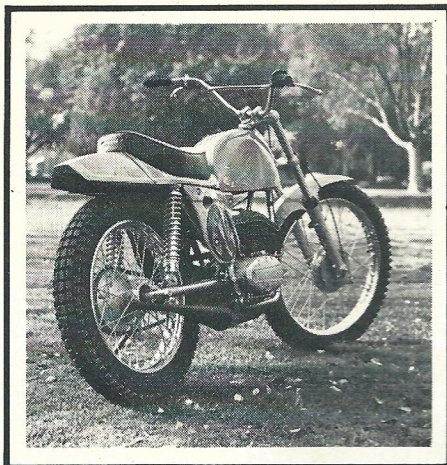


# RICKMAN MÉTISSE ZÜNDAPP



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Nine hundred is a lot of bucks. There are plenty of adequate 250's around for that price. So when someone asks you to part with 900 green ones for a 125cc motocrosser, you have to do some close, hard looking. Is the Rickman Zundapp Métisse worth that kind of money? Maybe not for everybody. However, I doubt if that one factor will stop many people from buying one.

The brothers Rickman are past masters in the art of making a motorcycle so throat-chokingly beautiful, that all common sense is thrown to the wind. There are many riders who have eaten beans for extended periods of time, just to own such a work of art on two wheels. The machine is done right and is a delight to ride, but putting all of that beautiful, frag-

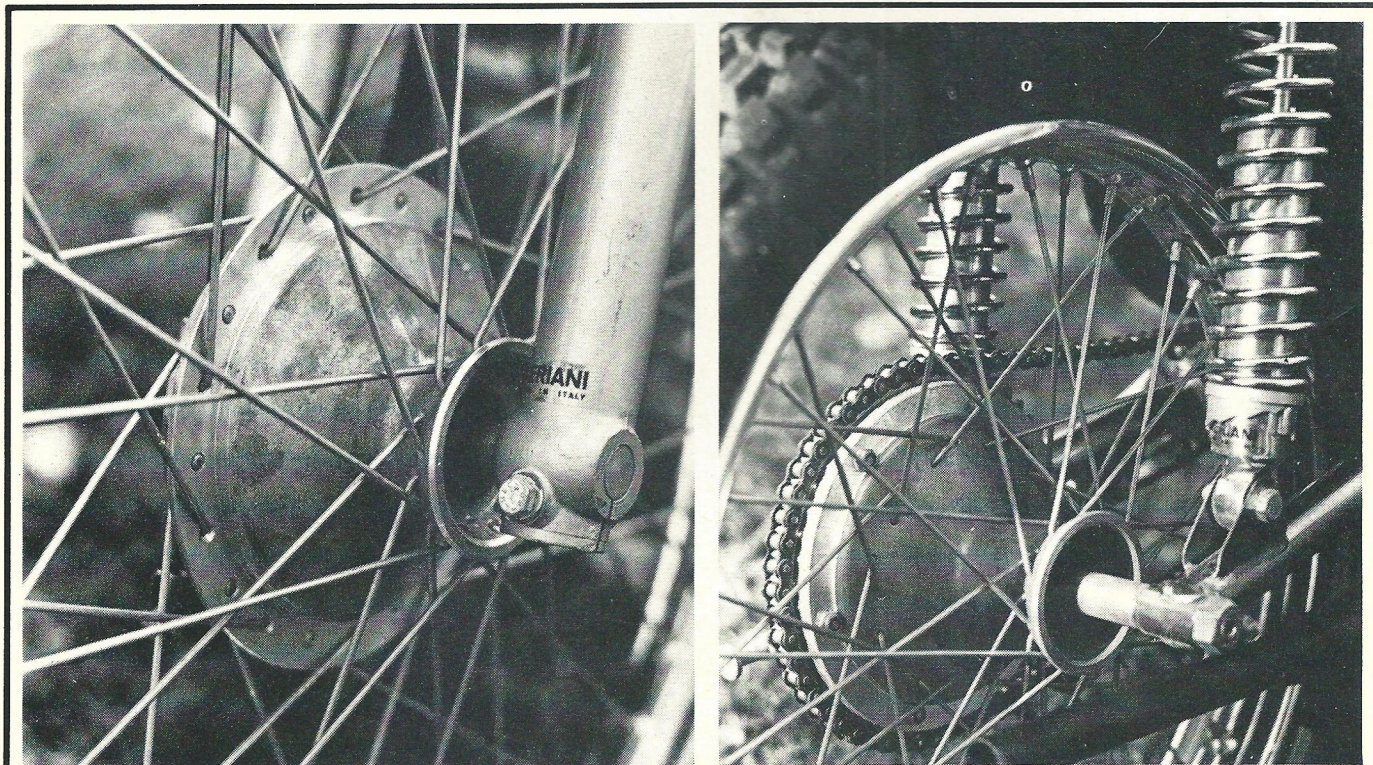
ile fiberglass on a racing bike seems like overkill.

