We test a lot of different bikes here at MOTOCROSS ACTION, and we have the scars to prove it. The Bazzer, for instance, has a hole in his leg which is the exact size of a Can-Am 125 axle, while Mike's spine is permanently inscribed with the unmistakable imprint of a Yamaha 360's rear knobby — all the more impressive when you consider he'd been riding the bike mere seconds before. But that's all fluid into the dirt, as we say. Point is, when you ride and test lots of different motorcycles, you begin to look for ways to characterize them. Like this. Yamaha YZ250 — for experts only. Hodaka Combat Wombat — for the little bit of everything rider. Maico anything — for the man who wrenches as well as he rides.

Some bikes aren't so easy to classify, of course, but the new CZ 250 is. Right out front we'll tell you that the CZ is not an all-around bike, should not be bought by the guy who wants to maybe race, maybe cowtrail next Sunday. That's not what this bike is about. The CZ is an uncompromising motocross machine — but unlike...
Lookit that sprocket! They cut away everything but the teeth.

many other bikes which fall into its class, it is not an uncompromising motorcycle.

Uncompromising race bikes punish even the smallest mistake harshly. Pick the wrong line, put your weight in the wrong place, get on the throttle at the wrong time or in the wrong gear and you'll either go nowhere or end up on your head. The CZ, in contrast, compliments the good rider, yet doesn't punish the bad one unduly. It is an excellent bike to go from OK to excellent on, a safe enough bike to ride only "adequately." The power is not unpredictable, but it's there. The handling isn't chancy, it's natural. You do not have to overcome natural deficiencies in one area (say, handling) by making the bike work harder in another (say, speed). It's a package, not a trade-off. Maybe not as surgically precise as a Maico in the corners, it exits faster. Maybe not as explosion-quick out of those corners as a YZ, it enters and exits correctly, smoothly, with the least possible fuss. Because the Czech engineers have taken this package approach to building a motocrosser, the CZ rider is likely to get into and out of a given corner as quick, or quicker, on the average, than anyone else on stock machinery. And

While you're up there, cross up. The CZ will love you for it.
averages mean a lot in 20-minute-plus motos.

Because of the CZ combination of spot-on handling and power, the Czechoslovakian Trade Ministry has always been able to count on selling a bunch of them. This despite the fact that in recent years CZ has been a heavyweight among lightweights in the serious 250cc class. It may have weighed 240 pounds, but it was reliable, competitive and — maybe most of all — it was a CZ. So it sold. And it'll sell again this year, for all those reasons and a few less.

HOW IT CHANGED

Less? Yep, about 22 less to be exact; and in all the right places. On the gate, with a half-gallon of gas (and that's about enough for a 20-minute moto — no wastrel the CZ), a stone stock CZ weighs 218 pounds. Quite respectable, and it's relatively cheap and easy to go down from there. Trade the ten-pound steel coffin tank in on a plastic jobbie, and you've cut almost eight pounds. Replace the steel rear fender section and the steel air box with custom numbers from some CZ specialty house like Coast Moto Cycle or Grand Prix Cycles, and you find yourself in the trick Spanish weight range real

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quick. Yet you've still got a bike which is as much the motocross standard of reliability as the old DT-1s were in the street/trail category. Unless you're the kind of mechanic who parks it on Sunday evening and kicks it over again next Sunday morning, you'll rarely if ever DNF with your "trick" CZ.

Where did the weight loss happen? The frame, for one place. Gone is a maze of traditional CZ cross-bracing, along with steel air box mounts (rubber now), and the massive steel rear brake locking arm (channeled aluminum now). Both hubs are of cast magnesium, as are the backing plates, greatly reducing unsprung weight and making the CZ the only production bike on the market with 100-percent magnesium hubs. That isn't new, of course, but it's still trick. The rims are Akrons (the old kind, but it takes a few years to get these radical changes through the plans commissar), and the bolts are alloy with locking aircraft nuts. All light, and it all works.

The rumor has been that the new CZ would feature the works Grand Prix split frame, which is true - depending on how you
The stock 250 CZ, all 218 pounds of it. Sigh.

