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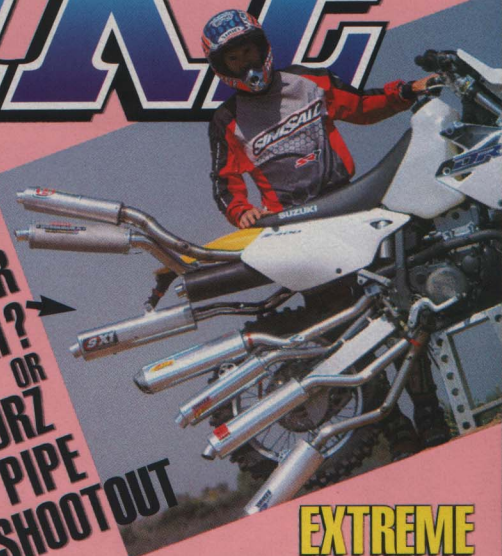
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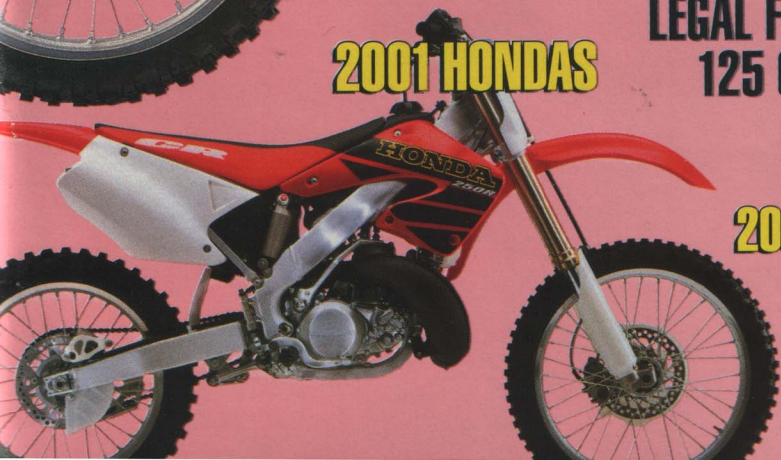
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By the staff of **DIRT BIKE**

**H**ere's a quick  
Are-You-Old? quiz:  
**Husqvarna is...**

- a. A proud Swedish marque with a history of world championships.
- b. A proud Italian company that makes good four-strokes.
- c. What the shop down the street used to sell before going out of business.
- d. A company that makes gardening tools or something.

There's about 15 years of age between each answer. It's a generation thing. Old guys know all about Husqvarna—the name means something. Young riders don't really care. There's only a slight difference between a Husky and an Indian to anyone born after 1980.

For the record: Husqvarna's last high point was in the four-stroke world. From 1985 until somewhere around 1991, Husqvarna had the ultimate thumper. It was light, fast and simple. It took years for the rest of the motorcycle industry to catch up. Some companies still haven't.

RECALLATION





# ITALIAN RETALIATION

The Husky 610 was once the king of the thumpers. Can it make a comeback?





# ITALIAN RETALIATION

So what has Husky done lately? About all Husky is famous for these days is losing most of its dealers and having terrible parts support. But listen up, Generation Why. Things might be happening at Varesse

From what we can tell, Husky is moving into a new era. The days of bad dealer support appear to be over. And for the first time in years, the product line is showing some advancement. The 2000 Husky TE610 has a new frame with quicker geometry, is lighter and has suspension updates. Is that enough to make people sell their Yamahas and forget about the DRZ? No. But it's a great starting point. After all, there are certain things that the Japanese still don't offer. They have no big-displacement, lightweight thumper. The Honda XR650 is the closest thing, but it weighs more than a house and it still doesn't have an electric starter. That means there's still a place for the Husky 610.

## PROJECT DESERT HUSKY

Eron Boyer and Matt Burroughs are the Husky true believers in the West. They know exactly what to do to get the most out of the 610 and regularly do so in the Best In The Desert series. For the 2000 Tonopah 300, we had a bike set up exactly like theirs. Here are the basics:

**ENGINE:** The Husky was really advanced when it was originally designed back in the '80s. And it was still pretty advanced when the Italians reinvented it in 1990. Now it's the very definition of an old-world four-stroke. It's powerful, but slow revving and slow to respond. Our bike was blasted into the new century by Russ Fletcher. He's the guy who built the Husaberg motors that Mike Young used to win several four-



If you think you know all about what Husky has these days, think again. The new four-strokes have faster steering geometry and slower motors than the versions of years past.

