

FIRST TESTS: '88 CR500R & '88 YZ125U!
RIDING THE HOT '88 XR600! INSIDE THE NEW KX & RM125s!

DIRT BIKE

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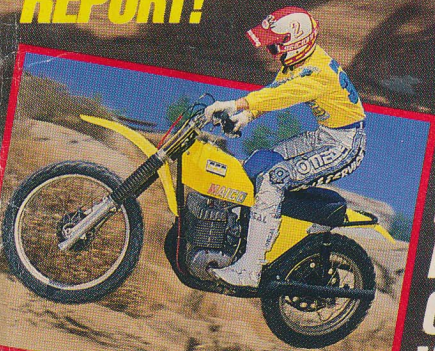
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NEW LOW-COST VINTAGE-CLASS MX: WHO SAYS RACING IS EXPENSIVE?!



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ON THE COVER:—Jeff "Chicken" Matiasevich backs the CR500R into the new year, Pete "Pepe" Murray time travels on a vintage Maico, Gary LaPlante styles the '88 XR600R, and the RM250 and Mugen 125 get the aluminum treatment. "Flying" Eddie Arnet snapped the two-stroke action, while "Torquing" Tim Tolleson captured the thundering thumper, and the *DB* lens traveled to Japan for the photos of the ultra-trick RM and CR. Tom Stratman took the Table of Contents photo of Jeff Leisk, styling deep in an Ohio National berm.

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WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear.

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**BLAST FROM
THE PAST**

VINTAGE

MOTORCYCLE RACING

The \$1000 solution to the cost of competing



Vintage racing classes are growing across the country. Many are merely dusting off their old iron, but others are buying up basket cases for almost nothing and restoring them to racing condition. To the rider who has only \$500 or \$1000, vintage racing offers a viable solution.

◀ No, you haven't slipped into a time warp; vintage race bikes are alive and well. The old iron is making a comeback because they are low-slung, low-tech and long on history. Here, Ken Sykes, the vintage bearing and seal king, roosts a cherry Greeves to victory.

wrenching, large thrills with low danger, and a sense of history and accomplishment. And the rage is sweeping the continent.

FOCUSING ON THE PHENOMENON

This article will feature riding impressions of several history-laden blasts from the past, as well as tips for finding and restoring an old European, Japanese or American sled to racing condition. *Dirt Bike* will also give the budding enthusiast a list of racing clubs, specialty shops and interested individuals to aid in the restoration process. When the resurrection is complete, rescue the antique riding gear from the attic and go racing!

SEARCHING BACKWOODS BARN

Actually, the days of finding a cherry antique machine under a tarp in an old barn are long gone. The chances of this happening to you are about as good as your chances of dating Christie Brinkley and Cher on the same weekend. But don't be discouraged; there are plenty of old sleds to be had. And, depending on the condition of the bike and the financial situation of the owner, you can pick up a vintage machine for anywhere from \$50 (for a basket case) to \$1000 (for a cherry antique).

An excellent way to find an antique is word of mouth. Ask around local shops and at the races (the Vet class is your best bet). Most shops have a bulletin board; check it for ads,



◀ Compared with the thumpers of its time, the 1963 Greeves Motocross Special was a real feather. The rubber-grommet-sprung front end handles bumps surprisingly well, and the bike turns, but it is very slow compared with the bikes of the '70s.

By the Staff of *DIRT BIKE*

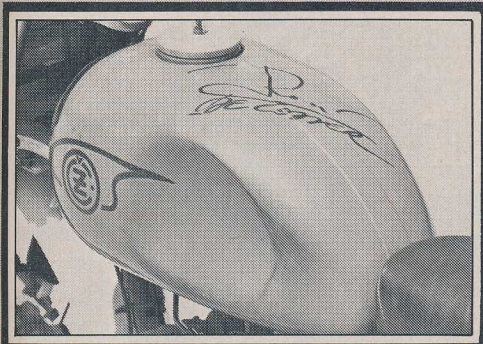
In a world of mega-dollar, long-legged, high-tech dirt bikes, there is a revolution brewing. More and more riders are taking a long, hard look at the doubles, and they flat don't want to attempt such insane leaps. Some don't have \$3000 to plop down on the latest in high-flight hardware. Others have the money, but are sick of wrenching on their sleds to keep rising-rate linkages from seizing, and of dealing with power valves and watercooling on every ring change. Some people are sick of finding milk crates to keep their machine upright on the line, or of praying they don't put a foot down during a race.

