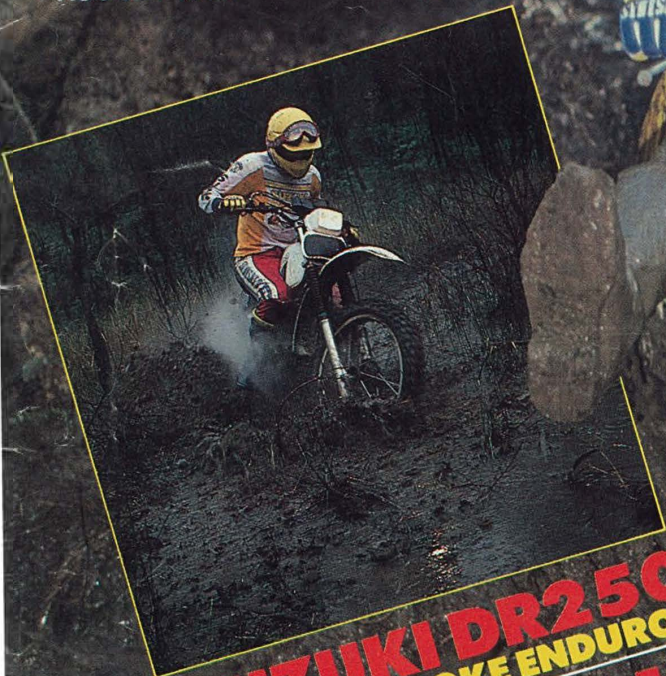


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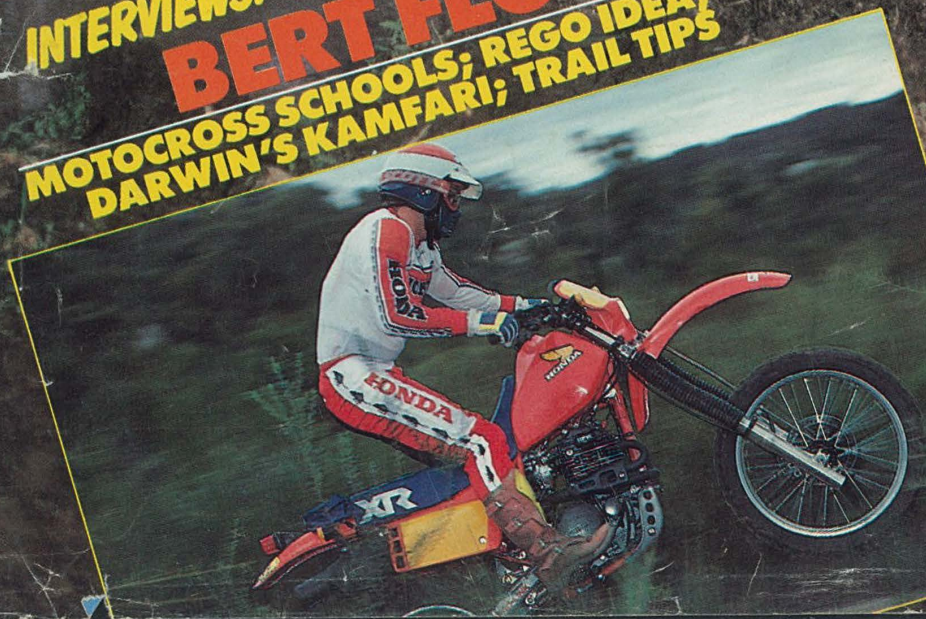
YAMAHA IT250K
AS GOOD AS
BIG BROTHER?



SUZUKI DR250
BEST 250 FOUR-STROKE ENDURO?

INTERVIEWS: **JIM ELLIS**
BERT FLOOD

MOTOCROSS SCHOOLS; REGO IDEA;
DARWIN'S KAMFARI; TRAIL TIPS



**HONDA
XR500**
BEST 500
FOUR-STROKE
ENDURO?

YAMAHA IT250K

Lighter than the 490, more power than the 175

There are two schools of thought on competition dirt bikes. One says that a 250 is the perfect combination of size and power, the other says that a 250 is the worst of both worlds; almost as heavy as an open class bike and not much more power than a 175/200. As far as Yamaha's latest IT range goes, the 250 would seem to support the latter theory.



