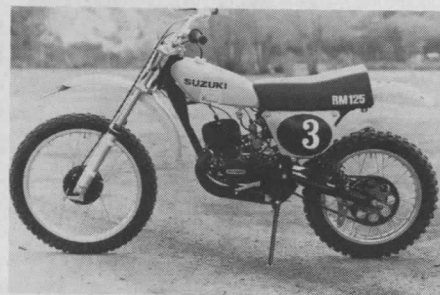




"HOLY \*\$& + #!!"

# SUZUKI RM125

by the Staff of DIRT BIKE



Every four years the best ad men in the country get together to sell us the ultimate product: a president.

Every Sunday we are deluged with invitations to sign our lives away for a few years to have the very same machine our football heroes drive (in the background, as an even more subtle invitation, is the beautiful woman that somehow must appear with the car).

And more recently these clever ad men have found a new market. With the country going berserk being economical it is a natural. Go smaller than a small car. So for one reason or another we poor motorcyclists are the recipients of some very fine advertising hype.

It is subtle and it is clever. Which is not to say it is bad. After all, there are better motorcycles out there now than there have ever been.

Let's narrow down the topic. Suzuki is pushing the new RM125. They are pushing it hard. This included a preview of the bike which consisted of a race between the motorcycle press with everyone on board an RM. Everyone had a one-day exposure to the bike at the



same time. Suzuki gave out press kits, answered questions and let everyone ride to their heart's content. Best public relations one could imagine. On top of that, everyone liked the bike. But it was, all in all, only a one-day impression. Then it came time for a closer look, a month-long look, without all the outside influences.

We headed to the track to be alone. Forget all that, "Hey, if this new thing from Suzuki goes as good as it looks, their competition's in trouble." After riding, we solicited opinions. As always, the questions

and answers were both general at first.

"It sits tall but when you're moving that doesn't bother you at all." But that remark came from a 5'11" rider. What about all the short people in the world?

We politely asked a young lady, who seemed to know what she was doing on the track, if she would mind giving her opinion about the bike. Certainly she would. With a flurry of cameras we hit the track. After watching for quite a few laps just how fast 104 pounds can go on board a 125, we flagged her in.

"Well?"

"I like it better than my Elsinore (but it is only a '74). And it is fast. Really fast."

But we wanted to know about the height.

"It's not too high at all. I could always reach the ground around a corner. But in the desert I might have a problem on a hill or a ridge."

Desert riders. They all think hill or sandwash, even when they are on a pure motocross bike.

"OK, so you didn't mind the height around the corners, how about the suspension, was it too stiff for 104 pounds?"

"No. It felt really good, especially over real choppy ground."

A bad omen. If it felt fine to a very light rider then we were sure the hulks on the staff would be constantly bottoming it. No way. As of this



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And, if you think Wiseco's 'FMX' Special pistons do things other pistons don't, and can't, you're right again. That's why 'FMX' Special pistons should be part of your arsenal.

They're designed for performance. They're stronger, yet lighter, than ordinary pistons, so they run longer. They run cooler, with better heat transfer. They give you an increase in rpm's and horsepower throughout the power band.

And how about those SuperStrength rings? They're made of ductile iron for high tensile strength and flexibility. They're moly-filled for long life, and to prevent scuffing. And, they provide an excellent seal for increased compression. So, they're best for MX.

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Break out your stepladder.

writing not one person has bottomed the Suzuki. Does this mean it is too stiff? Not at all. At slow-speed choppy stuff and high-speed choppy stuff and slow-speed smooth stuff and high-speed smooth stuff the bike always gives an excellent ride. It's our personal opinion that the bike is set up just right in the rear; if you ever bottom it you're in big trouble.

The front end brought more controversy.

"It hugs through the corners perfectly."

"It washes out."

Now wait a minute here. That is about as divided as an opinion can be. Go back out there and ride some more.

"It hugs through the corners perfectly."

"It washes out."

We'll come back to that. One of the staffers is obviously doing something either very right or very wrong. Let's talk about power. It was unanimous that the RM had a good powerband that came on at fairly high rpm. About 7000 rpm high in the powerband. That's up

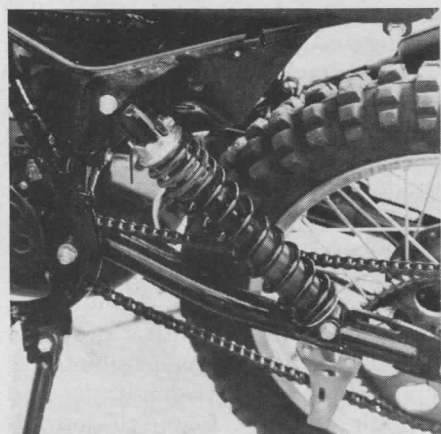
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A nice slide is never a problem with the RM.



But it is sometimes with the rider.



Nitrogen filled shocks are mounted upside down. Five-way adjuster is seen at the top.

there but it is not as pipey as those figures might lead you to believe. Because it pulls strong from 7000 to about 10,000 rpm. Real strong.

