

4
FREE BIKES
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YAMAHA YZ125E: 11 GRAND GASSER

DIRT BIKE

APRIL 1978 • \$1.00 UK60p

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**RED ROOSTER
HONDA CR250R**

TESTS:

- **HERCULES 250 ISDT**
- **SUZUKI RM80C**
- **YAMAHA SR500**

**CHUCK SUN
ON THE
RISE**



TOMMY CROFT



TRAINING WITH BRAD LACKEY
FIX FLATS WITH LESS FUSS
KYB PRO-LINE SUSPENSION

DIRT BIKE

VOLUME EIGHT NUMBER FOUR
APRIL 1978

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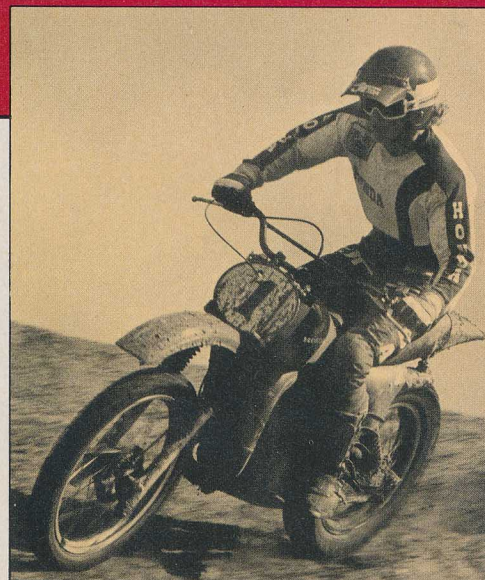
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ON THE COVER:
Tommy Croft and the Big Red Machine
that Cincinnati didn't build.
Photo by Len Weed.

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 20

"Its mother was a dirt bike"

By The Staff of Dirt-And-Then-Some Bike

RRRRRING.

Yamaha Representative: "Hello?"

Miscellaneous DIRT BIKE staffer:

"Hi, it's me again."

Yam: "Uh, oh."

DB: "I'm in a bind. We want to test something a little different this month. You know, add a little variety to the book. We've already tested the DT and the IT, and a couple of our guys are playing with the YZs right now. But we want to try something a little, shall we say, out of the ordinary. I'm stumped."

Yam: "How about a TT500?"

DB: "What's new on it?"

Yam: "The paint."

DB: "Nah."

Yam: "Hmmm. This is going to be a toughie. Let me think a bit."

DB: "Dum de dum . . ."

Yam: "Ah, how about the SR500?"

DB: "The what?"

Yam: "The SR500. It uses the same basic engine as the TT and the XT but it's all new."

DB: "Wow. A super-hot one-off, prototype exclusive! What's it for? Motocross? Woods? Trials? Hillclimb?"

Yam: "Street."

DB: "Come again?"

Yam: "It's based on the XT. It's a single-cylinder street thumper."

DB: "Yeah, but . . ."

Yam: "It's light and agile, and has a distinctive personality all its own."

DB: "But the name is *DIRT BIKE*."

Yam: "Well, uh . . . Its mother was a dirt bike."

DB: "I just don't . . ."

Yam: "You'll love it. Is Thursday fine?"

DB: "Huh?"

Yam: "Good."

CLICK.

□ The SR500 could be said to have brought the single-cylinder thumper full circle. The engine is the same basic unit that Yamaha introduced in their TT and XT500s, which in turn was inspired by the old BSA Gold Star and Matchless. From British street machine to Japanese dirt and dual-purpose

