

Graham Noyce: Reaching for Number One

DIRT RIDER

Nissan/Datsun
500cc USGP of MX:
Our best vs. theirs
at Carlsbad

Exploring Michigan's
Tomahawk Trail system

\$1.75
Canada
\$2.25



SEPTEMBER 1983

**KDX vs. IT
ENDURO
SHOOTOUT!**



**Roost booster:
Honda's awesome
CR480R!**



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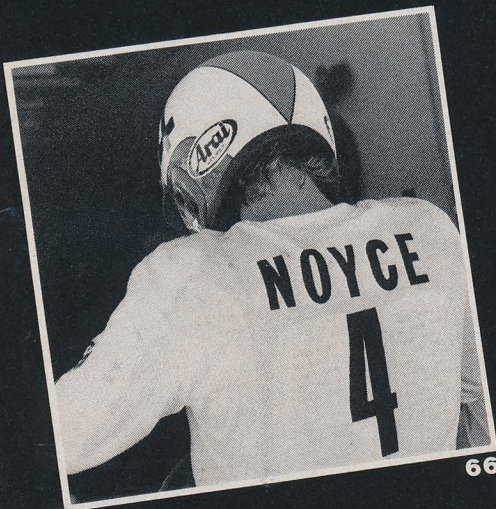
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DIRT RIDER

SEPTEMBER 1983
PUBLISHED MONTHLY, ISSUE 10



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Crossing this stream in the Tahoe National Forest was lots harder for Mark and George than the IT and KDX. Charles Morey forced them to for the photo.

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SUZUKI DR250D

The dirt-only version of the SP250
has better suspension, but the
motor's on vacation

When dirt riders talk about the current crop of bikes that are available on the market, they usually talk about horsepower figures, weight bias and total weight, suspension travel and "trickness." Most dirt riders are concerned with how much a given model has improved over the previous year's model. Even more important is how much of a difference those improvements will make when stacked up against the competition. But the most important aspect that dirt riders discuss is whether or not the bike in question can perform above and beyond the rider's skill.

But this is only when dirt riders are talking about the "typical" motorcycle—and the Suzuki DR250D is not your typical, run-of-the-mill motorcycle.

To start with, it doesn't have an abundance of horsepower. The DR250D isn't exactly setting new records with its lightness, and suspension travel is on the short side. There is nothing "trick" about the bike; it isn't much different from last year's, and most riders will find its limits before they reach their own.

The Suzuki DR250D just isn't an exciting motorcycle. So what's the point, you're probably asking yourself. Why bother with the DR if it's really all that bad? Well, the point is, is that it isn't really all that bad.

While there isn't all that much in the motor for horsepower, if you keep your shift foot moving fast the bike can scoot down a trail pretty swiftly. At the speeds you'd use on the DR, the suspension is adequate and the handling acceptable. In short, it is a good play bike or an excellent beginner's bike.

PHOTO: RICH COX



DIRT RIDER SPECIFICATIONS

SUZUKI DR250D

Serial number Frame: JS10J41D2100304
 Price \$1,698
 Number of dealers (U.S.) 1,390
 Warranty None
 Customer service U.S. Suzuki
 3251 E. Imperial Hwy.
 Brea, CA 92621
 714/996-9540

Rear suspension Suzuki Full Floater
 with KYB shock,
 remote reservoir, 8.0 in.
 travel (measured)
 Brakes Drum
 Wheels Front: Takasago 1.60-21
 Rear: Takasago 2.15-18
 Tires ..Front: IRC Vulcanduro VE31, 3.00-21
 Rear: IRC Vulcanduro VE31, 5.10-18

Head \$196.56
 Clutch plates Friction—\$7.54 (5)
 Steel—\$3.94 (4)
 Air filter \$10.42
 Brake shoes Front—\$3.99 ea.
 Rear—\$3.99
 Chain \$70.25
 Seat \$80.37
 Fenders Front—\$34.21
 Rear—\$26.09
 Fuel tank \$125.36

ENGINE

Type Four-stroke, air cooled,
 over-head cam
 Displacement 249cc
 Bore x stroke 72 x 61.2mm
 Compression ratio 8.9:1
 Horsepower/rpm
 (measured) 15.6 @ 8,000 rpm
 Torque/rpm (measured) 11.0 @ 4,000 rpm
 Carburetion Mikuni VM28SS
 Exhaust Single, steel into steel
 spark arrester/silencer
 Ignition Suzuki Pointless
 Electronic Ignition (PEI)
 Lubrication Wet sump
 Air filtration Oiled polyurethane foam

