



DUAL TEST

# YAMAHA TT & XT500G

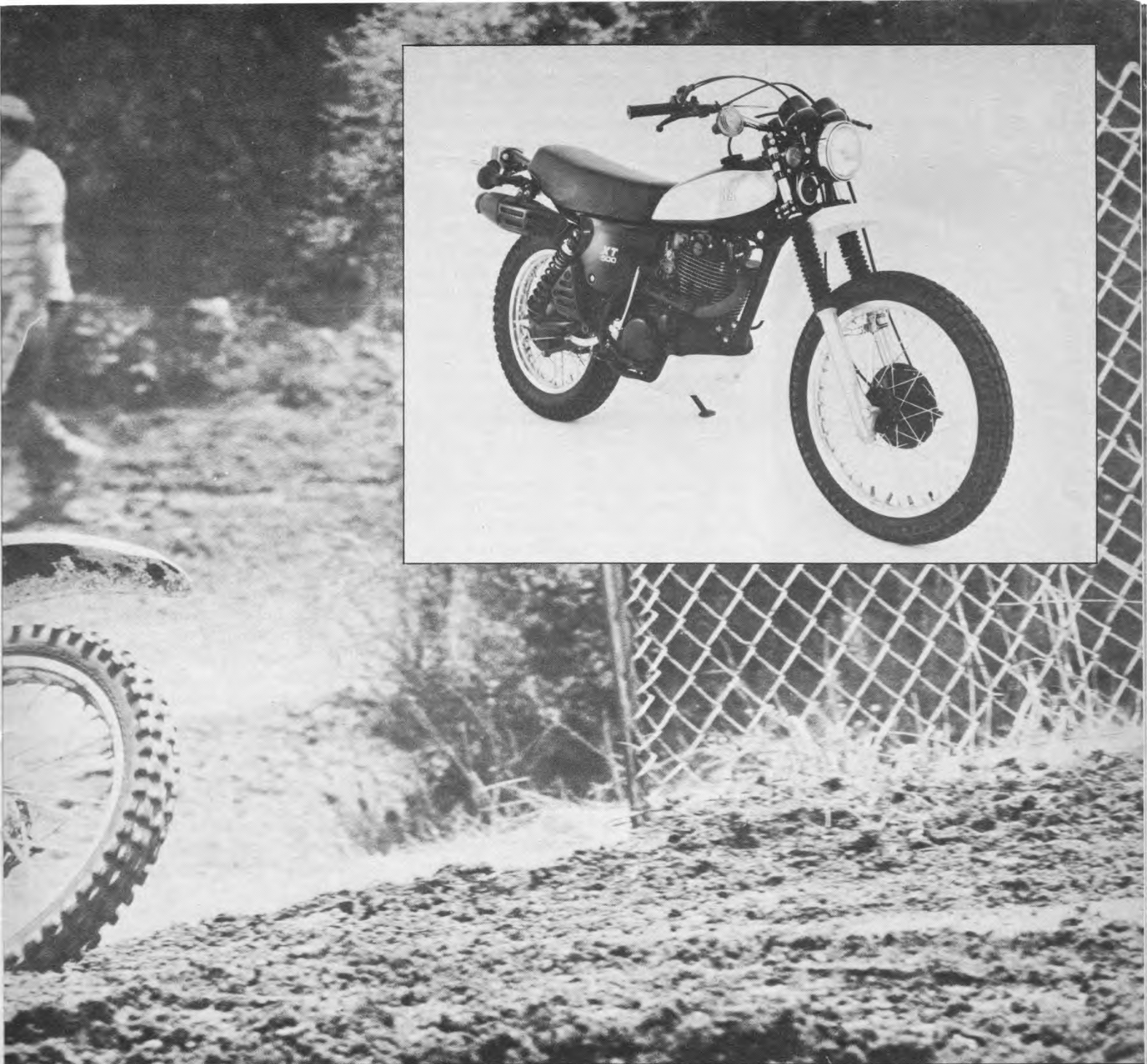
*Eight Strokes  
for Street or Trail*

By the Staff of Dirt Bike

When the TT500 was first introduced, thumper freaks for miles around rejoiced. All sorts of extravagant claims were made about the huge 500 single, most of them wishful thinking. However, the bike was incredibly popular.

In a rather short period of time, the romance slackened a bit as the shortcomings of the bike came to be common knowledge. It was too heavy. No getting around that. It didn't turn very well, and the suspension was strictly bargain basement stuff.

