

AUSTRALIAN

TRAIL & TRACK

JULY, 1981, \$1.20

Tests;

IT465 YAMAHA

RM465 SUZUKI

XL185 S HONDA

MONTY 248 TRIALS

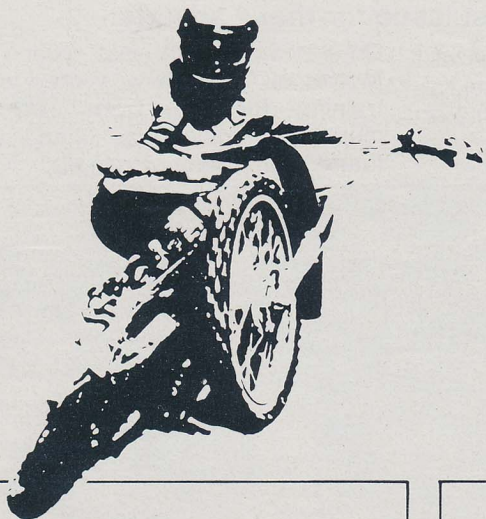


Features;

UK 4-STROKE MX

VIC 125 MX ROUND

Mr MOTO-X, QLD ROUND



TRAIL & TRACK

Australia's top seller

JULY 1981, Number 94

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IT465 "H"



XL185SB



RM465 "X"



248 COTA

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Craig Scott

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RM465 "X" Floater

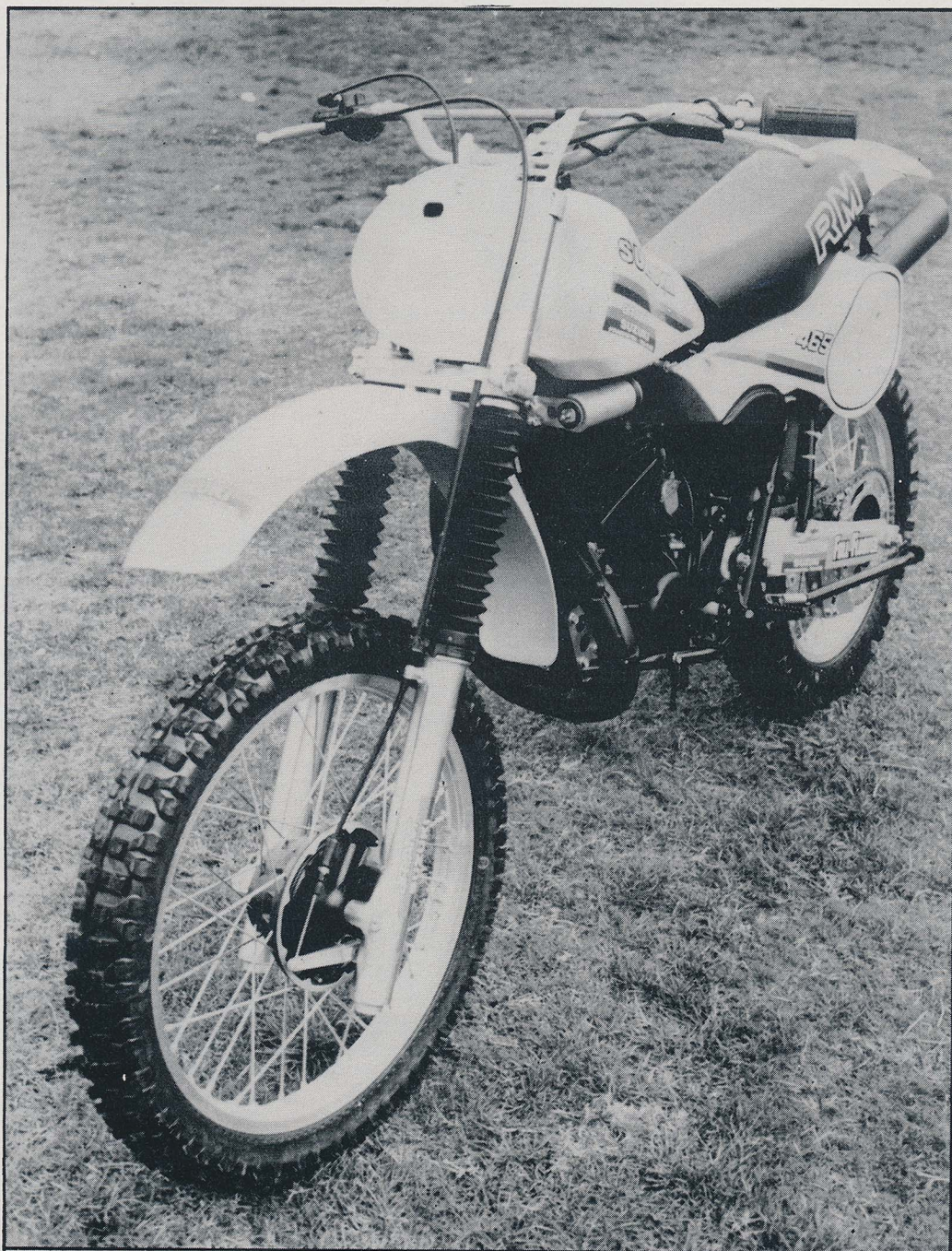
SUZUKI'S RM "X" 465 Floater

If you have been watching the motocross scene the progress of three young riders must have been apparent. The guys I'm talking about are Robert Bailey, Peter Carney and Mark Hill. All three ride Suzuki 465's so we were anxious to discover how much of their success depends on the bike.