But the thrill of racing is too great to totally give up the sport. So, what is the alternative? Vintage racing. Across the country, people are resurrecting the old hardware and heading for the track. Clubs have sprung up to promote the sport and to put on races catering to the older iron. Finally a class exists where you can forego doing the doubles and still have a chance at the gold. And vintage racers don't have to deal with coolant systems or variable exhaust ports or nose-bleed seat heights. Better yet, showing up at the track with a 15-year-old piece of moto history will draw more attention than having the trickiest one-off special in the state.

Most importantly, the average Joe can pick up a vintage machine for little more than a song, restore it to racing condition, and go racing for \$1000 or less. Sometimes much less. Vintage racing is becoming popular because of low costs, ease of riding, ease of



VINTAGE



If you have a really valuable part, such as a works or autographed tank, it would be a good idea to remove it from the bike before racing. A plastic replacement gas tank would be a better unit for the bar-banging world of motocross. Many old sleds came with brittle fenders, so plastic replacements look better longer.



This is what it's all about; slamming into a berm on a low-slung machine. Even by today's standards, vintage machines carve! However, don't get too rambunctious over the jumps. Three inches of travel definitely limits air time!

◀ **CZ twin pipers earned four 250 World Championships, and their brute strength made them outlast the competition. Although they weren't the quickest bikes around, good handling and reliability kept them on top. Fiberglass fenders and a grim carb are all that need replacing.**

and place a want ad of your own. Through word of mouth, *Dirt Bike's* Torquin' Tim found a basket-case '74 Maico 400, complete with a works aluminum gas tank, for the amazing price of \$50! After putting another \$200 into the machine, Tim has a styling race bike for a measly \$250.

Also, check the classified section of your local newspaper and used-car publications, such as *The Recycler* or *Auto Mart*. This method has the best chance for success. Look for a mount that hasn't been wildly modified, and steer clear of obviously thrashed machines (unless you like chasing down rare

engine parts). If you can't find anything in the classifieds, call people in the Vintage enthusiasts listings; they may be able to refer you to someone in your area who can help.

CLEARING AWAY THE COBWEBS

Once you've found a sled, carefully inspect it before laying down your bread. Crank it over to make sure the motor spins freely; if it has set for a long time, the cylinder and crank may seize with rust. Tweaked rims or handlebars are easy to replace, but steer clear of machines with wasted cases or other severely damaged, hard-to-replace parts. If it seems to be in sound condition but won't start, haggle! You can probably pick it up cheap, and getting it running could be as simple as cleaning the carb or replacing a condenser!

Take your new chunk of history home and set it on a crate. If it hasn't run in a long time, take out the spark plug, dump in a tablespoon of oil, and crank the motor through a few times. Treat any rusted parts with liquid wrench to ease removal. A rusted metal gas tank can be treated with acid to stop the oxidation, and then sealed to prevent further rusting. Lube all cables, pivots and such. A heavily rusted machine should be completely disassembled, cleaned and reassembled.

Carefully disassemble the carb and use a carb cleaner on any mung or varnish inside your mixer. A lot of old European iron came with grim excuses for carbs, so swap that old Jikov, Amal or Bing for a more modern mixer. CZs and Huskies really come to life with a 28mm or 30mm Mikuni or Keihin. Many vintage racers also use K&N filters instead of the original airbox. If you use the old carb, rebuild it. Replace the fuel line(s), too.

Check your sled for spark. If negative, replace the points and condenser and try again. Take the old parts with you to the auto or cycle shop so they can cross-reference the numbers; ditto for the coil. Replace any corroded wiring, and disconnect the kill button if you have trouble chasing down a lack of spark.

It's likely that your vintage machine is in need of a ring job. Carefully remove the head and cylinder and pay close attention to the gaskets; you may have to fabricate your own using the old ones as patterns. Give your specialty shop (see listings) the number on the piston to make sure what size (standard, first over, etc.) it is and order the rings (and piston if needed). Any rust pits in the cylinder can be filled with epoxy or Liquid Steel. Sand the repair flush with the cylinder wall.

Inspect all control cables and replace any kinked or frayed units. Many shops custom-make cables if you can't cross-reference one from the shelf. Drain the tranny and forks and replace with new fluids. NOTE: Most Euro vintage bikes require mineral-based two-stroke oil mixed at 20-to-1! Replace with fresh pre-mix.

