

FIRST TEST: THE 1995 YAMAHA 250

Handling? Power? Style? Don't ask!

By Rick Sieman (special thanks to All-Valley Yamaha, Granada Hills, CA)

Talk about excitement! Lots of magazines spend oodles of hours, gaggles of effort and puddles of perspiration trying to get a unique bike test. You see it all the time; it's halfway through 1989 and right there on the cover you see the banner: "First Test! 1990 Honda 250!"

Magazines fight each other tooth and nail to get the newest, hottest, latest bikes. This tends to confuse the readers and leads to distrust of the motorcycling media.

So, *Dirt Bike*, in order to put things in their proper perspective once and for all, is proud to announce the exclusive to end all exclusives: You got it! The first test of the \$19.95 Yamaha 250!

Oh sure, we could have gotten a good bike for 50 or 75 bucks, but how many people can get a running scoot for under 20 bucks? Precious few, we think.

THE HUNT!

Finding a sub-\$20 bike is not easy. Sure, you can buy all manner of non-running, ordinary bikes for a pair of ten-dollar bills, but finding something unique—truly unique—for less than the price of new MX gloves is difficult.

However, we persevered. Local junkyards yielded nothing but incomplete hulks of 305 Super Hawks, rusted-out Suzuki Dusters,

twisted frames from step-through 90s with gutted engines, mangled Kawasaki Bighorns with inch-thick layers of crud and Yamaha Enduros half-eaten away with rust.

No bargains here.

We then turned to the local *Bargain Box* and *Recycler* freebie newspapers to hunt for a bargain. Ha! Fat chance. All of the good stuff was gone, and whatever was left was the kind of stuff you would not want for free.

Things like:

- A Benelli Barracuda with no engine and missing forks for \$35.

- A '71 Bultaco with a blown-up Briggs & Stratton engine welded solidly to the frame. No motor mounts. Just a stick-welded powerplant. At \$20, it was no bargain.

- A Bridgestone Hurricane Scrambler with a topless engine that had been sitting out in the rain for seven years. Price? First \$15 takes it. No one took it.

- A Hodaka Road Toad that had been repainted with a brush (bright-red latex wall paint, semi-gloss), with no engine, saddle or gas tank, for \$25 . . . and no title, to boot!

- A Yamaha Mini Enduro with the forks folded back under the gas tank. Except there was no gas tank. Or swingarm. Or engine. Or wheels. No bargain at \$20.

- A Honda SL-175 with quite possibly the



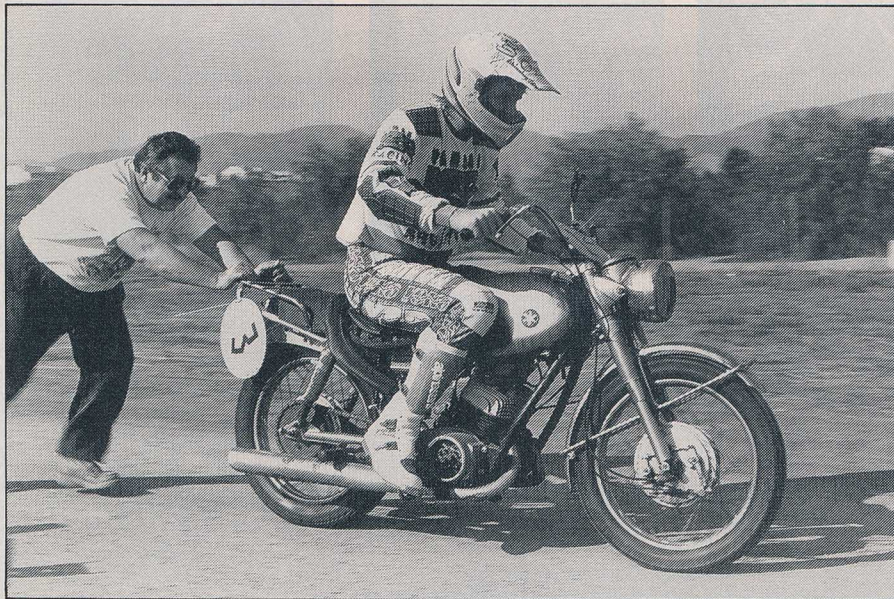
The Yamaha was a veritable handling demon in its day. Unfortunately, its day came and went about 30 years before it was built.

worst blown engine we've ever seen. The head had clearly popped off the cases and literally wrapped around the top frame tube like a limp taco shell. The engine was a ball of orange rust and the rod was bent over like a fish hook. Mold was growing out of the saddle, the tank looked like it had been beaten with a five-pound claw hammer and the wheels vaguely resembled the Star of David symbol. The price was \$25 or trade for a waterbed heater.

