING ON THE GOOD TIMES



This is a difficult editorial to write. Short of a world war we're pretty much in the worst place right now, globally. Hundreds of thousands dying due to the pandemic, economies in crisis, travel banned, businesses failing and unemployment rising – that's before we get onto global warming etc. And in the UK we've added the shortcomings of Brexit into the mix, as if the pervading misery wasn't bad enough. Sitting here in Lockdown 3 yeah, it's hard to feel the love. That said, there's enough in the mainstream media to maintain a healthy sense of depression, so I'll let it go.

Instead, let's talk up the positives. New bike sales are up, curiously, and – given new bike supply shortages – second hand bike prices are on the up as well. And, just before Lockdown 3, here at RUST, we managed to at least get out for one last ride in 2020 – testing the magnificent new 2021 Yamaha WR450F. We have a long held love for Yamaha's WR-F series. Between the 1998 WR400F and the 2001 WR250F Yamaha led the modern four-stroke charge into enduro; these were bikes which brought excitement and great –

clubman-pandering – ease of riding, not to mention reliability and durability. Some 23 years later the bottom line stats – on weight and horsepower – haven't really changed, but there's no denying the latest WR-F engines and chassis are a fair refinement compared to their forefathers. Proper thoroughbreds. And this newest 450 was so good it prompted our Austrian-loving tester to completely reset his opinions.

With infection rates dropping (here in the UK at least) and with vaccinations going out around the world lets hope that at some point soon – in 2021 at least! – we can all get out riding again, sharing our backyards. RUST is hanging in there and in fact for 2021 we're looking to get back on track with 12 issues in 12 months. These will be necessarily smaller magazines, with the balance of content tipping into our website. But between more RUST issues and an exciting plans to republish the best of 20 years of TBM (Trailbike & Enduro Magazine) we should have plenty to keep you entertained, informed and hopefully even laughing.

Safe riding (when you can)

editor@rustsports.com





RUSTAFARIANS

What's going on in the lives and workshops of the RUST team...



JB: WHAT MAY COME?

#JB318

The new year always prompts deep thought. What to do with this year of my life? That should be part of a bigger, longer-term plan, although as I get older I can see the longer term actually getting shorter. Which is no bad thing, it prompts action. Only with Lockdown it's the opposite of action right now for all of us.

Good news is after a bit of wrangling, van hiring and negotiation with various charities (just before Lockdown 3 – or should that be 3.0 for the trendies?), the garage is now free of old furniture. It's also now free of the vast accumulation of cardboard boxes that lockdown online purchases bring. This has seen the wee Honda TLR250 re-emerge from its hiding place. It is, technically speaking (or non-technically), ready for action. It's not perfect, but it's good enough. Once we can get riding and trials can be run again, we'll be out there.

The clear out has also revealed there's

space for more motorcycles in the garage. Only the various importers are pretty much closed for (media) business right now, so no dice there. While there's not enough money in the bank to go for an exciting new model I have been tempted to nudge my meager savings toward a project purchase. Even that's not easy. I've missed out on a BMW F650 Dakar and a Honda Dominator lately, it seems finding scabby dirt bikes for pin money – and worthy of restoring – is a tall order. I might have to go a little more pricey – it's back to stuffing tenners in the piggybank!

Meanwhile Warren keeps prompting me to think big, rally-wise. So be prepared for an onslaught from RUST as and when the pandemic relents. Grand plans, but right now a quiet week's meander around southern Morocco on a rental trail bike, pootling from kasbah to kasbah – probably with buddy July for gourmet guidance – would do quite nicely.



JULY: A SIX-POINT PLAN

#JB297

Like JB, every Jan I sit down to plan my motorcycle calendar for the year.

It gives me joy to see at least one or more planned motorcycle rides each month. This year with all of us in lockdown and so many motorcycle events getting cancelled it all seems a

bit futile. So instead I have devised a six-point plan for things adventure related that I (or you!) can do now:

1. Photographs and Videos – We're all guilty of having hard disks full of pictures that have never seen the light of day. Learn or improve your photography and share those magical moments with the world via social media. I started a Facebook page a couple of years ago to celebrate this, called Moto Adventure Photography. Have a look and get posting!

2. Kit – Have a rummage through your motorcycle and camping kit and see if you need to clean it, add to it or get rid. There's loads of sales happening including the fab one on helmets at RUST's sister site www.bell-motorcycle-helmets.co.uk.

