

EASY RIDER BETA 450RR

The Italian Beta 450RR is pretty much an all-new machine for 2010. Not only with respect to the power-plant (a dual-overhead-cam, Keihin-carbureted, six-speed with separate oil chambers for the tranny and engine), but also the chassis, suspension and bodywork. Our initial testing of the 450RR revealed that it is a wonderful machine and a serious threat to the KTM-dominant world.

STRENGTHS:

This is a double-edged sword, as both the powerband and thin chassis with plush suspension make the Beta a real contender for extreme conditions and ugly trails. The power is strong, tractable, and readily on tap (not quite as instant as the 'Berg's); the clutch pull is light, and the Zoke fork and the Sachs shock swallow hack and trail litter with a hefty appetite.

GROANS:

As soft and plush as the suspension is, faster trails and desert applications reveal that it's too cushy at race speeds. There's a tiny bit of vibration through the bars and, incredibly, the clutch pull is almost too light (making the engagement feel weak).

THE CRUNCH:

The Beta is a truly superb off-road machine. It makes stunning power, belching down low with tractable and competitive juices that hunger for tight, nasty terrain. It's thin, light feeling, and fit with excellent off-road bling like the lights, hand guards, brakes and plastic. It falls a bit short of the KTM in suspension versatility and broadness of the powerband, but not too far.

RATINGS:

Skid plate: (A) Aluminum unit with good coverage, a tight fit, and wings protect the water pump and ignition.

Airbox access: (B) Side panel access is a bit clumsy, though the air filter latch system is sano.

Seat: (A-) Good consistency and feel. Push-button removal!

Computer/odo: Electronic, resettable, fairly small thin readout.

Brakes: (B+) Braking rotors and Nissan brakes equal good stopping power everywhere.

Overall suspension: (B) Plush and very compliant through obstacles.

Overall power: (B+) Excellent bottom, clean jetting; loves tough stuff.

Clutch feel: (B) The lightest in the shootout, but almost doesn't have any feel.

Overall fit and finish: (B+) Has all the goods and is top-of-the-line at that.

Ridability in stock condition: (B+) Tough trails are its home.

PRICE: \$8499; **WEIGHT:** 258 lb.

KYLE REDMOND

6'1" / 175 lb.

Extreme Enduro/Endurocross racer

"The Beta gets third. It feels the lightest and handles amazingly on tight trails. The suspension is great for tight, too soft and scary for fast, and the engine goes flat on top."

TOD SCIACQUA

5'8" / 170 lb.

Vet A rider, Vet Expert motocrosser

"This bike was a big surprise for me; I just don't like the design and look of the plastic. The ergos were great, and the suspension was excellent for tight trail riding."

ADAM BOOTH

5'8" / 175 lb.

Vet A Enduro rider

"The Beta motor is neck-and-neck with the KTM motor; pumping out perfect off idle power, making negotiating nasty trails a treat."



450 OFF-ROAD SHOOTOUT