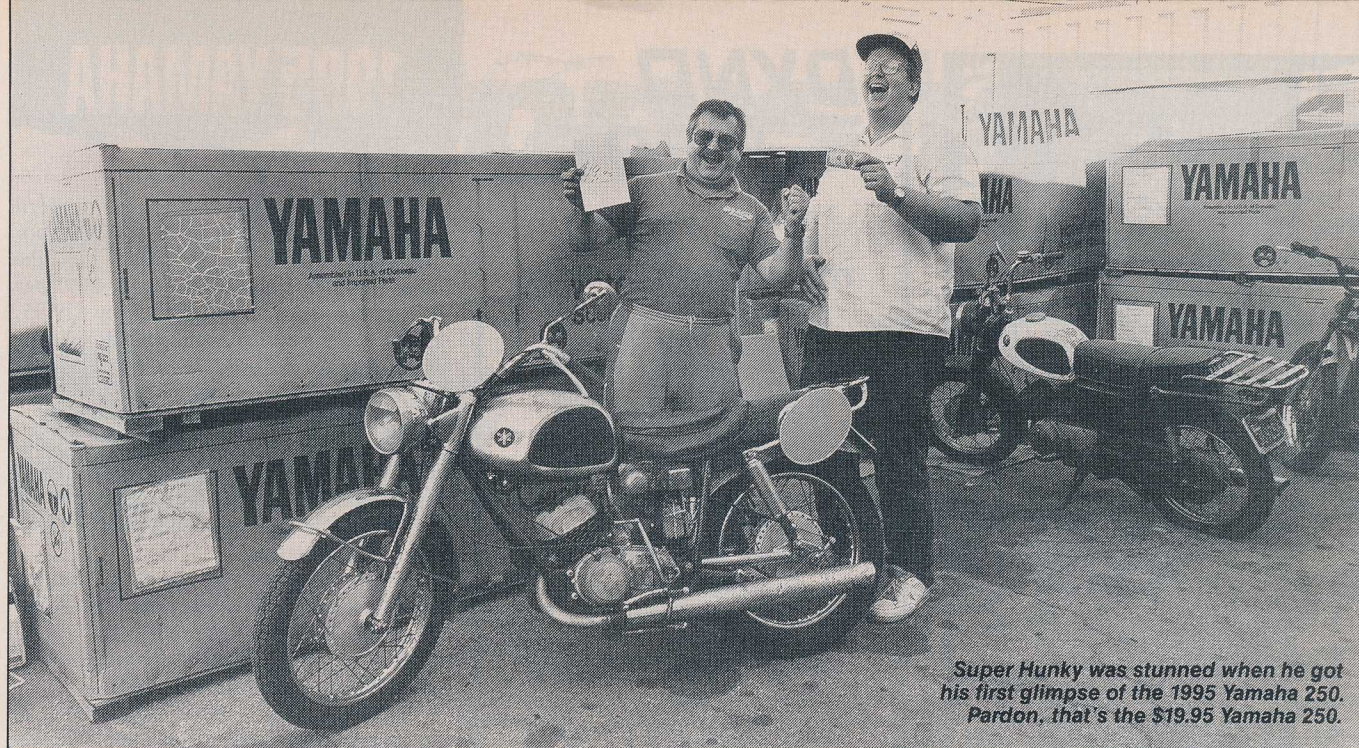
SHOPPING AT THE SHOPS

Finding zip, or less than zip, via the normal channels, we tried calling salvage yards and local motorcycle shops. While these folks were very helpful, they admitted that most of the boneyard bikes had been pretty well picked over.

Shops are a good source of running, low-cost dirt bikes, but we were talking a few hundred bucks for most of what they had lying around the back rooms—things like running DT-1s with a lot of dents, old yellow YZs with steel swingarms, clapped-out RMs with plastic the color of toenails, Kawasaki Bushwhackers with mung and drool leaking out of every juncture and ancient



The acceleration was neck-snapping. No, make that eye-watering. Arm-stretching? Breathtaking? Mind-blowing? Cliche-draining?



Super Hunky was stunned when he got his first glimpse of the 1995 Yamaha 250. Pardon, that's the \$19.95 Yamaha 250.

Honda four-strokes with more rattles than a boxcar full of BBs.

SUCCESS! IN OUR OWN BACKYARD!

I live in a small community on the northern edge of Los Angeles called Granada Hills. Beverly Hills, it ain't. A nice place to live, it is. In desperation I walked into my local friendly motorcycle dealer (LFMD), All-Valley Yamaha, and asked if they had any low-cost used bikes. They conducted me to the back room and displayed the usual variety of whacked-out bikes.

When I asked for something that ran for less than 20 bucks, and that was dirt-worthy to boot, they appeared stymied for a few moments. Then Vince, the manager at All-Valley Yamaha, brightened and smiled. "We've got just what you might be looking for, sir. Follow me."

We followed Vince to a storage section at the back of their lot. In the corner were a few bikes semi-buried under some odds and ends. Two of them looked promising: One was a '72 Yamaha CT-1 175 Enduro and the other was a '62 Yamaha YDS2 twin-cylinder sport bike. Both bikes were more or less complete, intact, and both ran.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT!

We had a moral and financial dilemma. Our goal was to get something decent and dirt-worthy for under 20 bucks. However, the YDS2 was going for \$25 and the CT-1 Enduro had a price tag of \$39.95. How could we get rolling in the rough for our target goal?