3. Plan a long ride – The only dependency on this is lockdown lifting. Plan your ride with all the pit stops, places to eat, dishes to try, sights to see, camping spots etc... and start saving for it. Get it approved by the missus and book it in the calendar.

4. GPS – Most of us have GPSs but we don't scratch the surface when it comes to using all the inbuilt functionality. Get onto YouTube and master your GPS inside out – even better plot your next rides route on it. Also, look at alternative map apps. Maps. Me, and What3words are a good starting point.

5. Armchair Upskilling – YouTube is inundated with 'how to ride adventure motorcycles better' videos. Pick your favorites and see if some theory might help you ride better. There's also stuff on camping, outdoor cooking, bushcraft etc.

6. Travel Books, Guides and Programmes – Read one travel book a month coupled with a country guide for a destination you want to ride to next and watch a programme on it. This whole immersive style works for me and brings the destination to life.



CRAIG: DAKAR CALLING...

#CK275

I'm going to be a modern man and share my feelings. I've had a rubbish first two weeks of 2021. It's a spiritual agony to sit and watch other people get excited about Dakar, even those I've been among that have been watching someone they know incredibly well doing so. And with the retrospective I can now apply, I rather missed being there, which detracted from the enjoyment of watching. I try as a rule to be present wherever I'm present, but I let myself down somewhat this last fortnight. I think it's inevitable that I'll be back in the bivouac once again soon enough.

My mate Neil Hawker getting himself to the end was however a fabulous distraction from my grump. Knowing the sense of achievement he felt as he crossed the finish line is something I'm whole heartedly enjoying – it's called mudita apparently: taking joy in someone else's joy. He's had a stormer placing inside the top 40 with a finish of 37th overall and 6th in Malle Moto class, which is without

a doubt the culmination of a lifetime in two-wheeled off-road sport. Well done my man.

I shouldn't have allowed myself to enter the post event fug, but for the most part I've decided to embrace a rather special time at home through these lockdowns. With the arrival of baby Keyworth last March we sort of switched off to the crumbling, pandemic riddled world and embraced our new crew in a cocoon-like manner. We got some chickens too, and retreated into our little piece of Lincolnshire.

It's very much time to get off my arse now. The very recent purchase of a new 2021 Husqvarna FE350 has prompted fresh activity. Get fit, get riding – and get racing (as and when)...

It wasn't ever on my agenda to do two consecutive Dakars, or even really a second at all, however I have a rather serious itch to get a Malle Moto finish. I'm at the eyebrow raising stage with the boss currently, but I'm not very good at not scratching, and the itch won't go away. #2022 it is then, assuming I can get fit...



WARREN: WORKSHOP SANCTUARY

#WM151

I'm sure I'm not alone in seeking and finding sanity in the workshop. A

haven, a retreat, a little quiet time away from the bombardment of the 'news and information' bollocks. I'm sick of telly, the news and frankly all of it. I grew up listening to the radio as a kid so (although not quite the same) I

select a playlist on Spotify – get some tunes going, turn on the coffee machine, get out the service manuals and find happiness in the simplicity of life and learning new things.

I'm now into the frame rebuild on the FE350. It's made its way off the workbench and on to the stand. Save for splitting the cases I have the motor apart as well. I could have a real Brexit rant right now but given my workshop zen I'll only say that getting parts has been a pain. There's the new 20% import/export charges on everything to and from Europe (minor exceptions) and that plus the almighty cock ups by HMRC over the past three weeks all mean the motor is not making fast progress at all. Pro-tip from us in here at RUST about workshop life in



our brave new 'brexited' future: make sure you have ALL the parts and tools you need before you start any work, it'll save you a load of frustration and a lot of time. Check out our YouTube Channel, I'll be posting a video on essential tools, lubricants and bits you need to make you job easier for the majority of engine, suspension and frame servicing on Austrian enduro bikes. 🇬🇧



1998



2003



2007



2012



2016



2020



YAMAHA WR450F

MODEL INTRODUCTION

Yamaha's bigger WR-F has been with us for 23 years now – that is some innings. It started out as a 400 in 1998, grew to 426cc in 2000 before becoming a fully-fledged 450 in 2003. Of equal importance was the arrival of electric start in that 2003 revamp – which made the big Yam a lot more approachable for all. The 2007 model was another breakthrough, when it first gained an aluminium frame. Then in 2012 came the huge change to the fuel-injected reverse cylinder motor and beam-type aluminium frame. In 2016 the reverse-cylinder concept got a major review, with a revised four-valve motor and chassis. This model was refined in 2019 with a new

motor and made slimmer (etc), and now a similar process again for 2021.

