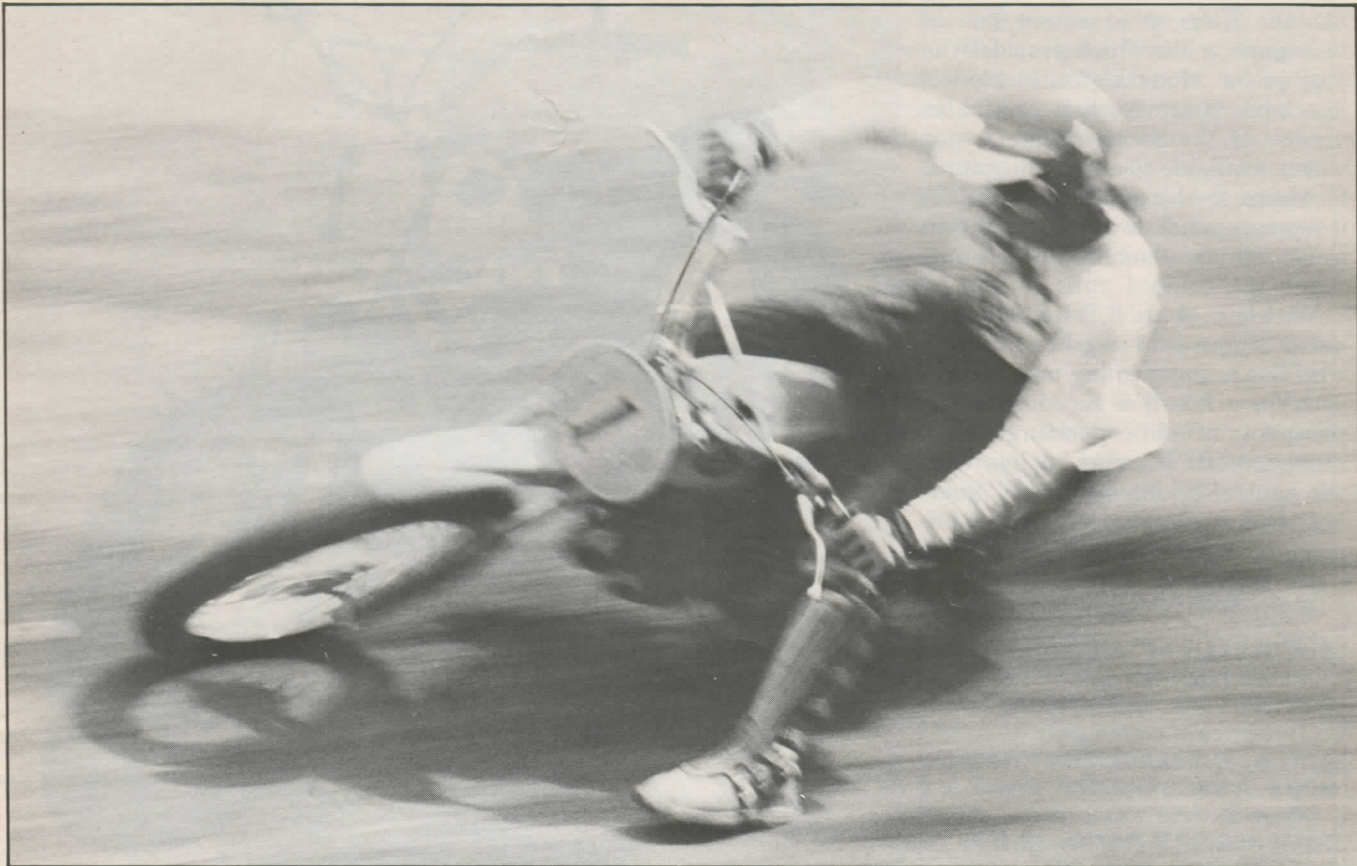


# MONARK 125



## It's got class

*Announcer (Voice Over):*

"We asked Americans to tell us their definition of class!"

*Thin, reedy, littleolelady-type voice:*

"Class is wearing your red, white and blue tennies to the meeting of the American Legion Ladies' Auxiliary."

*Bluff, hearty Nationalleader-type voice:*

"Class is never having to say you're sorry."

*Seedy, scruffy, motocrosser-type voice:*

"Class is going WFO down the straight when the water truck's sitting on top of the berm at the next turn and you ain't got no brakes."

These unbiased random samplings prove one thing, but we're not going to tell you what it is. Instead, we're just going to say that apparently that monotonously defined something called "class" is supposed to sell products. Enter the Monark

125MX from stage right.

