



EXCLUSIVE

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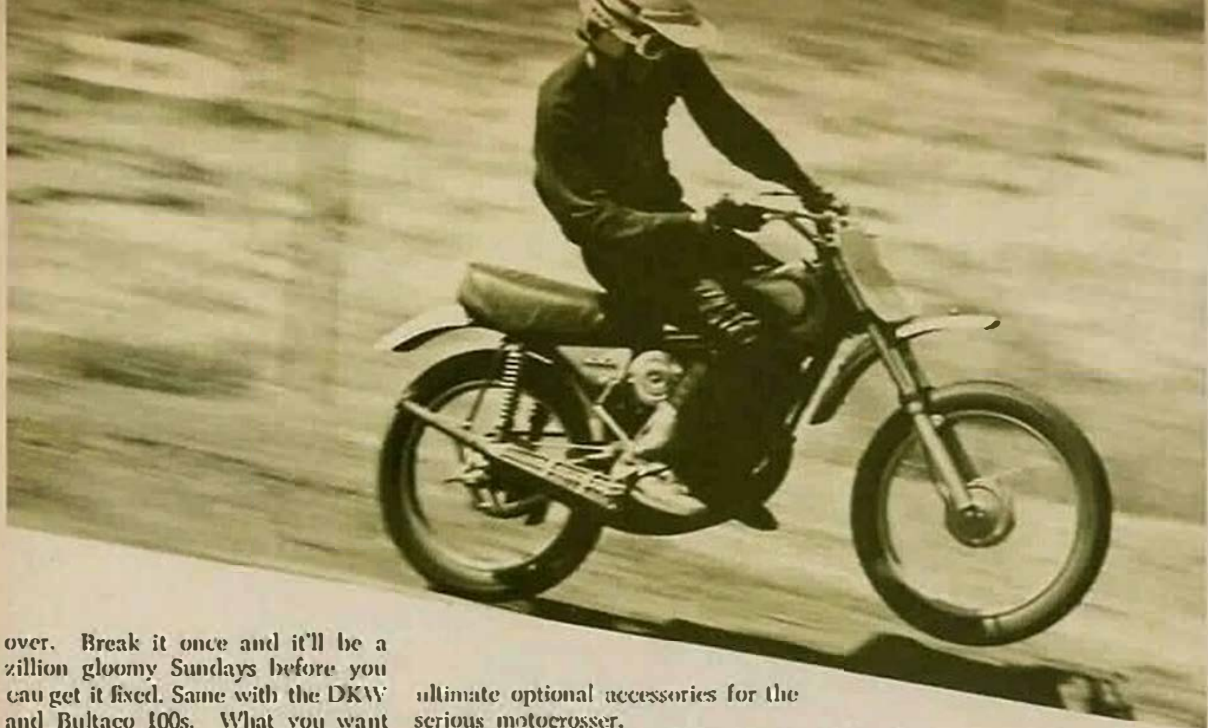
First Test: 1973 Yamaha LT-3 MX

A stripped, kitted Enduro that works in spite of itself

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

Pssst. You with the part-time job and dewy eyes. Wanna race motosickles? Hundred class, huh?

Say you want to start out on a Penton? Sorry, that's out. You'll be saving for that until the season is



over. Break it once and it'll be a zillion gloomy Sundays before you can get it fixed. Same with the DKW and Bultaco 100s. What you want is either a Hodaka Super Rat or a Yamaha LT3-MX. Sure, there are other Japanese 100s—Suzuki, Honda, Kawasaki—but they have lights and turn signals and need special kits; it will still cost you a bunch. Just the Hodie and a Yammie are ready to go, more or less.

And you just might end up with the Hodaka if you don't place an order for the Yamaha pronto. The LT3 goes fast, handles decently and is cheap to service. Just what you want. But it also sells faster than \$2 Jofas at an all-Junior meet.

Last year Yamaha called it an LT2; this year it's an LT3. Yamaha fans know that this should mean a considerable change/improvement over the previous model. Not so this time. All that's changed are the forks, the appearance, and perhaps the porting and combustion chamber. Even the frame and engine serial numbers carry an "LT2" prefix. When asked why an LT3 says LT2, Yamaha explained, "Oh, all the LT3s will have LT2 stamped on them. But they're really LT3s." Sorry we asked.

The bike feels good. Seat is plush and comfy, controls are right where various appendages are prone to poke and punch, and it's light. Look down and notice that the triple clamps are the same junk they use on the enduros, complete with mountings for tach and speedo, the

ultimate optional accessories for the serious motoerossler.