Right after this came the golden



**Ron Haase raced a bone stock TT500G test bike at the recent Four-Stroke Nationals held in Carlsbad. Amazingly, he got a third overall in his class and actually pulled a holeshot in one moto.**

period of TT500 hop-ups. Everybody and his brother were slipping cams, carbs and pipes in, on and around the bike. It was actually easy to modify the TT to the point where you had enough horsepower to scare any rational man senseless.

The period of hop-ups was followed by the period of "Now that it runs like a striped-ass ape, it sure handles grim." This is also widely known as *The period of Enlightenment*. Now, attention was turned away from the boring bar and the cam grinder, to the suspension

specialist and the frame-makers. Sturdy swingarms flourished and folks tried to figure out how to get the top-heavy monster to keep from reeling through the turns like a drunken sailor.

During these periods, Yamaha kept bringing out a "new" TT500 each model year. The only problem was that the "new" bike was little more than the old bike with different paint and the decals moved around a bit.

Even the introduction of the forward axle forks and the aluminum arm were considered marginal updates. Interest

in the TT500 reached an all time low when the XR500 came out, followed in early 1980 by a reasonable DR four-stroker that had a lot of potential.

So, this brings us to the latest and, hopefully, last version of the old war horse, the TT500G model. With it, you'll find an XT version of the bike. We lumped them together because they are virtually the same bike, cosmetics aside. One is street legal and the other must be considered a dirt play bike.

As we review these two bikes, we



# YAMAHA TT & XT500G



**Heavy muffler emits quiet little burps of sound.**

must assume that they are the last of the line. The introduction of the XT and TT250 monos seems to point to the obvious future of four-stroke dirt bikes from Yamaha. While we have had the opportunity to see some of the 1981 bikes from Yamaha, the four-strokes have been kept under wraps. This lends a bit more strength to our stance that these are, indeed, the end of the old breed of TT500s.

## TRUE, TRUE.

### BUT HOW DO THEY WORK?

Glad you asked. Motor-wise, both bikes leave little to be desired. Power starts at idle (literally) and builds strongly throughout the whole rpm range. Both bikes will over-rev until the valves float without too much protest. You can expect about 29 to 30 horsepower out of the bikes, at the rear wheel. With only a pipe and a carb, you can get an extra five ponies. Do not believe all of those extravagant claims about any pipe adding ten to twelve horsepower. It just does not happen that way. With stock bore and stroke, a high compression piston, a good pipe and carb, you can drag forty stout horses out of just about any XT or TT500. With a big-inch kit, you'll have basically the same peak horsepower, but a bunch more steam down low and at mid range.

One nice thing: the XT and the TT can take these modifications without turning into melting metal. This is a

strong, well-built motor.

We did something strange with the TT500G. DB entered it in the Four-Stroke Nationals held at Carlsbad recently. And, to really hang it out, we entered the bike stone stock. Ron Haase was the rider. Believe it or not, he pulled one holeshot in the second moto and even led the first moto for a while. Naturally, the suspension beat him to death, but Ron still ended up with a third overall for the day, against some extremely trick machinery.

Ron summed up the bike: "Good power. All you could really want. Any more and you'd spin the rear tire. This thing hooked up all the time. The only problem was trying to get the bike to go where you pointed it. It took me a few laps to realize that I *had* to hit something to get the front end turned at all. Without a berm, or a lip, the whole bike would just wash out and start sliding to the outside until it was damn good and ready to hook up again. Thrilling, really thrilling. Funny thing about the jumps. If you hit them as hard as you could, the bike would land OK. If you sort of eased off the jumps, it felt like a safe hitting the ground. After a while, the shocks didn't even want to move up and down anymore. And I could feel the swingarm twitching and bending around when I gassed it hard up the long uphill."

After the race, Ron used the TT500 for trail riding and to get in shape for racing. At medium speeds, without pushing the bike, it was a pleasant enough bike. But the handling and suspension proved to be the limiting factors for ever relaxing while riding.

We didn't do anything nearly as exotic on the XT500. It was ridden back and forth from various editors' homes to the office, and vice versa. The XT was taken out into the dirt only a few times, then no one wanted to trail ride on it anymore. There were simply too many other desirable street legal street/trail bikes around for anyone to want to ride the XT. Sorry. That's the way it was.

The XT was miserable to get started when hot and the suspension and handling were even worse than the TT500. Also, there was a hitch in carburetion in the XT, right off the bottom, that was not present in the TT.

The weight of the XT could be felt at even slow-to-moderate trail riding speeds. The dry weight of the TT500 is slightly over 270 pounds. With gas and oil, you're looking at the 290 pound range. You'll find an additional 20

pounds of street legal hardware on the XT, taking the ready-to-ride weight to over the 300-pound mark. Simply too heavy for pleasant trail riding.

