But it handles
by the
Staff of DIRT BIKE

The second most obnoxious cult in our sport is The CZ Riders Of The World. We are not going to tell you what the first most obnoxious cult is; you'll have to figure that out yourself. Yes indeedy-do, CZ freaks are hard core people.

In fact, we have one here at the plush DB offices: George. We have a lot of fun with George and go out of our way to make a large number of crude remarks about CZs whenever we can, and he responds accordingly by getting all red in the face and stammering out obscenities. A normal session goes about like so:

“Hey Chet. Take a look at this bogus set of handlebars. They must weigh a ton — probably came off a new CZ. Haw haw.”

(From the other room...) “Oh yeh, you ZX5%68*64537)8%当你2%4%6%8, laff all you want. If it came from a CZ, it’ll never break like that wimpy trash on your Breako.”

See what we mean? They’re fiercely loyal to the brand and will defend CZ at the drop of PAL.

When you press George, or any other CZ freak, about their undying love for CZs, they’ll invariably boast about the legendary reliability of the bike and attempt to play down the weak points. What about the zit-like shocks, you ask?

“Well, you’re supposed to put Koni on. Everybody does. Don’t you know any better?”

But they’re so gawdawful heavy, you...
protest.

"Hey now... take that metal tank off and slip on a plastic thingy and you save ten pounds right away. Kee-rist. You can't expect the factory to do everything for you."

But the picky-picky staff of DIRT BIKE has indeed come to expect the factory to do a lot more for you nowadays. After bikes like the dazzling Elsinore and some of the latest race-ready Bultacos, the way a CZ is sold to the public is almost unforgivable. Sure, it can be made right. But why should you - the buyer - have to spend so much of your own money to get all those goodies?

"Just wait till we get the new CZ," warns George. "It's got all the trick stuff on it. And light? You bet."

So we waited until we got a phone call from American Jawa. Ring ring ring. "Hullo. Offices of DIRT BIKE. You wanna buy a sub or something?"

"No. Dis be Amerrikan Jawa (that's the way they say it). Ve haft a bike for Doort Bike. Come und pik it up. Now."

"Hey," Chet yells, "which one of you guys wants to pick up the CZ? It's ready."

We hear a door slam and a wisp of smoke is rising from George's spinning chair.

Three hours later, he comes in the office with a big grin on his face; like he'd just made out with the girl with the biggest you-know-whats in town. "It's here," he says reverently.

We wandered down to the heat-treated DB parking lot and gave it the famed "once-over." Looked weird. Red frame. Silver gray parts and, what's this? New shocks! Wonder if they work any better than the old ones? That's dumb. Of course they have to work better than the old ones - anything worked better than the old ones.

George ran around the track in little circles, pointing to this and that. We tried to calm him down till Wednesday.

Ah yes. Wednesday. That's the day we usually take off every week to go riding. Seeing as George was the most nervous of the group, we let him ride the bike first. The bike fired right up and ran clean. Too clean, in fact. When a two-stroke runs that clean from ice cold, it's probably jetted on the rich side. And, conversely, when it warms up it'll probably blubber some.

After about a half-tank of break-in gas, George started to push it a bit. We took pictures and observed. Then we took turns riding and made him take pictures and observe.
Cornering is still exactly what you expect from CZ: precise, exact, comfortable and not very spectacular.

Single-spark mill, cross-over-axle brake rod, new frame and various familiar parts mark the ‘74.

Stuff it, or slide it, both work. Mostly, try to do both.

Stock pipe is too loud, and — according to inputs we get from CZ owners — isn’t the best power setup.

Then we sat down and hashed over initial impressions. Conversation went thusly:

"Those shocks actually work, but I don’t think they have enough travel. But the rear end is soft until it bottoms out on the big bumps; then it’s harsh."

"Guess what? The famed CZ hop is gone. But the bike doesn’t feel as fast as a 250 is supposed to be."

"That front end bites better in the corners than anything. You just cannot make it wash out ... even on that baked enamel surface in the ‘S’ turns."