ENGINE

Pass the Horsepower Please

1981 will go down as the year of the cubic capacity race. In a desperate scramble to attract buyers, every manufacturer except Kawasaki has



The big brother of the RM fleet.

bored and stroked their existing engines to make full use of the 500cc limitation.

Suzuki's offering comes in the form of a 465. Not as big as the Maico 490 but guaranteed to give you a rush of exhilaration. The 400 Suzukis of the past have been the mid-range torque kings while being a little down on power. Well this year the power has been increased but the powerband is not as flexible.

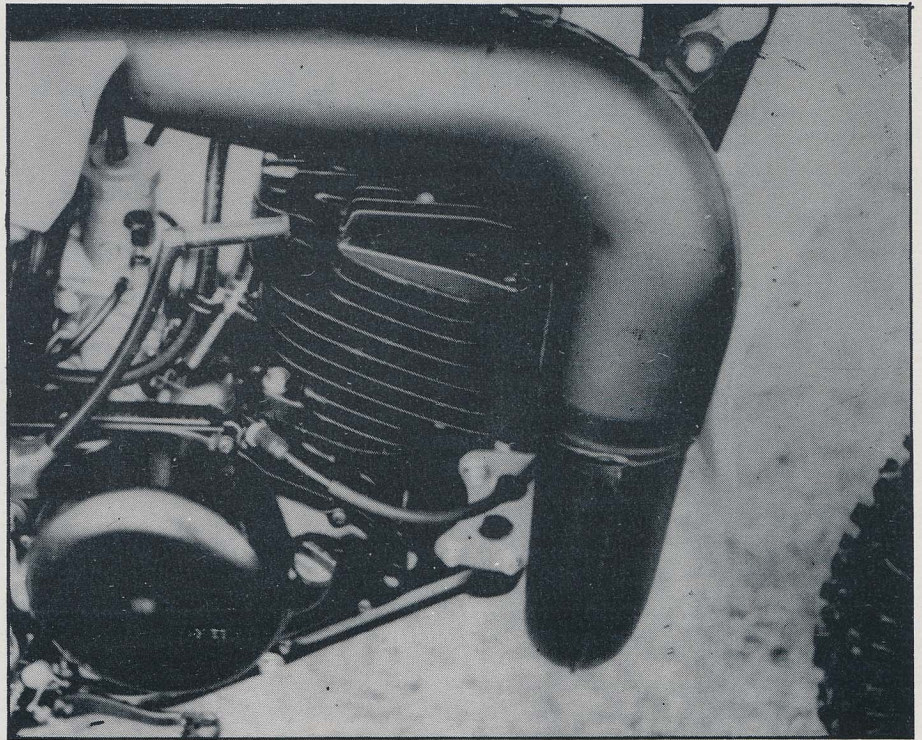
The big air cooled engine tends to blubber a little too much around the bottom end of the power scale. Unless the rider gives the bike at least 3000 revs the Suzuki feels way too rich. It wasn't bad enough to worry about during a race where everyone tends to over rev their bikes, anyway but it is a problem.

Sometimes a rider is forced to dial on a little more than he feels comfortable with through a tight corner because of the bike not revving cleanly below the 3000 mark. Careful jetting will eliminate some of the problem but for the most part you're going to have to live with it because of the large barrel, wide expansion chamber and high performance porting.

