

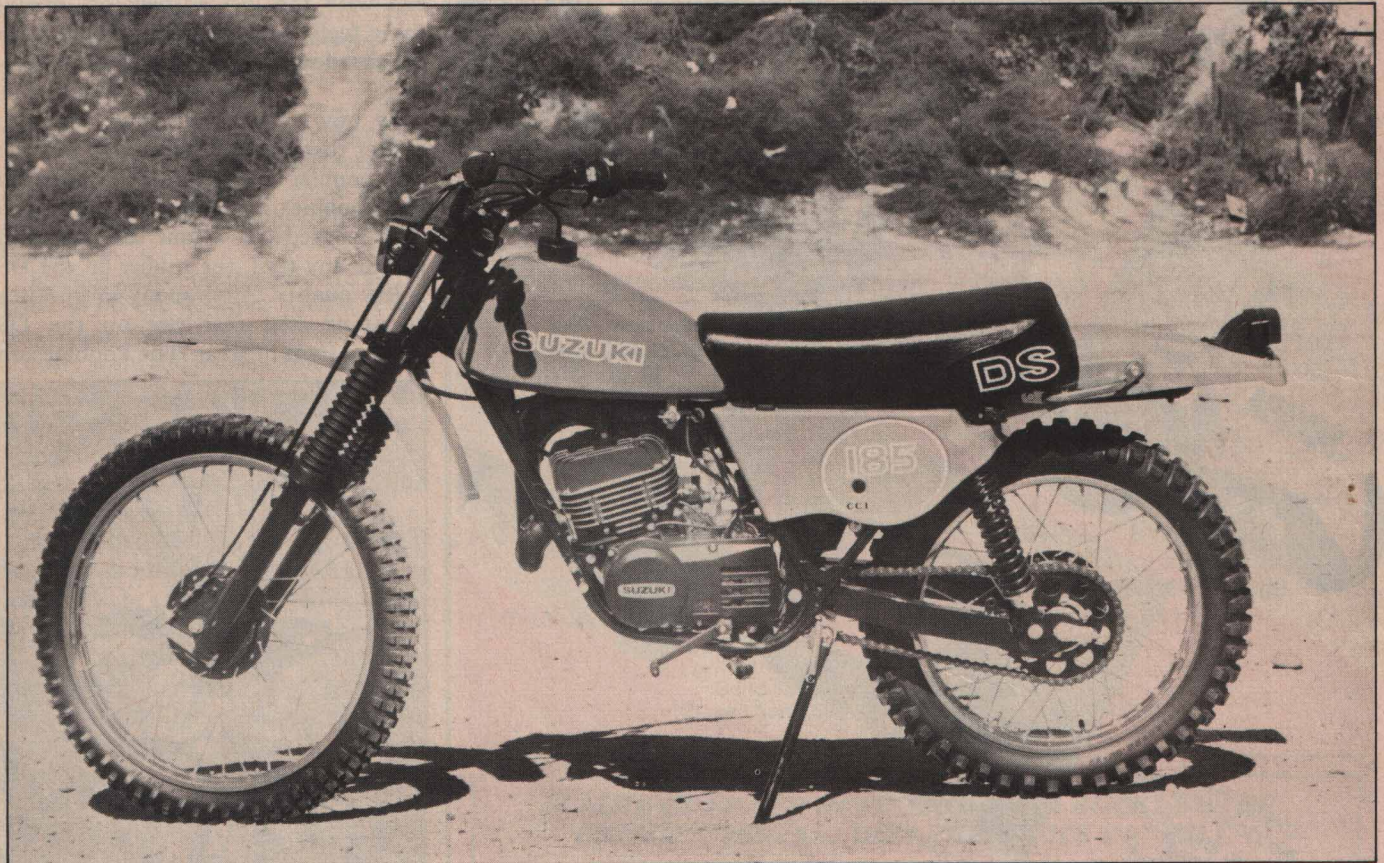


TAKE A RIDE ON THE...

SUZUKI DS185

Trail Truckin'

By the Dirt Bike Staff



What kind of a person would buy a 1980 Suzuki DS185 trail bike? It's not a long-legged, suspension-oriented motorcycle. And it's not an ungodly fast speedster. In fact, it doesn't even have a front number plate! So why would somebody go out and spend a thousand and fifty-nine dollars on a DS Suzuki?

