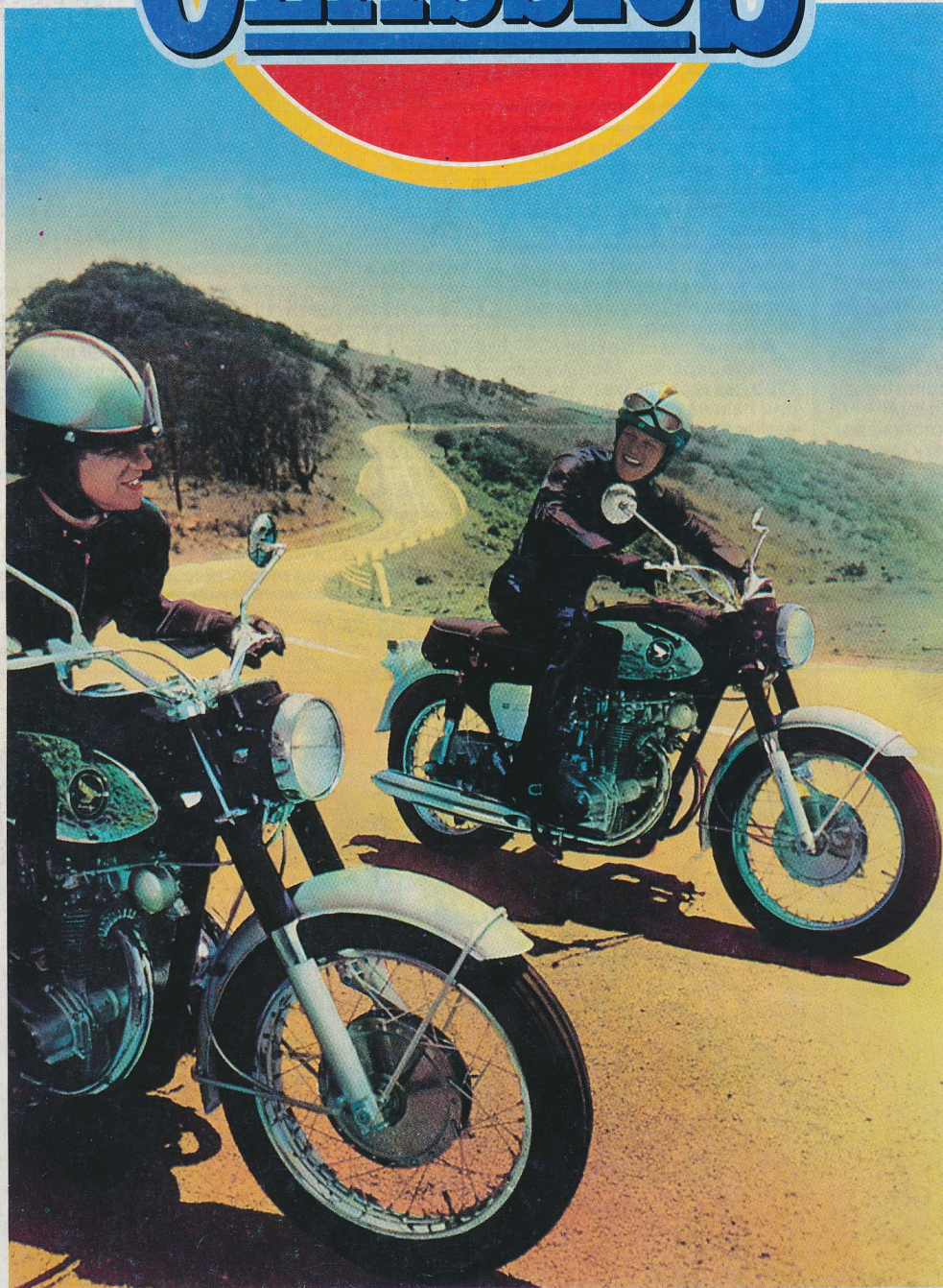


# JAPANESE CLASSICS



20 Golden Greats  
from the Land of  
the Rising Sun  
1960-'72





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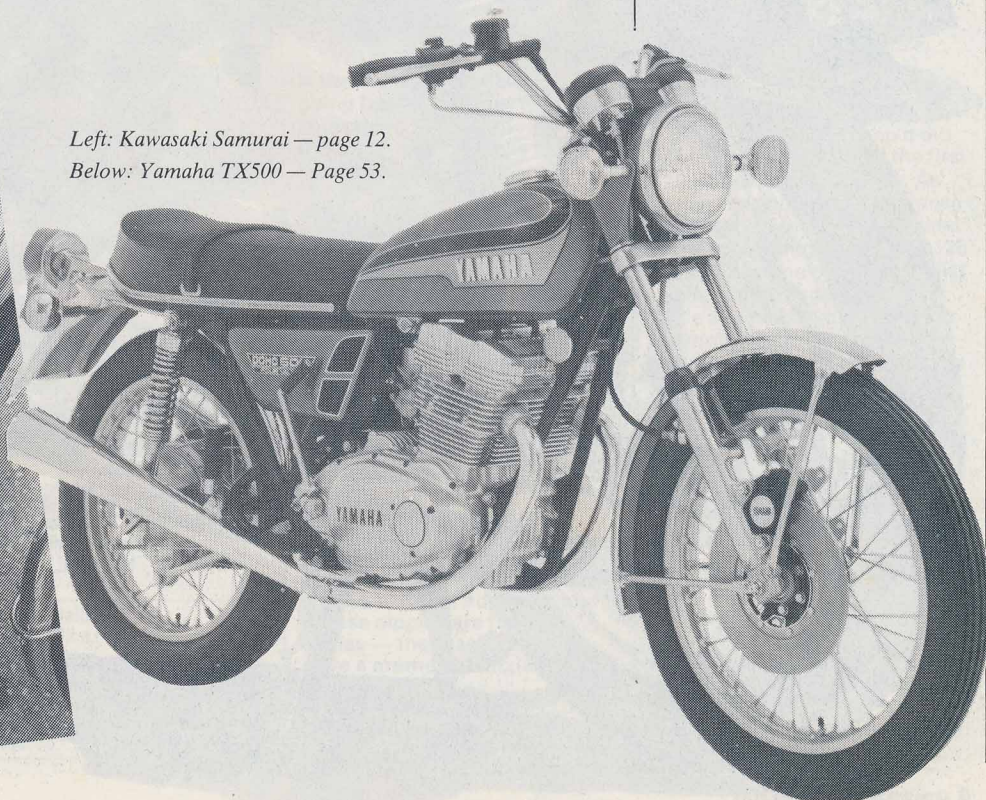
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*Left: Kawasaki Samurai — page 12.  
Below: Yamaha TX500 — Page 53.*





SUZUKI T20

# THE SUPER SIX

‘... what do you want for  
£276 17s 1d?

Absolute perfection?’

Martin Hodder MCN tester

**SOMEHOW** Suzuki's six speed 250 managed to slice right through a barrier of widespread anti-Japanese feeling in the mid-sixties.

That somehow must obviously have been a set of impressive credentials which included good looks, a six speed gearbox, ton-up potential, 12 volt electrics, twin-leading shoe front brake and excellent handling.

Able to take on and often thrash machines twice its size it topped the *Motor Cycle News* 'Machine of the Year' polls in 1966 and '67.

It was so fast for its day that people who rode it couldn't believe it was just a 250.

Even those who wouldn't contemplate buying a Japanese motor cycle had to admire the sheer pep and nerve of the Super Six, so-named because of its close ratio six speed gearbox

For the youth of the day it was just like being able to walk into the showroom and buy a works road racer.

Indeed the Super Six quickly became a race-track favourite and was followed up with a tuned TR250 race version.

