

THE DRESDA LIGHTWEIGHT

THE oldest, and most effective, form of tuning is to add lightness. Dave Degens embodies in his Dresda lightweights precisely this approach, and the Suzuki replacement for the Dresda Triumph as his mainstay is a typical example of performance gained by weight removed. An exhaustive study of all the available motor/gearbox units on the market singled out the Suzuki 500 as the best all-round bet. This unit is not distinguished by its light weight, but rather by its proven reliability, its good power at low r.p.m., and interchangeability of spares over the whole series of machines from the original Cobra onward. It is interesting also to remember that Suzuki's "Daytona" barrels, heads and pistons can be fitted directly without any special machining. The exhaust system was really the only part of the motor that was studied with a view to producing a special Dresda system. The result of this work is a smoothly styled megaphone carcass encasing what is virtually an expansion chamber with multiple stingers. This unlikely combination proved to deliver more power than the standard system, while altering the note and retaining a very good level of silencing to boot. This package was then fitted to a special Dresda lightweight frame, with careful attention to engine placement. The result is that the Dresda Suzuki accelerates frantically fast without those unpleasant and totally unnecessary wheelies. Of course if you like driving a monowheel, just move the engine backwards by half an inch . . . then you get them . . . but don't ask me to ride it.

The weight saving is carried on right through the bike. Even the ignition switch nearly got the chop. Swan-neck clip-ons are available but were not fitted to the bike that we tried, which had straight bars. The forks are of Dresda design and manufactured by REH to their specifications. The front brake is

one of those four-shoe JC brakes, cast in aluminium now that the electron castings are finished. The rear hub is a small conical affair of quite adequate power and little weight. The steady improvement in the overall finish of Dresda machines has now brought the level up to a very high standard. It is particularly evident in the good tailored fit of the glass-fibre work and its neat and unified design. Only one feature of the glass-fibre units annoyed me, that being the wide rear part of the tank. It is stylish, and uncomfortable as the excellent front brake forces one to a close and painful position.

The battery is carried in a full recess in the top of the glass-fibre oil tank, which is fitted neatly between the rear down tubes of the frame. A sight level is left for oil checking, but would be better replaced by a dipstick as the transparency of the tank side leaves much to be desired. The rear-suspension units are Betor five-way adjustable, and most effective on this light machine. The overall weight is quoted as around 300 lb on the road. It really feels even lighter, but this slimming treatment does wonders for the power/weight ratio. The steering is helped by the Timken taper-roller bearings in the head races, and these also recur in the swinging arm.

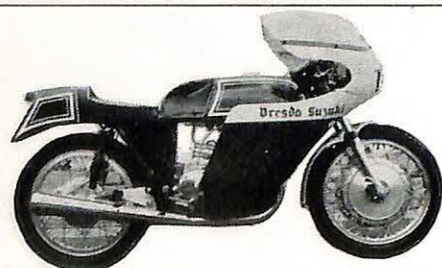
We had the opportunity to get the feel of this machine on a bitterly cold and windy day. The lock on the steering immediately caught me out, as I had not expected it to have such a small range of movement: once on the move, after discovering the wide turning circle at rest, this caused no difficulties, and indeed the wall set relationship of footrests handlebars and seat produced a feeling of instant mastery of the situation. The acceleration and rapid throttle response gave one the feel of being on the end of the leash of a giant greyhound, on the point of taking off at any instant. Once out of the Putney traffic and on to the

Kingston by-pass the Suzuki fairly leapt to 75/80 and then buzzed contentedly along like, a great bumble bee, the Dresda exhausts making a nice mellow note. The Dresda Suzuki feels as if it is lazing about at 80, and any change in throttle setting produces an immediate push backwards. Unlike other high-powered two-stroke road machines that I have ridden, the motor was not the dominant feature of the machine: the Dresda impresses one with a taut, lively and responsive air that cuddles one into alarmingly acute angles of lean and knife-edge changes in direction. Its 300 lb or so are balanced beautifully, and the front brake is extremely powerful and reliable: the untuned state of the engine leaves one with enhanced breadth of usable torque, and only the razor-edged wind at sub-zero temperatures persuaded me to return to Putney after only 20 miles or so. It gave me the feel of the OSSA 230. It was a machine of supreme utility for the sole purpose of pure riding pleasure: the Dresda drags you to the nearest twisty and tortuous stretch of road, and leaves you with the desire to just turn round and ride again for the fun of it.

The final stages of fully sorting out the Dresda Suzuki are now under way, and the odd detail—like an unpolished bracket—set to rights. The growth of small specialist manufacturers like Dresda underlines the number of lost opportunities there are for the grabbing by the large firms, and now a few specialists are producing complete machines that are genuinely tailored to the individual yet still can be bought at a reasonable price. How simple for BSA, for example, to have marketed the specify-it-yourself motorcycle range with their computer controlled factory . . . and how very unlikely that such an idea would have got past the proposal stage had it even been put forward . . . Dave Degens seems to know what his English, French and other customers really want, and on the showing of this Dresda Suzuki his products need only a little further civilising to satisfy a yet wider market than he already enjoys.

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