

Like last year, the new 125 Elsinore has a definite edge over the competition.

HONDA'S CR 125M ELSINORE

When we go out testing a motorcycle, the staffers usually bring along their own mounts. After a day's worth of riding the test bike, when there is still just enough daylight to illuminate a berm, we hop on our bikes. Sometimes our mounts give back that feeling of good handling, power, right suspension and familiarity. If we've been testing a real toad all day, those familiar home-brew bikes sure feel good.

But when we went out and tested the Honda 125 Elsinore, our own bikes weren't even unloaded out of the truck. To say the least, we were fighting over who would get to ride the bike. Bribes weren't uncommon.

First of all, let's get the bad parts out of the way. When testing the 125 Elsinore, we were highly critical of the machine. Road tests just don't sound right when you say "everything is fantastic and you should buy three of these gems." It's a nice way for the editor to accumulate some ad commission off of sales, but you're really cheating the readers. Besides, the ultimate bike hasn't been mass-produced yet.

The 125 has a very firm seat, a little on the uncomfortable side. It will take you at least three outings to break it in to the point of being semi-comfortable. Let

someone else ride the bike, and they probably won't be as comfortable as you are. It's designed so that your own personal cheeks flatten just the right spots. Custom fit you might call it.

Although the rear shocks are neat, they will pump up under long hard riding. With a 170-lb. rider bashing around the Valley Cycle Park track for a 45-minute jaunt, the shocks go through stages. After about 20 minutes they get mushy. Half-an-hour and you've got one really hot set of boingers. When 45 minutes worth of sand falls through the meter, the shocks are very uncooperative. Aluminum-bodied shocks with a good cooling system work much better if you plan on running motos longer than 20 minutes.

For the average rider, the brake pedal is a little tricky to find. With our vast knowledge of mechanical methods and precise engineering, we grabbed a handy crescent wrench, and with a little eyeballing, bent the brake pedal out from under the clutch bulge on the side case. Even with Heckel boots on you could find it. For those with size five or six boots, it's just fine. Anyone who isn't a card-carrying Little People of America member will probably have to bend it out.

The top rear motor mount, just below the airbox, is a very unsociable creature. As soon as you get the bike, that motor mount is thinking about parting company with the rest of the engine. Your best bet is to drill all the mounts out just a hair and get some good quality aircraft bolts and nuts. Then the engine will stay where it belongs: tight, secure and happy.

Our last beef is the opening on the gas tank. It's too small to accept most gas can nozzles. Many a 125 Elsinore owner can be seen carrying a funnel around when it's time to refuel. Even with a small nozzle on your can, you can't see

how full the tank is getting. Don't be surprised when you overfill your bike a couple of times.

