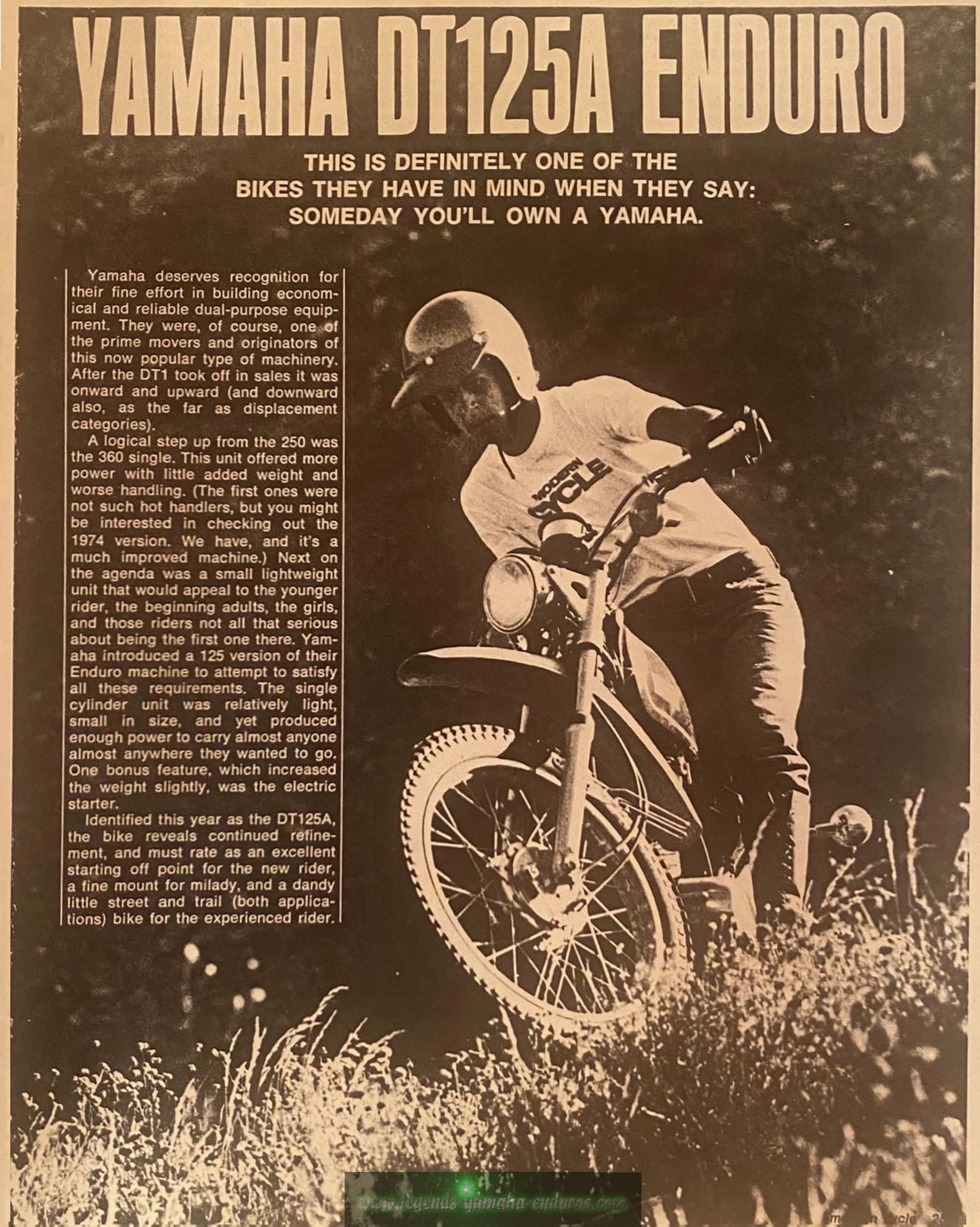
YAMAHA DT125A ENDURO

THIS IS DEFINITELY ONE OF THE BIKES THEY HAVE IN MIND WHEN THEY SAY: SOMEDAY YOU'LL OWN A YAMAHA.

