



The GP100U may be the economy version of Suzuki's disc-valve screamer, but as Julian Ryder discovered, it's still a very desirable little motorcycle

IT'S not often that I can actually say that I enjoyed riding a 100cc machine. After all, a lot of bikes in the class are unashamed commuter machines, but in the Suzuki GP100U we have a real motorcycle. What's more, if you are just graduating from a moped and haven't got enough cash available for things like insurance, then a hundred is a good idea. Check out the enormous leap insurance premiums take as soon as a punter mentions the figure 125.

So, you're convinced a sub-125 machine is all the piggy bank can finance, but still want more performance than a step-through and the looks of a bike and not a glorified scooter. The GP100U delivers on both counts while making things as economical as possible.

Costs are kept down by the use of painted mudguards — not chromed items — and a drum brake up front instead of the disc that adorns the GP100N. The N also has a tachometer and striping on the seat hump to set it apart from its humbler relative. That's a saving of £54 on purchase price for a start.

One thing that is definitely not built down to a price is the little Suzuki's performance. It's good for the legal limit on the straight or downhill, and acceleration is quite good enough to keep ahead of traffic in and around town.

Despite the cost-cutting exercise to differentiate the U from the allegedly sportier N, the U has mirrors, indicators and a full complement of warning lights to keep inferiority complexes at bay. It also looks very pretty. It's available in blue as well as the red our bike came in.

Handling is just what you expect: quick to the point that it feels like you're on a knife-edge at times. Not surprising really, when you consider the dimensions of the bike and the small contact patch of those tyres on the road. I have to admit that I took a while to get used to riding a bike of this size again. It's a few years since I regularly rode a little two-stroke, so I had to learn to keep the thing up in its power band all over again. The clutch takes some stick to get the thing away from standstill until the exactly square (50 x 50mm)

disc-valve motor hits the power band at around 5000rpm. From then on it's just a case of gassing it until the motor sounds and feels like it's about to fly apart, before grabbing the next cog. There's no sensation of the motor choking itself at a certain speed; it just doesn't want any more.

As long as you can keep it on the boil, rapid progress is no problem. Naturally the handling is edgy, but I never persuaded it to frighten me, although I'm glad that I had the thing for a dry couple of weeks last year.

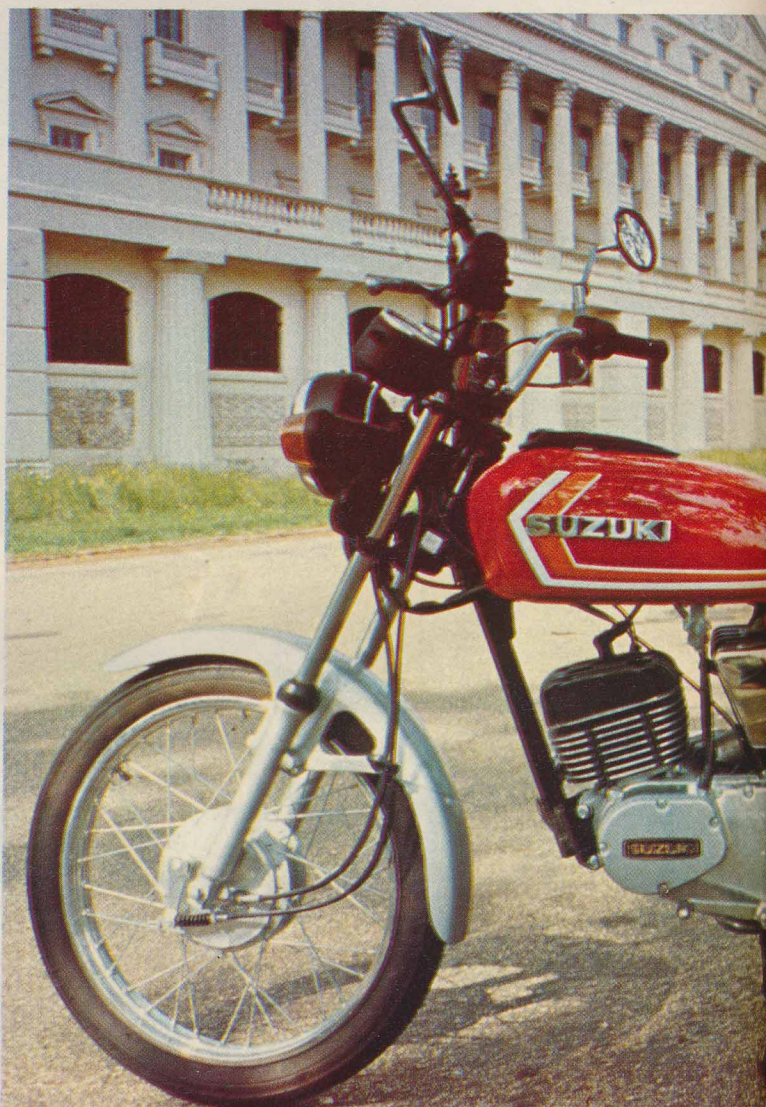
The drum front brake is the only suspect component on the bike. It's nowhere near as effective as the disc on the N model, although it has been suggested that this brake is too fierce for the bike. The U's drum needs a good, strong squeeze to produce

