

cycle guide

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SPIRITED VIKING

CYCLE GUIDE

TEST
REPORT

HUSQVARNA
250cc CROSS



A thing without compromise, designed for a single special purpose, it gladdens the heart of the enthusiast.

Although the majority of Americans are not aware of the fact, Husqvarna of Sweden has been manufacturing motorcycles since 1903, giving the eminent firm a longevity in the industry comparable to anyone. It is no accident that this is a machine of superb quality, in the same way that it is no accident Sweden is famous for stainless steel and other metallurgy. The products to construct the machine are there. All that is required is the will, and the giant Husqvarna company has the will.

It is interesting to note that motorcycles constitute about one percent of the Husqvarna factory's annual sales. The majority of their production is involved in such precision items as aircraft, firearms, auto and farm equipment, and machine tools and

related equipment. Yet no attempt is made to mass produce less expensive motorcycles which must compromise on quality and performance for the sake of price in order to capture a larger share of the world market. The Husky might be thought of as a rich man's indulgence: a labor of love that he can afford to make conform to his philosophy of excellence because he is not dependent on the profits of the product for his livelihood. Whatever the reasons, the avid off-road competitor earnestly hopes the Husqvarna philosophy never changes, because it has given the demanding enthusiast who must purchase his own machines a production model that is comparable to the works bikes of the best riders, whatever their brand.

The latest Husqvarna 250 Cross is



The new shaped handlebars are really comfortable. The Magura controls are as good as any in the world. The gas tank is contoured not to interfere with rider movement.

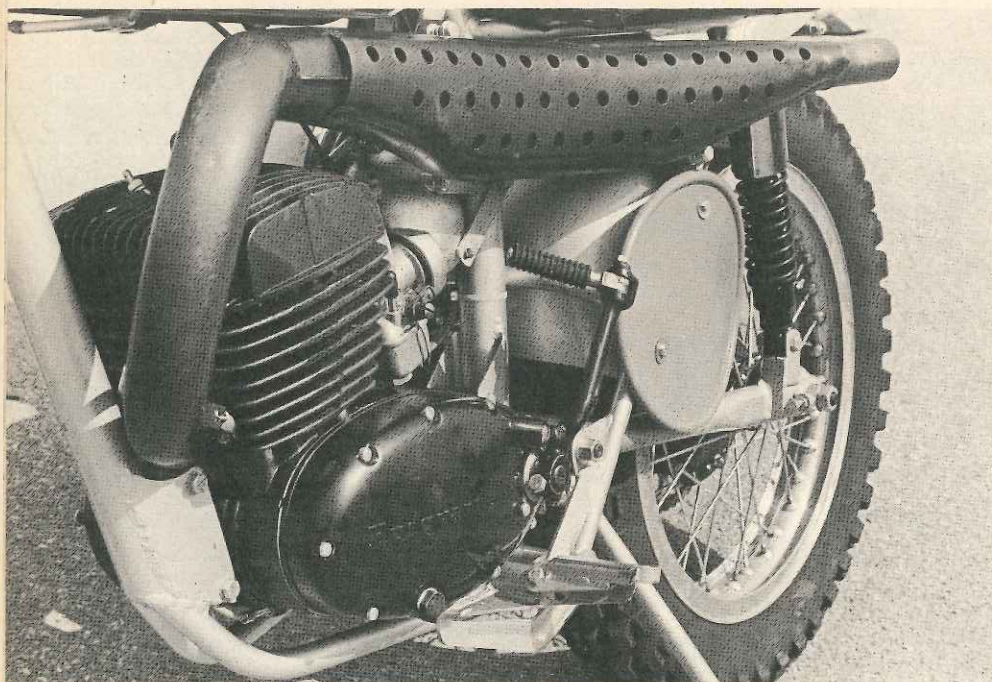


The front forks work like a dream to smooth out the terrain. The conical alloy front brake hub is light and strong. The rubber fender tip keeps grit out of your teeth.

the MI series. This four-speed machine is the product of years of specialized development toward a single goal, victory in motocross competition. Every detail of the machine shows the painstaking thought and attention that has gone into the design and manufacture of the product.

The first impression of any product, of course, is visual. The Husky fairly dazzles you with its look of quality. Every detail throughout the machine fills the observer with an awesome respect for the craftsmen who cared enough to make it so. The materials of all components are of the best quality, and the finish of the whole package is superb. It evokes an instant yearning in the viewer and a massive pride in the owner.

