

SUZUKI RM80T

"HEY DAD, WILL YOU BRING THE OTHER MILK CRATE, TOO?"

Gad, these things are getting tall!

By The Dirt Bike Staff

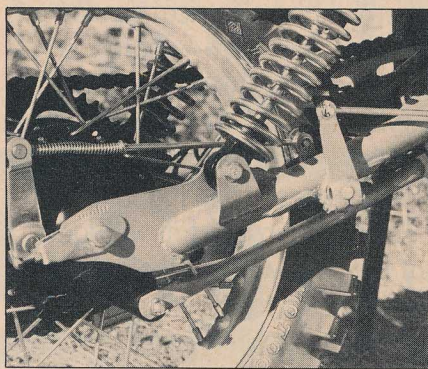


Todd Sciaqua, son of famed DB test rider Nate Sciaqua (both pronounced Sciaqua), slides the little RM through the brush.

It used to be that the Mini class at local races was full of wide-eyed kids, nervous as cats, on a variety of machinery. The majority of them were clad in an old pair of leather boots strapped around an old pair of Levi's, a long-sleeved jersey that usually never matched the brand of bike that sat underneath them, and an old Peter Fonda Captain America helmet.

But now, go out and take a peek at what sits on the line of a Mini Beginner race. Kids on brand-new flashy 80cc missiles that are capable of scaring the wits out of a grown man, all decked out in JT leathers, Bell Moto-III's and Scott boots—yep, Scotts—and most of them stand high enough to pass as a 125 rider. In fact, just last week, we went to a race and watched a kid ride in the Mini Experts in his first race, then turn around and ride the 125 Pro class a half-hour later.

To keep up with these changing times, the manufacturers are spending a lot of time developing mini-bikes that can suit the bigger, heavier rider,



Suzuki's new brake rod setup is one of the nicest touches on any bike we've seen in a while.

and leaving the smaller ones the 50s and 60s.

Suzuki's effort for 1980 is precisely what all of the factories are gunning for.

Their RM80T is long, tall and full of power, enough to take a full-grown editor on a wild and crazy bash through the underbrush. The motor is excellent, and has a powerband resembling

the new bigger-bore RMs. The chassis and suspension sit high enough to grab second glances from onlookers curious as to just what size motorcycle it is; a big 80, or a small 100. And the detailing and styling are very sharp.

Last year, Suzuki minis had a good engine, but the low end was a little less than a crippled mosquito. Once on the pipe and high up in the revs, the bike would scoot. Now, the 80T has a very potent motor that pulls a lot stronger down low, and lasts a lot longer than the old powerband of '79. As to whether a mini rider needs all that, we'll leave that up to the individual. But the bike does have a vicious blast at early mid-range. The power comes on quick once off the bottom, and unlike all minis of last year, you can work this mid-range. You don't have to wind the buzzer out to get anywhere.

As for the suspension, our small test riders loved it. The 1980 Suzuki handles the big bumps a lot better than last year, as the shocks were stiffer and appeared slightly longer than in the

past. With this in mind, a smaller, lighter rider may want to soften up the springs a bit to give a more comfortable ride in rough and semi-rough terrain.

The overall handling of the RM80T was another fine point, according to the half-pints who spent the better part of eight hours on it. Turning, sliding, berm-bashing and whoop-cornering were all tested, and the RM handled each very well for a mini-bike. The rear shocks weren't quite as responsive as the CR's Showas, but they still worked above average in all of the sections. As for the straights, the 80 tracked quite well also.

The shift lever on the RM80 was a small annoyance. Although the transmission was smooth and precise, the lever stuck out too far, and in tight turns where the rider threw the bike over his leg, the shifter grabbed a handful and bent out like a curb feeler on a '57 Buick. We tore the stocker off and replaced it with an International Motorsports folding unit, which solved our problems quite effectively.

As with all Suzukis in the past, the neutral between first and second is nearly impossible to find. When you want to stop the RM, plan on spending a few minutes doing some fancy foot-work with the shifter.

Finish line

It looks like the mini ranks are growing up. And so are the bikes entered in them. Suzuki's RM80T is a very good example of that. But, whether this increase in size will be beneficial to the riders, will have to be seen. We do know that with the longer legs, the motorcycle handles better, and bigger kids can ride them, but what will this do to the littler ones? And can a tyke handle all of the motor Suzuki put into their RMT?

They say kids nowadays are getting bigger, too. Let's see if the industry and the riders can grow at the same rate, without one getting ahead of the other.

SUZUKI RM80T Specifications

ENGINE TYPE Air-cooled, two-stroke, power reed
BORE AND STROKE 49mm x 44mm
DISPLACEMENT 83cc
CARBURETION 26mm Mikuni
IGNITION CDI
TRANSMISSION Six-speed, constant mesh
FUEL TANK CAPACITY 1.4 gallons
WHEELBASE 47.2 inches
GROUND CLEARANCE 9.8 inches
WEIGHT (CLEARED) 146 pounds
SUSPENSION:
FRONT Telescopic fork, leading axle
REAR Swingarm/shocks-gas/oil
TIRES:
FRONT 2.75x17 knobby
REAR 4.10x14 knobby
INTENDED USE Off-road competition
APPROX. RETAIL PRICE \$699
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