

35
SUZUKI
RM400C TEST

250 MX SHOOTOUT: RED, GREEN & YELLOW

DIRT BIKE

MAY 1978 • \$1.00 UK60p

**SUPER CROSSER
YAMAHA YZ250E**

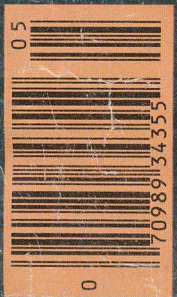
**BULTACO 350
SHERPA T**

**YAMAHA
XS400E**



Bob Hannah

**YAMAHA IT175 TIPS
GO FASTER WITH BRAKES**



DIRT BIKE

VOLUME EIGHT NUMBER FIVE
MAY 1978

TESTS

BULTACO 350 SHERPA T	
World champion again.....	26
YAMAHA XS400E	
Around-town twin	30
YAMAHA YZ250E	
The Hurricane Machine	36
SUZUKI RM400C	
Squaring her up	46
250 MOTOCROSS SHOOTOUT	
Honda, Kawasaki and Yamaha	60

FEATURES

SIMONS SETUPS	
To the front, march	14
YAMAHA IT175 SET-UPS	
Direct from Czecho to you	16
BILL STEWART	
Talking R & D for IT	17
MX PRIVATEERS	
Some will be flying first class this year.....	20
USING THE BRAKES	
Riding technology continued	52

PRODUCTS

DIRT WERKS STAND	
Getting under wonder	34
POSI-BRAKE	
Full-floating the RM Suzuki.....	58

DEPARTMENTS

CHECKPOINT	
We'll be back after this important message.....	6
BITS & PIECES	
DNFing with Putsy Caballero	8
RIDERS WRITE	
Give up whaaat?	12
NEW PRODUCTS	
Better than used	65
LAST LAP	
Gentlemen, start your engines	69
CRASH AND BURN	
That looks nice and soft.....	82

DIRT BIKE (May 1978) is published monthly by Hi-Torque Publications, Inc., with editorial offices at 16200 Ventura Blvd., Encino, California 91436. Subscriptions \$9.00 for 12 issues (one year). Foreign subscriptions add \$2 per year and Canada \$1 per year for additional postage. Copyright © 1978 by Hi-Torque Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted in whole or in part without the express permission of the publisher. CONTRIBUTORS: Photographic submissions must be 5x7 or 8x10 glossy black and white, or 35mm and larger color slides. Please mark each photo with owner's name and address. Manuscripts should be typewritten. Unsolicited contributions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Unless special arrangements are made in advance, all published material becomes the sole property of Hi-Torque Publications, Inc. The publisher does not assume responsibility for unsolicited material. Second class postage paid at Van Nuys, California 91408, and at additional mailing offices. DIRT BIKE, P.O. Box 317, Encino, California 91316.



National #1 in color . . . Pg. 60



National #1 in color . . . Pg. 36



World #7 in color . . . Pg. 26

ON THE COVER:
Bob Hannah stylin' at Indian Dunes.
Can you tell if he's wearing underwear?
Photo by Len Weed

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE MAY 18

Style and handling for the weekday asphalt scrambles

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE;
who has to get to work, just like you

□ With a high-pitched, irritating buzz that pierces the twitching restlessness of your dreams, the alarm clock announces Monday morning. Your leaden arm involuntarily swings out of the covers and brings the noise to an abrupt halt, as you wrestle your first eye open. 7:45. Fifteen minutes to key time.

You spring from the bed and into your waiting clothes. The muscle aches from yesterday's 100-miler through the boonies are beginning to ripen. That bruise below your knee is already turning slightly yellow. But no time to muse on that. The weekday reliability run to work is about to begin.

