

EXCLUSIVE TEST: 450 HUSKY

POPULAR

34120 **MAY 1972** 60¢

CYCLING

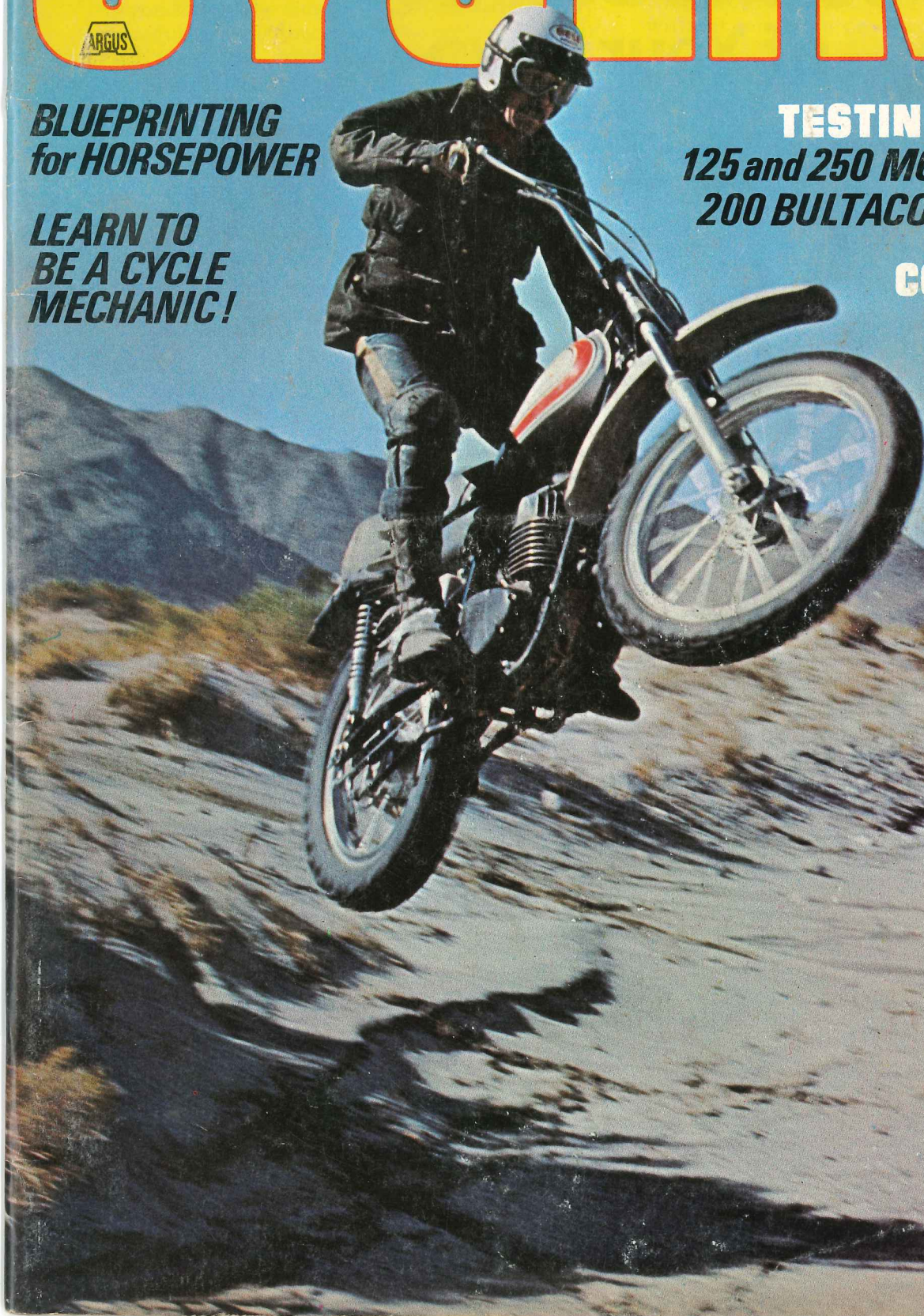
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HUSKY'S HAULER THE 450



The cover for the ignition system is bigger now to accommodate either the Motoplat or Fems setup.

