

# CYCLE

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## **7** DIRT BIKE **TESTS** FROM MIGHTY TO MINI

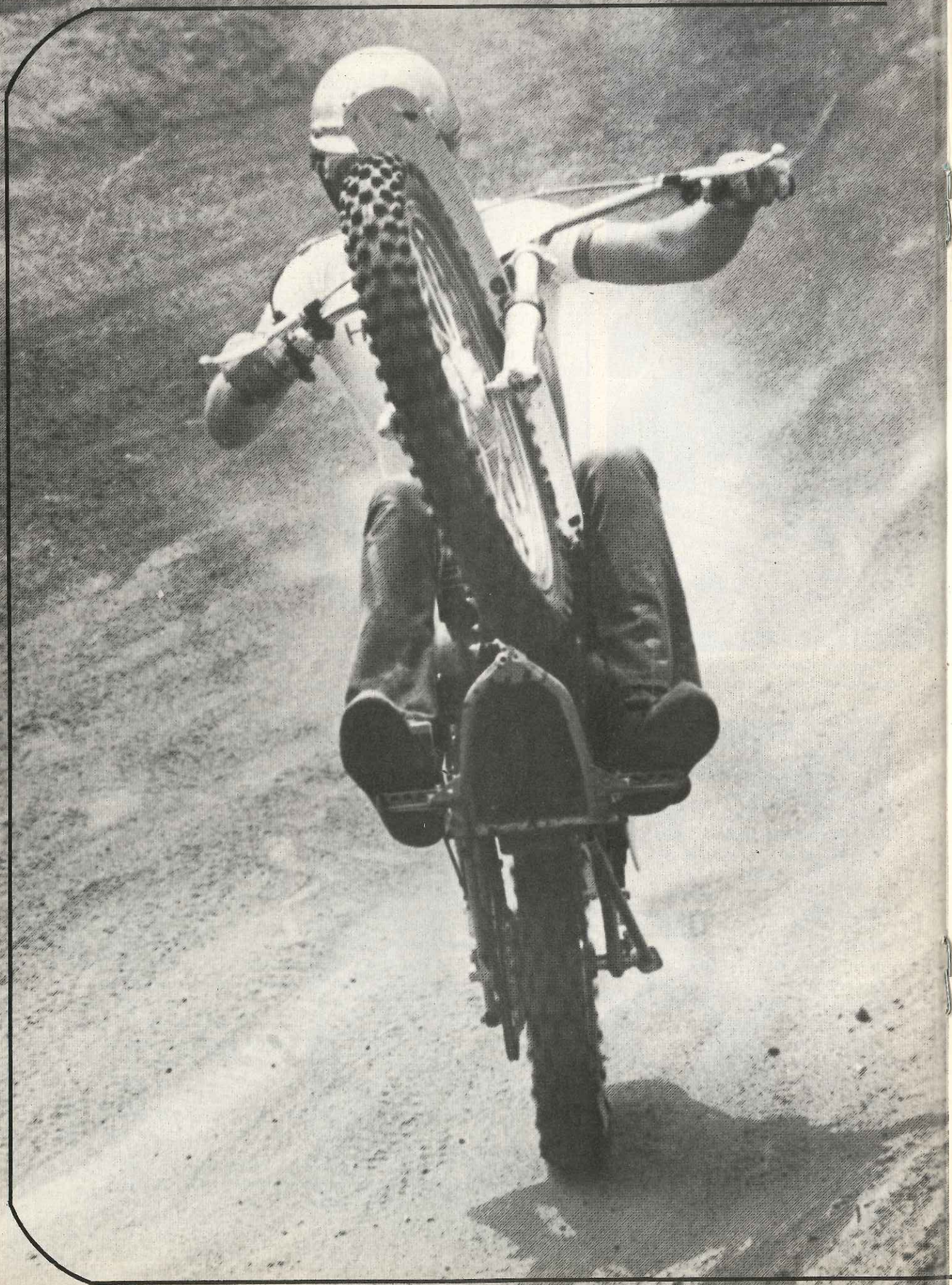
**CLEWS 600 cc TRAILBIKE • HUSQVARNA 250 WR  
HONDA XL-350 • SUZUKI TM-75L • HONDA XL-175  
HUSQVARNA 125 CR • YAMAHA DT-100**

**Those  
Wild  
Motocross  
Sidehacks**



**HONDA'S  
NEWEST BIG SINGLE  
THE XL-350 FOR  
STREET OR TRAIL**







The one-two-fives are about the closest thing we have to "boy racer" machines in this country, the training ground for teenagers who hope to become future Roger DeCosters, or at least future Jim Pomeroy's. The racing organizations and the manufacturers are finally getting serious about providing machinery that is something more than just a tiny trailbike with number plates in place of lights, and Husqvarna's new 125 CR is a prime example of just how serious they are.

