

motorcycle **MECHANICS**

FORTNIGHTLY

Yamaha's
dandy
XJ650



**Kawasaki
dirt
spectacular**



**Brassy
custom**

**Learn
carb tricks**

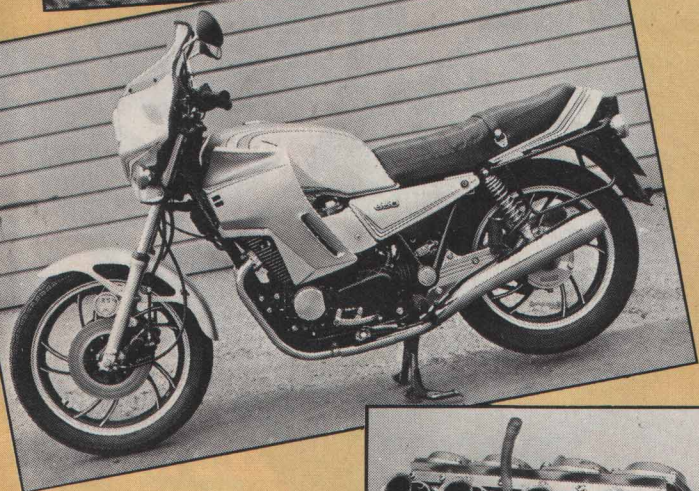
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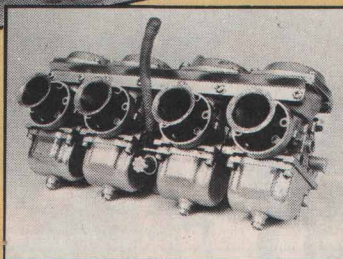


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glorious mud —
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ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIRING

Yamaha's dressed-up XJ650 swings into motorway action without getting lost on the roundabouts. John Robinson reports.

WHEN Yamaha first introduced their sleek XJ, with its long rev range that went on for ever and took the 650 up to almost 130mph, we thought of it as the world's gentlest, most flexible sports bike.

Mitsui, the UK importer, have now altered that perspective. With the addition of their stubby fairing, leg shields and twin panniers, they have made the XJ the world's sportiest touring bike.

These additional items are available separately and the panniers will also fit the XJ550. The glass fibre fairing is handlebar mounted and is just big enough to give weather protection to the rider's body and to keep some — but not all — of the weather away from his hands.

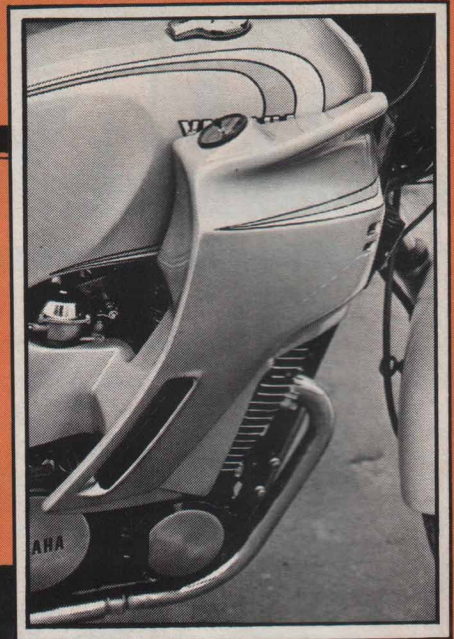
Leg shields sounds a bit antiquated but shielding the legs is all they do apart from carrying two instrument mountings. They made a fair enough job of keeping a mild November away from our nether regions but an acquaintance who has them fitted to his own bike says that they make it too hot in summer, particularly in stop-start London traffic.

They hinge forward to allow access to the top of the engine so there shouldn't be any problem with normal servicing. Still, it seemed a pity to me that all that space should be wasted when there would be enough room for compartments for an oversuit, maps or tools.

