You can't win on a trail bike—but you can with these factory racers

125 SHOOTOUT

BULTACO/CZ/DKW

by the staff of Dirt Bike

As promised, here's DIRT BIKE'S in-depth 125 comparison test. We put this test off for a while, simply because most of our staff members are on the beefy side. No shrinking violets here; everyone rides a 250 or bigger.

After riding the bigger machines for a while, one tends to think of the 125s as underpowered little ring-dings, suitable for learning on and that's all. Hence, there was no great eagerness on our part to spend a great deal of time on the smaller machines.

This was narrow thinking on our part. Quite frankly, we had a ball riding and evaluating these bikes, and were sorry to see them returned to their rightful owners. To ensure that we would have a fair evaluation, DIRT BIKE invited a gawdawful large number of people to participate in the testing. Aside from our regular people, we'd like to thank the following riders for their unflinching help:

Andy DeLaTorre, who supplied not only a 125 CZ motocrosser, but his sponsored teenage whiz racer, Greg Robertson. Greg has been cleaning house at all of the local tracks on his MID-VALLLEY-tuned CZ. Greg was unbiased in his evaluations on the test machines and has a lot of know-how for such a young squirt.

Woodland Hills Sportcycle, which let big, hairy Steve Riggens out of his cage temporarily for use as a test rider. We thought it was a good idea. If Steve can't break a bike, then it must be strong. Sportcycle handles Bults and Suzukis.

Steve's Bultaco Sales (of Van Nuys, California), which brought pretty Janene Pennington and a pair of Bul Sherpa S's. Janene is double-quick, and has even trophied against the men in motocross. She's sponsored out of Steve's. Look for a story on her soon.

Ted Lapadaikis, owner of Hercules Distributing Co. (distributor of Fuch and DKW), who gave us a 125 DKW with tears in his eyes, when informed that big Steve Riggens would be one of the test riders. The DKW, by the way, is still intact.

John DeSoto, who took time off from his busy schedule to help us evaluate the bikes. John turned lap times around the Rough Rider MX course almost as fast as the lap record for big bikes, on each of the 125s. Gasp!

Landing was no problem with Bul's soft suspension.
TESTING THE 125s

Initial riding was done on a familiarization basis, to get the feel of the different machines. Only the DKW required break-in time, as it was brand new. The CZ was race ready, as were the Buls. One of the Buls was Janene Pennington's specially prepared racer, and was far from stock. The other was a standard Bul Sherpa S.

BULTACO 125

One thing became immediately apparent in the comparison test: the 125 Sherpa "S" is the fastest of the three as far as sheer acceleration goes. The little red Bul is a screamer.

Initial impressions are favorable. The seating position is very low, enabling all but the shortest riders to plant both feet flat on the ground. However, this low seating position is combined with rather high pegs, making the rider contract thigh muscles more so than with the other test bikes, when seated.

Most of the time, except when cornering, will be spent standing for maximum control. Going from a seating position to a standing position requires a lot more work, as the distance from the saddle to a full standing position is quite long.

Everything works just fine on the Bultaco while accelerating in a straight line. The front end is light, but not uncontrollably so.

When entering the first hard corner, a number of things become apparent. The bike can be leaned over to incredible angles before it breaks loose, but when it does break loose, the front end will wash out first.

Cornering is best accomplished by getting the body weight as far forward as possible. For most riders, this means getting right up on the gas tank. Failure to do this means early front-end wash out and an out-of-control machine.

The most efficient way to corner the 125 Sherpa is to keep as much weight as possible on the outside peg and take the turn like a speedway rider, with the opposite foot skimming the ground lightly. This demands a half-standing, half-crouching attitude.

The smoother and looser the corner, the easier the bike is to corner. Choppy or rough corners demand an extra ratio of attention and concentration.

The 125 Sherpa was a natural slider as long as weight was forward.

Chain adjustment, by snail-type adjusters, is superior to bolts.

The Sherpa is an easy slider, but gives very little warning when the limits of adhesion have been reached. One moment, a rider might be nicely crossed up with the power on, then whoops—too far, and a slide out.

