

125 MX SHOOTOUT!

DIRT BIKE

**RACING:
MICHIGAN
STADIUM &
PENNA.
GOLF COURSE**

**YAMAHA IT175G:
SPLIT
PERSONALITY**

**SUZUKI DR400:
THE 370
GROWS UP!**

**ENDURO TOOLS
UPDATE**





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ON THE COVER:—Jammin' Jimmy Weinert made his debut on a Can-Am at the New Orleans 'dome event. Technical problems kept him out of the Pontiac race—see story inside. Dick Miller photo.

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AUGUST 1980

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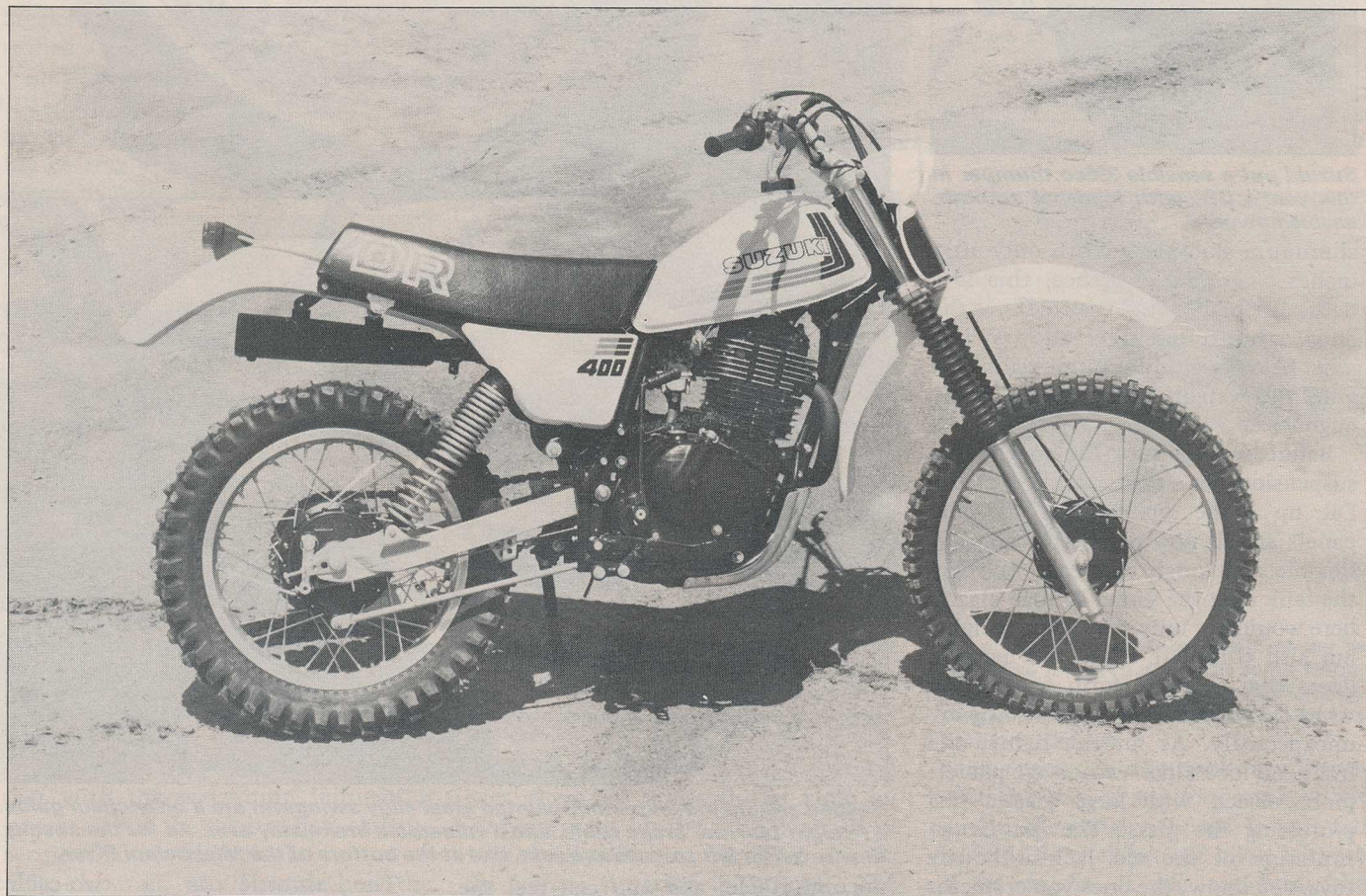