Kickstarter isn't so hot, either. Stamp at it and find out that it travels nearly to the bottom of its stroke before the ratchet grabs some metal to make the motor spin. It doesn't spin the motor very fast, either. A fine toe had to be developed in order to make it work right. After that, a classic 1-kicker.

To ride the LT3 properly is simply a matter of leaving the throttle wide open. Judicious use of duct tape here will leave the right hand free to wave at friends, scratch, or

beat off competing riders. For that matter, after the start the clutch becomes useless. Just snickety-snick through the gears, selecting the one that best suits the speed you feel works best. Tranny is typical Yamaha stuff—bullet- and idiot-proof.

It had better be. A typical moto-cross course might call for, say, 40 to 50 shifts (depending on, among other things, prevailing wind conditions) for 100s and 125s. For a 10-lap moto, this means perhaps 500 shifts and 1,500 in a day of racing.



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Don't expect to find a lot of new engineering goodies on the '73 100 MX. Most of the changes are cosmetic. Nonetheless, the bike performs well.

not counting hauling your girl around for hot dogs. And if you miss a gear going into fourth, you lose 10 positions when you have to go back to first to start all over again. The Yamaha has proved it can take this sort of tenderness.

Our test hike was delivered with rich jetting and the Autolube pumping oil into the combustion chamber like it was lubricating a drill press. After several hours of thrashing, however, actual oil use was negligible, although you never would have guessed it by the constant blue stream from the expansion chamber.

After we compensated for a bit of the richness by moving the needle to the bottom, the Yamaha ran swell, all things considered. Even with it crapping out at high and low r's, the LT3 scooted at least as fast as anything in its class. A simple but careful tuning job would leave the rider with no excuse for getting passed on the straightaway.

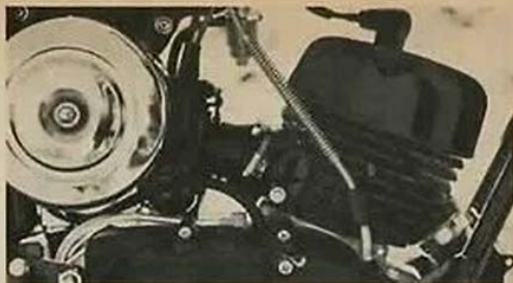
Yamaha's successful reed valve (which, according to Yamaha's PR folks, "inducts torque") certainly helps out the power band, but like any other strong 100cc 2-stroke, that band is as wide as a parachute packer's margin for error. Keep your left foot moving.

Most surprising thing about the LT3 is the way it handles. Before actually riding the thing, one test rider grumbled, "This bike ain't new. This is the same junk frame they used on last year's Enduro." After several hot laps, the same guy became a volcano of compliments for the machine's trackside manner.

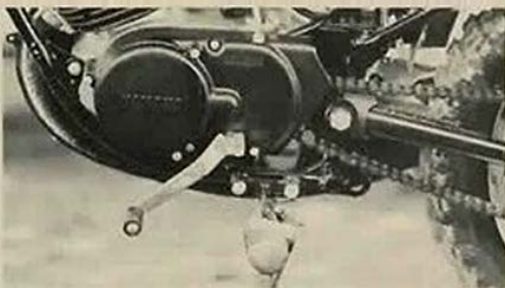
Funny thing. The frame is the same one Yamaha used last year. One reason why the machine handles so well is because of its light weight; it is easy and heaps of fun to muscle the hike in any direction you want. Also, Yamaha is using heavier forks this year that work extremely well.

Better sit down for this: The rear shocks actually can be termed "adequate."

When the rider is really zooming on very rough ground, the Yankee will indicate that it has reached its limit by "hobby-horsing." That is, the rear end will start bouncing straight up, causing the forks to do the same. Up goes the rear end, down goes the rear end, up goes the front end, down comes the front end, up goes the rear end. And so it



The power band is very peaky, despite the reed induction. Air cleaner, Autolube side cover and carb slide chamber are poorly sealed.



Footpeg design dates back 5 years to the original DT-1. Odd shifter placement doesn't hinder smooth, positive shifts. For that matter, Yamaha could use a brick for a shifter and it would still work well.





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goes until the rider backs off on the throttle just a tad. The proper attitude will return. Sideways movement through whoopdies is minimal.

