

FIRST TESTS: '88 CR500R & '88 YZ125U!
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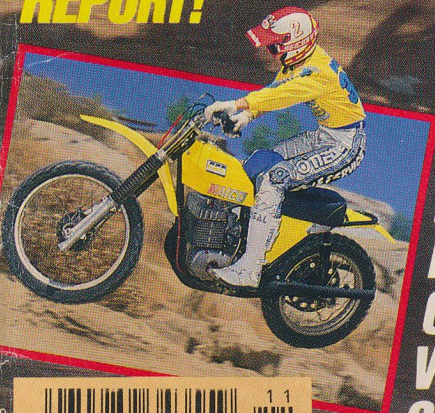
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ON THE COVER:—Jeff "Chicken" Matiasevich backs the CR500R into the new year, Pete "Pepe" Murray time travels on a vintage Maico, Gary LaPlante styles the '88 XR600R, and the RM250 and Mugen 125 get the aluminum treatment. "Flying" Eddie Arnet snapped the two-stroke action, while "Torquing" Tim Tolleson captured the thundering thumper, and the *DB* lens traveled to Japan for the photos of the ultra-trick RM and CR. Tom Strattman took the Table of Contents photo of Jeff Leisk, styling deep in an Ohio National berm.

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WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear.

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BROADENING THE WORLD OF SNAP

Will Honda live this one down?

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

Chronology of Yamaha's bid at tiddler supremacy:

1972: Yamaha introduces the AT2M 125. The bike can't compete head to head with the exotic Bultacos, DKWs, Pentons, Sachs, Zundapps and Monarchs of the early '70s, but it is still snatched up in droves, due to an extremely low price.

1973: The all-new ATMx. Improved styling, forks, shocks and a 21-inch front wheel are the "big" changes to the new Yamaha 125. Oh yeah, the price goes to \$638. Yamaha has another popular unit on its hands, although not necessarily a competitive one. The 20-horsepower 180-pound Honda Elsinore blows it into the weeds!

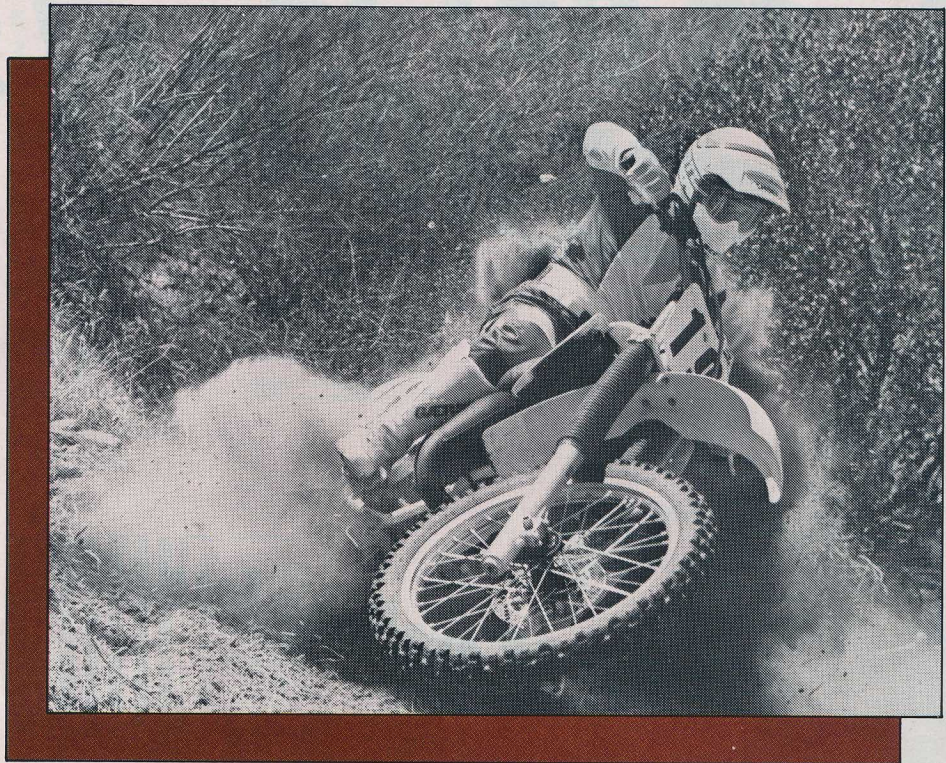
1974: Yamaha offers two hot 125 motocrossers: the 16-horsepower yellow-tanked MX125A and the 18.2-horsepower silver-tanked YZ125A. Most riders find the souped-up YZ125 too demanding to ride. The standard MX offers a mellower alternative. Honda is still on top.