Always, the WR-F has been developed alongside its motocross sibling, the YZ-F. For some years its development lagged a fair bit behind the 'crosser but of late it's back on track with just a 12-month lag between upgrades for the 'crosser being fed into the enduro model.

The WR-F has always been a good looker and performer – albeit securing only the one world championship, with Johnny Aubert in 2008 – and you can see the familial genes flowing through the years. The underlying stats, though, suggest the more things change, the more they stay the same. The original WR400F is quoted

as offering 48hp while weighing 114kg (dry). Come the 2007 model of WR450F power had increased to 58hp and weight was down to 112.5kg. This 2021 WR450F has no claimed horsepower but is not likely to be too far off the 57hp the current YZ-F has been tested at, and with a full fuel tank it weighs a claimed 119kg, so about 111kg dry. As you can see there's something of a plateau there in terms of outright performance and mass, yet for sure the latest models have felt considerably easier to pilot and less bulky. 🇬🇧

YAMAHA WR450F

THE 2021 UPDATES

REVISED MOTOR

What the YZ-F got for 2020, the WR-F gets for 2021. The latest engine revisions have left it 'lighter and more powerful at all engine speeds' – not that we've EVER complained about a lack of power from WR450Fs – these beasts have always been powerhouses.

WHAT'S NEW?

There's a lighter, more compact piston with a raised compression ratio (from 12.8 to 13.0:1). The cylinder head is smaller thanks to repositioned camshafts which have made for revised (steeper) port angles. The engine is apparently more compact as a consequence although we've not seen any dimensions to back this up. Oh, and that blue rocker box cover is made from magnesium. Cam timing is apparently enduro specific – not as found on the YZ-F. Alas, we've no real detail on all of this as yet. The transmission (five-speed, still) has also been tweaked with special treatment to harden the third and fourth gears for durability and attention to the selector drum for better shifting.

NEW FRAME

These always look just the same, but the fact is this is a new and lighter frame with thinner main spars and thicker bottom tubes and revised engine plates, which changes the flex-feel, which Yamaha says 'gives improved feedback over bumps'. This is, of course, a different setup to the motocrosser, more appropriate to enduro riding. Suspension is still Kayaba and while there's no mention of new settings for this year in the UK briefing, other countries have been told there are new bolts and torque settings on the triple clamps, wheel axle and bar mounts – all to assist with that feel and flex. As well, the front brake now features bigger pistons and a caliper body that's 30% more rigid.





▷ YAMAHA POWER TUNER (APP)

No more faffing with Yamaha's hand-held plug-in plastic Palm Pilot thing of the recent past. No they've joined the 21st century and we now have a free App for your smart phone that wirelessly communicates with the WR-F. As before you can adjust your mapping for fuel/air and ignition timing. There's a blue button on the left handlebar which allows you to switch between two maps while on the move.

PLUS

Actually the UK press briefings need to be beefed up a bit. Here's a couple more details we've gleaned elsewhere There's a new instrument panel, which now features fuel consumption indicator and those are new lighter footpegs. According to Aussie sources Josh Coppins had a fair hand in the development of this bike. Given the fact the Kiwi is a classy motocross rider not an enduro specialist, we're not sure if that's a positive or negative! 🚫

2021 YAMAHA WR450F TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: 450cc, liquid cooled, DOHC four-valve four-stroke, single

BORE X STROKE: 97.0 x 60.8mm

COMPRESSION RATIO: 13.0:1

FUELLING: Fuel Injection

GEARBOX: Five-speed

FRAME: Aluminium bilateral beam

SEAT HEIGHT: 955mm

WHEELBASE: 1480mm

RAKE & TRAIL: 27°10' / 116mm

GROUND CLEARANCE: 320mm

WET WEIGHT (including full oil and fuel tank): 119 kg

FUEL TANK CAPACITY: 7.9L



2021 YAMAHA WR450F

RIDE REPORT

So, for 2021 Yamaha has remodeled their already excellent WR450F. We guess the question has to be, 'can you over-egg the pudding?' Well, we headed out to deepest Wales on two of the coldest wettest days of 2020 to find out...

