



Monark's 125 Motocrosser

Superior performance
at an outrageous price

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

States under the MCB trademark because of hazy restrictions on the use of the word "Monark" ("k" notwithstanding) for trade purposes. All the problems have been ironed out and the bike is now officially what it has always been everywhere in the world except America, a Monark.

Comments on the Monark's appearance vary from "bitchin'" to "bleah!" After all, a bike with a turquoise frame and a yellow gas tank is bound to offend some folks' aesthetics. It is definitely distinctive looking; like it or not, there are going to be plenty of Monarks around, so better get used to seeing them. 1973's production run will be doubled.

Riders of all sizes, from the sheer bulk of a Super Hunky to a feather-weight 14-year-old, will feel comfortable on a Monark. The handlebars are perfect for tall (6-foot and over) riders, but should be replaced with flatter units for better control in the corners if the rider is average-size or smaller. Pegs are adjustable to several different positions both laterally and vertically, and grip the boot well in dry riding conditions despite their crude appearance. Mud, water, snow—forget it, they don't work. Not spring-loaded, either.

Power characteristics of the Sachs engine are about all one could ask from a 125 motocrosser. To about 3,000 rpm there is nothing at all, but the rest of the way up to the *altissimo* buzz level is dynamite. Also, the power comes on more like a big bike than on a 125. Most 125s wind up very quickly; not the Monark. It

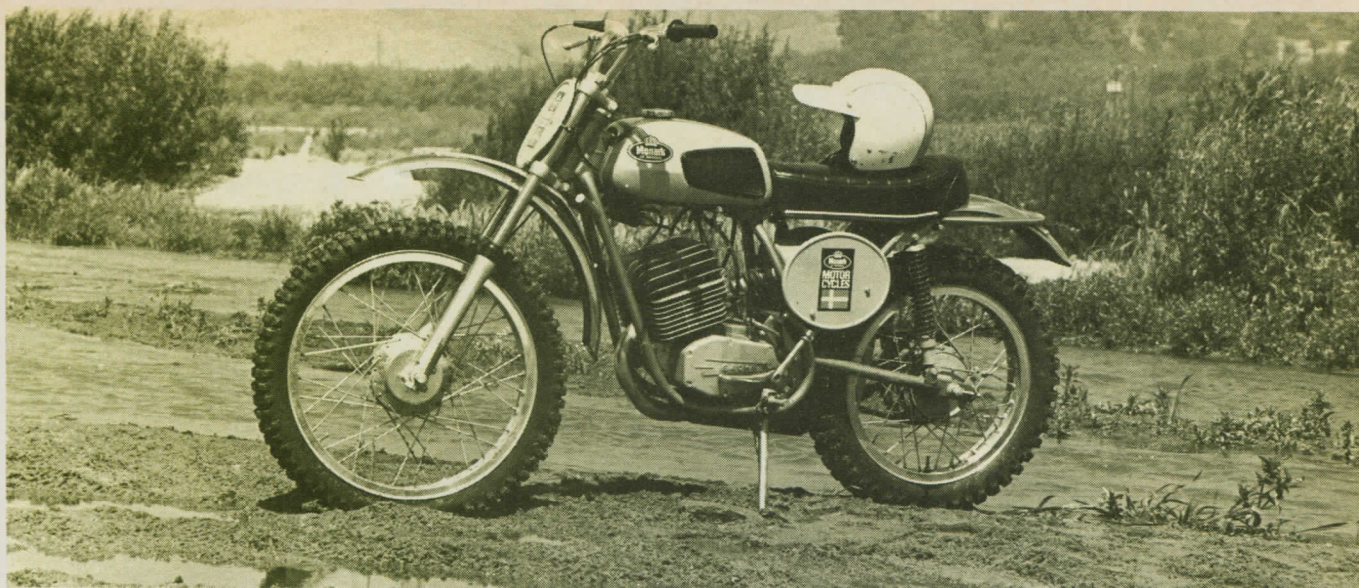
Press-time news in the continuing saga of the Monark expansion chamber: Since the Monark test was written, we've visited a number of Monark dealers. Most of the stock bikes in their showrooms do not have the expansion chamber mounted like the one on our test bike. The new mount allows the fitting of a clamp-on silencer. We did, however, see a couple of bikes that had the chamber tucked in too close, like ours.

