

australasian **DIRT BIKE**

ISSUE 84 1986 \$2.95 (\$3.75NZ)*

YAMAHA IT200

GOOD ENOUGH
TO PLAY IT
AGAIN,
SAM!



SUZUKI RM125

TRYING HARD TO REGAIN THEIR CROWN

HUSKY 125 ENDURO

PRO HANDLING, BUT IS IT PRO POWER?

WE RIDE A PARIS-DAKAR HONDA!

RALLY OF THE INCAS

JETSETTING IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS

TEAM PINK

HOW THEY BECAME
SPONSORED

BUMBAGS

WHAT THE EXPERTS CARRY

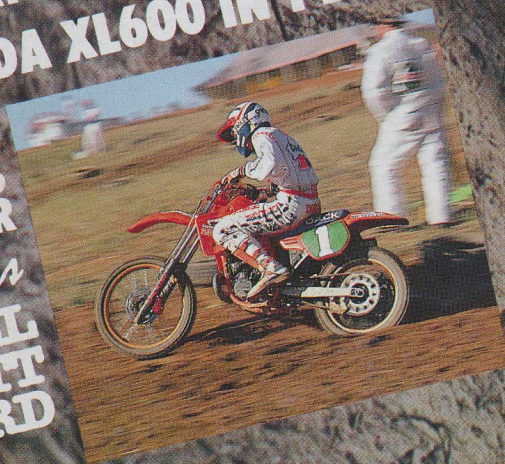
WE RACE A HONDA XL600 IN PERU!

Competition

MISTER MOTOCROSS BRISBANE 12 HOUR

ADB's experts

GALL LOVETT BALLARD



INSIDE!



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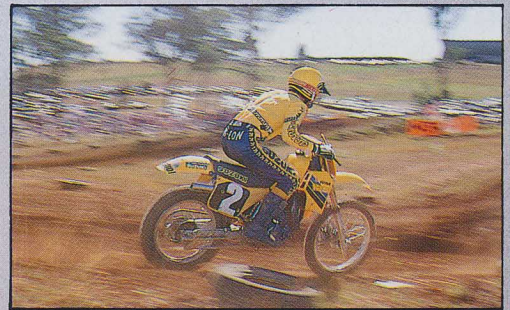
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 Australasian DIRT BIKE Magazine is published by
DIRT BIKE PUBLISHING PTY. LTD. (Incorporated in NSW)
 POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX 696, BROOKVALE, NSW, 2100
 TELEPHONE: (02) 938 4155

Printed by Toppa Printing Company Pty. Ltd
 Distributed by Gordon & Gotch Ltd., Sydney and Melbourne

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ABOVE

Something for the Indiana Jones in us all — the Incas Rally in Peru. A real motorcycle adventure and more than just a race. ADB was there. Of course.

COVER

Yamaha's Old Blue — the IT200 — proves that old dogs never die. We shouldn't really call it an old dog, because even though it's not much changed for '86 it's still a damn fine enduro mount.

INSET

Craig Dack scorched 'em at the Mister Motocross opener, filling Jeff Leisk's shoes admirably.

* Recommended and maximum retail price only. The only reason we're not jacking the price up this month is because we were cool enough to invest in German Deutschmarks and we made a killing (sic) when America bombed Libya and they floated the US dollar.



SUZUKI RM125G

Suzuki's RMs have fallen from grace in recent times as the factory dabbled with other interests. In particular, their RM125 lost all the momentum the Suzuki factory's nine World 125cc Championships gained for it becoming the least desirable Japanese 125 motocrosser to own in 1985.

They've done better this year, but is better enough?

Nice face, shame about the legs.

ROUNDUP

Last year the RM125 had the worst motor of the four Japanese brands: too peaky, lacking in bottom-end, yet with no real ability to wind right out high in the rev range either.

As well as that, riders found the 1985 RM125 felt flabby and awk-

ward compared to the others, despite the fact that its tremendous suspension gained it some points. Not nearly enough, as it turned out.

Great suspension is fine, but if the 125cc class calls for anything, it's power. Not necessarily the most power, but good usable power, with "most power" lurking not too far behind as something good to have.

So this time round, that's where we'll start.

POWER

Our test riders this year all claimed the new RM had more power right across the board - more grunt, more midrange, more top-end. We think that the excitement of a new model and the idea that Suzuki's AEC was present on this engine had a lot to do with these initial conclusions, because as time wore on and we interrogated other riders about the RM compared to the CR, KX and YZ, our initial thoughts began to change.