In all likelihood, you'll find that several bearings and seals need replacement. Remove the culprits and take them to your local bearing shop, or send them to Ken Sykes at (714)558-8931 for cross-referencing. Carefully inspect all swingarm, wheel and headsets

bearings. If your brakes are wasted and you can't get replacements, you can relined the shoes with little hassle. A wasted seat cover can be replaced with a CEET or Hi-Flite cover, and plastic manufacturers can help out with replacement fenders, gas tank and numberplates.

Should your shocks be wasted, many companies, such as Koni, Fox and Works Performance, offer economical replacements. Be sure not to exceed rear-wheel travel limits, though (see next section).

GETTING INTO VINTAGE RACING

This sport has grown from one event a year to several events; and it has spread from California across the nation. In addition to the California's CZ World Championships and Dick Mann Dirt Bike Rallye, vintage events have spread to Colorado (Steamboat Springs), Ohio, Florida, Oregon, Washington and Canada. Races draw 100 or more riders, which is a bigger turnout than many "normal" races!

Two major clubs have formed out West; the California Vintage Racing Group and the Southern California Vintage Motocross Association. And interest is brewing in the Midwest, too, so more clubs are sure to follow.

Basically, getting into vintage racing is as easy as getting a '74-or-earlier dirt bike running. The CVRG allows bikes up to 1974, and travel limits are four inches in the rear and seven inches up front. SCVMA (aka the CZ Club) allows all comers up to 1976 at the Vintage class of the CZ World Championships, held in mid-November. Travel at this event is limited to eight inches up front and five inches in the rear. You can even swap motors and frames as long as travel is within limits and the motor meets the age requirements.

Monthly events are run at old-style tracks (pre-doubles) at places such as Ascot, Glen Helen, DeAnza, L.A. County Raceway, Sandhill Ranch, Marysville, Reno and Steamboat Springs. The SCVMA and CVRG have combined efforts to put on a six-race series. This year, events include Navato, California (April 12, 1987), DeAnza (May 17, 1987), Steamboat Springs, Colorado (September 11, 1987), Dick Mann Dirt Bike Rallye (October 18, 1987), CZ World Championships (November 15, 1987) and L.A. County Raceway (to be announced). Go for it!

WHO TO CONTACT

CZ CLUB/SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA VINTAGE MOTOCROSS ASSOCIATION, Rick Nabers, President, 1240 Logan St., Ste. S, Costa Mesa, CA 92626; (714)640-7117 or (714)662-7377. Membership: free.

CALIFORNIA VINTAGE RACING GROUP, Fred Mork, President, 1423 Rifle Range Rd., El Cerrito, CA 94530; (415)529-2518. Membership: \$10 per year.

WHERE TO FIND PARTS

CZ, Bertus Jawa/CZ, P.O. Box 3303, City of Industry, CA 91744; (818)330-2326

J&B CYCLERY, 17468 Road 25, Madera, CA 93638, (209)674-4788; (Anne Jamison)

GREEVES, (parts or complete bikes), Frank Conley, 13 El Cuenco, Carmel Valley, CA 93924; (408)659-4958

HUSQVARNA, Uptite Husqvarna, 1609 Unit E., East McFadden Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92705; (714)835-7277, (George Erl)

MAICO, Cycle Service, 1503 South Pacific Ave., San Pedro, CA 90731; (213)548-6874

HODAKA, Heid's Hodaka, Garnet Lake Rd., Johnsburg, NY 12843; (518)251-2110

VINTAGE RIDING IMPRESSIONS

1963 GREEVES MCS

• Dave Bickers was the first rider to take a two-stroke to the 500cc World Championship crown (1960 and 1961), and the Greeves Motocross Special is a replica of Bickers' works machine. The only differences are a square-tubed swingarm (complete with a drip chain oiler!), a square barrel instead of the Villers round iron barrel, and lighter cases. The machine ruled the desert in the early days and features a springless rubber-grommet leading-link front end!

A 19-inch front rim and Dunlop 350 Sports tire came standard on machines bound for America. The Euro models had 21-inch front ends. We rode a machine with the larger hoop up front. Turning is very precise on this machine, and the rubber-glide front end soaked up bumps amazingly well, but power is almost nonexistent. The MCS was built before two-stroke technology included the now-standard expansion chamber, but even an underpowered two-stroke could run with the heavy thumpers of the era. We had fun on the machine, despite the anemic motor and right-hand-shifting, one-up and two-down shift pattern.