THE PRODUCTION PROJECT BIKE

SUZUKI'S DR400T

Does This Mean Ours Is Now Obsolete?

By the Editors of Dirt Bike



If anyone read our articles on the DIRT BIKE DR/RM project bike, U.S. Suzuki did. Our project was to take a 1978 DR370 engine and put it into an RM400 frame, and come out with a four-stroke that handled like a dirt bike, rather than a '49 Dodge with three flats and a bent axle. And now, not even a year after those stories hit the newsstands, Suzuki has introduced their all-new, redesigned DR400T.

What is this redesigned four-stroke, you ask? And how is it so much different from last year? Well, as far as its relationship to last year, the only things Suzuki didn't change were the letters D and R. This bike is now a true four-stroke off-road motorcycle that doesn't look like a stripped-down street SP model. Its frame very closely resembles an N or T Suzuki RM unit, and its legs are longer than in the past.

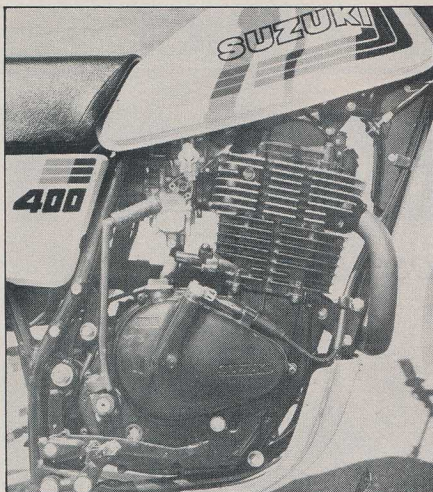
The overall appearance is more sleek and stylish, with a competitive air about it. Gone are the wide fan-tailed rear end and the saddle that looked like a reject from Harley-Davidson. The new DR has been redesigned from the ground up.

Let's start at the bottom, and work our way to the top. The tires are Bridgestones; a 3.00 up front and a 5.10 at the rear. Both stick to the trail very well for stockers, but the knobs round after a few hours and the rubber loses its effectiveness. The 5.10 is the quickest to go, as the torque put out by the motor eats away at it. Rims are the standard 21- and 18-inchers, made of aluminum alloy. The spokes demand a lot of attention for the first few rides, but after they seat, they'll hold for a long time. If you happen to forget about checking them, make sure you stay

away from any rocks larger than what you can fit in your pocket. If not, the wheels tweak instantly, as we found out first-hand during a long trail ride.

Brakes are standard Suzuki-quality binders that halt the forward motion quite effectively, unless you've just gone stream-crossing. In that case, you'd better have a long runout to slow down, because the shoes just won't bite when moist. They will come back after a few miles of good, dry fireroad, though. At the rear, Suzuki put on a frame-to-hub brake stay arm to hold everything in place. This should have been a shorter connection to another outlet on the arm, due to the fact that when the rod meets any stationary object it will get bent upward, and lock up the rear wheel solidly. The brake mechanism itself is a straight-cable.

