

It just won't pull. I wore myself out coming up this hill."
"You're not riding it right, you've got to keep it singing—stay on the gas."

"That's easy for you to say, you're a factory Ossa rider. But every time I have to shut off for a turn, it takes forever to get back on the pipe. I think I'm about to fry the clutch."

"Maybe it's the pipe."

"Maybe it's the gearing."

"Maybe it's carburetion."

And so it went. The conversation was between two *Motorcyclist* staffers and two representatives of Full Bore West, importers of the Ossa VI Day, and was taking place on a snowy mountainside north of L.A. The staffers were relatively unimpressed with the bike's performance so far. Steve Keull, an Ossa factory enduro rider, had suggested we change the stock gearing on the VI Day to make it more suitable to the terrain—moderately tight trails with lots of ups and downs. However it's *Motorcyclist* policy to test bikes just as they come out of the crate.

As we resumed our ragged ascent up the twisty trail, thoughts inevitably turned to visions of the American Ossa ISDT team flogging their machines along the high-speed goat paths of the Austrian Six Days back in 1976. The idea of riders like Earl Law, Ron Lamastus or Dave Hulse wrestling the underpowered cousins of our test bike just didn't ring true. And yet, our Ossa friends repeatedly assured us that the bike is virtually the same machine campaigned by Team Ossa two years ago.

Then came a piece of bad luck that turned the tide of the test. A sharp rock punctured the Ossa's rear tire. Steve Keull saw his chance. Since he had a second wheel with slightly lower gearing than stock, he lost no time in fitting it to the test bike. A transformation took place! We could hardly believe that a mere three teeth—from a 50- to a 53-tooth rear sprocket—could make so much difference. The rider was suddenly able to loft the front wheel at will and the bike could be steered with the throttle, breaking the rear tire loose with a quick downshift and sometimes even with a flick of the wrist. Long, loose uphill suddenly were no problem, even with a 200-pound rider aboard. Few other single changes we've ever experienced did so much for a motorcycle. Keull recommends 53 teeth for A riders and 55 for B riders. Most trail riders should stick to the 53 in order not to sacrifice too much top-end speed. With the 53 the Ossa will go just over 60 mph.

One must wonder why Ossa is marketing a "VI Day" machine that is basically two years old and wasn't

Ossa 250 VI Day

IT'S A TANTALIZING LIGHTWEIGHT WHICH NEEDS A LITTLE WORK

exactly "state of the art" even then. We suspect that the answer lies in the gas tank decal, which is apparently more a marketing afterthought designed to titillate the buyer's ego. The bike's packaging and labeling does not match its performance. Technology inflates just as the dollar does and what might have been effective in Austria two years ago will surely seem antiquated in the Parc Ferme' come September. So let's forget the ISDT reference in the bike's title and evaluate it for what it really is—a trail bike with genuine enduro quality and capabilities.

The machine is not a hybrid Desert/Phantom with Pioneer parts—it's got its own frame and its own porting. Betor suspension at both ends delivers adequate travel for trail work (between 7 and 8 inches), but serious competitors will want to install the kit available to increase fork movement an inch. Fitting Honda seals at the same time will stop severe leakage past the stock seals. In back gas shocks deliver consistent action with good quality though heavier riders or great speed used up the available travel often enough to raise an eyebrow. However there are some circumstances where only average travel might be an advantage, like in very tight terrain where the lower center of gravity facilitates easier turning and flicking, and because it results in less radical changes in geometry. During a long

ride at breakneck speeds when our testers were racing each other and the Ossa people, the VI Day maintained a lightning trail pace fast enough to stay on time in any local enduro. This proved ultra-long-travel isn't an absolute necessity to stay hot on a trail.