1966 250 TWIN-PIPE CZ

CZ won the 250 World Championship in 1964 (Joel Robert) and 1965 (Victor Orbekov) with the twin-piper, and the 1966 production model had the same design innovations as the works machines. While the Japanese were fiddling with rotary valve intakes, CZ stuck with the piston-port design. The twin-exhaust was criticized for being heavier and less efficient than a single port, but the system was more reliable. At the time, bridged exhaust ports had problems with uneven expansion, but unbridged ports had a tendency to catch rings. The two-port, twin-pipe system solved both problems.

Over 2000 twin-pipers were produced, and our test machine is one of the last to come with a fiberglass gas tank and alloy airbox. Later models came with an alloy tank and fiberglass airbox.

Twin Dykes-ring pistons, crank-mounted clutches, backwards ignitions (the magneto internals mounted to the cover) and bullet-proof four-speed trannies were also twin-pipe trademarks. The machine had 26 horsepower, and the powerband was an amazing 5000 rpm wide (2000 to 7000)! Also, if a rider fouled a plug on the line, he could get going by simply switching the plug lead to the secondary spark plug. Try this on a modern machine!

Riding this machine is a blast. It turns exceptionally well and is stable at speed. The tranny shifts smoothly, and the brakes work surprisingly well. The CZ is very narrow in the middle, but the tank makes sliding forward for turns painful. The welded-on lever perches were also awkward.



Paul Friedrichs took three straight 500 World Championships ('66 to '68) aboard 360 CZs, and the machines are every bit as reliable as the 250s. However, only 700 were produced, so they are scarcer than the 250s. We broke our frame in half during testing and photos.

1968 360 TWIN-PIPE CZ

Like the 250, the 360 featured dual exhaust ports and pipes, engine-speed (crank-mounted) clutches, generous port areas, two Dykes rings and a two-plug head. The machine was the most bulletproof, quickest, most tractable two-stroke of its time, and it put out 30 horsepower and weighed in at 262 pounds, wet.

Our test bike boasted Roger Decoster's autograph on the gas tank and a mill that was once owned by Dave Bickers. Rick Nabers built this Chay-Zed out of two tweaked frames, and it is his favorite race bike. The machine turns very well, is stable over rough ground, in spite of an almost rigid rear end, and has the powerband of doom. It's almost as tractable as a four-stroke on hard-pack. As with other vintage machines we tested, the 360 easily starts with one kick. Of the eight machines we rode, this bike was our second favorite. It's rich with history, but only 700 of these machines were produced, according to Roger DeCoster.

1969 250 MX6 CHALLENGER

Challengers were introduced in 1965 and feature the Greeves trademark I-beam frame. The MX1 had a terrible gearbox, and a new crescent-shaped gearbox replaced the grim original on later models (MX2 and MX3). The MX4 is a 360cc machine, and the rest of the Challenger line is 250s. The MX5 and MX6 had updated round gearboxes, and the MX6 was an America-only model with a short-stroke mill. All Challengers came with Ceriani forks or the Greeves springer front end. Nick Nicholson, the world's leading Greeves dealer, received more than 50 percent of Greeves' total production!

Power is greatly improved over the non-expansion-chambered MCS, and the more conventionally sprung leading-link front end soaked up bumps better than the rubber-sprung model. Starting requires folding the footpeg out of the way, so the pegs have no



The Greeves Challenger series will carve turns with all comers, except the Maicos. The motor and chassis are strong, but watch out for grim trannies on the MX1 models. The MX2 through MX6 models all had decent gearboxes. Greeves came with either leading-link or Ceriani forks.



Husqvarnas ruled in the early days and have a long life span, so finding a decent mount should be easy. Basically, the Swedish machines had bulletproof motors, but details such as steering-head bearings, fork seals and aluminum fenders required constant attention. Those problems are easily dealt with these days; merely swap the parts for modern items.

Ah, yes, the legendary Maico. No other machine could come close in the turns, but they had flimsy pipes and motor mounts. Brakes and shifting were decent, and the forks were the best of their time. Cycle Service's Pete Murray double jumps the ancient 1971 Maico. ▶



return springs. This is not good. We also had trouble getting used to the backward shift pattern and the right-side shifter.

