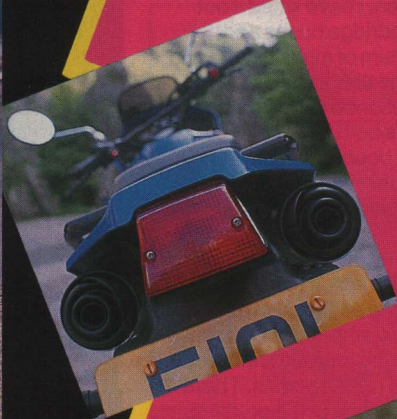
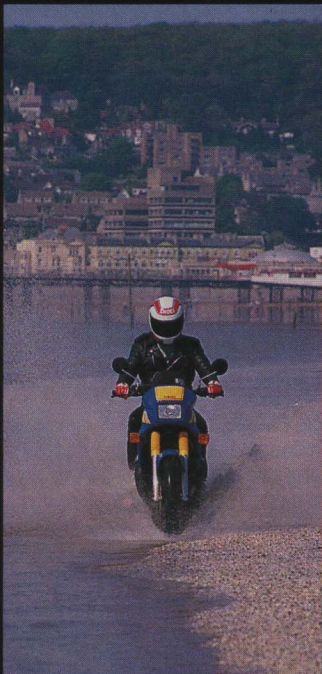
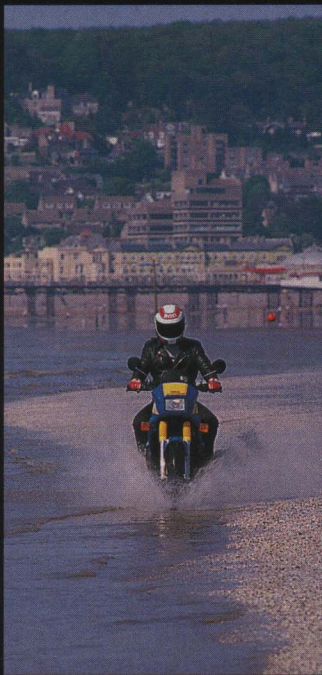


Yamaha



GARRY STUART



More fun than Disneyland/Tom Isitt

When was the last time you really had fun on a motorcycle? Not just simply enjoying a good ride on a nice bike, but having fun! fun! fun! fun! like you used to have when you were a nipper. Laughing out loud, grinning inanely, having a whizzo wheeze and all that kind of thing. Well, happy days are here again with the dawn of The Two-Wheeled Plaything. It is only recently that motorcycle manufacturers have begun to consider bikes solely in fun terms. Okay, we had brain-out race replicas for a while, but the amount of fun you can have on a repli-racer is finite unless you're a totally committed head-banger. After a while the novelty of going everywhere at Warp 8 begins to pale. You've got used to three-figure speeds and you're left wondering 'what next?' You either start playing with turbos and loaded revolvers, or else you completely re-appraise your biking needs and buy yourself something like a Mach 1 Kawasaki.

So far the list of motorcycles designed purely as an hedonistic vehicle is pretty small, but it's growing all the time. Yamaha and Kawasaki are currently leading the field with the ZL1000 Eliminator, the unrestricted KMX125, the XT350 and of course the YSR50. You could arguably include the Harley-Davidsons in this list, and maybe even big trail bikes, but they're probably a little too practical to qualify. Now Yamaha have added to the line-up. Their TZR250 is too good in too many departments to make the grade, so they invented the TDR250. Ultimate Dual is how Yamaha describe their TDR, which is to say that it's designed as a kind of trail bike. Yamaha claim that the TDR was created to bridge the gap between trail and sports bikes, but there's more to the TDR than that.

Yamaha's party line may be sensible and reasonable, but in designing a sporting trail bike Yamaha have somehow created a maniacal device that at first acquaintance defies belief.



250

TDR

defies belief.

