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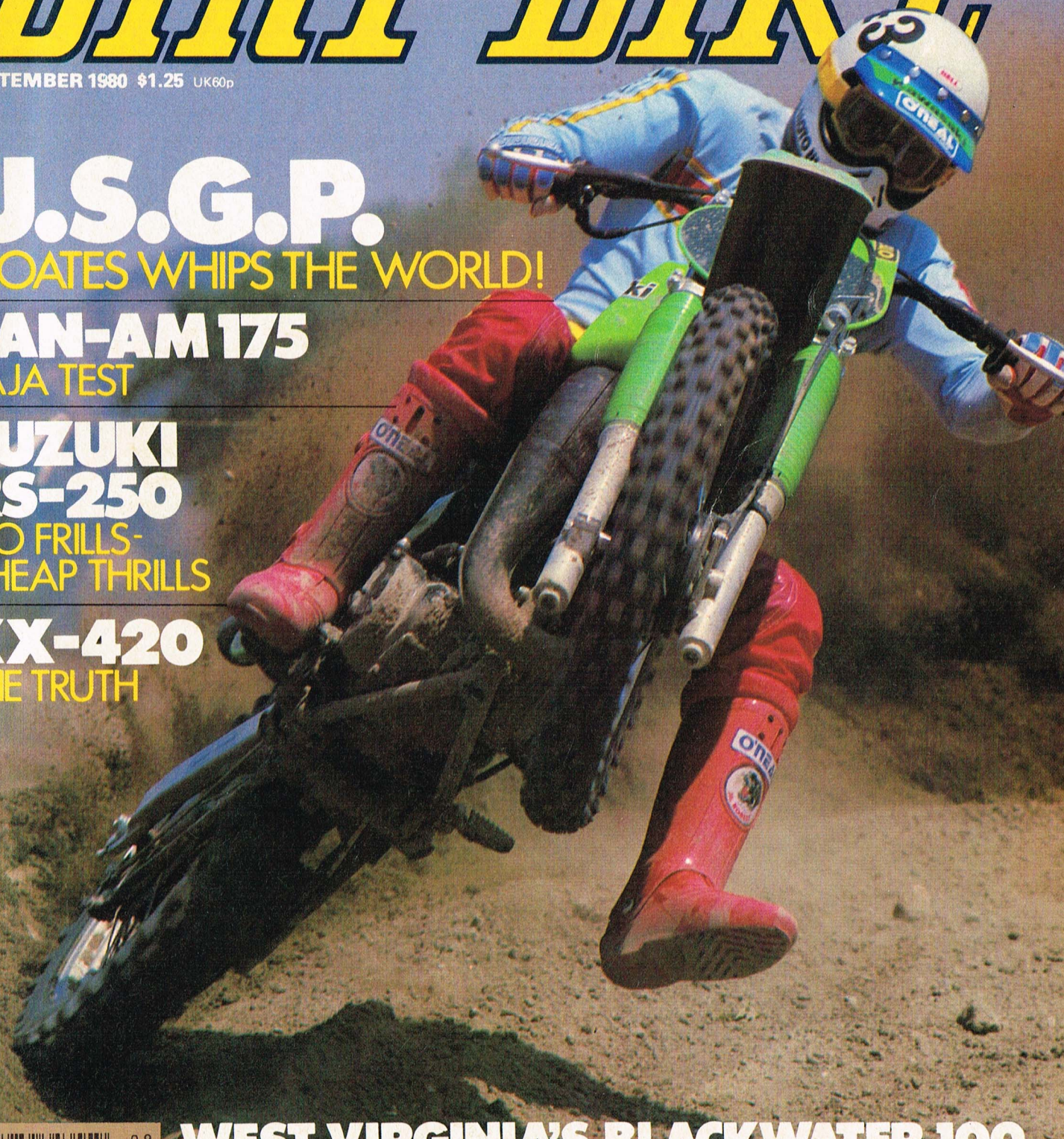
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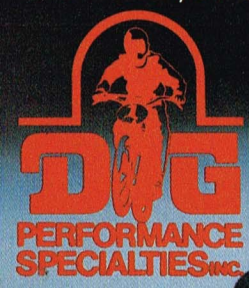


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ON THE COVER: — Rod Brand on the KX420.

