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DIRT BIKE

JANUARY 1978 VOLUME EIGHT NUMBER ONE

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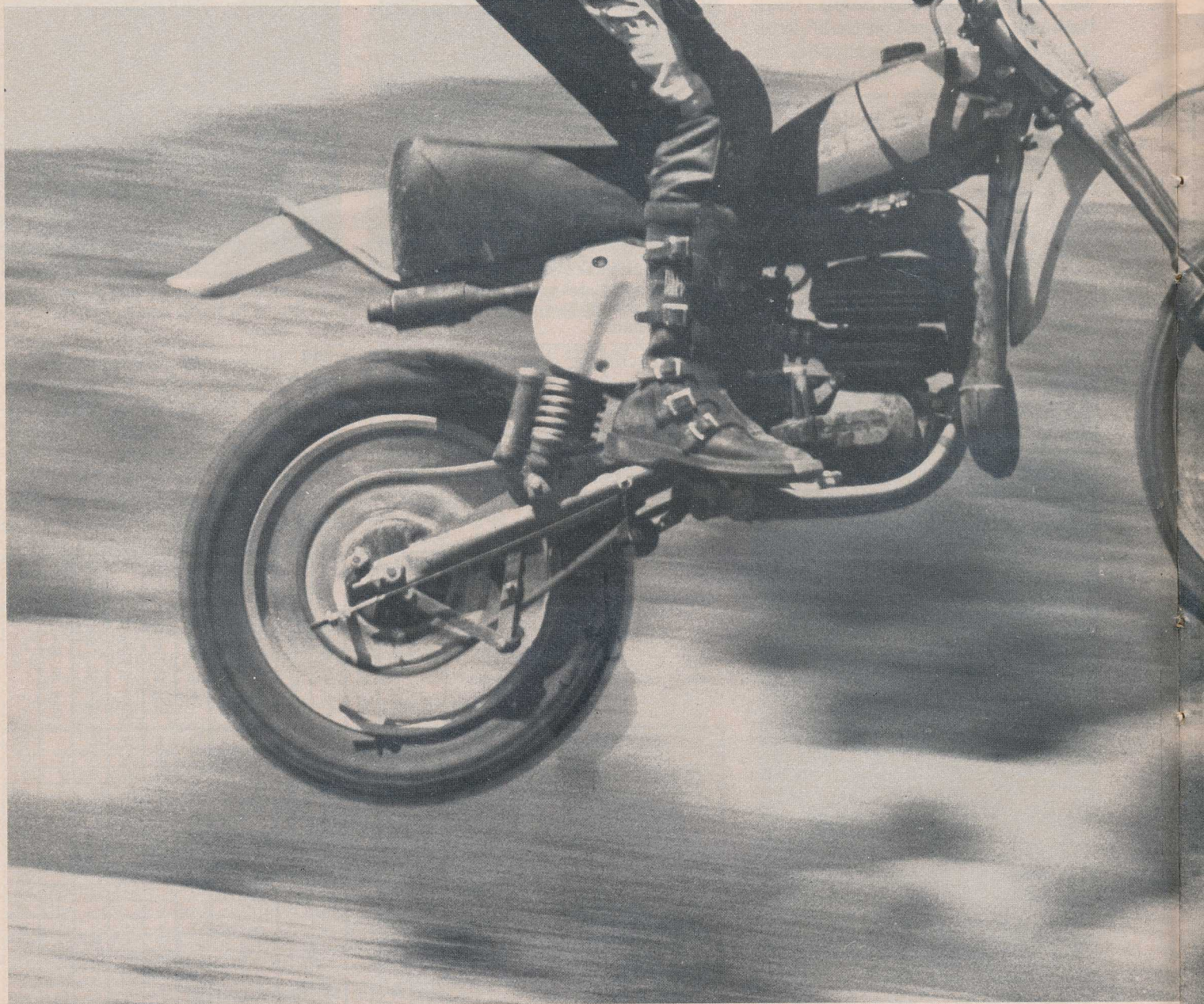
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ON THE COVER:
From American Eagle to American hope,
Brad Lackey keeps getting closer.
Photo by Jim Gianatsis.

