

# ATTACK OF THE WHEELIE MONSTER

*Featuring a Fantastic Suspension and a Questionable Motor*

**By the Dirt Bike Staff**

This is the year of the 175. When all the 1980 models were being introduced, way back at the beginning of the year, we went from show to show checking out the latest iron and by far, the biggest improvements were happening in the 175 class.

Kawasaki would introduce their Uni-Trak woodser and try to finally snatch a piece of the market they'd long been overlooking. Suzuki's PE was bristling with aluminum and magnesium, and looked as if it might finally satisfy the snivelers at DB. Yamaha's IT would be wearing a reservoir on the mono and a pair of reworked YZ forks, and looked like a real killer—finally. The KTM looked as gnarly as ever.

Slowly, but surely, the bikes are getting tested. For some reason, the 175s have been as elusive as eels to us, and two months ago was the first time we slung a leg over the KDX—the first big four 175 we've tested this year (not including the Honda XR, which we consider in a different class). After 60 days and nearly 1000 miles on the odometer, the Kawasaki was going to be hard to beat, but we've been holding back any decision until all the candidates have been accounted for.

Which brings us to the IT175. We've been pounding on the medium-light-weight Yamaha for about a month now, and are ready to commit ourselves to an opinion: The suspension is as good as, or better than, anything we've felt so far on a woods bike; and



the motor . . . well, the motor has a few problems.

#### **Horsepower—or The Lack of**

The first run through the gears of the IT is likely to be impressive. On a dead level, which is probably the first place anyone is likely to start, the Yamaha snaps off smartly with an upper mid-range punch calculated to open even the most jaded eyes. We first rode the bike on a motocross track while testing a few racers, and the IT had very little trouble keeping up on a twisty course. The top-end power was good, but motocrossing isn't what the bike was made for, so we aimed it for the hills and buzzed off.

The first piece of steep ground came

up, and we automatically downshifted a gear. A few more feet, and one more gear. Five or six yards, and another gear—what's this, first already? Next thing we knew, it was clutch-slipping time, and on the last steep part of its first hill, the IT ground to a halt—stalled. Ran out of power.

We chalked it up to rider error, rolled back down, and tried it again. This time, start in second, with a little run at the hill. The IT revs its guts out till the carb starts moaning, and then a quick stab to first, a few more yards and . . . gag! Stopped three feet from the top. Hmmm. What's going on here? This is the hill the KDX could almost take in second, and the Yammie gags out in first.

The problem is simple. No low end. The IT has just enough torque to start off with no hassle, but with obstacles in the way, an awful lot of clutch-slipping is needed. The motor is a light flywheel revver, and nothing really happens until well past mid-range, and then everything tears loose in a rush. So fast, in fact, that a rider inexperienced with the IT may pull it over backwards on the first couple of hills, or wheelies, attempted. Yamaha has gone all-out to make the IT175 exciting, but sadly, didn't stop soon enough.

There are, however, a few things that can be done to improve the situation. We've been working with the IT and can suggest three modifications:

1. The air box is choking the motor.





**The 175's forks are the best yet offered by Yamaha for the IT's.**

Either open up some holes or louvers in the stock box, or install a box from a YZ, which will bolt right on. Cutting holes in the box is the cheapest alternative, but it's not the right answer if the waterproofing is affected. The YZ box is hardly waterproof.

2. Replace the 82.5 powerjet with a #85 (one step richer). Absolutely necessary if you make the air box breathe better.

3. Like the air box, the silencer is also strangling the motor—too much back pressure. The best cure for this is modifying a silencer from a '79 IT175 to fit, or using a good accessory model made for the IT. DO NOT remove the silencer and run with an open pipe—the overall power will be reduced to zilch and the bike will be unbelievably noisy.

On top of all this, we would suggest lowering the gearing on the IT. Stock gearing is good for nearly 80 mph, which is more than enough. The stock countershaft is a 12-tooth item, and if you want the chain to live, forget about going any smaller. The stock rear sprocket is a 44, and the largest Yamaha offers is a 46. It might be a good idea to check with Circle Industries to see if they make a larger sprocket for the Yammie. We would suggest a 48, which would make first gear almost too low, but would make the IT much more rideable.