But initial impressions are sometimes misleading and we reserved judgment
until the bike had been ridden hard for a month and a half. It was raced several times and at least two tanks of gas were run through it every Wednesday by all the Staff and several other riders. It's safe to say that at least 20 different people rode that bike and gave us their opinions. And those opinions were remarkably similar.

Everyone agreed about the handling; it's what you've come to expect from CZ ... plus some refinement. The front wheelbase on this red-framer helps, but all the precise steering of the past is still present. The narrow Barum front knobby can be placed into exactly the line the rider desires without his even thinking hard about it. And to do this, the rider will not have to climb all over the tank like Bultaco riders must. Just plonk your old buns right down in the saddle and steer it where you want. Very little in the way of gymnastics required. Even during hairy-chested broadsides, the rider could more or less relax and play with the throttle for control.

It's a good thing one doesn't have to sit forward, because the shape of the rear section of the gas tank is awkward and a sure thigh-purple-er.

The only time the CZ gives a hint of hopping around is when passing over genuinely serious whoopie pies. Then, the rear end will start that old familiar side-to-side thud-thud-thud bit, and your stomach will get a sinking sensation. Naturally, if you are a long-time CZ rider, you ignore it and merely keep the throttle on, using several lanes of the course at one time. However, if you're like most of us, you'll just jump off the bike out of stark unadulterated fear.

The only deficiencies you'll notice in handling on a normal MX course are when you can't avoid the bumps and ruts. At this point, you realize that the suspension - while good - isn't good enough. Especially noticeable are the limited travel shocks. Even though damping was quite good, that rear wheel flat does not have enough up and down travel. Four inches - tops. In this day of forward mounted shocks and stock bikes with almost five inches of axle movement on the rear end, the CZ simply doesn't cut it. We had a chance to ride one of the new CZs with a pair of Koni mounted. Even though the Konis had only 3/4 of an inch more travel than the stock CZ shocks, it made all the difference in the world.

We talked to one of the CZ specialists - Mid Valley CZ - about the rear end, and they told us that the stock shocks were holding up well and many of their team riders were using them.

Additionally, we talked to a rider who had cut the frame on his new CZ and used the stock shock with a heavier spring instead of a Koni. He claimed it retained damping for at least a 30-minute moto. Whatever. At least CZ is giving the rider a decent shock on their latest effort.

However, the story up front is not as nice. Even though no one can scream and yell at the forks, they are still not as sophisticated as a lot of other units on the market; compared to Bultaco or Malco forks, they're harsh. More than one simple remedy is available.

Motorcross Action, our illegitimate offspring magazine, took the forks apart on their test CZ, did some spring swapping and drilled out the holes in the bottom of the dampers, and claimed it made them the match of anything you can buy.

We didn't do this to our test machine and can only take their word for it, but they seem like a relatively honest - though clumsy - group. It has been common practice for some time for CZ owners to install Coniani springs instead of the standard fork springs. Having ridden CZs with this change, we can vouch for the worthiness.

All things considered, the CZ is easy to ride quickly, but the bike is considerably down on power compared to the other bikes in its class. We were surprised at the readings we got on our first dyno run; so surprised, in fact, that we yanked the head and checked the timing. It was slightly off, so we retimed the bike to factory specs and tried it again. Not much improvement.

The bike would only register 24.5 horsepower at 6500 rpm and then it would sign off like somebody dropped an orange in the inlet tract. Sure, the low end and mid-range were nice, but not nice enough to justify giving away four or five horsepower to damn near everything else in the 250 class.

What this lack of power at the upper end of the rpm range means is this: Unless you pull a fan-tast-tick holeshot on everybody else, you're getting your shots blown off heading into that all-important first turn.