The bike that Team DIRT BIKE raced in the Tonopah 300 was a replica of the machine that the official Husky team raced. The major mods were suspension by RG-3 and an engine by Fletch Trick.



stroke championships. He reworked the head with a special valve job and port work. And then he lightened the fly-wheel and rebalanced the crank. These days, Russ is working closely with Big Gun, who made the exhaust.

**SUSPENSION:** Husqvarna uses a Marzocchi inverted fork and a Sachs shock. To this day, we have never seen a Sachs shock on anything but a Husky. They seem to be ordinary; i.e. the shock has a piston and valve stack that isn't too different from that of a KYB or Showa. But in stock form it has some really oddball valving. Rob at RG-3 has become America's leading (maybe only) expert on Sachs shocks. Yes, it's a weird thing to be known for, but he'll take it. He revalues the shock so that it resembles something from this planet. Same goes for the fork. Marzocchi conventional forks are common, but the upside down fork isn't. Rob can make it work as well as anyone.



## SEE YOU AT TONOPAH

Here's the bottom line. The bike was kind of a big fluffy trailbike as it came from Husqvarna. Okay, it was a *fast* big fluffy trailbike. When it was finished it was a 110-mph desert bullet. We rode it once, swallowed our gum, and then it was whisked away to Tonopah for the Best In The Desert race.

Getting used to a new bike in the middle of a race is a little like ordering a bride over the internet. You hope for the best, but you can't be surprised if she has a slight case of The Plague. The Husky doesn't have The Plague, but it doesn't handle like anything else. Even with its new, quicker geometry, it still feels like a long, low bike. It isn't very heavy, at least not by Honda 650 standards, but it does have a few pounds on a Yamaha WR400. But it seems like it *should* be heavy. So when you first get on the bike, you're afraid to brake hard or to try to throw it around.

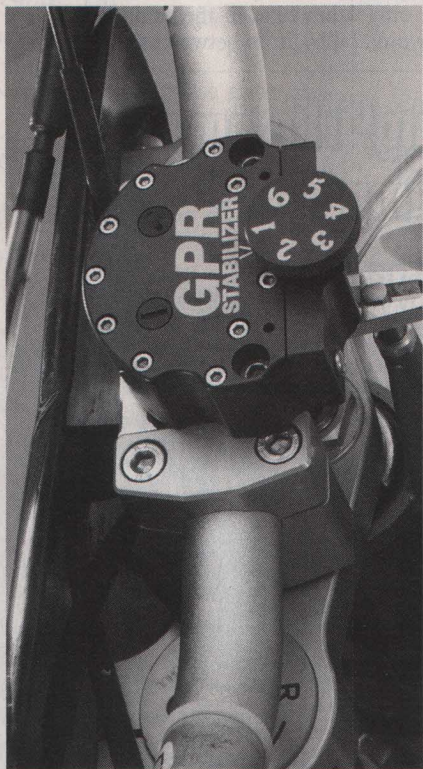
Well, get over it. The Husky won't bite. Once you grow a little courage, you realize that the bike *can* be tossed around. You *can* brake hard. It just takes a little muscle. And at stupid speeds, you might as well be in a Lazy

**CHASSIS:** With the new frame, Huskys aren't as stable as they once were. This is a 100-mph desert race we're talking about. A steering damper can't hurt. For this project, we used a new GP stabilizer—it looks like a simple version of a Scott's. It was hooked up to a BRP top clamp that repositions the handlebar a little more forward. Then there's the usual desert racing stuff, like a dry-break fuel filler (manufactured by Clarke and installed by GPR), and FMF 909 bars, handguards and grips. Just for some high-tech kicks and giggles we installed a carbon-fiber rear fender from Claerhout's Husqvarna and a Pro Products composite skid plate.

### CONTACTS

Big Gun	(909) 948-7029
RG-3	(714) 630-0786
GPR	(619) 422-5771
BRP	(949) 380-1160
Clarke	(503) 829-2156
N-Style	(800) 831-9043
Claerhout's	(517) 883-9887
Pro Products	(805) 684-0410
Fletcher	(360) 253-7177

Ron took some time to get used to the Husky. By his second stint on the bike, he was speaking Italian with a Swedish accent.



A Husky with head shake? Believe it or not, the new 610 needs a steering damper to go fast. But on the other hand, it's a Husky that turns, which is even more of a mind-blower.