The frame is made of chromoly tubing—one of the few production machines in the world to utilize this superior material. A single down tube from the steering head branches into two smaller diameter tubes which run under the engine to terminate at the swing arm pivot. A single backbone tube runs under the gas tank and curves downward behind the engine to anchor the swing arm pivot. Even a casual study of the frame reveals



The upswept exhaust pipe has one of the most sanitary designs on the market. It never interferes with the rider's leg, and the heat shield really works.

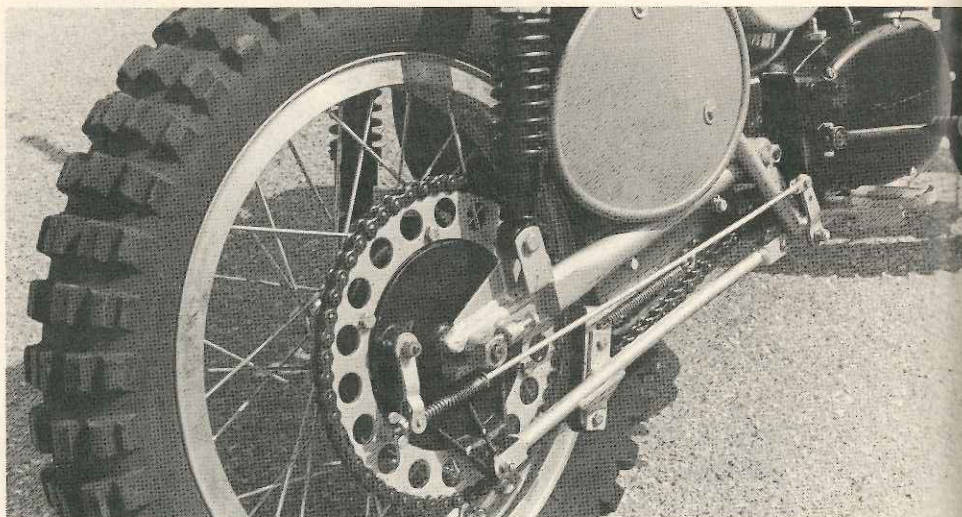
the thought that has gone into the selection of the various diameter tubing for the different frame members. Each piece is selected to give the maximum strength with the minimum weight—of great importance for any motocrosser.

The new shape of the handlebars on the M1 series Husky is as close to perfection as we hope to see. The bars are 35 inches wide, with about a 4½-inch rise. The first time you grasp them they feel absolutely right. On top of that, they look jazzy.

The seat is comfortable and well shaped for the motocross rider to move up and down and around. There is a gap of about 1½ inches between the front of the seat and the rear of the gas tank, exposing the rear tank bolt. We've heard about riders coming down on the tank bolt. It never happened to us in five days of hard, constant riding, although it would be more comforting to have it covered by the saddle.

The folding foot pegs are made of steel and are super strong. We can't imagine even a heavyweight rider bending them on the hardest jump. The addition of springs would be a good idea, as the bolts have to be loosened considerably to allow the pegs to fold up, and they will not always rebound. A rider with a foot temporarily off the peg likes the assurance that it will be where he expects it when his boot returns home.

The position of the seat, handlebars and foot pegs in relation to each other



The full floating rear brake is one of the best performance features on the machine. Note the backing plate rod is anchored to the frame instead of the swing arm.

is just right. Two members of our staff, whose height difference is six inches, both commented that the first time they sat on the bike they just felt right at home. When bounding over the terrain that motocross is noted for, it was amazing how easy it was to stand, or even half stand, when required. The rider's heels were under his body, so he could easily push up with his legs without having to pull on the handlebars. This vital ingredient adds immeasurably in controlling the machine over the rough. The rider doesn't have to sacrifice the directional control of the front wheel in order to get his weight up and down as required. He can point the bike where he wants to go while moving



The 250 Cross has an injection molded head with two spark plugs. If one is fouled, the plug wire can be quickly switched to the other to finish the race.

his body around to facilitate his flight.

