

AUTOCIZED!!

The absolute in conquering terrain...

The Staff of DIRT BIKE

Why on earth would someone want an automatic motorcycle? Half the fun of riding is fanning the clutch, jamming the trans from gear to gear and hanging on. The word "auto" brings to mind slow, moped, and dull.

Why is it that factory Husky rider Terry Cunningham rides an Auto in all National enduros? Why, too, does Husky Service Manager and many-time enduro winner Bob Popiel ride an Auto? The answer is obvious, once you've ridden one. On board the Husky Auto tight, squeaky woods are conquered in a fashion not possible on a normal-shifting bike. As the terrain gets tougher, tighter and more vertical, the Auto works better, letting the rider traverse obstacles that can't even be considered on a normal bike.

THE KEY IS IN THE CLUTCH(ES)

Similar in design to a moped, the Husky trans is centered around the centrifugal clutches. These are the key. The clutches are shaped much like brake shoes, hooked together with springs and fit in a hub, like a brake drum. The clutches spin inside the hub; the faster they go, the more positive contact they make, providing acceleration. At low rpm, no contact is made with the hub; they expand and are thrown in contact with the hub as the motor spins faster and faster.

There are four clutches that operate inside the 420. They work in unison, though each reacts at a different rpm, engaging the four gear ranges at the proper time. A smooth working harmony develops from the power put through the clutches, making the Auto an absolute slick shifter—picking the correct gear for any occasion. On downhills, back off the throttle and coast, then at the right moment nail the gas; the thinking trans has already picked the proper gear for the speed you're traveling. Uphills are the same. Start up the hill; as momentum decreases, the bike picks the right gear for maintaining speed. All you have to do is work the throttle in an effort to keep the traction coming. The bike does the rest.

FRAMED AND A LEVER SHORT

For 1982 and 1983, there will be two models of the Automatic available: the AXC and the AE. Both motors are identical, with the exception of the ignition. The AXC has a smaller internal rotor Motoplat, while the enduro version has a heavier external type. Also, the pipe on the AE is a double-wall version, made that way to keep the decibel level down.

Suspensionwise, we liked the AXC by



Rider concentration can be spent just worrying about the throttle and braking. After getting used to the bike, a style develops and tight, gnarly sections can be man-handled faster than on a normal-shifter bike.

virtue of its longer travel—12 inches front and rear. The AE has just 9.5 inches, not nearly enough travel for SoCal riding. Both machines have the old-style 35mm forks. Their action is excellent, although the longer AXC suffers from severe flexing in a strained situation, namely big whoops and jumps. The shorter AE doesn't have this trouble; it's simply undersuspended for anything but cruiser woods.

On the tail end of the AXC is a standard MX swingarm right off the latest CRs. Outboard-mounted Koni shocks are used instead of the familiar Ohlins. We can't fault their action, but because they are not rebuildable eventually the owner will have

to fork out for Ohlins or something else suitable. In fact, we opted to put Ohlins on our test bike after some 700 miles. The AE has an old-style swingarm with archaic Corte & Cosso shocks. For mild trail-riding, these are fine; for anything else, forget it.

On the chassis, both bikes share the same frames as this year's MX and enduro bikes. Tanks, seats and handlebar gear are all ditto, excluding the absence of the clutch lever.

Enduro paraphernalia is limited to the AE, although bolt-on parts are available from Husky Products, should one want them for the AXC.



AUTOMATICS

REVAMP YOUR STYLE

Riding an Auto requires a different technique from a normal-shifting bike. This starts at the ground level, which includes firing up the machine. There is a lever on the engine cases that reads "N-D." That's neutral and drive. Put it in neutral, flip down the choke lever and kick it over. A potent stab will usually start the engine in two or three kicks. Let the revs drop, release the choke lever and let the bike idle. Once the engine warms and reaches its lowest idle point without stalling, move the lever to drive. It's important that it be in a smooth idle phase—meaning very low. When the engine's running too high, popping the lever into "D" is harsh and grinding.

There's a positive feel to the bike when put into drive. It lurches—similar to an automatic car. It doesn't start running down the road though; you can leave it on

the sidestand and put on your goggles without fear of the bike taking off. The next step is simply to turn the throttle.