Under the engine, there's a huge

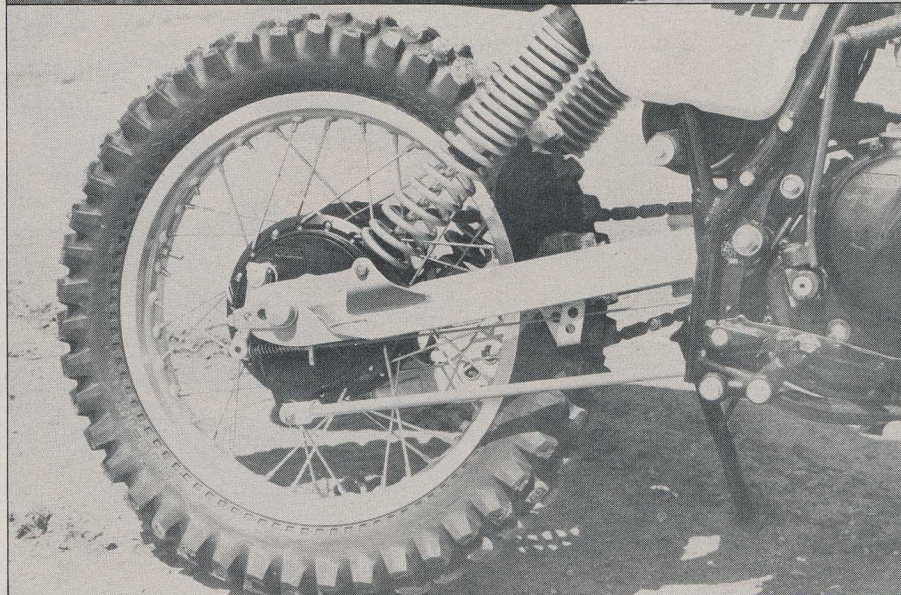
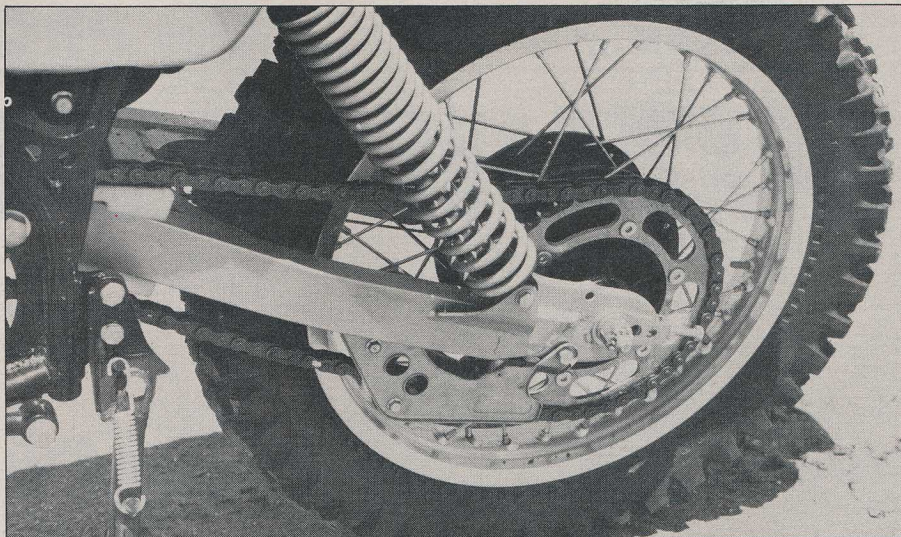


Suzuki put a sensible 396cc thumper in this year's DR, with loads of smooth, usable power.

aluminum skid plate. With only 10½ inches of ground clearance, this is a necessity. Just behind the cradle, is the aluminum-painted steel alloy swing-arm. It looks aluminum all right, but with the weight of the DR, it really ought to be.