The front brake is a lightweight alloy conical hub, 5½ inches in diameter. The brake assembly has a flat black finish that looks right, and it works right. The front wheel is a 21-inch Akront alloy rim, laced with heavy duty spokes. The standard front tire is a 3.00×21 Trelleborg knobby. The rubber in this tire is fairly soft, giving excellent traction over varying surface conditions.

The front forks are manufactured by Husqvarna and have over 6 inches of travel. A few years ago Husky bought their forks from Ceriani of Italy, but ultimately they decided to manufacture their own to incorporate the exact performance design they wanted for the machine. They work like a dream, with a smooth, progressive action that is a delight to experience. Not once in five days of hard pounding did the forks either top or bottom. Not once. Only years of test-

ing and experience got them to this point. The fork tubes are made of chromed high tensile steel and the fork legs of aluminum alloy. The bottom diameter of the fork legs does not taper, giving the front wheel axle the widest possible attachment to prevent flexing. No member of our staff could ever remember seeing a Husky with a fork brace, which makes sense, because it would be a useless addition of weight.

The Husky fork seals are noted for leakage. On the 250 Cross, the right fork tube merely showed some dampness on the rubber wiper. The left seal

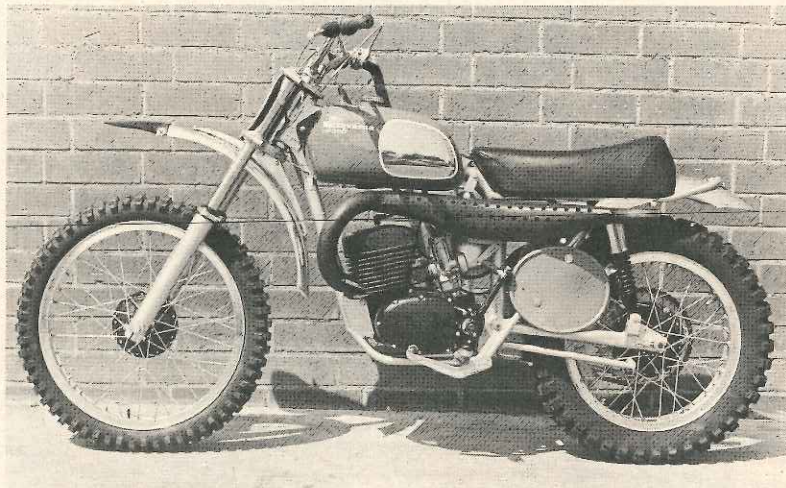
leaked slightly more, enough to allow a trickle of fluid part way down the fork leg. But no oil was added during the extensive testing, and the amount of seepage was not enough to give the rider any hint of change in the fork action at any time. A point to be kept in mind about the Husky fork seals is that the engineers at the factory know they leak slightly. But a tighter seal would increase the friction of the fork legs moving up and down on the tubes, impairing slightly the action of the forks. So the seals are left as is, reasoning that any serious rider should drain and replace the fork

oil often enough that the slight fluid loss will not affect the front end suspension. Many veteran Husky owners we talked to said that after a few oil changes in the forks the seals just seemed to stop seeping.

The throttle, front brake and clutch controls on the Husky are Magura items, which is to say they are probably the best in the world. The Magura hard rubber grips are the favorite of one of our staff and, along with Doherty grips, are the two kinds used by the majority of European motocross aces.

The rear suspension is supplied by

Continued on page 99



HUSQVARNA 250cc CROSS

ENGINE

Type.....single cylinder piston port two stroke
Bore and stroke.....64.5mmx69.5mm
Displacement.....245cc
Compression Ratio.....12.3:1
Ignition.....FEMSA flywheel magneto and coil
Carburetion.....38mm Bing Concentric
Lubrication.....Premix gas/oil

DIMENSIONS

Seat height.....31.5 in.
Wheelbase.....54 in.
Ground Clearance.....9 in.
Dry weight.....224 lbs.

