

YAMAHA DT125A

Street/Trail Enduro

For your first-time enduro, it's hard to beat.

Yamaha has the street-trail enduro field just about covered. They started half a dozen years ago with the 250cc DT1, which was immediately and immensely successful, and since then have spread the line in both directions; there now five different sizes and variations of the original enduro: an 80, 100, 125, 175, and 360.

Although the Yamaha enduros are aimed at a similar market, they are not aimed at the same people in that market. The Yamaha enduros are made for the kind of rider who doesn't demand that his machine be able to cruise the highways at a casual 65 mph, or that it be able to earn a gold medal in the ISDT, or that it be a trophy winner at the local scrambles. He's more concerned that his bike will last for

an afternoon of bashing around in the boonies, or that it will get him down to the store and back for a pack of cigarettes without wearing him out when he tries to start it, or that it gives his family something to play with while they're camping. That's where the DT125 comes in.

THE BIKE: The DT125 bears a strong physical resemblance to its brothers in the enduro line. (Considering the fact that *Cycle Guide* has recently come under the wrath of fem libbers for its chauvinistic attitude toward motorcycles, maybe we should say "sisters;" or better yet, to be safe, "siblings.") It doesn't share all of its parts with the rest of the family, but only one of its features—the electric starter—is exclusive to the DT125.

On the outside, the DT125 is a neat little devil, all tidy and functional, with the only obtrusive bits being the turn signals. The headlight is small and the taillight big; although something sounds not quite right when you say it that way, the combination of a small headlight and large taillight makes sense for a small enduro. Since most night riding on a bike of this type is done on small roads and at slow speeds, a large headlight isn't really necessary. And because of the bike's overall small size, a large rear taillight really helps to make the machine visible to trailing automobiles.

Although there are threaded holes in the swingarm for passenger pegs, the short seat is designed for solo riding. But behind the seat is a very handy (and sturdy) lug-

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEE STANLEY



gage rack; by the first of the year Yamaha dealers will have an optional seat-like pad which fits on top of the rack to provide a spot for a passenger. The seat is padded sparingly, but not uncomfortably; only after a couple of hours of riding do the old buns get stiff.

The seating position and handlebar/footpeg location is good. Anyone taller than five-foot-two fits on most 125s like his (or her) legs need to be sectioned by about eight inches, but with the DT125 you don't feel like you have to stand over all the bumps to keep your knees out of your armpits. And the handlebars are just about the right size for the rest of the motorcycle. You can ride in the woods for a couple of hours at a time without getting a funny feeling in your forearms or a kink in your neck from bending forward to reach the grips.

Instrumentation includes a speedometer and tachometer, plus various handlebar switches and buttons, and an ignition key slot above the top triple clamp. The

duction. Reed valves are the latest rage, and dirt racers are fitting them on just about everything. The reed valve acts like a one-way gate between the carburetor and intake port; it prevents blow-back of the gas mixture from the cylinder into the carburetor. Theoretically, this increases low-speed torque, improves throttle response and starting, and gives better fuel economy.

The reed valve works in practice as well as it does in theory. The advantages that reed valves are supposed to give are all strong points of the DT125. Starting couldn't be simpler: pull out the hand choke (when cold), pull in the clutch lever (primary starting enables the engine to turn over while in gear), and press the button. That's right, press the button. The DT125 has an electric starter because Yamaha feels that of all their enduros, it is the most likely to be used by women and children, who love it. That makes sense, although it makes the 125 a bit heavier.

The engine is surprising. It's not all that

the redline is a bit misplaced; 8000 rpm would be a better starting point. But revving over 7500 in the gears isn't really necessary.

The gears are spaced nicely. On the street, there's no drop off the power between gears, and only in climbing hills in dirt is there any real problem in keeping on the power. If the bike had a six-speed gearbox, it would be perfect; sixth could be a little taller than the present fifth, providing top-speed cruising at less rpm, and the bottom five gears could be spaced a little closer together, making the 125 even abetter up hills.

Shifting can't be done haphazardly; the lever requires a firm throw, since there isn't always a solid click as the gears change. Full power downshifts while trying not to lose revs when climbing hills were made difficult because of this. But once we got into the habit of giving the lever a positive jab, missed shifts were reduced to nearly zero.