# ITALIAN RETALIATION

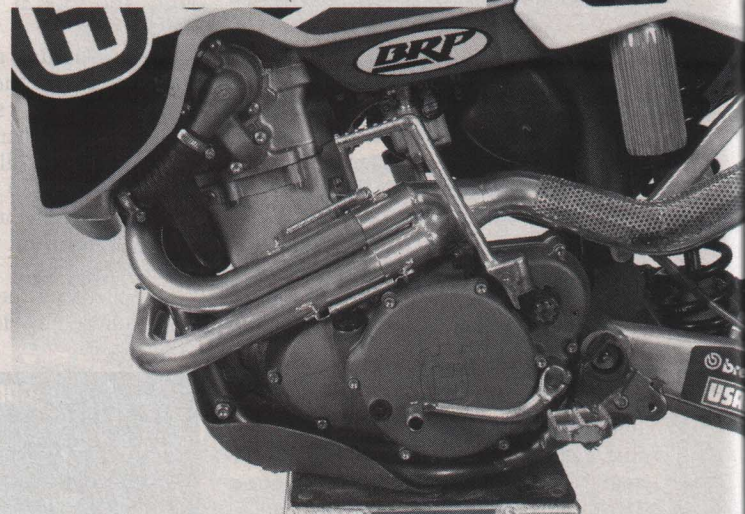
Boy watching Oprah. Actually, watching Oprah might be more scary, especially if we're talking about one of the weight-loss episodes.

A word about the GPR steering damper; it's great at making the bike go straight in gnarly stuff. But if you don't like steering dampers in general, it certainly won't convert you. Even on its lightest setting, it makes the steering very heavy. The valving is much less complicated than that of a Scotts, which is very speed-sensitive—in other words, the harder the handlebar is jerked, the more it resists. The GPR has some detectable damping even at slow speeds. Between the already slow steering, the stabilizer and the suspension (which was perfect for the terrain at Tonopah), nothing, but nothing could throw the Husky off course.

## BUT IS IT FAST?

Good grief, yes. Sometimes it can freak you out. When you're on a dry lake going twice as fast as the cars on the highway, and you realize that you still have sixth gear to shift into, you start thinking a little too much. All the forces that make an airplane fly start working on your head. You feel your helmet lifting and it takes a surprising amount of strength to just hold on. The Husky, in the meantime, can always go faster if you have the space.

There's enough power in there; it's just not pleasant or easy to use. With less flywheel weight, the Husky is a little more lively.



And it gets up to speed in a hurry, too. The bike still doesn't have the sudden hit of a Yamaha, but it is much more responsive than the old-fashion four-stroke that it used to be. How does the engine compare to a race-ready Honda 650? The Honda probably has more torque and more power right above idle. The Husky has more on top. The only other bike in the same league is a Husaberg 600, which would fall right in between the two.

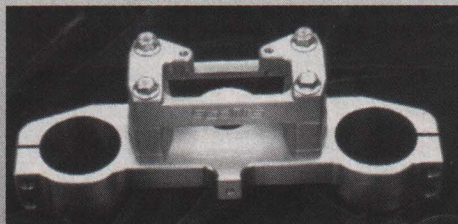
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**DIRTBIKE  
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# ITALIAN RETALIATION

The Husky is a much more refined bike than the Husaberg—almost to the point of being Honda-like. It just has a few glitches that hold it back. The carb, for instance, is dated. The suction of the engine makes the slide float up and down, making it hard to adjust the idle. And our bike was never easy to start. Husqvarnas are all over the map in this department. Some start right up and others don't—we think each ignition is a little different. On our particular bike, the lightened flywheel probably made the problem worse. We're still holding out for an electric start model.

In the end, that didn't matter. The Husky ran flawlessly for all 257 miles. Gary Jones and Ron Lawson couldn't break it no matter how hard they tried. They won the old-guy Pro class, and were about 45 minutes behind overall leader Tim Staab and Johnny Campbell. Winning always feels good. But we need to admit, winning on something a little out of the ordinary like a Husky 610 feels better than usual. □

## PARTS

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RG-3 shock revalve.....	185.00	Bridgestone ED78 rear tire.....	9750
BRP top clamp.....	179.99	Bridgestone ED77 front tire.....	9750
GPR stabilizer.....	350.00	909 BFB handlebar.....	129.99
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GPR antivibration bar ends.....	56.96	Big Gun valve job.....	Call
Big Gun exhaust.....	425.00	Big Gun head work.....	Call

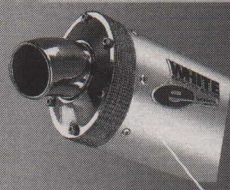
We've all seen Marzocchi forks, but not inverted ones. The front suspension remains Husky's weak spot, even with extensive revalving.



# The Benchmark.....

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