WHEELS AND BRAKES

Front tire size.....3.00x21 in.
Front brake type.....internal expanding
Rear tire size.....4.00x18 in.
Rear brake type.....internal expanding

TRANSMISSION

Type.....4-speed constant mesh
Clutch.....wet multi-plate
Internal gear ratios.....1st 1.9:1, 2nd 1.42:1,
3rd 1.2:1, 4th 1.0:1
Final ratio.....9.7:1
Countershaft sprocket.....12T
Rear wheel sprocket.....53T

GENERAL

Air Filtration.....dry paper

CAPACITIES

Fuel tank.....2.2 gal.
Fuel reserve.....
Gear box.....900cc

FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Front suspension....telescopic double damping
Rear suspension..adjustable spring over shock
Frame type.....tubular single downtube

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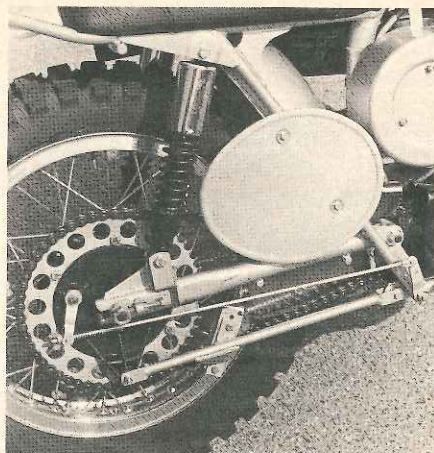
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The Girling shocks do a beautiful job on the rear suspension. The spring rate and damping are well matched to the bike. The saddle is well padded and comfortable.

SPIRITED VIKING

Continued

Girling shocks, which in the opinion of the Husqvarna chief engineer, are the best in the world. The swing arm is an oval shaped chromoly tubing, strongly braced for strength. The rear brake is 6 5/16-inch diameter, slightly larger than the front. The rear brake has a full floating backing plate, with the backing plate arm anchored to the frame instead of the swing arm. This feature allows much smoother braking over rough ground, with minimal back wheel hop, yet the other two largest selling European motocrossers do not have the floating rear brake. The rear brake is a conical alloy hub, laced to an 18-inch Akront rim. The rear tire is a 4.00x18 knobby, usually a Trelleborg, but the one on our test bike was a Metzeler. It seems the Trelleborg factory only sells motocross tires in pairs: one 3.00x21 and one 4.00x18. The rear tire wears much faster than the front, so the Husky factory soon found itself with an excess of front tires, due to their factory supported motocross teams. So they bought some Metzeler to fill out production. The one on our test bike worked just fine.

The front and rear fenders are made of aluminum. They are attractively polished and very light weight. The front fender has a rubber extension at the front end to prevent dirt and mud from being flung up in front of the bike at an angle that will throw it back in the rider's teeth. The gas tank is a 2.2-gallon steel unit with a red and chrome finish. The frame and air cleaner are painted a silver gray, while the entire engine is black, for heat dissipation as well as looks. The standard exhaust is an upswept affair that tucks in neatly under the tank

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SPIRITED VIKING

Continued

on the left side. The heat shield is welded to the pipe and the unit never touches the rider's leg or gives any hint of bothersome heat. The standard air cleaner is a pressed paper element which is fine for some areas, including Europe, but in dusty country, a K&N or a Filtron element is advised to keep the crud out of the combustion area.

The engine, including the cases, cylinder and head are aluminum alloy for lightness and strength. The cylinder has a steel sleeve pressed in, with precision machined ports. The head on the new 250 is an injection molded unit, which the Europeans call pressure casting. It has two spark plugs, only one of which is used at a time. The spare is for quick changing in case of fouling, merely by switching the spark plug wire. Ignition is supplied by a FEMSA flywheel magneto with an external coil. The standard spark plugs are Bosch 240 units, and they work well enough that in five days of testing we never had to switch the spark plug wire to the spare plug.

The piston has a single chrome ring which must be as nearly unbreakable as possible. A Husky ring can be twisted like a pretzel, without breaking. It reminds you of piano wire, only with the necessary rigidity to prevent it from trying to exit through the large cylinder ports. The internals of the engine are supplied generously with either needle or ball bearings. The primary drive is by straight cut gears, which are more efficient than either helical gears or chain. The considerable increase in engine noise is noticeable but acceptable on a competition machine. The final drive is by Reynolds chain—again an item of top quality. A 36mm carburetor feeds the engine, which is more than sufficient to insure that it won't run out of fuel at high RPM's.

Starting the Husky engine is a joy. First kick starts were the general rule, even when cold. Although the compression on the 250 Cross is over 12 to 1, the leverage on the kick starter is such that kicking it through requires no great effort. The engine warms up rapidly, with no choke provided or necessary. The sound from the exhaust, while not muffled by any means, nevertheless has a distinctive deep note that is much less offensive than some of the chain saw sounds of other machines. We had often heard that starting the Husky was extremely difficult after stalling it. Well, we made our share of mistakes during our test, stalling the engine several times. In every case, restarting required no more than two or three kicks at most.