On the positive side, the transmission is a smooth shifter, and there aren't any gaps between the cogs. The clutch action is light and positive, and as good as any Yamaha of the past.

#### **Plenty of Suspension**

The most exciting part of the IT is the suspension. The monoshock unit is straight off the YZ125, and is fully

adjustable for spring preload and rebound damping—right on the bike! The manual explains the basic adjustments, but in a nutshell, if you're looking for a slow, plush ride, you would want more rebound damping; and if you really thrash the bike you would adjust for less. The beauty of the beast would be realized in an enduro with one easy loop and one fast one—you can adjust the shock for the best ride in each, in a matter of seconds.

The mono should be adjusted while cold, for the most consistent results, and if you ever reach back to the adjustment knob (the "clicker") and find that it doesn't click anymore, stop everything and call on your Yamaha dealer. A lack of clicks means that the reservoir has lost pressure and needs to be charged again. This is a rare occurrence, and is caused by a leak in the



**Handlebar brush guards are useful in tight situations, and easily removable for anything else.**

system. It doesn't happen often, but it happened to us once on a YZ.

The forks are another steal from the YZs, shortened up for the woods, but with all the good internals. They feature 36mm tubes and full adjustability, for oil type and quantity, and air pressure.

The recommended air pressure is zero. Although you can adjust the pressure to suit whatever riding you may do, consider this: Sealed forks are going to stiffen up somewhat as they warm up—the internal air pressure increases. If your forks feel good with five pounds of air when cold, chances are they'll be too stiff after a half-hour of riding. Rather than increase the air pressure, try this: With the forks collapsed and the springs removed, check the level of the oil. It should be

in the neighborhood of 185mm from the top. To each fork leg, add enough oil to bring the level up 10mm, and make sure both legs are even. Button it all back up—with no air pressure—and go riding. Instant stiffer forks, with none of the harshness of high air pressure.

By increasing the oil level, you reduce the air space in the forks, and as there's less air to compress, the forks turn out to be stiffer in the mid to last part of travel while still retaining a soft ride at near full extension. It's possible to go even stiffer or softer—the instruction manual gives the level limits.

Once we had both ends adjusted to suit our tastes, the ride was excellent. Rough ground is no problem for the IT, and there are very few jolts transmitted through to the rider. The only bike that comes close to the Yamaha, in the suspension department, is the Kawa-



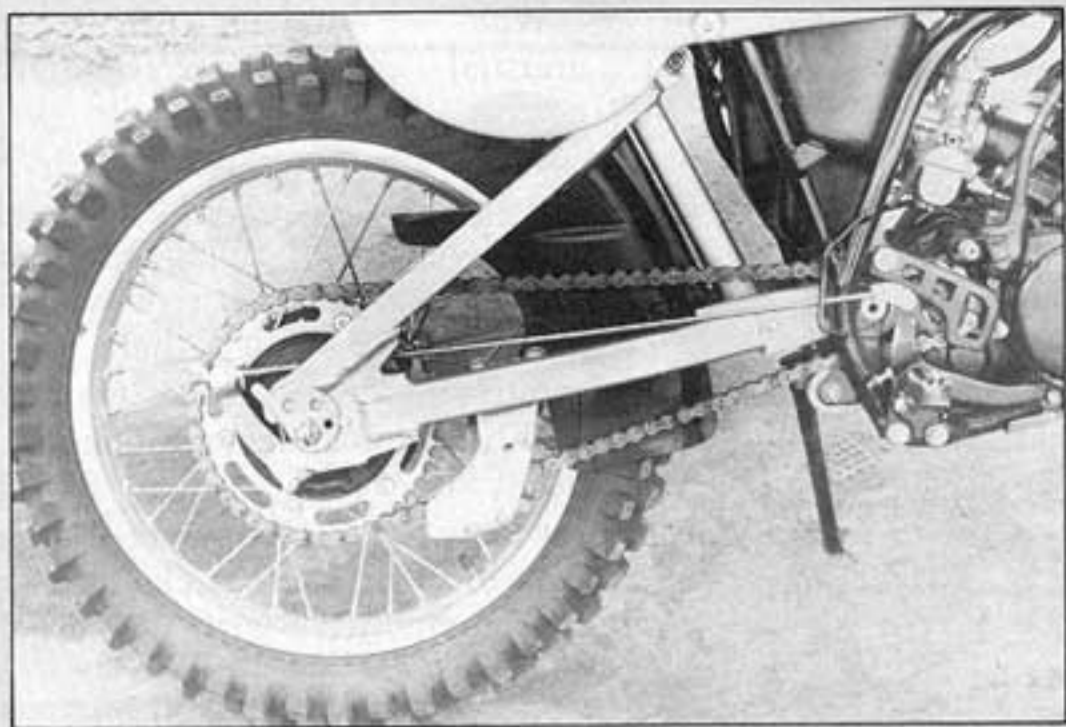
**IT features a light, compact motor which is going to have to be tuned on to become competitive.**

