

Cycle

**KAWASAKI KZ1000J
THE FINEST ZEE**

Yamaha's New XJ550
In Maxim Dress
With Seca Soul

Husqvarna 250 CR
Holdout Among
The Single-Shockers

Motocross Champions
Howerton & Hannah
Battling For Glory







PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVE HAWKINS

HUSQVARNA 250 CR

While the Japanese manufacturers toil in a frenzy to produce the latest and greatest single-shockers, Husqvarna engineers quietly go about producing a dual-shocker that will run with the class of the field.

● HUSQVARNA'S 250 CR IS A FINE EXAMPLE of diligent refinement paying off. When the Japanese manufacturers previewed their 1981 motocross bikes, all of which feature highly advanced single-shock rear suspensions, even close observers of the scene believed that the European manufacturers would be hard pressed to produce bikes with equal suspension performance.

Anyone close to the industry knows there is little likelihood that the smaller European motorcycle companies will invest the engineering and development man-hours the Japanese do. But quantity of development time isn't everything. By producing the first-rate 250 CR, Husqvarna shows that the experience they've

garnered in many years of motocross competition goes a long way to off-set any weakness in the Battle of the Budget.

Husqvarna retained the specifications of the 1980 powerplant. The reed-valve-inducted cylinder continues to use Husky's unusual vertically mounted reed cage. Past there, the charge enters the case through windows cut in the rear skirt of the single-ring piston. The only change on the intake side is the addition of a water drain on the bottom of the airbox to prevent water accumulation from contaminating the filter.

Although on paper the Husky's 250cc engine looks fairly peaky, real-world application proves the CR has one of the smoothest power deliveries of any 250

motocrosser currently available. Thanks to rather heavy flywheels, the Husky doesn't surprise you when you dial on the gas. This trait is especially valuable on hard, slippery surfaces, where there's part-time traction only.

Not all 250s offer a six-speed transmission; those that do carry the advantage on tracks with slow hairpins and long, fast straights. Though the Husky's six-speed transmission requires a long throw at the lever, it operates smoothly with positive engagement. The ratio selection combines well with the engine's smooth power delivery to get power to the ground efficiently.

Although the clutch is unchanged, our '81 test bike displayed none of the clutch

HUSQVARNA 250 CR

grabiness that our 1980 test bike did. Second gear starts are best, but the heavy flywheels require that care be taken to keep the revs up when leaving the starting gate. If you don't, the engine can bog, and the flywheels' weight will prevent a quick rpm recovery.

Husqvarna made most of the changes to the 1981 CR in the running gear. They've updated the fork, shocks, shock mounting position, tank and seat. Husqvarna increased the fork tube diameter from 35mm to 40mm, a change which eliminates all apparent flex. Husqvarna retained the air/coil-spring feature but raised the suggested air pressure from five to eight psi. Fork length is the same, and travel remains at 11.8 inches.

We can't fault the fork action. The front end exhibits the suppleness we enjoyed so much on last year's bike, with the fork responding at once to all surface irregularities. On very smooth tracks, we ran the fork with just two psi pressure. That setup allows the fork to track through the turns without any glitches. When the jumps get higher, and the whoops change from medium to large, an increase in air pressure is required.

Husqvarna motorcycles have traditionally been plagued by leaky fork seals. At each new-model introduction, Husqvarna representatives have developed almost a stand-up routine wherein they explain they've cured the problem. Every year we find that's not the case,

and this year is no exception. The 250's seals were weeping ferociously when we received the bike. After repairing the first set, we continued our test. The second set also leaked, but not too badly.

Husqvarna knows which components help make their bikes as good as they are, and they've wisely continued their association with the Ohlins company. For the '81 CR Husky has chosen the integral "piggy-back" type instead of the remote-reservoir shocks of previous Husqvarnas. The spring rates have been increased a small amount, probably in response to the relocation of the shock mounting position on the swing arm.

