

FIM VETO NEW TT FORMULA

Shattering the hopes of many TT enthusiasts, the FIM have rejected the ACU's plan for a new look world championship formula, based on a four-strokes only race, and have thrown the whole 1977 TT programme back into the melting pot.

Life may demand Phil's bike back

PHIL READ may have to return his 500 cc Suzuki to Life International, the Italian-based company who sponsor him in the half-litre class.

Angered by Read's sudden decision to quit Continental racing, Life may demand the return of the RG500 Suzuki that Read now has in England.

They originally supplied him with two of the new Suzukis at a total cost of nearly £9,000. One of the machines was taken back to Italy after Read walked out of the Belgian Grand Prix.

This week Life are to make a decision about the second machine. If they take it back, Read will be left with only a TZ750 Yamaha.

News of the FIM's shock decision, made after ACU chairman Norman Dixon had presented the case for the new formula to senior FIM officials in Geneva, leaked out last week despite a smoke screen of security thrown up by the ACU.

Dixon and other TT officials refused to give details of the FIM's objections. "I shall be reporting to the TT sub-committee on Friday. Until then I'm not prepared to say anything," said Dixon on Sunday.

But another member of the TT sub-committee was prepared to talk: "The FIM said we had not done enough. We have not gone far enough. Now we are to have an

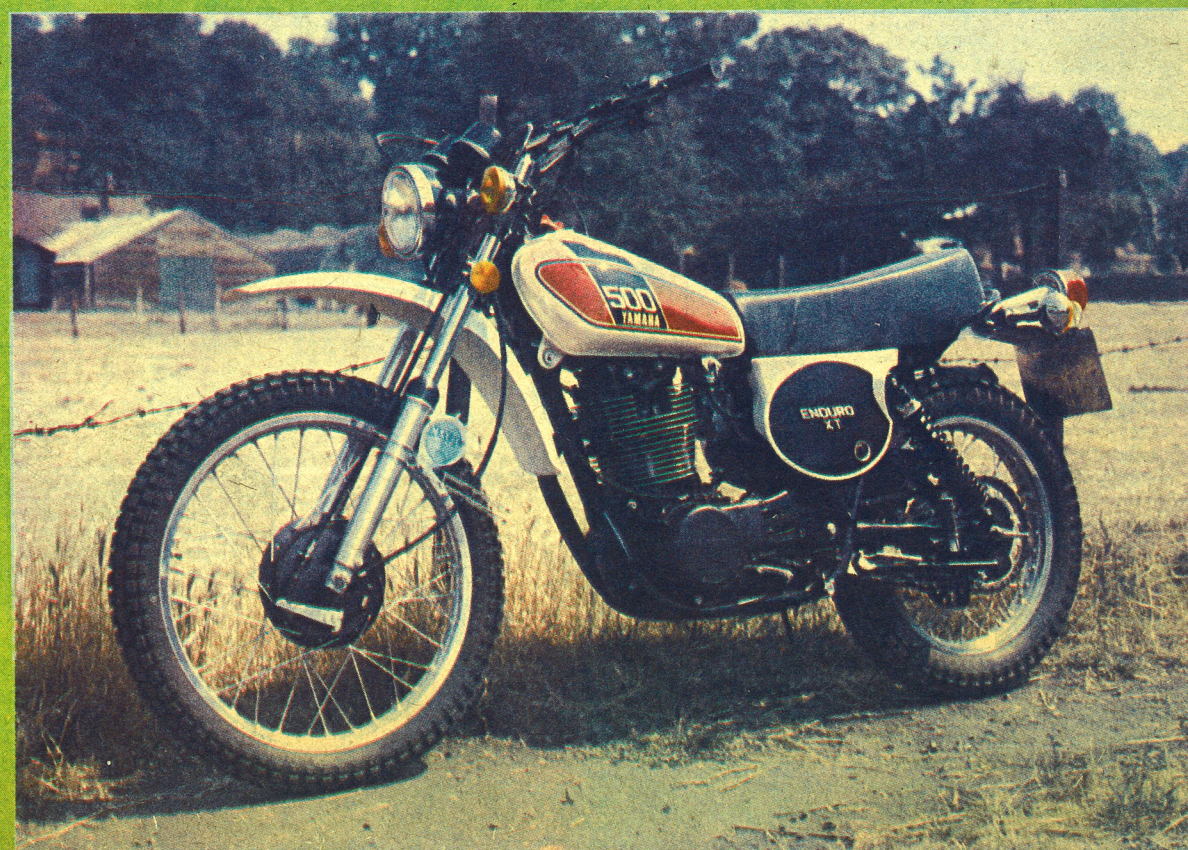


VIC WILLOUGHBY'S REPORT FROM JAPAN

Technical Editor Vic Willoughby, back from a week in Japan, gives you the full and accurate account of just what makes Barry Sheene's four-cylinder Suzuki 500 such a world-beater. See pages 30 and 31.

