

PETER RICHARDSON

SUZUKI
PE 175

RIDE A JAPANESE dual purpose trail bike with the word 'enduro' emblazoned on the plastic side covers? And you believe it could be ridden competitively in that type of event once the indicators etc. have been removed? Forget it. Comparing such a bike with a true enduro mount is like assuming your RD250 is as good as Kenny Roberts' Yamaha. Well, perhaps we exaggerate a little, but the difference is certainly great.

But make no mistake, the Suzuki PE 175 is pure enduro through and through. There's no roadster heritage, the breeding is true-blue moto-cross from Suzuki's famous range of RM125s — and pieces have been taken from the A, B and C series to provide the final composite bike with its own special requirements.

For example, while the engine's bottom end is basically the same as the C model, the frame is from the early 'A' series (used because of its less steep head angle, thus giving better high speed straight line stability), while the case-reed petals are from the 'B' to give a wide spread of power.

The same basic cylinder and head is shared with the RM — being a sand-cast iron liner with bridged intake ports, six transfer ports and a large bridged exhaust port — and that adds up to a lot of holes! Naturally, the bore has been increased to 60mm and the stroke to 57mm to provide the extra capacity, while the liner has been re-ported to give a wider power band and more torque, at the expense of all-out peak power. Still, 22 useable bhp in a bike weighing just 234lb. can't be bad!

Tall and Strong

No longer does the head feature a squish band, while stronger rods, increased crank pin diameter, bigger big end bearing and thicker gudgeon pin ensure that the bottom end can handle the larger capacity. Incidentally, the PE's cylinder uses different stud fixing, so you can't convert an old RM125...

The transmission is also borrowed from the RM, but with wider gear ratios, and two more clutch plates have appeared. An external rotor flywheel has been substituted for the

RM's internal unit, bringing with it more flywheel inertia and hence better bottom end 'plonk'.

Clearly, a frame that has withstood the rigours of moto-cross and time is eminently suitable for such a machine, while the suspension would likewise be hard to fault. The leading axle front forks provide around 8in. of travel, while the forward mounted rear shockers do likewise. This results in a seat height of 36in., but once astride the softly padded seat, your feet can touch the ground once again.

Barely Legal

As for accessories, only the bare minimum have been added to make it 'legal' for competition without adding excess weight. The tank is alloy, the front plastic number plate/light unit retained by rubber bands, the lights wired permanently 'on', mudguards are flexible plastic and deeply valenced, while the speedometer has a large, easily re-set trip odometer. The quick action throttle is designed for fast cable changes, while a multi-purpose spanner is instantly

accessible, being carried on the triple clamps.

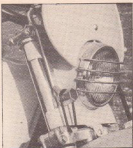
Both centre and prop stands are fitted, while tyres are the universally approved IRC Volcanduro — wrapped around equally well-known Takasago alloy rims with ultra strong butted spokes.

That perhaps says it all — the Suzuki PE is a thoroughbred, designed for the serious enduro freak to race straight from the crate. The only other alternatives are to buy an expensive European mount, or to extensively modify a trail bike. Surprisingly, Yamaha do not import the IT range to challenge Suzuki.

Carrying a price tag of £899.64p inc. VAT the Suzuki just has to be good value — but don't buy one with the intention of running it on the road. It may be street-legal, but it's not street-practical — nor is it intended to be used in that way.

To evaluate the machine, we tried a slightly different approach. Firstly, ad-man extraordinary — and we mean extra ordinary — Andy Foulkes, who has some moto-cross experience, gave the yellow and black beastie a thrashing to provide the view of an experienced rider (hate to use the word 'expert' — his feet would never touch the ground!), and then the remainder of the Editorial Team pass on their impressions as complete novices to this mode of transportation, working on the basis that if they can do it, you can do it, etc. Incidentally, the machine incredibly had been assembled from its crate the day before by importers Beamish Motors and had just one mile of 'running in' on the clock when we were let loose. Many thanks, gents!

Everything you need for success. Centre stand is essential for punctures.



Above: all-in-one toolkit is kept handy! Below: leading axle fork gives long suspension travel and helps steering geometry. Right: Steven B. enjoying himself!



PE EXERCISE ANDY'S ANTICS

A COUPLE OF WEEKS prior to the PE175 test I had the dubious pleasure of giving Jonathan Wright's practice RM400C a potter round in a closed to club scramble. For the first few laps of practice I circulated at a fair turn of speed . . . and then I got it into the power band and slowed right down as I wrestled to stay alive. Definitely not the right bike for a rusty right hand attached to an even rustier body. But that PE175! What a little beauty. On the same circuit as the above mentioned event I could throw it around with no fear of sudden pain or swift excursions to the Portaloos.

