

Yamaha Beluga CV80



Yamaha's new Beluga looks like a scooter, sounds like a lawnmower and runs like a hovercraft. But it's simplicity itself to ride and, as Mike Winfield discovered, it's ideal for around-town commuting.

In 1960 the fledgling Yamaha motorcycle company launched a scooter called the SC1. Its sales flopped so badly that it nearly wrecked the company. With their new Beluga, Yamaha are now back in the scooter business but this time you get the feeling they're going to enjoy a lot more success.

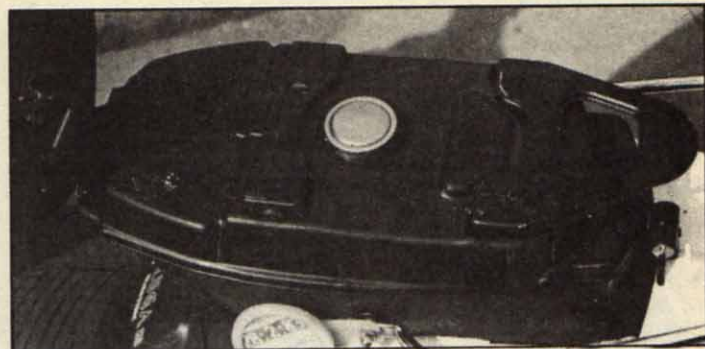
For one thing, times have changed. As travel costs escalate the commuter bike is becoming more popular. With efforts being made to aim them at the female market, commuter machines are also becoming more socially acceptable.

The Beluga is typical of the modern generation of time traveller. It's beautifully made

with the keyword being convenience. The damn thing can do everything except read the news. It's got no gears, no clutch, no choke and next to no weight to lug around. What it has got is an electric starter and a reasonably effective set of brakes. So all you do is climb aboard, thumb the starter and head for the hills. No, on second thoughts keep it away from the hills — it's only got an 80cc motor after all.

The Beluga's engine is the well tried and tested Yamaha 80 single-cylinder, two-stroke unit mated to a fully automatic V-belt transmission system. You just twist the throttle and as the revs rise the belt slips smoothly into the higher gears. Interestingly, there's none of the time lapse jerk that you sometimes experience with automatics.

Power output of the Beluga is a mere 5bhp at 6000rpm which means that it isn't exactly grand prix material. Nevertheless the initial acceleration is adequate enough to leave most dozy car drivers behind at the traffic lights — for the first twenty yards at least. The only time its lack of power becomes a problem is when you're travelling on a fast dual carriageway. With a top speed of only 45mph you



4.5 litre Beluga fuel tank is situated out of the way under seat

find yourself being hustled from the rear as cars and trucks behind you in the slow lane try to force their way past. The only thing to do in those circumstances is not to move over into the gutter but to defend your position on the road. It can be a temper fraying business though.

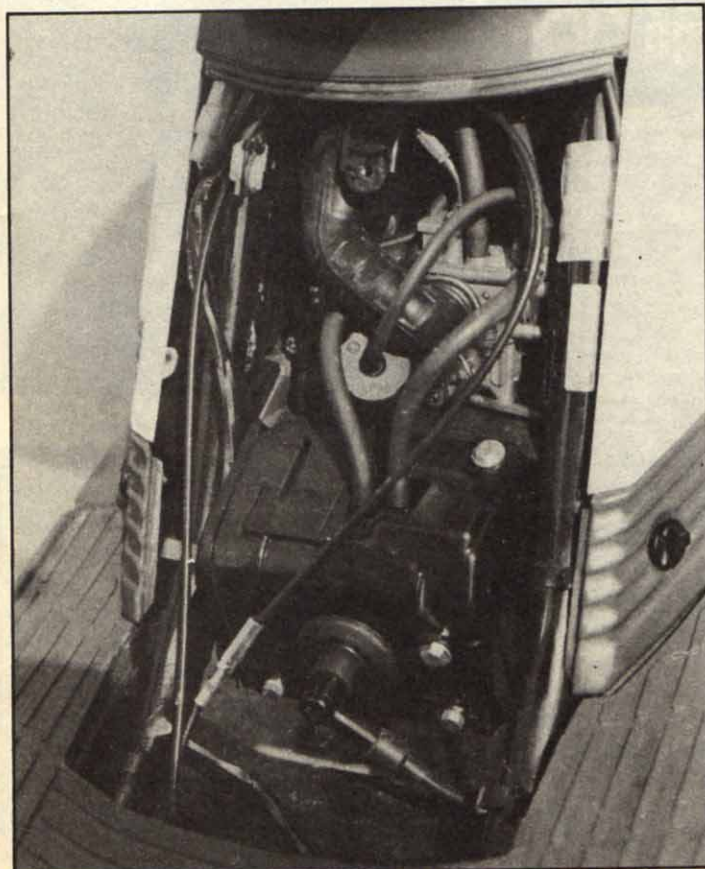
I tried the Passola before riding the Beluga and found that the Beluga was a much more satisfactory machine to ride. For one thing it's a lot bigger and more solid than the Passola which makes for a more reassuring ride.

Even so, riding the Beluga for the first time is a little disconcerting, particularly if you've ridden a motorcycle before. Because there's no tank for your knees to grip you feel as though you're sit-

ting on some sort of motorised roller skate. Secondly, the wheels are so small that any change of direction is fairly sudden.

