

**MZ**  
**ETS250**  
**ISDT**

Can We Interest  
You In A Brand  
New Classic?





# Cycle World Road Test

■ SIX DAY COMPETITION can be unbelievably menacing for riders and equipment to a degree that few people can appreciate unless they've witnessed or sampled the torture. Machinery is meticulously prepared, on top of being quite specialized. The motorcycles must have unique power characteristics that provide the capability of creeping through trials-like rock sections or charging across open tundra at 70 mph. They have to be strong and tough and handle well in a tremendous variety of situations.

Motorcycles that conquer the ISDT become important sales tools for their manufacturers, at least in Europe, where the ISDT has long been a tremendously prestigious event. In the U.S. much more interest has been shown in the whole affair since we got to host our own in 1973. Too, each year the U.S. team becomes more proficient, adding hope and even more interest. More emphasis is placed on enduro-type events, particularly the qualifying rounds for the ISDT, and brands doing well are getting lots of exposure.

There are pseudo enduro bikes for sale, genuine enduro machines and a few ISDT "Replicas." As defined by most dictionaries, "replica" means a copy or reproduction of the original. Somehow certain manufacturers have overlooked the definition and tacked the name "replica" on machinery much less deserving. . . certainly less similar.

Not so the MZ ETS250, though. Aside from the very latest models in the factory ISDT effort, this production model is identical to what has run in the Six Days of late, less the mechanical prep. It's really a "replica," right out of East Germany, where MZ stands for Motorradwerk Zschopau, a company in the nationalized system of industry there. And with a heritage such as this, you're not talking about an ordinary, run-of-the-mill motorcycle. It's bound to be different and strange. . . and it is.

Among all the machines that CYCLE WORLD tests each year, there are a few that stand out for one reason or another. Some make an impression on the staff because they are particularly bad, some because they're exceptionally good, others because they happen to be unusual in one or many >

ways...like the MZ. For that reason alone the MZ is refreshing, though there are some who would consider prosaic the machine's lack of the flashiness that accompanies so many new motorcycles these days.

East Europe Import Export Inc., 440 Park Ave., New York, NY 10016, handles the distribution of the MZ in the U.S. Besides the ISDT bike, there're 150 and 250 street machines for basic transportation.

