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← CRAZY MX PILOT COMPLETELY FLIPS OUT: WHY HE DID IT! PAGE 24



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APRIL 1986 • VOLUME 16, NO. 4



DIRT vs. STREET



HONDA CR80



YAMAHA YZ125



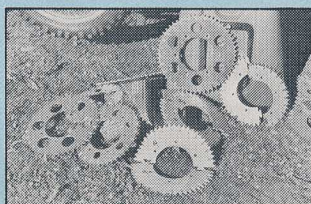
ANAHEIM SX



HONDA XL600



YAMAHA TT350



125 SPEED SECRETS

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ON THE COVER:—*Dirt Bike* test rider Steve Schmitz gets absolutely nuts aboard the rejuvenated Yamaha YZ125. Steve completed a 180-degree aerial maneuver for the *DB* cameras. Tom Webb took the photo, and Flash Kuhn snapped the awesome "whip" shot. DeWest artfully designed the cover, and Valley Film performed the color separations.

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.

HUSQVARNA 250MX vs. M-STAR 250MX

THE INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

Two answers to the Asian Invasion





By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

It seems strange that a little over a decade ago, European motorcycles completely dominated the virgin sport of motocross. Names like Aberg, Kring, Jonsson, Bauer and Mikkola carried the headlines, and all were mounted on state-of-the-art European machines. These motocross weapons were piloted by men who took them to World Championships—year after year after year.

Today, both Husqvarna and M-Star still maintain a hold on a share of the market, but, relatively speaking, a much smaller piece than that of the early '70s. While both companies have fought for their lives, a certain strength has blossomed. Husqvarna's motocross effort slowly withered and was replaced by an enduro/off-road knockout punch that stems from the company's belief in building bulletproof equipment meant to laugh at the elements and take its riders to countless victories in brutally long races.

M-Star (a.k.a. Maico) is battling back from a grisly mess that originated at its own corporate headquarters. They've nearly lost

the network of dealerships it took them years to build up. Their machines, however, have always been blessed with handling traits that border on magic, and engines that are more than just rideable—they are also competitive.

What we have here are two European 250cc motocrossers. Both are fighting for a niche in a market crammed with lightning-fast, incredibly sophisticated Japanese equipment that evolved directly from input from their megabuck racing teams. The question is, can the Husqvarna 250 Motocross and the M-Star 250 still compete in today's high-tech world of motocross?

THE HUSQVARNA 250 MOTOCROSS

Husky accomplished several important goals last year. First, they reduced the weight of the 250 to a competitive level and actually got the machine to breathe a shade harder than past efforts. The 1985 Husky was by no means a rocket, but, in the hands of the right pilot, one could extract some decent results. This year there have been subtle improvements to the white bull. The cylinder has

been worked on, and, combined with a new exhaust system, the pony department has been juiced up. Husky stresses reliability with a forged-aluminum piston. The jug is water-cooled and the tranny is a five-speeder.

Although the chassis appears to be a rerun of last year's, there have been some important updates. Husky has finally shelved the ol' standby 40mm forks and introduced some new front silverware with the same dimensions. They've improved the tolerances and slipped in low-friction bushings and a floating seal. This is what other folks have been doing for years. The damping rates have been changed, and the springs stiffened.

Once again, the saddle height sits up next to the moon, although the body of the machine is slim and compact. An Ohlins rear damper coughs out just under 14 inches of travel, and the fuel tank carries its load way down low. The frame is a unique giant backbone with no appendages hanging down by the swingarm pivot. The footpegs are new, and the tires are by Metzeler.

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1984	500 cc World Championship
1983	125 cc World Championship
1983	500 cc World Championship
1982	125 cc World Championship
1982	250 cc World Championship
1981	125 cc World Championship
1981	250 cc World Championship
1981	500 cc World Championship
1980	125 cc World Championship
1980	250 cc World Championship
1980	500 cc World Championship

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HARD				
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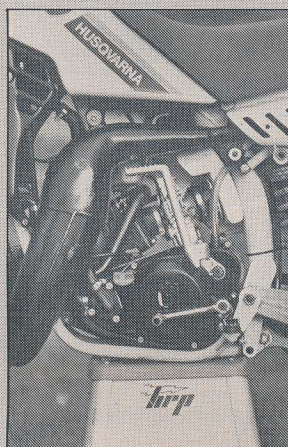
HUSQVARNA 250MX vs. M-STAR 250MX