Don't get us wrong. Before we say anything else we want to make sure you all realise that we consider the IT250 to be a fine enduro bike. It's just that for some reason it left us disappointed when we expected it to be everything the IT490 was and maybe more.

What we plan to do with this test then, is try to pinpoint what that "some reason" is. Further complicating matters is the fact that our test bike was not standard.

Due to some problems, Yamaha hadn't been able to put one on demo and we had to chase around. We got onto two. Our test bike and a stock standard one. The standard bike had had a coil failure and a replacement was not immediately

available so what we ended up with was an IT250 with Boyeson reeds, an Answer alloy muffler and Pirelli tyres instead of the standard IRCs. Other minor changes included the removal of the airbox lid for better breathing at the expense of some waterproofing, different grips, a different tail-light (the standard tail-light/number plate bracket broke just like the one on our 490 test bike). Slightly less than the recommended amount of fork oil (Bel-Ray, 10ml less than standard) had been put into the forks to try to get them working to the owner's satisfaction.

He wasn't completely happy with them but figured some of the problems may have been due to the rear end making life even harder. Relatively extreme adjustments to the

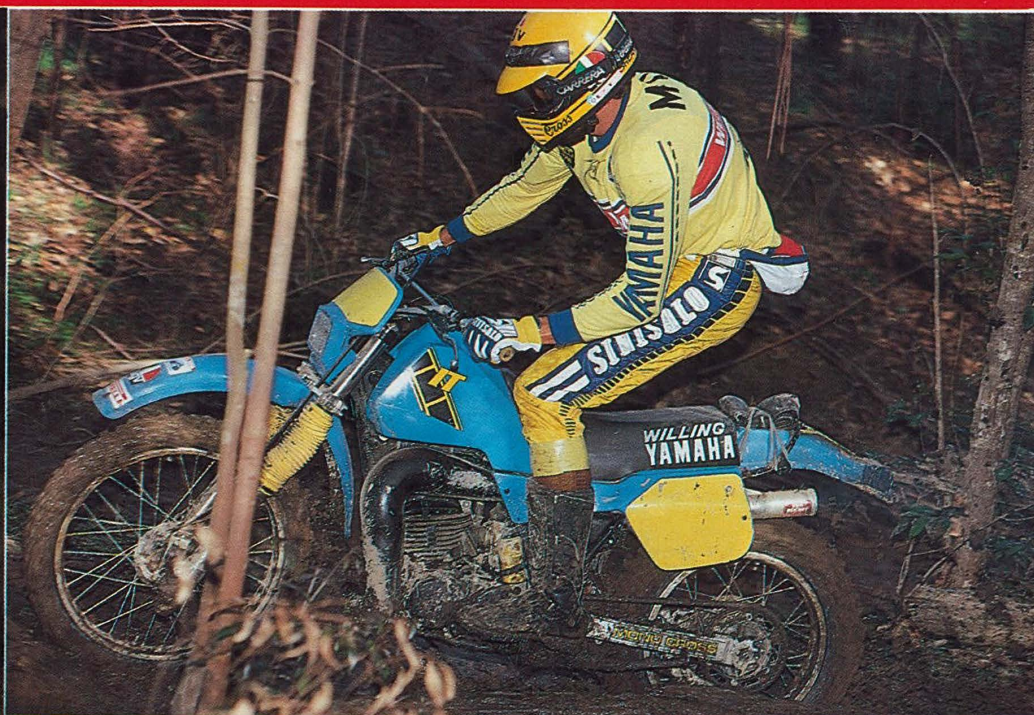
rear suspension hadn't cured that area. The soft spring that had come with the bike was within about 5mm of being wound to full preload and the rebound damping was three clicks from the heaviest setting. Unfortunately the ITs don't have the compression and rebound damping of the YZ motocrossers.

Another fairly radical change was the gearing. The IT's owner is a fanatic for high gearing and we wouldn't recommend everyone follows his example and runs 14/46 gearing instead of the standard 13/52. On the other hand though, the gearing wasn't unmanageable. We were surprised at how well the motor, which at first seems rather peaky, handled it. I guess the Boyesons didn't do any harm helping

the motor keep pulling at low revs. The only jetting change was to go one leaner on the needle position. All these alterations were topped off with a slightly higher set of bars which the owner fitted merely as a personal preference.