The Press and public alike took to the TZR250 in a big way when it was launched last year, so Yamaha (realising when they're onto a good thing) have kept its engine almost identical for the TDR. Basically the motor is the same liquid-cooled two-stroke twin that features direct crankcase-reed valve induction. Displacement is 249cc due to a bore and stroke of 56.4 x 50mm and the engine is fed through a pair of 28mm Mikuni carbs. Yamaha's good old Power Valve is still there boosting midrange power and the ignition is slightly changed, but the main changes have been wrought to the exhaust system and gearbox.

The changes are in reality very minor. First gear is lower than on the TZR, both as a concession to trail use and to enable you to keep the front wheel in the air, and the exhaust system is modified to give slightly more torque in the midrange. Apart from these two mods there's almost no difference between the TZR and TDR motors, and they

SECOND OPINION

The first time I saw a photo of the TDR I wanted to ride it. Supercross styling has always appealed to me and I firmly believe that modified dirt bikes make the best street bikes. In the TDR, Yamaha had done it all for me, tough fork with a brace, small front wheel with a disc and loads of rubber on the road. Ground clearance like you wouldn't believe, and no silly things like exhausts to get in the way. For an off-the-shelf Japanese design the TDR looked very impressive.

But as is often the case, in the flesh the TDR was a bit of a let down. Far from being neat on the street, it was either being gutless or climbing up the back of something you didn't want to be that close to in the first place. I came to the conclusion that the TDR was a trick bike, great for riding on one wheel, either wheel, it doesn't matter. As a pure fun bike it would make more sense and have wider appeal as a 125. Of course there is the remote possibility that I'm just getting too old to appreciate this type of cycle.

Rick Kemp

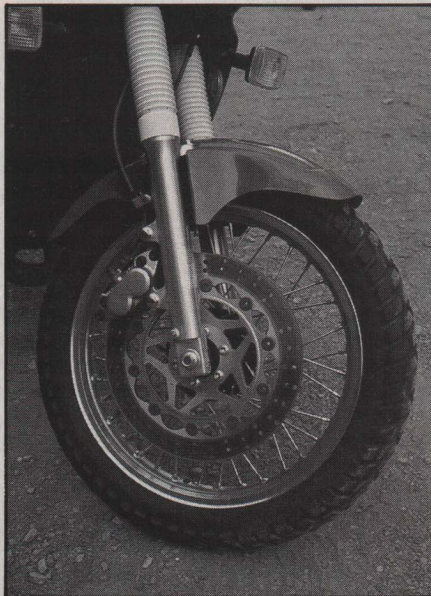
behave just as you'd expect from a Yamaha 250 two-stroke twin. Peak power from the TDR is the same as that of the TZR - 46.5hp at the back wheel on our dyno - while maximum torque is up by just under 1ftlb to 26.7 and occurs lower down the rev range at 8500rpm.

Of course all this is purely academic to those who will be tempted by the TDR. Technical interest and mechanical sympathy will not be well represented among the TDR's fans, because this is a machine that brings out the bad boy (or girl) in everyone. Wheelies, stoppies and other forms of anti-social behaviour become irresistible as you kick the TDR into life and pull into the traffic. At the bottom end of the rev band the TDR will bumble along in a very sedate and controlled manner, feeling more like a learner bike than anything else, but as the revs pick up so does your pulse rate.

There's almost no warning of what's



Off-road handling is compromised by too much weight on the front wheel, too little suspension travel



Front fork and brake are perfect for a road bike, mudguard clogs up when the going gets dirty



Rear brake is excellent, but tyres are better suited to tarmac than dirt

about to happen - one moment you've got the throttle wound all the way open while the revs crawl slowly towards 7000 on the tacho, and then BLAM! As the revs hit seven grand the TDR leaps forward, the front wheel lifts three feet off the ground and if your feet were still on the footrests you'd be desperately trying to hit the back brake and look for somewhere other than the car in front on which to set down the front wheel. If you don't immediately leave the TDR at a bus stop and walk home, you'll eventually get used to it. After the first couple of accidental wheelies you'll learn to roll off the throttle as the revs approach 7000rpm and to be a little less heavy-handed with the throttle.

