

Can-Am's MX-3 Rocketship



Dirt Test

FP: All right, is the tape rolling? Good. Good evening ladies and gents, my name is Fred Perf and... what?... I've got pepper on my tooth? Oh, there, is it off now? Good. Let's start again. Is my smile big enough? Okay, I'm ready now! Good evening ladies and gents, my name is Fred Perf, Channel Three's answer to Bert Parks, and today on "The Consumer's View" we find ourselves outside this motorcycle park, well, not really *find*, we were actually sent out here, you see we don't just stumble around, but anyway, we're here to interview a motorcycle owner about his machine and ask his opinions. As I can see from the rising cloud of dust that is about to get my After Six lavender tuxedo all dirty and yeechy, one of the motorcycle riders is now leaving the park in his van. We're going to stop him to ask a few questions. As you can see, my charming crew, with the help of a bazooka, railroad tie and a sub-machine gun, have gotten our prospective consumer to happily concede

to an interview for our cameras. Tell me sir, what is your name, age and occupation?

SM: Hey, just wait a minute, you guys. All right, I confess. I did sneak my girlfriend in today without paying the three bucks admission, but I'll tell you what, if I give you the three bucks now, will you let me go? Come on, you guys, I forgot she was in there, and what with inflation and all...

FP: Now don't get excited sir, I'm the irresistible Fred Perf, and as you can see, we're here to interview you. Now what did you say your name was?

SM: Oh, I get it. You're one of those guys who goes around asking dumb questions. Hey, I'm in a hurry, so I'll get this over with really fast for you. In the first place, it's none of your business whether I drink Coke or Pepsi, you can't buy the shirt off my back to wash it, I don't go around squeezing paper towels or talking to margarine tubs, and if that's your idea of a hidden camera, you don't do a very good job of disguising those two clowns over there with the camera and that board of knobs and dials. Hey, what are those guys tak-

ON-THE-STREET INTERVIEW OF A TRICK OR TREAT WONDERMOBILE

ing my bike out of my van for?

FP: Relax friend. I can see from our interviewee's wallet, which my assistant mistakenly yanked out of the van's glove compartment, that we're talking with Scott Martin, and my crew has just unloaded his motorcycle, and it's a Can-Am, but it says Bombardier on the engine. Tell us, Scott, did you paint the bike that way for Halloween?

SM: Oh, I get it, you guys are for real, aren't you? Okay, I'll play along. First of all, I didn't paint the bike that way for Halloween, it comes with the black tank and orange fenders. You're right though, it is a Can-Am but it's the new MX-3 model, the 250cc motocrosser, and yes, it does say Bombardier on the engine.

FP: Can you tell our viewing audience why that is, Scott?

SM: Well, the bike is called a Can-Am, and it's made by a company in Canada that's called Bombardier. They make snowmobiles too, and other neat stuff like little tractors. The engine comes from Austria, and it's a Rotax model.

FP: Tell us, Scott, what made you buy the Can-Am?

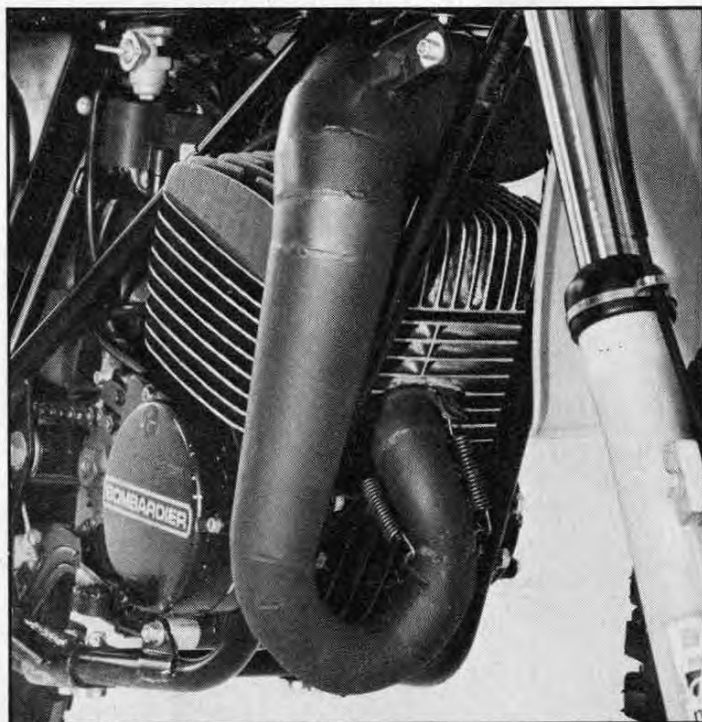
SM: Well, I like going to the motocross races and I want to be a pro someday, and at a few of them I saw Jimmy Ellis on a Can-Am just smoking everybody in the stadium races. The announcer and the motorcycle magazines have all been saying that the Can-Am Jimmy is riding is pretty close to stock, and I figured that if it's good enough for him, it's good enough for me.

