

FIRST TEST: SUZUKI'S SURPRISE NEW RM250B

DIRT BIKE

IND

NOVEMBER 1976

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'77 KTM/PENTON
MC5: ALMOST
WORLD CHAMP!

THE SUPERBOWL OF MOTOCROSS:
WHAT, NO LIONS?

US 125 GP: MARTY'S PARTY!

PLUS Gassin' with Gary Jones, Fixin'
your forks, and assorted sundries



DIRT BIKE

VOLUME SIX NUMBER ELEVEN NOVEMBER 1976

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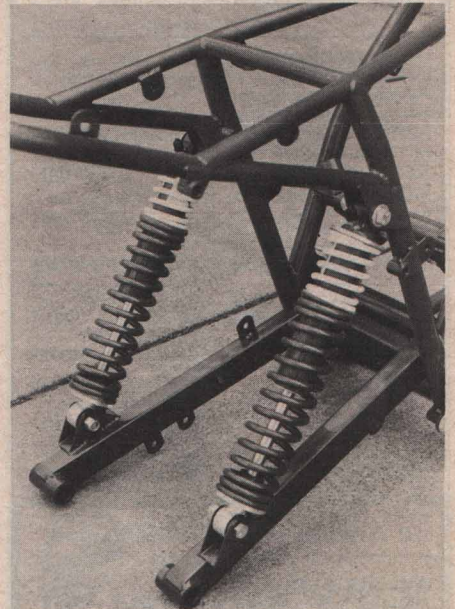
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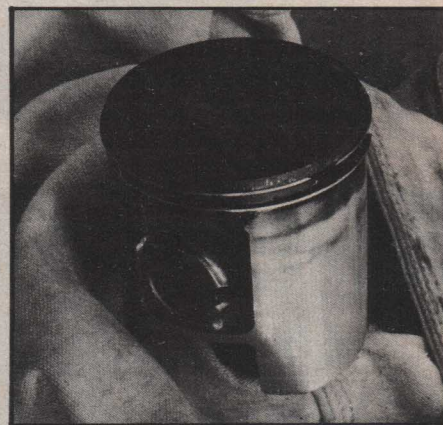
WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO TO ME?

The RM250 is an exercise in protective aggression. The motocross world, in this day and age of rapid development, is not a safe place to rest on your laurels. Someone else is likely to use those laurels for traction.

Honda has discovered this. The once-mighty Elsinore series has been relegated to a middle of the pack position through lack of continuing development. Suzuki, with its RM series emerging pretty clearly as the superstars of 1976, plans to avoid Honda's fate in 1977.

Thus our test bike. While not new from the ground up, the "B" model RM250 sports changes and improvements significant enough to be termed stunning when applied to a model that had already set the world on fire.

Protective aggression. The act of insuring one's place by moving into all of the other places around it. This is the first of the Japanese 1977 motocrossers that we've dealt with. If the other companies plan to make 1977 *their* year, then things could get interesting, indeed.



The 1977 long-stroke engine features a redesigned piston, now similar to that found on last year's 370. Porting arrangements are identical to last year's, engine weight is 57.5 pounds.

RM250B

"B" is for Better, believe it.



RM 250B

Though it remains 246cc, the RM250B's engine incorporates a major design change. Bore and stroke, which measured out at 70x64 on the "A"-model, are now 67x70. "What?" you cry, "The old switcheroo? Can that really make a difference?"

A quick glance at the old dyno chart at the end of this test will quell all doubts. Long-stroke engines produce, the theorists tell us, torque. By changing the bore and stroke ratios Suzuki has given the RM a

give your passionate knobbies a love-lock on the yielding soil.

The new swingarm is a steel box section unit. Theoretically it produces a more stable ride. Most of us will just have to be satisfied to know the theory, because such delicate improvements in ride are actually felt only by the masters, if at all. The tubular arm used on the RM250A had a tendency to crack. It was to eliminate this weak point, we surmise, that Suzuki incorporated the redesigned swingarm.



WHY DOES B COME AFTER A?

