

**Suzuki DS185N**

# **MIDDLEWEIGHT MUD-RUNNER**

What! Another one?  
By the Dirt Bike Staff



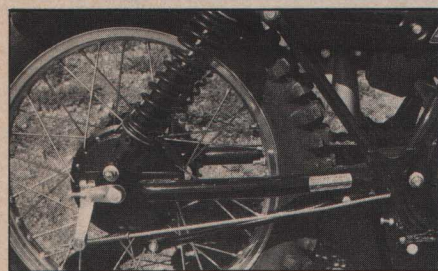
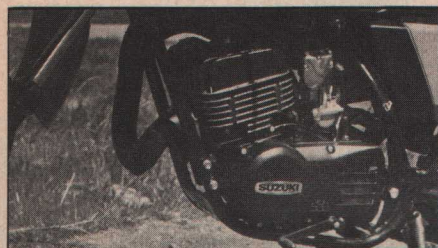
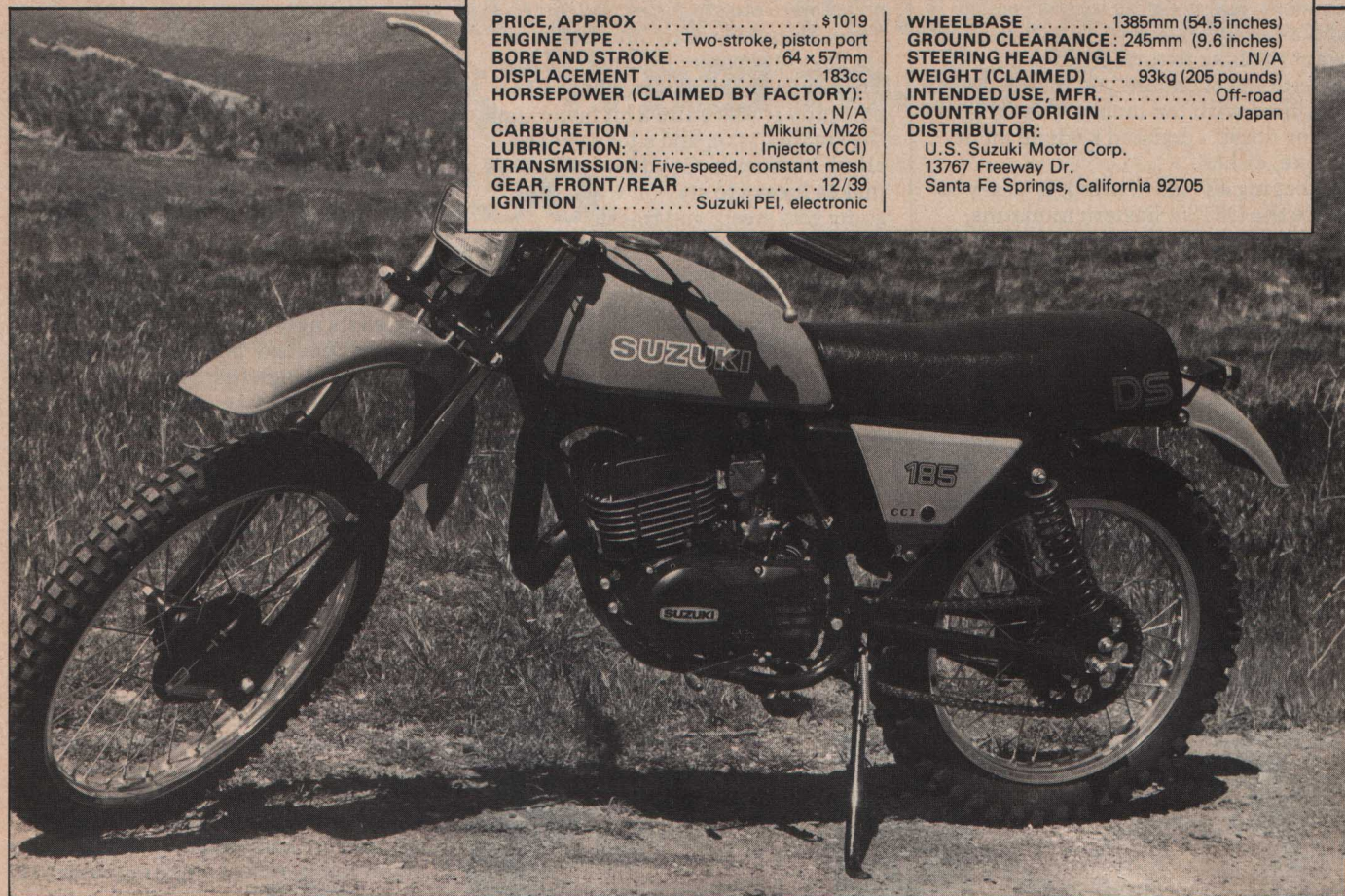


## Suzuki DS185N

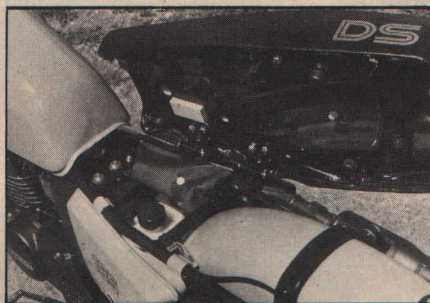
PRICE, APPROX ..... \$1019  
 ENGINE TYPE ..... Two-stroke, piston port  
 BORE AND STROKE ..... 64 x 57mm  
 DISPLACEMENT ..... 183cc  
 HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY):  
 ..... N/A  
 CARBURETION ..... Mikuni VM26  
 LUBRICATION: ..... Injector (CCI)  
 TRANSMISSION: Five-speed, constant mesh  
 GEAR, FRONT/REAR ..... 12/39  
 IGNITION ..... Suzuki PEI, electronic