FP: Sounds just peachy keen. Can you tell us a little about the engine?

SM: Sure, it's about the fastest thing you're going to find in the 250cc class. You see, it's a single-cylinder two-stroke, with a rotary valve intake hooked to a Bing carburetor, with Bosch ignition, five speeds, a left side kick starter, and a bulletproof reputation. The outer cases are magnesium, the clutch is super heavy duty, the shift lever is easy to find, it's got lots of power and so forth.

FP: You mentioned that the engine is designed to hold up well. Is that rare in this industry?

SM: In some cases it is. But Can-Am has a good reputation for reliable powerplants. I've had my MX-3 for about three months now, and my friend has had last year's model for



One of the first machines to come out with a snake pipe is the MX-3 Can-Am. Shown is a one-off prototype, the production model will have stamped halves and curved tubes.



Like a CZ, the Bombardier engine uses a common shaft for the kick starter and shift lever. You can see the Bing carb peeking out from between the frame downtubes, and the rotary tunnel running behind the kick starter.



Can-Am MX-3

over a year, and nothing has gone wrong yet. The engine will probably outlast a redwood tree.

FP: What about the rest of the machine, the suspension for instance?

SM: That's what really sold me on the new bike. It's got the really good Marazocchi front forks. They are offset axle jobs, and the lower legs are made out of magnesium for lightness and strength. They're the same forks that many of the factory riders use on their works bikes. The travel measures out to 8¾ inches, and even though the fork springs sag after a few hours of riding, the forks are still the best on the market.

In the rear end, Can-Am uses the new monstrously long 16-inch Gabriel gas-bag shocks, the type that don't fade out like normal everyday shocks. These give the rearend 8½ inches of travel. Overall the bike has more suspension, and a better quality of it, than last year's model. The past two years have been big suspension years in the motorcycle industry, and the Can-Am isn't falling behind the times.

FP: But couldn't the owner of an older Can-Am just bolt up the better suspension and have the same bike?

SM: No, that wouldn't work, because of the frame. It's been changed and altered to accept the better, longer suspension. For instance, the swing arm is three-quarters of an inch longer to take the new shocks and the front end has been changed to accept the better forks. There's even a new chain guide on the swing arm to take up the chain slack that is caused by the longer travel back wheel.

FP: I see. While you were talking, I

was handed a note by my very able research staff. It says: "Hey stupid, ask about the front steering cones, and your wife called and wants to know about the woman's undergarment she found under the bed that isn't hers." Ah . . . well . . . ah, can you tell us about the cones, Scott?

SM: That's one of the neatest parts about the Can-Am. You see, you can change the fork angle to suit the track or your riding style by changing cones in the front end. It comes stock with a 30-degree cone, but you can change the adjustment in half degree increments from 25 degrees on up to 31 degrees. For instance, if it's a short tight track, why, you slip in the cone to pull the front end in. If you're going to be riding in sand or on long fast tracks where high speed stability is more important, you push the front end out with a different cone. As far as the lady's frontal upper support item goes, that's your own problem.

FP: Yes, I'll have to come up with an excuse for that one later. Tell us, what is that big black thing with the paint slightly worn off?

SM: That's the new exhaust pipe. It's upswept so you don't smash it on the ground due to the longer suspension. It's also repackable, and comes straight from the factory a little too loud for my taste. The reason that the paint is worn off is because the back of my leg rubs against the pipe while I'm riding. It gets pretty hot, too. I almost burned my leg a couple of times already.

FP: We'll certainly get back to that point later. What other improvements have been made on the bike since last year?

SM: Let me see, there's a longer brake arm on the backing plate for better stopping power by way of leverage, the shoes, backing plates and

front hub are magnesium like the engine cases. The rear wheel is laced differently this year, mainly because Jimmy Ellis kept exploding the stock wheels in competition last year. The fenders are, of course, unbreakable, the seat is softer this year and the handlebars are about an inch higher. Oh, and the tank is plastic and the decal doesn't rub off.

