

# DIRT RIDER

MARCH 1976

PDC \$1.25



**SPECIAL  
SIX DAYS  
ISSUE**  
**Malcolm Smith  
on Safari**



**HOTCHA**  
—Another verge  
of control color  
**MOTOCROSS  
POSTER  
INSIDE**

**Bike of  
the year?  
Yamaha  
TT 500**

**Three  
Trans-AMAs  
wired on  
the circuit**

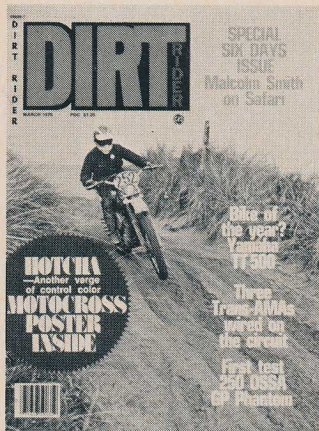
**First test  
250 OSSA  
GP Phantom**



# DIRT RIDER

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# Test: 250 OSSA GP Phantom

Last year's "if-onlys"  
are answered in full.

Frankly, it's playing havoc with our poor weak psyches to be forced into writing three complimentary tests in one issue. Worse yet, two of them are about Japanese motorcycles, traditionally the bane of *Dirt Rider* staff members. To be truthful, this is the last of the three to be written, simply because it's by far the easiest. Writing a test on the bike which excels so thoroughly in a very narrow category is no problem.

The updated GP Phantom is most certainly one of the finest 250 motocross machines available to the buying public today. It shares that classification with a half dozen others, which is nothing to be ashamed of. If half the technology that has been put into 250 motocross bikes in the last five years had gone into making all bikes quiet, then we could probably ride motocross in a manner similar to Putt-Putt golf. If only.

250 motocross bikes are so good today that many an experienced Pro could be heard to say that a 1976 production bike could have won a Gran Prix 4 or 5 years ago. In fact, of the half dozen or so excellent examples of the type, most can't be ridden to half their potential by three-quarters of the motocrossers in America.

Show me a man who can ride a 250 GP Phantom to its potential and I will show you a man with either big eyes or a list of credits too long to notate. The GP Phantom is fast, faster than last year, turns better and has greatly improved suspension. If it's better, is it better than other 250s? Look see:

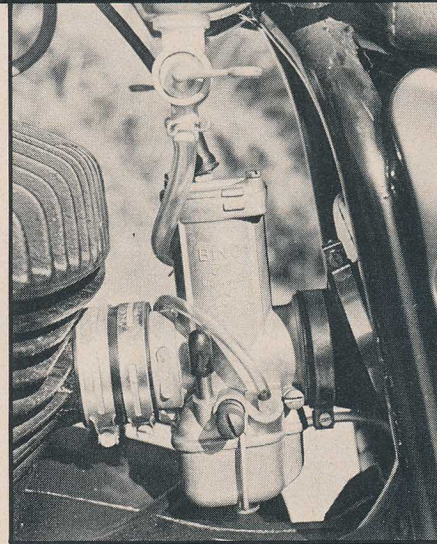
When we finally got down to the cylinder the ports proved to be iden-



tical to last year's Phantom. All change is in the redesigned 36mm Bing and the pipe. The Bing has new a new fuel introduction system allowing it to flow more gas in less time, rubber O-rings on the slide stop and idle mixture screws for waterproofing, a new float needle and spring system to prevent surging and a new mainjet carrier design and screen. It carburets more consistently and allows better flow for high RPM. The pipe is the GP model which has smoothed the low RPM response and tacked another 1,000 rpm on top.

Along with that trick new pipe comes the same old garbage not-trick-in-the-least not-a-silencer. Gripe, gripe, gripe. It's like talking to a wall. Doesn't anyone hear? Manufacturers, riders? Are you too deaf from your own exhaust noise? Bikes as noisy as the Phantom, and it doesn't stand alone by any means, are committing suicide right before our very eyes. If they don't get quieter they won't be for sale. Period.

Problem was that with a little too much of that 1/8 turn throttle on last year's bike you could easily loop exciting a turn. Now the motor comes on more smoothly resulting only in thrilling wheelies. Once the motor hits mid-



range it comes alive and acceleration is significantly stronger than the previously quick Phantom. From start gate to first turn the Phantom again gives ground to no bike.

