

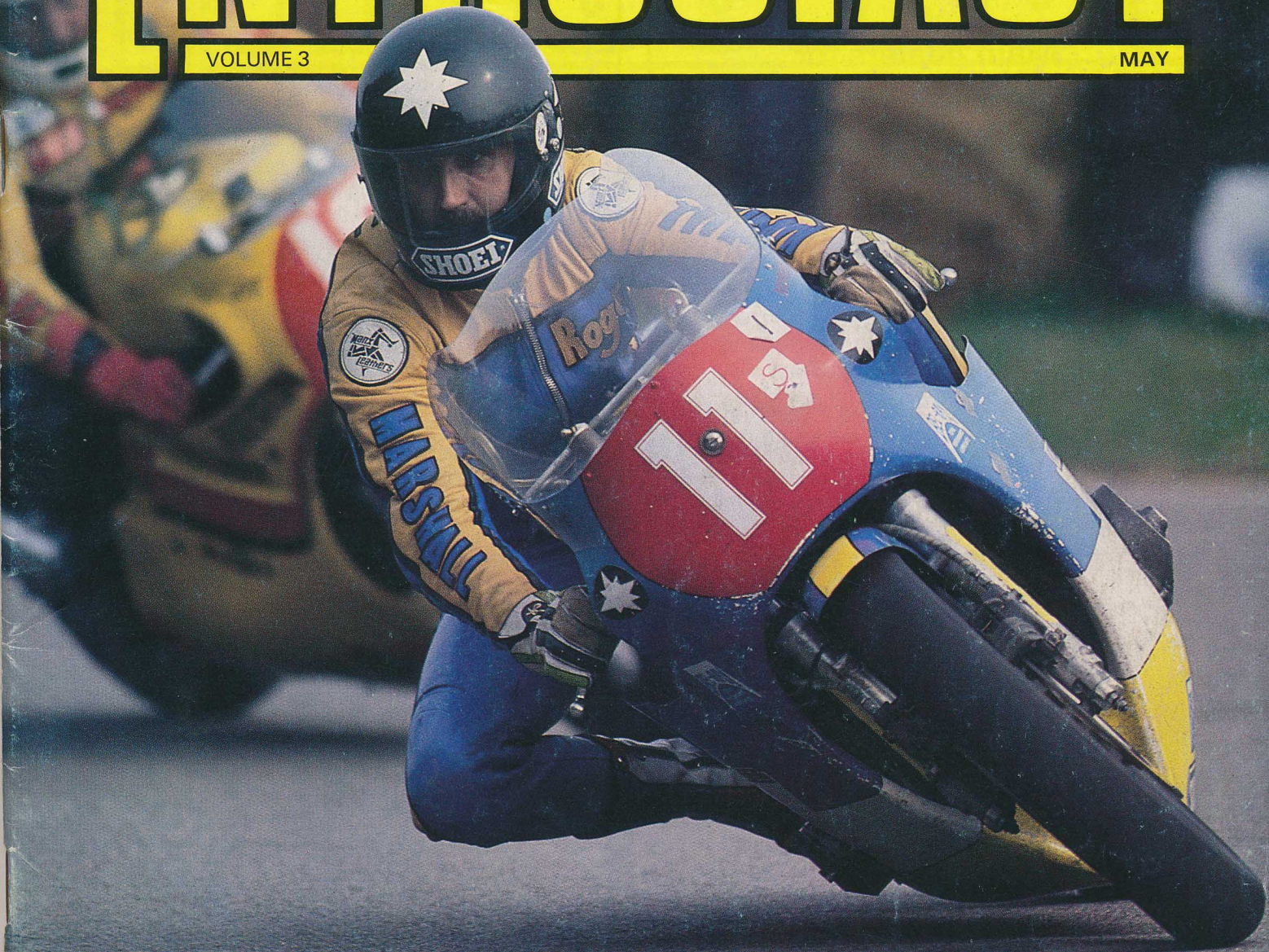
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MAY



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# THE YAMAHA XT125 and DT175

It is a sad fact of life that the introduction of any new legislation is bound to adversely affect a minority group somewhere. Where motorcycling is concerned, trail riders have been dealt a blow by the 125cc learner law in that the acknowledged optimum sized trail bike (the 175cc machine) is now considered rather a marketing white elephant as far as importers are concerned. Honda have dropped the XL185 from their range, Yamaha have replaced the DT175MX with the DT125LC while Kawasaki and Suzuki have just not changed the model specifications of the KE175 and TS185 to any great degree - notably the absence of monoshock suspension which is fitted to most new "off-road" bikes and lack of up-dated styling. Although these factors in themselves are in no way detrimental to either machine, the buying public is usually very fashion conscious.

