



NOT JUST ANOTHER YELLOW TANK

SUZUKI PE175X

A host of minor changes add up to a major improvement

The hot word on this year's PE175 was no word at all. From all of our casual inquiries, we got the same answer: The PE would have a few new details on it, but no major changes in the engine or suspension. If there was anything radically wrong with the 1980 PE, this would have been upsetting news; but, as a matter of fact, we liked last year's bike quite a bit. So, that's great; no major changes; no great excitement. We would wait and then test it later on in the year.

Okay, fine.

Soon, the time came to test the new PE. We really paid very little attention to it because, after all, it was the same bike, right?

Eventually, we took it out for its first ride and gave it the once-over as we unloaded it from the truck. The graphics were different, and, what's this? There's no skid plate this year! Instead, there is a pair of Six Days-type bash bars welded to the lower frame tubes. One of our test riders sidled up, and we asked him for any comments. He said the pipe looked like a bathysphere. Hmmm. He also said the silencer looked like a bathysphere.

Obviously, what we had before us was a test rider with a deep-sea exploration fetish.

References to underwater sports aside, we gassed up and went for a break-in ride. First off, we noticed the bars were weird. They seemed to be pulled back too far and didn't allow the rider to sit as forward as he should. Personal gripe. Some people might like the bars.

We can't think of anyone who'd like the seat, though. It's the same seat as last year and it still has a couple of problems. For one thing, its shape is too square. When you're sitting down (and you only notice the seat when you're sitting down. Odd, isn't it?), the edges of the seat can be felt pushing on the inside of your thighs.

On a long ride this can become quite uncomfortable. Also, for long-legged riders, the seat is too short. Some of our taller testers suffered taillight bruises on the butt after a trip through the whoopdies. A couple more inches in length and some rounded edges would improve things a bunch.

Neither the shift lever nor the rear brake pedal have folding tips. This should come as no surprise, as we've

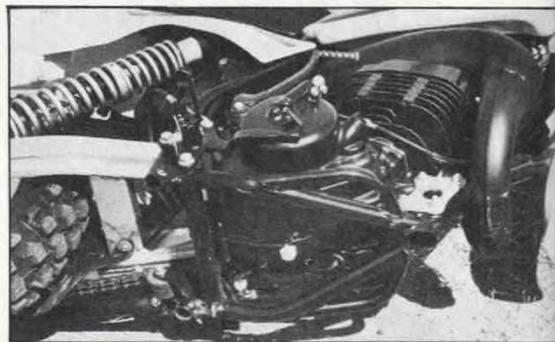
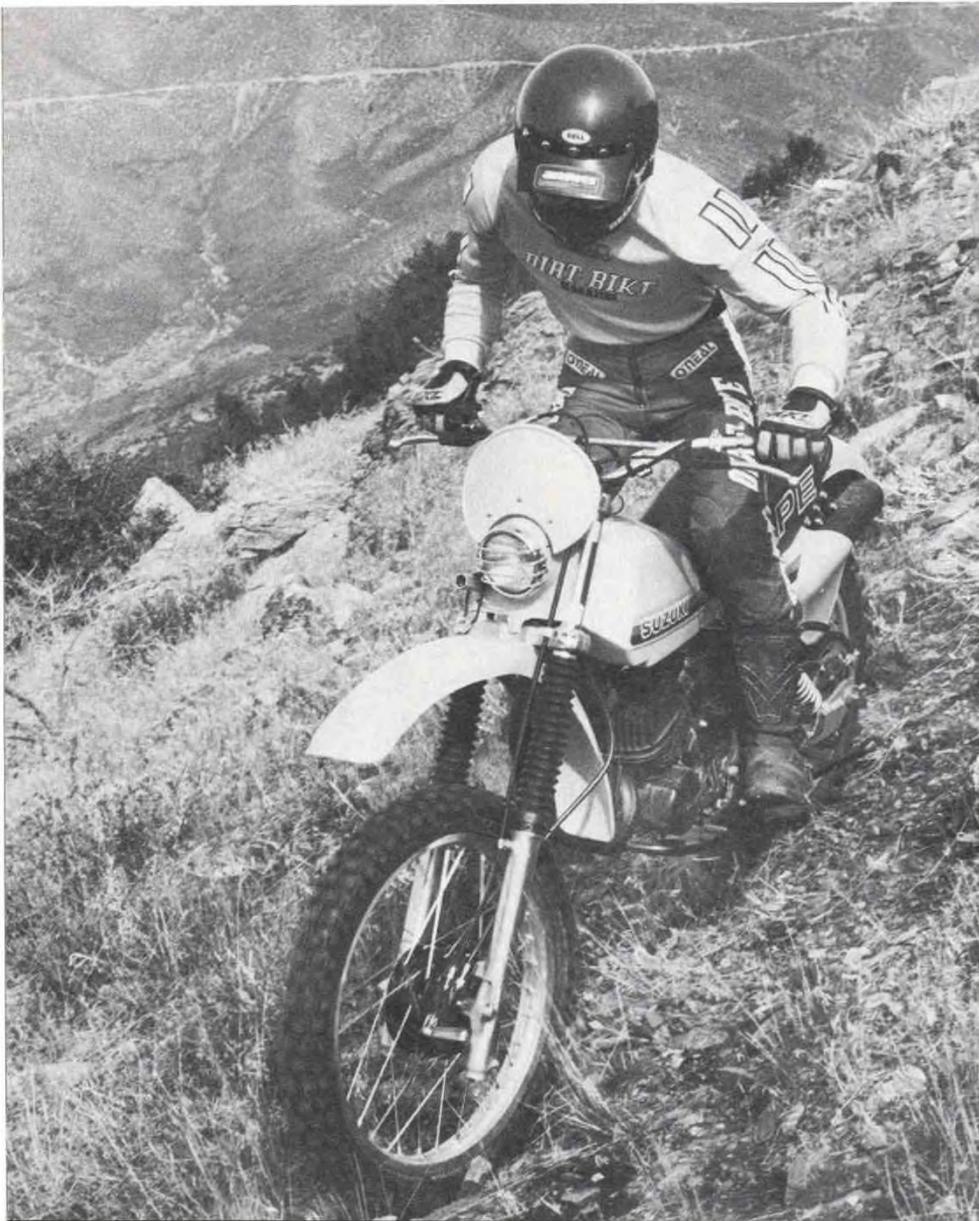
been telling you this for two years. Suzuki must have a warehouse full of those shift levers, and maybe once they use them up, we'll get something new.