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE JANUARY 19

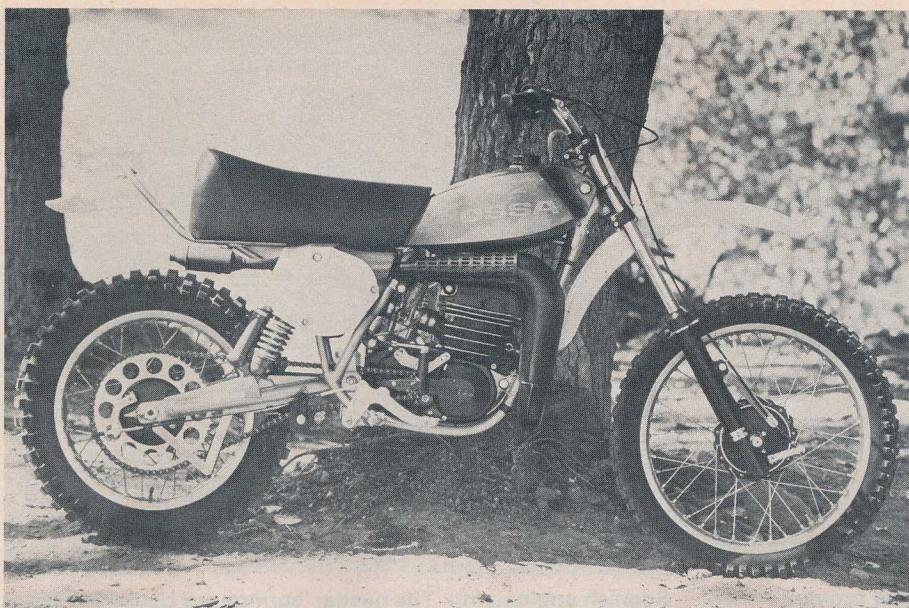
OSSA 250 GP III PHANTOM

by the Staff of DIRT BIKE

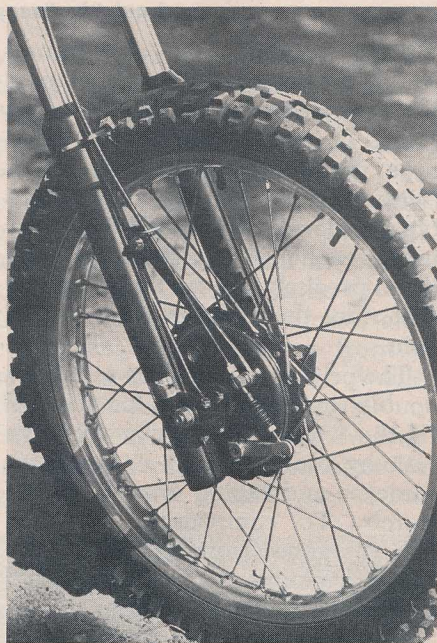
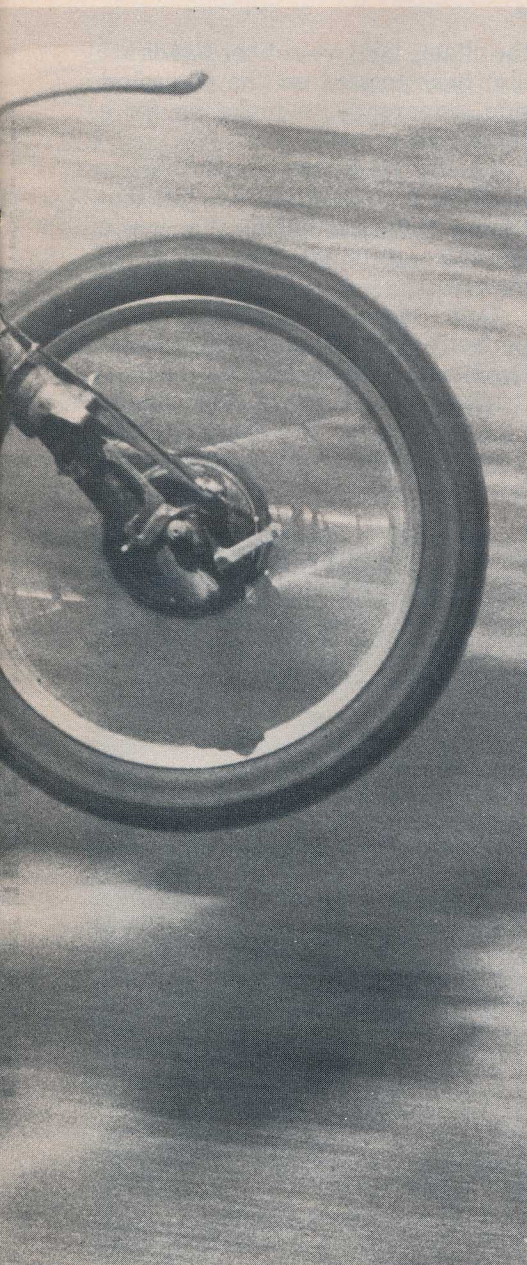


THEY ONLY GET BETTER, LUCKILY

Improved suspension and more usable power make the GP III the best Ossa yet



The GP III has taken on the look of a serious piece of motocross machinery.