Look at it. The new frame is not the current GP frame which people like Baborovsky campaign, though some have said it is (probably because it's painted red). This one splits below the pipe and is of a high grade mild steel, whereas the factory works item splits above the pipe and is of chrome moly. Sure it would be nice if the stocker was 4130 too, but politics is politics, so most Czech chrome moly is used on Russian tanks — the kind with treads. But it is a GP frame, the kind that a couple of guys named DeCoster and Robert used to straddle before they got that old Suzuki yen (heh, heh). And that ain't bad. The center frame is lower than last year's model, and there's a half-degree more rake in the neck — helping to make the CZ a seriously long motorcycle. Compare the bike's 56¼-inch wheelbase with the 250 Maico's 55 inches, and you'll better understand some of the things we'll talk about when we discuss handling.

That extra half-degree of rake is quite possibly responsible for the '74 CZ's most obvious defect, however. While the bike handles front wheel touch-downs with the greatest of aplomb, the more or-

Continued
CZ TEST

 orthodox rear-wheel-first style is incredibly hard on the rider. That extra half-degree seems to inhibit fork damping action. Or perhaps the problem is simply sagging fork springs (those on our test bike did). Or maybe it was bad karma. Whatever. We’re experimenting with the forks at this very moment, and as soon as we figure out what it’ll take to make them work we’ll let you know.

CZ has left the powerplant pretty much alone, and why not? Basically, there’s none better. The only power problem can be traced to the Jikov carburetor, and the

and this has got to go if you want to win,

factory is stuck with it. The serious CZ rider will know what to do about that. The gearbox, motocross’ standard of reliability, is also traditional CZ, though with a few unfortunate but minor differences.

Difference One is the substitution of bushings for needle bearings in the transmission. Prices being what they are these days, this change was probably necessary if the bike was to retail competitively; but bushings aren’t as reliable as bearings, and their inherent drag factor must cost the bike about one-half horsepower in a place where that term has real meaning. Still, it’s not a tragedy, just an annoyance. Those who are sincerely annoyed can always look around and find a bearing supply house which stocks needle bearings of the appropriate size, and make the switch. With the proper tools (which come with the bike, or should), CZ gutsmanship is as straightforward as ever.

The second difference is a spring-loaded shifting plate locating plunger which doesn’t, always. This is the widget that screws into the top of the cases and — when working properly — holds the selected gear. First models had a spring which was too weak to properly engage the plunger, and as a result the bike would not hold

the top gears after a little use. This problem has been corrected at the distributor level, but the originals may still be out there, somewhere. If your plunger is of the two-gasket type, it’s the old kind. Simple solutions: Just take it to your dealer, who should know all about the problem and be willing to replace it for one with a stronger spring; or simply install a stronger spring and throw away one gasket. No more problem — hopefully.

HOW IT WORKS

The CZ 250 is an experience to ride, and as long as you relax and let the bike do its stuff, the experience is a good one. Ride a lap with us at Indian Dunes’ Shadow Glen course, and we’ll tell you why.

On a hard-packed surface like the one at the Glen, a first gear start works just fine. The bike is quick out of the hole and manageable, leaving the rider to concentrate on his shifting and on getting the best line into the first turn. Second gear starts, on the other hand, tend to be squirrely. Too much, too soon. A mid-range puncher like the CZ prefers to ease into its motion, rather than grabbing it all at once.

Once off the line, grab another gear, another, then another. Shifts are smooth and positive, and quickly become automatic. Don’t worry about missing a gear. Once you become attuned to the CZ box, you never will. And if the box is smooth, the power’s even better — like turning on silk. The thing to watch out for, especially if your bike is running the stock Jikov, is over-revving. The Jikov feeds the CZ’s mid-range surge just fine, but things shut off fast at the top end. Of all the trick solutions to this problem, the simplest is to just trash the stock carb and put a Mikuni in its place. This will give the CZ all the top end it needs, without sacrificing the mid-range. Until this is done, though; don’t expect to beat anybody. Not only will you get continually zapped in the long straights, but you’ll have trouble staying in the power on the parts of the course that need medium bursts, too. Stay tuned,
and we'll show you what we mean.

The CZ slips through the Glen’s first shallow bend without a wiggle. Sliding by a guy on a Honda who had to put out a foot to maintain. After that, two low jumps which the bike takes heavily, but with no problems, then into the deceleration potholes before the sharp right-hand. Whoa! That smarts! Used to riding smaller, quicker handling machines, you had your weight too far forward, and the bike responded by jackhammering every ripple in the ground back into your forearms and shoulders. Experimentation will prove that the best way to handle this kind of terrain is to get your weight well back on the bike to quiet the busy (and marginal) rear shocks, and let the front end float. Meaning you can’t set up for the turn quite as soon as you might like. But the CZ doesn’t really mind.