Instead of bolting to a welded bracket on top of the arm, the shock now bolts through the swing arm. To retain the standard shock length Husky moved the lower mount forward to compensate for the extra distance created by the repositioning of the lower mount. These changes alter the leverage ratio slightly, hence the spring rate change.

The shocks offer all the superb wheel control for which they're famous. The bike runs straight and true—no sidestepping even in the worst whoops. If you choose to slide the bike through a sweeper, the shocks respond well to small bumps, helping to prevent any unauthorized sideways stutters.

Husqvarna has increased the steel fuel tank's capacity for the second consecutive year. Last year they bumped it from 1.8 to 2.2 gallons and this year added another half-gallon to bring the total ca-

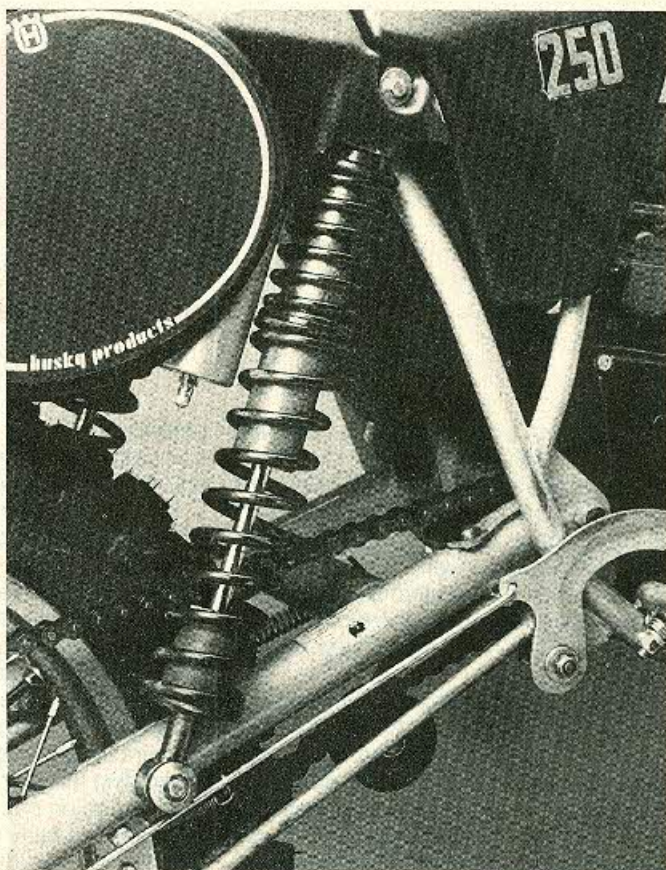
capacity to 2.7 gallons. The tank, though broader and taller than before, doesn't impinge on the rider.

Some earlier CRs had a seat base cracking problem. Husqvarna integrated the seat base into the rear fender in 1980, but the plastic used for the seat base was too brittle. This year's bike uses a newer plastic, a softer material that should be more resilient. Our test bike's seat survived the test period, but only extended time in the field will reveal whether it was the correct fix.

Combination side cover/number plates replace last year's individual plates. To accommodate this change, Husky reshaped the airbox cover to blend in with the new cover. The new covers have improved the bike's appearance, and they keep the rider cleaner on muddy tracks, but the mounting method leaves something to be desired. On the right front side two small plastic hinge-type fasteners secure the cover; if you ever need to remove the cover, the small screws that hold the fasteners together are nearly inaccessible. Once you've managed to remove the screws, you must peel off the stick-on number plate background to get to the remaining bolt behind the shock. The left cover is shock-mounted to clear the exhaust pipe where it exits in the rear. The mount is a rubber piece with a six-millimeter stud on each end. It's a flimsy piece which tears easily after little time on the track. The rubber-mounting method is a good one, but the part isn't



The new 40mm tubes and stanchions improve fork performance by reducing flex.



New spring rates compensate for relocation of the Ohlins lower mounts.

The CR requires no special riding techniques or compensatory moves. The steering is neutral, and surprisingly responsive despite the longish wheelbase.