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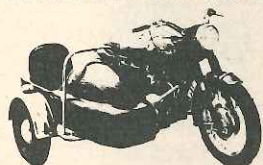


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SPIRITED VIKING

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Like most competition motocrossers, the Husky requires pre-mixing the oil with the fuel. The recommended ratio is 20 to 1, using a vegetable type racing oil. Despite the fact that the 250 Cross was a new machine, the distributor assured us we could use any good quality two-stroke oil with a ratio of 32 to 1, as this is not a critical factor with the machine. We took his advice and the results were most satisfactory. However, all the testing was done on a motocross course where long periods of open throttle were impossible. For other applications, such as desert racing, our fuel/oil ratio might not be sufficient. If it's your machine and you're in doubt, by all means follow the advice in the manual.

At no place in the manual could we find any claims for either horsepower or torque figures. Frankly, we think this is a good idea. Too many prospective buyers are impressed by comparing claimed horsepower figures, which may or may not be accurate. The only test that matters is what happens when you ride the machine. And when you ride the Husky 250, what happens is torque. This is a muscle machine, with the powerplant designed to squirt you rapidly ahead when you open the throttle. It is assumed by the manufacturer that the terrain where the machine will be used will not allow the rider to wind the engine wide open in top gear for long periods of time. What is required then is maximum acceleration at every opportunity to open the throttle, with the broadest possible power band to minimize shifting as much as possible. Shifting takes time with the throttle off, which causes an inevitable pause in your forward progress.

The Husky 250 has a very broad power band. For a rider not used to it, it was continually surprising how long you could keep accelerating without having to shift gears. It seems impossible that anyone could accurately claim that any other machine of the same displacement had a wider power band. The gear box ratios are well matched to the engine, allowing the rider to get the maximum benefit of the power developed. It is a four-speed transmission, and for this machine that's enough. We can't see how the addition of a fifth gear would add any performance for motocrossing, unless a rider insists on a stump pulling first gear ratio which he never uses again during the race. But if he routinely downshifts into first gear where necessary, as this transmission is designed for, he will find that his speed range is more than adequate.

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SPIRITED VIKING

Continued

In fact, on some courses, many riders would never get into fourth gear during an entire race. The shift throws of the gear lever are somewhat longer than we're used to, but accustoming yourself to this requirement was only a matter of minutes. The throws were crisp and positive, and we never missed a shift up or down, and we never used the clutch after we started moving. The shift lever is perfectly located in relation to the right foot peg, for convenient toeing. We soon found ourselves liking the transmission very much.

The foot brake pedal on the left side is an unusual shape, compared with anything else on the market. Your first impression when looking at it is that it's too small to find in a hurry. But experience proved to us that we never missed it during panic situations, which come up from time to time. A quick stab with your toe and it was always there. It has the added advantage of being made of some kind of springy steel which is next to impossible to bend—a comforting thought if you get off in the middle of a bash and prefer to have your brake pedal in the same place when you restart.

The Husky suspension is superb. Bounding over the bumps is so much easier on a machine like this that you find yourself regretting the years you spent flogging some economy toad. The frame is very rigid in flight, giving no hint of the "hinge in the middle" common to some bikes. It goes where you point it, with the rear wheel firmly behind you tracking straight ahead, unless you get too exuberant with the throttle in the corners. But this is an easy mistake to avoid. The throttle is not an "all or nothing" affair. You can dial it on as required for the smoothest surging drive out of the corners. The whole machine is actually forgiving, which makes sense when you stop to think about it. Anything designed this well would naturally complement the rider's skill, at whatever level.

It's impossible to adequately convey this machine is with words. Only a test ride will do justice to the product. Once you get used to it, you're hooked, and you begin to scheme how you can afford it. But once you've bought it, the price doesn't seem so high. Because the Husky has a well deserved reputation for reliability that probably cannot be matched by any other machine, so you spend less for maintenance. Anyway, if riding the best makes you happy, the Husqvarna 250 Cross is as good a choice as you can find anywhere. Swede Carlson.

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