The new Betor forks hold a full 230cc of oil and offer just over 230mm of travel. Last year's full-width hub was replaced with this conical unit that houses the same shoes as the GP II.

When the first Phantom appeared on the motocross scene a few years ago it was immediately clear that it was a force to be reckoned with in the 250 class. It had very good power, was very lightweight, and its suspension was in the ballpark.

After a good deal of refinement, the GP II was developed. Although it was not as spectacular as the first Phantom, it was still a competitive contender after the owner made a few suspension modifications.

Ossa's latest effort, the GP III, boasts some improvements over the previous Phantom in areas where

they were most needed. Namely, more suspension, more top-end power, and better handling.

Along with the new suspension arrangement at both ends, you get a new front hub, fuel tank, expansion chamber design, a longer swingarm, and one of the most powerful production 250cc powerplants in existence.

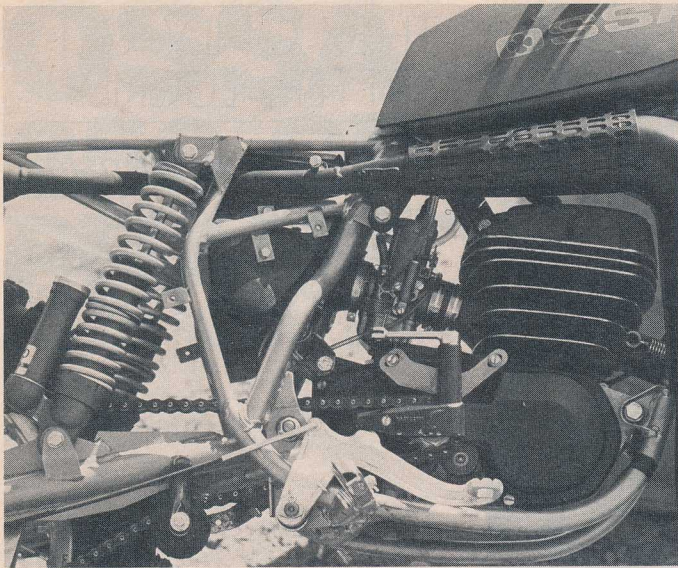
WHAT THE GP III IS MADE OF

While every other factory was going to six, nine and eleven-port breathing arrangements, Ossa was content to stay with their tried-and-true four-port design, getting a very healthy power output out of that seemingly outdated design.

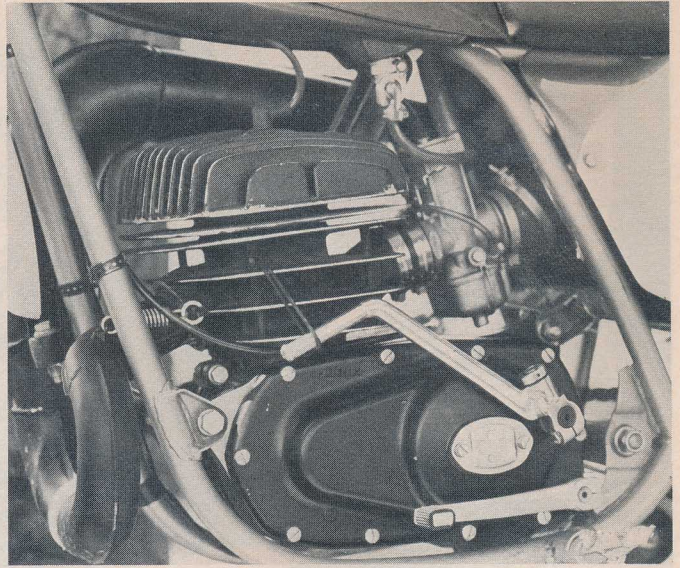
For their new effort, they've added a fifth (boost) port, redesigned the rear cone of the expansion chamber, and switched to a straight-cut piston. The result of these modifications is a very healthy mid-range and a peak horsepower output of 32.3 at 8500 rpm. We feel that this engine has the potential to put out the most usable and manageable power in its class. We say *potential* for a couple of reasons, as you will soon understand.

