

# australasian **DIRT BIKE**

ISSUE 74

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**GIANT  
BONUS ISSUE!  
MORE COLOUR  
THAN EVER!**

**EASTER FOUR DAY  
ENDURO**

**EBENEZER'S  
12 HOUR**

**HONDA XL600**  
AN EASIER START IN LIFE

**IT200 vs KDX200**  
THE FACES REMAIN THE SAME,  
ONLY THE TIMES HAVE CHANGED

**HONDA XR250  
VS SUZUKI  
TS250**

**THE TEST THEY  
SAID  
WOULD  
NOT  
BE  
FAIR**

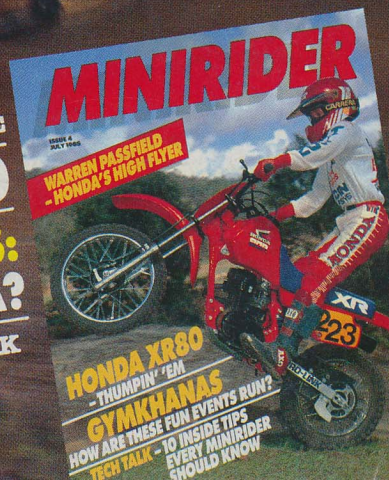
**MAICO  
500  
ENDURO**



**ADB'S  
ISDE SUPPORTER  
TOUR  
DETAILS INSIDE!**

**MINIRIDER**  
INSIDE THIS ISSUE  
**HONDA XR80**  
**GYMKHANAS:  
A GOOD IDEA?**

TECH TALK



**HONDA XR80**  
- THUMPIN' 'EM  
**GYMKHANAS**  
HOW ARE THESE FUN EVENTS RUN?  
TECH TALK - 10 INSIDE TIPS  
EVERY MINIRIDER  
SHOULD KNOW



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**VOL.13, NO.2**



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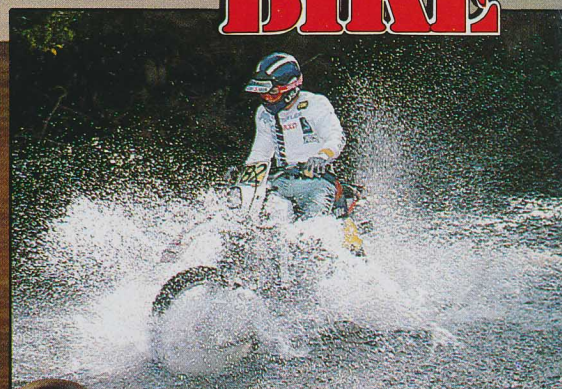
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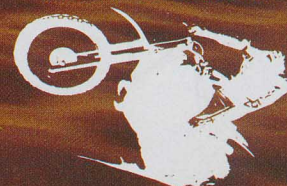


Photography by Vicki Huston

## COVER

Victorian Yamaha Team rider Gary Hore is well known in his home state, but interstate riders are quickly becoming aware of his abilities. He finished 2nd in the RMMM Four Day 250cc Class and 3rd outright behind Pelle Granquist and Phil Lovett. Our pictorial on the Four Day begins on page 62.

\* Recommended and maximum retail price only. Imagine what this price could soar to if we actually had to pay staff. ADB - budget cutters.





# MAICO GM500E

**At a time when open class enduro bikes are going down in capacity, Maico has stuck to its guns and released a "full" 500 for you to battle it out in the bush.**

If you've always been intimidated by 500s, then you'll be intimidated by this bike. Minimal refinements in the pursuit of more manageable power mean the bike should deliver as much hairy-chested roar as ever. Strangely enough we seemed to adapt to the big Maico a little faster than usual, and Maico owners claim this 85 model is indeed smoother than its predecessors.

However, the bike still produces raw horsepower with a capital "R", and while it may lack the broad appeal of the 400 Husqvarna or the 300 KTM, it still draws the attention of that select group of riders who don't wish to compromise in this area when they select an open class machine.

It's interesting to reflect on just why Maico chose to stick with the 500 powerplant. The Maico en-

gineers are certainly no strangers to smaller capacity open class bikes. Look at the success of their 400 which was produced alongside larger capacity open class machines a few years ago.

