

KAWASAKI KE125A7

TRAILER



125 trail bikes are funny, really; they're a good bit more expensive than road bikes of the same capacity but have the obvious advantage of being dual purpose. 175s cost about £60 more on average and the difference in performance isn't that great. Where the 125s do score is on

Yamaha's XT125MX has finally gone monoshock, Rick Kemp rides it alongside the latest A7 version of Kawasaki's KE125 and finds two very different bikes. Photography by Tim Leighton-Boyce.

economy, which is something worth considering these days. As most trail bikes stay

firmly on the tarmac, you can't blame the manufacturers for producing what

are basically road bikes with off-road cosmetics. In the case of the Kawasaki KE125A7, the off-road influence comes in the shape of a motocross-styled petrol tank and a square section swing arm with acute angle shocks. The DT125MX uses Yamaha's highly successful



SCRAMBLERS

YAMAHA DT125MX

The KE's styling is inherited from the successful motocrossers.



Both bikes are available in red and apart from the rear suspension look very similar.



Yamaha's smallest monoshocker shows its off-road breeding.



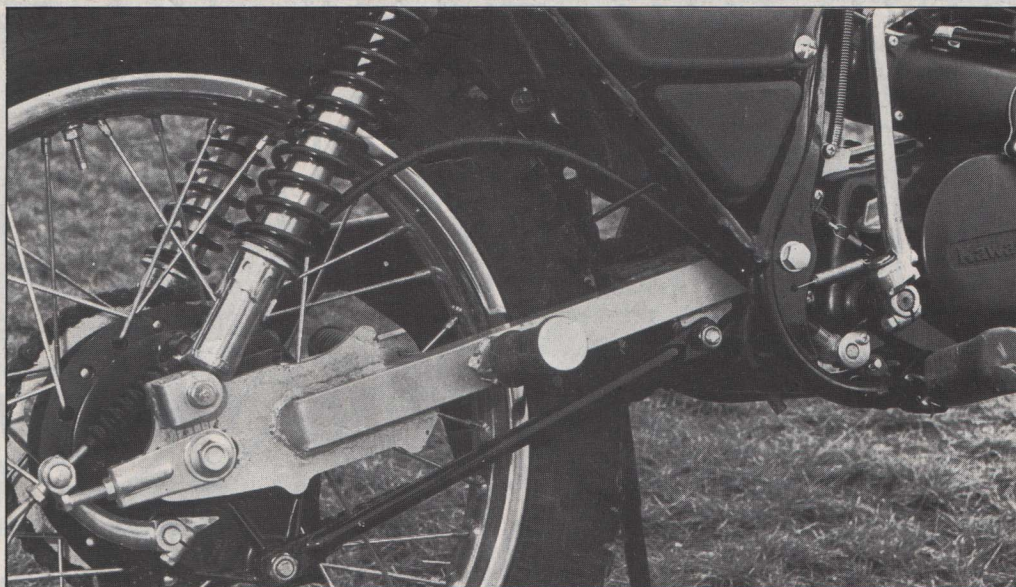
monoshock back end and snail cam wheel adjusters. Both machines have the front mudguard mounted under the bottom triple clamp, which gives that light, lean look.

KAWASAKI KE125A7

Like the smaller Kawa trail bikes, the 125 uses disc valve induction, with the carburettor on the right side of the crankcase. This increases the overall width of the engine and cuts down its trail riding potential. The advantage of disc valve induction is that it's more efficient in the mid rev range so you don't have to work so hard to keep going. The result is better fuel consumption and a more tractable motor. Actual displacement of the engine is 124cc from a bore and stroke of 56 x 50.6mm. A compression ratio of seven to one is used and the carburettor is a 24mm Mikuni. All this adds up to a power output of 12.5bhp at 6,000 rpm, with maximum torque of 10.1lb-ft at 5,500rpm. Primary drive is by gears and there are six gearbox ratios to choose from. Ignition is by flywheel magneto on the left end of the crankshaft.