Gearbox ratios and shifting mechanism have been altered. The ratios are much closer making the Phantom a more hyper 250. Faster, too, of course. Out of a start gate you move from second to fifth in a tremendous hurry. Almost as soon as the motor springs

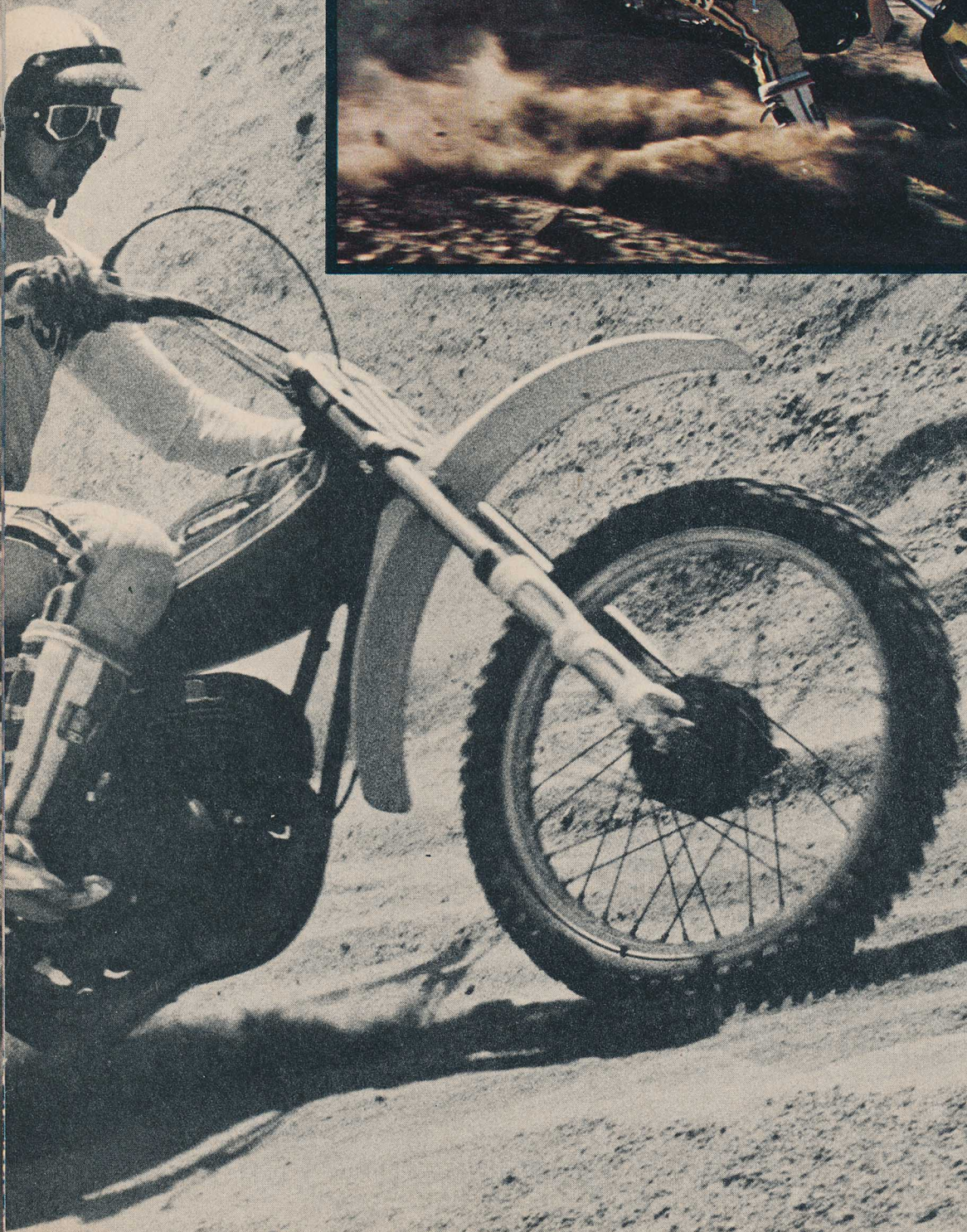


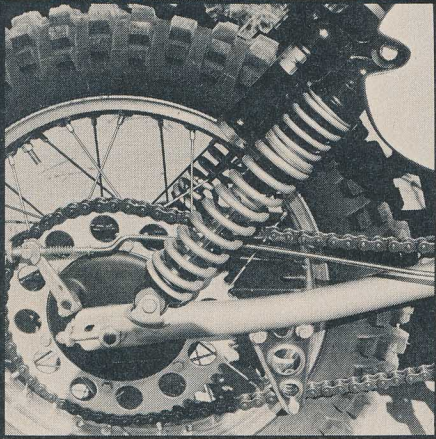
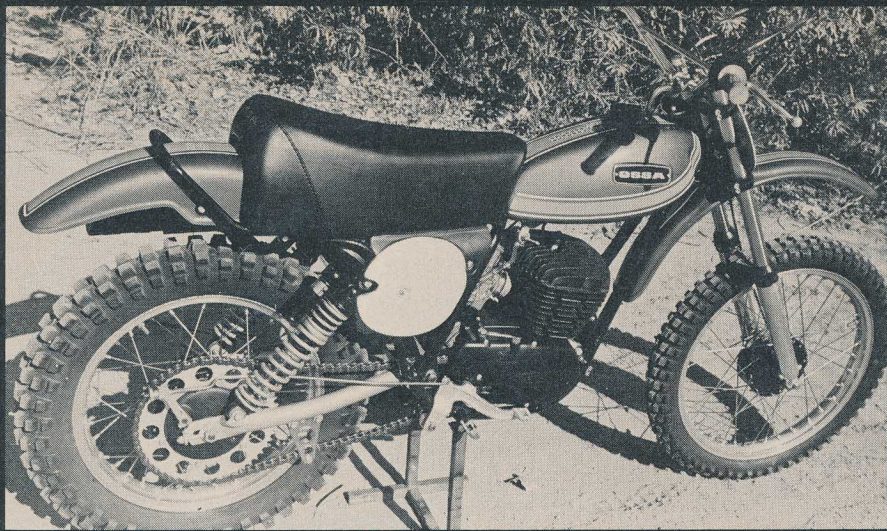
alive in each gear, it's time to shift up. On the track most obstacles are negotiated in third like last year. In the sharpest corners on our local tracks third gear and a flick of the clutch lever brought the Phantom out at maximum potential. If there's any straight, the best method is to move quickly to fifth and allow the motor to pull to obtain maximum traction.

The new shift mechanism has made the lever travel shorter and more precise. Our club footed tester still had a little trouble negotiating third in tense situations—others had no difficulty. Compared to last year, the problem has been solved.

Cantilevered shocks have been accomplished by moving the sub-frame supports to accommodate a leaned forward mount. A swingarm similar to last year's desert Phantom has been used, with additional boxing for the shock mount. This arm is steel and almost an inch longer than last year's aluminum arm. We credit it with some of the Phantom's more mellow front wheel tendencies. The cantilever stance raised







the rear of the bike slightly and an additional 1½ inches of seat padding raised it some more. This has resulted in the extreme weight transfer system common to most motocross machines today. Still, the Phantom's stance is shorter than any other 250 save the Montesa and Bultaco.

Previous performance of Betor gas shocks left us without much hope for their use. Betor, however, has redesigned and these new ones performed quite acceptably and lasted until Russ got his new Curnutts—over 6 rides. They seem to perform as well and be as long lasting as any other gas shock.

In addition, their dual rate springs make appropriate use of the cantilever system allowing a comfortable ride along with good control and ground sensitivity. After Russ installed his new gas Curnutts, however, no one could argue the improvement. More travel and traction were obvious.

It took quite a while to sort out the 9 inch travel Betor forks. At first we thought there was a spring problem, too much load rating for that travel. When that didn't fix them we attacked damping. Finally, when Russ was about ready to file them in a dark corner, he discovered some nicks on the inside running surface which were causing them to bind. Apparently, the wall thickness is little enough to make fork protectors mandatory. We honed the sliders and installed Jones Motocross foam protectors and now the forks are traveling smoothly all the way to the triple clamps—an actual 8¾ inches of travel.