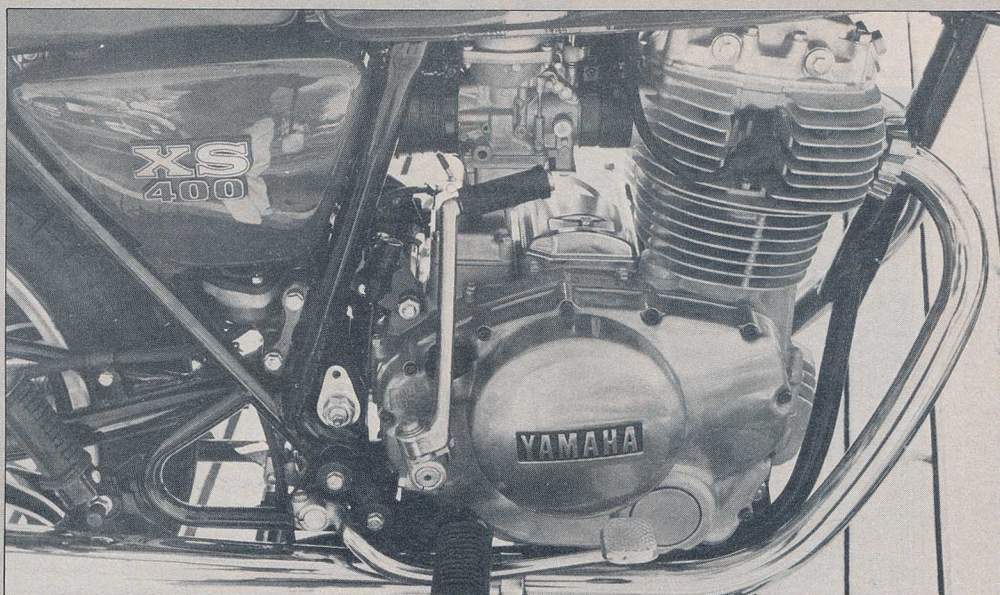
The water kettle begins screaming as you reach a hand in the box, grab a fistful of Raisin Bran, pop it into your mouth and take a swig of milk. Now down the row of vitamin bottles while gulping the coffee. Better take two of those green ones, gonna need 'em today.

Then out the door, and there she sits in the driveway, gleaming in the early morning sun. Your Yamaha XS400.

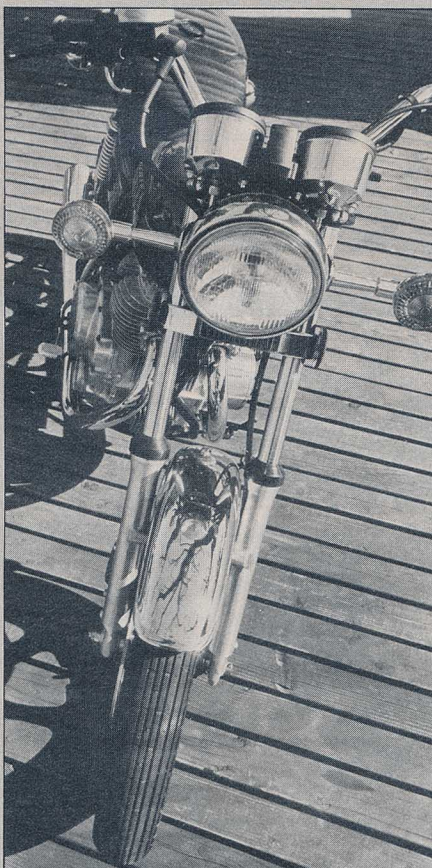
Your scoot for the asphalt enduro. You have to pause a moment to take in its sleek lines and stylish design. It really is a pretty machine. You commend yourself for your display of good taste in picking it out.

Your eyes caress the profile of the sleek teardrop tank, soak in the deep, rich red paint and the striking gold insignias on the tank and sidecovers. You blink at the sparkle from the swooping exhaust pipes, and smile at the stylish black and aluminum wheels. Yes sir, styling is the key word with the XS400.

