

# Suzuki PE250N

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THIS TEST CAME at the wrong time in some ways. By 1979 the PE was getting dated and past its prime, but it meant more to me than any other enduro bike I have ever ridden, since I won so much on its two predecessors.

I had the second PE in Britain, which I collected straight from the Belle Vue Show, where it was the star attraction on Eddie Crooks's stand. Eddie was sponsoring me at the time.

Eddie is an excellent sponsor. If I won on the bike it was because of my riding ability, and if I didn't it was the bike's fault. Eddie's top mechanic, John Wren, tweaked up the first PE and it was probably the fastest 250 in Britain. The thing absolutely flew!

Throughout 1977 we won numerous Golds and Best 250 awards; Eddie put his hand in his pocket again and we had a new bike for 1978. On this PE the lowest award I got during the whole season was a Silver at the Jubilee (after getting lost) and a Bronze in the Welsh after running on Gold time throughout the event and eventually splitting the front tyre wide open 10 miles from the last serious check.

As well as being fast, the PEs were ultra-reliable. We had only one retirement from mechanical failure in three years, and that was only a split footrest. They were a joy to ride and I developed a deep affection for them.

For their part, the bikes won a whole wall full of trophies for me and I never once got injured on them, until the last one I rode. Small wonder, then, that I loved the PEs so much.

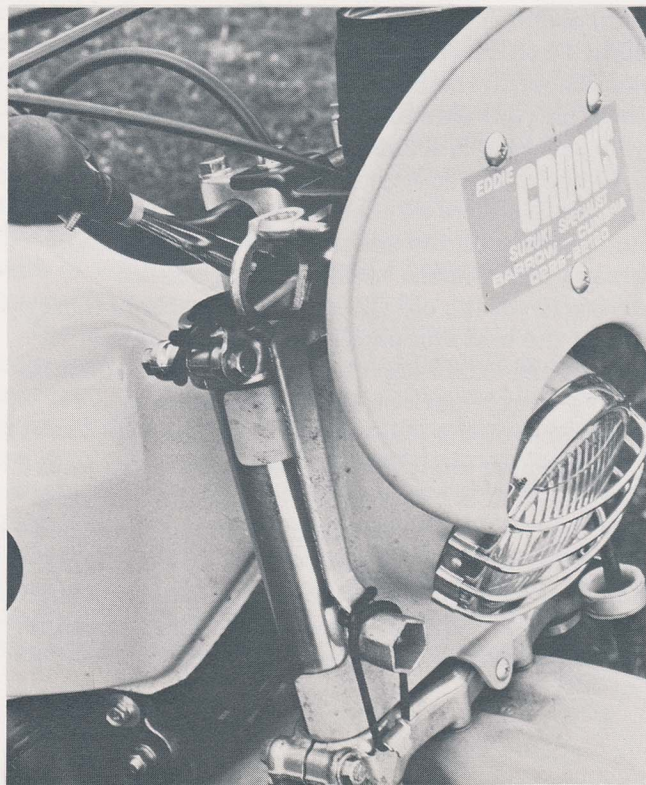
The fact that the 175PE outsells its bigger brother by a ratio of about 10:1 clearly indicates that the original 250 model has fallen from favour somewhat, even in the eyes of Suzuki buyers. In

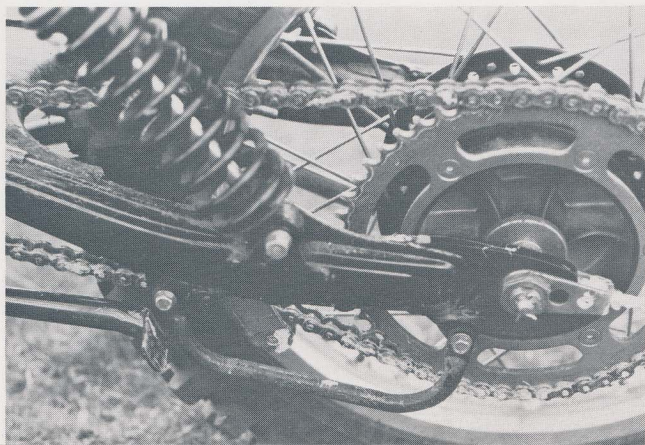
the 250 stakes it is numerically outclassed by the all-conquering KTMs, and had SWMs been freely available, then this marque too would have given the PE a battering.