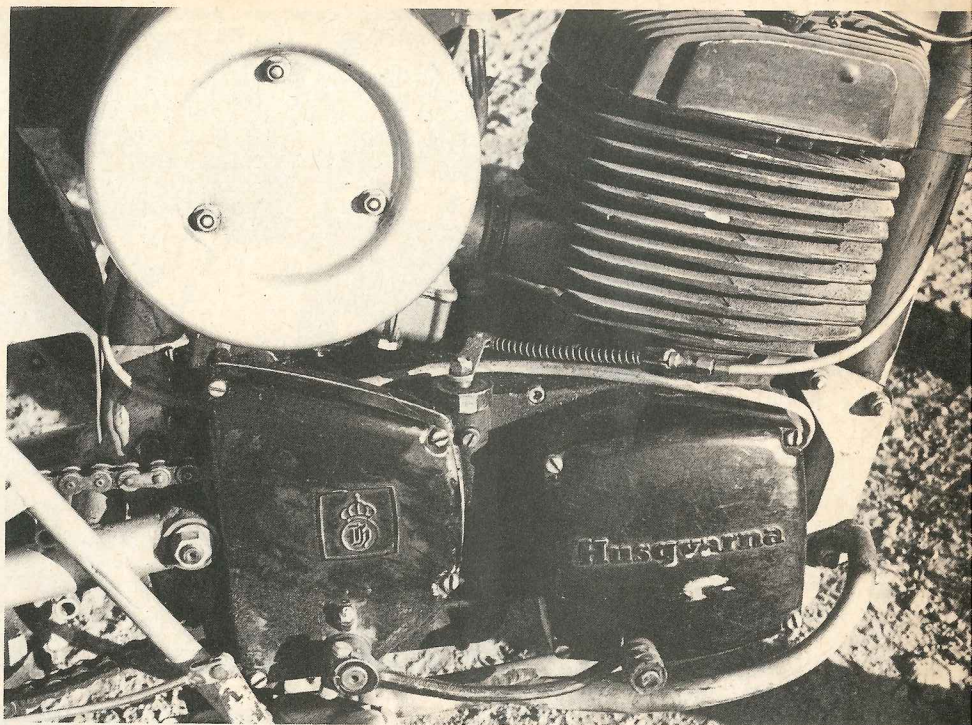
The King is dead, long live the King. Over the past few years the top desert sled has been the 400cc Husqvarna. Last year the Number One desert plate was carried by Whitey Martino, on his 400 Husky. This year the magic plate will be carried by POP CYCLE's Contributing Editor, J.N. Roberts. He too won the plate with a 400 Husky. Now it seems these two top riders will have to make a change in their mounts — the 400 just might be outdated.

What caused this to take place? After all the 400 was perhaps the most versatile of any of the large displacement cycles available. The answer is simple, Husky built another model for the desert, the new 450cc.

At the time of this writing there're only two 450s on the West Coast. Malcolm Smith has one, and of course, J.N. Roberts has the other. A gentle nudge in J.N.'s ribs was all it took to get his bike for the test. Since he came along with it we received a bonus. There're very few riders who can jump on a machine that produces the power of the 450 and be objective about it, the first few hours in the saddle are usually spent just trying to hang on. J.N. could explain the finer points of the bike to us while we could concentrate on swallowing our hearts.