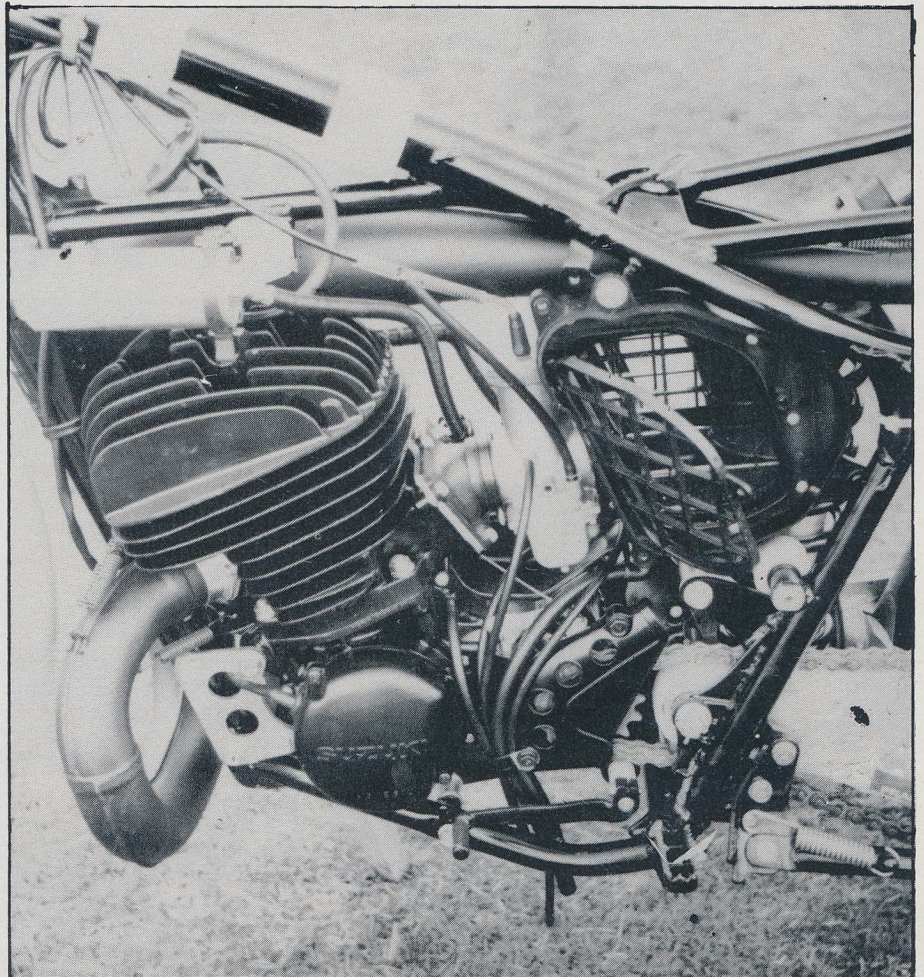
Most important though is the mid range and top end power. This is where the Suzuki shines with its fairly good torque and ability to wind right out like a 250. Our test bike seems to have borrowed the best traits from the CR450 and YZ465. It is powerful like the Yamaha although not quite in the same league and has a flexible power delivery similar to the Honda but isn't as easy to control. To our way of thinking that's a pretty good balance although still not equal to the brilliant Maico 490 power.

Right on through the range truck-loads of BHP pushed the RM465X forward without any unsuspected surges. That's not to say the machine won't mono unexpectedly under certain circumstances because it will. If you like to ride around everywhere on about 6000 revs and enjoy bursting out of berms and corners under full power the RM will try to kick you off. A big bore rider must accept that his bike will blow the smaller motocrossers off down the straights but is harder to ride.

Like most other open class bikes the Suzuki is working best when the mid range power is used and the gears are short shifted. The RM465X



Power range is stronger from mid-revs to high.



With proper maintenance engine should last.

accelerated faster than if each gear was rung out.

This style of riding also lets you rev to the red line if there isn't time to catch another gear. If your local track is the type of place that is covered in mud from about May to September and you're worried that such a powerful bike will be a handful you can relax. On test we had the bike down at Longwarry motocross track and on every occasion the course was saturated. Still the RM could be raced around at a fairly good rate despite a few crashes along the way. In the dry it can't fail with the abundance of power.

Under wet conditions throttle control plays a major role in whether the rider spends his time in the saddle or eating dirt. Too much and the rear end slides forward while too little can

cause the engine to bog down in thick mud. After a while though riding through gloop becomes second nature, the bike inspires confidence.

Getting back to the comparisons we find that the RM feels more comfortable with an experienced rider but can be mastered by the average guy after a bit of practice. On the other hand Yamaha's YZ465 is too much for all but a few while the Honda 450 needs engine work to catch the muscle machines.

No, we haven't found the perfect big bore engine (the Maico is superior for a start), it's just that the Suzuki has less wrong with it than the other two.

Large Suzukis have always proved to have durable engines with a well looked after bike needing not more than a few sets of rings and maybe a rebore. Big end bearings usually last a

whole season although they can't be expected to last more than 12 months, such is the strain of motocross racing.

Gear box problems are as rare as top end bothers; fairly uncommon. We rarely missed any shifts and could slice through the gears whether the bike was revving hard or not. I can't predict how the unit will handle top line motocross: Anthony Gunter broke the gears on his bike at least 7 times last year.

Because of the new FLOATER suspension system the air filter has been placed either side of the shock as with the RM125&250. Two thin air filters handle the job and are an improvement in at least one respect. Last year it was hard to know whether the filter was properly seated; sometimes letting grit through and ruining the bore. No longer is this a problem.