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission Five-speed
 Primary drive 3.24:1 (gear)
 Final drive 3.23:1 (13/42)
 Gear ratios (internal) 1st 2.64:1
 2nd 1.75:1
 3rd 1.32:1
 4th 1.00:1
 5th 0.82:1

CHASSIS

Frame Steel, single down tube,
 stressed engine
 Rake/trail 28.5°/4.61 in.
 Front suspension 36mm telescopic fork,
 9.5 in. travel (measured)

MEASUREMENTS

Weight (wet, no fuel) 257 lbs.
 Weight (wet, tank full) 271 lbs.
 Weight distribution 116.5/140.5 lbs.
 (45/55%) (Fr/rr, wet, no fuel)
 Weight distribution 126/145 lbs.
 (46/54%) (Fr/rr, wet, tank full)
 Wheelbase 55.9 in.
 Fuel capacity 2.3 gal.
 Reserve capacity 0.3 gal.
 Sound test 9.5 dbA
 Ground clearance 12.6 in.
 Seat height 35 in.
 Swingarm length 22 in.
 Swingarm pivot
 to center of countershaft 3.3 in.

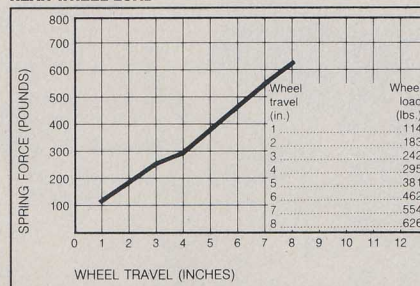
PARTS/COST

Maintenance manual N.A.
 Carburetor jets Main—\$2.32
 Pilot—\$2.32
 Needle—\$3.56
 Needle jet—\$5.31
 Sprockets Front—\$13.34
 Rear—\$40.16
 Handlebar levers Right—\$8.99
 Left—\$7.73
 Shift lever \$14.20
 Piston kit (complete) \$26.38 (piston only)
 Rings only \$20.29
 Cylinder \$106.07

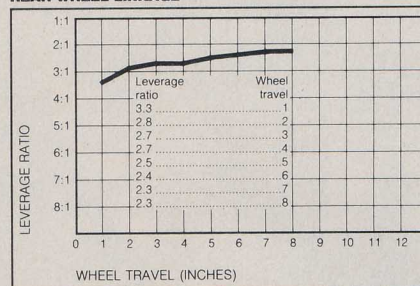
OPTIONS

None

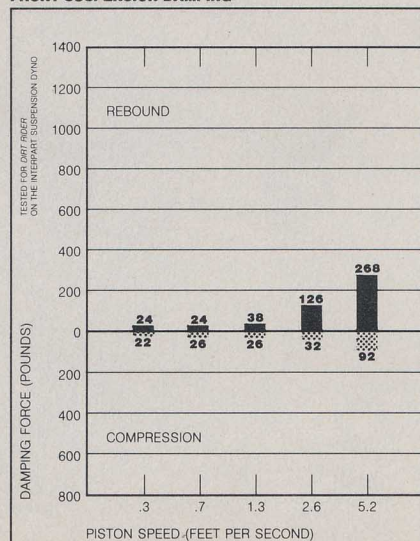
REAR WHEEL LOAD



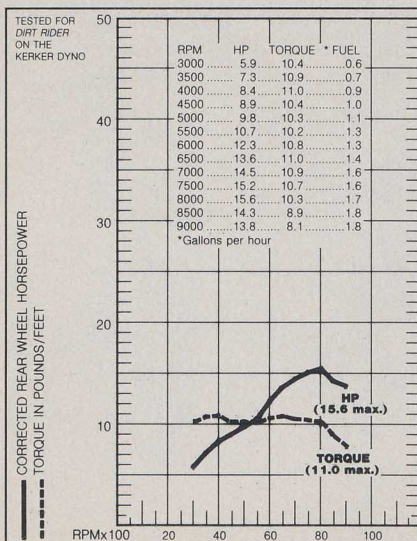
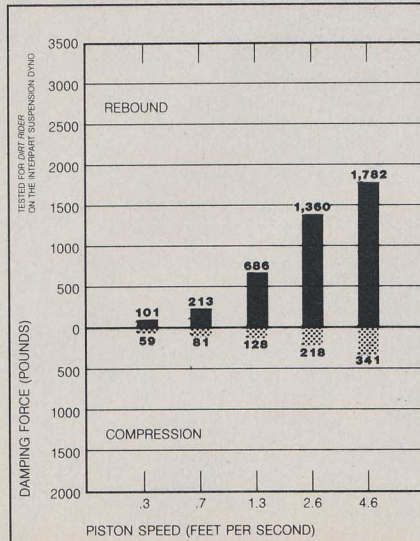
REAR WHEEL LINKAGE