HUSQVARNA 250 CR

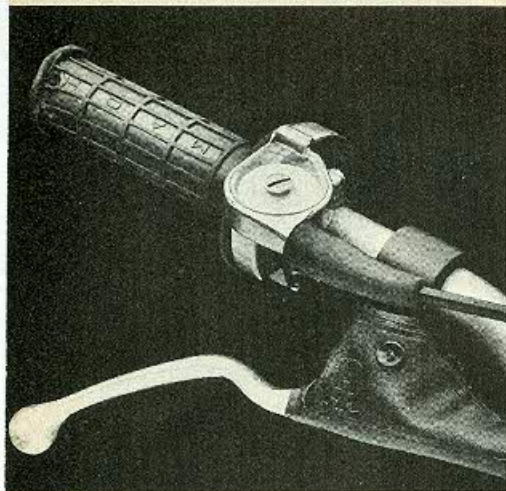
strong enough for the job. The covers seldom need to be removed; nevertheless they should be easier to work on.

The most striking virtue of the Husky is the feeling it instills of being a complete package. The CR requires no special riding techniques or compensatory moves. Certain motocrossers require that the rider become adjusted to the bike before he can ride it anywhere near its limits; the Husky invites you to jump on and gas it. Although the seat height is just below the 38-inch mark, the contour makes the rider feel as though he is much lower to the ground. The seat is also flat, without an annoying upsweep at the rear. When riding over a series of whoops you can stretch as far back as your arms will al-

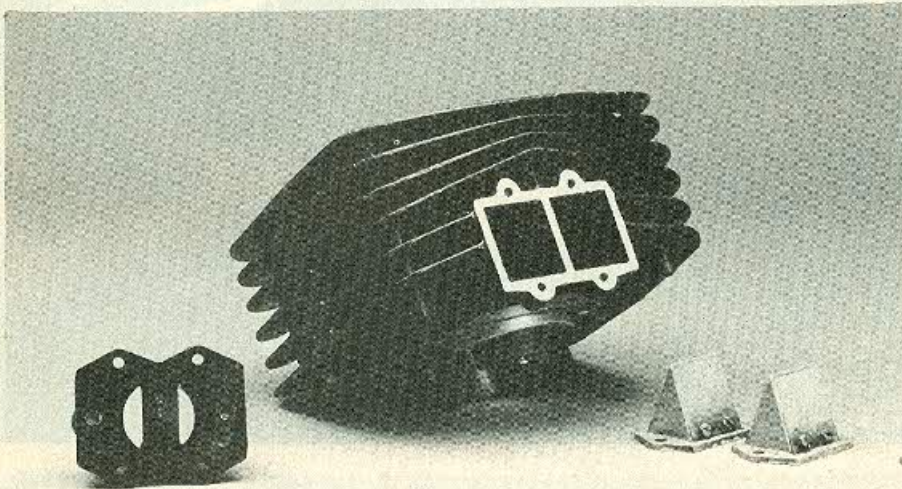
low without constantly being hit by the back portion of the seat. The handlebar, seat and footpeg relationship fits all but the tallest riders. The controls are accessible from any riding position—even when you're applying liberal amounts of body English on a difficult section of track.

The steering is neutral, and surprisingly responsive in light of the longish, 60-inch wheelbase. The front wheel tracks well, allowing the rider to put the CR anywhere the moment requires without worrying that the front will wash out.