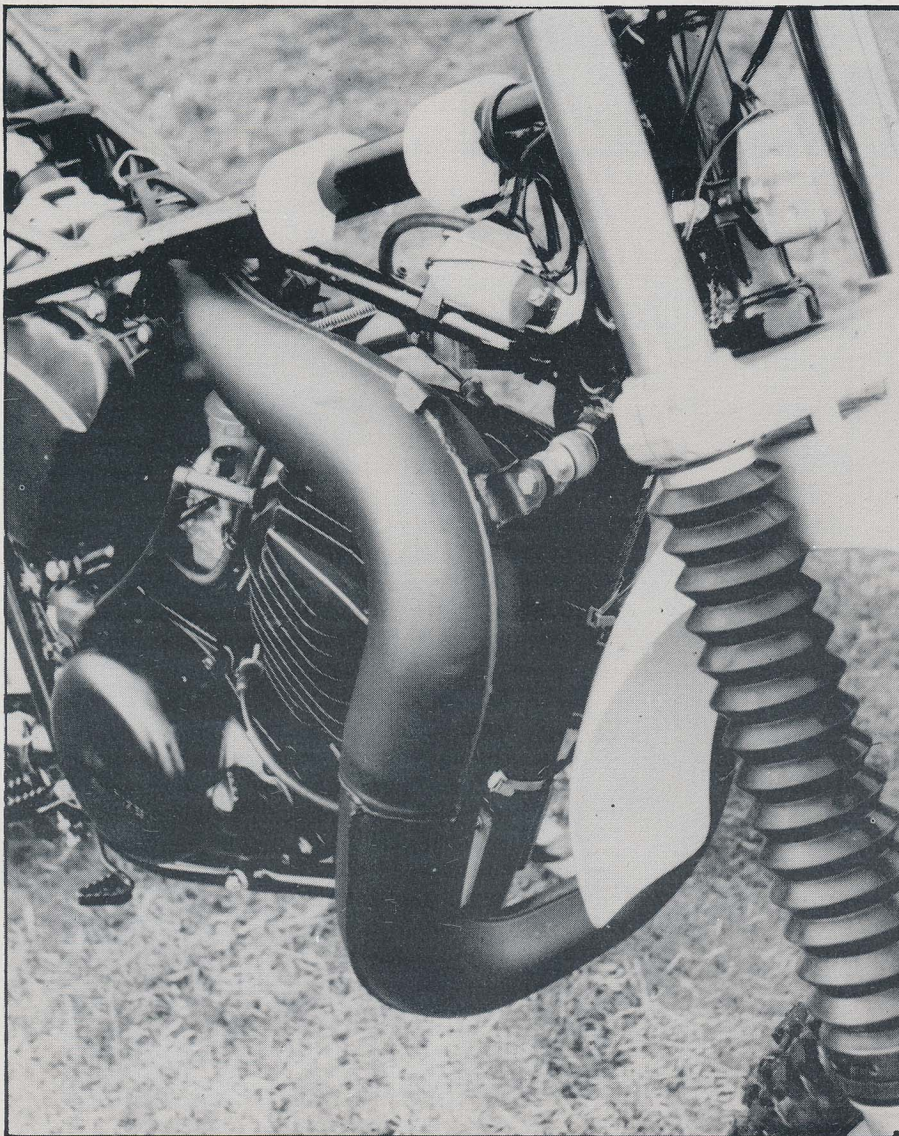
SUSPENSION & HANDLING Floating Over the Whoops

While the RM has excellent straight line handling manners and turns reasonably well it does have problems. Problems that cannot realistically be altered.

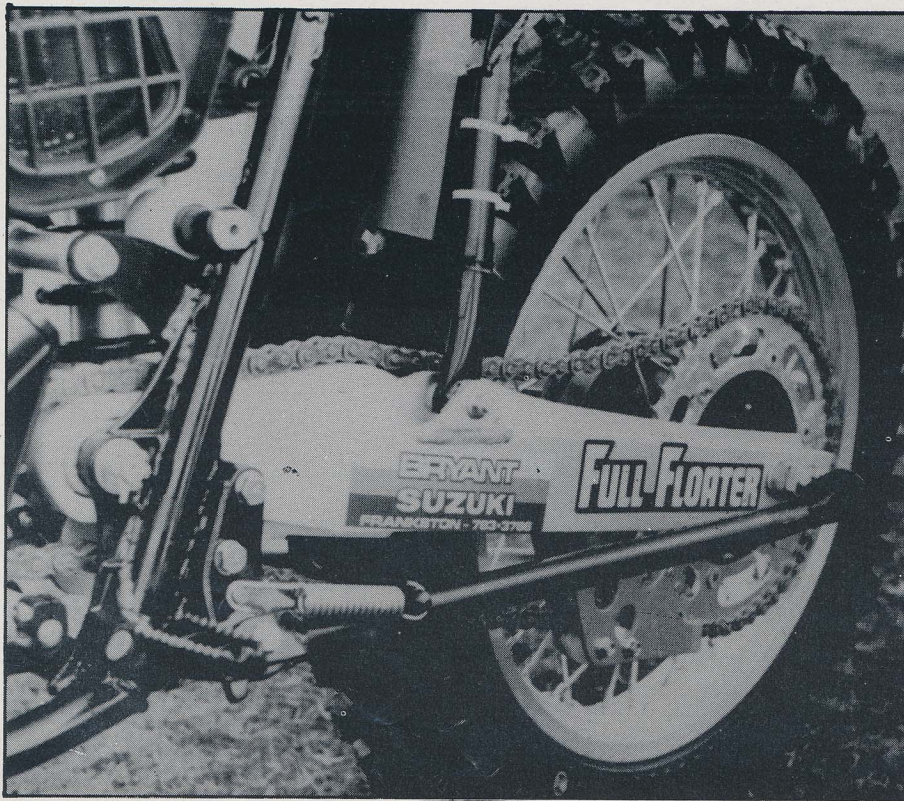
The most obvious is the Suzuki's relatively high centre of gravity. To put it quite simply the weight is too high and can be felt when riding. The RM will not corner as sharply as the CR450 (or any other bike for that matter!) It wants to stand up around corners and go to wide. When forced to corner in hard the big Suzuki feels uncomfortable and reluctant. No matter what type of corner (off chamber, sweeping, tight) the bike's reaction was the same. If a berm could be found the 465 felt much better although it was necessary to push the bike down.

