

To regard the Yamaha FS1-E as a mere boy's moped would be a great pity... it has good lights, brakes, handling and performance. And it is very comfortable



ROAD TEST The Yamaha Sixteener Special

MOPEDS, as we have said before, are not really our line. Nothing personal, of course, it's just that we think our readers have usually passed beyond the moped stage. Occasionally, though, one comes along that forces its way into the reckoning. The Fantic "chopper" was one. Another is the latest Yamaha, the FS1-E or "Sixteener Special" as the SS blazoned on the side conveniently suggests in this country.

Why does this Yamaha deserve the attention that others do not receive? Because, in

our view, it bridges the gap between a genuine motorcycle and a moped so effectively that the gap no longer exists. Certainly this has its dangers, for a frustrated civil servant might well kick the card table over and let no one play the game if it can't be played to his rules. He might, but if he did so he would be a fool for, although the Yamaha may well be considered to be contravening the spirit of the edict confining 16-year-olds to mopeds, it does something else, too. It gives these 16-year-olds the

opportunity to learn to ride a powered two-wheeled vehicle with a degree of safety not normally available on a moped. This might well be taken as a damning indictment of all mopeds but it is really intended to underline the fact that mopeds are designed for a different customer from the naturally high spirited 16-year-old who, by fair means or foul, is going to extract the last ha'peth of life from his 50 c.c. motor. He can do it either by buying a conventional moped, with brakes and handling designed to cope with no more than the modest performance of the engine when it left the factory, or he can do so by purchasing a moped that looks, handles and, most important of all, stops like a light-weight motorcycle.

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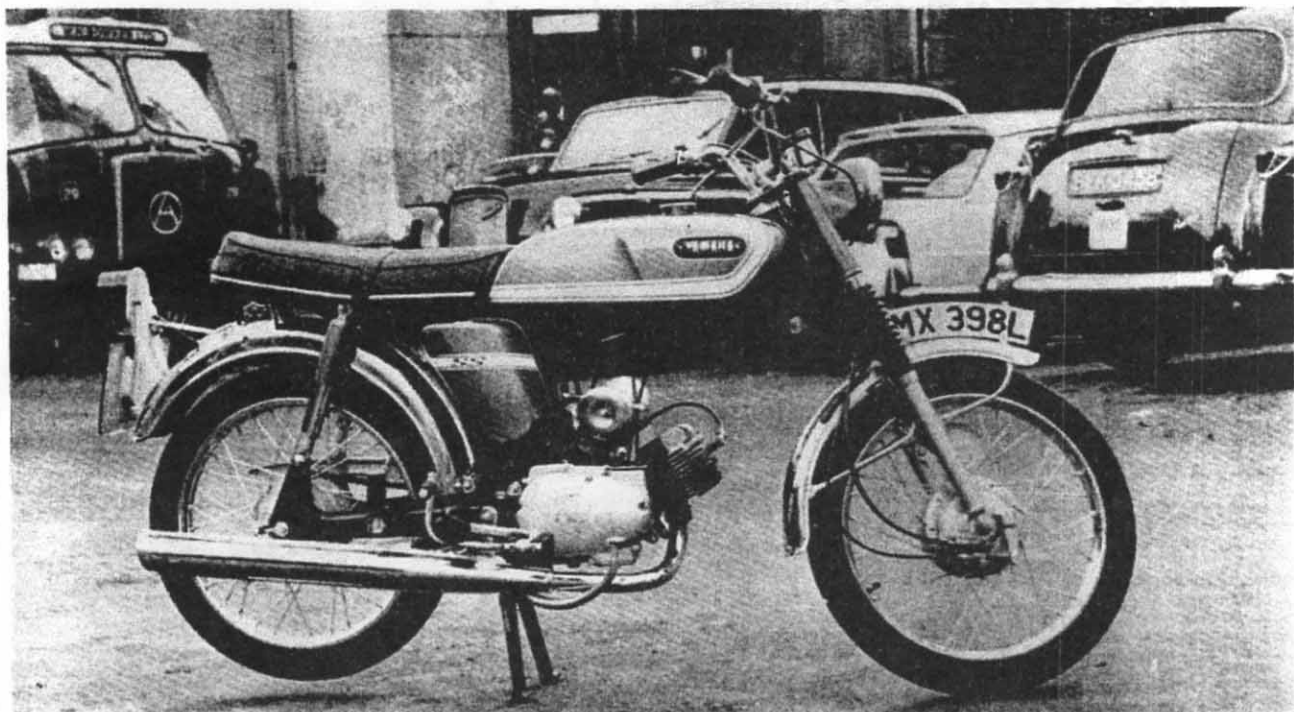
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Seat height is 30 in., giving good riding position

