

FIRST TEST! HUSQVARNA XC175/WR175

SCREAMING SWEDISH STEEL

A pair of hard-edged revvers attack the 200cc class

By the Staff of Dirt Bike

There are probably a few riders left in the world who still remember the Husky 175. With a silver frame and a blue tank, the little buggers used to run through the woods way back in '76, snapping at the heels of the KTM 175s (previously known as Pentons), and throwing a roost at the first batch of Japanese sub-200cc enduro bikes. They were just what you would expect from a small European enduro bike in those days. Good handling, reasonably light, strong as a bridge abutment, and extremely peaky. To ride such a machine, you had to be reasonably insane; and it didn't hurt to have a throttle wrist permanently set to the wide-open position.

They disappeared without a fanfare, though. Snuffed out by the invasion of Japanese enduro bikes that were easy to ride, lighter in weight, and easier on the wallet. In 1978, you could ride a PE, an IT, an MR, or shell out your bucks for a KTM. In later years, the KTM 175 disappeared, and the Japanese mounts were your only choice.

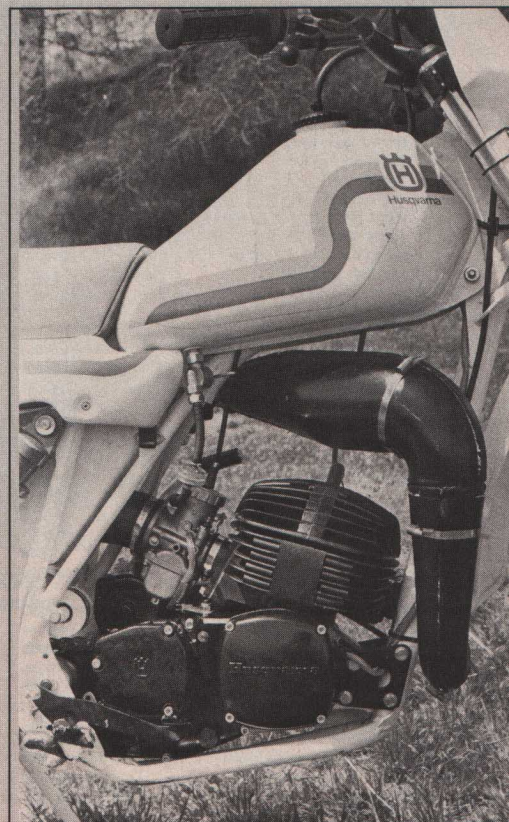
ENTER THE MINIATURE MILK TRUCK

That is, until now. After a long gap in their tape, the people at Husqvarna believe that the time is again right for a Swedish



Parting the waters on the WR. The best horsepower can be found in the upper-rpm range.

(Right) Both engines use the Husky 125 cylinder sleeved up with a 175 liner. The 38mm carb may be part of the reason for soft low-end power, but it sure lets it rev.



HUSQVARNA XC175/WR175



HUSQVARNA 175WR/175XC

Engine type	Air-cooled, 2-stroke, reed valved
Bore and stroke	64.75mm x 52.0mm
Displacement	171.2cc
Carburetion	38mm Mikuni
Factory recommended jetting:	
Main jet	400
Needle jet	Q6
Jet needle	6DH20
Pilot jet	55
Slide number	2.5
Recommended gasoline	Premium
Fuel tank capacity	10 L (2.7 gals.)
Fuel tank material	Aluminum
Lubrication	Pre-mix
Recommended oil	Bel-Ray MC1+
Oil capacity	1.4 L (1.3 qt.)
Air filtration	Oiled foam
Clutch type	Wet, multi-plate
Transmission	6-speed
Gearbox ratios:	
1	33.85:1
2	24.49:1
3	18.67:1
4	14.98:1
5	12.64:1
6	10.64:1
Gearing, front/rear	13/48
Ignition	Motoplat CDI
Primary kick system?	No
Recommended spark plug	Bosch W3C
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/yes
Exhaust system	Up-pipe, through-frame
Frame, type	Single downtube, cradle, chromoly steel
Wheelbase	1465mm (57.6 in.)
Ground clearance	300mm (11.8 in.)
Seat height	925mm (36.4 in.)
Steering head angle (rake)	30°
Trail	152mm (6.0 in.)
Wet weight, no fuel	175WR—228 lbs./ 175XC—223 lbs.