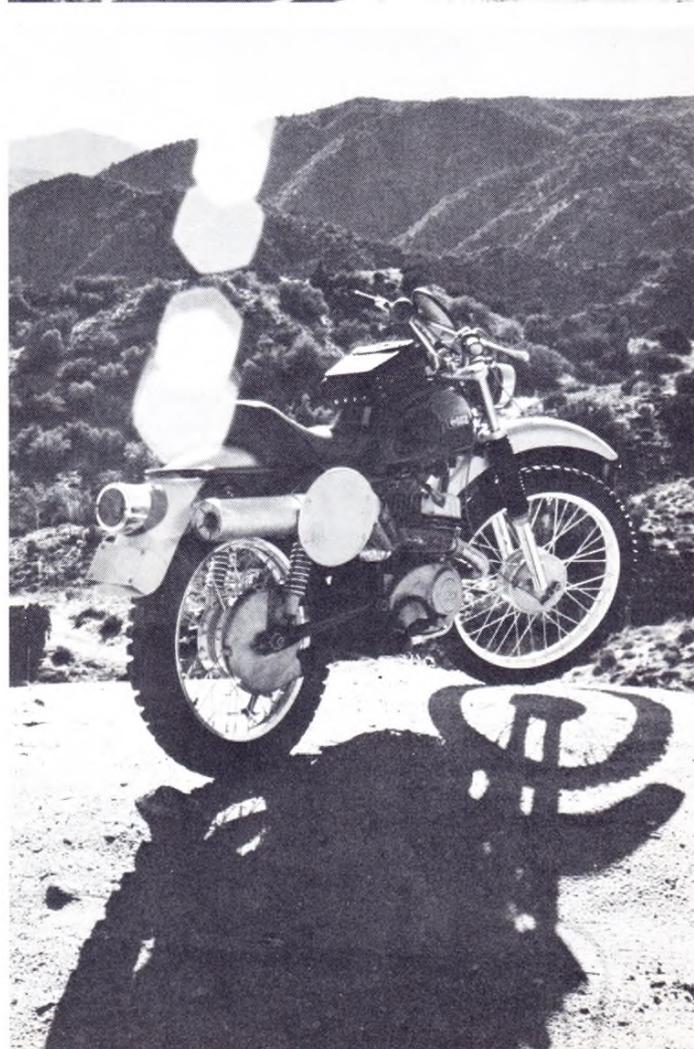
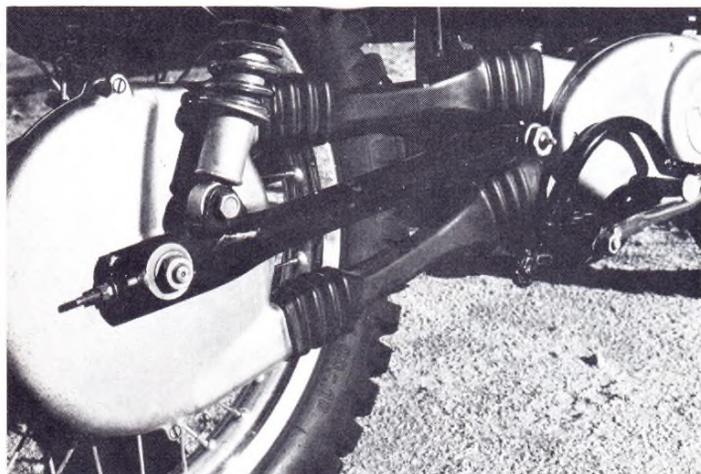
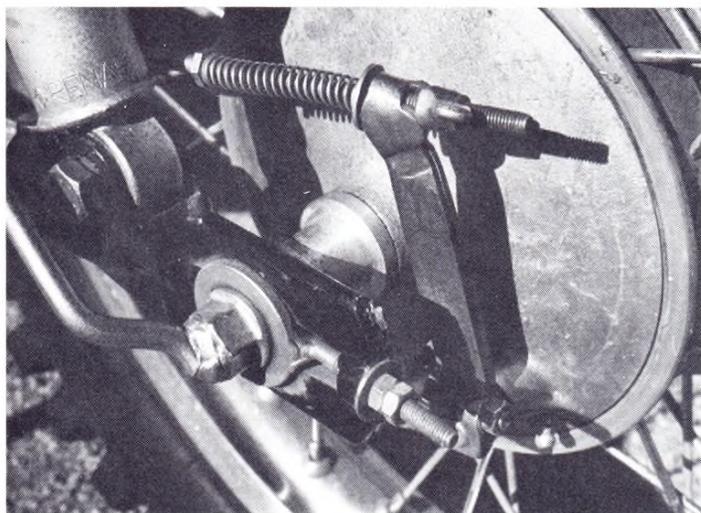
Many are familiar with the MZ name in Europe, but in the U.S. that is not yet so. But MZ has certainly established itself over the years as a force to be reckoned with in many different types of competition in Europe, the most noteworthy being the ISDT. The coveted World Trophy was captured by MZ in 1963, '64, '65, '66, '67 and 1969. After that, Czechs more or less took over on their Jawas and have dominated ever since. But the East Germans have always finished well up in the standings, and on bikes just about like the one pictured and tested here.

It would be difficult to make any claims about the MZ's styling being attractive. By today's standards, it appears old-fashioned...almost "classic." Cobbiness is combined with a "businesslike" appearance, leaving no doubts that the motorcycle was built for a specific purpose by an iron curtain country beset with certain limitations.