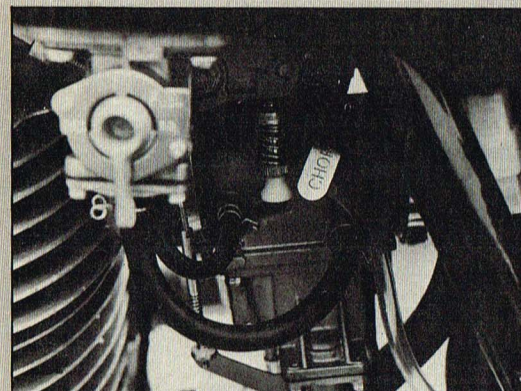
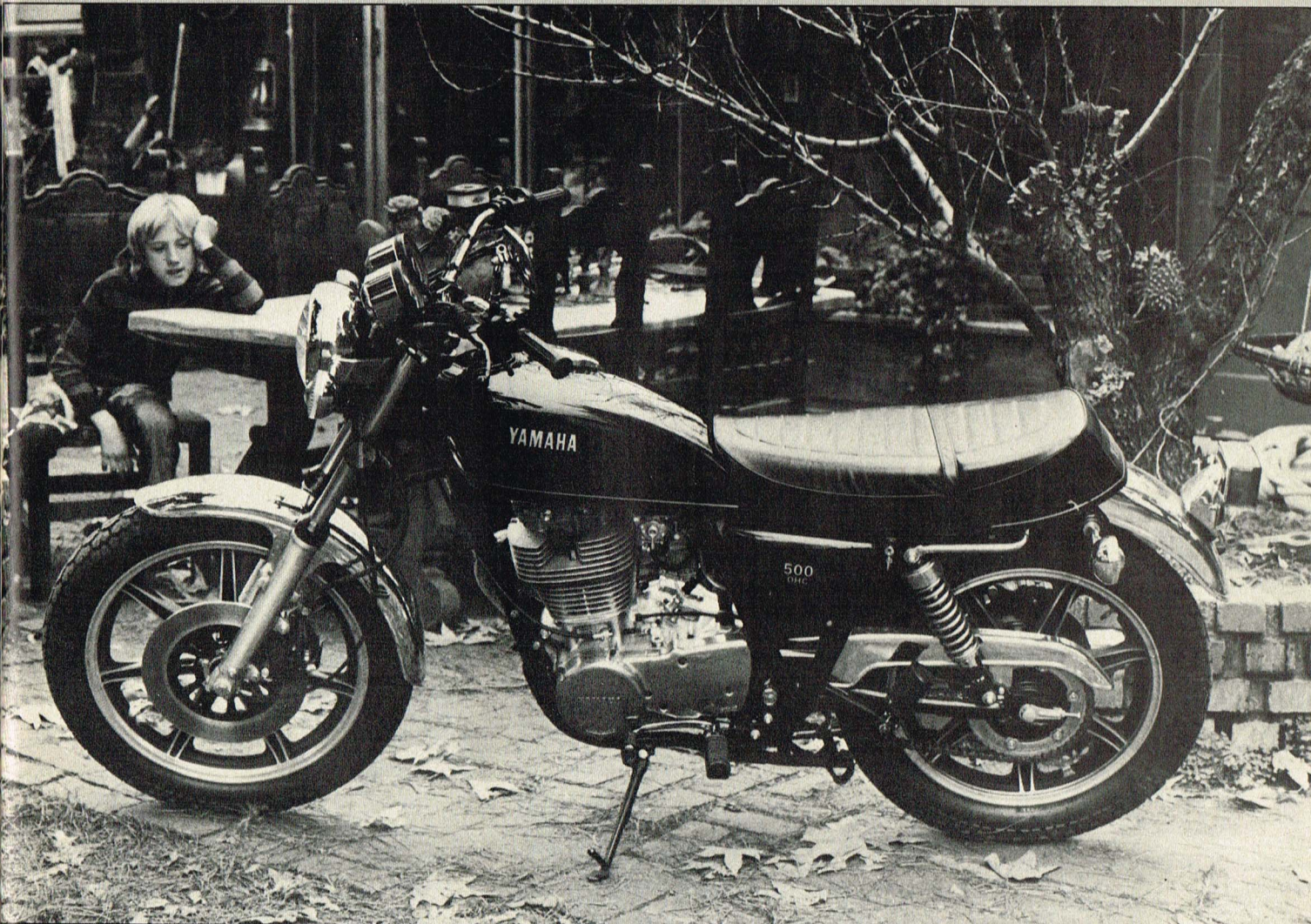
machines to British-inspired Japanese street machine. Quite a route.

While the SR's overhead cam engine and other technical features come from the XT/TT mold, the overall styling and feel of the bike is strictly British replica. Yamaha has done a commendable job of combining the atmosphere of the old thumpers with the technology of today.

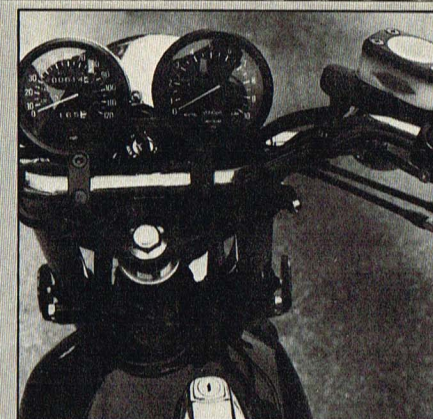
Such things as one-piece cast aluminum wheels, self-canceling turn signals, front and rear disc brakes and an easier starting system are welcome

components to the thumper package. Other differences include an electrical system that works and an engine that doesn't drip oil, things only the most nostalgic British bike fan will miss.

