

## MINITEST:

# Suzuki RS175 & RS250

*Listen up, all you  
playbikers; it's time to  
get serious.*

• Suzuki's RS175 and RS250 could hardly miss their target; it's sure big enough. The bikes are intended to satisfy the needs of the vast majority of dirt riders, thousands of semi-serious trail folk who want more than a neophyte's trail bike but nothing quite as radical as a mile-high motocrosser.

This market is still wide-open, too, because no other manufacturer makes a machine that fits the serious playbike mold so well. Enduro bikes probably come the closest, but these days most are too high-strung and high-priced to serve as playbikes. So, up until now, backyard mechanics in search of the right mix of level-eyed funbike performance had to adapt one of the dirt-riding extremes: either port a trail bike or detune a motocrosser. Either way is an expensive means to a playbike end.

Not surprisingly, Suzuki began with its ever-popular enduro models in its search for the perfect playbike. And also no great shock, Suzuki was able to come closer to that goal than most backyard mechanics. Better still, the conversion from serious enduro bike to serious funbike was both simple and effective. And that's no polite way of reporting that Suzuki simply raided the parts bin from its other models to produce a quick-and-dirty new bike. While it's true that both the RS175 and 250 share plenty of parts with other off-road Suzukis, a careful selection of pieces insures that both bikes work as coordinated wholes rather than as collections of unrelated bits.

The motors, for instance, are essentially PE-based in both cases. The 175 comes with a virtually unaltered 1979 PE bottom end. All that is added is a little extra flywheel weight to help smooth out any sudden throttle response. And because the RS isn't a racer, the porting need not be racer-radical, either. The exhaust port is simply lowered by 1.5mm, which, combined with a 30mm carb in place of the PE's 34mm mixer, takes much of the sting out of the woods racer.

For the great majority of playbikers, such toned-down throttle response is just what's needed. Out on the open trails with no check-point to reach and no checkered flag to chase, the 175 provides power that is easy to handle and even easier to like. It is neither a tractor at low rpm nor a racer at the top end, and yet, for

the type of riding the RS will be used for, it is more satisfying than either. In between those two extremes is a willing response that will haul you up most of the trails you'll find.

While the 175 will get you up most anything in your path, it occasionally will need a little too much clutch slip to be really fun. Then it's time to break out the 250. It, too, uses a 1979 PE as a starting point, with a 3mm lower exhaust port and a longer and more restrictive muffler.

On rocky climbs, when effort is high but speeds are low, the 250 chugs along almost like a trials bike. It won't snap instantly through the powerband from that speed, but it always keeps pulling. All it takes is a quick fan of the clutch in any of the six gears and things start happening. Nothing earth-shattering, mind you, but more than enough to keep the dirt-biking masses moving briskly.

Once up to speed on either bike, there is no reason to fear that a cheap trail-bike frame will transform all that speed into a quick trip through the weeds. The RS175 was heir to one of the most successful racing frames in history: the RM125's. The same geometry that made motor wins monotonous now makes trail riding

relaxing. Only the motor mounts have been changed to bring the slightly heavier left side of the motor nearer to the center line. Otherwise, the 29.5-degree head angle and 4.9 inches of trail are almost RM-spec. And that means stability on fast trails and fire roads with steering that's quick enough to make the tight woods fun, too.

The same is also true of the RS250's frame, which is largely a 1979 PE chassis. This machine also retains the light and responsive steering of a PE, but shorter suspension allows for a lower seat height than PE owners ever dreamed of.

The RS250's shorter suspension comes about through a set of non-adjustable shocks mounted slightly farther back than on the PE. To match the shorter suspension at the rear, the RS250 also has a fork with less travel than a PE's. The stanchion tube diameter is 2mm less than a PE's at 36mm, but the wall thickness of the tubing is also 1mm greater.

That is also the case with the 175, which has non-adjustable shocks bolted to a steel RM100 swingarm. But although both bikes are suspended similarly, you instantly notice a difference on the trail. Neither is motocross hard,





### Suzuki RS175

**IMPORTER:** U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.  
13767 Freeway Drive  
Santa Fe Springs, California 90670

Category	trial
Suggested retail price	\$1199
Engine type	two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one piston-controlled intake, six one reed-valve-controlled intake, six transfers, one exhaust
Bore and stroke	62.0mm x 57.0mm
Displacement	172.1cc
Carburetor	one 30mm Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	36mm stanchion tube diameter 48.3 in. (210mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	10.0 in. (254mm)
Wheelbase	\$5.9 to \$7.1 in. (1420 to 1450mm)
Seat height	35.4 in. (900mm)
Weight	219 lbs. (99kg)
Warranty	60 days
Available colors	yellow



### Suzuki RS250

**IMPORTER:** U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.  
13767 Freeway Drive  
Santa Fe Springs, California 90670

Category	trial
Suggested retail price	\$1499
Engine type	two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one piston-controlled intake, six one reed-valve-controlled intake, six transfers, one exhaust
Bore and stroke	67.0mm x 70.0mm
Displacement	249.5cc
Carburetor	one 38mm Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	36mm stanchion tube diameter 48.3 in. (248mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	9.6 in. (243mm)
Wheelbase	\$5.9 to \$7.1 in. (1420 to 1450mm)
Seat height	36.3 in. (921mm)
Weight	238 lbs. (108kg)
Warranty	60 days
Available colors	yellow

and it is possible to bottom out both machines. The 175 is, however, much softer, and heavier riders might need an optional spring. In most cases, though, the RS suspensions will be adequate to trail-riding tasks.

Even the bare essential accessories on both RSs are all that most serious trail riders will need. The basic lighting from a DS model will get you back to camp after a day's ride—but nothing more. And the resettable tripmeter lets you know when to head back unless, like ours, it self-destructs. Our test 250 also broke its primary case, but this time a rock inflicted the destruction. The case might have been complete if Suzuki had taken a lesson from the development of the RS series and tarried at the parts bins a little longer, though. A PE sump shield would have been welcome, as would a larger PE tank—or indeed any tank with a reserve position on the petcock.

But those are essentially fixable problems on what are two very good motorcycles. With the RS series, Suzuki recognized that some dirt riders who will never touch knobby to race-track still need performance bikes—with performance tailored to their particular needs. Suzuki not only recognized the need, it gave those grimly determined playbikers something to smile about.

—David Dewhurst