A perfect example is the road-racy low and slender front fender. This unit offers no protection at all from mud and sand thrown up at the rider; often creating mottled patterns on one's face. A more conventional alloy full fender would have been a wiser (though not as pretty) choice. Loading and unloading the bike from the truck leaves you puzzled as to what to grab. The glass is far too flimsy and no protective tubing is exposed. Everything is neat and concealed for looks, sacrificing convenience in the process. You know, you just painfully know, that one good spill and all that glass beauty will be marred. Expensively marred. Even though you know this, you will probably still

buy it, because the bike handles like a dream and instills confidence like few other 125's in the world.

Based on a lightweight, double downtube Rickman frame, the major working parts of the bike are the Zundapp engine with a five-speed box, Ceriani suspension front and rear, and Bing carburetion. This selected combination of ingredients should be a winner on motocross tracks.

BEFORE THROWING THE bike through the rigors of the sandy Indian Dunes motocross course, we dug into the innards a bit to see how a Rickman really goes together. The small paper element air filter does not appear adequate for any serious riding and Steen's, the U.S. distributor



Ceriani suspension front and rear make for a spectacular handling machine. Conical hubs are cast magnesium alloy and keep unsprung weight down to an absolute minimum.



for Rickman machines, replaces the unit with a foam-type cleaner before delivery to the customer. A point for the good-guy dealer. The bolts holding on the head are very long, and number only four. Their length and number means that there is a fair likelihood of vibration loosening them, so a heavy-duty gasket and gasket sealer, while not required, seem like a good idea.

The biggest problem we encountered in dismantling the bike was the gas tank. Its dimensions just miss being an easy pop-on, pop-off, fastening, with a single nylon-fitted bolt and rear flange. The tank is about 1/2-inch too long in front and hangs up on the bars in removal and re-installation. This means that the vinyl-covered seat takes more abuse than is strictly necessary. No big thing, admittedly, but shaving just a hair off the non-functional fiber-glass at the front of the tank would cure this annoyance. Removing the bars in order to easily remove the tank is a drag. Our only other reservation about the machine is the fiberglass itself. It is light, very attractive, generally high-quality molding, but even if you don't dump as frequently as our more-

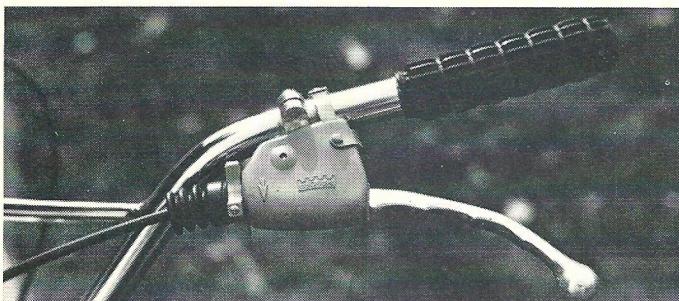
speed-than-skill staff, you could be facing a sizable cost in 'glass work before the end of the season. The answer, of course, is not to lay it down, but that's not always something you can control. The Rickman frame itself is beautifully engineered. It looks light almost "airy" to someone used to thick heavy downtubes and center tubes.

One loop on a twisting motocross circuit is enough to make you forget all the cautionary words in the above paragraph and start trying to figure out how you can justify buying one. The handling is *that* good. It really does improve your riding by 20%. The Rickman ads are not an exaggeration in that respect. It is great fun.