On first glance the new Suzuki fairly shrieks with anticlimax. Only a practiced eye, as the ads for those fake diamonds tell us, can distinguish this bike from last year's model. Later we'll tell you how to practice your eye and amaze your friends.

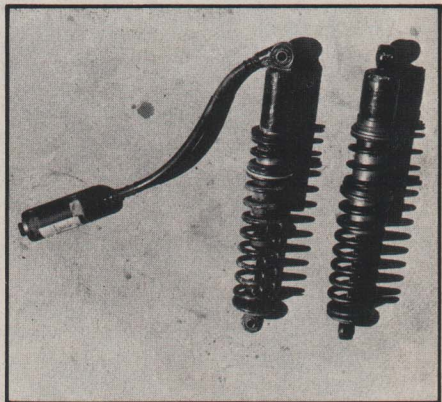
The *real* differences, the ones that make this a new model, are, however, all but invisible.

There was a time when all anyone cared about was horsepower, engine performance, nothing else was really deemed of any interest. Now suspension draws attention equal to or surpassing power. Since these are the areas of the new Suzuki's most significant changes, we'll deal with them alphabetically. We don't want to slight anybody's pet passion.

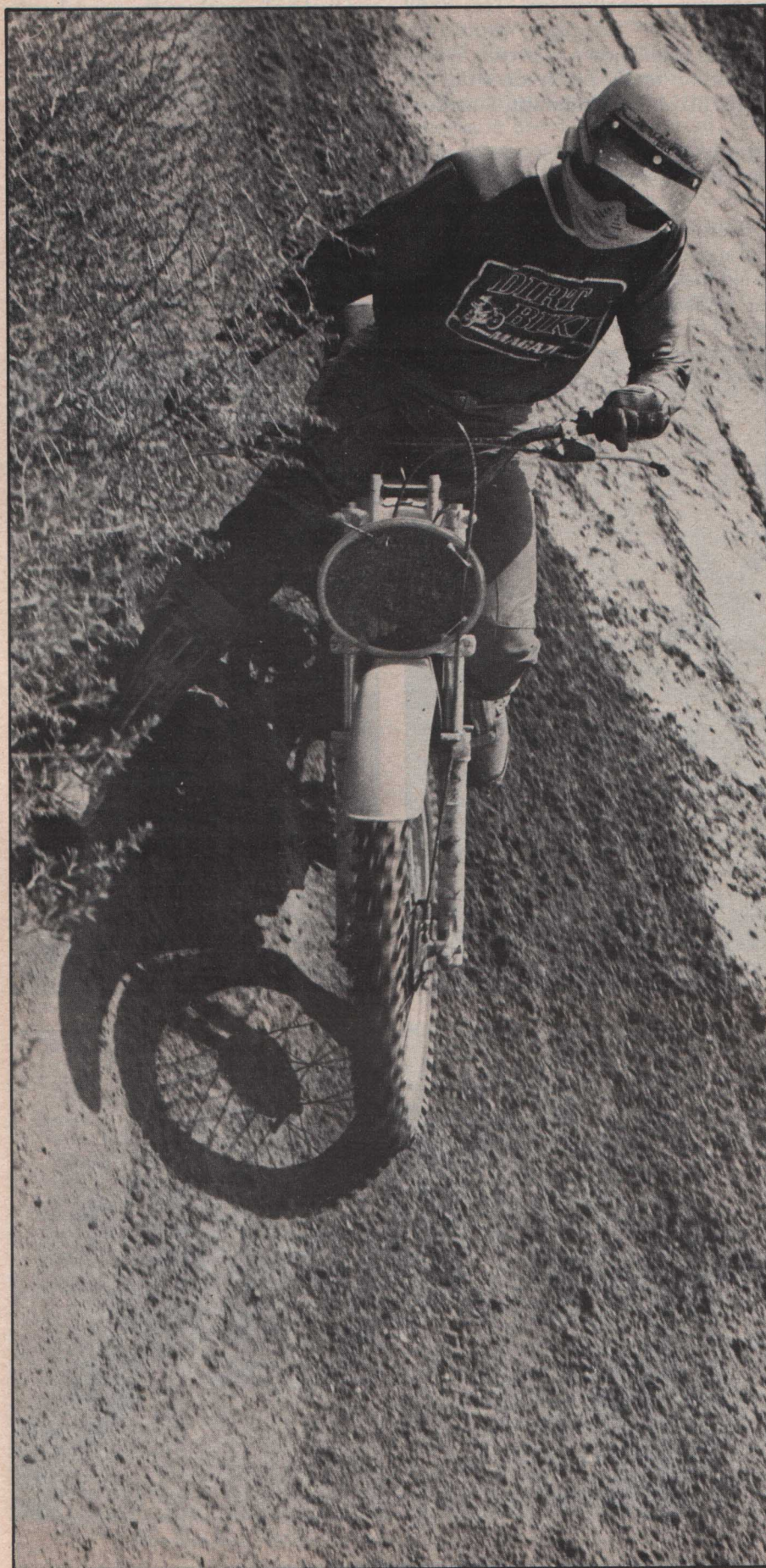
broader and more usable powerband, while, actually and we suspect almost accidentally, picking up an honest two horsepower on the top.