A much better alternative might be to square off as many turns as possible. This the Bul will do with accuracy and little danger of slide outs.

Landing from jumps is a strong point. The suspension, both front and rear, cannot be faulted. Impact is absorbed easily, and no head shaking or flex can be felt through the bars.

The longish (for a 125) 54-plus-inch wheelbase does a great job over rough straights and choppy sections. The Sherpa tracks straight and true with minimal rear end hop.

The bike is fast, but peaky. If the rider becomes careless and leaves the machine in a higher gear than should be, the engine will promptly blubber and barf. A quick snick at the shift lever will bring the revs right back up, however.

USABLE POWER doesn't start to happen until well up in the rpm range, but once on the pipe, the Sherpa is as fast as many average 250s. One thing takes some getting used to: the effective power is just a short blast. Then shift before the revs drop, then another short spurt of power and do it all over again. The gear box really has to be stirred.

Shifting is butter-smooth and the clutch can be ignored if the rider is so inclined. The lever throw is short and positive, with few missed gears.

Anal concentric received air through poorly designed air cleaner.

DI RT BI KE
Impromptu race between Buls had Janene Pennington in front.

Down pipe was tucked in nicely. Engine was very compact.

Pegs and controls are well-placed, but kickstarter is awkward.

Steve Riggen uses body action over turn-jump on the Sherpa S.

Brakes are somewhat better than on larger Buls tested, but the rear brake is on the snatchy side. The front brake is spot on. Controls, in general, work smoothly and are placed to work easily without undue stretching or groping.

Bits and pieces on the Bultaco:
At last, the gas cap doesn’t leak. This is a far cry from the set-ups of the past that passed gas like a weak bladder.
The bars are fine, but the bar clamps are flimsy U-bolts that don’t
offer much in the way of solidity. The standard grips feel like something from a two-dollar golf club and are sure to create blisters.

The kickstarter is on the right side, awkwardly placed. Fortunately, the bike is an easy starter, except when cold.

Carburetion is by that gawdawful Amal concentric, but seemed to do a fair job on our test bike. Check that slide often though, as they do break from vibration on occasion.

The air cleaner is the absolute worst ever encountered to date and looks like it was taken from a $29.95 lawn mower... or worse.

The glass tank is slim and nicely finished, as is all the glass. Fenders are polished metal and re bendable.

Seat shape is about right for not getting in the way, but could stand a tad more in the way of padding.

First-rate alloy rims are carried front and rear.

Foot pegs are spring loaded, but on the slippery side. There are good replacement pegs on the market, and these should be considered by any prospective Bul owner.

The 125 Sherpa S is a nice package, but will soon be replaced by a new 125 model, tentatively named the 125 Pursang. The other Sherpas will remain. One thing about the 125 Sherpa: if you are passed on a straightaway, it isn't the bike's fault.

**DKW 125**

The DKW is an ugly little duckling. Looking at it resting against its side stand from 15 feet away, the little popper looks like somebody must be pulling your stump. Those funny-looking leading link forks, steel fenders and that chubby gas tank—they just aren't the In thing for a competitive piece of machinery.

Throw a leg over its black naugahyde seat and grip the bars. The seat feels right. It's not plushy soft, but there's a lot of cushion under your dead end and it's just narrow enough to make it comfortable to stand on the pegs without having to ride bow-legged.

The high-mounted expansion chamber mounts out of the way of the right leg, and the heat shield works well. At no time does anybody have a warm leg.

The controls are placed perfectly. They seem to be right where all the test riders expect them to be. No one has to think about where the rear brake pedal is to apply the rear brake; just think about slowing down and it'll happen on the Deck.

Along with the usual handlebar controls is an additional little lever. It resembles a compression release lever, but it's actually connected to the richening device on the carb.

With this tricky little gadget, it's no longer necessary to crouch over the tank to tickle the carb—nor is it necessary to ride with the left glove index finger soaked with gas. Hold the little lever down, right hand on the throttle, and give it a little kick—just one little kick.

Straight from the crate and all during the test, it never took more than one kick. It started once for a test rider who was just trying to get the engine up on compression preparatory to giving it the actual starting kick.