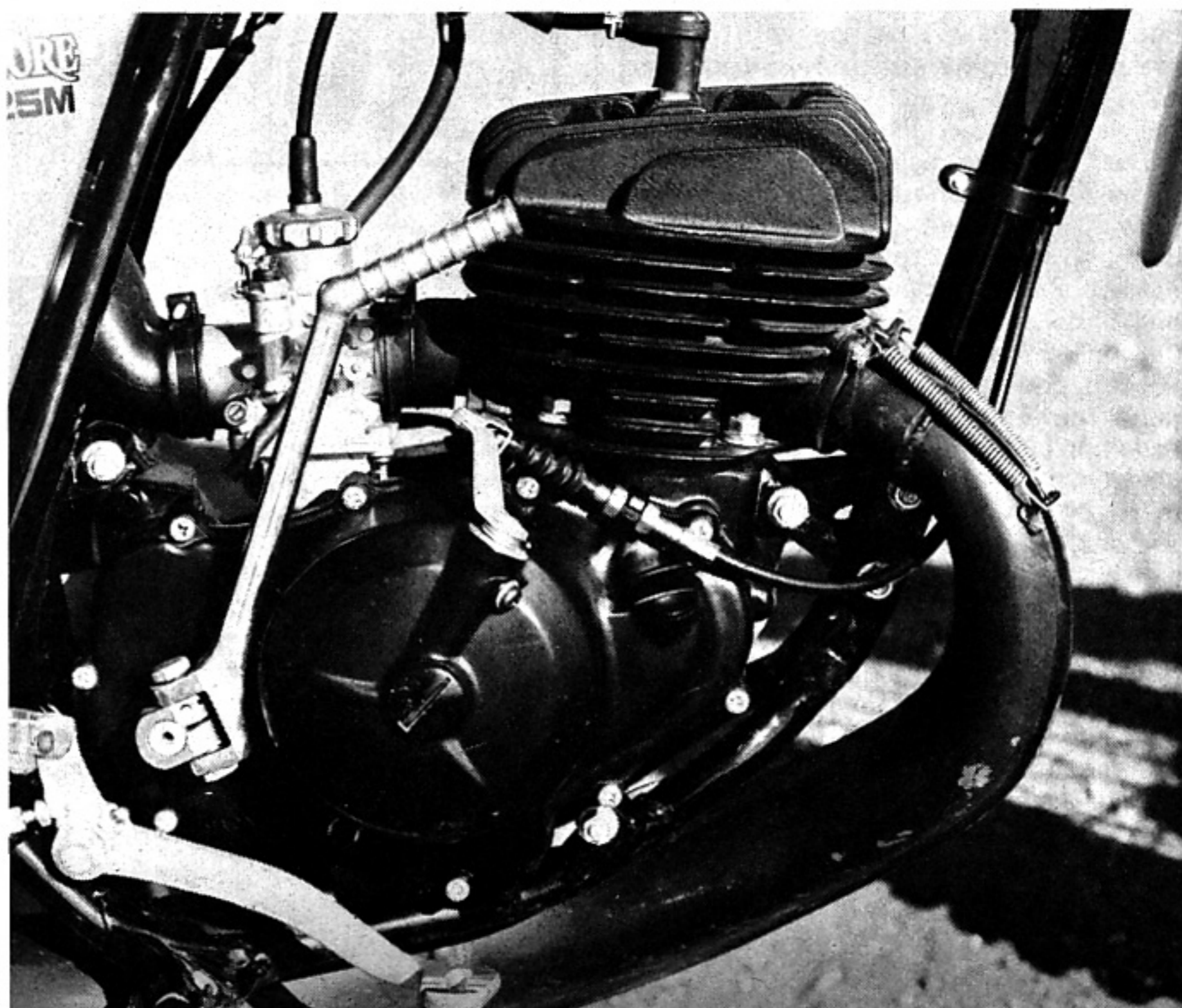
Now for the changes. The first on your list is the air cleaner. Last year's machine had an acceptable filter, but it was a little too restrictive. Now it's a monster, with a larger airbox and less mohair material on the filter. We popped a Twin Air filter in ours and slept better at night. The bike breathes easier and cleaner now.

As you'll notice from the photos the pipe has been changed. It is now very similar to the Flying Machine Factory



Tires, brakes, forks and fender are all top rate and don't need to be replaced.

Externally the engine looks the same. The kickstarter is bent a little different and you might want to do some relocating of the brake pedal.



pipe, which is like the DG pipe, which is like the CH pipe, which is, well, you get the idea. Honda got smart and made their own pipe. It's a little off. More on that later.

Breaking footpegs off because of lacking welds is now remedied. Honda hired a new welder at the factory, and he obviously knows what he's doing. The entire frame is a bit sturdier, but doesn't add any weight.

Porting on the barrel has changed, turning your basic 125 Elsinore into a machine with a better top end and some more mid-range grunt. It starts just as easily as last year's machine, and cleans out quicker when it gets loaded up.

The kill switch used to be a real pain.



We experienced some fade and pump characteristics on the rear shocks during 45-minute motos. The rear sprocket has been beefed up.

finishing out the products this year.

Riding the little Elsinore is a real pleasure. If there is a machine that is more forgiving, fun and faster (stock-wise) in the 125 class, we haven't found it yet.