Rim material	Aluminum alloy
Tire size and type:	
Front	3.00 x 21 Trelleborg
Rear	4.50 x 18 Trelleborg
Suspension, type and travel:	
Front	175WR—Husky forks, 250mm (9.8 in.)/ 175XC—300mm (11.8 in.)
Rear	175WR—Beter gas shocks, 250mm (9.8 in.)/175XC—Ohlins ITC shocks, 330mm (13.0 in.)
Intended use	175WR—Enduro/175XC—Off- road racing
Country of origin	Sweden
Retail price, approx.	\$2095
Distributor:	
Husqvarna Motorcycle Co., Inc. 4925 Mercury St. San Diego, CA 92111	
Parts prices, high-wear items:	
Piston assembly, complete	\$68.69
Piston rings only	13.44
Cylinder sleeve	102.93
Shift lever	24.50
Brake pedal	16.08
Front sprocket	13.97
Overall rating of bikes, keeping intended use of machines in mind:	
Handling	Very good/Excellent
Front suspension	Very good/Very good
Rear suspension	Poor/Very good
Power	Fair/Fair
Cost	Good/Good
Attention to detail	Very good/Very good

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 (four-stroke vs. MXer, 175 enduro vs. 80cc mini) is a meaningless exercise in futility.

175, and they may be right. The two new bikes, the 175XC and the 175WR, share the same strong frame and fine suspension as the rest of the Husky line, and they should throw a little spice into the choosing process for future would-be lightweight enduro bike shoppers.

Going on the reputation of their bigger brothers alone, the two new bikes should be worth the \$450 difference between Husky and the competition, but we're not going to pull the wool over your eyes. These two new white 175s do suffer from a couple of problems that should be taken into consideration while you're shopping around.

BREAK THE NEWS GENTLY

Two things. The first is not all that earth-shaking. The powerband on either of these bikes can best be described as peaky. We had many comments from our testers, ranging from "no power" to "soft on the bot-

"NOTHING THAT A L

Carving a few more ponies out of the Husky 175

• Compared with the rest of the (read "Japanese") 200 class, the Husky is clearly lacking a certain amount of *oomph*. We like the basic machine. The suspension and handling is very good for a stock bike, but it will get smoked in a close race with the competition.

This is a bike that deserves to be worked on, so for the answer to our horsepower problems we turned to Mitch Payton, longtime Husky expert and owner of Pro Circuit Husky in Anaheim, California. We left our test XC with him for two weeks and then went down to get his comments—and a thoroughly breathed-on XC175.

"When I first looked at it, I knew that anything I did would help," he said with typical modesty. "All Husky is using is the 125 cylinder hogged out to fit a 175 liner. They just carved it out and squeezed in that liner, and all the ports are pointed in the wrong direction."

Bypassing the editorializing, this is what he did to cure the soft powerband: The low points of the intake port were filled in with Devcon, and then the port was completely reshaped. The transfers were raised and reshaped and so were the auxiliary transfers. The exhaust port was widened and raised *very slightly*, and the head was milled down .015 inch. He also built a pipe to suit the powerband better than the stocker.

"Even on the stock bike, the jetting was



tom" to "I had to scream the thing to death." They do make horsepower—the Huskys are actually quite fast, but it's all in the upper mid-range.

In stock form, the Husky 175 of either flavor is not a very relaxing mount. If you like to ride berserk, with your brain unplugged (and many of us do), you'll be pleased with the white bikes. If you like to cruise along without working too hard on demanding terrain, you will hate them.

Thankfully, this is not an incurable situation. There is plenty of room inside the 175 engine for muscle insertion, and any porter worth his salt can grind in some torque. We turned Mitch Payton of Pro Circuit Husqvarna loose on our test XC, and you can read about the results within this story.

Problem number two. Remember non-primary kick? That annoying way of building engines so that you have to put the bike in neutral before you can kick start it?

That's right. You get non-primary kick, free of charge, with every Husky 175.

If it weren't for the fine chassis features, this one glaring deficiency would relegate the Husky 175 to a position in stone-age history. There is no more frustrating circumstance than to be shrieking through a tight section at the bottom half of your minute, throw the bike into a tight turn and stall it, and then have to sit there rocking it back and forth, trying to find neutral before you can kick it back to life. Even with a Husky 250 you can grab the clutch and kick it over and then abuse the clutch to get going again.

If they can build it into the bigger bikes, why, oh why can't they provide it on the 175 and 125? On no other bike in the class will you have to put up with this problem. Do not consider it lightly.