All you have to do to figure out that the '74 'Nark has class is to look at the spec sheet. It reads almost like a high-priced accessories list: Ceriani forks, Girling shocks, Akront rims (?), Magura levers, Motoplat ignition, Trelleborg tires—class. Which is about what you'd expect. The Monark 125 holds the Swedish 125cc motocross championship, and—as you may have heard—they go fast in Sweden. There's also the fact that the Monark goes out the door for a hefty \$1100, and for that kind of money you have the right to expect all the extras.

After reading the spec sheet and reflecting on the sticker price you're already half convinced that the Monark *must* be a damn fine racing machine. And you're almost right. But that "almost" is likely to cause the serious racer more grief and money than he really wants to spend on a bike that's already cost him

1100 devaluated clams. If it's not, there's no question that with money spent the Monark can be raced and won on in any class.

The heart of the 'Nark and of its problems is the Sachs "B" engine. The Sachs mill is strong, fast and torquey, putting out good power through the range, but it has traditionally had a passel of false neutrals mixed in with its six gears. And there have traditionally been ways to avoid those neutrals. Trick ideas range from simply using the clutch (which we feel is unacceptable on a racing bike), to rolling off the throttle and being very "positive" when shifting (how positive is "positive?") to installing an improvement kit like the Koba. Alternatively, the shifter should be adjusted between motos. Various people have had varying degrees of success using these methods, but they all come down to going slower or spending more time and/or money—a fact of

which the Sachs people are not unaware. In fact, the Sachs factory has taken to installing a kit something like the Koba in a certain line of its engines, a line which provides the engines for Monark's "GS" models (see box). However, this particular version of the Sachs engine is not widely available to either the manufacturers or the public at large, so it represents not so much a solution as something which could be done. . . . if. If.

Without that if, the Monark owner who wants to go racing (and who else is going to lay out all that cash for a bike?) is faced with the prospect of A) spending more money, or B) learning to live with the neutral-riden Sachs "B" gearbox. Unfortunately, it's almost im-



*purty, purty.*

**MONARK 125 MX**

**SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:**

\$1100 (approx.)

**ENGINE TYPE, INDUCTION:**

Two-stroke, piston port

**ACTUAL DISPLACEMENT: 122cc**

**BORE AND STROKE: 54mm x 54mm**

**COMPRESSION RATIO: 12:1**

**CARBURETOR: Bing, 28mm**

**CLAIMED HORSEPOWER/RPM:**

21 @ 8300

**PRIMARY DRIVE: Gear**

**GEARBOX/SHIFTING: Six-speed, left side.**

**GEARBOX RATIOS: 1) 4.60:1**

2) 2.93:1 3) 2.16:1 4) 1.72:1

5) 1.43:1 6) 1.24:1

**AIR FILTER: Paper**

**ELECTRICAL: Motoplat electronic**

**LUBRICATION: Pre-mix**

**FUEL CAPACITY: 2.1 gallons**

**SUSPENSION: Ceriani forks**

Girling shocks

**TIRES/RIMS: front: 3.00x21**

Trelleborg/Akront alloy

rear: 3.50x18

Trelleborg/Akront alloy

**WHEELBASE: 52 inches**

**SEAT HEIGHT: 30 inches**

**WEIGHT: claimed, 185 pounds**

**STARTING: kick, left side**

**COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE:**

Sweden

**DISTRIBUTOR:**

Inter-Trends, Inc.

