

*More suspension,
wider power,
more handles*

HUSQVARNA CR250 MIKKOLA REPLICA

by the Staff of DIRT BIKE



Have you ever wondered if owning a championship-style GP motocross machine would enable you to become the rider you've always wanted to be? Certainly, spending a considerable amount of time on such a bike couldn't hurt your riding ability. Even if, perhaps, you are one of those few individuals who just can't seem to get along with a particular brand's basic frame geometry or handling characteristics no matter how hard you try or how much time you put in.

Today, there are about three brands of production motocrossers

which you can buy that are either the same or very similar to the machines that their respective factories are campaigning in World GP competition.

One of these manufacturers is Husqvarna, creator of the object of this test. Partly due to the fact that our editor had worked as a research and development engineer at Husky during the past several years, we were able to procure a pre-production prototype of their new quarter-liter MXers. These bikes are the same in virtually every measurement and detail to the bike Heikki Mikkola

DIRT BIKE



New up-pipe tucks in better than any we've seen and is very quiet. Model 54 36mm Bing has choke within. New sidestand is a great improvement over last year's. Finally, you get genuine toothed footpegs. Kickstarter is also newly designed, but still barely adequate.

rode to his first 250 World Championship this past season, after winning the 500 Championship on basically the same bike two seasons before that. When we say the same in virtually every measurement and detail, we mean that we're talking about the identical bike, except for the periodic experiments using different shocks, grips, springs, tires, porting and pipes that go on continually. Also, Heikki's bike doesn't have a sidestand.

The '77 CR250 is the first of a new breed of longer travel suspended bikes sporting 240mm (nearly 9.5 inches) up front and 254mm of travel in the rear.

The forks are the same fine units found on Mikkola's and Howerton's factory racers except that the crowns are aluminum forgings rather than being milled out of solid stock. Aside from that, the forks are identical to what the big boys are running. Atop dual oil seals on either leg is a trick little plastic scraper designed to prevent mud and dirt from ever getting close to the seals. The new crowns feature rubber mounts for the offset aluminum bar clamps, to help reduce rider fatigue. Changing fork oil and springs can be easily done without removing or loosening the bars. Two springs of different weights are used in each leg. The lighter top springs will be available from your dealer in different weights so that the front end can be tuned to individual rider preferences. Oil capacity is 240cc.

Third-generation, long-travel gas Girlings are used out back, the Girlings also use the two-spring, dual-rate configuration. Shock travel is 154mm and actual axle travel is 254mm. The swingarm pivot point has been moved forward 10mm and dropped 5mm. There is now only 90mm between swingarm pivot and countershaft centerlines. Better for sure. Additional swinging rear fork changes include moving the shock mounts 35mm (or 15mm, depending upon whether you want our measurement or Husky's) further up the arm and adding 10mm to its overall length in order to make up



Husky's 240mm travel leading axle forks rate with the best. Front brake now uses the same backing plate as the rear. Torque stay tweaks the backing plate slightly out of alignment, but doesn't affect performance. Actuating arm is now longer to give you better mechanical advantage and therefore a more powerful brake. It would be nice to see a suitable clamp to replace all of the tape necessary to hold the brake cable in place. Green label Akronts and stainless spokes held up fine.

for the change in the pivot point location while retaining the same wheelbase.

Both wheels consist of the new "green label" shoulderless Akronts laced to 160mm conical drums with stainless spokes. The front binder now utilizes the same backing plate as the rear, which is still a fully

floating setup for a little smoother braking. Trelleborgs come stock, but ours came with a Metzeler on the back. We were told that it was the last one in Southern California, since Honda had just bought up 50.

The powerplant is basically the same magnesium-cased, reeded, 246cc six-speed, close ratio unit as last year's, but with a little different porting. For instance, the transfers have been radically reangled from 35 to 15 degrees, and the entire porting layout has been lowered a few millimeters.

A newly designed, round side-cover now encases the small-flywheel motoplat ignition, which should now be less susceptible to rock rash.

Hanging out behind the standard Husqvarna six-petal reed is a 36mm Model 54 Bing with a choke. The air box it breathes through has redesigned, with riveted-on rubber flaps in addition to a new aluminum flap up top to help prevent mud from reaching the Twin-Air filter. Plastic is substituted for aluminum on the outer cover.