Because it does what it was designed to do. And it does that better than most other bikes in its class.

It was built for trail riding. That's it.

Suzuki didn't build it to be a killer ISDT/enduro machine, and it isn't. And the kind of person who goes out and buys a DS is someone who wants to go trail riding. Not competing, but riding.

That's something a lot of people have forgotten about in the past couple of years. There are still those who enjoy packing the ol' skoot up on bumper racks connected to the family station wagon and head out for the hills to in-

dulge in a little leisurely cowtrailing.

The DS isn't long-legged, that's for sure, but what it's got in the suspension department works just fine for any trail ride, and the motor is excellent for a kicked-back cruise through nature's finest.

Let's take each of these points of interest separately. First, the suspension. The front forks are leading axle, oil-damped units, while the rear end has a boxed steel swingarm holding down a

pair of oil-damped spring shocks. Neither is very fancy, compared to today's suspension standards. But when we got out on the trail, they did an adequate job.

The forks were very good. They were not only plush in small bumps, but handled the bigger ones quite comfortably, without any sudden jolts or jars passing into the rider's forearms. That's a surprise for forks on a budget bike. They are usually too soft all over.

As for the shocks, they could stand to be replaced, even with a slow trail ride still in mind. Unlike the forks, they aren't smooth and soft, but rather

harsh and skittery in the bumps. The rear end has a bad hopping tendency in the rough, which makes the whole motorcycle seem out of control in most whoops. They'll pass on an easy trail, but once the rugged terrain appears, they need to be pampered, in order to keep the bike upright and in a forward motion for any length of time.

Now, what about the motor. It doesn't have much top end, and won't pull all five of its gears to peak rpm in loose dirt. But, on a trail, you need good low-end and mid-range power. And that's what the DS has. A good lower- to mid-range curve, which has

no odd surges of power anywhere.

While not a racer by any means, there is one place where the DS has a strong suit over any of today's motocross and enduro machines. It will outturn all of them. The DS is a real handler. After DIRT BIKE staff wildman Kenny Zahrt took a little spin on the DS, he commented, "Now, in today's motocross, this bike would get blown away, but a few years ago, with this suspension and especially the handling, this bike would have beaten a works Bultaco in a race."

Trails aren't the only place you'll have fun with the DS185. Take it on a twisty fireroad for a bit. After a few passes, you'll learn that the DS slides so easily and so predictably that you'll feel comfortable on any surface, pitching it sideways and getting a few thrills. The rear end breaks loose comfortably, and with the low suspension, everything feels totally under control from the first few inches of the slide to full-lock.

By now, you've probably come to expect that all play bikes will run the ever-popular trials tires. Wrong. Suzuki put knobbies on both ends. Although they worked OK in our test and will handle any trail, the rubber on the DS is low quality. After about 45 minutes of riding, the rear tire on the DS showed signs of wear. The knobbies on

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Suzuki designed the DS185 to be a trail-bike, not a racer. It does what it was designed to do very well.



For a cowtrailer, the DS has exceptionally good forks, along with a comfortably mellow powerplant.

the 3.25 tire began to peel at the edges, and after two hours, they were all rounded off. These are good sliding tires, but as far as bite goes, they need some help.

The cosmetics on the bike are all the same as on the TS line, with a small, thin front fender, and a huge, outrageously wide and flat rear one. The side panels are plastic as well, but the tank is made of metal. Plastic up here would help the DS cut weight down, and add a little better resistance to denting during crash periods.

As for the lighting, the rear taillight is rubber mounted to the fender, while the headlight is a funky-looking square unit. With the small size of the headlight, a small number plate could have been molded on to add to a better appearance. The lighting does feature an on/off switch, as well as a high-low beam circuit.

Heading for Home

Overall, the Suzuki DS185 is a pleasant trail bike that does everything it was designed to do. But, remember, it is not a competition machine. It will get blown away in a speed or suspension race. It has possibilities for an enduro, preferably an easier, family-type event. But it won't handle a serious run.

So, if you're into trail riding and don't want to sit four feet off the ground and go a hundred miles an hour, then check out one of the Suzuki DS185s. You'll love the way it handles, and the price isn't too far out of reach.

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