saki, but the Uni-Trak is not damping-adjustable.

As can be expected with a suspension this refined, the handling of the IT is very good, and considering the light weight of the 175, we'd have to say that this is the best-handling IT to date. The front end tracks and turns well, with only one problem: the tires. The stock IRCs work fine in wet loam, but in anything else they leave much to be desired. In dry, hard conditions, they slip and slide all over the place—very poor traction-grabbers. Once the rider fits up a good set of skins, the IT will be ready for anything.

#### **Bits and Pieces**

It's necessary to check the spokes often while the IT is being broken in. Ours loosened up a couple of times before they were firmly seated. The



*Aluminum swingarm helps keep the weight down. Brake and drive are on the same side this year.*





Changing the mono's damping characteristics is as easy as turning a knob.

brakes are good and strong when dry, but not too well shielded from mud and water. It takes a good bit of dragging to dry them out, and after a muddy run, we would strongly suggest cleaning the hubs and shoes.

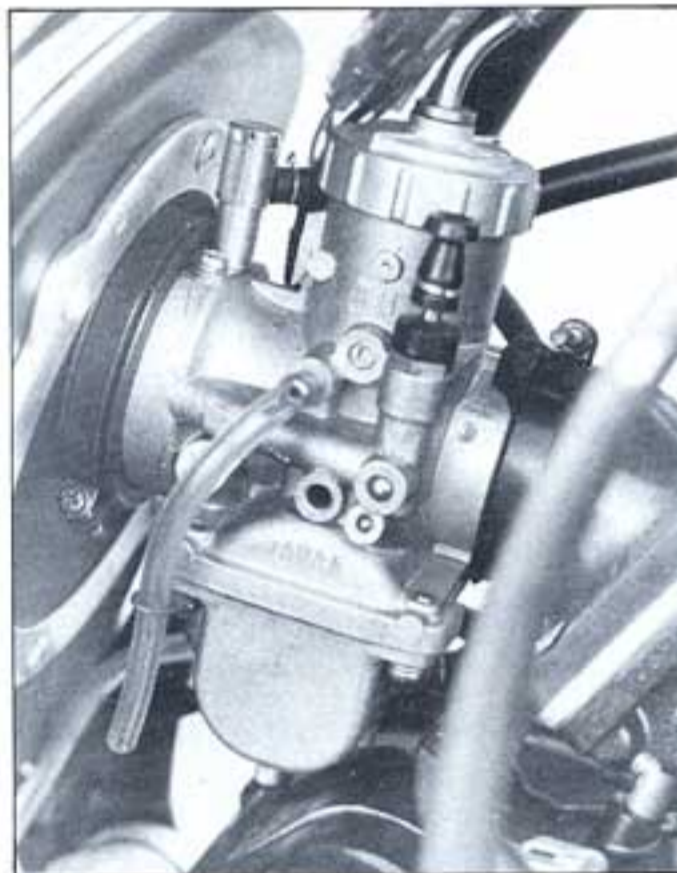
While we're on the subject, the rear wheel is a true quick-change/quick-maintenance unit. The chain is snail-cam adjustable, and the whole rear assembly slips out after just loosening the axle nut. We wish everyone used this system.