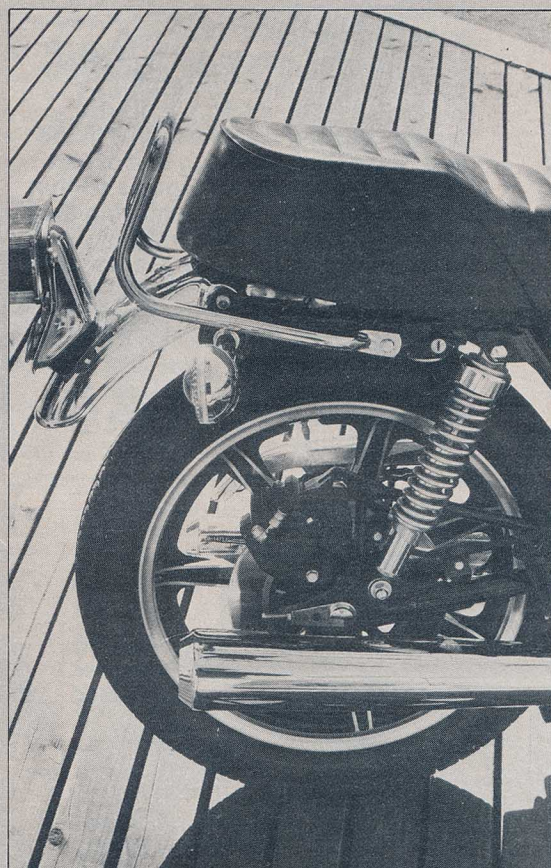
Generally, the mid-sized bikes, such as 400s, are commuter-oriented, around-town bikes. They're not built for the long haul, but basically as inexpensive, reliable, fun transportation for scooting to work, market, etc. They give quite a few more miles to the gallon and shave off minutes in the rush hour traffic. And maybe you find yourself



The XS powerplant is a single overhead cam four-stroke twin, fed by dual constant velocity Mikuni carbs.



The front components, including the tire and the forks, have a good working relationship going.



The shocks feature five preload adjustments, which are needed. The rear brake is strong, but lacks "feel."

YAMAHA



XS400E

YAMAHA XS400E

having some of that Sunday kind of fun.

Ah, but until recently mid-sized bikes looked their part. Sensible, practical designs, not exactly overflowing with flavor or personality. The manufacturers saved the *real* lines for the larger machines.

Perhaps that's why the XS doesn't look like a 400. Upon first glance it can easily be mistaken for a 550, or even a 650. Yamaha has taken the successful designs of their larger XS bikes and used them to overhaul the visual package of the 400.

Besides the addition of the teardrop tank, and spiffing up the aluminum wheels, the pipes have been rounded near the head to give them a more sweeping look. And the muffler has been shortened 25mm.

The cylinder head and fins have also undergone some rounding off, while the chrome, contoured fenders and a new two-step seat add the finishing touches to the new appearance.

Stepping up to it, you wipe a smudge off of the tank with your shirt sleeve. It's all right for your Husky to get covered with mud and dust, but not this baby.

Now you strap your helmet on and ease into the seat. This you wouldn't mind being a little softer. Especially this morning, your sore rear would welcome a seat not quite so firm. You insert your key and thank Yamaha for incorporating their fork lock into the ignition switch, and not making you hunt around under the steering column for it.

With the choke on it takes a couple of presses on the electric start to fire it up, and then a few seconds to let it warm up.

The exhaust note is quiet but "authoritative." It seems just loud enough to cover up the mechanical noise from the engine.

The bars are higher and swept back more than last year. Between them and the seat it's said that you sit *in* the bike, not *on* it. But that's a point on which you differ with Yamaha's PR people. Especially after trying Billy's XS650 or Bob's SR500. You still feel like you're *on* the 400. In fact, when Walt tried your bike, he said he'd like the bars more forward and a bit lower. Oh well, they seem fine to you.

Other nifty new features include the rubber-coated dog-leg-type levers, the self-canceling turn signals and the angled-back instrument panel.

Sharon liked the fact that she could stretch her legs straight down, and could easily touch the ground without having to angle around any protrusions. This causes it to "feel" low, and that's one of the little things that make it such a nice bike for beginners.

Oops, been savoring the bike too long. You're running behind your minute.

You click it down into first and ease out the clutch. The 400 takes a slight lurch as it gets under way. Walt blamed that lack of pull-away smoothness on the constant velocity carbs. You usually don't notice it anymore, but it is a little bit bothersome in stop-and-go traffic.

The power of the XS is pretty normal for a 400. It's not as quick as Richard's RD, or even quite as strong as Mike's Honda Hawk. But it gets up and goes. It's certainly not intimidated in the least by the speed limit.

