

THE SUZUKI PE_s

SUZUKI PE250T

The Factory Finally Got Serious . . . And It Paid Off.

Since its introduction some four years ago, we've grown to admire and respect the Suzuki PE250's steadfast reliability and generally pleasing personality. Unfortunately, most "serious" competitors will admit that it has never quite lived up to their expectations as a hardcore, gold-medal winner. Blame the suspension if you will, the lack of certain enduro "delicacies," or the rather weak-lunged engine—but the true fact of the matter is that Suzuki has never totally committed themselves to fully enduro-izing the 250. What effort they did expend was usually funneled toward their smaller, more competitive 175.

This year's 250T marks a substantial change in philosophy for Suzuki: they've finally decided to get serious with their mid-sized PE. Consequently you'll find that the 250T is practically a whole new package, sporting many RM-T motocross components, along with the latest enduro trickery perfected in the battlefield by their factory enduro team. Just how serious did Suzuki get you ask? Well, the new quick-change rear wheel assembly (detailed in the 400 test) is unquestionably the slickest set-up we've seen in a long time. Even a two-fingered chimp could remove it in a half-minute. Then again there's the new straight-pull throttle—an exclusive to the PE series. They're a spitting image of the Magura throttle, using plastic bevel gears to make the 90-degree turn. Another reflection of their seriousness is the smaller competition-size 2.8-gallon plastic tank (last year's had a 3.2-gallon capacity). It does aid maneuverability, but unfortunately at the playrider's expense since this PE only has a range of about 70 miles. Those anticipating longer excursions might start looking for a larger tank.

In the enduro business "getting serious" means adopting motocross

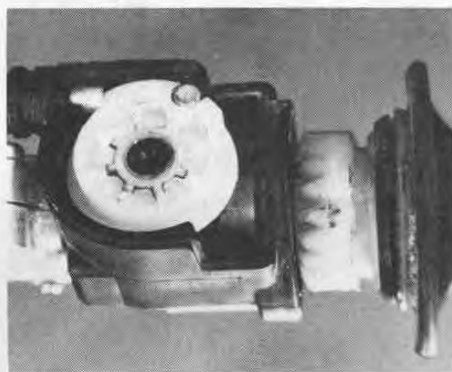
components as quickly as possible—and you'll find the 250T runs almost parallel with the latest RM-T. It has the RM's FIM numberpanels, the longer-and-wider RM-styled fenders, the same basic aluminum swingarm and the MXer's full-width front hub. The PE-T also incorporates the RM250's latest frame and engine case designs which place the engine closer to the swingarm pivot to reduce fluctuations in chain tension. All the PEs are fitted with a similar assortment of plastic chain guides and rollers. Although we didn't experience any derailment problems, we were annoyed with the amount of

noise the chain creates as it scrapes and clangs through its guides. We weren't too crazy about the new aluminum chain guide either: it adds to the racket and is susceptible to shedding its many pieces if the nuts and bolts aren't secured with Loc-Tite beforehand. The whole affair seems sloppy and makes these PEs sound like they're self-destructing.

Considering all the trick new gadgetry, the RM-T has come a long way. Now, if it was substantially lighter and more maneuverable, we'd really be excited—but it isn't. At 259 pounds (just two pounds under last year's bike) the T-model still weighs in like a big, burly open-class machine. Most riders won't find that an overwhelming burden, but unfortunately the T's seat height will be, since it towers 37.2 inches above the earth. From that height we found it difficult to negotiate slippery streambeds and marbly uphill, and concluded that the 250's appeal as a playbike, especially for short-legged novices, was reduced considerably. However for the seasoned veteran the PE-T does offer a side benefit in this skyscraping trend: it has the RM's taller bolt-on pegs and a two-inch increase in ground clearance which is a blessing when avoiding sharp, foot-grabbing obstacles.