Also: Remember Mitsuo Itoh, the only Japanese ever to win a TT? He's still around, teaching road safety to Japanese youngsters. Vic Willoughby renews his acquaintance on page 34.

PLONKER POWER



MICK GRANT TALKS

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NATIONAL RALLY

page 40

SIDECAR CROSS GP

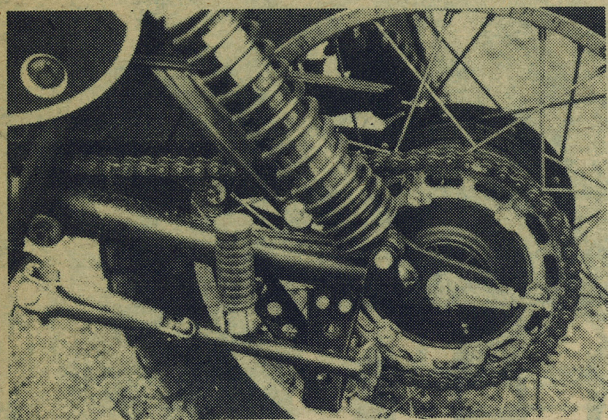
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JOE'S SOUTHERN 100

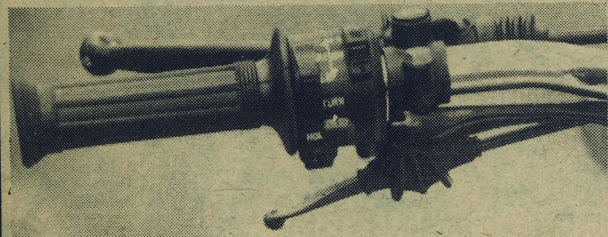
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It chuffles along at 85 mph, returns up to 75 mpg, and has the kind of character that turns motor cyclists' heads everywhere. Yamaha's XT500C four-stroke single is going to be a winner.

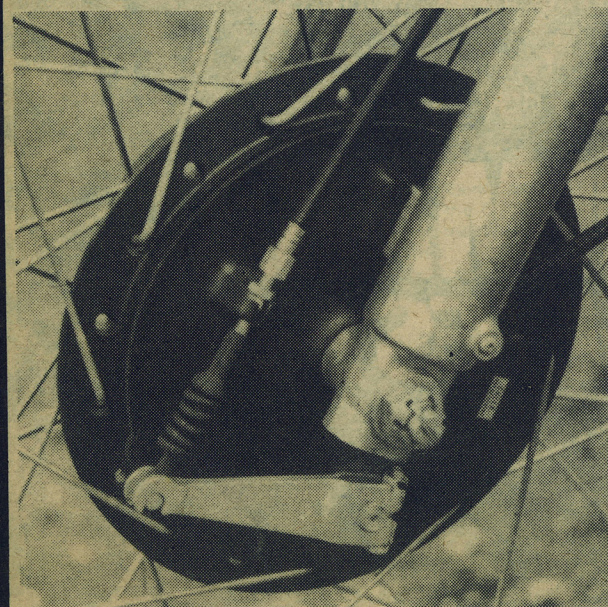
John Nutting and National Schoolboy Moto Cross Champion Paul Hunt put the Yamaha through its paces and conclude: It's every inch a plonker. See full road test on pages 26 and 27.



