

IND
34355

**HOW TO
GASSIT!**

250 ENDUROS: PE Suzuki vs IT Yamaha

DIRT BIKE

AUGUST 1978 • \$1.25 UK60p

**BLACK TRACK
ATTACKER:
HUSQVARNA 390CR**

**SCOTTISH SIX DAYS
SUZUKI DR370**

YAMAHA XST100

OHLIN SHOCKS



Chuck Sun



Retailers: See Page 72 for
Special Display Allowance Plan

Light, Nimble, Manageable; Suzuki's less-is-more thumper

By the Staff of Dirt Bike

□ It seems like I'd been wanting to get myself a little shack up in the mountains just about ever since I can remember. Nothing fancy, you understand. Just a few walls nailed together, with a roof, a stove, and some space to throw myself and some blankets. Yup, and that's about what I finally got.

Herman, you see, finally decided to sell his old hunting cabin after all these idle years, and run-down as it was, it just fit my budget nicely, with even a little left over. Yessir, it's got tall green trees all around, lotsa rocks scattered about, not more than a morning's walk away. And quiet? Why, the old road was washed away 12 years ago, and there ain't much more than a footpath leading to the shack now. Ain't nobody around them parts.

Trouble was, ya see, I ain't quite as young in body as I am in spirit, and I hankered for a means to make that five-mile hike from the paved road go a little quicker. So I thought about getting myself a little motorcycle.

My buddy, Ben, let me try his. He's got a Yamaha TT500, and that sure took the trail all right, but it was kind of heavy, and sometimes hard on my kicking leg and, though the engine never got ornery, I was never quite sure who was boss.

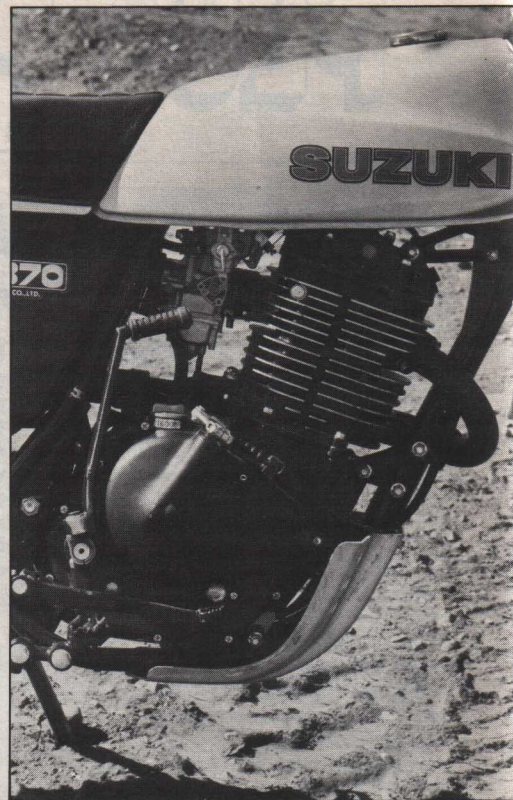
I tried a couple of two-strokes too, but they didn't have that same kind of grunt power, and tended to be noisier. I was thinking about one of those Honda XLs, when Ben told me about a new bike Suzuki had out that looked a lot like his TT500, and was called a DR370. So we headed over to take a look at one.

Mr Gibbs, down at the Suzuki shop, was real good to us. He introduced us to one and then went on to explain all about it. It's kind of a funny looking bike. It's a pretty silver finish, but the tank is so slim and the rear is so wide, it's not exactly what you'd call sexy. For lights, it's just got one small headlight and one small taillight, nothing too heavy.

That engine sure does look a lot like Ben's 500 engine, but not quite. Mr.



The Suzuki DR370: serious contender in the Wheelie King category, as demonstrated by Russ Darnell.



The DR carries its oil in the cases rather than the frame, like the TT500, giving it a lower center of gravity which aids handling immensely.