Fortunately though, the 250T hasn't lost any of its familiar trail-going predictability. The new front





Straight-pull throttle is a nifty design but since it is all plastic we're still skeptical over its long-range durability. Handgrip is actually *vulcanized* to the barrel so replacement is really quite a hassle.



All the PEs use identical chain guides—a complicated contraption that makes more racket than a blender full of marbles. We suggest you Loctite all the nuts and bolts, or they'll end up scattered all over.

brake is progressively strong, as is the rear. And although the rear (not a floater) will chatter slightly while braking hard through sharp ripples, rear wheel lock-ups and slide-outs are a rarity. Like past PE250s—which also had long wheelbases pushing 57 inches—the T-model isn't the quickest turner, the most agile or the most maneuverable goat on the mountain. But the steering still remains sharp and accurate, thanks in part to Suzuki's constant fiddling with steering geometry. In '78 the PE's head angle measured 29.5 degrees; in '79 it was bumped to 30 degrees for a bit more high-speed stability; and now, due to the T's taller suspension, they've reverted back to 29.5 degrees. This year the lower triple clamp is also beefed up to help counteract the

twisting forces of longer forks.

At first glance the familiar-looking 246cc case-reed engine appears to be the same aging plowhorse Suzuki has been flogging for the past three years. But believe us, it isn't. This one has some real steam, and it comes by way of some very minor modifications. First there's the RM250T's new cylinder head (which has boosted the compression ratio) and the latest RM expansion chamber body. Inside the barrel they've fiddled with the porting, switching to six independent transfer ports—the old barrel had Siamese ports. There's also new stainless steel reeds (they were fiber material previously) and the reed cage has been redesigned to allow the reeds to move more freely, aiding induction. Finally, the

diameter of the magneto rotor has been enlarged by 12mm to help increase flywheel inertia.

This engine feels a lot stronger than the factory's claimed two-horsepower increase would indicate. The primary reason for this is because the 250T boasts an all new *six-speed* gearbox. This new gearset features a taller first gear ratio with third through sixth packed tighter together. The new box has completely eliminated the former bogging between gears and lets the 250T really charge aggressively through the top three gears. The PE still has a good top-speed potential and a reasonable amount of low-speed grunt, but we do think first gear is a bit too tall: it makes clutch slipping almost a necessity when scratching up steep, rocky switchbacks. Otherwise the gearbox ratios are matched perfectly and transmit every bit of the PE's available power. We thought the larger 5.10-18 rear Bridgestone knobby might provide too much bite, but the 250 churns it forcefully, without a hint of strain.

To keep up with the Jones, the 250 naturally received a bump in suspension. Last year the front end stroked 9.1 inches; this year the new *air-assisted* forks pump out 9.8 inches. They're basically smaller 36mm versions of those on the RM-T with slightly reduced travel. Fork action is fairly soft and responsive and capable of filtering out most sharp bumps quite effectively. With the air-assist they are more tunable this year and can be dialed-in to suit most everyone's type of riding. Out back Suzuki has increased rear wheel travel from 9.2 inches to a generous 10.1 inches by a simple manipulation of the leverage ratio. The increased travel at both ends definitely offers this PE-T more stability and a better cushioning effect when pounding through deep washouts or landing from skyscraping jumps, but at higher speeds in rougher terrain the quality of the rear suspension is still short of being serious. The Kayaba shocks haven't been improved much over last year and still dish out a rather harsh ride which has the back end pounding from one bump to another. They'll provide adequate performance for the playrider (as they always have) but serious top-notch competitors will probably trash-can them immediately.

