

THE MAGIC MAN

Possibly the coolest bike on the planet

We seem to have done something terribly wrong somewhere along the line and are being punished. When it comes to street-legal dirt bikes, California is the black sheep of the country. We hear tales from across the country from readers and friends about how their state will street-legalize anything with a motor. In Arizona, we've witnessed plated Rhinos, two-stroke motocrossers and numerous ATVs chugging down the streets. This same operation will have you chained in a cell fighting for the top bunk with a serial killer. Luckily, one manufacturer has gone after this niche, and mirroring their passion for filling a need, has overcome the legalities, the boilerplate laws and all-consuming EPA law to give us what we want: A true dirt bike with a plate. Enter the KTM 450EXC.



Just a few short years ago it was unheard of to purchase one of the best off-road bikes that was also street legal. The KTM 450EXC is the same machine with a headlight, taillight and blinkers as the one that won our off-road shootout, the KTM 450XC-W. The best part about a dual-sport bike is that you can ride to your favorite riding spot.

THE MAGIC MAN



Yes, ten grand is a lot of money, but what else would you do with it, pay your mortgage? We ditched the stock mirrors and went for something a little smaller, and when the stock tires wore out, we ran Motoz.

WINNER OF THE 450 OFF-ROAD SHOOTOUT

There is no mechanical difference between the 2009 KTM 450EXC and the 2009 KTM 450XC-W, the machine that won *Dirt Bike's* 450 Off-Road shootout. The differences visually are the headlight, taillight, turn signals, mirrors and, of course, the license plate. Even with these street-legal accessories, the 450EXC is one bad off-road machine, and we still giggle when we see the license plate and know we can pull out of the garage and ride around town on a machine that is at the top of the off-road world.

The changes in the single overhead cam 450cc motor for 2009 start at the cam, which received a slightly new grind and an all-new auto decompression system designed to improve starting. Other internal changes are new center cases for improved oil flow, new crank seals to keep the separate oil baths separate, and a new ignition for stronger spark at lower rpm. The friction plates for 2009 are thicker, and the clutch basket has new holes for better oiling.

The suspension changes are minor but make a big difference in performance. The fork tubes are now sourced from Japan and feature a thinner wall and improved chrome plating, resulting in lower friction and improved flex. For 2009, the fork springs are a little stiffer, going from a 4.4 to a 4.6. The WP PDS shock received a bigger needle and different valving, creating a softer setting with more resistance to bottoming. The new two-bolt machined bottom clamp and smaller diameter steering stem has a fixed 19-degree offset versus the previous setting of 20 degrees.

BUT OFFICER...

We received our KTM 450EXC and made a few essential small changes. To pass the sound drive-by test, which is third gear wide open, the stock KTM gearing is crazy tall at 15/45. The hot ticket is going down to a 14-tooth front sprocket and up to a 49 on the back. This allows the use of the stock chain, and even with the lower gearing, the 450EXC will pull 75 mph on the freeway without a fuss. We also raised the needle one clip and ran the fuel screw at 1-3/4 turns out.



The 450 motor received some minor updates for 2009 that improve starting and reliability. We raised the needle one clip and left all the emissions on because we are law-abiding citizens.

KTM's are known for quality in stock form, so it's no surprise we love the brakes, hydraulic clutch, oversized Neken bars and Excel wheels. We added some full wrap handguards and have been enjoying the bike in pretty much stock trim for hundreds of miles.

IDENTICAL TWINS

The suspension on the 450EXC is wonderful. The little changes KTM made from 2008 equaled big improvements. The suspension is exactly what comes on the shootout-winning XC-W, and bottoming is infrequent while plush and great out on the trail. We felt comfortable going from the street to any off-road situation; we even hit the local MX track for a few laps. The only reminder we were on a street-legal bike was hitting our helmet on the mirror (we took one off) and noticing the rear blinkers were gone after our first ride. The bike's performance off-road is awesome.

KTM really hit the proverbial nail on the noggin with the single overhead cam KTM engine. The 450 has a nice balance of sweet bottom-end and quick-revving characteristics. It can be super smooth or hard hitting and aggressive, it depends on how you use the throttle and hydraulic clutch. Perhaps the strongest suite on the engine besides the broad useable band of power is that it doesn't flame out at slow speeds like some four-stroke motors. This lets you chug in conditions where traction is scant without the fear of a burp, cough or belch.

NICE AND QUIET

We've resisted the urge to veer too far from stock exhaust and EPA trim. We know there are aftermarket exhaust systems that will give us more boost, and a lot of riders are



Stock gearing is way too tall to actually ride serious off-road. We went to a 14 in the front and a 49 in the back and still were able to use the stock chain.

going to want to rip all the emission stuff off. Our machine runs strong with all of the do-dads necessary for legality, starts easy and is jetted just right for our sea level to 5000-foot adventures. Just the thought of Officer Bill sticking his nose in the bowels of the engine searching for illegal bypassing of EPA canisters and hoses when the bike does everything pretty darned great bone stock is a head scratcher. What's the point when we can gear up in our garage, slip down the driveway, stab the left blinker and point it towards the hills?