Sadly the 250PE is no longer the event winner it once was and this has led to many riders dismissing the bike as a has-been, which is a great shame. Even on ISDT schedule the PE is a

*Below and bottom right*

**Three years later, Suzuki was the first manufacturer to fit multi-purpose tools as standard, but the rest of the bike was little improved, with the same archaic chain tensioner which was such a nuisance on the original PEs.**





The author aboard the Crooks-Suzuki, which brought him so much success. This was the second PE in Britain, and, after being tuned by John Wren, proved to be the fastest 250 in the country. It rates as one of the author's all-time favourite machines.

super motorcycle for staying on standard time. Its only fault lies in its inability to set blisteringly fast special test times.

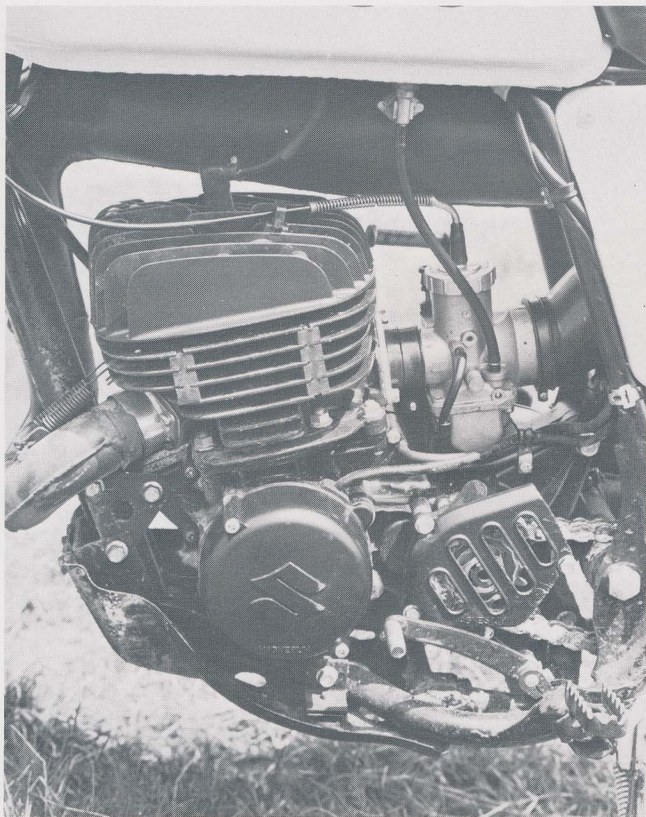
I must confess to a certain degree of bias in that the PE is my own personal favourite out of all the enduro bikes I have ridden. And I have grounds for my enthusiasm too, with a number of outright and 250cc class wins in club enduros and plenty of Golds at National level. A bike which can let a less-than-brilliant rider achieve all this has got a lot going for it. The PE250 has!

Its greatest virtue is its power plant – one of the great off-road motors of all time. With first or second kickstarting guaranteed, no matter how cold, hot or wet the weather, the PE will never lose marks on the morning's cold starting test. Equally, it is a first-prod starter when stalled and

**The motor, too, was as pleasant as ever, but was actually slower than the original Crooks-Suzuki. Not good enough in the fiercely competitive world of enduros!**

**This shot shows Melling in what proved to be his last serious ride on a PE in the 1979 Powys enduro. After running on Gold standard all day, he hit a hidden rock in the last few miles of the event and suffered a broken shoulder. The rider 173 in the background is British enduro champion Geraint Jones, who was somewhat less well known in 1979.**





will fire up just as sweetly in gear or neutral. For the rider who DOES make the occasional error, the ability to get on the move again with the minimum of fuss is worth a lot.

Thanks to a crankcase-mounted reed valve the power band is almost limitless. It will pull from 1500rpm all the way to 9000rpm and has a fat area in the middle of the new range where instant crisp urge is readily available. It is possible to stall a PE, but the rider has to be really determined to achieve this feat. Certainly the PE will growl across muddy cambers, finding grip like a tractor in a way which leaves riders of more buzzy machines wondering what they have done wrong.