For anyone investigating two-wheeled transport for the first time, however, the Beluga must be an attractive proposition, particularly to the kind of person who doesn't need to cover large mileages. It's so dead easy to ride and park that it soon became popular with fellow *Biker* staffers needing to make short, sudden trips into town.

I'm not sure I care for this growing interest in short-haul commuter bikes but there's no denying that as an around-town, ultra-convenient transport system it would be hard to better the Beluga.



Beluga's engine is a trusty two-stroke 80cc single developing 5bhp

Passola 50

Yamaha's super little short-trip shopper now features electric start for even easier commuting

The ever-increasing number of Yamaha Passolas seen around town these days (particularly in the hands of women) must surely be proof that the shopper/commuter bike is here to stay — whether we purist motorcyclists like it or not.

However, whereas the Beluga is at least a fun machine to ride the Passola is strictly functional. Its job is to provide cheap and efficient transport and fun and restricted fifties are not synonymous in my book.

In fact, fear was the first emotion I experienced on picking up the Passola from Yamaha's Chessington base. As I headed back to London on the fast three-lane A3 I soon became acutely aware of the little machine's limitations.

A top speed of just 35mph means you can expect to be

passed by just about everything on the road. Also, the Passola is so light, and its wheels so small, that any crosswind has it bobbing around like a cork in a stream. In time, however, I got used to its quirks and its virtues eventually won my grudging respect. It's when you get the bike off the open road and into the snarled-up streets of the city that you begin to appreciate its usefulness.

The biggest problem with the Passola is that pint-sized motor. It's a restricted 50cc, single-cylinder, two-stroke unit that produces a dinky 2.8bhp at 6000rpm. Covering long distances is hard work. The Passola is strictly for short-trip shopping and commuting. Indeed, I took it to my local supermarket one Saturday, zipped it through the traffic, parked it on the pavement, dumped all the goodies

Yamaha Passola 50

in the basket afterwards and was home in half the time it takes me to do it by car. No wonder the ladies love the thing.

Another feature everyone is sure to appreciate is its ease of operation. There's no clutch or gears, transmission being taken care of by means of a two-speed automatic gearbox with fully enclosed chain final drive. It's also got both electric and kick starting facilities and it simply couldn't be easier to ride. The brakes are operated by handlebar levers although I wasn't too impressed by the front brake's effectiveness.

The Passola's handling is difficult to describe in normal biking terms. It's a bit like being strapped to a powered baby-chair but in time you do get used to it.

But whatever its faults may be, there's no denying that the machine has a definite appeal to a certain section of the community. And there's little doubt that that community will buy enough of them to keep the Passola on our roads for some time to come.



Pretty little Passola uses restricted 50cc single-cylinder, two-stroke motor giving only 2.8bhp

READOUT

Passola SA50 Beluga CV80

Performance

Maximum speed

Fuel consumption

Overall

Engine

Type

Bore & stroke

Capacity

Compression ratio

Carburation

Claimed bhp at rpm

Claimed torque at rpm

Transmission

Electrical system

Cycle parts

Frame

Suspension

Tyres

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase

Seat height

Overall width

Ground clearance

Weight

Fuel tank capacity

PRICE

Warranty

Supplied by

35mph

125mpg

Two-stroke single

40 x 39.2mm

49cc

6.0:1

Single 12mm Y12Pcarb

2.8bhp (2.10kW) at 6000

0.39kg-m (3.82Nm) at 4000

Two-speed automatic, chain

final drive

CDI ignition, electric start

Telescopic forks front,

swing arm with twin

dampers rear

2.75-10 Inoue front

2.75-10 Inoue rear

1115mm

715mm

615mm

110mm

51kg

3 litres

£289

12 months/unlimited mileage

Mitsui UK Ltd, Oakcroft Rd.,

Chessington, Surrey

45mph

95mpg

Two-stroke single

49 x 42mm

79cc

7.0:1

Single 13mm VM13 carb

5bhp (3.7kW) at 6000

0.72kg-m (7.0Nm) at 4000

Two-speed, V-belt

automatic; gear final drive

CDI ignition, electric/kick start

Telescopic, bottom

link forks front; pivoted

swingarm rear

3.50-10 Inoue front

3.50-10 Inoue rear

1200mm

757mm

670mm

110mm

80kg

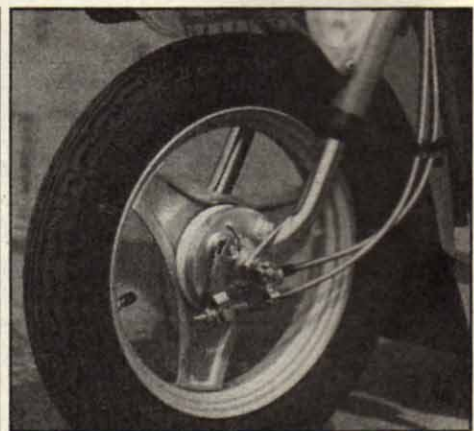
4.7 litres

£545

12 months/unlimited mileage

Mitsui UK Ltd, Oakcroft Rd.,

Chessington, Surrey



Tiny wheels are shod with 10 inch Inoue tyres



Chain final drive is fully enclosed; single damper at rear

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