After that one kick, you notice that the exhaust note is subdued. The DKW is delivered with a J & R
silencer fitted to the chamber.

Reactions to it were mixed; some riders thought there was more power with it, others felt more ponies without it.

The deep, sandwash test pretty well proved it once and for all. The DKW would not pull fourth gear through the soft stuff until the silencer was clamped on.

Handling in deep sand is excellent. Most small machines, with their narrow tires, slice into the soft ground and wallow around, handlebars flapping uselessly. But the DKW is surprisingly good, considering the amount of power on hand to keep the front end light.

There are those who think the leading link fork is real Mickey Mouse, that they are old-fashioned. The truth is, nobody cares what the forks look like when they do a fantastic job of holding up the front half of the bike over a horrendous array of bumps, holes, ruts, logs and dead cows that would destroy many of the racers available today.

The DKW is capable of higher speeds over rough ground than most other motorcycles on the market today because of those funny forks. The one comment most prevalent among the test riders concerned the excellent handling and the incredibly smooth ride.

Deep holes do not upset the little bike nor cause the rear end to hop around. It tracks perfectly over ruts and grooves without that peculiar “hunting” that some machines are afflicted with.

Throw it into a smooth sweeper, down shift, dial in some rpm and instant, controllable power slides result. The DKW is a very predictable skidder, probably due to ability of the suspension to absorb the rough stuff without throwing man and machine off balance.

JUMPS ARE A pleasure on the 125. The suspension takes up the jolt of landing and smoothes it to the point where the rider is not too sure of just when the wheels touched the ground.

Over the jumps, handling is impeccable. The front wheel naturally assumes the proper attitude, and if the jump is taken cross-eyed, the DKW lands sideways and continues as if the jump wasn’t really there.

Washboard ripple bumps prove no problem. At any speed over them, the bike seems to ignore the ground and continues on its way with only a

Detailing and finish on the DKW are as sanitary as any street bike.

Leading link front end is soft, yet has no side-to-side flex.

Massive sunburst finning keeps the engine cool at all times.

DKW has narrow lines, making stand-up riding comfortable.
fast, gentle rocking of the entire bike. But the washboard bumps do prove a problem for the brakes and they indirectly involve the suspension. The front brake is not a floating unit, and when the brake is applied, the forks lock rigid. Since those ripple bumps always form in the approach to a turn where brakes are applied, the DKW runs into some difficulty there. The bike is not uncontrollable, but it certainly lets the rider know that it is not happy with the situation. Mechanically speaking, there is not too much involved in adapting the brake to a floating unit. That conversion would eliminate only the design fault in the entire motorcycle.

The only other hassle during the test was the rear spokes. They constantly loosened, and had to be retightened five or six times. We suspect that the thread tolerances on the spokes were too loose, and that vibration unscrewed the nipples. Good ol’ 3M would no doubt fix that.

There is no problem with the engine. This willing little 123cc piston-port popper pulls like a mini-tractor from just above idle all the way up. It seems impossible to lug the engine too much. In spite of a lot of low rpm use during the test, it never loaded up; the original plug is still in the head. The power is down a little for serious racing, but that would be a relatively easy modification to lay on the ports when it becomes necessary. However, for most, there is plenty of power.

SURPRISE! The gearbox multi-neutral hassle has been fixed. No longer does the DKW have five gears and six neutrals. The test bike collected no more missed shifts than is expected of a new, tight transmission.

The gears are well-spaced except for the gap between first and second. The big jump is most noticeable on starts and in very slow sections of a hairpin turn. Its necessary to scream the engine before clogging into second for the best drive, but the torque curve will pull the bike and rider out if he blows the shift.

The rest of the gear spacing works well in all situations. Shifts can be made both with and without the clutch. It makes no difference to the gearbox, and the clutch never protests abusive slipping in tight situations. (All during the test, the clutch did not require any adjustment—which is a good indication of how tough it is.)

