

# australasian **DIRT BIKE**

JULY/AUGUST, 1981 \$2.00\*

(\$2.50 N.Z.)



## **SUZUKI'S THUMPERS**

**DR400 and DR500**

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## **MUSCLE POWER**

**PE400X vs IT465H**

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## **MOTOCROSS WARS**

**Honda's CR250RB and Yamaha's YZ250H**

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## **ADB TALKS TO THE MAN IN THE DIRT**

**Feedback on Ten Bikes**

JULY/AUGUST 1981  
VOL. 5 NO. 6

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EDITOR: Geoff Eldridge  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Ray Ryan, Chris Blethyn, Dave Ewins, Geoff Udy, Murray Watt, Terry Dodd, Ian Palmer M.I.A.M.E.  
PHOTOGRAPHY: Peter Fischmann, Terry Dodd, Geoff Eldridge, Alan Tomlinson  
ARTWORK: Iain Wilson and Geoff Eldridge  
Advertising: Alan Tomlinson (NSW, 699 7861), Walter Keating (Melbourne, 699 2851)



COVER: Geoff Udy idles the DR Suzuki along on the back wheel in an attempt to persuade the world into turning four-stroke. Photography by the everpresent lens of Peter Fischmann, who operates largely on Flex-itime.

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# RUMPINGSTILTSKIN SUZUKI'S DR400/500

BY GEOFF UDY

**T**he world of four-stroke dirt bikes is at present a new frontier, motorcycling wise. It really is sad how many years of suppression and ancient technology the four-stroke fan has had to endure from the Japanese factories. Years of humiliation at the hands of his noisier, smokier, vastly lighter and faster two-stroke counterparts.

How many times have you been boogying along, enjoying your thumper, convincing yourself that the power and handling aren't all that bad when your pleasant world of valves, rockers, cams and perceptible combustions has been shattered by some kid wheelying past on his screaming, belching two-stroke, often unmuffled, and your "I'll show him this time" effort has concluded in your over-weight, under-suspended thumper coming to rest against a tree, well off your intended course, your only consolation being coming across the same kid much later pushing his bike, hell-bent on getting his next batch of premix?

Well, thumper fans, rejoice! Your day of liberation is close at hand! 1980 saw the introduction of (gosh!) some **technology** into Japanese four-strokes with the introduction of the Honda XR series (performer), Kawasaki KLX (handler) Yamaha TT250 (suspended), and last but not least, Suzuki's DR series.

Earlier this year I managed to get my backside onto a rare (two in Q'land) DR400T (i.e., American model) for evaluation and I have been very reluctant to get back off it in the months since. This bike handles, has suspension and a good power delivery and has been a real pain in the arse to many two-stroke riders.

It's intended usage is still play-bike. But somehow, someone at the factory dropped a classic no-no of the past and designed competition geometry into the frame, got the forks out of the PE bin, ran out of short shocks and had to use something longer, devised a small intake bridge and good carburetion and if all this wasn't enough, he had the absence of mind to completely by-pass the excess plumbing and ironmongery dept and fitted a simple lightweight and efficient exhaust system.

Pity help this brave Oriental, probably already labouring in the paddy fields, for he has jumped several years of new stickers and cosmetics for the new model releases dept, now being retrenched.

Now this DR is not bristling with the latest technology like the RM brothers, but it sure as hell works and pours heaps of fun back into motorcycling that lately has been overshadowed by excesses of travel, power and so on that have created absolutely specialized pieces of machinery. Brilliant as they may be for the specific section of the sport, they are not capable of fulfilling the many whims of variation most of us like and which need a stable of maybe three or four mounts, e.g., PE, RM, SP.

I'm not saying that this bike will stay with an RM motocross or a PE in a full, multi-day, enduro, but with the addition of a pair of De Carbon shock absorbers (same model as PE 400-250) I have motocrossed it and enduroed it with what I consider very good results: e.g., 1st four-stroke and within eight points/seconds of capacity class winner at the Canungra one day enduro.

