

Just like
Dudley DooRight—
straightforward, but
not too quick.



Royal Canadian

If the dirt biking world sees just one more Sachs-powered 125, it'll probably throw up. At least, that's the way we feel here at DIRT BIKE. Everybody wants to get into the lucrative off-road thing, so they take a quick look around and find out that the only reasonably priced 125 powerplant available to them is the Sachs motor. Or possibly the Zundapp, which is a close cousin, or even an Austrian Puch, another relative.

So they make a deal with a fac-

tory, put together some sort of frame, purchase suspenders from Italy or Spain and give the bike a fancy name. But it's still a Sachs down deep. And some of these wonder bikes are not too well thought out. Many share the same faults that have plagued the Austrian/German powerplants since they yanked that bottom end/gearbox out of the mopeds. Bad shifting and expensive parts.

About the only new 125s as of late have been the new Suzuki and Hon-



Mounted racer

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

da 125 racers. Bultaco hasn't really changed their design since the earth's crust cooled off and most of the other manufacturers have been content with mere updating, too.

It was, then, with a great deal of interest that we looked forward to the CAN-AM bikes for testing. Having received the usual flood of pre-release press kits, we could tell that the CAN-AM was at least a whole new design. Very few parts are "old stuff." Most obviously new is the engine — a rotary valve unit made by

Rotax in Austria. Austria? Wait a minute. Isn't that where they make engines for some of those bikes we were talking about earlier? Sure is.

What does this mean to Sachs and Zundapp and Puch, is the more than obvious musical question?

It means they had better get off their dead asses and update their powerplants. Quickly. Because this engine is superb.

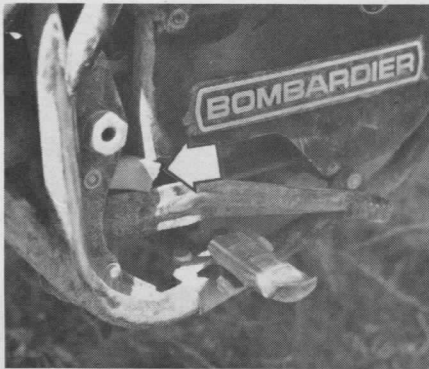
It shares none of the jolly gruesome of the Sachs transmission, but is as strong in hp as a normal DKW.

The actual spread of power is wider than any 125 racer we have ever tested and almost as strong as many on the top end. Who knows what potential is in the engine when the grinders get their flint-coated little hands on that rotary valve?

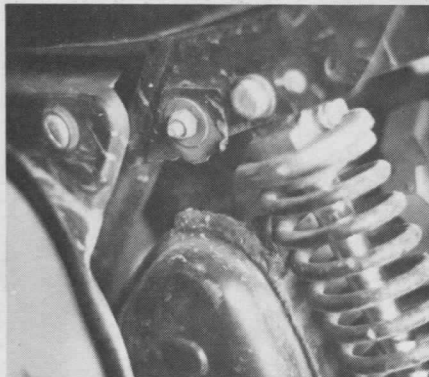
During the month or so that we had the CAN-AM 125, we rode it very hard and gave it *no* maintenance, other than lubing and normal cleaning. Never once did we hear the slightest bit of piston slap or mechanical clatter. Even after a

pounding in the desert on a very hot day the motor sounded as tight as the day we first got it.

Our test bike seemed to be able to rev almost endlessly and not mind it at all. One sand wash in particular comes to mind . . . a long, slightly uphill section that ran almost two miles. We had to go to second gear and keep it tapped for the whole length. Not a whimper from that motor. It's still early to make predictions, but we feel it just might be the most reliable engine in the 125



We added a homemade brake stop to relocate pedal position.



Sole fatality — muffler bracket died quietly.

class. If it's left in stock trim, any rider should be able to get through an entire racing season on the original piston and rings. We had the opportunity to talk to some CAN-AM owners from Canada, and they tended to reinforce our feeling.

Stunning engine aside, first-time riding impressions are not good on the 125 CAN-AM. When the bike is fired up (usually one or two kicks), it doesn't sound like a motorcycle. More like a pump in an aquarium. Stick your finger in your mouth and blow real hard around it. That's what it sounds like. Rev the motor and the whhooooosh increases. No noise.

