

## Competition Test

# Suzi's PE In Action!

To conclude our assessment of the new Suzuki "Pure Enduro" KEL WEARNE rode the bike at the Blue Light Enduro, staged by the Police Motor Sports Club at Noojee in the mountains 120km east of Melbourne. In wet, greasy conditions interspersed with fast, open forest tracks Kel ran the 250 to second outright and second in class. The bike which won outright was another PE250! The TWO WHEELS test machine ran stock standard jetting but was fitted with brush cables, Bridgestone tyres front and rear and Magura control levers in place of the brittle standard units. In effect — an out-of-the-crate winner!



We think a lot of fast riders will like the PE250 — and we think a lot of average riders will rave about it!

THE THREE JAPANESE manufacturers really into volume sales of dirt bikes (Honda, Yamaha and Suzuki) rarely let any of the others get too far ahead in the numbers game. Neither of these companies like to miss out, even if overall killings are not likely to be great; better to be seen to be in it than not at all, sort of thing.

Such ideologies kept the three at it in the race for the Great Dirty Dollar (messy mud that is) from street/trail, through agricultural, mini-MXers, MXers, even the trials scene until there was little left to tackle.

That left the enduro/ISDT-type of machinery. Forgotten — or almost. Someone once said it would be the last stronghold for the Europeans as the Japanese had decided the sales were too small, the requirements for building a long-lasting winning machine were too tough, and the encumbrances of making the machines street registrable impractical.

But times change, and after Honda bounced out the MR250 and 175s as purest enduro models and the Yamaha big seller, the TT400 came in (and out) of the showrooms (with a 175 due here shortly), it was natural that Suzuki, the dominant dirt bike MX manufacturer, with world titles on every wall (pasting the Yamaha cantilevers around in the attempt), just had to up and join the boys. Suzuki has done that by providing the PE250 enduro, its version of what an all-round serious trail bike, two-day reliability trials machine and enduro racer should be like.

The PE is based on the technology of the MX-winning machines, with just enough serious enduro riders' work to create a very specialised all round bush racer. The blend of RM250A and the RM250B series is the dominant feature but the steering and the overall final design shows careful attention to just what makes a bush basher go the distance at a hard pace.

Some company test claims are normally hard to swallow. But not with the PE. The British ISDT boys entered three of the new 250s in the ISDT at Austria last year and returned perfect results.

The three bikes took three gold medals in the 250 class, the first time a Japanese manufacturer has taken gold





*The wrong and right way . . . but you learn from mistakes.*

*The narrow creek was deeper than expected — but waterproofing is fine.*



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on a first attempt. Reports on the PE's performance in the Austrian Six-Day event ranged from "A damned fine bike" to "A tough act to follow at the price". Overall feeling among the riders and spectators was that the Suzukis were impressive pieces of machinery — obviously the model has a few things going for it!

Like the MR Honda and the IT Yam, the PE250 is a "you get it registered yourself caper". It may present hassles in some places but it will be done as the bike represents what hundreds of riders want. It is hardcore. It must be. The rugged world of enduros doesn't allow any pushing back to the pits for instant re-builds between legs. The only pushing will be just to get nearer home while the sun sets and the rider is 50 km out in the scrub. No way it isn't serious stuff!

And the PE is about as serious as one would want. The bike has the chrome-moly frame from the RM series; but the rear unit mounting point on the swinging arm is closer to the pivot point, and offset to lower the end of each unit. The gas Kayaba units are 25 mm shorter than the ones on the RM series. The two separate springs are different, softer rated than the RM springs. Rear wheel-movement is nearly 30 mm less than the RM.

The front forks are also different, with rubber gaiters for cleanliness. But the forks too have 25 mm less travel

than the RMs. Which means the overall height of the PE is less; everything is slightly lower. Yet overall travel for the front and rear wheels is still more than considerable. All this means the rider of the PE will feel the bike is lighter and more manoeuvrable than the RM, although it weighs in at a healthy 110 kg (243 lb) dry — right in the middle of the top enduro bikes. But the impression of weight is just not there.

