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bike

M A G A Z I N E



KWICKER KWACKER

ZX-10 joins the alloy army

FRENCH LETTERS

Les motards know their onions

DEATH THREATS

A Volvo is for keeps-special warning poster!



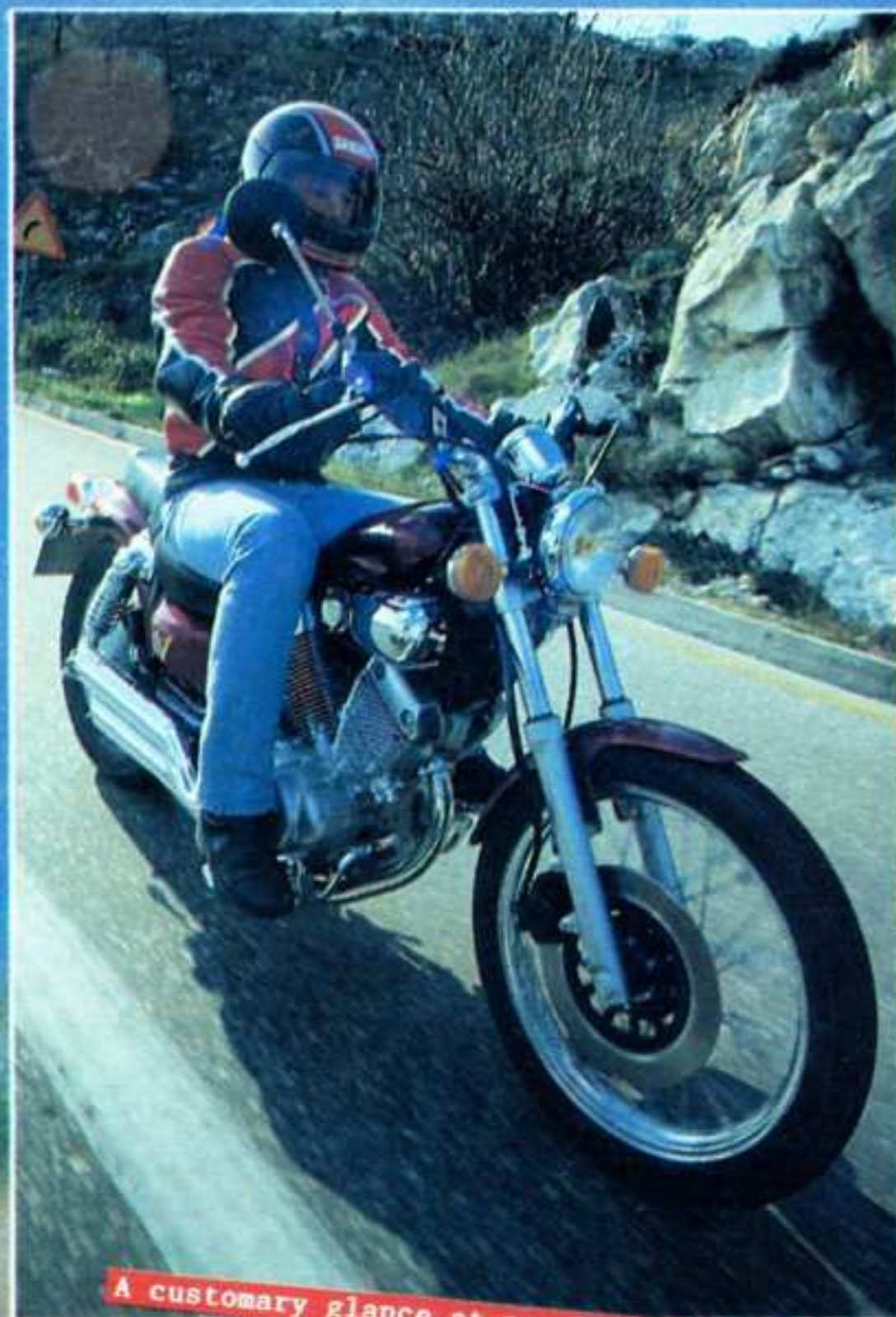
MY LITTLE PONY

Yamaha TDR-sixty screaming stallions

STILL A V

to
fashion

Devereux observes the
Balkanisation of
motorcycling trends as
Yamaha takes a
Croat by the throat. . . .



