

Yamaha's Surpri-zing



125MX

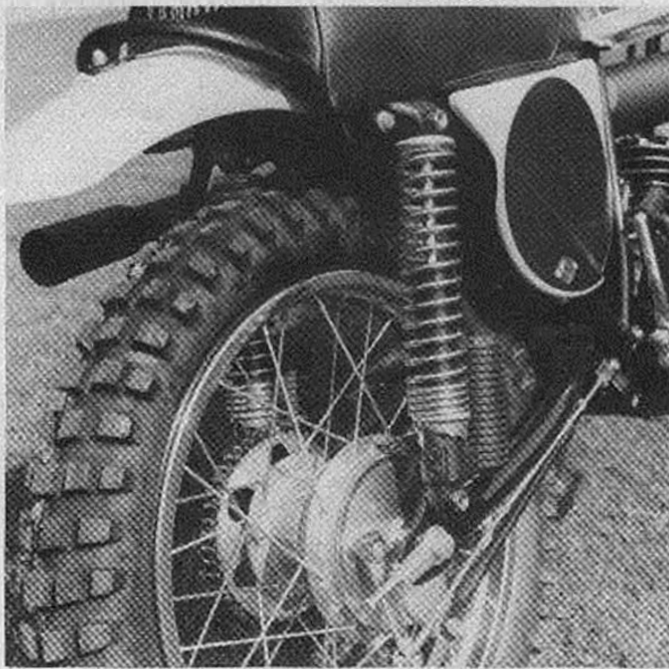
Not as fast as
the YZ, but
much easier
to ride

Let's suppose for the moment that you haven't been to a motocross track in over a year. Your excuse being a rather large, heavy chunk of plaster that hitched a ride with your body, courtesy of the talents displayed at the last Easter Sunday Grand Prix. This white, heavily autographed award was awarded you for fantastic feats during that gigantic downhill jump. You got a little out of shape, took a ride in a white and red

station wagon, and spent many hours building model cars and filling in tricky words to crossword puzzles.

But now everything's all healed up, the old helmet and leathers have been resurrected and you're ready to go out and take on the troops. All the time you were at home watching daytime TV, you were secretly going over the old track in your mind. Turn by turn it comes back to you, remembering where and how you

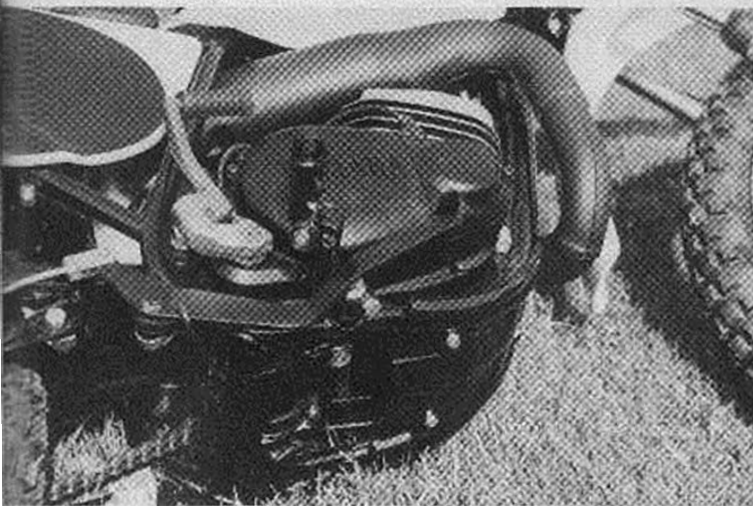
Thermal Flow shocks, proportionally smaller versions of those found on the bigger Yamahas, actually worked well in the rough.



blew off all those riders on your 1971 125 Yamaha. Now you're going to re-earn your position at the top of the results page in the weekly newspaper. But, something seems drastically wrong.