SUZUKI



DR370

SUZUKI DR370



SUZUKI DR370

PRICE: (retail, approx.) \$1319
ENGINE TYPE: SOHC four-stroke single
DISPLACEMENT: 369cc
BORE & STROKE: 85mm x 65.2mm
COMPRESSION RATIO: 8.7:1
CARBURETION: Mikuni VM32
CLUTCH: Wet, multi-disc
PRIMARY DRIVE: Helical gear, 3.045:1
TRANSMISSION RATIOS:
1) 2.64:1
2) 1.75:1
3) 1.29:1
4) 1.00:1
5) 0.82:1
FINAL DRIVE: 520 D.I.D chain, 2.80 ratio
15-tooth countershaft
42-tooth rear sprocket
AIR FILTRATION: Oiled foam
IGNITION: Flywheel magneto
LUBRICATION: Wet sump
RECOMMENDED FUEL: Premium
FUEL CAPACITY: 8.3 liters (2.2 gallons)
SUSPENSION:
Front: Kayaba forks, 7.4-inch travel
Rear: Kayaba gas/oil shocks, 5.5-inch travel
WHEELS: Akront alloy rims
TIRES:
Front: 3.00 x 21, Bridgestone MX-M11
Rear: 4.60 x 18, Bridgestone MX-M12
DIMENSIONS:
Wheelbase: 142.2cm (56 inches)
Clearance: 25.4cm (10 inches)
Seat Height: 85.0cm (33.5 inches)
Weight: 279 pounds wet
BRAKES:
Front: Cable-operated drum
Rear: Cable-operated drum
LIGHTS: Headlight and taillight
SILENCER: Yes
SPARK ARRESTOR: Yes
PRIMARY KICK: Yes
WARRANTY: None

Gibbs said that's because they're both four-stroke singles with a single overhead cam. But one of the ways the DR is different is that it keeps its oil in the bottom of the cases, instead of in the frame's backbone like the Yamaha. This makes the cases have to be a little taller, but it helps keep the center of gravity down low.

He explained that a low center of gravity helps the scooter handle better, so it's not like wrestling a bear.

Mr. Gibbs said the crank uses full circle crank halves for more flywheel weight, and sits in caged ball bearings. I guess he knows all about that stuff. He also said the wrist pin is specially impregnated with oil and therefore doesn't need the usual needle bearing. It rides in direct contact with the crank rod. Ben seemed real impressed with this.

Other things he mentioned were that the barrel is aluminum, but uses a cast iron sleeve, that the ignition is the regular flywheel/magneto type, and that the swingarm rides on needle bearings.

One thing Ben pointed to and cocked an approving eyebrow about was the DR's full-floating rear brake. It's supposed to make stopping a whole lot smoother and easier.

Mr. Gibbs showed us another bike called the SP370 that's just like the DR but has a lot of other stuff added on to make it legal to ride on the street. It has a larger headlight and taillight, turn signals, a horn, a speedo/tach cluster, a much smaller bash plate underneath, trials tires instead of knobbies, and no fork boots. He just wanted to make sure I wouldn't prefer something I could ride on the street, but I just laughed and told him there weren't likely to be any streets where I was headed.

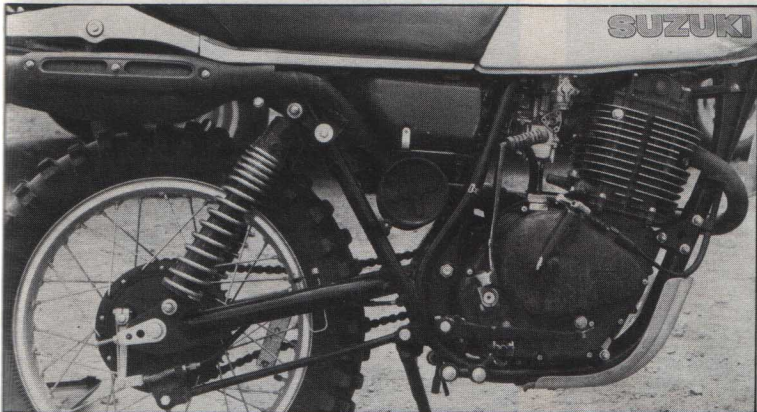
After that he let Ben and me take short rides on one, and that was it. I bought one right then and there.

Let me tell you about my little DR. Since the first ride, I've been really impressed with how light the bike feels while riding it, as compared with Ben's TT. It seems to wind down the trail a whole lot easier, and it doesn't take as much effort to turn it around a corner.

That doesn't necessarily mean that it's a real good handler. Those two-strokes I tried seemed to be a whole lot more predictable, as they say.