There's some excess vibration in the 4500-5000 rpm range, a by-product of the engine's high-revving tendencies. Over a long distance this works together with the firm seat to give you a numb rear. Fortunately you don't stay in that range too long.

As you head down a long straight you click from fifth into sixth gear. That sixth gear is a necessity with the XS, and you're mighty glad it's there. The ratios are close, but well spaced to complement the power. The throw of the shifter is quite short and extremely smooth. The click from one gear to the next is hardly noticeable. It's so smooth, in fact, that it creates a certain feeling of "unsureness." As a result you sometimes come up with a false neutral.

There's a light up ahead and now you want to see if you can beat it. It's still green as you come upon it, but suddenly it switches to yellow, and you have to grab your brakes. The front disc brake is very strong and sure and quickly slows you down. The rear disc is likewise strong, but doesn't have much feel to it. You unintentionally lock it up for an instant, leaving a short patch of black, before you ease back off. With normal braking there's no problem, but you have to watch those sudden stops.

You check your watch while you're waiting for the light. Still running behind your minute. The next section is a winding road, and this is where you can make up some time.

You take off from the light and begin pitching it through the turns. The handling of the XS is on a par with the styling. There's no sign of flex from the strong, rigid frame. It gives a solid feel in the corners and tracks true. In addition, the combination of the power and the six-speed gearbox provides you with good acceleration out of each turn. This is where you've got the edge on Richard's RD.

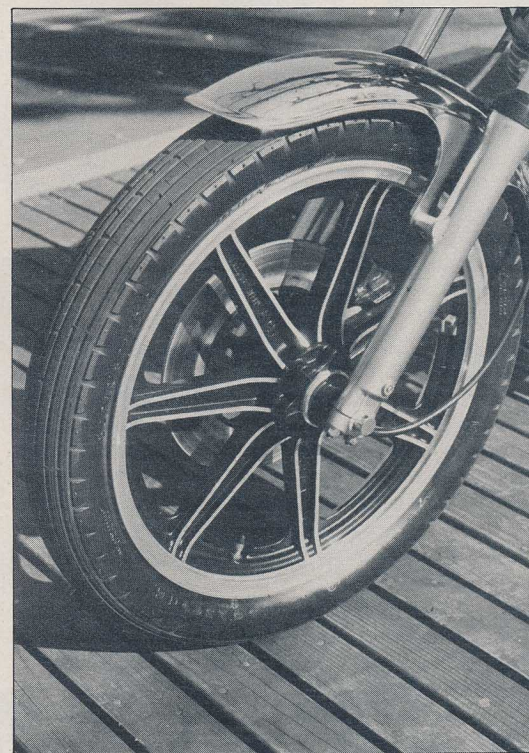
The rear suspension was a little soft when you first got the bike, but dialing on some preload helped that out. The

front has always worked well.

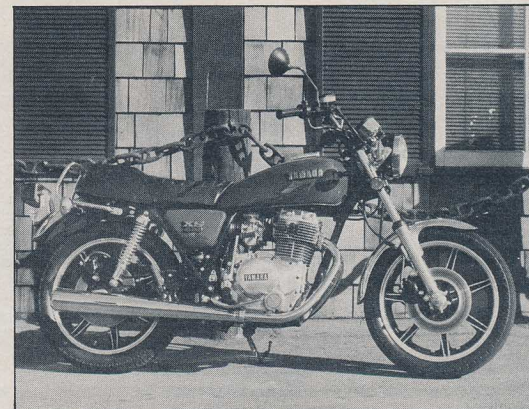
Now you're approaching the freeway, the final section. You go up the ramp and slip in among the four-wheeled vehicles. You're in fifth when you hit 55, but have to nudge up to sixth to maintain the flow of traffic. You settle into a cruise speed of 65 and the bike feels comfortable. It's steady and secure. Part of this stability can be traced to the slightly extended forks and 30mm more on the swingarm.

There's no sign of shimmying on the rain grooves. You wonder if that could have anything to do with Yamaha's going with a 3.00 front tire, instead of the previous 3.25.

A few more miles and you pull off on your exit. A couple of girls on the sidewalk turn and stare as you pass by.