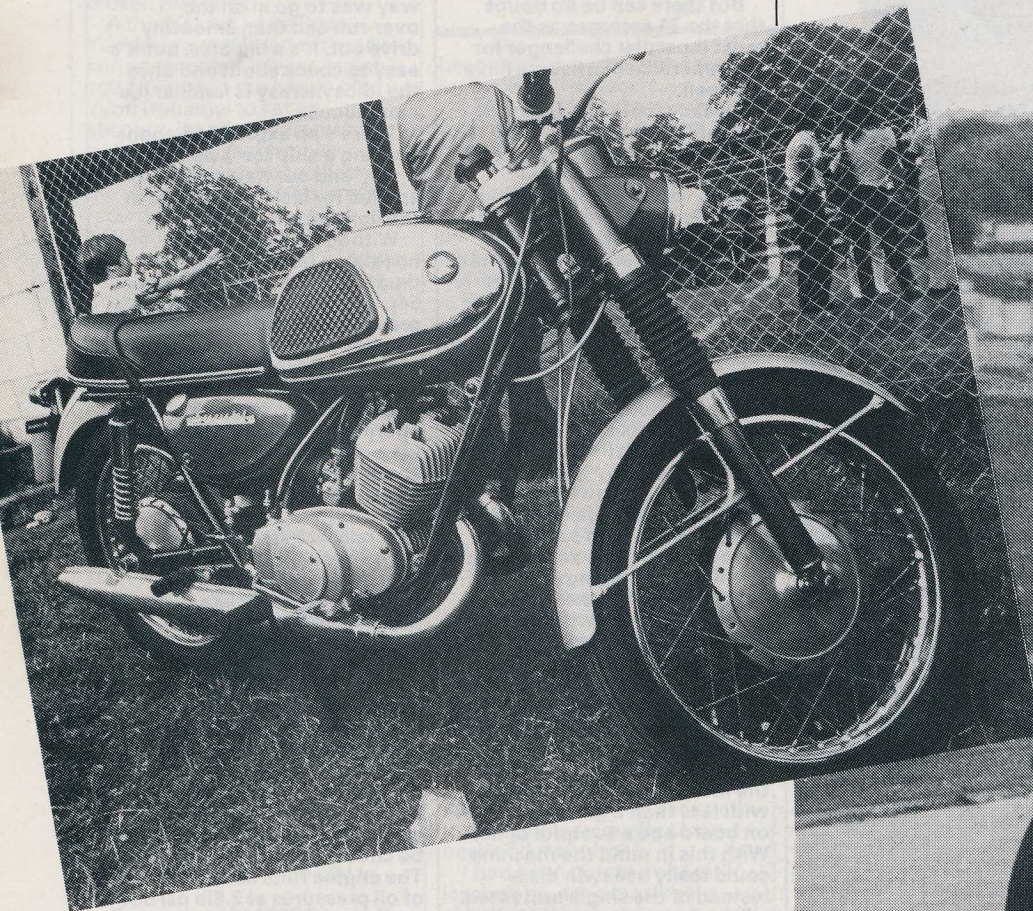
And the Super Six wasn't only suitable for tarmac. Suzuki GB from their Birmingham base in 1965 prepared versions for the International Six Days Trial which was being held in the Isle of Man that year.

MCN tester Peter Howdle got to ride a one-down five-up wonder to the Belgian GP in July '65 before the model was for general sale. His task was to run it in ready for the ISDT. Here are extracts from his report:

**"With its multi-ratio gearbox and positive lubrication system the 247cc T20 Suzuki inherits many features tested and proved in grand prix racing. When racing champion Hugh Anderson saw the twin carb model we rode to the Belgian GP he spotted a strong resemblance to the early disc-valve 250 racing twins, one of which he rode into tenth place in the 1961 Lightweight TT. The big difference was that ours never seized up! And, of course, they don't have disc valves.**

