

RACE TEST

YAMAHA YZ250F

What you need?

• This may be the year when the major Japanese manufacturers make a parting in the ways. Regardless of the degree of flash or *techno-crapola*, the Oriental top four have always produced machines in accordance with what their sister competitors were doing.

It's been good for racing because they've goaded each other along one step at a time. But in 1979, things are beginning to change. Suzuki, Kawasaki and Honda have chosen to duplicate their works bikes. They all have new engines, new suspensions, new sneakers and a hard core approach to nailing down the motocross market by selling what they race.

Yamaha's YZ250F is a bike for *everyman*. Not that it isn't totally new, but rather that it's designed to suit me

and you instead of Rick, Bob, Rex and Pierre.

It has a new frame that accomplishes four different feats of handling magic in one move. The swingarm pivot has been moved closer to the countershaft sprocket which eliminates the YZ's nagging chain problems. The steering head has been pulled back 1 1/2 degrees to make the F-model turn 100 percent better than the YZ-E. The monoshock has been shortened (2 inches) and lightened (2 pounds) through the use of aluminum to increase rear wheel travel and lessen overall weight. The seat height has actually been lowered, even though the front fork travel has been increased.

If you remember our analysis of the 1978 YZ250E, we complained rather



www.legends-yamaha-enduros.com

YAMAHA YZ250F

bitterly that it wouldn't turn and that it was too pipey for a 250. Yamaha said we were wrong! This year they pulled the rake back to make it turn better, and re-ported and geared the motor.

By lowering the exhaust port 2mm and raising the gear ratio's on first, fourth, fifth and sixth gear, much of the peaky performance from last year has disappeared. But don't think that they've built a *torque-mutho*. The engine is still way down on torque. But as an example of the improvement, calculate these facts: on the E-model, the national privateers would add six teeth to the rear sprocket to give the bike better bite. This year, the hot privateers are adding two teeth to the rear sprocket.

A BIKE FOR EVERYMAN

The YZ250F is a big improvement over last year, but on the whole, it doesn't do anything exceptionally well. Conversely, it doesn't do anything atrociously bad either. It has a lower seat height than most 250's, which makes it comfortable and easy to sit astride. The bars and levers are great in shape and bend. The controls are improved, especially the new case-hugging brake pedal. The plastic has been increased in thickness, and the new FIM number plates give the YZ a touch of Euro-class. The engine is easier to ride, but still is not the easiest or the fastest.

What Yamaha has wrought in 1979 is a bike that does it all, but doesn't stand out in any area. In many ways, this is better than a killer motor in a turd frame



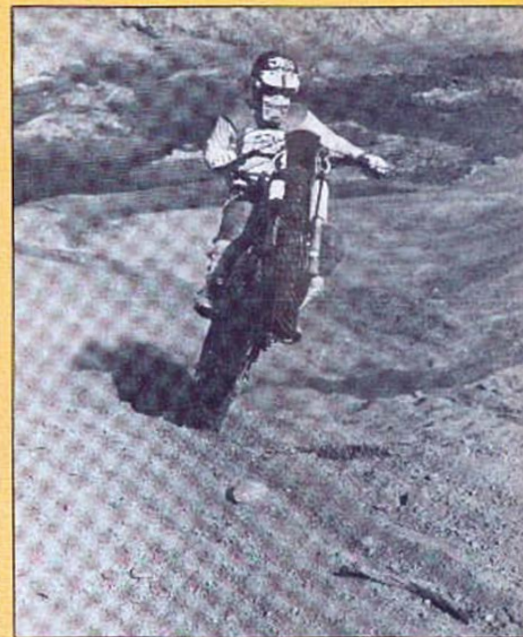
This is how far the fork legs are supposed to stick up above the triple clamps. Instead of making a one piece cable guide number plate, the YZ has a trick little strap-on guide on the left leg.

or a handler with anemic power. Yamaha is trying to give you what you need, while the *works* replica manufacturers are giving you what you want.

CLIMB ON ABOARD

You will notice two things when you climb on board. You can touch the ground with both feet and the engine won't start. It never lit off with the first kick, and we never fired it up with the clutch pulled in. Give yourself every advantage when kickstarting the YZ; put it in neutral, choke it, and give it about six good swift boots.