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TESTS

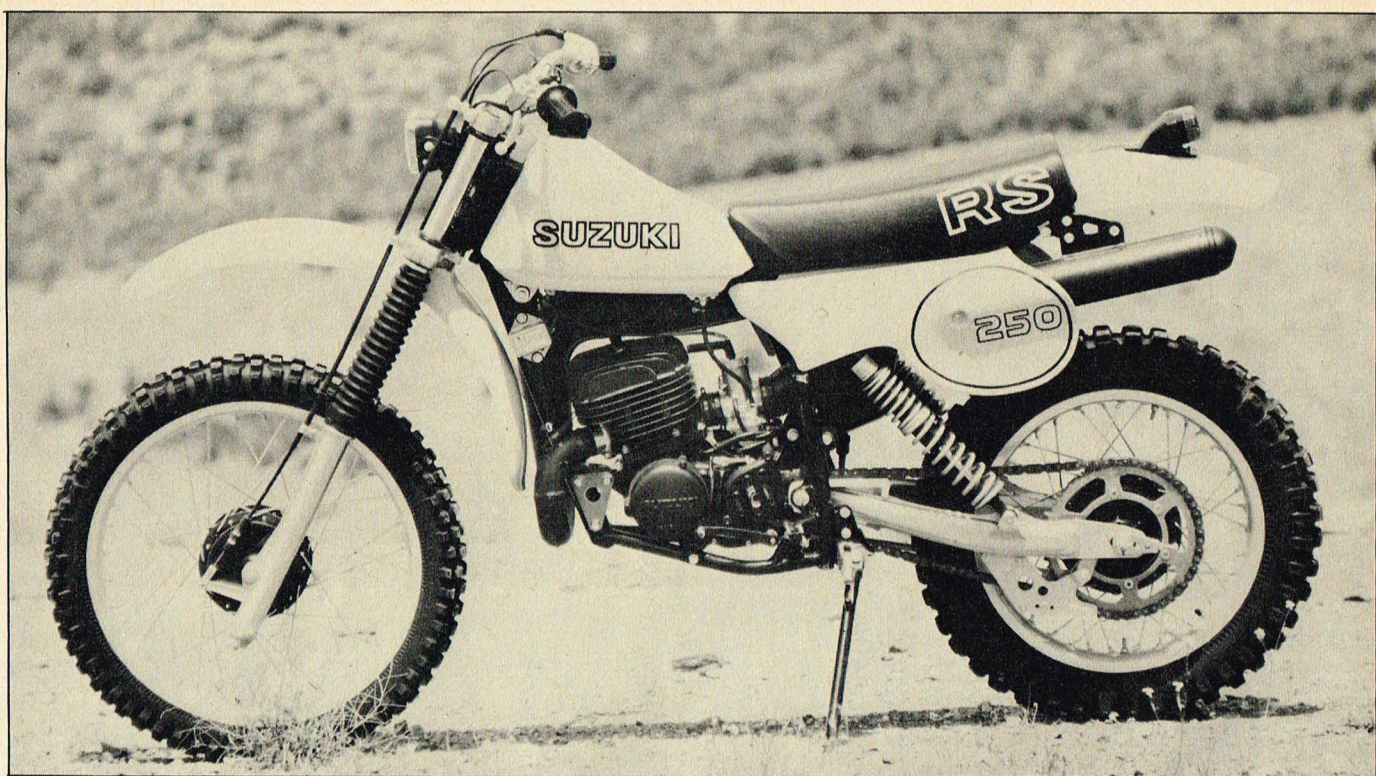
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A NEW FACE IN THE CROWD

SUZUKI RS 250

Collective Bargaining

By the Dirt Bike Staff

Just when you think things have finally become predictable, for better or worse, along comes something new, and another category has to be formed. Such is the case with the new RS series bikes from Suzuki. Midway into 1980, Suzuki introduced the two new bikes, a 175 and a 250, along with the information that they were hybrids, created from an RM chassis and a PE motor. All the good things rolled into one, as it were.

