

**FIRST COMPLETE ENDURO SHOOTOUT!**

**DIRT  
BIKE**

WPS  
34355

**JUNE 1992**

**\$2.95**  
CANADA \$3.50  
UK £1.95

Attn. retailer:  
Please display  
until June 18



**TIRE SHOOTOUT:  
STREET-LEGAL KNOBBIES  
GOOD ENOUGH FOR MX!**

**SPECIAL  
DAYTONA  
REPORT!**

**FIRST TESTS:**

- **YAMAHA'S HOT  
NEW 4-STROKE**
- **MAICO'S FAST 440**
- **HUSKY'S SEXY 610**

SEYMOUR £1.95



9 770364 154022





WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear. *Dirt Bike* does all of its testing and photography legally on public land, or private land with permission from the owner(s), and we abide by the local laws concerning vehicle registration and muffler/spark arrester requirements. We are not responsible for quality of aftermarket accessories we use.

*DIRT BIKE* Magazine (ISSN 0364-1546; Canada GST #R125009266), June '92, is published monthly by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc., with editorial offices at 10600 Sepulveda Blvd., Mission Hills, CA 91345. Subscriptions \$18.98 for 12 issues (one year). Canada and foreign add \$6 additional postage for one year, \$12 for two years. Copyright ©1992 by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted in whole or in part, by mimeograph or any other means, without the express permission of the publisher. Contributors: Photographic submissions must be 5x7 or 8x10 glossy black and white, or 35mm and larger color slides. Please mark each photo with owner's name and address. Manuscripts should be typewritten. Unsolicited contributions, manuscripts, photographs and illustrations must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Unless special arrangements are made in advance, all published material becomes the sole property of Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc. The publisher does not assume responsibility for unsolicited material. Second class postage paid at San Fernando, CA 91340, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Dirt Bike* Magazine, P.O. Box 9501, Mission Hills, CA 91395-9501. Printed in USA.

## SHOOTOUTS

### 30 250 ENDURO SHOOTOUT

Husqvarna vs. Kawasaki vs. KTM vs. Suzuki vs. Yamaha

### 68 DUAL-SPORT TIRE SHOOTOUT

Testing 17 street-legal knobbies

## BIKES

### 48 HUSQVARNA 610

A dirtier dating game

### 64 YAMAHA SEROW

Mountain goat with a jolt

### 72 MAICO GS 440

Riding the legend that won't die

## FEATURES

### 41 HOW TO WIN ENDUROS, PART III

The most valuable minutes of a race

### 44 FINISHING WHAT YAMAHA STARTED

The YZ125 didn't work; now it does

### 78 MAICO MOMENTS

Memorable moments that made Maico magnificent

### 84 HALL OF FAME DIRT BIKES

Pages in the Dirt Bike history book

### 88 BLACKJACKS

More than a club; almost a tribe

### 91 READER SURVEY

We want to know about you

## RACES

### 54 SOUTHERN MADNESS

Gainesville, Daytona & more

## DEPARTMENTS

### 9 FROM THE SADDLE

### 12 BITS & PIECES

### 14 CHECKPOINT

### 18 RIDERS WRITE

### 24 NEW PRODUCTS

### 25 TEN RIDES AFTER

### 28 VIDEOCROSS

### 99 MR. KNOW-IT-ALL

### 100 CRASH & BURN

ON THE COVER: What Yamaha rider won five of the first six supercrosses this year, has been on *Dirt Bike*'s cover six times in the last three years and has the initials Damon Bradshaw? Give up? So do we. Photo by Ron Lawson, design by DeWest, color separations by D.I.S.C.