While the engine is warming up,

CAN-AM MX-1 125

PRICE: \$ 895

ENGINE TYPE:

One-cylinder, two-stroke, rotary valve

DISPLACEMENT: 123.7cc

BORE & STROKE: 54mm x 54mm

COMPRESSION RATIO: 13:1

CARBURETION: 32mm Bing

HP @ RPM: 20 (claimed)

(actual) 17@9000

PRIMARY DRIVE TYPE:

Straight cut gears

PRIMARY RATIO: 3.29:1

FINAL RATIO: 3.57:1

CHAIN SIZE: #520

GEAR RATIOS: 1. 3.40

2. 2.31

3. 1.68

4. 1.31

5. 1.09

6. 0.96

AIR FILTER: Foam

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM: Bosch CDI

LUBRICATION:

Oil injection system

FUEL CAPACITY: 1.9 gallons

RECOMMENDED FUEL: Premium

RECOMMENDED OIL:

Can Am or other injection oil

FRAME TYPE AND MATERIAL:

Double loop w/tapered backbone

FORKS: Betor; 6.0 inches travel

SHOCKS: Girling; 2.9 inches travel

TIRES: Trelleborg

Front: 3.00x21

Rear: 4.00x18

RIMS: Steel

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase: 54 inches

Ground clearance: 9 inches

Seat height: 31½ inches

Weight: (claimed) 216 pounds dry

(actual) 233 pounds wet

FOOTPEG HEIGHT: 12 inches

HANDLEBAR HEIGHT: 42 inches

INSTRUMENTS: None

SILENCER:

Yes; good effectiveness

PRIMARY KICK: Yes



sit on the bike and take a lookasee at the layout. Hmmm. Decent wire bars . . . but the gas tank is too wide near the seat. You can tell that before your feet are on the pegs. There's a slight bulge on the left side at your thigh — it's the heat shield — and you also know that isn't going to work so wonderful either.

Bounce the forks up and down and they seem too stiff . . . seat is like an ironing board . . . pegs look OK, but the brake pedal is way up in the air . . . you'll have to lift your foot off the peg to actuate it . . . bummer.

Oh well . . . might as well ride the bike and see how it works as a unit. Down for low on the left gets low gear — there are five more cogs to go — engagement is smooth. Feed some r's and ease the clutch out. The bike moves off smoothly with no clutch slipping required. Good, very good, low-end grunt.

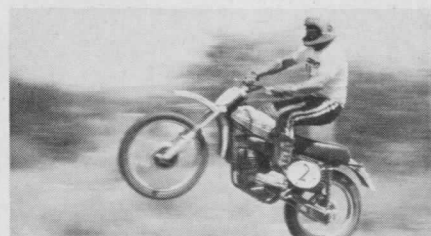
Punch the throttle and the CAN-AM surges strongly ahead with some wheelspin. Moving from one gear to another is easy . . . the box is very pleasant to stir. Other than a wide gap between first and second, the ratios are properly set up. You must rev low quite high to cleanly pull into second. A good strong response



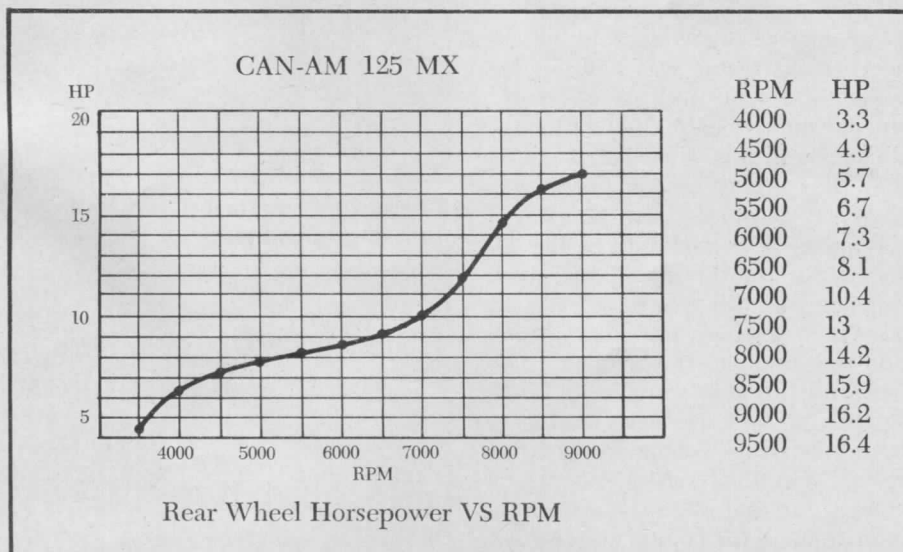
Even in deep sand, the good spread of power pulled the bike strongly in third and fourth gears.