All five transmission ratios have remained the same as before, but the gears and shafts are now rough cast here with good U.S. steel, then sent over there for machining. Where earlier Phantoms used bronze alloy bushings on the layshaft, the GP III uses ball and needle bearings throughout.

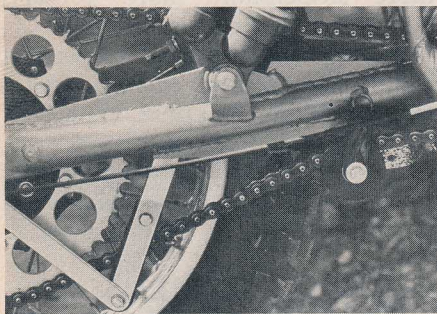
Another major improvement to the transmission is in the actual



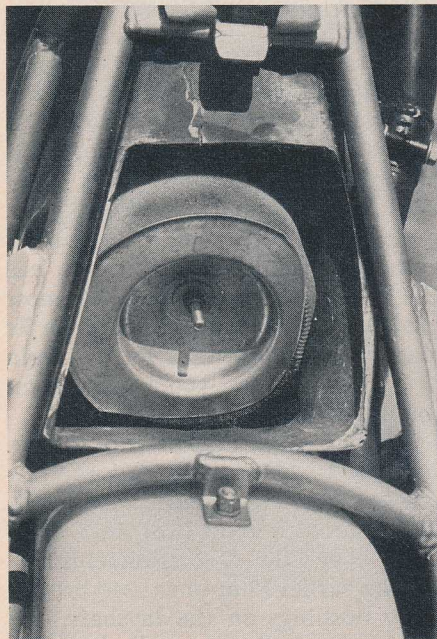
The rear frame has been modified to accept the forward-mount shock setup. Note the sexy four-fin cylinder arrangement and the aluminum case saver above the countershaft sprocket.



Spanish engineering: The header springs are hooked to large lock washers that loop through the cylinder fin. Also, the trick thingie holding the kickstarter looks like a large O-ring and quickly disappears.



Added oomph is given to the chain tensioner spring by a couple of rubber bands draped around the opposite side, as seen here. Chain guide is both sturdy and silent. Rubber strips line inside edges.



As you can see here, some things are a bit on the cobby side. Extra care should be taken when installing filter so that the top edge seals properly.

shifting action. The old tranny could, on occasion, be shifted past the gear desired by a heavy-footed rider. To rectify this, they've gone to a greatly lightened shift drum (with less inertia) and a braking type of device with small pins that index each gear position on the drum precisely. As we found on our first ride, their efforts were not in vain.

The primary drive is, as usual, by double-row chain, but for the GP III they've upped the primary drive ratio by adding a tooth to the crank sprocket and taking one off of the clutch. To compensate for this, they've gone from a 12 to an 11-tooth countershaft sprocket and added five teeth to the rear.

Spain's latest forward axle Betor forks grace the Phantom's front end to give you 234mm or 9¼ inches of travel.

In the rear, the frame tubes have been moved around to accept the same gas Betor shocks, but in a forward-mount position as opposed to the GP II's laid-down arrangement. The swingarm is now an inch and a half longer for added stability and heavily gusseted to handle the added stresses of the new shock mount position.

JUST THE FACTS, SENORITA

The GP III's chain tensioner is questionable. There is a spring tucked well out of the way to pull the large rubber roller up against

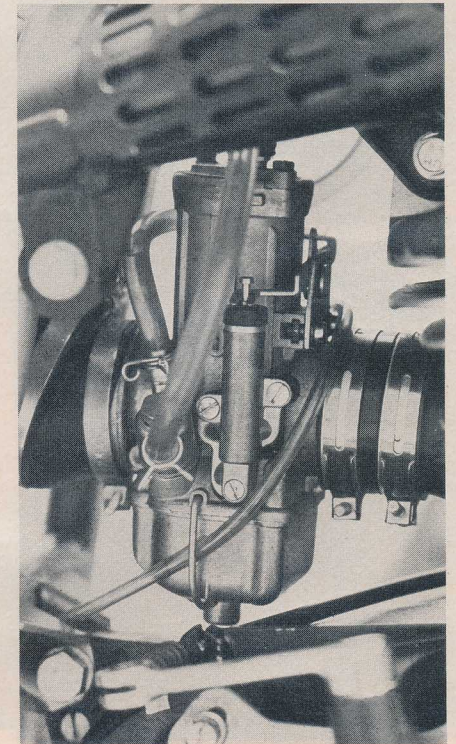
This is the latest Spanish Bing, complete with enriching lever.

