

## Maple Leaf Moto Meanie: They're Really Getting Serious

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

□ *"I have some great news for you gentlemen. You don't have to worry about Canada anymore. Even the automatic butter warmer is gone."*  
Gungo J. Calrose, speaking at the North American Refrigerated Conveniences and Bondage Conference.

Can-Am launched a new breed of bike this year with the MX-4. Gone forever, apparently, is the chassis by Kelvinator. For years Can-Ams have had fantastically powerful engines, perhaps too powerful, bolted into frames that made the wheels do the darndest things at times. But at last the light bulb has popped on. Perhaps it happened while someone was looking for a midnight snack inside the latest Arctic Zoomer Frigidaire.

So, now we can lay to rest the great lowbridgers of the past when referring to Can-Am crossers while tipping our cap to the new direction indicated by MX-4 development. No more: How does Jimmy Ellis do it? . . . Whoa now, Trigger, easy boy . . . This thing handles better than a Westinghouse . . . Where's the automatic ice maker?

Nowadays you'll have to be content with things like: "Very few machines turn sharper than a Fokker, the Can-Am is one of them." Or, "Just ask the guys who are racing. Ask them who's putting that power down to the ground," Rich Eierstedt. Or, "I'd rather ride the MX-4 without a front tire than last year's bike with everything."

We tested the first of the MX-4s, the 370, in the March issue. The general mood of the test was: Boy, they really turned things around in one year — this baby turns like crazy — 41 horses is the most we've even gotten on the pump and on the right track you can use most of it and give yourself brown pants in the process — while being slightly discombobulated by the suspension of what was admittedly a pre-production prototype and not exactly enamored by overt porkiness. Yet as it turns out, porkiness seems to be the order of the day for several open class bikes this year. The new Suzuki RM400 gained some around the midriff, up to 240

pounds ready for gas. The 370 MX-4 prototype toed the line at 242 pounds ready for gas. The production unit that followed was lighter.

The 250 MX-4 is listed as 13 pounds lighter than the 370. We weighed it at 219 pounds, ready for gas. Compare that to 218 for the Honda CR250R, 221 for the Yamaha YZ250E and 206 for the Kawasaki KX250.

### What rhymes with orange?

We gave you a complete rundown on the MX-4 configuration in the 370 test, so we'll just hit the high spots here since the bikes share the same rolling chassis. Only the powerplants are different.

Can-Am put aside the rotary valve design for the first time with their open classer. The 250 remains a roundy-round with a new 72mm x 61mm configuration. Last year's bore and stroke was 74 x 57.5. Both the exhaust and especially the transfer ports now function during a longer percentage of the stroke. The new engine has actually been around awhile, but former team riders preferred the pipier, higher peak horsepower design used in production until this year.

The 250 powerplant has six clutch plates, one less than the 370. Carburetion is handled by a 32mm Bing (with tickler) rather than the 36mm pump found on the open classer. Both orange off-roaders sport the new SW5 Sun rims. The frame is now chrome moly. Playing around with the two cones in the steering head can vary the rake from 27 to 33 degrees in two-degree increments.

Marzocchi forks offer ten inches of travel. The wall thickness of the sliders has been beefed and there's 30mm more overlap. Diameter of the fork legs is now 38mm, up from 35mm. Some feel that the bike's natural propensity for turning is in no small way attributable to the rigidity and strength offered by the front suspenders.

Out back Gas (nitrogen emulsion) Girlings provide 9 1/4 inches of travel. The frame was redesigned to handle 15-inch suspenders. (Girling also offers



# CAN-AM





# 250 MX-4



# CAN-AM 250 MX-4

a solid fluid nitrogen gas shock with reservoir. These run around \$180 with springs. For more info contact Lucas Service, 1320 West Walnut Street, Compton, California 90224; [213] 537-1000, attention Jay Maines.)

## The Can-Am can

Everyone who climbed aboard was really impressed by the changes made in the bike in a year's time, in both handling and power. "The power is really different now. There's a wide powerband, it's torquey right from the bottom. It's really good, with no surprises anywhere. It wants to wheelie out of corners, but that's no hindrance. It's just hooking up so much better than it used to." "The power's probably a little pipier than the Honda. I don't think it gets it to the ground as well, but that's probably just the rear suspension. The

old bike used to spin all the time." "The power instantly reminded me of the Honda."

**Shifting.** The lever sticks out a bit compared to most bikes and the lever throw is a bit longer than most Japanese bikes. Nobody seemed to mind it, they just noticed it. General consensus: it shifts good up to a point. It will shift fast if you're careful.

