

ENDURO MOTORCYCLES

TRACK TESTS
OF THE
WORLD'S
GREATEST.

FRANK
MELLING



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Yamaha DT175 MX

ONE OF THE biggest dangers for the professional motorcycle tester is that of becoming blasé. Every three or four weeks a gleaming new model arrives full of promise and hopes of mammoth sales. Usually the new entrant is a little better or worse than normal, but not markedly so. Boredom can, if one is not very careful, cloud one's perceptions.

I was feeling particularly jaded when the DT175 arrived like a Gold Medal in the ISDT. I just couldn't keep off the thing. I rode the MX to work, went trail riding on it and course-marking at a National enduro. There was nothing, literally nothing, which it wouldn't do superbly.

Not only was the bike years ahead of any dual-purpose bike, it had that almost indefinable quality – a loving nature. I had the bike on test for months and never once did I fail to enjoy riding it.

I think what made the DT such fun was its unassuming nature. It never demanded anything from the rider in the way of effort or concentration, but instead just got on with the job in hand. Sometimes it is a lot of fun to wrestle with a bike with real character, but on other occasions there is a lot to be said for a willing servant.

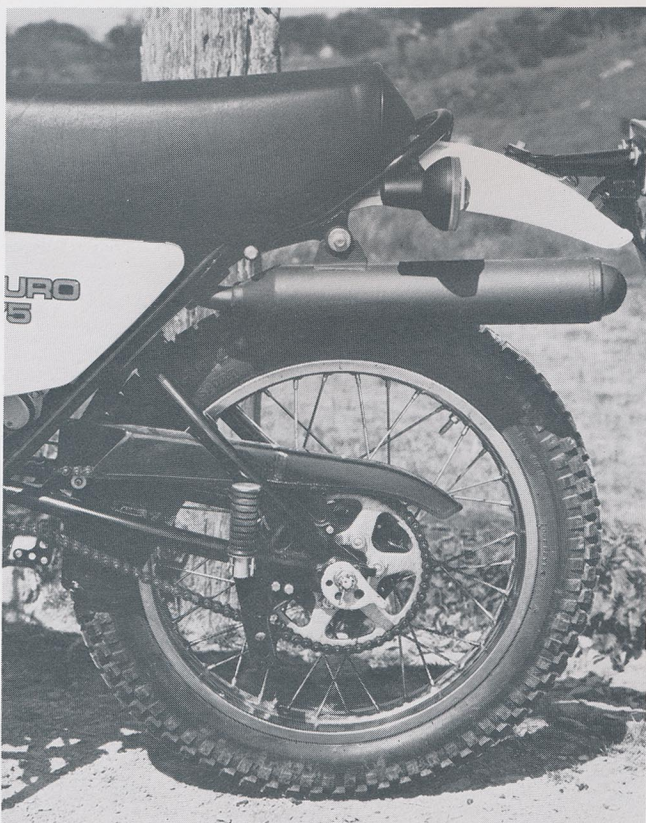
Eventually the bike had to be returned and I missed it so much that I bought one of my own, which is THE most sincere compliment any tester can pay a bike.

As a postscript I should add that the DT went on to carry many riders to great things. Both Dave Kent and Colin Jones, who went on to ride for SWM and Moto-Gori respectively, used DTs with notable success in both clubman and expert classes, and along with many other riders took home mountains of trophies – so perhaps we



The DT175 motor was a derivative of the 125cc motocross motor. With its six-speed gearbox, a reed valve and racing expansion chamber it was fast enough for competition, yet its forgiving nature and autolube made it a firm favourite amongst trail riders. Outstandingly the best dual-purpose motor ever produced and still a top seller years after its introduction.

The monoshock rear end was a revolutionary new development for a trail bike when it was first introduced, giving a quality of ride few racing bikes could match. The DT was always whisper quiet and so could be ridden on the road without fear of upsetting anyone.



shouldn't forget just how good this little bike was.

Whatever judgement I, or any other journalist, passes on Yamaha's latest 175 trail bike is going to be largely superfluous. One glance around the *parc fermé* of any enduro will provide all the evidence that this little Yam has been taken to the hearts of a vast number of clubman riders.

These sporting trail riders, who press their bikes to the outer limits of reliability, have decided *en masse* that the monoshock Yam is the greatest thing since the Welsh Two Day and have voted

with their wallets – the clearest mandate any bike can have. In fact, the 175 Yamaha totally dominates the 175 class numerically and does very well on awards as well.

No other bike has ever enjoyed such instant popularity, but the DT MX is quite unlike any other trail bike offered for sale. Its specification is more in keeping with an enduro racer rather than a trail bike and yet its civility, ease of handling and lavish specification put it in the same class as a lightweight roadster. And all this is achieved with a selling price of under £600 on the road – a remarkable conjuring trick in its own right.

