



A real head-turner. Yamaha's TDR looks as cool as a winter's day but its looks are not just skin deep.

Strange brew

FACTORY made custom bikes were beginning to look awfully drab until the Japs turned to the drag strips for inspiration. The result was a crisp new marriage of performance and style typified by mind-bogglers like the V-Max and Eliminator.

Now Yamaha have taken the same recipe and stirred in a little dirt. The bike brewed from this strange new concoction is the TDR250 — a machine that's much more of a custom hot-rod than a green-laner. Yamaha have stuck a label on the side of the pint-sized petrol tank describing it as the "Ultimate Dual." In reality they know few buyers will venture off the tarmac to test that claim. Only a very tiny percentage of dual purpose trail bikes are ever used on the dirt. What buyers are investing in is style.

The TDR takes the whole concept one step further with a green lane custom creation that's going to look more at home outside the disco than in the middle of some ploughed field.

The TDR is a kind of Yuppie Mountain Bike for guys who don't like pedal power; a pose machine for the fashion conscious rider to cruise the high street looking as cool as a winter's day. And he has been given plenty of wheelie-popping power to play with too. The engine lurking behind the new clothes is a carbon copy of the fire-breathing two stroke twin used in the TZR250 — the first 250 production bike to lap the TT at 100mph.

Dull this bike isn't.

YAMAHA TDR250



Brian Tarbox

blasts off

on the

TDR250

and

discovers

that

Yamaha's

pint

sized poseur

has more

than

a few

thrills on top.

● Engine and transmission

★★★★

SLIP a race-bred, twin cylinder two stroke engine into a lightweight trail bike chassis and the one thing you can guarantee there will be no shortage of is excitement. The TDR delivers more thrills per pound than just about any other motor cycle in captivity.

The engine used in this mini-superbike is a straight lift from the 120mph TZR with crankcase reed-valve induction and a torque boosting power valve. Re-tuning has been kept to a bare minimum. The 28mm Mikuni carbs have been re-jetted and the sparks are provided by a new digital controlled CDI ignition system. More mid-range response is promised in the shape of a crossover, high rise exhaust system and the gearing has been lowered with a new first cog and a lower overall reduction ratio.

What you get for your money is a shade over 50bhp delivered slap-bang on the 10,000rpm redline. The engine slips into its powerband at 7,000rpm and you don't need to be looking at the rev counter to know you have reached blast-off.

Bang — and suddenly it is all happening. The front end goes light and you have to hold on tight to stop slipping off the back of the narrow motocross style seat. Flat out the TDR will pull 110mph and hold a steady 100mph when you are sitting bolt upright.

Down twisty backlanes you are involved in about a million gear changes per mile. This is not a bike for the lazy rider who likes to sit back and let things happen. Your left foot is constantly exercised by the superslick six speed gearbox.

In town it is thankfully another story. The TDR is no steam engine but the power valve helps the engine trickle along outside its powerband so you don't have to pull a wheelie at every traffic light or stay stuck in second gear when threading through congested city centres. The bike will rattle along in top at 30mph though opening the throttle without cogging down at that speed produces zero response.

Gentle trails can be tackled with similar ease but the peaky powerband means only the most experienced green laners will be able to use it to its full potential when the going gets really rough. Maximum torque of 3.7kg-m is delivered at 8,500rpm which means steep hills and muddy lanes have to be stormed. This machine is no plodder.

There is no electric starter but then, you don't need one. The water cooled engine always fires up first or second prod filling the air with the sound of a swarm of mechanical bees.

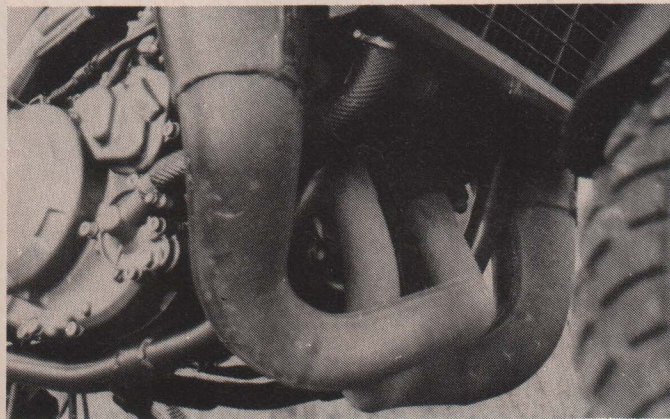
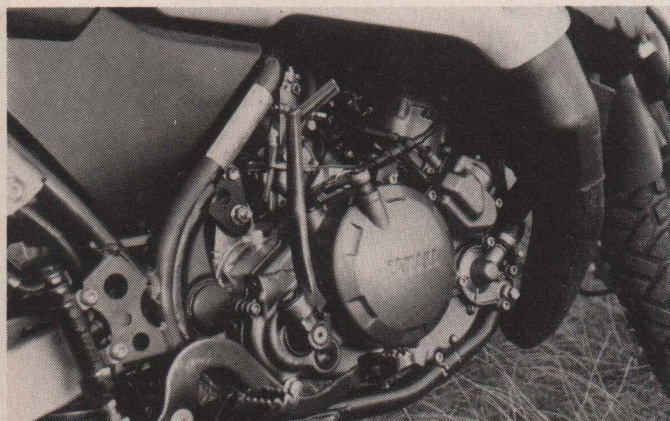
Because of its pose value, the bike is likely to spend most of its life showing off in town but its real domain is twisty B roads where, if anything, it is even more exciting to ride than the TZR. Even with its dual purpose tyres the bike feels like a real scratcher.