Taking your Elsinore out of the hole, you have the choice of either first or second gear. When using the latter, you will require some talented clutch slippage, but with a little practice, you'll get the idea down pat. Starting in second gear can be a great advantage in the 125



You could slam the bike into a berm super-hard, and if you weren't careful, your right wrist would brush against the kill switch, shutting off the bike right at the wrong time. A few high sides were anticipated. Honda has now moved to the button-type switch, located on the left side of the handlebars. By the way, the bars are now black "to increase rider visibility" according to the Honda PR people. We don't know about the visibility factor, but black does look better.

Elsinore owners in the past have had to modify their rear sprocket, due to the fact that it would spin free, breaking the bolts. The new Elsinore cures that problem, with a beefier setup that looks like it would hold.

The top triple clamp has been cleaned up and looks a lot better, appearance-wise. It doesn't affect the riding of the bike, but what we were offered last year looked like a very rough sand casting, done in the sandbox of a local kindergarten. Honda took a little more time in

class. Preston Petty, the plastic wizard with the computer brain, has figured out that the average rider loses anywhere from 15 to 20 feet down a straightaway, and six to eight feet at the start every time he shifts. Imagine what you can get away with when you come out of the gate, knowing that you've got a six-foot edge.

The power on the little Elsinore is still punched with surprises. It comes out of the hole like an untamed banshee, getting the power to the ground and through the gears as quickly as you can.

Mid-air cross-ups are as easy to achieve as putting on your helmet.



move your right wrist and your left foot. The Elsinore does require a lot of shifting, but the rewards are plentiful.

With the slightly altered powerband, the new 125 Elsinore is easier to work with. For instance, on last year's bike you had to be very careful if you wanted to leave the front end in the air all the way through the gears. The powerband was rather sudden, and it could easily tip you over backwards. Now you can stand the little racer up after you get over the starting gate pipe, and not have to kiss the front wheel on the ground when you shift gears. It's a smoother powerband, but hasn't detracted from the speed.

On one of the uphill sections at one track, the 125 would pull the front end up in fourth gear, allowing you to loft your way through the bigger bumps on the course. If you slam into a berm in second, and with halfway decent trac-

tion, you can carry the front end into the next corner.

On a flat-out drag race, the Elsinore shouldn't have any problems pulling with the best of them. As a matter of fact, if you get blown off consistently, it's either by a very trick 125 or your jetting and timing are way off. There's no reason to be the follower into the first corner, except for lack of muscles.

