The Best 200 Ever!

Yamaha deserted the 200cc enduro class a few years back. After standing toe to toe with Kawasaki and battling for 200cc-class dominance, Yamaha fell short. Because although both Yamaha and Kawasaki were building low-cost enduro mounts with dated suspension and frame technology, Kawasaki was building them a little better. Yamaha's IT200 was simple, reliable and torquey, and, at 214 pounds, the IT was one of the lightest bikes ever seen in the class. But with the advent

Yamaha's new WR200R looks and acts the part of a serious enduro weapon. The DT-derived engine has a proven reliability record and new-found performance.

FIRST 1992 TEST: YAMAHA WR200R

QUIET RIOT!

The chassis is totally enduro ready. The bike has zerks in the linkage and swingarm pivots, and the small tool kit is carried under the sidepanel on this side of the machine.

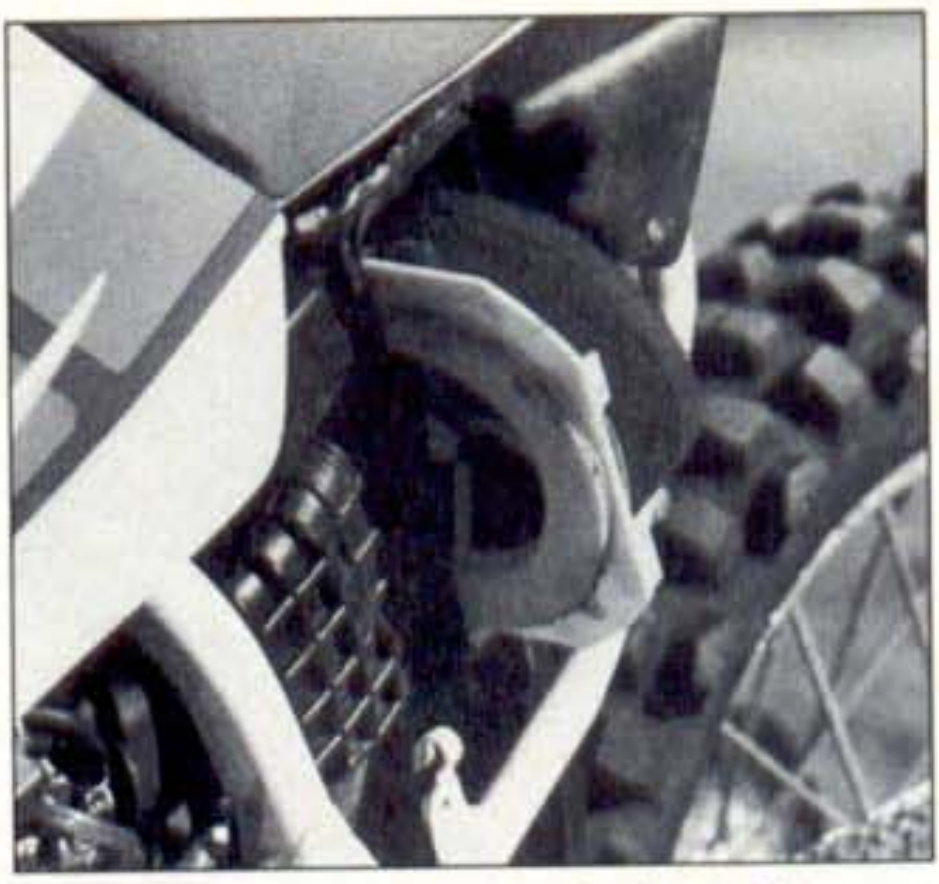
of the KIPS-equipped Kawasaki KDX, Yamaha IT200 sales sagged. The liquid-cooled KDX was another step up the evolutionary chain, but Yamaha wasn't selling enough ITs to warrant the major redesigns necessary for the bike to keep pace with the KDX.

Now Yamaha is back with a new game plan: Make the best EPA-legal 200cc enduro mount possible without breaking the bank. They knew their new WR200R's price tag would eclipse the KDX's, but they didn't scrimp on features or technology. Beating Kawasaki in the 200cc enduro market isn't easy. After all, the KDX is ultrareliable, quiet, effective and perhaps the best value-for-dollar bargain in off-road motorcycling.

