

# SINGLE SURVIVORS

WHO'D BUY A 250cc BIKE THESE days? Learners daren't touch them because from October 1 this year they're going to be restricted to 125cc. Qualified riders, or those with driving

tests booked before the end of September, worry about resale values and the supply of spare parts once manufacturers lose interest in the class. But 250s can be great fun to ride with a sporty power-to-weight ratio, they're economical compared with bigger bikes and they make ideal city bikes if you can't stand the idea of a moped.

Tested here are three 250cc single cylinder bikes which we think will survive the October 1 L-plate restriction. Honda's 250RS, MZ's 250ETZ and Yamaha's SR250 may not seem as desirable as a watercooled LC

but they're considerably cheaper to run, if a little less frantic.

And these tests are special in that they've been conducted over a longer period than is usual for magazine reports, in two cases by owners of private machines. Streetlife columnist Peter Watson reports on 6000 miles astride his Honda, Peter Fisher took to the MZ when his precious 750 Desmo Ducati rebelled against commuting into The Big Metrop, and Assistant Editor Julian Ryder came to like our long term Yamaha test bike, even if the Clapham Cowboy image wasn't to his liking.

## Honda CB250RS

IT WAS THE BEST SMALL BIKE I'D ridden in 1980 and it was available at the right sort of price. All I had to do was crack a decent trade-in deal on the Yamaha SR500 (5000 miles on the clock, top end recently rebuilt with warranty parts, fingers crossed behind back) and I'd have a good-looking hack that I could run cheaply and work hard. That was last June, and 6000 miles on my Honda CB250RS have merely confirmed those hopes and reinforced the notion that it was a good buy.

Almost all the problems I've had with the little red machine were down to the discount dealership I bought it from. They eventually came up with an undamaged front mudguard and a new seat to replace the torn original. The bike even survived its first — and only — 'service' there, but the missing battery breather tube gave me a real headache. I'd spotted it wasn't there at home, but by then the damage was done, for a section of frame tube and the anodised battery case soon showed signs of acid damage. Washing the whole area in a strong alkaline solution (washing soda), I stripped the tubing back to bare metal and brush painted it with red oxide primer and black gloss. It looks okay now, but the battery case is less presentable.

If that was a bit of a downer, discovering that this little four-valve motor ain't quite as easy to service as it might be was another. For starters, I spotted that the front forks — like those fitted to early RD250LCs — didn't sport drain plugs. I wonder how much this penny-pinching saves Honda? Perhaps they expect you to smack up the front end before the damping fluid needs changing or the seals fail. The company line is apparently that the oil doesn't need changing in service, so there. Yet this year's new RS model, the electric-start Deluxe, is fitted with drain plugs. Huh.

Worse comes when you want to clean the wire mesh oil filter and adjust the balancer chain. The recommended service intervals are 12,000km/7200 miles and 18,000km/10,800 miles respectively. To accomplish this you have to: remove the side panels and seat, detach the kickstart, the rear brake lever, its stop plate; disconnect the valve lifter and clutch cables; split an electrical jack plug under the saddle; unfasten four cable ties on the CDI pickup wires; remove thirteen 8mm case bolts.

Honda obviously don't intend you to do the job and they don't even give you an 8mm wrench in the toolkit. However, I undertake all my own maintenance and the foregoing ritual is a time-wasting hassle. Once you have the case off the thin steel washer on the kickstart shaft falls out, followed by the clutch bearing. You need pliers to remove the oil filter and its essential to spend £10 plus on the four-language shop manual before you begin. This is partly because adjusting the balancer chain — which you can't see — must be done according to the book and no other way. As the Good Book advises, remove the bolt that secures the adjusting quadrant so that it moves across freely. Then back it off against the spring by one whole division.

Replacing the right-hand side case is just as tricky. You may have remembered to replace the washer and the bearing, but unless you hold

LONG TERM GIANT TEST



## Yamaha SR250SE

IT MAY SEEM A BIT ODD TO INCLUDE Yamaha's SR250 in this test along with such acknowledged classics as the Honda and the MZ. After all it's a US Custom and really hasn't got any right to be taken seriously, has it? Well, yes and no. In no way does the styling add to what is otherwise a very handy little motorcycle. But the specification and the viceless little single cylinder motor all but make up for the silly riding position.