**Brakes.** It takes a while to get used to the location of the rear brake lever. And you really have to stand on it to get good response. The new easier-to-adjust floater is better than the old cable brake setup. Some felt that the front binder was a little mushy but that the stopping power was definitely there.

**Forks.** During our testing we slipped on a pair of stock Marzocchis modified with the same factory specifications used on the team race bikes. The stock

forks felt a little harsh on compression but the modified forks offered a more progressive feel, a better balance between compression and rebound dampening. Our suggestion: dial in the stock forks first. (See *How To Tune Your Forks* in the June issue.) Your suspension needs may not be as demanding as national pros'.

**Shocks.** Rear end suspension felt OK on smoother tracks. The ride did get choppy out of rougher turns and was a little soft for a 180-pound pro. The same model Girlings used on our 370 test prototype seemed to work better on the lighter 250. We also tried the Girling reservoir gassers. The best combination we came up with was the medium dampeners with 180-pound minor spring, 110-pound medium spring and two cooling fins.

The bike arrived with the standard





31-degree rake angle and again drew raves in the direction changing department. "Cornering's perfect. No problems. The front end is really responsive and predictable." "This baby turns better than a 125. It probably steers as good as the Honda."

We played with switching the cones for different rake settings. Guess what? It gets nasty with 27 degrees, is still somewhat twitchy at 29 degrees. Most riders preferred the stock 31-degree setting, feeling it worked best with the overall geometry of the bike.

And lordy momma, the weight is competitive and what's better, it feels light.

#### **Crate racers — talking to Semics and Eierstedt**

Both Gary Semics and Rich Eierstedt are racing modified production bikes in

1978. The changes are none that Joe Owner can't make himself.

Both of 'em are running Ohlin shocks. They've been working with suspension ace Bruce Burness, formerly of S&W, to get them dialed in and are real happy with results so far. Ohlins, tuned specifically for Can-Ams, will be available later this year through Husky dealers across the nation. We had a chance to ride a pair of Ohlins set up for Rich, with a 70mm blue bottom spring and 240mm yellow top spring. That translates out to about a 75/160-pound setup. The shocks also had a Celasto foam bumper. The ride was quite impressive. (Watch for the complete lowdown on Ohlins in next month's issue.)

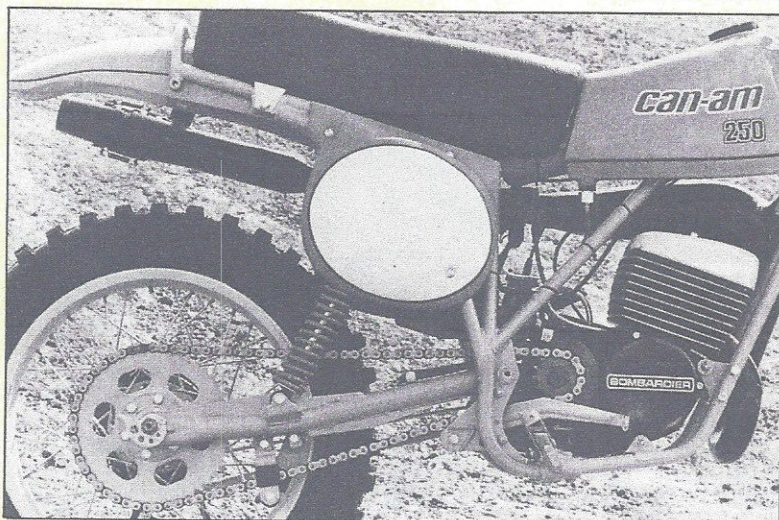
The factory has come up with a modification for the Marzocchi that's working out well. Another hole, the

same diameter, is drilled through the dampener rod at a 90-degree angle, a quarter-inch above the production hole.

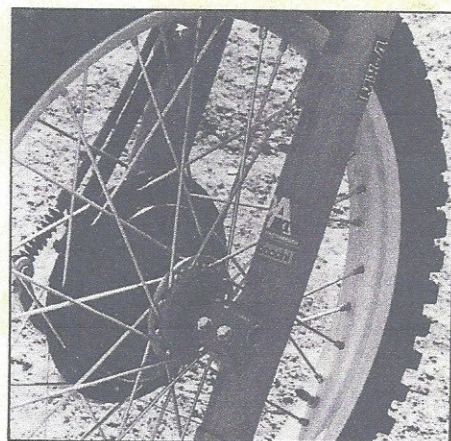
The team has also experimented with fork springs. Fourteen-pounders seem to work best. The forks have also been converted to air caps. Both Gary and Rich run 10-12 pounds of pressure. Both run Bel-Ray LT200 shock oil in the forks.