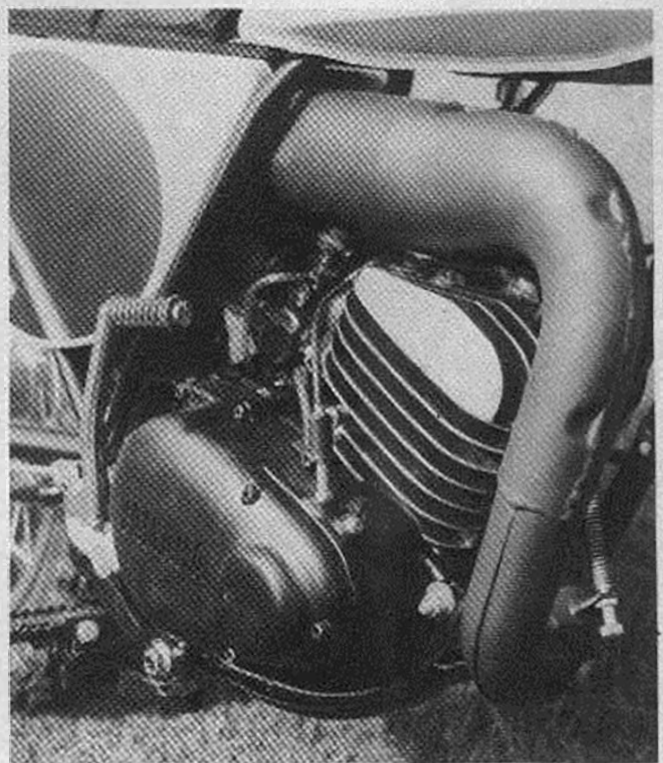
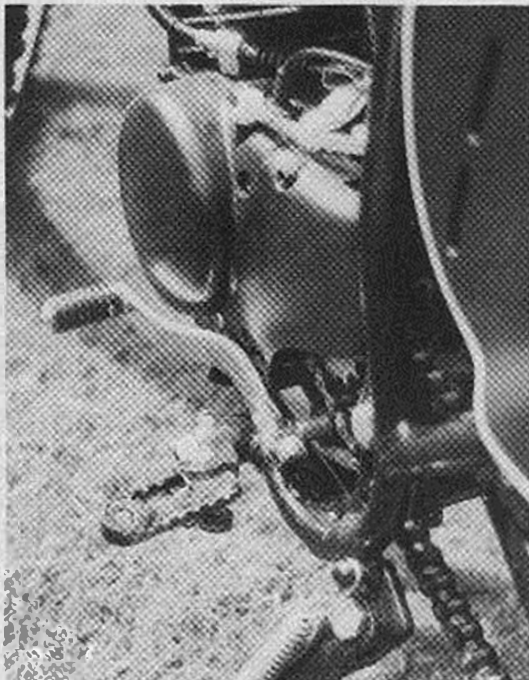
There appear to be many new motorcycles out on the track, many that you've never seen before. No matter. You can still beat them all with your inborn talent and natural abilities. Or so you think. Those Honda machines that you've been hearing so much about are swarming all about, diving under, powering above and occasionally through your line in the corners. A new Yamaha, yellow and vastly improved, comes flying by. Too fast for you to notice the changes, but you know there's something up the little Y's sleeve 'cause it's tracking really smooth. A screaming 125 Pursang spews its share of mother earth all over your Carreras. Face it buddy, you're out of touch with the motocross world.

Back home, after being trounced by almost everyone, the old motocrosser



Underside view of the Yamaha 125 shows the skid plate that helps keep you out of your dealer's service department after a rocky ride.

The footpegs finally give you something to grab onto.



ABOVE— Yamaha's new frame design on the 125 routes the pipe through the chassis, just like on its bigger brothers.

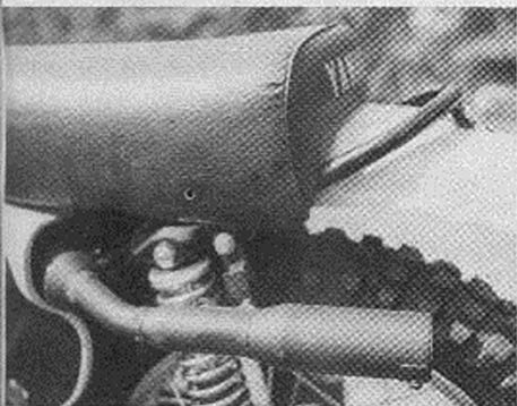
goes up for sale. Some kid three blocks away hears about your plight, buys the bike and sets you free on the '74 motocross market. A trip down the road to your Yamaha dealer (who remembered you by sending a get well card along with two overdue payment notices) and you immediately head for the new yellow 125 MXer that won your three motos last Sunday. An empty wallet, a free T-shirt, and, gobs of paperwork later, you have the new bike. All shiny, trick parts, and still ignorant of the treatment you will subject it to out on a track. Once home, you have the customary "come see my new bike" get-together with a few friends, and

you're all set. A new Jofa in the duffel bag, some oil in the Autolube injection system, some gas in the tank and you're raring to go.