WHAT ABOUT THE GOOD STUFF?

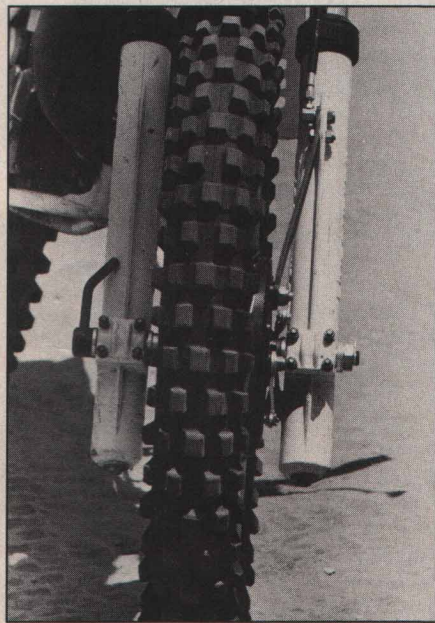
We tested many of the '83 Huskys earlier

this year, and the chassis and suspension of the 175s are almost identical to the rest of the lineup, with only minor differences. The XC175 is the longer-legged of the two, delivering 11.8 inches of travel from the Husqvarna-made forks, and 13 inches of stroke in the rear through a set of Ohlins ITC shocks. A very impressive suspension combination in anybody's book.

The WR, on the other hand, is built for the lesser requirements of enduro riding. The forks have a 9.8-inch stroke, as does the rear end, but if you look closely at the shocks you'll get a shock—no pun intended. Those Ohlins look-alikes are actually Betors, and they are not nearly up to the sophistication of the ITC units. The damping is set up very light, which is not too bad in the woods, but on a fast, rough trail they bounce around in an unnerving fashion.

Aside from the Betors, which have no business being on a \$2100 motorcycle, the

LITTLE DEVCON WON'T FIX"



The quick-change front axle is another goody available from Pro Circuit and is a must for rapid tire changes.

grossly off. It needs to be much richer," he says, "and the gearing is too tall." The jetting on our modified bike is perfect—a 45 pilot, 2.5 slide, R-4 needle jet, 6F15 needle in the second-leanest position, and a 460 main. This is much richer, but believe us, it works. The gearing was dropped down to 12/56, which in our opinion is much too low. We will probably raise it to 12/48 and then leave it alone.

The result of all this diddling is awesome. The sound of the bike has changed from a wheezy little 175 to the guttural growl of a strong 125 race bike, and there is now low-end power where mere blind faith for-



With a longer, flatter power curve, the modified XC was a lot more fun to ride. Both engines will respond to the Pro Circuit treatment.

merly existed. The mid-range power has been broadened but is still explosive, and the 175 will now rev out to the far reaches.

In a drag race against an '83 CR125 Honda, the Husky was just able to stay neck and neck out of the hole, which is a very good sign. We may still have to work to get the Husky around all the KDX200s

out there, but now we don't have to work quite so hard.

Mitch says that the work necessary is not all that complicated, so the price shouldn't be totally out of line. For complete pricing information, get in touch with him at Pro Circuit Husky, 4212 East La Palma, Anaheim, California 92807; 714-993-5400. •

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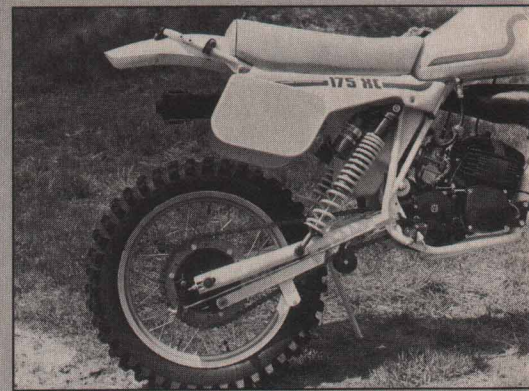
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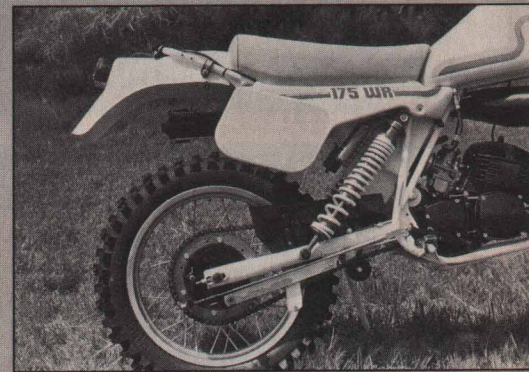


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HUSQVARNA XC/WR175



The Ohlins/Husky ITC rear shocks may be holding up the last of the twin-shock rear ends, but the performance rivals that of the best single-shockers.