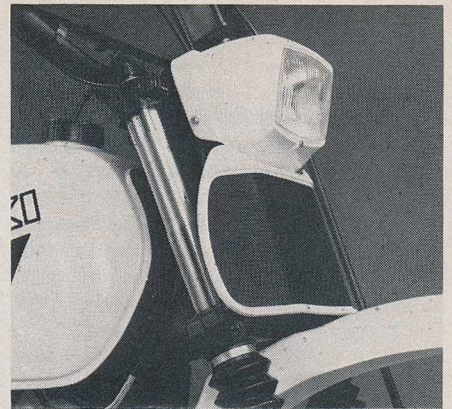


FRONT SUSPENSION DAMPING

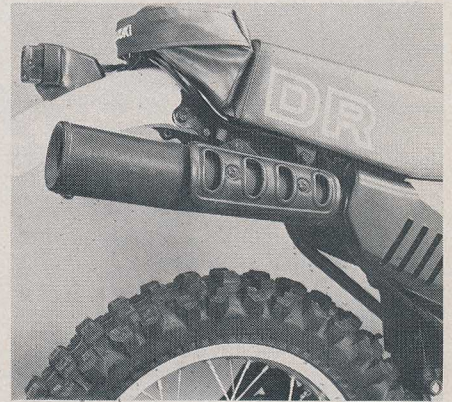


REAR SUSPENSION DAMPING

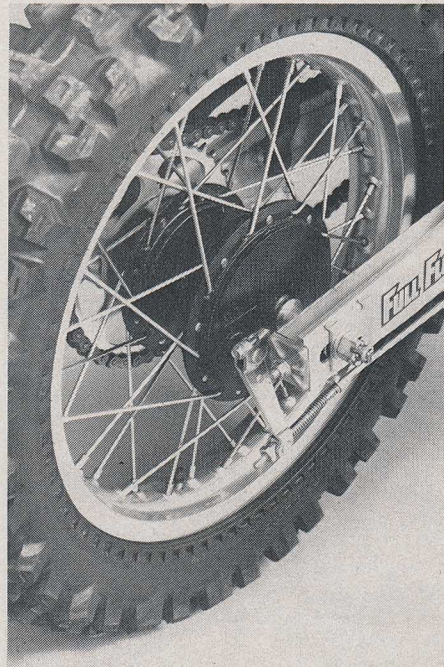




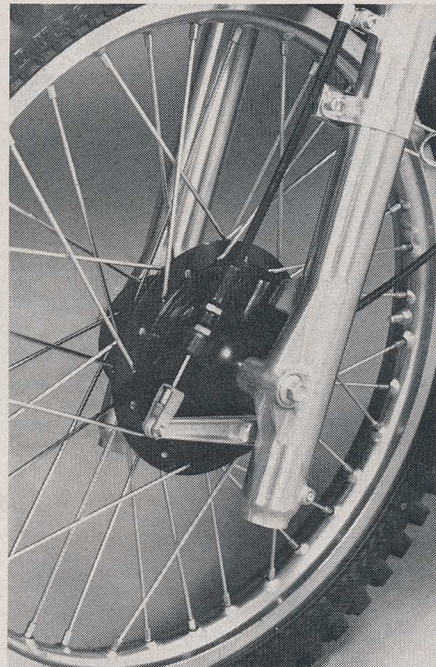
Tool kit is hidden behind the number plate. Plate hinges up so the light isn't in the way.