Yet, despite the odds against them, Yamaha has a winner in the WR200. It is something that both the IT and KDX have never been—a good enduro motor in a totally contemporary chassis. Yamaha began the testing with the YZ125 chassis, but they opted for

PHOTOS: TOM WEBB


YAMAHA



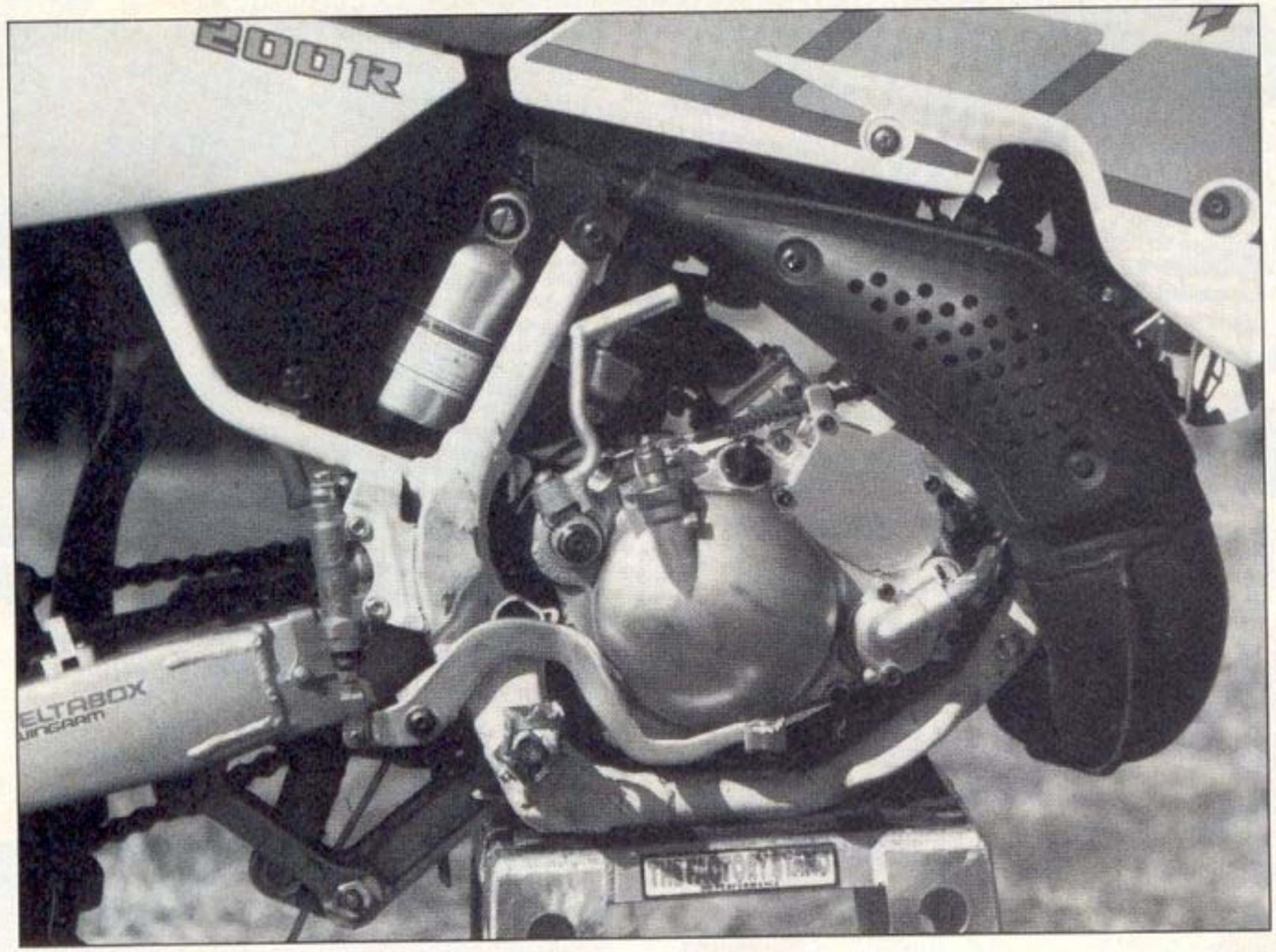
Air filter service is eased since the filter attaches to this slide-out plate in the airbox. A screwdriver or a coin is needed to access the filter and tool kit.

a new design instead. However, the WR does use the same linkage and similar frame geometry, Deltabox swingarm, wheels and brakes as the YZ125B1.

