

# HUSQVARNA WR250

“GIMME DAT  
OL’ TIME RELIGION”

*Hallelujah brothers! Refinement of fine, upstanding engineering principles has held strong against the devilish temptation of sales gimmickry.*

**B**ike racers are divided into two distinct types of people — those who love Husqvarnas and those who hate them.

How’s that for a done-to-death statement to start the test?

Those among us who can read (ADB staff are going to start at night-school next month) will have noticed something strange lately: the dwindling number of Husqvarna haters. Huskys have been getting rave reports in every magazine you pick up, and not wanting to be left out, ADB sent their one-eyed, factory sponsored, married to the manager’s daughter, Husky worshipper out to do the test on the new WR250 and this is what the sleazy little, under-the-table, contra-dealing mongrel came back with.

## THE MOTOR

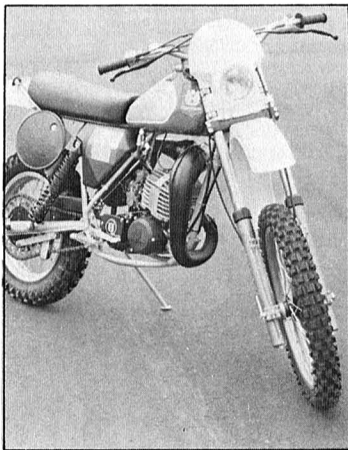
The motor is new. The motor and gearbox. All of it. Big 8-petal reed valve going in and a new exhaust system going out. Complete with an improved muffler.

The head and barrel are unpainted this year, a radical change from the age-old black Husky motors. We suspected this was to improve heat dissipation and rang the factory in Sweden to confirm this. We got hold of Mikael Zetterlund, Husqvarna’s try-to-do-everything man, who solemnly informed us that this had been done to “make it look trick”. We ran out of 20 cent pieces before we pressed him further on the technical details.

For the first time ever, the motors on the WR (enduro) Husqvarnas are different to the CRs (motocross). The CRs now come standard with GP porting.

Husky motors in the past have had instant power. No sudden detours in the horsepower graph, but touch the throttle while travelling at 5kph and you got the same burst of power as when you hit it at 105kph. Always predictably there.

Probably in an effort to shut up the peak-horsepower theorists, Husqvarna have built a motor with a totally new personality. They’ve done something that manufacturers and tuners often claim to have done but have rarely ever succeeded at. More top end power and better low down. God knows how they achieved this 2-stroke contradiction but it’s a very obvious improvement both ends. We



**DIRT  
TEST**







## HUSQVARNA WR250

haven't seen a horsepower graph for the new 250 and it's difficult to tell just exactly what has happened to the good old Husky mid-range but it still feels near enough to keep the disciples happy. In fact, the WR250 motor has a bit of everything. Everyone should be happy.

The gearbox looks like what the 430 Husqvarnas changed to last year. Complete with primary kick starting and plastic ignition cover. With the new motor comes a radically changed set of gear ratios. Each gear is lower than the corresponding gear on the '81 WR, and the space between each gear is wider. On paper it looks like an awkward arrangement for the new higher revving motor but in practice it works well. The bike is fast on fire roads, climbs nasty hills easily and there's always the right gear available on demanding trail sections.

The only place you have to keep your wits about you is when you plan to keep the revs permanently up in the top end blast zone while you do battle with the special test clock. A little carelessness by the rider can have the bike off that top end power momentarily. Practice should eliminate the problem but keep a finger on the clutch just in case. It's not as obvious as the gear spacing gap we mentioned in the test of the 5-speed Maico GS250 but it's a good thing the J-Husky has an extra gear in there to look after that potent top end power.

Gear change is more positive with the new gearbox. The internal linkage which used to wear and get sloppy has gone but the long throw of the gearlever is still there. Gear change in first and second was a little stiff on our test bike but it wasn't a problem and the bike **was** new.

The primary kick starting worked well. No clutch drag when starting and a new gear ratio makes starting the bike a relatively pleasant operation. Left side mounted of course, but no need for any getting off the bike nonsense.

The actual starting of the motor was one of two things. First kick or non-existent. I knew the bike was a kick starter even when cold but a few times during the test the bike simply refused to start for ten or fifteen kicks. Dead as a doornail. Then suddenly, it would fire up effortlessly.

The lights/horn/kill switch was the number one suspect. Just breathing on the kill button would stop the motor, and the hopelessly primitive switch unit would be the first thing to get rid of before you ride the bike with any seriousness.