Bits and pieces on the DKW:
- The extra-large tank is nice for a long day's riding. Rebeschable levers are handy for the clumsy rider.
- Engine protection is first-rate, as is the chain guide.
- Handlebars are a good compromise for the average rider.
- Kick start lever is short and hits the footpeg at an awkward angle.
- Steel fenders could be replaced with lightweight plastic units to save weight.
- Sidestand works well in soft dirt and is out of the way when folded up.
- Steel footpegs would not be slippery in muddy conditions.
- Air cleaner is mounted out of the way and draws air from under the seat, where it is cleanest.
- Enormous headfins are large enough for a 360.
- Welds are clean and well finished; paint is flawless.
- It should be obvious by now that the staff loved the DKW. It was raced, it was put to use as a camera-equipment mule, it was used to make runs on the job. Every possible excuse was used to ride it—which is the best compliment any test bike can have.

The distributors made it perfectly clear that more power was available with minimal porting modifications, but the engine is delivered in a milder state of tune. To better reach peaky as the Bultaco, for example, much of the tractability and low-end power is lost.

As Ted Lapadatkis says, "You can make a 125 as fast as you want; it just depends how much you're willing to give up."

CZ 125

The CZ 125 has approximately the same feel as its bigger brother, the 250. You cannot tell any difference in feel by sitting on it; the layout is nearly identical.

Handling is as near neutral as any motorcycle tested to date. The machine will do exactly what it's supposed to do—nothing more and nothing less. It is not forgiving, but there is nothing there to surprise the rider, either.

The CZ can be tracked, slid or squared off through a corner. It just doesn't seem to make any difference in efficiency or speed. None of the rear end hop so prevalent in the 250 and 360 CZs is present. This may be due to the fact that not as much jolt-power is on tap.

On long bumpy uphills, the bigger CZs move all over the place when under heavy throttle, but rarely go past the point of no return. The 125 never approaches this point.

The wheelbase is a whopping 54-plus inches, which helps smooth out the terrain, but the CZ did not track as straight as either the Bul or the DKW. The difference was slight, however.

At a not too fast forward in the saddle to keep the front wheel biting when the bike was heeled over. Again, the neutral feel. The rider doesn't have to move around too much to make the bike work, but he must spend most of his time standing on the pegs for precision. You just don't sit down and go fast on the CZ.

The CZ is the best slider of the three machines tested. Front end is quick and precise and can be raised in the air with just a little fore and aft. The suspension is not as soft as the Bultaco or as forgiving as the DKW.

It is not a bike than one can jump on and ride fast instantly; the CZ takes some getting used to. The more one spends in the saddle, the better and more confidence-inspiring the machine feels.

Power is less than the Bultaco, but more than the DKW. It has a broader power band than the Bul, and the engine will not load up if forced to pull at lower rpm. A good guess is that the engine pulls reasonably from 4000, increasing predictably as the revs build. There is no big surge at any one spot in the rpm range.

THE CZ EXCELS in the tight "S" bends, and can be flogged from side to side easily. Downhills are another story. Lack of a full-floating rear brake causes some rear-end hop while braking.

Traction is excellent with the big 4.00 x 18 Barum on the back—perhaps too much traction for the power available. Some riders have gone to a smaller 3.50 rear knobbly and have found the bike easier to keep up on the pipe.

The front, shod with a 2.75 x 21 Barum knobbly, works well except in very deep sand. A 3.00 x 21 would seem to be the answer here.

Shifting is typical CZ. Very posi-
Light conical hub is laced to steel 21-inch rim.

Non-stock Koni shocks and 4.00 x 18 Barum knobby helped handling.

Baby Jakov carb kept engine fairly tractable, but hard-starting.

The CZ's long wheelbase kept bike straight when jumping.

Wide power band enabled rider to make full use of berms.

The 125 CZ had narrowest lines of the three bikes.

tive, but very long on the lever throw. Shifting without the clutch is no problem. In fact, the machine can be slammed in gear at the start without using the clutch if the weight is kept forward. Good for quick starts.

The fins are large, letting the engine run cool. At first glance, many will mistake it for a 250. The 125 incorporates a mag/flywheel with the points exposed for easy timing.

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There are no adjustment for the levers at the handlebars, but at least your controls will never slip around the bar.

The stock pegs are solid, round, slippery bars that must be immediately replaced. With anything else.