Before we get into the motor and suspension, let's cover the rest of the DR, up at the top. Fenders and side panels are all new plastic pieces, very flexible and tough to break. Too bad the tank isn't the same. A little plastic here would not only save some weight, but also eliminate all of the massive dents that seem to form on the DR when bike and rider part company unexpectedly. As for the lights, the front end looks like a space-age planet-probe object, with large plastic fins protecting the glass. The rear is an imitation of the old Jack-in-the-box toys; you know, the ones you crank for a while, then everything inside pops out all of a sudden. To stop this from happening, before you even leave the garage take the taillight lens off and remove the two little washers holding the lens assembly to the rubber. Replace those with some wider, heftier ones, slip the bolts back in, pop the lens on and you're stylin'. Don't worry about the front light going anywhere; you can endo that baby off a cliff, and it still wouldn't disintegrate. Give one point to space-age technology. Too bad the number plate flies off all over the trail, though. It has no rubber bands to keep it on the fork tubes, just a pair of plastic tab clips.

The saddle is a real disappointment on the DR. How much does foam padding cost? Apparently too much for Suzuki. They put in barely enough to pad a size 32-B bra. The seat gets very



Nestled around the aluminum-painted steel alloy swingarm are a nifty chain guide, a straight-pull rear brake cable, and a vulnerable brake stay arm. As for the shocks, they're better left somewhere safe, like at the bottom of the Mississippi River.

uncomfortable, and you can feel the bottom and frame rails with your buns every time you hit a rough spot sitting down. Suzuki probably left out the excess foam rubber to keep the seat height down, but it's not worth the sacrifice to even the shortest riders.

The bars had a comfortable bend for most of our test riders. Levers are good quality doglegged blades that are easy to get hold of and easy to hang on to. There's a compression release lever mounted just above the clutch lever, which Suzuki didn't really have to put on, but it can be a handy item, depending on what kind of mood you are in. If you want to be macho, then leave it off and kick away. The engine will turn over without it. But, if you're stiff and sore, just flick the lever down, and you can easily run your boot through the motions and get everything fired up the easy way.

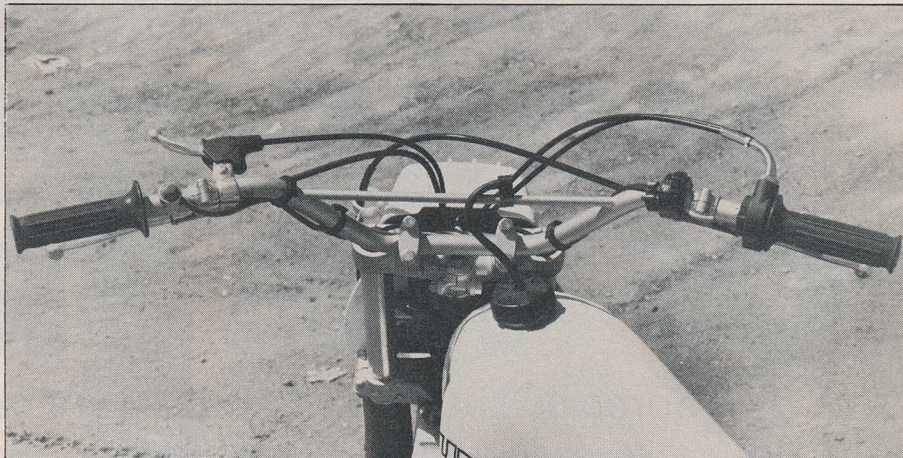
The throttle is a two-cabled push/pull model that is about as necessary as the hiccups. All the extra cable does is complicate maintenance. A standard throttle would be more appropriate, and a lot less of a hassle.