Bernie Kiel of Cycle Parts in Santa Monica, a Monark dealer, has had some experience with the chamber swap (Suzuki 90MX) mentioned in the test. He tells us that the chamber will not bolt right on, but the head pipe only has to be modified slightly to fit. There is claimed to be a token power increase throughout the range, with lots more low-end grunt.

"That looks like a *seer-yus* little old mo'crosser ya got there," said the friendly bystander who happened by the DIRT BIKE pits when we were testing the 125 Monark.

His impression of the bike was correct. The Monark is a serious racer that could never be mistaken for a trailbike, enduro bike or similar contrivance. There is nothing hanging off the Monark that doesn't have to be there. A spindly frame makes the Sachs engine look that much bigger, and a still air chamber is built into the top frame member to eliminate a bulky filtration system under the seat. All welds are neat and ample and the craftsmanship, in general, is A-1. Would you expect less for \$975?

Anyone who is accustomed to hobnobbing with European dirt bikes will notice that the Monark bears a distinct resemblance to the MCB. That's because the Monark is an MCB. Both enduro and MX models of the bike were imported to the



torques smoothly and patiently right up to the maximum with no let-off before the peak. The Monark is one of the fastest 125s that DIRT BIKE has tested, and more importantly, the power is easy to get to the ground since there is no place in the rpm band where the horses increase suddenly. A reasonably skilled rider will be able to ignore the lack of beans on the very bottom end.

Our test bike had stock gearing which is rather tall, but we still felt that we could have gone one higher on the countershaft sprocket (14 vs. 13). The power is that nice.

Monark's local sales rep told us that even more beans can be extracted from the little popper by replacing the stock expansion chamber with one from a Suzuki 90 MX kit. Supposed to give better power throughout the rpm range. Whoosh!

Remember the 125 Penton that DIRT BIKE tested a couple of issues back? It had a Sachs engine (ported differently) and the crummy Sachs gearbox. The Monark shares this crude 6-speeder with the Penton. Downshifts, especially, were easily missed. Third gear to second was flubbed most often. 125 class races are often very closely contested and the time lost trying to find the proper gear can cause the loss of two or three positions. If Penton and Monark combined their economic clout it seems that they should be able to get Sachs to redesign the tranny so there is only *one* neutral.

Sachs also sells the front and rear brakes and hubs to Monark. Both ends are interchangeable, which is a nice feature, but the fact that the rear hub is essentially just a front hub with a sprocket bolted on makes

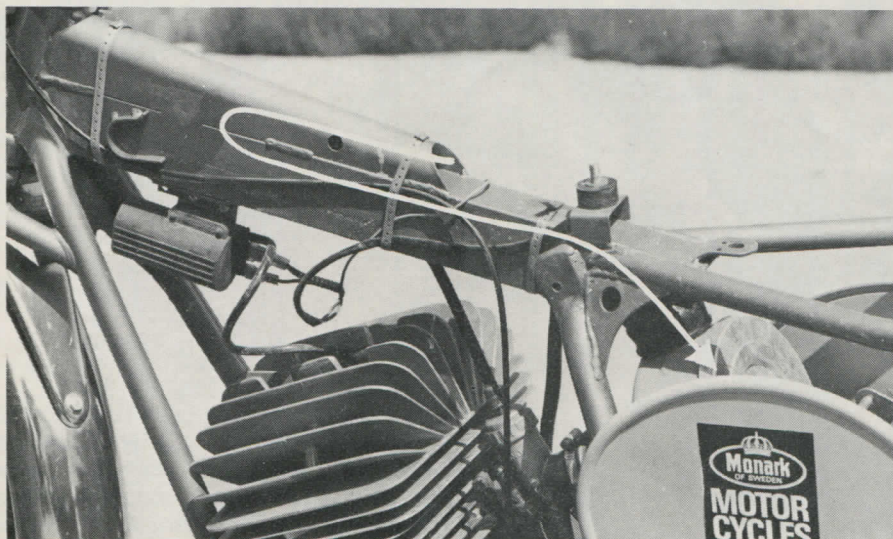
its use slightly impractical. The rear hub is just too narrow for the type of abuse that the back wheel of a motocrosser has to endure. More spoke spread at the hub means more strength.

By the way, both brakes work reasonably well after they're broken in, which takes considerably longer than on some other bikes. The rear brake is cable operated, but not by a cable like you've ever seen. Only the outer cable moves, the inner remains stationary. If it works . . . what the hell? Expect severe chatter on rough ground and lots of feedback to the pedal.