I believe capacity class wins can be scored, particularly in events with longer cross country special tests, because one of the dominating characteristics of a good four-stroke is its ability to maintain consistently high cross-country speed for a long duration. Put it on a motocross special test against equivalent capacity two-strokes and the frantic ability of the two-stroke to go maximum for a short period will blow you into the proverbial weeds.

But the old hare and turtle theme, without extremes, applies. A good variation of special tests per enduros shouldn't put the four-stroke rider to any real disadvantage. Taken overall, the four-stroke cornering and traction abilities are a good match for the two-stroke braking and accelerating point-to-point features and now, with four-stroke classes in enduros and some motocross meetings, you thumper riders have a much more satisfying competition future ahead.

## THE DR400T WEIGHT

Reduced to 279 lbs dry, compliments of some very trick simple

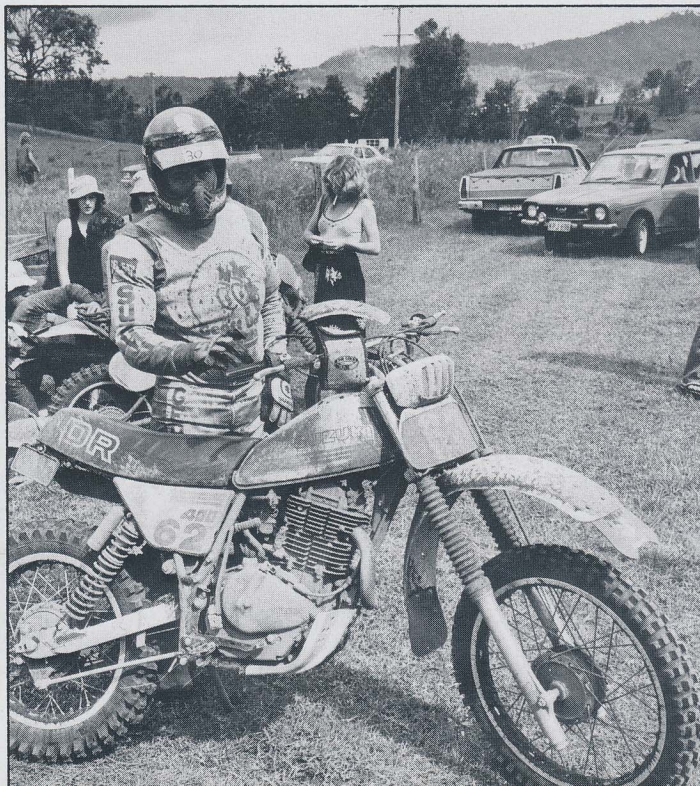
features, e.g., front number, tool kit holder and head light unit, all one piece plastic. Rubber taillight. Plastic seat base, side covers and guards. Box-section swingarm. Lightweight exhaust. Weight distribution (priority) is all low as possible. Wet sump. Main muffler is just above the swing arm pivot. The overall feel is very light and easy to flick from side to side. Wheelies are a breeze in 1st, 2nd and 3rd gears.

## CAPACITY

396cc due to 88 mm bore enlargement from 85 mm on the 370. Stroke remains the same at 62.5 mm so basically you have a similar bore size to XT/XL 500's with a shorter stroke giving completely different motor characteristics. DR tends to relish a wider rev and power range. Not as much bottom and mid range power as the XT, but thanks to a neat little bridge in the intake and good carburetion its power starts at ultra-low revs and doesn't stall; even with a decent handful at these revs I found this to be fabulous in loose, rocky uphill and many other trail situations where too much bottom-end response will result in jumping a bike, of course, or flipping it. The motor is equally happy lugging or revving, which means cow trailing requires absolutely minimal gear changing.