Perhaps the factory can be excused for being a little less adventurous this year while they get properly back on their feet after being sent bankrupt not too long ago. Perhaps they wanted to keep their range of models to a minimum. Perhaps the big demand for their 500 motocross bike in the US (the reason our enduro test bike was held up) meant they didn't have time to play around with a different enduro motor.

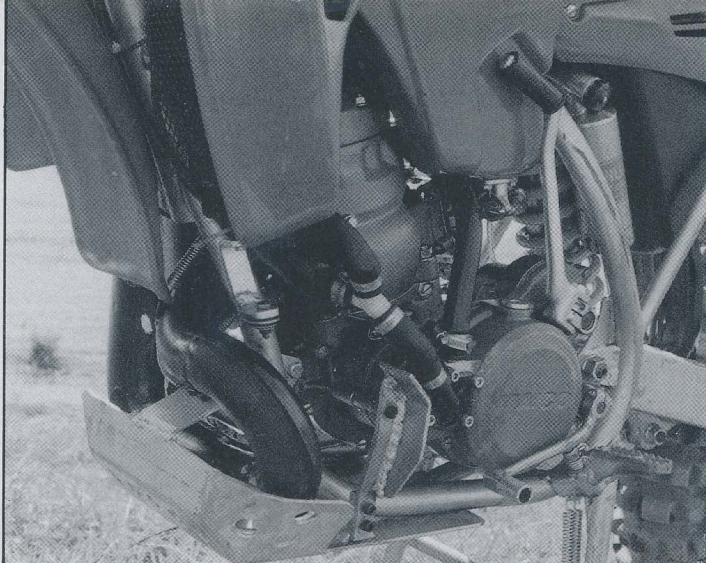
But maybe it had nothing to do with these sensible reasons at all.

Could it be they simply wanted the most powerful enduro bike? If

**Big on power and tradition.**







#### ABOVE

The motor is the predominant feature of the GM500E's personality. As one rider put it, "It's a real 500. Not like the pretend 500s from KTM and Husky." Just the same, it's easy enough to live with all those extra cubic centimetres once you get used to the idea that throttle twisting should be approached with a little more restraint in certain situations.

#### BELOW

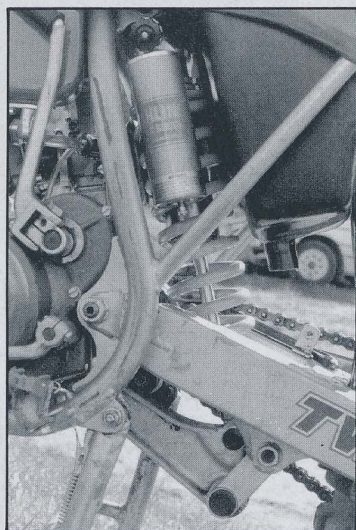
Look at the size of these rear suspension linkages! They should certainly be strong enough, and grease nipples mean the bearings should last all season too (provided you use them). Swingarm is similarly sized and it's all connected to an Ohlins shock. It works well once you get it adjusted properly.



#### ABOVE

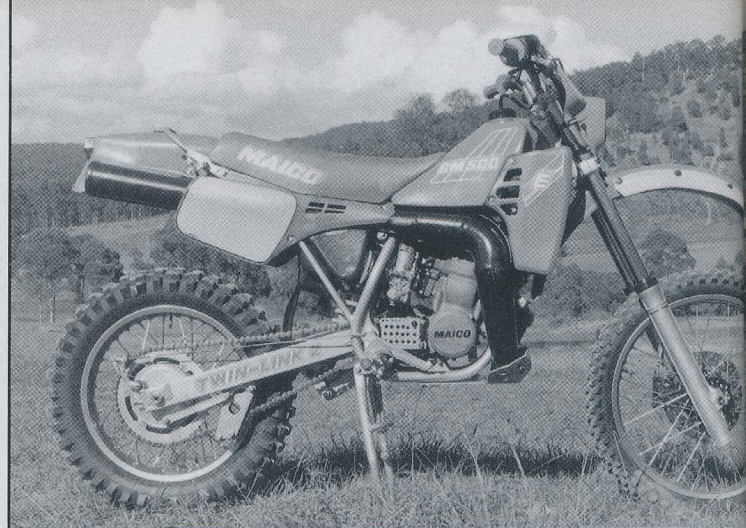
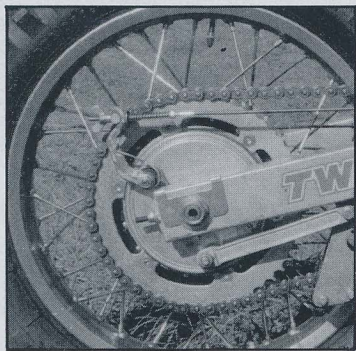
Front fork problems seemed to disappear once we got the rear suspension sorted out a little better. Don't overfill them with oil, and remember to release the air from them regularly.