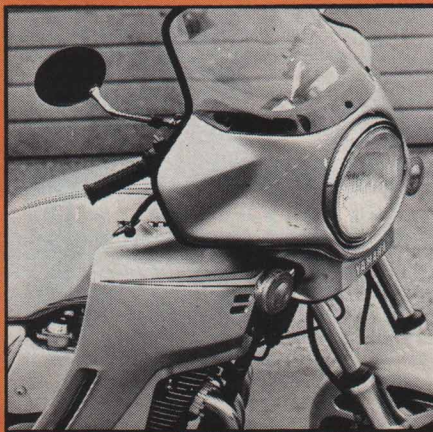
There are two moulded instrument mounts, which will accept the VDO range of instruments or units of a similar size, although the actual instruments are not included in the price of the fairing. Our demonstrator had a clock and a temperature gauge but neither was working and the dials didn't appear to be connected to anything.

Even so, they are not in the best place for instruments because the rider has to look a long way from the road ahead to see them and they are rather exposed to the weather, possibly more so when the bike is parked.

The fairing and shields are colour-keyed to the XJ and blend in well with the bike's



The Yamaha XJ650 in action. Top and below: The stubby fairing adds to the sporty touring bike.

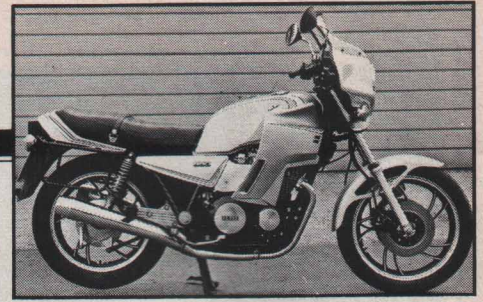


styling. They are also available in plain black or white, which makes them around £30 cheaper. Some engine noise is reflected back at the rider and there is a resonant speed above 5000rpm when the noise wells up and seems to be coming from all directions. Fortunately this was above normal cruising speeds and only became a nuisance during acceleration.

Although mounted on the handlebar, the fairing is small and light enough not to have any effect on the bike's handling. The XJ did show a minor weave in long bends but this appeared to be coming from the suspension and set in as the springs rose and fell with undulations in the road. For general touring I think that a slightly larger fairing would be better. More hand protection wouldn't be a bad thing and the stubby screen often

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projected a turbulent draught into the rider's face. This seemed to vary with the strength and direction of the wind, as well as the speed of the bike. Some days it would disappear altogether, others it would be a noisy, draughty nuisance.

They've obviously tried to keep the size down so that the fairing has the least effect on performance. In this respect they haven't done a bad job.

The fairing simply lops off the academic peak performance which can only be achieved with the rider flat on the tank anyway. Crouching behind the screen we got the XJ up to 116.6mph; with the rider sitting normally it pulled 107mph — in this condition the 650 is well over-gearred and it is quite likely that the sitting-up speeds are better than with an unfaired bike.

Acceleration over the quarter mile was a few tenths of a second down, again losing out at the fast end with a terminal speed some 8mph below that of the stock machine.

Fuel consumption was slightly better than the unfaired machine we tested in September '80. The faired bike averaged 47.8mpg, while the unfaired bike only managed 40.3mpg overall. Possibly the fairing helps performance in real-world riding, although it is certain that some of this improvement came from the different road

conditions. Easing a bike across slimy November roads has got to be worth a few mpg over summertime riding.

So, the fairing complements the XJ well enough although they could have taken it further for the touring rider or the all-weather rider. The bad news is that it costs £230.70 plus VAT. And the nasty thing about VAT is that small percentages suddenly get pretty significant, not to say meaningful, once the sterling is measured in hundreds.

The Yamaha panniers might be a better bet or, at least, at £114.40 plus VAT, they are a cheaper bet. The catch here is that Mitsui didn't have any so all we can say for sure is that the mounting sub-frame fitted neatly.

From photographs, the Krauser-like panniers are large enough to take helmets and can be removed quickly from the bike and used as hand luggage. Yamaha say that they have secure locks, are waterproof and do not upset the XJ's handling.

These additions turn the Yamaha into a much more practical machine and, despite its sporty image, the shaft-drive 650 does make a very good tourer.

The controls are light and slick with a good gearshift that shows no harshness from the shaft drive. Lots of power and control come from the twin disc and rear drum brakes; like

several other shaft-drive bikes, the XJ's rear brake seems to pull the machine down on to the road and make it feel steady.

As a result, the XJ can be flicked through tight curves, snapped upright and braked, then heeled into the next curve with power on, all in one fluid movement. That is what's so nice about the bike; the steering is precise and all the controls have exactly as much bite as you expect.