Words: Craig Keyworth. **& Images:** JB





must be the last rider I know to have been to the Jones' spread in Wales. Pretty much everyone I ride, or have ridden with, has a Jones story, and the general consensus in my pre-/on-the-drive ring-around (hands free of course, before the safety police comment) was that the Yamaha Off-Road Experience, to give it its full name, is the best school of its type in the UK. High praise indeed.

We stayed nearby the night before (COVID restrictions also adhered to of course, before the safety police don the other cap) and were there bright and early the next morning. I met the dogs first, and even the apparently grumpy old fella came over and made friends. Yep, we were off to a great start – a nice drive into a typically stunning Welsh valley, into a typically stunning (immaculate) working farm to be greeted by a pair of fine working collie/kelpies and the old stalwart, by which I mean the collie, not JB (again, we arrive separately). Add to it a welcome brew and a tidy workshop and we're already in full agreement about its standing – even before I entered the heated changing rooms equipped with the best engineered drying rack I've ever seen.

ALL NEW ICON BLUE

JB had ridden the WR450F briefly the day before, but kept tight-lipped. This is the new for 2021 WR450F, all-new and mostly unriden here in the UK. Given the year that was 2020 this is the first chance anyone of us has had to test it.

First impressions are that it looks largely similar to previous models and borrows much of itself from the latest YZ450F. I'll be honest and say I missed the nuance that is the All New Icon Blue colour scheme, but the rest was familiar enough and broadly





▷ what I was expecting - aluminium frame (chassis if you're American or stick with the official terminology), reverse cylinder engine and a slim, sleek high seated stance we come to expect of any modern dirt bike (more Americanisms but one which if I'm honest I'm starting to favour).

Yamaha obviously have huge clout in the technology stakes, having spent a 'fair bit' on race tech on the road bikes, and the four-valve DOHC head and reverse cylinder set up is now commonplace across the WR-F and YZ-F range. Getting familiar with the ergo's takes no more than a cursory acquaintance, but there is a flashy blue button on the bars. More of that shortly. Now you can't start up any Yamaha 450 without being taken aback by the bark. Mostly that's a legacy of the reverse engine which means you are

positioned directly over the airbox/intake, but these things sound SERIOUS. It's not dissimilar to my rally bike, you can almost feel the air getting sucked in. It's a fair warning to the uninitiated, as it has bite to back up the bark.

ALLY OR STEEL?

We're in Wales, remember, so we were straight up a granite hill, and the WR450F pulls. Hard. The WR-F has a wider ratio five-speed gearbox, but you can't help but feel you only really need three of them! It's not overwhelming (and we'll come to the blue button soon, too...) but if you want power, it'll keep giving it. Forever. There is talk of mass centralisation and redeveloped head angles, but us off-road lot, even the engineers among us, tend to sneer a little at this – leave that sort of thing to Sportsbike

Dave to chat about, but just perhaps...

Aluminium frames remain the primary distinction between the Japanese offerings and the orange, white and now red Austrian siblings, plus a few other 'endurocentric' smaller manufacturers. It's an interesting and important one though, as having put some hours on the Honda CRF250RX this/last year, and had access to a YZ-F of my own in the past, it is easy to believe the early claims of the Austrians that steel affords a better refined, more compliant enduro bike than its aluminium competitor. A few years ago you'd also be forgiven for being a cynic and suggesting the tooling costs, material costs etc for cast components might be the real issue, but you'd be wrong. In any case KTM now have the lion's share of any enduro line up, so if they wanted to go aluminium, I dare say

they could, but I'm a signed up believer that the flex in the frame really does help the thing behave in the more technical going.

However... the Yamaha blurb explains this frame has been sculpted and refined to allow for more flex: "the rigidity of the frame is finely tuned to give a higher level of feedback on various types of terrain". I read that with interest, but do I believe it? On the experience of this test – you bet! Jumping on the bike you can immediately feel something has changed, and very much for the better. The bike tracks incredibly well, and I instantly feel at home. I make no bones about the fact I've ridden the large part of 2019 and 2020 (until March anyway!) on Austrian bikes, indeed I clocked up over 350 hours on them in that time, so for the WR-F to feel like an old friend is quite a thing indeed. It does turn

▷





very well, and I start to wonder about the packaging also. Now I can't give the Icon Blue rocker cover any credit here, but the fact that you can see it does suggest it sits low in the frame (all part of the engine miniaturization) and the combination of the reduced cylinder head dimensions and revised frame flex-rigidity might have something to do with this exceptionally fine handling.

