



NEW-WAVE SPEARHEAD!

Charge of the Light Brigade

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

For the past half a decade, Husky has relied heavily on enduro and cross-country bike sales, while the motocross machine sales have languished. The reasons for this are simple: The Husky MX bikes have been too heavy, too slow, and on the trailing edge of technical sophistication.

Realizing that an almost total dependence on the enduro/cross-country market was dangerous, Husqvarna decided to completely and radically update its pure MX racing machines. What you see here is the result of those efforts.

Two immediate goals had to be met: Firstly, the bike had to get rid of excess pounds, and it had to produce some seriously competitive horsepower. Second-level goals were to equip the bike with all the latest hardware necessary to sell it to a flighty market. This meant disc brakes, single-shock suspension and Buck Rogers styling.

GOALS MET...SORT OF

A casual glance at the new Husky 250CR tells you that this machine has entered the space age. Styling is fresh, crisp and elegant, yet still has the Husky look about it.

A disc brake is up front, and an Ohlins single shock rides in a beefy-looking aluminum swingarm. Naturally, watercooling is employed, as with all current 250 MXers.

A trip to the *DB* scales shows this is the lightest 250 racer they've made since the early 1970s. Actual weight, with no gas in the slim tank, is 226.5 pounds.

As for the horsepower search, well, the Husky does produce some decent figures on

the dyno, with readings in the mid-30 range, just about the same as most other 250s. One problem, however, is that the Husky makes this power over a very narrow range. More on this later.

PRIMARY INPUT

Your first thoughts on the Husky are shared by all the other test riders: "Boy, this is a handsome bike!" and "Wow! is this sucker tall!"

The Husky 250 starts easily when cold. Little more than a slap at the left-side-mounted aluminum kickstarter is required to get things burbling. Unfortunately, when you start to ride the bike, you still have burbling.

As with most every Husky two-stroke we've ever tested, our test bike was jetted sloppy, dripping, blubbering rich. And, as with most of the Huskys, you'll be hard-pressed to get information as to what the optimum jetting is.

It's claimed that Huskys should be broken

Heavy clutch use is required to get the 250CR moving out of a low-speed turn. Stock, the bike is faster than a Honda and slower than a YZ.

in with the jetting on the rich side. Fine. But how about some data on what to run after you've wallowed through a few tanks of gas? Even better, with the high suggested retail price of the CR, the optional jetting should be included as part of the owner's manual/tool kit.

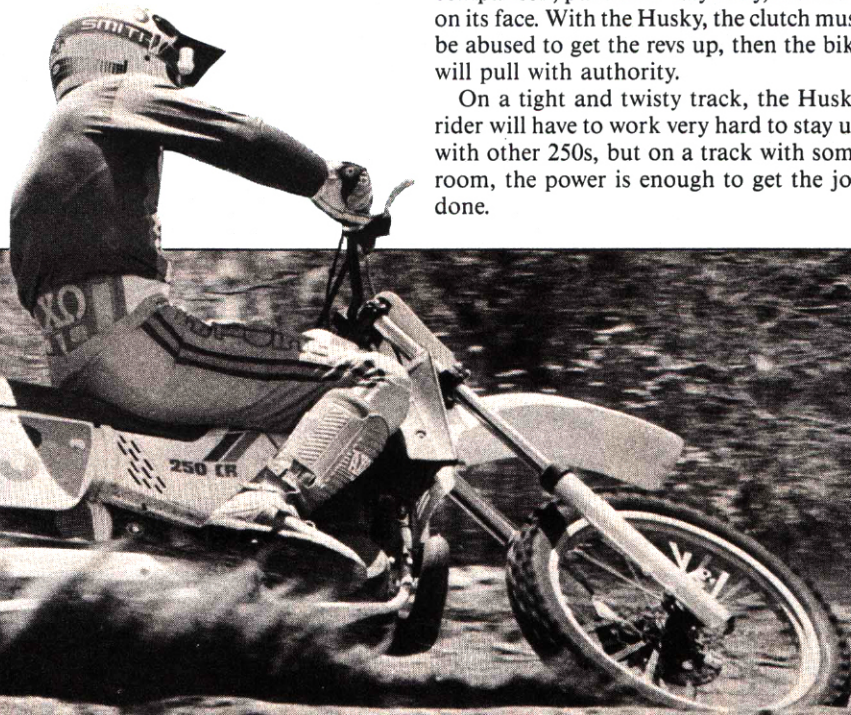
After leaning out the jetting on our bike, much of the blubbering went away, but we never did end up with a crisp-running machine. It took several minutes of hard running through the gears before the Husky would respond below half throttle.