At the top end the PE will chuff along forestry tracks at 80mph with a little to spare. My first sharpened PE would just nudge 90mph, but this was an exceptionally good one.

What the PE lacks is the surging, neck-

snapping urge which will launch it out of corners like a GP motocross bike. The PE is far too smooth for these sorts of antics. The smoothness and controllability which make the PE such a pleasant tool to conquer the toughest enduro going mean that it is too soft-natured to equal the speed of the real ISDT thoroughbreds.

One-tenth of a second here, a yard there soon add up to a Silver rather than a Gold in the ISDT class.

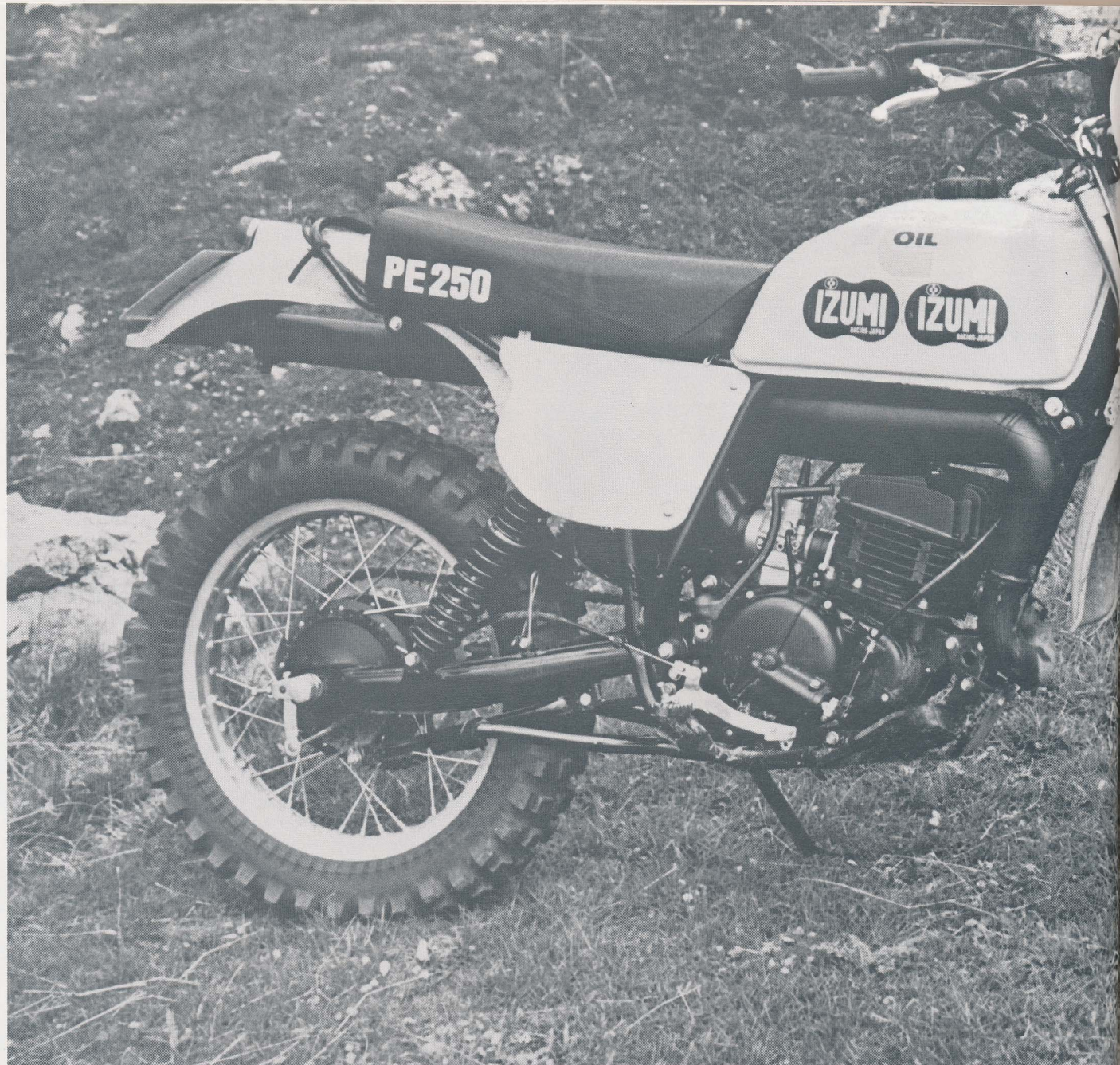
The chassis repeats this pattern. With one of the lowest seat heights of any 250 enduro bike on sale the PE is exceptionally easy to leg about when the going gets tough. A steady dab is also possible without any problem, since, although the PE's saddle height has gradually climbed over the years, it is still possible for most full-size riders to place both feet firmly on the floor.