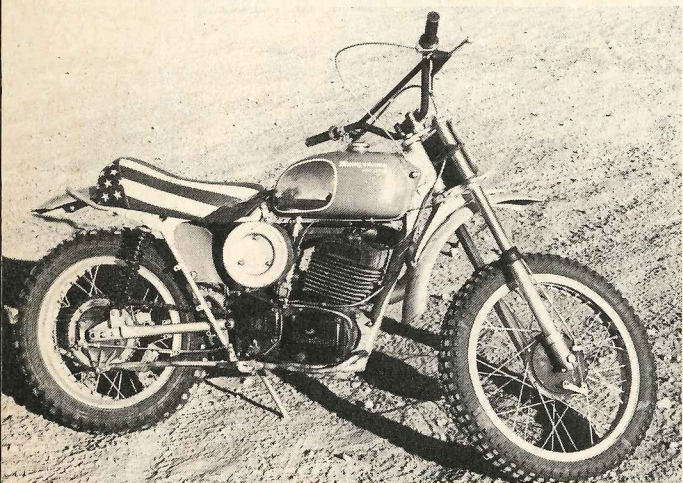
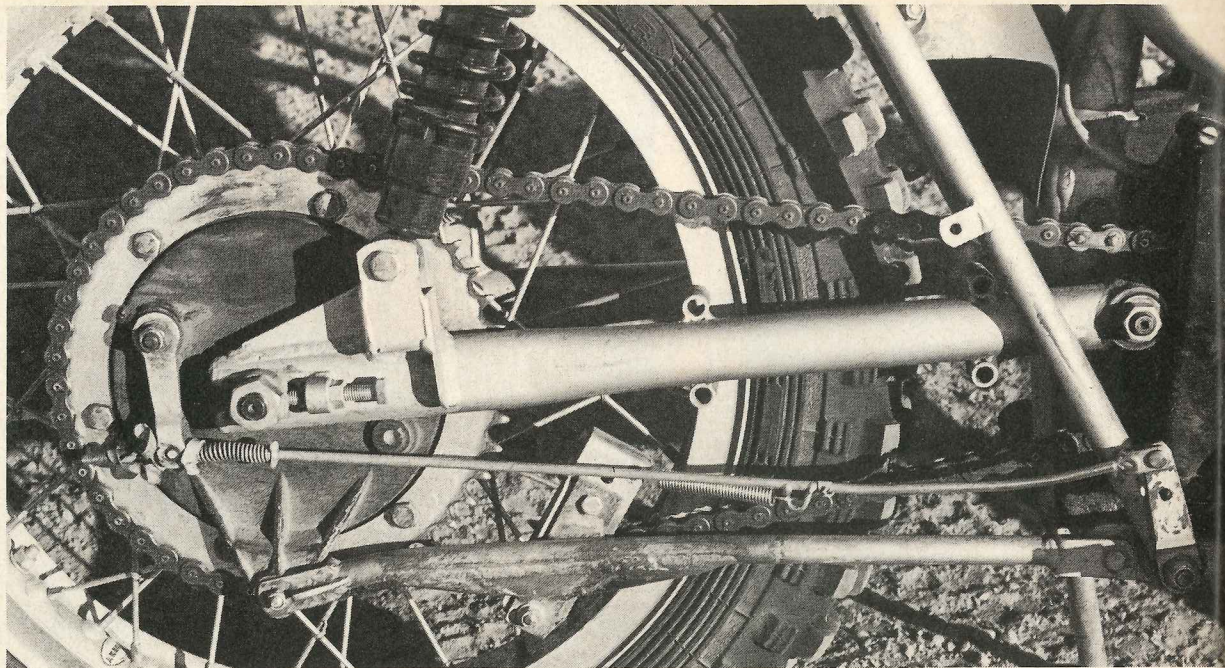
Actually the aforementioned isn't true. Much to our surprise the 450 was very easy to ride, in many ways easier than the 400. The 400 wasn't what you'd call a pipey machine, but the 450 is even less so. Here is one engine that actually pulls hard from 1500/2000 rpm.

One of the big complaints riders had about the Husky in the past was the fact that the front wheel was very light most of the time. All the rider had to do was to sit back and gas it, the front wheel would then be well up in the air. Once gotten used to it wasn't a big problem, but it could be disconcerting. On the 450, and all of the '72 Huskys, the engine has been moved forward in the frame to counteract this problem. Now when the

