

The 125 Elsinore is almost a carbon copy of the 250, but the smaller engine allows the center of gravity to be kept lower. The 125 uses a six-speed gearbox to get the most from the engine.

■ There is no doubt that the introduction of the 250cc Honda Elsinore is going to have a dramatic effect on what other Japanese and European manufacturers produce from now on. Honda's ability to produce an almost race-ready two-stroke out of the crate is nothing short of amazing considering that the 250 Elsinore is their first attempt at a two-stroke racing machine. In southern California they already abound in many numbers and can also be seen thrashing across the desert on a Sunday.

Now a one-eighth liter Elsinore has arrived, which everyone heard about but which dealers are unable to get their hands on as of this writing, much to their dismay. We checked with two Honda dealers who assure us that they could sell many 125 Elsinores if only they were available. However, potential owners should not construe this report to mean that buying the 125 will ensure instant success.

One of the keys to success with the Honda 125 Elsinore (as with any other machine) is keeping the engine and cycle parts in top condition. Little machines are proving they can go almost as fast as larger ones, but they have to work exceptionally hard to do so. This Honda is no exception. With a relatively high power output, six speeds are needed to make use of the limited torque from the engine. The stresses on both the engine and transmission necessitate keeping an eye on certain items and replacing them when necessary. Keeping a



TESTING THE **HONDA**

125 ELSINORE

If You Believe In The Old Saying That "Good Things Come In Small Packages," You'll Find The Honda 125 Motocrosser A Very Good Thing



Hammering up to a corner in fifth or sixth gear is pretty fast riding, and the brakes need to be applied quickly. Both brakes work very well, and at no time did they lock up.

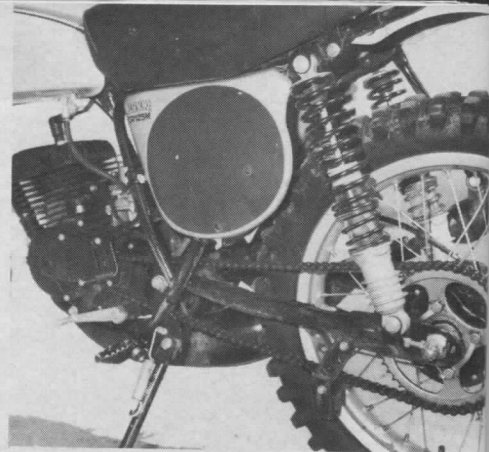
HONDA

125

good 125 competitive means spending money. However, Honda parts are competitively priced.

The 125 Elsinore is almost a carbon copy of the 250 machine, but the smaller engine makes for a lower center of gravity. This and its lightweight and longish wheelbase contribute greatly to its good performance around corners. There is almost no feeling of any weight; the bike can be flipped over and pushed down and down into the corner with considerable safety. Around one particular corner we kept leaning the

20 DIRT CYCLE/October 1973



The 250's excellent rear shocks were not compromised on the 125. They appear huge on the small bike. Once you get under way you really appreciate them. Our 170-pound test rider had no problems with suspension.

tually, then, the two machines are somewhat different, but they look so much alike (except for the engine bulk) that when viewing the two machines independently it is almost impossible to perceive where the beefing-up takes place on the 250.

One area in which there has been no compromise is the rear shocks. These items appear huge in diameter and have a correspondingly large shaft. Only when the bike is being ridden does one appreciate these shocks. Lightweight machines should be ridden by lightweight riders of no more than 150 pounds in order to get the maximum performance from the machine, but our 170-pound test rider had nothing but praise for the rear suspension. It was more than adequate in absorbing his weight on landings.

Starting this bike is a snap. Just turn on the gas and kick a couple of times with the choke on. Honda is still using the twist-type cut-out, and most riders will check to make sure the switch is at the "run" position if the engine doesn't fire up almost immediately. We wonder why the cut-out is not on the left handlebar since most riders find that on this side the thumb can actuate the switch if necessary without removing the hand from the bar. Once warm, the engine will idle all day if need be, and a lot of praise has to go to the Keihin carburetor. During our testing the carburetor did not load up once, and as fast as the throttle can be opened, the engine answers with instant revs.