Corner taking on the LT3 is like riding the monorail at Disneyland. It follows lines very well and is precise, but there is no front-end wash-out at all. Actually the overall handling is quite similar to that of a Mini-Enduro. Maybe it's just the LT3's light weight that makes it seem so.

Sharp jolts like jump landings, drop-offs, etc., are handled admirably considering that it's Yamaha suspension.

The total effect of the combination of power and handling yields a great deal of potential, providing



Factory-installed silencer tones down the high-pitched shriek. It is secured with both clamp and bracket to preclude ejection during the third moto.

that the rider can learn to make them give. Though the engine must be kept cooking, there is no serious handling deficiency to make the rider want to back off. Wide open and stir the gearbox.

Although the LT3 is a good machine for the serious young motocrosser, as a serious motocross machine it fails. It could easily be 20 pounds lighter. The air cleaner, triple clamps, footpegs and other assorted items are all chipped off an obese chunk of metal. The frame abounds with dealies to mount such necessities as buddy pegs and turn signals. The steel rims are strong, could be lighter, and have no provision for rim locks; when you get the rear tire pressure down to the point of optimum traction, you spin the tube. Brakes are the best thing since a brick wall but the hubs could be lightened. Tank is just more heavy metal. Of course, by the time you save up for an LT3 with all this neat stuff, you could have bought yourself a Penton a long time ago.

BITS AND PIECES

Kill button is a simple but handy feature; ours came with a wire 3 feet longer than necessary. Maybe that's so you can plug it into someone else's bike.

The earh slide stuck wide open after a joust in the mud. This is typical of an unwaterproofed Mika-

ni. After cleaning it, the throttle still had to be closed by hand. More grit had gathered around the throttle-oil pump cable junction.

Air cleaner is the oil-foam type. No one bothered to oil it when we got the bike. The shiny chrome element cover is a natural home for a DIRT BIKE sticker.

The fenders and tank have a spiffy new paint job to match the bigger Yamacrossers. The fenders are made of a plastic-like substance: very thin aluminum. They crack under vibration.

The entire engine is covered with racy looking black paint. Boots wear the stuff off quickly.

The footpegs are rubber. Feed them to the goats. Grips are those dumb plastic veined things that feel neat in the dealer's showroom and cause blisters out on the trail.

The slip-up gas cap had no tendency to flip open and turn the rider into a potential Buddhist monk like other Yamaha caps we have loathed.

In summary, a super motor, decent handling and bargain-basement price make the LT3 a stunning deal. It doesn't possess the hairline geometry of a European Special, but it doesn't possess an expensive appetite either. If you ordered an LT3 two weeks before you were born, you might even be able to get one, unless Yamaha has upped production for the new year.

- YAMAHA LT-3 MX**
- PRICE: Suggested retail, approx. N/A
- ENGINE TYPE: Single cylinder, reed induction, piston-port
- DISPLACEMENT: 97cc
- BORE & STROKE: 52 x 45mm
- COMPRESSION RATIO: N/A
- CARBURETOR: 26mm Mikuni
- HP @ RPM: (claimed) N/A
- CLUTCH: Wet, multi-disc
- PRIMARY DRIVE: Gear
- FINAL DRIVE: Chain
- GEAR RATIOS: 1. 2.833:1
2. 1.875:1
3. 1.368:1
4. 1.090:1
5. 0.956:1
- AIR FILTRATION: Oiled polyurethane foam
- ELECTRICAL SYSTEM: Flywheel magneto
- LUBRICATION: Autolube
- RECOMMENDED FUEL: Premium
- RECOMMENDED OIL: Not specified
- FUEL CAPACITY: 1.6 gallons
- FRAME: Double downtube, full cradle
- SUSPENSION:
Front: Hydraulically damped telescopic
Rear: Swingarm w/Yamaha shocks
- TIRES:
Front: 2.75x19 Yokohama knobby
Rear: 3.00x18 Yokohama knobby
- WHEELS: Front: Steel
Rear: Steel
- DIMENSIONS:
Wheelbase: 49.6 inches
Ground Clearance: 8.3 inches
Seat Height: N/A
Weight: (claimed) 185 pounds
(actual) 188 pounds (no gas)
On front wheel: 43.1%
On rear wheel: 56.9%
- BRAKES: Front: Internal expanding
Rear: Internal expanding
- INSTRUMENTS: None
- SILENCER: Yes
- PRIMARY KICK: Yes
- NOTE: Prices of commonly replaced parts not yet available to this motorcycle.