For the past two years, enduro Husqvarnas have come with Swedish SEM ignitions which supply lighting power galore and a few overheating problems into the bargain on the early versions. Our test bike came with a later model ignition with generous extra windings on each of the two 70 watt coils to put any worried minds at rest.

### WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

The forks are new for the WR. They are the same 40mm dia. forks as the motocross Husqvarnas got last year but with 270mm (11") travel. Up from the 240mm travel of last year's WR but still shorter than the 300mm travel motocross suspension. 270mm travel is all you need, for sure. We believe nearly everything we are told and, apparently, Mike Guerra put the shorter suspension on his G.P. Husky and rode it to fifth place in the World Championship.

Easier front tyre changes were arranged by the factory when they substituted the CR's split axle-clamp bushes (which require loosening nine nuts to remove the axle) with solid axle-clamp bushes. This means you need only remove the axle nut before you fly into the usual foul-mouthed, knuckle-skinned, tube-pinching tyre change.

Some of the Six-Day riders replaced the split bushes with solid ones and eliminated the clamp problem altogether.

The new headlight is now the classic European look, number-plate combo and is held on with rubber bands. A big improvement but it still needs a clear plastic protector over the glass.

Front brake lever is one of those short two-finger jobs but the clutch lever is still the full length Magura. Perfect!

### WHAT'S OLD?

Too radical a departure from Husqvarna tradition would be too much for the converted to handle, so the factory has retained a whole lot of the good stuff we've come to know and love.

The tank and seat are not really old but we saw them on most of the Husqvarnas last year. The tank is aluminium, of course, and you can buy a set of clear plastic tank protectors to keep it looking brand new (provided you don't bend the hell out of it).

Ohlins piggyback shocks are better than ever and this year they even have a travel-restricting washer inside them. Have it removed (and increase the travel slightly) and you can sacrifice a little of Husky's stability for a steeper fork angle. It's Husqvarna's way of saying "you can have what you want but we're still going to do it right".

The plastic guards are the same, the frame is the same (strong as ever), same hubs, same rims, air box, controls, and at the other end of the list, the same Barum tyres. We ran the Barums at around 6lbs pressure front and rear. They didn't work too bad but hard, slippery stuff made you nervous.

Then, there's the same old fork seals. Reports had been heard that the new seals were not leaking, but one of ours did. Aahh — tradition!

### RIGHT

**The new motor is good. Very good. Everything is new from reed-block to muffler. Unpainted head and barrel looks "trick" does it not? (See text.)**





## RIDING (AMUSING OURSELVES)

As always, the Husqvarna failed to impress the test riders at first. Hours of riding on mainly good dirt roads didn't really excite anyone on the Husqvarna, especially when you constantly needed to be on the lookout for other vehicles.

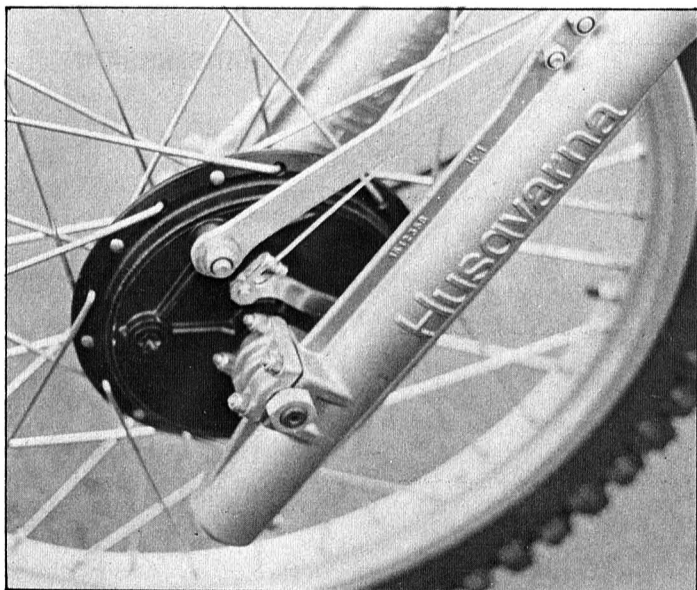
Throwing caution to the wind on a few brief occasions helped the enthusiasm and proved the Husky to be a fast and stable dirt/road racer that would let you change your plan of attack at any stage. A slide around the outside of a turn could be changed to a square-off up the inside line if that's what took the rider's fancy. Accurate too. If that inside line happened to be a narrow escape route from a potential crash, you could make good your escape perfectly.