Once under way, the clutch lever can be forgotten. Just dip the throttle, a short movement at the gear lever, and

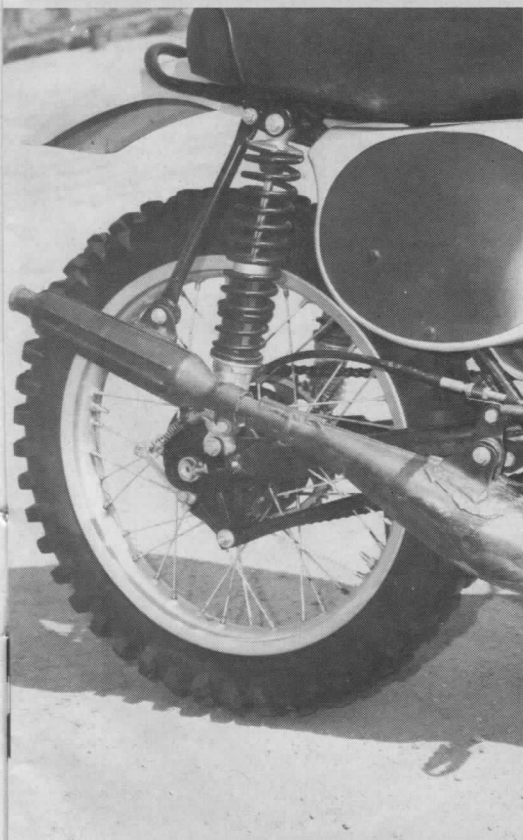


Much of the praise for the performance of this bike has to go to the Keihin carburetor. During the test, the carb did not load up once. The metering is so precise that as fast as the throttle is opened, the engine responds.

The combined front and rear suspension gives as good a ride as possible when hustling over "whoop-de-dooos."

Even with a light front end it is not always possible to miss every trough, and the seven inches of movement helps a great deal.

This has to be one of the best - muffled racing bikes you will ever ride. It starts with ridiculous ease, and will sit there and idle without constant blipping of the throttle.



it's on until the process needs to be repeated. As with all other six-speed bikes, we find that it is best not to try to remember which gear the bike is in. If it begins to drop off the pipe, go down enough gears to bring it back on, and in changing up, keep on hooking up until there are no more gears left.

We wanted to determine whether or not the Elsinore was any quicker than other 125cc machines in a straight line, and although our tests were far from conclusive, they may be of interest. In our first session with the Honda, we also had along a 1973 125cc Suzuki TM125. Both machines were new and well run in, but unfortunately one rider weighed

170 pounds and the other 140 pounds. This 30-pound discrepancy makes a lot of difference with small-capacity machines. With the smaller rider on the Honda, the bike easily pulled away from a standing start and led by about seven yards after an eighth of a mile. When the riders were reversed, the Suzuki opened up the seven-yard gap. We tried rolling starts in an attempt to eliminate any advantage either gained over the other, but the results were always the same. On one series of runs, at 30 to 35 miles an hour, both throttles were snapped open simultaneously to see which machine had the better mid-range performance. With the lighter rider aboard,



Over jumps the Elsinore is as straight as an arrow. The large shocks really soak up the impact upon landing.



A motocross machine must be able to get around corners quickly, and it is here that the 125 Elsinore really shines. Cornering is very easy: put it on line, keep it as wide open as you dare, and go.

HONDA

125

the Honda gained considerably over the Suzuki; ridden by the heavier rider, it also gained albeit at a much slower rate of advance. We concluded that the mid-range performance of the Honda is excellent, and that 30 additional pounds can play havoc with the performance.

In addition to good straight-line performance, a motocross machine has to be able to get around corners quickly, and this is where the Honda shines. When approaching a corner in either fifth or sixth gear, the brakes need to be gathered rather smartly. Both brakes scrub off some of this excess speed extremely well, and at no time did either wheel lock up, no matter how hard the binders were squeezed. Undoubtedly, the small brakes would fade if used every few seconds, but enough time elapses between corners on most courses to enable the small brake drums to recover.

Getting around corners is very easy: put it on line, keep it as wide open as you dare, and go. Chances are you'll soon try doing it with both feet on the pegs, such is the confidence it inspires. We are great advocates of getting as much rubber to the ground as possible,

but in this case we believe the 3.50 x 18 tire is ample for the Honda. This is due primarily to the frame geometry for at any given time it is possible to sense when the rider has overcooked it. Even when the rear wheel breaks completely loose, all is not lost, for the bike does not suddenly flip the rider off should the rear wheel grip again after corrective action is taken.