One almost has to think that they knew it all along. Last year's RM was the new kid on the block, with a reputation to make. Its somewhat pipey, shoulder-separating surges made believers of everyone. Now that we've bought the concept, they're ready to give us the *good* stuff.

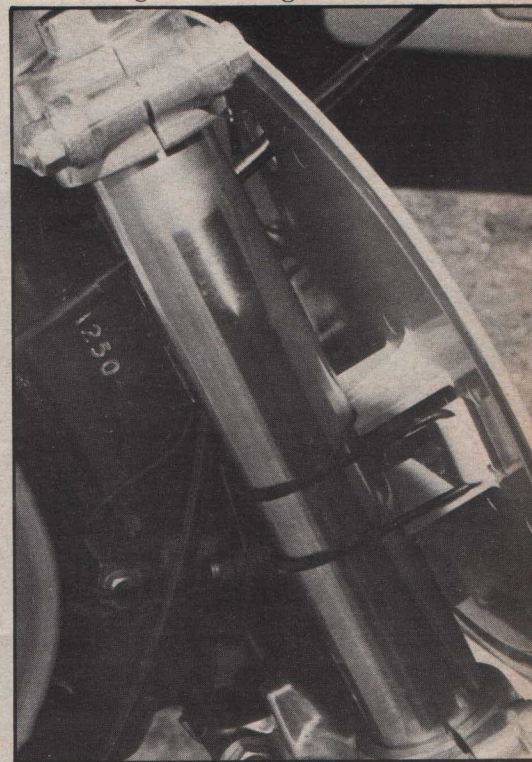
A broader and smoother powerband is a powerband that is more likely to let the rear wheel hold loving contact with the ground, less likely to spin off in different directions. Rear suspension changes, involving the shock absorber and the swingarm, do everything they can to



The new shock on the left is shorter than last year's model but moved up further on the swingarm to give roughly the same travel at the rear wheel. Even with the inclusion of the remote reservoirs which improve dampening consistency during long rides the 1977 shocks still save you 0.4 kg over last year's.



The new reservoir rear shocks have exactly the same travel as those on last year's 250, but use 20 percent less dampening on both strokes. The 1976 shocks incorporated heavier damping in order for the shocks to work correctly after the initial heating and fading. With 40 percent more fluid in the new units, fade will not be a problem. In fact, take it from us, anyone who claims to be able to fade these shocks significantly is likely, to put it politely, bullshitting. The slight decrease



The 1977 number plate features molded-in brackets. A rubber band, which is too fragile for long life expectancy, replaces last year's straps. The straps will fit this plate, though, and are recommended.

in weight in the reservoir shocks is just another of the several improvements they bring to the motorcycle.

From here the changes get progressively less significant. For the most part they are attempts to remedy details that caused problems on the original RMs.