HANDLING: The suspension on the DT125 is up to the task, assuming the task isn't the Jack Pine Enduro. The front forks give only 5.7 inches of travel, but don't bottom or top out. A dozen or so deliberate front wheel landings off a three-foot drop failed to find bottom. And we never heard or felt the clunk of the forks topping. The forks absorb the bumps carefully, without transmitting any uncomfortable jarring or choppy feeling back to the handlebars. And the damping gets the wheel back to the ground without trying to fight the spring action.

The 19-inch front tire had a tendency to plow just a bit in the sand, and it wasn't the hot setup for getting crossed up. But the Yamaha will slide when it is pressed into it; it just isn't very comfortable in that position.

All five adjustments on the rear shocks are usable for a man, but may not be for a child. Our 160-pound tester found the best position to be the second-softest, so a lighter rider might be happiest with the softest position, giving him the full range of adjustment to stiffen up the suspension when the riding gets tougher.

The front wheel doesn't come up freely; a jerk on the bars does more to lift the wheel than a twist of the throttle. The overall 227-pound weight of the bike doesn't encourage a flying front wheel, but the machine doesn't really feel that heavy. It maneuvers like it weighs 30 pounds less. It's easy to ride the bike in a straight line at idle, much slower than a walking pace; the DT125 would probably perform quite adequately in sportsman trials events.

We tested it over some sandy whoop-de-dos, and since the rear tire didn't provide much traction in the sand, the *only* way to get through without bogging down was as fast as the bike could go, before the tire had a chance to sink. When we got to the whoop-de-dos, the bike hopped and leaped like a miniature Husky, but only when it was really pushed did it show any

speedometer is a 100-mph (whew!) front-wheel-drive model with a separate resettable odometer, features that will please enduro riders. The tack begins its redline at 7500, and continues all the way up to 10,000. The redline is actually a bright orange block, as if there were some real danger in revving over 7500. There isn't; in fact, the engine doesn't even hit its horsepower peak until redline.

The tires are Yokohama, a3.00x19 on the front and 3.25x18 on the rear. They are the common (for street-trail enduros) universal trials pattern. The frame is a standard double-loop cradle—nothing fancy—and the suspension is all Japanese, with five-way adjustable shocks.

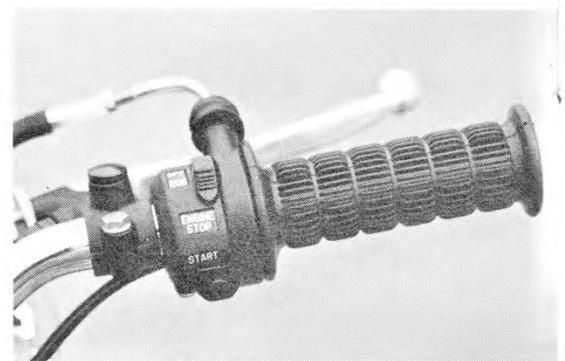
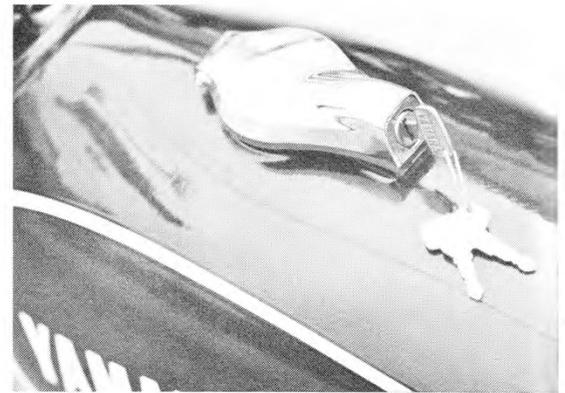
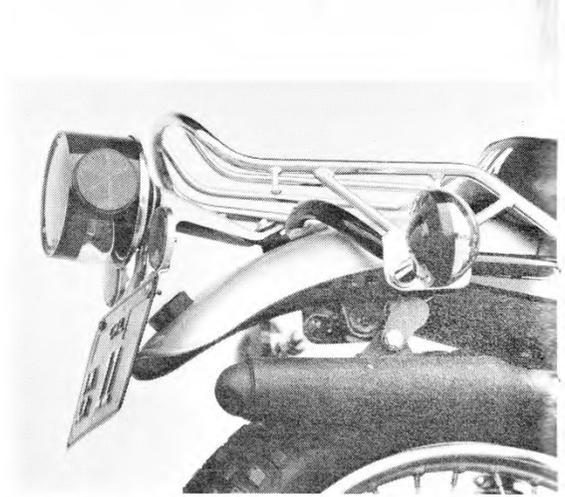
ENGINE AND GEARBOX: The 125cc Yamaha engine has proven its dependability many times over. It's been around for years, and it gets better and better as it gets refined. The latest version features a seven-ported cylinder, and a reed valve intake system that Yamaha calls Torque In-