Over jumps the Elsinore is as straight as an arrow, and those large shocks do a great job soaking up the jolt upon landing. The combined front and rear suspension gives as good a ride as possible when hustling over "whoop-de-doods." Even with a light front end, it is not always possible to miss every trough, and the seven inches of movement at the front forks is well appreciated.

As with the 250, the high-mounted front fender is of unbreakable plastic. Notice how carefully the front brake cable is routed to prevent tangling.

It is not often that a manufacturer breaks with tradition and brings out a bike or bikes that are so different from anything else they have ever produced. Honda's venture into the two-stroke field was rumored for a long time, and when the bikes arrived they were almost immediately rated superior to anything else around by the motorcycle press. The Elsinores are undoubtedly first rate, and we join with everyone else in saying so. It would not surprise us to see a World Motocross Championship go to the Honda camp next year. ●

The front axle is situated ahead of the fork slider on the 125. The front brake is slightly smaller than the 250's, but the wheel is still the shoulderless alloy type.



HONDA CR125M ELSINORE

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING EVALUATION



BASIC SPECIFICATIONS

Price approx. \$750.00

Engine

Type single cylinder, 2-stroke

Bore56mm

Stroke50mm

Cubic centimeters displacement 123cc

Carburetor size & type 28mm Keihin

Ignition system type Flywheel magneto

Lighting system type NA

Air filter size & type oiled Polyurethane foam

Gearbox

Overall ratio, first 29.86

Overall ratio, second 22.55

Overall ratio, third 18.20

Overall ratio, fourth 15.27

Overall ratio, fifth 13.41

Overall ratio, sixth 12.32

Shift pattern one-down, neutral, five-up

Can be kick-started in any gear? neutral only

Dimensions

Wheelbase 53.5 inches

Weight 180 pounds

Front tire size & tread 2.75x21 knobby

Rear tire size & tread 3.50x18 knobby

Length 79.9 inches

Handlebar width 34.6 inches

Ground clearance 7.9 inches

Fuel capacity 1.6 gallons

Engine oil capacity mixes with oil

Details

Folding footpegs? yes

Self-cleaning footpegs? yes

Tire-to-rim clamps? yes

Alloy rims front & rear? yes

Handlebar-mounted kill button? yes

Speedometer? NA

Odometer? NA

Odometer read in tenths? NA

Odometer resettable backwards? NA

Tachometer? NA

Muffler? yes

U.S. Forest Service-approved spark arrestor? no

Head & tail lights? NA

Brake light control-actuated switches? NA

Horn? NA

Fuel tank material? alloy

Front fender material? plastic

Rear fender material? plastic

Full-floating rear brake? no

Performance Specifications

Weight with 165-lb. rider and full tanks . 354 pounds

Rated horsepower @ rpm NA

Pounds (with rider) per horsepower NA

Pounds (with rider) per cubic centimeter 2.80

Number of speeds in transmission 6

Handling Specifications

Weight distribution, % front/% rear 55/45

Center of gravity (approximate)

Crankshaft center to ground 15.5 inches

Crankshaft center to rear axle 27.25 inches

Footpeg to rear axle 19.5 inches

Footpeg to ground 11.5 inches

Front suspension

Steering head angle (rake) 31 degrees

Trail (axle setback from steering axis) . 5.5 inches

Fork travel, compression 7.1 inches

Fork travel, rebound 7.1 inches

Rear suspension

Swing arm length, pivot to axle 17.5 inches

Swing arm pivot to ground 15 inches

Swing arm pivot to crankshaft 9.5 inches

Rear chain run (countershaft sprocket to rear axle) 22.5 inches

Shock travel, compression 4.1 inch

Shock travel, rebound 4.1 inch

Height of seat from ground 32.3 inches

Length of seat 22 inches



Performance & Handling Opinion
(rated 1-to-10 on a scale of 10)

Power (within displacement class)9

Ability to maintain rear wheel traction9

Vibration9

Ease of starting 10

Ignition waterproofing9

Air intake & carburetor waterproofing9

Oil leakage 10

Fuel leakage 10

Front fork dampening9

Tendency of front tire to skid in turns9

Ease of lifting front wheel with handlebars9

Steering response to effort at handlebars9

Rear wheel tendency to lock up or hop when braking9

Rear shock absorber dampening9

Stability in deep sand or mud9

Seat padding and comfort9

Convenience and operation of controls9