The gas tank holds nearly three gallons of mix, and should be good for at least 60 miles of hard riding. The petcock has a "reserve" position, a very handy thing to have on an enduro bike, but a small detail which is disappearing on many brands. Yamaha gets a "10" for this.

The footpegs are wide and easy to stay on, but they seem a little low and set back. We've had our feet kicked off the pegs a few times when the suspension bottoms out. Both the shifter and brake pedal are folding.

Like the rest of the ITs, the 175 comes stock with a pair of nifty brush guards on the handlebars. They'll save your hands quite a bit of abuse in tight trees and brush, and are easily removable if not needed. They'll also fit on nearly every bike made.

The air filter is easy to get to—the



New and unusual: The IT's 32mm Mikuni is fitted with a powerjet to reduce the chances of full-throttle seizure.

same system as on the YZs. Waterproofing is also good.

The IT has a nice little speedometer, with an odometer which is resettable in tenths or straight to zero. Marvelous!

The chain is a normal DID item which stretches quickly—keep an eye on it. The plastic chain guard is molded right around the rear tire, and does a good job of keeping mud buildup to a minimum.

## What's The Verdict?

What we wind up with is a rather unusual combination. A fantastic chassis and suspension wrapped around a marginal motor. In stock trim, all the IT is suited for is qualifier-type (wide-open) riding on relatively flat, open ground. In tight woods and mountainous terrain, there just isn't enough torque to cut it. Gearing down will help, but unless a quick and dirty (read "free") horsepower fix is discovered, the IT175 owner is going to have to spend a few bucks to make his bike competitive with the rest of the field. □

## YAMAHA IT175G Specifications

NAME AND MODEL	Yamaha IT175G
ENGINE TYPE	Two-stroke, reed valve, single
BORE AND STROKE	66mm x 50mm
DISPLACEMENT	171cc
CARBURETION	Mikuni VM32SS
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	210
POWER JET	P-8
JET NEEDLE	6F21-4
PILOT JET	60
SLIDE NUMBER	2.0
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	11 liters (2.91 gallons)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
LUBRICATION	Pre-mix
RECOMMENDED OIL	Yamalube
AIR FILTRATION	Oiled foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, multi-disc
TRANSMISSION	Six-speed
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	3.091
2	2.077
3	1.500
4	1.190
5	1.000
6	0.818
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	12/44
IGNITION	CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG:	Champion N-59G
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/QUALITY	Yes/yes/well-silenced
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Up-pipe, right side
FRAME, TYPE	Mild steel, single downtube
WHEELBASE	1420mm (55.9 inches)
GROUND CLEARANCE	290mm (11.4 inches)
SEAT HEIGHT	895mm (35.2 inches)
STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)	28.5 degrees
TRAIL	122mm (4.8 inches)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	217 pounds
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	3.00x21 IRC
REAR	4.10x18 IRC
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT	Air/spring forks, 250mm (9.84 inches)
REAR	Monoshock w/remote reservoir, 250mm (9.84 inches)
INTENDED USE	Off-road, enduro
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
PRICE, APPROX.	\$1399
DISTRIBUTOR:	
Yamaha Motor Co.	
6555 Katella Ave.	
Cypress, California 90630	
PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:	
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE	\$30.68
RINGS ONLY	\$7.98
CYLINDER	\$123.08
SHIFT LEVER	\$9.35
BRAKE PEDAL	\$8.84
FRONT SPROCKET	\$5.50
OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:	
HANDLING	90
SUSPENSION	98
POWER	80
COST	92
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	95
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	85