3001 Red Hill Avenue

Costa Mesa, California, 92626

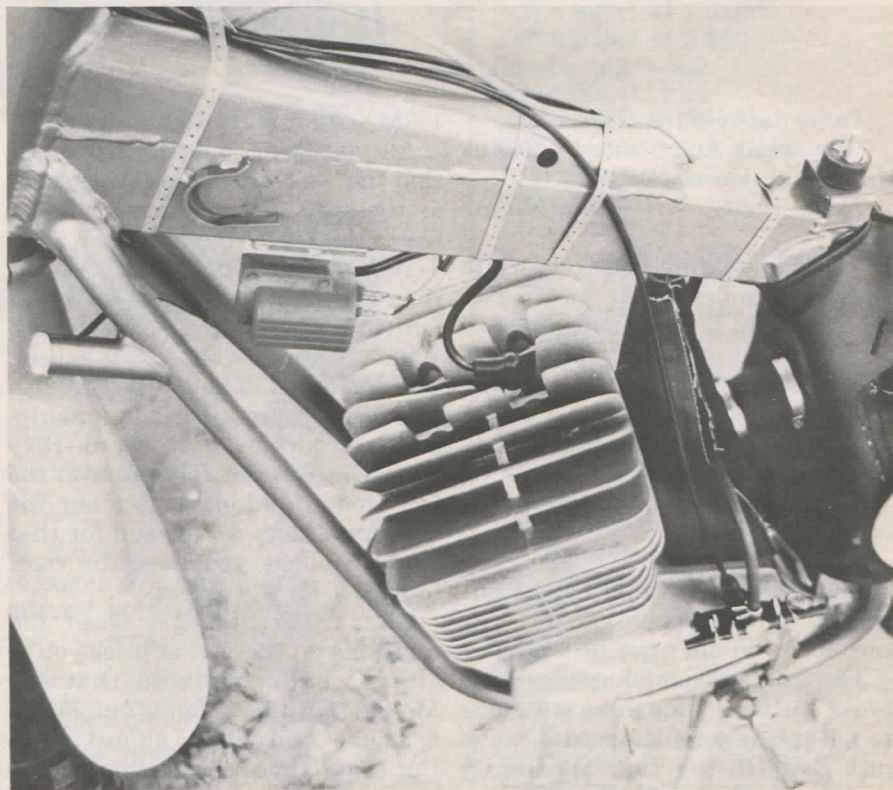
**COST OF REPLACEMENT**

**PISTON, RINGS: \$26.30,**

\$12.60

**COST OF REPLACEMENT**

**CYLINDER: \$157**



*Pull the tank, and everything shows up neatsy-keen. Motoplat, air intakes in the rail, lots of Velcro-fastened waterproofing. Costs money, though.*

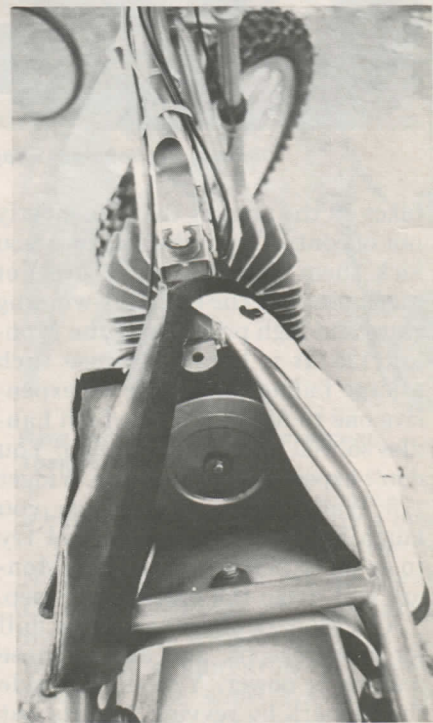


possible to live with that gearbox and be competitive. Shifts are inevitably missed and progress slowed, control goes down the tubes. And once the nervous 'Nark is nudged into neutral, forget about toeing it back into gear until the revs have dropped off to near idle.

Example: a steep, treacherous downhill, with a sharp left-hander at the bottom. Downshift into second. Find neutral instead. Hit the rear brake, thus locking up the wheel. Get off the rear brake QUICKLY. Meanwhile, try to get the bike into gear—any gear. The engine has not yet wound down. You are totally out of control. The front wheel hits the berm at the base of the hill. Ayaaaaaaah!

Example: a steep, fast uphill, which calls for an upshift at about mid-point if you're getting it on. Upshift. Miss. Learn to ride MX in reverse. If you were unlucky enough to be out in front when this happens, prepare to quickly get on intimate terms with the pack.

It is very difficult to race motocross, be ye novice or expert, when you are never quite sure that the next shift is not going to put your bike almost totally outside of your control. True, there are plenty of



*Then the curtains were drawn aside to reveal the Holy of Holies to the awestricken crowd. "We'd have had a full house if they hadn't had to take the seat off first," muttered the promoter.*



*Girlings, Trelleborgs, alloy sprocket—s'all nice stuff.*

bikes on the market that are mostly out of control from the moment you kick them over, but they are not machines with the basically winning ways and high price tag of the Monark 125. It is hard to excuse such a large failing (and such an expensive one to fix) in a bike which handles so well and costs so much. You don't expect much from the Widget 125 Wallstomper anyway, so you laugh wryly, bruise easily, and try to go on to better things. The Monark will make the enthusiast weep.

Yet, Monark chose the Sachs mill for good reasons, and one of those reasons is power. You do not ride the Monark by revving its guts out while teetering precariously on some mythical razor's edge known as "the pipe," meanwhile moving your left foot like a berserk ant-stomper to stay there. Within the limits implied by the displacement category 125,

the Monark is torquey, a bike with enough low end to get through a sharp turn without the obligatory three downshifts. With the Monark, you simply dive in, tap the lever down once, muscle the nimble 'Nark through the corner and grab a handful. If you've maintained any kind of momentum, the bike will grunt on out in its alto way and take you on to better things with nary a lug or gurgle.

The Monark's power comes on smoothly. There's no lunge at some point in the powerband, just steady power which gets you there quickly while other riders are still waiting for their kick in the leathers. Just upshift at around eight grand, and find yourself on the charging edge of all sorts of usable power. The Monark rider will soon learn to avoid over-revving, since it'll simply cost him time and positions.