Ceriani front and Girling rear suspension components are perfectly suited to the Monark. The forks use all their travel and still won't bottom. Ditto for the Girlings. Though the ride is not as soft and cushy as a Bul 125, it is like a Caddy if you're used to a Yammie AT-MX.

Handling is excellent for a short wheelbase motocrosser. You'll notice that we qualified that statement by saying "short wheelbase." Perhaps the bike that the Monark will be compared to most frequently will be the Penton. It is a long wheelbaser (55 inches) and, as such, handles better in a straight line over the rough stuff. But the Monark is shorter (52 inches) and tends to hop around some on whoopdies. Not enough to really get scary, just a bit more tiring and time consuming. The only way to eliminate the jittery ride is to extend the wheelbase.

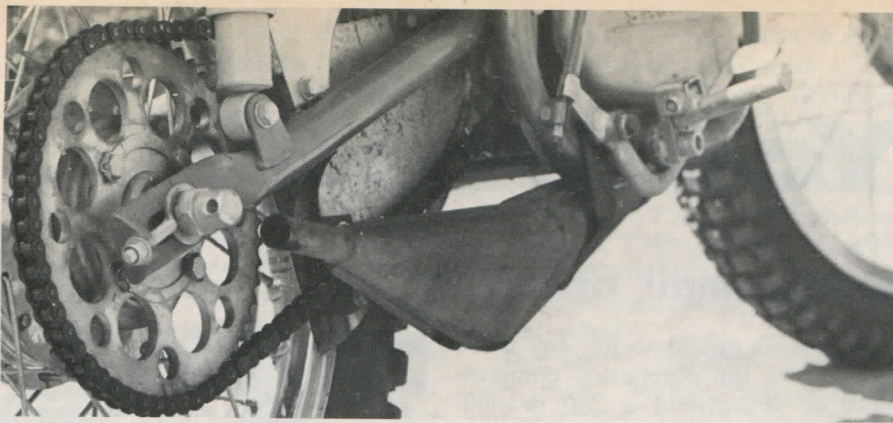
To make up for a deficit in the straight-line handling, the Monark is just great at going around corners. It steers very easily and most any-



Unusual breathing arrangement: Air travels through top frame tube as indicated by arrow. Works fine as long as the filter housing is kept well sealed.



Despite their relatively recent introduction into this country, Monarks are in competition just about everywhere. Here's a Texas rider showing a little flash. Photo by Richard Creed.



Close proximity of stinger end and axle makes silencer mounting a real hassle, and this little sweetie needs a muffler bad. Chamber comes from the factory pre-squashed.

thing can be accomplished by sawing away at the bars. In most situations, the quickness is an attribute, but it can get the rider in trouble if he doesn't stay on top of things. We noticed, for instance, that the Monark would come off a berm very rapidly and cross over to the other

side of the track if the rider got sloppy. Pay attention and go like hell.

Since the Cerianis and Girlings are so effective, both wheels tend to stay on the ground when they would be airborne if suspended by lesser (translate that to cheaper) units. This contributes greatly to the overall handling. This is why we often harp at some of the short-wheelbase cheapo motocrossers. Lousy suspension on short wheelbase bikes can put you on your tail a lot faster than on the Monark.

Another attribute of the Monark's design that allows the bike to be ridden quickly is its lightness. Our Official DIRT BIKE Scale said that the Monark weighs 200 pounds. You don't have to be a weightlifting champion to be able to stuff the Monark into a corner or physically lift the front end over and around ruts, rocks, etc. The average 140-pound plus rider will be able to get out of trouble the same way John

DeSoto does, with sheer muscle power. At one of the tracks where we do our test riding there is a rough, loose right-hand sweeper that's great to use for highside practice. The lightness and stuffability allowed us to jam into the corner and square it off far faster than on bigger, more powerful machines. In third gear, too. It's really fun to be able to have so much control over a bike.

Several riders spent a full day swapping off on the Monark during one of our test sessions at Lions Dragstrip's night MX track in Wilmington. Fastest lap times of the day were turned by the Monark, even though we also had two 400s and another 125 on the course at one time or another. The rest of the bikes felt like pigs after getting off the Monark.

Motoplat electronic ignition made the Monark a breeze to start. First kick every time, no sweat. One of our more foolish staffers rode the bike about a mile through 2-foot-deep water—didn't miss a beat.

