

## Long-Term Report

# SUZUKI PE400

One Year And Some Modifications Later,  
We Still Like The PE400

**W**e waited impatiently for the introduction of Suzuki's first PE400. When it finally came we were impressed with the big bore's smooth power but the steering precision wasn't so impressive. Still, the 400 had so many good traits, like the quick change rear wheel and strong frame, we decided to keep the bike and try to fix some of the things we didn't like. Keeping with our policy of treating long-term bikes as personal property, our Art Director was given the responsibility of riding and maintaining the PE400.

The bike currently has 2100 mi. on it and hasn't suffered one major or even a minor breakdown. The mileage is the result of many trips to the Mojave Desert, local mountains and numerous trips to Baja, one of them in excess of 1000 mi.

The long range test started with a couple of modifications carried over from the normal testing. The front tire was changed to a 3.25 Metzeler, the non-folding shift lever to an International Motorsports folding lever.

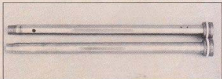
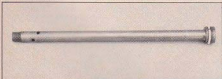
We weren't too tickled with the stock suspension so it was modified. The rear was easy; we bolted on a set of Works Performance Supercrossers. Works Performance also modified the stock fork damper rods by machining grooves in them. End of suspension complaints. The difference in the handling is amazing. The twitch in the rear disappeared, fork compliance improved and the bike became much easier to ride. Steering precision also improved but the bike still didn't get through trees and tight woods as quickly as an enduro bike should. We decided to cut the frame's main backbone and change the steering rake from 29.5° to 28°. The steeper rake should quicken handling and it did. The bike became much quicker in tight situations and didn't suffer much in a straight line. It is busier in a deep sandwash but the overall handling is better and the bike



doesn't feel as heavy now that it turns easier.

We replaced the stock plastic throttle with a metal Magura straight-pull. A Terry-cycle hooked the carburetor and throttle together.

Normal maintenance items like oil, tires, chain, grips etc. were taken care of by the rider and he chose brands and models to suit his preference. Three Metzeler 3.25 front tires and four Dunlop K88HT rear tires were used during the test. The



Fork dampers were grooved by Works Performance. The dampers also had one compression hole welded up.

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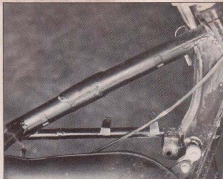
drive chain was changed twice. Diamond was the brand. Five sets of Malcolm Smith grips were worn out. Two sets of stock sprockets were consumed. The rear brake shoes were replaced once, as was the rear brake cable. The handlebars were bent from crashing and replaced with another set of stockers. Both fenders and the rest of the plastic parts went the distance

without breaking or causing problems. The seat that started out a little hard broke in and became more comfortable but it would be better if the sharp side edges were more rounded. The cover is still good and unorn despite several crashes. The odometer quit working about the second month but we didn't bother fixing it because the bike wasn't being used in competition.

Our modifications have transformed the PE400 from a good bike into an excep-

tional one. It's always ready for a long ride anyplace. And it doesn't require much maintenance. Clean the stock air filter occasionally and check the spokes. Nothing ever seems to break or come loose. It just keeps running. The side cases or head/cylinder haven't been off. There hasn't been any reason to take them off.

Reliability is a major factor involved in off-road riding. Reliable is the description that keeps popping into our heads when we think about the PE400.



Steering head rake was changed by sawing the backbone tube in half and adding another piece of pipe the same diameter. Rake was steepened from 29.5° to 28°. Parts were welded with an acetylene torch and outside pieces were welded over the joint for strength.

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