

## MINI-SHOOTOUT

# RM vs. CR vs. YZ

by the Staff of DIRT BIKE



Three of the hottest 125s around. In 1975 anyway.

### *In response to the 2619 letters we haven't received yet.*

"I weigh 123 pounds, I'm 14, and I watch all the *Star Trek* reruns. Which 125 should I buy?"

Perennial question. The answer used to be pretty obvious in the 125 class, subtitled the 125 Honda class. But time waits for no man, nothing is forever, this too shall pass and all that. Almost in tandem Yamaha released their YZ125 Monocrosser and Suzuki debuted the RM125 laydowner. Ever alert, our pulse on the finger of the nation, we matched the two newcomers to the "old" standby. Lined up the three bikes and took 'em ridin'. Probably just what you plan on doing. Arrange your own shootout and compare your notes to ours.

So how do the two new bikes stack up to the class favorite? Answer. Very well.

Drag racing. Hard to pick a clear-cut winner. The three bikes were close. Starts decided the winner generally. All three have different power patterns. The YZ provides a close ratio road racer burst of power

and it's time to shift again. The Elsinore runs longer before you have to shift, the power burst is not quite so radical. The Suzuki, the only five-speeder, doesn't seem to need the sixth gear. Less downshifting, a good power spread, a less radical power burst.

We tried some racing. Jim, Zeal and Bill (S.W.A.T.) Sherman switching bikes. Jim won two heats riding the Suzuki and Honda. Bill won one, riding the Suzuki.

Here are the comments that emerged from the riding sessions.

Zeal: I didn't like the Yamaha at first, but then I got used to it and it was neat. I ran into stuff I couldn't see in the dust and didn't even know it. The front end was better than I thought it was. The YZ is really zappy, it's got so much where it's got it. The CR seems to rev slower. The YZ was more tractable in the drag racing. I had to tiptoe on the RM. But I'd take the Suzuki.

Gunnar: The RM outperforms the CR in almost every respect. It's got

good, wide power for a 125, as good or better than any other stocker, and it's matched very well to the five-speed tranny. The Yamaha YZ125 has a little more maximum beans but has a narrower powerband which makes more shifting necessary. The Suzook eliminates quite a few shifts on the MX track, which makes up for it. The RM has the best suspension to date for a 125. Better than the 125 monoshock? It's not by much, but I think so, for two reasons. First, it's got more rear wheel travel than the Yammie, but most important, the Suzie is more comfortable at slow speeds, and it seems to fit all kinds of riders and tracks and works excellently without either spring or dampening adjustments. The new gas pressurized Kayaba shocks are using the old DeCarla patent with a floating seal between the oil and the gas (same as Bilstein). I can't recall bottoming the RM shocks. You feel the Yamaha bottom. It coil binds. The Yammie can certainly be dialed in, if

you have the equipment and the knowledge, and then it would be superior, but most guys have neither. The YZ was always straight even though the suspension was not as comfortable. The front suspension of the YZ and RM seem equal (and good) and better than the Honda.

The RM engine sits very high and consequently the CG is located higher, but it handles very well.

Where does all this leave the Honda CR125? Behind; the rougher the track, the further behind. It's lacking the good suspension. It's still up in the air as to which bike to buy, though. There's so much good stuff available for the CR, engine and suspension, but the RM looks good.

Chet: I never did like the CR. I even preferred the TM to the CR. The Suzuki is much more stable. I like the kind of power it puts out. Both the YZ and the Suzuki corner well, but the Suzuki is easier. The tall end takes getting used to, but I'd take the RM.

George: The YZ is too cramped. It has no low end, a fat mid-range, the narrowest powerband. Suzuki has a winner first time out. It's too skittery, but except for the bars it felt like a real motorcycle, a CZ naturally.