Alas, the fun we had zooming around on the Monark was spoiled by one thing. The expansion chamber is the loudest thing since the Suzuki 400 and there is no way to mount a silencer without cutting off the stinger and welding one on. Outlet on the stinger is only about 2 inches in front of the axle bolt, making the use of a clamp-on silencer impossible unless the pipe is swung out, which would make it more vulnerable to crunching. As it is, the lowest point on the pipe is only 7 inches off the deck, and our

Cont'd. on page 62

MONARK 125 MX

PRICE: Suggested retail, approx. \$975
 ENGINE TYPE: Piston port, two-cycle
 DISPLACEMENT: 123cc
 BORE & STROKE: 54 x 54mm
 COMPRESSION RATIO: N/A
 CARBURETION: 27mm Bing
 HP: (claimed) 21
 CLUTCH: Wet, multi-disc
 PRIMARY DRIVE: Gear
 FINAL DRIVE: Chain
 GEAR RATIOS: N/A
 AIR FILTRATION: Paper
 ELECTRICAL SYSTEM: Motoplat electronic
 LUBRICATION: Oil in gas, pre-mix
 RECOMMENDED FUEL: Premium
 RECOMMENDED OIL: Not specified
 FUEL CAPACITY: 2¼ gallons
 FRAME: Double downtube, full cradle
 SUSPENSION: Front: Ceriani telescopic
 Rear: Swingarm w/Girling shocks
 TIRES: Front: 3.00x21 Metzeler
 Rear: 3.50x18 Metzeler
 WHEELS: Front: Akront
 Rear: Akront
 DIMENSIONS:
 Wheelbase: 52 inches
 Ground Clearance: 7 inches
 Seat Height: 31 inches
 Weight: (claimed) 190 pounds (dry)
 (actual) 200 pounds (no gas)
 On front wheel: 46 percent
 On rear wheel: 54 percent
 BRAKES: Front: Sachs internal expanding
 Rear: Sachs internal expanding
 INSTRUMENTS: None
 SILENCER: None
 PRIMARY KICK: No

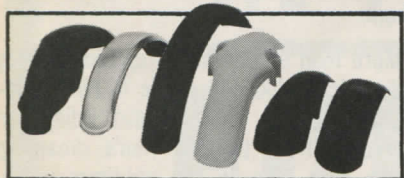




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MONARK 125 *Cont'd. from page 29*
test bike had a few scrapes on the chamber when we took it back, even though it had never been ridden on a rocky track. The Suzuki 90 chamber swap mentioned earlier is starting to sound better . . . if it actually works.

BITS AND PIECES:

As per usual Sachs practice, the shifter and starter are on a common shaft. The shifter's position is similar to that on a CZ. You have to kick up with the arch of the foot. Starter was easy to operate while seated on the machine, but rubbed the side of the rider's boot.

While stainless steel fenders are nice to look at, they ain't much in the durability department. We'll take flexible plastic any time.

Magura levers, Metzeler tires, Akront rims. Super!

As mentioned earlier, the carb/filter breathes through the frame. In order to remove the paper element (ugh!), the rear part of the aluminum housing must be removed. Which is all well and good, but the seal on the plate is very critical and after the housing gets banged around it will bend and warp. Smart Monark owners will be very careful with this piece. A dab of grease around the rear plate's circumference wouldn't hurt, either.

As usual, the baby Bing carb did a good job and only leaked a teaspoonful or two. No loading up was experienced, though the carb was jetted rich to prevent the brand-new cylinder and piston from fusing.

The spokes on the Monark must be checked frequently, especially when the bike is new. For that matter, *any* bike with alloy rims should be given a lot of attention in this respect.

Nice shape to the gas tank and it holds over 2 gallons, enough for three motos on the stingy one-two bits.

Monark's 125 motocrosser is being distributed throughout the country, so you've probably seen a few already. A lot of people at a recent motocross in Oklahoma saw *too* much of the Monark. An expert rider there won the 125, 250, and Open classes on a single afternoon aboard a Monark. Not bad.

DIRT BIKE's staff 125 freak is saving his money to buy a six-pack of Monarks. Such prestige!

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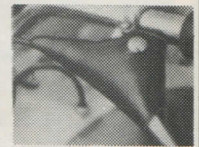


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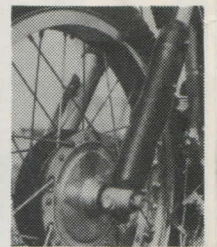
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