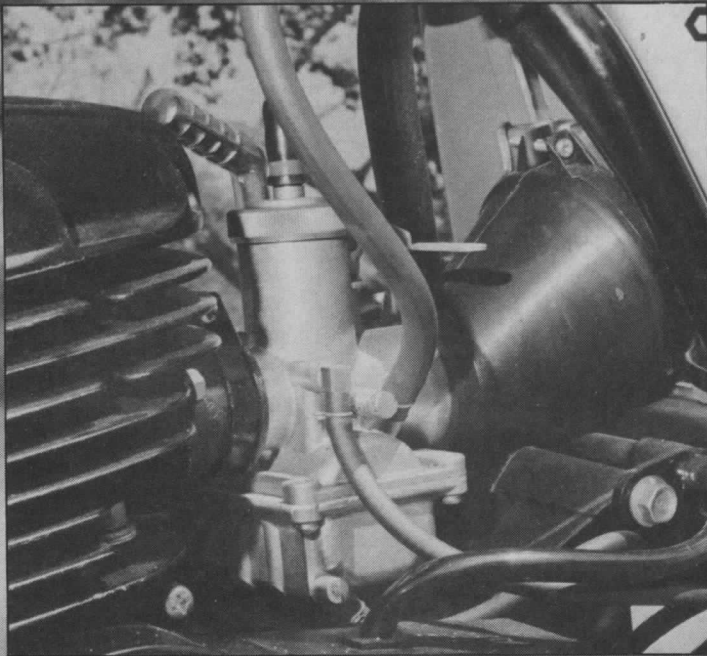
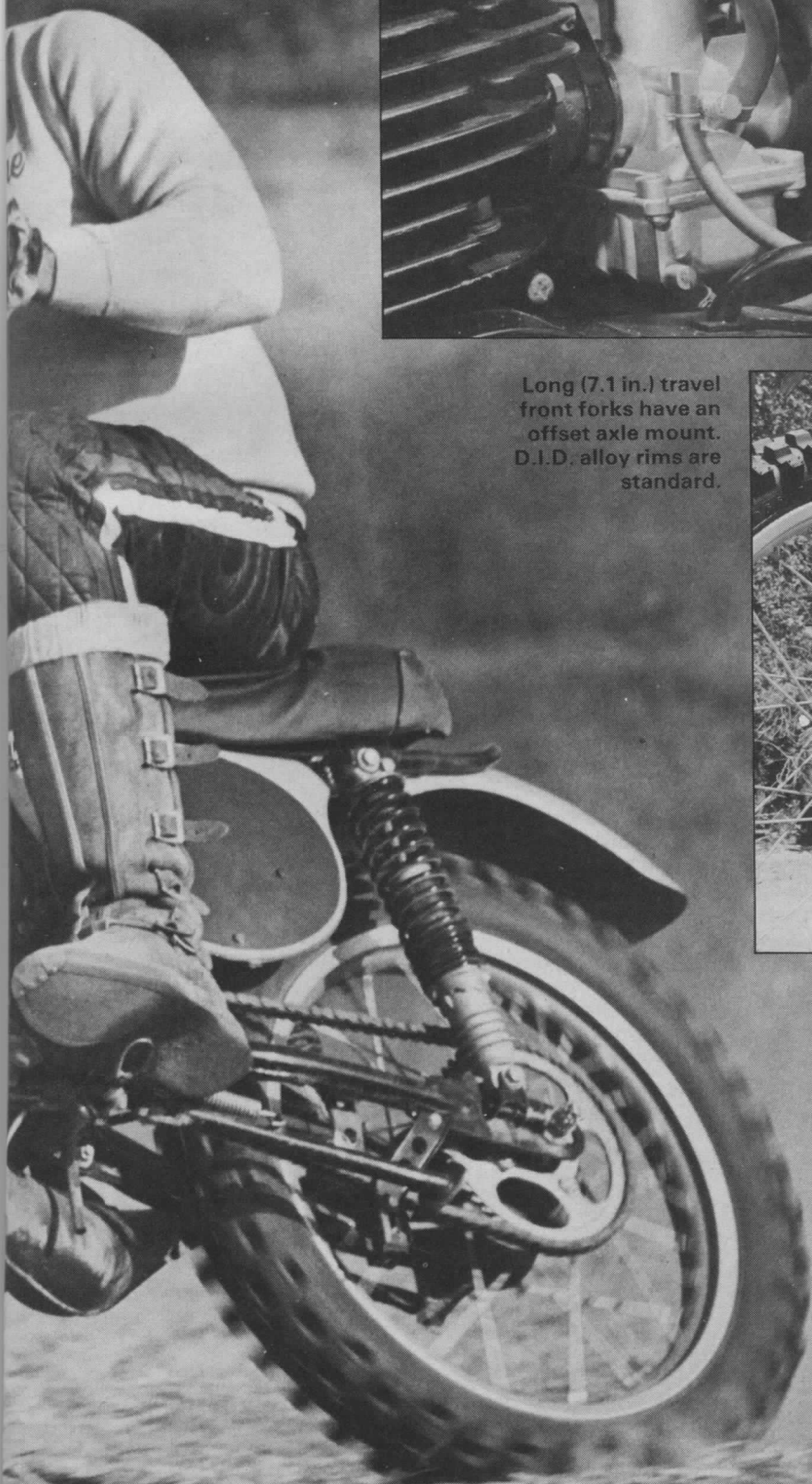