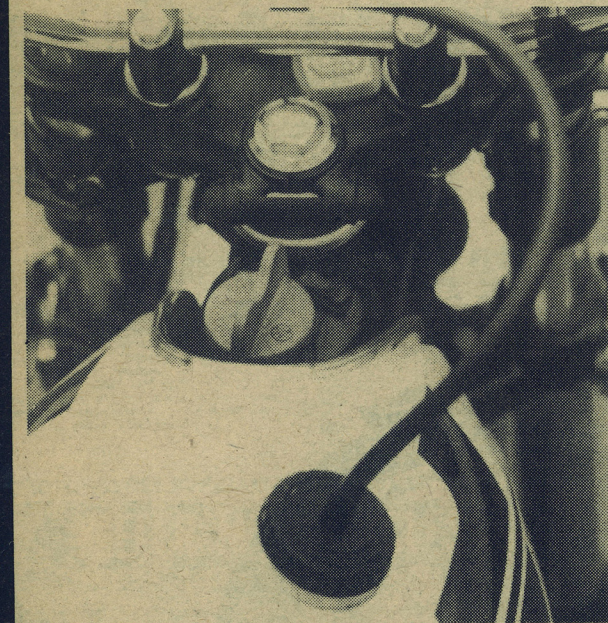
Heavy-duty rear shocks, flimsy chainguard and unusual sprocket/rear hub arrangement of the new Yamaha.



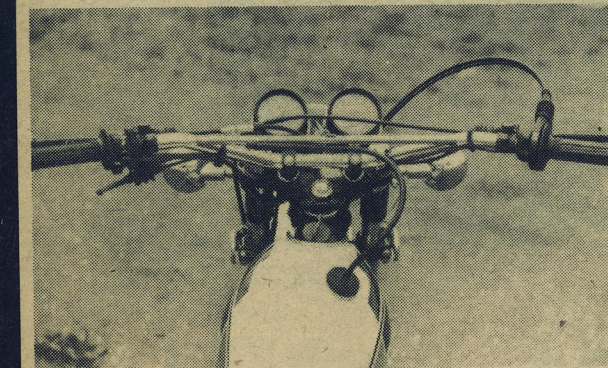
Rubber-gaitered everything — a fine practical detail — and easy-to-use switch arrangement.



Looks puny — yet the single front brake was up to every task except, perhaps, long, continuous braking.



No-spill petrol cap arrangement — one of many features that make the new Yamaha a really practical enduro.



Wide, straight bars, narrow tank and neat cable runs — the essence of a smoothly-operating machine. Note also the "big bike" rev counter and speedo dials.

THE PLONKER COMES BACK!

John Nutting and national schoolboy champion Paul Hunt go snorting around on Yamaha's sensational XT500C big single

EVERYBODY loves a big single. That's the verdict if the reaction to Yamaha's new 499 cc overhead-camshaft enduro-type bike, the XT500C, is any guide.

To clap eyes on it is to admire the audacity of Yamaha in apparently turning back the clock. But to ride the bike is to love it and to realise that the virtues that made singles so appealing in the past are still valid.

Maybe it's the way the big Yam almost talks as it chuffs to itself at traffic lights while you're feeling like a cross between Vic Eastwood and Ake Jönsson.

More likely it's the electric sensation of being propelled forward by each individual thrust of the 87mm-diameter piston when you open up in top gear.

It could be, of course, just the rugged masculine appearance of the XT500C that makes it so attractive. Either way, the XT500C crosses the frontiers of specialisation like no other machine in recent years.

Admiration

It didn't make any difference whether they were from road racing, moto cross, trials or road riding, motor cyclists of all complexions took to the big Yam like ducks to water. You just can't resist it.

For although it's a superb enduro machine, as its name suggests, the XT500C has aspects of its character which would make it impressive in any sort of company.

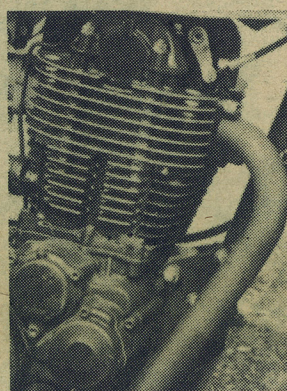
There is a lively road performance that tops out at 90 mph, usefully light weight at about 300 lb, surprisingly good road handling and fuel consumption that would make a 125 seem like a guzzler.

Bulldozer

Yet all this, basically the top end performance of a good 250 twin with the economy of a commuter bike, lurks in the best dual-purpose machine to appear from Japan, a bike that can blast across country like a bulldozer or tug itself up climbs that would tax a trialster.

All this comes in a package that is beautifully detailed. Waterproofing bellows cover all the control levers and cables and the feel is as good as the best road machines. The alloy tank has a screw-in cap with a breather pipe just like the real thing, while off-landers will like the spring-loaded and cleated footrests and rear brake pedal, though the scanty rear chainguard could be improved.