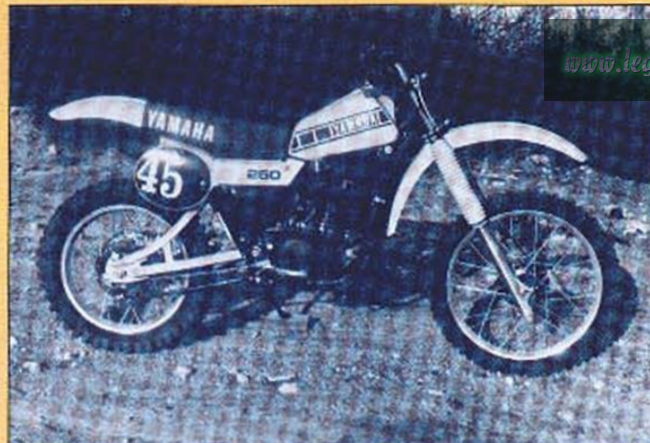
Sitting still, the rear end feels pretty nice, but a lot of that feeling goes away when you start to move. In the old *daze*, the monos wouldn't move unless three guys pushed down with gusto. Now, the mono feels really supple to the untrained hand. We didn't like the



Finally the YZ has the controls sorted out to perfection. The bars, levers and pedals are sano. Now for a new throttle!



The YZ has done a good job in the battle of FIM sidepanels. The plastic is first-rate, even the sprocket cover is plastic.



Except for the new sidepanels and airbox, the average person would be hard pressed to tell the difference between the E and F. There is a difference.

www.legends-yamaha-enduros.com



Yamaha's reed-valved, six-speed, 246cc mill is getting a little better every year. More torque and a broader spread are needed.

shock, perhaps because it's an example of everyman engineering. It's hard to mass-produce one unit that suits everyone from the feather to heavy-weight.

What you will find is that the compression damping is way too stiff over the small bumps. The little ripples will send the YZ rear end into spasms of hiccups. Being relatively bright, and possessing a Yamaha's owners manual, you can click the damping adjuster a couple of notches and back off the preload a tad to soften up that ripple bump rigidity. Disaster! Now the mono bottoms so badly over jumps and in depressions that you have compressed three vertebrae. Back to the manual, you discover that the solution to the bottoming problem is to click the damping adjustment the other way and up the preload a tad. Zero!

The solution is a \$150 mono surgery from the good folks at White Brothers, Al Baker or Luft. A reservoir and dual rate spring will bring it up to snuff.

The front forks come with Yamaha oil in them and the standard spring. All in

all, they're a good set of 38mm forks. We think that you'll like them. They give in excess of 10 inches of travel, and depending on your style and weight, might be perfect for you as they come.

For us, we gave the forks a quick fix that pleased most of our riders. We switched the stock fork oil to a light five weight oil in the recommended quantity, and took the standard spring and spacer out. We replaced the spring with the Yamaha accessory soft spring (available from your local dealer) and added ten pounds of air.

The transmission worked better this year than last, but still was reluctant to accept a full power shift. Thanks to a new lighter-feeling clutch (with three less plates) the hot set-up for Yamaha riders is to two-finger the clutch in any questionable situations. The power bend levers make this an easy action, and if you're a YZ rider by trade, it would serve you well to spend a couple practice sessions learning to feather the power in.

Remember, the engine is torquier than last year, but not a torquer! In slow



Marty Smith



FACTORY RIDER.

"When riding off-road, I make sure my motorcycle is equipped with a muffler and spark arrester."

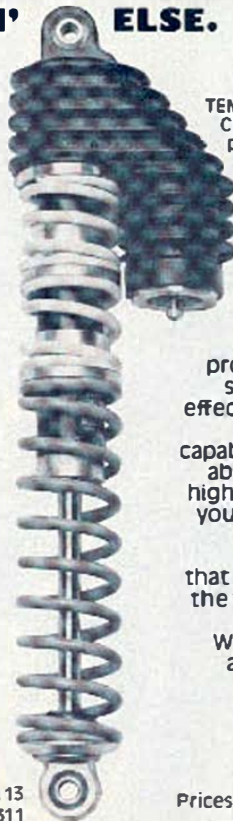


www.legends-yamaha-enduros.com

WORKS WORK LIKE NOTHIN' ELSE.

1 ADJUSTABLE COMPOUNDED DUAL OR TRIPLE RATE SPRINGS. Only WORKS offers a "crossover" spacer system that allows you to select the exact point of transfer from one spring rate to the next throughout the full stroke of the shock. And, yes, we use springs, because air, being temperature sensitive, has not, cannot and will never perform as well as a spring.

3 THE WORKS PERFORMANCE PROGRESSIVE DAMPING SYSTEM. Most other shocks use a wave-washer valving principal. We use progressive valving. Damping adjustability is infinite because in each piston there is a separate orifice or spring loaded ball check valve for each function: rebound, low, medium & high speed. Selective damping changes are affected by varying the size of holes and/or spring pressure.



2 ADJUSTABLE PRESSURE NITROGEN BLADDER SYSTEM. Because the WORKS SUPERCROSSER uses a large diameter piston with high volume valve capacity, oil pressure remains low. The flow of oil between body and reservoir can then be left unmeasured, so that the nitrogen bladder can be pressure adjusted to effect the damping characteristics of the piston.