You see, the SR was actually designed as a factory chop using as many components as possible from the XT250 trail bike. The motor, obviously, is externally the same as the XT but has been deprived of 10cc and four horses. The carb doesn't have an accelerator pump as on the trail bike and the compression ratio is lower. But unlike the trail bike the SR has 12 volt electrics including an electric start, plus a full complement of instruments. Similarly the chassis looks like it could have been modified from a trail bike: wire wheels, flexy indicators, snail-cam chain adjusters, long travel fork, short fat rear wheel, tall thin front wheel... but it wasn't. The major advantage of this bike is that it was designed this way from the start; it isn't a roadster with the standard small tank, fat and thin wheels, stepped seat and high bars factory chop treatment. As a result the finished product is nice to ride and good to look at, and I say that as one who is far from keen on the whole factory custom idea.

Most of the credit must go to the motor. Despite its simple two-valve cylinder head layout and low compression ratio it deals out enough torque low down to deal with any 250 Dream. It continues to pull smoothly and predictably from 2000rpm and delivers power in a stepless flow up to the red line. In town it's a lovely motor to use, you can open it up from any speed in any gear and it'll pull. What's more it sounds nice, occasionally even popping back on the overrun. It's the sort of power delivery that makes people fall in love with single cylinder motorcycles.

The frame and suspension are quite capable of dealing with any demands the motor can put on them, and the big wide bars make it so easy to dump the thing into tight corners and roundabouts that I actually started enjoying my daily run across London. Then the front brake started playing up severely. The 180mm (7in) diameter drums front and rear just aren't up to the job of regularly bringing the SR and its pilot to a halt, despite its light weight — over 120lb less than a Dream. If you add a pillion — not a good idea on that seat, terminal bum ache sets in after a very short distance — then the front brake really does give up.

I was adjusting the cable almost every time I took the bike out and it doesn't take long to run out of adjustment. The trouble is that there is such a long run of cable that regular hard use ends up with the lever coming back to the bar. After a selection of near tailgating episodes I parted with one penny short of eleven quid for new shoes and a cable. Inside the brake drum there was a considerable amount of dust but the shoes showed little signs of wear after 3700 miles. Cleaning the drum out and just fitting the replacement cable improved things a little but not enough for my peace of mind. Installing the new shoes made things a whole heap better. The strange thing was that the shoes hadn't worn, just taken on a kind of glazed appearance.

Maybe getting different frictional material stuck on the shoes would be best.

I've gone on about the front brake for so long because it is the only thing that stops the SR from being a real winner. When Yamaha have taken the trouble to change the motor, build a new chassis and produce a tank and seat to suit it seems a little curious that they spoil it with a brake off a secondhand trail bike.

Everything else works nicely, the electric starter did its job every time, a good job too because the kickstart shaft's hole in the engine casing is blanked off. The headlamp and the rest of the electrics are straight off the larger bikes in Yamaha's range, more than can be said for the SR125 which makes do with distinctly budget equipment. The only thing the SR doesn't get is the self-cancelling indicator system. The switch console may look just like the self-canceller equipment and indeed it has the same self-centering, push to cancel operation, it's just that the electronics aren't fitted. Why I don't know, everything else on the SR is top notch stuff.

Okay, so it's a well equipped, well thought out machine but now we come to the side of the SR dictated by fashion. The riding position is surprisingly comfortable, even on moderately long runs but don't buy an SR if your trips involve regular 50 miles plus. In town it's fine, fun even, but in the wet that thin section front tyre has difficulty maintaining its grip... The major disadvantage is that the width of the bars makes filtering through lines of traffic a chancy occupation. I collected more car wing mirrors in my first few days with the SR than I have in the rest of my London biking put together.

Leaving the front brake out of the discussion for a while, the bike behaved perfectly and was easy to look after. The air filter is the washable foam type and lives under the left side panel. The oil filter is under the circular cover in the front of the right crankcase. It's easy to get at and to fit a replacement but you have to bleed the oiling system afterwards. This involves replacing everything except a small hex-head screw in the top of the aforementioned circular cover. This should be left loose, the new oil poured into the sump and the engine started up. Let it tickover until oil appears from under the loose bleed screw, tighten it up and everything's okay. The tappets are got at via quite large plates but are a little difficult to measure as they are tucked away below the level of the inspection cover.