If heavy meant good, then the MZ, weighing 290 lb. with half a tank of pre-mixed fuel, would be near the top of the heap. The reason is steel...and lots of it. Those big silver fenders that do such a good job of keeping the mud off are heavy gauge steel; so is the airbox assembly, the tank, seat base, fork legs, exhaust system, handlebars and lots of assorted

bits and pieces. Alloy is used in the wheel hubs and rims and minor incidentals here and there.

The rider isn't that aware of all the weight while underway, but when he drops the machine and has to heft it up or push it out of a ditch he just can't help but notice. Suspension units front and rear, which are not that good to begin with, get worked doubly hard, particularly at speed. Even though the East Germans can put up with the bulk, owners would be well advised to install plastic fenders and lightweight goodies wherever possible.



# MZ ETS250

In ISDT tradition, the MZ has certain features expected on a motorcycle of this sort. There are front and side number plates, full knobby tires, a squeeze bulb horn, tiny head and taillights, large capacity fuel tank, full toolkit including tire pump, a leather tool bag that rests on top of the fuel tank, even an enclosed drive chain.

The unusual frame, incorporating a huge-diameter backbone tube, features a removable front downtube and lower cradle assembly to facilitate engine removal. The cradle has a welded bash plate in its middle that is perforated with holes so that debris is less likely to accumulate, though protection is still afforded the engine. Gusseting is ample, but the heavy gauge of the tubing makes the frame quite heavy, though tough.

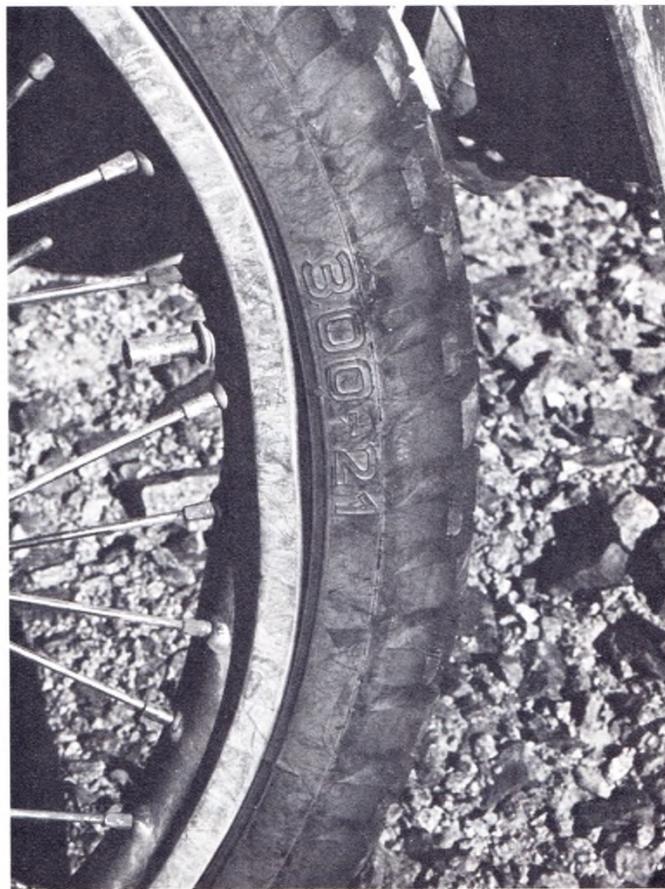
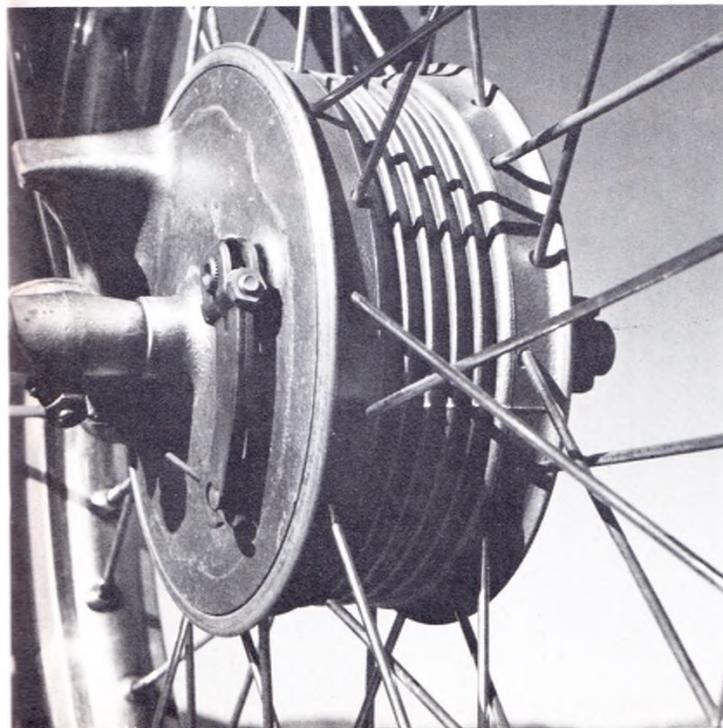
Suspension is very conventional. Forks have limited travel and lose their effectiveness after a beating of short duration.