Go ahead and do your part and don't litter the trail. Take off the turn signals before the trail takes them off for you. The stockers are big and fly off if you sneeze near them.



Metzler MCE Six Days tires come stock on the 450. They are DOT legal and suffer performance-wise when the dirt is anything but perfect.

THE MAGIC MAN

BIG DOLLARS

Yeah, \$9198 is a lot of cash for a dirt bike, but you aren't just getting a single-sided, one-thought wonder. You're getting the freedom of the open road and the ability to go where no non-street-legal bike could ever dream. Having a license plate opens doors that would normally not even exist to a dirt bike. This isn't a dirt road dual sport; this is a hard-core dirt biker's dual sport bike.

HITS

- Street legal!
- Great motor
- Excellent suspension
- Did we mention street legal?

MISSES

- Mirrors are bulky
- Boils over in slow conditions
- Turn signals fall off

KTM 450EXC

Engine type.....	Four-valve single overhead cam 4-stroke
Displacement	449.3cc
Bore/Stroke	95/63.4 mm (3.74/2.5")
Carburetion.....	Keihin FCR MX 39
Fuel tank capacity	2.38 gal. (9.0 l)
Gearing	15:45 (14:52)
Lighting coil	yes
Spark arrester.....	yes
EPA legal.....	yes
Wheelbase.....	58.0 inches
Ground clearance.....	15" (380 mm)
Seat height	38.78" (985 mm)
Tire size & type;	
Front.....	90/90-21"
Rear	140/80-18"
Suspension:	
Front.....	WP inverted cartridge, adj. reb./com., 11.8" (300mm) travel
Rear..	WP PDS, adj.prid, hi & lo comp., reb., 13.2" (335mm) travel
Country of origin	Austria
Suggested retail price	\$9198
Distributor/manufacturer	KTM/North America

LIVING WITH THE KTM 450EXC

MOTOZ

With hundreds of miles aboard the 450EXC, we've burned through some tires. Motoz is a tire company that uses natural rubber to build their tires, and each Motoz series uses different construction for different applications. A high-strength ply material means they have a higher ply rating with less ply layers. The Tractionator series (what we tested) is a super heavy-duty tire and has unique sidewalls and reinforcement to reduce punctures and pinch flats. The Motoz Tractionator X Circuit H/T is designed mainly for dry conditions and a split between hard and soft terrain. Long distance durability is the aim of the X Circuit.

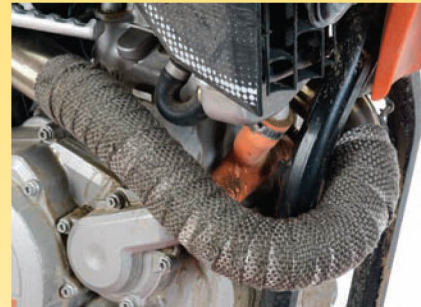
We really like the Motoz tires on every terrain but in deep sand. The close tread pattern is much more at home on loamy dirt to hard pack. They have great durability, resist chunking and hook up well. You can find out everything about them at www.motoz.com.au.



The Motoz tires work well, last a long time and went on easy.

MOOSE

Because we hate burning down our favorite riding spot and burning holes in our favorite riding pants, we installed some Moose header wrap onto the header pipe on the EXC. It is a ceramic cloth wrap that is stable at temperatures up to 2000 degrees. It insulates the exhaust header and can reduce the external temperature by 50 percent. We didn't have an issue putting on the wrap, but we would suggest using gloves if you have sensitive hands, because the fibers in the wrap can make you itch. After installed, we fired up the bike and were amazed how much the wrap did to take away the heat. We ride in areas of dry grass, and fire is always a concern. The wrap takes away almost all that worry, especially if we fall on the pipe side. We are now wrapping all our off-road bikes with the wrap, especially the stock KLX head pipe. It hangs out low and far, and is just waiting to start a fire or burn a leg. Retail price starts at \$39.95. Contact www.mooseracing.com to get yours.



Moose header wrap reduces the chance of burning your leg, pants or catching the world on fire. The orange CV4 silicon hoses reduce the number of junctions for the radiator hoses.

CV4

We installed a set of CV4 silicon hoses on the EXC, first because they look good and second because they eliminate the need for the plastic junctions. These joints can leak, wear out and break under duress, and the CV4 jointless design removes any possible dilemma. Install takes a little time (i.e.; a pain in the boxers), and we found the easiest way was to remove the head pipe to get proper access to the network of hoses. Retail price for a set of cool colored CV4 hoses is \$140.50 and you can find out more by going to www.cv4.net. □