A customary glance at new Yam chopette



The freezing, rain-laced Bora wind tightened its icy grasp around my inadequately covered, denim-clad legs. A heavy bosa-nova rhythm pounded out from between my ears as the brain that had once occupied the same place writhed around in a skull that seemed to have shrunk to half its normal size. My stomach felt like a ten-year-old cesspit, and I was hopelessly lost in a sprawling range of Yugoslavian mountains. But I didn't care. All bodily pleas for a moment's respite from the ambient chill factor were lost in a two-stroke howl resounding off craggy limestone outcrops through which the road wound on and seemingly ever upwards. I was having far too much fun to think about stopping.

Rather than developing a latent masochistic tendency overnight, my reasoning for actually enduring, nay enjoying, this hungover mystery tour into cryogenics stemmed from an over-riding feeling that I was lucky to have made it there at all. Such a fortuitous sensation was instigated via a brief recollection of the previous night's events, involving the bribing of a Zagreb airport official, but more significantly because I was riding Yamaha's TDR250 hybrid scorcher.

We all have our own personal ideas of what we'd▶

Helmet: Shoei RF105, £154.50. Jacket: Furugan Racing Security, £223.99. Boots: Gaerne A390, £64.95

PHOTOGRAPHY: KEL EDGE



Reclining TDR plans next unsuspecting victim's fate amongst the Balkan bouldery

like to see rolling off next year's production lines, but most of the time we have to make do with what the designers decide is what we ought to want. With the advent of the TDR, however, we are witnessing a timely, if only partial, reversal of this situation. Rather than being the product of a previous night's overindulgence in magic mushroom and saké cocktails, the TDR represents the Japs' desire to bolster a depressing market via the cultivation of punter rather than factory-based ideas. Proof of this can be seen if we turn our gaze across the Channel. Stand on any Parisian street corner for more than a few minutes and you're bound to see at least one of what our garlic-crazed cousins refer to generically as a 'supermotard', essentially a basic trail iron stripped of its big front wheel and trail tyres, replaced by sticky road boots and a significantly smaller front hoop for better road manners. Frequently boasting restyled bodywork and tuned engines, they represent the type of bike a majority of trailie owners, whose machines, if they were honest enough to admit it, rarely spend more than ten per cent of their lives in the dirt, would have logically chosen had they been available. But rather than nicking this principle wholesale, Yamaha



Bulging cross-over exhaust system fails to hide refugee TZR lump

deemed it more prudent to create a bike that, instead of being road-based with trail styling, could still claim dual-purpose status in the trail vein only with a bias towards the road rather than trail side of the equation. And thus they created the TDR. Whilst being an undeniably competent road tool, it is theoretically capable of the occasional sojourn into the scenery too.

Crouching down behind its miniscule, frame-mounted fairing, the speedo needle edging towards an indicated 180kph (112mph), it was with emotion bordering on deep relief that I discovered the chassis' claimed ability to take both on and off road situations in its stride. A short distance



It's not often you'll see a TDR's front wheel this close to the ground

ahead, what had at first seemed like a gentle, left-handed (and therefore flat-out) curve, had unexpectedly developed (from

the extensive roadside shrubbery) a slow-moving chicane comprised of a Slav shepherd and his attendant four-legged harem. Plus I noted, as you seem to do during moments of impending disaster, the already slippery tarmac was prominently covered in a characteristically familiar layer of dung. Ironic thoughts that I was metaphorically in the same up to my neck sprung to mind accordingly.

Grabbing a massive handful of the floating front disc, the same as found on the TZR with subtle mods to make it less ferocious, the steeply-raked air and preload adjustable forks sagging noticeably under radical forward weight transference and Metzeler Sahara tyres fighting for grip on the Serbian surface shit, it became sickeningly obvious that, short of divine intervention, lamb cutlets en Croat (sic) were going to be on the hospital menu for quite some time to come.

However, just as the whole situation was about to plunge into pre-crash slo-mo, and several gallons of adrenalin had been dumped into my system in readiness for the impact, a possible get-out clause appeared in the form of trajectory deviation, to take in some unplanned off-road work. The previously uninviting, rock-strewn verge

had suddenly taken on the demeanour of infinite preference to impending carnage. Thus, with heart secured firmly in mouth, I flicked the 'bars to the left, nailed the throttle, and hung on.