1975: Yamaha makes minor changes to the 125 lineup. The 1975 MX125B receives aluminum rims and a new paint job. A new paint job is the only change to the YZ125B. The two bikes are no match for the hyper-speed 1975 Honda CR125M1 Elsinor and the new down-pipe RM125.

1976: Yamaha kisses the Thermal Flow shocks good-bye with the introduction of the spectacular 1976 YZ125C monoshocker. The new yellow hot rod is immensely popular. Many think it is the best bike of the year. A white-tanked, laid-down, dual-shocked MX125C is still offered to economy-minded riders.

1977: Bob Hannah and his water-cooled factory OW125 shock the world by stomping Honda's Marty Smith in the 125 Nationals last year. Yamaha drops the lower-priced MX line and responds by building an ultra-competitive, plastic-tanked, air-cooled YZ125D. Suzuki still smokes the class with its amazing RM125B.

1978: Yamaha celebrates another 125 National win by offering an improved YZ125E. Less weight, more power, more suspension and tighter handling give the monoshocker a fighting chance against the popular Suzuki RM125.



1979: Yamaha makes a few refinements to the YZ package in hopes of catching the Suzuki RM125's magic. When the dust settled, the RM still edged the YZ for the 125 crown.

1980: People who patiently waited for a water-cooled Yamaha tiddler are let down by the air-cooled YZ125G—until they ride the all-new bike. The new YZed is phenomenal and proves to be the best small-bore of 1980.

1981: It's here! Yamaha introduces what some said could never be offered to the general public—a liquid-cooled two-stroke motocrosser. A nervous rear end knocks the new YZ125H off its pedestal. Suzuki gladly grabs the 125 glory for '81.

1982: An all-new rising-rate linkage monoshock rear suspension design and power-valve exhaust port highlight the YZ125J. The powerplant is impressive, and the rear suspension is grim. The Suzuki wins again.

Attractive lines: The Yamaha YZ125U handles on a par with anything in its class. A low seat height and precise chassis make directional changes a snap. It comes as a surprise that the sharp-turning chassis tracks arrow-straight over rough ground. Good power and suspension performance make the YZ a balanced package that could be '88's best 125.

1983: Yamaha moves the radiator from the forks to slightly ahead of the gas tank. Overall weight is cut, and we gain a quicker motor and a sharper-performing chassis. The YZ125K finishes second in *Dirt Bike's* 125 shootout again, but behind the Honda CR125R this time.

1984: Everyone's anticipation of a blazing-fast YZ125L turns to puzzlement the second the clutch is dropped—the bike is incredibly slow. Yamaha moves from a strong second position to a solid last. Honda and Kawasaki battle neck to neck for "top 125 of the year" honors.



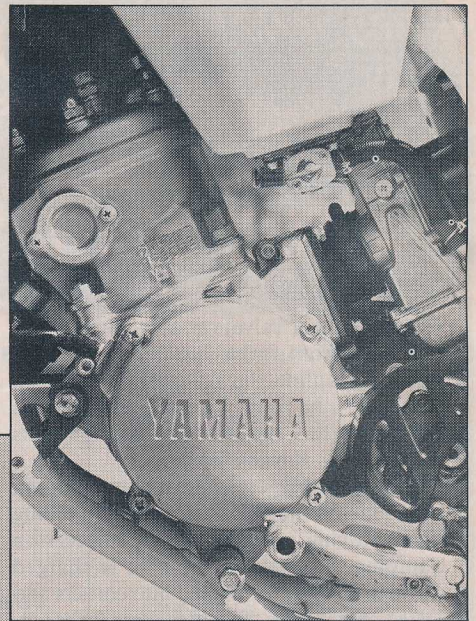
1988 YAMAHA YZ125U

1985: The year of the white tanker! Yamaha's racing head honcho Ken Clark claims, "We will not have a slow 125 in 1985!" On the contrary, the YZ125N is slow. Extremely slow! Another last-place finish didn't make the big cheese happy at Yamaha. Honda wins the war again.

