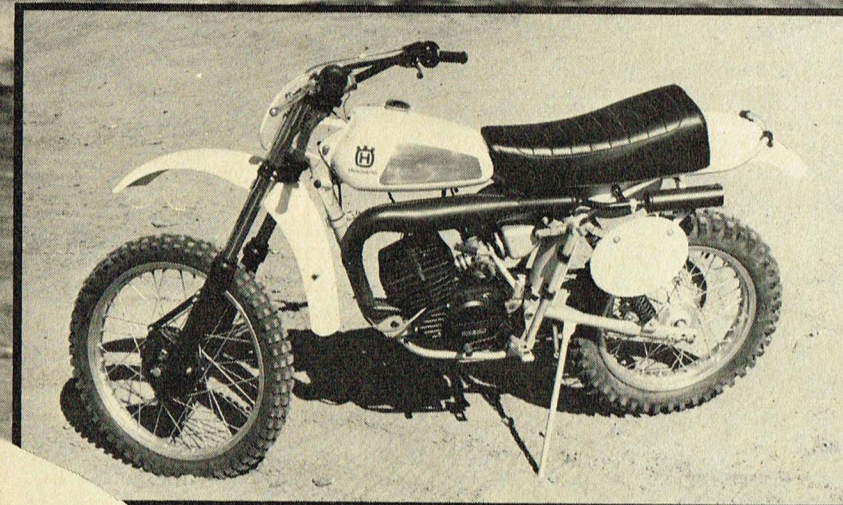


# HUSKY'S POTENT 125CR



This is the motorcycle that's currently carrying the "Across the Atlantic" flag against the Japanese onslaught in the hotly contested 125cc class. It's the Husqvarna 125CR, of course.

The latest in class  
and quality from  
Sweden with  
respect.

By Tom Beesley

Here's a lesson in how to make a good motorcycle into one of the very best in its category.

First of all, you take a bike that's already got a reputation for being one of the best built machines, that puts out a bunch of horsepower, has up-to-date suspension, isn't the most expensive motorcycle in the world and has styling that is both modern and traditional. Then you make everything just a little bit better, and you end up with a real winner.

What we're talking about here is the latest version of Husqvarna's 125cc CR motocrosser. Perfecting the little things on the bike is exactly what Husky has done with the '78 version, and the best compliment that we can pay the bike is that it ranks right up there with the Yamaha YZ and Suzuki RM Japanese-built racers in every respect. At present, no other European 125cc motocross machine fits that bill.

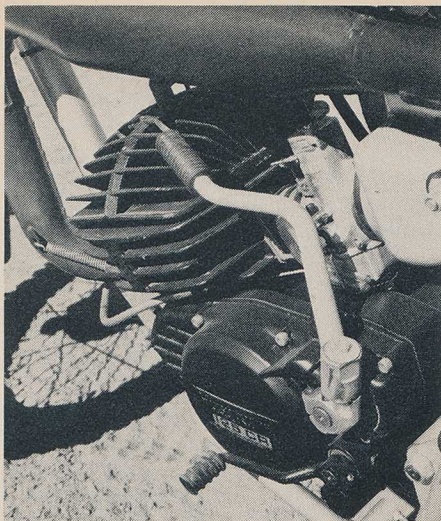
We at *Popular Cycling* have the ideal staff situation for testing Husqvarna racers. Editorial Director George Elliott has ridden and raced Huskys for years, including every previous version of the CR125. The editor, Beesley, hasn't ridden the Swedish machinery very much, being a Japanese bike fan. Take the two ends of the scale, turn them both loose on the bike for awhile and average out each rider's impressions. You should come up with a pretty evenly distributed editorial opinion.

First impression of the CR125 was its size. This is not a small motorcycle, despite its displacement category. Because the bike uses basically the same chassis and engine as the 250cc racer, it is tall and long, especially for a 125. Add on the height necessary for over nine inches of suspension travel on both ends, and you've got a motorcycle that takes a hefty swing of the leg to get over the seat and astride.