POWER DELIVERY

There's not a whole lot of punch at lower revs on the Hooska, but there's a nice blast over a fairly broad mid-range. The bike will tolerate being revved out but is happier in the fat part of the powerband. By shifting a bit early, the Husky will accelerate hard enough to be competitive, but if you shift too early or too late, you'll lose ground to bikes with broader and more usable power.

Needless to say, gear selection is critical. In terms of sheer speed, the Husky will out-pull a Honda 250 to the first turn, simply because it will rev further. The Honda, by comparison, pulls hard very early, then falls on its face. With the Husky, the clutch must be abused to get the revs up, then the bike will pull with authority.

On a tight and twisty track, the Husky rider will have to work very hard to stay up with other 250s, but on a track with some room, the power is enough to get the job done.



HUSQVARNA 250CR

Actually, when all is said and done, the power characteristics of the 250 Husky are much more suited to desert and cross-country work than to motocross. Once a rider gets used to the slightly long throw of the Husky gearbox, the shifting is smooth enough and positive for constant stirring.

It would have been nice to see just how the Husky would have performed with perfect jetting, but our patience ran out after a number of bothersome trips inside the hard-to-work-on Mikuni flat-slide carb.

HANDLING

Our bike felt far superior to the XC500 we tested a few months back. Both ends felt firm but correct, with the forks being slightly on the harsh side over a square-edged bump but certainly superior to all of the Japanese forks, with the exception of the Suzuki.

It's been our experience that Husky forks improve with time on them as the seals seat in, and the right oil level, viscosity and type are dialed in for your riding style.

At the rear we found little wrong with the Ohlins single shock. It took big bumps well, ignored little bumps, and let the rider know where the rear was at all times. Travel is ultra-long at 13.8 inches, perhaps a bit too much for motocross, but for cross-country charging, it's a plus!

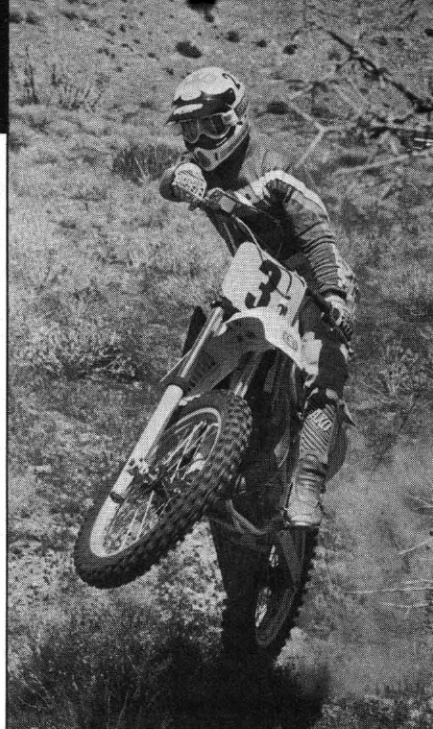
Our test bike tracked as straight as a falling safe at high speeds and turned well in everything but very tight, slow-speed turns. Here, the tallish saddle and high center of gravity extracted a price and made the CR clumsy in low-gear, creepy-crawly turns, especially in sand. We said tall, and we mean it.

Think about a 15.4-inch ground clearance!

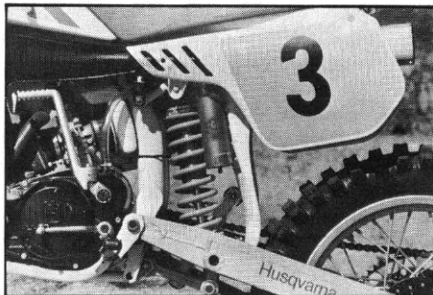
Excellent handling habits were displayed at all medium and high speeds, even on slippery hard-packed ground. No doubt, much of this can be attributed to the excellent Metzeler tires that come stock on the CR versions of the Husky.