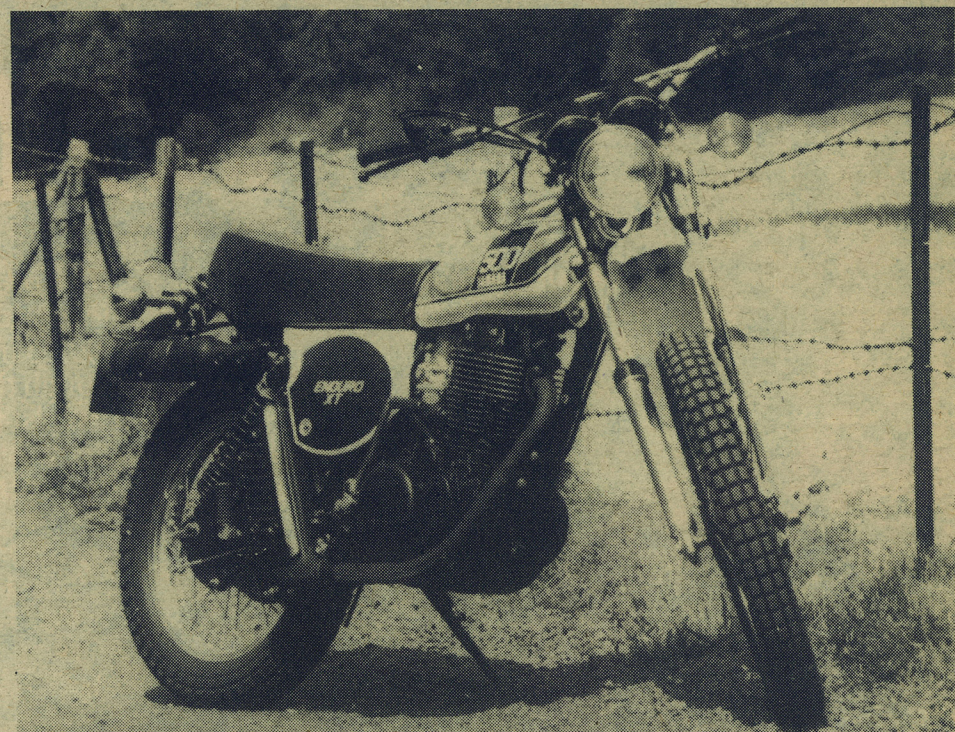
Hardly bigger than most of the current trail machines, the XT500C is very compact. The overhead camshaft engine has been cleverly slotted into a machine with a well padded 32½ inch seat height com-



Tall, black and handsome, the Yamaha's single-lunger power plant.

bined with nearly nine inches of ground clearance.

Slightly oversquare at 87 x 84mm, the five-speed unit construction engine has magnesium alloy side covers for weight reduction. To reduce the overall height, dry sump lubrication with two Eaton-type pumps is used, the oil being contained in the large diameter top and down tubes with filler and dipstick just behind the headstock. Clean and tidy, the vertically-split crankcases never leaked. The eco-consciousness even extends to the recirculation of engine breathing fumes through the massive



Every inch a plonker! The majestic Yamaha single has many of the features of a classical road bike.

foam air-filter under the offside cover.

The only aspect in common with the plonkers of yore is the single cylinder.

Yet even the starting is easy. Back in the dark ages, the ultimate demonstration of masculinity was to fire up your big banger with one mighty swing. Even now you can impress friends by taming the beast, but now the bike works for you, not against.

Sacrilege

Naturally, there is no electric starter, for that would be sacrilege on an off-roader. Instead, there is the time-honoured procedure for starting singles with few simplifying modifications.

Firstly, for first-time cold morning starts, you open the starting jet lever on the new 32mm-choke Mikuni carb with push-pull cables. Then you ease the piston up to compression, edging it past TDC with the aid of the handlebar mounted exhaust valve lifter (yes, dad, it's got one of those). All that's then needed is to give a long swing from the top of the kick lever's stroke and the single immediately idles at a rhythmic and regular beat.

The procedure is vital, for any other way only leads to cracked ankles and frustration. Simplifying that even, Yamaha have had the foresight to arrange for the kick start gears, which drive through the clutch and allow starting in any gear once the clutch is disengaged, to disconnect at the bottom of the stroke.