However, all is not doom and gloom as the advent of the learner law has

brought about a crop of new up-dated 125cc, 12bhp machines on to the market. Unfortunately, although a drop of 2 or 3bhp on a 2-stroke 125 does not affect performance too much, on the 4-stroke it appears to effectively kill it. I started my riding on a Honda XL125K and know that lack of ground clearance and poor suspension movement let that bike down far more than any lack of power, in fact it could attain a maximum speed of over 75mph whereas the modern day restricted versions seem only to be able to manage a top whack of around 65mph.

#### YAMAHA XT125

The XT125 was first introduced in 1982 and, unlike many road bikes, it has not been through any model changes. It was developed specifically for the new restricted 125 market and was a departure for Yamaha from their more usual and well known 2-stroke machines. However, the

engine boasts no great technical advances and is a simple air cooled unit with single overhead cam, single cylinder, 2 valve motor with a gear driven balance shaft to dampen any vibration, which it does very effectively.

The first and only real problem I encountered with the XT125 was starting it. Four hours of intermittent kicking produced only a slight grumble from the engine and much grumbling from me! There was nothing wrong with the bike, it's just a wee bit particular about its starting habits, it was a matter of knowing just what it liked. The only way the bike would fire was on full choke and no throttle, even the slightest touch of throttle would kill the engine. Once fired up one had to sit for about 30 seconds until the revs started to rise when the choke could be knocked off and it was safe to set off without stalling. Using this method the XT fired up reliably over the rest of the test period, however, I did find it extremely awkward kick starting the XT and keeping my right hand from turning the throttle.

To compensate for its finicky starting, the XT ran well, never missed a beat and was an extremely smooth and quiet running unit. As no rev counter is fitted, against a noisier bike and at a standstill, it could sometimes be difficult to tell whether the engine was still running. Apart from cost cutting, I can see no reason why a rev counter has not been fitted, a set of warning lights staring you in the face just doesn't have the same appeal. Also as this is essentially marketed as a learner machine I should have liked to have seen a rev counter on the XT as it does give useful information, apart from telling you when you're thrashing the thing through the red line! Tickover speed adjustment will only be able to be achieved from the sound of the engine rather than from a specific rpm and any change in gearing will only be



Old and new, Yamaha's traditional 2 stroke trail bike, the DT175 and in the background the latest XT125



## Tested by Rosemary Swindells



No rev counter just a row of warning lights

able to be felt from riding rather than be assessed from the correlation between speedo and rev counter.

Typically, the power was unimpressive. There was no power band as such, the XT just went progressively faster until it reached 65mph and then would not do any more. For town riding any manoeuvre had to be preceded by a down gear change to get any performance, but, having said that, I have to confess that I came to like the XT.

The monoshock rear suspension was superb, riding over changing road surfaces effortlessly. On the trail it never bottomed out or lurched about and gave a sort of armchair-type comfort. Unlike the DT's suspension unit, the XT's monoshock is not adjustable so I was lucky that the suspension suited my weight, however, the low power and weight of this bike is hardly going to necessitate the latest in suspension technology. The swinging arm is of the standard silver painted steel box section type. I found the riding position and seat were also very comfortable, but for anyone much over 5'5" it will probably feel rather cramped as the distance between the seat and handlebars is quite short. (Quite a refreshing reverse from the norm.)

Although I tend to think that many trial bikes never see a green lane, I still feel that any bike marketed as dual purpose should be tested as such. Over the easier type of green lane it was difficult to fault the XT's

performance. It handled well, the suspension coped well over stones and rocks keeping the back end well under control, the good ground clearance eliminating any serious knocks to the engine and on the flat any beginner to the game would be well served. However, uphill lanes proved to be the undoing of the 125 as it just didn't have the low down grunt needed for some of the climbs. You needed to have the bottle to take everything uphill as fast as possible to ensure reaching the top. I suppose there was some consolation after all that the XT didn't have a rev counter! Downhill though, the addition of the 4-stroke engine braking was useful. Braking downhill on a loose surface is a tricky operation at the best of times.