Well, this is fine and good, we thought, but what we were really after was an explanation as to what sort of function they would serve. After all, in the two-stroke line Suzuki already has a superb stable of motocrossers, three very good enduro bikes, the lackluster but sturdy DS series bikes, and the on/off-road TS line. What sort of slot is the RS going to fill?

After testing the 250, this is the way we would put it: The RS is a good bike

for casual off-road play riding, trail riding, enduros, and even an occasional laid-back motocross. This isn't to say that the RS is a capable motocrosser—as a matter of fact it would be a wrong choice for anything other than the beginner or novice class—but if the RS owner has the urge to race, he can be reasonably sure that his bike won't injure him permanently.

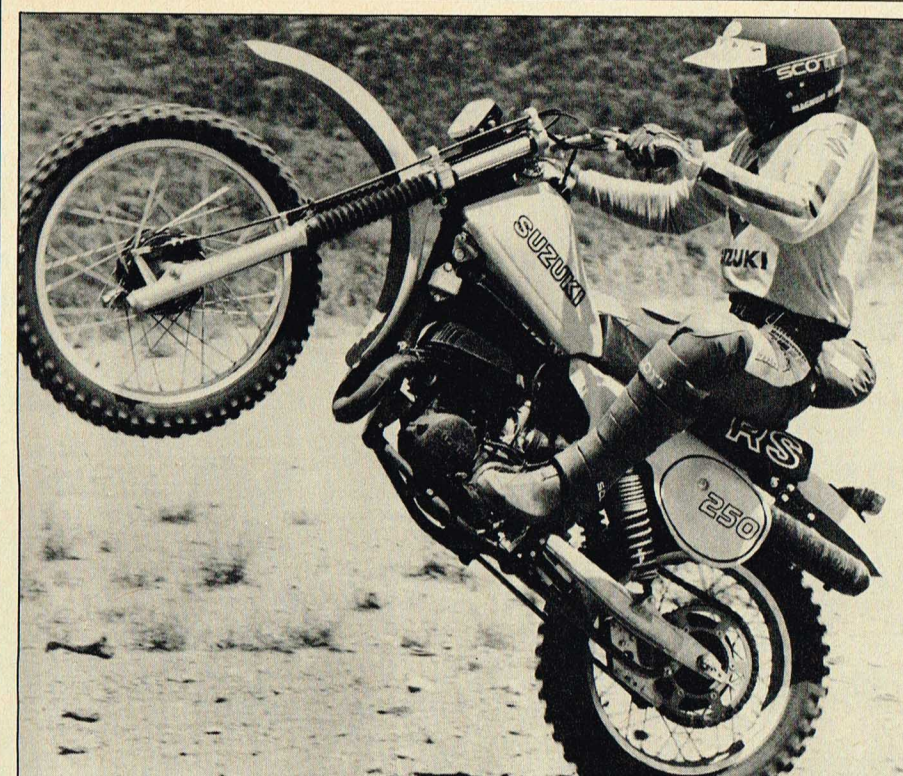
The RS will be much more suited for average enduro riding, and after testing it, we would have to say that it would be an excellent choice for the enduro rider on a budget—after the addition of a larger gas tank. For trail riding and just playing around, the RS is fine just as it is. Let's take a look at this interesting mount.

