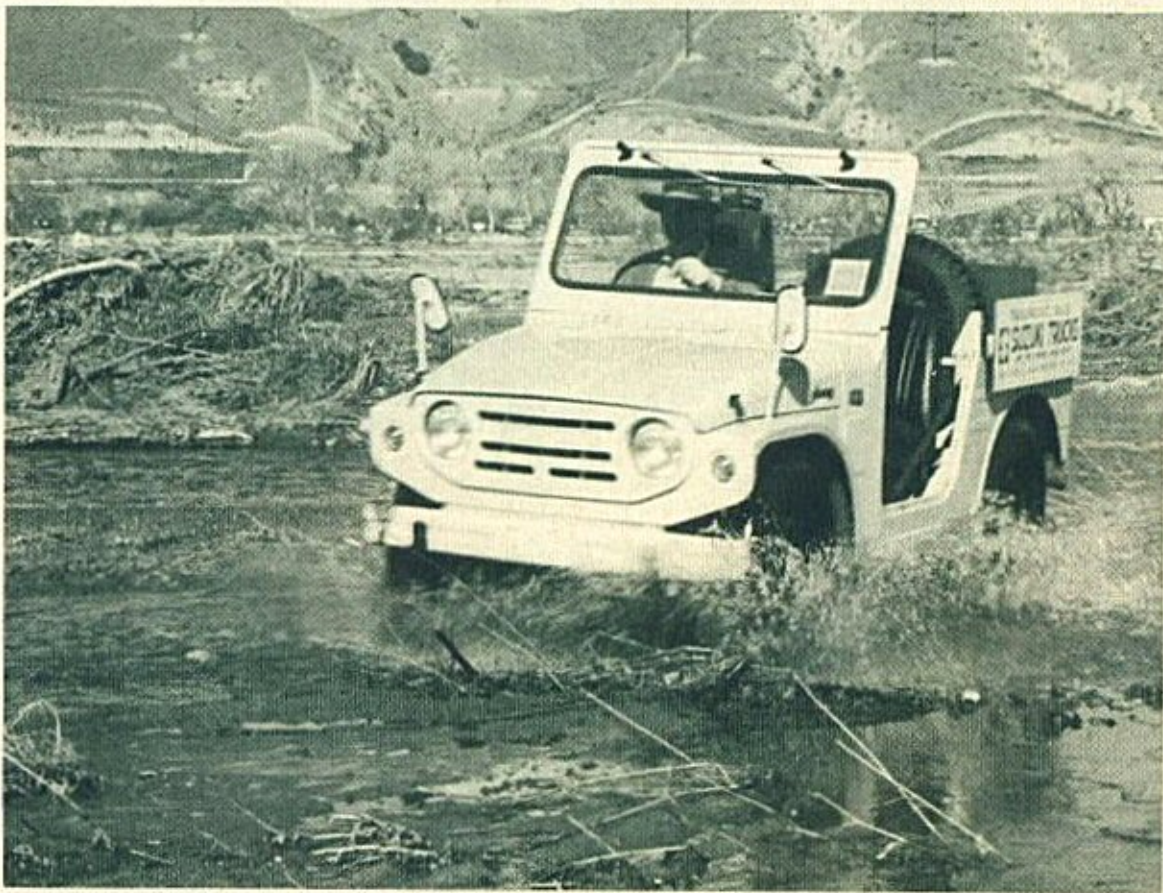


# DRIVER REPORT:

IT MAY BE HALF-SIZED,  
BUT PERFORMANCE IS  
NO LAUGHING MATTER

# SUZUKI MINI-BRUTE



This minuscule import from the makers of the motorcycles could just happen to grow into the hearts of off road enthusiasts and into a unique category of vehicle. We can see much potential on ranches and farms for a serious working car with four-wheel-drive. I don't want to knock anyone off their chair with performance figures on the highway... so I won't. Let's say that at around 50 mph the landscape seems to go by at a rather steady pace.

There isn't much reason to expect hot road speeds from this light (1,320 lbs.) vehicle though, because it was built to handle off-road territory and that's what it does best. The power-

plant, a 360cc two cylinder, two stroke engine delivers a whopping 25 hp at 6000 rpm, leaving you to wonder how it moves at all. The trick is in the power train, which really tends to overcompensate for the lack of power. The four speed box, located on the left of the driver, is all synchromesh and couples with a four wheel drive unit which has a high and low range. If you sank the rear wheels in concrete and let out the clutch in reverse low range FWD, the little bomb would just spin right over on its back.

After adjusting to the fact that the shift was on the left, I got out on the soft sand. The Brute could stay on top

and dig out of a dead stop in two wheel drive quite easily because of its light weight. In the deep sand the two wheel drive couldn't get us up into fourth gear, so I shifted to high FWD and started again. This time I made it into fourth and skimmed along the bumps at 30 mph. Low range fourth gear brought me down to 25 or so and I was getting funny looks from a stripped VW bug with wide tires which kept passing me. Looking the other way nonchalantly, I headed for the nearby river at full tilt.