The DR is just jim-dandy when I putt along at a friendly pace, but it gets a little more nervous when I pick up some speed. It's the forks and the shocks. They're both fancy kinds; the shocks are gas/oil, and the forks are the leading axle type, which makes them both neat. But Ben says they're way too soft. While going slow they don't have any trouble making the trail seem real smooth, but with faster speeds they don't feel as good. Both ends jolt if I hit rocks too hard, and sometimes the forks bounce out to the side slightly. Ben says I'll need new shocks for sure if I want to go fast, and that I'll have to work on the forks too. But he sure does agree that my DR feels a lot lighter and slimmer than his TT.

Still, he'll also be the first one to mention that it's not as powerful as his. And it certainly isn't. It comes on real strong on the bottom with that old four-stroke grunt, but dies out pretty



Take note of the "coffee can" exhaust pipe design, one of the reasons the DR is so quiet. Other points of interest include the full-floating rear brake, the ample skid plate, the "cutesy" side strips below the seat and the cam window at the top of the cylinder head.



Mystery of the Month: Both our test bike and that of a rider at the Dinosaur TT jettisoned their tool kits sometime in the course of normal riding. Normally they sit seemingly securely under the left side panel.



The air box is semi-easily accessible under the seat, and the design makes it a lot easier to work with than the RM's or PE's.

SUZUKI DR370

quickly on top. It doesn't rev out with that godawful stump-pulling power, but then it's a lot easier to control and doesn't want to run away with you.

'Course, to me that's the neatest thing about the bike. The power is so smooth and controllable that it'll go over anything. Ya just kind of hold the throttle steady and short shift to keep in the lower part of each gear and that little

DR will putt right over rocks, and hills, and things that those two-strokes would've had to look at twice. Why I could never really do a wheelie before either, but the bike makes it as simple as could be. It doesn't like to be revved, though. If ya try to rev the bike to go faster, it'll just flatten out and get more uncontrollable.

For cruising back and forth along my

trail I find that third and fourth gears at about half or three-quarter throttle works best.

My DR starts a lot easier than Ben's TT, too. It's got one of those cam view windows, just like the Yamaha, but you don't need it 'cause the bike kicks through without too much fuss, and besides, you can't see it while you're sitting on the bike anyway. Never takes

A DAY AT THE RACES

During our month of testing the DR370, Mark Kiel, a long-time contributor to DB who also occasionally helps us with testing, entered our test bike in the all-four-stroke Dinosaur TT sponsored by the Dirt Diggers MC. Mark's competition consisted mainly of Yamaha TT500s, most of which were modified in some way. It was a good opportunity to compare the stock DR370 with its principle competition, in a race situation.

Mark found the small-displacement Suzuki, naturally enough, to be very under-powered compared with the Yamahas. He felt it might be losing additional hp in the stock pipe. As an example, in his semi heat he was first off the line, but was outpowered to the first turn by four other bikes.

The advantage of the DR, he maintains, is in its lightness, nimbleness and ease of turning. He says there's no question that it outhandles a stock TT



Dave Destler photo

through a corner. It both turns and slides better, not only because of the lightness, but also because of the smooth, controllable power.

Because of this, it was in the corners that he did all his passing. In the case of the semi, he came back within the next three turns to re-pass all four riders who had caught him, and went on to win the heat.

For competition purposes, as with the stock TT, there's lots of room for improvement in the DR. But with a strong yet manageable motor, and the relative lightness and handling of the 370, it seems like a more preferable starting point. We would venture to guess that it wouldn't take that many modifications to make the DR a lot better.

After his day atop the DR, Mark feels it's currently the way to go in the area of four-stroke dirt bikes.



more than a couple of tries, even when cold.

I sure am thankful for that large, shiny alloy skid plate underneath, too. My DR isn't as high as it could be and hits its share of rocks on the bottom there. Ben says what it needs is more ground clearance.

There are other parts of the bike, though, that I wonder if Suzuki really

thought out all the way. Like the fenders, for instance. The front is plastic, but is way too short to really protect the engine when I slosh mud. The rear fender is short, too, and is steel, to boot. I'm just waiting for the day it falls on a rock and bends all up. Maybe Suzuki just had a lot of extra fenders left over from other bikes or something, huh?

The seat leaves me wondering a bit, too. It's nice and narrow up near the tank, making it easy to move around on, but it gets awful wide at the back. I guess they had to make it wide so they could use that fender they had left over. I also wouldn't mind a little more padding on the seat, either.