Power to the Wheel

It would seem right to be able to say that the RS uses last year's PE motor, but last year's PE was a five-speed, and the new RS has a six-speed box. Does

this mean that we're looking at an '80 motor here? Guess so, although there may be differences in porting. Comparing the two, they both use 36mm Mikunis, Suzuki's PEI ignition, the same bore and stroke, and look identical. What more do you need? We haven't tested the '80 PE250 yet, but we suspect that the motor will look very familiar.

As far as power goes, we had no complaints. The RS has plenty of torque for any kind of trail riding situation. We never had to go lower than second on any of the moderate hills we rode on, and only the gnarliest demanded a stab to lower gear. Once the heavy flywheel gives the revs a chance to build, the RS delivers a strong mid-range rush before it runs out of wind. The best way to ride is to short-shift and let the smooth low and mid-range power do the work—buzzing the motor won't get you much more



punch, and is accompanied by a good bit of vibration.

It's a good enduro/trail riding motor, for sure, but we wouldn't be ashamed to also take it out on the track once in a while. On a tight, twisty course, the RS's kind of power may actually be a benefit—allowing the rider to torque the bike between the turns, losing little momentum to unwanted wheel-spin.

Springs and Oil

The motor, however, does you very little good if the suspension isn't up to the job, and this is where we expected Suzuki to try to save some money. Save some money they did, but the RS seems none the worse off for their thrift.

The forks are the nine-inch jobs, straight off last year's PE, and they work just as well as they did then. The limited suspension travel keeps them out of the MX ballpark, but nine inches is fine for an enduro bike. Our bike gave us a plush ride over the stutter-bumps, and did an OK job over moderately rough ground at speed, but sharp-edged holes and rocks had a tendency to bounce the front end around a bit. Nothing intolerable; as a matter of fact, with a little experimentation with oils and levels the forks could be greatly improved, or at least tuned to the individual rider's requirements.

Out back, the RS has a swingarm which looks quite a bit like the old painted steel RM models, and the usual

pair of non-reservoir Kayaba shocks. After last year's PEs we expected the shocks to be sprung too stiff, but we were pleasantly surprised. It seems that Suzuki finally got their spring rates sorted out, and as a result the RG gave us a smooth ride. We didn't even have to fool with the preload to satisfy a diverse group of riders. The rear damping is also well thought out, and even though we began the test approaching any rough ground with a high degree of caution, by the time we were used to the bike we hardly ever backed off the gas. The shocks will fade a bit when they heat up, but not badly enough to be noticeable during normal riding.

The frame is direct steal from the RMs, and the combination of the correct chassis geometry and the shorter PE forks works to make the RS a surprisingly nimble mount. The bike tracks well in a straight line, and can be flicked back and forth in the rocks and trees without a trace of front-end washout. We expected less from a budget motorcycle, but we found the handling to be nothing short of excellent.

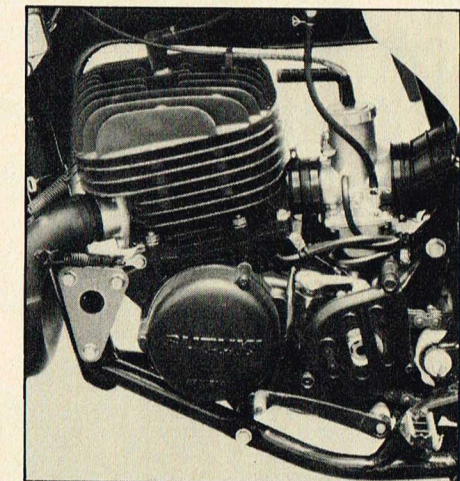
Bits and Pieces

The brakes and hubs are standard pre-'80 PE items and do the job reasonably well. Brakes work fine when dry, except for a little chattering at the rear on steep downhill, and fade considerably when wet and/or muddy.