Yamaha deserves recognition for their fine effort in building economical and reliable dual-purpose equipment. They were, of course, one of the prime movers and originators of this now popular type of machinery. After the DT1 took off in sales it was onward and upward (and downward also, as the far as displacement categories).

A logical step up from the 250 was the 360 single. This unit offered more power with little added weight and worse handling. (The first ones were not such hot handlers, but you might be interested in checking out the 1974 version. We have, and it's a much improved machine.) Next on the agenda was a small lightweight unit that would appeal to the younger rider, the beginning adults, the girls, and those riders not all that serious about being the first one there. Yamaha introduced a 125 version of their Enduro machine to attempt to satisfy all these requirements. The single cylinder unit was relatively light, small in size, and yet produced enough power to carry almost anyone almost anywhere they wanted to go. One bonus feature, which increased the weight slightly, was the electric starter.

Identified this year as the DT125A, the bike reveals continued refinement, and must rate as an excellent starting off point for the new rider, a fine mount for milady, and a dandy little street and trail (both applications) bike for the experienced rider.



This year's DT carries brandy red paint on the 1.8 gallon gas tank. As with a majority of Yamaha units produced over the last few years, the paint quality is good. The gas tank is equipped with an ignition key operated locking gas cap. Hopefully this type of device keep honest people honest. With the gas level right up to the neck of the tank there was just a minimal amount of seepage past the gasket and cap over rough terrain. On the pavement we noticed no leakage at all.

We have noted a trend toward less chrome. That suits us just fine. In the past some manufacturers went overboard and gaudied up their machines. Chrome on the DT125 has been kept at a minimum. In our opinion this enhances the appearance of the motorcycle. Even though the 125 is a small motorcycle, it is more or less well suited for the larger rider. In a seated position the relationship between the rider contact points allows a comfortable riding position. Even our staff giant, who's slightly taller than Jerry West, but not as good a ball handler, didn't complain about the seating position. Riders from about 5-9 on up will have to hunch forward a bit to hang onto the low handlebars when up on the pegs. The setup is good for anyone any shorter.

The handgrips aren't to be found on our list of top ten all time favorites, but they are better than the notorious fluted grips found on some other machines. All those fluted grips should be buried at sea without honors.

The footpegs are the rubber covered folding type. Although they cannot be adjusted (as on the new 250 and 360 Enduros) we feel that their positioning is fine.

Yamaha has really cleaned their act up this year by tucking both the pipe and kick starter lever in completely out of the way. This is readily apparent when standing on the pegs. We wish that some of the other dual-purpose bike builders would follow suit. Not only does it provide a more comfortable ride, but control of the machine is also easier as a result. The muffler and USDA approved spark arrester exhaust system is surprisingly quiet and yet doesn't seem to sacrifice any appreciable power.

The saddle on the DT (all Enduros are called DTs this year, not just the 250) is well padded and offers the rider a good amount of support. The long seat comes in quite handy when bouncing around over rougher sections of terrain. It is not long enough for comfortable two-up riding however. The seat height of 31½ inches puts the ground well within reach for most riders.

As on the larger models, the ignition key is located just below and between the tach and speedometer. This seems to be the most convenient place to mount an ignition switch. The speedo has a trip meter that is resettable by tenths of a mile. The tach is well defined and easily read. All the handlebar switches are easily reached with the exception of the kill button. Thank goodness it is not necessary to use one of these buttons or switches often.

You can start the 125 with an easy kick on the kickstarter if you are kind of weird. The electric start button on the throttle grip control is much more convenient. Genuine first time every time starting. Even if you have a thing about kickstarting electric starter equipped bikes, it will take two stabs at the most with a cold engine. The pull up and turn choke lever located on the 24mm Mikuni carb is used for a few seconds after firing up. Warm up time is quite brief.

Primary kickstarting lets you start the 125 in any gear by simply disengaging the clutch. First gear can be engaged without any lurch or clutch drag. The wet multi-plate clutch was used hard without any adverse affects. The amount of effort necessary to disengage and engage the clutch seemed normal. Disengagement took place approximately half way through lever travel.

The five-speed constant mesh gearbox could be shifted without using the clutch, even shifting down to a lower gear was a simple matter. One of these days we are going to come with a new phrase to replace smooth and positive when referring to the gearbox. But this is not one of those days. Shifting was smooth and positive. (How about smooth as glass?)