1986: Yamaha goes wide open with the YZ125S—new suspension, chassis, plastic and case-reed motor. The bike is somewhat hard to ride but is, finally, fast. Yamaha

- New exhaust pipe.
- A needle bearing replaces the bushing in the clutch assembly.
- One friction plate has been added to the

Revised: Yamaha updated the molds yet another time in an attempt to clean up the YZ125's troublesome carburetion hassles of years past. An improved intake and exhaust tract have given the 1988 YZ125 one of the most usable tiddler powerbands ever designed. ▶



takes a giant leap back to second in the standings, behind the Honda CR125R.

1987: Motor and suspension refinements highlight the YZ125T. Again, it isn't enough to touch the rapid-fire case-reed Honda CR125R. Another second-place finish for Yamaha doesn't sit well with the sales department.

1988: ?

CHANGES: GOING FOR BROKE

Here are some of the biggest changes from the 1987 Yamaha YZ125T to the new YZ125U.

- All-new silver motor and rims. Silver is obviously the latest trend in Oriental MXers. (Everyone is going to silver motors and rims).

- The YPVS (Yamaha Power Valve System) valve has been lowered for straighter exhaust port shape. The valve also has an improved shape.

- A larger reed-valve assembly sits in a reshaped intake tract. The rubber intake has fingers a la the FMF reed booster.

clutch, along with one more spring (from five to six).

- A larger-diameter main axle (counter-shaft) helps offset the increased power load. Tranny ratios remain the same.

- An updated rotor has improved the moment of inertia for more overrev.

- Clutch operation has been improved by a new pressure disc that opens the outer pressure plate more evenly.

- New lower-friction linkage pivots.

- A rear disc-brake assembly.

- Kayaba cartridge forks.

- A new piggyback shock with no BASS device.

- Larger-diameter front disc for increased braking power.

- New bars with a bend that actually fits human beings.

- Updated footpegs that don't pack up with dirt as easily as the old units.

THROUGH THE SPREAD

Last year's YZ125T earned a reputation as one of the hardest hitting 125s ever built.

All together now: Yamaha has finally correctly assembled all the pieces on the 1988 YZ125U. The easy-to-use motor and potent power output give the small-bore Yamaha a lively feel. This bike is a serious contender for the 1988 King of the Tiddlers glory.

It snapped to life way down low for a tiddler and barked over a very short power range. Trying to rev the bike only brought on a massive drop in power. Fast 1987 YZ125T pilots shifted faster than a bare-footed dancer on hot coals to keep the white YZed in the bottom of the curve.

For 1988, Yamaha actually "stole" some of the snap off the bottom and spread it over the entire curve. The new Yamaha YZ125U still hits with authority low in the spread (for a 125) and pulls hard through a peppy mid-range. As an added bonus, revving the YZ's little guts out won't have the motor falling on its face anymore. Instead, the refined motor will taper off in power and pull flatly high up into the rpm curve.

1988 YAMAHA YZ125U

The bottom line? Yamaha's reinspired 1988 YZ125U engine rates a solid nine. It's an easy-to-use, very competitive 125 powerplant.

UPDATED SUSPENSION

Earlier this year it was rumored that Yamaha would retain the outdated TCV-type (Travel Control Valve) variable-damper system in its front forks. But before the production deadline, the YZ engineers realized that there is no room for compromise in the 125 Class; thus, the cartridge fork internals for the 1988 Kayaba legs.