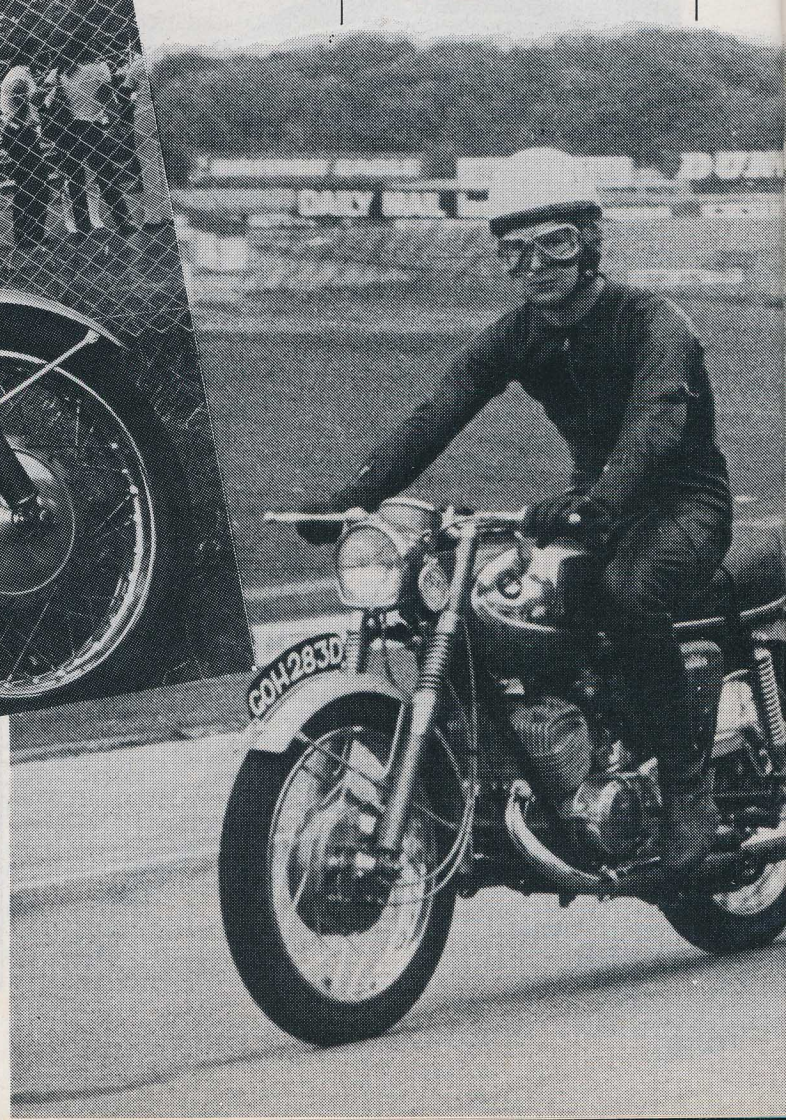
**"Slight mechanical chatter was audible when stationary, specially when starting from cold. On the road, my impression was of sitting on a dynamo. No tremor was felt by hands, feet or sit-upon.**

**"Frequently snarled up behind sluggards in the outer lane I was forced to tread into fifth or fourth. Effortlessly the needle moved to 85mph in top at 6,500. My scepticism about a claimed 100mph potential was slipping fast.**



Above: This Super Six has been completely restored by former *Motor Cycle News* tester Val Ward.

Right: Suzuki works riders aboard Super Sixes at Brands Hatch for publicity purposes in 1966. The riders are (left to right) Hans Georg Anscheidt, Frank Perris and Hugh Anderson.





## SPECIFICATION IN 1966

■ <b>ENGINE:</b>	Twin cylinder two-stroke. Bore/stroke 54 x 54mm, 247cc. Compression ratio 7.3 to 1; bhp, 29 at 7,500rpm. Lubrication: Pressure feed to crankshaft outer main bearings and big-ends. Middle crankshaft bearing fed from gearbox, splash feed to small-ends and cylinder walls.
■ <b>CARBURATION:</b>	Twin Mikunis with paper element air filter.
■ <b>TRANSMISSION:</b>	Six speed gearbox. Ratios: Top, 6.17; fifth 6.98; fourth, 8.17; third, 9.99; second 13.23; first 20.19 to 1.
■ <b>ELECTRICAL:</b>	12 volt battery and twin coils, 5½ diameter headlamp.
■ <b>BRAKES:</b>	8in diameter front with twin leading shoes; 8in diameter rear.
■ <b>WHEELS:</b>	18 rims with British Dunlop tyres.
■ <b>FUEL:</b>	3.1 gallons tank. Separate 3.5 pint oil tank.
■ <b>WEIGHT:</b>	297lb (dry).
■ <b>PRICE:</b>	£276 17s 1d.
■ <b>MAXIMUM SPEED:</b>	89mph (limited run-up).
■ <b>MAXIMUM SPEEDS IN GEARS:</b>	(revving to 8,000): First, 26mph; second, 44mph; third, 56mph; fourth, 71mph; fifth, 82mph.
■ <b>ACCELERATION:</b>	0 to 60mph, 8.91s. Standing start quarter mile, 16.26s — terminal speed 82mph.
■ <b>BRAKING:</b>	from 30mph, 24ft 6in; from 50mph 72ft 6in.
■ <b>FUEL CONSUMPTION:</b>	38-40mpg (driven hard). Oil consumption: 200 miles (or more) to the pint.