We feel that the ratios could be improved upon slightly. The jump between first and second is noticeable although the engine does not bog. We feel that it might be an improvement to leave first gear where it is while spreading the gap from first to second more evenly over the higher gears. That gap is from 3.18 first to the 2.00 second. Fourth is an even 1.00 and fifth is a 0.80 overdrive. Spacing of the higher gears is relatively even. We had some trouble with the neutral light not lighting when neutral was selected. It was very easy to feel the gearbox into neutral however.

It took a while to adjust to the shift lever. The lever follows the contour of the left engine cover, inside of which the electric starter unit is housed. Because of the inclusion of the starter, the cover is oddly shaped and a new rider may end up riding with his foot on the lever. There was no great difficulty adjusting to a slightly different foot placement.

As with Yamaha's other two-stroke engines, the DT125 is equipped with reed valves. This unquestionably improves the low speed performance, and increases the pulling ability of the engine at low rpms while greatly reducing any chance of plug fouling. It is this impressive low end, particularly for a 125, that enabled Yamaha to place such a large jump between first and second gear.

The very low (high ratio number) first gear is ideal for picking your way through very difficult terrain. The low end helps too because you can drop the r's without going brrrt a lot, followed by a very noticeable silence. Second gear is also lower than most found on dual-purpose bikes. The gearing and pulling power are responsible for making the Yamaha such a neat little trail bike. Even with a two hundred pounder aboard second would deliver up most mountain trails. On the occasions when a dab down to first was necessary, it always did the job.

The engine red lines at 7500 rpms, but it is quite easy to run way over that point, even in top gear. 7500 rpm is just under 60 mph indicated. Several times we saw 8500 to 9000 rpm even though we were sitting upright on the machine. This gave an indicated reading of 70 mph. We would recommend staying below the redline, but our own overreving indicates just how wide a power band the 125 has.

Whether traveling on the highways at top speed or negotiating narrow, tricky trails in first gear, we found the handling to be quite good. At the higher speeds on the highway, the machine is extremely stable, and it has no tendency to shake or move around, as other small capacity units do. Because of the power range the rider does not have to constantly keep shifting. Slow or medium speed handling in the dirt is impressive. The DT feels a bit front heavy at at slower speeds, but nothing to get upset over. It does not have a "loose" or searching type feel while threading along narrow, rough trails. It turns when it is told to, not before.

New this year is a larger 19-inch front tire. It is a three inch trials universal treader. On the rear is a 3.25x18 with the same tread pattern. We used ten pounds pressure in the front tire and fifteen in the rear for one mountain ride. It's at times like those that the advantage of rim locks become apparent. Both wheels have these locks to prevent the tires from turning when pressure is dropped for off-road riding.

The double down tube cradle type frame is well suited to the two different types of uses that the 125 has been designed for. It's hard to notice any frame flex on a machine as small as the 125, so this wasn't of prime importance to us. The frame comes equipped with a heavy duty bash plate that came in quite handy for protecting the vulnerable underside of the crankcases on several occasions over rocky terrain.

The two internal expanding shoe brakes are slightly larger than five inches. The front brake is an extremely good stopper. Some may feel that it is too sensitive for the dirt. Our staff felt that it was extremely positive and well suited for either on or off the highway. The rear brake followed suit, and was both positive and easy to operate. We did notice some rear wheel hopping from braking over rough or downhill sections of our test area, but it was not excessive.

We gave the 125 a good workout in the water. By repeatedly splashing through streams it became quite evident that the front brake was unaffected. In fact, the first time one of our testers emerged from the water he grabbed a big handful, expecting some loss of binder performance. He didn't get it. What he almost got was a trip over the handlebars. It took several hard applications of the rear brake to dry the hub and linings to regain normal stopping ability. While doing all this splashing back and forth through the water we were also pleased to learn that the ignition system on the 125 does not care if you engage in such nonsense.