Suzuki has pretty much fulfilled their goals with this 250. It now has the full complement of enduro trickery it needed and a potent engine to match. There's no question it has elevated itself to more serious ranks. All it needs is a little suspension tuning and you'll be right in there with the big sluggers. **M**

THE SUZUKI PE_s



SUZUKI PE175T



SUZUKI PE250T



SUZUKI PE400T

TEST BIKE	SUZUKI PE175T	SUZUKI PE250T	SUZUKI PE400T
Suggested retail price	\$1379.....	\$1759.....	\$1899
Warranty	None.....	None.....	None
Number of U.S. dealers	1450.....	1450.....	1450
Cost of shop manual	Included.....	Included.....	Included
ENGINE			
Type	Two-stroke case-reed single.....	Two-stroke case-reed single.....	Two-stroke case-reed single
Displacement	172cc.....	246cc.....	397cc
Bore x stroke	62 x 57mm.....	67 x 70mm.....	85 x 70mm
Compression	7.6:1.....	7.7:1.....	7.3:1
Carburetion	1, 34mm Mikuni slide needle.....	1,36mm Mikuni slide needle.....	1, 36mm Mikuni slide needle
Ignition	PEI (pointless).....	PEI (pointless).....	PEI (pointless)
Lubrication	Premix.....	Premix.....	Premix
Air filter	Oiled foam.....	Oiled foam.....	Oiled foam
Battery	None.....	None.....	None
DRIVETRAIN			
Primary transmission	Straight-cut gear, 2.761:1.....	Straight-cut gear, 2.727:1.....	Straight-cut gear, 2.280:1
Clutch	13 plates, wet.....	9 plates, wet.....	11 plates, wet
Final drive	5/8 x 1/4 (No. 520) D.I.D., 48/12.....	5/8 x 1/4 (No. 520), 52/13.....	5/8 x 1/4 (No. 520) D.I.D., 46/15
CHASSIS			
Fork	36mm Kayaba, 9.84 in. travel.....	36mm Kayaba, 9.84 in. travel.....	36mm Kayaba, 9.8 in. travel
Shocks	Kayaba gas/oil, 9.7 in. travel.....	Kayaba gas/oil, 10.1 in. travel.....	Kayaba gas/oil, 10.1 in. travel
Front tire	3.00-21 Bridgestone MX M19.....	3.00-21 Bridgestone MX M19.....	3.00-21 Dunlop Sports K290
Rear tire	4.00-18 Bridgestone MX M20.....	5.10-18 Bridgestone MX M20.....	5.10-18 Dunlop Sports K290
Rake/trail	29.9°/5.04 in. (128mm).....	29.5°/4.92 in. (125mm).....	29.5°/4.92 in. (125mm)
Wheelbase	56.3 in. (1430mm).....	56.9 in. (1445mm).....	56.9 in. (1445mm)
Seat height	36.0 in. (914mm).....	37.25 in. (946mm).....	37.25 in. (946mm)
Ground clearance	12.2 in. (310mm).....	12.5 in. (317mm).....	12.5 in. (317mm)
Fuel capacity	2.8 gal. (10.6 liters).....	2.8 gal. (10.6 liters).....	2.8 gal. (10.6 liters)
Wet weight	241 lbs. (109kg).....	259 lbs. (117kg).....	268 lbs. (121kg)
Colors	Yellow.....	Yellow.....	Yellow
Instruments	Tripmeter resettable by tenths.....	Tripmeter resettable by tenths.....	Tripmeter resettable by tenths
PERFORMANCE			
Power to weight ratio	10.8 lbs./hp.....	9.16 lbs./hp.....	7.82 lbs./hp
Mileage & approx. range	20 mpg average, 56 miles.....	25 mpg average, 70 miles.....	16.9 mpg average, 47 miles
RPM at 60 mph in top gear	7603.....	6413.....	5485
Speed in gears at (redline)	(9000) 1st 20.1 mph; 2nd 28.0 mph; 3rd 37.7 mph; 4th 47.8 mph; 5th 59.4 mph; 6th 71.0 mph.....	(8000) 1st 23.8 mph 2nd 32.5 mph; 3rd 42.1 mph; 4th 51.9 mph; 5th 62.9 mph; 6th 74.8 mph.....	(7000) 1st 29.0 mph; 2nd 38.3 mph; 3rd 49.0 mph; 4th 62.6 mph; 5th 76.5 mph