

As the newsletters progress we will be doing features and profiles on models, this month we focus on the;

400 SSN (1992-95)

The Japanese home market is ahead of the rest by 2 -3 years for economic reasons so as the rest of us were still coming to terms with the Retro beginnings the Japanese had started with the Techtro which involved not just making a modern replica but fitting the latest and updating to produce a machine that looked 1980's but handled and performed like a 1990's. Suzuki focused on their flagship, the KATANA 1100. As we know Kats were still produced in Japan until 1986 but this was the 750 S3 and seen by some as not really a Kat (I disagree wholeheartedly, Bias? Me) The 750 S2 was still around but the gentleman's agreement was still in force and larger CC machines couldn't be sold in Japan . This changed at the beginning of the 1990's so the 1100 was produced in limited numbers to feed the Retro and to feed the Techtro markets the 400 and 250 SSN. This was and still is the mainstay of the Japanese home market, due to the strict licensing laws. These bikes became there like the Bandit here in popularity.

The world was introduced to this model when the Grey Importers started to buy them cheap then sell them to us due to the availability of machines over 3-4 years old because of extreme MOT's and must have latest market forces coupled with Yen to Pound exchange rate, in our favour for once, brand new bikes were cheap too for the same reason but our Importers didn't think our smaller mid CC market was vibrant enough. Whoops!

The upshot of this is a lack of information in English, or technical advise this we will try to help with here.

Firstly all the articles say based on the 400 Bandit --not true its newer in development and shares its basic frame with the GS1000 look alike Impulse the engine is a 92 GSXR 400 water cooled with reworked casings for both aforementioned Machines. The front end is RGV 250 with slightly changed length stanchions. As for the body and wheels, pure resized and updated copies of the flagship all finished in traditional silver or later gunmetal.



LIVING WITH A 400SSN

From first look or on its own the unsuspecting admirer will and do mistake this Kat for the larger ones. Closer inspection reveals a big radiator for the water-cooling, 4 pot Tokico brakes, and upside down Showa rear shocks.

When it's along side the mother ship then the size is obvious as are the above-mentioned changes. The 400 somehow also look more modern though it comes from the same drawing board. The changes mean that it can just as easily accommodate the short and tall of us all.

The 400 being only intended for short production in the home market seems to suffer from weather related illnesses probably no more than other modern bikes but enough to warrant a mention. The brakes both front and back do not have rubber boots on the outer side of the pistons so suffer from collecting grime in use, there is no doubting the effectiveness of them seeing as they are fitted to GSXRs with success but having 4 pistons per each side front and 2 rear means when fitting new pads each calliper requires through cleaning about every 6-8000 miles. This co insides with the tyres requiring renewing, obviously this depends on the rider but I can't imagine too much difference. The only front tyre in the correct size available in U.K is a Bridgestone BT45 however it is perfectly suited to the machine when used with the correct rear of the same make.

When looking at one as a purchase check the front part of the chain guard behind the v in the frame were the footpegs are it can break at the bend, not in its self a problem but it makes a noise -the sort you just can't place. Another place is the gear lever mounting point by the footpeg (this is obviously an area that needs a little more tlc than the rest.).

From the saddle the position is not the stretch it may with the 750/1000/1100 that it looks like, however the 12500 redline and temp warning light indicate its eagerness to hurry along. The watercooled lump starts with the least effort and an almost silent rustle as it ticks over without any of the usual noises associated with the larger cousins. Blip the throttle and it definitely a short stroke engine as the 1100rpm tick over zips unto 6000 and back without you noticing. This is translated on the move as an instant turn of speed with a distinctive wail from the O.E exhaust (or a wonderful deeper howl if you're lucky enough to own a Yoshimura 4-1). The 50 tooth rear ensures quick acceleration, quick footwork is needed to whiz through the 6 speed gearbox to keep up, the box is usual Suzuki work of effort free wizardry so much so that clutch less shifts are not just possible but can be a help as engine breaking is minimal. That said the engine produces enough torque to go from walking pace up in top gear without chain whip. The O.E exhaust doesn't fair too well in the UK after a while but a 4-1 stainless system from the Impulse should be easier to come by.