Better tires would have made the Ossa even more deft in its trail blitz. Virtually every Ossa test in recent memory has criticized the standard Pirelli tires. They just don't cut it, especially in Southern California where the terrain is even slicker than the lifestyle. Potential owners should figure the price of Metzlers into the purchase price. Another rubber product which needs attention is the seat, since the stock foam quickly collapsed and left us bottoming out. Since the Ossa is best suited for all-day trail rides, the case of the disappearing seat is doubly discouraging. Ossa later supplied us with a well-padded saddle which delivered great comfort, but it came from an old model now out of production.

Unacceptable braking performance when the bike was new slowly evolved to an adequate level after two tanks of gas, but the brakes never stayed efficient once they were wet. It took a concerted effort to dry the brakes by dragging them after every puddle or water crossing to ensure some sort of slowing power would be available around the next bend. It's a problem you can learn to live with, but shouldn't have to.

For \$1695 one would expect the lights to work, but they didn't. Nor is there a kill button. Our testers felt the Super Trapp silencer/spark arrester let a little too much noise escape as well.

Many outstanding features tended to soften the impact of the above criticisms. The motor, with its new gearing, possessed the solid pulling power in the midrange that Ossas are noted for and never failed to start on the first kick. A silky clutch which survived considerable abuse at first had a wide friction point and never needed adjustment. Squeezing it when changing gears ensured crisp shifts under full throttle, but at casual speeds the transmission worked without the clutch. Bars, controls, pegs, etc., are located in the right places



Toolbag comes with a quick-release Velcro route-card holder for enduros.



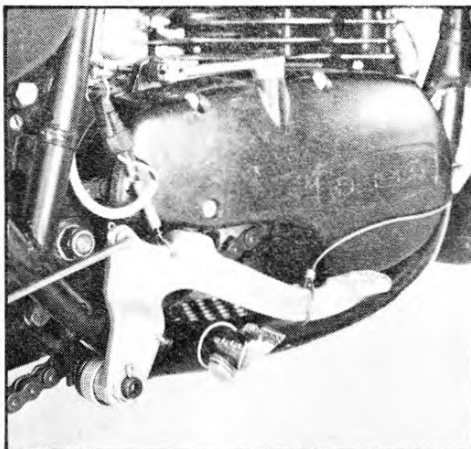
Ossa 250

and withstood much abuse. A spiffy leather tool bag comes mounted on each plastic tank which sports a non-leak cap and provides a range of about 75 miles. Reliability during 200 miles of trail riding was perfect.

As the test progressed the lightness of the machine became more noticeable. It weighs 35 pounds less than certain Japanese off-landers and feels much more like a nimble 175 than a full 250. This contributes greatly to the rider's confidence and helps off-set whatever extra body fatigue might result from the lack of ultra-long-travel suspension.

The Ossa's friendly, efficient manner almost made the test crew do a full 180 in their opinion of the motorcycle. At the end of the second day we could see ourselves happy with the Ossa. But then bottom line realities surfaced in the clear light of absolute objectivity, and we realized we hadn't paid \$1695 out of our pocket, hadn't had to fit the new gearing ourselves, our backsides would have ached without a new seat and the brakes were still a questionmark. Our 180-degree change in attitude slipped to about 140 upon reflection of these realities, but that's still good enough to make the VI Day worth consideration, especially if you savor lightness, craftsmanship and European soul. Once dialed-in—admittedly through considerable extra effort by the buyer—the Ossa has rewards that shouldn't be overlooked by those who want to have fun riding trail-bikes. It says "VI Day" on the gas tank, but don't let that fool you if you're an expert or scare you away if you're a novice.

