

SHOOTOUT! THE HOT 125s CLASH

DIRT BIKE

AUGUST 1982 • \$1.75 UK90p

**KAWASAKI
KDX250:
MXer with
lights**

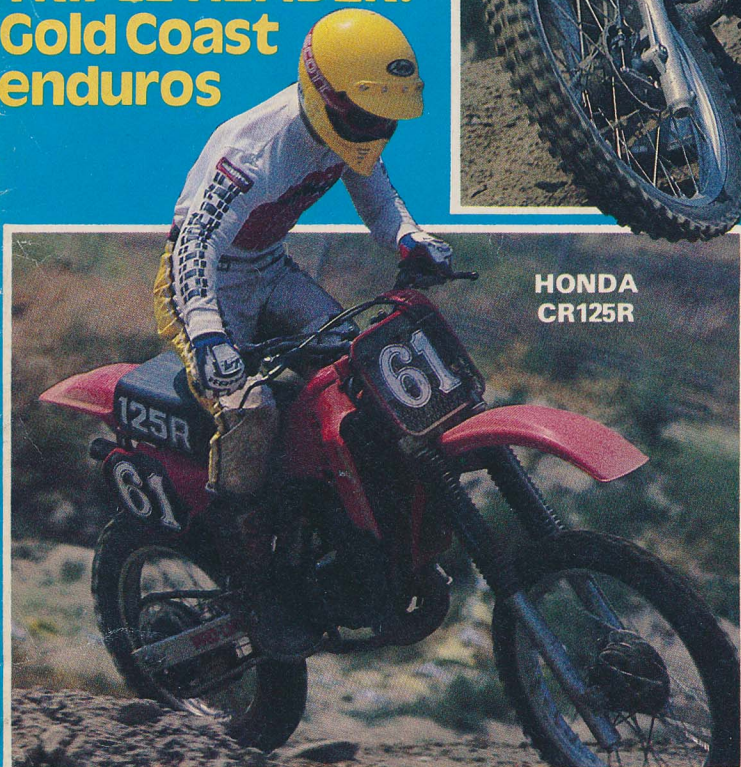


SUZUKI
RM125Z

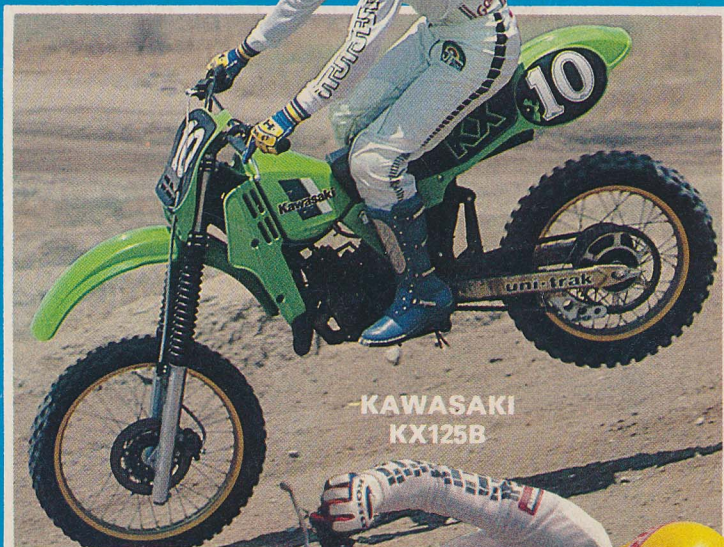
**YAMAHA
YZ490J:
Mammoth
motocrosser**

**SUPER SONIC:
Building a two-
stage rocket**

**TRIPLE HEADER:
Gold Coast
enduros**

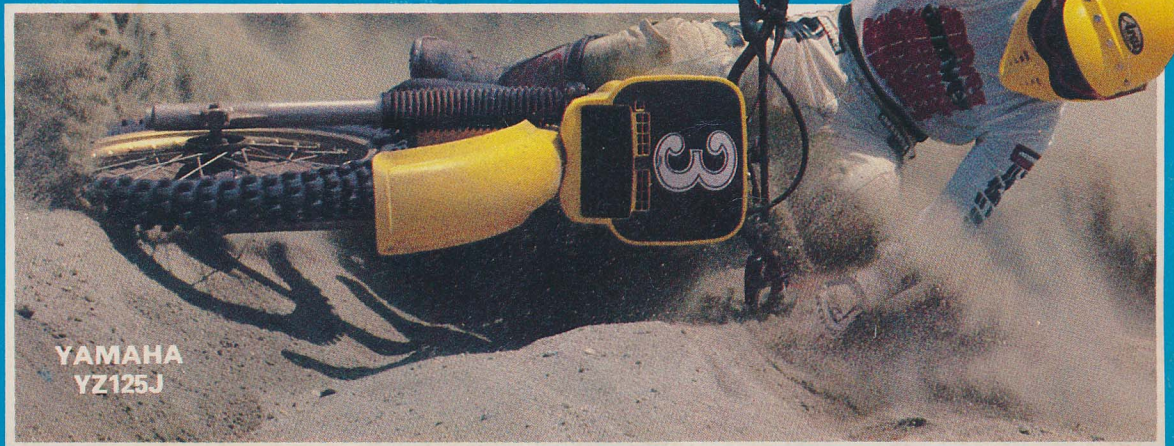


HONDA
CR125R



KAWASAKI
KX125B

**YZ100J:
Sole
survivor**



YAMAHA
YZ125J



DIRT BIKE

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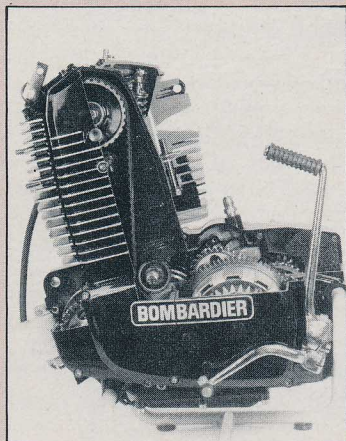
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On the Cover: *DB* testing crew caught in the act of evaluating the Big Four 125s. For the final verdict, see page 38. Photos by Tom Webb and Paul Clipper; color separation by Valley Film.

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125 SHOOTOUT



PROJECT CAN-AM



KAWASAKI KDX250



SUPERCROSS



The engine is relatively unchanged for '82; still has buckets of horsepower off the bottom.

EASY RIDER

Second time around for Dr. Thump

By the Dirt Bike Staff

Somewhere in the back of our muddy minds, we were hoping for a Floater DR from Suzuki this year. We have also been waiting patiently for a 40-horsepower 125 for a number of years, so we weren't all that surprised or disappointed when we learned that the DR had come through unchanged. What the heck—last year Suzuki did the major job of bringing the old DR up to 500cc's, and building some handling into the frame... so we really shouldn't complain.