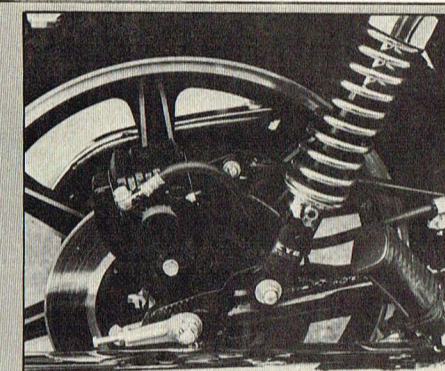
The bore and stroke and compression ratio of the SR are the same as the XT's engine, yet a 2mm larger carb and a new CDI ignition help to produce a couple more horsepower. Also, while the frame has been reworked to give it good street geometry, it still retains the forced feed dry sump lubrication



The carb features aids for both cold and warm starting. The choke lever enriches the mixture for cold starting, while the white button leans it out for easier warm starting.



The cockpit. Notice the oil cap between the tank and the triple clamps. Ala the TT and XT, engine oil is stored in the frame tubes.



The rear Kayabas worked fine considering there isn't any pounding terrain on the street. The rear disc turned blue from heat after one test session but still continued to work fine.

YAMAHA SR500

YAMAHA SR500

system, with the oil housed in the frame's backbone.

The SR features an intricate but effective starting system to replace the kick-and-pray method of the old Beezers. Like the XT, it uses a cam window and a compression release to locate the point right after top dead center when it can be kicked through without worrying about kickback.

For cold starting a choke lever is provided on the carb, although, surprisingly enough, during most of our 60+ -degree mornings it would start immediately without the choke. In addition, the pressing of a white plastic button on the carb creates a lean condition in the carb, which is designed to help, and is quite necessary for warm starting.

Throughout our test, the SR started easily about 90 percent of the time on the first couple of kicks. The other ten percent was somewhat erratic, and once in a while it was downright difficult to fire up.

It didn't take long once we had it on the street for definite impressions to form among our test riders. A couple of descriptions the SR's torquey power drew were "mellow" and "soulful." The bike isn't frightfully fast, but it's hardly a slug. It will easily cruise 70, and still have instant pull for a pass. One rider did say he'd like to have a little more power, but for most it was plenty. Another rider who had always felt that the engine was a bit too much for comfortable dirt riding mentioned that he was glad to see it finally find a proper home.

The handling, too, is impressive, and is complimentary to the power. The cornering feels stable and precise. Very "continental." It's similar to comparing the cornering of a KTM to an RM in the dirt. It takes to a winding road like a Penton to a tight trail.

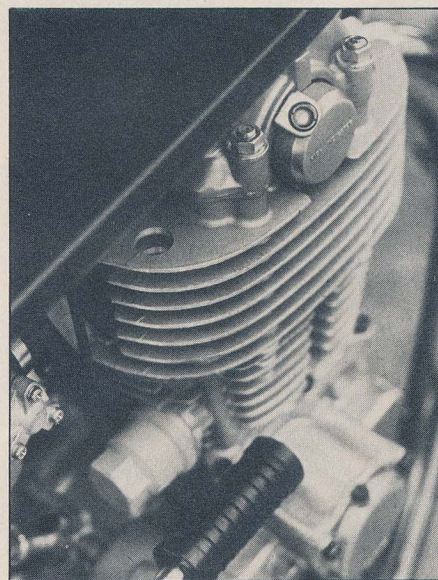
The overall handling is very sensitive both to the rider and to the road. This is an advantage when using body English, but can be a disadvantage when hitting small fluctuations in the pavement, which will sometimes cause the rear wheel to hop a little.

The suspension is pretty good by street standards. It's not terrific, but it's comfortable and never does anything funny. The forks withstood the wheelies of our more abusive riders quite well, never landing with a jolt. Kayaba shocks are used on the rear.

The disc brakes are impressive. They're very progressive and sufficiently transmit the feeling through to the rider. The rear disc was a nice blue hue after one shooting session, but still worked great.



The disc brakes and cast aluminum wheels are welcome updates for the thumper.



A cam window on the right side works in conjunction with a compression release as a kick indicator for saving your ankle while starting.

Chrome Edge Numbers

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white
black

helmet 50¢
plate 75¢

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YAMAHA SR500

The Bridgestone tires work fine on smooth pavement, but shimmy on freeway rain grooves just like any other tire called upon to traverse such surfaces. This seems to be a trait unique to all Yamaha street bikes.

Except for one time when the clutch came out of adjustment, the shifting was perfect. It gives a solid click from gear to gear, and neutral was always easy to find. One rider thought the clutch was a bit too grabby but released well.

Most had no complaints with the positioning of the pegs and controls, though one felt he had to sit up too straight, and would prefer the pegs back a little.

There were a couple of areas that lost universal points among the testers. One was the method for taking the seat off, which is by unscrewing two bolts in the rear. Nothing really important lies under the seat, but a conventional latch and hinge arrangement would be simpler.