Only the WORKS SUPERCROSSER gives you progressive damping with 3 separate adjustments that effect damping. This gives you almost infinite tuning capabilities to adapt the shock absorber's low, medium and high speed damping cycles to your specific motorcycle and riding requirements. You get a shock absorber that works. At any speed. Over the widest possible variety of terrain. Perfectly. Write or call for our catalog and ordering information.

\$259.95

Suggested Retail

Triple Rate \$40 Extra

Lengths 13 1/4 in. to 18 1/2 in.
Prices and specifications subject to change without notice.

...our only competition is us.

YAMAHA YZ250F

curves and bumpy exits the clutch will be your only chance to get a clean drive against your opponents.

LITTLE STUFF

The brakes are very good. The rear is a full floater this year. The rear brake pedal is tee-rick. The quality of the cables is very good. The rear is rod-activated. We prefer this method because it's direct, secure and solid.

We liked the bend of the bars, although they were destroyed in a crash. The grips slipped off our bike the first day. We re-taped and wired them back on. We suggest you check yours out immediately.

The decals fell off before the grips did. We've had rotten luck with YZ tank decals. It's mated to a growing dislike of plastic gas tanks. Give us aluminum



For safety, we mount our throttle with the cable aiming backwards. You should, too.



The fork boots are massive, but if you put a kit in the forks they will be too short. The pipe sticks out too much and cracks on the upper mount.



Performance Products
20970 Knapp Street, Dept. 13
Chatsworth, California 91311
213-998-1977

tanks with good decals.

The thickness of the plastic has been upgraded this year and hopefully will eliminate the front fender sag. The FIM sidepanels look good. The separate, plastic aircleaner panel could benefit by being attached with less screws. It takes twice as long to get the cover off than it should.

The monoshock design makes air cleaner placement a problem. After many years of poor filter engineering, Yamaha has refined an essentially horrid filter position to the point that it works. The filter itself would benefit from a change. Perhaps they could borrow a JT Racing Phase Two filter from Bob, Rick, Rex or Pierre to see how a filter should be designed. The stock filter is a dual-layer job, but one of the layers looks like Red Buttons' toupee.

The round swingarm pad, which keeps the chain from sawing the swingarm pivot in half, is easily replaceable this year without having to remove the complete arm like last year. The swingarm has gotten all new braces and supports.

The exhaust pipe sticks out so far that it's an invitation to destroy it. How do we know? We destroyed ours.

Watch the weld on the upper pipe bracket (under the gas tank) as it has a tendency to crack across the main cone of the pipe. The pipe itself has a longer headpipe and fatter center section to help the engine develop a stronger mid-range. We think that the pipe on your bike will either crack or be smashed before the six month mark.

The foam in the seat is much firmer than last year. The tires were IRC's that seemed to be pretty middle-of-the-road. The handling and turning of the YZ was good. Better rubber would make it even better.

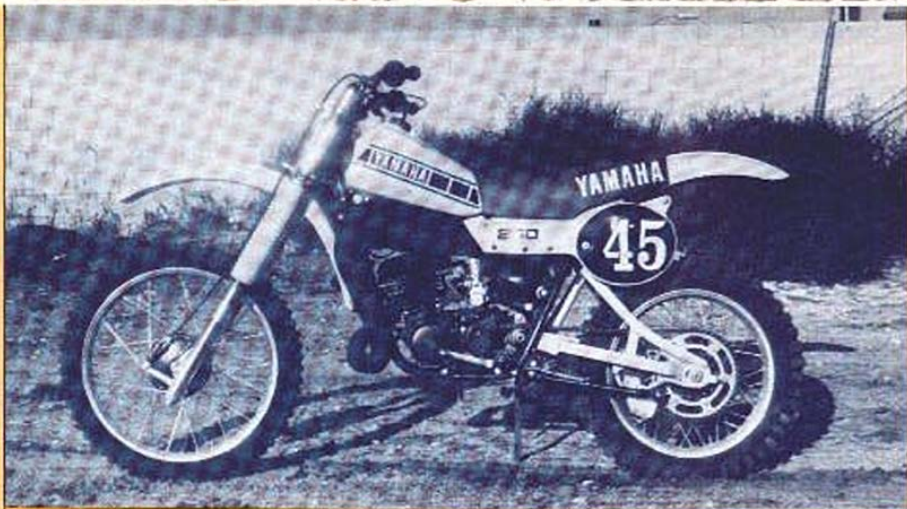
The front number plate is still the warped frisbee of the past. Seems funny that they would go to the trouble of putting trick-molded FIM's on the back and then strap that plate to the front. It may be an inferior number plate, but it's mounted solidly. The left fork leg has a form-fitting molded cable guard.