When coupled with the heavy weight of the motorcycle, they make bottoming frequent and annoying. At the rear things aren't much different. The shocks are not up to the poundings desert runs dish out. Whoop-dees sack them sour in short order. At last year's ISDT in Italy, the East German team MZs ran longer-travel forks and rear shocks—with large capacity bodies—that were mounted farther forward. We're not the only ones who feel that the suspension is sadly lacking.

Tires and wheels are other items requiring attention. The alloy rims are ridgeless, but the front one is especially soft, dinging easily in a mild enduro run during our testing. And in spite of the center pull spokes, we found ourselves constantly battling spoke tightness. . .to no avail. The rear rim and spokes held up just fine; tires don't offer any sidewall cleats and, hence, virtually no side grip. We'd prefer mounting six-ply ISDT Cheng Shins, keeping a 4.00-18 at the rear, but going to a larger 3.50-21 (rather than 3.00), at the front. You'd be amazed at how well the Cheng Shins work with seven to 10 pounds of air pressure. They did wonders for the MZ Enduro.

The fuel tank simply rests on rubber pads attached to its underside, which in turn sit on the frame's backbone tube. After a few hundred miles, the pads sag a bit, allowing the tank to rest on things it's not supposed to. It secures to the bike with leather straps that hold the leather tool bag in place at the same time. The bag is a good one. Its lid closes snugly and has a clear pocket with a snap flap to hold route cards and the like. Inside there's an amusing first-aid kit consisting of a hoard of safety pins, odd looking bandages and some unusual instructions in several different languages. Also included are spare cables and primary sprockets. Very complete.

But the tank bag rubs the paint off the top of the tank and interferes with the rider's crotch when he's in the standing position. Maybe that's why the East German ISDT riders always sit down, though even that can be awkward. The seat is short and humps up at the rear, keeping the rider forward in >



the area where the padding is the thinnest. Removing the seat is easy, since all that one has to do is unscrew the knurled plastic knob on the rear seat bracket and slide the unit rearward and off the machine. Underneath is a screened air intake hole, leading to the airbox unit.