Another disappointing design feature is the relationship between the front and rear suspension. With the tall rear end our test bike had a distinct forward bias. When riding the RM, especially over a rough course, the forks dived into the bumps unless you were concentrating and using the power to lift the front end over the obstacles.

Once accustomed to the bike's peculiarity though it largely becomes second nature although that little extra bit of concentration is always needed. There's no real remedy because the area for fork adjustment is limited to about 1 cm either way. The rear could



Chamber sticks out a bit too much at longer front area.



Chain line is well guided.

undulations we have a machine not prone to crossing up or tankslapping. The rider felt safer as the Suzuki was pushed hard, beyond the point where some bikes might buck around so much you begin to feel like a rodeo rider.

If the straight is covered in ruts and holes just itching to send you over the bars there is no need to worry with the Yellow Terror. Our test track was littered in ruts from a very muddy meeting the weekend before, causing the test crew to have a few second doubts.

After becoming accustomed to the machine though, this line of thinking disappeared. Equally as comforting was the way our 465 handled the jumps and drop offs. As long as the bike landed square the rider hardly noticed a thing. If the bike was a crossed up the landing still remained pleasantly unexciting.

Over the jumps with a steep ascent it was vitally important to lean over the tank or you will land, hanging off the bike like a flag. Drop offs require a squirt of power before going over, or too much load is forced onto the forks when you hit front first.

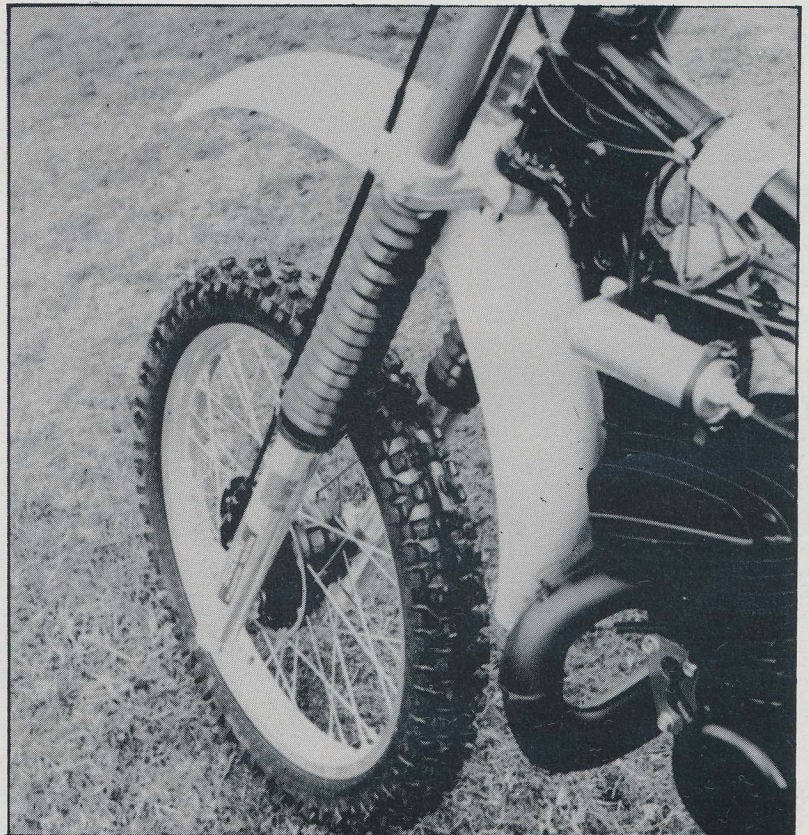
be dropped but then the bike would wash out and swing out wide even more dramatically.

Basically what's needed is a re-think in the complete frame design. Too many handling faults have been inherited from older RM's despite the improvements. Something along the lines of the Maico frame would prove more effective, with the weight set lower in the frame and a more balanced suspension height.

