



dead perfect, so you want to hook into it as soon as you fire up.

Steering is both light and precise. The bike goes where you point it and tips in more easily than either the TM450 or the KTM525. For a big bore it's incredibly nimble through tight stuff and feels light whatever you're trying to do. I guess it gets back to our original comment about everything feeling right. It makes so much difference when you don't have to fight the bike, and in that respect the TM is damn near perfect. On-road it feels like it's geared too low in top gear but not too many dirt riders will worry about that. The front brake is adequate but not impressive, the only aspect of this bike we think the factory could improve.

We did fuel consumption runs and

came up with interesting results. In tight stuff, with a lot of alternate braking and accelerating, the 530 got 10km per litre, and in open terrain in high gears most of the time it returned 14.4 km per litre. The latter would be good fuel consumption for a 450, let alone a 530. Assuming 12 km per litre to be average fuel consumption, from the eight litre tank you should, under normal conditions, manage to travel between 90 and 100 kilometres.

The suspension is Ohlins front and rear. The boys at Cross-Country Action must know we start our tests with the clickers centred and adjust them from there. Fork compression was set 13 clicks out from Hard in a range of 26 clicks, and the shock compression clicker more or less in the same

position. We couldn't find anything wrong with this setup so we left it where it was.

In a nutshell, this is the suspension we've been telling TM it should have had all along. You don't feel small bumps at all and the bike handles big hits with equal grace. The suspension does exactly what it's supposed to do – keep the wheels on the ground – without bashing you around, making you bleed from every orifice or suffer Popeye arm-pump. It changes direction easily, steers accurately and with little effort (even on Pirelli tyres), slides with great predictability, is easy for anyone to ride at any speed and gives you the confidence to push harder and turn sharper. The three guys who rode this bike got off it with big smiles, and that pretty much sums up the TM 530 experience.

The 530 is a better bike than the TM450 because it has trail suspension and the 450 race suspension, and bloody hard race suspension at that. If they put this setup on the '06 TM 450 it'll be one of the nicest blue bikes on the planet. But it still won't be as good as the amazing 530. This bike has everything going for it. The engine is strong without being thuggish, the handling is brilliant and the bike is so much fun you just don't want to stop. We loved the bloody thing. ■

(Left) In tight stuff the TM feels a lot smaller than any big bore should.

(Below) There's enough power for anyone but this isn't an intimidating bike.

Price: \$13,999.