The saddle height is partly a consequence of a relative lack of suspension. With 10in of movement in the front and 9in in the rear, the PE is lacking compared with the very best ISDT machines. When riding in the Powys I was passed by Geraint Jones on several occasions and, disregarding the fact that he is a far better rider, it was noticeable how the Maico could soak up very rough going where the PE simply ran out of suspension movement and began to hop.

Not that anything very drastic happens when the bike is pressed beyond its limits. It kicks and bucks a trifle and occasionally shakes its head, but it is almost impossible to drop a PE. I did manage the feat in the Powys and collected a badly broken arm for my troubles, but one can't expect to hit a buried boulder square on at 30mph and not have the bike react adversely. Although we did part company, the bike only suffered bent bars and a dented tank, which speaks well for its durability.

The lack of suspension means a low ground clearance and this can be both a virtue, in that it makes the bike a dream to power slide on the shale, and a hindrance to a top expert, who will bottom out the substantial crankcase shield more often than desirable.

As I have indicated, PEs have bullet-proof



**The PE was never an attractive bike to look at, but, despite their ungainly appearance, the early PE's dominated the 250 class of British enduros in the 1976 and 1977 seasons.**

reliability. They are ruggedly constructed and seem capable of quite astonishing abuse without even a murmur of complaint. Normally we pop a piston ring at 700 miles and a piston at 1200 to 1400. Other than tyres, chains and air filter elements, a PE will make no other demands on its owner's pocket – crash damage excepted, of course.



Whilst one can live with the bike's inherent deficiencies, accepting them in fair exchange for its virtues, there are several really irritating points which Suzuki should have cured long ago. The chain tensioner is prehistoric and, unless meticulously maintained, the rollers will wear out with frightening rapidity. Chain wear is also poor due to the lack of a chain guard, whilst the chain

tension varies tremendously through the arc of swinging arm travel because the gearbox sprocket is simply too far away from the swinging arm pivot.

On the latest model earlier faults such as very non-q.d. wheels and the lack of a centre stand have been remedied. If the problems associated with the drive chain can be overcome, then Suzuki could have the best all-round enduro bike in the 250cc class. The PE will never be an ISDT bike – although the 1979 American Trophy and Vase teams are mounted on special versions of the bike – but it could be an exceptionally nice clubman's and expert's bike with low running costs and bullet-proof durability, which means that most of the rider's time will be spent racing his bike, not working on it.

It also does over 40mpg under racing conditions, which with today's petrol prices must be a strong selling point!

#### **Suzuki PE250N**

Engine: Single-cylinder two-stroke with crankcase-mounted reed-valve induction

Capacity: 247cc (67 × 70mm)

Carburation: 36mm Mikuni with enriching lever. Oil-soaked air filter

Lubrication: Rock Oil MR50 at 24:1 mix

Transmission: Geared primary drive with wet clutch. Common lubrication for clutch and gearbox

Ratios: 1 – 2.666:1; 2 – 1.750:1; 3 – 1.200:1; 4 – 0.913:1; 5 – 0.692:1

Electrical equipment: Suzuki pointless electronic ignition (PEI). 5in 6V 15W headlamp. 3W tail lamp

Fuel capacity: 11.8 litres (2.6 imp gal). Alloy fuel tank

Suspension: Suzuki front fork with leading axle, 10in of movement.

Kayaba rear dampers giving 9in of rear-wheel movement

Frame: Single down tube and spine with duplex engine cradle

Wheels: WM2 × 21in front; WM3 × 18in rear

Tyres: IRC rim protector, 3.00 × 21in front; 4.50 × 18in rear

Wheelbase: 57.3in

Ground clearance: 11in

Handlebar width: 33in

Saddle height: 35in

(all unladen)

Claimed dry weight: 240lb