The overall appearance also *looks* light. The PE is clean, angular and yet functional without appearing gross. Close up and when seated it's hard to realise the wheelbase, at 1440 mm (56.5 in) is the same as the XT500 thumper, Honda 250, the MR250 Honda, and far more than the big IT400 Yamaha and the Can-Am 250 TNT! Like the RM the PE has the very flat triple clamps which tie the forks in against the steering head. Maico first did this but others have found the steering answer is here. The forks have leading axles to offset them being brought back closer to the bike.

The PE gets further changes from the RM in the brakes. Rear drum/hub is the same, which means riders must watch the rear sprocket studs very carefully. They come loose! The cable-operated rear brake has a wing-nut adjuster like normal bikes, unlike the RM 250 which is a bitch to adjust. The front on the PE gets a completely new hub, almost twice the diameter of the RM's, which



*The RM frame remains. Improved airbox allows reasonable service access, but care must be taken to seal the element when replacing it against the inlet manifold. Airbox gets top which is held in place by the seat.*

*PE design is good, with lots of things tucked in out of the way. Rear brake should be fully floating, but note rod mounted to swing arm. Rubber boot on kickstart lever is nice.*



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includes the speedo/odometer drive.

The brake is effective, provides good feedback and dries quickly after water. It does not fade after road use and will be a boon to the hardchargers in the desert.

The engine of the new Enduro has the RM250B design. The long stroke. Compression is less on the PE at 7:1 compared with 7.8 in the MXer. This means more torque at less revs. The Suzuki puts out around 21 kW (28 hp) against the reputed 26 kW (35 hp) of the RM. The PE still has the case reed induction system, and the four transfer ports. The flywheel is heavier, although not by much. But the bike does have a great amount of mid-range power without losing much at the top end of the scale.

The PE is definitely not a plodder at the bottom end but is excellent about mid field up. Even with the low 29:1 overall first gear the rider must watch the clutch and be ready to get to it while riding rocks and hard, tight treed sections, as the bike has a tendency to suddenly just stop!

But essentially the PE250 combines a tough frame and well-balanced engine, complete with the reliability one

*Swing arm is curved where Kayaba gas units mount. There's a chain tensioner in place of the guide but it's not strong enough. Two holes in swing arm will accept accessory heavy duty tensioner and guide. Tyres are IRC (Inoue Rubber Company). Normal tyres are Bridgestones which are good value.*



expects from Suzuki. It also has a compromise suspension system that works very well. It lacks the extra long travel of the current MXers but the front forks soak up everything pretty well. The only jarring note seems to be deep angle narrow gullies in undulating trails, which whip the rider's wrists.

The rear units can be bottomed. The springs are too soft for hard charging over dry, rocky trails. With two separate springs it would be a simple matter to change the softer ones for a heavier initial rate. Again it comes back to rider preference. By our rating the rear is a fraction too soft for the enduro sections in NSW and Victoria.

The fittings on the new Suzuki are right in with weight-watchers! Plastic as

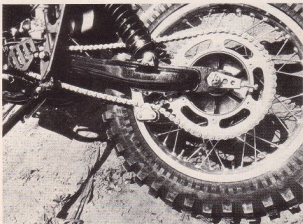
*PE250 gets number plate, speedo (in MPH) which stopped working on one test machine in 3 km, small switches which need coolant for muddy enduro work and fully breakable levers. Throttle action is quick and soft.*

much as possible. The unusual exception is the immaculate fuel tank which is alloy. Replacement will, like the RM tanks, cost well over \$100. Some smart riders will opt for a plastic accessory item and save the easily-dented alloy tank until it comes around to resale time. The 12 litres will get a rider between 105 and 135 km depending on conditions.

Front and rear guards are plastic, and it's here the stylists must have over ruled the designers. The front guard needs to be longer and more deeply flared. The rear? Well, straight MX. Hardly easy to get registered and useless on the trails. The large 4.50 tyre will rapidly smear the rider's back and seat with water and mud. A deeper arched, long-sided rear guard would do some good. No one likes sliding all over a greased seat while trying to ride steep hills rapidly.