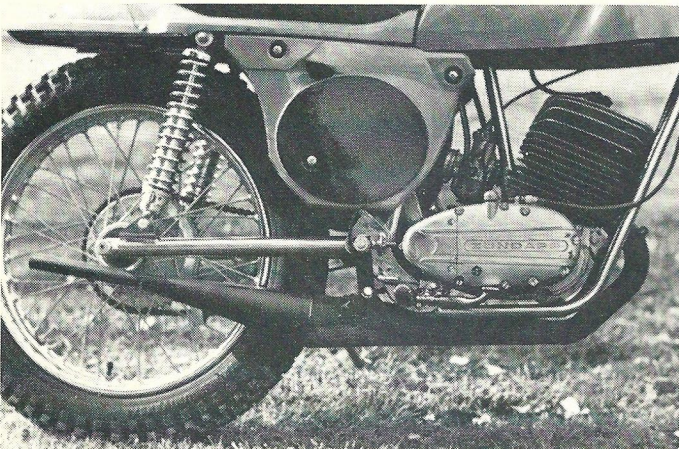
GETTING OUT THERE on the course should happen something like this. Tickle the Bing slightly and stomp the kick-starter through about medium-hard. First kick every time got the beastie ticking over. Warm-up time, at least until the two-stroke burble stopped, was very short. The bike pulled quite strongly from an idle in both first and second gear. This was a surprise for a racing 125 that we had thought *must* be peaky. It was

no problem to putt around enjoying the countryside in the lower gears, but that is really not what the Micro-Metisse is all about, though it makes a nice trail bike. The riding position for this machine, up on the pegs and leaning back slightly, is immediately comfortable and seemed quite natural even the first time aboard. This statement has to be modified for the heavier or larger rider. The 200-lb., 6-foot rider may never find a comfortable position or get sufficient performance out of the machine, but it seems ideal for weights up to about 175 and riders of average (or less) height. The small seat is attractive, fitting in with the overall look of the bike, but that's about all it does.

Handling is the Rickman Zundapp's strong suit and, in the right hands, could make it unbeatable. The combination of light weight, well-planned geometry and Ceriani suspension is the right one. Riders kept taking it flat-out around the course, without braking in places where, on other bikes, it had been necessary. Throwing the bike into corners was a ball. It was possible to lay the Rickman over and stuff the front end into a corner exactly where you wanted it.



Outstanding feature of the Micro-Metisse is the use of Magura controls and levers. Rubber covers over pivot points keep the muck out of the moving surfaces. Large plastic knobs allow easy adjustment of cable tension. Levers will bend back.



Exhaust exits through the tuned downpipe, which is too vulnerable for cross-country bashes without a skid plate. It is right for motocross as is.



The Zundapp 125cc engine sucks up to 1.7 gallons of pre-mix per tank through the Bing carburetor. First kick starts are the rule.

Handling was very precise with the 6-inch travel Cerianis and well-dampened shocks of like manufacture in the rear.

The DIRT BIKE editor could manage to get into some impossible crossed-up situations in corners and recover from them with minimum loss of time or dignity. It was possible to lay the machine over in the corners until knees and knuckles grazed and still come out of the turn on the pipe. If you want handling in a machine, this is it. The "feel" of the bike is very light and the amount of precise control possible inspires confidence in even the novice rider. The Ceriani forks were brand new and, as such, quite stiff. This was felt particularly over hard-packed washboard and deep whoop-de-doo. The benefits of the stiff forks were manifested in the ability to carve a line through a corner with amazing precision. The rear shocks, also Cerianis, are quite good. They do the job for the weight and set-up of the bike. We suspect that handling on this scooter will even improve as it's broken in.

Clutchless shifting is the rule and that's a definite plus, since the box is necessary to keep it up on the pipe while negotiating a twisty uphill-downhill course. The Zundapp gearbox had a bad case of the "neutrals." There seemed to be a neutral on each side of every gear. Long-time Zundapp riders seem to adjust to the shift-hesitate-snick gearshifting drill, but it can be a real drag to slap up and get nothing but an over-revving engine, particularly in motocross where a missed shift can mean a difference of a dozen finishing positions. One of the many Zundapp gearbox fix-it kits would seem to be necessary for the serious competitor. Or else more experience in working that particular shift sequence.

The front brake was surprising on the Rickman Micro. It was more than adequate for a 125, and really hauled the bike down without getting twitchy or locking it up. The cable-operated rear brake is spongy and was never just "right," even after adjustment. A rod-operated brake has got to be better. The cable will always stretch a bit and doesn't give the positive feel that a rigid rod imparts to the rider.

TAKING A FEW laps at speed has a way of making all these nit-picking gripes disappear. The bike was capable of beating 250cc bikes of respectable makes around the track,

almost regardless of who was at the controls. The bike was quite sensitive to weight, however, as already mentioned. It is definitely underpowered for the big man, but he is probably not going to pick up on a 125 in the first place. In the hands of the 135-lb. hotshoe, the Micro-Rickman is a real screamer.

