

SWM RS650R

Old School in all the best ways.



A brief history recap: The SWM RS 650 R is basically the 2011 Husqvarna TE630. Husqvarna engineer Ampelio Macchi put together the backing needed to take over the Husqvarna factory in Lombardia, Italy. Macchi was instrumental in the design of the TE and under the revitalised brand SWM is prepared to back himself and the bike in today's fast-growing adventure market.

After a bit of thrash around, a few coffees and a run along the bitumen, we're backing this bike as well.

If you're looking for a light, fast-handling bike that'll do comfortable road miles as well as carve up on trails, look no further. The SWM is calling out to you.

No frills

The single-cylinder, 600cc, liquid-cooled four-stroke motor is fuel-injected, but that's pretty much where the electronics stop. There's no ABS, no traction control and no switchable fuel maps. The digital gauges are about as technical as the electronics get. The throttle body is connected to the rider's right hand via a cable, and rain, hail or shine, the power characteristics and delivery stay the same.

Marzocchi USD forks and a 21-inch front wheel do the bizzo at the front with an 18-inch wheel and Sachs shock at the rear. Brembos handle the stopping both ends and the six-speed box drives a chain which runs through a guide that'll have grey-haired old enduro riders misty-eyed with nostalgia. In an interesting design feature, the rear hub isn't cush-drive. The clutch itself has a cush-drive set-up.

Despite the bike being supposedly 'a 2011 model', the bike won't look dated or out of place on showroom floors – or as part of an adventure-riding pack, come to that.



First up

The initial impression of the SWM is 'dirt bike!'

The 900mm seat height, the firm, shaped seat and the flare of the radiator shrouds straight away evoke feelings of the enduro and trail bikes of years past. There's no beak or screen and the switchblocks are uncomplicated and straightforward. The markings on the fork tops remind the rider forks have rebound adjustment and if it needs to be changed it takes a screwdriver. The shock is fully adjustable, and if a rider wants to get his screwdriver in to the clickers he's going to have to hunker down!

Being a single, the SWM feels fairly slim and the 'bars are possibly a little narrower than an out-and-out dirt bike, but the refinement of the European fittings is very nice, and the width of the 'bars is pretty good for the bike's intended dualsport use, we reckon. Everyone will have their own ideas on what they consider comfortable or appropriate, but that's what we thought.

Chuckles

Snicking the bike into gear and easing out

Left: Plenty of polish, but still old school enough to set hearts thumpin'.

Above: The Mojo Motorcycles (importer of SWM) development bike is a step up again. There's an extra four horsepower and two kilos less weight thanks to the Barrett pipes, pannier racks, a Safari Tank and an accessory seat. The work is ongoing, and everything seen in this pic is available over the counter.

Below: The digital instrument has a surprising array of alternative displays and was easy to use.

into the western-Sydney traffic yielded a few nice surprises.

The SWM is very, very comfortable on the road. The dual exhaust is far from loud, but it chuckles along with an understated snarl that makes a rider feel good. We also remember the Husky TE630 as having a unique feel in corners, but that wasn't apparent on our test bike at all. Compared to the original Husky, the SWM has 27mm less travel in the forks and 14mm less in the shock. SWM says this is to achieve a more 'adventure-bike' feel and less motocross- or enduro-type behaviour, so that's bound to have made a significant change from the bike we remember. Whatever. The bike handled traffic and open-road running with no fuss or bother.

We were actually surprised at how little buffeting there was for our 175cm rider at freeway speeds. We thought that without a screen we'd be in for a pummelling, but it wasn't so. We can only think the headlight surround was deflecting a fair amount of the windblast around or over the rider's helmet. The ride wasn't as smooth as a well-screened bike, for sure, but we were surprised at how smooth it was.

Right at home

Where we really fell in love with the SWM was on the dirt. ▶



The motor delivers a very predictable drive at its strongest in the middle of the rev range and thanks to the suspension doing its job really, really well and the brakes being even better than the suspension, carving along a bush road filled our hearts with all the fun and fantasy we used to enjoy so much on trail bikes when we were younger. The 'feedback' from the SWM to the rider is really excellent. The rider gets plenty of indication of the rear letting go or the front ploughing or locking or whether or not the bike's going to loft its front wheel and fire a wall of roost from the rear at the same time. That just makes a rider do all those things, all the time. It was glorious.

Braking is really first class with great feel and good stopping power, and although we did manage to bottom the forks once, it took a lot of hard work to make it happen. We didn't get the rear to bottom at all, but after the excitement of the front-bottoming exercise we got a bit coy and calmed down a little.

The suspension works on the SWM. It works the way good suspension should, allowing the bike to be pushed fairly hard and still leave the rider in control. That's almost another old school thought these days when we see so many riders tuning suspension for comfort. For the older generation, good suspension meant good control, and we were transported back to younger, faster days when the SWM offered plush, firm response from both front and rear that begged us to work the bike harder.

Bolt ons

Another advantage of the SWM's history is that there are good adventure accessories available already. There are a couple of good bashplates, Safari Tanks has a fuel cell available, and Jason Barrett has both pipes and pannier racks.

The SWM gets a big thumbs up from us. It won't be for everyone, because there are plenty of adventure riders who'll never want to tackle a tough bush track and who love the technology and comfort that's available on modern bikes. But for those out there who come from a dirt-bike background and who love the blur of the bush passing at speed or the challenge of some tough terrain, the SWM is gold.

We also felt – and we mean this as a huge compliment – the SWM is a true, refined, capable trailbike. In saying that we're harking back to the days when a trailbike was the bike you rode to work on every day – because your wife had the car for

Main: Riders with an off-road background and a love of pushing hard on a bush track will fall for the SWM. It's comfortable and well-behaved on the road too, and we reckon long-distance would be no problem.

Below left: Fully adjustable suspension front and rear. It takes a screwdriver, though. There's no sitting there and pushing a button.

Below right: Brembo make great brakes, but the units on the SWM are especially good. Great feel and good strength.



the kids – then would do duty as the smile-inducing recreation machine on the weekends, and then, once a year or so, head to Cape York or Fraser Island with mates for a cut-loose, ride-the-edge annual holiday.

That's what we reckon the SWM is about. And all at the totally unbelievable price of \$8,999 plus ORC. We had to check that twice, and it's true. Check it out for yourself. You won't be sorry.

ADV



BIKE SPECS



There are some good accessories available already. Our test bike had a Force Accessories bashplate, but there's a typically gorgeous B&B plate available as well.

SWM RS 650R

Web: www.swmmotorcycles.com.au

- Engine:** Liquid-cooled, DOHC, four-valve, single-cylinder four-stroke
- Capacity:** 600cc
- Bore x Stroke:** 100mm x 76.4mm
- Transmission:** Six-speed
- Clutch:** Wet, multi-plate with hydraulic control
- Ignition:** GET Athena
- Fuel system:** Mikuni EFI
- Start:** Electric
- Front suspension:** 45mm Marzocchi fork with 210mm of travel
- Rear suspension:** Sachs shock with 270mm of travel
- Wheels:** 18/21-inch front and rear
- Seat Height:** 900mm
- Wheelbase:** 1505mm
- Ground clearance:** 250mm
- Fuel capacity:** 12-litres
- Weight:** 144kg