In short, if you compare the 1986 RM125 to the other three Japanese machines the power still falls short. It's peakier than all three yet it still doesn't have an overwhelming top-end. In fact, just as you reach the high placed powerband it seems keen to want to sign off before you can do a lot with it.

The RM's top-end delivery can be compared to the Honda CR125, yet the Honda starts making usable power a lot earlier than the Suzuki.

The only way to use it is to work hard getting it going, then keep working it hard to keep it in its narrow powerband.

What's happened? They've added an exhaust valve system similar to Honda's ATAC, but the Suzuki system doesn't seem able to overcome the other elements of the engine, like the porting. Either that, or copying Honda's ATAC design just didn't work like they planned.

Technically speaking, this new engine is just that - new. Coloured Suzuki racing blue to let you know, Continued over



SUZUKI RM125G

it starts with the new Automatic Exhaust Control Valve (AECV) which is intended to boost power. It doesn't control the height of the exhaust port like Yamaha's YPVS or half of Kawasaki's KIPs. Instead, it functions like Honda's ATAC to open a small passageway that leads to a large chamber at the front of the barrel. This happens at low- to mid-range rpm.

Opening this extra chamber is the same as if there was a different shaped exhaust pipe (ie, bigger in volume and therefore better suited to fatten the early part of the power-band) attached to the motor for greater bottom-end and midrange performance. As the revs build up the automatic system cuts in and closes off this chamber so the engine then thinks it has a pipe designed for power up high in the rev range.

However, in practice the RM still has a weak bottom-end and mid-range, even though it is better than in 1985. We've even heard stories that you're better off to lock the AEC in the closed position because it tends to flutter open/shut/open if you blast across real rough ground, producing all sorts of effects on the power.

Partly, the blame goes to the porting, where the inlet and exhaust ports are the same as last year, although the transfers were enlarged 0.5mm in their height and width. The pipe has been enlarged to match the new transfers and the AEC.

It sounds to us as if they've taken an unsatisfactory engine and simply added an exhaust valve in an attempt to add some bottom-end performance, when a better solution would have been a whole new barrel and pipe.

Apart from the power aspect of this new RM, Suzuki reduced the overall mass of the engine by using fewer teeth in the transmission, among other things. The old push rod clutch has been replaced in favour of a rack-and-pinion clutch which gives better action and is less prone to fading when abused.

At the footpegs, there is 12mm less width thanks to oval tubing on the frame at that point, and they managed to reduce the width of the bike by 25mm at the swingarm pivot point. In addition the seat/tank juncture has been trimmed and everything together overcomes the problem we noted in 1985 of the RM125 being fat. This year it feels much smaller and easier to throw around.

Jetting has been changed from '85 specs, although the 34mm flat slide Mikuni carb body is the same. Suzuki still uses their tried and true case reed induction system, where the charge from the carb is fed straight down to the crank through a case-mounted reed valve, as well as directly in to the piston.

Gearshifting is OK, selection being not all that positive, although we really have no complaint about the gearbox other than that the ratio

LEFT

Suzuki's Automatic Exhaust Control (AEC) valve is a step in the right direction, but we figure they needed two steps. The power is still too peaky and difficult to use if you're anything short of expert, and it lacks the outright horsepower of the Honda and Kawasaki. The porting is essentially the same as '85, although the pipe is new. Gearing is on the tall side and needs regearing on the sprockets.

of the sprockets at 12/51 results in tallish gearing if you're heavy or the track is soft. A bigger countershaft sprocket (13 teeth) would be a good idea.

Basically we think that Suzuki needs a whole new engine designed by the whiz kids who worked at Suzuki during the early-to-mid seventies, when RMs were horsepower kings. Then maybe bolting on technical gadgets like the AEC would have some real effect.