Husqvarna imported Nils Arne Nilsson for America's round in the 1973 World Championship round of the 125cc motocross championship, and he stayed on in San Diego to feed information back to the factory about America's enthusiasm for one-two-five racing. The fact that the 125 CR is nearly a duplicate of the machine he used to win that championship race indicates that Husqvarna, at least, understands. The basic machinery in their 125 motocrosser is probably closer to the exotic than most if for no other reason than the factory 250cc and 360cc machines are based on the basic 125cc design. The 125 is the first *production* version of a whole new generation of Husqvarna motocross engines. With competition like the Honda Elsinore, Yamaha YZ125, Suzuki TM 125, Penton, Bultaco, Kawasaki KX125 (maybe) and (if they're ever imported here) the championship-winning Zundapp prototypes, the Husky had *better* be good! We've ridden all of these machines except the Kawasaki and the Zundapp, and it's easy to see why Nils was able to do as well as he did on the 125 CR; it's nowhere near as good as the 1974 250 CR Husky but it's certainly the equal of anything in the one-two-five class.

The 1974 125 CR Husky has received most of the changes that were applied to the rest of the line for this year, including a (at last!) waterproofable air cleaner, plastic fenders, internally-muffled expansion chamber and the new Husqvarna crest on the gas tank! A new cylinder barrel and head allow room for a Bing 32mm carburetor to

replace last year's Amal. The new cylinder and head finning has that rough-cast and squared-off look that implies factory prototype racer even though our test machine was right off the production line. The footpegs are Husqvarna's substitute for the sawtooth-edged style and they do work well enough on dry land and in the water, but mud quickly packs into the three small drain holes to make them as slippery as last year's. The rest of the machinery is pretty much as it was last year and that's great — Husky had a good thing going with its 125 and only the influx of the so-called racing replicas from the Japanese has affected the domination of the class by the 125 CR. Essentially, the 1974 Husqvarna has



The 125 CR Husqvarna has the best suspension we've yet seen in a production 125cc motocrosser.

been updated to match the Japanese competition in terms of both practicality (the plastic fenders and new air cleaner case) and power. The Japanese have yet to match that once-fabled Husky handling (at least in the one-two-five class), so the new Husqvarna "boy racer" is one machine you should ride before buying anything else in its class. That European craftsmanship doesn't come cheap, though, and the 125 CR is in the upper reaches of the price class for one-two-fives right along with the new Can-Ams, DKWs, Puchs, Pentons and Bultacos.

The 125 CR Husqvarna has virtually all the trick mechanical stuff that has appeared on the factory racers during the last few seasons. Everything, that is, but the reed valves that appear on the

250cc and larger Huskies for 1974 and the still-prototype forward-mounted shock absorbers. The Swedish engineers swear that the 124cc engine doesn't benefit from the addition of a reed valve as much as the bigger machines, and frankly we can't say that the 125 CR has any less mid-range power than, say, a YZ125 Yamaha with a reed valve. The major benefit of a reed valve is in the area of mid-range power (and there isn't a racing one-two-five that couldn't use more of that), but at least the 125 CR is no worse than anything else in its super-power class. It does make us wonder, though, how much more throttle control you could get on a 125 CR *with* a reed valve. The super-star racers in the one-two-five class generally ride with the throttle wide open everywhere, so perhaps they don't notice the bog in the lower and middle rev ranges. Most novice racers, though, would fare far better if their 125s had some dig at something less than full-rev, full-throttle operation. The forward-mounted shock absorbers are in the same general category — fit for the pros but presenting problems for the novice. Nobody, not even the factory prototype people, have been able to come up with a shock absorber (or a shock absorber fluid) that can stand the extra action required of a forward-mounted shock. The current prototypes are as stiff as rails for the first 10 minutes of a moto, and when the rider's body is about worn out, the shocks are warm and beginning to be worn in for that *one* moto. The six inches and more of travel that the prototype forward-mounted shocks give does strange things to the steering, too, so perhaps the novice rider is blessed in not having to work out the bugs in the new suspension system.

The rest of the new Husky's mechanicals are as trick as you could want. It's the only machine in its class (except the Can-Am) with a full-floating rear brake to reduce brake-on rear end hop. The giant seat is typical of prototype motocrossers these days but rare on a production machine. The frame has a giant single top tube and a single down tube

The closest thing you can get to a true factory prototype in the one-two-five class

# HUSQVARNNA 125 CR TEST



# HUSQVARNA

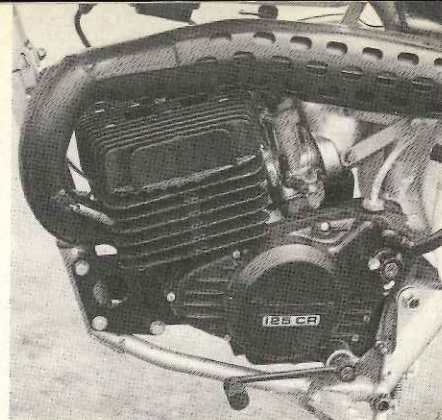
with large gussets to reinforce the steering head. A pair of smaller-diameter tubes branch out from beneath the seat and from beneath the engine to give wide, stable support to the swing arm and shocks. The swing arm pivot bolts are supported on both sides of both arms this year for even greater rear end stability.