## STARTING

No more four-stroke blues. The DR has a neat valve-lifting compression release that clicks down and releases as the piston passes TDC on the compression stroke, e.g., click in the compressor lever, kick slowly until the lever releases, then bring the kickstarter up for a full kick and BOOM! — one or two kicks cold, one kick hot. Also, this little gem makes that downhill stall hassle-free by simply pulling in the clutch and decompressor and releasing the clutch when sufficient bump start speed is



**This is the older DR400: a great bike in its own right, it is destined for even greater things. Unfortunately, there was no Compliance on this model, so only a few were introduced to Oz.**

## SUZUKI DR400T

reached. The rear wheel won't lock up as the decompressor takes it over TDC then automatically releases to give one free stroke prior to compression.

### GEAR RATIOS

Absolutely perfect for all applications I have used it for to date. Slightly lower than the street model, giving as low a gear as you'll ever need and about 130 km/hr top speed: more than sufficient for all dirt and transport sections.

### COMPETITION FEATURES

Knobbies, alloy bash plate. RM-type chain guide and rollers top and bottom of near swingarm pivot, giving consistent chain tension without spring-loaded tensioners. Heavy duty alloy rims. Heavy duty chain. PE forks, gas/oil shocks, 9.1" and 8.3" travel. 11" ground clearance. PEI electronic ignition.



Great, fabulous!

Now let's ride the beast. First thing you notice is the voluntary wheel stand as you let the clutch out, so watch it or you might just be rearranging your rear gear before you get used to it. But it's a real blast when you're suddenly faced with a bank (up or downhill), a log, rock or bog when warning only allows a quick twist of the throttle. Incidentally, the throttle is a push-pull type which automatically gives you a spare cable, although a slightly quicker action for competition use would be better.

Forks and shocks are fine for its intended usage, but with its competitive geometry I just had to race it. I fitted my De Carbons and brought a Terry fork kit which I never got around to fitting and don't intend to, either, as I have no reservations about the forks as stock. Save yourself the dollars for more petrol and riding! The De Carbons are certainly an investment in riding pleasure and satisfaction, and make the rear end flawless under any conditions.

Cornering is absolutely fabulous. The quickest way through trees and winding trails is a series of turning wheelstands in complete control: decelerate into the corner, turn sharply (no wash-out worries and some fork compression) then roll the throttle on



## FOUR-STROKE FUTURE

As mentioned elsewhere in this feature, I think this bike is just the start of a real revolution in four-stroke technology from Japan.

How about a prediction? How about 240 lb state-of-the-art suspended, 500cc MX models as well as enduros, with specific classes for each by '83? Well, I'd love to see it, anyway. It's not that the four-stroke is or can be more (or less) competitive, it's just that the old story of 'different strokes for different folks' couldn't be more applicable than in our sport, where riders have such specific preferences.

The revolution can't be restricted to the factories, as it must pass on to worldwide rider activity, which is poised and ready. My recent trip to New Zealand revealed something like 70% four-strokes in the unlimited Trail/Enduro class at one of the Christmas motocross meetings at Nelson and they were very popular at the Tahunanui Beach Race, which is now a regular feature of this resort area's Christmas activities. Now this percentage is partially due to economics and the enormous prices the Kiwis are having to pay for their motorcycles, meaning that in many cases the bikes they are racing on Sunday are the same machines that transported them to the meeting and also to and from work through the week.

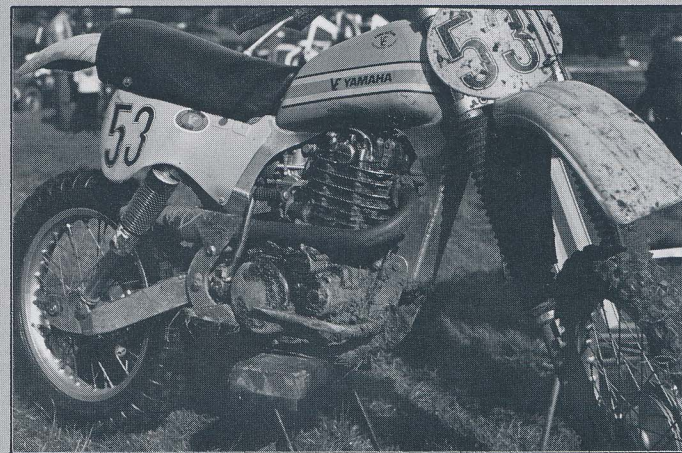
The scene in England was completely different, with four-stroke motocross being a heritage ("Absolutely, my good man, our fair Union Jack was flying at the birth of scrambles, or motocross as we now know it. Heaven forbid any two-stroke in the pack then"). The home of the CCM (production motocrosser) has seen tremendous effort put into this class with a field of 40 machines at one of the major meetings we attended. They mainly concentrated on the CCM with Yamaha and some Honda motors in the most exotic frames you're ever likely to come