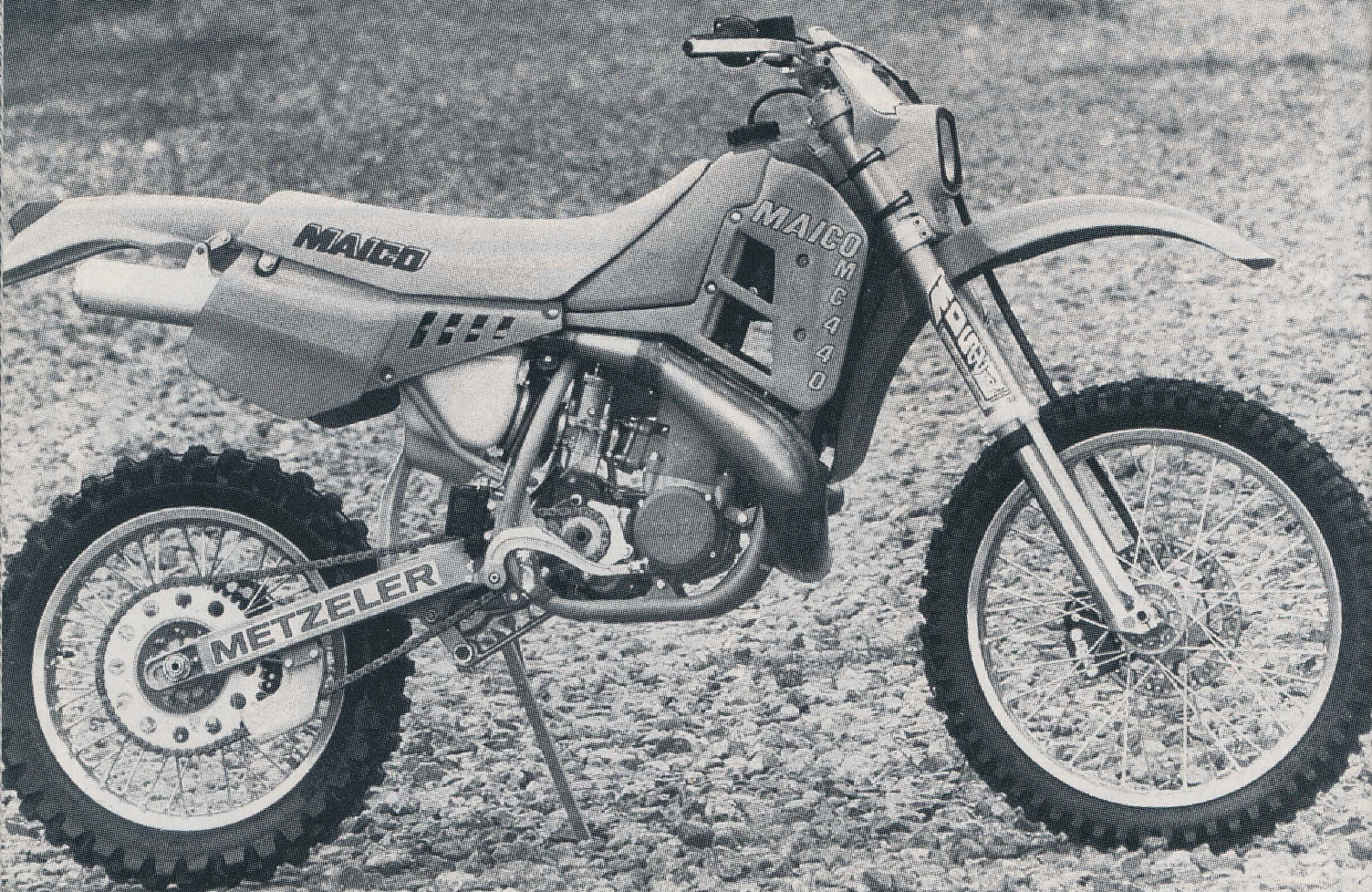


ENDURO BIKE TEST: MAICO GS 440

# MAICO LIVES!

*Time passes, but some things never grow old.*

By the staff of DIRT BIKE







◀ **Maico power was smooth back then and is smooth now.**

down fork, disc brakes, a power valve. All of it has a certain twist, though. The power valve is vacuum-operated, so there is no ball-ramp device spinning off the crank. When the pressure in the exhaust port is right, the power valve opens; the system is very simple and light. The brakes are Grimecas, which haven't been seen on dirt bikes in a number of years, and the fork is a Muller. That, in case you don't remember, is the fork that came on KTM's big four-stroke last year, and uses compressed air instead of springs. The fork is unique and quite well made, and has more adjustability than any suspension component ever made.