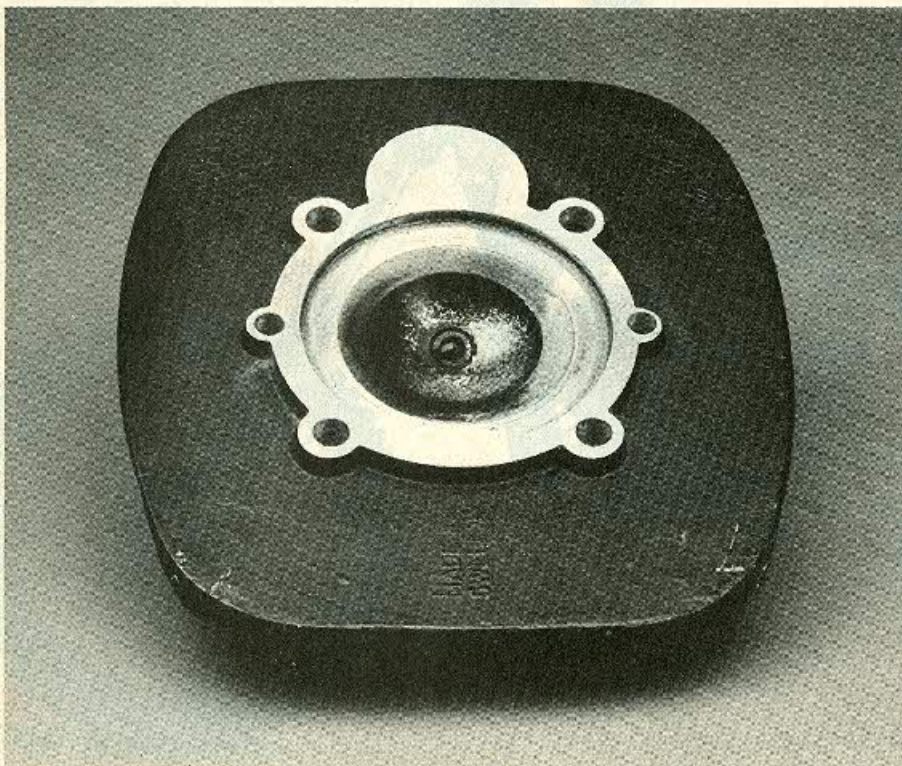
If the situation calls for sliding around the outside, here again the Husky will oblige, accurately and predictably. The smooth power delivery teamed up with the excellent Pirelli tires and chassis geometry allow the rider to work the bike



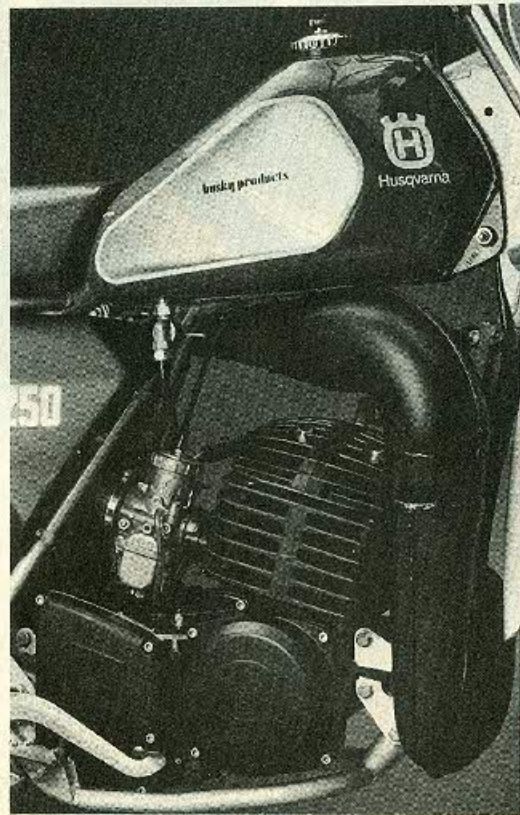
Whirlpool throttle routes cable out of the way of hazards. Magura levers are strong, high-quality units.



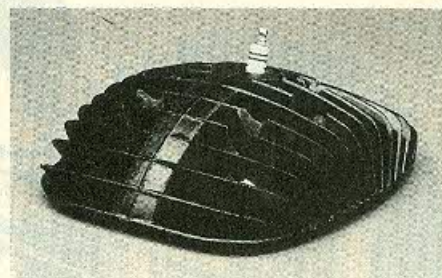
V-block manifold and vertically-mounted reed cages direct the fresh charge to the bridged intake port.



Squish-type combustion chamber reduces chance of detonation. The head/cylinder mate without a gasket.



The exhaust pipe is mounted well out of the rider's way. The engine has a very predictable powerband.