With the TDR's wide handlebar shimmying in my white-knuckled hands as the 18-inch front wheel hit the first of many outsize pieces of rubble, recovering its composure sufficiently before being presented with the second and many more, and with the engine screaming like a drowning witch as the rear tyre fought for traction on a less than ideal surface, I wasn't in any kind of position to start putting question marks over the strengthened double-cradle steel frame's off-road abilities.

The approach of a stubborn and not very soft looking boulder signalled that, with the woolly obstacles now safely banished into the mirrors, the moment was ripe for considering a plan of self-preservation. This dictated a rather hasty return to tarmac if it was to be effective for anything more than a few seconds.

The look of disbelief and lack of appreciation of the averted proximity of injury on the shepherd's weather-beaten face was matched only by my all too apparent overwhelming sense of thanks for the same as I slithered to a halt and put a quivering match to a much-needed cigarette.

Standing at the side of the road, inhaled nicotine instigating the beginnings of a mild head-rush, I pondered the general idiocy of allowing myself to get so carried away in the first place. But as I did this, I looked back at the TDR standing innocently and unscathed at the side of the road, its twin cross-over MX-styled pipes bulging out from the front of what is, as near as damn it, a TZR engine, and realised that it was partly to blame.

When you've got 50 very hot horses champing at the bit to be given their head, it's hard to refuse them their freedom when they manifest themselves in such a pleasing way. Fun on the TDR starts when the tank-mounted tachometer points to an undefined region between six and seven grand (some 500rpm lower than the TZR thanks to the different pipes and an overall reduction in gearing), reaching a crescendo in peak pleasure just after the aforementioned dial is a couple of hundred revs over nine.

After this point, the only possible, but purely onanistic, course of action is to snick up another of the six super-slick gears and repeat the whole process over again. Doing anything else feels positively sinful.

Around town, having this amount and nature of power secreted in a trail-orientated chassis, dictates a degree of misbehaviour limited only by the rider's strength of desire to achieve boss poseur status. All that's required to convince the rider that the only logical location for the tachometer is on the end of the alloy-braced, low-level front fender, is a burst of the 28mm twin, flat slide carbs in any of the first three gears. With only a ridiculously small amount of assistance, front tyres can outlast the rider, as the TDR will wheelie for as long as he, she or it dictates, squatting happily on its

preload-adjustable monoshocked haunches all the while.

Impressive as it is on the street, the TDR is also no slouch when the time comes to get the tyres dirty. Or rather everything but the tyres. Happy as it was to blast along the many rock strewn tracks and grassy plateaus that make up a majority of Yugoslavian off-road terrain, the short wheelbase and frame mounted instruments keeping the steering light and crisp, when things get muddy its rounded profile, deep-cleated Metzeler, that had been so proficient on the road, would quickly pack themselves with nature's wholesome goodness and dump the rider on his ear. Despite these brief altercations with the scenery yielding a certain pain quotient, they did serve to illustrate the TDR's ability to be crashed repeatedly

and yet still be in a fit state to cart the rider's bruised carcass back from whence it came.

All told, the TDR is one of the most significant and proficient additions to the biking scene for quite some time. I want one, and if you'd ridden it, I'm sure you'd want one too. If the gathered Nips were to be believed, it's possible that the TDR concept might be extended to encompass larger capacity engines, so don't be too surprised if someone blitzes past you on the back wheel of his FDR750 in the next couple of years. Also on the cards is a TDR250 Challenge, run in a similar fashion to the TZR series only the courses will include off-road sections. Everybody say Yeah!

Yamaha reckon they're going to shift nearly 20,000 TDRs (be they with or without a more fittingly anti-social ▶

fj 1200



The FJ1200 has enjoyed the heady accolade of being the bike-most-Bike-staff-would-buy (if any of us had any money, that is) for quite some time now. Offering an unparalleled package of speed, comfort and handling, its five year history on the British market is notably free from any major updates. A fact which goes a long way towards proving the excellence of the FJ's original design.

The salient alterations on the '88 model include a redesigned windscreen that, whilst certainly offering more protection than the '87 sports screen option, is perhaps not quite as comprehensive as the higher touring version. Pillions will now have less to grumble about as the seat is

thicker and less forwardly inclined so they stay put, in supposedly greater comfort, under heavy braking. And the footrests are rubber mounted to isolate the vibes.