On board, the first few minutes or so is a strange experience. It doesn't drive like a motorcycle; it's spacelike. You can feel the bike shift from one gear to the next, always picking the right situation on a hill to downshift itself, or up on a two-track. It has a mind of its own, taking away any failures that might crop up, leaving the pilot to efficiently attack the terrain and think only about braking and accelerating.

This is probably the hardest part to get used to. Rider error is minimized, rider efficiency is maximized. No matter how badly you foul up a section, it's just a matter of regaining your attitude and turning the throttle. No downshifting, clutching, restarting—*no hassle*. There are two things that go through your mind: throttle—brake, throttle—brake. After a little time, tight, gnarly trails, switchbacks and heavily wooded areas are handled by braking into turns while keeping the throttle preloaded, letting off the brakes, and the bike

lurches out to the next phase. Then the process is repeated. Minor get-offs, mistimed corners and slideouts show another virtue of the Auto—it doesn't stall. Pick up the bike and go.

DOWNHILL, UPHILL

Most questions concerning the Auto have to do with freewheeling—engine braking on downhills. In the upper gears, there actually is some engine braking, though not nearly as much as with a normal bike. At first, it's downright frightening. This is with any area, not just downhills. You accelerate, then shut off, and the bike freewheels. When the power is off, the bike coasts. It takes a few hours to adjust, then it feels normal. The more you ride an Auto, the more you alter your style to fit the needs of the bike. It usually takes five or six rides to completely adapt to the ways of the Auto.

Slowing on the Auto requires only a stab at the brakes. The brakes work much better than the standard units on the shifter bikes, although they're identical. Because the motor coasts when the throttle is



HUSQVARNA 420 AXC/AE

ENGINE TYPE	2-stroke, reed valve
BORE AND STROKE	86mm x 71mm
DISPLACEMENT	412cc
CARBURETION	38mm Mikuni
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	430
NEEDLE JET	R-2
JET NEEDLE	6DH3
PILOT JET	45
SLIDE NUMBER	2.0
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	10.0 L/11.0 L
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Aluminum
LUBRICATION	Pre-mix
RECOMMENDED OIL	Bel-Ray MC1+
OIL CAPACITY, TRANS.	1200cc/Husqvarna hydraulic oil
AIR FILTRATION	Foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Centrifugal clutches
TRANSMISSION	4-speed, automatic
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	17.30/15.86
2	12.85/11.78
3	10.21/9.36
4	8.41/7.78
GEARING, FRONT; REAR	11/53/12/53
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	Champion N-86/NGK B-9EV
SILENCER; SPARK ARRESTER:	
QUALITY	Yes; no; good/Yes; yes; very good
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Up-pipe, through the frame
FRAME, TYPE	Single downtube, chromoly
WHEELBASE	1525mm/1450mm
GROUND CLEARANCE	340mm/270mm

SEAT HEIGHT	970mm/925mm
WEIGHT, DRY	106 kg/109 kg
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	3.00x21 Barum
REAR	5.50x17 Barum

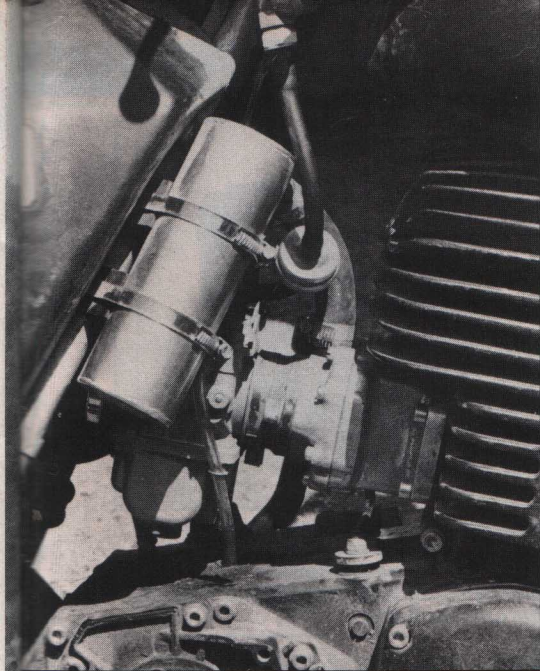
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT	Husqvarna forks, 35mm—300mm/240mm
REAR	Remote reservoir Koni shocks—300mm/ Remote reservoir Corte & Cosso—240mm
	Cross-country/Enduro

