

THE EXTERMINATOR!

KILLING BUGS AND RACING MOTO AIN'T AN EASY WAY TO MAKE A LIVING BUT FOR AUSSIE-BOUND CUMBRIAN JAMIE LAW IT'S STILL A MORE APPEALING PROPOSITION THAN ANY NORMAL NINE-TO-FIVE...

Words and photos by Suttly

Life as a privateer motocross racer is tough with ever-increasing costs, ever-decreasing prize funds and little in the way of recognition from the mainstream and quite often the specialist media. Just turned 25 years old, Jamie Law is the epitome of a British privateer motocross racer – racing hard on the weekends and shuffling part-time work, training and a stifled social life in between. And like the majority of UK 'professionals', J-Law isn't actually earning a crust from racing.

"I wish motocross were my full time job," says Jamie the morning after winning a fistful of dollars by dominating a Wednesday night meeting in his native Cumbria. "It is a full-time job in that I spend hours washing my bikes,

working on my bikes and then there's the time spent training and so on but I have to do other things to fund it so I kill ants, cockroaches and all sorts of things like that. In fact, I think I've killed a bazillion wasps this week – with the sun coming out things have got real busy and the phone has been going like a hotline. There's always something creepy needs killing.

"My dad owns a pest control business and he knows the job back to front. If there's anything crawling along the ground and you ask him 'what's that?' he'll know straight away whereas I just sort of blag my way through it. If a customer asks me what something is nine times out of 10 I haven't got a clue – I know how to kill 'em and that's all I need to know." >>

Jamie takes time out from killing wasps to cut loose in the dunes

JAMIE ON...

THE PRICE OF PRIVATEERING!

"It's not costing us a fortune to go racing at the moment because we're consciously doing it as cheaply as possible. I wouldn't want to add up the fuel costs though – that's the biggest expense because we live where we live but I love it here and I wouldn't change it for anything. We get good support from the industry – Michelin help us with tyres, Putoline with oils and Neil and Maria at D3 help out with the bikes and Stewart Johnstone at NME tunes the motors. Spares for the bikes cost a small fortune but Race FX help out with Fly clothing and I get support from Gaerne boots and Rip n' Roll goggles.

"Pretty much everything is taken care of without me taking a wage out of it. If anybody asks I say I'm doing something I really love and it's not costing me a great deal of money to do it. It is costing me money – it can cost £260 a week for diesel which is why I don't do every championship. This year I'm concentrating on the Maxxis and the Red Bull Pro Nationals because they get the most coverage. There's no point in me going doing the British Masters because even though people say it's good money by the time you add up your fuel costs, a set of chain and sprockets, tyres etc you're not making the money you think you're making. It looks good when you get a cheque through the post for £600 but in actual fact when you break it down you've maybe broken even and in terms of exposure you've gained nothing."

SHAMELESS SELF PROMOTION...

"You've got to market yourself right. It's like the www.jlaw25.com thing – you've got to try and get your name out there, get a good following and hopefully get sponsors interested. I think I've got a few good followers on the website now but I'm maybe a little guilty of not updating it often enough. I'm slow and steady with the computer at the moment and I'm still one finger typing but I'm sure I'll get there – if I could do it all with pen and paper I'd be all right."

Who needs a bucket and spade when you've got a D3 350 KTM to play with!



Beach kill Cumbrian style



That commitment to getting the job done without needing to know the ins and outs of it all is also applied to his motocross. "Some people eat, sleep and sh*t motocross bikes but I think you need other things in life. Don't get me wrong, I do love doing it but I'm not a major follower of the sport – I couldn't even tell you who won the last GP because I'm not that bothered. Rather than looking at results on the internet I'd rather be outside doing something. I just enjoy living life, going out with my mates mountain biking or trials riding. I'm not a major follower of anything really – I don't watch telly and I never have time to sit down and read a magazine. It's a bit weird and maybe I should follow the sport more but you know that's just the way I am.