Out the other end is the second most obvious change besides the new suspension, a double-cross-over, through-the-frame up-pipe. It tucks in better than any production up-pipe we've seen. A major improvement over their last attempt as far as rider comfort is concerned. On top of that, it's also the most quiet MXer we've tested. No hurrahs yet.

The bar peg seat relationship is excellent. The bar design, the plushly-padded, extra-long seat, the narrow tank and the out-of-the-way pipe combine to make the Husky one

of the most comfortable motorcycles available. Huskys tend to favor, and will be much more comfortable for, riders approaching six feet in height and over, especially now, with the longer travel suspension.

Between your legs there sits a very artfully designed piece of modern sculpture formed of Swedish aluminum, welded by a perfectionist, which serves as a fuel container.

In addition to moving the swing-arm pivot point, further frame modifications include moving the steering head forward and changing the head angle from 30½ degrees to 29. All tubing in both frame and swingarm is, of course, chrome moly.



Shock dampening on both compression and rebound was a bit too stiff on our pre-production unit. We were told that this will be corrected before production begins in January. Clearly visible side number plates are a rarity these days. Fenders are wide and long to keep glop out of your eyes and off of your bod.

The pretty, white fenders appear to be virtually indestructible. Below the rear fender is a splash shield made of the same tough plastic, that keeps mud and dirt off the engine where the fender ends near the top shock mounts.

OUT PLAYING WORLD CHAMPION

Standing on the left side of the Husky, gas on, you push the tickler down till pre-mix wets the cases

from the overflow tube. Flip out the kickstarter pedal, push the choke lever down, put your right boot on it, wind it up, back, and down to the starting position, give the throttle a little twist and let her rip. Our test unit nearly always fired on the first or second kick. Let her idle for a few seconds on the choke, then flip it off. Swing a leg over. Ah, feels good. RAP RAP RAAAP. Clutch action is light. Shift throw is neither too long nor too short but, because the clutch disengages so well, there's no "clunk" so you're not sure if she's in gear till you ease out the clutch. You're off.

Snick through the remaining five gears to get up a full head of steam

and point her toward a turn, any ol' turn, flat, bermed or otherwise. Husky's we've tested in the past had a minor case of the "slows" in the shifting department. This problem seems to have been overcome, as this unit shifts perfectly. Now click it back into fifth, roll on the throttle and throw her sideways. No, keep those feet planted firmly on the pegs. That's it. You may have to remind yourself that you are, indeed, riding a Husqvarna. Somewhere in amongst those little changes here and there they've improved the Husky's sliding ability tremendously. On the tracks we rode for this test, the Metzeler out back helped for sure, but there's more to it than just rubber. Once you get her into a

slide, you have the confidence to leaver her there, because the steering is much more responsive.

Pick another turn. One with a tight, decreasing radius and that's bermless. Bring the CR in hard, get on the binders, down a gear, roll on the throttle and steer her around. Yup, this bike not only slides better, but it turns better too. Except for an occasional loss of traction in slick spots due mostly to the front rubber compound, this honey will hang in most anywhere, and allow you a choice of lines unless you are totally committed.

Head out to the sandwash, get her up into sixth and make some runs through the deepest whoops you can find. The Husky tracks straight and true, as you would expect from a machine that's won more off-road races than you can remember.

It was out in the whoops where we discovered that the shocks on our prototype were not as perfectly matched to the machine as most of the other components. The rear end had a nasty tendency to kick up, occasionally putting you in a compromising position, especially while in sixth. Both compression and rebound dampening were too stiff. This condition would partially correct itself when the shocks got good and hot and faded a bit. We were assured that this overdampened situation would be corrected before actual production begins. With this change, rear suspension performance will be equal to the best we've tested.

Fork action was a bit harsh to begin with, as the bike was delivered with 30-weight in the tubes. A switch to 20-weight during rather warm riding weather was just right for our testers. Fifteen-weight might be better for lighter riders or cooler weather. These forks are equal to the best production forks available. In fact, they are good enough for Heikki and Kent.

The brakes work as well as you would expect from a machine of this caliber. They were smooth, progressive and strong at either end.