INTENDED USE	
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Sweden
RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.	\$1825/\$1900
DISTRIBUTOR:	

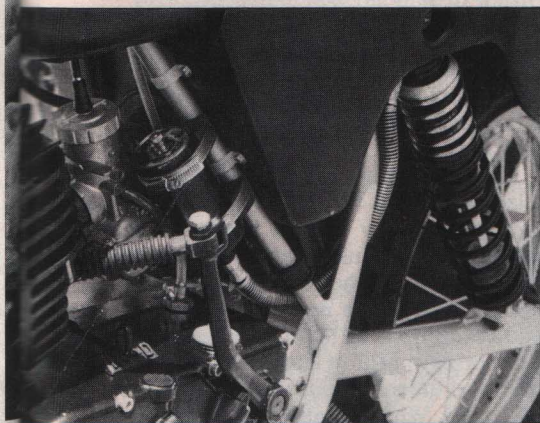
Husqvarna Motorcycle Company, Inc.
4925 Mercury Street
San Diego, California 92111

PARTS PRICES, HIGH WEAR ITEMS:	
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE	\$94.87
RINGS ONLY	14.74
CYLINDER	389.96
SHIFT LEVER	No charge
BRAKE PEDAL	12.83
FRONT SPROCKET	12.60

OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES	
KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:	
HANDLING	98/94
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	94/97/90/92
POWER	97/94
COST	98/98
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	97/97
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	96/94



A Mossbarger Reed assembly and a boost bottle are the easiest way to get more power out of the Autos. The units bolt on and require only minor jetting changes.



The engine package looks nearly identical to other Huskys, but check out the neutral/drive lever behind the cylinder. Both bikes use older-style damper assemblies on the back, the AXC with Koni units and the AE with Corté & Cosso shocks.

chopped, normal engine inertia is nullified, letting the brakes stop just the bike, not the motor.

SPRING FOR OIL

One of the nicer features of the Auto is the ability to take the entire trans out of the engine without splitting the cases or removing the motor from the frame. Tools supplied with the bike are all that's needed, and the hardest part of the task is taking off the side cover.

Change the trans fluid at least every 150 to 200 miles. This is critical to trans life. Use only Husky Automatic trans oil. The drain plug is magnetic, picking up all foreign ferrous metal in the trans. If the bike is stalling after putting it in gear, you most likely have a broken spring. You'll know by leaning the bike over on its side and pulling the drain plug. If the spring is broken, the drain plug will tell. On it will be a piece of the spring. It's easy to replace,



No matter how tight the terrain becomes, the Auto adjusts. Conquering sections requires no more than using the correct amount of throttle. Body attitude and controlled throttle usage let you slide through areas where you'd normally have a tough go of it.

so carry a few extras.

One of the best ways to increase power, while not hurting the powerband, is to pop for a Mossbarger Reed assembly and a boost bottle. The Mossbarger is available from Husky Products, the bottle from a number of companies. Pro-Circuit sells a modified version that's already equipped with the bottle. Mossbarger Reed—\$106.95 from Husky Products. Answer Products boost bottle—\$39.95 (27967 Beale Court, Valencia, California 91355; 805-257-4411). Pro-Circuit Mossbarger Reed and bottle—\$178.00 (4212 East La Palma, Anaheim, California 92807; 714-993-5400).

PRICED RIGHT

By merely looking the bikes over, you can see that most of the suspension components are made of older parts—shocks and forks from '80 and '81 machines, and older-styled rear hubs. It appears Husky is

trying to skimp to save some bucks. The good thing about this is that the savings are passed on to the buyer. Both bikes sell for under two grand—the AXC is \$1825 and the AE is \$1900. That's about \$700 to \$800 cheaper than the rest of the lineup. Pretty appealing.

WHY AN AUTO?

Some people aren't cut out for the Automatic. It takes time to adjust and alter riding style and habits to fit the mold of the Auto. It's like starting again from point zero on something similar to a motorcycle, yet very different.

But, if you can make the change, learn the new skills and keep your mind open to the good things the Auto has to offer, it's hard to turn back. Trailriding on an ordinary bike becomes a task. The Husky Auto spoils the rider; it pumps his ego by letting him conquer terrain, rather than just ride trails. □