The heart of the beast is a 498cc TSCC four-stroke powerplant (TSCC standing for Twin Swirl Combustion Chamber... Suzuki's version of the four-stroke Schnurl Loop). Transmission is a five-speed, with the lowest *first* you'll ever need, and a *fifth* that will deliver 80-plus mph without too much of a strain. The carburetor is a 35mm Mikuni, jetting perfectly for sea level, sucking air through a slightly restrictive yet very waterproof airbox.

Forks are 36mm Kayabas, non-air-adjustable, and offer just a hair over nine inches of travel. Rear shocks are Suzuki-designed gas-charged piggybacks; eight and one-half inches is the maximum travel. Both ends are set up for a very soft ride, although the damping rates seem to be adequate for average riding. In other words, both ends may bottom out quite easily in moderately heavy whoops, but the DR isn't about to spit you off without a fair amount of warning.

We had a good chance to try out all the high-speed characteristics of the DR; the thumper Suzuki got the job of being one of the bikes on the annual Barstow to Vegas trailride. Most of the route consisted of fourth- and fifth-gear cruising over moderately rough and rocky desert terrain. Although we knew that the DR's engine would be perfect for the haul, we had reservations about the suspension. How would the DR work in long stretches of whoops? What would it do in a rock field?

As it turns out, the answer was just as mellow as the DR's exhaust. The bike doesn't like big whoops at breakneck speeds. The front end will try to soak the bumps up, but the rear will soon bottom and start tankslapping. Curiously, even when the Suzuki starts getting out of shape, it does it slowly and predictably—the rear starts hopping slightly out of line, and that's the signal to throttle back a bit and let it straighten out. Most often we would just drag the rear brake to pull it back into line, and then keep motoring at the lower speed.