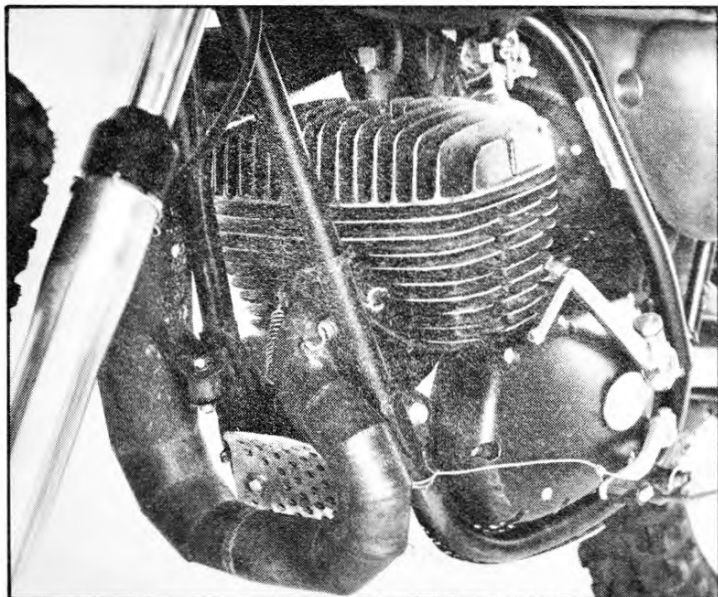
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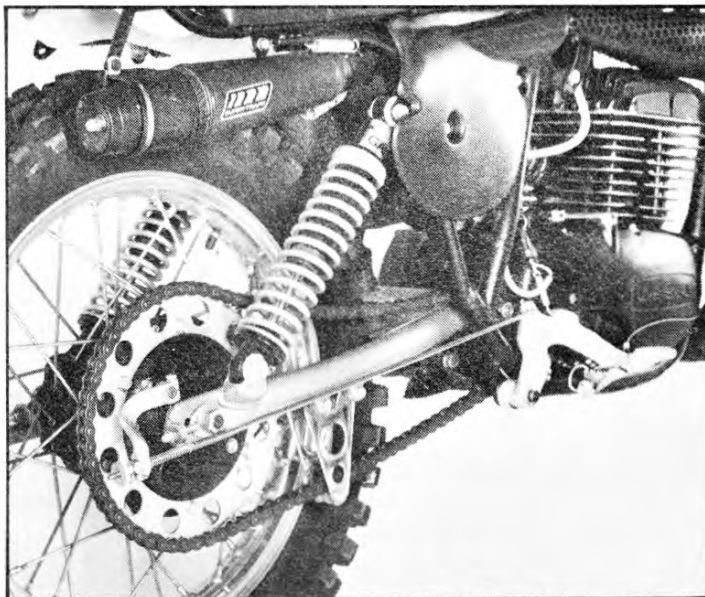
Wire running from brake lever prevents brush from wedging inside lever.



Rock guard offers only minor protection to the glass headlight lens.