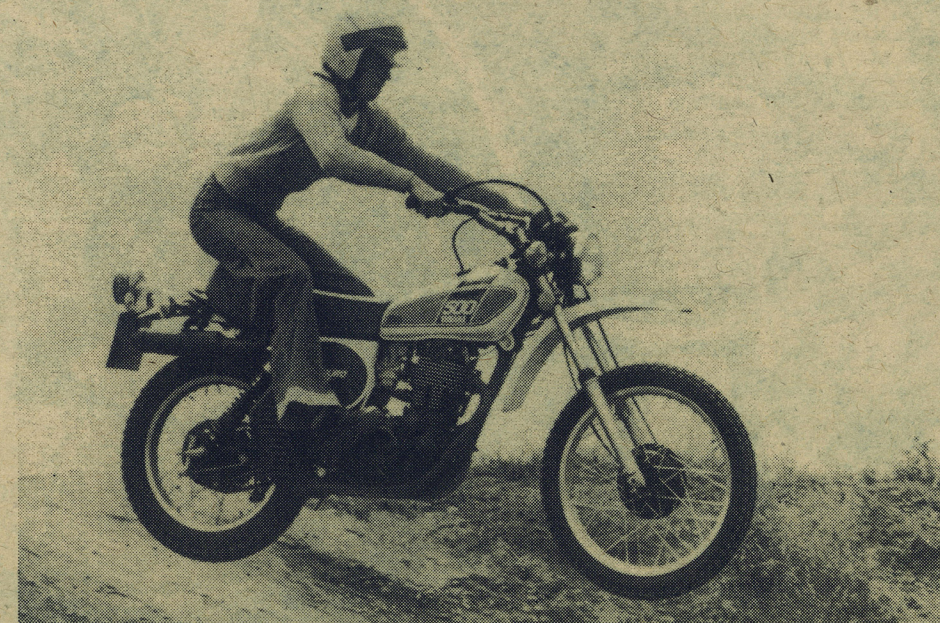
Punch

Once on the move, the first impressions of the XT500C are of a softly-tuned and well-muffled motor that can deliver immense punch at low revs. Apart from a very slight flat spot just off the throttle stops, the carburation is clean right up to the 6,500 rpm redline where the power is evaporating anyway, and beyond. But the motor gives its best below 4,000, when it chugs along like a gas engine on full chat.

Well tucked away, the exhaust system, with its bolt-



Schoolboy champ Paul Hunt gets the Yamaha's front wheel pawing the air.



Paul Hunt gets his weight well back as he starts a steep descent on the Yamaha.

'Yes, dad—it's even got an exhaust valve lever ...'

on spark arrester, emits an attractive 'doofer-doofer' note with a distinctive twitter on over-run. Better still is the sound when the arrester is removed... shades of the Goldie days.

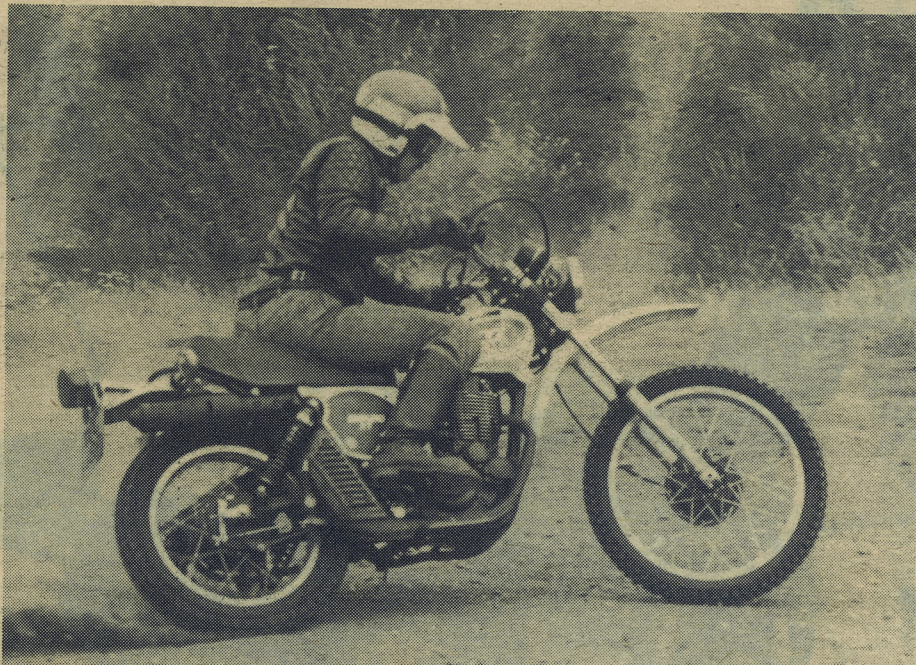
So good is the road performance though, that we decided to take the Yam to MIRA. It exceeded all our expectations. Sitting bolt-upright complete with braced bars it clocked a mean 80.6 mph, dipping down behind the speedo and rev counters, a mean 89.2 mph with 94 mph best one way, the Yam revving happily into the red.