With the five-speed gearbox the RM needs this powerband to keep up with the six-speed competition. More gears means you can afford to have a narrower power curve which usually results from the factory's attempt at higher peak horsepower.

But here again opinion is divided. One of the staff suggests that a five-speed box, coupled with a not-so-pipey engine, is the best combination. The less time shifting the more time power is getting to the ground. And with many turns being

separated by only ten or 20 meters, a second lost shifting means a great deal.

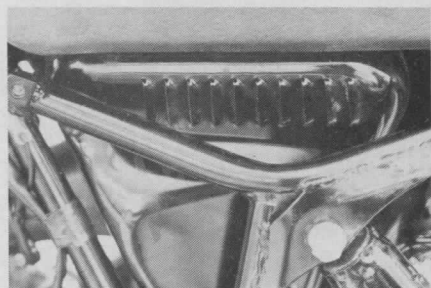
Of course this is all theory. In the end it must always be brought to the particular case. And this particular case is the Suzuki. Whatever the reasons, this engine and this gearbox get that bike around a motocross course very fast.

The best comparison we can draw for you is with last year's TM125. The RM is noticeably faster as far as straight drag race speed is concerned. And on a motocross course, there is no comparison between the two bikes. With the new rear suspension (which is the main difference

between the two bikes), the RM is simply a class, maybe two, above the TM.

There are other improvements also: better air box setup; no more Mickey Mouse oil injection; new internal design on the forks. Because of the new shock setup, the swing-arm is different and did not seem to flex as did some of the TMs. Also because of the new rear end the fender and seat have been altered slightly. The new seat position brought mixed comments but they were mostly favorable. A larger carburetor (28mm) wraps up the list of major changes.

For those TM owners out there who can't afford switching bikes every year, Suzuki is making it easy for you. The new forks are interchangeable and rumor has it that a



Reverse louvers mysteriously allow air but not water in.

factory laydown shock kit will be available soon. So much for comparison.

The RM is a race bike, so that's what we did with it. We took it to Grand Prix and motocrosses. And the more we rode it the more we liked it. But we can't ride all the time, so we had to stand back and make some observations.

After a thorough cleaning it was obvious that a well-worn motorcycle rested before us. Paint was worn off the side number plates, gas tank and side cases. We began a close inspection of the bike. The frame was not bent, cracked or otherwise deformed. Those welds are undoubtedly the ugliest and sloppiest ever found on a motorcycle, or maybe a close second, but they must be strong.

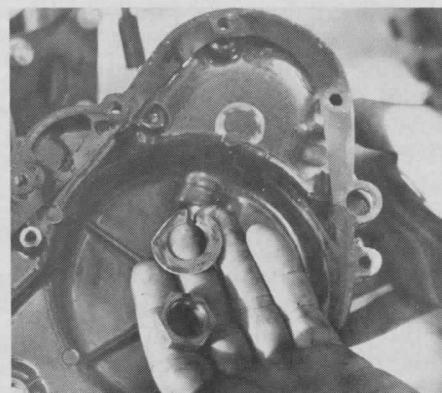
Tires were holding up remarkably well. Those IRCs are among the best found stock on any 125 racer. They brought nothing but praise and are definitely responsible for some of the Suzuki's sticking power through the corners. Rims did not bend or break, and they're aluminum so they must be light. Not bending is actually



Denise tries out the RM. "Nicer than my Elsinore."

quite a feat when one stops to consider what laces those rims to the hubs. For some unknown reason the Suzuki's spokes seemed to have a human desire to get loose. Twenty minutes of riding and nipples could be found floating around inside the rim. But this was only the first few rides. Eventually they did not need tightening at all. They just need time to settle.

Since racing was part of the test we'll own up to part of our record.



Tab washer on the primary gear broke and caused momentary heart failure. Notice mark on the case where the nut did its best to break through.

The famed Suzuki reliability deserves its fame. Kind of. The second race first (so we can build up the bike before we chip away at it). It was a Grand Prix and there were incredible amounts of water. The Suzuki plowed through all this water and never missed a beat. Rear wheel first, front wheel first, paddling through and a few ways that probably have never been done before. It is completely waterproof. And though the Suzuki was getting pretty used by then it still pulled strong and every part held together.

To go back a couple of weeks. The first race. It was still at the point where the spokes needed tightening every few minutes. The RM was pulling strong as a new bike should. Then, starting it up between motos, a not-so-funny thing happened: sitting there idling in neutral it started rattling, gave a few gasps and coughs, let out with a sickening grinding sound and went silent. We stood back horrified. It is bad enough when a bike self-destructs during a race. But idling! With visions of broken cranks, circlips lodged between piston walls and

rocks in the bottom end, we reluctantly removed the top end. Nothing. Piston just as it should be. We popped off the side case. Ahhh. The nut on the primary gear backed off because of a broken tab washer. Minor, but a definite nuisance. At the track we made a makeshift tab on an ordinary washer and the bike



kept running the rest of the day. There have not been any problems since then. None at all.