The Dunlop Trials tires that come as standard equipment proved quite adequate, even in deep sand. There was no apparent loss of traction and the high speed stability was excellent through the rough stuff. The 53-inch wheelbase, long for a 125 lightweight, contributes to the stable feeling and the rear wheel showed no tendency to come around even on a series of high, hard bumps. It is almost impossible to fault the handling of the Micro-Metisse in any respect.

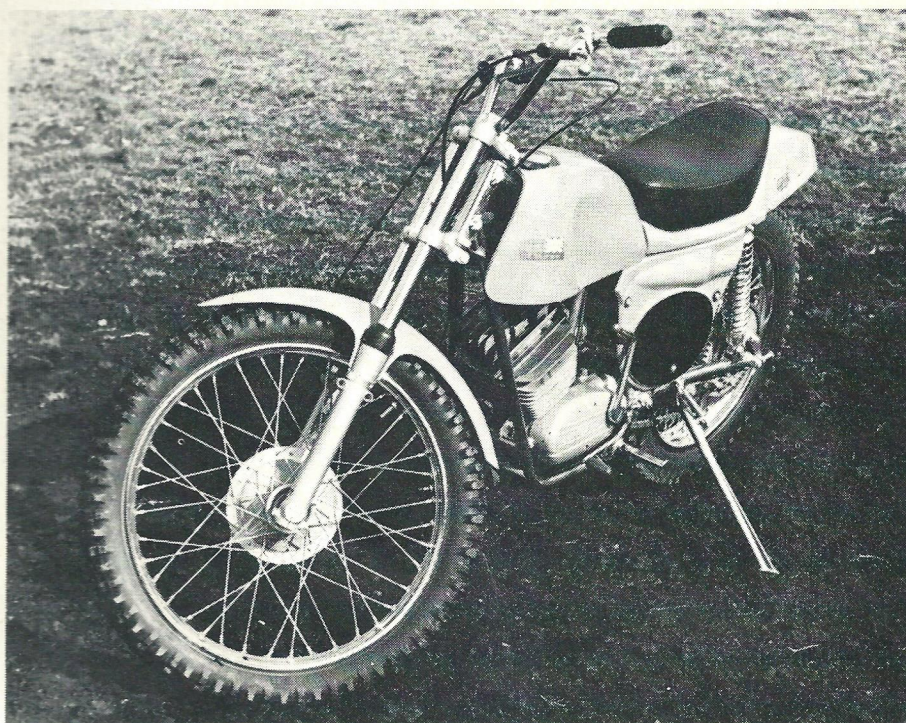
The full size tires are what should be on a machine of this caliber. The 3.00 x 21 and 3.50 x 18 skins would be our choice for any serious competition machine in this size/power bracket. There is a strong prejudice among the staff against inadequate or "toy" wheel/tire combinations, even on the smaller machines. Ground clearance of 9-inches is ample for motocross, even with a downpipe. As on many machines of the MX-type, a skid plate is necessary for any bashing off a course as the pipe is outside the frame and quite vulnerable. An up-pipe is available as an option. It tucks up under the tank and exits

through the fiberglass side cover. The kick-stand is another option, handy for propping up the scooter when you're out cow-trailing but, as it attaches to the swingarm, it's not something you'd be likely to keep on a competition machine.

The 1.7 gallon capacity gas tank is standard issue on the Micro-Metisse. A 3-gallon tank is available for the cross-country or desert rider and adds \$15 to the cost. The only color is blue, identified by Steen's as U. S. Racing Blue. Whatever you choose to call it, the color is rich, deep (permeates the 'glass) and intense. Black number plates are molded into the side panels and one is supplied for the front. The rather brittle plastic of the strap-on plate is prone to cracking, but at that level of criticism we are really digging for the nits.

The Zundapp-powered Rickman scales out at an honest dry weight of under 200 lbs. With the potential inherent in the Zundapp engine, the serious rider can arrive at some favorable power to weight ratios. Top that off with the completely controllable, precise handling and all the ingredients are there for one of the best-performing "little" machines on the market.

There are a lot of cheaper 125's available but very few that will deliver, even with modification, what the Rickman Zundapp Micro-Metisse offers right off the dealer's floor. ●



Full-size 21-inch Dunlop goes on the front. Sidestand is an extra cost option; mounts on the swingarm.