



# LONG HAUL WRAP-UP **2014 KTM 300 XC**

Story And Photos By Adam Booth

Is there a better all-around trail machine than a KTM 300 two-stroke? No, and most would have a hard time arguing against that conclusion. The KTM 300 can go from casual off-road riding to winning a hard enduro race without skipping a beat. It is light, has a great motor, is very reliable, and begs to be pointed at adverse terrain. After 10 months with *Dirt Rider* living the life of a trail hound and an enduro race machine, it was time to return the well-loved and hard-ridden 300 to KTM.

The 2014 KTM 300 XC is a hard machine not to love off road, especially when the going gets tough. The two-stroke motor is strong from idle into an aggressive midrange punch that lasts well into the upper rpm. Different power-valve springs and preload can greatly change the way the power is delivered, and after going between the green (stiffest spring, softest hit) and the red (softest spring, hardest hit) we found very smooth and consistent power with the yellow stock spring turned in a few rotations from flush. Because it doesn't come with a spark arrestor, our first order of business was to install an Enduro Engineering Spark Arrestor End Cap on the stock muffler. Two-strokes are more nervous than four-strokes, so a Scotts stabilizer was quickly added to the 300, working to calm the handling and help the bike stay in a straight line through rough terrain. To protect the bike from trail hazards we used a P3 carbon-fiber skid plate and pipe guard. Even with the pipe guard installed we smashed up the pipe enough to necessitate a new one. The P3 guard, although visually hammered, was still intact and found a new home on the replacement pipe. An auto clutch isn't for everyone, but the Rekluse EXP 3.0 on the 300 is magic in terrible terrain. To make bulldogging the bike down hills easier, we used the OX-Brake left-hand brake with good results.

The 300 saw a lot of race time, starting last year with daytime duty at the Glen Helen 24-Hour; then it went straight into a life of single-track seeking,

**PRIMARY USE:** A TON OF SINGLE-TRACK AND CASUAL TRAIL RIDING WITH EXTREME RACES SPRINKLED IN FOR FUN

**MAIN MODS:** SCOTTS STEERING STABILIZER WITH CLAMP-MOUNT-STYLE POST, ENDURO ENGINEERING SPARK ARRESTOR CAP, SLAVENS RACING ORIGINAL LINK SKID, BRP POLYMER FRICTIONLESS CHAIN GUIDE, P3 COMPOSITES SKID PLATE AND TWO-STROKE PIPE GUARD, OX-BRAKE LEFT-HAND AUXILIARY BRAKE, REKLUSE CORE EXP 3.0 AUTO CLUTCH, FASST COMPANY FLEXX HANDLEBAR, MOHARD RACING RADIATOR GUARDS, DUNLOP AT81 TIRES

**MOMENTS OF GLORY:** FIRST-PLACE FINISH IN THE AMATEUR CLASS AND 21ST OVERALL AT KING OF THE MOTOS; 10TH-PLACE FINISH AT LAST DOG STANDING

**FORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE:** THE 300 GOT UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THE GROUND WAY MORE THAN IT WOULD HAVE LIKED, BUT THAT HAPPENS IN EXTREME RACES

**TOTAL HOURS:** 68

**AFTERMATH:** TWO BLOWN FORK SEALS, TWO SETS OF REAR BRAKE PADS, ONE DESTROYED PIPE, DENTED REAR RIM, NUMEROUS DEEP ROCK GOUGES, MULTIPLE SETS OF DUNLOP AT81 TIRES

big hill climbing, and more hard enduro racing. Michael Allen danced in the rocky terrain at the King Of The Motos then Quinn Cody put it through hell at Last Dog Standing. Between races staffers fought over the bike for any trail ride; slicing up sand washes at the Nevada 200 for three days aboard the 300 stands out as a highlight. You might recall our cover story in the August 2014 issue where we compared two-strokes to four-strokes. At that time we inspected and replaced the piston and rings on the 300, even though after 55 hours they didn't need it. With proper maintenance it isn't uncommon to get 100 hours out of pistons and rings at trail-riding speed. If you are racing or riding outside the parameters of normal humans, maintenance schedules are more frequent.

*Dirt Rider* loves the 300 XC because it is designed to do exactly what we did: ride it hard for months on end. The lack of wear and tear we experienced is impressive but also completely expected. Take away the two leaky fork seals and we can't find anything to complain about, except boiling over at low speeds. One of the keys to longevity of an engine is keeping it cool, so we will be adding an aftermarket fan like the Trail Tech unit to our 2015 KTM 300. Long live the two-stroke! **DR**

*Dirt Rider* (ISSN 0735-4355, USPS 701-530), December 2014, Issue 384 is published monthly by Bonnier Corporation, 2 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Copyright © 2014 by Bonnier Corp. All rights reserved. Reprinting in whole or part is forbidden except by permission of Bonnier Corp. Mailing List: We make a portion of our mailing list available to reputable firms. If you would prefer that we don't include your name, please write us at the Harlan, IA address. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes and all UAA to CFS, Non-Postal and Military Facilities: to *Dirt Rider*, PO Box 6364, Harlan IA 51593-1864. Subscription Rates: \$20 for 1 year (12 issues), Canada \$32, and all other countries \$44. International order must be paid in advanced and in US funds only. Canada Post Publication agreement #40612608. Canada Return Mail: IMEX Global Solutions, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2