The DT's heritage is pure motocross. The monoshock system began shakily with a few handbuilt units produced by Belgian Lucien Tilkiens in 1972, went on to provide Hakan Andersson with a World Championship in the following year and is now found on Heikki Mikkola's bike. Basically, the same system is used on the DT with a large floating piston De Carbon unit, using nitrogen as the pressurizing agent providing 3.2in of damper travel, which through mechanical advantage gives a very healthy 5.7in of rear wheel travel. This sort of travel was strictly for genuine, and expensive, racers prior to the DT and not unnaturally the DT's off-road handling goes straight into the serious enduro class.

The front end is equally impressive with 7in of travel available, although non-racing owners might find the standard fork springs a little too hard for their liking. On the rough the DT can be ridden just like a 1976 motocross bike. It can be jumped downhill, thrown across cambers and stuffed into corners with a confidence which would be fatal on any other trail bike. Best of all, these tricks can be achieved with no modifications other than substituting the standard sae 10 fork oil for a drop of sae 20, which is better suited to match the characteristics of the fork springs.

On the road the handling is equally good, but riders new to long-travel suspension might find the saddle height, some 32½in, and the 10.4in of ground clearance a little disconcerting initially,

but it will be a very drab soul indeed who doesn't soon get into the swing of throwing the DT about.

The handling is aided to a very marked degree by the low weight – for the 175 is ideal in its design, being a big-bore 125, rather than a 250 short of 75cc, and weighing only a shade under 51lb more than its 125 brother at 216lb dry. The motor is still very much a 125 in its original conception, having started life as a YZ125 motocross motor.

The benefits to be derived from this heritage are a light weight and a high power output, but there are drawbacks. The biggest of these is the six-speed gearbox, which, in conjunction with the 175's excellent torque, could have been spaced more widely, thus increasing the already impressive 75mph top speed. As things stand, the ratios are identical to the 125 and so are really too close for the 175, which could manage comfortably with a five-speed box.

The DT takes a little adaptation to get the best from it, since there is a distinct power surge at about 4500rpm, but with the assistance of the four-petal metal reed valve, the motor will pull very hard under load right down to 2000rpm.

In addition to having handling and power of racing standards the DT rejoices in the best set of brakes ever to be found on a trail bike. Both front and rear are of 5.7in diameter and both are superbly powerful and yet extremely sensitive. If desired, either will lock the wheel solid at 30mph on dry tarmac and yet they would provide the most delicate retardation on wet clay.

All the features which today's rider demands from a dual-purpose bike are to be found on the DT. Lighting equipment is up to touring standards, the plastic mudguards are copious and provide excellent weather protection, whilst the autolube system, complete with hinged oil tank for ease of access, provides fuss-free lubrication.

Add to these all the virtues of a racing bike, including a polythene flywheel cover for the ultimate in weight saving and pointless electronic

When first introduced, the DT175 MX proved to be at least three years ahead of any competitor.







Although nominally a trail bike, on standard trail tyres, the DT could behave like a motocross machine in the right hands.

ignition for reliable starting, plus an 80mpg petrol consumption when trail riding and a whisper-quiet exhaust, and you have the best trail bike on sale in the world today.

My only slight worry is that the racing characteristics of the bike, such as the long-travel suspension and the power surge, might dissuade casual purchasers of the bike. Two or three hours spent learning how to get the best from the DT will open a whole new world of motorcycling to even the most inexperienced riders. Riders who already know the off-road ropes will need no further convincing.

Yamaha DT175 MX

Engine: Two-stroke single with 4-petal reed valve
Capacity: 171cc (66 × 50mm)
Compression ratio: (from exhaust port closure) 6.8:1
Carburation: 28mm Mikuni with cold starting facility
Lubrication: throttle-controlled pump
Claimed maximum power: 15bhp at 8000rpm
Transmission: 9-plate wet clutch and six-speed gearbox. Geared primary drive with an in-gear starting facility. Chain final drive
Ratios: 1 - 3.5:1; 2 - 2.214:1; 3 - 1.556:1; 4 - 1.191:1; 5 - 0.957:1; 6 - 0.800:1
Flywheel magneto. Direct lighting from flywheel magneto to 6V 35W/35W headlamp. 6V 6AH battery supplying direction indicators, instrument lighting and rear lamp CDI ignition
Fuel capacity: 7 litres (1.5 imp gal)
Frame: Single down tube with monoshock suspension
Suspension: Telescopic front fork with 7.09in of travel. Rear Monoshock using De Carbon system pressurized damper. Damper travel 3.2in = 5.7in at rear wheel
Wheels: WM2 × 21in front; WM2 × 18in rear, both with steel rims
Tyres: 2.75 × 21in front; 3.50 × 18in rear, Yokohama trials pattern
Brakes: 5.12in sls drum front and rear
Wheelbase: 53.1in
Ground clearance: 10.4in
Saddle height: 32.5in
Overall width: 34.1in
Caster angle 60°
Trail 4.96in
Claimed dry weight: 216.1lb