Once the TDR is past the 7000rpm transition period it pulls strong and fast, just like the TZR. Power builds quickly up to 9000rpm, after which it tails off just as it hits the ten grand redline. The unobtrusive way the power comes in makes the TDR a real handful round town unless you happen to enjoy weaving through the traffic on one wheel. Plenty of self-control is needed to keep the TDR buzzing along our urban highways, the problem being whether to ride it in or out of the power band.

On the open road the TDR is less of a problem. With 46 horses straining at the leash (or should that be rein?), the TDR goes like stink up through its six-speed gearbox. Making rapid progress along back roads is as much a doddle on the TDR as it is on the TZR as the tacho needle swings between 6000 and 10,000rpm. The two-stroke unit is at its best when you wring its neck, and will reward you with plenty of top end poke as well as a top speed of around 107mph (which makes it one of the fastest trail bikes around, despite its small engine capacity).

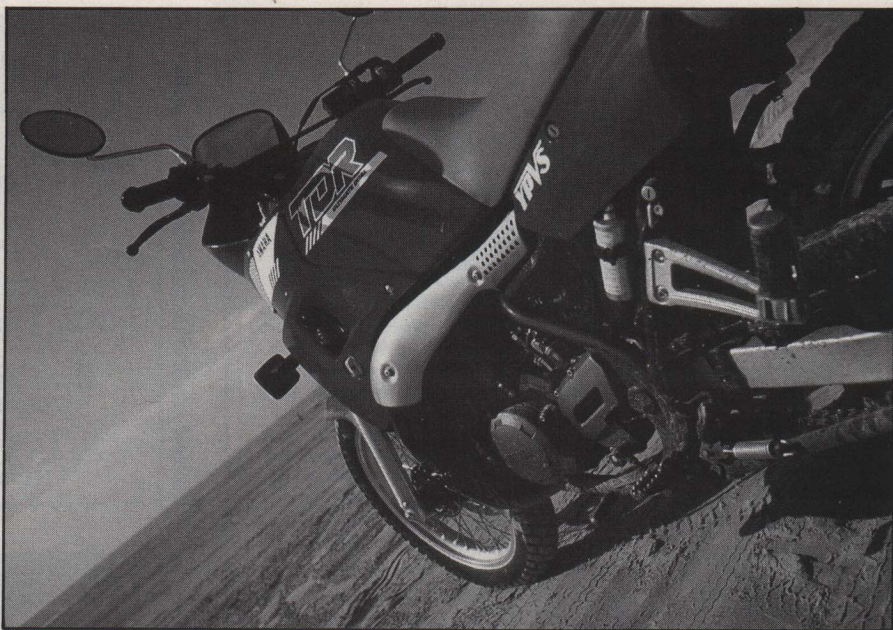
Paradoxically, the riding position makes it difficult to use the TDR's performance to its fullest extent. The typically upright trail bike stance makes long periods of riding over 70mph very tiring even though the engine is perfectly capable of cruising at 90mph. Of course this upright riding position is perfect for town riding but the engine isn't, which

TDR

goes to prove that you can't have your cake and eat it (although I fail to see the point of having your cake if you're not going to eat it. Come to that, how can you eat it if you don't have it in the first place, huh? But enough of this, on with the story . . .).

Despite its sit-up-and-beg riding position the TDR can be hustled along at an impressive pace not only because of its superlative top-end power but also due to its nice handling and powerful brakes. The engine is slung in a standard issue, well braced double cradle steel frame onto which Yamaha have bunged a pair of 38mm forks and a rising-rate monoshock unit at the back. The forks are centre-axle, have over six inches of travel and are air-assisted, while adjustment at the back is limited to preload with six inches of travel.