From the off it's obvious that Jamie doesn't mind speaking his mind and he's not afraid to elaborate on stuff either with an anecdote thrown in to accompany almost every statement. That kind of behaviour along with his engaging eyes and wildly styled/unstyled hair remind me a lot of rogue road racer/TV personality Guy Martin – something that's not lost on Jamie's friend Adam or his old man either for that matter.

But unlike Martin who's gone from being a total privateer to a team Relentless Suzuki star, the path Law has taken is almost the exact opposite.

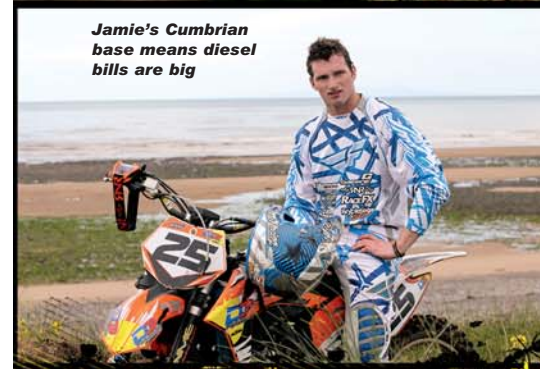
Since parting company with Rob Hooper's Relentless Suzuki team midway through 2009 Jamie's done his own thing – first of all on a Lakeland Spas-sponsored Suzuki and then this year on a D3 Racing KTM. But while the on-track image has drastically changed from yellow to orange, the people making it happen behind the scene are very much the same.

Like most young pros in this sport it's essential for Jamie to have the backing of his family and luckily the Laws are about as solid a family unit as you're ever likely to meet. Dad Mike's a former pro rugby player who owns his own extermination business while mum Karen is awesome with a pitboard and has a formidable head for business herself. Throw younger sister Jodie, girlfriend Janette and the dogs into the family camper n'all and Jamie's got as good a support crew as anyone else out there.

"Racing is what we do and we've done it as a family for the past 19 years. We go away as a family and I think they enjoy it just as much as I do – loading up the camper, putting in



In Red Bull Pro Nationals action at Whitby



Jamie's Cumbrian base means diesel bills are big

JAMIE ON...

DAD MIKE

"I think I get my competitive spirit from him and I've always been inspired by him and I do look up to him for what he's done in his lifetime. Even now with his business - he's got a really successful business that he's built up from nothing. I think that if you're brought up in that way - working class - you're never happy with what you've got and it moulds the way you are. Having the people I've got behind me has definitely made me the person I am now."

MUM KAREN

"She's a very organised person my mum. She's got a good business head on her and I think that comes out with everything she does. If I tell her I want pitboarding in a certain way mum will be on it. I told her to put lap times on my board to make sure I don't slack off towards the end of a race so now everything's lap times right down to point zero zero zero one of a second. Everything mum puts on the board is calculated but it works and it gives her something to do on race day although I always hear how crap the viewing is in the pit box."



the dogs and getting away for the weekend. I'd be lost without them and I'm not sure what I'm gonna do when I go to Australia..." Say what? "Yeah, I'm going back to Australia next Tuesday."

Having only just come back from a busman's holiday Down Under it transpires that Jamie's headed right back to finish off the Rockstar Nationals for the Herb Watson KTM team.

"They're always looking for international riders to compete in the Manjimup 15000 and I originally got the call up for that," explains Jamie. "With me only doing the British championship and the Pro Nationals there was a bit of a break in the calendar so I thought I'd give it a go. Me and Janette decided to make a bit of a holiday of it and we sneaked five days in at Dubai on the way and did the whole sightseeing thing in Australia as well as fitting in the racing."

"It was just really chilled out. We had a tiny little Jucy camper van that was no bigger than a people carrier over here so when you're laid out your head's on the steering wheel and your feet are hanging over the bumper. It did us for what we needed and we travelled round and had a brilliant time. On the last day we were there the man who supplied us with bikes for the trip sent us a text message asking what it would take to make me stay over here for the rest of the season. I just kind of laughed it off but then we had a few talks about it and I said 'look, I've got to come back to England and speak to my sponsors and also my mum and dad as well'."