FP: I would imagine that about covers the changes in the machine. Tell us, how does it perform, for instance, in the horsepower department compared to other machines in its class?

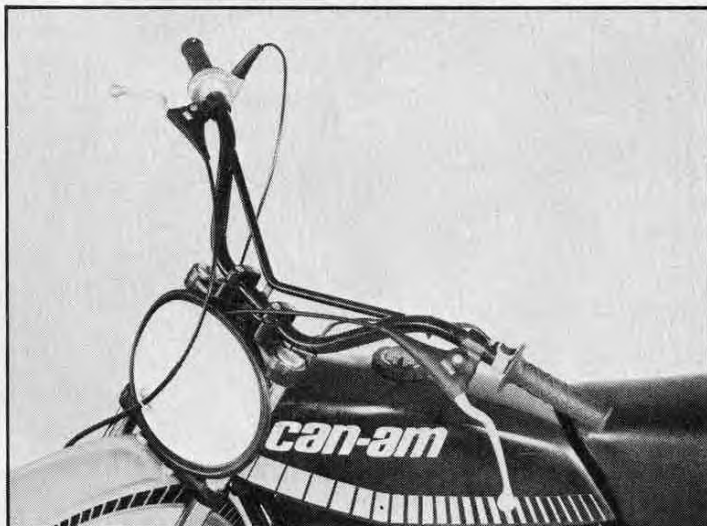
SM: So far it's been the fastest 250 that I've ridden or raced against. I'll say one thing for Can-Am, they sure know how to make an engine fast. The latest figures I've seen show that on the Webco dyno the MX-3 puts out 35.16 horsepower at 8500 rpm. I don't think you'll find anything with more stock horsepower in the 250cc class. The only trick is starting it. You see, if you turn on the gas and tickle the carb, the engine has a habit of getting too much fuel and getting loaded up. But if you just turn on the gas and kick the starter, it usually cooperates. But as far as horsepower, it will run with most open class machines. I usually get the holeshot at each race with my MX-3.

FP: And what about shifting?

SM: At first I was missing a few shifts, especially in and out of third gear. But eventually I learned to pull on the lever a bit harder with my foot and that problem went away. The gears are in the right places as far as ratios go, but with the stock gearing, I haven't found a track that is fast enough to use fifth yet. If you know what you're doing, you can get off the line in second gear with no problems. Just slip the clutch and hold on because it accelerates so quickly and strongly.



The air filter is very essential to good operation. If the filter gets excessively dirty, the machine starts missing and running poorly. Aluminum seat base reduces weight.



Originated by the Jones family, the handlebars have a "V" crossbar, Magura levers, good grips, and in-house manufactured cables. The tank is plastic, and the Mylar decal doesn't rub off on your leathers.

Can-Am MX-3

FP: So you feel that the engine is very good?

SM: Excellent. It's very bulletproof, runs extremely strong, you don't have to fiddle with it, and as long as you keep the air filter clean, it's going to run crisp forever.

FP: Moving right along, let's start talking about suspension.

SM: Okay.

FP: No, you're supposed to be the one talking. I'm just the one that asks questions.

SM: Oh, I get it. Well, the front forks are excellent. They've got good down dampening and good rebound. When I first got my bike, the rear springs were a bit too stiff for me so I had to get softer ones. The suspension package as a whole is super good, right up there with what the Penton/KTM bunch has to offer.

FP: And now your comments on the handling characteristics of the bike.

SM: That's the one thing that puzzles me about the bike. You see, on the tight tracks, where you've got to go down to first or second gear for some of the corners, the Can-Am works beautifully. It turns really nice. For instance, going into a corner, all you have to do is kick it down a few gears, throw it into the berm and gas it. It turns quick with the steering head pulled in a bit, and the good suspension. You can either square off a berm or take the inside line, whichever is best for the corner and the circumstances.

But on the longer tracks something strange happens. My MX-3 has a

habit of bouncing around a bit and what I would call wiggling. If you're trying to go fast and the course is rough, the rearend of the machine bounces around to the front and wiggles a bit. It feels like something I

have experienced on my street Kawasaki Z-1. According to a friend of mine, the wiggling is caused by the swing arm being so long, having so much leverage and flexing the frame.