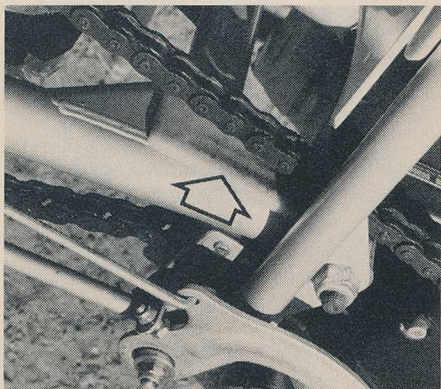
Once you're aboard, though, the bike is very comfortable. In fact, the Husky qualifies as one of the most comfortable motocross racers we've had the opportunity to ride. We rate it as more comfortable than either the Yamaha or Suzuki, and that's saying quite a lot for the bike. The seat is firmer than the Yamaha, but the suspension is so plush that the overall ride is more comfortable. The Husky would be more comfortable for the taller rider, since it is a full-sized motorcycle (meaning that it's just as big as a 250), while the Yamaha and Suzuki more or less set the standard for 125cc machines.

As we started out saying, the Husky excels because it is so *refined*. They've taken a bike that has always rated as one of the world's best built, and polished it even further. We don't mean that it's





The 125CR's engine is based on the bigger engines in the Husky range. Bottom end is identical, cylinder comes from same mold as the 360cc version. That's why it looks so big. It's a short stroke engine, with a 55x52mm bore/stroke configuration. That's unusual in the 125cc class, but is one of the main reasons for the beautiful power traits of this bike.

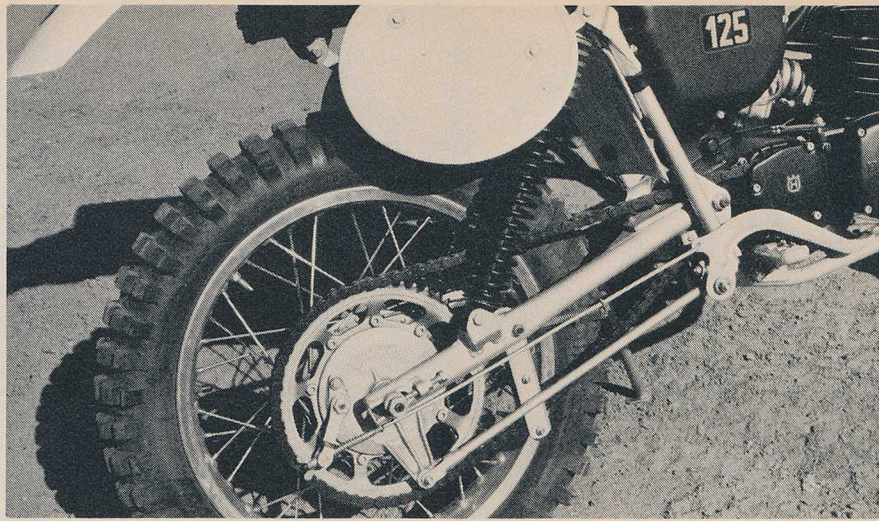


No chain tensioner is used, but nylon "pads" are on top and bottom of swingarm. Top one (see arrow) doesn't wear fast, but the spares kit that comes with the bike includes a couple of the smaller bottom pads, since they will go faster. Simple matter to change them and they're cheap.

shiny, but the quality of craftsmanship and assembly is incredible.

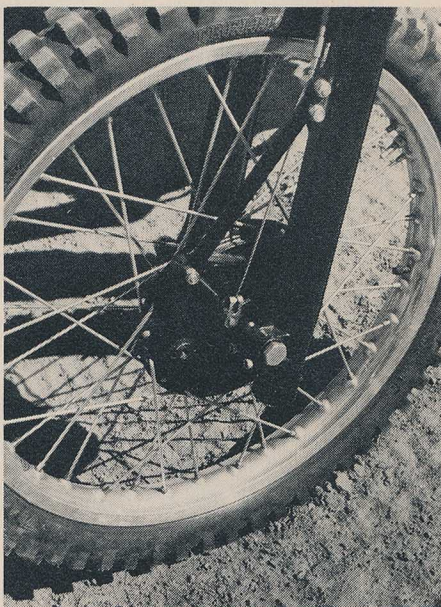
The engine is basically the same unit as last year's CR, which is to say powerful, strong and apparently reliable. The mill has a slightly unusual configuration, with 55 by 52mm bore and stroke dimensions. Most other bikes in rivalry with the Husky either have "square" dimensions of 54 x 54mm, or 56 x 50mm, like the Yamaha and Honda. But anyway you figure it, you come out with 123cc actual displacement.