To make it enduro-ready, Maico's importer, Ronnie Smith, bolts on an Answer SA Pro silencer for the spark arrester. In Europe, spark arrester lunacy hasn't yet occurred to anyone with governmental power, so no European company makes one. The stock silencer actually is quite a bit quieter than the SA Pro, but oh, well—the price we pay for having a conscientious government is having more noise.

For this test, another addition was an ICO comparitor computer. In Europe they don't have any need for odometers on enduro bikes and, consequently, there aren't any good odometer drives over there. The ICO doesn't come with the bike but is a necessary add-on if you want to run time-keeping events.

#### WHAT, ME WORRY?

We aren't worrywarts normally, but there were a number of things that worried us about the Maico before we rode it. Ron was going to take the bike through the Alligator, then the next day Joe Almon and Barry Higgins would ride it in different classes of the Daytona Hare Scrambles. It would have to survive two short but very tough events with virtually no maintenance.

Worry number one: You could actually see the air cleaner element from the outside of the bike. Florida isn't a very dry state, so we figured that the Maico would die as soon as it smelled the first water hole. That didn't happen. The Alligator wasn't exactly dry, but it wasn't as wet as it could have been. Same goes for the hare scrambles. The Maico slogged through what little water there was without missing a beat.

Worry number two: The bike wouldn't start. Like the Maicos of old, the new 440 has a compression release. We would pull it, kick like crazy and the bike would just make a passing-gas-kind-of noise. When it's cold, the bike takes 47 kicks, each of them ending with a folded-up kickstart lever smacking the rider in the shin. We worried that if we stalled the bike in the race, it would take ten minutes to get going again. It didn't turn out to be a problem. When it's hot, it starts first or second kick.

Worry number three: We didn't have

“**B**ultacos are better than Maicos,” came a voice from below. The statement, directed at Ron Lawson, didn't register at first. Ron looked down and realized that a response was expected. A young boy, maybe 11 years old, waited patiently for some kind of reaction.

“Uh, Bultacos were nice. So are Maicos,” said Ron, hoping to emphasize the change from past tense to present tense.

“Make-Oh, break-oh. It looks taller than the other vintage bikes. My dad has a Bultaco,” he said, throwing a little bit of an edge into his voice. It was as if he wanted Ron to say, “Oh, yeah?” and then challenge him to a fistfight.

“This isn't a vintage bike,” Ron said. “It's a '92 model.”

The kid didn't react. “Bultacos are better than Maicos,” he repeated, then turned and ran away.

Ron looked around. He was on row 63, waiting for the start of the Alligator enduro. There were three vintage Bultacos in front of him. There was an old MT250 and a Can-Am on his row, and an assortment of ancient Huskys and Pentons behind him. Had they gotten his entry mixed up? Did they see he was riding a Maico and automatically throw him into a

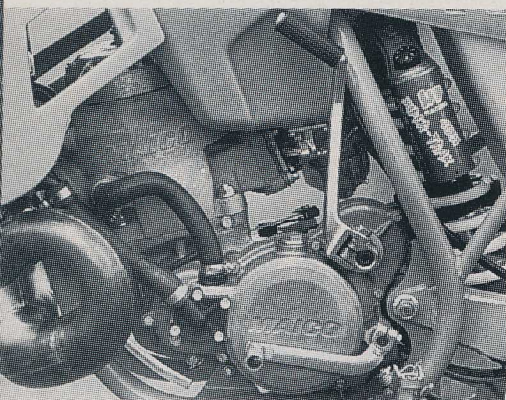
pack of vintage bikes? The Maico didn't at all look like a vintage bike. It towered above the older machines like Dorothy in Munchkinland. He would have to worry about it later.