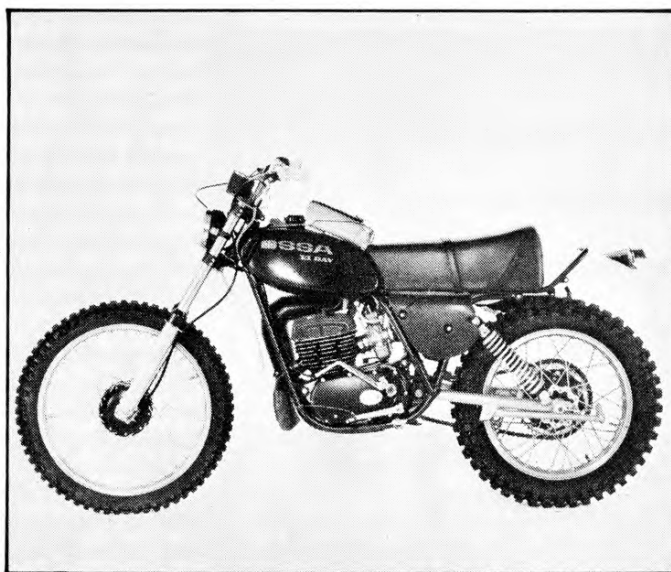
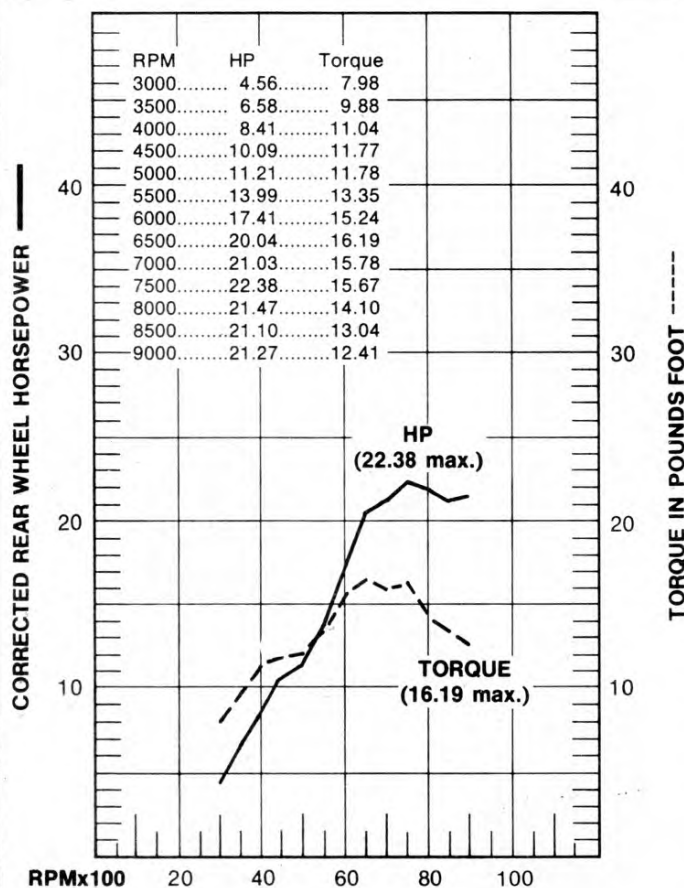


Pipe has a flat lower bend to maintain the bike's fine ground clearance. Note brush chain protecting shifter.



Our bike's chain got super sloppy when running in deep mud but still didn't derail. Shocks are gas Betors.

OSSA 250 VI DAY



Suggested retail price.....	\$1695
Warranty.....	Magneto and Frame-1 year; Shocks-1 month; remainder-60 days
Number of U.S. dealers.....	350
Cost of shop manual.....	\$12

ENGINE

Type.....	Two-Stroke piston-port single
Displacement.....	244cc
Bore x stroke.....	72 x 60mm
Compression.....	10.75:1
Carburetion.....	1, 36mm, Bing
Ignition.....	Motoplat electronic
Lubrication.....	Premix: Full Bore 20:1
Lighting output.....	N.A.

DRIVETRAIN

Primary transmission.....Joresa double-row chain 2.26:1
Clutch.....12 plates, wet
Secondary transmission..... $\frac{5}{8}$ x $\frac{1}{4}$ Joresa chain

CHASSIS

Fork.....	Betor, 8-inch travel
Shocks.....	Betor, 6.5-inch travel
Front tire.....	3.00-21 Pirelli
Rear tire.....	4.50-18 Pirelli
Rake/trail.....	29.5°/4.6 in. (117mm)
Wheelbase.....	55.5 in. (1409mm)
Seat height.....	36 in. (914mm)
Ground clearance.....	11 in. (279mm)
Fuel capacity.....	2.7 gal. (10.2 liters)
Wet weight.....	239 lbs. (108kg)
Colors.....	Black
Instruments.....	VDO speed, odometer, tripmeter resettable both ways by 10ths

PERFORMANCE

Power to weight ratio, unladen11.3 lbs./hp
Average fuel consumption.....approx. 30 mpg
Touring range.....approx. 81 miles
Speed in gears @ redline.....1st 21.81 mph; 2nd
31.57 mph; 3rd 42.41 mph; 4th
51.86 mph; 5th 60.63 mph