



Yamaha DT400

IT'S been a long time since production roadsters bore any real resemblance to competition machines, but the old adage about track success paying dividends on the showroom floor still stands. Just the sight of a full fairing or a pair of knobbly tyres is still enough to set any red-blooded Briton's pulse racing. Consequently, add the name Yamaha to 400cc of all-black, rough hewn motorcycle and everybody's champing at the bit to get it in the dirt!

No matter who buys the DT400 Enduro in the UK, it is still basically aimed at the American trail bike market, where stockbrokers and bank clerks alike have been snapping them up to add a little spice to their weekends away from it all.

So, although the DT400 is a new machine to us, it has long since earned the reputation of 'add petrol, oil and ride' reliability in the States. The seven-port single-cylinder motor comes in a very mild state of tune, producing an extremely

manageable claimed 32 brake horses. Reed valve induction eliminates the low-speed jerkiness associated with two-stroke engines and carefully metered Autolube lubrication keeps exhaust fug to a minimum.

But by far the most immediately endearing factor of the DT400 is its light weight. Though somewhat spartan by comparison, when fuelled and ready to roll it steals well over 100lb on similar-capacity tourers. For once, riding through congested city streets was a joy, prowess in the stop-light enduro being limited only by the width of the handlebars and the ludicrous length of the rear-view mirror stem.

The relationship of controls to rider is fine, maintaining the bike's overall rugged appeal without being clumsy or inaccessible. As an added touch, the stylish alloy clutch and brake levers are shrouded by rubber gaiters.

Even the most reactionary of riders must have come to terms with turn in-

dicators by now, and while five minutes with a spanner *could* have them out of your life forever, in the event of a minor spill they are tucked well out of harm's way. The rev counter represents another anomaly to the dirt bike image, but given the DT's relatively low (for street use) gearing and 7000rpm redline it could save you some hefty repair bills.

So how does this pleasant-looking package perform? About town and along tortuous country lanes it is an extremely agile mount — the five speed gearbox has sufficient ratios to keep the motor on its 5500rpm powerband, the frame and suspension take road conditions and changes of line in their stride, the drum brakes arrest progress with assurance. Those Dunlop trials tyres stick like glue no matter how hard you lean through the corners. Under fierce braking the back end can break away, but even then the machine remains stable and the skid is easy to control.

Unfortunately, the pillion rider gets rather a raw deal. The slope of the dual seat throws the passenger into the back of the rider and two-up work is hard going over distances longer than about 50 miles. Necessary adjustments to the rear suspension units to cope with the extra load make the suspension movement harsh, and the pillion footrests mounted directly to the swinging arm can throw the passenger's feet off over rough ground. In this event the noticeable lack of chain guarding could well ensnare a wayward foot or trouser leg.

Solo, on the rough, the suspension is outstanding. Editor John Thorpe, who seems to enjoy the odd spot of masochism, spent some happy hours traversing a tank-testing course to assess it. He reported that the DT400 could easily be ridden over pave and rocks

at around 25mph. Usually, suspension systems clash and bottom at half that speed on these test strips. On our 'washboard' test the Yamaha clocked over 60mph — half as fast again as most machines we've checked out there.

It took shifting sand, grass, shale and hummocks in its stride, and was agile through woodland, but proved skittish with standard tyre pressures on mud. Waterproofing was absolute: we had it running happily for ten minutes while being washed down with a high-pressure hose.

Not that the machine is without disadvantages. At low engine speeds, it stalls easily and without warning.

Some alternative gearing might solve a lot of the stalling problem, and from then on the changes would be more a matter of personal taste.

Despite the machine's overall lightness, the front wheel requires a lot of coaxing to get it in the air, and 8½ inches of ground clearance has you constantly riding around obstacles rather than over them, and the sump bash plate stops short of protecting the gearbox housing from underneath.

In top gear the bike will cruise happily anywhere between 30 and 70mph, solo or two-up. Fuel consumption depends quite markedly on the steadiness of your right hand rather than actual road speed. The DT400 begs to be squirted in and out of tight corners and returns can be as low as 33mpg. On the other hand, a short 50mph cruise on the motorway, followed by some gentle riding through the back roads of Berkshire, bettered that figure by at least six mpg.