across. One example was a 560 Yamaha engined, hand-built Cheney all-alloy frame (even the fuel tank was integrated into the frame) with 12" magnesium Marzocchi forks, Fox Air Shox, a total weight of 245 lb and cost about 2,500 pounds (SA\$5,000).

Don't get me wrong: this is not a campaign against two-strokes. I love two-stroke motocross bikes and my trusty PE400. The point is that they are specialist mounts and can't be replaced in their field, but when I turn to a bike for a lot of fun and relaxation I'm afraid my DR gets the nod. Now, with classes coming into competition for these bikes, I hope the effect will be a lot more people enjoying our fabulous recreation.

Maybe it'll be a case of justifying it to the wife or girl friend by commuting with it, thus saving heaps of money on ever-increasing fuel costs and helping solve some of our city problems and sticking it

**Photographed in England at the Final Round of the Haynes Four-Strokes Series, this immaculate Hagon-framed 580cc Yamaha had a fully worked engine, every second engine fin removed, alloy sheet frame and tank, Fox Shox and Marzocchi forks.**



**New Zealand runs their Tahunanui Beach Race at Christmas, attracting four-strokes from everywhere. This 500 Yamaha leads a field of four-strokes, two-strokes, motocrossers and enduro machines.**

fair up these striking public transport people who delight in coordinating the stoppage of these essential services to extort shorter hours, more pay and overtime! Imagine if they returned to work only to find most commuters had finally had it with their blackmail and were zipping to work on mopeds! Wow! We could even go on night trail rides when the electricity people decide to switch off our home entertainment and comforts.

Do you realise a whole new era of revolution against greed and rising costs and maybe even the answer to most of the world's threats and anxieties could be centred around the humble motorcycle? Picture, if you would, Reagan and Brezhnev engaging in another verbal brag on who could destroy the world faster, with more pain, or even less destruction of material things. They could reach a point of stalemate and just before pushing their ego-tripping, total destruction buttons, up rides our saviour, who suggests with great optimism they engage in mortal trail ride, man to man, till D.N.F. or helpless state of laughter declares the winner.

So be it: they take off, chop each other off into the corners, block pass, bermshot off each other, even roost cow pats, puddles and mud at one another, each incident releasing great chunks of aggression till finally the Harley gets a flat and the Cossack throws its chain ... long silence broken by ... "Hey, man ... if I give you my spare joining link would you give me your spare tube, as our armies don't seem to be at hand?" "Agreed. Did you hit that washout back there?" "Jeeze, no, thanks to your warning ... hey, you're not such a bad sort of bastard after all. Maybe we should send our advisers out for a trail ride!"

again half way through the turn. The rear grabs good traction, the front comes up and simply turns on the rear wheel in line with the next corner, then repeat. It's neat! Sorry if this sounds like a rave, but it's hard to suppress your enthusiasm when you're having so much fun (psst — and impressing your followers!).

The fork geometry has to be about optimum, as at high speed you can detect a slight lightness and wandering of the front end on a road surface. If you've ever looked on in awe at our speedway stars, well, give it a go on the DR! Its sideways manners are above reproach and from high speed short-circuit type to tight sand and mud cornering it just hangs the back out and the front bites like a Moreton Bay mosquito.

The muffling is very effective and a little restrictive. Removing the end muffler will give it more positive bottom-end response, but it's going to be too noisy to use under power in areas where the public can be found. Leave it on: there's plenty of power there, anyway! The whole system is almost concealed as the main muffler/expansion cylinder is just above the swingarm and the only visible part is the header pipe before it disappears into the side cover area.