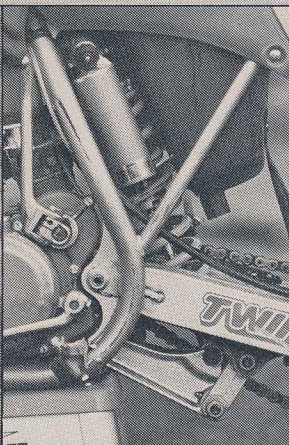
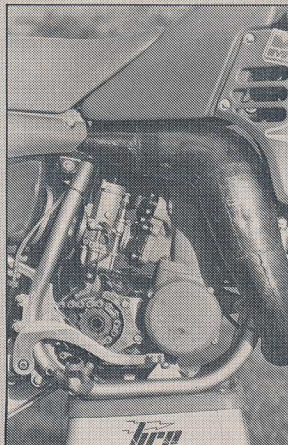
The big H machine required much more rider input when it came to serious jumps. The height of the machine hindered the rider in making critical body adjustments.



The M-Star had no annoying habits upon landing after free flight. The front and rear suspension worked well together, and we experienced no five o'clock surprises.



Husqvarna's 250 generates more thrust than the M-Star, but over a narrower powerband. Good clutch action makes the bike easier to navigate in the corners. Shifting is good, but the throw is too long to allow for precision work on frenzied Supercross-style tracks. Husky says the 250's 40mm forks are new and improved. They are new, but the action still needs to be improved. The forks flex enough to make cornering vague, eliminating the square-off technique from the bike's cornering repertoire. Front brake feel and action are good, but power could still stand a boost. This year Husky's single-shock rear is surprisingly close to the mark. The shock absorbs massive impacts without being harsh over smaller stuff—chalk this up to improved spring and damping rates.



Stock final gearing on the M-Star is too tall, but the internal gearing is correct for the engine's power output. Shifting requires a firm effort, and the throw is longer than most riders are used to. We missed a lot of shifts, especially in the first few hours. The German forks were supple enough to deliver a smooth ride and still absorb the killer hit. The stock Bridgestone M22/23 tires are outstanding hard-track sneakers. A single, multi-adjustable Ohlins shock controls movement of the M-Star's Twin-Link 2 suspension system. The shock is harsh on the initial stroke for riders in the 140-to-170-pound range. We backed the low-speed compression damping down to zero with good results, but the shock could be further improved if revalved for even less compression restriction.

M-STAR 250

It's weird, but the cobby outer shell of the M-Star makes the machine look like a Cagiva. All that red plastic is offset by a silver frame, engine and forks. The gas tank carries its load down low, and the radiators snug in nicely. A supple seat makes a good transition where it meets the tank, and the body of the M-Star isn't so fat as to be obnoxious.

One of the big eye-rippers is the front and rear disc brake arrangement. Both feature floating brake calipers, metal discs and braided lines that run unprotected throughout much of the machine. Both discs are mated to slim-line hubs with 40-spoke setups. The forks are M-Star designed, offer 12 inches of travel, and have boots that cover the delicate stanchion. There are no gimmicks or gadgets on them, just beefy-tubed, unadjustable, oil-damped telescopics. Out back, M-Star relies on an Ohlins shock and a link system that looks similar to older models.

The engine has gone through much more than a simple face lift. It features M-Star's version of a power valve (labeled S.E.E.S., or slide-engaged exhaust system). Basically, the unit is a spring-loaded valve that's activated by exhaust pressure. The higher the revs, the greater the valve opens. M-Star has also done away with the standard borable liner, and replaced it with a slippery nikasil coating. This makes for better performance and a much lighter weight. New port timing and a new exhaust system top the news from the German powerplant. Both are meant to re-focus the power down low, making for blast rather than a softer, longer-revving power delivery.

WORKING OUT, SWEDISH STYLE

Husky's work in the off-season centered around getting more roost at lower revs and still letting the machine breathe on top. It hits much harder than past efforts, but only in the mid-range snap. Once you're past that, it's time to shift. It makes very little horsepower in the lower and upper parts of the powerband, and it vibrates on top like an out-of-control blender. The short-shift routine produces far better results when you regear the machine. We added four teeth to the rear sprocket, and felt an immediate improvement.