Standing and staring at the machine up to this point, one would probably anticipate the performance potential to be unexceptional. The machine appears dated, heavy and most likely slow. **WRONG.**

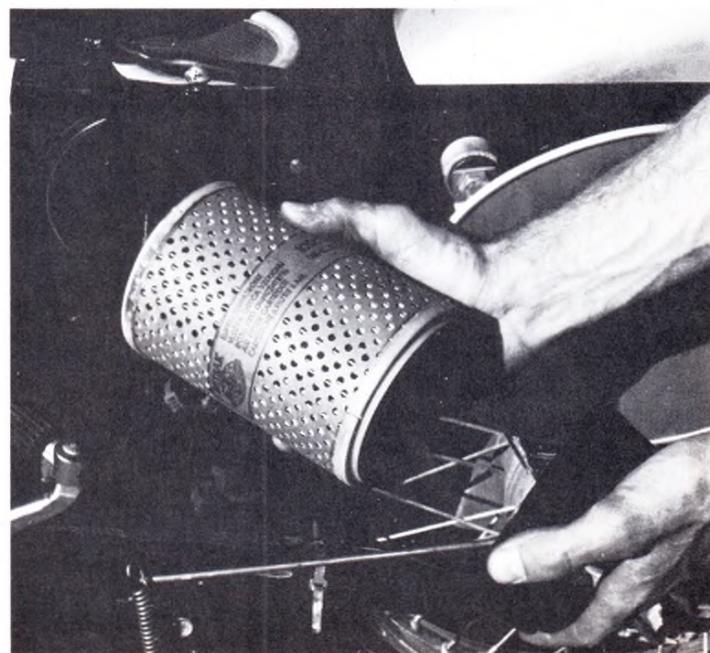
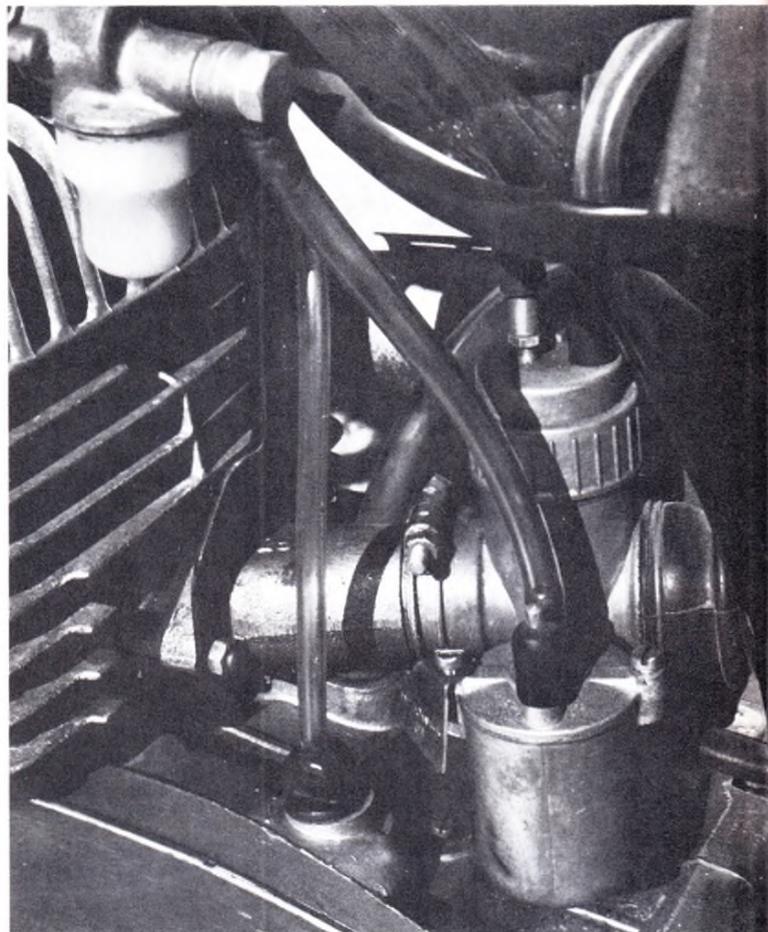
Grab a handful with this one and you start going places in a big hurry. For a 250, the power is astounding. We drag raced the MZ against the 400 Yamaha Enduro we tested last month and they ran dead-even side by side...all the way into high gear. Hard to believe? We did it over and over again to convince ourselves. In fact, the MZ often had the edge. Shocking.