MOTOR

Considering the opposition, we don't think either of Yamaha's 250 competition dirt bike motors are anything to write home about this year, but on the other hand the IT motor is not as unco-operative as you first think. What initially feels a lot like a motocross type motor (remember, our test bike was fitted with Boyeson reeds) turns out to pull surprisingly well (remember



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also the ultra high gearing). It is a considerable improvement over the previous model which seemed to be more of a motocross motor which tried, through a few relatively simple modifications, to work in the bush. It seemed to promise something in the way of low end power to pull you out of awkward situations but was reluctant to deliver the goods when it came to the crunch.

From what we can remember of the earlier model IT250, this latest motor still has that same motocross feel to it. The big difference is that the off-peak power is now real instead of make-believe. Yamaha have achieved this by redesigning the motor along more conventional enduro guidelines. Bore and stroke has gone from 70 x 64 to a square 68mm x 68mm. Naturally the porting has been changed to suit the new configuration and a redesigned reed valve also does its bit along with a new pipe, in a new engine package which aims to give more power everywhere. Even the gear ratios have been altered slightly in the interests of giving the IT250 a motor which works in an enduro.

And it does work. Certainly an improvement over the previous model. Most people we spoke to

about their new IT250s feel the power is improved everywhere. Strong and crisp, more forgiving at lower revs and even seems to rev out better up top. If you liked last year's IT250 you'll love this new K model.

SUSPENSION AND HANDLING

It's the same old story with the IT suspension. The forks work pretty well and the shocks need something doing to them. After thinking about it we'd have to say we don't agree completely with the way the owner of our test bike had the suspension set up. Just like we said in the IT490 test, we figure the ideal setup would be slightly less compression damping in the forks without reducing the rebound damping. All up though, the forks work well.

If we were planning to race the IT250 all season we'd just fiddle with oil weights to get the forks working as well as possible and just learn to live with what we feel is their less than perfect performance on very small bumps. What do very small bumps matter when the forks handle everything else so well? It just seems with the IT that the failure of the forks to react quickly to very small bumps is a contributing factor in the cornering inconsistency of what is generally an excellent turning bike.

As for the rear suspension, there

are several options. You can leave it as it is and just play with the spring rate and the rebound damping adjustment (generally, we have found a soft spring with a lot of preload won't work as well as a heavy spring with very little preload). You can spend a whole heap of money on a White Power or Ohlins shock; you could even spend a whole lot of money on a YZ shock which would give you the option of both damping and rebound adjustment; but we figure best of all you get the standard shock "fixed". This will give you the most performance increase per dollar. We figure you'd have to be pretty good or pretty fussy to want the performance edge offered by an expensive European shock.

Naturally the suspension affects the handling but that's not half the story. The 250 didn't seem to steer as well as the 490 (possibly partly to do with the way the front suspension was set up as we mentioned earlier), it didn't turn as well and it generally had you more out of shape and less confident than the 490. We're sure the motor has something to do with the way the bike behaved. The 490 was a master of beautifully controlled bulk horsepower where our test 250 was just another 250 in the power department. We didn't fully realise it at the time but you could slide the rear of the 490 around with the greatest of ease on any surface. The power of the 250, despite the

improvements, is more off or on and getting the bike through the turns shows up more problems.

The throttle requires a real big turn to get from fully closed to fully open. It sounds ridiculous but it is a big problem. Most of the time you are not getting the throttle fully open. Having all the power when you want it must surely make cornering more predictable. Perhaps we had the same problem with the 490 and never realised it. Three-quarter power might have been just enough for us on the open class bike.

Another big problem is that sonavabitch safety seat that everyone wanks on about. We don't even like it on the YZ Yamahas and the IT version is fifty times worse. It forces you to sit in the one spot whether you like it or not and it slopes up so steeply on the big wide tank that even if you do make the supreme effort to lift yourself up and forward, the first application of power will plonk you straight back down into that not-so-good-for-cornering position and have you battling the ploughing sideways/wheelieing front end.