On faster tracks, riders exercising a frantic shifting foot can keep the speed up and the lap times down. Tight, Supercross-type layouts are pure hell on the Swedemobile, especially if you fall out of the meat of the powerband. Although the clutch pull is easier, it still lacks feel, and combined with decent but not explosive engine adrenaline, you quickly find the limitations of the machine.

Although Husky has pulled in the rake on the machine, its forte is higher speeds. It lusts after fourth- and fifth-gear situations, big whoops and wide, sweeping turns. On flip-flop tight and twisty courses the H-mobile wallows and spits due to its high feel and lack of "carve-ability" at lower speeds. The front Metzeler MXR is garbage on hard-packed terrain, and we replaced it with

HUSQVARNA 250MX vs. M-STAR 250MX



Long and smooth: The Husky craves the long, fast sweeper. Trying to force the Swede through tight Supercross-style turns is an exercise in frustration, as well as an attempt to defy the laws of physics. A tall saddle height and long wheelbase fight the rider in the switchbacks.



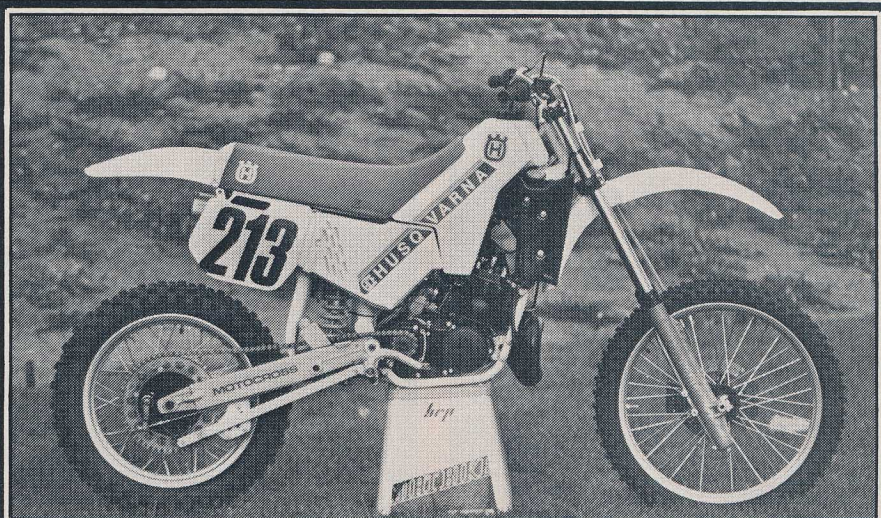
Cornering is one of the M-Star's strong points in the sense that the machine's geometry lets it cut a tight line, but this positive trait is overshadowed by the heavy pull required to clutch out of the turns. Fix the clutch, and the bike will live up to its cornering potential. Most of the fast M-Star guys extend the unit's actuating arm and polish the pivot points for an easier pull.

a standard-issue MX Metzeler. This helped considerably.

The suspension proved to be a conflict of interests. Up front the new forks refuse to take spike hits, cringe at stutter bumps, but love the big, rolling G-outs. We actually feel that last year's units were far more supple, but they couldn't take the big crusher hits as well. Evaluating the rear end took far less effort: Dial in the sag to four inches, set the rebound damping to a comfortable position, and hit the track. While it's not magical, the Ohlins setup does everything it should—fairly well. Its strongest positive trait is an ability to hook up under power while traversing jagged terrain.