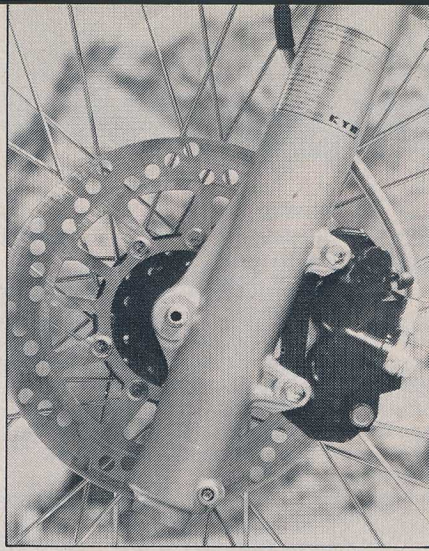
This is the biggest improvement Yamaha has made on the YZ's suspension in a long time. Valving provides firm compression damping. The harder the bike is charged through bumps, hammered into corners and lofted over jumps, the better these forks perform. They have a feel similar to the Suzuki RM125 cartridge strokers, which most riders thought were the best production 125 forks in 1987.

Give the forks plenty of time to break in before making adjustments. *Dirt Bike* also suggests changing fork oil every three hours of racing time for peak performance. There is no rebound adjuster.

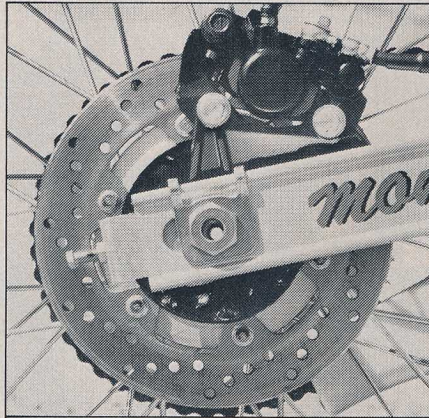
Rear suspension action is slightly improved over the 1987 model. The shock features a bleed-type compression adjuster, rather than the pop-off valve on last year's piggyback unit. It seems to have improved low-speed compression sensitivity to some extent. Riders will find that the rear end of the YZed is still nervous over braking bumps and high-speed, square-edged hits.

SHARP AND STABLE

The first item long-time YZ pilots will notice is the redesigned bars. For the first time since the ice age, Yamaha has provided the YZ125U bars with an acceptable bend



The wait is over: Yamaha has cartridge forks! The Kayaba internals provide solid damping action that thrives on aggressive riding. The front disc is 10mm larger in diameter and hauls the Yamaha YZ125U down from speed with ease.



Discd out: Long-time Yamaha 125 pilots will need some time to become familiar with the powerful rear disc. The somewhat cobby-looking unit is a major improvement over the wimpy drum brake on last year's YZ125. Chain adjustment and wheel removal is simple on the new YZ.



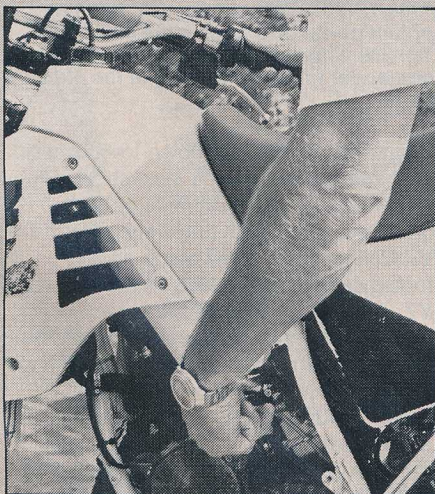
It's here: After years of gambling with "almost" complete 125 packages, Yamaha has broken the ice with its dramatically improved 1988 YZ125U. The bike is reliable, easy to work on and competitive. It's been a long time coming for Yamaha.

(similar to Honda's). A "sit-in" layout tends to force riders into a hunched, sit-down riding style. Standing up on the Yamaha small-bore isn't exceptionally easy.

"Very good handling" is the best way to describe the YZ125U chassis. It goes down choppy, whooped-out straights with minimal headshake. Other than a busy rear end (suspension), stability is first-rate. Ask desert star Erik Hallgath, who finished second overall in Barstow to Vegas on a YZ125.