● Chassis

★★★★

THE dual purpose tag has done nothing to compromise the TDR's on-road handling. Forget the dirt bike accessories, this machine has been designed for tarmac duty and handles a good deal better than many pure road bikes. In fact it is more than a match for the factory's RD350LC due to a much better balanced front end.

The bike is quick and easy to steer at low speeds because of the leverage one can exert through the wide, moto cross style bars.



The frame mounted cockpit fairing is strictly for show.

Engine is the fire-breathing two stroke twin from the TZR with better mid-range power.

Cross-over exhaust pipes provide the mid-range power improvement but wreck the system and it will set you back £425 to replace!

No frills on the equipment front. The rev counter is mounted on the tank and cannot be read without taking your eyes off the road.

Front single disc sports a four piston caliper and those off-road style tyres stick like glue on the tarmac.





And down twisty backlanes the feeling is one of complete security thanks to a frame and suspension set-up that keeps everything in line.

Nor do the Metzeler Sahara Enduro tyres let the side down. Despite their dual-purpose tread they grip the road like glue. Wheels are 18 inch front and 17 inch rear

allowing a straight switch to pure road rubber for those who are never going to venture on the dirt.

The TDR engine is slotted into a tubular steel, double cradle frame with a box-section swinging arm. Just under 6.5 inches of travel are packed into the gaitered forks which have air assistance and an adjustable preload. At the rear the bike is sprung by a rising rate Mono Cross system with wind up preload adjustment. The whole set up works exceedingly well. The suspension is sufficiently sensitive to soak up bumps while retaining a feeling of taut security.

Brakes on the 336lb machine are good too. A four piston caliper is run on the front 320mm disc with twin pot caliper on its 210mm back-up. The set-up is both responsive and powerful.

● Equipment

★★★

HAD ridden the TDR several miles before I noticed it had a rev counter. The instrument is tucked away on the lead-

ing edge of the fuel tank where it is impossible to read without taking your eyes off the road. It may not make a great deal of sense but it shows a certain style and that is what you are buying when you invest in a TDR.

Most lavish of its accessories is the frame mounted fairing. This carries the powerful 60/55 watt rectangular headlamp and wraps around the radiator before marrying in with the fuel tank. It doesn't offer the rider any wind protection but it helps turn heads. A temperature gauge and string of warning lights are carried in the fairing while the speedo is hooked to the front forks.

Poor fuel consumption (see The Price You Pay) is made more of a headache by the fact that the fuel tank holds only a shade over three gallons. Nevertheless, that still allows you to chalk up sufficient miles to end up cursing the rock hard seat that is almost narrow enough to be worn internally!

The riding position itself is pure moto crosser as are the stubby serrated footpegs.

Both choke and fuel tap are easy to get to and the pillion is provided with grab rails



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either side of the seat.

Unfortunately the bike does not have a centre stand which is less forgivable on this machine than it is one something like an RC30. But, as I said, what you are buying is a piece of designer artwork rather than a practically equipped motor cycle.

● **The price you pay**

★★★

YAMAHA provide TDR owners with quite an incentive to look after that flashy, crossover, high rise exhaust system. A replacement costs more than £370 plus VAT! And it is unlikely you will be able to find a cheap alternative. The bike, great though it is, is hardly likely to sell in the kind of numbers needed to generate the interest of after-market suppliers.

You had better watch your step off road as well. A gentle tumble could cost you well over £200 for a new fairing while a pair of front forks are a few coppers less than £250 even before the VAT man has claimed his bounty. Rear brake pads are £21.39 a set and a rear shock costs £87.30.

Part two of the horror story is written in liquid gold. The fiery two stroke will drink a gallon of juice every 26 miles when you give it its head. You can almost hear the tank emptying down the throats of those two 28mm carbs. Anyone who can average more than 36mpg has probably bought the wrong bike.

And while we are piling on the agony turn to our insurance guide and weep. (Pages 88-89).

Still interested? Good. Anyone who buys a TDR with their eyes open to the running costs is not going to be disappointed — the investment pays rich dividends in terms of enjoyment. At £2549 this raunchy green laner actually costs £400 less than its TZR stablemate. And it's even more fun.

● **Conclusion**

★★★★

RADICAL styling makes the TDR250 one of the best looking bikes on the block. There probably isn't a better looking bike on which to arrive at the disco but scratch the surface and you will uncover a thoroughbred sports machine.

I once described the Suzuki RG250 as a motor cycle for headbangers with a brain. The same is true of the TDR Yamaha only doubly so.



Not a regular Northampton haunt of tester Tarbox - he's still into Jimmy Hendrix...but the young poseur around town will find the TDR's unique style a perfect match for his latest designer trainers.

● **Pictures: David Charles**

The TDR's off-road looks belie the fact that it is really a road bike and can handle only modest off-road duty.