SUSPENSION

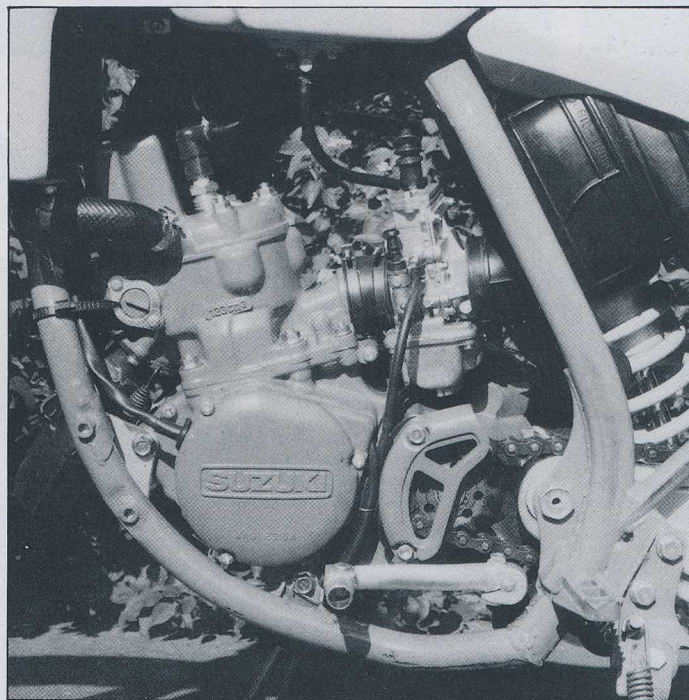
Big plus points for Suzuki here. Somehow the Suzuki factory has always produced motocross machines which had good suspension and performed beautifully in the handling department. This time we're pleased to report that the RM125G has the suspension package it may have been lacking in the last few years.

Our riders loved the forks. A 43mm diameter KYB fork gives 300mm wheel travel with eight compression damping adjustments, using a progressively wound spring. Adding some oil above the recommended volume is the ticket for faster/heavier riders, and if you're particularly fast or heavy then you're either going to need heavier springs or a preload spacer, but apart from that everyone liked them just the way they were. The more riding the bike had, the more they settled in.

At the rear Suzuki has dropped the Full Floater system of the past umpteen years, bolting the top of the shock directly to the frame instead of a rocker arm. The other end is attached to an arm mounted to an eccentric cam. Suzuki explains that they have gone this direction to lower the centre of gravity, centralise the mass and get rid of a few moving parts that were prone to wear (the struts and rocker arm). This new system is better sealed against corrosion and requires less maintenance.

As for the shock it appears to be basically the same: a KYB shock with 21 click rebound damping adjustment and 17 click compression damping adjustment. Thanks to the other components of the new suspension system, actual wheel travel is less than last year, at 315mm.

Overall, we'd say the suspension was on the firm side and the bike responded best to an aggressive rider. It tracked straight even though the wheelbase is a full 25mm shorter, and both ends soaked up the bumps if you were



really hard on it. Anything less than that and the bike displays a little harshness, but that's to be expected since the 125cc class demands a 100% effort from the rider.

Cornering was good, steering accurate.

Apart from these things, tall riders felt the RM was cramped. With a lowish seat height and the positioning of the pegs and bars the bike seems designed around a shorter rider, while the seat was criticised as being poorly padded. Still, it was a bike that didn't take long to feel at home on, just like we remember of Suzukis.

BITS AND PIECES

For the last few years Suzuki has stood still on their detailing quality while the other Big Three have marched ahead into the space age with the manufacture of their race bikes.

When you look closely at the RM it is obvious that although it is better detailed than a European machine, it's fourth out of four among the Orientals.

All the controls are the same old

ABOVE

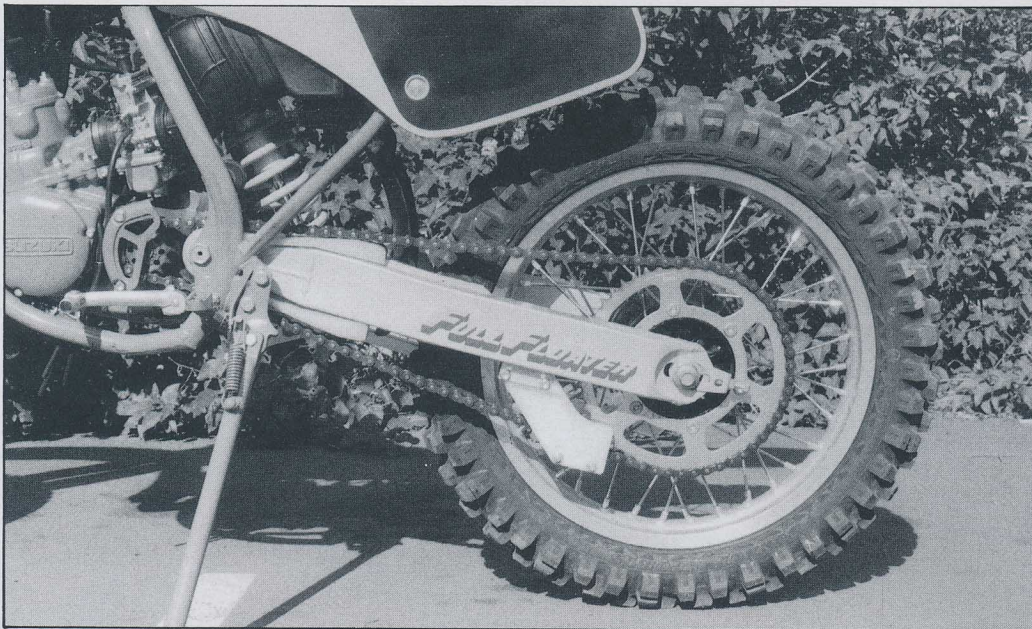
The list of changes to the 1986 RM125G is quite a long one. New rear suspension, new frame, new engine. The bike is far superior to the last RM125, but the engine lacks bottom-end and top-end, even though it's got a peaky power delivery. It's on the small side for tall riders.