The 125 CR is only an inch shorter and about 15 pounds lighter than the 250 CR Husqvarna, but both differences can be noticed when you ride the little machine. The combination of footpegs that are slightly too far forward and that inch-short wheelbase makes the 125 CR a bit of a tail-hopper compared to its bigger brothers. Compared to the other 125s in its class, the handling through the rear end is about average in the ready-racer group. The machine is small enough to allow you to get your weight back over the rear end with enough effect to keep the machine pointed where you want it. It takes a bit more track width to get the Husky down a series of whoop-dee-dos than is required by some of the 125s with longer wheelbases, but it's just as quick once you've adjusted to having the rear end bounce back and forth beneath you. The major advantage of that full-floating rear brake is that it is completely predictable; the machine slows in direct proportion to the amount of push on the pedal, without any sudden jerks or hops. You can get the 125 CR's rear end hopping with an overweight brake application, but any sensible effort results in a controllable slowing over the roughest terrain. The engine's small flywheels let it keep revving on any downhill, but the lack of displacement voids any potential engine braking effects. The machine just doesn't have the throttle response, either on or off, that you'd expect of a Husky. The gearshift lever, rather than the throttle, is the control you'll find yourself using most on the 125 CR if you expect to turn the quickest possible lap times. The engine is really happy only at the last quarter of its rev range, and all six speeds are needed to keep it there. We found ourselves using the clutch only for starting because the engine just didn't want to pick up revs if shut down even for a fast shift. The shift-lever throw is a little on the long side, but clutch or no, we only missed two or three shifts in the weeks that we had the machine. The constant shifting and a powerband that doesn't allow for backing off on the throttle are

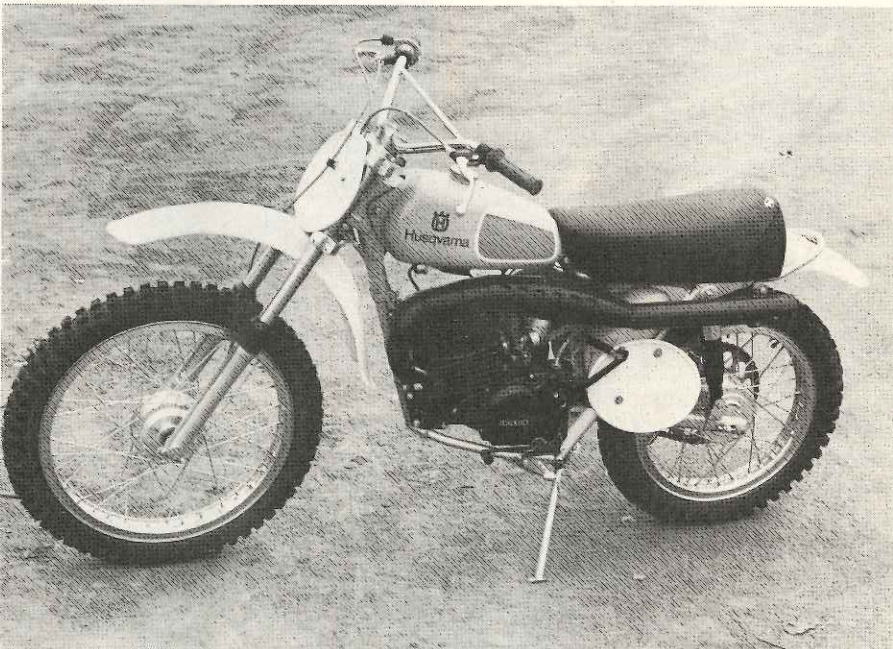
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The footpegs are a bit far forward and the handlebars are a bit too straight, forcing the rider to lean too much toward the front wheel on even a gentle uphill. There's a full seven inches of travel in those Betor forks, and superb dampening in either direction.



The cylinder barrel is new for 1974 with coarse, squared-off finning. The intake port angle has been altered so a 32mm Bing carburetor can clear the crankcase. The self-cleaning footpegs aren't. The carburetor can be pivoted, after loosening its clamps, to change jets in a hurry.



Bendable white plastic fenders are standard on both ends of the 125 CR for 1974. The gas tank is still heavy steel but it's also as pretty as ever with its chromed rear panel. Nylon-lined cables are standard and have built-in lubrication fittings.