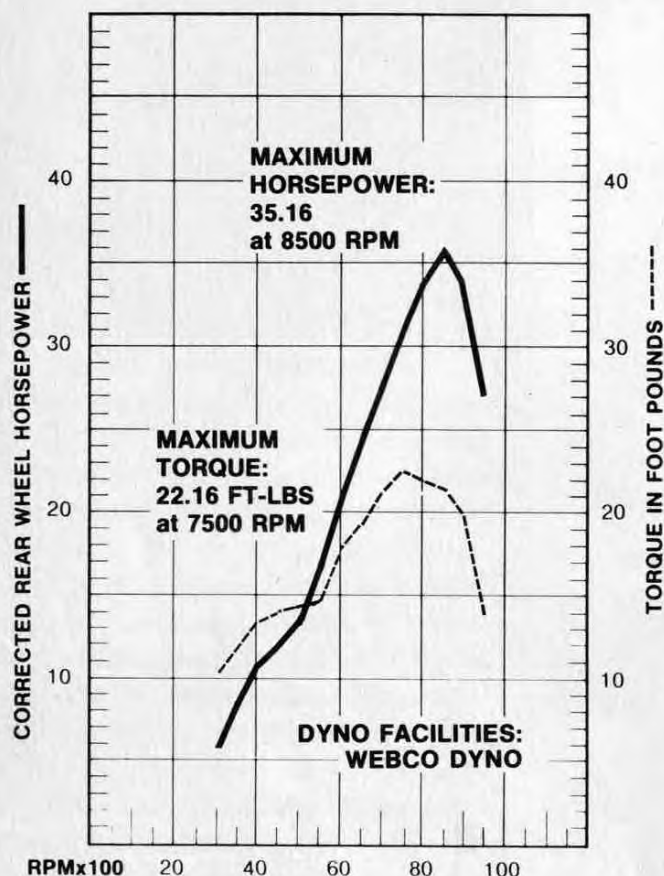
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Can-Am uses one of the simplest wheel adjusting systems by incorporating the snail cam unit. Check out long shocks, cable operated rear brake, beefy knob for traction!



Magnesium offset axle forks, strong brake system, and sturdy spokes and rims complete the front of the MX-3.



PRICE

CAN-AM MX-3	\$1845
PENTON MC-5	\$1851
PUCH MC250	\$3000

HORSE-POWER

CAN-AM MX-3	35.2
PENTON MC-5	31.9
PUCH MC250	31.5

WEIGHT

CAN-AM MX-3	223 lbs
PENTON MC-5	235 lbs
PUCH MC250	229 lbs

TRANSMISSION

CAN-AM MX-3	5-SPEED
PENTON MC-5	6-SPEED
PUCH MC250	5-SPEED



DATA PANEL

TEST BIKE: CAN-AM MX-3 250

Price, sugg. retail.....\$1845

ENGINE

Type.....Rotary-valve 2-stroke single
 Bore/stroke.....74x57.5mm (2.914x2.264 in.)
 Piston displacement.....247cc (15.09 cu. in.)
 Compression ratio.....13:1 (uncorrected)
 Carburetion.....Bing 32mm
 Air filtration.....Oil-wetted foam
 Ignition.....Bosch c.d.i.
 BHP @ rpm.....35.2 @ 8500
 Torque @ rpm.....22.2 lbs./ft. @ 7500
 Lubrication.....Oil-injection
 Electrical power.....None
 Battery.....None

DRIVETRAIN

Primary transmission.....Spur gear (2.91)
 Secondary transmission.....# 520 chain (3.43)
 Gear ratios, overall.....(1)23.75 (2)17.46
 (3)13.87 (4)10.92 (5)9.11

CHASSIS & SUSPENSION

Suspension, front.....Marzocchi teles. fork,
 8.75 in. travel
 Suspension, rear.....Swing arm,
 Gabriel shock absorbers
 Tire, front.....3.00-21
 Tire, rear.....4.60-18
 Brake, front.....Drum, 6 x 1 in. (152.4 x 25.4mm)
 Brake, rear.....Drum, 6 x 1 in. (152.4 x 25.4mm)
 Brake swept area.....37.69 in./sq. (95.73cm./sq.)
 Rake/trail.....30° std., adj. from 25° to 31°/n.a.
 Wheelbase.....56.5 in. (143.5 cm.)
 Seat height.....35.5 in. (90.2 cm.)
 Handlebar width.....33.5 in. (85.1 cm.)
 Ground clearance.....11.0 in. (27.9 cm.)
 Instruments.....None
 Stands.....None
 Tire retention device(s).....Security bolts;
 1 front, 2 rear

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

Fuel capacity.....1.9 gal. (7.19 ltr.)
 Oil capacity.....2.3 qt. (2.18 ltr.)
 Weight, wet, unladen.....223 lbs. (101.1 kgs.)