Brakes are superb, with fully floating rear and excellent mud and water repelling qualities. After the Canungra enduro, which had miles of long, black mud sections and some water, I pulled the wheels off to put my old trail riding



knobbies back on and found no sign of mud or water in front or rear. They never showed any sign of reduced effectiveness throughout the ride (which incidentally was the best one-day course I have had the pleasure to ride. It was sufficiently long with a lot of everything in it: good one, Reliability Trials Club of Brisbane).

Hmmm... had better find some criticisms or my credibility could be in jeopardy.

In the time I've had the DR some get-offs have resulted in some casualties. Firstly, the seat got an L-shaped tear in it: now it may have had good reason to tear, but I think it's about time Japan bred thicker-skinned nauga's. One side cover lug broke, compliments of the quads at Millmerran motocross track. The sidecover is still on and looks like staying that way, but the mudguard type plastic would be

preferable. One high side on a steep hill resulted in bent handlebars; maybe an introduction of Mr Suzuki to Mr Rental would do the trick.

I know the DR wasn't ISDT (or E for '81) bred; however, after being spoiled by the PE rear wheel system for quick release where the brakes, sprocket and chain remain on the swingarm with no readjustment, it's a bit tough to the old 'stick her on the drum' routine and become a three-armed contortionist, getting all those chain adjusters, bushes, axles, etc., lined up for replacement of the rear wheel. I may be physically retarded, but every time I do it I can't help thinking that their bloke must have at least three arms. Could be it's a hint of a master race being created.

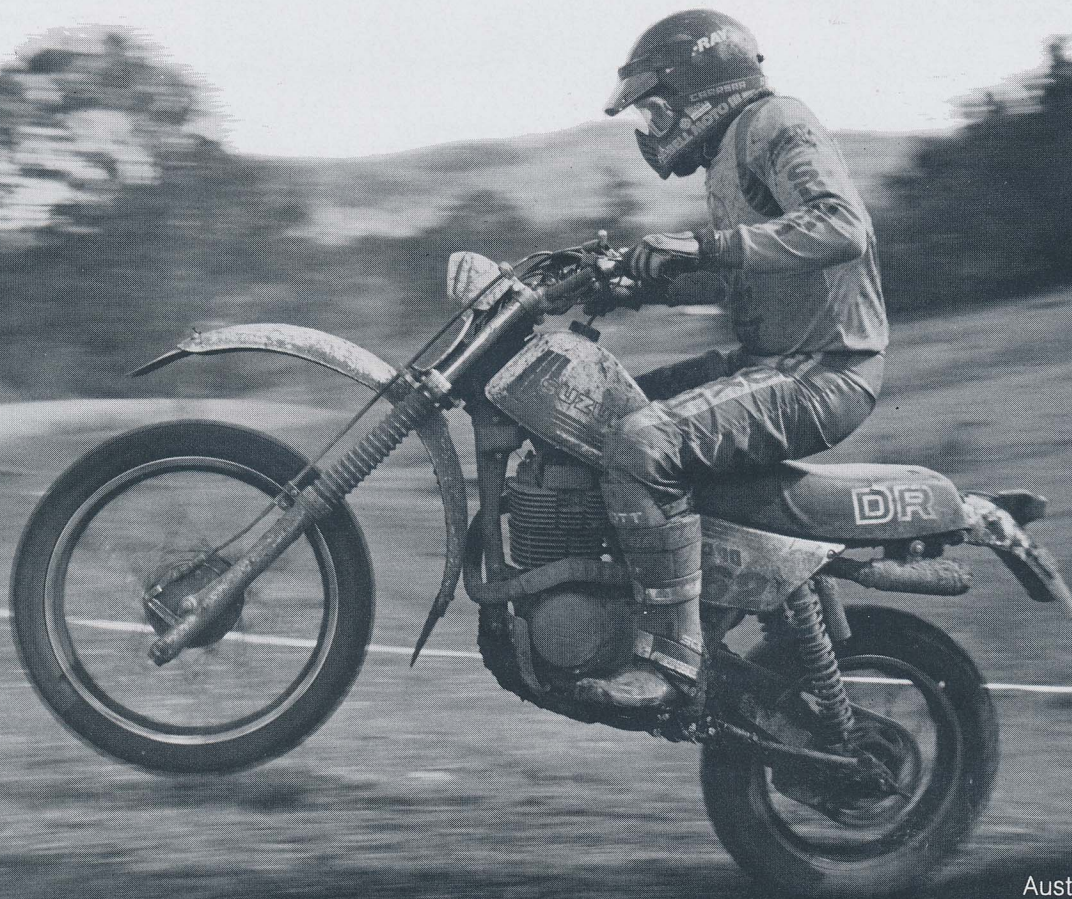
While I'm nit-picking we should introduce Mr Hi-Point of USA to show off his fine range of heavy