in each gear gets you moving right along, but the bike won't pull sixth gear, except under ideal conditions. Which is as it should be on a 125 racer.

Everything seems to be just fine, until the first series of bumps and ruts appears . . . then a serious deficiency lets itself be known. For all of its good features, the CAN-AM has horrendous suspension. But it shouldn't. Not with Betors up front and Girlings in the rear. Every decent bump on the track is immediately and harshly transmitted directly to the rider. The rear end whacks up and down and the forks do not absorb much of anything. Hands, wrists and forearms quickly tire from



Wide plastic tank looked good, but got in way.



the beating.

We went back and took a long hard look at the offending units. The CAN-AM people told us that Jeff Smith (the development man) had 30-weight oil in the forks. That's the way he likes it, apparently. We screwed out the drain plug in the lower leg and oil shot out about 30 feet. Aha! Hydraulic buildup. Closer examination revealed that the fork caps were not vented — allowing air to get in — and not allowing it to escape.

We put in some Bel Ray 10-weight fork oil, which some of our guys have been using lately in their personal bikes, and gave it a try. It worked fine for a few minutes, then

that damnable lockup started again. Those forks became almost rigid when really slamming into the hard stuff.

Oh well, nothing much else could be done up front. Back up on the milk crate went the bike and we took a look at the rear end. Apparently the CAN-AM folks are aware they have suspension problems, because our test bike did not have the standard Girlings on the back. In-

After that, it was easy to reach. Brakes, by the way, were very strong and water didn't seem to affect them at all.

At first, we thought the CAN-AM had a decided tendency to plow — or wash out — the front end. But this was traced to a badly trued front wheel. We fiddled some with their movable steering geometry, but came back to the 31-degree position as most desirable.



Bendable, not breakable, front and rear.



Oh well. Every once in a while, the suspension let the bike hop.

stead, there was a pair of S & W shocks. They only offered about three inches of travel and don't appear to be the answer on this bike. We had a chance to ride a CAN-AM with Girlings, too, but it didn't make much difference. The ride was still hammering.

Our tech whiz, Brian Fabre, suggested that the shocks were mounted too far back near the axle, making even 60/90 springs way too stiff.

Boge sent us a pair of their shocks with 55-pound springs on, and it made a big difference. We suggest that CAN-AM either mount the shocks further forward, or go the soft sprung path. Unfortunately, with 55-pounders on the back, they'll bottom out every now and then. A lot more work is definitely needed on that back end. Vented fork caps, like the late-model Bultacos have, should cure the front end hassle.

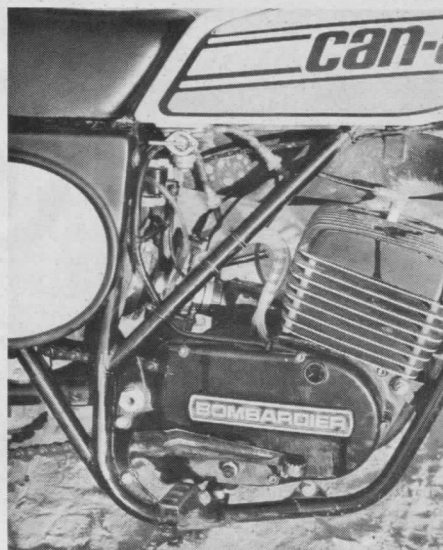
Anyway, back out to the dirt. After a few hours of riding, the rear brake position became unbearable. So we fabricated a brake stop from an old broken Maico motor mount lying in the bottom of a toolbox. There were no provisions for adjustment built into the standard system.