We spent a little while tooling around, getting the feel of things and letting the motor loosen up a little; then came back, gassed up, and went for a real ride.

It didn't take long until we started



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Rather than using a skid plate this year, the PE has Six Days-type bash bars. The underside of the cases could be better protected.



Rear wheel is the same quick-change item as last year's; a nice touch. Shocks are okay, but springing is a little stiff.



Front forks were a little harsh when new; tires could be better.



The '81 motor is not the same as last year's. Improved porting has resulted in a much better powerband.

noticing odd things. The power delivery felt good on the PE. Actually, it felt good on last year's bike, but the odd part was that this bike felt better. A whole lot better; and that's unusual for an engine that's supposed to be unchanged. Granted, it'd been a long time since we rode an '80 175, but we were having less trouble on steep hills, and the bike seemed to make more power all the way up to redline. Hmm. More torque and better top end. What's the story here?

Later on, we made a phone call to U.S. Suzuki and found out a number of interesting things. Yes, there were a few changes inside the motor. Most notable were lowering the exhaust port one millimeter and the use of a thicker head gasket to lower the compression ratio a tad. Also, the pipe has been changed internally and the muffler redesigned for better breathing. This allowed the jetting to be leaned out slightly; what we wound up with was a

powerband even easier to live with than last year's. Not too shabby for an unchanged machine.

At the same time, we found out the rims are a new type, reputed to be about 15-percent stronger than the old ones; and the spokes had been beefed up one size. It never hurts to strengthen up the wheels.

We also had the bash bars pointed out to us again and, although they look like they'll do a good job of protecting the side cases, the underside of the engine is left completely unprotected. This is not good. We returned last year's PE with a big dent right in the middle of the skid plate. We feel that if Suzuki wanted to go with bars this year, they should have run one more along the bottom, centered on the engine. It would have made a lot more sense.

Back to the riding. We had no major complaints on the suspension of last year's bike, and near as we can tell, it's the same for 1981. The forks are air adjustable and deliver 9.8 inches of decent travel. There is nothing awe-inspiring about these forks—they soak up nasty terrain without feeling harsh, but then they're not what you would call plush, either. Just good, average forks; no bad habits, no surprises.

The rear shocks seem to be tuned right in to the action of the forks, although a few of the testers complained that they may be a bit stiff. Our bike is still relatively new, and it'll take a little more time for the shocks to get completely broken in, but it's always better to have a suspension set up on the firm side, rather than too soft.

On the days we rode the PE, there was good traction and cool weather, and the PE couldn't have been happier. The bike handled perfectly in both the wet and dry stuff and was very easy to thread through tight trails at moderately high speeds. Because of the wide powerband, the 175 is also easy to wrestle around obstacles at a crawl; like picking your way through rocky stream beds and such.

The only handling problem we had came when we were braking hard into a choppy turn. While the rear brake was very difficult to lock up, we did notice quite a bit of hopping around in the stutter-bumps. The hopping does not render the PE uncontrollable, just uncomfortable. We expect it to be-

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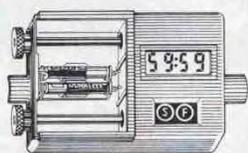
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SUZUKI PE175X

come less of a problem once the shocks loosen up some.