The Yamaha FS1-E falls beautifully into the latter category. Based loosely on the popular 80 c.c. YG1-F, it is in almost all respects a "real" motorcycle. The key to its dual personality is an ingenious pedal arrangement that enables the rider to switch in seconds from power to pedal. When one is riding the Yamaha as a motorcycle the pedals are "free", i.e., are in no way connected to the power train. They are positioned as conventional footrests with the right pedal pointing the same way as the left. This is achieved by pulling the pedal out on its spindle, freeing it from its locating dogs and rotating it forward until it strikes home. In the unlikely event of one wishing to resort to leg power, one merely lifts the right pedal crank and revolves until it clicks home in its dog, held by a spring. Drive is obtained by moving a lever above the gear-change pedal, located on the left-hand side.

This slides home a dogged gear. Surprisingly, the Yamaha then becomes just about the easiest moped to pedal that we have tried. The whole operation takes longer to read about than to perform.

The Sixteener Special is in most respects a conventional Japanese light-weight motorcycle having most of the features that have made this type of machine so highly thought of. The engine, forward inclined, is a 49 c.c. rotary disc valve. It is just about "square" with a bore of 40mm and stroke of 39.7mm. Compression ratio is 7 to 1. Ignition and lighting is by flywheel magneto with a battery to operate the stop light and (when fitted) flashing indicators. Although a loom and switches are in position, the flashing indicators are an optional extra and were not fitted to the test machine. This is to keep the basic cost as low as possible. Lighting is six volt, with a first-class 18/18w headlight as part of the deal. Bulbs are seven volt, to reduce the risk of blowing

in the event of one failing on the direct-lighting system. A good idea.

Lubrication is by petrol mixture, 20 to 1. Another effort to keep the price down. What a pity. The engine is designed to accept the Autolube system and surely one of the great virtues of Japanese two-strokes over the rest is that they almost always boast positive oiling? It isn't even available as an optional extra. The gearbox is four-speed with neutral below bottom, an arrangement that is great for finding neutral but I lost count of the number of times I went all the way down the box only to find neutral when I wanted first gear. Perhaps a newcomer would be less troubled by old habits. The clutch is wet, multi-disc type.

Standard wear in light-weight frames these days is the monocoque spine type, with the engine hanging. And why not, it couldn't work better? Telescopic forks at the front, swinging arm at the rear and a 1.2 gallon petrol tank between the knees complete the

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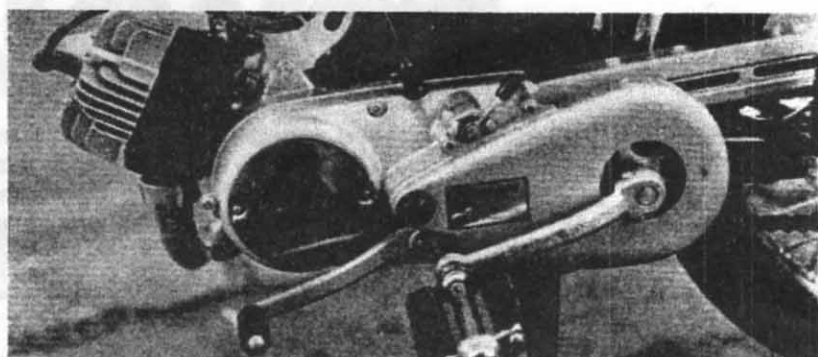
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feeling that one is aboard a real motorcycle. A very light one at that, weighing in at just 154 lb. Tyres are 2.25 x 17in front and 2.50 x 17in rear with Yamaha going over to that old Suzuki favourite, Inoue. They handled well enough, even in the wet—and there was plenty of that during the test.

