

WANTED!! ALIVE ONLY!! A notorious and extremely pale commando is on the loose! This European-flavored hybrid has been known to wreak havoc all along the West Coast. Its appearance lends itself to friendship, with fun appeal and a well-polished set of manners. Be careful! The demon is a hostile weapon that tramples terrain like an out-of-control hurricane. The reward for capturing the savage Husky 400-WRX can be brutal... its appetite for adventure can warp an untrained pilot for the rest of his life!

HUSKY'S HYBRID WEAPON

It's brutally efficient

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

Husqvarna performed a rather simple operation when they built the WRX-400. They took the long-legged, new-generation, single-shock chassis and plopped in probably the best all-around engine in the universe. The result? A maniacal thoroughbred that laughs at scabby, ugly territory and

will grunt, plug, plow or rev to Saturn, depending on the one untested piece of the puzzle—the rider.

Last month we featured a riding impression on a shortened version of the WRX400. Now we're going to get into the pulse of the

machine, how it handles not only slow-speed enduro obstacles, but also the eye-watering world of speed. Like most machines, there are some quirks and warts on the WRX, but there are also a few setup tricks plus a handful of tips that will make the machine, in our eyes, nearly perfect.

CLOSING THE GAP

Basically, the 400cc water-cooled engine is unchanged from last year. The mid-sized jug spits out a constant flow of easy-to-ride juice and is attached to Husky's versatile six-speed gearbox. In stock trim the motor will tractor off the bottom like a John Deere, hit like a full-sized 500 in the mid-range and rev out to a decent but not overwhelming upper hit. For the off-road traveler/enduro pilot, it's brutally efficient.

Our 400 came jetted a little fat. We cured the minor blubbing that infected the mid-range by simply leaning out the needle posi-



Jon "The General" Miller grabs some air during a high-speed leap. It's extremely stable and forgiving at speed, and the suspension does an excellent job of mellowing the terrain.



In tight woods you should drop the countershaft sprocket down a tooth. This will make the first three gears much more usable for tight terrain work. As it stands, the Husky sits a tad high for smaller riders, but it knifes through the trees with amazing accuracy.



Once the WRX is dialed in, it's both a woods weapon and a competitive dez sled for the speed demons.



HUSQVARNA WRX400

tion. Besides that, it was dead-on. Our only other complaint with the engine was the gearing, and this was a minor grievance. The stock 15/52 setup leaves first gear a shade taller than we like and makes for a top-end speed that pins the speedo needle at over 90 mph! We replaced the stock countershaft sprocket with a 14-tooth model and immediately felt a huge difference. It makes first through third gears much more usable for tight enduro work while still allowing the machine to blur to an 80-mph-plus top-end speed.

BATTLE LINE

Husky's single-shock chassis features their own 40mm, 11.8-inch-travel forks working together with an Ohlins-based, single-shock rear end. The new tank/seat design has cut off all the old bulges that hampered the rider, and the "skinny" feel seems strangely out of place. . . for a Husky. Just under 13 inches of travel ooze out of the Swedish linked tail section.

Two things are painfully apparent about the WRX chassis: The rear shock is too soft, and, once it's set correctly, it's as stable as a locomotive and will turn like a greased snake in a gopher hole. You must replace the standard 5.7-kg spring with a 6.1- or 6.3-kg Ohlins spring. Most normal-sized riders will prefer the 6.1-kg unit. Next, with the spring fitted, dialing in the correct sag is critical! If the machine sags more than four inches with the rider's weight aboard, it will turn about as well as an ironing board. With four inches of sag, a fine-line cutting prowess lets the rider attack, zigzag, or cut and thrust through, over or around any obstacle.

You will notice that the rear end has a tendency to drumstick over stutter bumps with the heavier-spring setup. Run the compression damping at six! This helps, but doesn't cure the hack. It requires revalving, which allows more bleed at low speeds. Simons/Ohlins will revalue your shock for



around 60 bucks. We firmly suggest you get the damping mods—they work! By the way, the optional heavier spring will set you back nearly 80 big ones!