As we said, the more we ride the bike the better we like it. This is true of many bikes simply because it takes a while to get used to them. But with the Suzuki it goes beyond that. For example, back to the front end. "It hugs through the corners perfectly" now seems to be the more reasonable comment. It only took time to let the "wash-out" man find the right seating position on the bike. That position is forward. Like right about the gas cap. Keep on that front wheel and it tracks wherever you point it.

#### BITS & PIECES

Fortunately for the future RM owner the expensive miscellaneous items are also the quality miscellaneous items. All the bits or pieces needing replacement are the cheap items.

Suzuki's Pointless Electronic Ignition is convenient, provided a strong spark throughout the test and was completely waterproof.

Rear shocks are fantastic. But they are not rebuildable. But then again, they are well protected from mud

and other flying debris. Eventually, though, all shocks need rebuilding. New RM shocks are not cheap but you won't have to hock your grandmother, either. \$37 each.

Lever were fine.

We've said it so many times it sounds like a recording: you will have to junk the grips.

Our chain didn't break or kink and the chain guide setup worked very well. The chain itself must be kept fairly loose because of all that rear wheel travel, and there were never any problems with it wrapping around our thighs.

Mikuni chokes are sometimes a hassle with gloves on, but no big thing.

Brakes are excellent.

If you have a gas can with one of those fast fill plastic nozzles on it you had better purchase a funnel. It's hard to get more than an average size thumb in the opening on the Suzuki gas tank.

Air cleaner box has reverse louvers to catch the wind and is still completely waterproof. Wet foam job is among the best we have seen stock.

#### MEMORABLE QUOTES

"It hugs through the corners perfectly."

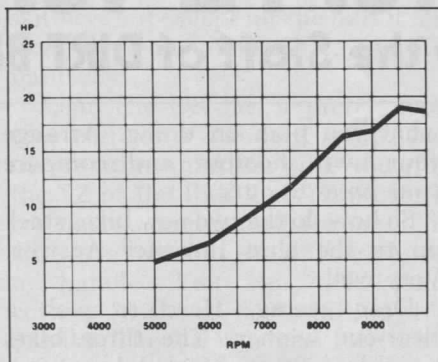
"I'm 104 pounds and the rear feels great."

"I'm 195 pounds and the rear feels great."

"What's that sound?"

"I almost jumped the water but it didn't matter, this thing will never drown out."

"Hey, if this new thing from Suzuki goes as good as it looks, their competition's in trouble."



#### SUMMARY

In the hot 125 class it is doubtful if the Suzuki will be blowing off even a slightly tricked-out member of the competition in a straight line drag race. But that's not what really

#### SUZUKI RM 125

PRICE.....(retail, approx.)	\$925
ENGINE TYPE.....	Two-stroke
DISPLACEMENT.....	123cc
BORE & STROKE.....	56mm x 50mm
COMPRESSION RATIO.....	7.4:1
CARBURETION.....	Mikuni 28mm
HP at RPM.....	18.6 at 9500
CLUTCH.....	Wet; multi-plate
PRIMARY DRIVE.....	Gear, 3.388:1
TRANSMISSION RATIOS:	
1)	2.143:1
2)	1.588:1
3)	1.250:1
4)	1.045:1
5)	0.913:1
FINAL DRIVE:	
14-tooth countershaft	
60-tooth rear sprocket	
AIR FILTRATION.....	Wet foam
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM.....	P.E.I.
LUBRICATION.....	Pre-mix
RECOMMENDED FUEL.....	Premium
RECOMMENDED OIL.....	Castrol R30
FUEL CAPACITY.....	.5 liters (1.3 gallons)
FRAME.....	Single downtube
SUSPENSION:	
Suzuki forks;	
Kayaba gas-filled shocks	
WHEELS & SPOKES:	
Takasago aluminum alloy rims	
TIRES:	
IRC 3.00x21 knobby	
IRC 3.50x18 knobby	
DIMENSIONS:	
Wheelbase.....	136 cm (53.5 inches)
Swingarm length.....	.45 cm (17 3/4 inches)
Ground clearance.....	
.....	24.5 cm (9.68 inches)
Bars:	
Width.....	86 cm (33.9 inches)
Height.....	114 cm (45 inches)
Pegs:	
Width.....	46 cm (18 inches)
Height.....	35 cm (13.8 inches)
Seat height.....	90.1 cm (35.5 inches)
Fork angle.....	N/A
Weight:	
86 kg. claimed;	
90.1 kg. (200 pounds) actual,	
with one gallon of gas;	
40.9 kg. on front wheel,	
49.1 kg. on rear wheel.	
BRAKES:	
Front.....	Cable-operated drum
Rear.....	Cable-operated drum
INSTRUMENTS.....	None
LIGHTS.....	None
SILENCER.....	Yes, fairly quiet
SPARK ARRESTOR.....	None
PRIMARY KICK.....	Yes
PARTS PRICES:	
Piston assembly.....	N/A
Rings.....	N/A
Clutch cable.....	\$5.95
Cylinder.....	N/A
Shift lever.....	\$5.50
Brake pedal.....	\$7.64
Clutch lever.....	\$3.95

counts. Around a motocross course that engine works with that suspension to let you keep up with anything in its class. And it is remarkably reliable. And it is even relatively inexpensive. Watch out, McDonald's.