Both riders cut their handlebars to narrow the width and they've been running the 29-degree head angle for the tight-turn stadium races. Rich raises his pegs one inch to give better clearance for the deep grooves that develop in the stadium track surfaces.

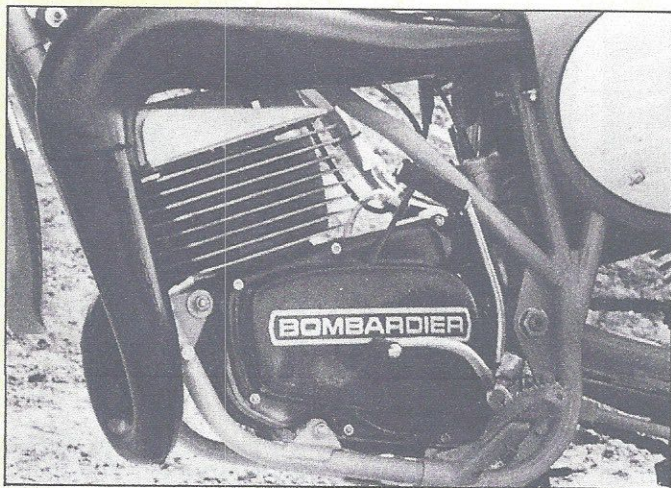
Both have kept the Disco-Jet silencers on their bikes. Rich pointed out that it actually helps the power and that the discs should be cleaned often for optimum performance. The standard



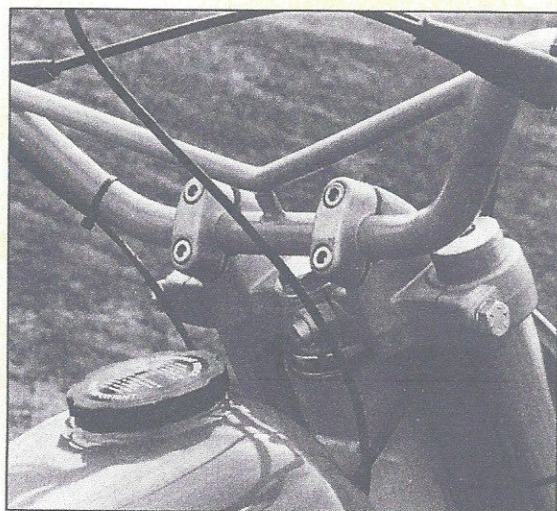
**New chrome moly frame works. Disco-Jet silencer can be tuned by adding or removing discs. Rear brake is now full-floater.**



**Ten inches of Marzocchi travel. There's more overlap. Diameter is beefy 38mm. The front hub, braking shoes and backing plates are magnesium.**



**Roto-moto. The rotary valver pumps out less peak horsepower than last year's 36, but they've mellowed out the powerband for better traction action. Toothy footpegs are very grippy.**



**The new handlebar mounting clamp is set back more, allows easy access to servicing the forks.**



# CAN-AM 250 MX-4

five discs seem to work best.

Other tips. Keep the air cleaner well maintained and properly sealed. Rotary valve engines can be especially susceptible to damage from dirt. And keep an eye on the steering crown the first few times out for any signs of loosening up. The guys run Bel-Ray 50:1 for pre-mix. Tire pressure: about ten pounds front and rear.

## The answer man can

National 69, Eddie Cole, who fits in some test riding for DB when he's not busy holding down the fort at Answer Products (Bob Hannah Practice Starting

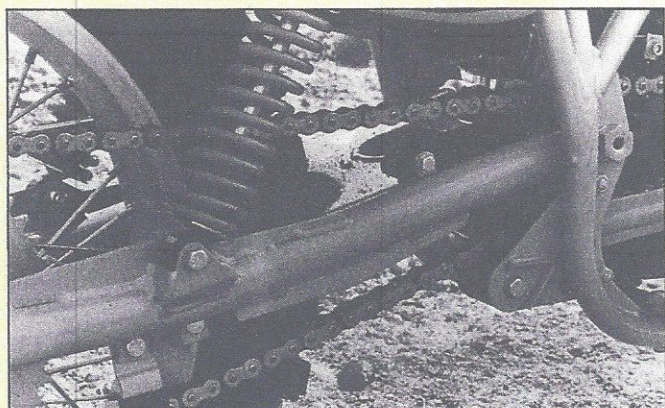
Gate, Steve Stackable Griffin mopeds), has been racing Can-Ams for some time now, sponsored by Kolbe Honda/Can-Am. Factory support rider Kenny Zahrt also stays in touch with the shop. The Kolbe Can-Am team, which also includes Greg Robertson and Craig Cole, has been quite successful in SoCal pro racing, so we talked to Eddie and shop owner Andy Kolbe about bike set-up.