The tyres (standard Japanese block pattern trials covers) were actually not as bad as I'd feared they would be. Obviously they let the XT down when riding through mud, but once I'd got used to the bike squirming a bit but not totally losing traction, I felt more confident. Over rocks and stones the tyres were adequate. This really is a general comment on most

trial/trials tyres where the smaller block pattern has the advantage over the larger open block of the moto-cross tyre when riding on stoney ground, with the moto-cross type having more grip in deep muddy conditions. The XT really surprised me on one particular muddy climb where the DT175 was all over the place whilst the 125 plodded slowly up, on next to no revs, with just sufficient grip to keep moving. In that instance it would appear that lack of power and weight was an advantage as any more power would probably have had the rear wheel spinning.

For 6 volt electrics I thought the lights were excellent. The system is completely direct (except for the indicators which run off the battery). Most trial bike systems have just the headlight running direct and I felt that the XT's electrics were just too basic in this respect, for in the event of a nighttime breakdown or if one just stalled at a junction, I would have thought it safer to have at least the rear light working so people don't come crashing into the back of you. The indicators surprised me by actually working consistently, they



Yamaha's smallest 4 stroke trail bike, the XT125

# ROAD & TRAIL

are usually a weak point in 6 volt systems and they were also sensibly rubber mounted. Because of the completely direct lighting system, it may be possible to run the XT with no battery, (to save weight) but I wouldn't want anyone to quote me on this.

The ignition switch was rather fiddly and I can see quite a few keys being snapped off in the first few days of ownership. A steering lock is incorporated into the switch and the key needs to be pressed in hard and allowed to spring-release slightly before it can be turned. A steering lock incorporated into the ignition switch is an improvement over the old head stock design, but with the XT's design, only just. I am not sure if there is an easy way of removing the key, I didn't find one and just had to yank it out and hope that the key would last for the test period!

All the controls were smooth, even the gear change which, on a bike that seemed to need a gear change every few seconds, surprised me as I would have expected the gearbox to have been hammered to death. The brakes too were excellent, far better than I have come to expect from trial bike drum brakes.

To keep the weight and more probably the cost down, a lot of plastic has been used — even down to the seat base which also acts as part of the rear mudguard. I always wonder just why manufacturers insist on putting black painted exhaust systems on trial bikes as opposed to chrome finished systems as these rust and look a mess in no time. With only 400 miles on the clock the XT's exhaust system was rusting badly. Keeping a trial bike exhaust system rust free is rather like "painting the Forth Bridge" and, as trial bike systems are usually expensive items, I would recommend anyone buying a trial bike to have a chroming job done on a new system to help prolong the life (and looks). The general finish of the rest of the bike was good. I'm pleased to see that the Japanese have managed to perfect the art of black painting engines. As there is so much plastic the only other parts that will

rust are the frame and the petrol tank.

I liked the overall styling which is very similar to the XT's big brother the XT550 and to my mind gives the bike quite a sporty appearance. Although quite high, the bike sinks down when you sit on it and I found that on the trial I was able to dab easily and at only 212 lbs (dry) it was easy to throw around.

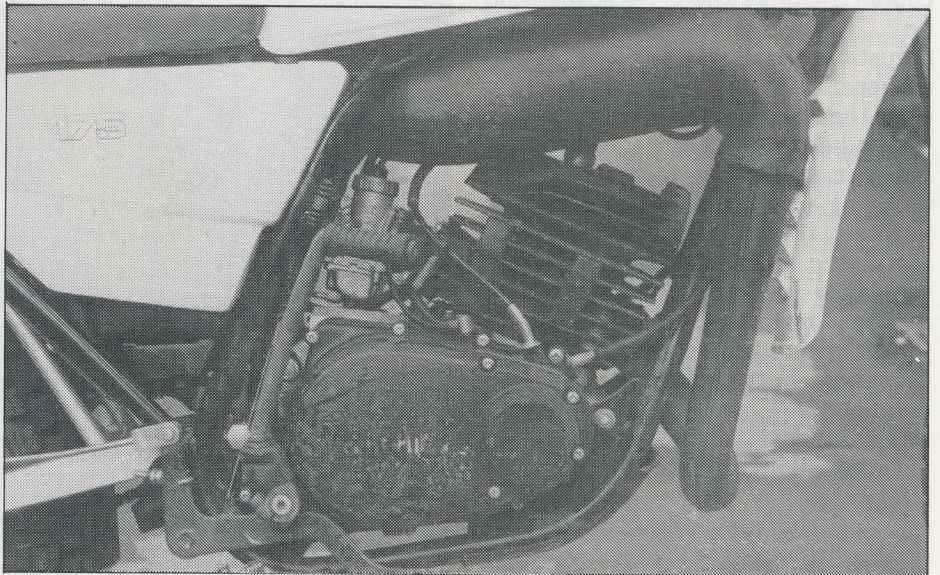
I thoroughly enjoyed riding the XT125, but did feel rather sorry for it, as I cannot see it selling awfully well beside its 2-stroke rivals, but it may appeal to 4-stroke lovers who are willing to sacrifice that extra bit of performance for a quiet and very civilised bike.