ALL-DAY USABILITY?

There's no denying the YZ-F is a focused beast, it's at home on the moto track, and Yamaha make no bones about the starting point for the WR-F being the motocrosser, but they're also keen to stress that while the WR-F has the hard hitting performance of the YZ-F it comes blended with all-day usability and precise control. Their words. And does it? Wow, well, yes again! Bear in mind we're in December 2020 – my bikes, along with many others, have been largely furloughed these past months – so I'm rusty and a little podgy; but me and the WR450F hardly notice it's raining and this is the cold and near-misery of wet Welsh winter.

So with photos in the bag I'm keen to get the beast deeper into some proper Welsh going – slippery, muddy, rutted nadgery woods. It's all well and good these Jones boys showing me the official Yamaha test

CRAIG WEARS:

Helmet: Shoei VFX-WR

Jacket: Alpinestars Venture R

Pants: Alpinestars Techstar Venom

Boots: Alpinestars Tech 10



tracks, which are flowing and well hewn into granite – which the WR450F makes light work of – but I want to see what happens when we're subjected to misery of the woods. This is where my previous Japanese foray fell over. Is the WR-F a little too close to the motocrosser? Are we about to fall out?

Well, what a pleasant surprise. I should mention here that we didn't mess with the suspension. It was a bit new and a little under damped for me, but this isn't too much hassle to adjust, in any case it was more than adequate for my lardy and unfit approach on the day.

What we did do was play with the blue

button. If you're a technophobe bear with us here, but there's a phone App that allows you at any time, even out on the trail, to adjust and reload the engine/fuelling mapping on the bike. So even in the middle of a Welsh forest, in the rain, in December, you can load up a different map or two. The blue button then allows you to choose between the two – set them as you wish, hard or soft, or even something else in the middle. What I can tell you is there's no faffing here. Young Mr Jones (Dylan, aka DJ, aka DeeJ) had me try a good few maps and to verify my standing as a rider by reporting back what I thought of each. I think I passed





▷ the test. What I can confirm is that with no word of a lie we changed the character of the bike from a full bore motocrosser to a silky smooth grip-finder in the push of a button.


To prove this I elected to go down a bit of what really is a mountainbike-esque trail (a goat track really, or sheep track given our locality). No one followed me, as no one wanted to paddle or pull their bike back up (and the other two were on the school's 250s too). No need for such shenanigans on the WR450F, it was not exactly 100% pretty, but we were not a steaming mess of revs and cough stalls, in fact, I didn't stall the bike in the woods once. Not once. Remember we're looking for trouble here too - or photo's anyway, which is often one and the same.

Yamaha claim a wet weight of 119kg (including fuel) for the WR450F but it doesn't look or feel it. The engine appears tiny for a 450, and its specified 0.9 litres of engine oil suggests every bit of shaving has been done. It does initially feel back-end heavy, but after an hour or so this seems to abate, so its either the more centralised fuel tank or the fact that the bike was box fresh and the rear end wasn't yet fully 'plushed in'. Bikes do need a few hours on them to start to behave – or maybe it's just me. As ever, my own preference for a little bit of a bar lift would

be all I'd change initially if the bike were mine (you can often see I'm a bit hunched on a test bike, but this is mostly just my BMX youth/not perfect stance).

IS THE 450 THE NEW 350?

This bike is a bit of a breath of fresh air for me. Not just because I'm back on a bike after too long not doing so, but because I find myself sat on it in a strange period where everyone is considering their options.