With all that suspension movement, the Phantom handles a little differently than last year. Actually, it's the same handling only exaggerated. It turns more quickly than last year no doubt because of the additional head angle change under braking. In fact, it turns so quickly that most anyone should plan on a full day of practice just to become used to its potential. We switched to a Full-Bore front tire to



**OSSA 250 PHANTOM**  
 Yankee Motor Corp.  
 Box 36  
 Schnectady, New York 12301  
 Price: \$1595

**SPECIFICATIONS**

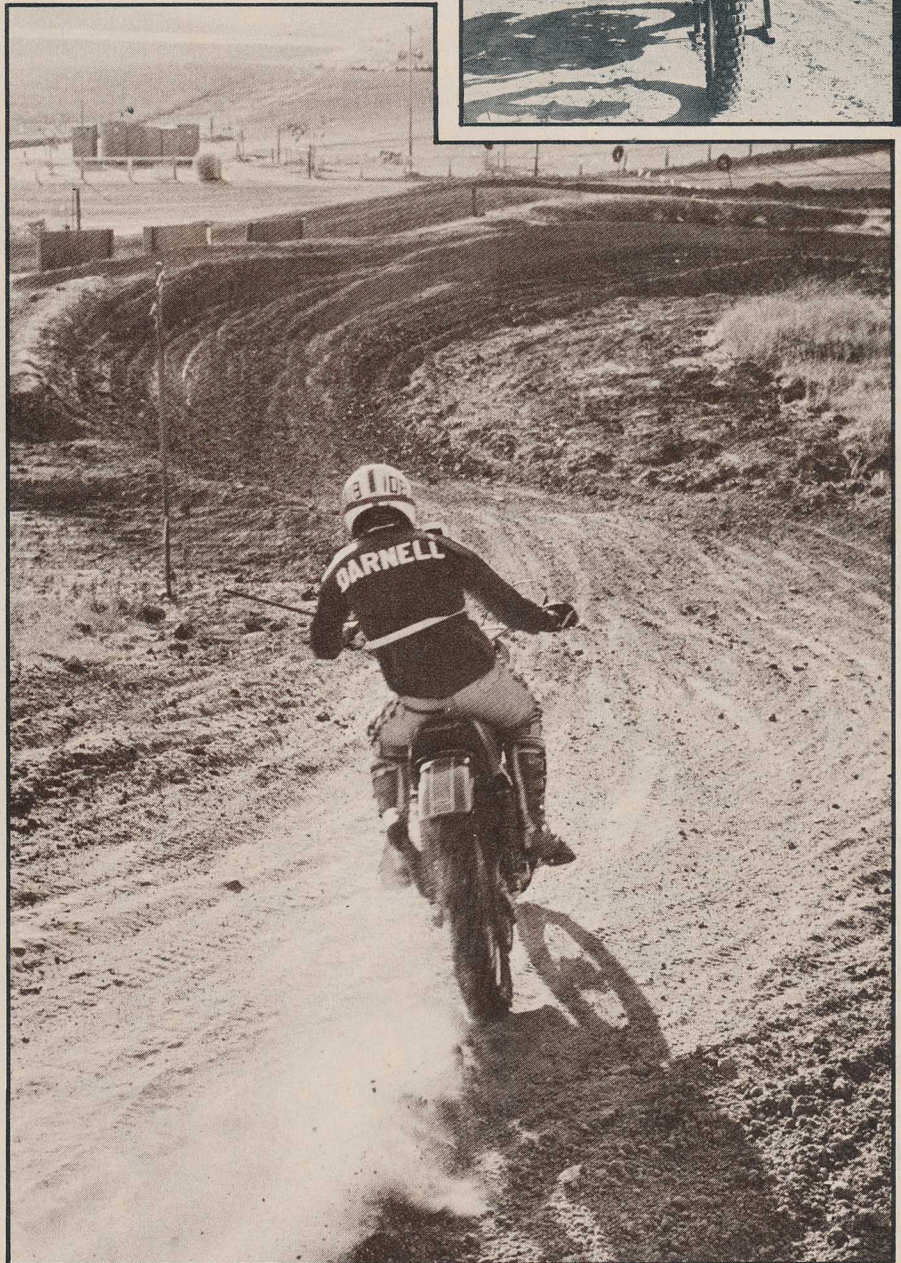
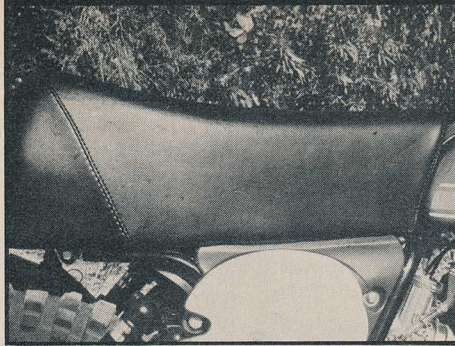
Engine .. Piston port/two stroke single  
 Bore/stroke ..... 72mm/60mm  
 Displacement ..... 246cc  
 Compression ratio ..... NA  
 Claimed torque ..... NA  
 Claimed horsepower ..... NA  
 Carburetion .... 36mm Bing concentric  
 Clutch ..... Wet multi-plate  
 Gear  
   ratios (:1) .. 2.60, 1.92, 1.43, 1.17, 1.00  
 Primary ratio ..... NA  
 Final drive ..... 13/53  
 Lubrication ..... Premix  
 Fuel ..... Premium  
 Oil recommendation .. Full Bore 50W, 32:1  
 Warranty ..... None

