



YELLOW PERILS

320/250/200 MAJESTY YAMAHAS

Yamaha's 250cc trials machine has been in production now for seven years. And in that time it's virtually been unchanged. But in that period other manufacturers have marched on and the design of the Yamaha is really too long-in-the-tooth to cope with the tasks required in modern trials events.

Yet in 1974 Yamaha had won the Scottish Six Days Trial two years on the trot thanks to the able development of their machines by Mick Andrews. Without doubt the Yamaha was as good as anything in its class. That had been the direct result of a concerted effort by the factory to put trials on the map as far as Japan was concerned. Three years earlier, Yamaha, as now, were dominant in road racing and moto cross. But there was nothing to show on the trials front.

At this time Great Britain had the world riding talent. And Yamaha had the money. So they literally, bought the talents of Mick Andrews who had been developing the Spanish Ossas to championship-winning pitch.

He came up with the goods. And eager to flood the market, Yamaha set up production of the Andrews-developed machine soon after. But while you'll find them being happily used by clubmen pleased with its ruggedness and obliviousness to abuse, those in the top echelons of the sport have long regarded the TY250 as a non-starter for national trials in its standard trim.

For a start, the chassis is out of date. While fork travel is adequate the damping is poor and rear-wheel movement is far too limited. Worse still, the ground clearance is far too tight for the demanding sections you find in today's trials.

But the basic components are excellent. The wheels and brakes are still the best in the business. And the 246cc reed-valve two-stroke engine had ample power with good mid-range torque though the reed sometimes limited revving out when you couldn't change up. The five-speed gearbox had three useful lower ratios and, very important for



Japan's only trials machines in production, Yamaha's TY models, are underpowered and out-of-date for the national class riders. *Charlie Harris* rides competitive conversions developed from Mick Andrews' works bike. *Photography by Tim Leighton-Boyce.*

most riders, the kick-start lever spun the motor through the primary gears.

Fashion, however, is as influential in the trials bike world as anywhere else. And as soon as the world-championship class riders started to take advantage of the powerful but demanding 325cc engines in their machines, then the ripples ran all the way through the sport. Despite them being more than a handful for Joe Soap, everyone wanted a 325.

Although the lessons learnt by Yamaha failed to reach the production line, Mick Andrews was still massaging his Amsterdam-based works bike to competitive trim two years ago before his move back to Ossa.

Ex-speedway and motocross rider John Shirt, a close friend of Mick, saw that there would be a market for such a machine, and asked if he could copy the last works Yamaha and put it into production. He had a ready-made demand and soon had so many enquiries that John and Mick started their own enterprise called Trial-Moto, based at Matlock, Derbyshire.

Nearby is Hawks Nest, the set of sections made famous by the Bemrose trial and the ideal location for testing.

You wouldn't recognise John Shirt's 320 Majesty Yamaha as being a modified TY250 when you ride it and the same goes for the appearance.

The tremendous torque from the motor is astounding. Hawks Nest, a deep water gully carved through a hillside with big boulders and ruts, was taken in the first three gears comfortably. The Majesty makes its finesse very obvious, but violent action will make you know it's the jumbo model that you're riding although the weight is much the same as the TY at around 192lb.

The extra power is provided by upping the capacity to 322cc by using an 80mm bore instead of the stock 70mm. Shirt presses in a new liner but retains the original 26mm Mikuni carburettor and reed-valve.