



74 August Which Bike?

YAMAHA DT 50

You may recall in last month's super sixteen feature we mentioned that the DT50 Yamaha was on long-term loan from Mitsui. Fact is we scammed the bike for an earlier test and it became one of the forgotten few: the test bikes lost in the world of bike journalism only to re-surface when some eagle-eyed accountant finds its number on a list.

Not that we haven't been giving Yamaha its money's worth. So far, the bike has clocked over 2,500 miles, not bad for a 50cc machine in six months, although it's nothing like the monster mileages racked up by the intrepid messenger riders in Soho (one guy on an MB50 said he'd done 6,000 miles in three months).

Most of that mileage was put on the bike by Art Director Paul Carpenter on

his Croydon to West End run before he switched to a DT175MX (see how struck he was by Yamahas – that's brand loyalty for you) and that was only with the refueling of the tank and occasional top-up of the oil reservoir.

The miles had taken their toll, though. A quick glance over the bike at the 2,000 mile mark showed that the cables were in bad need of lubrication and that the chain was neglected. The bike had also started to exhibit a strange fault – running out of steam every ten miles or so and then picking up again. Initial diagnosis was the need for a decoke but disassembling the carburettor and giving it a good blow with an air line did the job.

Most of the staff who've had the chance to ride the DT find it one of the more likeable sixteeners (or, rather, the least distasteful). It's extremely nippy and, with its wider-than-normal handlebar, feels like a full-size bike. The only time you find it not acting like a full size bike is on the open road: sixteen performance is only adequate in town.

The extra mileage has been advantageous here, however. Being strung out with a wide-open throttle for its whole life, the DT's engine has loosened up well; the performance is much better than your usual 50 and certainly more perky than the RD50 we also have in tow. Most times, you can keep up with accelerating

cars away from traffic lights and with a top speed that occasionally hits an indicated 40mph, you can stay with them most of the time. Surprisingly, the DT only loses out a couple of bike lengths to unrestricted FS1 Yamahas in the traffic light GPs across London.

All this burning around on 50cc machines has focused our attention on the safety of these bikes. We seem to be involved in more minor prangs with the little bikes than we do with the big ones. Perhaps it's because they're small, or quiet, or whatever. Certainly not because of any lack in performance. Probably it's because they're so nippy, other drivers of bigger vehicles can't see you: which I suppose behoves bikers to be aware of the fact.

But what can you do when you're sitting innocently waiting at a red traffic light when what seems like a house hits you from behind? Yes, that's what happened to me. The next thing I knew was that I was lying on my back, facing a mile-high coach and nursing a festering desire to wring the driver's neck. I couldn't believe it. It was like a dream. Mind you, I was brought back to reality by the words: 'Oh, I must have been distracted by something. Damage to the Yamaha was fairly extensive but nothing to stop me getting home on it. Next month, we'll give you the news of how much it cost the coach driver.'

John Nutting.

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