anything like rapid deceleration. Try that a few times and it's prone to fade.

If the engine is kept revving hard through bends you'd better be prepared for an interesting ride over any bumps. The whole bike will leap about like a frenetic flea. Nothing to worry about, though. In fact, it's rather a lot of fun. Much of this behaviour is explained when you look at the swinging arm. It's an amazing 17.5in (445mm) long, or 37 per cent of the machine's wheelbase. Exactly the same as on a Honda 400-4. Combine that with the soft springing and things get interesting from time to time.

If you rode some of the early big Japanese bikes you'll be familiar with that feeling of a bike being 'hinged in the middle'. That is, at times it felt like

THE HOT



front and rear wheels were not in the same plane. Well, on the GP100 the length of the swinging arm gives the rider the impression that the hinge is somewhere around the cylinder head, allowing the wheels to try and touch tyres under the motor when rebounding from a bump.

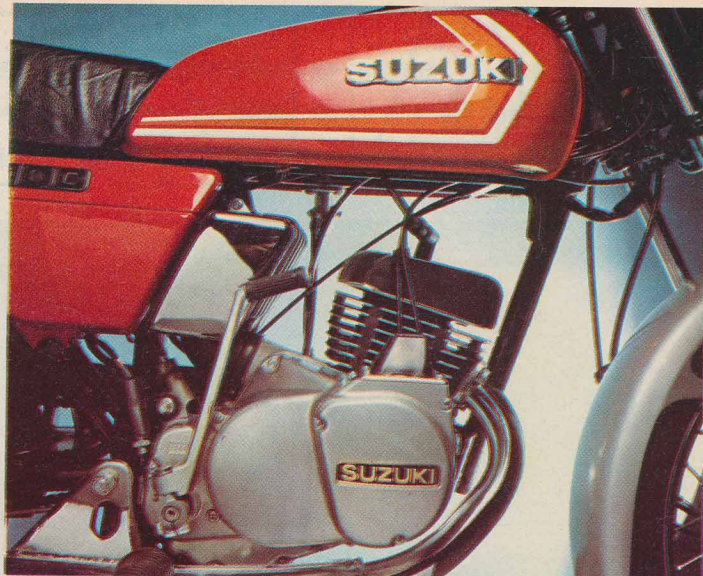
This behaviour only becomes apparent when the motor is being used to the full. In most other circumstances the frame is quite capable of dealing with everything, despite distinctly soft suspension.

The only time things looked like getting out of hand was on a particularly silly little journey down to Wimbledon speedway. We went two-up, which amounted to the poor little Suzuki having to deal with a payload of well over 350lb (158kg). Turning onto main