Once you get to know this baby you'll discover that you can do some pretty fancy tricks with it. It still works just fine in the berms, but now you can set up for them early and do neat two-wheel drifts for a meter or so while you're rolling on the power. Very nice.

Oh yes, the power. Although the

peak output is less than the other '77s we've tested, the spread is wider, smoother and more predictable, without a hint of peakiness. This type of power can be beneficial in a great number of situations, especially on tight and twisty, slick or hilly courses. But, the lack of horsepower on top will hurt you in fast sections or on long starting straights. When we informed Husqvarna of our findings in the horsepower department, they got very busy on Telex machines and telephones to Sweden. The word we got was that our pre-production unit was not representative of what the '77s were going to be like. Deadline time prevented any extensive fiddling to

NUTS, BOLTS, FITTINGS AND SUCH

Magura power levers and throttle are clamped onto the black-anodized chrome moly bars. Grips are very similar to one of the most popular designs today, but a bit harder, so they take a while to get used to. Surely lever covers come with the bike, but there were none on our advanced copy.

The production bikes will have dual rubber rollers, like the ones used on the chain guide, up behind the front number plate where it bolts to the top crown, to guide the front brake cable.

Oil started oozing out around the fork seals after the first hour or so of



Nifty green plastic scrapers whisk away accumulated dirt before it gets to the seals. Our seals leaked after a short time, though probably not due to dirt.



All but the final few millimeters of suspension travel, front and rear, are used in this deep sand turn.

find out why our bike was not up to par with the rest of the batch. Something was not right somewhere, but we were assured that whatever it was, it would not appear on any of the production bikes. Husky's own dyno runs did not correspond with ours at all, and, like we said . . . we wish there had been more time available for a fact-finding teardown.

Something to seriously consider when shopping for a new bike is the Husqvarna 60-day unconditional warranty. Certainly within 60 days you will be able to put in enough riding so that any deficiency will be easily discovered and corrected free of charge by your dealer. All it will cost you is getting it there.

riding. Maybe someday . . .

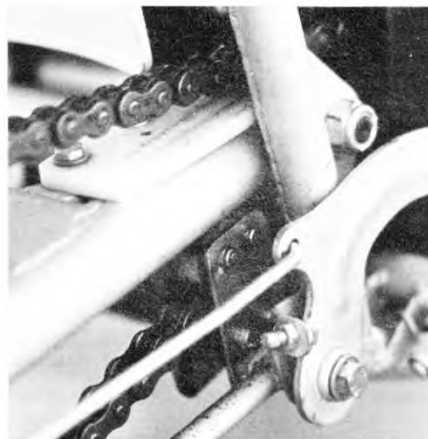
Footpegs are finally genuine, healthy, toothed devils as were found on our 125 test unit. It's about time.

The exit side of the expansion chamber ends just in front of the forwardmost number plate bracket and stains everything behind it.

If the CR doesn't start within the first few kicks, you'll swear that the kickstarter is disgustingly unpleasant. It's truly a joke. Maybe someday . . .

There's a nifty plastic rubbing pad bolted to the top of the swingarm to protect it from the sawing action of the chain. It seems to be made of the right stuff, as its surface has barely been dented after many hours of testing.

Beneath the swingarm, behind the brake pedal, is a slick little



Plastic swingarm/chain protector is held securely in place with two bolts and showed surprisingly little wear after many hours of testing. Underneath is the all-new dual-blocked chain guide/slack taker-upper. Its rubbing blocks have the same fine wear qualities. A spare pair will be included in the tool kit.



The long, comfortable seat gives you lots of room to slide around for precision weight positioning. Air box cover is now plastic and features additional rubber and aluminum shrouding to help keep mud out.



While maintaining the same wheelbase, the steering head is pushed forward and reangled from 30½ degrees to 29. The beautiful new swept-back bar clamps compensate for the head angle change, leaving the bars in the same relative position as last year's, and are rubber-mounted to help reduce rider fatigue.

slacktakerupper (that must be Swedish) that's bolted to the frame to take up chain slop as the shocks extend and compress to either side of the swingarm's centerline. An extra pair of these plastic rubbing blocks will be included in the tool kit, but won't be needed for quite a while if they're made of the same type of plastic that ours were. Good stuff.