Getting to the track seems to take forever. Unload the bike and fumble with the gear. Jump on the bike, adjust the new Toasted Almond gloves that are two sizes too small and then give the kickstarter a prod. Nothing. Oh well, it's new, isn't it? One more kick. Still zilch. On the third kick things are starting to happen. Strangely the machine doesn't make half as much noise as your old mount. Boy, these Japanese folks sure have come a long way since the disposable silencer. It sits there quietly and idles, stretching its shifting paws and rubbing its clutch plates.

Give it a second, kick it into gear and take off towards the track entrance. You'll get about two feet and it'll die. It's a cold-blooded bike; you've got to give it a few minutes to warm itself up. After all, it's still new.

The bike is wide awake and bushy tailed now, and as you head towards the starting line you experiment with a few things. Yup, it has five gears, just like your old Yammie. And you can actually find neutral when you want it. Quite an improvement over your old bike that came equipped with the hunt and swear method. Getting it up to the gate, you plunk the new toy into first gear, set up for the start, wick up the revs and drop the hammer. The bike explodes out of the hole, spewing some dirt, screaming its little heart out and strangely enough, traveling ground faster than you had expected. A quick shift to second maintains the natural high. Just to give

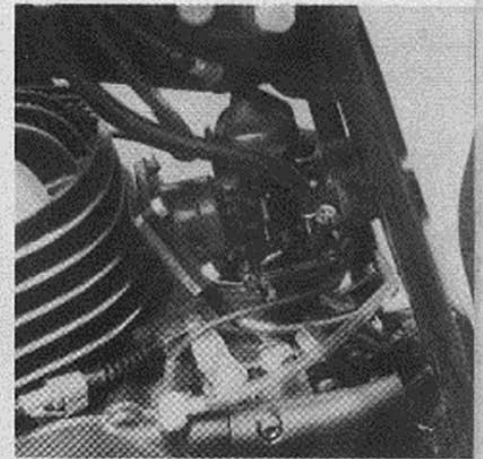


On the end of the exhaust pipe lies the U.S. Forest approved spark arrester.



Both brakes on the machine performed well. Front suspension was good, but needed a little extra spring tension for rough terrain.

The Mikuni carbureted perfectly. Both starting and throttle response were smart in operation.



the old ego a little boost, a tug on the handlebars seems appropriate. The bike lofts its front end slowly and surely as you sashay down the starting grid. Boy, what a blast. Just gotta try that again!

Turn around real quick, line up behind the starting gate again, but this time stick the bike in second gear. Wick it up again, release the left-hand lever as though it were the wrong end of the coat hanger at a weenie roast, and the bike sputters out of the hole and struggles back on the pipe as it passes its way over the starting gate. Oh well, first gear it is. At least now you know how to get the hole shot on the troops come next Sunday. But those corners are important too.

Gliding down the straightaway you approach the first turn, a sharp but smooth left-hander. Grit your teeth, give it the old hairy eyeball, and take a charge. Just before you hit the berm, drop the anchors. WOW, those brakes are too much! Slide down off the gas cap, slither your way through the turn, tell yourself that it's been a long time since you've been on a really competitive bike and try it again. This time wait till the last moment to hit the brakes. The rear brake isn't as touchy as the ones you read about on the bore Yanimies. This time, grab the binders, kick down a couple of gears, pitch the bike sideways, and screw it on. If you kept it on the pipe, the Yamaha grabs a bite and sends you off into the next straightaway. Boy, you could really learn to enjoy this!

Accelerating down the straightaway you'll notice that you can't grab the proverbial handful and shift your way to a factory sponsorship. The 125 needs a little help getting from one ratio to the next mathematical plateau. Backing off



The little Yamaha has lost much weight with this year's changes, making it much more maneuverable than in the past.

the throttle (which it pains your heart to do), is the best way to encourage the Yammie to engage the next cog. It won't shift under full power, darn it. Maybe some designer abroad is working on this little hang-up right now. Sure hope so. But until it becomes a reality, you're going to have to adapt. Downshifting is no problem however. Do it like Brad Lackey: jump on that funny little bar sticking out of the left side case, and Bingo!