The spark plug hole was offset for 1981 to provide better access for servicing the spark plug.

hard and with a great deal of confidence. The Husky has tough competition this year. On a theoretical basis, the Honda and Suzuki motocrossers offer the latest in rear suspension technology; on a practical basis, too, their systems are state-of-the-art, performing on the track extremely well. But the Husky is good enough to compete with the best Japanese bikes. The CR's rear suspension setup is the best dual-shock system to date and rivals the best single-shockers. Additionally, as a total package, the 250 CR is a more complete motorcycle. It doesn't have the tall, top-heavy feeling that some of the Japanese motocross bikes do, and it offers a nimbleness few 250s have.

Ultimately, the final question is, "How well does the Husky get around the track?" The answer is that it holds its own in regard to lap times compared to any 250—and it does so on the basis of its competency in all areas. While other 250s have more sheer power, none can match the smooth, predictable power delivery of the 250 CR. On a long straight, they might pull a bike length or two on the CR, but when the course turns right or left, the CR's excellent power characteristics and precise handling will



get it in, around and out with the best.

Husqvarna's policy of constant refinement has allowed the company to stay near the front in the current world of high-tech suspension. The CR's chassis and suspension components are first-rate;

the 250 is outclassed by its rivals only in terms of horsepower—and that only in regard to peak power output. The way it stands, the Husky *can* be a winner; with three or four more peak horsepower, it *will* be. ●

Cycle TEST SPECIFICATIONS

Make and model Husqvarna 250 CR
Price, suggested retail (as of 7/23/81) \$2480

ENGINE

Type Two-stroke, reed-valve inducted, single-cylinder
Bore and stroke 69.5 x 64.5mm (2.72 x 2.54 in.)
Piston displacement 245cc (14.9 cu. in.)
Compression ratio 12.3:1
Carburetion (1) 38mm Mikuni
Exhaust system Expansion chamber with silencer
Ignition External-rotor magneto; capacitor-discharge
Air filtration Oiled foam
Oil capacity 1600cc
Bhp @ rpm NA
Torque @ rpm NA

TRANSMISSION

Type Six-speed, constant-mesh, wet-clutch
Primary drive Straight-cut gears; 29/70; 2.41:1
Final drive DID #520 chain; 12/53 sprockets; 4.41:1
Gear ratios (at transmission) (1) 2.070:1 (2) 1.561:1
..... (3) 1.242:1 (4) 1.044:1
..... (5) 0.884:1 (6) 0.780:1

CHASSIS

Type Single-downtube, full-cradle chrome-moly frame; tubular-section, chrome-moly, needle-bearing-mounted swing arm
Suspension, front Leading-axle, air/coil-spring fork with 40mm tubes and 300mm (11.8 in.) travel

rear (2) Nitrogen-charged, piggy-back reservoir Ohlins shocks with 310mm (12.2 in.) travel

Wheelbase 1524mm (60.0 in.)
Rake/trail 30.5° / 152mm (5.98 in.)
Brake, front Conical hub with drum brake; 160mm-diameter shoes
rear Conical hub with full-floating drum brake; 160mm-diameter shoes
Wheel, front 21-inch aluminum alloy rim
rear 17-inch aluminum alloy rim
Tire, front Pirelli 3.00 x 21 Pentacross MT 25E
rear Pirelli 4.50 x 21 Pentacross MT 25
Seat height 960.1mm (37.8 in.)
Ground clearance 325.1mm (12.8 in.)
Fuel capacity 10.2 liters (2.7 gal.)
Curb weight, full tank 109.5 kg (241.5 lbs.)
Test weight 177.6 kg (391.5 lbs.)

CUSTOMER SERVICE CONTACT

Husqvarna Motor Corporation West
4935 Mercury Street
San Diego, CA 92111

Cycle's Schenk dynamometer, long residing at Webco, Inc., in Venice, California, is in the process of being moved and re-installed at a new location. Consequently, this motorcycle could not be dyno-tested at this time. Figures for this motorcycle will appear in Cycle in an upcoming issue.