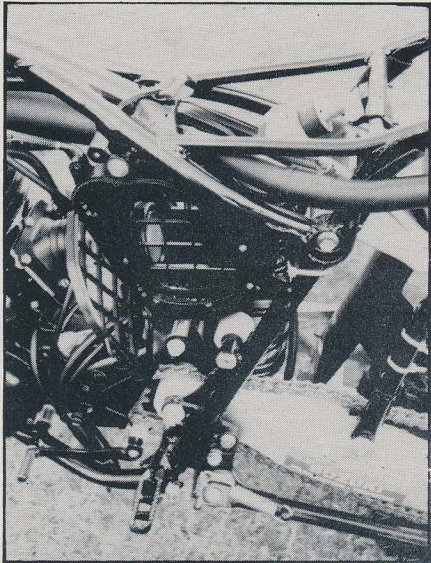
For all our moaning there is still plenty we like about the RM465. When there are some berms or deep ruts to bounce off the RM comes to life. You can hit one at any speed and as long as the bike is leaned well over the Suzuki will shoot out like a bullet. And through sweeping corners the rear tyre can be slid out to help the bike through.

Pivot turns weren't impossible but could have been easier if the RM was a little lighter. Outside lines always proved fastest with the RM and even if it is not as ready to cut underneath the others it can still compete on its own terms.

Probably the best feature of the Suzuki is its stability. With the front wheel skimming across the top of the



Front end handles pretty good.



Air enters via both sides of bike.

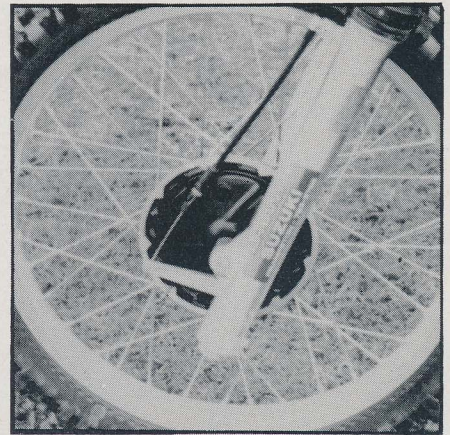
obviously has a lot to do with this but only because of the dependable nature of the frame.

No reports of frame damage have filtered through to us yet so it looks as if the Suzuki Floaters are going to avoid the trauma experienced by A6 Unitraks. **Craig Scott**

One area that the RM400T really fell down was its rear suspension;



Hubs are stronger.



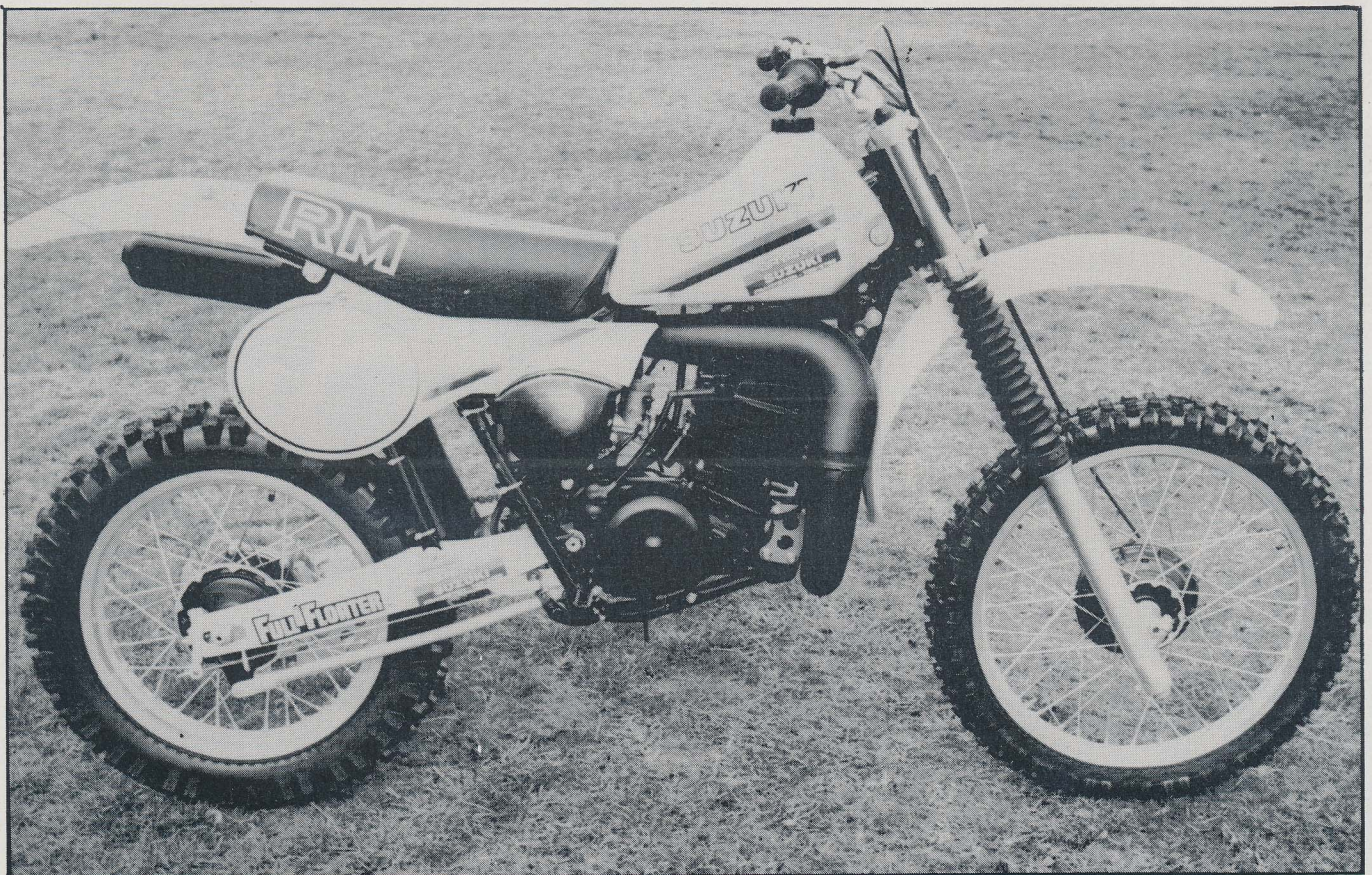
Brake is single leader but works good.