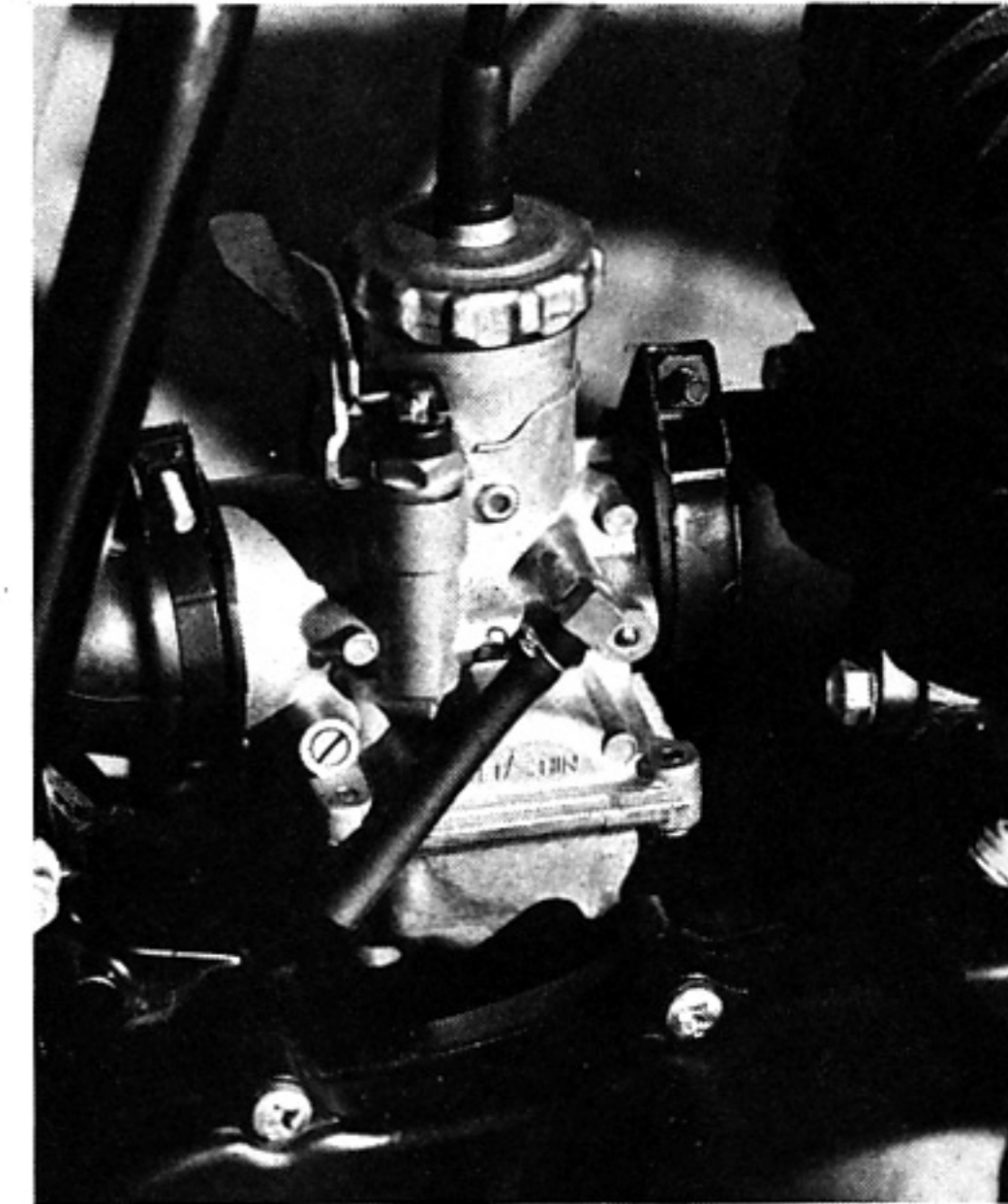
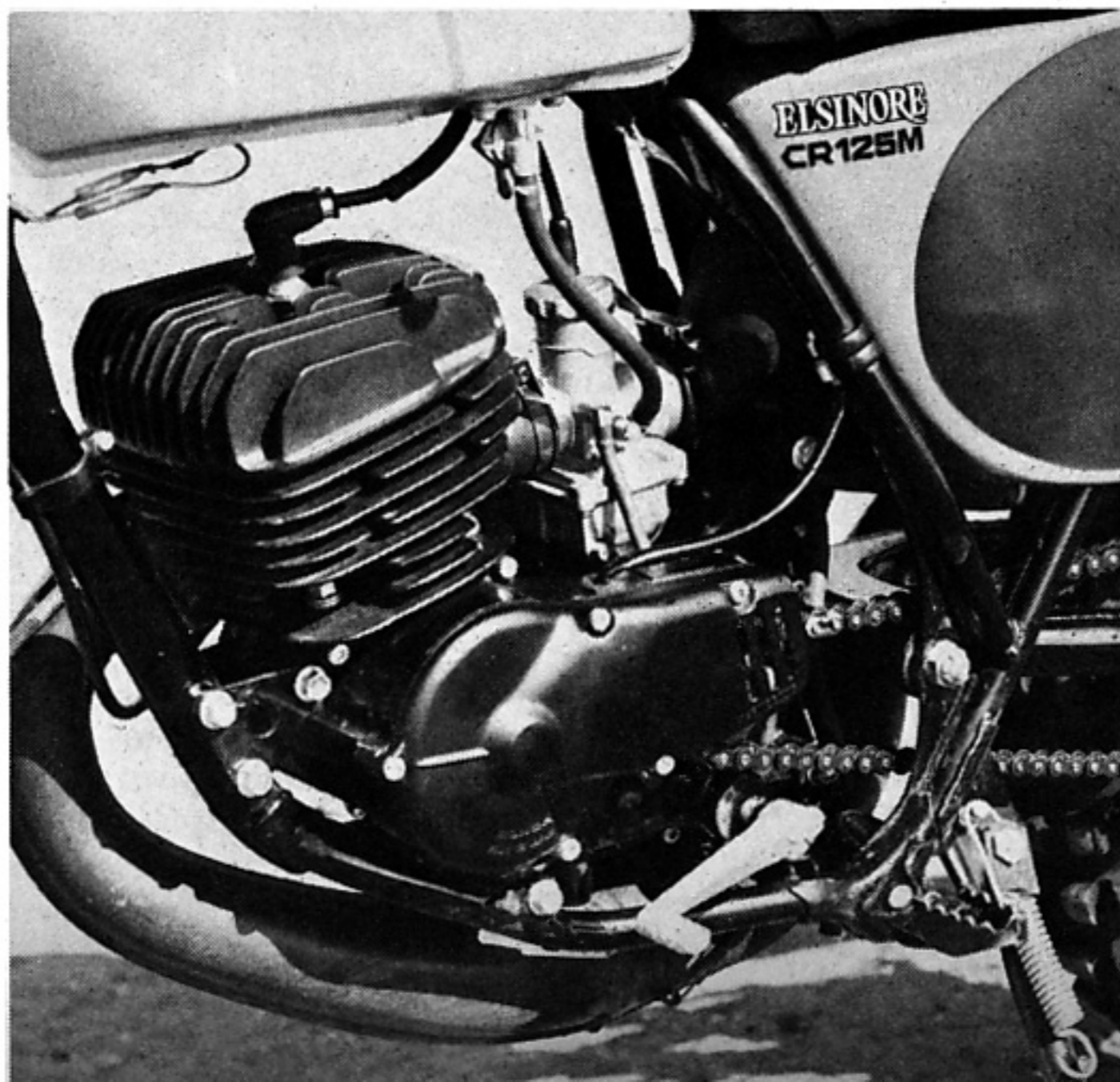
Being light, and a great handler, the 125 Elsinore allows you to conquer boredom on any track. You'll find yourself going out of your way to smash down that berm, or fly over that jump. The 125 instills confidence, and allows the rider to make mistakes and still come out gleaming.