The suspension systems on the 125 is quite good for a small displacement dual-purpose type machine. There is no question that it could be improved, but Yamaha's approach seems better than most or all DPers available today. The front suspension did work well, with adequate travel and spring rate. Damping was good. Under no circumstances were we able to bottom or top the forks. The rear suspension is an improvement over most comparable systems available today. It is a five-way adjustable spring that is surprisingly strong for a lightweight motorcycle. We found it necessary to adjust the pre-load of the spring to the softest position. At this point there was a relatively good spring rate and a reasonable amount of damping.

The bike is not a racer or fast cowtrailer. If the machine is ridden fast over a section of whoop de doos or other rough terrain the back end has a tendency to try and catch up with the front end. This is the only complaint that we have in regards to the suspension system.

We feel that the DT125 deserves a rather high recommendation. Perhaps for some people the weight of 250 pounds with a full tank of gas is too much for a lightweight motorcycle. Some of that weight does provide the convenience of the electric starter, which more than offsets the additional weight. The good trail handling, wide power band, and more than adequate road speed obtainable undoubtedly make it one of the best buys on the market today at $616. ●

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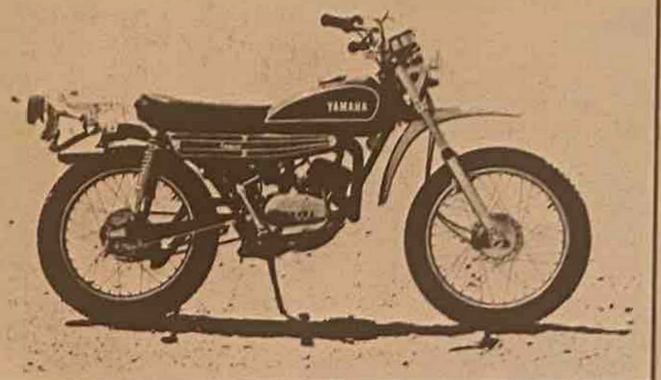

Engine Type	Single Cylinder, Two-stroke
Bore and Stroke	56x50mm
Displacement	123cc
Compression Ratio	7:1
Engine Red Lines @	7500 rpm
Ignition	Battery
Starting System	Electric and Kick, in any Gear
Carburetion	24mm Mikuni
Lubrication	Autolube
Type of Transmission	Constant Mesh 5-Speed
Clutch	Wet Multi-plate
Internal Gear Ratios	(1) 3.181, (2) 2.000, (3) 1.368, (4) 1.000, 5) 0.800
Final Ratio	10.2
Countershaft Sprocket	14
Rear Wheel Sprocket	45
Quarter Mile Acceleration:	
Terminal Speed	62.11
Elapsed Time	19.67
Indicated Top Speed	70 mph
Length	79.3 in.
Seat Height	31.5 in.
Wheelbase	51.6 in.
Ground Clearance	9.1 in.
Listed Dry Weight	227 Pounds
Actual Weight, Full Tank of Gas	250 Pounds
Front Tire Size	3.00x19 in.
Front Brake Type	Internal Expanding
Front Brake Size	130mm
Rear Tire Size	3.25x18 in.
Rear Brake Type	Internal Expanding
Rear Brake Size	130mm
Air Filtration	Washable Foam
Battery Type	12V, 7 AH
Fuel Tank Capacity	1.8 Gal.
Oil Tank Capacity	1.3 Qt.
Gear Box Capacity	750cc
Front Suspension	Telescopic Double Damping
Rear Suspension	5-Way Adjustable Spring Over Shock
Frame Type	Tubular Double Cradle
Exhaust System	U.S.D.A. Approved Spark Arrester
Color	Brandy Red
Retail Price, Los Angeles	$616

Distributor:
Yamaha International
6600 Orangethorpe Ave.
Buena Park, Calif. 90620

IMPRESSIONS

	POOR	FAIR	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT
ENGINE					
STARTING					●
EXHAUST NOISE				●	
MECHANICAL NOISE					●
POWER RANGE					●
ACCELERATION				●	
THROTTLE RESPONSE					●
VIBRATION					●
CLUTCH					●
TRANSMISSION				●	
CHASSIS					
HANDLING					●
SUSPENSION				●	
RIDER COMFORT				●	
BRAKES				●	
TIRES				●	
CONTROLS				●	
STYLING				●	
FINISH					●
INSTRUMENTATION					●
LIGHTING				●	
TOOL KIT				●	