That's why it feels like the steering head is going from left to right slightly. So far, out of the four people who've ridden my bike, three have noticed it, and they're expert riders. One friend of mine put some reinforcing gussets on his swing arm and the wiggle went away. It's possibly because of the swing arm and the abundant horsepower that this happens.

FP: Is it hazardous?

SM: No, it doesn't seem to be. So far the bike hasn't spit me off or anything like that, but a few times I've backed off the throttle because the rearend was bouncing around so much. But even when I back off, I'm already going so fast that the other guys aren't going to catch me. But I'm going to get the swing arm reinforced anyway.

FP: Any other complaints about the handling?

SM: No, not really. I used to have a Maico, and this bike doesn't work as well as my Maico did in the sandy whoop-dee-dos, but overall, it's a better handling machine than most available on the market today. And with those adjustable front end cones, you can do a lot of dialing in the geometry for each particular race track.

FP: What else about the machine stands out in your mind?

SM: The tires really work well. They're the Yokohama Super Digger series on both the front and rear and they work exceptionally well, especially the front one. The tread grabs well, and gets good traction, although the rear is almost always spinning because of the abundant horsepower. When these tires wear out, I'm going to get another set just like them.

The Magura levers are nice, but the adjusting bolts are too brittle and break when you fall. There's a lot of vibration felt through the handlebars when the engine is running at high rpms. Eventually you get used to the problem, but it would be nicer if the motor was rubber mounted. The footpegs are hard to keep a good grip on because they don't have enough little knobs on them to grab your boot, and I think that they should be placed a little differently, about an inch back from where they are, for better high speed stability.

There's also an injection pump in the engine so you don't have to worry about premixing your gasoline. All you have to do is fill up the gas tank with straight gas, and fill the cavity in the upper frame section with oil and be on your way. The bike doesn't eat

spark plugs, has tons of power, doesn't loosen spokes once they're seated in, and generally has a good time out on a motocross track.

FP: Then overall, how would you rate the motorcycle?

SM: Well, obviously, since I bought one I think that it's a good machine. It has a decent sticker price, since it should be compared with the European machines. It's got really good suspension, good handling, and aside from the swing arm flexing problem, it's virtually trouble-free. Plus you're not going to find another 250cc production motorcycle that will beat it in acceleration and pure horsepower.

FP: Do you have any tips to pass on to someone who might buy a Can-Am MX-3?

SM: Yes, a few. When you're jumping, be sure that you're over the back of the seat, or you're going to land flat. I've noticed this more on my new Can-Am than on the last three brands of bikes that I've owned. And it tends to go a little sideways with altitude if you don't take off properly. It's nothing to worry about, you're not going to get spit off or anything, but if you're a little sloppy at take-offs, the Can-Am isn't going to correct for you. And by all means, sharpen up on your track lines, because you can manipulate the Can-Am around a track in a variety of positions. With all that horsepower, it's to your advantage to learn more about alternate passing lines on a motocross course, because if you give it the chance, the Can-Am will beat any other 250 out of the corner due to its acceleration capabilities. You just have to find a route for it to follow that doesn't run down the guy you're trying to pass.

FP: Well Mr. Martin, I can see that this just about wraps up our conversation for today. We'd like to thank you for taking the time to stop and talk with us about your motorcycle and what you feel are its good and bad points.

SM: You mean that I don't win a trip to Hawaii or a case of maple syrup or anything like that?

FP: Well, no, actually you don't win anything.

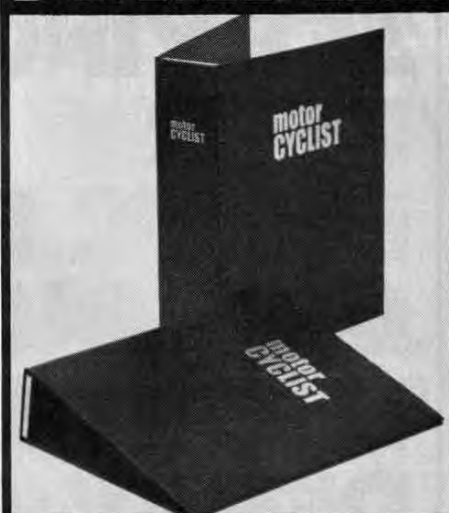
SM: Don't you think that's a little unfair?

FP: Look here, son, are you some kind of exploitive little monster?

SM: Would you like me to have my girlfriend call your wife and ask, in a very sexy voice, if she found a bra laying around anywhere?

FP: How soon can you have your bags packed for Hawaii?

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