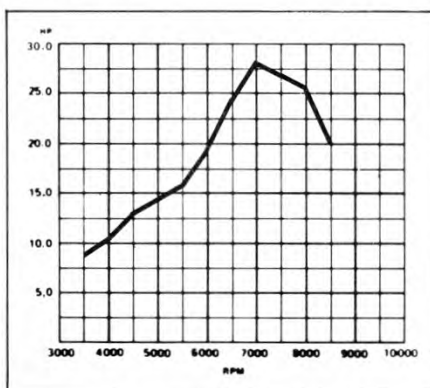
The entire bike glistens with finely cast cases, precision-machined bits, aircraft-type bolts and lock-nuts, fine welding, pretty paint and a lot of pride. A very fine piece of racing hardware.

IN CLOSING

If it were not for the slight rear end deficiency and its comparative lack of peak horsepower that's needed to win starts, the CR would be practically equal to the best 250 we've tested. However, it is safe to assume that these two foibles, one minor, the other not so minor, will be ironed out by the time they start rolling off the assembly line.

In this era of "best yet" motocrossers, we find ourselves with one of the best 250s. One of the best two, to be exact. All of the components like each other, so the bike works very well as a total package. This bike is a lot closer to the factory racers than many of you choose to believe. All the basics are there and working well.

You have to think to ride a Husky, and it will make a better rider of you for the effort. It's more forgiving than any of its predecessors, but you're going to have to concentrate on the business at hand. After all, you're not out there to daydream about your woofie standing at turn two. You're out there to win. The Husky's got what it takes. The rest is up to you.



HUSKY CR250

Price (approx. retail, West Coast): \$1695
 Engine Two-stroke single, reed valve
 Displacement246cc
 Bore & Stroke69.5mm x 64.5mm
 Compression Ratio12.3:1
 Carburetion36mm Bing 54
 Standard Jetting:

Pilot #55, slide #210, needle jet 3.16,
 needle position 3, main jet 195

Horsepower27.7 at 7000

ClutchSix-disc, light alloy

Primary Drive2.42:1

Transmission Ratios:

- 1) 2.06:1
- 2) 1.56:1
- 3) 1.24:1
- 4) 1.04:1
- 5) 0.88:1
- 6) 0.78:1

Final Drive:

12-tooth countershaft

53-tooth rear sprocket

Air FiltrationTwin-Air foam

ElectricsMotoplant CDI, pointless

StartingNon-primary kick

LubricationPre-mix, 25:1

Recommended FuelPremium

Recommended Oil:

Castrol R, Shell Super M, Pennzoil ZT

Fuel Tank Capacity:

7.8 liters (2.1 gallons)

Frame . . .Single downtube, chrome moly

Suspension:

Front: Husqvarna leading axle forks
 with 245mm (9.65 inches)

Rear: Gas Girlings offering 254mm
 (10.0 inches)

Wheels & Spokes:

Front: Akront "green label" rim,
 4mm stainless spokes

Rear: Akront "green label" rim,
 4mm stainless spokes

Tires:

Front: 3.00x21 Trelleborg

Rear: 4.50 x 18 Trelleborg

Dimensions:

Wheelbase:

143.5cm + 3.2cm (56.5 inches)

Swingarm length:

49.6cm + 3.2cm (19.5 inches)

Ground clearance . . .31.0cm (12.2 inches)

Bars, height118.0cm (46.5 inches)

width86.3cm (34.0 inches)

Pegs, height36.8cm (14.5 inches)

width46.0cm (18.2 inches)

Seat Height90.5cm (35.7 inches)

Fork angle29 degrees

Weight:

99.7 kg (220 pounds) without petrol;

45.1% on front, 54.9% on rear

Brakes:

Front: 160mm, cable-operated, conical
 drum

Rear: 160mm, rod-operated, full
 floating, conical drum

InstrumentsNone

LightsNone

SilencerYes, quiet too

Spark ArrestorNone

Warranty . . .60-day Husqvarna Warranty

Parts Prices:

Piston . . \$39.56 with ring, pin and clips

Rings \$5.28

Clutch cable \$4.80

Brake pedal \$8.76

Shift lever \$8.95