Suzuki style, meaning they're OK but not startling – and the throttle turn is too much for a 125cc racer. We have more trouble with nuts and bolts on Suzukis than anything else. The airfilter servicing on this bike is a pain, with an oversize filter in an undersize airbox and fiddly bolts and things in between. The disc brake isn't as strong as we've become accustomed to.

The whole bike seems evidence that Suzuki is currently trying to cut a few expensive corners that the others are only too happy to make in an effort to swing buyers.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Despite our complaints we still can't help but like the RM. It's a bet-



ABOVE

Suzuki no longer has a Full Floating rear suspension, with the top of the shock bolted to the frame and the bottom to a lever attached to a cam. It centralises the mass, lowers the centre of gravity, is better sealed and is easier to service. Wish we could say the same of the airbox.

RIGHT

This year, Suzuki has great forks. With 8-click compression damping adjustment and progressively wound springs, they work better as time on the bike increases. Heavier or fast riders may need more oil, maybe even stiffer springs. The front disc brake is OK.

BELOW

The rider positioning is cramped if you're tall, although this year they've taken great pains to slim the bike down from its fat predecessor. The seat has dodgy foam.



SUZUKI RM125G

Test Bike: Suzuki Australia,
7 Grand Ave, Camellia, NSW.

Retail price: \$2749
(NSW recommended)

ENGINE

Type Single cylinder liquid-cooled crankcase reed two-stroke with AEC
Bore x stroke 54 x 54mm
Capacity 123cc
Compression ratio 8.9:1
Max HP.23 1 @ 11,500rpm
Max torque 10.9 @ 9,000rpm
Carburettor 34mm flat slide Mikuni
Airfilter Oiled foam
Ignition CDI

TRANSMISSION

Clutch Wet multi-plate rack & pinion
Primary drive Gear, 3.157:1
Secondary drive 520 chain, 12/51 sprockets

Gear ratios:

1st 2.000
2nd 1.692
3rd 1.437
4th 1.200
5th 1.052
6th 0.950

FRAME & SUSPENSION

Frame Single downtube split cradle chrome moly steel
Suspension
Front ... Telescopic forks with 300mm wheel travel, 8-way adjustable compression damping
Rear ... Suzuki Floater system with KYB shock, 315mm wheel travel, 21 position rebound and 17 compression damping adjustments
Rake 29°
Trail 109mm
Brakes Disc front, single leading shoe drum rear
Silencing Average MX
Tyres Dunlop K195 front and rear

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase 1445mm
Seat height 925mm
Ground clearance 340mm
Fuel capacity 7 litres
Weight 92.5 kg (with oil, no fuel)

ter investment than its counterpart was in 1985, thanks to a more usable powerband, but it nevertheless lags behind the other three.

Still, the rest of the package is basically there. You learn to live with the way a Suzuki is put together, and you can adapt to a cramped riding position, as long as the bike handles the track well.

In the case of the RM125, it does handle well and we rate the suspension at both ends better than its rivals. Like Suzukis always have, it handles superbly and pretty soon you learn that there's nothing you can't get away with on this bike.

Nothing, that is, except hole-shots. The motor needs work to be as competitive as the others, but like we've always said it's easier to find a good engine tuner than it is to overcome sad suspension and frame geometry.

In other words, it needs work but thankfully only really on the engine. The rest we'd be willing to put up with for that Suzuki ride.