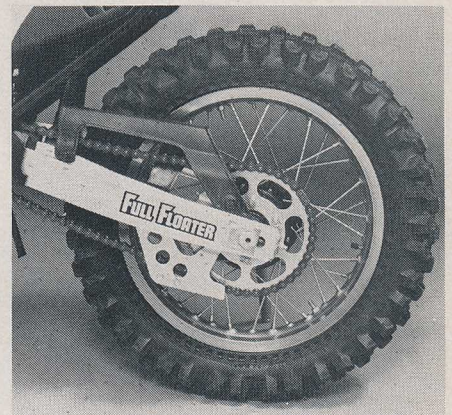
The DR is quiet and sports a U.S. Forest Service-approved spark arrester.



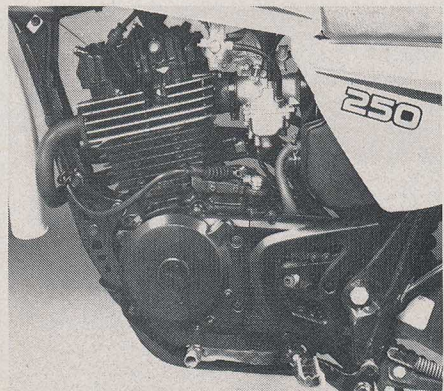
Rear wheel assembly is strong enough to take just about anything you can dish out.



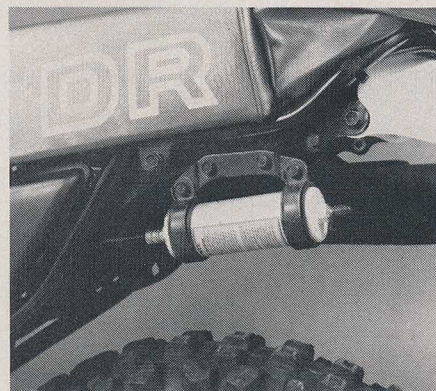
Front suspension worked fine for trail riding. It even did okay when flogged.



Rear end stayed straight through some pretty rough terrain.



The DR250's motor doesn't exactly pack a powerful punch. It's more like a limp slap.



The DR's KYB shock includes a remote reservoir for those who ride it fast enough to care.

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

While some might feel there is nothing technically to speak of on the DR250D, it does have some modern features. Suzuki's Twin Swirl Combustion Chamber is the featured item on the 249cc, four-stroke engine. Suzuki says this makes for a cleaner-running engine.

The kickstarter on the DR250 is longer than most and gives the bike a reputation for being an easy starter. It kicks over very easily and is usually started within three kicks. If it hasn't started by then, you'd better start looking for trouble.

The single spark plug is located within easy reach on the left side of the head. The DR has dual exhaust pipe headers

that combine into a single steel spark arrester/silencer combination. The spark arrester/silencer isn't one of those garbage can-size ones, either. It looks more like a tuned exhaust than a boat anchor.

A manual compression release is provided to make starting even easier. A small lever on the left side of the handlebars actuates the compression release. To use it properly, first pull the compression release lever all the way in. Next, push the kickstarter down slowly until the compression release lever clicks back to its home position. Now bring your foot back up and kick it through the full swing. Once you get used to the ritual, it isn't that time consuming and is almost effortless. What a pleasure.

Once you get the motor started, you won't have to worry about holding all those ponies back. The single most noticeable trait of the Suzuki DR250D is its lack of horsepower. Most people snicker when they hear that a motorcycle with a displacement of 249cc puts out only 15.6 horsepower maximum at 8,000 rpm. Although the DR250D holds a 50cc advantage over the Honda XR200R, it only shows 0.9 more horsepower on the dyno. In fact, when comparing the dyno chart of the DR250D with the dyno chart of next month's test bike, the Honda XR200R, it is surprising how similar their powerbands are. At 3,500 rpm, the Honda puts out 6.0 horsepower while the Suzuki nudges ahead with 7.3 horsepower. The Honda's maximum horsepower (14.7) comes at 8,500 rpm, while the Suzuki's maximum (15.6) comes slightly lower at 8,000 rpm. Neither could be termed cammy or hard to ride.

Torque readings are a different story, however. The XR200R started out at 3,500 rpm with 9.0 lb./ft. of torque, while the DR250 started out at 3,000 rpm with 10.4 lb./ft. The one significant difference between the two motors is that while the XR200 puts out its maximum torque (10.2) at 7,000 rpm, the DR250 puts out its maximum (11.0) all the way down at 4,000 rpm. The DR250 puts out the same 11.0 lb./ft. at 6,500 rpm.