Through the right-hander, well back on the pegs, as the bike’s suspension now does a better job of soaking up the small whoops out of the turn. A quick left, still accelerating, still on the pegs, then the first of two close-spaced, steep jumps. On the CZ it seems to work better to land front wheel first after the first jump, then fly the second one. This technique gets you to the ground quicker, allowing more under power time and a better shot at the second, bigger, jump. The Honda rider had almost pulled even with you during your momentary trouble in the cobby stuff, but the way the CZ handled that front wheel landing dropped him back some, as his bike’s problems following the first jump made him back off for the second.

Into the potholes again, this time with your weight well back and arms stiff. Works better this way, and the Honda dude doesn’t close up this time. That’s good, because the long straight’s coming up, and with the stock Jikov on this mutha he’s bound to make up some ground there. The course hasn’t been prepared since last Sunday’s racing, and the usual berm at the end of this little runout is nothing but a vertical adobe wall terminating in a nasty looking tree. So instead of hitting the berm high and hard like you usually do, you take it low and bounce change direction, using the smooth acceleration which is the CZ’s strong suit to pull you off the wall and up the hill onto the straight and the run-out at the big jump. The Honda skitters into the turn, its rider not sure quite what to do. He almost loses it, saves it, tank slaps once or twice and loses a bit more ground.

You shift your way down the straight, careful to keep it in the mid-range where the CZ will pull, and loft it off the jump. Duck a crow, snap at a nasty bluejay. Cross up a time or two — the bike loves it. Time to land. Ka-bang! Straight as an arrow, but impacts like that sell kidney belts. And no wonder they sell Konis to CZ riders. Even this 218-pound lightweight lands like the lead pipe specials of old. That extra half-degree of rake must be cutting down the fork damping efficiency somewhat. Your mind files away the fact that a little experimentation with spring rates and fork oils couldn’t hurt.

You let the CZ drift into the small berm which has been built up on the 90-degree left at the end of the straight, and look back. The Elsinore has made up time in the straight and is hot on your rear knobby, but now you’re into the CZ’s element, a series of sweeping ‘ess’ turns made for sliding. So you bang off the berm at the apex of the first sweeper (gas it before you hit the berm, sliding the rear end into the bank, and you’re in the power and out of the turn while the Honda’s still fidgeting its way into the wall), foot down your way through the sandy, sweeping right, knock it down a gear and come out hard into the wide left that leads into the straight in a feet-up slide, with the Barum at the back making things difficult for the Honda guy as he elects to square off the last one. Brake hard at the end (good brakes, good feel), then gas it into the berm that belongs to a downhill right-hander, grab another gear and drift the rear end through another sweeper. The Honda’s gaining, picked up some ground on that straight, and he’s right on your rear fender. Brake hard. Right-hander through the dip and up the hill toward the spectator bridge. The Honda’s right behind, but hold him off here and it’s easy, all CZ country ahead. But as you crest the rise, heading for the bridge and the sharp right at the end of the mini-straight, you have problems. You don’t have time or space to go for another gear, and the one you’re in is used up. As the bridge’s shadow hits you in the face the Honda wiggles by on the far left, brakes hard for the right-hander and is gone — and you tight on his tail but with no room to pass. Too bad. A little more top end and it would never have happened.

Figure the price of a Mikuni into the purchase price of your CZ, and it probably never will.

THE HOT SETUP
You don’t have to get too trick or print your own money to set up your CZ. A Mikuni carb is a must to give the bike some top end. When the stock shocks go away (soon, you’ll hope), replace them with something less interesting, like Konis. The factory pipe with its built-in silencer is OK, but if and when it’s beat to a pulp, consider a specialty pipe. The Sonic Waves aluminum pipe is hard to beat. Accessory items like the seat and pegs are good; the bars — well, bars are a matter of taste. To our taste the stock bars are uncomfortable, the grips murderous, weld-on levers ridiculous. Do as you see fit. Replace the parts mentioned in the text with plastic, and you’re ready to go racing.

THE RED HOT SETUP
If you think you’re really ready to dice with the big boys, the pros, here’s whatcha do. Besides all of the above, swap the magneto for a Motoplat (nice power, but radical) and play around with the porting. As a final step, you’ll want to move the shocks up on the swingarm (see April ‘74 MXA). The CZ responds very nicely to this latter operation, but your wallet may not appreciate having to replace your shocks so often.