The engine is simple, not the least bit complex. Castings are on the crude side; the cylinder and head fins are squarish and large. Rubber tubes inserted between the fins damp mechanical sounds to some degree. It's a robust unit, part of the stoutness created by large-sized ball bearings throughout the lower end. Caged needle bearings are found at the large and small ends of the connecting rod. The piston-ported Single breathes through a 30mm Jikov carburetor, a unit infamous for unreliability and its cries for constant attention. Ours was no different.

Air filtration is provided by a large cylindrical paper element, not the answer for dusty conditions. But the element is well-protected in a nearly waterproof airbox assembly, which certainly doesn't hurt.

Dual ignition coils are very handy and they are each controlled by toggle switches located on the right side of the machine. Should a plug foul or a coil fail, simply flip the toggle to keep things running. A leatherette shroud wraps about both the carburetor and airbox, as well as around a few electrical components for an extra measure of protection in wet riding. The kickstarter pedal is on the left side of the machine, but there is no start-in-any-gear feature.

Both gearbox (which is a five-speed unit) and clutch are strong and should hold up well to abuse, but the clutch actuating mechanism is located on a vulnerable portion of the left engine sidecase. Clutch pull is medium hard, and the levers as they come require a large-sized hand to reach them and



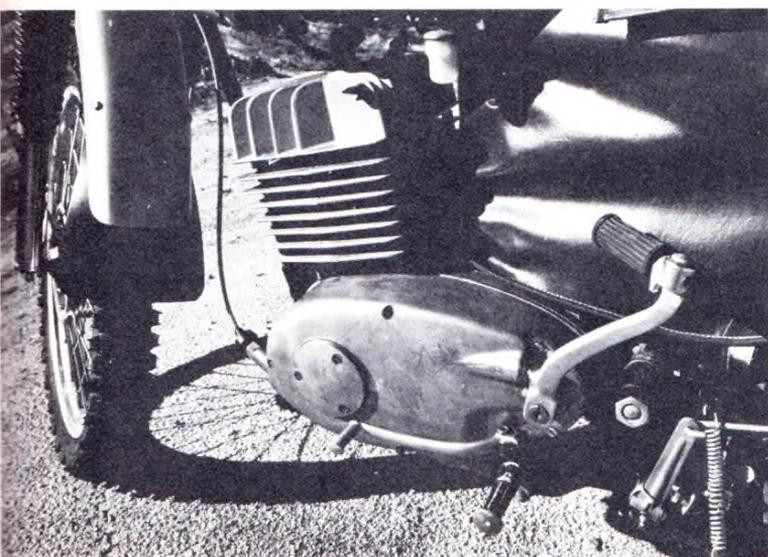
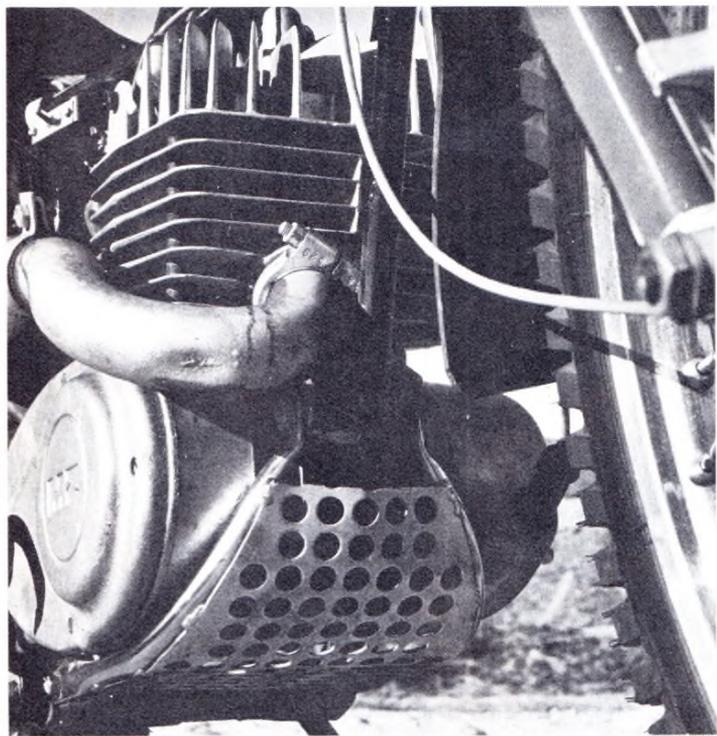
squeeze comfortably. Bending them back a bit helps.