LAYOUT AND FEEL

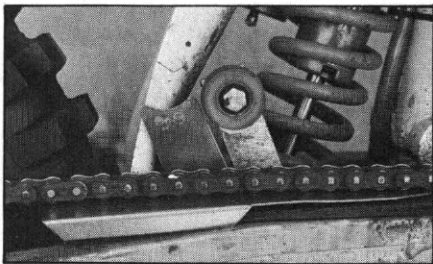
Even though the bike is tall, sitting and standing positions are quite comfortable and very natural. Bigger riders felt very much at home on the Husky, but riders under five feet seven inches will more than likely investigate lower machines.



With a great rear suspension and top-level Metzeler tires, the Husky hooks up well, even on baked-dry terrain. Tim Hanna demonstrates.



A superb Ohlins shock does 13-plus inches of impeccable travel work. Both adjusters for the damping are external.



Here's an answer to the chain sawing problem. Uptite Husky makes this sturdy protector that bolts right on. Price is \$18.85.

The 250CR is slim through the midsection, and the smooth transition of the saddle into the tank is well thought out. Even though the gas tank is a generous 2.6 gallons, it feels thin and does not bother the rider.

What does irritate the rider is the heat from the exhaust pipe as it toasts his leg. Also, on the right side of the bike, the rider tends to put his heel on the brake pedal link when braking, stifling proper braking feel.

GLITCHES

Detailing on the Husky is depressing. The upper chain roller is mounted on an aluminum arm that gets chewed up by the chain. It chews the chain up prematurely in return. Reversing the location of the brake cable on the XC500, the CR has its cable down low. It still rubs the edge of the swingarm.

Clutch pull should be lighter and the clutch lever is located too far from the grip for most normal-sized hands. Same with the brake lever, but that can be adjusted inward somewhat.

The clutch does not handle abuse well and protests when hot by creeping in toward the grip.

Plan on having the plastic airbox lid fall off soon unless you zip-tie it or screw it firmly into place.

Plastic badges on the tank will crack almost immediately. Don't even ask what replacement badges cost.

A Magura kill button should be replaced before you ever race the bike. Its sole goal in life is to expire at just the wrong time.

GOODIES

It's hard to argue with the high quality of the Ohlins dual-adjuster shock.

Wheels seem to be strong, and after initial settling in, are resistant to bending and spoke breakage.

And they are wrapped, as noted, with Metzeler tires. The good ones.

A rebuildable aluminum muffler keeps noise very low for a MXer.

The massive filter will handle dirty air well in the longest of races, and the bike is fairly waterproof.

It's nice to have a warranty on a race bike, a Husky exclusive, and it's even nicer to know that your engine comes with a forged piston, instead of a cheap cast item.



Bombs away!

HUSQVARNA 250CR

THE BOTTOM LINE

As it stands, the Husky is all the bike any rider will ever need until he's a fast intermediate or an expert. It's easy to ride, has forgiving handling and no real vices. It will warn you when you're past your skill level, rather than spit you off.

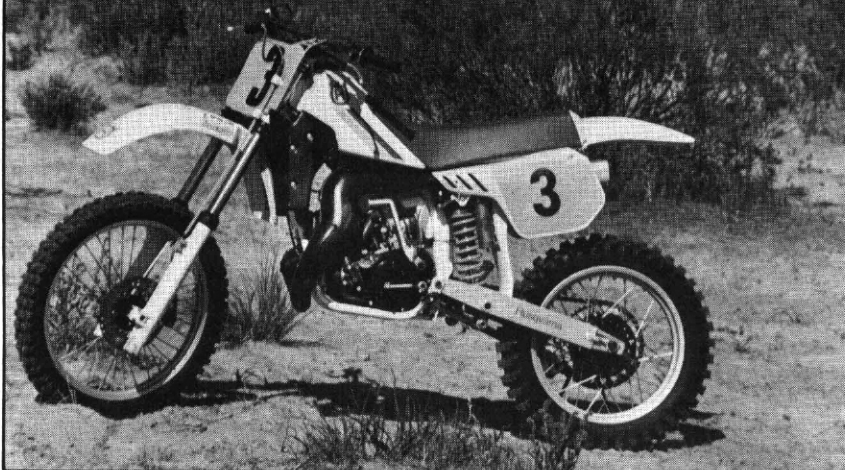
A fast rider will need and want more power, especially more explosive power, but the average rider will find that the bike encourages working a little harder to go a little faster.