The only changes in the engine department are a digitally-controlled ignition for a claimed improvement in engine efficiency, and a fuel pump to suck every last drop out of the 5.5 gallon tank to maximise the bike's range. Wheels and brakes are very similar to the FZR1000's set-up, the only difference is the FJ's equipment being of slightly smaller proportions. The fitment of these hollow, three spoke wheels and four pot calipers working on floating discs, also highlights the increase in size, (from 16 to

17-inch), of the FJ's front wheel. Although making the steering slightly heavier at slow speeds, the larger wheel did promote a useful increase in ground clearance, and should stop the front end from being quite so twitchy in flat-out bends. I say should, as Yugo road surface wouldn't allow, through having a friction co-efficient similar to that of a frozen pond, the necessary on-the-limit testing — a situation that wasn't helped by appalling Japlop tyres. It really is about time decent boots were fitted as standard.

The only glaring error concerning the '88 FJ is that Yamaha still haven't halved its price, and thus I'm still unable to buy one.



Compact custom carts over-excited ex-TDR pilot into soporific Slav scenery, slowly

paint job) in Japan alone next year. They obviously won't sell that many here (try moving the decimal point three places to the left for a more realistic British figure), but one thing's for sure — anyone that does front up the likely two and a half grand won't be disappointed, even if they don't live too long once they have...

xv535

Yamaha call it a 'compact custom', but I'm more inclined to think that perhaps 'compact cliché' would be a more fitting title for the XV535. This teenybopper's tinsel-wagon is, as the promo blurb is wont to gush dyslexically, "A middleweight entry into a class of its town."

Barring the existence of the appalling Suzuki LS650 Savage (now there's a euphemism to cap all others), I suppose they're right. But however true the statement might be, it still doesn't explain why Yamaha's marketing personnel have seen 1988 as the time to launch such a motorcycle. It hardly seems like the type of bike to

revitalise a languishing market, nor one which will earn a sufficient fortune to allow them all to retire on mega pensions to some exotic Far Eastern island. But then again perhaps it has got the beating of its obvious competition, aka the aforementioned Suzuki and the as yet untried Honda NTV 600 on paper at least, which would seem like justification enough for its inception onto the New Year's market.

Apart from adding a semi-home-made cache to its title, the XV535's capacity allows it to put itself in a healthy position relating to our country's insurance bracketry and noise emission regulations. Being, as it is, midway between five and six hundred cubes, the XV not only qualifies for lower insurance than either of the opposition, it also allows the luxury of being able to produce an extra decibel of noise pollution over its sub 500cc brethren. That's not to say that it actually exploits this leeway, its twin sidewinder pipes rarely finding enough voice to drown out a nun's confessional, but at least it could if it should need to in the future.

Being based on the US-only

XV500, the 535's oil-cooled, 70 degree vee-twin engine, thankfully owes little or nothing to its hideous XZ550 predecessor. Using the 500's bottom-end, the extra 35ccs have been gained, along with the desired ambiguous aesthetics of an engine twice the size, by the fitment of two bored-out and heavily overfinned barrels.

Orchestrating this styling exercise are a pair of 34mm downdraft CV carbs breathing through what Yamaha have lately turned into an ongoing art form — an air-box that looks like a petrol tank (as per the FZX, et al eventually). Drunken disinformed attempts to locate the yet to be explained non-existent petrol cap, via the application of undue force to various portions of the 'tank', soon illicit an impromptu demonstration that revealed the real petrol tank, all 1.9 gallons of it, under the seat. The reserve switch was also pointed out (once these promo guys start it's hard to stop 'em), as an electronic switch on the right-hand handlebar. But the tank's not the only piece of contentious design on the 535. Just what the hypothetical punter would

make of the dummy air-intake shrouds on either side of the engine, lucidly described by a well-known inebriate at the NEC show as 'chrome bollocks', is anyone's guess.

Stringing all this underwhelming engineering together is a tubular steel backbone chassis. Designed to accentuate the XV's long and low dimensions, it should ensure that even the most stunted and myopic custom sympathiser stays upright at the traffic lights via the 27-inch, low seat height, and, by using the engine as a stressed member, keeps him/her happy by not crowding the oversize lump's styling with apparently unsightly downtubes.

This compact mechanical juxtaposition is in turn propped-up at either end but a suitably stubby 15 inch rear wheel and, aping all choppers' undoubted ancestor, the Pennyfarthing, a comparatively-oversized 19 inch front. Both should make tyre selection something of a difficult subject to breach in conversation.

A pair of distinctly short-travel shocks ensure an authentic pogo sensation when roads get bumpy, and a set of