The WR's true enduro features are the proof that it's more than a modified YZ. The linkage has zerk fittings to ease servicing, and an O-ring chain with snail-type adjusters was fitted. A water-resistant airbox with a unique filter-mounting system is featured. The filter and the plate to which it's fastened slide out of the airbox for easy service and positive

The WR gets good marks for its midrange but great marks for the off-idle and high-rpm sections of the powerband.

A tiny tool kit nestles in an airbox cavity below the junction of the super-quiet muffler and pipe. Showa makes the fully adjustable shock.



The shrouds completely cover the WR's fuel tank, which means replacing them will revive the bike's appearance. Note the plate that covers the previously employed oil injection system.

sealing. There is no tool pouch on the rear fender as a few tools can be carried in the side of the airbox under the right sidepanel.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The life of an enduro machine isn't easy, and a new white machine can look pretty homely after a couple of muddy enduros. Yamaha is the first Japanese company with enough savvy to copy Husqvarna's radiator shrouds. The WR's shrouds cover the entire fuel tank, so replacing the shrouds and stickers will make the bike look new again. The tank holds about 2.8 gallons, which is good for an average range of 55 miles.

Hard-bitten tech-heads will smugly point out that the WR's chassis is not state of the art. The fully adjustable Showa shock and YZ linkage (with only 10mm less travel than the YZ125) are hot technology, but the fork is a 41mm KYB inverted unit with no externally adjustable rebound damping. Front travel is identical to the YZ125, and we don't miss the rebound damping adjustment; the 41mm KYB fork is very plush and it is stouter than the 40mm White Power forks found on European machines.

Developing a new motor based on the YZ125 would have been brutally expensive, and it might have been impossible to meet federal noise standards. After scouting around Yamaha's technicians settled on the street-legal European- and Japanese-spec DT200 motor with an electronically controlled power valve. They felt that the engine could develop good power, meet sound regulations and provide the reliability that was already well established in many other markets.

The ignition cover is completely sealed by a rubber gasket and expanding rubber seals on each of the case screws. One of the electrically operated power valve cables is just visible.

Braking is smooth and predictable, although we didn't get enough tough time on the machine to see whether we could fry the brakes. Suspension action at both ends is perfectly dialed in for off-road use.

The basic DT motor needed a new cylinder, pipe and carb, and it no longer has oil injection or a battery. The built-in counterbalancer has stayed inside the cases, and the power valve's electronics are kept under the tank and seat.

All told, the WR is a sharp-looking package with all the appropriate enduro niceties.

ON THE MOVE

We fired up the WR and headed out on some tight trails with a stock KDX200 for comparison. The WR is a sturdy machine with excellent ergos and snappy throttle response. Like the KDX, the WR is a compact machine, but the seat features excellent foam and a flat, smooth shape that make it very comfortable and easy to move around on. All of the control ef-

FRANK'S *off-road* FACTS #3

BY FRANK STACY/ DUNLOP OFF-ROAD RACE COORDINATOR

CHANGING YOUR TIRES

TIRE REMOVAL:

1) Lay the rear wheel sprocket side down and the front wheel brake side up.
2) Remove the valve core and loosen the rim locks.
3) Stand the wheel up and use the flat side of a tire iron to push the rim locks down, breaking them loose from the tire bead.
4) Lay the wheel down again and stand on the tire sidewalls with your feet pushing to break the beads loose from the rim. Sometimes a little soapy water at the tire/rim junction helps loosen the beads.
5) With the brake side of the wheel up, use the spooned end of your tire irons and insert them (2) be-tween the bead and rim. I suggest inserting them on one side of the valve stem or the other. Lever one at a time, working your way around the tire in small increments.
6) After the first side is removed, push the valve stem into the rim and pull the tube all the way out.
7) If your wheel has rim locks, remove them before beginning removal of the second bead.
8) Remove the second bead by inserting a tire iron under the bead of the brake side of the wheel, then lever the tire bead over the rim and push it off.
9) Clean the bead area of the rim. Check the rim locks, rubber rim strip or tape covering the spoke nipples for damage.