Surprise

Flat-out acceleration was in the same league, with the standing quarter disposed of in 16 seconds dead and at a terminal speed of 80 mph.

The fuel consumption was the biggest surprise. Before MIRA, the XT500C had been clocking 73 mpg in town on the cheapest fuel while the steady speed 30 mph figure checked in at an amazing 100 mpg. Even including the gruelling MIRA tests, the overall figure for 500 miles of testing was 60.5 mpg.

On the open road, the big Yam had no qualms at being thrashed along at 70-75 mph. Vibration of some sort was



Dust billows as John Nutting tries a little dirt-tracking on the Enduro.

always evident, with the worst period just below 5,000 rpm (about 65 mph) when the rear view mirror blurred. But generally, the machine is pleasantly smooth for a single, a boon for high-speed cruising.

Other features of the machine are naturally compro-

mised for road work but the gearbox ratios and action are just fine, the clutch light and smooth, the general impression being of a tight and purposeful plot.

As might be expected, the brakes faded with heavy use from above 70 mph, but used

with prudence they proved effective in most circumstances. Likewise with the direct lighting; the small headlamp, supplied from the fly-wheel magneto, delivers only the barest minimum of legal illumination.

The handling brought pleasant remarks from all who rose the bike. On tarmac, the bike naturally steers tauntly, but with the usual wobbliness born of flimsy front forks, yet it can be flung around with casual and safe abandon provided you don't explore the edges of the Bridgestone trials-type tyres. Though it looks high, under load the rear lay-down De Carbon gas-filled suspension units sag perceptibly for a large proportion of their 4 inches of movement, a pleasing feature for those shorter in the leg, and in striking contrast to the relatively stiff front forks.

To plumb the potential of the forks, we took the Yam to our local moto-cross course, where instead of your usual tester, who openly admits to being a bit of a dirt dummy, we enlisted the talents of 16-year-old national schoolboy champ Paul Hunt to put the bike through its paces.

Accurate

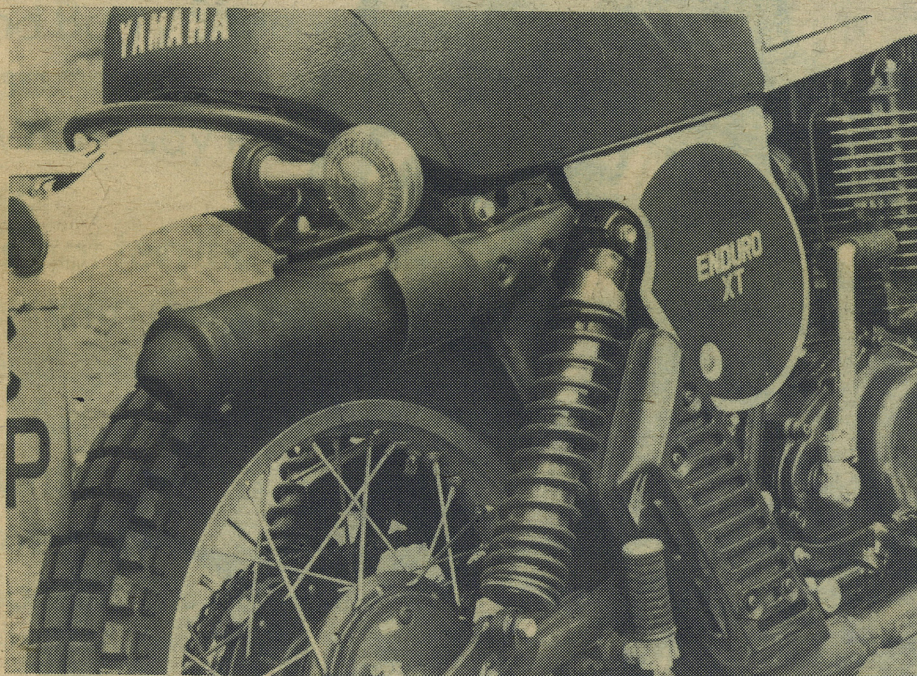
Like all before him, Paul fell for the big lazy engine and soon got used to the soggy suspension. Pressed at a racing speed, the springing is noticeably soft and chopped the bike around on bends, he said. But the front end is superb and control over whoops easy. Only other grip is the way the offside rear shock becomes much hotter than the other due to the closeness of the exhaust box.