The bike weighs only two pounds less than last year, which is the weight savings of the aluminum monoshock over last year's steel one.

THE EVENING WRAP-UP

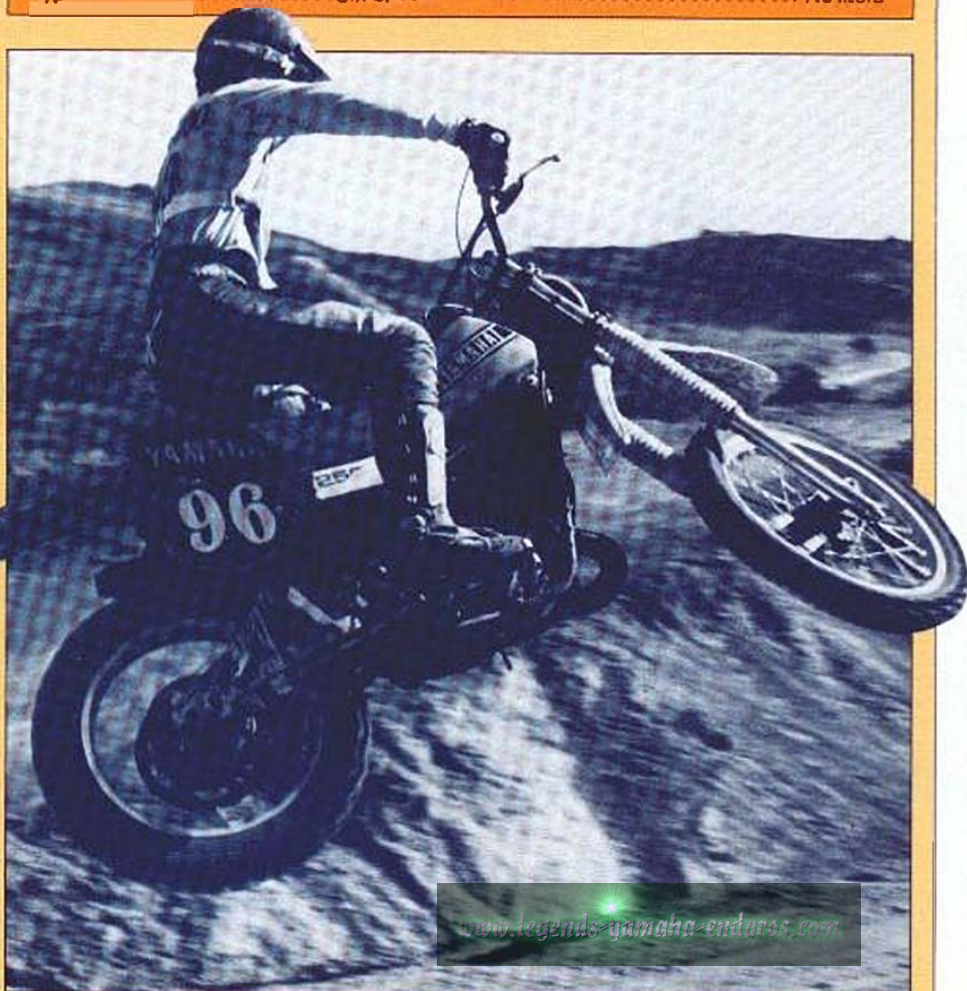
It's going to set you back \$1829 smackers, unless you get a deal. You should aim for about an additional \$160 in improvements (shock and air cleaner) and you'll have a bike that won't thrust you too rapidly into the new generation of machinery.

With the YZ250F, you'll get no surprises. It's a good, solid performing package with a good record of trouble-free wins.



SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE:	Yamaha	Ratios:	1-2.142, 2-1.812, 3-1.444,
MODEL:	YZ250 F	Drive Chain:	4-1.200, 5-1.0, 6-0.875
COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE:	Japan	SUSPENSION:	
RETAIL PRICE:	\$1829	Front:	Keyaba air-spring
ENGINE:		Rear:	Monoshock
Type: Piston port, two stroke, reed valve		DIMENSIONS:	
Bore & Stroke:	70mm x 64mm	Wheelbase:	1450mm
Displacement:	246cc	Ground clearance:	320mm
Carburetion:	Mikuni VM38 SS	Seat height:	930mm
Ignition:	CDI	Track weight:	105 kg.
Lubrication:	Pre-mix	CAPACITIES:	
Air Filter:	Dual oiled foam	Fuel:	7.6 liters
TRANSMISSION:			
Type:	Six-speed		



www.legends-yamaha-enduro.com

The suspenders are good. A reservoir must be in the future. If it isn't in Yamaha, it is in yours.