The DR behaved a little better in the rocks; the soft suspension would allow the rear wheel to soak up most of the impact, rather than transfer it to your butt. When we finally parked the Suzuki, our opinion was the suspension is too soft for most rough stuff, but the chassis is so forgiving you can get away with a lot more than you should be allowed.

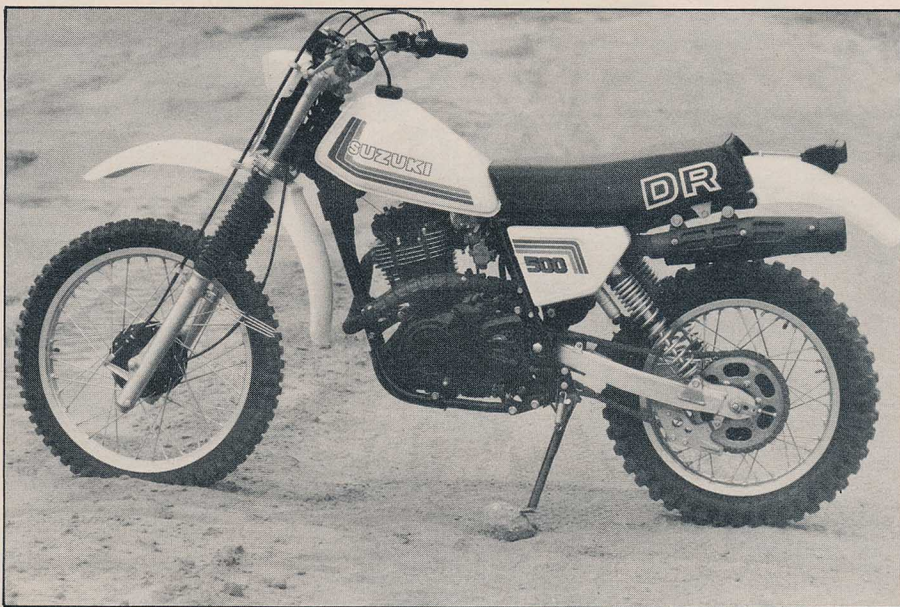
Over the course of our ride we had no complaints about the engine, aside from the same starting hassles we had last year. The bike starts easily... but the problem is kicking it. The kickstarter lever is very long and easy to push through, and it's a simple job to kick too hard and bang your heel on the ground or overextend your knee—both of which can be very painful. Once we got used to it, everything was fine. The DR always started enthusiastically on the first or second kick.

Power is everywhere in this engine. Plenty of torque for the long, uphill stretches, and more than enough top end for the

places we could use it. We spent very little time downshifting during the ride. Even on the rare times we went to *fourth* or *third*, we probably didn't need the lower ratio. Need more torque? More speed? Just turn up that handle on your right!

The DR's detailing (same as last year's) is still good. The brakes work whether they're wet or not. The shifting is smooth and troublefree. None of the cables got snagged or pinched, and the odometer is small and out of the way, and also one of the best enduro instruments going. The gas tank appears small, but during the ride we checked our mileage, just out of curiosity. How about 75 miles to the tankful? Not too shabby for a 500.

Which just about sums up the DR500—not too shabby a bike. True, it is unchanged over last year, and we have to say that if you can get a bargain deal on an '81... go for it. Either way, if just plain old trailriding is your game, the DR isn't likely to disappoint you. □



Does it look the same as last year's? It is!

SUZUKI DR500Z

ENGINE TYPE 50HC four-stroke
 BORE AND STROKE 88mm x 82mm
 DISPLACEMENT 498cc
 HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED) N/A
 CARBURETION 35mm Mikuni
 IGNITION Suzuki PEI
 TRANSMISSION Five-speed
 FUEL TANK CAPACITY 2.4 gallons
 WHEELBASE 57.5 inches
 GROUND CLEARANCE 11.4 inches
 SEAT HEIGHT 34.5 inches
 WEIGHT (CLAIMED) 287 pounds, dry

SUSPENSION:
 FRONT Oil/spring Kayaba, 9.1 inches
 REAR Piggyback gas, 8.5 inches
 TIRES:
 FRONT 3.00 x 21 IRC
 REAR 5.10 x 18 IRC
 INTENDED USE Off-road, enduro
 APPROX. RETAIL PRICE \$2099
 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Japan
 DISTRIBUTOR:
 U. S. Suzuki Motor Co.
 3251 East Imperial Highway Brea, California 92621