Their method for changing the rake seems safe and sound, but it's a real pain to hassle with. It takes two guys about a half hour with hammers and big wrenches, and appears to be another gimmick the bike does not really need.

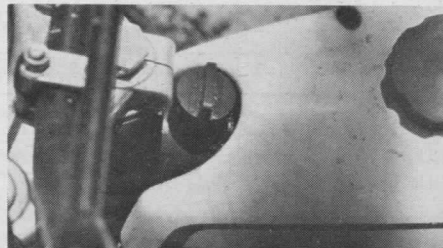
Aside from the suspension and wheel problems we later trued the wheel in our tastefully decorated DB garage), the bike handled well. Every once in a while, the rear end would take a nasty hop, but we feel the suspension was at fault, not chassis geometry. Someone told us the metal in the frame was halfway between mild steel and chrome moly, which sounds like smoke-blowing to us, but it was plenty strong.

No flex could be detected, even when we slammed some Grade AA whoopdies. The back end of the engine is part of the swingarm pivot, which means you'll have to take off the whole rear of the bike if you want to remove the engine. The swingarm did stay snug in its bushing though, and we were unable to wiggle the wheel by hand even after the full month of riding.

One thing that all of the test riders made immediate comments on was



Compact engine stayed fresh and tight throughout test.



Oil filler on main frame spine.



the weight of the machine. With a half-tank of gas, it weighed in at 228 — about 20-25 pounds too heavy for the 125 class. At higher speeds, this weight did not feel objectionable, however the bike took some muscling at lower speeds on the tight turns.

After taking a long hard look at the machine, we cannot see where too much weight can be removed. Tank and fenders are both flexible plastic and the seat is relatively light. Some lard is in the exhaust system, but changes would be difficult and expensive, unless the rider is willing to go to a low pipe.

We suspect the big poundage is lurking in the frame. A ball park guess would be that the frame weighed in at 40 pounds. Compare that to a Penton frame, which comes in at 27 or so.

For a rotary valve engine, the powerplant is remarkably narrow, tapering in at a svelt 10½ inches wide. Come to think of it, that's narrow for a conventional engine.

Our bike ran clean and stayed oil-tight. Like we said, the unit appears to be well thought out and should last, with a minimum of maintenance.

As a package, even with the shortcomings in the suspension, the CAN AM 125 MX seems to be an all-around bike. It has more than enough low end to ride enduros with, there's just about enough steam for motocross and it surely can be ridden in desert and cross-country, with very few changes. And, most importantly, it should be a dynamite fun and play bike. Who knows how much power can be coaxed out of the motor? Obviously, it's in a very mild state of tune as delivered, but it's almost as fast as the full-blown racers. At least close enough where you don't have to be ashamed of it on any track in the country.

BITS AND PIECES

That bulge in the exhaust pipe did toast the inner thigh; a better heat shield is needed.

Gas cap became increasingly harder to screw on as we used it more and more. The plastic edges seemed to lose their sharpness and it cross-threaded easily. Frustrating.

Our muffler broke at the clamp near the rear shock.

Steel rims and first-rate Trelleborg tires are stock.

Kickstarter is on left and tucks in out of the way. Bike can be started in gear. Clutch did not drag.

Number plates are part of side panels and help protect the foam filter nicely.

Oil is carried in frame spine — holds a whopping 2.3 quarts.

Waterproofing is first-rate. We could never drown the bike out.

Forks wept a bit. Why not? They're Betors; it's the thing.

Spokes loosened up once, then stayed snug from then on.


The bike seemed to get very good gas mileage, even when revved at

the limit. We would estimate 55 to 60 miles out of one tank — under the worst conditions.

SUMMATION

All things considered, the CAN AM is a good first effort from the Bombardier Snowmobile Company. They've made as close to an all-around 125 as exists today. There's only one other bike that has the same versatility — Hodaka.

Hey, that's it . . . Canada's answer to the Combat Wombat.

Perhaps they should have named it The Combat Moose. 

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