Forks: They replaced the fork springs with 14-pounders and added Goki air caps. They run 12-14 ounces of 10W oil (Bel-Ray) and 14-16 pounds of air. Works Performance milled some slots

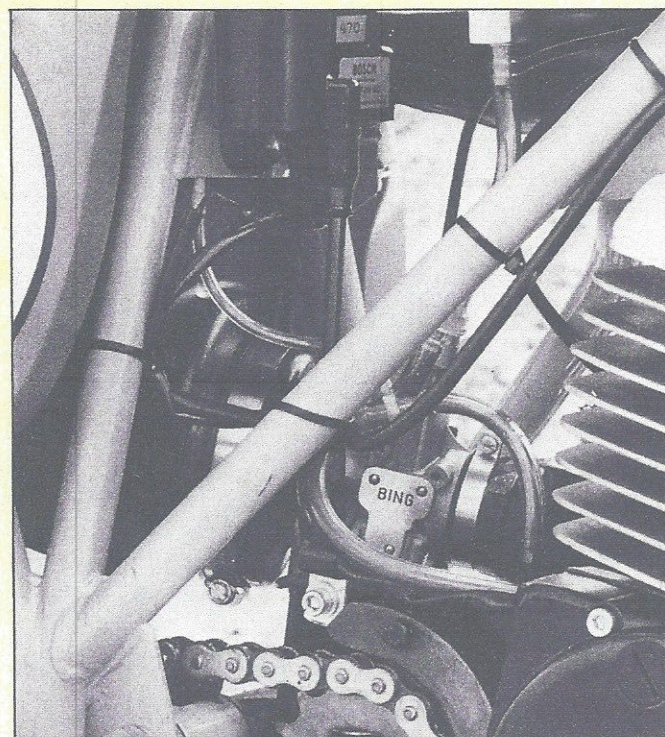
into the damper rods to make for more progressive action. Then they add some orange fork boots from Jim O'Neal.

Shocks. Fox Air, 15-1/8-inchers are used with the stock swingarm. Eddie runs 70/155 pressures. Answer Products also sells a chrome moly arm for the 250 that is about three pounds lighter.

Engine. They keep it stock. The new MX-4 powerplant with different bore and stroke configuration is much smoother and torquier than past efforts. To smooth the power out even more, it is possible to bolt on the heavier flywheel from the Qualifier enduro model. After



Countershaft sprocket sits next to swingarm to relieve chain tension problems. Chain tensioner has nylon rollers. The swingarm uses sealed Nylotron bushings.



Bosch electrics and a 32mm Bing mixer. Note case protector in front of the countershaft sprocket. Regina chain has rust-colored plates.



Rich Eierstedt in complete but not quite horizontal control.



trying it, Eddie went back to standard. Less aggressive riders may prefer the additional flywheel weight, especially for trail racing.

**Tires.** They run either the high or low knob Metzeler up front, depending on track surface, and use either the stock Dunlop K88 or a Metzeler on the rear.

**Miscellaneous.** Answer Products handlebars. A skateboard wheel to replace the plastic chain roller. This is becoming a standard replacement item for different make bikes. For wet running they fit the outside foam filter of a Jim O'Neal two-stage filter for a YZ125D over the stock K&N. They also

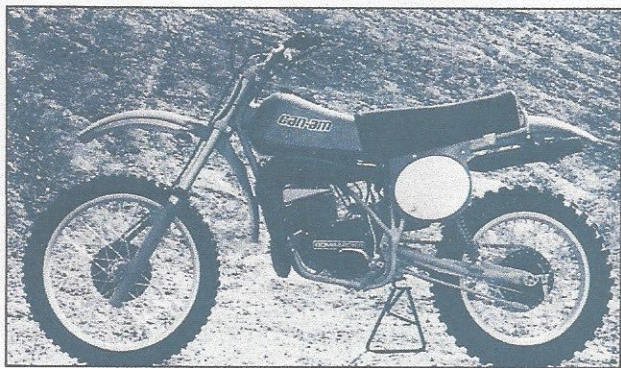
screwed the filter right to the seating base in the air box for better sealing and used additional foam and silicone for better sealing around the underside of the saddle. An air box drain hose is also added. The front brake cable gets safety wired and an electrical tape cable guide is added up front. The valve stem nuts are removed. They add some washers and Loctite the rear fender mounting, grind shock clearance on the side number plates and install an aluminum shield on the upper air box where it is in close proximity to the pipe. Re-jetting for SoCal running finds a 35 pilot and 155 main.