By road bike standards the TDR is equipped with plenty of suspension travel and enough adjustment to satisfy all but the most avid fiddlers, but for a dirt bike it's not enough. Brief attempts at off-road riding showed the TDR to be not quite the 'Ultimate Dual' Yamaha claim it to be. With a tanked-up weight of 340lb the TDR is a little too heavy for off-road use, especially as most of that weight is on the front wheel which encourages it to dig into the soft stuff. Added to that is the limited suspension travel (fine for the road, but not enough for big bumps), the lack of ground clearance

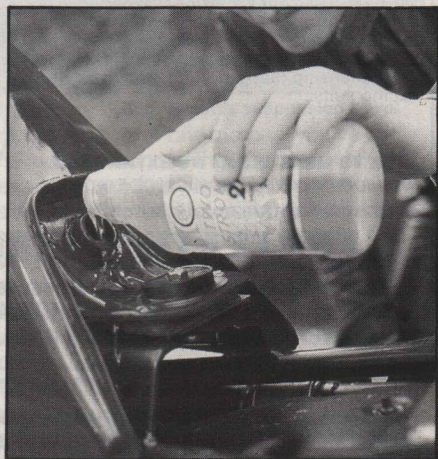


The TDR's styling is gorgeous – a continental-styled Supermotard designed for good times

(especially for the footrests), the semi-knobby tyres that appear to be Teflon-coated for off-road use, and the front mudguard which clogs up with mud almost immediately you venture off the tarmac.

Playing with the TDR on the beach at Weston-Super-Mare highlighted the TDR's compromised off-road abilities. For someone with my limited dirt riding experience the TDR proved an awkward bugger, refusing to go where I wanted and frightening the hell out of me every time the power came in with a kick. At slow speeds on fairly solid terrain the TDR is more manageable, but despite its Ultimate Dual tag, the TDR is primarily a road bike.

The suspension is perfect for London's potholes, and the steering geometry makes it a nimble and sure-footed handler. With a rake and trail of 27° and 114mm, combined



Yamaha's patent two-stroke filler/gearchange lubrication system



On the road the TDR's handling is good but tends to understeer, requiring a little more rider input than should be necessary

TDR

with an 18-inch front wheel and wide bars, the TDR is immensely flickable without sacrificing stability in fast corners. Round town the high, wide handlebars make the Yam very manoeuvrable without being wide enough to impede your progress through traffic, whilst on the open road they give plenty of leverage when hustling through the twisties. The steering is precise and the suspension response excellent, right up until you approach the three-figure mark, whereupon the front end becomes a bit light and begins to meander.

As with much of the rest of the TDR, the brakes are also lifted direct from its TZR brother which means it'll stop on a sixpence thanks to opposed-piston calipers gripping a massive 320mm floating disc at the front and a 210mm fixed disc at the back. The Metzeler Sahara tyres are very effective on the road, even though they're semi-knobblies, but lack serious traction when taken down to the beach for a paddle.

Up till now everything about the TDR seems hunky dory, does it not? Ace motor, capable chassis, good suspension, brilliant brakes. Looks like adding up to a nice little bike, *n'est pas*? However, Yamaha's design department obviously got sidetracked onto something else before they got any further, because there are some bits of the TDR that were obviously designed by the cleaning lady.

On a bike like the TDR, the tacho needs to be large and easily visible... Yamaha made it small and mounted it on top of the petrol tank so that when you look down at it you drive into the back of a taxi. Where the tacho should have been, Yamaha have mounted a largely useless temperature gauge. While on the subject of useless, let's look at the pillion grabrails. Not only is the seat not big enough for two people, the passenger footrests are too high and the grab handles badly positioned (there are also very few places to which you can attach bungees). This doesn't really matter because the power delivery of the TDR means that anyone who gets on the back won't stay there very long anyway – the first set of lights you pull away from will leave your pillion sitting in the middle of the road behind you. Even more irritating than the foregoing (yes, there are things that are even more irritating than the foregoing), is the small matter of fuel and oil. 'Small' is the appropriate word here because the TDR only holds three gallons of petrol. If the TDR did 50mpg this wouldn't be a problem, but it struggles to do more than 35mpg and this means it runs onto reserve at around the 70-mile mark – we are not talking touring motorcycles here. The ultimate in sheer idiocy, however, is the method by which the two-stroke oil tank is topped up.

