

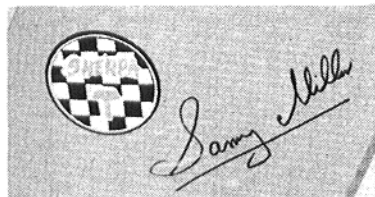
A FEW YEARS AGO, Bultaco decided that they would like to have a world-beating trials bike in their line. They wisely began their project by enlisting the services of Sammy Miller, the young Ulsterman who had won every trials title and championship extant — and most of them several times. The development project was one of the shortest — 12 days — and most successful in motorcycling's history. Now, after spending a reasonable amount of time, not in the saddle, but on the pegs of the Bultaco Sherpa T, we can readily understand the success of this brilliant machine.

The Sherpa T begins its life reasonably enough with a single loop, all-welded frame, similar in its design to the Matador unit, that is sturdy and flex-free. Much of the rigidity of the frame is the product of the gussets that are used for some of the joints, and not only are they functional, but actually add a great deal to the appearance of the unit.

The powerplant of the Sherpa T is a study in tractability. Basically, the engine is the same unit used in Bultaco's Matador, but it's an interesting point that the engine was first developed for the Sherpa T, rather than other models in the line; Bultaco didn't produce a 250 at the time the trialer was conceived. Externally, one of the more interesting things about the engine is its radially finned head, which does not rely on unidirectional air flow for cooling. There's little question that a slow-going motorcycle presents design problems in cooling, but this arrangement seems to be particularly good; the Sherpa has as much heat dissipating area as a parallel-finned head, but there is more space between fins.

The peanut-size IRZ carburetor and very small exhaust chamber must be given some of the credit for the Sherpa's good low-end manners, but much of the good trialer characteristics have to be attributed to the lead-filled external flywheels (external, in that they are not contained within the crankcase, but located in the primary case). These extra wheels lead the engine smoothly from one pulse to the next and keep it churning willingly when one would expect it to give up. Probably the most interesting point about good trialers — including the two-strokes — is that they continue to pull right down to the last beat. And the Sherpa is hardly an exception, but rather an example of the breed, in that it has the rider feeling as though he couldn't kill it with a stick. The flywheel effect, of course, prevents the Sherpa from bursting to life, and generous throttle applications provide only additional usable torque that is totally predictable.

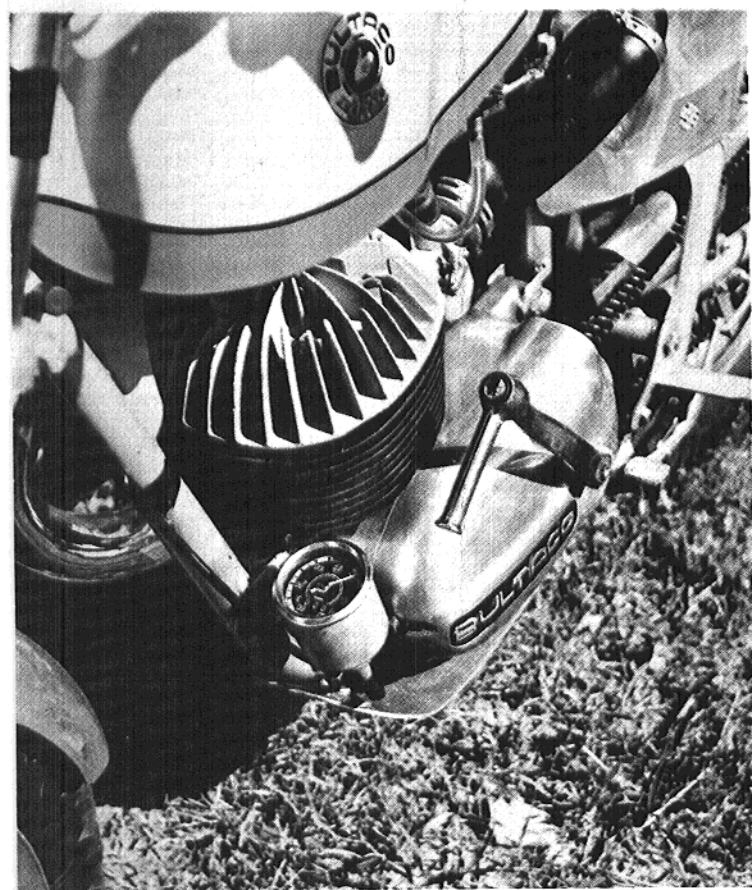
Typical of a good trialer, the Sherpa T has a wide ratio gearbox that offers a stump-pulling low gear and a highway speed top gear in the same system. Second and third gears are spaced rather close to first and provide a generous working range in observed sections.