duty folding gear and brake levers. The CR250RZ I rode in the View Finders GP was fitted with them, and they were beautiful in the making and operation. Suzuki probably figure that the excellent alloy bashplate does the job of protection for these (which it does, as I haven't beat mine yet), but we dirt bikers can be relied on to come up with one way or another to demolish these little devils. Regardless of that, in this age of skull trickery they are a must if only to psyche out the opposition. Finally, in the absence of a chain guard, I would like to see an 'o' ring chain fitted as standard equipment.

The reason for this evaluation model? Good one, I almost forgot

## ENTER DR500 X and SX — EEEEEH!

This section, unfortunately, can't be seat of the pants orientated as we haven't ridden one yet, hence the DR400T as a fair insight into what this new model will be like. So when this test hits the newsstands and the trampled bodies of our younger, weaker readers are carted away from a mob scene, reminiscent of the effect of XXXX beer hitting the N.S.W. market, the DR500 should be reality. Unless it's only one or two strikes, stop-works or slow-downs away. Where would we be without our unions, aye? Just imagine it: what would we possibly do with competition bikes being here actually before the season starts? Imagine the anti-climax if we, based on the





## SUZUKI DR400T

shipping dates from Japan, held a huge new model release convention and actually had the models there. How mundane! Thus endeth this chapter of social comment; on with the good news.

If you haven't had your head buried in the sand you will have noted a fair domination of Suzuki GSX road bikes in production racing and sales figures of late, particularly since the patented TSCC (Twin Swirl Combustion Chamber) was introduced, giving greatly increased torque and economy. Well, you guessed it: the DR500 is fitted with this feature, along with an all-new motor and gearbox, and many other new features as follows.

### ENGINE:

498cc. Single overhead cam, four valves, TSCC head. Decompressor as per DR400 (thong nongs rejoice). Gear driven dual counterbalancers. PEI electronic ignition, wet sump. Bore 88 mm, Stroke 82 mm, compression 8.7:1. It would appear that piston and ring interchangeability between DR400 and 500 is on, so you cubes freaks have already worked out what you are going to blow her out to, I imagine. Carburettor: Mikuni 35 mm as against 33 mm on DR400.

Suspension: All new for the DR500 is the aluminium box-section swingarm with full RM type chain guide and rollers for constant chain tension. Remote reservoir shocks, 8.5" travel. PE forks with 9.1" travel giving 11.4" ground clearance. Wheelbase and length are increased to 57.5" and 86.4". Height and ground clearance approx 0.6" increase.

Speculation Time: Obviously, the TSCC 498cc motor is going to transform the easy-going DR400 into a real howler, if the four valve, twin swirl feature on the road bikes is any indication. So what are we faced with now? An already excellent handler, with a powerplant enlarged from 396 to 498cc; lengthened from 84.1" to 86.4"; increased ground clearance and minimal weight increase (269-283 lbs); hooked up to remote reservoir shocks; alloy swingarm and reworked forks that already worked well.

I'd have to be conservative or have had too many get offs not to be excited about the DR500's potential.