"Hydraulic damping was superior to any Japanese machines I have previously ridden. Not surprisingly, cruising at around 80mph the Suzuki proved somewhat thirsty. Our average for the 635-mile trip was between 40 and 45mpg. But remember we

all exceeded 90mph at times! "Alone, or used in conjunction with the rear, also cable operated, the front anchor was a beauty. "The Suzukis were constantly admired at the Belgian GP. One onlooker commented: 'These are the

first real motor cycles a Japanese factory has produced.'

"While his statement may be a slight exaggeration, there is no doubt that the T20, with its English styled duplex frame, conventional kickstart, and a minimum of trimmings, looks a very nice motor cycle.

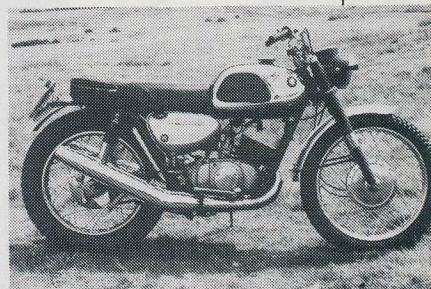
"All sorts of people tried them on the road, including members of the Suzuki racing team. Without exception, they thought the acceleration was fantastic. The close ratio gearbox gave a variation of only 250rpm between gearchanges. Not surprisingly, from such a high performance engine, there was very little power below 5000rpm."

When MCN managed to get an example for a longer test period in May '66 the list price of the machine had been fixed at £276 17s 1d.

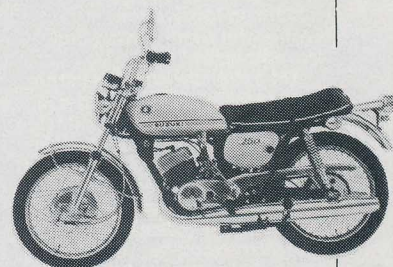
Later in July the T20 was tested again this time with speed figures. Martin Hodder was in the saddle and here are extracts from his report:-

**THERE'S only one drawback to the Suzuki T20** — it's such an eyecatcher, in an unassuming kind of way, that the sight of it parked by the road is practically guaranteed to result in a gaggle of onlookers.

But this latest Japanese 250 has other assets, some hidden and some plainly visible, that help to make up for this. Like high speed, vivid acceleration,



An early Super Six modified for ISDT work with unswept pipes and enduro tyres.



The Suzuki Hustler T250 which replaced the T20 Super Sport. Headlight and instruments are restyled, fork springs are now internal, and outer heads are larger.





SUZUKI T20

# THE SUPER SIX

excellent gearbox, very advanced lubrication, wonderful roadholding and incredible brakes.

Take the lubrication system. Posi-force it's called, and it really works. Basically, oil from a separate tank is pumped direct to crankshaft, crankshaft bearings and big end, with splash feed to small ends and cylinder walls. The oil pump is driven through gearing, by the crankshaft with additional flow control operated by the twistgrip.

Benefits lie in low oil consumption — at least 200 miles to the pint driven hard — and the reliability of the four-stroke type lubrication system with its relative freedom from seizures.

The T20's performance, although outstanding, is not quite in keeping with some of the claims made in advertising the Suzuki Super Sport. "The magic ton" has been quoted fairly freely in connection with this machine, but this is 10mph in advance of its true capabilities, unless there is a good tail wind blowing down a longish hill. Wearing racing leathers, I was able to screw 89mph out of it at the end of Snetterton's Norwich straight, electronically timed. There was no wind worth speaking of.

Not that I think 89mph is sluggish for a 250... just wanted to point out that on the level 100mph is "not on the level."