WHEELBASE ..... 1385mm (54.5 inches)  
 GROUND CLEARANCE: 245mm (9.6 inches)  
 STEERING HEAD ANGLE ..... N/A  
 WEIGHT (CLAIMED) ..... 93kg (205 pounds)  
 INTENDED USE, MFR. .... Off-road  
 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ..... Japan  
 DISTRIBUTOR:

U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.  
 13767 Freeway Dr.  
 Santa Fe Springs, California 92705

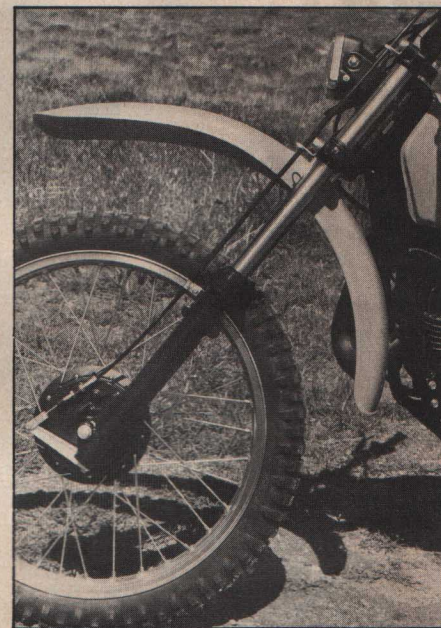


(TOP) DS powerplant is one of the most impressive parts of the bike. It wouldn't be out of place on a qualifier machine. (BOTTOM) Brakes had a tendency to lock up often on long downhills. Better sensitivity is needed here.



Flip-up seat reveals tool storage, oil filler for CCI tank. Snorkel device is air intake.

Front forks worked well, considering their size and limited travel.



Last month we tested the DS185's little brother, the 125, and a lot of what we said about it can be applied to this month's test. A good beginner's bike — not too tall, easy to ride, reliable, but a little bigger than the one-two-bits, and more motor.

Actually, it's a little unfair to call the DS strictly a beginner's machine. An awful lot of them can probably be

found on the starting lines of many enduros across the country. It may not be as glamorous, or as hard-core, as a PE, but a good rider will find out that the DS is ready and willing to go through anything that the higher-priced pure enduro machines will, if not a bit slower.

Speed, anymore, is directly related to suspension travel. And not just gobs of

travel — there are certain limits. The quality of the available travel (damping) is a major factor, and the length of travel is important. For motocross or desert riding, the more the better, but for trail riding, or enduros, there is such a thing as too much. In a horrible, deep mud run, suspension is almost useless. For tight  
*(Continued on next page)*



woods, as in the eastern half of the country, eight or nine inches is just about the upper limit — if you still want the bike to turn. In an open, desert type of enduro you may be happy as a clam with ten inches. Casual trail riding doesn't demand a whole lot of stroke, either.

Keeping all this in mind, it's easy to place the DS185: Eastern mud runs, real tight woods, and slow trails. If you buy one of these to ride in the desert, you may not be happy.

#### PIECE BY PIECE

We took the DS out to one of our

standard testing areas, Texas Canyon, and started stomping around on it. Three things came to our attention, shortly, to separate it from the 125. The first was the power. Being a 185, naturally it was quite a bit faster than the smaller bike, and a lot easier to climb hills with. Good low-end grunt makes it easy to stay on when the going gets steep, and frantic downshifting was kept to a minimum. One negative aspect to this increase in motor was the limits of the chassis — we noticed much more flexing than with the 125. Not enough to make it dangerous, but we knew it was there.

Secondly, upon application of the loud handle, the DS became a rather short bike with a light front end. In other words: Wheelies! Lots of them. This bike is so happy on the rear wheel, we almost wondered why they bothered to put a front wheel on. A little throttle, a little weight transfer, and we were looking at the balance point. Occasionally we got a surprise, when we least wanted it.

Then, when we started down a hill, on a well-known trail, the third item reared its ugly head — gearing. Now, it's not that bad, but the bike was set up to pull a high first gear, and pull it it will. But one of our testers had trouble crawling down real nasty hills. Here's the problem: a real slow down-hill, riddled with rain ruts. On the DS, considering the short suspension, it's necessary to creep down, picking a very careful line. First gear is too high to drag a real low rpm on the rear wheel, and traction is lousy, so whenever the brakes are applied the rear locks up — kills the motor — and another tester is flung on his head. If the gearing had been a little lower, we would have been able to control the rear a little better with engine compression, and would not have had to use the touchy rear brake. But this is a rather rare case. If the traction had been a little better, we might not have had anything to snivel about.

That's the other problem — traction. Uphill or down, the DS had its own ideas about lines to follow, and most of that was directly caused by the tires. To these tires, *grip* is something you carry your overnight things in. When you wear out your first set of skins on this bike (hopefully soon), and put on some knobs with a little meat on them, you'll find yourself a very happy person.

It's really interesting how one thing can cause so many changes. A little more motor, in a package essentially the same as a DS125, and it's a different bike. The tires go from mediocre to bad, the front wheel becomes joyously light, and the suspension limits come up a lot faster. It is possible to go very fast on the 185, but not on rough ground. The suspension is soft and short, and not all that fantastic in execution — but most people won't notice it for quite a while. Why? It's a light bike. It's a lot easier to control a marginal suspension on a bike that's not tipping the scales at 300 pounds, ready to go. We figure the DS is 220 wet, and at that figure the punishment isn't as great, but if you plan to ride hard, some aftermarket shocks will be in order.

As it stands, the DS is a pretty good buy. It will do most everything a recreational rider asks it to do, and not cause a whole lot of trouble doing it. □

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