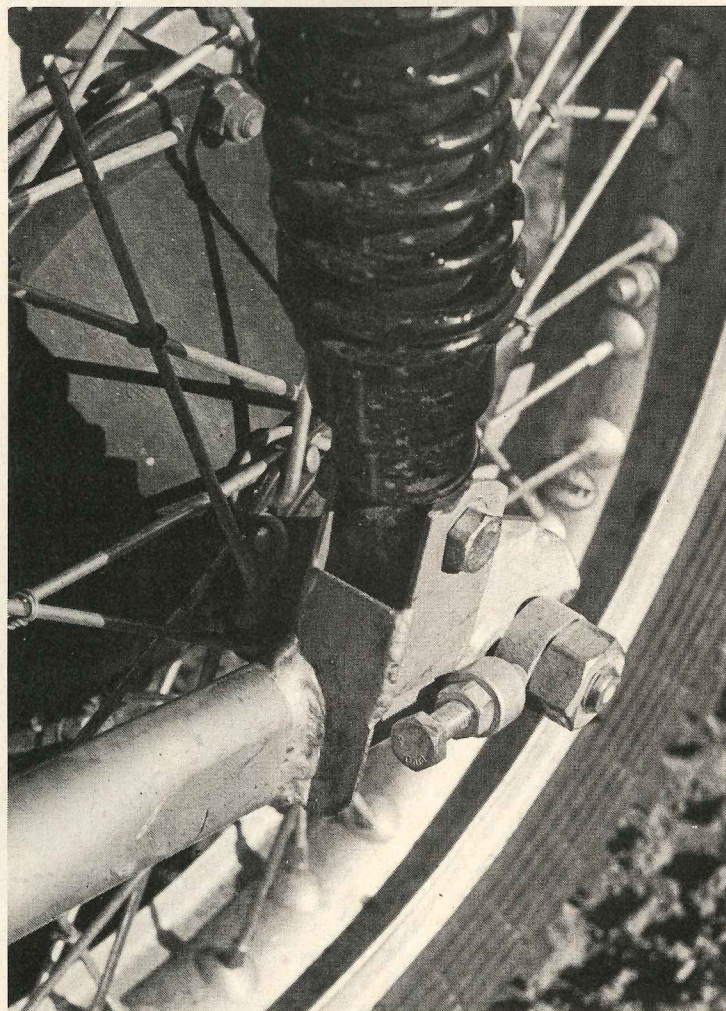


The forks haven't changed, they're still strong, well dampened, and the seals still leak.

A floating rear brake is used to minimize wheel hop under hard braking.

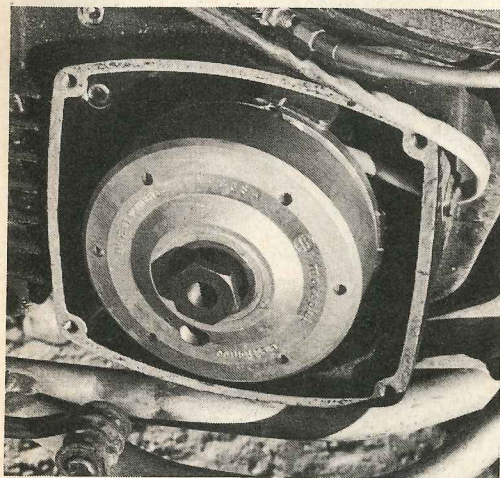
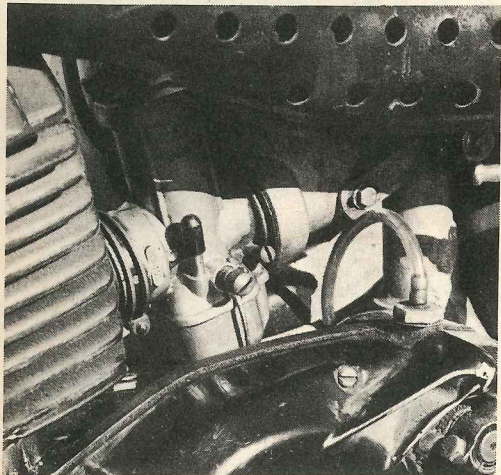


With the engine moved forward and down in the frame it's much easier to keep the front wheel on the ground under hard acceleration.



The shock mount is boxed for strength. The axle adjuster works well from the standpoint of not bending the adjusting bolt.

If all-out horsepower was necessary Husky would have used a bigger carburetor. This one is 36mm.



Even though J.N.'s bike has the wide ratio gearbox he runs the Motoplat ignition because it's somewhat lighter.

power is dialed in the front wheel stays on the ground and the bike moves out. Of course with the power on hand in the 450, a claimed 46 at 6200 rpm, the bike will still wheelie if the rider gives the slightest tug on the handlebars. It's very easy to control.