So here we are in Wales, with me having bought a new 350 only days before as I've not really decided what to do with myself this year so I went for an all-rounder. I'd wanted something not too feisty, quite light and nimble, but a decent all-rounder with plenty of grunt that could turn its hand to a lot of different things – you know, from a slippery Yorkshire hare & hounds through to a roadbook rally. But as I was pottering around, popping the new Icon Blue WR450F against a perfect Welsh green backdrop (for the photos), pulling up and over loose lips and popping over drop-offs into slippery Welsh slate and clay puddles, I remembered what I was riding. And I had to wonder, is there anything you CAN'T do on this WR450F? After a day in the saddle I was coming to the conclusion 'probably not', and that is very much a change. The new normal?  ▷



JB's SECOND OPINION

Crikey, if Craig's 'podgy' then I'm positively clinically obese. Factually I'm 89kg, which is about 115% what Craig is. Supersize indeed. And even more super-unfit, having had precious little saddle time (or gym time) through 2020. Not in the best shape for evaluating this, or any, enduro bike.

However, that's never stopped me before. So, onward. Aesthetically – the new WR450F is a 10. The new look is (to quote Kevin McCloud) crisp, the (Icon) blue is electric and, unlike me, the bike looks to have gone through a thoroughly effective slimming-come-fitness regime. The last model (MY19) was sharp enough, but the MY21 is arguably even more finely defined. You might, on casual inspection, mistake it for a 250F, something you would never do with WR450Fs of old.

That said, on starting – as Craig said – there's no mistaking the bark and potency of this bike, amplified as it seems through the airbox. Gambling away from the Jones' 'yard it feels light and perky. The engine feel is increasingly like a 250F in the way it revs up quick, but there's plenty of punch. Wales in December is best left to arctic monkeys (if there were such a mammal) so by the time I'm shifting into third already my nose and fingers are feeling frostbitten. So I leave the revs in the lower midrange where a crack of the throttle easily lifts the front over the never-ending puddles.

For my test ride (the day before Craig's), riding with Wyn Hughes (former 500cc British enduro champion), we skipped round some short circuits in the forests that the Joneses use for their schools. I

was impressed with the light and easy feel of the bike. It turns real easy, feels light and precise. I have to say I was not giving it anywhere near 100% throttle, just trying to float over the whoops and not die (it was that cold, that wet). The WR-F was, though, quite manageable.

I have a caveat, though, with this being a brand new bike (and given the impending Lockdown 3, which gave us and the Joneses just 48 hours from delivery to 'tested') this was not optimal testing conditions. The KYB suspension needed more hours to bed in and as we didn't have enough time on my day to play with the tuning App I was on standard maps, on which the WR-F felt fairly snappy.

I have previously twice tested the MY19 WR450F and I can say after the Joneses had put on enough hours to break it in, and had tuned the suspension for a super-plush ride, and developed what I might call 'a soft map', it turned into a wonderful ride. This MY21 bike needed that treatment, too, but I daresay this bike would be just as nice once settled in. With more time and more heat in my hands I would have retested the bike after Craig had finished. But as we've come to know, this is a far from perfect world.

My feeling is Yamaha is doing a great job with the WR450F, it's the best it has ever been. Having swapped between it and a WR250F, though, it is still a comparative brute, better placed in the hands of a serious rider (like Craig). For ATRC-type competitions (at my age) and roadbook rallies, yeah I'm liking the 450, it would be damn good choice. For short-lap enduro, no, I'm backing the WR250F for that, still. 🍌



ON TEST

ON TEST

KLIM BADLANDS PRO

The intention here had been to test KLIM's new Carlsbad combo – something of a mid-range jacket and jeans that follows a philosophy of sturdy simplicity, ideal for the kind of riding RUST does: short, sharp and exciting. But with it out of stock in Europe, I received instead KLIM's range-topping Badlands Pro to test. This is the kit you buy when you want to face and overcome every possible eventuality. Going around the world on a big tour, pole-to-pole and all that – you'd be after this one. This is the King Kahuna.

And you know, while I honestly was a little disappointed that I wasn't getting the Carlsbad, the moment I unpacked the Badlands Pro I was instead off-the-scale delighted. I've not properly encountered KLIM before, but by heck on the basis of this kit I can tell you this is top shelf kit and then some. The moment I told RUST compadre July that I'd got this suit to test he disowned me, "I'm not talking to you anymore," he said in close to a jealous rage.

Point being KLIM make this suit something of a last word on everything that is adventure suits. They use the best materials, use the most care in manufacture and back up their products with the most cast iron of no-quibble guarantees. This is the Saville Row of adventure.