So the role of the XT500C lies somewhere between the two; that is, an enduro, which has been carefully, not accidentally, built for the job.

Confirming this, the resettable mileometer was dead accurate.

Nevertheless, the Yamaha XT500C will inevitably be all things to all people. At £685 we'll be surely seeing as many of them just gracing the garage floor for the hell of it as others being stripped down as potential Yamagoldies, complete with clip ons, rear sets, disc brake front ends and megaphone exhausts.

Just a few might be used as enduro bikes, too, but there are more riders with red blood in their veins than will want to do that with the XT500C, I'm sure.



Rear-end detail of the 500 Enduro, showing the efficient silencing unit.

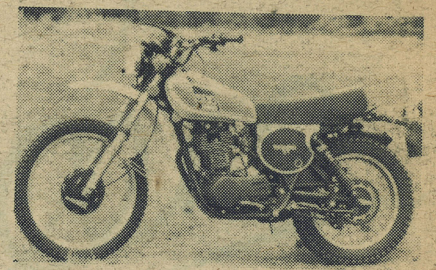


Ouch! John Nutting makes a front-wheel landing — and looks just a tiny bit alarmed!

ROAD TEST 18/76: YAMAHA XT500C

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 499 cc (87 x 84 mm) overhead-camshaft single. Light alloy cylinder head and barrel with cast iron liner. Two ball main bearings; needle-roller big end. Dry sump lubrication; Eaton type oil pump. Compression ratio, 9 to 1. Mikuni 34 mm-choke VM carburettor with lever operated cold start jet, oil soaked foam air filter. Maximum claimed power, 30 bhp at 6,000 rpm. Maximum torque, 28 lb-ft at 5,400 rpm. **TRANSMISSION:** Primary spur gears (ratio, 77/30). Wet, multi-plate clutch and five-speed gearbox. Overall ratios: 16.6, 11, 8.4, 6.46 and 5.48 to 1. Chain final drive, 5/16 in (ratio, 44/16). Mph/1,000 rpm in top gear, 13.6. **ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT:** Flywheel magneto ignition and 6-volt alternator with rectifier and regulator. Direct lighting to 5 in-diameter headlamp with 30/30-watt main bulb. Six-volt, 6-amp-hour battery supplying horn, indicators and stop lamp. **BRAKES:** 6.3 in-diameter drum front, 5.9 in-diameter rear. **TYRES:** Bridgestone Trail Wing G5, 3.00 x 21 in front, 4.00 x 18 in rear. Light alloy rims. **SUSPENSION:** Telescopic front fork (7.7 in travel). Pivoted rear fork; De Carbon units with five-position spring pre-load adjustment (4 in travel).



FRAME: Welded simple loop type incorporating oil reservoir.

PRICE: £685 including VAT.

ROAD TAX: £16 a year; £5.85 for four months.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase, 56 in; seat height, 32½ in; ground clearance, 8½ in; handlebar width, 33½ in; turning circle, 13 ft 1 in.

WEIGHT: 315 lb approximate kerb weight.

FUEL CAPACITY: 2¼ gallons including 2 pint reserve.

OIL CAPACITY: 3.8 pints.

MANUFACTURER: Yamaha Motor Co Ltd, 2500 Shingai, Iwata-Shi, Shizuokaken, Tokyo, Japan.

IMPORTER: Mitsui Machinery Sales Ltd, Oakcroft Road, Chessington, Surrey.

SERVICING

WARRANTY: 4,000 miles or six months; parts and labour.

MAJOR SERVICE: 3,000 km, no recommended pricing.

SPARES: Air filter, £4.80; Oil filter, £3.95; Clutch cable, £3.45; Throttle cable, £5.94; Piston assembly, £15.42; Brake shoes, £4.90 per pair; Headlamp assembly, £17.43; Drive chain, £17.50; Direction indicator body, £5.94; Contact breaker, £4.21; all exclusive of VAT.