## YAMAHA DT175MX

The DT175, first introduced 12 years ago, has not changed significantly since 1978 when it was given mono-shock suspension, CDI ignition, a 6 speed gearbox and suffixed by "MX". To my mind this machine had its hey day in the late seventies when it was considered by many to be the trail bike to buy. In fact, in 1979 it was not unusual to see the 175MX in clubman class enduro events. Today it looks rather basic and old fashioned against its more moto-cross styled rivals, not that styling means everything. The DT is now a discontinued

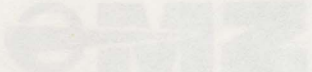
model having been superseded by the DT125LC, however, there are still some about in dealers showrooms and there is still a market for 175 machines as the trail riding fraternity find that the combination of weight, size, power and economy suits their needs admirably.

The first point that impressed me about the DT was the security bolt fitted as standard in the rear wheel rim (a small but nevertheless essential item for any bike likely to be run on lower than road tyre pressures). How many other non-competition bikes have this? It might sound strange, but this is a trail bike that has actually been designed for trail riding! Manufacturers openly admit that their trail bikes are usually designed for around 80% road use and 20% green lane use. In this respect trail bikes are seldom purposely built for their dual role. In fact I thought the detail design for trail riding excellent with neat rubber covers over almost all points where water and mud would like to do their worst, a chain tensioner and fork gaiters are fitted as standard. The motor too has been improved and made more flexible by the addition of the 6th gear, thus giving three low gears for good power at the bottom end of the rev range, useful for trail riding and three higher gears so the engine does



The DT175 engine giving 15bhp

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not have to be revved to death to attain a reasonable speed on the road.

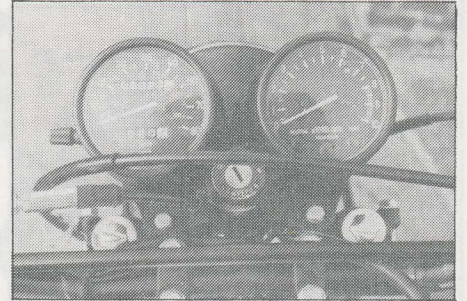
All the controls were light and unobtrusive which is as they should be, a stiff throttle or clutch can erode your concentration at a vital moment. The brakes in particular fitted this pattern, working without fuss and with plenty of feel. The gearchange was smooth and in common with most trail bikes these days the bike can be fired up in gear (with the clutch in of course).

For the serious "off roader" the DT can be run completely direct without the use of a battery which, if nothing else, will save weight. You certainly wouldn't notice any lighting detriment as the lights were not up to much. A blob of yellow light about 3' diameter 20ft in front of the bike is not enough and main beam only moves the "blob" 5ft further forward and 1ft further to the right. This kind of lighting, although poor, was accepted when this model was first introduced in the '70s but today really should (and can be) improved

as the XT125 showed. One point to remember about the lights was that the key in the ignition switch needed to be turned a further notch before the lights would work. The indicators and rear light in contrast were very bright and visible, a shame because these are the very items that most trail riders either remove or replace for less vulnerable/purpose built components.

The tyres, due to the aforementioned lack of development of this class of bike, were not the hopeless "fancy pattern" type fitted to most new trail bikes but were the block pattern trials type, which for once proved advantageous as they were quite reasonable covers giving good grip in most situations except for deep mud. As for road grip they gave as much as I asked which, admittedly, was not a lot as I have long since given up trusting the grip and cornering ability of this type of tyre.