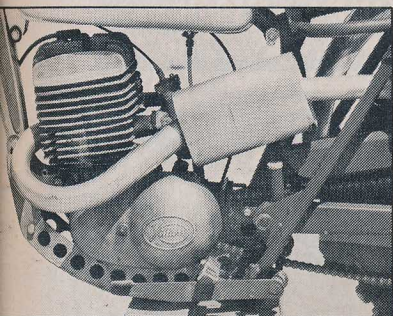
1971 250 HUSQVARNA

Husqvarna's U.S. motocross history began with the 1966 250 Husky, which had a bolt-on rear subframe and was dubbed the Bolt Together or Hallman Husky. In 1970, the MH model went to a one-piece frame, and



This machine is actually a '74 125 chassis with a '74 Husky Mag 250 motor wedged in; the machine even shreds on the Maico in corners, and we appreciated the left-side shifting. Next to the '75 Puch, this bike had the best power of the eight machines tested.

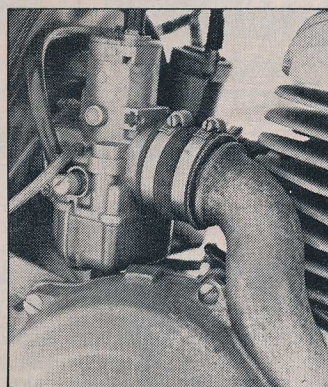
This ATK-owned Puch had the motor of doom in 1975; its 250 will still run with modern machinery, but the suspension doesn't meet vintage racing rules. Some bigger events have an Unlimited class where it's legal. Grim brakes and shifting weren't so nice.



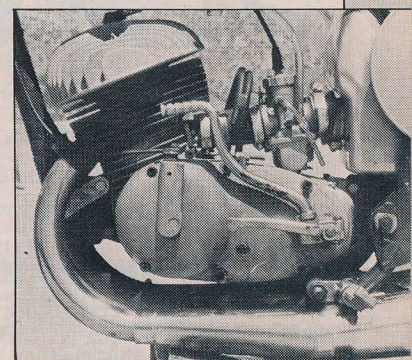
Before expansion chambers were perfected, two-stroke exhaust systems looked like the one on this 1963 Greeves. Some two-strokes used blooey pipes, which looked like the front half of a chamber. They were great for sucking out exhaust. Unfortunately, most of the intake went with it.



Maico is the father of handling, but never won a world title. The motor is indestructible, but keep an eye on the motor mounts, the brittle pipe and the finicky ignition.



This is the fastest 250 motor of its time. The twin-carbed (rotary valve and piston port) Harry Everts replica Puch is quick even by today's standards, but only a few were produced.



Although CZs had the reputation of having indestructible motors and transmissions, take it easy on yours; spare gears are extremely scarce. Modern shocks feature improved damping, but be careful not to exceed travel limitation rules.

the '71 MI shared the same unit. The only difference between the '70 and '71 models is that the '71 had springs holding the headpipe to the exhaust manifold. Also, the early machines came standard with full-floating rear brakes. Motors were unchanged from 1967 to '71, except for the angle of the motor mounts.

Riding this machine was a gas, but it took some time to get used to the right-side shifting and the extremely strong rear brake! Turning was precise, and we could carve some tight lines without bothering to climb up on the tank! It was stable over rough terrain but not as rock-steady as the CZs.

1974 MAG 250 HUSQVARNA

Between 1971 and 1973, the other European manufacturers and the Japanese gave the public more advanced machinery, but Husky slogged along with basically unchanged models. In '74 the Swedish firm released a replica of Heikki Mikkola's 1973 works machine; the magnesium-cased 250 featured reed induction, a five-speed tranny and a wet weight of 217 pounds. As was the tradition of the era, the Girling shocks were moved one inch forward for a tad more travel.

This is by far the favorite vintage machine of all our testers. It has better power than all the other machines on hand (except the '75

twin-carb Puch), and it turns very well. It better, because this particular machine is actually a Mag 250 motor in a '74 125 Husky frame. It rails the inside line extremely well, but the light weight and rearward weight bias (only 45.2 percent on the front) makes the Mag want to loop out if the rider gets careless over jumps. Shifting is excellent, but the brakes are only marginal. Still, the machine shreds the Vintage class.