Obviously a degree of compromise is unavoidable with a dual purpose machine. That high mounted rear light could have serious consequences if you lost your pillion over the back on or off the track. That front mudguard won't keep your legs dry either, but isn't flexible plastic a sensible material to make it from?

There's no doubt the DT400 is a machine with bags of potential and one that everybody at NMM enjoyed riding — can we help it if we'd like to see it improved just a little here and there?

PHIL MATHER

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Single cylinder air-cooled two-stroke. 85mm bore x 70mm stroke. Capacity 397cc. Compression ratio 6.4:1. 32bhp @ 5,500 rpm. Carburettor 32mm Mikuni. Yamaha Autolube lubrication, tank capacity 2.6 pints. Primary kick starter.

TRANSMISSION

Helical gear primary drive, wet multi-plate clutch. Primary reduction 2.66:1, secondary reduction 2.85:1. Overall gear ratios: 1st, 19.29; 2nd, 13.63; 3rd, 9.93; 4th, 7.62; 5th, 5.83.

ELECTRICS

CDI ignition. 6v 4ah battery. 35/35w headlamp, 5/18w tail/stoplamp. Turn indicators. Indicator and main beam warning lights.

CHASSIS

Telescopic front forks. Swinging arm rear suspension with 3-way adjustable dampers. 2 gal. petrol tank. Brakes s/s drum, front and rear. Front tyre 300 x 21 Dunlop Trials Universal, rear tyre 400 x 18 Dunlop Trials Universal. Seat height 32in. Wheelbase 55.5in. Ground clearance 8.5in. Dry weight 273lb.

GENERAL

Prop stand. Single rear view mirror. Steering lock, seat/double helmet lock. Toolkit. Sump guard. Price £559 inc. VAT. Test machine supplied by Mitsui Machinery Sales, Oakcroft Road, Chessington, Surrey.





www.legends-yamaha-enduros.com



NMM MINI TEST CARD YAMAHA DT400

Performance in Brief

SPEED RANGES/GEAR SPEEDS

Gear		mph		sec
		min	max	
1	solo	5	28	2.38
	pillion	5	25	2.86
2	solo	10	35	3.11
	pillion	10	35	5.45
3	solo	15	60	11.84
	pillion	15	60	15.37
4	solo	18	70	16.14
	pillion	19	70	21.00
5	solo	20	75	24.20
	pillion	22	73	32.03

RESPONSE IN THE GEARS/SECONDS

mph	sec				
	10-30	20-40	30-50	40-60	50-70
2.18					
2.24					
2.82					
2.96					
	4.62	5.45	6.18		
	4.94	6.88	6.52		
	7.41	7.33	7.26	8.95	
	7.92	7.88	7.79	9.36	
			10.42	8.08	10.83
			11.04	9.13	11.52

ACCELERATION FROM REST

	solo	pillion
0-20	2.6	3.2
0-30	3.8	4.1
0-40	5.2	6.5
0-50	7.5	9.0
0-60	10.8	14.0
0-70	21.5	29.4

MPG

steady speed

ft	solo	pillion
30		
40		
50		
60		
70		

BRAKES (BOTH)

SPEEDO

mph	ft	
	solo	pillion
10	4½	5
20	17½	18½
30	34	36
40	43	47½
50		
60		
70		

ACCELERATION OVER STANDING ¼ MILE /402m

	ft m	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	1000	1100	1200	¼ mile
		31	61	91	122	152	183	213	243	274	305	335	366	400
solo	sec	3.15	4.78	6.31	7.62	8.85	10.19	11.61	12.36	13.06	13.99	14.92	16.24	17.47
	mph	25	38	45	50	55	58	62	63	64	66	68	67	68
pillion	sec	3.17	5.21	6.84	8.32	9.81	10.92	11.98	12.91	13.88	15.02	15.88	17.34	18.91
	mph	24	35	40	48	51	55	57	58	60.5	61	63	64	65