But the Suzuki looks functional and mostly lives up to the looks. The right side kickstarter lever even gets a small rubber boot to protect the hinge section. Nice touch. The PE starts in two kicks every time. The Mikuni has a small choke lever on the right hand side for the cold starts. Slightly rich as new we left things as they came. The two bikes ridden never loaded up and would really get it together at the top end of the rev range.

Just filling the tank was easier than normal due to the large opening and screw-on plastic cap. Easier refuelling at checkpoints means less time stationary — important when you are doing it all in your own time. The throttle action is



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light, something rare on a production bike. The grips are okay and the black bars not too wide at 813 mm (32 in).

The riding position is good, purely for the fact a variety of different size riders all found the bike comfortable and could ride hard for longish periods. The bike also likes the sit-in and down approach. The rear brake is chattery and hard to use on rough downhill. A fully-floating backing plate brake would help considerably.

The front brake is excellent and the steering lock to lock fine for tight stuff. The weight balance allows for very fast turns and through tight woods the PE is hard to pass! We thought the ground clearance was not enough (although good enough to cope with the great majority of situations), and footpeg height is also lower than the RM's and thus easier to catch on things. This was one thing that occurred a number of times.

The PE is a natural slider. But as the bike can turn so well the real fasties will stick to squaring the turn and driving out. Doesn't look as good but it keeps the rider moving. The front is light enough to lift even while pegged out in fifth, and the MX feel is nice for the rough special test sections, although the front hunts in greasy going and loses accuracy. Which brings us to the tyres — the greatest rubbish we have ridden on for years! Even just testing the bike on

the road in front of home the rear snaked and slid around like wet clay! Not good enough!

The sidestand is held up by an under-frame spring. It needs careful wiring to remain on. Both bikes lost the springs after contact with a rock or tree stump. And in scrub country the lack of lever wires between gearlever and frame and brake lever and frame became annoying. There are small brackets there so you can fit them but they are not provided.

The bush plate is good but gathers lots of mud. The footpegs remain mud-free. The chain doesn't as there is no chain guard. Not many enduro bikes have them but after riding with a couple that had them fitted we're convinced it's the way to go. There's a chain tensioner near the rear sprocket, but no major guide like on the RM. Because there's no guide the strength and durability of the tensioner is a must with the long travel suspension. As it was one PE lost its chain twice in the wet slopes.

That almost takes care of the minor blemishes. The last is the lack of provision for a tool kit. A kit comes with the bike. A poor one at that. All nuts are Phillips heads. So do you get a nice strong T-piece screwdriver? No, just the same crummy plastic handle slip in thing-amejig! Weak. Not enduro-oriented. No place to put any of it

either. A bag or case would be nice.

Yet in other aspects the bike is a ripper. The rear wheel adjustment does not use snail cams but it does use two separate large nuts which do not disturb the brake and axle. Like that a lot. Access to the aircleaner is quick, the same to the carb, and chain, which gets a protector to ensure a broken chain does not penetrate the case. The wheels are the shoulderless alloy rims. They seem strong. Rim locks rather than self tappers. It's a personal choice really.

Like many Japanese makes the attention to things like cable guides, wiring and the fittings is excellent. In the final result Suzuki has entered a fast, racy and lithe enduro bike into a competitive market. The bike feels and acts far lighter than its already competitive low weight is. It stops, turns among the best and is capable of being ridden at diabolical speeds in the bush — provided one dumps the standard tyres! The engine appears strong and reliable, the frame, the suspension and the running gear, the same.

Security of mind is important. The Suzuki PE250 offers that. It also offers one hell of a starting point for serious riders. It has good bottom end, superb mid-range and goes hard at the top.

And as the 250 will undoubtedly be a huge success there only remains the 370... Gasp!



Top: Toolkit is poor. PE is nearly all Phillips heads... and there's only plastic slip-in driver which is hopeless. There is no place for toolkit on the bike. Right: New "Super" hub and brake, a great idea and works well in all conditions. Forks offer less travel than RM and are slightly too soft.

