

ATK

Intimidator



PHOTOS BY JAY MCNALLY

Do we really need two-strokes in this Age of Thumpers? How about 'stokers pushing absurd displacements, say 700cc? Ring-dinging to the smell of premix in the morning, ATK is here to please. The only remaining American dirtbike manufacturer since Cannondale's recent demise, the Utah-based company has survived on the clever concept of building unique bikes for the discriminating few. Its latest offering is no different.

To get a grip (literally) on the mega-torque monster the company calls the Intimidator, we met company president (and all-around dirtbike nut) Frank White for a little desert trail ride. Still in its pre-production state, the Intimidator we rode displaced 620cc, which White & Co. have so far found to be the optimum setup. They also tested a 680cc version, but it revved slower and made less power.

Before you can ride a dirtbike, you've got to kick-start it. And with its decompression valve and long, left-side lever, the Intimidator is more complicated than any four-stroke. It goes on record as being the first-ever dirtbike that I *could not* start! Blame my bum knee, and thank goodness Frank was there to kick it for me—though I don't think he's included in the purchase price...

One word comes to mind while riding the Intimidator: **TORQUE!** Based on a Maico engine designed for sidecar motocross racing in Europe, this thing feels like a Honda CR500 on low-end steroids. More like a diesel than you can imagine, it hates to rev, and the word "bog" is not in its vocabulary. Even so, the "*ding-ding-ding*" on the bottom is way smother than expected, and throttle response is surprisingly crisp, though the revs build pretty slowly when you hold it wide-open.

Which isn't to say that the bike isn't lunging forward as hard as the grippy Kenda rear knobby can manage. It's a hillclimber's dream machine, and won't complain about being ridden around in fourth on a first-gear trail. Handling and suspension were great on the desert trails we rode, and stability is quite good. Overall, the Intimidator is as light-feeling as a modern Thumper; you're just always aware of that big piston doing its thing.

If a 700cc two-stroke isn't enough out-of-the-ordinary for you, ATK's special-order program can make it even more so, with everything from a chrome-plated frame to wave brake rotors available. Prices start at \$7995—replacement rear tires not included.

—Jimmy Lewis

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