Disc brakes and one-piece cast aluminum wheels adorn both the front and rear.



YAMAHA XS400E

PRICE: (suggested retail) \$1298
ENGINE TYPE: Air-cooled, four-stroke
 SOHC twin

DISPLACEMENT: 391cc

BORE & STROKE: 69mm x 52.4mm

COMPRESSION RATIO: 9.3:1

CARBURETION: (2) Mikuni BS3411

HP at RPM: 37 bhp at 8800 rpm

CLUTCH: Wet, multi-disc

FINAL DRIVE: D.I.D 50DS chain,
 102 links

16-tooth countershaft

39-tooth rear sprocket

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM: Battery and coil.

Electric or kick start

LUBRICATION: Pressure-lubricated
 wet sump

RECOMMENDED FUEL: Regular

FUEL CAPACITY: 3.7 gallons

FRAME: Tubular steel, semi-double cradle

WHEELS & SPOKES: One-piece cast
 aluminum

TIRES:

Front: Bridgestone, 3.00x18

Rear: Bridgestone, 3.50x18

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase: 53.7 inches

Clearance: 5.9 inches

Seat Height: 30.7 inches

Weight: 370 pounds

BRAKES:

Front: Disc

Rear: Disc

INSTRUMENTS: Speedometer, w/trip
 meter, tachometer, self-canceling turn
 signals, neutral indicator, oil pressure
 light

WARRANTY: Six months

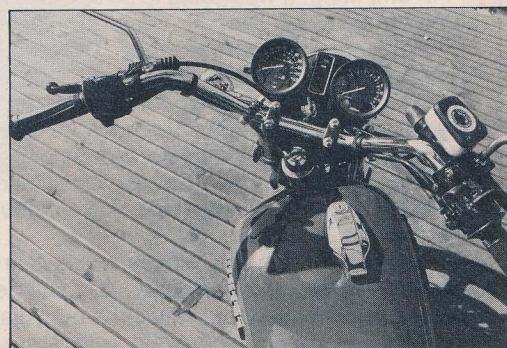
You'd smile at them except you know that they're admiring the bike, not you. Even so, it still feels good to know that your wheels have caught their eye.

You zip through the back streets for a couple of blocks, savoring these last few moments of brisk air on your face, and finally pull into work. Again the fork lock on the ignition switch saves you a few seconds as you hop off and head for the door.

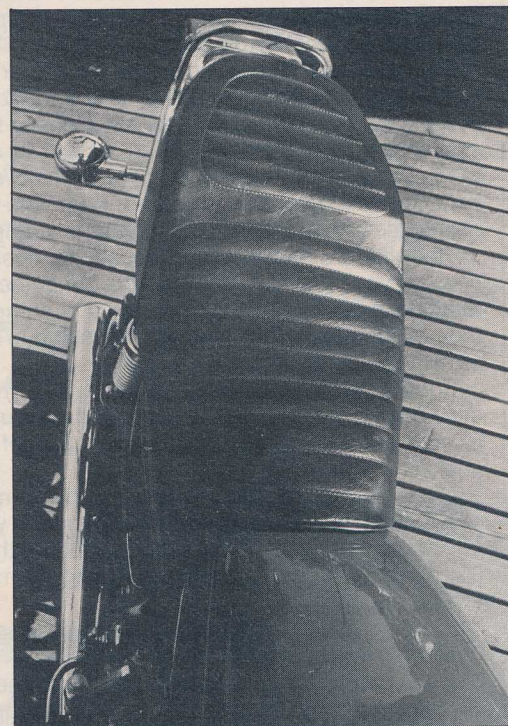
Halfway through you turn once more, eye the glistening chrome and deep red, and think that perhaps a jaunt through the countryside this afternoon would be nice. Something to look forward to before you start shaping your Husky for next weekend.

Then you turn back, reach for your time card, and punch it into the clock. 8:30. Zeroed the course. ■

Former Harley Team rider and National Road Race winner Walt Fulton takes the XS400 through hot around-town paces.



New swept-back bars and easy-to-read angled instruments are part of the styling package.



The two-step seat looks inviting but could use some softening up.