(Continued on page 68)



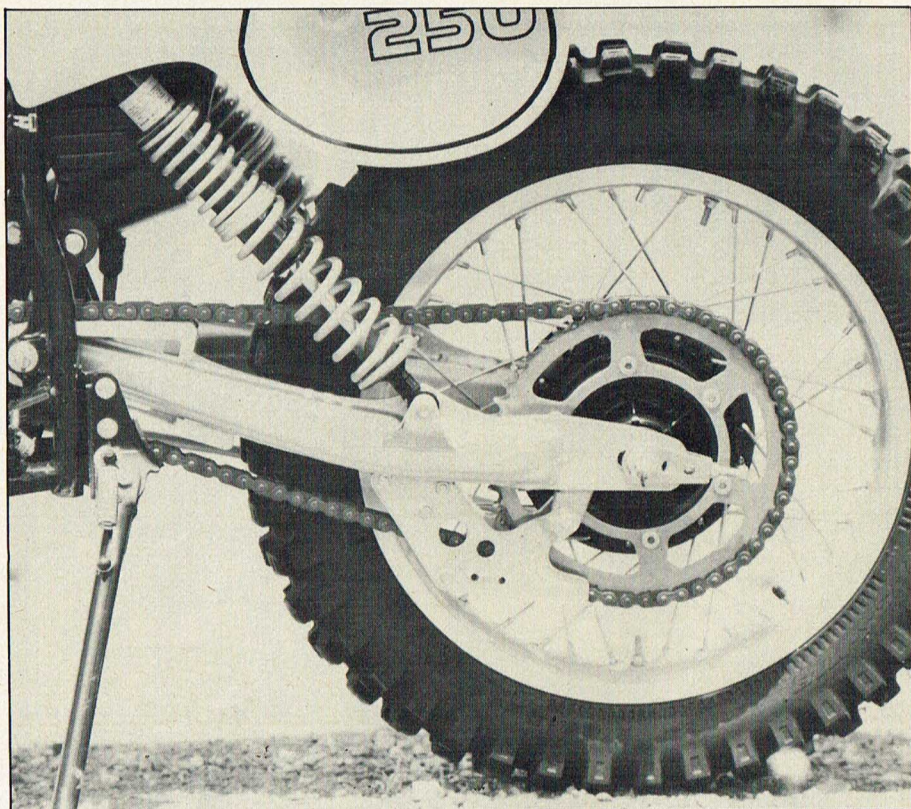
Front forks are also '79 PE style, with 9.1 inches of travel and no air caps. Action was a little on the soft side, but very good over the bumps.



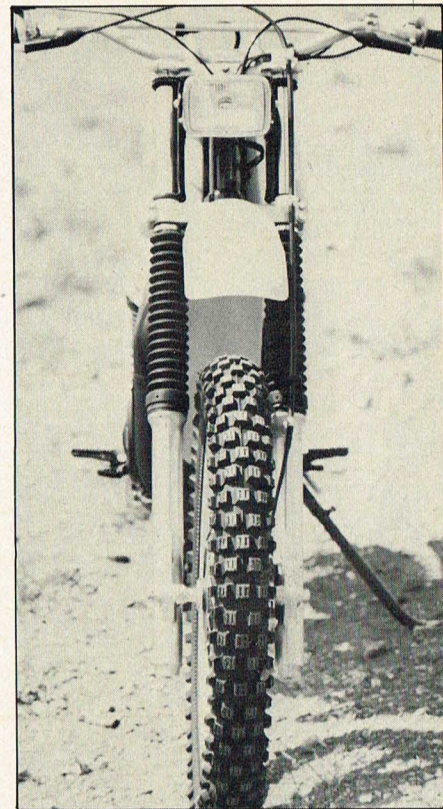
The RS features a PE250 motor—six-speed tranny and plenty of torque.



(Continued from page 37)



Swingarm looks to be a perfect twin of the '79 RM100, although a bit longer. Don't let the paint fool you—that's a steel arm.



Overall, the RS is a very narrow, light, easy-to-handle bike, with surprisingly few bad habits.