CYCLE WORLD
ROAD TEST

BULTACO SHERPA T

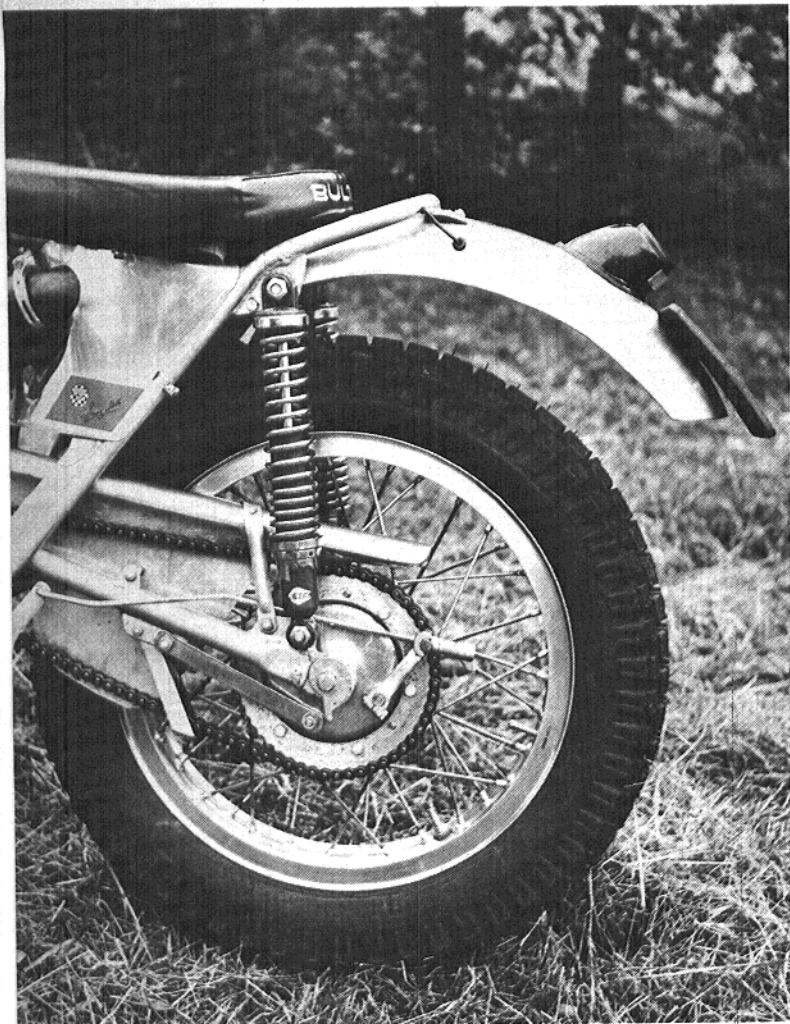




For suspension units, the Sherpa T employs Ceriani-pattern Telesco front legs with an alloy crown and five-position Betor spring-shocks aft. Both ends of the bike have good trialer characteristics in that they are soft, have long travel, and are well damped. Since we are pretty much pre-sold on the Telesco forks, we spent a greater amount of concentration on the rear suspension and found it to be some of the best going. Even during fast riding on rough ground this motorcycle — conceived for slow going — evidenced no nasty habits such as excessive rebound and hopping about.

The all-important standing position on the Sherpa is excellent. The pegs are set high and well back, and are extremely sturdy, nicely fabricated pieces. The handlebars, unlike those on many other Bultacos, are one-piece with integral control lever stubs. Bar contour is excellent, but the stubs rule out any repositioning of the controls to suit personal tastes. Hand control feel is light, and this is surely welcome for a clutch control that will see as much use as this one. The relationship of the foot controls to the pegs is uncommonly good (this is usually a point where a trialer must be compromised). Gear changes are easily made up or down while standing on the pegs and under way.

The seat is just as uncomfortable as it looks. It is short, narrow and has virtually no padding — but this is not a criticism; a trials saddle should serve only as a platform to thrust against when the rider must foot, and it performs this chore quite well. The fuel tank is comfortably narrow while providing excellent knee-grip. In addition, it's set far enough back from the steering head to be



out of the way of the fork legs when they are brought to "lock." Speaking of lock, the Sherpa has all that a rider will ever need — roughly 170 degrees from lock to lock! This extreme lock is most welcome and totally necessary in a trialer, and in this case nicely compliments the exceptionally precise steering feel.

Something new to the Sherpa this year are the alloy wheels. Bultaco employs the heavy-duty Akront rims and laces them to their own alloy hubs. They have completed the assemblies by mounting a set of Metzler tires — a Trials in the rear and for some reason, a Sports in front (sports-pattern tires are not permitted in trials in England and Europe).

The Sherpa's weight bias is good, but on steep climbs the front end has to be looked after to prevent it from rising — something that it does easily but, fortunately, slowly and controllably. The Sherpa is extremely sensitive to weight shifting, and traction can be caught or broken, simply by shifting one's weight from back to front, with the rider thus gaining one more "control."

The Sherpa T is handsome and nicely finished with only a few rough spots. With all of its civilizing features such as muffler, light and deeply valenced fenders it could be ridden as general transportation for short distances, and it would very definitely be a super-cowtrailer.

It is a study in good trialer design — low c.g., lots of ground clearance, ample steering lock, low top hamper, low weight and bags of tractable torque. And it has an interesting manner that causes those experiencing it for the first time to suddenly become interested in trials. ■

BULTACO SHERPA T

SPECIFICATIONS

List price	\$795
Suspension, front	telescopic
Suspension, rear	swing arm
Tire size, front	3.00-21
Tire size, rear	4.00-18
Engine type	2-stroke single
Bore and stroke	2.84 x 2.36 in., 72 x 60mm
Displacement, cu. in.	14.9
Displacement, cu. cent.	244
Bhp @ rpm	18 @ 8000
Carburetion	IRZ 24mm
Ignition	flywheel magneto
Fuel capacity, gal.	2.0
Oil capacity, pts.	oil in fuel
Oil system	oil mist
Starting system	kick, folding crank

POWER TRANSMISSION

Clutch type	multi-disc, wet plate
Primary drive	duplex chain
Final drive	single-row chain
Gear ratio, overall:1	
5th	none
4th	9.0
3rd	10.8
2nd	19.8
1st	25.7

DIMENSION, INCHES

Wheelbase	52.5
Saddle height	31.0
Saddle width	8.5
Footpeg height	14.0
Ground clearance	10.0
Curb weight	219