The expansion chamber/muffler unit on the 125 CR is far cleaner and much quieter than ever before. The pipe never interfered with the rider's leg in any riding position. The bolt-through rubber mounts are reliable enough for a Baja racer.

typical of the truly competitive one-two-fives, but they come as a shock on a Husqvarna. You need the skill (or the nerve) to really dash up any steep hill because the lack of low end power just doesn't let you shut off the throttle for even an instant. If engine starts to bog, the drill requires a quick jab down on the shift lever and absolutely no slackening-off on the twistgrip. There's not enough torque to let the engine catch up once it's lost more than that top quarter of its revs.





Husqvarna's heritage of good handling really shows up when you dive through any kind of corner with the 125 CR. The suspension, both front and rear, is well dampened with predictable movements that make banging through a bermed corner a real joy. The Husky tracks right on through such banked corners on just the line you select. The flat-track type of broadside is not generally much fun on a motocrosser, but the 125 CR makes it seem easy once you've levered the machine over from the upright position it seems to prefer. The same short wheelbase and forward pegs that make it a tail-wagger over whoop-dee-dooos allow completely predictable drift angles. The lack of mid-range torque can be a problem if you're not wise enough to grab the right gear as you enter into a broadside, but a few dozen mistakes are enough to let you know just how many revs are enough and in which gear for most flat-surfaced corners. It's this same cornering precision and the super-shocks and nearly seven-inch-travel Betor forks that make a motocrosser like the 125 CR such a desirable play bike. The constant need to stir the gearbox lever is a real annoyance, particularly on steep uphill, but the machine's utter predictability more than makes up for the lack of brute torque. It's no wonder that the 125cc class is so popular with teenagers who have the strength but not the weight to wrestle with a 250; a one-two-five is just light enough and has just enough power to make it a pleasure to anyone willing to master the rev-to-shift sequence.

Anyone who buys a 125 CR Husqvarna gets a lot of machine for his money, a bike that will require only a few custom changes like different handlebars or perhaps a shift of the footpegs to the rear. The only complaints we had with the machine were the Trelleborg tires' lack of knobs along their edges, the footpegs location and the fact that the air cleaner would have to be resealed every time the element was serviced. If you ride over rocky terrain a skidplate would be a must, but that's a common complaint about true motocross machinery from a half-dozen makers. What few flaws existed in the 1973 125 CR have been corrected with the revised swing arm mount, new air cleaner, new expansion chamber, the Bing carburetor and the plastic fenders of the 1974 machine. The Japanese shook up the one-two-five class with their ready-racers, but now the Husky has met the challenge to maintain its position as one of the top machines in the field for motocross and trail riding.

## HUSQVARNA 125 CR

Price .....	NA
Warranty .....	none
Distributor .....	Husqvarna East, Lorain, Ohio
Resale value after one year .....	60%

### ENGINE

Type .....	single cylinder two-stroke
Displacement .....	124cc
Bore & stroke .....	.55 x 52mm
BHP @ rpm .....	NA
Advertised c.r. ....	14.8:1
Actual c.r. ....	NA
Valve area (sq. in.)	
intake .....	NA
transfer .....	NA
exhaust .....	NA
Con rod/stroke .....	NA
Carburetion .....	.32mm Bing
Overall gear ratios	
First .....	28.4:1
Second .....	21.6:1
Third .....	18.1:1
Fourth .....	15.3:1
Fifth .....	12.8:1
Sixth .....	11.4:1

### RUNNING GEAR

Frame .....	tubular steel
Rake & trail .....	NA
Suspension .....	7-inch-travel hydraulic
Tires	
front .....	300-21-inch knobby
rear .....	350-18-inch knobby
Brakes	
front .....	full-width alloy s.l.s.
rear .....	full-width alloy s.l.s.
Electrics .....	Motoplatt CDI solid-state

### GROSS MEASUREMENTS

Weight .....	203 lbs. (dry)
Wheelbase .....	53 inches
Seat height .....	32 inches
Ground clearance .....	8¼ inches
Handlebar width .....	31½ inches
Fuel capacity .....	1.85 gallons

### COMFORT RATING

1. Vibration .....	.7
2. Suspension .....	.10
3. Noise level .....	.9
4. Seat .....	.9
5. Handlebars .....	.8
6. Start mech .....	.8
7. Controls .....	.9
8. Stand .....	.9
9. Shift mech .....	.9
10. Switches and instr .....	NA

Adjusted overall rating ... .85

### PERFORMANCE

¼ mile .....	N.O.
0 to 60 mph .....	N.O.
Braking dist. from 60 mph .....	N.O.

### SUMMARY

As race-ready a machine as you can buy in its class, with a price similar to that of other ready-to-race 125s. All the latest trick detail features with superior suspension. Excellent cornering but only fair straight-line stability.