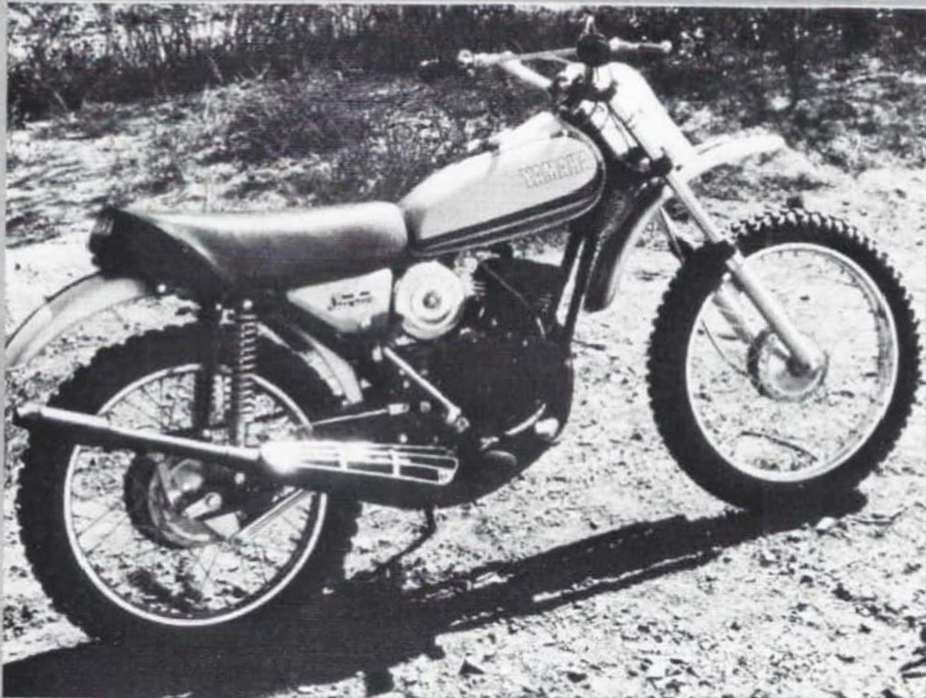


LT-3 MX

... FOR THE YOUNG OR NOVICE RACER



Downswapt exhaust pipe looks great. Despite silencer it's rather noisy.

YAMAHA FOR '73

Starting out life in a 90-cc version, Yamaha's LT series machines were enlarged to the more popular (and logical) 100-cc size with last year's models. Gaining a reed valve induction system at the same time, the 100s proved to be a worthwhile little motorcycle for the young or novice racer. Buyers responded by making the LT series the most popular of all the Yamaha off road/dual purpose machines, with the Enduro model getting the nod in the sales race.

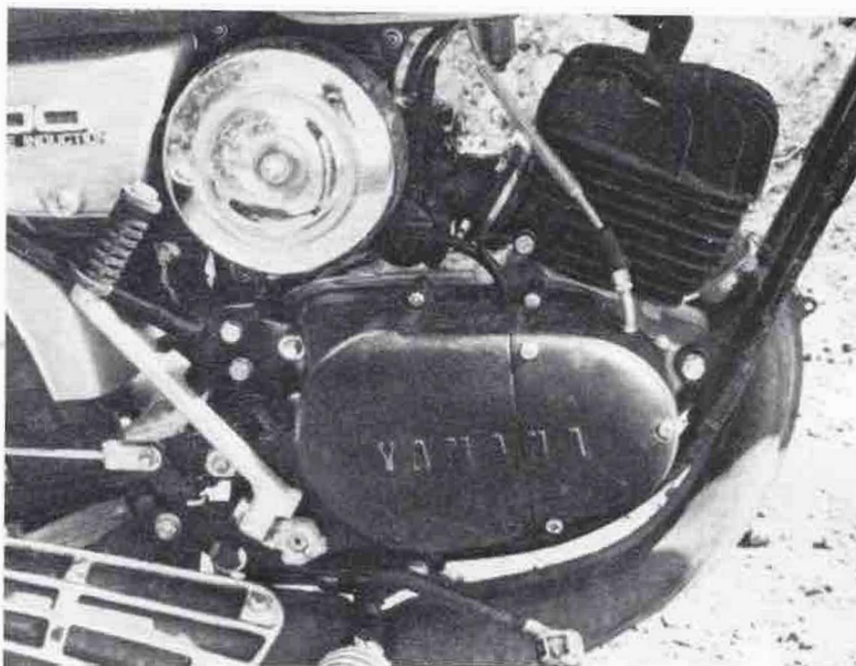
That fact will probably surprise many readers, as it did us. But when you consider the base price of the LT series machines, the statement becomes more believable. What it boils down to is that there are many more buyers with \$500 than with \$1000, the rough price difference between a big bore machine and a small bore machine.