Cornering is precise. It can rail berms or dive through a monorail berm with equal excellence. The narrow layout allows for smooth fore-to-aft movement, which helps maintain superb body weighting to the chassis.

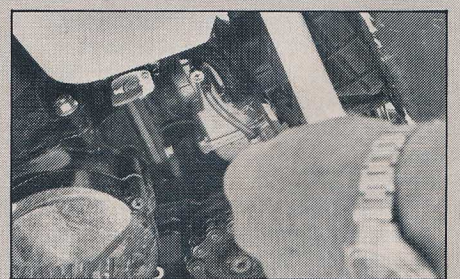
HOW TO ADJUST THE AIR SCREW



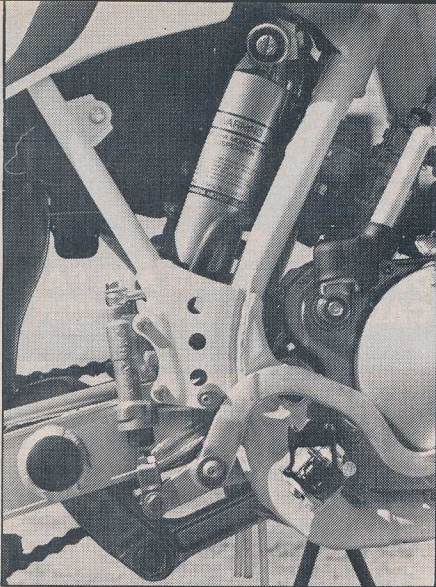
Step one: Thoroughly warm up the engine. Bring the motor up to a steady idle around 1000-to-1500 rpm.



Step two: Clamp the large inner grip flange against the throttle housing to help maintain consistent rpm.



Step three: Turn the air screw IN (from the manufacturer's recommended setting) until the engine almost dies. Now turn the air screw back OUT until you reach peak idle speed. There's usually a drop in rpm if the air screw is turned out too far. If idle doesn't drop, the motor will get a flat, dull sound to it. Once peak rpm has been found, shut off the motor, turn the air screw all the way in while counting how many turns it takes. This will give you the ballpark idle screw setting for your machine. Re-adjust and hit the track.



Framed: The 1988 YZ125U frame has minor changes to accommodate the rear disc brake hardware. Linkage ratios remain the same as last year, as does the piggyback rear shock body. However, new valving and spring rates give the monoshock a slightly improved feel.

BITS AND PIECES

Check the spokes when breaking in the bike. Ours came loose before settling down after an hour's worth of riding.

Front and rear disc brakes are strong. It will take previous YZ riders a period of initiation before they become accustomed to the powerful nature of the rear binder. The front disc felt stronger than last year's

1988 YAMAHA YZ125U

(due to the larger disc rotor). Yamaha disc units have proven to be very trouble free.

The airbox design is good. It isn't the most spacious unit in existence, but the side access makes for easy servicing. There are still too many screws attaching the left-side panel/filter lid to the chassis. The filter seems to be of reasonable quality. Team Yamaha uses Answer MotoAir filters on its race bikes.

There is also still a "ratty" tingle at the bars under power. And, the chain slaps like crazy against the hard plastic block protecting the swingarm up by the pivot. Yamaha should use a softer plastic to help reduce this irritating noise.

Some riders weren't able to lower the rear brake pedal enough with the trick eccentric adjuster.

Carburetion isn't electric smooth, although the YZed is jetted in the ballpark.

Standard suspension spring rates are suitable for most riders. Lighter pilots (135 pounds and under) might look into Yamaha's optional light springs.

The clutch didn't fade or change adjustment after severe thrashing. It's a big improvement over the previous year's troublesome units. Engagement is on the late side, and the action isn't buttery smooth. Keep the clutch cable well lubed.

Dunlop K490 (front) and K595 (rear) are excellent meats. (Some bikes might come with Bridgestone M22 and M23 tires.) The front tire works on all terrain conditions, and the rear meat is a hard-track specialist that will provide ample traction in looser conditions.