The air box, for example, was formerly a bear to service and had a nasty habit of not always allowing the filter to seal well. The "B" air box uses a new filter, clamp and sealing surface. Leakage should no longer be a problem when the filter is carefully installed, and service is

RM 250B

have been uncalled for. The RM's doesn't offer adequate protection and has been known to break. We've seen some really pretty ones on the works bikes. How's about it, Suzuki?

PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE, OR HOW TO TELL AN "A" FROM A "B," SEE?

Both the gearshift and the kickstarter are now basic black.

No longer perched in the middle, the RM's gas cap is now fashionably set off-center.

Oval holes replace the round ones in the rear sprocket.

RIDING IT, OR, HOW COME TONY D. DON'T CRASH LIKE ME?

Predictably, as the result of everything that we've already discussed, the new Suzuki is easier to ride than last year's. The initial impression is one of shortness, both the bike and the seat seem a bit cramped. This sensation quickly passes away as familiarity with the



now acceptably easy.

The front number plate now has a pressure-formed plastic mount, lighter, though held in place by a too-flimsy rubber band.

The seat base is now plastic, as it was on last year's RM125A.

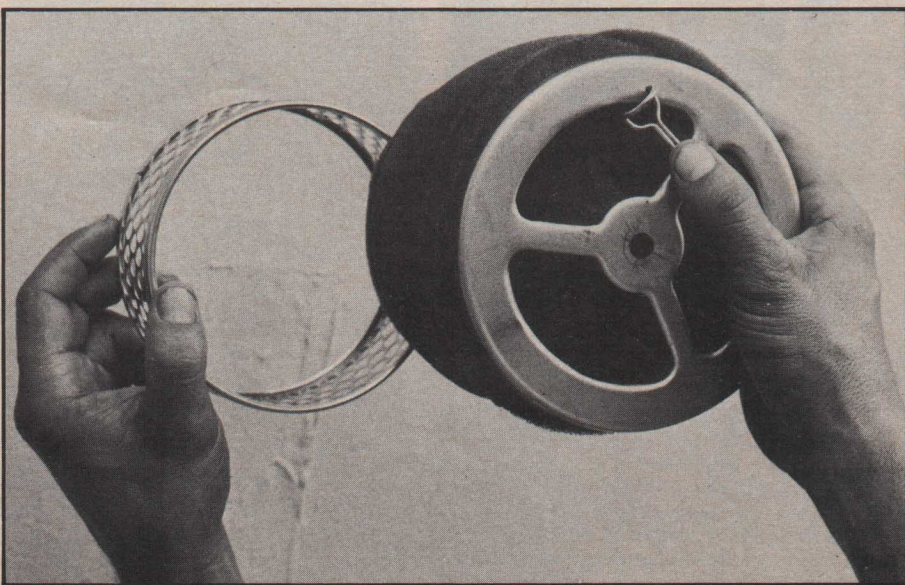
There is no longer any provision for full floating rear brake setup.

THINGS WE THOUGHT THEY'D CHANGE, BUT THEY DIDN'T

We expected stronger lacing on the hubs, but the two-cross pattern remains. How can we bitch, it's the same pattern that DeCoster uses. Rims, the theory goes, make the difference.

Our spokes still loosened a lot at first. Regular attention and *hard* tightening soon beds them in.

A new front fender would not



The air box has been redesigned, now provides a positive seal and easier servicing. It is held in place by a single slip-pin.

SUZUKI RM250B

Price (approx. retail, West Coast): \$1445

Engine:

Two-stroke single, piston port, reed valve
 Displacement 246cc
 Bore & Stroke 67mmx70mm
 Compression Ratio 7.1:1
 Carburetion Mikuni
 Horsepower:

Measured 32.6, Will Pfizenmaier's dyno

Clutch Wet, multi-plate

Primary Drive:

Straight-cut gears, ratio 60-22 = 2.727

Transmission Ratios:

