

# God's BIKE

If your life is ruled by the search for 95 kilos of lacerating grunt, ride this.



The riding position is perfect. Comfortable too.

**O**kay, time to fess up. When Malcolm Hall (Cross Country Action) asked if we were ready to do a piece on the TM530, we weren't sure. Or I wasn't sure. I mean, let's put this into perspective. TM's 450FES is the fastest 450 – no, the fastest four-stroke – we've ever ridden, and with tough suspension it's a bit of a handful after a couple of hours,

years that trail riders want comfortable, compliant suspension, and bugger me, they finally got around to making TMs more of a bike for trail riders.

So we'll tell you up front: the TM530 is the best dirt bike we've ridden this year. And here's why.

## THE FEEL

We knew this was a honker five minutes

follow at close range. The roost is unbelievable, like riding through an asteroid belt wearing nothing but a bandanna and a jock-strap.

The engine drives through a slipper clutch, an option on this model, and it feels better than the slipper on the Gas Gas 450. We think TM has the better version. On the Gasser four-stroke there's no engine braking at all but on

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so what the hell would a TM530 be like?

It'd be Godzilla with a gearbox, that's what it'd be like, and frankly, after all the crashing I'd done lately, I wasn't sure if it was the right time to excavate the foundations of a tottering ego.

“Nah, you'll love it”, was Dr Dan's response. But he always says that. He said it when they were pumping morphine into Brad Raffin. He said it when I crashed in Jurassic Park and covered in dina-shit.

Dr Dan's a bastard and a bad influence. So I told Malcolm, “Yeah, sure, Mal. Can't wait to ride it. We'll pick her up Friday.”

But what a surprise this bike turned out to be. As you all know, we like TMs but we don't like their rock hard suspension. We've been telling them for

out from Mad Monkey HQ. The 530 is one of those bikes that feels right straight away. Everything about it fits. The engine's not a scary thing either, much to our amazement. This bike is no faster than a KTM 525EXC – in fact it's no faster than a four year old KTM520 – but the power is a brilliant match for the suspension.

Dr Dan thought the engine had a terrific bottom-end and midrange and a reasonable top-end. (I thought the top-end was better than reasonable. We argued. He got snitchy about it and wouldn't share our Forbidden Delights. Bastard). The power comes on in an uninterrupted surge and keeps coming. Delivery is easily modulated with the light clutch, and that makes the 530 bags of fun if you like to slide on gravel roads. It also makes it impossible to

the TM there is. Getting down filthy hills on a big bore four-stroke with no engine braking can be difficult for the inexperienced – runaway train! - but the degree of engine braking still available on the TM makes the challenge less scary. The bike benefits from the advantages of a slipper clutch – no rear wheel hopping under severe braking – while still giving you a measure of control over your speed without having to use the wheel brakes.

## SUSPENSION AND HANDLING

It's not the engine that makes this bike brilliant, it's the handling. The 530 has wonderful ergos that make you feel confident straight away. It's flat across the top and easy to move around on. The bars-pegs-seat relationship is drop-