As to be expected from a small capacity machine the revs must be kept up to obtain the best performance, although it never gassed up through overloading. When it starts to grunt just stab down the gear lever and whack the power on again. No feathering of the throttle to save a dying motor. Just go! Ace moto-crosser Steven Beamish himself rated the PE175 above its 250 Enduro stablemate because it was less tiring over the distances he had tested them both.

For a purchase price of less than £900, which is less than a number of Japanese trail machines, Mr. Beamish will sell as many PE175s as he can import. The PE will continue to win as a pukka enduro machine, play/trail bike or street-corner poser's delight.

Pete's pranks

HAVING just watched the most impressive antics of Steve Beamish, and (how it hurts to say it) the stylish Andy Foulkes, the realisation that the words 'it's your turn now' were aimed in my direction, suddenly sunk home.

Now my personal confrontation with moto-cross machinery was restricted to a previous visit to the impressive Beamish set-up, when I was put astride an 80cc schoolboy scrambler. It was physically too small for my bulk, and I was disdainful of a mere '80'. Until, that was, I fired up the motor, heard the staccato roar, and set off down the farm track with the front wheel in the air for the first three gears. Never again, I vowed, would I be disrespectful of such tiddlers — or indeed, any form of competitive off-road machinery.

Being prepared for an explosive-type take off on the PE, I was relieved to find that the light-action clutch fed the power in smoothly, and that a very sedate get-away was quite possible. Riding position seemed comfortable, with all controls easily accessible — immediately leaving you free to panic about the terrain ahead.

The test ground had a wide variety of surfaces, and a series of harsh ripples approached — pulling hard in third gear brought me out in a cold sweat — until I realised that the suspension was coping so well with the hazards that hardly a lump was felt. Eventually more confidence brought (slightly!) higher speeds and it was clear that the way to success was to relax — if in doubt, let the bike take over, it being far more competent than the rider! Power was good and easy to control — not in the least peaky. Stalling the motor halfway up a steep climb brought thanks for the in-gear starting capabilities and the realisation that revs do have to be kept up for maximum power, even though the

motor is quite flexible.

Finding a nicely developed 'berm' (deeply rutted turn if you prefer) brought out the latent ambition to be a moto-crosser! Charge into the turn with outstretched leg, lay the bike down and screw in the power as your leg glides over the dusty surface, back wheel drifts being controlled by throttle and body positioning. Felt great with the impression of being a budding De Coster, even if it was only in second gear at 20 mph! The important point was the utter feeling of controllability even after just a few minutes of riding. The lasting impression gleaned from the PE was that of an easy-to-ride, high performance machine which even a novice could appreciate and eventually master. An expert could get on it and win straight away. Me? If I had the practice facilities, time and cash, I could be well and truly hooked on enduro riding in general, and with the PE175 in particular.

Tim's tricks

'GO ON' said Andy, 'if you've ridden an XT on the trail you can cope with this'. I was by no means so sure, especially after watching the others (although Editor Richardson had been encouragingly timid) but I persuaded myself that I would not do a lot worse, hopped aboard and gingerly buzzed off.

Once abject fear had ceased gripping my bowels, I began to enjoy myself immensely. The PE was so much easier to control than my XT that my 'lap' times quickly improved. By the end of my first session I was gaining confidence rapidly and came in rather reluctantly. The two old men who had ridden it before me came back puffing and panting, but the only part of my anatomy which felt exercised was my legs.

By the time my second go came up, Pete had fallen off a couple of

times — once rather spectacularly. We would have rushed over and helped him, but it's not often that you get a chance to leave your editor at the bottom of a small cliff with a PE175 perched precariously over him. I am told that he is quite used to such situations, however, as he regularly indulges in what he calls 'trials riding'. Being a mere editorial assistant myself, I felt that not much dignity was at stake and consequently began to experiment with lifting the front wheel, shooting the berm, donking dirt, etc. etc. (well you know how these off-road chappies go on). I would have continued all day, only the toppers of the team began to crave alcohol and, closing time being near, I felt it would be cruel of me to keep them waiting — and besides, they might have gone without me. In my somewhat uncontrolled, but exhilarating final rush down the hill, I noticed that a large boulder had contrived to place itself between me and my destination. To be honest, I was a trifle — mm — worried, but putting my faith in the bike I kept it on and what I wanted it to, or perhaps it was a case of me doing what the bike me doing what doing what the bike wanted to. In any case, we missed it and arrived at home base out of breath, but in one piece. That fairly sums up the bike/rider relationship. I felt that the Suzuki would do all I asked of it without punishing me because I was a learner.

I managed another ride in the afternoon and came away with the impression that a day's undisturbed practice would impart a great deal of confidence and improvement in off-road technique. I think it will have a very broad sales appeal as, apart from its very reasonable price, it is such an eminently usable bike for either the expert, someone who has graduated from a trail bike, or even a complete beginner.

Andy F. showing off.
Please do not applaud.