Use of the clutch could be put to good use even racing on dirt roads if you're in a desperate hurry. Hang the back end out a little too far onto the soft edges and a quick touch of the clutch will keep the revs up in maximum power without wasting valuable milliseconds on a down-shift.

The Husqvarna is still a ricochet-off-anything master but it behaves so well on smooth turns. I'm afraid we can't agree with other reports that say this new bike requires no special riding technique. The Husqvarna only really comes into its own when you are concentrating and shifting your weight around on the bike. Slide well forward and you can break the bike into a power-off rear wheel slide (not exactly copy book riding but very handy occasionally), or a long power-on drift for those tighter-than-expected curves on the dirt road (aren't they all?). Shifting forward on the seat also lets you confidently dive the front wheel into those twisting turns in and out of the trees, and simply shifting your weight back lets the front wheel float across any unexpected obstacles you may discover mid turn. No muscling the bars or nailing the throttle; just a shift of weight and you're across the problem with little disturbance to your originally planned line.

You work harder but it all works easier, if you can see what we mean. You work harder but the bike responds so easily and your efforts are rewarded with versatility plus. The bike **can** do everything very well. Everything, that is, except negotiate steep, nasty climbs covered with large loose rocks and boulders. The Husqvarna feels like a spooked racehorse in this situation and seems to be at a definite disadvantage . . . to almost every other decent enduro bike around. It was the least popular choice with freshly swapped-around riders on these particularly nasty climbs. They didn't even want to persevere with it. "Give me something big and luxurious and powerful" seemed to be the popular choice.

The brakes were good on the test bike. They require a little less pressure than what Husky owners are used to but they retain a good

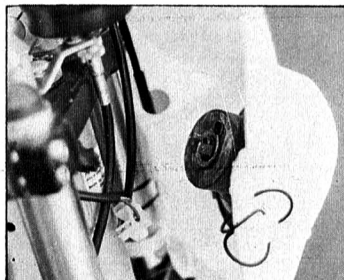


### LEFT

New brakes lurk inside these innocent looking hubs. We feel they work better than ever but probably won't impress twin-leading retro-rocket disc freaks.

### BELOW

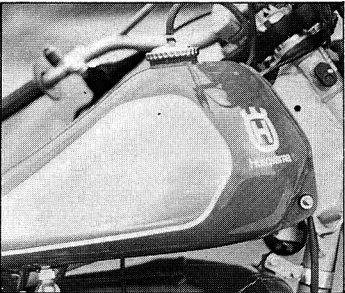
New headlight and number plate is held in place with rubber bands, and a globe change at the lights test is a simple operation. Glass lens is vulnerable though.







**ABOVE**  
Front 40 mm dia. motocross forks with travel shortened to 270mm. Wheel removal is considerably easier than your mate's CR (thank goodness).

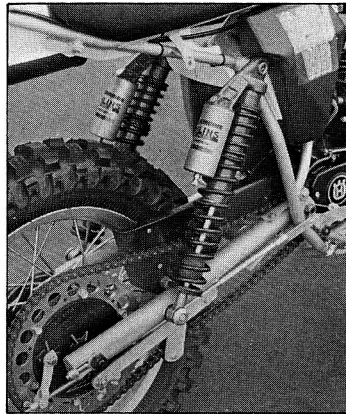


**ABOVE**  
Aluminium tank. Featherweight and classy looking when new but just be careful (keep it in the lounge).

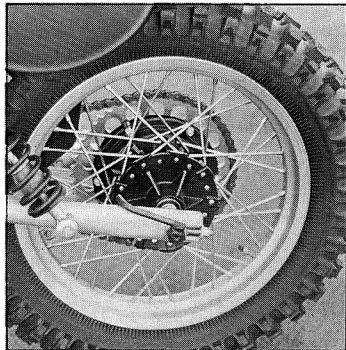


"feel". In fact, the front brake would have the best feel of any brake we've tested. You knew exactly what it was doing and exactly when it would lock up.

Husqvarna brakes have a reputation for working best when they're new and disappearing when wet and these will probably hold true to at least some of that tradition. The braking effect was reduced temporarily after a run through the creek, though nowhere near as bad as



**ABOVE**  
Naturally the Husqvarna runs Ohlins shocks. Like every new shipment that arrives, they are slightly updated internally and should be even better than what you've already heard.



**ABOVE**  
Husqvarna have stuck with their 17" rear wheel decision on the larger bikes. More manufacturers have accepted the move and you now have a wider choice of tyres.



previous models.