We'd have to rate the disc brake as the biggest single improvement for the big Maico. The old single leading shoe brake was pretty sad and no one was sorry to see it had gone.



#### BELOW

Maico's traditionally fragile rear brake setup has been helped out a little here with the backing plate rotated to position the brake actuating arm above the swingarm. It's not standard procedure but it seems to work.



## MAICO GM500E

so, they certainly succeeded. One ride will convince you of that.

Let's get off the subject of the motor for a moment and see what else these German lads have done to make their machine attractive to their power-hungry customers.

The first comment everyone makes about any of the new Maicos is "They look good." But better still is the fact that the bike looks good up close. The Europeans are getting better with their detailing (thank you Japan) and Maico is doing its bit. The compliance-plated (of course) machine gives us much less to complain about than the last big enduro Maico we tested (remember the 490 Spider two years ago?) and this is one of the most praised aspects of the new E model (E for Enduro) bikes from long-time Maico owners.

We had the chance to eyeball one of the first GM500Es in the country and were pleased to note that it seemed close to race-ready out of the crate. Just pack the indicators away and fit less dangerous (and less legal) mirrors.

We were proved wrong couple of weeks later though. The bike we eventually got to test ride had been prepared for the Four-Day, and the changes were as follows:

Jetting was taken one leaner on the pilot jet and on the needle jet.

A one tooth smaller countershaft sprocket was fitted to lower the gearing. It's way too high standard.

Standard Bridgestone tyres were replaced with Metzlers. Bridgestones on a Maico - wow!

The rear brake backing plate was repositioned so the actuating arm was above the swingarm rather than below it. We're not so sure that it is as effective in this position but it still seemed to work OK so what the heck? A rear brake is a rear brake. The idea behind it was to make it less vulnerable to damage, and in the case of the Maico we feel this is a good move. For years Maico's rear brake backing plate has been a consistent problem. It's simply too easily damaged. They've promised us

something better next year and we'll welcome any update with open arms.

The rear guard was bobbed to alleviate fears of the knobs on the rear tyre (which touches the guard when the suspension bottoms out) catching the back edge of the guard and dragging it into the wheel. It's uncommon but we've had it happen on other bikes.

The kickstart lever was located on (very important apparently).

Rim pins were fitted in place of the rimlocks, for two reasons. The pins made for faster tyre changes and with this much power and only one (!) rimlock on the rear wheel, the tyre wasn't holding as firmly as it should have. Bit of a slip-up on that attention to detail we mentioned earlier.

An alloy bash plate/pipe protector was fitted to our test bike, despite the fact that the big Maico

## MAICO GM500E

**Test Bike:** Maico Motorcycles, 276 Victoria Rd, Gladesville, NSW, 2111. Ph: (02) 816 1461.

Courtesy of "BJ".

**Retail price:** Very European.  
**ENGINE**

Type .....	Big Mutha
Bore/stroke .....	Long/wide
Capacity .....	Bulk
Carburettor ...	Barely big enough
Ignition .....	Yes. Including kill switch with dual back-up systems.
Air filtration .....	Chicken wire screen to keep rocks, logs etc out.

## FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Frame .....	Silver
Front forks ...	Two (one each side) big fat mothers
Rear suspension .....	One (at the back)

## DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase .....	Medium/lengthy
Seat height .....	Depends
Ground clearance .....	10-12 metres either side of the trail
Fuel capacity .....	One tank full
Weight .....	Excellent



has one of the least vulnerable pipes around. "They had them there so we put them on," was the reason behind it. Additional protection for the water pump was included in the bash plate package.