## SUZUKI DR400/DR500

Test bike: Geoff Udy Suzuki,  
307 Ruthven Street,  
Toowoomba, Qld. 4350.  
Phone: (076) 32 5579

### DR400

### DR500

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine.....	Single cylinder, air-cooled.....	SOHC four-stroke.....
Bore x stroke.....	88 x 65.2mm.....	88 x 82mm.....
Compression ratio.....	9.2:1.....	8.7:1.....
Displacement.....	396cc.....	498cc.....
Lubrication.....	Wet sump.....	Wet sump.....
Carburettor.....	Mikuni 33mm.....	Mikuni 35mm.....
Air filtration.....	Oiled foam.....	Oiled foam.....
Electrical.....	CDI.....	CDI.....

#### TRANSMISSION

Clutch.....	Wet, multi-plate.....	Wet, multi-plate.....
Primary drive.....	Gear.....	Gear.....
Secondary drive.....	520 chain.....	520 chain.....
Gear ratios:		
1st.....	2.069.....	.....
2nd.....	1.496.....	.....
3rd.....	1.148.....	.....
4th.....	0.933.....	.....
5th.....	0.726.....	.....
Transmission shifting.....	1-N-2-3-4-5.....	1-N-2-3-4-5.....
Starting.....	Primary kick.....	Primary kick.....

#### FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Frame.....	Steel tubing semi-double.....	.....
	cradle.....	.....
Suspension:		
Front.....	38mm dia oil-damped forks,.....	38mm dia oil-damped forks,.....
	9.1" travel.....	9.1" travel.....
Rear.....	Gas/oil shocks, 5 load.....	Gas/oil shocks, 5 load.....
	settings, 8.3" travel.....	settings, 8.5" travel.....
Rims and tyres.....	Alloy rims, IRC knobby tyres,.....	Alloy rims, IRC knobby tyres,.....
	21" front, 18" rear.....	21" front, 18" rear.....
Brakes.....	Single leading shoe, cable.....	Single leading shoe, cable.....
	operated front and rear.....	operated front and rear.....
Footpegs.....	Folding spring loaded steel.....	Folding spring loaded steel.....
Silencing.....	Superb.....	Equally as superb.....
Lighting.....	Headlight, high/low beam,.....	Headlight, high/low beam,.....
	taillight, brake light.....	taillight, brake light.....
Controls.....	Average, no folding lever tips.....	Same.....
	or dogleg levers.....	.....
Toolkit.....	Under headlight.....	Same.....
Mudguards.....	White unbreakable plastic.....	Same.....

#### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase.....	57.3" (1,450mm).....	57.5" (1,560mm).....
Handlebar width.....	32.5" (825mm).....	34.1" (865mm).....
Seat height.....	35.2" (1,400mm).....	Same.....
Ground clearance.....	10.6" (252mm).....	Same.....
Fuel capacity.....	9 litres.....	9 litres.....
Weight (dry).....	279lbs.....	283lbs.....

## QUEENSLAND 6 ONE-DAY ENDURO SERIES — FOUR-STROKE CLASS



1981 has seen the introduction of this very welcome class into its increasingly popular 6 One Day Series. I think it originated with a discussion with Dave Lucas at Annand and Thompson when it was suggested that a four-stroke class might inject some new blood (not that it's been suffering from loss of blood) into this already established series, and to save time getting sponsors Geoff Udy Suzuki offered to put up the trophies there and then, so that it could get publicised at the start of the '81 series. Dave was enthusiastic about it, as he rode an XT250 last year with distinction and much enjoyment. However, as Annand and Thompson sponsors the series and give it much-needed promotional support, not just in the front room posters/trophies area but, more importantly, in the backroom expense effort, in the form of circulars, supp. regs and arrows, many areas of expense facing clubs running non-sponsored events were minimised. It wasn't surprising

when it turned out that one of our veteran enduro campaigners, Bob Morgan, had put up (offered or succumbed to a Lucas con) the trophies for this class. Whichever, good on you Bob and A and T! We need this kind of support for this aspect of the sport, which, although involving many riders and helpers, lacks the glory and mass spectator pull of some of the other categories.