#### BORN AGAIN

Maico is, indeed, making modern motorcycles, but not many. The company will produce about 300 machines this year, with maybe a quarter of those earmarked for the U.S. There's a 250, a 320, a 440 and a 500, all available with motocross or wide-ratio transmissions. The 440, the one we sampled in the Alligator, is of special note because it uses the same bore and stroke as the original 440 Maico. You could even take a new piston and pop it into the old bike, if you wanted. The bottom end of the motor is familiar, too. The cases are virtually identical to those of the Maicos we saw in this country back in '84. That was when Maico first eliminated the primary chain and the old clutch design. For rather complicated legal reasons, Maico was called M-Star in the U.S. back then.

Of course, there isn't much else that's borrowed from the past on the new machine. It has all the same features of the modern Japanese bikes: an upside-





The lower end of the GS 440 isn't very different from the original non-primary-chain model introduced in '83.

time for suspension setup. Between the White Power shock and the Muller fork there are enough suspension possibilities to keep a row of computers working for a month just to list them. Of all the things we worried about, this turned out to be the most legitimate. By the time Higgins got on it for the last time, we had the bike close, but the perfect suspension settings still existed in theory only.

### ENOUGH WORRIES— GIVE US REALITY

To this day, there are people who say that the best Open-class powerband of all time was that of a Maico. The company developed a reputation for not only making a lot of power, but *good* power. That reputation is in no danger. The new Maico 440's shining asset is its motor. It's delightfully smooth and almost hitless. The engine is slow-revving, but the bike gets up and moves when it has to. In fact, the Maico's motor is more four-stroke-like than most four-strokes.

How fast is it? The power is there, but it's so peakless that it feels sleepy. It's hard to lift the front end at an instant's notice—twist the throttle and the Maico goes forward. It doesn't wheelie and it doesn't spin. That's what made Maicos win races. To use a more recent bike for comparison, we would have to refer to the Husqvarna 400 from, say, '88. If you ever rode one of those, you know what we mean when we talk about smooth, effective power. That bike, if you remember, was noted for being like a Maico, but with more vibration. The new Maico, incidentally, doesn't vibrate nearly as bad as, say, a Kawasaki KX500. That's how old Maicos were, too.

There are some differences between old Maico power and new Maico power. For one thing, the new bike is a little easier to stall. When Maico eliminated the primary chain back in the early '80s, that resulted in eliminating some flywheel effect, too. It's not a real problem, once you get used to the idea of grabbing the clutch whenever you hit the brakes really hard. The engine has such smooth power characteristics that additional flywheel mass would be of no benefit, as far as traction is concerned. The bike hooks up.

## MAICO GS 440

Engine type	Liquid-cooled, reed-and-power-valved 2-stroke
Displacement	438cc
Bore and stroke	82.0mm x 83.0mm
Carburetion	40mm Bing
Fuel tank capacity	2.2 gal. (9.3L)
Gearing	15/52 (14/52 as tested)
Lighting coil	Yes
EPA-legal	No
Claimed weight	226 lb.
Running weight with no fuel	N/A
Wheelbase	59.3 in. (1505mm)
Rake/trail	N/A
Ground clearance	15.1 in. (383mm)
Seat height	37.8 in. (960mm)
Tire size and type:	
Front	3.00 x 21 Metzeler
Rear	120/90x18 Metzeler All-Cross

### Suspension:

Front	Muller inverted air fork, adj. comp./reb., 11.7 in. (300mm) travel
Rear	White Power aluminum piggyback, adj. comp./reb. 13.5 in. (345mm) travel

Country of origin.....Germany

Suggested retail price.....\$5385 (as tested)