When a track slopes to one side it can force the bike to the lower edge. This line is usually pretty worn as everyone thrashes by so it's nice to avoid. With the Suzuki you can do that; pick your own line. Suspension

remote reservoir Kayabas just could not handle the situation but that was last year and things have changed for the better.

The ProLink suspension allows plenty of adjustability and was set up for a heavier rider but worked efficiently through the period we had the bike. No matter what the circumstances the rear end kept glued to the track. Rarely did we have the seat hit us in the spine; the ride was beautiful.

It's natural for firm motocross sus-



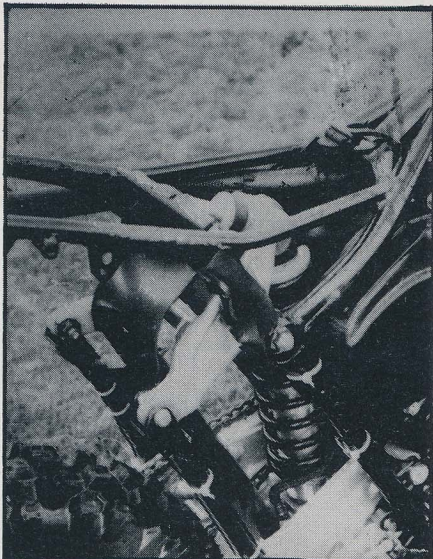
RM's are posting big wins overseas.



Anyone for a long muffler.

pension to kick up unless under heavy load, that is until now! Only when hitting the lip of a jump or with our weight too far forward did the Suzuki feel as if it wanted to knock us over. Very good when you consider that 1981 marks the first year of production Floaters. They work as well as the best after market, laid forward shocks yet have years of future refinement. Things are looking good. Progressive damping helps but the suspension still bottoms out.

Around Longwarry we had the unit bottom after a down hill jump/drop off



Back end joints must be cleaned and lubed quite regularly.

after a short straight. Performance stayed consistent all the time the bike was with us; the frame mounted reservoir seems to be doing its job.