The Kawasaki comes fully-equipped with tachometer and trip meter; the rear mudguard has a flat section behind the seat that can be used as a carrier. The choke is mounted under the left switch console for easy operation but, as it is spring-loaded, you have to keep your finger on it till the engine's warm enough to pull away. The riding position is good but the seat could do with being a bit softer – for long trips, anyway. The 33in seat height is reasonable, considering the bike only weighs 218lb.

The motor's power delivery is certainly good in the midrange, but it's at the expense of the top end. Maximum power is at 6,000rpm and it starts building up at about 4,000rpm, but once past the peak it drops off very quickly. The motor will run on to 7,500rpm in top gear quite comfortably, which works out to 66mph. Bottom end power delivery is smooth and the steering very light, making it an easy bike to ride round town. The clutch is light and the gear-



The only thing alloy about the square section swing arm is the colour of the paint. Brake cable has a fixed inner with the lever moving the outer.



Left side shows window for oil-level; note petrol pipe runs through carb intake.



Kawasaki's disc valve induction means that the carb is mounted on the side; it makes the engine wider but the carb is waterproof. change is positive, if a bit notchy. Our test bike wasn't in prime condition, the first problem being with the spark plug. The gap was too big and it was arcing at high revs, cutting the top speed to an indicated 60mph. Secondly, though everything was fine around town, funny things started happening to the suspension on the open road.

There was a patter from the rear wheel, making it feel as though it wasn't round, and this was transmitted to the rest of the bike at speeds above 50mph. We couldn't find anything wrong with the wheel or the tyre, but something obviously wasn't right. A shame, because this made it difficult to assess on a long run.

The front forks are longer than on the A6 model, giving an extra inch of ground clearance, but both springing and damping are soft, so the front dips under braking and gear changing. This is probably more noticeable due to the rather hard rear suspension. The Kawasaki's suspension package is better suited to trail- than road-riding. The Nitto Field & Sport tyres represent a good compromise, being as good as one could expect for turf and tarmac. No complaints on the brakes: both are progressive with loads of feel. The rear brake has a fixed inner cable

with the lever moving the outer.

The KE has all the necessary details for a trail bike — folding, serrated footrests, handlebar-mounted front indicators and rubber mounts for the rear ones. An adequate sump shield and a mud flap on the front mud-guard completes the equipment. Lighting is good enough for the bike's speed and the 6ah battery ensures everything works all the time — no dwindling indicators. A KE125 will cost you £599, £9 more than the Yamaha, but it does have better fuel consumption and a larger tank in its favour. We got 70mpg on average, giving a range of 147 miles on a tankful. The Kawasaki is, perhaps, a good choice if you're intending to use it as a dual purpose machine rather than just a road bike.

YAMAHA DT125MX

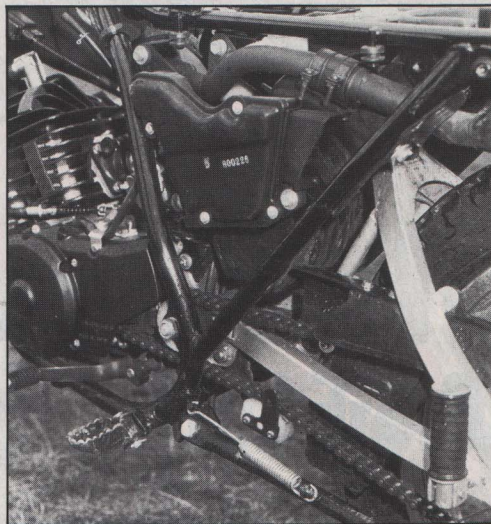
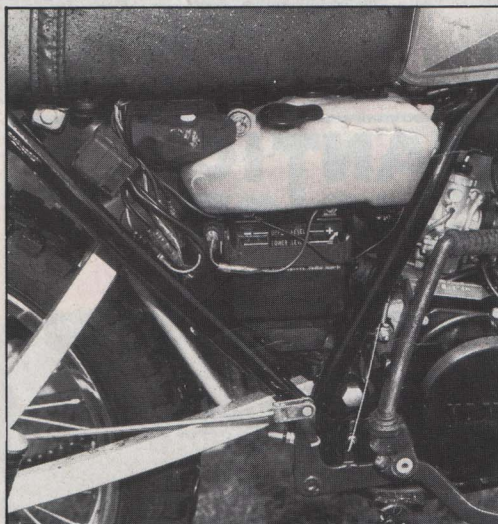
Yamaha's DT range has always been popular with trail riders, especially since the introduction of monoshock rear suspension. In fact, until the launching of the IT enduros last year, modified DTs were used in serious competition. The DT175 has long been the top selling model and the 125 is now more in line with the bigger bike. Apart from the cantilever rear suspension, most of the changes are cosmetic, but practical. The front mud-guard is slung under the bottom yoke and it's vented to aid engine cooling. The matt black up-and-over ex-