Suzuki's masterpiece of a gearbox zooms the bike up to the eighties very quickly. Close ratios and positive selection ensure rapid changes both up and down the box, the only slow one being from second to first, when two prods are necessary to get through neutral.

Standing quarter mile performance was tested at a sprint meeting, with a best run of 16.26 seconds and a terminal speed of 82mph. In those 16 seconds I had changed right through from first gear to fifth, with a red overdrift showing on the tachometer at the end!

Our 0 to 60mph figures were just as impressive with a mean over five runs of 8.91 seconds. Not much lacking in that department!

If the T20's acceleration is impressive, the brakes are almost over-zealous; they can cope with the Suzuki's performance... and a lot more.

On a coarse granite chipping surface it stopped from 30mph in 24ft 6in, the best figure ever recorded during a "Motor Cycle News" road test. One attempt showed promise of being even better than this, but I finished in an ungainly heap sprawled across the machine. Brake efficiency is equally good at higher speeds, as a 72ft 6in stopping distance from 50mph proved.

Even with standard road tyres handling is definitely in the racing machine category. Footrests are narrow with chamfered ends and were normally still clear of the road when the side of my boot was just scraping.

Attention to detail and standard of finish is in the same high class as everything else connected with the machine. For example, there's no need to remove the fuel tank filler cap to check on the petrol situation; one glance at the plastic pipe running down the front of the tank tells all.

Only fault to develop during a long, hard test programme was a rear light failure. Only criticism: adjustment of the rear chain is a lengthy process, involving removal of a split pin and undoing two nuts before the wheel can be moved back.

But what do you want for you £276 17s 1d? Absolute perfection?

In December '66 came the news that readers of MCN had voted the Super Six as Machine of the Year, the first Japanese machine to top the poll since its inception in 1959.

Although the machine had only been on sale in Britain for six months it knocked the beloved Triumph Bonneville from the top of the popularity tree.

Nearly one thousand Super Sixes were sold during those first six months and its race potential had been proved by

the following results — 12th in the Lightweight TT ridden by Barry Smith at 82.88mph average speed, second in the 250cc class and ninth overall at the Brands Hatch 500-mile production race ridden by Tommy Robb and Chris Vincent, and 11th in the 250 Manx GP.

More race successes followed including a Manx GP win, and another Machine of the Year award in 1967. But possibly the Super Six's greatest achievement was taking four world speed records in the summer of '68.

Three 250cc long distance records were broken in the following categories:

**Six hours:** 94.574mph — 567.449 miles (old record: 91.00mph, Guzzi 1950).

**1000km:** 94.866mph — 6hr 35min 19.3 sec (old record: 90.10mph, Guzzi 1950).

**12 hours:** 93.316mph — 1119.796 miles (old record: 87.00mph, Guzzi 1950).

Riders were: Tommy Robb, Stuart Graham, Barry Smith and *Motor Cycle News* tester Martin Hodder.

One 350cc record was broken:

**24 hours:** 91.055mph — 2129.075 miles (old record: 72.00mph, Jonghi 1933).

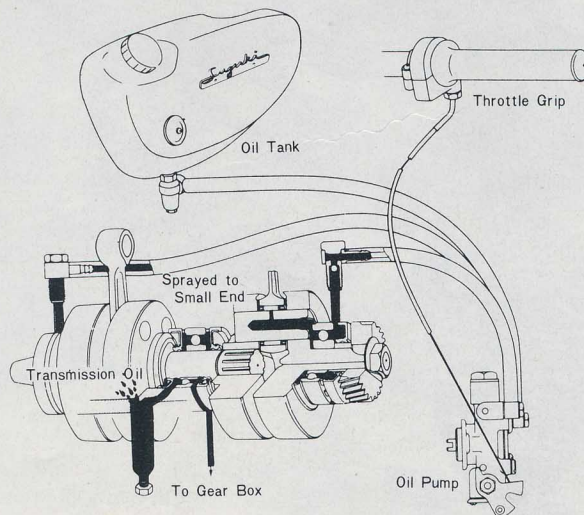
Riders were: Brian Ball, Frank Whiteway, Eddie Crooks and Hans Georg Anscheidt.