This year the class is Unlimited Four-Stroke, but don't let this discourage any smaller capacity thumpers; it needs your participation to assess enthusiasm, and maybe next year we will see Up To 200cc and Over 200cc classes. At least now these two very different motor types don't have to compete directly.

So come on: drag the old girl out of the shed, squirt in the old upper cylinder lubricant and fire 'er up. Let's see how many thumpers we can put against them ring-a-dings at these very enjoyable one-day enduros.

## DR400S ROAD IMPRESSIONS

by A. Kauter



they have the road to themselves. Excellent road holding with the standard dirt/street tyres inflated to high speed road pressures, and the well damped suspension soaking up the indifferent surface that makes up our state's highways.

The engineers in Hamamatsu must have seen the toiling minions of the Water Board, Telecom, and others attempting to turn a thin layer of tar into a moonscape, for the rear end particularly coped with pot-holes, ditches, patches, even median strips and gutters that stood in my way.

The weight (about 315 lbs/139 kg wet) added to the impressive train-like stability as I cruised along on a whiff of throttle at 90 km/hr. The note from the exhaust was subdued in the cold greying dawn and I felt like a modern-day knight astride a tall charger.

Unfortunately, the DR400S may be a little too tall for many riders, as at 185 cm I found my feet just touched the ground, and at times I was off balance and in danger of having a large toaster make a breakfast of my leg. The bike possibly feels so correct as a street bike because the front and rear brakes look as if they came out of the spare parts bin from past roadsters, and the fork legs still have drilled and tapped fittings for a low mounted mudguard.

When it came to the lights they must have run out of candles in a tin as the darkness cutters would not do for a stepthrough 50 let alone a machine with a potential speed of 150 km/hr. I feel that a 55w/65w quartz iodine globe in a compact reflector is a minimum for this class.

Gripes aside the rest of the day was pure joy: tick along in the traffic, see a gap, twist the grip, and right now, top gear you are pushed through it. By sundown I had covered a fair part of the Hunter Valley and was heading back to Sydney, the small tank needed filling only every 200-215 km with economy a staggering 25.25 km/litre. I arrived home to (you guessed it) the yapping dog running up the street, otherwise feeling I'd had a first class ride.

Good points: Old fashioned, gutsy, thumping single performance, surprisingly good road holding and manners, consistently good fuel economy, and a built-in ability to attract the right sort of pillion passengers, and carry them with ease. First kick starting, sometimes.

Poor points: Weight! Any dirt bike over 120 kg is a handful off the road and a 140 kg bike that is so tall that your feet just touch the ground can be a handful on the street. Sixty-eighth kick starting, sometimes.

One of the joys in life is to sneak down the drive in the hours before dawn with a new bike, snick open the gate and roll it down the street until it's under the window of the parakeet-voiced woman whose mongrel dog yaps at me all week.

Then stand back and check gloves, helmet, wallet and keys and savour the joy of kicking into life a 396cc Suzuki DR400S, coming as it does with a 9.2 to 1 compression ratio and a moderate degree of muffling.

Fuel on, choke on, compression release pulled in, gently push down the starter until the release clicks back to place. Body rising, then descend in slow motion with my weight resisted by a vastly over-square (88mm x 65mm) single with small flywheel mass to carry the kick over a number of strokes.

First time! Deep resonant diesel locomotive sounds drown the noise of a pea-brained dog going bananas. Then, like a freight late for some place far away, I'm off. A chirp from the knobby tyre and it will be 500 kilometres in one day.

How does this large 4 stroke Suzuki Enduro/street machine take to the tar? With style, guts and more performance than I could legally use in NSW!

It's just a matter of working up through the right five-speed gearbox and letting the bike chug (3000 rpm), purr (4000 rpm) or vibrate with tingling excitement (5000 rpm to 8000 rpm) in top gear.

As I head north from Sydney I find it has powerful but sensitive brakes, able to avoid idiots driving through red lights when they think