The left side cover, which shelters



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YAMAHA SR500E

PRICE: (approx. retail, West Coast) \$1549

ENGINE: Single-cylinder, overhead cam,
air-cooled four-stroke

DISPLACEMENT: 499cc

BORE & STROKE: 87 x 84

COMPRESSION RATIO: 9.0

CARBURETION: VM34SS Mikuni

HORSEPOWER: 32 hp/6500 rpm

CLUTCH: Wet, multi-disc

FINAL DRIVE:

16-tooth countershaft

44-tooth rear sprocket

AIR FILTRATION: Dry, Moltpren

IGNITION: AC CDI

LUBRICATION: Forced feed dry sump

RECOMMENDED FUEL: Regular

FUEL TANK CAPACITY: 3.2 gallons

FRAME: Single cradle

STARTING: Kick

WHEELS: One-piece cast aluminum

TIRES:

Front: 3.505x19 Bridgestone

Rear: 4.005x18 Bridgestone

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase: 140cm (55.6 inches)

Ground Clearance: 16.5cm (6.5 inches)

Seat Height: 78cm (31 inches)

Weight: 163 kilos (359 pounds) without
fuel

BRAKES:

Front: Disc, 298mm diameter

Rear: Disc, 267mm diameter

INSTRUMENTS: Speedo w/tripmeter,
tach

WARRANTY: 60 days

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A trend is afoot

Slightly reminiscent of the subtle fusion between classical and rock music during the last decade, a wave seems to be creeping in that demonstrates the compatibility of dirt bikes and street bikes. They are becoming more and more related to each other, not only spiritually but also physically.

One clue to this is some of the latest strides in street technology which a few of us purists refer to as "dirtizing." Whereas a dirt bike that feels like a street bike has always been something to avoid, a street bike that feels like a dirt bike is a hot item. This, of course, refers to the lightness and nimble handling current dirt bikes are noted for, in addition to peppy power and good suspension. That enviable combination is something the street riding world is presently seeking as anxiously as we did a few years ago.

But another aspect which is becoming more and more apparent is that the "dirt world" and the "street world" are hardly as separated as some of us have imagined. Of course, there are many riders who do one and scoff at

the other, yet the better, more open-minded riders realize that a good street bike can be as much fun as a good dirt bike. This is a pure motorcycling feeling, and they appreciate that the same feelings, the same thrills can be found on both dirt and pavement.

For instance, you won't catch Malcolm Smith turning his nose up at a good street ride. By the same token, Kenny Roberts can ride a dirt bike in a way that would bring tears to your eyes.

But to really experience both, rather than a compromised machine such as a dual-purpose bike, who can blame someone for wanting to enjoy the current state of technology in both areas?

Indeed, a recent independent survey taken of DIRT BIKE readers indicates that a surprisingly large percentage of the readership have a street bike in the household as well as a dirt bike.

The item that brings all this home is Yamaha's new SR500. It is a street bike, developed directly from the XT and TT500 dirt models, that seems to incorporate the best of both worlds into one package.

the battery, tool compartment and registration case, has a lock and is designed to be removed with the key. The lock is a hassle in reinstalling the cover, and doesn't do its job very well, as one staffer discovered while looking for the tools in bad light, when he effortlessly yanked the cover off.

One of our faster riders noted that the sidestand is too low, as it's the first thing to scrape while leaned over on the left side. He mentioned that he'd be tempted to take it off completely, since the bike also sports a centerstand.

As is to be expected with a 500 single, vibration is present at all rpm settings, but it's hardly an irritating vibration. Like the mellow sound of the engine, the vibration is actually soothing in a way, almost sexual, and contributes to the overall personality of the machine.

Like a Harley, the personality is really what sets the SR apart. Except, unlike a Harley, it has handling that will stand on its own. Its forte is surprising the big-bores on Racer Road. Being light and responsive, strong, yet well mannered, it's the dirt bike of the street in more ways than one.

RRRRING

Yam: "Yeah?"

DB: "Well, we've done our test on the SR."

Yam: "How'd ya like it?"

DB: "It wheelies real neat, but it's unstable over the whoops, awkward on a tight trail, and terrible in a berm."

Yam: "Sigh."

DB: "But what do you think the chances are of us getting a hot deal on a couple of 'em?"



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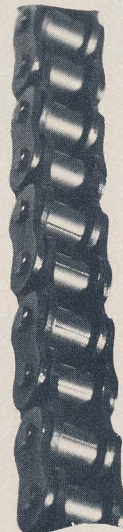
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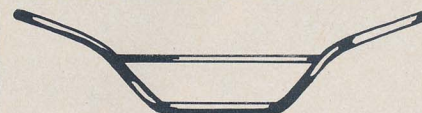


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