Continued over

YAMAHA IT250

Test Bike: Courtesy of Willing Yamaha, Pacific Highway, Wyong.
Phone: (043) 532267
Price: \$2492 on road

ENGINE

Engine.....2-stroke piston-reed valve single
Capacity.....246cc
Bore x Stroke.....68.0 x 68.0mm
Compression Ratio.....7.7:1
Carburettor.....Mikuni
Lubrication.....Premix
Ignition.....CDI
Transmission.....6-speed

FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Frame.....Semi double cradle
Suspension
Front.....Telescopic fork
Rear.....Monocross
Brakes.....Single leading shoe drum brakes
Lighting.....Headlight, taillight, stop-light, blinkers, with a battery in the system
Compliance.....Yes, fully road registerable
Horn.....Yes, feeble beeper
Noise level.....If kept standard, acceptable
Toolkit.....Usual tools inside a well designed toolkit behind the seat

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase.....1485 mm
Ground clearance.....340 mm
Overall length.....2190 mm
Overall width.....870 mm
Overall height.....1300 mm
Dry weight.....104 kg
Fuel tank capacity.....13.5 litres
Tyres:
Front.....3.00 x 21
Rear.....140/190 x 18



YAMAHA IT250K

The owner of our test bike had tried a YZ tank and seat which allowed him to move a whole lot further forward. He said the IT became a different bike completely. We'd suggest it as a top priority modification if it wasn't for the lack of mileage from the reduced fuel capacity, and it if wasn't so expensive.

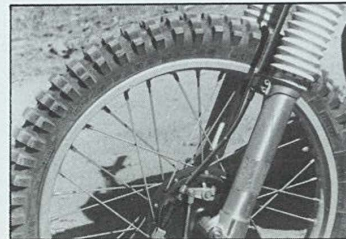
That's about it. After our delight with the IT490 we were disappointed with the way the 250 handled generally. To be honest we don't really know why the 250 doesn't work as well. It can't all be in the motor and it wasn't a suspension problem either. Even tight turns on a smooth surface were a bigger problem than they ever seemed on the 490.

BITS AND PIECES

What can you say about bits and pieces on an IT Yamaha? They've

got everything and most of it works well. Even enthusiastic riders new to the enduro scene will be able to charge through two day enduros without worrying about frustratingly stupid detailing problems causing them any trouble. From the quick detach wheels and headlight to the rubber strapped-on intake canister, the bike works.

Sure, we slagged the safety seat, but maybe the next rider can put up with it. We think the kickstart lever is way too long but it's not going to put you out of the event. Change the air filter element for a Uni Filter though, because apparently the foam falls to bits. We always recommend getting work done on the shock but that hasn't stopped riders winning events on ITs with standard suspension ever since they were first introduced. There's so much to like about IT Yamahas and this bike is no different. Good brakes, controls, cables, and adjustable, quick-change folding everything. When it comes to bits and pieces, the IT250 has got 'em all. No messing around. Just buy one and ride it. New tyres are the only real must.



LEFT
Up front are a good set of forks. Not as responsive to little bumps as we'd like, the way our test bike was set up (see test), but good. The front guard is excellent, the headlight detach system is the best in the world, and Yamaha's twin leading shoe front brake is great once you use it a couple of times.

SUMMARY

As we've already mentioned (and mentioned, and mentioned) we were disappointed in the IT250 after riding its bigger brother, the IT490. We are at a loss to understand why, but we have at least had some reassurance from other IT riders who, like us, consider the IT250 to be the least exciting of the latest Yamaha enduro bikes. Where the new 490 seemed to be a big step forward for this immensely popular range of enduro bikes, the 250, though undoubtedly improved, still reminds us of past ITs we have criticized for so long.

As with all ITs, the bike is extremely well finished and will

serve its owner well but there are a few problems that will surface as you push it harder; in a tight cross-country special test, for example. To make it worse, these problems seem inconsistent. As one IT250K owner put it: "It seems perfect for practising on a course you know, where you are prepared for the obstacles, but if you suddenly come onto something unexpected you're never sure what's going to happen. You never get really confident."

That sums up our feelings exactly. Bear in mind that the rider who made these comments was

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ABOVE
Our test bike had Pirellis fitted in place of the stock tyres, a big improvement. We feel there are other tyres around which would have done an even better job (we tried a Metzeler on the front of our 490 and it did wonders). The rear brake was excellent,

the rear guard let mud fling over onto the riders back (believe it ...), the stock tail-light can be broken (it's for rego purposes, remember), and we've heard that owners tend to replace the stock silencer for racing. For trail use, the stock silencer is good.