**COMPONENTS**

Forks .. Betor hydraulic, 9 inches travel  
 Shocks ..... Betor, 7 inches travel  
 Frame .... Chrome molybdenum double  
                   down tube, aluminum alloy  
                                   swinging arm  
 Pegs .. Serrated steel, folding, no spring  
 Hubs ..... Cast aluminum, full width  
                   front, conical rear  
 Rims ..... Akront shoulderless  
 Rimlocks ..... 2 front, 2 rear  
 Tires ..... Pirelli Motocross,  
                   3.00x21, 4.50x18  
 Brakes .... Single leading shoe, internal  
                   expanding, cable front,  
                   rod-operated rear  
 Chain ..... Joresa #520  
 Ignition ..... Motoplat electronic  
 Lighting ..... None  
 Tools..... A few, plus 2 countershaft  
                   sprockets  
 Air filter ..... Paper in fiberglass box  
 Sparking plug ..... Champion N2, N2G  
 Fenders ..... Fiberglass  
 Number plates .. 1 plastic front, 2 fiber-  
                   glass (side panels)  
 Kill switch .... Rubber shrouded button  
                   left side  
 Muffler ..... Of sorts  
 Fuel tank ..... Fiberglass

**DIMENSIONS**

Wheelbase ..... 55.0 inches  
 Ground clearance ..... 9.0 inches  
 Peg height ..... 13.1 inches  
 Seat height ..... 34.2 inches  
 Running weight ..... 204 lbs.  
 Weight distribution ..... 43.8%/56.2%  
 Fuel capacity ..... 2 gallons  
 Oil capacity, transmission .... .1 quart  
 Throttle turn ..... .70 degrees



make full use, since the Pirelli tends to wash out when pushed to extremes. Now the Phantom will turn out of ruts in off-camber corners like nothing else.

Also helping the turning radius is the improved front brake. We've looked and looked and can find no difference other than the actuating arm being turned forward. This single change improved the brake from marginal unless well maintained to outstanding. Two fingers will lock it without trouble now,

yet it still has adequate sensitivity to be used to maximum potential. Anyone who has an older Phantom should try turning the brake arm on the backing plate 180 degrees, so it points forward. It works.

In suspension improvements the Phantom gained 4 pounds nudging back over 200 to an unseemly 201. Like last year, the lack of weight is probably the most noticeable characteristic about the Phantom. It's so easy to jostle it

around in the air, make subtle corrections on the ground, place the bike wherever you may want it. It has an airy feeling like a 125, yet power and torque more common to a 400.

Other improvements on the GP model include an airbox redesign to be more waterproof, a pin in the throttle housing to prevent it from spinning on the bar and a better, though not satisfactory chain guide.

Improvements which weren't made

that could have been include the need for a chain tensioner, more gusseting for the footpegs, a method to keep the kick lever from folding out at the wrong time and plastic fenders. These aren't too difficult for the owner to accomplish, but didn't have to be. The fenders are irritating, especially if Bultaco finally gets its act together and delivers Pursangs with plastic. That will make Ossa grandpa of fiberglass. If Montesa can do it, so can the rest.

But is it better? Better than the rest? Now isn't that a stupid question? If

you happen to own a GP Phantom and ride it in a way that makes you feel good, then it is. It's best because you have it. One of the best qualifications for a best bike is whether or not you own it. The most committal answer you're about to get from us is two-fold. First, it's as good as any, better than most. Second, we have a sneaking suspicion many of you might tend to think so if you rode one, just because it might be the most pleasantly competitive 250 motocrosser built today. ●

