

High-quality components as standard equipment make the TM stand out from the crowd

'OWNING OR RIDING AN EXOTIC BIKE IS A FUNNY THING. THEY'RE OFTEN SEEN AS CURIOSITIES, BUT SOMETIMES YOU COME ACROSS ONE THAT'S A HIDDEN TREASURE'



OWNING THE '07 TM250EN is a really different experience. People don't see these things as a mainstream motorcycle and just trailering the bike around brought some strange responses. The funniest response to the TM was from a bloke who wandered out of the pub and informed me that "these Chinese bikes are crap, mate. It'll fall apart on you". Of course, the TM is Italian. Everyone knows that.

QUALITY ALL THE WAY

Let me start by saying this thing is a freak show. It's the best-handling and braking stock bike I've ever ridden and I've ridden most of them. I have a 100km test loop where I usually average 46-47km/h over the loop; obviously, it takes over two hours. That's on my KTM 250EXC, so we're comparing apples with apples here. The brand new, stock-as-a-rock TM did it averaging over 52km/h in under two hours.

The chassis feels smallish and chuckable but certainly not cramped for me, at 1.82m tall. The thing corners like a rat on rails, so much so that when I was wondering how I'd torn a grip without hitting anything, one of the boys told me I'd dragged the bar through a turn. I've never done that before. It's stable at high speed and is the only two-stroke Euro I feel comfortable on at any speed with no steering damper.

The fuel is carried low in the steel perimeter frame and about two litres sit down behind the barrel. The subframe and extension frame are steel and this, plus the big muffler and steel sidestand, make the rear of the bike somewhat

heavier than the other Euros. This seems to be a factor in the excellent chassis balance, as the rear rarely steps out of line.

Ready to race is a phrase that's been used by lots of people, lots of times, and it mostly makes me laugh. But apart from a bottle of Loctite, the TM's the first bike I've seen that I'd happily race stock. The quality of the componentry is top notch: Ohlins suspension, double-label Excel rims (the top spec rim), Brembo brakes, billet triple clamps, billet hubs, Nissin master cylinders, Reikon bars, Domino grips, Vforce reeds, HGS pipe, forged bar clamps, quality Michelin tyres, super heavy-duty Pirelli tubes and 3mm Teflon rim bands.

THE PARTS BIN

Everyone who casts a glance over the TM asks the same question: how is it for parts? The local TM importer has a good supply of spares (I trashed a pipe and a new one came the next day) and very few parts are TM-only on the bike.

The front guard, front master cylinder, fork guards, throttle housing, mudflap, rear caliper and rear master cylinder are all current Honda CR spec. The radiators, footpegs, fuel cap, clutch basket, grips and front brake caliper are all current KTM spec. (The radiator grilles even have KTM stamped into them.)

About the only one-offs on the bike are the engine parts and the billet hubs. The rear sprocket is also TM-only with nine bolt holes, which seems weird until you realise all the nuts clear the spokes and any spanner can fit in. Clever.



The TM's engine produces typical 250cc two-stroke power that's exciting and fast



A set of red Cycra handguards matches the Honda seat cover for an even splash of red