Overall finish is fantastic. The bike is flat beautiful, while still retaining a functional look. It comes standard with a sizeable still air box and a Filtron.

The overall package is that a strictly functional machine, with absolutely no frills added. It does everything well, but nothing spec-
tacularly. The CZ is a very straightforward machine and that’s the way they build all of them. Rugged, competent and reliable.

**SUMMARY OF THE TEST MACHINES**

The Bultaco emerges as the fastest of the three, but is slightly more at home on the smoother tracks. It puts out as much horsepower as can be reliably extracted from a 125.

The DKW is delivered in a milder state of tune, but can be readily and easily modified to a fire-breather. It excels on the rougher terrain, especially cross-country. On the smoother courses, it is at a slight disadvantage.

The CZ is an all-round bike that can be ridden anywhere with little more than a gearing change. The rider will have to choose his mount by the type of riding he will do, making the decision a little less diffi-
cult.
TEST BIKE SPEC SHEET

CZ 125 (Model 984.1)

Price, suggested retail: $865
Engine type: Single-cylinder, two-stroke
Displacement: 123.5cc (7.53 CID)
Bore and stroke: 55 x 52 (2.16 x 2 inches)
Compression Ratio: 13:1
Carburetion: JIKOV Model 292B SE
HP @ RPM: Claimed: 19 @ 7800 rpm
Actual: N/A
Clutch: Dry plate
Primary Drive: Gear
Final Drive: Chain
Gear Ratio: N/A
Air Filtration: Filtron
Electrical System: 8-volt magneto ignition
Lubrication: Oil in gas—pre-mix
Recommended Fuel: 20:1 fuel/oil mixture
with Castrol GP 50W—Ethyl
Recommended Oil: Castrol
Fuel Capacity: 1.76 Imperial Gallons
Frame: Tubular enclosed (same as 250 & 400 frame)
Suspension: Front: Hyd. shock, 170mm stroke, telescopic fork; Rear: Hyd. shock, 90mm stroke, swingarm
Tires: Front: BARUM 2.75 x 21 MX, 3.00 x 21 desert; Rear: BARUM 4.00 x 18
Wheels: Front: Steel; Rear: Steel
Dimensions: Wheelbase: 54.0 inches; Ground Clearance: 11.0 inches; Seat Height: 32.0 inches; Weight: Claimed: 206 pounds; Actual: N/A
Instrument: None
Brakes: Front: 160 x 35mm (6.3 x 1.38 inches); Rear: 180 x 25mm (7.1 x .98 inches)

TEST BIKE SPEC SHEET

DKW 125 Motocross

Price, suggested retail: $768
Engine type: Single cylinder, two-stroke, piston port
Displacement: 123cc
Bore and stroke: 54 x 54mm
Compression Ratio: 8.0:1
Carburetion: 26mm Bing
HP @ RPM: Claimed: 18.3 at 8000 rpm
Actual: N/A
Clutch: Multiple-disc, wet
Primary Drive: 2.10:1 Helical-cut gears
Final Drive: 4:1, 14-56, 428-pitch chain
Gear Ratio: 2.73
3 1.95
4 1.5
5 1.24
Air Filtration: Still-air box—paper
Electrical System: Bosch dynamo-magneto, 6V
Lubrication: Oil in gas—pre-mix
Recommended Fuel: Regular, 20:1 oil mix (break-in), 15 oz.—4 gal. for running
Recommended Oil: Torco 30W
Fuel Capacity: 2.5 gallons
Frame: Large-diameter backbone with bolted cradle and downtube
Suspension: Front: Leading link, Boge shock, 6.3 in. travel; Rear: Swingarm, Boge shock, 4.6 in. travel
Tires: Front: 3.00 x 21 Metzeler Knobby; Rear: 3.50 x 18 Metzeler Knobby
Wheels: Front: Steel; Rear: Steel
Dimensions: Wheelbase: 54.0 inches; Ground Clearance: 11.0 inches; Seat Height: 32.0 inches; Weight: Claimed: 206 pounds; Actual: N/A; Width: 32 inches
Instrument: None
Brakes: Metal-impregnated linings, single shoe, internal expanding

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