One of our test riders got so confident with the machine that he was falling down because of it. Going into a berm, he didn't like the position that the bike



Sitting up on the tank will allow the rear end to slide way out, but not to the point that it deposits you on the track.

Drilling a few holes in your shifter will help to keep the gearbox and the shifting shaft happy. Notice the extra weld on the footpegs, where they broke previously.



The 28mm Keihin is still the best carb for feeding the stock 125 Elsinore.

was headed in. A well-planted leg, some grunt, and the bike was off the ground, ready to be redeposited somewhere else on the berm. Unfortunately, he picked it up and over the top of the berm, doing one of the few cheek berm shots that we've seen.

You can square turns, ride all the way through, monorail the berm, or just plain ignore it altogether. The Elsinore sits relatively low to the ground, allowing you to get away with ridiculous slides that would have otherwise dumped you on the track with a different mount. We must also give the handling a nod for these kind of results.

Straightaways don't present much of a problem either. The excellent front forks, coupled with the warm setup rear shocks, will allow you to go through a rough section of the track with more confidence, and quite often a gear higher. A word of caution: If you've got your Elsinore cooking along in sixth gear at your

average motocross course, you shouldn't be riding motorcycles. See if you can get a ride in a jet-powered dragster. Sixth gear is just too fast for many tracks. In a GP where there is a long straightaway, you can click into the top cog, but otherwise you'll probably never use it. Fifth is plenty fast.

We tried two aftermarket pipes on our Elsinore during the tests—the Skyway and the DG pipe. The Skyway is designed to pull a better usable mid-range and a higher top rpm reading. It did both very well, much better than stock. For instance, if you went into a corner a gear too high, the Skyway pipe would usually pull the bike along and get it back up on the powerband without the use of clutch slippage. At \$69.95, it might just be the ticket for a slightly quicker Elsinore that got a little kick in the pants at the mid-range department.

some local Honda shops.