These old hubs aren't very well protected from mud, so expect to have to keep them clean.

The lighting system is very similar to the DS units—just enough to be enduro-legal, and easily removable for anything else.

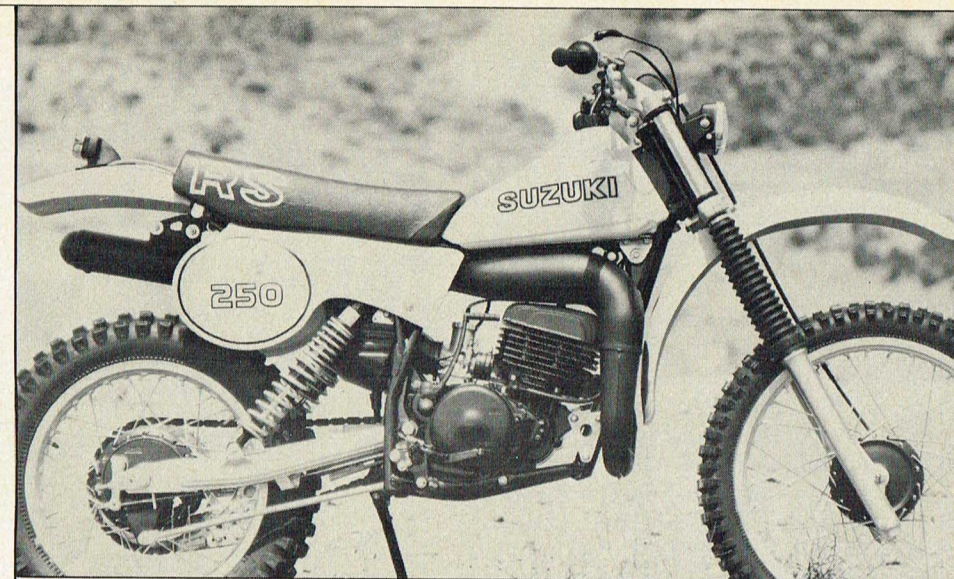
Lever, foot pedals and controls are all old standard PE equipment and will get the job done with a minimum of frills. Neither of the foot controls are folding, and they will bend when they hit anything solid.

Tires are OK—nothing fancy here. They grip decently, but the best way to improve the handling is with a good set of skins.

Say what you want about the lowly RS, but it does have FIM side panel/number plates. Must be a racer, huh?

And so on

What, then, does the RS work out to be? We would have to say that it's not quite as trick as the PE, not quite as long-legged as the RM, quite a bit more serious than the DS or TS, and a good combination of everything that's fun about all of the above. The RS is a little bit of everything bike, for the rider who rides "just a little bit of everything."



SUZUKI RS250 Specifications

NAME AND MODEL	Suzuki RS250	SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
ENGINE TYPE	Two-stroke, reed valve	FRONT	Kayaba oil forks, 230mm (9.06 inches)
BORE AND STROKE	67 x 70mm	REAR	Gas/oil shocks, 250mm (9.84 inches)
DISPLACEMENT	246cc	TIRES, FRONT	3.00x21
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)	N/A	REAR	5.10x18
CARBURETION	Mikuni VM-36	INTENDED USE	Off-road, enduros, racing
IGNITION	PEI	RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.	\$1499
TRANSMISSION	Six-speed	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	8.5 liters (2.2 gallons)	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
WHEELBASE	1430mm (56.3 inches)	DISTRIBUTOR:	
GROUND CLEARANCE	300mm (11.8 inches)	U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.	
SEAT HEIGHT	35.5 inches	13767 Freeway Drive	
WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	241 pounds dry	Santa Fe Springs, California 90670	

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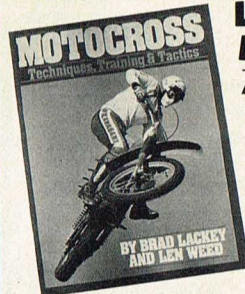
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