HONDA CR125M ELSINORE

One hundred and
seventy-eight pounds
of dynamite on wheels





Keihin carburetor measures 28mm and breathes through a foam filter element. Side cases are magnesium, while shift and brake levers are malleable aluminum.

Long (7.1 in.) travel front forks have an offset axle mount. D.I.D. alloy rims are standard.



Honda's CR125M is going to be THE bike to beat. Rarely do all the staffers here at POPULAR CYCLING go so absolutely berserko over a motorcycle. And a small bore at that. After having our appetites thoroughly whetted by the Elsinore 250, we could hardly wait to get our hands on the smaller of Honda's two-stroke motocrossers. And we weren't disappointed. It isn't the perfect motorcycle, as we will explain, but it is such an absolute gas to ride that we can barely contain ourselves.

First, let's go through the technical stuff so we can get down to telling you what riding the little rocket is really like.

The frame is chrome moly. A single downtube design with a split cradle which houses the engine. A swinging arm of the same material mounts inside the cradle tube above the bend which angles

The Bridgestone tires at both ends of the Honda are superb. Shock absorbers dampen well and are adjustable.



the tubes towards the upper shock mounts. A single backbone from the steering head splits at the seat/tank junction, and drops downward to the swinging arm mounting plate. Simple, light, and very strong. Even the stoutest tester couldn't detect any flex in the frame. Under the lighter riders who frequent 125 class racing, the chassis should be indestructible.

The engine feels the same way. Ours gave us no trouble, and we don't think many of them are going to give anyone headaches. Bore and stroke are oversquare at 56mm x 50mm. The piston has undergone the same etching process as that of the 250 to retain oil and prevent seizure. Both rings are coated with a Teflon-like substance which deters cylinder scuffing during the break-in period. The coating will wear off after about an hour of riding. Both ends of the connecting rod ride on needle bearings, while the crankshaft spins on huge ball bearings. All the right parts are in all the right places.

The wet, multi-plate, aluminum hub clutch transmits power through a set of straight-cut primary gears to the six-speed transmission. If you recall our test of the Elsinore 250, you'll remember that the transmission could not be upshifted under full power. Well the 125 is different. It won't always shift under a full load, but it seems like all you have to do is think about backing off the throttle and whammo, next gear. The tranny never missed a shift either. It is almost difficult to put into words how well it worked without sounding like a revival preacher. Just take our word for it, they

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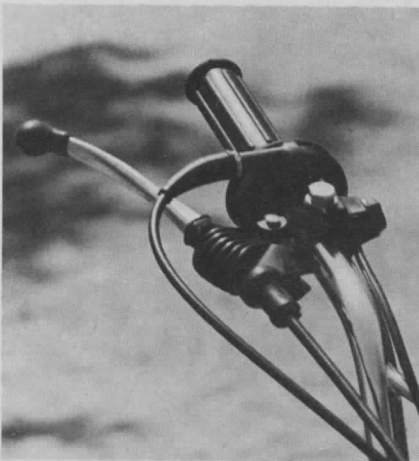
don't come much better.

We did mention that the bike was not perfect, so we should explain that we weren't thrilled with the spacing of the gear ratios. They are too tight.

