

A rider wearing a blue helmet and gear is riding a dirt bike on a trail through a dense forest. The bike is red and white. The background is filled with tall trees and green foliage.

BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

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WE HIT THE TRAILS FOR A DAY ON THE SWM RS 500 R AND SEE WHAT THIS RELATIVELY NEW BRAND HAS TO OFFER FOR AUSSIE TRAIL RIDERS



WHERE DID SWM COME FROM?

It's actually been around for a long time, debuting its first bike at a race in Spain in 1971. The brand ceased production in 1984 but in 2014 former Husqvarna engineer Ampelio Macchi purchased his designs from Pierer Industrie, who now owned them, and went back to the then-vacant former Husqvarna production factory.

With investment from the Shineray Group he was able to fire up manufacturing once again, many of the former workers returning to their former workplace. This is a factory that also received a major overhaul in 2007 during BMW's ownership of Husqvarna. With Shineray's backing, production of bikes started, predominantly from the 2010 Husqvarna designs. Knowing he couldn't use the Husqvarna name he acquired the sleeping SWM brand — and here we are.

IS THIS A CHINA BIKE?

No, it is manufactured in Italy and we believe the only Chinese products on the bike are the plastics. It's essentially a 2010 Husqvarna TE510 underneath. There is a Chinese investor behind the revamp of the brand and that's where the misconceptions come about.

IS IT AN OFF-ROAD RACE BIKE?

To be fair, no. It's a trial bike for fun weekend rides; if you're looking at enduro competition then a later model bike is a better option. This bike isn't cutting-edge technology and they're not trying to claim it is.

WHAT WOULD WE ADD TO IT?

Not much, really — maybe some quality handguards for the trail and some softer compound grips. Aussie alloy company Force Accessories makes a skidplate and also radiator guards for this bike, so they're probably a good investment.



ARROW PIPE & GRAPHICS

For 2017, SWM offers a promotion that includes an Arrow exhaust and full graphics kit with each bike. The Arrow exhaust not only looks great and increases performance but also comes in at more than 4kg less than the stock pipe.

LET'S RIDE IT

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a little sceptical heading into riding this bike. I learned more about the brand as the test came closer and started to understand it more; that increased my confidence for what was ahead. This bike

is a slim and tidy-looking machine. There's no mistaking the Husky heritage even with the redesigned plastic. Sitting on the bike, it feels narrow and comfortable.

My first impression of the engine was smooth. It has sufficient torque to allow you to ride it at a low-rpm, smooth part of the power delivery — a positive for a trail bike. Twist the throttle and it will liven up. There's no denying you have 500cc underneath you but I think the strength of this engine is that it's smooth and rideable. The Arrow exhaust that Australian customers get has quite a note to it. It's actually quite loud for a trail bike but does sound pretty tough.



MATT BERNARD

"The SWM RS 500 R is a good bike for the money. If you ride it in the conditions it's designed for, you'll be rewarded. It's a bike littered with quality parts and a good track record from the 2010 Husqvarna TE510. The Arrow exhaust is an added performance bonus and adds some extra value to boot. You can tell it has unearthed the power, but it's really loud. It would be great if it were a little less offensive; it's that bit too loud to be a trail bike, where you don't want to be attracting attention. Catch-22, though — it saves weight, adds power but is louder. I also melted my boot on one of the bolts on the header on the left-hand side of the bike, the opposite of most models. The engine is nice and punchy. We had a few issues getting the idle right, so spend some time with that. The suspension is well settled and it looks pretty cool, too. At \$8,990 + ORC, this bike is very good value and well worth the consideration when you're looking at a new trail bike or even looking at a second-hand bike with a \$9k budget."



SWM RS 500 R SPECS

- **Engine:** Liquid-cooled DOHC 4-valve single cylinder four-stroke
- **Capacity:** 501cc
- **Bore/stroke:** 97×67.8mm
- **Transmission:** 6-speed
- **Clutch:** Wet multiplate with hydraulic control
- **Ignition:** GET
- **Fuel system:** Mikuni D42 EFI
- **Start:** Electric
- **Front suspension:** 50mm USD Kayaba fork
- **Rear suspension:** Kayaba shock
- **Front wheel:** 21" with 260mm brake disc
- **Rear wheel:** 18" with 240mm brake disc
- **Seat height:** 963mm
- **Wheel base:** 1495mm
- **Ground clearance:** 250mm
- **Fuel capacity:** 7.2L
- **Weight:** 112kg

The bike is agile; it doesn't feel big and if you compare the bikes it's up against from a price point of view it wins that battle pretty easily. The KYB suspension is set up well for what this bike is aimed at doing. On the trails, it's forgiving and feels pretty plush, soaking up small stuff like tree roots and rocks well without feeling harsh or deflecting. Bigger hits made it feel a little soft but that's to be expected given what this bike is.

I hit some more technical trail and a couple of rocky climbs and it handled them, no problem. There was the opportunity to turn some laps on a sandy, natural-terrain track, too; it was fun on that stuff. Its smooth power makes it an easy bike to hang on to off turns and also means rolling the throttle on early isn't a drama.

WHAT'S THE VERDICT?

It's important to keep in mind what this bike is. It's a trail bike that comes in at under \$9K. That's pretty damn cheap for a 500cc fuel-injected trail bike. With that in mind, it's a solid option if you're in the



market for a registered trail bike. I think the majority of trail riders would have a great time on this bike. There are no major negatives from a general riding experience point of view. You have a proven power plant underneath you which, once again given the price, is an added bonus. KYB suspension and Brembo brakes are quality components that can't be ignored. Fuel capacity is a little on the low side at 7.2 litres. For longer rides there's a larger aftermarket tank option from Safari tanks. Parts may not be as easily obtainable as for more common brands but they're available through SWM Australia's dealer network, which is growing. If the potential resale struggle doesn't worry you, I think it's a bike that should be well considered if you're after a weekend trail machine. **DM**