A few other items which fall into the same "They had them there so we put them on" category are the gold Tommaselli bars, different grips and a big Acerbis front guard extension.

### LET'S RACE

Test area was a Pony Express. Familiarisation with the bike consisted of starting it up and riding across the pits and back. The bike has a manually-operated, barrel-mounted decompressor. Barrel-mounted means the motor will still run with the compression release open so all you do is pull in the lever, kick-start the bike like a 125 trailbike, then when it's running, release the decompression lever. Your big bore will be idling away without all the sweat and tears.

That's about all we found out about the bike before the race. That and the fact that it had big plenty horsepowers. The gravel-packed roost which shattered windscreen and headlights and caused \$800 worth of paint damage to the Nissan Coupe parked at the gateway to the pits was confirmation of that.

The clicking over of our starting time unleashed another gravel-storm on unsuspecting bystanders, many of whom were lucky to escape serious injury from the flying sheets of corrugated iron which had been torn from the lapscored shed by the blast.

Fearing for personal safety and hygiene, the bike was lurched awkwardly around the first lap in too-high gears, to return a very unsatisfactory lap time. It seemed no different than any other "difficult to ride properly" 500 enduro bike, especially in tight terrain such as this.

The front disc brake was nice though. We've been complaining about the old drum brake for ages, but the long wait only makes the disc seem all that much better. And the GM500's easy starting is such a nice touch when you stall it.

As the race wore on, things improved. The front brake was still good, we didn't even stall it anymore, the motor didn't seem quite so overwhelming, and consequently our lap times started improving.

The early (and increasing) gap between us and the leaders (also on a new 500 Maico) began to close, and by the end of the event we had managed to record fastest lap. We think that says something for a 500 in such tight terrain.

It wasn't all good news though. The few fast sections of the course revealed a poorly set up suspension package that needed attention. We weren't able to do much in the way of alterations during the race of course, but a post-race fiddle-session went a long way towards overcoming the double-sided problem of suspension that wanted to wallow in the whoops yet kick around badly (both ends)

in smaller, sharp-edged bumps.

We eventually reduced all three rear suspension settings from standard. We decreased the compression damping to help the rear wheel react to smaller bumps, rocks and logs, then followed that up by decreasing the spring preload slightly. We're not sure of the effectiveness of that move. Adjustment of the spring will depend largely on the size of the rider and the type of riding he is doing. In fact according to Mitch Heffernan (who rides a 250 Maico), correct adjustment of the spring is a critical first step in setting up the Maico's rear end.

Finally we backed off the rebound damping, which resulted in a much more responsive rear end in the whoops. It seemed the rear wheel was not recovering fully from one bump before it was hit with another so the faster recovery time was much appreciated.

As we find so often lately, changes to the rear suspension affect the front end more than we ever believed possible. Our rear suspension improvements helped the behaviour of the front forks, and after releasing a little accumulated air we were pretty happy with their performance.

We must admit we still weren't 100% happy with the suspension by the time we let the concerned owner get back to his Four-Day preparation, but the improvements we were able to achieve in the limited time available were reassuring if nothing else.

Overall, we'd have to rate the suspension as the only real black mark against the bike. There were no other major complaints, and as we explained, the suspension can be made to work a whole lot better. It's just something you'll have to accept will need a little of your time when you get a Maico.

### SUMMARY

This is just the sort of bike that has scared generations of riders away from the open class, but on the other hand, it is just the sort of bike that has attracted horsepower-hungry riders for so long.

For a tight enduro or a tight special test, give us a smaller bike any day. We've never been able to get our act together on a 500 and this new Maico is just the same in this respect.

As far as we can see, there are two groups of riders who will want a bike like this. Those select few who can successfully handle a 500 in enduro competition, and all those riders who simply want a good quality club-racer/play-bike with enough power to scare themselves and their mates silly all weekend. We know it's an expensive toy, but we're discovering that this is exactly what so many good-time riders are doing all over the country every weekend. And judging by the comments from the Maico 500 riders we spoke to, they're loving it.

But don't expect an enthusiastic recommendation for the GM500E from us. We're scampering off back to the 200cc class.



# "I KEEP MY HEAD IN A GOOD HELMET."



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