BRINGING IT BACK HOME

Yamaha's 1988 YZ125U is a serious contender for the 1988 crown. It may have the best motor of the year. The forks are great. It will handle on a par with anything on the track. You couldn't ask for more braking power. The layout is smooth and comfortable. It's striking in appearance, and all the components are of good quality. The bike should be more reliable with the beefed-up clutch.

Although not a glaring fault, rear suspension is the only trait that can be questioned on the 1988 YZ125U. The rear suspension performance *won't* slow you down on the track; it just doesn't provide the smoothest ride possible.

The first question that comes to mind is: How will it stack up against the full house of other radically improved 125s of 1988? The new YZ125 is clearly a solid, well-thought-out and technically advanced machine. Someone is finally giving Honda a run for its money in the tiddler class.

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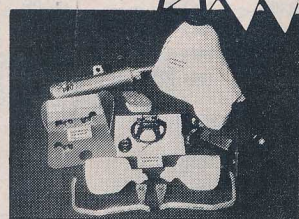
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1988 YAMAHA YZ125U

Engine type Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, YPVS-adj. exhaust port, two-stroke
Displacement 123cc
Bore and stroke 56mmx50mm
Carburetion 34mm Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity 7.5 L (1.98 gal.)
Lubrication Pre-mix
Gearbox 6-speed
Gearing, front/rear 13/50
Ignition CDI
Silencer/spark arrester Yes/no
Wheelbase 1450mm (57.1 in.)
Ground clearance 350mm (13.8 in.)
Seat height 935mm (36.8 in.)
Claimed weight, dry 87 kg (192 lbs.)

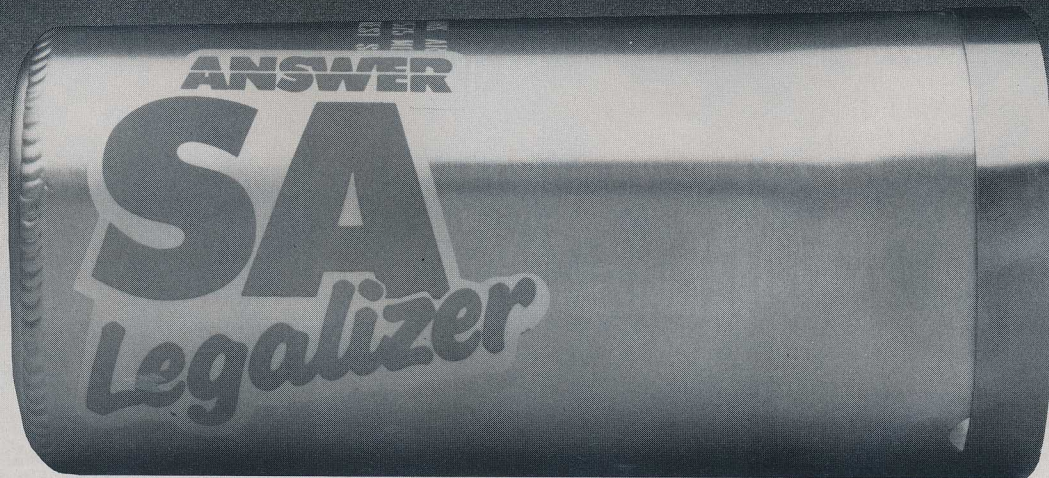
Tire size and type:
Front 80/100-21 Dunlop K490
Rear 100/100-18 Dunlop K595
Suspension, type and travel:
Front KYB telescopic, cartridge damping, adj. comp., 300mm (11.8 in.)
Rear Monocross, piggyback Yamaha shock, adj. comp./reb., 315mm (12.4 in.)
Intended use Closed-course competition
Country of origin Japan
Suggested retail price N/A
Distributor/Manufacturer:
 Yamaha Motor Corp.
 9950 Jeronimo Rd.
 Irvine, CA 92718

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT...



... was: Yamaha has covered almost the entire alphabet in past years, trying to produce competitive 125s. Its last 125 Class ruler was with the 1980 YZ125G. It had motor, suspension and handling. It has taken Yamaha eight years to recapture the magic formula. □

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