1971 250 MAICO

Although Maico never won a World Championship (Ake Jonsson came the closest in the '72 500cc chase, but a loose spark plug cost him the title), the German machines are world-famous for unequaled handling. Maicos could hold lines in corners no other machines could dream of taking. Japanese R&D types copied Maicos to get their machines on the handling program. On the other hand, Maicos were also famous for requiring constant attention to fight off the dreaded DNFs. Pipes were more brittle than Tammy Faye Bakker's makeup in winter, and the motors vibrated so much that Loctite became an industry standard in motocross.

No other machine turns as well as a Maico. Period. It'll carve inside on flat hard-pack, rail the berm, square off or slide beautifully on choppy ground with ease. Handling is also first-rate on choppy ground (for its

time). Shifting is good, but the clutch pull is out of the Stone Age (no wonder nobody ever used the clutch back then), and so are the brakes. It vibrates too much and requires almost constant attention, but the 250 Maico had decent power and handling.

1975 MAG 250 PUCH

This limited-edition (only 100 were made) Harry Everts replica is the trickiest and rarest vintage machine around. The machine is the spitting image of the works bike Everts won the 1975 World Championship with. It features a magnesium motor with Motoplat ignition and two 34mm Bing carbs; one feeds the mill via a piston port, and the other feeds it via a rotary valve! The mill is fast, even by today's standards.

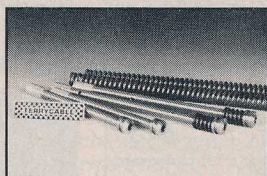
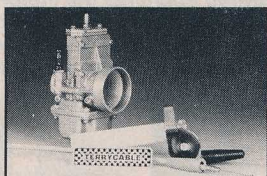
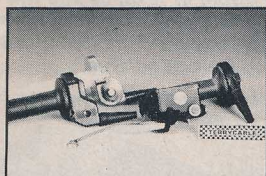
However, suspension travel is too much for vintage racing rules. If you are lucky enough to find one, you'll have to install spacers to limit both front and rear travel. Even with the stock suspension, the awesome motor overpowers the boingers and mild-steed frame. Although the shifting is heavy, it doesn't have a long throw or a ton of neutrals, and the clutch isn't too bad, either. Brakes are also average. With a 56-inch wheelbase, the machine turns better than modern machinery, but it isn't in the same league with the other vintage iron. This machine is so rare, it should be a museum piece, not a racer. •

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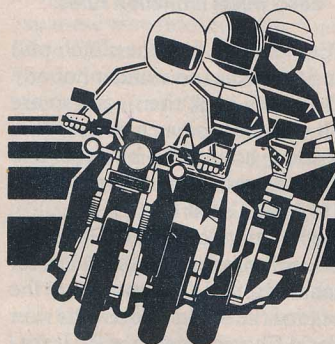
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ROGER DECOSTER'S TWIN-PIPE MEMOIRS

• "I rode CZs from 1965 to 1970. My last year on the Czechoslovakian machine was spent contesting the 250 GPs and the Belgian 500 Nationals. I rode the 250 Class, since Joel Robert and Sylvian Geboers were both picked up by Suzuki to compete in the 250 GPs (both had previously ridden for CZ).

"The twin-pipe CZ 250 was reliable, but heavy compared with Joel's and Sylvian's works Suzukis. It also didn't have the pick-up the Suzuki had. Handling wasn't too bad. My bike was stock except for a radial head and a little porting. It was the most com-

1988 HONDA CR125R vs. 1974 HUSQVARNA 250CR



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VINTAGE

petitive bike available to the privateer at the time.

"I finished third in the 250 World Championships that year (1970). Joel Robert won, Sylvian Geboers finished second, and Heikki Mikoka on a Husqvarna placed fourth behind me. My most memorable ride was at the last GP in Austria. I would pass six-time World Champion Joel Robert every lap on the downhill, and he would pass me right back on the uphill straightaway. I ended up beating Joel, because the finish line was after the downhill!" •



◀ Old versus new. A modern 125 is faster, stops better and has more suspension travel than the early 250s, but nose-bleed seat height and high-maintenance trickery scare off some riders. Old bikes had grim brakes and carbs.

◀ On the top end, our '74 Husky 250 would run with our '88 CR125R, but the Husqvarna balked coming out of the hole. As a result, the Honda would reach the first turn with a big lead every time. End of comparison. □

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