Up front the forks aren't magical, but perform without any stance behavior disorders. We ran 500cc of ten-weight oil, and the more time we put on the forks, the better they worked. There's quite a bit of stiction from the seals and the inner slider bushing. In time it smooths out, and the damping ability improves.

Husky opted for the proven dual-leading-shoe front stopper, and we can't fault their wisdom. It's progressive, strong and bullet-proof. The only maintenance required is making sure both shoes are actuated at the same time. This means keeping the linkage adjusted properly. Out back, the hardware performs well, is simple in design, and easy to work on.

TICS AND TACKS

Last month we sneived about the airbox. In stock trim it doesn't like water a whole lot. There is a cure, and it's a rather simple operation. We bolted a plastic deflector to the inside of the airbox, next to the carburetor. This keeps water from deflecting off

the rider's leg and shooting straight into the breathing system of the machine. Husky Products will be offering them to Husky dealers. Get one!

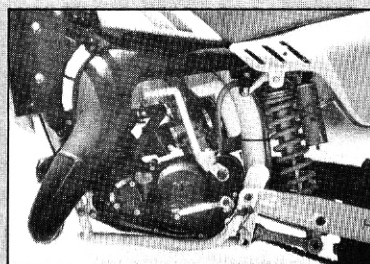
Next year all the Husky WRs will show up with Metzeler tires. This is good. They seem to add about another quarter-turn of confidence to the rider's throttle hand. We used them on our test machine and felt they worked nearly twice as well as the stock Trelleborgs.

Ironically, the stock Mach grips were loved by the entire DB wrecking crew. A softer compound has replaced the hard, deadly hand bleeders of the past. Thank you, Husqvarna.

Husky's new spark arrester is maintenance-free—another round of applause.

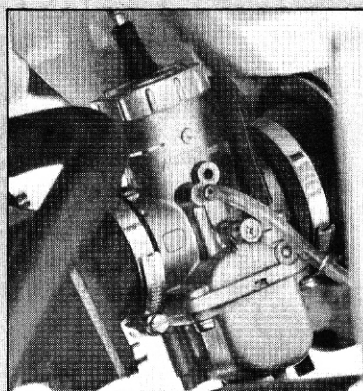
HERE'S THE DEAL

We absolutely love the WRX400. Once it's set up correctly, it will suck up violent gnarlies and blow out flat earth. The engine is the flat-out king of the do-it-all powerplants. It's easy to ride, a cruise to handle, and a plain gas for all levels of riders. If you can get your hands on one of these wanted and rather hard-to-find machines, do it! You'll never regret the investment. □

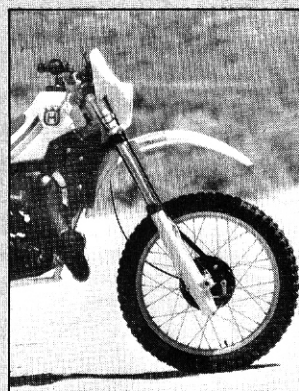


It's a very tidy package; the radiators tuck in nicely, but the pipe bulges enough to burn your leg. Our machine shifted perfectly and always started with very little effort.

◀ Everyone loved the slim feel of the WRX; the tank/seat combo is narrow and easy to move around on. We had to do a little grinding on the rear brake pedal, as its highest adjustment still keeps it sitting lower than the footpeg. You should grind off some aluminum where it hits the swingarm bolt.



We had to lean out the jetting a tad for our riding area. It was a little fat in the mid-range and upper response. If you look closely, there's a shield behind the carburetor, mounted on the airbox. This isn't stock, but is critical in keeping the WRX waterproof. Husky Products will be selling this item, and you should have one!



The WRX features the "old style" dual-leading-shoe front stopper and long-travel forks. This year's headlight cowl can be completely removed in seconds. That nice striping on the tank will last a few weeks, then bubble up and die.