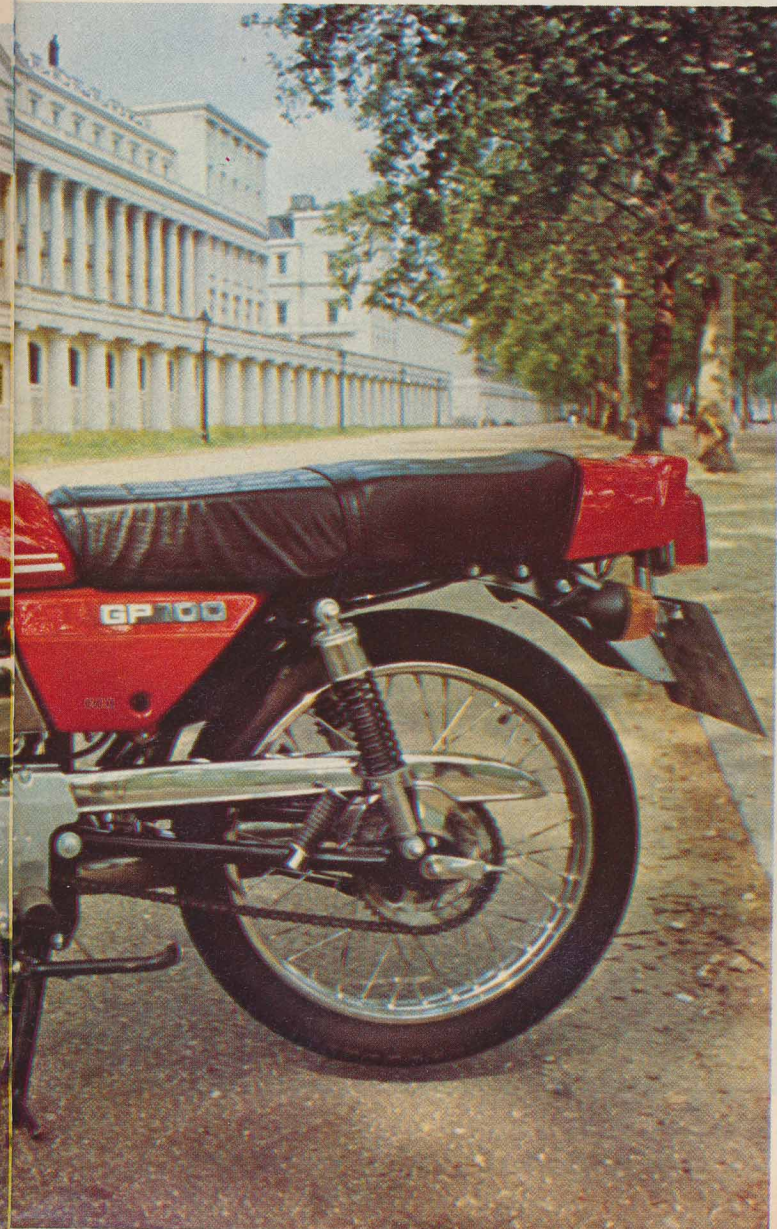
roads from junctions and traffic lights really did upset the chassis and it would go from lock to lock when pulling away. Entertaining stuff.

Surprisingly, the seat was quite adequate for two people, which adds to the GP's appeal as a 'real' bike. Fuel consumption hovered around the 70mpg mark, which is not startling when compared with similar bikes, and especially equivalent four-strokes, but perfectly acceptable. You have to pay some price for the zippy performance.

If the insurance companies have got it in for you, or it's a commuter machine you're after, the GP100U is a good deal and good fun. It's a real alternative to most of the 125s on the market and you sure won't grow out of it in a hurry.



HUNDRED



READOUT

Performance	
Maximum speed	71.08mph
Standing ¼ mile	18.2 sec/64.83mph
Fuel consumption	
Overall	70mpg
Best	74mpg
Worst	65mpg
Average full tank range	150 miles
Speedometer accuracy	
At indicated 30mph	27.28mph
At indicated 60mph	57.13mph
Braking distance	
From 30mph	34ft (10.4m)
From 60mph	129ft (40m)
Engine	
Type	Single cylinder, disc valve two stroke
Capacity	98cc
Bore x stroke	50 x 50mm
Compression ratio	6.9:1
Carburation	22mm Mikuni
Claimed bhp at rpm	12 at 8500
Claimed torque at rpm	7.8ft-lb (1 kgm) at 8000
Transmission	Gear primary drive, wet multiplate clutch, 5-speed gearbox, chain final drive
Electrical system	Flywheel magneto, cb points, 6V, 4Ah battery
Cycle parts	
Frame	Single downtube with engine as stressed member
Suspension	Telescopic front fork, pivoted rear fork with 5-way adjustable damping
Wheels	Wire spoked, chromed steel rims
Tyres	2.50 x 18in Inoue front 2.75 x 18in Inoue rear
Brakes	6½in drum (155mm) drum front 5in (130mm) drum rear
Dimensions	
Wheelbase	47½in (1210mm)
Seat height	30in (762mm)
Overall width	34in (860mm)
Ground clearance	6¼in (159mm)
Weight with 1gal fuel	198lb (90kg)
Fuel capacity	2.2 gallons (9.8 litres)
PRICE	£385
Warranty	12 months or 10,000 miles
Supplied by	Heron Suzuki GB Ltd, Beddington Lane, Croydon, Surrey.