- 1) 2.076
- 2) 1.750
- 3) 1.352
- 4) 1.105
- 5) 0.915

Final Drive D.I.D # 520 TR chain

13-tooth countershaft

50-tooth rear sprocket

Air Filtration Wet foam

Electrics Nippondenso PEI

Starting Primary kickstart

Lubrication Pre-mix, 20:1

Recommended Fuel Premium

Recommended Oil:

- 1) Shell Super M
- 2) Castrol R30
- 3) Golden Spectro
- 4) Bel-Ray MC-1

Fuel Tank Capacity 4.8 liters

Frame Chrome moly

Suspension:

Front: Kayaba telescopic, 207mm measured travel

Rear: Kayaba gas shocks 215mm travel

Wheels & Spokes:

Takasago shoulderless rims

Tires:

Bridgestone or IRC, 4.50x18 front, 3.00x21 rear.

Dimensions:

Wheelbase 145.0cm + 3.0cm

Swingarm length 49.6 cm

Ground clearance 28.0cm

Bars, height 113.0cm

width 88.0cm

Pegs, height 36.0cm

width 45.0cm

Seat Height 91.0cm

Fork angle 30 degrees

Weight 101.5 kg (225 pounds)

44% front, 56% rear

Brakes:

Front: 130mm, cable-operated

Rear: 150mm, cable-operated

Instruments None

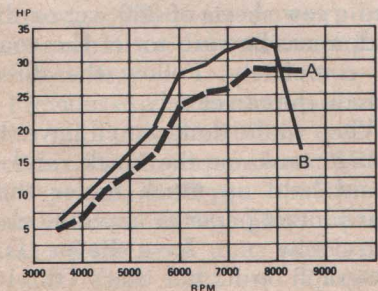
Lights None

Silencer Yes, but for closed track competition only

Spark Arrestor None

Warranty None

Parts Prices N/A



motorcycle grows.

The power *feels* smoother, gear choice is a whit less critical than in the past, and the soul-satisfying but counterproductive sensations of wheelspin are not as apparent. The suspension is plusher too, without any increased tendency to bottom, especially after the forks have been oiled and the shocks preloaded to suit rider weight and style.

There is also a bit more top end, as evidenced by the dyno charts, but this is insignificant compared to the

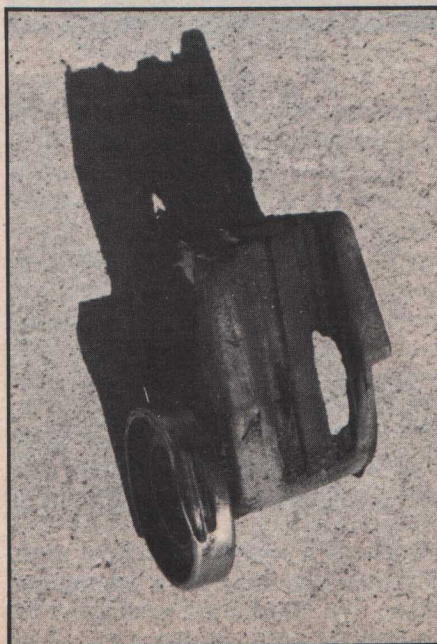
greater acceleration resulting from a wider powerband in each gear.

The rear wheel follows the ground better; this is especially noticeable gassing it out of a choppy corner.

Thus, the bike is less tiring to ride. So you can ride hard, longer.

The redesigned, longer muffler (thought we'd forgotten, didn't you?) still isn't trailbike-quiet, but is a great improvement, decibel-wise, over last year's. Noise fatigue can be a real factor in rider performance.

In short, Suzuki has taken an



already fast bike and made it easier to go fast upon. Our test riders, ranging in ability from novice to professional, all felt more comfortable, and therefore more efficient, than they had on the RM250A.

Amazing. The concept which Suzuki has introduced with the "B" is not a new one, but is one that most have ignored. They have built a gentler, quieter, more tractable motorcycle, and as a result it is better, and still, among what we've tested to date, the best. This approach makes such perfect sense that we're surprised that everyone hasn't been doing it all along.

Our swingarm featured this rubber block to protect it from the chain. In the course of the test it wore through, damaging the seal underneath. More protection seems to be needed here.