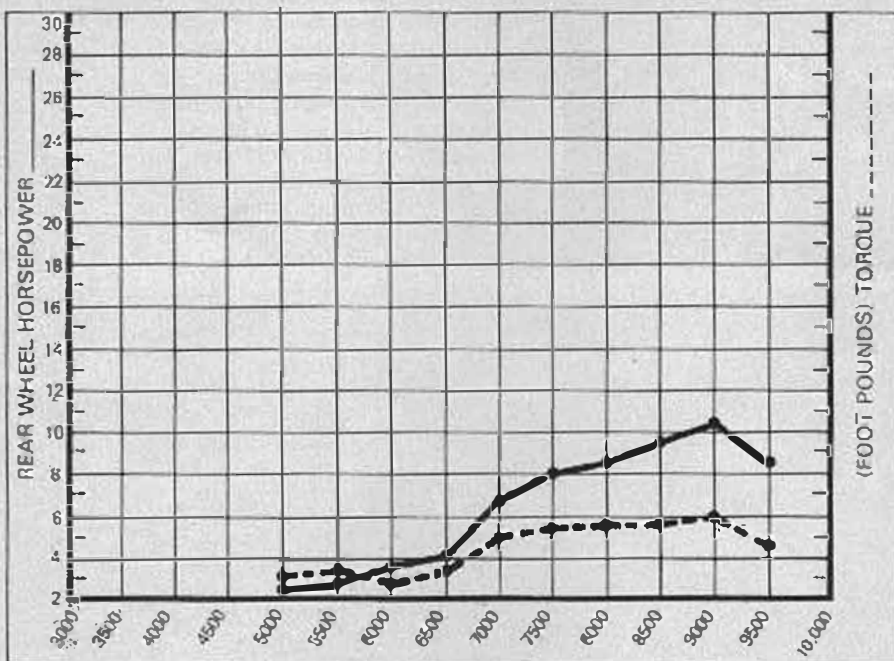
Towards the end of the straightaway, about ten feet from the corner, is a long series of braking bumps and ruts. Kick the bike down a gear, hit the binders, and start your journey through the potholes. About halfway through you notice something very wrong. For one thing, your Jofa is now up over your eyes. Your helmet strap is digging into your neck, and you can envision what it was like to visit the gallows. Those Thermal Flow shocks, a shrunken version of those found on the bigger machines, don't want to cooperate in the truly rough terrain. They agree with you for the first five feet or so, after which they might decide not to work at all. The shocks weren't built strong enough to take a constant beating, thus your impression of

Pierre Karsmakers goes down the tubes. The shocks don't rebound as quickly as they should, excuse enough to test the softness of your new Yamaha's seat. Fortunately, someone in the "seat cushion" department has been very generous.

Now you come upon your favorite part of the track, the big jump where you had your previous painful and time-consuming experience. The guy in front of you, on a 360, just took off, his rear wheel hitting a small bump which sent the bike's back end into a large arc. The bike finally lands in a semi-controlled manner. Recalling your tricky maneuver of 12 moons past, you head dead straight at the jump. Rushing the tranny through as many gears as you can squeeze before you go into space you hit the jump, head towards the sky, and wait. The little 125 is much lighter than the machine you just



The 125 corners exceptionally well. With more sophisticated tires it could be even better.



YAMAHA 125 MX

Suggested Retail Price: \$708

ENGINE

Engine type	2-S, piston-porr, sgl
Bore and stroke, mm	58x50
Displacement, cc	123
Horsepower/rpm (claimed)	N/A
Torque/rpm (claimed)	11.5 ft.lb./9000
Compression ratio	8:1
Air filtration	wet foam
Carburetor	28mm Mikuni
Lubrication	Autolube
Ignition	flywheel-magneto

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission	5-spd, constant mesh
Clutch type	wet, multi-disc
Primary drive	gears, helical
Final drive ratio	15/47 1:3.133

CHASSIS

Chassis type	double cradle
Overall length	78.7
Seat height	31.7
Peg height	11.0
Ground clearance	9.8
Wheelbase	52.4
Weight as tested	192
FR/RR wt. bias	89/103
Tires, front	2.75-21
rear	3.50-18

unloaded... er... sold and as such it climbs like a Lear Jet.

Expecting all kinds of nasty things to happen to you, you're surprised when the machine touches down softly and doesn't jar your spine loose. Those shocks that gave you headaches when you braked through the rough are really working now.

A couple of more laps like this one and you get the feeling that anyone can become an expert. You've got a mount that will work with you, a powerband that agrees with your transmission, and brakes that allow you to stop when it's necessary. Why heck, maybe you do have a chance at winning this week's class.

Max Pts.	NUMERICAL EVALUATION	
10	Power	8
10	Powerband	7
10	Acceleration	8
	(5) Ratios	5
10	Transmission	
	(5) Operation	4
	(5) Front	4
10	Suspension	
	(5) Rear	3
	(5) Front	5
10	Brakes	
	(5) Rear	5
10	General Handling	8
30	Miscellaneous	
	(5) Starting	5
	(5) Rider Comfort	4
	(5) Quality of Craftsmanship	4
	(5) Riding Maneuverability	4
	(5) Tires	3
	(5) Noise Level	5
100 pts.	Overall rating	pts. 82