It's certainly not perfect, and the jetting hassles are inexcusable, but the more you ride the bike, the more you learn to trust the handling.

Only one thing is puzzling to us. Why would anyone buy the five-speed CR version of the 250, when the six-speed XC version offers so much more versatility? The XC is only two pounds heavier, has a larger gas tank stock and will be as happy in Baja as it is on the MX track.

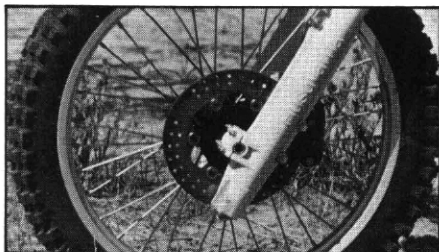
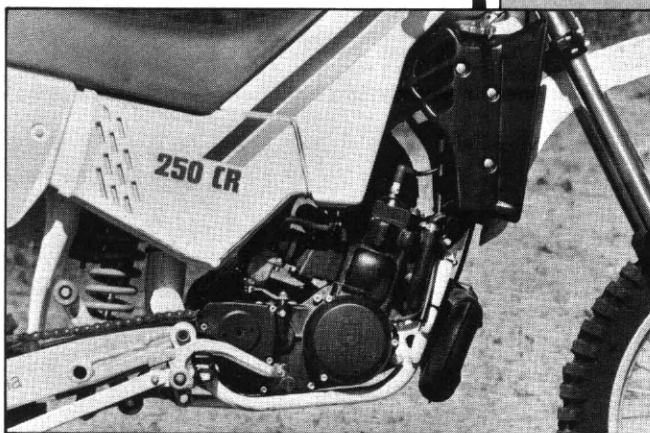
Still, for the MX purist, this represents the fastest 250 Husky motocrosser yet, and the first competitive one in almost a decade. □

No doubt the fastest Husky 250 ever, this engine still does not produce much power right off the bottom. The brake side of the engine is almost hidden by the low-slung gas tank.



HUSQVARNA 250CR

Engine type	Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 2-stroke	Tire size and type:	
Bore and stroke	69.5mm x 64.5mm	Front	3.00 x 21 Metzeler MX-Enduro
Displacement	244.7cc	Rear	4.50 x 18 Metzeler MX-Enduro
Carburetion	38mm flat-slide Mikuni	Suspension, type and travel:	
DB recommended jetting:		Front	40mm Husky telescopic, air-oil, 300mm (11.8 in.)
Main jet	390	Rear	Ohlins single shock, adj. comp./reb., 350mm (13.8 in.)
Needle jet	Q4	Intended use	Motocross
Jet needle	6FJ40 or 6FJ41	Country of origin	Sweden
Pilot jet	35	Retail price, approx.	\$2895
Slide number	3.5 or 4.0	Distributor/Manufacturer:	Husqvarna Motorcycle Co.
Fuel tank capacity	10.0 L (2.6 gals.)		4925 Mercury St.
Lubrication	Pre-mix, Bel-Ray at 40:1		San Diego, CA 92111
Gearbox ratios:		Overall rating of bike, keeping intended use in mind:	
1	18.95:1	Handling	Excellent
2	15.21:1	Front suspension	Very good
3	12.11:1	Rear suspension	Excellent
4	10.21:1	Power	Good
5	8.61:1	Cost	Fair
Gearing, front/rear	14/52	Attention to detail	Fair
Ignition	Motoplant CDI 0-63	Effectiveness, stone stock	Good
Recommended spark plug	Autolite	This rating system is included to aid in comparison of bikes in the same displacement and intended-use categories. Comparing the ratings of two dissimilar machines is a meaningless exercise in futility.	
Silencer/spark arrester	Aluminum silencer only		
Wheelbase	1520mm (59.5 in.)		
Ground clearance	390mm (15.4 in.)		
Seat height	975mm (38.4 in.)		
Rake/trail	27°/120mm		
Wet weight, no fuel	226.5 lbs.		



Quite possibly the best front brake to ever be delivered on a Husky. It's bracketed by decent 40mm Husky forks.

A slim bike at the midsection, the new-generation Husky lets the rider move around with no snags or hassles, but plan on getting a warm left leg from the unshielded pipe. ►