The machine which took the 350cc 24-hour record was an overbored 256cc Super Six. Both bikes were prepared by tuner/dealer Eddie Crooks, and scene of the record attempt was Monza's banked track in Italy.

For 1969 Suzuki restyled the T20 and renamed it the T250 Hustler. From there the model went on to become the GT250 with Ram Air cowl, the GT250A, the lightweight X7 of 1978, and now for '83 Suzuki has kept up its tradition for sports 250s with the watercooled Gamma twin.

□

Above: Martin Hodder track tests the Thompson Suzuki. In America where the Super Six was extremely popular it was called the X-6.



Schematic layout of the Suzuki Posi-force lubrication system which made life so much easier for Suzuki two stroke owners. The amount of oil delivery via the pump to the mains and rod bearings was controlled by throttle opening.



## AN OWNER'S THOUGHTS

LONG-TIME Super Six owner and Suzuki marque specialist Don Leeson has the following comment and useful advice on the "Whispering Twin".

I can testify to the machines longevity, with a "hack" model in current daily use having clocked up over 160,000 miles, and an accumulated total on the type approaching 250,000.

The fact that the machine was designed as a roadster, was only a

250, and a two-stroke at that, led many to reappraise their views on Japanese bikes in general, and establish the maker firmly in the market place.

Memories of the first ride on a T20 — as pillion — are still vivid. the acceleration throwing one back, the difficulty in breathing at speed, the squeal of the front tyre as one slams forward on braking.

### Restoration

The T20's quality particularly in chrome and alloy, was superior to that seen today.

Frame was high gloss black — Johnstone's polyurethane recommended.

For a true factory rather than councours look, stands, footrest hangers, battery box and number plates should be treated to a lesser quality finish. The bottom fork yoke on very early models in body colour, otherwise black.

Tank, side-covers, headlamp shell and forks in either:

078 candy apple red (Holts MB1-S1 over Dupli-Colour beige PSB3), 079 candy apple blue (Rover SD1 metallic blue over silver), 080 candy apple black (Holts MB1-K6 over silver).

Only early models in candy black, later versions straight black 019 as frame.

All body parts lacquered.

Mudguards: 126 silver metallic (Dupli-Colour panel spray PS-GY8 with 29cm wide stripe in body colour. No lacquer.

All visible nuts, bolts and spacers were chrome, apart from fork pinch and number plate bolts, which were cadmium.

Early models had cadmium blanking screws in the rear mudguard indicator mounting holes, later ones grommets or even indicators!

Air cleaner hose clips, and the airbox itself, were also cadmium.

Engine cases and brake plates polished and lacquered.

All control cables, apart from rear brake, silver outer sheathing.

### Derivatives

TC250 "Street Scrambler" — high piped version with sump guard, enclosed suspension.

TR250 — the pukka racer version with different top end, extra frame bracing and works 125 front brake, as opposed to the Eddie Crooks or Harry Thompson production racing T20 conversions.

### Points to watch

Crankshaft oil-seals. Timing side goes first, being smaller diameter and lubricated only by mist. Easily spotted by black film inside timing cover and on generator windings.

Centre seals go next and empty the gearbox oil — lots of smoke, mostly from right-hand side.

Both above can be lived with if the price of an exchange crank is out of reach, as long as points are kept clean and gearbox topped up.

Plugs — for my money, must be NGK, at least B8HC, or B9 for a bike which is used as intended.

Fourth gear was weak on early models — dealers had free kits to update.

Front engine bolts snap on most frames — last few have a cross brace between the pipes to take the strain.

Front sprocket nuts always loosen off, so make sure the tab washer is secure, that holds it. A nasty one is the fuel tap. The cork can rotate on the spindle, restricting the flow and giving weak mixture at high speeds.

Lest anyone gain the idea from the above that the machine is a mobile disaster area, my personal involuntary stops over 17 years total two.

Certainly a machine I would recommend to anyone both from the viewpoint of an enjoyable motorcycle in its own right, and as a Classic Japanese that is bound to attract increasing interest in years to come as a milestone in development.

*The MkII Hustler is quite rare and would be a prized possession for any Suzuki collector. Claimed power was 33bhp.*