ABOVE
Our suspicions are that the 250cc engine doesn't bring out the best in the bike. But the K model is far superior to the J, which was far superior to the H. The H must have been pretty suss. But the K pulls surprisingly well at the bottom, and has plenty of go in the top end. The kickstart lever is too long and awkward, you need to remove the boost bottle to get the plug out, and you have to take great care not to bend the pipe on a rock or log.



ABOVE
The rear suspension is what Yamaha should have done years ago: it has a decently low centre of gravity that allows a rider to corner quickly and safely. The shock isn't as refined as a YZ shock, but it's still good. All it needs is for an owner to give it to a Yamaha specialist to get it overhauled. It can be done throughout the country.



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YAMAHA IT250K

Continued from page 45

referring to his experience with riding the bike as hard and as fast as he could, and in the top level of NSW competition. If you are a rider who doesn't ride on the limit all day (most riders) then you will probably find the IT250 to be near perfect.

But in case this all sounds far too negative, let's get the record straight. Yamaha's K Model IT250 has come a long way from the past. The new rear suspension design, like other Yamahas in their racing stable, has done a lot for the handling of the bike: cornering is now far better and overall rear end behaviour is a lot more predictable. Steering, too, is a lot more refined over previous models, and as we said, this year's engine makes a serious and pretty successful attempt to do what a 250cc enduro engine should do.

What else is in the IT's direct line of fire? First would have to be Kawasaki's brilliant new KDX250: it's about the same price and it goes out and does the 250cc enduro job with supreme ease. Although we feel that the IT's suspension is superior (as suspension, the up-and-down stuff, in-and-out, you know) and that the IT has a slightly more together detailing package for serious dirt riders (i.e., folding levers and whatnot), you can get a KDX through the bush faster, more safely and with greater predictability. The KDX is a superior performer, for sure.

Of the rest you have bikes like Husqvarnas, KTMs and Maicos. All of these offer a performance edge over the IT, but aren't even in the hunt for price and detailing (we aren't even going to count four-strokes).

So there you have it. Value for money, and near perfect.



SPEND MORE MONEY

As with the IT490 test, we figured it's only fair to let you know the best ways to spend your money once you get the bike. In the case of the IT250 we'd recommend different tyres (especially a different front tyre) when the standard ones start to wear out, and getting work done on the shock. First of all though, get an accessory airfilter element such as a Uni Filter. Our test bike was one of a batch of ITs with self-destruct filters, so change it straight away or keep a very close eye on it.

What sort of tyres should you fit? Well, after all these years, we're still going to suggest Metzeler. Sure, there are other great tyres available, such as the Dunlop K139 (front), but the Metzeler fitted to the front of one of our test 490s really impressed us. Most manufacturers

have different tyres to suit different terrain and although it's difficult to be precise in your selection of an enduro tyre, try to choose one which will suit the bulk of the terrain you intend riding over. The Pirelli on our test bike gave us the impression that it was not too happy with the hard terrain much of our testing was carried out on and possibly contributed to the insecure feel of the bike.

Where do you get the shock fixed? As we said in the 490 test, there are quite a few people who are equipped to modify Yamaha shocks. Your Yamaha dealer should be able to steer you in the right direction.

A big alloy bashplate/expansion chamber protector is available from Peter Delaney in Qld (ph (071) 915051) and he also builds a centrestand to suit if you're a fanatic. Alloy mufflers are another of his accessories but there're a few different choices in that department.

We don't think you really need one. Just like we don't really think you need a White Power or Ohlins shock. And we know everyone loves 'em but you'd probably be better off getting your carb jetted correctly than rushing out for a set of Boyeson reed petals. We also think it would be worthwhile getting a good welder to shorten the kick-start lever and fitting a quicker turn throttle. Guess you'll just have to live with the safety seat setup we think is so awkward, but Yamahas are pretty easy to live with all considered.

Just about the only other change we can see is to replace the right hand side handlebar lever bracket with a split perch bracket for faster changes if you break one, because the stocker is off an XT so that it has a mirror mount for rego. Like we said, IT Yamahas are complete off-road motorcycles, and there's not much needs doing.



Photography by Geoff Eldridge

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