Yamaha were first in the field with monoshock suspension and in my



**Clocks on the DT175 are dated compared with modern consoles**

opinion got it right first time. (The suspension is based on that used on the early YZ125 moto-cross machines). The only change from the 1978 specification is the box section swinging arm (it was previously round tube) which looks like aluminium, but is actually only silver painted steel. The seven position shock absorber (damped by a mixture of oil and nitrogen), sits under the seat and worked perfectly well on the street and on the trail where over rocky going would never kick back or get



**Although old fashioned the DT175 is still an excellent green lane mount**

# ROAD & TRAIL



**DT175 rear suspension based on the early YZ125 motocrosser**

out of shape. The rear end absorbed huge bumps and craters without bottoming or topping out. Adjustment of the pre-load settings on the rear shock absorber is simple enough. Similar in fact to a twin shock system, using a collar with 7 notches, reached by removing the seat and adjusted by the lever provided in the tool kit. The front forks are the conventional oil damped telescopic type and worked in harmony with the rear suspension but gave an alarming clonk over large bumps. The short wheelbase of the DT, only 53", contributed to good steering and handling.

The maximum road speed was rather unimpressive at 65mph in 6th (top) gear at 8000rpm, but of more importance for a trail bike, it had plenty of bottom end power and would pull well from as low as 2000rpm.

The engine is a 171cc piston ported 2 stroke with reed valves and oil injection. The test machine used rather a lot of oil and I suspect that Yamaha set the oil pump rich on the press fleet to avoid the bikes being returned to them with remarks like "... 9000rpm in second then it stopped ... and the kickstart has gone all stiff ...". The oil tank

situated behind the right sidepanel was easily accessible. There was also a useful warning light housed in the rev counter which illuminated when the tank was about a quarter full.

I was not completely happy with the engine performance on our test bike. A flat spot just off tickover was slightly annoying when trying to pick a line through boulders when trailing. I suspect it was not set up properly which could also account for the high fuel consumption of just 50mpg giving a full tank range of only 78 miles (I know, I pushed it!). Not good enough when a KE175 managed 85mpg with better performance.

I felt the styling of the MX was rather dated, but the finish was good

with only the side panel transfers showing signs of wear — a usual sight on trail bikes used on the dirt. The instruments too showed their age being two separate clocks as opposed to the more common all-in-one consoles seen on today's models. To my mind the older design of instruments is better for a trail bike as they are rather accident prone components and can prove expensive to replace when highly styled.

Overall, I consider the bike as good a buy today as it was in 1981 and at almost the same price. Not a bike for the non-trail rider as unlike many dual role bikes it was not too comfortable on road and felt far more at home on the rough.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### YAMAHA XT125

Engine: single cylinder, sohc  
Bore and stroke: 57 x 48.8mm  
Capacity: 124cc  
Compression: 10:1  
Carburation: 24mm Teikei  
Lubrication: wet sump  
Maximum power at rpm: 12bhp at 9000rpm  
Maximum torque: 1.0kgm at 8000rpm  
Gearbox: 5 speed  
Electrics: 6V 4ah battery, CDI ignition

### Dimensions

Wheelbase: 53"  
Seat height: 33"  
Ground clearance: 10½"  
Weight (dry): 212lbs  
Fuel capacity: 1.6 gal

### Cycle parts

Brakes: 5.1" s/s drum (front and rear)  
Tyres: front - Bridgestone Trailwing 2.75 x 21"; rear - Bridgestone Trailwing 4.10 x 18"

### Performance

Top speed: 65mph  
Fuel consumption (overall): 75mpg  
Price: £849

### YAMAHA DT175

Engine: single cylinder, 2 stroke  
Bore and stroke: 66 x 50  
Capacity: 171cc  
Compression: 6:8:1  
Carburation: 24mm Mikuni  
Maximum power at rpm: 15bhp at 7000rpm  
Maximum torque: 12ft/lb at 5500rpm  
Primary drive: Gear  
Clutch: Multiplate, wet  
Gearbox: 6 speed  
Electrics: 6V 4ah battery, CDI ignition. Flywheel magneto  
Lighting: 35/35w headlight

### Dimensions

Wheelbase: 53"  
Seat height: 32.5"  
Ground clearance: 10"  
Weight (dry): 218lbs  
Fuel capacity: 1.4 gal

### Cycle parts

Brakes: 5" s/s drum (front and rear)  
Tyres: front - Bridgestone Trailwing 2.75 x 21"; rear - Bridgestone Trailwing 3.50 x 18"

### Performance

Top speed: 65mph  
Fuel consumption (overall): 50mpg  
Price: £835

Supplied by: Mitsui Machinery Sales, Oakcroft Road, Chessington, Surrey.