An MCE folding shift lever is welded on to allow for really cranking the bike over in left-handers without fear of dorfing the lever. The Kolbe team all use the standard Disco-Jet tunable silencers.

Eddie, Greg and Craig have all been turning in some impressive results on the 250s. Eddie had a seventh in one moto at Hangtown, while Greg was running third well into the race when his throttle stuck. And the following week at the Racing World National Greg and Eddie formed a holeshot sandwich around Bob Hannah. Eddie admits he

(continued on page 60)

## CAN-AM 250 MX-4



**PRICE:** (approx. retail, West Coast) \$1699

**ENGINE:** Two-stroke single, rotary valve

**DISPLACEMENT:** 248cc

**BORE & STROKE:** 72mm x 61mm

**COMPRESSION RATIO:** 14:1

**CARBURETION:** Bing 32mm (V84)

**HORSEPOWER:** 32.2 at 7500 rpm

**PRIMARY DRIVE:** 2.91:1, straight-cut gears

**TRANSMISSION RATIOS:**

- 1) 2.38
- 2) 1.75
- 3) 1.39
- 4) 1.09
- 5) 0.91

**FINAL DRIVE:** 3.36 ratio, Regina 520 chain

14-tooth countershaft

47-tooth rear sprocket

**ELECTRICS:** Bosch magneto

**LUBRICATION:** Pre-mix

**RECOMMENDED OIL:** Can-Am

**FUEL TANK CAPACITY:** 7.6 liters (2 gallons)

**FRAME:** Chrome moly, double-loop, double-cradle

**SUSPENSION:**

Front: Marzocchi forks, 254mm (10-inch) travel

Rear: Gas Girling shocks, 234mm (9.3-inch) axle travel

**STARTING:** Primary kick

**TIRES:**

Front: Dunlop K88 3.00x21 knobby

Rear: Dunlop K88 5.00x18 knobby

### DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase: 139.7cm (55 inches)

Swingarm length: 54.8cm (21.6 inches)

Ground clearance: 29.2cm (11.5 inches)

Bars, height: 114.8cm (45.2 inches)

width: 85.0cm (33.5 inches)

Pegs, height: 36.3cm (14.3 inches)

width: 51.3cm (20.2 inches)

Seat height: 94.7cm (37.3 inches)

Fork angle: 27 to 33 degrees optional

Weight: 98.4 kilos (216.4 pounds)

claimed, without fuel; 219 pounds

actual, ready for gas.

### BRAKES:

Front: Cable, conical drum

Rear: Rod, conical drum, floating

**SILENCER:** Yes

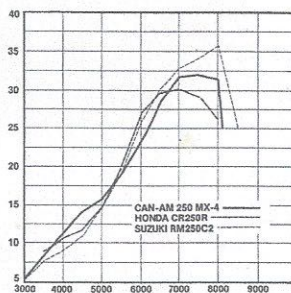
**SPARK ARRESTOR:** No

**WARRANTY:** None

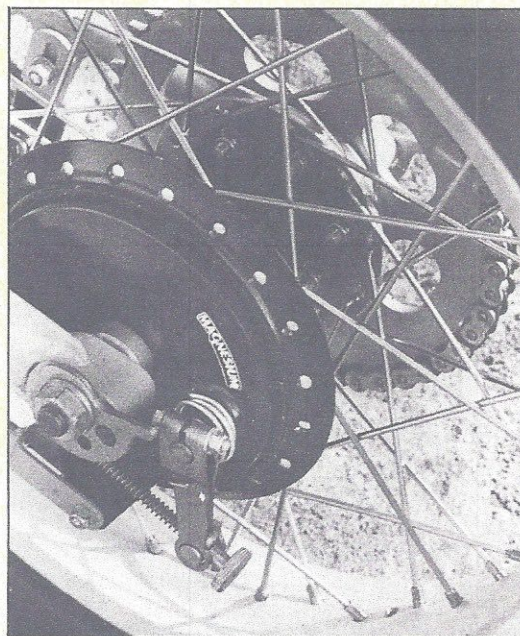
### PARTS PRICES:

Piston/rings: \$45.00

Rings: \$7.50



Wide Petty fenders keep the gorp off.