Most motorcycles feel comfortable to us within about 10 minutes of riding time, even if we've never ridden them before. But the MZ was different. It was the most "foreign feeling" thing we'd ever been on. Getting used to it took about 50 miles and a few hours of riding time, believe it or not. But once we felt at home on the MZ, it was okay, as long as we didn't switch to other machines often.

The peculiar footpegs are non-folding, but can be adjusted some by loosening their securing bolts and rotating them on the mounts. Even so, a standing position places the rider very far forward and makes the front end quite heavy. There is no doubt that the bike is designed to be ridden sitting down as much as possible, which is the typical East German or Czech riding style in ISDT competition.

Braking is good, even at higher speeds and on steep downhills. The binders seem to resist wetness to a great degree, as well, so water crossings can be treated with less worry.

In certain riding areas the MZ will do well. These would include narrow, tight trails and woods, also smoother dirt roads. The MZ does very poorly in the desert, however; the machine can't handle high-speed whoop-dees and other South-west characteristics.



The machine is terribly forgiving, and got us out of several horrendous near endos and what-have-you's time and time again. Handling, disregarding suspension, is exceptional, at both low and high speeds. But there is a lot that needs to be done to the bike before it can be ridden hard in competition. We'd change the rims and tires and the exhaust system, since it interferes with the rider, is heavy and not that quiet. We'd add plastic fenders and tank and rework the suspension on both ends completely. But that really isn't what an owner should have to do to a \$1500 piece of equipment. Leave it stock and it's an instant collector's item. Change it around like we suggest and you should probably start with something else, unless you enjoy something truly unique. ◻

# MZ ETS250 ISDT

## SPECIFICATIONS

List price	.....	\$1495
Suspension, front	.....	telescopic fork
Suspension, rear	.....	swinging arm
Tire, front	.....	3.00-21
Tire, rear	.....	4.00-18
Engine, type	.....	two-stroke, piston-port Single
Bore x stroke, in., mm	.....	2.71 x 2.55; 69 x 65
Piston displacement, cu. in., cc	.....	14.8; 243
Compression ratio	.....	11.0:1
Claimed bhp @ rpm	.....	32 @ 6000
Claimed torque @ rpm lb.-ft.	.....	23.8 @ 5300
Piston speed @ rpm ft./min.	.....	2550
Carburetion	.....	30mm BVE
Ignition	.....	magneto
Oil system	.....	pre-mix
Oil capacity, pt.	.....	4.0
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	.....	4.0
Recommended fuel	.....	premium
Starting system	.....	kick
Air filtration	.....	dry paper

## POWER TRANSMISSION

Clutch	.....	multi-disc; wet
Primary drive	.....	helical gear
Final drive	.....	520 single-row chain
Gear ratios, overall: 1		
5th	.....	6.1
4th	.....	7.6
3rd	.....	9.7
2nd	.....	13.6
1st	.....	21.9

## DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	.....	52.5
Seat height, in.	.....	29.5
Seat width, in.	.....	8.5
Handlebar width, in.	.....	32.0
Footpeg height, in.	.....	12.5 (adjustable)
Ground clearance, in.	.....	8.25
Curb weight (w/half-tank fuel), lb.	.....	290
Weight bias, front/rear, percent	.....	44/56