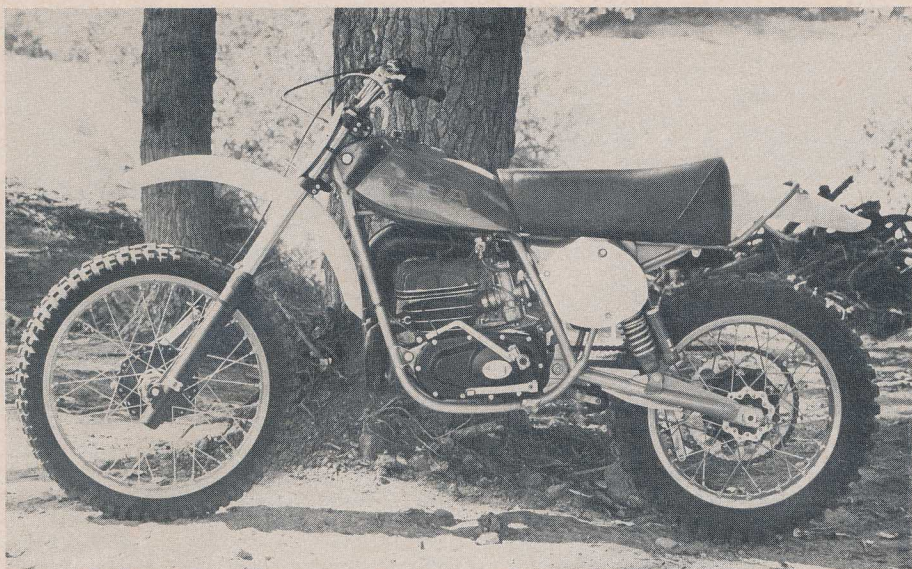
the chain, but two rubber bands are also incorporated on the outermost side, apparently to make up for a weak spring.

The GP III is very comfortable to sit on in the pits. Everyone felt that the bar/peg/seat relationship was a good compromise for riders of various sizes.

Our Motoplát CDI worked perfectly. The Phantom most always fired on the first prod.

After a good bit of time on the bike, one tester commented, "The way this thing's carbureted on the bottom, someone's going to get



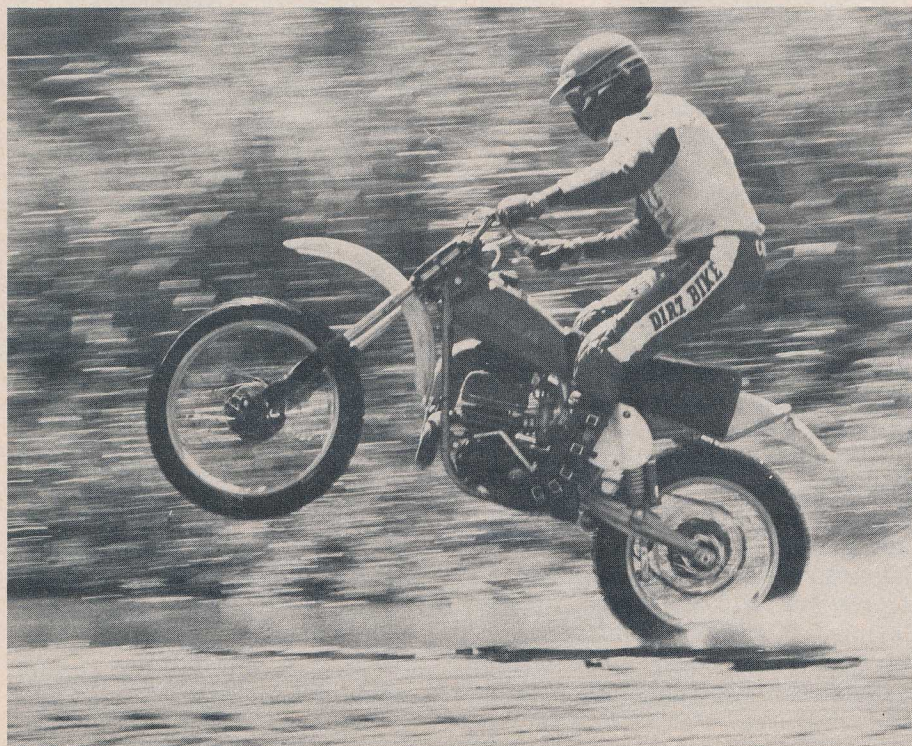


hurt." It had a very rich condition on the bottom that made it bog just long enough to get you into trouble if you were not very careful. We headed back to our portable workshop for adjustments.