So what does this mean? It means that the Suzuki DR250D, a bike that is sometimes called lame, has more torque than a Honda XR200R. But wait, you say, doesn't everybody go on and on about how wonderful those XR200s are and how they can climb trees because of their grunt? Yes, they do say that, and yes, it's true. Before you start to wonder why the DR250 isn't a better woods bike than the XR200, take a look at the spec page for the DR. Look down the second column until you come to the subhead "Measurements." What's the first thing you notice? Weight. What's the first thing you notice when you ride the DR250? Weight.

A paltry 0.9 horsepower and 0.8 lb./ft. of torque is insignificant when the bike is 30.5 pounds heavier. With a full tank of gas, the Suzuki weighs in at 271 pounds. With an empty tank, the DR is still no light-

weight at 257 pounds. Compare this to the XR's wet weight of 240 pounds and dry weight of 226 pounds and you can see why the DR250 isn't favored over the XR200 as a woods bike.

Weight placement on the Suzuki keeps the front end feeling light, a good feeling for any beginner. With a full tank of gas, the front end carries 46 percent of the weight while the rear end holds 54 percent. As fuel is used, the front end becomes slightly lighter.

Keeping all that weight from feeling like a ton of bricks is the adequate Suzuki suspension. The rear end features the Suzuki Full Floater system with a KYB shock. A remote reservoir is mounted on the left side of the bike, alongside the seat. The spring tested out to be 384 pounds per inch with 261 pounds of preload at the installed length of 10.1 inches. Free length of the spring is 10.8 inches.

The rear wheel linkage on the DR is surprisingly similar to Suzuki's RM125 motocross bike which we tested in the June issue of *Dirt Rider*. The RM started out with a leverage ratio of 3.5:1 while the DR starts out at 3.3:1. At the second inch of travel, the RM's ratio drops 0.4 to 3.1:1 while the DR drops 0.5 to 2.8:1. From then on, both bikes' ratios drop gradually until their last inch of travel, but that's where the difference between the two bikes really becomes apparent. At the RM125's last inch of travel (the 12th) its leverage ratio drops 0.3 while the DR's ratio doesn't change at all. At the first

inch of travel, the DR has a lighter wheel load than the Honda XR350R, another mid-size four-stroke. At the second inch of travel, the two bikes have almost exactly the same wheel load. By the third inch of travel, the DR250 starts to get a little stiffer (242 pounds compared to 223 pounds). The difference continues to widen until the eighth inch of travel (the last inch for the DR, the next-to-last inch for the XR) where the two are separated by 127 pounds of wheel load. What's interesting, though, is that the XR's last inch of travel (the ninth) has a wheel load figure of 637 pounds, which is only 11 pounds more than the DR250D at its last inch of travel. So, basically, the Suzuki has the same type of wheel load curve, only with one inch less travel.

The 36mm KYB fork could be a lot better, but we find it hard to complain too loudly about it since the intended use of this bike doesn't include double jumps and 110-mph Baja rides. Still, the fork is a little too soft for the rest of the bike. The compression damping on the fork is half that of the XR350R until the final reading of 5.2 feet per second on the dyno. At that point, the DR250 is still softer than the XR350. Rebound damping is softer on the DR until 2.6 feet per second is reached. At that point, the DR has a lot more damping than the XR. At 2.6 feet per second, the DR showed 126 pounds of damping force while the XR showed only 86 pounds. At a dyno speed of 5.3 feet per second, the XR showed 230

OPINIONS

For just goofing around, doing little wheelies and jumps, climbing hills and skidding around, I'd give Suzuki's DR250D a B-minus. To improve it, there are several things I'd like to see. One is more power, plain and simple. As is, the DR barely has enough steam to wheelie well, though what power it does have is widely spread.

Another item that could be better is the suspension. I like Full Floaters, but the system on the DR bottoms too harshly on big stuff. The front isn't quite as bad.

At least the DR sits low, which is comforting and a refreshing change. (Curiously, the levers are made for extra-large hands.) The low seat height and overpowering rear brake (in contrast to the wimpy front binder) make for fun slides.

—Mark Kariya

Age/Ht./Wt.: 26/5'10"/160 lbs.
Motorcycle(s) currently raced/ridden:
Kawasaki KX250C1, Jawa DT500,
Yamaha RD350H
Riding ability: Intermediate motocrosser

No thanks, I'd rather walk. It's not that the Suzuki DR250D isn't any fun at all, it's just that it could be so much *more* fun that I'm reminded of it each time I hit a bump or try to throw it into a turn.