As far as the myth of re-ringing your Elsinore goes, let's clear up the problem now. You don't have to re-ring your bike between motos, or every two races, or every six hours, or every time you go riding for a day. Proper maintenance and a check of ring clearance tolerances will tell you when to change the rings. You can probably bore out your 125 to sixth over, long enough for the average rider to put a good three years on the bike before hunting for a new cylinder liner.

One thing to watch on your bike is the shift lever. It might be to your advantage to drill a couple of holes in the lever so that if you fall hard on the left side, the shock won't be transmitted straight to the gearbox. With the holes drilled, the shifter will snap in half instead of taking your entire 12 gears with it.

If you take the clutch apart, be sure

that the pressure plate is back on correctly. If you button up the sidecase, and the clutch lever won't work the clutch, you've got the pressure plate sitting in the wrong holes. Many a dealer has taken pleasure in getting a bike through the repair shop with this ailment. It takes about 15 minutes to fix, and could cost you about 20 bucks at some shops. Keep an eye on what you're doing.

To date, we feel that the 125 Elsinore is the best out-of-the-crate 125 motocrosser available. We'll probably get a lot of letters in regard to that statement, both pros and cons. But we still think that the Elsinore has proved itself in competition in the last year, both by winning and filling in the next 40-odd positions in the field. The Kawasaki comes in a close second, followed by the Suzuki and the Yamaha. But the Yamaha is rumored to come with a monoshock system next year, which should change its placing in the ranks. But for now, your Honda dealer has the most potent trophy-catcher in the business. Just make sure that you have a long mantelpiece over the fireplace. You'll probably need it.



The new pipe and different color (red) are the only big changes. The Honda 125 Elsinore is still a rocket ship at the top of its class.

The DG pipe is definitely not for the medium-experienced rider in the 125 class. It is a screamer pipe, plain and simple. It adds gobs and gobs of high rpm power, but a wrong gear into a corner will take at least another 10 feet to correct if the bike doesn't load up. For the average rider, DG's screamer top-end pipe isn't the hot setup. For the professional who knows his machine and wants to go even faster without a lot of engine work, the pipe is just right.

Tires on the Elsinore are about the most sought-after items in the 125 market. A lot of riders will give their first-born male for a new set, once the old ones start showing cord. Last year, this was a problem, but we have been seeing many of the stock tires popping up at

Max. Pts.	NUMERICAL EVALUATION	
10	Power	10
10	Powerband	10
10	Acceleration	10
10	Transmission	
	(5) Ratios	5
	(5) Operation	5
10	Suspension	
	(5) Front	5
	(5) Rear	4
10	Brakes	
	(5) Front	5
	(5) Rear	5
10	General handling	10
30	Miscellaneous	
	(5) Starting	5
	(5) Rider comfort	4
	(5) Quality of craftsmanship	4
	(5) Riding maneuverability	5
	(5) Tires	5
	(5) Noise level	3
100 pts.	Overall Rating	95 pts.

HONDA CR 125M

Suggested Retail Price: \$895.00

ENGINE

Engine type 2-S, single, piston-port
 Bore and stroke, mm 56 x 50
 Displacement, cc 123
 Horsepower/rpm (claimed) n.a.
 Torque/rpm (claimed) n.a.
 Compression ratio 7.6:1
 Air filtration foam filter
 Carburetion 28mm Keihin
 Lubrication in fuel
 Ignition CDI

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission 6-speed
 Clutch type wet, multi-disc
 Primary drive n.a.
 Final drive ratio n.a.

CHASSIS

Chassis type single downtube
 Overall length, in. 80.3
 Seat height, in. n.a.
 Peg height, in. 8.9
 Ground clearance, in. 7.7
 Wheelbase, in. 53
 Weight, lbs. (as tested) 178
 FR/RR wt. bias, percentages n.a.
 Tires, front 2.75 x 21
 rear 3.50 x 18