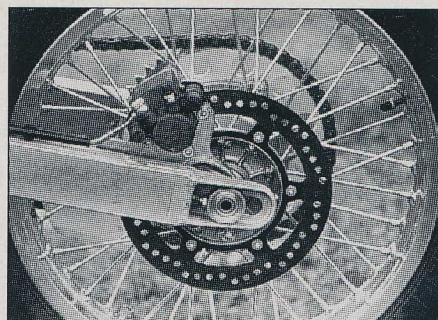
### Distributor/manufacturer:

U.S. Maico  
2806 Lark Dr.  
Oxford, AL 36203; (205) 831-3519

### PARTS REPLACEMENT COST

Piston	\$172.60*
Ring	47.05
Air filter	24.25
Clutch plate (drive)	15.40
Clutch plate (driven)	22.35
Front sprocket	21.50
Rear sprocket	53.50
Front brake pads	24.50
Rear brake pads	23.50

\* includes ring, pin, clips



Maico's Grimeca brakes are a weak point. We would like to see Brembos or Nissins.

Going up: Barry Higgins grabs a bit too much of the 440's throttle. The smooth powerband can be deceptive. ►

up against a lot of big sand whoops and, worse, hidden palmetto roots, which have been scientifically proven to be harder than diamonds and slicker than fresh chain lube. The whoops caused a problem for the rear end and the roots were hard on the front. We are sure that we could have gotten the rear end much better with just a little experimentation. The front might be tougher. It seemed especially brutal when it encountered side loads and deflections.

### CAN IT WIN?

Absolutely. We never really doubted that part. Maicos worked so well in their day that a well-restored '81 model could probably win now. What worried us most about the new Maico was its reliability. Small manufacturers like this tend to cut corners in the weirdest places, but in the course of three back-to-back races with almost no maintenance, the Maico gave us little trouble.

These are the problems that did surface: First, the fork seals began to leak. The ooze found its way to the front disc and weakened an already weak brake. Then, in the final race, Barry Higgins managed to heat up the rear brake to the point where it stopped working. We would like to try some high-temp brake fluid and maybe some insulated pads. The first time that we pulled in the compression release, the end of the cable pulled off. It was re-attachable. At first we missed a whole bunch of shifts. It took us a little while to remember to *shift*, not just jab at the lever.

If this sounds like a lot to worry about, then you should probably look elsewhere for an Open enduro bike. The Maico is for someone who wants to be different from the rest of the pack and doesn't mind paying a premium, both in initial purchase price and in time spent setting things up properly. No one wants to be different so much that he gives himself a disadvantage, and with the Maico, you *won't* have one. Lawson, Almon and Higgins all rode about as fast as they would have ridden even if they were on their respective favorite bikes.

The only difference was that more people noticed them doing it. □

### SOUNDS GOOD SO FAR

So what's the catch? Is this Maico really as good today as Maicos of the past were in their day? Maico used to be known for handling excellence. This Maico uses a lot of the same geometry as the last Maicos we saw in this country. Is that good enough? Yes, but just barely. Today, the Maico is an average-handling motorcycle. It has a little bit of a headshake at speed, and it's not as good in the turns as a Honda or Suzuki. The bike is tall, long and big, and you start noticing that when you have to take your feet off the pegs in tight situations.

Long-legged riders will complain that the footpegs seem absurdly high, making it very difficult to go from the seated position to standing up. It's almost worth that price, though, when you are whisking past stumps and other evil things that threaten to brutalize your feet. The Maico has a lot of ground clearance and those high pegs keep your feet well above harm's way.

### MULLER & WHITE POWER EXPRESS

As mentioned earlier, we didn't have time to get the suspension perfect. That's one of the big problems with White Power shocks: There are a million settings and one will be good, while the others won't work at all. With the Muller fork, there are a *zillion* possibilities, and it hasn't yet been established that any of them work.

Between the Alligator Enduro and the Daytona Hare Scrambles, the Maico was