The DR is too heavy and too slow. This

thing can barely get out of its own way. The potential is there, though, for a real killer, four-stroke machine.

With about twice the horsepower, more suspension travel, and less weight, the DR250 would be a lot of fun.

—Willy Simons

Age/Ht./Wt.: 21/5'7½"/150 lbs.
Motorcycle(s) currently raced/ridden:
Honda CR250R
Riding ability: Expert pro motocrosser

Boring? Not the DR250! Just because the motor is lame doesn't mean that the whole bike is a dud. Look how many people ride XR200Rs and have a great time.

The DR250 has about the same power as an XR200R, and the DR actually handles nicely. It doesn't have a lot of suspension travel, but the bike works in harmony on a tight, nasty trail.

The seat height is very low, so it might be the perfect beginning dirt bike. Engine maintenance is easy and you can't forget the pump. Just fill 'er up at the pump.

—Bob Carpenter

Age/Ht./Wt.: 23/5'9"/185 lbs.
Motorcycle(s) currently raced/ridden:
Yamaha YZ490K, Honda CR480R
Riding ability: Intermediate motocrosser



pounds while the DR climbed to 268 pounds of force.

Each fork carries an 18-lb./in. spring that is 22.1 inches long, uninstalled. The DR has a 3.7-inch spacer that goes on top of the spring.

The rear brake is a single-leading shoe arrangement that has a rod-actuated brake arm. The brake's backing plate is held securely by a flat, metal arm that is not full-floating. That means less maintenance to worry about.

The chain on the DR250D is well protected. It runs on a slider on the front part of the swingarm and shows very good wear characteristics. Toward the back of the swingarm is a plastic chain guard on the top and an aluminum guide on the bottom. The swingarm itself is of box-section aluminum, just like the real Suzuki racer-bikes.

A blue bag rests on top of the rear fender, just behind the seat. It has a plastic base that is pop-riveted to a metal

brace which is mounted onto the frame. There are no tools in the bag because they are hidden elsewhere. The headlight/number plate combination is arranged with the headlight on the top and the number plate on the bottom. Suzuki has seen fit to create a number-plate section with hinging action so that the standard-issue Suzuki tool kit can be securely stored and hidden behind the innocent-looking plate.

ON THE GAS

Some of our testers thought the Suzuki's horsepower was securely stored and hidden, too. Everybody who hopped on the DR and took it for a quick spin came back disappointed with the performance of the single-cylinder four-stroke. Not one tester came back from a ride and said the Suzuki was exciting.

That's fine; we didn't expect it to overwhelm anybody. But we had to send some of the testers back out on the trail for longer rides so they could develop lesser expectations and evaluate the bike for what it is. The DR250D is a trail bike—period. It isn't a dual-purpose bike, an enduro mount, or a motocrosser.

The DR has to be looked at in perspective to be looked at fairly at all. First, it's a four-stroke and that puts it in a different category than most bikes, and, second, it's basically a fun bike.

If you compare the DR250 to an XR200 on the trail, you might be surprised. The DR, as already mentioned, has about the same amount of power as the XR, but an even wider spread of torque. This means that trail riding on the DR can be even easier than trail riding on the XR200R.

The weight of the DR is the main factor to consider when comparing the DR to the XR200. The 200R is easier to throw around and flick through trail turns than the DR250. If you compare the DR250 to the XR350, you'll find that it doesn't have anywhere near the horsepower or torque. The 36mm fork on the DR is too wimpy when the riding gets serious. The softness of the fork can either be lived with or improved upon with heavier-grade oil, but the flex is going to stay there forever. The DR250 and the XR350 weigh almost exactly the same, yet the DR has a lighter front end.

One thing that is obvious the first time you sit on the DR250 is that it sits low. The seat height of 35 inches is exactly the same as the low rider XR.

While the Suzuki DR250D may not possess the latest in technological advancements and certainly doesn't win any horsepower contests, it is a *fun* trail bike. It would be an excellent choice for a beginner because as the speed on the trails picks up, the DR can handle it.

In fact, the old, cocky XR rider just might find a rapidly improving beginner on a DR250 nipping at his rear tire on the trail. At that point the beginner *needs* the XR, and the experienced rider hopes the new guy can't get one.

DR