A small one-eighth radius notch was cut in the back of the slide to lean out the bottom-end performance, but it only had a slight effect. Going from a number three to a number two needle was our final change, but still it was not running correctly down low.

Its mid-range to top-end performance was excellent. It was both

very usable and predictable. This is the type of power that will make a novice feel quite secure while still providing plenty of what it takes when you put the beans to it. The only drawback was that it was geared too low to get the full advantage of the excellent power characteristics. Going back to the GP II's 53-tooth rear sprocket, and even then, adding one up front is surely the hot line to take. While the power felt good and usable, it felt less energetic than the dyno indicated because the amount of ground covered in each gear is too



OSSA GP III 250

Price (approx. retail, West Coast: \$1645

Engine Two-stroke, piston-port

Displacement 244cc

Bore & Stroke 72mmx60mm

Compression Ratio: 15.6:1 (uncorrected)

Carburetion 38mm Bing

Horsepower 32.3 at 8500 rpm

Clutch Wet, multi-plate

Primary Drive: Double-row primary chain, 2.06:1

Transmission Ratios:

1) 2.12:1

2) 1.74:1

3) 1.43:1

4) 1.17:1

5) 1.00:1

Final Drive Joresa 520

11-tooth countershaft

58-tooth rear sprocket

Air Filtration Oiled foam

Electrics Motoplant CDI

Lubrication Pre-mix 32:1

Recommended Fuel Premium

Recommended Oil Full Bore

Fuel Tank Capacity: 8.7 liters (2.3 gallons)

Frame Double cradle, chrome moly

Suspension:

Front: Betor telescopic with 234mm (9.25 inches) travel

Rear: Betor gas shocks with 206mm (8.1 inches) travel

Starting Non primary kick

Wheels & Spokes:

Front: Akront green label with cross 3 spokes

Rear: Akront green label with 8-gauge spokes, cross 2

Tires:

Front 3.00x21 Pirelli MT07

Rear 4.50x18 Pirelli MT16

Dimensions:

Wheelbase 146.3cm (5.76 inches)

Swingarm length: 47.6cm (18.75 inches)

Ground clearance . . 31.5cm (12.4 inches)

Bars, height 113.0cm (44.5 inches)

width 86.4cm (34.0 inches)

Pegs, height 36.2cm (14.25 inches)

width 48.3cm (19.0 inches)

Seat height 92.1cm (36.25 inches)

Fork angle 30°

Weight: 104.4 kilos (230.0 pounds)

without fuel; 44.1 percent on front,

55.9 percent on rear

Brakes:

Front . . . Cable-operated, conical drum

Rear . . . Cable-operated, conical drum

Silencer Yes, so to speak

Spark Arrestor None

Warranty None

Parts Prices:

Piston \$37.90

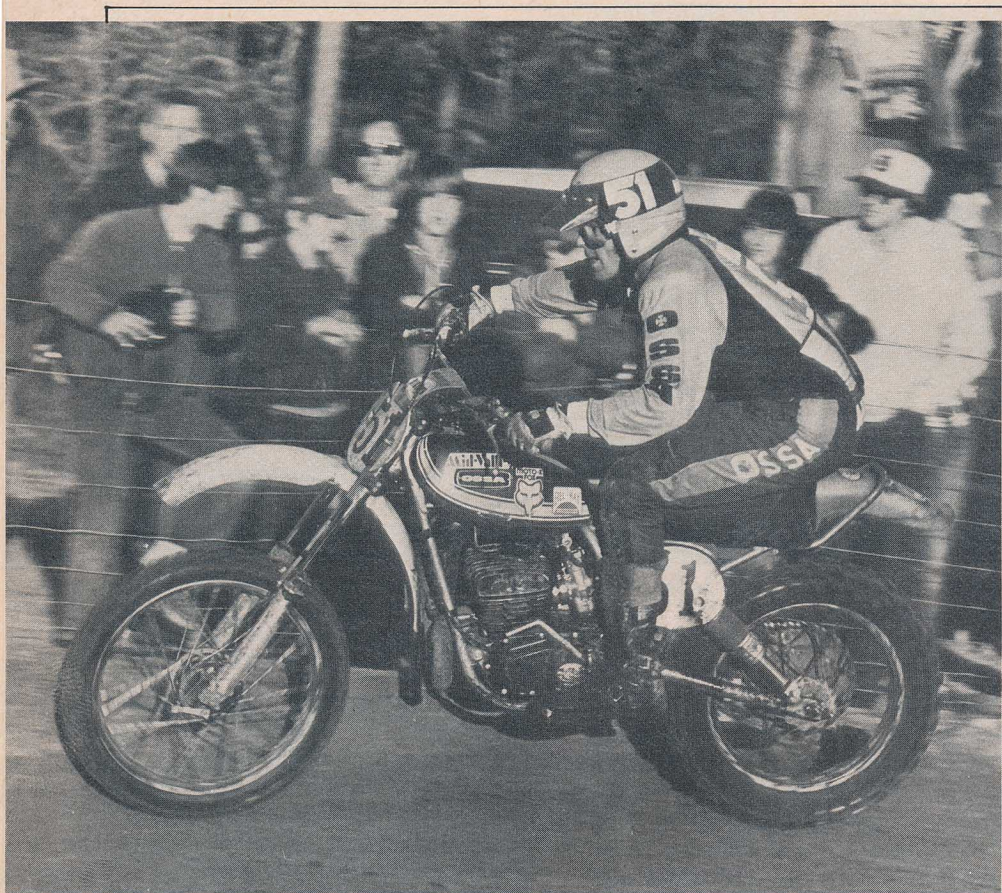
Rings \$11.40

Clutch cable \$3.50

Brake pedal \$23.20

short. The end result is a 250 that feels much like a continuously shifted 125, only the rear wheel breaks loose like a 400.

The gas Betors must be considered suitable only for novices under 160 pounds who can't afford to replace



MOATES MODS

While campaigning in Europe this past season, Marty Moates was commonly found running in the top ten in World GP points events, but was plagued by more than his share of mechanical DNFs.

While interviewing Marty, we picked up some invaluable information for all you current or prospective Phantom owners. For instance . . .

Marty's GP III ate nine countershafts before his Spanish-speaking mechanic understood that the chain tension was set up too tight. Only one primary chain snapped during the entire season.

The factory was continually experimenting with his equipment, so he was seldom familiar with all of the components or the exact handling qualities of his mount. Still, his performances, while in the running, were quite respectable for a newcomer, to say the least.

Finally, he had a suitably prepared practice bike similar to

his serious race bike. Its modifications include: Marzocchi forks up front, lighter-than-stock Fox springs with 12 to 15 pounds of air on top with 20-weight Bel-Ray fork oil; dual-pressure Fox Airshox in the standard mounting position out back with 120 and 100 pounds of pressure; and a Cross-Up swingarm. It was found that the stock pipe works the best for almost all situations.

He put 25 gallons of fuel through his practice bike without a single problem. So, the GP III can work, and work very well, with the right mechanic and the right rider aboard.

The suspension components mentioned above are available from: Cross-Up, Inc., 11781 Cardinal Circle, Garden Grove, California 92643; (800) 854-0117; Moto-X Fox, 520 McGlinchey Lane, Campbell, California 95008; (408) 371-1221; Marzocchi forks are available through your authorized Hi-Point dealer.



them with real shock absorbers. They allow the rear end to skip along, slide out and bottom regularly. These must have been Spain's answer to the Thermalflows.

The Betors up front are a big improvement over the GP II's forks. Small to medium bumps are absorbed quite well, really, but when it comes to good-sized holes and landing off of jumps, forget it. The money you could spend replacing gloves regularly should be directed toward revamping the dampening rods so that they won't hydraulically lock up in the final centimeters of travel. For riders over 160 pounds or so, stronger springing is also in order.

On the plus side, this is by far the best handling Ossa we've ridden. Even though it's gained 17 pounds over the GP II, the weight is somehow virtually unnoticeable. It still feels very light and is quite responsive to weight placement. It can be easily flipped about to make minor directional changes with a quick movement of muscle.

In keeping the same steering head angle and moving to the forward axle front suspension, the handling has been slowed down just enough to make the Phantom very pleasant and predictable to steer at all speeds. Adding an inch and a half to the swingarm has also played a big part, while giving the Phantom a much more stable feeling at higher speeds and negating the GP II's tendency to loop. Lifting the front end is now a planned combination of weight transfer and throttle application, rather than utter surprise.