haust system is now contained within the frame rather than running down the side with a heat shield, as on the previous model. The 1.5 gallon fuel tank is a new shape, as are the seat and side panels. The front forks now have rubber gaiters, a change for the better — especially if you intend using the bike off-road. Removing the right side panel reveals the tool kit and the oil tank for the autolube system. The toolkit also includes a C-spanner for adjusting the spring preload on the monoshock unit; much better than the old lock-nut adjuster. The handlebar layout is pretty standard, with engine kill on the right, lighting, indicators and horn on the left. The indicators are mounted on the bars and, to complete the enduro cosmetics, the bars have a padded brace.

The engine is finished in satin black, as is the exhaust, which is an up-and-over system with the expansion chamber under the tank. This necessitates slightly modified head finning and, together with the monoshock, dictates the minimum seat height. At 33.2in, it's higher than the Kawasaki, but still low enough for good control. The reed-valve motor is a 123cc unit with a bore and stroke of 56 x 50mm and uses a seven-port barrel. Compression ratio is 7.2 to one. Carburettor choke size is smaller than on the old model at 22mm. This has the effect of improving torque, which is now 18lb-ft at 6,000rpm. Maximum power output is 14bhp at 6,000rpm. The six-speed gearbox and standard wet multiplate clutch are retained. Sparks are supplied by CDI ignition. Yamaha's Autolube system is most efficient, the pump being driven off the right of the crankshaft, and delivery is throttle controlled.

Compared to the Kawasaki, the DT's power characteristics are very different. It builds slowly to about 5,000 rpm, then starts to get a move on, making the front end very light, and an enthusiastic twist of the grip can get the wheel in the air. Below 5,000rpm, power delivery is clean and smooth. In fact, throughout the rev range the Yamaha is smoother than the Kawasaki.

URBAN SCRAMBLERS



Left: Right side panel reveals oil tank and tools; battery has to be removed for topping-up. Right: It's a tight fit under the seat with air filter, exhaust and monoshock.

Starting the Yam with the aid of the push-pull choke on the Mikuni carb, is no problem as the folding kickstart affords a good swing.

Gear ratios are well matched to the engine's power; first is low but this has off-road advantages.

Like most trail bikes, the Yamaha is very easy to ride. Its riding position is good and, the seat comfortable and being light with a wide handlebar, low-speed manoeuvres are simplicity itself. (In traffic, though, the handlebar width can work against you.) The Yam is no bad performer on the open road, either. I used it several times for a 100-mile round trip and, providing you keep

the motor on the power band, you don't get blown into the weeds, even with a pillion. But because the power band is further up the rev range



Handlebar brace is padded to give the enduro look.

than the Kawasaki, the Yamaha uses more fuel. We got an average of just 62mpg.