Up front is a set of leading axle front forks, boasting a travel measurement of 9.1 inches. Although they're plush over mild terrain, the rough stuff proves them too soft. An oil level addition, or installation of air caps, would be a helpful cure. The damping is set up for higher speeds, but the forks don't lose their slow-pace quality, like last year's did. At the rear are a set of gas/oil shocks, which give a total of 8.3 inches of wheel travel. These shocks shouldn't even have been considered for the DR. They're undersprung and fade quickly. On square-edged bumps, a certain harshness transmits abruptly to the rider. This

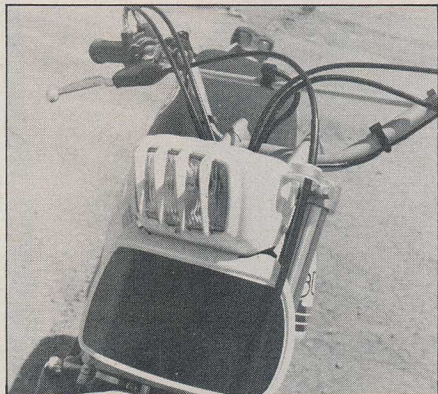
makes the whole motorcycle a handful to get through the rough at any sort of decent speed.

We genuinely liked the motor. Suzuki punched the DR out to a 400 this year, but kept it mellow and easy to ride. Pick a gear, any gear. The DR will pull it. The DR just plonks along, pulling right up almost any grade, and all you have to do is sit in the saddle, hold the throttle on and point it in the right direction. Even if the rear wheel breaks loose, the DR can still be controlled.

Shifting is slightly better than the '79 and gear ratios in the five-speed box have been just slightly altered, with the gearing a bit taller to handle the power increase. The one problem that



At the bars are comfortable dogleg levers, a compression release, and a push/pull throttle.



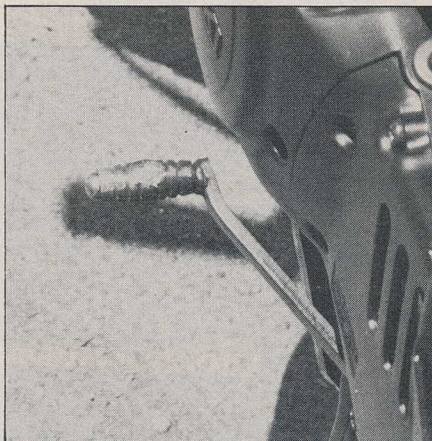
Although the headlight looks like something out of *Battlestar Galactica*, it is very tough to break. The number plate, however, is easy to snap off, since it has no rubber bands holding it to the fork tubes.

has been with the DRs all along now, is that with the wet sump lubrication system, when the oil gets hot, shifting becomes notchy and reluctant.

On the trail, you'll notice how the motor gives you the feeling that you're in control all the way. By winding through the gears, you'll discover that not only does the DR have good low end, but a respectable middle and top bracket as well. Although you'll probably never want to buzz the motor much, it's nice to know that you can.

Out on the fireroads, the DR is a natural-born slider. Just select the right gear and steer with the throttle. You can control every inch of a slide with the throttle and a minimum of body English. It is so confidence-building, that you have to watch out for overcooking a turn and ending up on your hind quarters.

Once you're into the back country, you'll notice that the DR is not quite as nimble on the small, twisting trails as you'd like it to be. A big part of this is the weight, which is not that far from

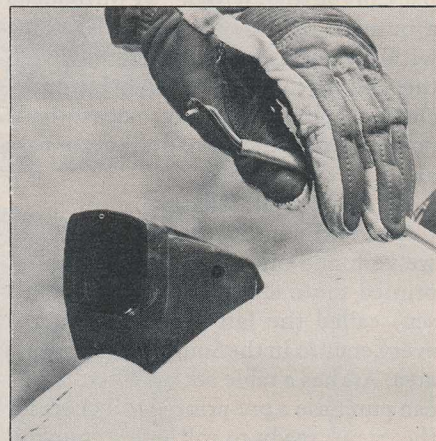


There is no excuse for this hung-out solid shift lever. If it catches a rock or the ground, it can snap the shifting shaft in two. A folding unit is a must here.

the 300-pound mark. At 278 pounds wet, there has to be a lot of room for improvement on the DR. With all of that weight, making the DR go fast in an enduro situation is difficult. The motorcycle was built to ride easy, while sitting down and having fun, and once you try to get competitive on it in stock condition, you'll get into trouble quickly. The suspension isn't up to the job despite the fact that the handling is. The DR can turn effortlessly compared to a TT500 or a Honda XR500.