AND NOW, SOME UNBIASED COMMENTS FROM OUR TESTERS

"I dig it. I'd seriously like to have one. This is the best bike Ossa's ever made. It's the best-steering bike

Continued on page 67



ever to come out of Spain. It steers like a Maico. You can stuff it in and it will hold its line. That's the most important part to me. If I had ridden it blindfolded, I would have sworn that it had Metzlers on it instead of Pirellis. That pipe really burns your leg. There's plenty of power and it's much more usable than most 250s. It's so smooth down low. If we could just get it carbureted right . . . I've been tuning Bings for years . . . maybe a Mikuni. I know that it's heavier, but it doesn't feel like it at all. I see what you mean about the forks now. They're so harsh that they'll rip the bars right out of your hands."

"I raced the Ossa at Carlsbad today. I won the first moto by 80 meters. In the second one I went down in the first turn at the start, then passed everyone but the first three and was right on the third's rear wheel . . . Now I'll tell you what really happened. I rode practice. What a joke. They were blowing by me like I was spectating. There was no way that I was going to risk my body on that thing. I knew for sure that it would have been suicide. There's no way that you can ride that bike fast enough to race it. I liked the old one better."

"It feels like the lightest 250 around, but it's not. It feels like it has about 26 horsepower but it has much more. Contradictions . . . The rear end kicks up really bad. And what's worse, it kicks to the

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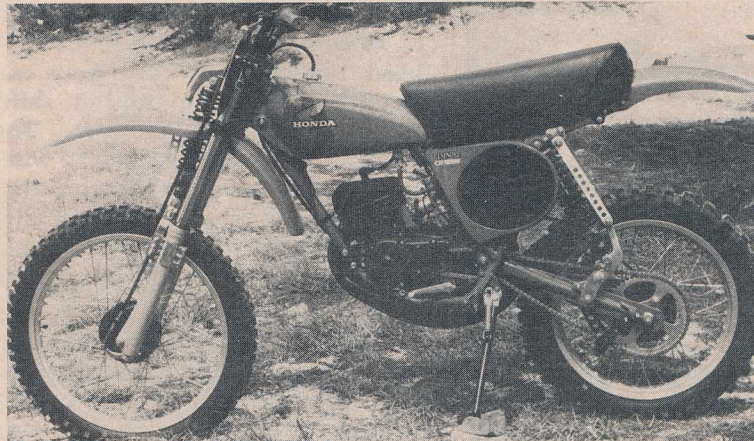
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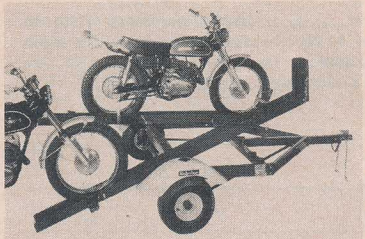
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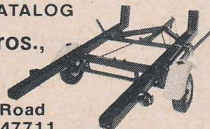
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side as well. From corner to corner in a drag race situation you'll get blown off every time. It steers so nice. It'll go anywhere you want it to. That's what I liked about it. I liked the shifting, too. You can leave the power on and it shifts cleanly without a problem. The overall handling, geometry-wise, seemed very good, considering that there were Pirellis on it. Normally, Pirellis are an instant nightmare. I didn't care much for the bars or the grips."

"This is the best Phantom so far. It's come a good way since the first one, but not far enough or quickly enough. It needs shocks and tires badly. And the forks have to be fixed or trashed and replaced with something decent. It bottoms really bad at both ends. There is no way you can go fast on it without shaking the snot out of yourself. There are a lot of bikes that I would consider buying before I got down to this level. The power would be really good if it had shocks and tires to hook it to the ground. It handles much better than the old one, when you're on smooth ground. It shifts very well, even with the power on. The brakes are terrible. You have to set your braking points up much earlier. They're terribly spongy. And the pipe needs more shielding."

THINGS WE LEFT OUT ELSEWHERE

The green label Akronts held up very well and required very little nipple-twisting before they were seated in.

Pirelli has evidently come up with a new rubber compound for their motocross tires. These seemed harder and worked a little better on dry terrain. Surely they work well in loam or on tacky surfaces, but not on the slick, hard-packed adobe.

AND SO . . .

With a change in gearing, a good set of shocks, modified forks with different springs and (depending on the type of track surfaces in your area) a set of tires, the GP III could provide pleasing results. It has excellent power. The handling has improved considerably. It steers and shifts well, and is very responsive. But, there are some bikes available today that don't have these problems and perform better overall.

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