For street riding, the XT is a decent mount, if you can learn to live with the hard starting manners. There's a compression release and a "hot starting" button on the carb that is supposed to make lighting the beast simple. Don't believe it. We found that the only sure way to get the fire going was a genuinely mighty kick and fullthrottle. Doing this in a light pair of tennis shoes can be a thrill of sorts, if the kick starter decides to bite back.

## Bits and Pieces

The layout of both bikes is on the odd side. Pegs are well back and the bars are overly wide, high and forward. This places the rider in a hunched over attitude, but does make the transition from sitting to standing easy. Most riders opt for lower, shorter bars that kick back more.

Both the XT and the TT are narrow and nothing bumps against the legs while sitting or standing.

Shifting is notchy, but superior to the XR and the DR series bikes. Brakes are typical Yamaha: excellent.

The saddle is wide and thick, but not very comfortable. If you ride either bike with street clothing on, you can actually pinch the meat on your thighs in the junction between the saddle and the tank. With leathers or riding pants, this doesn't seem to happen.

Oil is carried in the top frame rail. For maximum life of the engine, TT and XT owners change the oil often, as the engines do run a bit on the hot side.

Servicing the bikes is fairly simple, with the exception of getting into the carb. The dual push/pull throttle set-up is bogus and discourages carb tuning and cleaning.

We felt that the air filter was way too small. Many TT riders go for a large air box and the K&N filter seems to be very popular with them.

The muffler is massive, heavy and emits a sound much like that of a belching fruit fly. With an accessory muffler in place, the sound is much more pleasing and the TT sounds more like a real motorcycle.

Neither bike is happy at very low speeds, as there's considerable snatch in the drivetrain. Vibration is a problem in any single-cylinder engine, but the TT and the XT do not give your hands and forearms too much to complain about.

A lot of weight can be trimmed off either bike by intelligent parts removal.

More weight can be taken off by replacing with aftermarket items.

### Hindsight

Looking back, we can see that the TT and XT were extremely important bikes. Even though they're soon going to be a piece of history, they started the four-stroke boom. No one

in his right mind would suggest that these two machines are the best bikes in their respective classes, but bargains are around to be had. You know the new iron will be different and superior. But you also know it'll cost. This could be your last chance to grab a "Grand Old Single." □



### YAMAHA XT500G Specifications

NAME AND MODEL ..... Yamaha XT500G  
ENGINE TYPE ..... Single cylinder, four-stroke  
BORE AND STROKE ..... 87mm x 84mm  
DISPLACEMENT ..... 499cc  
CARBURETION ..... 32mm Mikuni  
FUEL TANK CAPACITY ..... 8.5 liters (2.2 gallons)  
LUBRICATION ..... Dry sump  
TRANSMISSION ..... Five-speed  
GEARING, FRONT/REAR ..... 16/44  
IGNITION ..... CDI  
WHEELBASE ..... 55.7 inches

GROUND CLEARANCE ..... 9 inches  
STEERING HEAD ANGLE ..... 29 degrees  
WEIGHT (CLAIMED) ..... 304 pounds  
INTENDED USE ..... Street/trail  
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ..... Japan  
PRICE ..... \$1898  
DISTRIBUTOR

Yamaha Motor Corp., USA  
6555 Katella Ave.  
Cypress, CA 90630



### YAMAHA TT500G Specifications

NAME AND MODEL ..... Yamaha TT500G  
ENGINE TYPE ..... Single cylinder, four-stroke, o.h.c  
BORE AND STROKE ..... 87mm x 84mm  
DISPLACEMENT ..... 499cc  
HORSEPOWER ..... 29.8  
CARBURETION ..... 34mm Mikuni  
FUEL TANK CAPACITY ..... 2.2 gallons (8.5 liters)  
LUBRICATION ..... Dry sump  
TRANSMISSION ..... Five-speed  
GEARING, FRONT/REAR ..... 15/50  
IGNITION ..... Magneto

WHEELBASE ..... 55.9 inches (230mm)  
GROUND CLEARANCE ..... 9.1 inches (230mm)  
STEERING HEAD ANGLE ..... 29 degrees  
WEIGHT (CLAIMED) ..... 271 pounds (123 kg)  
INTENDED USE ..... Off-road  
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ..... Japan  
PRICE ..... \$1849  
DISTRIBUTOR  
Yamaha Motor Corp, USA  
6555 Katella Ave  
Cypress, CA 90630

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