

SNEEK PEEK

YAMAHA TT250 MONO

Exclusive first look at the four-stroke future

By the Editors of Dirt Bike

Ah hah! What do we have here? What we got, sport, is the first-ever 250 four-stroke single from Yamaha. Naturally, it sports the TT name. As of this writing, not a single one of these bikes is in the U.S., but we were fortunate to get some advance information and photos. DIRT BIKE will have an exclusive test on this machine in the February or March issue. Sorry we can't be more specific; you'll have to keep posted.

Even though the specifications are not finalized, what we have here will be basically the machine sold to the public in the spring of 1980. Here's what we do know for sure:

The TT250 is not a match-up job of old TT500 engine parts in a YZ or IT frame. It has its own cases and drive-train components and the frame is an original for this unit.

Travel in the forks will be 9.1 inches (230mm) and leading axle forks will come with the bike. As of this writing, no air caps are scheduled for the forks, but this is still being considered.

Rear-end travel is 8.1 inches at the axle (205mm) and the suspension is monoshock. It'll be a basic DeCarbon mono unit, with no fancy aluminum body. Look for something about the sophistication level of a 1977 YZ mono unit.

Instead of the normal 18-inch rear wheel found on every other Yamaha dirt bike, the TT250 will sport a 5.00x17 rim and tire. Part of the reason for this is to keep the overall height of the bike down to a respectably low number. Enduro riders and trail/play bike folks just don't want or need bikes with 37-plus-inch saddle heights. According to our sources, the TT250 saddle height will be a fraction under 34 inches (860mm).

Somehow, Yamaha has managed to get decent ground clearance—11 inches—and a low-slung seating position at the same time.

While we received few details about the motor, we did find out that the TT250 will have a single overhead cam, a 30mm Mikuni carb and will have a moderately spaced, five-speed gearbox with primary kickstarting. An automatic compression release will make starting easier.

The trim-looking gas tank will hold about 1¾ gallons of gas. While this doesn't sound like a lot, it's not uncommon for a 250 single to get over 50 miles per gallon under hard riding conditions. If this holds true for the TT250, getting 75 to 80 miles out of that small tank should be no problem whatsoever.

A glance at the hard numbers indi-

cates that the TT250 will turn well. With a 55.5-inch wheelbase and 29 degrees of rake (trail: 4¾ inches), there should be no problem bending the TT250 around a tight trail.

Even though monos have some extra weight up high, the engineers have done lots of thinking to keep a low center of gravity. The engine is a wet sump unit, which keeps the oil down low. Also, the engine is short and squat, unlike the tallish TT500. Liberal use of light plastic on fenders and side panels will also contribute to a low c.g. and low overall weight.

We couldn't weasel any numbers out of Yamaha about the overall dry weight of the bike, but a safe guess would be in the 240- to 250-pound area. Of course, we might be surprised when we actually get to test and weigh the bike.

A CDI ignition will be used for spark. No points adjusting here.

As one can tell from the skid plate, plastic hand guards and overall look of the bike, its primary purpose will be that of enduro competition or serious play riding. Still, knowing the accessory folks, before the paint dries on the first batch sold, they'll have hop-up kits for them.

A spark arrestor will come standard on the bike and the pipe is tucked in neatly. No provisions are made for op-



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tional lighting kits, but it only seems obvious that the TT250 will be followed by a street-legal XT250. We'll take bets on this and give odds.

Other interesting details include a front number plate that's a combination plate and water jug. Talk about enduro-ready! It looks like it'll hold a quart plus, which is enough to get a rider by in an emergency.

A nifty louvered front fender will allow cooling air to get to the motor, while still keeping a certain amount of debris off the fins. We first saw this on one of the DT bikes a year ago and it impressed us as a good idea back then. We hope it catches on and becomes a standard.

One thing that we don't care for, is the dual-cable, push-pull throttle. This makes for a lot of work when getting to the carb for normal servicing and the throttle action is not as smooth as a single cable setup. Still, that's a fairly easy thing for an owner to change.

A folding shift lever is clearly visible in the left-side photo, but the brake lever appears to be rigid. Again, these details could change by the time we get

that first production bike.

FIM-style side plates lend the TT250 a space-age look, and the white color with touches of red and black is clean and sharp-looking.

That rear hub appears to be wafer-thin and spidery-light. Obviously, a lot of thought has gone into reducing unsprung weight.

Axle adjusters at the rear are the cam type, which makes for quick, easy and accurate chain adjustment.

The distance between the swingarm pivot and the countershaft sprocket is small, meaning that there'll be minimal chain slop within the normal up-and-down movement of the rear wheel.

There's no floating rear brake, which we find refreshing, and the brake rod actuates directly over the swingarm pivot point, which should make for chatter-free braking.

A more or less standard conical Yamaha hub rides up front and we saw no provisions for a speedo. However, this may change.

While we're not sure about the frame, it appears that it's a diamond configuration, like the XRs. This

means that there are no frame tubes under the engine and the engine acts as part of the frame structure. This has proven very strong on the XRs.

Bar clamps are set back, allowing fork leg adjustment room and easier servicing.

The saddle appears to be thick and comfortable.

What's happening here?

Can't you tell? This is obviously the beginning of the new-generation Yamaha four-stroke dirt bikes. The next logical step will be a mid-displacement jump—possibly a 350 to 370cc unit, based on the 250 bottom end. Then, a full-blown 500 can evolve from the same basic design. While we couldn't get anyone to comment on our educated guesses, we did see a lot of secretive smiles from "those who know."

Yamaha appears to be very proud of their new TT, as well as they should be. If it works anything like it looks, the rules of the four-stroke game have just been rewritten. This is one test we're *really* looking forward to. □