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VERDICT

How would you describe the ultimate two-stroke enduro bike? Not just what's ideal for you and your skill level, but something that encompasses everything that we love and want in a two-wheeled off-road machine.

Here's a list that comes to mind:

- Powerful but still usable for when the going gets tricky.
- A motor that will scare you sometimes, save you other times, but will always put a smile on your dial.
- A light clutch you can operate with one finger.
- A fork that is stable, plush and progressive, but with lively and nimble steering.
- A light package you can practically bunny-hop from one side of the trail to the other if things get sketchy.
- A progressive shock that provides plenty of drive to the rear wheel.
- It's got to look good – well, better than your mate's ride anyway.
- Effective brakes that have a light, yet definite, pull and feel.
- Slim enough through the girth to move around on, yet wide enough to grip with your knees while standing.
- Ergos that encourage you to stand and attack whatever lies in front.
- Competitive should you ever wish to race it.

In this shootout, there was one bike that didn't just fulfil our dreams of the ideal bike, but exceeded them. That bike is the 2006 TM EN250.

Finally, after years of coming bridesmaid in our tests, TM has got the mixture right. By making the power more user-friendly, the Italians have finally relented from producing exclusive race weapons and broadened their appeal.

The EN250 is still a weapon to be feared in the hands of a pro, but now the intermediate and clubman riders can also partake of this brilliant piece of two-stroke goodness.

The engine is brimming with power, but only lets out the amount you need at any given time, the suspension package is second to none, and the ergos – while suited towards taller riders rather than garden gnomes – will make you feel at home straight away.

Break out the champagne, TM, because you've finally satisfied our quest for the perfect two-stroke enduro and trail weapon. ■