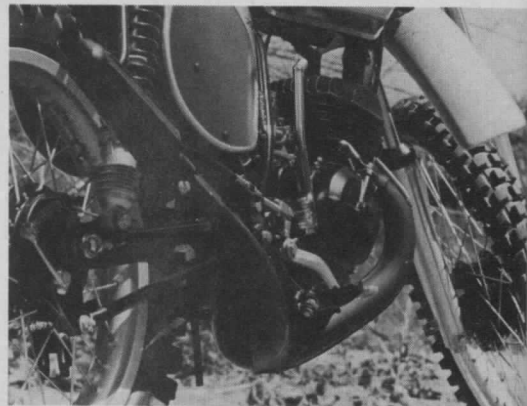
First gear is extremely tall, and sixth is good for only 50 mph or so. The tranny keeps the engine on its powerband with several revolutions to spare, so a wider ratio box would be a welcome change on future models. Complete with carburetor and kickstarter, the engine weighs a mere 46 lb.

The suspension is again something else. With over seven inches of travel up front, and four in the rear, it can best be described as plush. The forks have an offset axle, leading us to believe that someone at Honda likes the way Maicos track. This offset allows quick steering via a steep fork angle, yet will not let the bike get squirrely because it helps maintain a long wheelbase. Wheelbase measures out at 53.5 inches, which is above average for a 125 MXer.

Both hubs are magnesium, and are laced to those "everybody wants a pair" D.I.D. alloy rims. The front binder is full width, while the aft unit is half as wide. Stopping the Honda is like hitting a brick wall. Sudden. No uncontrollable skidding or fishtailing, just fierce, almost



Malleable levers, rubber dust boot, kill switch, and quick throttle highlight the CR's controls.



ORE
SM

tyling on the CR 125 identical to the 250 Elsinore. It doesn't look like it unless you get up close, but the machine weighs 178 lb.

The CR 125 engine has lightning throttle response and is very powerful. It needs more cooling fins though.

Low swept exhaust pipe has a miniature muffler at the end. The bike is loud although reportedly below the 92db AMA limit.

Serrated self cleaning footpegs are spring loaded and fold at a 45 degree angle.

violent deceleration.

And now that the preliminaries are over with, we can get down to the good part.

First, the machine is light. Not just a mere under 200 pounder, but an honest 178 lb., certified on the official PC scales. That's just two lb. over the FIM limit for 125cc machines. Remove the oil in the transmission, the forks, and the shocks, and it would be right on the money. This lack of weight is the greatest single asset of the motorcycle. It is difficult to fall on the Honda. It's not that if you do something stupid the machine won't try and spit you off, but rather that even the smallest riders can, because of lightness, physically manhandle the machine and maneuver it in ways that would be next to impossible on other 125s. Get a little out of shape? You don't have to sit there and take it. Just flick the bike back into position and continue on. Although the Honda is, it doesn't need to be forgiving—you can forgive yourself.

Cornering is tops. There is none of the front end washout found on the CR250. On the 125, you can sit in one position through the whole race, or you can slide forward a few inches through the turns and corner on berms that aren't there. It holds a line that well. Much of the credit for this, apart from the front end geometry, goes to the tires. They are a new design, manufactured by Bridgestone. Personally we're fond of Metzlers, but these Bridgestones did everything the Metzlers have done in the past, plus a few things we wouldn't want to try on any other tires. Maybe if Honda used these new tires, lower fork legs, and similar steering geometry on the bigger Elsinore, the 250 wouldn't be so skittery when laid over.

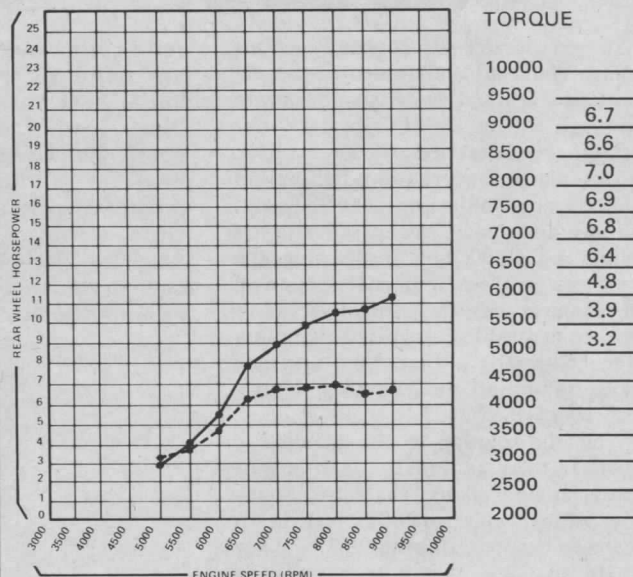
In the rough the Honda handles with grace and finesse. In fact, the bike actually doesn't need the fine suspension it has. It is so light that it will skip over many of the bumps and potholes that other machines, because of their heft, would be forced to traverse. The only time full suspension travel is utilized is when landing from a tall jump or banging into a solid berm.