Wheelbase on the PE, at 56.3 inches, is short compared to a KDX, but right about average compared to everyone else. The only place the 56-inch wheelbase becomes noticeable is when climbing hills. The ultra-long KDX can climb up the nastiest slope with zero front-wheel lift; not so with the PE. This bike *likes* to do wheelies, but does so predictably, and not with a lurch like an IT. Just pay attention to it when chugging up a hill and you'll

have no problems.

Bits and pieces

The shocks are laid down and covered with spiffy side panels, but they still stick out rather far at the top mount. When you stand up on the PE, the bulges hit right at the top of your boot and force your legs apart, making the pegs feel like they're too close together. This, the shape of the seat, and the bend of the handlebars need improvement before the PE can be truly comfortable.

The air box is large, with a lot of



SUZUKI PE175X

Name and model	Suzuki PE175X
Engine type	Air-cooled, two-stroke
Bore and stroke	.62mm x 57mm
Displacement	172cc
Horsepower (claimed)	N/A
Carburetion	34mm Mikuni
Factory recommended jetting:	
Main jet	250
Needle jet	6DP17-3
Jet needle	R3
Pilot jet	25
Slide number	2.0
Recommended gasoline	Premium
Fuel tank capacity	10.6 liters (2.8 gallons)
Fuel tank material	Plastic
Lubrication	Pre-mix
Recommended oil	Suzuki CCI
Oil capacity, transmission	900cc (.95 quart)
Air filtration	Oiled foam
Clutch type	Wet, multi-plate
Transmission	Six-speed
Gearbox ratios:	
1	3.090:1
2	2.214:1
3	1.647:1
4	1.300:1
5	1.045:1
6	0.875:1
Gearing, front/rear	48/12
Ignition	CDI
Primary kick system?	Yes
Recommended spark plug	NGK B10EGV
Silencer/spark arrestor/quality	Yes, yes, very quiet
Exhaust system	Up-pipe, through frame
Frame, type	Single downtube, cradle
Wheelbase	1430mm (56.3 inches)

Ground clearance	320mm (12.6 inches)
Seat height	35.5 inches
Steering head angle (rake)	29.5 degrees
Trail	128mm (5.04 inches)
Weight with one gallon gas	230 pounds
Rim material	Aluminum alloy
Tire size and type:	
Front	3.00x21 Bridgestone M19 (9.8 inches)
Rear	4.00x18 Bridgestone M20 (9.7 inches)
Suspension, type and travel:	
Front	Air/oil Kayaba forks, 250mm (9.8 inches)
Rear	Lay-down Kayaba gas shocks, 247mm (9.7 inches)
Intended use	
Country of origin	Off-road, enduro
Retail price, approx.	Japan 4.57
Distributor:	\$1479
Parts prices, high-wear items:	
Piston assembly, complete	\$25.24
Rings only	15.26
Cylinder	132.44
Shift lever	4.57
Brake pedal	12.83
Front sprocket	N/A
Overall rating, 0 to 100, various categories, keeping intended use of machine in mind:	
Handling	94
Suspension	92
Power	96
Cost	95
Attention to detail	94
Effectiveness, stone stock	96

breathing area, and has a large, round cap on the top to aid waterproofing. If wetness isn't a problem in your area, we'd be willing to bet that a little more horsepower is available to the person who removes that cap and then rejects the carb.

The silencer is huge and heavy and also very quiet; it doesn't really resemble a bathysphere at all.

Up at the bars, there's a set of standard hand levers. Nothing to shout about, but this year they're mounted on split perches, making replacement possible without pulling off the grips.

A high/low beam headlight is mounted in plastic up front, and it's on all the time. If you wanted to shut it off, you can either break it or install a switch.

That straight pull throttle assembly has a quick-change cable feature and is a joy to work on.

Suzuki supplies a small odometer on the PE, with the drive located in the brake backing plate. Even though these odometers look small and flimsy, they are just about the best you can get. We use them on nearly every one of our personal enduro bikes and find them to be extremely durable and accurate. They'll also work on any of the top Japanese enduro bikes with no modifications.

The extruded aluminum swingarm is very strong and light, but ours had some lousy-looking welds in it. There is a grease fitting in the pivot area for lubing the needle bearings.

We told you about the quick-change rear wheel last year, but we'll go over it one more time: pull the axle out, remove the right side spacer, and the wheel comes right off in your arms. The brake hub, backing plate and sprocket assembly remain firmly attached to the left side of the swingarm. Nice system.

The bottom line

What can we say? We had a few snivels about the PE, but there was nothing so radically wrong that we wouldn't buy the bike ourselves. It doesn't have the horsepower or top speed stability of the Kawasaki KDX, but it does have all you need to get the job done—without the suspension maintenance hassles of Big Green.

Simplicity, that's the word. If you want a bike you can ride and not worry about, it looks like the PE is the one for you. □

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