Servicing is straight fore ward the oil filter is a standard spin on one at the front of the engine the spark plugs are twin pronged CR8EK but the single prong CR8E work and are cheaper the EK ones do give a bit better performance and economy. The air filter is basically a GS500 with a fluted tube on the top, this can be achieved by drilling out the spot welds around the neck on the original then inserting in to the replacement. The alternative is to cannibalise the vax vacuum cleaner, the connection at the body end with the hose off is a remarkable fit. The other option is ,~~ ask your local grey importer to get one about £24.50 (Fowlers of Bristol details in discounts section, 10% quoting KOC number).

The coolant mix is 50-50 with distilled water or pre-mixed M/C coolant as the galleries are narrow and lime scale will cause problems. This is required when checking/adjusting valve clearances as the pipes over the rocker cover need disconnecting to allow access, so the radiator needs draining. Filling is through the rad cap behind the headstock. The reservoir on the right behind the clutch case is an expansion tank so requires room within, so after refilling system it is normal to find fluid coming out of the pipe there until it finds its own level. The cooling fan will seldom be if ever activated probably due to the fins on the engine and exposed casings.

As mentioned previously the rear sprocket is 50 tooth but is as yet not available as an

after market product, the 49 option doesn't affect the performance unduly but may contribute to the mpg figure of 50 to 60. The rear Showa shockers can be rebuilt using thicker oil and springs a complete overhaul with new rods and plastic coating is approx £160 with UK Suspension of Bradford (phone no from MCN). However in standard trim they don't fair too bad only when loaded or with pillion are the shortcomings noticeable. The front forks are adequate but if new seals are needed generally O.E ones are best (51153-08D00).

Leaving this machine dormant for periods like most modern bikes requires the battery to be plugged in to an optimate as sealed for life batteries are known not to hold charge for more than 3 months at a time and can't be boosted back to life with a car charger. Depending on what area of Japan the subject was intended for dictates whether the headlights can be turned off or are hard wired in with no switch fitted. A speed limiter will also be fitted at 180 km/h (112mp/h). This is easily overcome with a Motrax in line speed converter (see product test). With a ratio of 50mph=5000rpm the 14000 max means you could lose 2 licences in one go. We must mention the brake discs, they are of the modern floating variety reasonably thin to start with they are affected by modern formula brake pads i.e. HH sintered and may require renewing about 30,000 miles. Replacements are quite standard GSXF or Bandit.

Every time it crosses my mind to sell mine, I ride it and the rush I get cancels out the need for the extra dosh!

Subtle changes include this fabulous piece of artwork to mould stand around gear lever.

Do these look like YOUR clocks?..look again!!



SUZUKI KATANA 400 SSN GK77A 100001-

SPEC SHEET

Overall length:	2060mm
Weight:	197 kg
Power:	53 bhp@ 10500rpm
Engine capacity:	399cc
Bore & stroke:	52.0x47.0mm
Valve clearance: INLET	0.10-0.15mm
Valve clearance: EXHAUST	0.15-0.20mm
Engine oil capacity (with filter):	2.9 ltr
Fork oil capacity:	526cc (8wt)
Fork oil air gap:	87mm
Brakes (Front/rear):	FA 158 / FA 64
Tyre size (front):	100/80 H18
Tyre size (rear):	140/70 H17
Tyre pressure (front):	33 psi
Tyre pressure (rear):	36 psi
Sprockets (front/rear):	JT 433 14 /JT407 50*
Chain size:	525v 116(links)
Chain slack:	15-25mm
Battery type:	YTX 9BS
Spark plug type:	CR8EK
Spark plug gap:	0.7-0.8mm
Headlight bulb:	60/55w 12v
Fuel tank capacity:	17 ltr
Main jet:	85#
Pilot jet:	32.5#
Fuel level:	1.5mm
Mixture screw:	1.75 . t.o. (turns out)

Bridgestone only import BT 45 in to the UK in these matching sizes and recommend 2.3 bar (front) 2.5 bar (rear).

*50 tooth rear sprocket not available aftermarket at the moment 49 tooth can substituted. Articles by owners have been published in : The used motorcycle guide issue121 (May02) and Used Bike Guide issue135 (APRIL 00)