Now that you've found just what a comfortable speed is on the DR, go for a long ride. If you forget about going fast, take your time and find a good trail that's not outrageously rough, you'll be lost to the world until you decide it's time to head back.

There are going to be people out there who buy the DR400 to make a racer out of it, not just for enduros, but motocross as well. In that case, the DR will adapt, with the right modifications. Put on some good shocks, work on the forks and motor, and there you



All of Suzuki's enduro taillights we've tested so far have done the same thing: pop off after a few minutes of riding. Larger washers inside should solve the problem, though.

have a racer. On the track it will turn with the best of any four-strokes, but out in the rough whoops it will fall behind the trick project bikes because of its weight. If you can bring the weight down, then you'll have a competitive thumper that will not only handle even better in the corners, but will romp through the rough.

If you wish to go even further, you can begin to slip on RM components, such as forks, swingarm and shocks, install a plastic tank, remove a little excess "bulk" around the edges of the DR, and you'll have what we've been working on here at DIRT BIKE for months.

Suzuki did a lot of homework before they introduced their new DR400, but did they do enough? Of course, it's much nicer than what was offered last year, but there is still a lot of room for further improvement.

One thing is for sure, though, if you want to make a project bike out of a DR, you've got a big head start over

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SUZUKI DR400T

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what we had last year. As for now, our DIRT BIKE project bike is still far from being obsolete to the DR400T, but with what we've learned in the past few months, this bike can be made into the same killer four-stroke as what we have, in a fraction of the time. As for the cost, that is going to be cut radically as well. Now we can say that the project bike truly is worth it. There's a lot more to start out with, and a heck of a lot more to end up with. □

SUZUKI DR400T Specifications

NAME AND MODEL	Suzuki DR400T
ENGINE TYPE	Single-cylinder, four stroke OHC
BORE AND STROKE	88.0mm x 65.2mm
DISPLACEMENT	396cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY)	N/A
CARBURETION	33mm Mikuni
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	135
NEEDLE JET	6g1
JET NEEDLE	P-1
PILOT JET	15
SLIDE NUMBER	2.5
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	9 liters (2.4 gallons)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy
LUBRICATION	Wet sump
RECOMMENDED OIL	Premium SAE 10W-40
OIL CAPACITY	1.6 liters (1.7 quarts)
AIR FILTRATION	Foam element
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, multi-plate
TRANSMISSION	Five-speed constant mesh
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	2.33
2	1.68
3	1.29
4	1.05
5	0.81
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	16/46
IGNITION	Suzuki PEI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	NGK D8EA, ND X24ES-U
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/QUALITY	Yes/excellent
EXHAUST SYSTEM	High-pipe, left side
FRAME, TYPE	Single-downtube, split cradle
WHEELBASE	1440mm (56.7 inches)
GROUND CLEARANCE	270mm (10.6 inches)
SEAT HEIGHT	N/A
STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)	31 degrees
TRAIL	132mm (5.20 inches)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	278 pounds (125 kg)
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	3.00x21 4PR knobby
REAR	5.10x18 4PR knobby
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT:	Oil-dampened, telescopic forks, 9.1 inches
REAR	Swingarm, gas/oil shocks, 8.3 inches
INTENDED USE	Off-road
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
PRICE, APPROX.	\$1699
DISTRIBUTOR:	
U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.	
13767 Freeway Drive	
Santa Fe Springs, California 90670	
PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:	
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE	\$46.19
RINGS ONLY	\$18.94
CYLINDER	\$150.15
SHIFT LEVER	\$9.50
BRAKE PEDAL	\$15.37
FRONT SPROCKET	\$11.05
OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:	
HANDLING	92
SUSPENSION	84
POWER	90
COST	95
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	94
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	90



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