On the other hand, the 175WR uses Betor shocks, which are not state of the art. They are okay for slow riding in tight woods, but high speeds are no fun.

suspension on each of the bikes is good. The Husky forks don't leak, and once set up to the proper oil level, they will take any size bump with little more than a shrug. On the XC, the ITC rear end does a faultless job of soaking up abuse.

The rest of the chassis exhibits the same good manners. Both bikes handle like a second thought—very accurate, and dead-on the line you point it in. They are not the lightest 175s you can buy, but you gain a measure of strength with the Swedish machines that is very important if you're looking to keep the bike for a number of years.

HORSEPOWER HABITS

As we said, both bikes are decidedly peaky. The powerband is soft at the bottom, but there is a healthy mid-range and strong top end waiting for the person who holds the throttle open. Both of the new 175s like to be ridden on the powerband and will rocket from bush to bush if you work the mid and top. Try to lug the engine, and it's very easy to stall. First gear is low enough to pull you out of trouble, but the machine will be happier buzzing in the upper gears.

Part of this peaky situation can be traced to Husky's choice of carburetion. Both bikes use 38mm Mikunis, which is much more carb than they really need. Past experience tells us that either of them would

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pull harder down low with a 34 or 36, but at least the big carb doesn't cripple them totally. Once the bikes are jetted properly, they'll run well, but we wonder what they would feel like with something smaller. If we try it, we'll let you know.

BITS AND PIECES

One potential problem we've found with Huskys in the past year is the sealing rings on the fork damper rods. They are made of plastic, and when they get old, they can surprise you by breaking or turning inside out. When it happens, the forks make a nasty clanking sound every time they top out, and they soften up considerably. If you own a Husky, you should carry a couple of these rings in your toolbox and replace them if you have a big race to ride.

Both bikes have excellent brakes. They are strong enough to get the job done, without being too strong, and they aren't adversely affected by water, as the old brakes were. On a new bike it is normal to get your boot heel hung up on the flat part of the rear brake rod. Round the edges of the offending piece, and you shouldn't have a problem.

We find that the best setup for Husky forks is 12½-weight oil (equal mix of ten- and 15-weight), 6½ inches from the top of the tube, with the forks compressed. Great action in the summer. For winter work, ten-weight or less is the ticket. Fight off the urge to run air pressure.

In our opinion, the handlebars are just a little low. The controls are all first-rate, with the exception of the kill button. The stock Mach grips are murder on your hands, but save them for mud racing—there's nothing better in the slop than a pair of hard, high-ribbed grips.

With the airbox cover installed, the Huskys are practically submarines. Without the cover, they're merely waterproof.

Our only complaint in the mud comes from the front fender. It's just a little too narrow to keep mud from flinging up onto the front of the bike. A different fender would be the perfect cure, but adding a mud flap to the front seems to help quite a bit.

And, maybe if we all threaten to hold our breath until we turn blue and die, Husky will give us primary kick on the mosquito bikes next year. . . .

THE VERDICT

This is a hard match to call. The lack of primary kick is a real nuisance, and the peaky powerband has "Experts only" written all over it. But on the other hand, the frame and suspension are worth the investment. If you want a very durable 175 and don't mind spending a few extra bucks on more horsepower, the Husky is a very viable machine.

Call it an "old-school" racer—very buzzy, very demanding, and strong enough to stand up to years of abuse. We had fun on it during the test, but we expect it to be a much better bike next year. □

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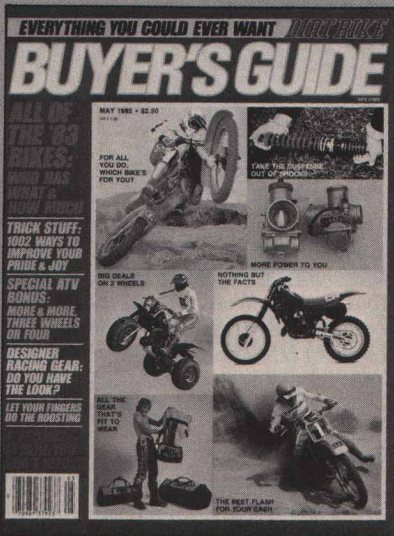
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