In many ways the 450 engine hasn't changed a great deal from the 400. It has a bore and stroke of 82 by 82mm, a square engine. Total displacement is 434cc. Maximum torque is a whopping 38.6 ft/lbs at 5200. Because of such a large bore and stroke a mild 8.8-to-1 compression is standard.

Carburetion is by a 36mm Bing concentric. The engine could probably stand a bigger carb but then it wouldn't be as tractable as it is. This choice is a good one for all-around use.

The 450 comes with one of two different ignition systems, depending on the transmission chosen. If the wide ratio is chosen, and we see no reason for the close ratio unit, it's not

as though this bike has a narrow powerband, the spark-maker is a Femsma pointless electronic unit. The close ratio engine comes with a Moto-plat setup. The reason for the two different ignition systems is that Husqvarna feels that the bike with the wide ratio transmission will be used in some of the longer races that might require a bit of night running: Baja, The Mint 400, etc. The Femsma ignition has lighting coils so it's no big thing to put lights on the bike. With the Moto-plat system lights can't be used. Both systems have been proven and neither should give any problem to the owner/rider.

A change for '72 throughout the Husky line, and of course, of the 450, is the addition of one gear in the transmission, making it a five speed. Huskeys have always been known for their torque engines and many might ask why they need a five speed. On a moto-cross track this is probably valid but the 450 is meant for desert racing. And here the fifth speed can be an advantage. In the Barstow to Vegas race, J.N. was able to pack enough gear to where low would still get him through the tight areas, and fifth allowed him a top speed of just over 100 mph on the dry lakes. This is some 10 to 15 miles faster than a four speed would run because the four speed would have to carry a gear that would still give him a tractable first gear.

The clutch on all of the '72 bikes has been beefed up to where they shouldn't ever give any trouble. They still have five fiber and six steel plates but extra tabs have been added to the plates that engage in the outer hub.

One area that hasn't changed is the suspension. At the front are the justly famous Husqvarna forks that have seven inches of travel. They're rugged and almost impossible to bend, but the fork seals still leak.

At the rear are Girling shocks. Most riders agree that Girlings, if not the best shock in existence, are at least one of the best. They do wear out quicker than some but while they're working we think they're the best available.

Riding this bike is a blast. You can let the bike idle down to almost a walking pace in third gear and then open the throttle and spin the wheel. As we said earlier the engine pulls from the bottom up.

With the added weight on the front wheel you can exit a corner with the power well on. The front end will stay down and the bike will track much better than last year's 400, even though the extra 50 cc's are urging you forward at a much higher rate.

We were surprised that the bike didn't come with a 4.50 by 18 rear tire. We felt that to put the power down it would be necessary. However, the engine is so smooth that a 4.00 contained the power well unless you got carried away with the throttle, and that would spin a 4.50. The front tire is still the tried and true 3.00 by 21.

There was only one thing we didn't like about the 450 and that was the price. Suggested retail is \$1475, and that's a chunk out of anybody's wallet. But if you have the money to buy it, and the talent to ride it, you should be happy with it. PC

HUSQVARNA 450

PRICE

\$1475.00

ENGINE

ENGINE TYPE

Single-cylinder, port timed two-stroke

HORSEPOWER @ RPM

46 @ 6200

TORQUE

38.6 ft./lbs. @ 5200

BORE AND STROKE

82mm by 82mm

DISPLACEMENT

434cc

COMPRESSION RATIO

8.8-to-1

CARBURETION

36mm Bing concentric

IGNITION

Motoplat electronic or Femsma electronic

TRANSMISSION

SPEEDS

Five speed

CLUTCH

Wet, multi-plate

CHASSIS

LENGTH OVERALL

82 inches

WHEELBASE

54 inches

GROUND CLEARANCE

8.7 inches

WEIGHT

235 pounds dry

FRAME TYPE

Single downtube

TIRE SIZE

Front: 3.00 x 21

Rear: 4.00 x 18

BRAKES

Front: single-leading shoe

Rear: single-leading shoe