Len: The CR has a pretty good rear end for a standard setup, but there's no comparison once you ride the YZ or the RM. The YZ power is too narrow and frantic for me. The CR's is better, but the RM's is easiest to handle. You can take some corners without downshifting the Suzuki. The YZ rear end feels stiff, but you leave the power on and it tracks really straight. I liked the YZ least. Forward mounted S&Ws or Koni GPs, laid down Girlings or the Strate-Trac setup would make the CR comparable with the other two.

Reliability? Haven't had the first problem yet with my CR. They hold up as long runners in Baja and the desert too. The RM seems like it's going to be a reliable bike. We had problems with our test YZ. For the money the Suzuki is hard to beat as a go-out-and-run-it-stock motorcycle.

Jim: The CR front end steers better, on a rough track or a TT-type corner. There's less washout and it tracks better. Even when the rear end starts hopping you can point it where you want to go and it won't let you down. On the jumps the Yamaha seemed to want to spring off higher, but it landed and tracked straight. The YZ would find its line a little better accelerating out of the bumpy corners. Maybe the

laydown arrangement on the RM causes a little more wheelspin.

The Honda engine ran the strongest. It has less low end than the Suzuki, but it pulls a little longer. The YZ has a really neat mid-range. The CR is the best slider. I noticed the front end on the RM seemed to want to tuck under every so often, it just didn't feel as stable. The front end seems better, the rear isn't as smooth, but it seems to put the power down just a little better and track a little straighter. The Honda rear end is evil compared to the other two bikes. And to think that just six months ago it seemed so good. I'd pick the Yamaha.

Don: I like the YZ over the Suzuki. I'm willing to admit the Suzuki is better for motocross. It's more stable and the forks are better. The YZ rear end is too stiff, but get it dialed in and it's potentially better. The front end seems nicer. The YZ feels faster and I prefer the six-speed box. I just feel more natural on the YZ. The RM is better on the slower stuff. I feel more confident on the YZ in a jump. The powerband on the Suzuki seems wider. I like the YZ better as a desert bike. It has higher top speed. It feels longer, whether it is or not. You can sit further back more comfortably for desert racing. The Suzuki seems really good for reliability.

Anonymous Expert: The Suzuki was superior. The power had the broadest range and was easiest to control. The suspension is better than the Yamaha's. The Honda motor has the most potential for super tuning, but the Suzuki engine has potential. The YZ is the fastest of the three stock, but it's road-racer-type power. The YZ front end was really washing out in the scrambles-type corners.

Denise (She races a CR125 in the desert): The RM is really tall for me but I liked it. The rear end is so much better than my CR and I didn't have to

shift as much. I'd like to have one.

Joe (TV stuntman who just bought an RM): It's the only way to go, I tell you.

Dick (Another TV stuntman): I'm going to get an RM.

Get the drift? Comparing the stock bikes, the CR is out of it because of the old-fashioned rear end. But we don't foresee a massive abandonment of the Elsinore. Just the appearance of some Yamahas and Suzukis alongside them at the starting line. Reasons. Nearly everybody already has the CR. Hop-up info, kits and accessories are abundant. There are several ways to make the CR rear end competitive with the YZ and the Suzuki. Most serious racers have already made the switch. Marty Smith rode a modified CR instead of his factory RC at the first National this year. He used a Red Line swingarm and S&W shocks. Dick Miller really likes the DG Performance laydown arrangement with gas Girlings on his Baja Elsie.

The YZ seems faster, because the power burst is the most radical, but it also seems to have the shortest power range. The RM is the easiest bike to ride because of the nature of its power. The RM rear end seemed spot-on for everyone who rode it, from a 100-pounder up to 200-pounders. The YZ as delivered seemed stiff even for a 200-pounder.

Conclusion? Comparing stock bikes, the majority of riders preferred the Suzuki. There is more proven power potential in the Elsinore, but it has to be rear ended to be competitive. YZ lovers have something to smile about and Suzuki is going to sell a lot of RMs. The days of the 125cc Honda racing class seem numbered. You're going to be seeing a lot more yellow out there mixing it up with the red, white and blue.