Not wanting to upset the apple cart, Yamaha has again elected to stay with the same basic design with their 1973 version of the LT series MX'er. Few changes have been made, and aside from subtle paint differences, most of them won't be visible to the interested observer. For example, how does one tell that the swinging arm thickness has been increased from 1.8mm to 2.3mm? There's no way you can tell by looking. Yamaha, however, has had enough instances of swinging arm breakage and/or bending in their LT, AT, and CT series machines to warrant the change.

Rear hub and spoke breakage was another problem that showed up more frequently than some, so the Yamaha people have a new way of machining the hub to eliminate the problem. Problems like these are few and far between, but weak areas occur with every motorcycle. It's just nice to know that Yamaha is seemingly striving for a better product. At least changes like these would indicate that fact.

Smaller size riders will find that the LT Yamaha is just about perfectly proportioned for them; even larger riders will be comfortable. The double-downtube/single-toptube frame package is compact and sturdy with good quality welds throughout. The only fault we found with the general layout for motocross racing was that the footpegs are located too far forward for the standup type of riding that is common in those events.

Since Yamaha's larger motocross racers use items such as unbreakable plastic fenders and cleated footpegs, you'd expect the smaller models to do the same. Unfortunately, the attention to detail isn't carried down to the smaller versions, so the owner will



100-cc engine is said to develop 16 bhp at 10,500 rpm. Powerplant has great capacity for abuse.



Flip-up fuel cap adds dash, little else.

Steering response from motorcycle is quite good. Forks could be a bit stiffer.

have to make the changes himself. Rubber-covered footpegs don't make it in motocross, and metal fenders will look pretty bad after only a few events. You would expect more from the Yamaha people.

Suspension will be adequate for most riders, but here too, improvements can be made. Front forks have more than five inches of travel and resist bottoming, and never did they show signs of leaking fork oil. The rear shock absorbers seem to be improved each year to a degree, but we still see most serious racers switching to an accessory brand for competition. Wheel rims are strong but also heavy since they're made out of steel. However, they won't clog with mud like

many of the aluminum types do.

The owner will find that the brakes on the little 100 are just about ideal as long as they're adjusted properly. The rear unit is controlled by a rod and the front by a cable. Brake "feel" is excellent and steep downhill runs can be accomplished without locking the wheels. Several water crossings will render them temporarily ineffective, but recovery time is minimal.

Full knobby tires are included in the MX package, not just the so called "universal" tread pattern found on the Enduro model. Wheel size is just right with a 3.00-18 on the rear and a 2.75-19 at the front. Wheelbase works out to 49 inches, somewhat short, but in practice steering is quick

and accurate. Short wheelbase machines are usually pretty tricky to ride at speed, but the combination with the LT-3 MX's frame geometry offers no problems. Though the bike performs nicely on a rough motocross course, it really shines on a smooth TT track. The only thing needed here is a switch to smooth track tires. If motocross weren't the "in thing" right now, Yamaha could call their LT-3 MX the "TT Special." No doubt many of them will wind up in races such as this.

The conventional piston-port Single really puts out in the power department. Maximum horsepower is 16 at a screaming 10,500 rpm. That just isn't an impressive figure on paper, it shows in the "seat of the pants" feel also. The LT-3 MX shouldn't have to take much guff from any machine in its class. The reed valve and radical port timing are what makes the 100 a scaled-down jet.

As with all Yamaha MX'ers, the carburetor on the 100 model is rubber-mounted to the cylinder. This helps prevent the fuel from turning into foam from vibration and bouncing. The cylinder itself is alloy with enough finning to prevent overheating in rugged use. Yamaha's "Autolube" is employed to eliminate the problem of mixing fuel, but many racers will see fit to remove it completely. For convenience sake it is handy; the oil being carried in a small plastic tank located under the well padded flip-up seat. The pump mechanism injects oil in amounts dictated by engine speed and throttle opening, and plug fouling is reduced.

The most glaring fault with the entire machine is the noise factor. A silencer is attached to the end of the expansion chamber stinger and all it does it take some of the "sting" out of the sound emissions. 1973 laws in California state that no off-road machine shall produce noise in excess of 88 db(a). How on earth this machine will pass that requirement we'd like to know. As it is, the low mounted pipe emits sounds seemingly well above that level. If Yamaha does not take that problem upon their shoulders, owners will be the ones that suffer for it. The Yamaha LT-3 MX is far too loud, and there is no excuse for such a thing in this day and age.

Yamaha's 1973 version of this model is pretty much "as before." The most welcomed change is the new paint scheme, which really makes the 100 look great. Subtle improvements all add up to a better machine, one that any young or beginning racer should consider. If Yamaha can come up with a way to silence the machine effectively, we'll really be getting somewhere. 