Typical of Husqvarna design is the short stroke engine, which makes a very sanitary-looking unit in the frame. In the full-sized 125 frame, though, the engine almost looks *too* small. There's a lot of spare room in there, as the photos indicate. Once used to the crammed



Best in the business? We think so, about the gas Girling-equipped rear suspension on the 125CR. Full floating rear brake works very well.

Photos by Tom Beesley and Sharon Gales



Husky's own front forks work good, give 9.6 inches of travel. Brakes are good, too. Wheel rims on both ends are shoulderless Akronts. Tires are Trelleborg.

frame area of the other bikes, you almost think that something is missing on the Husky.

As on the other bikes in the Husky range, the lower end of the engine and the gearbox is very compact and small. We think that the whole package is one of the best looking, most compact engine/gearbox units made.

Induction is via 32mm Bing, pumped through reed valves before arrival in the cylinder. Ignition is extremely reliable external flywheel Motoplat CDI, which is the same unit as on most modern European motocross machines. The benefit of the Motoplat over that on most of the Japanese bikes is the extra amount of crankshaft inertia produced by the larger (heavier) flywheel. Makes for much smoother power delivery through-



Husky's have their own handling characteristics, but the new 125 isn't as radical as previous models. Anybody can ride this bike.

out the powerband.

The gearbox houses a close ratio six-speed transmission with straight cut gears. The kick starter (on the left side) is not of the primary design, which means that the bike must be in neutral before the kicker will crank the engine over.

We were extremely pleased with the Husky engine. Throttle response was crisp and predictable. Horsepower was adequate, with about 16 ponies developed at 9500 revs. Everything (short stroke, reed valves, gear ratio and pipe) combines to give a surprising amount of low-end torque, plenty of mid-range and more than enough top-end. That heavier (than the Japanese bikes) flywheel really helps out. As a result of these factors, the Husky is equally at home on a long, fast, smooth track as it is on a tight twisty one.



Sort of the best of both worlds.

But for the fact that you are very much aware that you're on a 125, since there is a very limited amount of horsepower on tap, the Husky has traits more like a 250 than any other 125 racer. That makes it an interesting, fun and relatively easy motorcycle for the full-sized rider to go fast on.

The suspension department is where Husqvarna has made the biggest change and improvement from last year's 125CR. The Husky has the most travel of any bike in its class, over nine inches on both ends.

The front forks, which are designed and built by Husky, maybe aren't the very best in the business, but they're a lot more than "just" satisfactory. They're of the leading axle design, which is current with design trends, and they are "regular" oil/spring units.

The main thing about the Husky forks, and this really isn't a complaint, is that we'd really gotten used to the adjustable air forks on the Yamaha and Suzuki racers, so it was hard to "go back" to regular forks, no matter how well they work. If you consider that we've really come to appreciate the adjustability and function of modern air forks, you'll appreciate the fact that we would rate the Husky forks as the best oil/spring forks in the business.

On the rear of the Husky are long travel (9.9 inches!) gas Girling shocks, which just might be the best production shocks in the world. One thing is for sure, they sure work beautifully on this motorcycle. We'd have to give the Husky the nod over both the Kayaba-equipped Suzuki RM and the monoshock Yamaha YZ in the rear suspension department. They're that good.

The Girlings keep the tire on the ground, where it belongs if you want to transmit any horsepower. Over smooth fast terrain or real nasties, we found the 4.00x18 Trelleborg stuck to *terra firma*. Credit has to go to the shock absorbers. We were impressed.

Traction and control are the name of the game in motocross racing. Without either or both, you're literally spinning your wheels, and you're getting nowhere fast. Guess that's why we rave so much about the Husky and those Girlings, because they did such a great job of keeping the wheel from hopping and jumping around.

The Husky rates high on the overall handling scale, primarily because of the power characteristics and superior handling. Because it's such a big bike physically, it's not as nimble and agile as the Yamaha YZ or Suzuki, though.