How fast is it? That was the biggest question asked of us by outsiders whenever we showed up to test the machine. More than one racer invited us to drag his "stock" 125. The Honda is not as superior in acceleration to other 125s as the 250 Elsinore is in its class. It did lose some races to other modified 125s, but it is still fast. Very fast. We never backed down from a drag race and the Honda never really let us down. The worst we ever did against another stocker was a tie. Take the bikes we dragged and put them on a race track. Then ask them to come out of a corner and stay with the Honda down a stretch of the nasties and they couldn't do it. The Honda puts its power to the ground. All of it. The engine

HONDA CR125M



DYNAMOMETER TEST REPORT



TORQUE -----
HORSEPOWER -----

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

Suggested retail \$750

ENGINE

Engine type two-stroke, piston-port, single-cyl.
Horsepower @ rpm 21 @ 9000
Torque @ rpm N/A
Bore and stroke
in. 2.25 x 1.97
mm 56 x 50
Displacement
cu. in. 7.5
cc 123
Compression ratio 7.6:1
Carburetion 28mm Keihin
Ignition C.D.I.

TRANSMISSION

Speeds six
Primary drive gear, straight-cut
Clutch type wet, multi-disc
Final drive chain, 1/4 x 5/8

CHASSIS

Length, overall, in. 80.3
Wheelbase, in. 53.5
Ground clearance, in. 7.7
Weight, overall, lb. 178
Frame type single downtube, split cradle
Tire size
front 2.75-21
rear 3.50-18

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HONDA CR 125

is pipey, but it comes on in a smooth controllable surge. Best power is in the 5000-9000 rpm range. At nine grand the power simply goes flat. It just refuses to rev any higher. You quickly learn to anticipate redline and shift accordingly.

At the other end of the scale, it is difficult to load up the engine if the throttle is rolled on smoothly. It chugs so well you might think there are reeds in the intake tract, but there aren't. The precise metering of the 28mm Keihin carburetor is responsible. No blubbering, coughing, or hard starting. It feeds the pre-mix in and the engine fires on the first tromp, every time. Even after a high speed spill (note: the Honda does not take kindly to centerpunching by over-eager DT-1 riders), it took only two prods to get things popping. The C.D. ignition puts out quite a spark. The only other complaint we could muster was about the engine. When it gets hot it loses power, noticeably. We discussed this with Honda factory rider Gary Jones at last month's U.S. Grand Prix at Carlsbad. He said that with the 125 he had ridden in a race a few weeks before, he had encountered the same problem. His lap times hadn't slowed but the machine did not feel as though it was accelerating as quickly as it had been. It still blew the other 125s off, but not as easily. More fining is needed.

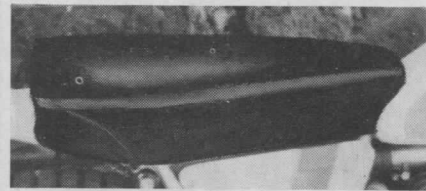
There are a couple of things that you will undoubtedly spend a lot of time doing if you purchase one of these featherweights. One of them is being the envy of most everyone you race. Another is changing lines in the middle of a turn. It's great to enter a bend on the outside of someone, and exit on the inside line. It also spooks your competitor who is trying his darndest to go fast without sliding out and here you are with your circus maneuvers, playing around as you pass him.

If you are one of the first at the local track to own a CR125M, a lot of people will think it's a 250. After you make them look silly on the track and they come in to say how really fast your 250 Honda is, watch the eyeballs bulge and the faces redden when you inform them that it's only a 125.

We said that the light weight of the machine is its greatest single asset. That was supposed to be *technical* asset. The greatest commercial asset is the price. What do you have to pay to get all of the above along with Honda dependability and their dealer and parts network? After riding it as long as we did, we feel that a price of \$900-\$1000 would not be out of line. How does a West Coast price of \$750 grab you? Us, too.

We didn't want American Honda to take the little Elsinore back, but all truly good things must end. We do hope to do some hop-up articles in the future though. Any excuse to get one of those jewels back.

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