EQUIPMENT

Mirror	Yes
Direction indicators	Yes
Starter Motor	No
Steering lock	Yes
Fuel tank lock	No
Helmet lock	Yes
Prop stand	Yes
Main stand	No
Tools	Yes

PERFORMANCE

(Figures obtained by "Motor Cycle" staff at the Motor Industry Research Association's Midland proving ground.)

MAXIMUM SPEEDS (MEAN): 89.2 mph, 12-stone rider wearing racing leathers. 80.7 mph, rider sitting normally.

BEST ONE-WAY SPEED: 94 mph, strong tail wind.

BRAKING DISTANCE (from 30 mph): 32ft 2in.

FUEL CONSUMPTION: 60.5 mpg overall. 2-star fuel.

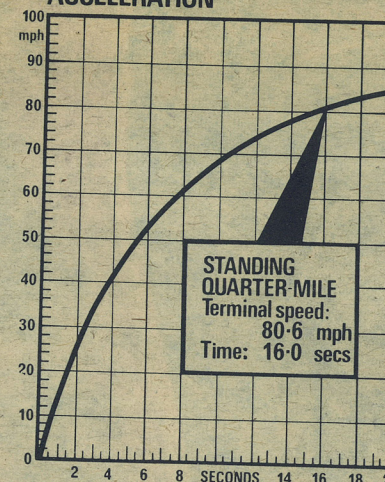
OIL CONSUMPTION: 395 mpp overall.

MINIMUM NON-SNATCH SPEED: 15 mph in top gear.

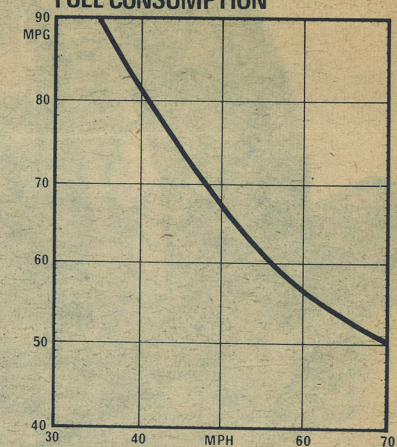
SPEEDO CORRECTION

Indicated mph	30	40	50	60	70	80
Actual mph	29.3	39.3	49.2	60.4	71.6	82.8

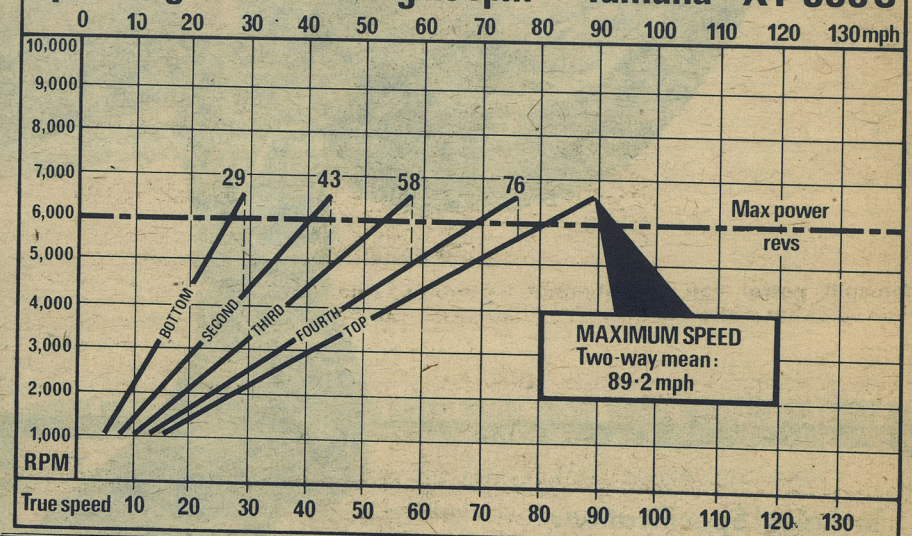
ACCELERATION



FUEL CONSUMPTION



Speed in gears versus engine rpm Yamaha XT 500C



COMPARISONS

	Capacity cc	Price £	Max mph	Consumption mpg	St. ¼-mile secs
Yamaha XT500C	499	685	89.2	60.5	16.0
Yamaha XS500C	498	839	107.7	48.5	15.0
Honda CB550F	498	925	108.8	50.0	14.6
Honda CB500T	498	799	104.7	46.6	15.1
Suzuki GT500A	492	670	104.0	46.6	15.1
Suzuki GT550A	544	789	111.9	35.5	14.3

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