It will go around corners, but it just takes more effort to overcome the tendency to remain upright, due to the high center of gravity. Once you get used to putting the Husky into corners in its own style, you'll like it. The faster you are

# HUSQVARNA 125CR

## ENGINE

Engine type	2-stroke single
Bore and stroke,mm	55 x 52
Displacement,cc	123.5
Horsepower/rpm (claimed)	15.9/9500
Torque/rpm (claimed)	8.8/9500
Compression ratio	13.5:1
Air filtration	oiled foam
Carburetion	32mm Bing
Lubrication	Pre-mix
Ignition	Motoplat CDI

## DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	6-speed
Clutch type	Wet, multi-plate
Primary drive	18:70
Final drive ratio	13.53

## CHASSIS

Chassis type	Single downtube chrome-moly
Seat height, in.	37.2
Peg height, in.	15.7
Ground clearance, in.	12.7
Wheelbase, in.	57
Weight as tested, lbs.	205
FR/RR wt. bias, lbs.	45 front 55 rear
Tires, front	3.00 x 21 Trelleborg
rear	4.00 x 18 Trelleborg

## SUSPENSION

Front	Husqvarna
Travel	9.6 inches
Rear	Gas Girlings
Travel	9.9 inches

## Max. Pts. NUMERICAL EVALUATION

10	Power	10
10	Powerband	9
10	Acceleration	9
10	Transmission	
	(5) Ratios	5
	(5) Operation	4
10	Suspension	
	(5) Front	5
	(5) Rear	5
10	Brakes	
	(5) Front	5
	(5) Rear	5
10	General Handling	10
30	Miscellaneous	
	(5) Starting	4
	(5) Rider comfort	4
	(5) Quality of craftsmanship	5
	(5) Riding maneuverability	5
	(5) Tires	5
	(5) Noise level	4

100 pts. Overall Rating 94 pts.

able to go, the better the whole package works. Chassis geometry and suspension are stable and very accurate, perhaps more so than any other bike in the class.

When it comes time to stop (or slow down), the Husky handles that area well, too. Both brakes are very precise, controllable and powerful. Levers are Maguras, which we have to prefer over anything else in the world. They help give the braking such a positive feel.

Braking feel is very progressive on both ends of the motorcycle. You can feel *exactly* what you're doing and apply just as much braking as you want. On the rear is a full-floating brake and as we've indicated, we can't seriously fault it. It's still possible to get the rear end hopping and chattering under certain conditions (such as loose, slippery, bumpy approaches to corners), but this brake isn't nearly as bad as most bikes.

The Husky shifts just as smoothly and easily as any of the Japanese bikes, even though the lever requires a longer and harder action to select the next gear. Because of the design of the gearbox and the lever, it's a lot harder to find false neutrals should you hit the lever by accident. Throw is about an inch and a half, which is just a little bit longer than the Yamaha or Suzuki. It's not at all bad, though.

In conclusion, we'd have to say that the Husqvarna 125CR is a great racing motorcycle. If you've got something against the Japanese bikes and still want to race 125s, then this is the only bike you should seriously consider, at least at present.

The motorcycle is just plain good, in almost every respect. On a scale considering every single factor, it'd probably come out ahead of any of the Japanese bikes, on the basis of consistency. There are some things that the Yamaha and/or Suzuki do a lot better, and some things that those two rivals do a lot worse. The end result, though is pretty doggone even.

See, there is an alternative to Japanese racing machinery in the 125cc class.

Cost-wise, the Husqvarna is a bit more expensive than the other Japanese machines at a suggested retail price of \$1435 (as compared to \$998 for the Yamaha YZ, \$1025 for the Suzuki RM and \$896 for the Honda CR), but it still isn't the most expensive bike in the class. There are other machines that cost more, but don't offer nearly as much motorcycle as the Husqvarna 125CR.

PS—We've got to tell you about the owner's manual that comes with the Husky. This book is worth buying just for the general information in it. Not only does it tell you in detail how to care for your Husqvarna, but there is a lot of general theory, suggestions and tips, as well as sections on training and how to race and fix malfunctions.