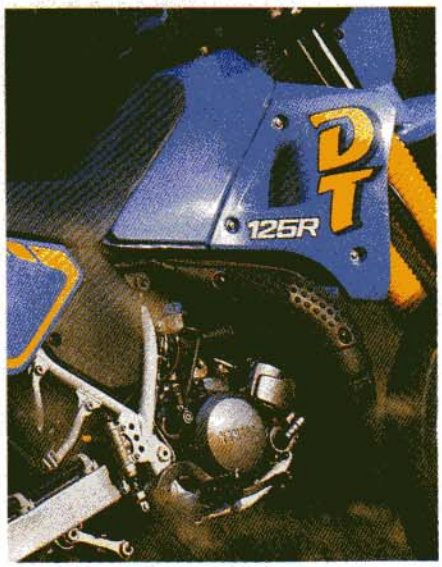
KING BR

When three people can thrash a motorcycle mercilessly for ten hours, on and off road, with such enthusiasm that the rear tyre occasionally leaves small lines of black rubber on the tarmac out of corners; when you consider that the said motorcycle wasn't once found wanting in its braking, steering, and suspension capacities; that it was never crashed; that learners can buy this bike, and do, in large numbers; then it begins to dawn on you that it's a fairly remarkable world we live in, and the DTR is a fairly remarkable motorcycle.

It was a very similar story last year, when the DTR showed it was *the* trail bike for violent road or dirt use with more brakes, bigger forks, a stronger frame and grippier tyres even than the brilliant KMX125. But in restricted form the DTR was a little slower than most — 68.5mph against the Kawasaki's 72.5. And as any learner knows, when those are throttle-on-the-stop, chin-on-the-tank top speeds, it's quite a significant difference.



What makes a TZR125 look boring, handles like a dirt racer and corners faster than a Dominator?

This year's DTR has a bigger carb, lower compression, larger brakes and 4lb more dry weight. And as three of these changes are, on the surface at least, go-slower modifications, Yamaha have also altered the way the engine is restricted in an attempt to claw back some more performance. More to the point, the bike is even easier to derestrict than it was last year, and that's saying something.

As with all 125 Yamahas the factory get 12bhp (or there abouts) by pegging the power valve in the fully closed position. Getting full power used to mean taking off the exhaust, turning the valve until you could feel it fully open, and trying to clamp up the power valve gubbins without the valve slipping back into its original position. As the locking mechanism only fits in the fully

AT closed position this is not always an easy thing to do, particularly when you bear in mind that the average 17 year old is barely able to locate the toolkit, let alone use it.

This year, though, the locking mechanism works in fully open *and* fully closed positions. The valve spindle is even dot punched for your convenience so you can tell which way round the valve is without dismantling the entire valve system or taking off the exhaust. Total de-restriction time: approx. two minutes. If I ever meet the man responsible for this incredibly considerate piece of design on a Yamaha Press Launch I promise to buy him a large drink.

Using the bike in this condition makes it rev more freely and slightly increases top speed to 73mph, with provision for accelerating — just — past 60mph cars. Flexibility is almost entirely unharmed, with plenty of off road and round town power from 4,000rpm. Why is this so?

Because there is another restrictor this year, in the exhaust downpipe.

It's actually a small tube with three spot welds holding it in. About a minute with an angle grinder or a porting tool — rather longer with a drill — gets it in the bin, though it also kisses goodbye to all the mid-range. Top end power is enough to hit 92.5mph prone but the bike is transformed into a clutch slipping banshee around town and needs to be ridden like a motocrosser on the dirt to stay in the powerband.

There are therefore three options: stick with the power valve fully shut (no choice if you're a learner and don't want to invalidate your insurance); peg it fully open (pleasing compromise if you like trail riding, twisty lanes and town traffic: we used this spec for the tyre test); or full power (fast road/dirt use only).

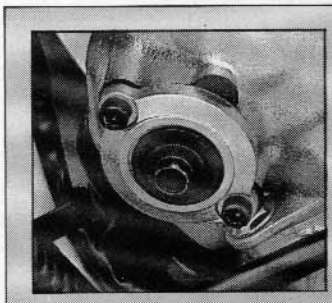
The fourth option — buying the YPVS kit — is, of course, he best of all worlds but it will cost you money — £101.84, to be precise. The brackets and wiring are all there.

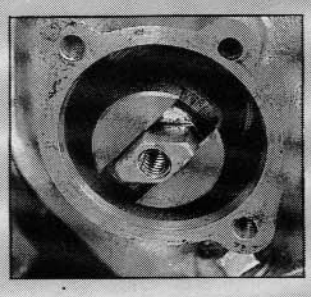
While the DTR is easy to work on — you can even get sockets on both exhaust nuts — it's quite fiddly to ride every day. Filling up with two stroke involves undoing the sidepanel with a coin, to get the toolkit out, to unscrew the dummy radiator scoop, to get at the oil tank filler cap safety lock, to get the cap off — if you follow all that. The fuel range, at just over 70 miles, is slightly irritating unless you're on a long trip when it's a welcome break. If you slouch forward you get backache after a while and if you sit right back so that the whole length of your thighs are on the seat the top speed suffers. Comfort is reasonable, but not fabulous. Finally, the DTR seems very reluctant to pull cleanly in the morning. It needs two or three minutes, which is a lot for a small two stroke. Possibly the heated carb has something to do with this — a pipe leads off the water pump onto the carb body to pre-warm the mixture, and of course it takes a while for the coolant to get up to temperature.

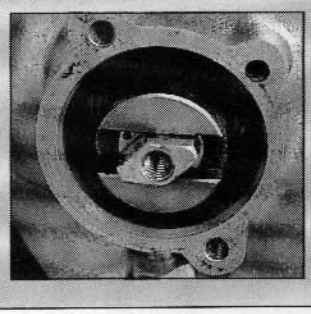
Everything else is good news. The DTR is blessed with sealed head bearings, o ring chain, two steering locks, three grease nipples on the rear linkage and snail cam chain adjusters. The KMX hasn't got any of these things, though it does have adjustable preload and damping on the rear shock. (Both bikes have fairly weedy frame paint, it has to be said).

The final proof of the pudding has to be in the riding, though, and you can take the most diabolical liberties on the DTR, remaining unscathed while various portions of your anatomy scrape on the road. It even brakes and steers at the same time. There can't be many bikes that get into corners quicker than this one and on the trail tyre test I was actually able to close on Forsyth in a long, sweeping right hander simply because DTRs corner faster than Dominators.

Little or none of this talk would cut much ice with the IAMs and Peter Bottomleys of this world but it does go to show what enormous margins of safety are built into modern learner bikes. If you buy a DTR and crash it you've no one but yourself to blame. Me? I'd like a dozen of the things, in assorted colours. Highly, highly recommended. RP







Interesting pics dept: top left, the power valve cover as seen from Space. Look in the toolkit and you'll find an allen key of precisely the right dimensions to undo the screws, and a spanner that will happily grip the central bolt. This reveals . . . (next slide, please, Cuthbertson) the power valve locking device and the diamond-shaped end of the power valve spindle. When you've cleaned all the filth off them, they look like this. The absence of a dot punch in this case indicates that the valve is pinned in its fully closed position for learners. Pull off the locking device and replace it with the dot punch visible for extra zap and reasonable flexibility from 4,000rpm. Bang it all back together with a bit of instant gasket to avoid unsightly leaks. Though there's little difference in outright power on the dyno the engine revs more freely at the top end.