The Yamaha's power, steering and controls blend together well and encourage enthusiastic riding, which partly accounts for the fairly poor fuel economy. Still it has a tank which is roomy enough to go 160 miles and still have the best part of a gallon left in reserve.

The good thing about the new accessories is that they don't spoil the 650's scratchability in the country lanes. And the fairing goes some way to help comfort on those long, cold motorway hauls. It doesn't exactly add a new dimension to the XJ but it does make one of its dimensions just that bit longer.

Yamaha XJ650 Test specification

PRICE

Yamaha XJ650 (with fairing, etc.)	£2115.87
Yamaha XJ650	£1819
Kawasaki Z650	£1699

WEIGHT

Yamaha XJ650 (faired)	approx 490lb
Yamaha XJ650	454lb
Kawasaki Z650	461lb

¼-MILE

Yamaha XJ650 (faired)	13.3s
Yamaha XJ650	12.9s
Kawasaki Z650	12.8s

TOP SPEED

Yamaha XJ650 (faired)	116.6mph
Yamaha XJ650	129.7mph
Kawasaki Z650	116.5mph

AV FUEL CONSUMPT

Yamaha XJ650 (faired)	47.8mpg
Yamaha XJ650	40.3mpg
Kawasaki Z650	44.0mpg

Recommended retail price £1819
Plus panniers £131.56
Plus fairing £265.31
Warranty 12 months/unlimited mileage
Availability: Immediate
Recommended service interval: 300, 1,000 then every 2,000 miles

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (prone) 116.6mph (187.6km/h)
Standing start ¼-mile
13.3s at 97.6mph (157.1km/h)
30mph top gear roll-on, ¼ mile
14.4s at 96mph (138.4km/h)
Speed in gears at 9500rpm:
First 48mph (77.2km/h)
Second 70mph (113km/h)
Third 90mph (145km/h)
Fourth 112mph (180km/h)
Fifth 128mph (207km/h)
Engine rpm at 60mph in top 4439
Fuel consumption
Best 51.3mpg (18.2km/litre)
Worst 30mpg (10.6km/litre)
Average 47.8mpg (16.9km/litre)
Average tank range 205 miles (330km)

ENGINE

Type: DOHC, in-line four cylinder.
Bore x stroke 63x 52.4mm
Displacement 653cc
Compression ratio 9.2:1
Exhaust system 2-1
Lubrication wet sump
Fuelling four Hitachi HSC32 CV carbs
Starter dc motor

TRANSMISSION

Gears five speed
Clutch wet, multiplate
Primary drive gear
Final Drive bevel gears and shaft
Primary reduction 1.672
Final reduction 1.361 x 1.055 x 2.909
Gear ratios 2.187; 1.50; 1.153; 0.933 and 0.812

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase 56.5 inch (1435mm)
Length 84.5 inch (2170mm)
Seat height 30.7 inch (780mm)

Seat width 9 inch (229mm)
Footpeg height 14 inch (366mm)
Ground clearance 5.9 inch (150mm)
Dry weight 454lb (206kg)
Fuel capacity 4.3 gal (19.5 litre)
Oil capacity 3.3 litre (4.2 pint)

CHASSIS

Type tubular steel, double cradle
Front suspension telescopic forks
5.9 inch (150mm) travel
Rear suspension swing arm with adjustable pre-load springs, 3.8 inch (96mm travel)
Front tyre 3.25H 19
Rear tyre 120/90H 18
Front brake twin hydraulic disc
Rear brake s/s drum

ELECTRICS

Generator 266 VA alternator
Battery 12V, 12 Ah
Ignition breakerless, transistor
Headlamp 12V 60/55W

INSTRUMENTS

Includes speedo, odometer, resettable trip, tachometer, warning lights for turn, oil level, high beam, neutral.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

Fairing (three piece), optional additional instruments, panniers, twin mirrors, steering lock, self cancelling indicators, padlock and chain.

COLOURS

Silver or red.

IMPORTER

Mitsui Machinery Sales, Ltd., Oakcroft Road, Chessington, Surrey.

TESTER'S VERDICT

Good points wide range of performance
Bad points fuel economy
Performance top of class
Economy poor
Handling fine
Comfort above average
Braking good balance of power and control
Equipment above average
Value bike good, accessories pricey