TIRE REFITTING:

1) Install one rim lock, lube one bead of the tire. Push down on the top of the tire and insert one side of the wheel and the rim lock into the bottom part of the tire. Begin levering the first bead on.
2) Insert the second rim lock if your wheel uses two. Before installing the tube, inflate it to make sure there was no damage done during removal. Check the nut at stem area for tightness and look for cracks in the stem. Leave just enough air in the tube for installing, so the tube holds its shape.
3) Apply baby powder to the outside of the tube and inside the tire. This prevents the tube from chafing in use.
4) Install the tube in the tire carefully. Starting at the valve stem holes, evenly place the tube inside. Be sure the tube is not bunched up in any area or caught under the rim locks.
5) Lube the bead with a mild soap and water solution and push a small section of it under the rim near the stem area. Insert one tire iron and start levering the tire bead on, taking very small bites with each iron. Stick the iron in just far enough past the rim edge being careful not to catch the tube.
6) With each bite, check that the bead of both sides of the tire is as far down in the well of the rim as possible.
7) After the final bead area is installed, be sure the rim locks and valve stem move freely.
8) Inflate the tire and seat both beads. Should the beads not seat properly, do not overinflate. Re-lube the bead areas with soapy solution and re-inflate until seated properly.
9) After the tire is fully inflated, let the air out again then reinflate. This allows the tube to settle inside the tire.
10) Tighten the rim locks and adjust the tire pressure.

For more complete information on proper mounting procedures, please write: Motorcycle Dept. c/o Dunlop Tire Corporation, P.O. Box 1109, Buffalo, NY 14240-1109. Watch upcoming issues for the next **"Frank's Off Road Facts"** when we'll cover choosing the best tire for beginners.

Snappy power and good ergos for riders of all sizes are part of what makes the little WR a winner. The price tag is $500-600 more than a KDX, but the WR's extra performance is worth the difference for the serious rider.

Yamaha dialed in the WR's handling. It razors through tight turns while still maintaining good stability.

The simple, resettable odometer isn't the latest in technology, but the unit is accurate and reliable.

forts are light and the WR is totally fun to ride. The Yamaha is both quick steering and stable, and the suspension is supple enough for rocks and roots while retaining good wheel control.

As with most EPA-approved motorcycles, the power isn't overwhelming, but it outshines the KDX at off-idle and bottom revs, and it has a shrieking top-end that beats the KDX, too. The WR is adequate in the midrange, but the KDX engine is a little more meaty. The KDX will respond without clutch use when zapping tight trails with many turns. If the trail is boggy or uphill, both the KDX and the WR need the clutch. The WR is the faster of the two, and it had plenty of grunt for a tight, uphill, rocky canyon on the Petersen Ranch enduro loop. The WR chassis carries slightly more of its weight on the front wheel, so it feels a little like a baby Husky on rocky ledges or gnarly survival sections. The KDX is far more prone to wheelying in the same situations.

Kawasaki's $2899 KDX is still the low-cost leader, but the $3499 Yamaha WR offers better ergos, suspension, steering and more performance than the KDX for the extra money. If you were planning on saving money on the KDX and simply riding it stock, fine. But if you're planning to modify the KDX's engine or suspension, forget it and grab a WR. The price of the modified suspension covers the difference between the two, and the WR has awesome suspension, more precise handling and more motor.

We hear a lot of calls for more simplicity in off-road machines, but the WR is a perfect case for proven, intelligently used technology. In this case, Yamaha's technology and development have created the best 200cc-class enduro machine you can buy. **DR**