Some of the Six-Day bikes had what looked to be these same new brake shoes and they had problems with glazing. Nothing disastrous, especially when you consider all the road racing that went on, but it was enough to make ADB's Six-Day rep run some coarse sandpaper over them about day 4 to smarten things up a bit. All in all though, these brakes are an improvement for Husqvarna.

## RIDING (DOWN TO BUSINESS)

Later in the day we got into the serious terrain. Tight, hilly, rocky trails mostly. As things got tougher and riders got more and more tired, the Husky's breeding made itself more apparent. Riders on the other bikes got spat off unexpectedly, stalled more often, bulldozed into obstacles and tipped off, and generally just got tired and frustrated with muscling around what seemed to be an increasingly unco-operative motorcycle. Small obstacles became potential big problems and all the while the Husqvarna pressed on like the rider was as fresh as a daisy. It even scampered up rocky climbs that had the other bigger bikes out of shape, stalled, and struggling down for another attempt. The same sort of rocky climbs that the Husky seemed so awkward on earlier in the day. The secret here seemed to be pick a line and stick to it. Hold the throttle steady and ride over everything rather than try to wind your way around the larger rocks.

At the end of the day it was the Husqvarna that was still flicking easily between the trees, still popping effortless little wheelies over the slippery logs and still behaving like a racing bike when we arrived back at the motocross track.

## THINGS TO DO

First off, we recommend tipping all the controls (clutch lever, gear change, both brakes) down a little so they can be operated more easily when you are still well forward. But you know better what suits you on that score.

More important is to throw that stupid little tin switch away. Hook up your lights so they run permanently, fit a squeeze horn and if you want a kill switch, fit a good Japanese one.

Next, get a decent plug cap. Anything is better than standard. The actual contact inside the cap spins around and even a plug check develops into an annoying operation.

Loctite the three Allen screws on the ignition and tighten the flywheel nut a couple of times after a few minutes running then after the first ride.

Loctite the top and bottom shock mounts and the kickstart lever retaining Allen screw.

Tighten the reed-block Allen screws after your first ride.

Finally, if you're worried about gearbox problems by stories you've heard, worry no more. The pin inside the clutch cover that holds the gearlever return mechanism won't come out on the bikes we have here in Australia. Should paranoia take over, you can lock that up like the Rock of Gibraltar also.

Sounds bad, eh? But knowing the problems means no problems. Talk to a mechanic about how his rider's bike came to be so reliable and he'll tell you a list of problem areas as long as your arm.

A reliable — as — the — sunrise Husqvarna WR250 should cost you about \$12 (including Loctite) and half an hour of your time.

## CONCLUSION

More factories seem to have concentrated their efforts into the 250's lately and there are some great examples around. Twin shocks are still in vogue on the enduro bikes and there is nothing better than the twin Ohlins on the Husqvarna.

The factory have refined their enduro bike concept and put in an easier to ride motor with a strong top end blast of power. You get a power, handling and suspension package that leaves very little to complain about.

Sure the Husqvarna is more civilised than ever with its primary kick starting (long overdue), front and rear brake activated brake light, indicators, etc., but the rubber-mounted, plastic-lined, cable guide with wire clip retainer bikes make it look as simple and unsophisticated as ever. The Husky is still a racer first and a sales item second. It's happiest when it's being ridden hard and fast and if you're a Husky owner you will be too.

We started the story off with a cliché so we might as well finish with one. How about this: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

Good grief! The pressure of going monthly is starting to tell.



## HUSQVARNA 250WR

**Test Bike:** Husky Motorcycle Imports Pty Ltd.  
453 Coreen Ave., Penrith 2750.  
**Phone:** (047) 32 1655

**Retail price:** \$2895

## SPECIFICATIONS

Engine . . . . .	Single cylinder, air-cooled, two stroke. Reed Induction.
Bore & stroke . . . . .	68.75 x 64.50 mm
Comp. ratio . . . . .	12.3:1
Carburettor . . . . .	38 mm Mikuni
Starting . . . . .	Primary kick
Electrics . . . . .	SEM CDI

## TRANSMISSION

Clutch . . . . .	6 disc light alloy
Transmission . . . . .	6 speed constant mesh
Primary drive . . . . .	Gear

## FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Frame . . . . .	Heat treated chrome-moly
Suspension:	
Front . . . . .	Husqvarna forks, 40 mm Dia. 270 mm travel
Rear . . . . .	Ohlins twin shock, integral reservoir. 270 mm travel.

## DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase . . . . .	1470 mm (57.8")
Seat height . . . . .	940 mm (38")
Ground clearance . . . . .	290 mm (11.4")
Weight . . . . .	108 kg (238 lbs)