It takes three bolts to get the seat off, so I can attend to my air filter. Two are behind these thin plastic side strips that sit right under the seat. The other is underneath the rear fender. Those side strips serve no other purpose than to hide the seat bolts, and to make the bike look pretty, so I chucked them.

The gas tank they made nice and slim, too. Makes it real easy to slide around when I have to. Trouble there is that, being as it only holds 2.2 gallons, I gotta keep refilling it pretty often. This makes for a little worry when I go

romping with Ben, especially since the DR has no odometer to keep track of the miles we've covered.

Let's see, what else can I tell you about my bike? The tires work just swell. They don't seem to slip and slide as readily as some others I've felt.

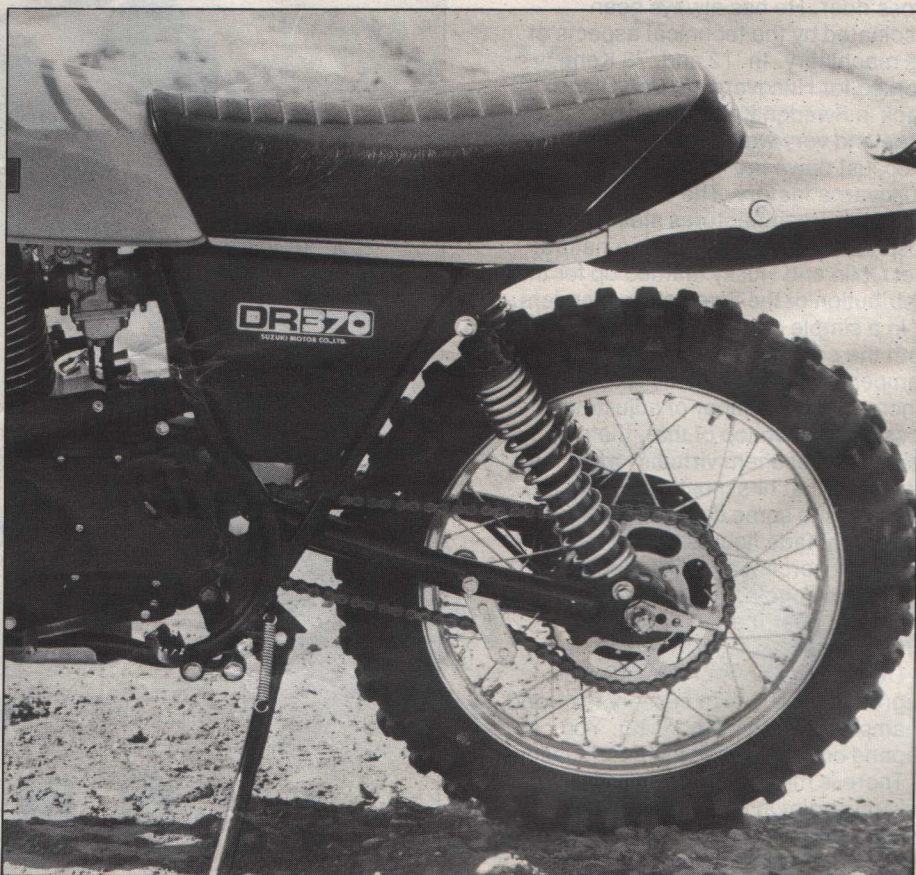
The shifter is made of nice, soft metal that bends back easily after I nudge a rock here or there. Three times now and still no signs of breaking.

The chain that came on the bike didn't waste any time stretching out a good deal, and the spring in the chain tensioner didn't last real long either.

I trimmed the bars down a little too, but that's just me.

Well, sure my DR's got its problems here and there. After all, it's the first one of its kind that Suzuki's tried to make. It doesn't handle as well as it could, and you gotta be careful about pushing the suspension too far, but it's got a real nice, mellow engine that's plenty strong, but still knows who's boss. And it sure feels a lot lighter and slimmer than Yamaha's TT500.

Why, hell, it's got its limits, but within those limits, it's a real fun motorcycle. And for the kind of trail I gotta go down, and since I'm no racer type, the DR370's just fine by me. ■



The short, metal rear fender and the seat which widens at the rear to accommodate it are examples of the DR's styling getting the upper hand on function.