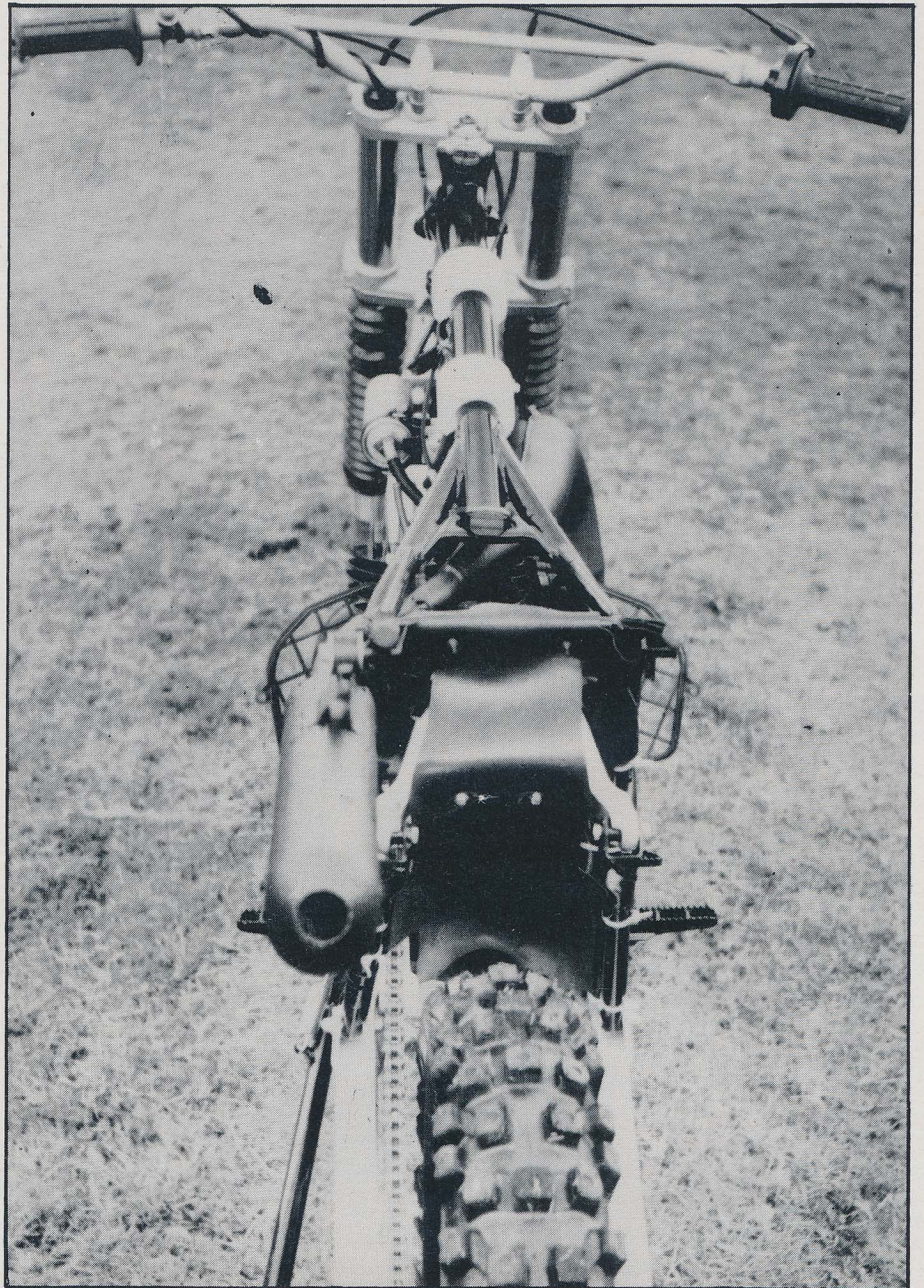
Nothing is perfect and with the Floater there is going to be extra effort needed to keep it working properly. Where the vertical struts attach to the long alloy swing arm, bushes are utilised. These need to be cleaned and lubricated after every outing or they seize solid.

To look at the RM465 forks you could be made to believe they only have ten inches travel. Which is right, kind of, because the other inch or so is

down travel. Only coming in to effect when the front wheel is off the ground.

Overall performance of the forks is fine; they handled the rough motocross track with precision while saving the rider from a crash with its progressive damping. Compression damping is a little too stiff over stutter bumps at moderate speeds.

On some occasions, mainly over down hill jumps, the forks resisted immediate rebounding, causing concern if the track ahead was bumpy. Other than that the only additional comment concerns the fork oil. Change it, immediately!



Unit is well guarded from mud.

DETAIL The Yellow Peril

When it comes to finishing off the bike Suzuki usually comes out tops. Thankfully this situation has not changed. There is little to fault.

The throttle, hand and foot levers are a bit antiquated though. No fold back lever ends, Magura type hand levers or straight pull throttles. Footpegs are one of the strongest sets around but should have been mounted slightly lower.

Kick starting the bike takes a while to master. With the piston at top dead centre you give the lever a big kick and it should start. Cold starts need about six heavy kicks. The lever pokes out at the wrong angle and lets a rider's boot slip off too easily.

Tank and seat relationship looks OK; I say looks! the thin seat is around an inch lower than the scooped tank and you must lift your backside onto the tank. Besides that the Suzuki feels easy to move around on. No longer do the side covers stick too far out.

Suzuki have ensured that the chain will not give any problems by mounting a large alloy guide and a neat little piece of alloy welded onto the swing arm so the chain won't wrap around the hub.

While we are talking about the hubs and such it's worth mentioning the redesigned wheels. A new straight spoke system and properly constructed hubs does away with the old broken wheel blues. Brakes are extremely touchy through wet conditions, in particular the rear brake.

The front brake is easily locked up but can be adjusted so that it can be used with confidence. On the other hand the rear brake continually locks up and we stalled the engine regularly.

CONCLUSION

Suzuki are going to have to look hard at their basic design principles before the RM465 can think of aspiring to the Maico 490's top spot.

The simple fact is that the Maico is still way ahead, but then it's better than just about everything. If the top heavy feel could be removed along with the high rear end we would have a much improved machine. In the engine department we have the best unit out of all the Japanese bikes despite a blubbery low end.

It is still a very competitive bike and

will probably prove faster than the CR450 in motocross conditions. The Honda feels better to ride though so it gets down to a case of what you think is more important; handling or power.

Special thanks to Peter Chard, Harry Croll and the Frankston MCC.

MARK TYLER



Mono's easy with 465cc of muscle.