"It all turned out okay though so I'm headed back there to finish off the Rockstar Australian Nationals and then there are a couple more races including the King of the Cross at a place called Southern Cross where basically the prize money for the winner is \$10,000 which is about

£6,500. I don't know of any race in the UK where they would put up that amount of prize money for the winner and pay well down the field too - \$7,000 for second and \$5,000 for third."

"Money doesn't motivate me but when you're making nothing - which is what I'm doing in the UK at the moment - you have to stop and think. I've just turned 25 and I can't be a kid any more. I don't actually spend much money away from bikes - I've had these jeans for about five years - but it's going to be nice to have the opportunity to make some money. Don't get me wrong, I don't want for nothing but there's only so long you can do a job for nothing and so far for me motocross has been like a 19-year apprenticeship. If I was a joiner I'd have done my three years and I'd be on good money now - with motocross I've done 19 years and I'm still not making Jack Sh*t."

Although Jamie's blatantly aware that he's not owed an existence he does feel as though those within the sport could do a bit more to help the cause. "We've got good British motocross magazines but a lot of the time the focus is all on foreign racing. If you look at the race report from a Maxxis round or a Red Bull it covers a couple of pages whereas the American equivalent will cover four pages. The Maxxis and Red Bull guys are doing a great job but the two series just don't get the coverage they deserve."

"It's not just that though. We do our own thing with the camper and we've got all our sponsors printed on the front of the awning like the big teams do. Then we get to a British championship and nothing against Chris Sprawson here but I think he finds the furthest away point - on a hill with rabbit holes - and says 'yep, that's



Jamie's now in Australia to finish off the Rockstar Nationals

OPPORTUNITY KNOX!

J-LAW'S R+D ADVENTURE...

For the past few years Jamie's been working flat-out with Cockerham-based impact protection specialists Knox to produce a truly protective piece of motocross body armour. Spotting a gap in the market, Knox MD Geoff Travell asked Jamie to help produce something that worked well with a Leatt neck-brace – something that hadn't been thought of at the time. After a lot of trial and error the Knox Warrior was born.

"We didn't really get it right at first," admits Jamie. "It was all a bit big and bulky but that's because everything Geoff does has to be CE Approved. It was difficult keeping the comfort, keeping the look and keeping the safety level where it needed to be but we've got it slimmed down now and it's very comfy to ride in and I won't ride without it."

"The biggest problem with any protective product is that you can never tell if it has worked or not but one of the biggest benefits I can feel is when I'm getting roosted. Sometimes you'll be behind someone and those little stones and dried up balls of mud really hurt and they can make you want to shy off the rider in front but with this you can just keep attacking – it makes me feel like a gladiator."

For more information on the Knox Warrior log on to www.knox-armour.co.uk



Life's hard for a privateer pro and Jamie has to carefully weigh up the pros and cons of everything to do with racing...



Jamie's pitch, we'll stick him there'. And you can guarantee you'll be tight up against another van so nobody can see the awning sheets with the sponsors on anyway.

"Stuff like that makes it harder to give back to the sponsors we do have. It'd be so nice to have a privateers' row for the guys who are doing a professional job and turning out as smart looking as the big teams but on a smaller scale. Unless you've got a big truck and 20 mechanics under your awning it's like 'get over there in that corner'. It just makes it frustrating – we're spending a lot of money to go racing too and while they're getting a little bit back by being in the limelight we're being pushed to one side.

"Some riders always seem to be in the limelight too while others are ignored. James Noble was an awesome rider but never ever got the recognition he deserved compared to somebody like Tom Church say. It's like that TT3D film – it's basically the Guy Martin show even though Ian Hutchinson absolutely smokes everybody in it, absolutely everybody and he wins every single class. Throughout it all he probably gets a fraction of the exposure that Guy Martin gets just because he keeps his head down and keeps himself to himself. That's the way it goes though, people and sponsors want to be part of somebody who's a little bit different. Guy Martin apparently doesn't enjoy sex – now that's definitely a little bit different..."