The top four gears in Monark's six-speed, close ratio box are spaced quite usably, but first and second are odd—the one too low, the other too high. Because of this, the rider often finds himself without real pulling power when exiting a tight turn. First gear is too low and gets him nowhere. And an upshift into second causes the engine to bog. During one of our testing sessions at Saddleback Park, there was a certain deeply rutted hairpin which no one ever managed to get through with any elan. There was just no gear where one was needed—smack in the space between first and second. Except perhaps in deep sand, first gear is just too low.

Still, with all its gearbox nightmares, the Monark can be a blast to ride, simply because it's a very forgiving bike. Suspension is generally excellent, though the short



travel of the baby Ceriani forks will occasionally result in bottoming out. Girlings at the rear do their job well. They're three-way adjustable units, and even our light-heavyweight tester had no problems with them.

Frame geometry was excellent. Considering its extremely short 52-inch wheelbase, the Monark is a very stable bike once you get used to it. You expect a bike which is short-coupled to be twitchy and wheelie-prone, but the Monark shook neither end unduly. High-speed cornering manners are excellent, both in the rough and on TT-like sweepers, so you pretty much have your choice about how to go through a corner: take the inside line and just stuff the bike through; or go fast and high on the outside, using the berm like



**Bing carb gets its own overcoat. Thanks, ma.**

a banked turn at the Daytona oval.

The Monark tracks well over the rough stuff, and you can accelerate through potholes and miniature rock quarries without doing an imitation of a kangaroo on uppers. However, the short travel of the baby Cerianis is a problem when you come off a high, hard one. Adding about 5cc of fork oil to the factory-specified amount helps some, but real, grown-up, full travel Cerianis would help more. Sigh. Still, the Monark will track, steer

and slide with the best of them. It's almost as if the Swedish gremlin were whispering in your ear: "Concentrate on shifting, and leave the small stuff to me." Indeed.

It's a bike of neatsy-keen small touches, and nit-picking omissions. Both are of the type that win and lose races.

Waterproofing is excellent. The engine breathes through the frame tube, Velcro-fastened covers protect the carb and air filter, and electrical connections are encased in plastic. Fenders are Husky-type unbreakable numbers, and the rear wheel has two rimlocks. On the other hand, the front wheel has no rimlock at all, the kickstarter gets in your way when you stand up, and the rear brake locks up without much effort on the rider's part.

As we mentioned earlier, the Monark has a Motoplat ignition; and this is, at least potentially, another problem. Motoplats are one of the exciting unknowns of racing at this point in time, and while Ted Moore, Monark's distributor, tells us they'll stand behind every Motoplat that's strapped to a Monark, that's not much consolation if your goes

on the futz while you're leading the third moto. Our test bike experienced a serious loss of power after running hard for a while in very hot weather, and we all pretty much agreed that it was the Motoplat's fault. Buy yours an icepack, or have it checked over by your local electronics wizard before you make any high-speed runs across the Sahara.

The Monark 125 is sold as an out-of-the-crate racer, with most of the trick accessories already in place. It's a fast, competitive bike, which offers the serious racer scope for even more speed if he's willing to spring for a little additional drilling and grinding at his local go-fast shop. But all the speed and handling in the world doesn't get it if you can't stay in gear. To be truly competitive, the Monark owner is going to have to work constantly on the bike, keeping the transmission in an exact state of adjustment. In competition, this will be a before-every-moto task. Alternatively, he's going to have to spend some money on a kit. It shouldn't take quite *that* much time or *that* much money to make an \$1100 motorcycle race ready.

### EYEING BIG BROTHER

The bike we tested was a '74 Monark 125MX with a Sachs "B" engine. This is the standard Monark which will be available through local dealerships around the country. Monark also produces a 125 designated the "GS." It has a claimed power output of 25 bhp, as opposed to the more modest 21 bhp claimed for the "B" model. According to Ted Moore of Inter-Trends, it also has a factory-installed kit to rectify the shifting problem. No price has been finalized, but it's likely to cost a good deal more than the standard 125.

But don't whip out your cookie jar just yet. At this date, it looks as though there'll be substantially less than 100 "GS" models imported into the States this year, and of course those coveted few will go to sponsored riders. So if you want something that'll run with these top-of-the-line models, you'll have to spend both top-end and low-end bucks. Based on our experience with the "B" model, we suggest you spend it on the lower end first. \*

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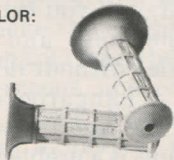
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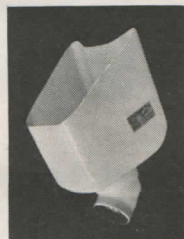


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