After checking around with all those aforementioned CZ freaks, we find out that the culprit is the exhaust pipe. Mid Valley CZ, always eager to sell you something, says they have a pipe that'll let the bike breathe on top. Even if you don't opt for a replacement pipe, most of the savvy shops cut the stock pipe and tuck it in closer to the shock. As it is now, a fall on the left side is going to foul the intake of the pipe. While you're cutting the pipe, the experts also tell us to get rid of the CZ muffler and put something else on. Anything else, in fact. Not a bad idea, because the stock setup is offensively loud and is a pathetic excuse for a silencing system. CZ has been stuffing off on the silencer bit for some time now, but there really is no excuse. Look at the new Montesa VR, for example. It's quieter than most street bikes and puts out a bunch more power than the CZ on top end in the mid-range. And it'll positively slaughter the CZ in a point to point drag race.

Quietly, we hope to get a chance to run some of the accessory pipes on the dyno at a later date to see if they live up to their claims.

Even with the lack of top end power, the CZ rider can turn competitive lap times as long as he keeps stirring the shift lever and operates in the mid-range of the powerband. Heavy flywheels let the rpm build up predictably and the rider can grab a handful without having the bike squirt out from under him in a corner.

It's not too hard to tiddle with the gearbox, either. Once the rider gets used...
Outrageous!!!

And filled to the staples with billions (nay, zillions) of important facts. Every possible conversion chart known to man is included somewhere in the mighty new DIRT BIKE Calendar and Almanac for 1974. Plus (eat your heart out Burt Reynolds) a full-color centerfold, with strategically placed staples, of SUPER HUNKY in the all-together.

Gas!

Each and every month of the year has its own dynamite full-color action photo of the top dirt riders in the business and a new feature: the official, unofficial DIRT BIKE Riders National Holidays Calendar. Featuring some of the exciting events in Dirt Bike history.

We still have a limited number of the 1973 Calendars. For those of you who especially liked that year. Living in the past? Swell, then order a few of the 1973’s dates and use them in the years to come.

DIRT BIKE CALENDAR
Box 317, Encino, CA 91316.

Enclosed is check or money order for [ ] copies of the DIRT BIKE CALENDAR. $1.50 each plus 25¢ each postage.

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promise to be better.

This is a spoiled marketplace right now and anything less than a full effort is going to be received exactly that way by the buyers. Yes, the bike handles impeccably. And yes, the power can be brought up to “standard.” But no, it isn’t fair to ask the customer to do it. Not for $1360, it ain’t. For $1095 . . . maybe.

BITES AND PIECES

The CZ legend of reliability held up just fine for us. Even though the bike had its wheels ridden off during the test, nothing broke. Nothing at all. Not even a spoke. Parts are horrendously expensive, but they will last far past the run-of-the-mill components most machines utilize.

Still the same old handlebars with the welded-on lever-things.

Superb waterproofing setup and the airbox is big and well protected. Saddle flaps dangle over the air inlet and protect it from airborne mung. Saddle is comely.

New brake pedal this year – nice and small. You can’t miss it, either.

Carburetor is by Jikov. Tee hee. More like carbonation than carburetion. Bing or Mikuni carbs are a huge improvement on Czs.

Tires are Barum – beyond reproach in performance, but wear out quickly. Traction front and rear is definitely superior under all conditions.

Pegs are decent boot-holders, but appear to be on the dangerous side. If one bites a fallen rider, he’ll have stitches to show at the next party.

The kickstarter must be depressed by hand to move it out to the stomping position. And if the bike doesn’t light off, you have to do it again. Still, it can’t flip out while you’re riding. Mixed emotions on that.

General layout and feel of all controls is excellent. The bike feels right. Someone over there knows how to make a bike feel good for all sized riders. Not one rider snarled about getting used to the machine.

And wonder of wonders... our fork seals did not leak!

SUMMARY

All things considered, the 250 CZ we tested would have been The Weapon last year. But this isn’t last year and things have changed so fast that it’s almost dizzying. It can be made right and the thing is ungodly reliable. Maybe that’s worth it to you. If you’re a CZ freak, that is. If you’re not, then you must look elsewhere.