The monoshock back end, the newest feature of the bike, works very well, particularly as it's easily adjustable, even with the added weight of a pillion. The forks are adjustable through the yokes so they can be set up for off-road riding. Springing and damping are compatible but, being long, travel is fairly soft. This is only noticeable on the road under braking; gear changing doesn't affect the front end

too much. The Yokohama tyres — 2.75 x 21 front and 3.50 x 18 rear — are perhaps closer to off-road rubber than road tyres in their tread pattern but the compound is soft enough to give reasonable grip on the road. There was the odd occasion riding in the wet when the sliding

foot technique had to be employed but, as the weight of the bike is only 211lb, this isn't too drastic; under normal conditions, though, it behaves well. Braking is what you'd expect from Yamaha — good. Both ends are progressive and, even though the rear brake isn't fully floating, it's very controllable. The rear chain is kept in check by a sprung-loaded tensioner and a roller under the top run.

The DT125 should make a good trail bike if the 175 and 250 are anything to go by; our own attempts were cut short by encountering a large bog early on. As a 125 road bike with trail styling it would be hard to beat; its only obvious shortcoming is the small-capacity fuel tank, 1.5 gallons, which gives a range of just over 90 miles. Yamaha really have no alternative here as the monoshock takes up so much room under the tank but, at £590, who's complaining?



Above: The reed valve motor revs well and produces more power. Below: A 'C' spanner is provided for adjusting the spring preload on the mono-shock.



Model:	KAWASAKI 125 A7	YAMAHA DT125 MX
Price inc. VAT:	£599	£590
Warranty:	12 months/unlimited	12 months/unlimited
Engine:	Disc-valve 2 stroke single	Reed-valve 2 stroke single
Capacity:	124cc (56 x 50.5mm)	123cc (56 x 50mm)
Lubrication:	Oil injection	Oil injection
Comp. ratio:	7 to 1 (corrected)	7.2 to 1 (corrected)
Carburation:	24mm Mikuni	22mm Mikuni
Ignition:	Flywheel magento	Capacitor discharge
Max. power:	12.5bhp at 6,000rpm	14bhp at 6,500rpm
Max. torque:	10.1lb-ft at 5,500rpm	11lb-ft at 6,500rpm
Primary drive:	Gear	Gear
Clutch:	Wet multiplate	Wet multiplate
Gearbox:	Six-speed	Six-speed
Final drive:	Chain	Chain
Mph/1,000rpm:	8.8 in top	8.7 in top
Fuel capacity:	2.1 gallons	1.5 gallons
Electrics:	6v 6ah battery, alternator, 35/35w headlight	6v 6ah battery, alternator, 35/35w headlight
Frame:	Single downtube	Double downtube
Suspension:	Telescopic fork. (f) Swing arm with five pos. spring preload.	Telescopic fork. (f) Monoshock with adjustable spring preload (r)
Brakes:	4.7in drum (f) 5.1in drum (r)	Drum (f) drum (r)
Tyres:	Nitto Field and Sport 2.75 x 21 (f) 3.50 x 18 (r)	Yokohama 2.75 x 21 (f) 3.50 x 18 (r)

DIMENSIONS:		
Wheelbase:	53.1in	53.1 in
Seat height:	33.0in	33.2in
Handlebar width:	33.3in	33.5in
Grnd clearance:	9.8in	10.4in
Rake/trail:	60deg/5in	60deg/4.9in
Dry weight:	218lb	211lb

EQUIPMENT:		
	Mirror, tools, tacho, trip, steering lock, turn signals, speedo	Mirror, tools, tacho, trip, steering lock, turn signals speedo

PERFORMANCE:		
Top speed:	64mph (indicated)	68mph (indicated)
Speeds in gears at max. power revs:	16mph, 26mph, 34mph, 40mph, 47mph, 53mph	13mph, 21mph, 29mph, 38mph, 47mph, 57mph
Av. fuel consumption:	70mpg	62mpg
Tank range:	147 miles	93 miles
Importer/Manufacturer:	Kawasaki Motors UK 748/9 Deal Ave. Trading Estate, Surrey	Mitsui Machinery Sales, Oakcroft Rd., Chessington, Surrey.