HOME & DRY

First test for this suit – which is in fact the third generation of the Badlands Pro – was the Rally Moto Tour of Wales Challenge. Obviously there was the 500km in 14 hours of the adventure ride itself, but as well the getting there and back – in all 1100 miles in three days. And not to mention countless rain showers and downpours. Just on the ride home along the M4 I counted six drenchings. Yeah, we saw a LOT of rain.

And here's the thing. I didn't wet get once. Actually that's not true. In one downpour I started to feel a wetness on the left side of my chest. 'Aha,' I thought, 'the suit's letting go.' Wrong, when I stopped I saw that I'd left a vent partially open. I zipped it up and continued – no more wetness. Throughout three days of on and off rain, including said torrential downpours I stayed utterly bone dry. Remarkable, honestly I've not had a suit do that before





and not through the sustained heavy rain of the kind we experienced.

So that's thanks to the GoreTex three-layer Pro Shell. For the record that's the outer layer, not a zip-in layer. So only the outer layer of the Badlands Pro gets wet, everything else stays bone dry. And when I say outer layer, that's kind of the only layer. We've become accustomed to multi-layer suits, with thermal and waterproof zip-ins. But to its credit the Badlands Pro isn't like this. It's one shell with everything within that. Which vastly reduces the faff quotient. Just zip in and ride. And being just the one layer makes it a fair deal lighter than much of the competition, which I really appreciated.

SERIOUSLY PROTECTED

The suit features D30 armour, called Aero Pro D30 on account it's highly perforated to improve ventilation. KLIM says there's 44% more coverage through their spec of armour (than the next best comparable) while being perforated means it has five times the ventilation. Now while we didn't have the hottest day to ride Wales there were times the work rate went up and the vents were opened – and yes, having vented armour at times like that – I like.

Talking of venting, my word its

comprehensive. I count three vents on each sleeve, two big vents on the front body matched with two more on the back. Then the vents on the trousers. You can really blow the air through this suit. I find it amazing that somehow when closed up those same zipped vents remain waterproof. Trick design.

As with other suits the jacket and jeans can be zipped together – something I always do. I also really like the integral kidney belt found in the jacket. Kidney belts have kind of fallen out of favour, but having ridden with one since my schoolboy scrambling days I really do much prefer to ride with one, even on the road.

When it comes to staying warm, on those cooler days, while the jacket is very wind resistant you will eventually need extra layers. And here KLIM will assist with a range of base and mid-layers that not only compliment the suit but are designed to be worn on their own, too. And having the mid-layer sweater here, I can say again there's equal quality and style in these garments. And of course unlike the zip-in layers of other suits you're not left with extraneous zips and tabs looking kind of odd when the under layers are worn without the jacket. They make sense.

As well as the Goretex there's Karbonite Ripstop superfabric for abrasion resistance in all the key wear zones where you might tumble down the road. What's nice about this fabric is it combines maximum abrasion resistance with a remarkable flexibility – so the suit doesn't feel like knight's armour, it remains soft, pliable and comfortable.

The pants, by the way, feel generous in cut, so no bunching around the crotch, good length so they don't sit halfway up your boot when sat riding, and there's a generous cut around the calf/ankle so they slide easy over even a bulky MX boot like the A-stars Tech 7.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

There are some aspects which could be better, mind. The low cut collar and modest velcro fastening might suit hotter climes, but for European winter you'll need a decent neck tube (aka Buff) to improve the seal around your neck. I think the velcro'd closure could be longer too for adjustability and for a more secure fastening. Next point, the external pockets are not waterproof, so beware what you store in them on wet days. As well, the pocket sizes are a touch odd – a little undersized I'd say. Equally the inside

pockets could probably do with a little rethink. The inside left chest pocket is the one I used most (wallet and phone), most other stuff I distribute between my tank bag and tail pack.

QUALITY WINS OUT

Those minor issues aside there really is just so much to this suit, and it's only when you see it, touch it and wear it that you fully understand just how excellent it is. It costs a pretty penny, for sure, but given its light weight, super-smart design, impressive safety features and 100% waterproofing you can start to understand the price point. And yes, in the Sage and Hi-Viz colourways it looks damn sophisticated.

There is of course much more to say on this suit, but this test is ongoing so once we get through Lockdown and are riding again we'll add further updates. For now, yes, I'm super-super happy with this suit.

JB

KLIM BADLANDS PRO

contact: www.klim.com

RRP: Jacket: €928.00 to €1195

Pants: €640.01 to €820.00

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