I found myself having a great time dipping in and out of various streams when the bottom fell out and my downshifting proved no avail. I looked

down at the clay or silt, or whatever bogged me down, and had visions of a scene from the *African Queen*. I gently let out the clutch and the Brute just as gently lurched out of the hole. I now had more confidence in this little work horse.

I could only take on hills and low jumps because of lack of a seat belt. The greatest thing about the car is the quick steering mechanism that really makes it easy to pick out spaces between rocks and obstacles. It stops like yesterday and, if you get in trouble on a hill, you can pull it down into low range FWD just like you'd normally downshift, without stopping.

In spite of many runs through the water I stayed dry (windshield folds

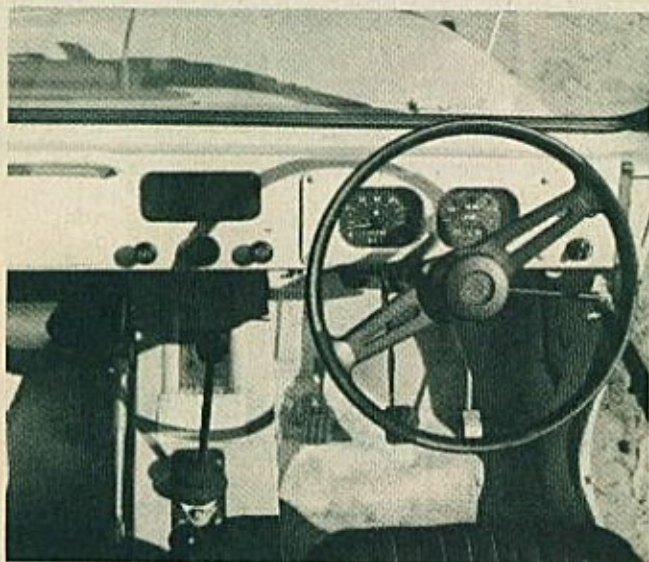
down but I left it up), and so did the engine. The driver's space was a bit snug for my six-foot two-inch frame but my knees and head cleared all parts of the interior when I left the seat below me on occasion.

The suspension seems highly adequate for level off-roading, but it comes off wanting when deep ruts and traversing inclines are met. Part of the problem is the high center of gravity and the narrow wheels which find their way deep into ruts.

The 75 inch wheel base is actually shorter than a standard dune buggy so the ride is quite comfortable in the rough. Sometimes roads can be a problem with the 52 inch overall

width, but it will take to trails all that much easier. The tires are well made and suitable for the majority of uses this little jewel will get. There is a frame for a complete top and side curtains that comes with the car, making it weatherproof. It seats only two, but a small jump seat can be installed in the rear. In spite of the high-revving engine, it keeps very quiet and runs smoothly.

The shift throws are extremely short as befits the size of the transmission, also adding to the ease of shifting. In one driver's opinion, this little Suzuki could take the place of a lot of vehicles in the off road and utility market.



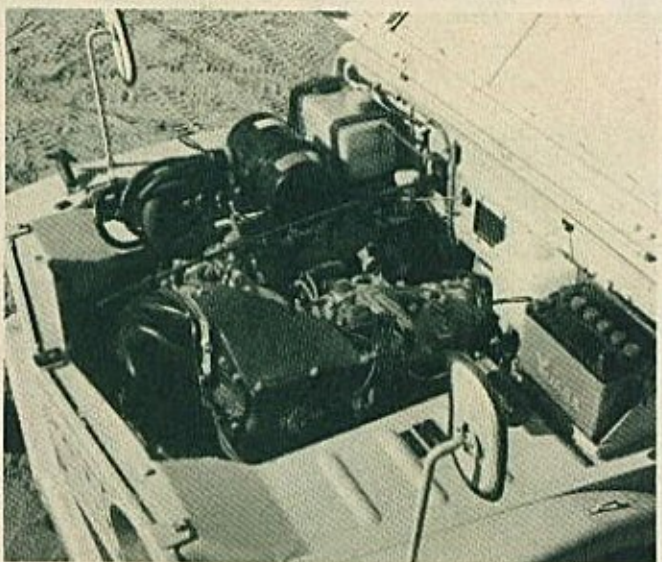
*Interior is stark but business-like. Left hand shifting is no problem after a few minutes, and knee clearance was adequate enough though seats do not adjust.*



*Suspension provided jouncy but not teeth jarring rides, even over rough terrain like this. The response was so quick that unexpected bumps could be met with proper speed and angle of approach.*



*A pickup truck with large bed can hold entire car, but towing is just as easy. Bumper has tow attachments built in and a tow bar is available.*



*Sophisticated 360cc engine compartment is well protected against water and dust. All the weight makes the car a bit front-heavy when traversing downhill slopes.*