Under the seat, at the back of the petrol tank, is a small rubber bung. Remove this bung and you are confronted by the two-

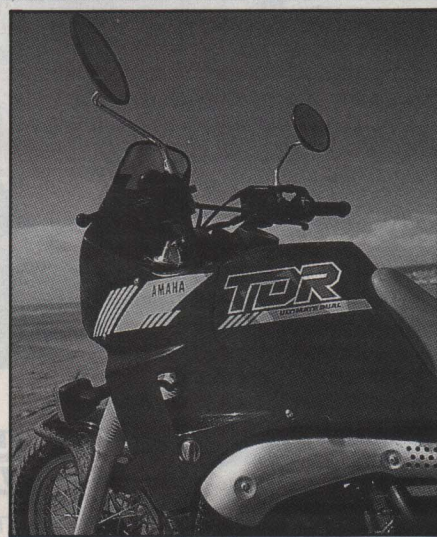
stroke oil tank filler tube which runs almost horizontally into the back of the petrol tank. You scratch your head and ponder how you're supposed to pour two-stroke down this little hole. Then it comes to you – there must be a little funnel in the toolkit expressly for that purpose, so you scabble through the toolkit but without success. Then you eventually realise that there's nothing else for it but to attempt to pour a litre of two-stroke oil in the general vicinity of the orifice. Half a litre goes into the oil tank, the other half goes all over the rest of the bike, the lefthand footrest and the gearchange pedal

– brilliant!

The TDR had the potential to be a lovely little bike, but it lost its way somewhere along the line. The idea of a dual-purpose version of the TZR is a good one, but the TDR could do with more off-road capability and some of its less savoury habits cured. For all but the most dedicated wheelie-merchant the power band arrives a little too abruptly, and the TDR's excessive thirst and odd instrumentation make it difficult to live with. As a two-wheeled plaything the TDR is a success, but like most playthings the novelty wears off pretty quickly.

TECH-SPEAK

RATINGS	Poor	Indifferent	Average	Good	Excellent
ENGINE					
Responsiveness				●	
Vibration				●	
Bottom end power		●			
Mid range power			●		
Top end power					●
Fuel economy	●				
Starting				●	
Ease of maintenance			●		
Quietness		●			
TRANSMISSION					
Clutch operation			●		
Gearbox operation				●	
HANDLING					
Steering				●	
Cornering clearance					●
High speed cornering				●	
Medium speed cornering					●
Bumpy bends				●	
Flickability				●	
Manoeuvrability				●	
Top speed stability		●			
SUSPENSION					
Front			●		
Rear			●		
Front/rear match				●	
BRAKES					
Stopping power					●
Braking stability					●
Feel at controls					●
GENERAL					
Quality of finish		●			
Fairing efficiency				●	
Seat comfort			●		
Riding position					●
Pillion comfort	●				
Touring range	●				
Headlight				●	
Stands			●		
Mirrors					●
Horn	●				
VALUE FOR MONEY			●		



TDR250

Price	£2449
Motor	Liquid-cooled crankcase-reed valve torque induction two-stroke twin
Displacement	249cc
Bore and stroke	56.4×50mm
Compression ratio	5.9:1
Maximum torque @ rpm	26.8ftlb @ 8500rpm
Maximum power @ rpm	46.5hp @ 9400rpm
Carburettors	2×28mm flat slide Mikunis
Transmission	Gear primary, 6-speed box, chain final
Frame	Steel double cradle
Rake	27°
Trail	114mm
Front fork	38mm telescopic, adjustable preload
Rear suspension	Monocross, rising-rate monoshock, adjustable preload
Brakes front	320mm floating disc, opposed four-piston caliper
rear	210mm disc, opposed piston caliper
Tyres front	100/90 H18
rear	120/80 H17
Wheelbase	1385mm
Seat height	820mm
Weight	302lb (137kg) dry
Fuel capacity	3 gallon (14 litre)
Fuel consumption	32mpg
Range	96 miles
Top speed	107 mph