MAULING WITH THE M-STAR

There's no doubt about it, the M-Star handlebars came straight off Whitey Martino's 1971 dez sled. Take them off and toss 'em to the devil. They force your arms into an immediate cramp, are too high and plain stupid. Other than that, the M-Star feels like



	HUSQVARNA 250 MOTOCROSS	M-STAR GM250
Engine type	Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 2-stroke	Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 2-stroke
Bore and stroke	69.5mm x 64.5mm	67mm x 70mm
Displacement	245cc	247cc
Carburetion	38mm Mikuni	Bing V54-2038
Factory recommended jetting:		
Main jet	380	190
Needle jet	Q6	282
Jet needle	6FJ40	6D2
Pilot jet	4.0	60
Slide number	4.0	2103
Fuel tank capacity	10.0 L (2.6 gals.)	10.1 L (2.7 gals.)
Lubrication	Pre-mix	Pre-mix
Gearbox ratios:		
1	20.41:1	1.875:1
2	16.38:1	1.555:1
3	13.04:1	1.300:1
4	10.99:1	1.090:1
5	9.27:1	0.916:1
Gearing, front/rear	13/52	13/52
Ignition	CDI	Motoplat electronic ignition
Recommended spark plug	NGK B8EV	NGK B9ES
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/no	Yes/no
Wheelbase	1512mm (59.5 in.)	1480mm (58.2 in.)
Ground clearance	390mm (15.4 in.)	381mm (15.0 in.)
Seat height	1240mm (48.9 in.)	960mm (37.7 in.)
Rake/trail	27°/120mm	Unknown/121mm
Wet weight, no fuel	226 lbs.	220 lbs.
Tire size and type:		
Front	90/91 x 21 Metzeler	3.00 x 21 Bridgestone
Rear	4.50 x 18 Metzeler	4.10 x 18 Bridgestone
Suspension type and travel:		
Front	40mm Husqvarna, 300mm (11.8 in.)	Telescopic fork, 305mm (12.0 in.)
Rear	Ohlins, single shock, adj. comp./reb., 350mm, (13.8 in.)	Ohlins, Twin-Link 2, adj. comp./reb., 343mm, (13.5 in.)
Intended use	Motocross	Motocross
Country of origin	Sweden	Germany
Retail price, approx.	\$2875	\$3220
Distributor/Manufacturer	Husqvarna Motorcycle Co. 4925 Mercury St. San Diego, CA 92111	M-Star 740 E. Santa Maria Santa Paula, CA 93060

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HUSQVARNA 250MX vs. M-STAR 250MX

a normal machine. The seating position, peg and bar relationship is a mixture of Euro and Asian upbringing. The bike is comfortable, sits fairly low and feels potent.

The power delivery on the M-Star is broad, with no hot spots anywhere in the range. Its strength is a healthy bottom-end roar that moves smoothly into a decent, but not overwhelming, mid-range snap. The big difference between the two bikes is that the German machine will rev out a shade further. You must still use the short-shift method of riding, but the strain on the rider is lessened because of the added top-end hook. Our machine came jetted sloppy and responded nicely to a needle drop and a main jet alteration. Also, like the Husky, the M-Star is geared too high. Add two teeth to the rear sprocket, and you'll be happy. Every test rider complained about the brutal clutch pull; some work is definitely needed here.

The handling is typically Maico—excuse us, M-Star. While it won't turn under a Honda, the M-Star hunts for the inside line and requires far less rider input to negotiate hard-packed turns than the Husky. At speed it's fairly stable, likes high-speed whoops, but has a tendency to carry the nose very high on Evel Knievel jumps. Everyone felt that the fork action was progressive and plush. Better than the Husky but not in the same league as, let's say, a Honda. The tail section never whipped, skipped or careened and does a good job of keeping the bike in a stable mode, although it is a shade harsh.

While the shift throw is too long and the clutch pull monstrous, the M-Star can still quickly get around a track. The brakes are a strong point: their action is strong and progressive. We did rip the flimsy front brake line off in a slow crash—this area needs to be strengthened.

STACKED DECK

Overall, we're not thrilled with either machine. As a package, they are good, but not great. Both are improved over previous efforts but still suffer many of the disadvantages we've grown to expect of European 250 motocrossers. Is either machine the right machine for you? That depends on a lot of things. Both can be made to go fast but demand a peculiar riding style that takes time and a strong mental effort to master. Both have many high-quality components, while the overall packages continue to be flawed by a few fragile mechanical items or strange geometries that hinder the rider's efforts to be competitive from week to week. Still, some riders seem to be able to overcome what the majority perceive as insurmountable disadvantages, and manage to turn in excellent performances on the Euro hardware. So what's the bottom line? While far from perfect, the M-Star and Husky are still viable alternatives for the diehard Euro purist. □

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