powerful, but the torque is something else, especially in top gear (fifth). A lot of other 125s have to struggle to even pull top gear, even on the level on a windless day. The DT125 just buzzes right up grades, sometimes even *hills* in fifth gear, with barely a drop in revs. During the photo session we rode around with our 180-pound photographer and his 20 pounds of cameras on the back, and the little 125 even pulled uphill with the extra 200 pounds! A look at the torque curve verifies this: note that from 4000 rpm to 8000 rpm, the 125 puts out a consistent 18-20 pounds of torque. It should be called The Little Engine That Could.

Although the redline is at 7500 rpm, the engine revs freely into the red zone in all gears but fifth, and seemingly without any real stress. Even in fifth gear, the top speed of 60 mph isn't achieved until 8200 rpm, and buzzing along at that speed is no problem. And considering that the engine produces its peak horsepower at 7500 rpm,







tendency to swap ends.

On the street the suspension worked just as well. The short choppy bumps didn't jar the motorcycle, and the long rippled bumps didn't make it hard to control. The engine is relatively smooth, and the tingle in the hand grips and seat was minimal, although after an hour of steady 8000-rpm riding, you're ready to stop and stretch and shake your fingers. But a lot of small bikes are virtually unbearable to ride at high speed because of vibration; that's no problem with the DT125.

The exhaust, however, is louder than a 125 should be. The sound is deep, like there isn't enough baffling. About ten years ago, when people (especially very young people) weren't used to the buzz of a two-stroke, they tried to make it sound like a "real" motorcycle by taking out the baffles. The DT125 has that baffles sound.

The brakes are absolutely super, especially on the pavement, where either wheel is easily lockable. Both have a solid

predictable feel, and locking either one by accident is unlikely. The front lever takes a gentle squeeze with two fingers, and feels like a good street bike brake. The predictability and smoothness is carried over to the dirt; downhills can be taken with the rear brake dragging without worry of locking the wheel and stalling the engine.

RELIABILITY: The DT125 was the most trouble-free motorcycle that *Cycle Guide* has tested so far this year. Nothing broke, nothing required any special adjustment, and it never missed a beat. It spent two afternoons on the dyno with the engine screaming at full throttle, and never whimpered. It spent three days in the dirt playing games, and another few riding around town and on back roads, and never balked.

SUMMARY: For the job it was intended for, the DT125 deserves a gold star rating. It was designed for tooling around town, going for trail rides on weekends, and an occasional enduro. For those purposes, it can't be faulted. Everything is

Luggage rack was sturdy and handy; silencer wasn't so silent. A lockable gas cap precludes the old sugar-in-the-tank trick. Would you believe an electric starter?

geared for easy riding; it's a perfect bike for a beginner or novice.

In-gear electric starting is so easy it's silly. The powerband is wide enough so that a lot of gear stabbing isn't necessary. The brakes get the machine stopped quickly and controllably. The handling is light in maneuverability and secure over bumps. The seating position and rider comfort are both excellent.

When pushed to its limit off-road, the DT125 begins to show some of its shortcomings; but even then, the bike lets you know it is at its limit without pitching you off or doing anything unpredictable. At a price of \$616, for the person considering a small street/trail machine, he can't go wrong with the DT125. **CG**