Badgering the good folks at All-Valley Yamaha proved to be the key. We yelled, howled, screamed, threatened, pleaded, cajoled and irritated them until they lowered the prices on both bikes. We hammered them down to \$19.95 on the '62 YDS2 250, but they refused to go below \$24.95 on the CT-1. Vince, the harried manager, kept protesting that the 175 Yamaha Enduro was worth a whole lot more. He held his ground and we

were forced to make a choice.

Greed won.

We handed Vince a \$20 bill, got a nickel in change and a receipt . . . then they helped us load up the YDS2.

BACKGROUND & SPECS

Yamaha's first attempt at a 250cc sport bike was the YDS1 that went on sale in 1959. It had a five-speed gearbox and a twin-cylinder, two-stroke engine. Kits were offered to convert the YDS1 to road racing or motocross. The YDS2 was an upgraded version of the YDS1, with more horsepower and better brakes. Twin leading shoes up front assured that stopping power was superb, but suspension came under the heading of "suspect."



Rick was sorry to report that the Yamaha stunk. Have you ever smelled 28-year-old pre-mix?

A close look at the specs reveals more of the true nature of the machine:

Model 1962 Yamaha YDS2
Displacement 246cc
Bore/Stroke 56mm x 60mm
Number of cylinders 2
Engine oiling system . Pre-mix, oil in gas
Plug gap024"/.027"
Point gap011"/.013"
Ignition type Battery
Timing 0.071"
Electrical system 6-volt
Tire size, front 3.00 x 18
Tire size, rear 3.50 x 18
Gearbox Five-speed
Weight (dry, approx.) 352.5 lb
Fork type/travel Telescopic/4-3/4"
Rear suspension:

Type/travel . . . Dual rear shocks/3-1/4"
Carburetion Twin Mikuni VM 22mm
Guarantee/Warranty Two wheels +
 WYSIWYG (What You See
 Is What You Get)

TESTING THE TWIN!

You paid your money and you certainly deserve a reasonable evaluation of the equipment being studied. Not everyone has the wherewithal to test and assess a 28-year-old bike. Since *Dirt Bike* has been evaluating off-road bikes longer than anyone else, we felt that we had the expertise needed to see if our \$19.95 had been spent wisely.

Testing consisted of timed acceleration runs, technical evaluations, suspension studies, handling traits and the all-important dollar-per-goody return on money spent.

Basic math can tell you some very real values. Consider a cost-per-pound factor. A typical new 250 dirt bike will cost the owner about \$4000. The bike will weigh about 225 pounds. Your cost per pound will turn out to be \$17.78. Compare that to the YDS2. It weighs in at a solid 352.4 pounds. Divide by the cost and you end up with a cost per pound of slightly over five cents. To be ex-

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1995 YAMAHA

act, 0.0566761 cents per pound.

Think about horsepower. A modern YZ250 puts out close to 40 very pungent ponies. Again, dividing the cost of the bike (about \$4000) into 40 hp equals \$100 per horse. Now take 22 hp divided by \$19.95, and see what we end up with. Aha! A glance at the calculator shows that the cost is a mere \$1.03 per horse, a veritable bargain at less than half the price.

In the real world of handling and dirt biking, the YDS2 may not prove to be as slick and effective as a typical modern bike, but it certainly is an eye-opener in the cost/return department.

Performance was . . . ahhh . . . unique, to say the least. We found the low saddle height pleasing. Shorter riders could touch their feet comfortably while seated. In fact, so could our German Shepherd.

One might raise a curious eyebrow as to the fact that the YDS2 was offered with optional road racing or motocross kits. Well, bubba, back in the mid-'60s, there were very few animals like "single-purpose" bikes. You pretty much bought a sporty kind of street bike, hung some number plates on it and went racing. Real pros did things like take off the headlight and maybe even run the right kind of tires that the situation called for. Most riders just rode whatcha brung, then rode it back home.

With a stout 22 hp, the Yamaha does exhibit brisk acceleration—not the trench-digging, neck-snapping punch of a new YZ, for example, but certainly enough to cruise at well over the speed limit on fire roads . . . if you dare!

The limiting factor, as expected, is the suspension. With three inches at the rear and a bit under five up front, one can almost read a "ground effects factor" into the handling. Still, the YDS2 proved remarkably stable on hard-packed turns—like U-turns in your driveway.

A certain "revivability" is apparent with a twist of the throttle, no doubt stemming from the use of two cylinders, rather than the more common single jugs we see today. Refreshing also is the complete lack of intake or exhaust gimmicks. The gas simply goes in a hole, gets burned up and exits a hole. Great concept!

What do we do, though, with our YDS2? Should we do a project? Slap a set of upside-down cartridge forks on the front and an ATK setup on the rear? Should we turn the engine over to the folks at Pro Circuit for a maximum horsepower extraction? Should high-zoot multi-colored plastic and a zebra-striped saddle be installed?

THE BOTTOM LINE

All things considered, we blew it. In our haste to get a truly low-cost dirt bike, we scrounged too much. Sadly, when all the realities are considered, we should have popped the extra five bucks for the CT-1 Enduro. Anybody want to trade? □

50¢ stickers 50¢

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