New Sun rims.



## CAN-AM 250

(continued from page 39)

had trouble getting the power down to the ground with the old bike, but it's holed out city for him and Greg now.

Various addresses: Kolbe Honda/Can-Am, 22123 Ventura Blvd., Woodland Hills, California; (213) 348-7865. Jim O'Neal Distributing, 18340 Gault Street, Reseda, California 91335; (213) 344-5175. Answer Products, 11555 Amanda Drive, Studio City, California 91604; (213) 761-3135. Works Performance, 20970 Knapp Street, Chatsworth, California 91311; (213) 998-1977.

### Bits and pieces

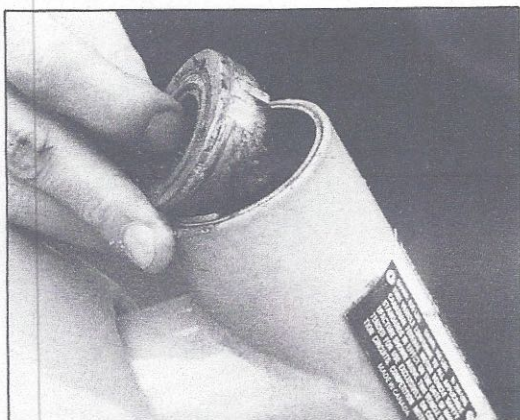
Nice seat. Nobody bitched about the riding position either.

The pipe sticks out enough that some riders complained of burning their leg on it.

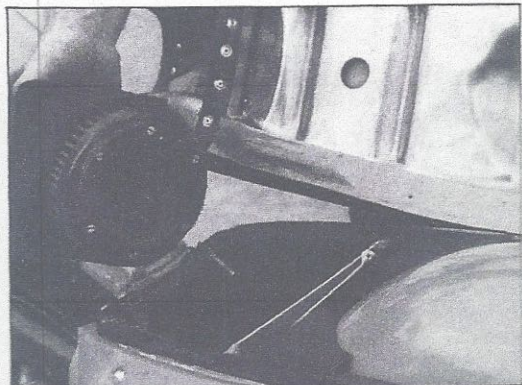
One tester kept hooking his boot on the side of a head fin on the right side of the engine.

The footpegs have a tendency to stay up if they get clogged with dirt, even though they are spring-loaded.

The left-side kickstarter is well snuggled in out of the way.



Rotating this cone and another at the bottom of the steering head allows a six-degree rake tuning range.



Eddie's air system. The K&N gets a foam cover, the screw-in base for the filter was screwed to the filter itself for a better seal. Silicone and additional foam are used by Kolbe to keep more grunge out.



And where it lands nobody knows.

Evidently a rock lodged between the chain and the case protector which runs close to the chain. The protector did its job, but the top part of it was torn away.

### Can't call it the Can't Am anymore

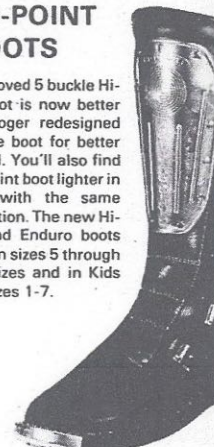
In one swell foop Can-Am has thrust their 250 right into the midst of the serious production racers, and works bikes as well. It's a super-turner, and the amount, spread and delivery of power, now finally "European" rather than "road racer," gives it a couple of very high marks. The suspension, while improved from the 370 prototype we tested, is still not outstanding, but can be improved with fiddling. The growing numbers of new Can-Am converts we talked to seem genuinely pleased with their orange gassers.

The more we fiddled, the more we liked the bike. Finally, those who pick Can-Am can state their preference without drawing perplexed stares and snickers. So let's welcome the Tangerine Torquer to the ranks of right-on racers. For the first time we can say: if you can, the Can-Am can too. ■



### NEW HI-POINT M-X BOOTS

The new improved 5 buckle Hi-Point M-X boot is now better than ever. Roger redesigned the top of the boot for better gear shift feel. You'll also find the new Hi-Point boot lighter in weight, yet with the same superb protection. The new Hi-Point M-X and Enduro boots are available in sizes 5 through 13, plus 1/2 sizes and in Kids Mini-Cross sizes 1-7.



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