Perhaps there are readers who consider themselves affronted if we confess actually to enjoying anything less than 500 c.c. Certainly I take a bit of stick in my clubroom if I admit that riding a fifty can be fun. Well, I don't care, the little Yamaha was fun. I rode it for just under 500 miles. In that time it never missed a beat, there was no need to open the tool box, which was just as well as, for some unaccountable reason, there was no plug spanner. It always started first kick, ran cleanly after a brief warming-up period and had the kind of performance that, not too long ago, would have been considered not unreasonable in a 125. Yamaha, particularly anxious not to appear to be encouraging youngsters to play racers, claim no more than 45 m.p.h. I cannot remember the last time a manufacturer underplayed his product's performance! Until now just about every moped or motorcycle with pedals has fallen down, sometimes quite badly, in one department. Breaking. How have Yamaha avoided falling into the same trap? Simple, they fitted 110mm units, front and back. There is ample lining area to stop a machine weighing less than 1½ cwt., even in the most trying circumstances.

Comfort is something that is occasionally overlooked on low-price light-weights. Thankfully, this isn't so on the Yamaha. To be sure, the dualseat, at just 20in long, doesn't leave all that much room for two people but it will take two and there are no



complaints from the engine room. With seat height of 30in, trials-type handlebars and a reasonable relationship between the footrest, seat and bars, the Sixteener Special could hardly have been more comfortable. Believe us, it would never have done 500 miles in our hands had it not been so! It was very quiet, both mechanically and from the exhaust and, perhaps helped by the rotary valve engine, vibrated not at all. The lights, as we have said, were excellent and the rear one deserves possibly even higher praise.

Just when we began to think that the blasted machine would never display a vice, we found a chink in its armour. It was not until just before we handed it back that we gave it a real opportunity to show its paces. We take our "running in" very seriously, you know. Previously, even when giving it an easy life, it had recorded as good as 110 m.p.g., now it dropped to 95 m.p.g. under pressure. To be fair, 110/120 m.p.g. might be considered a more reasonable average but even that is not really very good for a fifty. Will this put anyone off buying it? We doubt it.

To regard the Yamaha FS1-E as a mere

"boy's moped" would be a great pity and in this respect it is a pity that the SS, doubtless meaning something very different when it was first inscribed, should have earned the translation Sixteener Special. This might give prospective buyers the idea that it is in fact only fit for sixteeners. That is far from the case, and it has one considerable advantage over its pedal-less rivals. It can be ridden, without the need for another driving test, by car drivers. This is a market which, if properly exploited, could be even more lucrative than the sixteener one.

The Sixteener Special is a first-class light-weight moped-cum-motorcycle. It has good lights, brakes, handling and performance and can really only be criticized on the grounds of economy. Both from its use of petrol and the purchase price. The price, £159, isn't really too bad until one discovers that its half-brother, the YG1-F, sells for exactly the same. As that one offers an 80 c.c. engine, some extras and, most important, positive oiling, one cannot help thinking that things are not quite as they should be. Surely the addition of pedals and its accoutrements doesn't swing the balance completely back the other way?—B.P.

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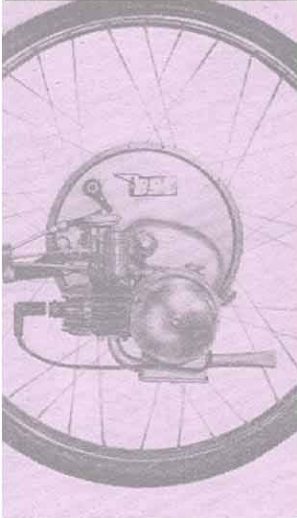
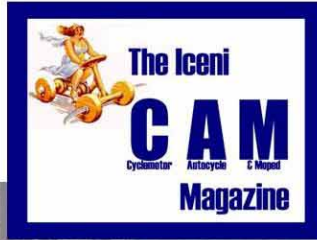
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