If they're a little awkward, the chain tensioning system is great. Slacken the axle nut and the rear brake operating rod, rotate the serrated snail cams to their next position and tighten everything up again. Just like that... it's been common practice on dirt bikes for years and it's good to see it getting onto road machinery.

If the Yam's equipment and civilised nature are good reasons for looking at it more than once if you're in the market for a 250 then the fuel consumption makes it impossible to ignore. Would you believe regular returns of over 70mpg with any main road work involved and mid to high 60s from continuous town use. Only severe abuse got our worst figure of exactly 60mpg.

The best part of two and a half thousand miles passed under the wheels of the SR while it was in our possession during which time fuel consumption averaged out at 65mpg, oil consumption was negligible, and the only unplanned expenditure was on the brake shoes and cable. Servicing, ie changing the oil and its

## PINEWAYS

### MOTORCYCLES

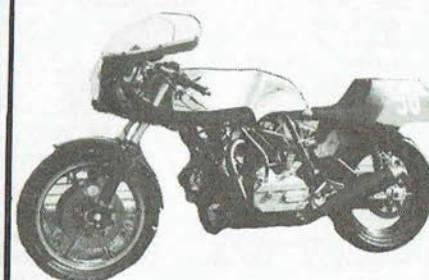
WE DON'T JUST  
SELL THEM, WE  
RIDE THEM AND  
RACE THEM!



PINEWAYS "STUCCHI"  
MONZA £1995



PINEWAYS MOTO GUZZI V50  
MkIII. Full dress with  
panniers & three part fairing.  
£1925



PINEWAYS 950 DUCATI  
Road or race trim. Built to order.  
Whatever stage of tune you require.  
Ring PIETRO on CATERHAM 40249.  
Price on request.

### PINEWAYS

182-184 COULSDON RD, CATERHAM  
Leave A23 near Purley onto B2030 only 5 miles  
from Croydon.

SALES  
CATERHAM  
48976

RING

SERVICE AND  
PIETRO  
40249

24hrs answering service.

# CHECKOUT

	HONDA CB250RSA	MZ 250ETZ	YAMAHA SR250SE
Price (inc VAT and Sales Tax).....	£844	£699.75	£829
Guarantee.....	12 months/unlimited mileage	6 months/6,000 miles	12 months/unlimited mileage
Engine.....	sohc 4-valve single	2-str single	sohc single
Bore x stroke.....	74 x 57.8mm	69 x 65mm	73.5 x 56.5mm
Capacity.....	248cc	243cc	239cc
Compression ratio.....	9.3:1	10:1	8.9:1
Carburation.....	30mm Keihin	30mm BVF	32mm Mikuni
Ignition.....	Coil/battery with transistorised advance, magnetically triggered	Coil/battery, emergency start, contact breakers	Coil/battery with transistorised advance, magnetically triggered
Air filter.....	Foam element, washable	—	Foam element, washable
Oil filter.....	Wire mesh screen	—	Paper element, disposable
Oil capacity.....	2 litres (3.6 pints)	—	1.3 litres (2.3 pints)
Max power @ rpm.....	19kW (26bhp) @ 8500	15.5kW (21bhp) @ 5500	12.6kW (17bhp) @ 7500
Max torque @ rpm.....	2.24kgm (16.2 ftlb) @ 7000	2.8kgm (ftlb) @ 5200	1.8kgm (13ftlb) @ 5000
Power per litre.....	76.6kW (104.8bhp)	63.8kW (86.4bhp)	50kW (68bhp)
Power to weight.....	6.7kg per kW (10.8lb per bhp)	9kg per kW (14.6lb per bhp)	9.8kg per kW (16lb per bhp)
Clutch.....	Multiplate, wet	Multiplate, wet	Multiplate, wet
Primary drive.....	Straightcut gears	Helical gears	—
Gearbox.....	5 speed	5 speed	5 speed
Electrical system.....	12V 9Ah battery, 110W alternator, 40/45W headlamp	12V 9Ah battery, 210W alternator, 40/45W headlamp	12V 12Ah battery, alternator, 40/45W headlamp

## CYCLE PARTS

Tyres.....	Bridgestone Mag Mopus	Pneumat	Yokohama
Front.....	3.00 x 18in	2.75 x 18in	3.00 x 19in
Rear.....	4.10 x 18in	3.50 x 18in	120/90 x 16in
Brakes.....			
Front.....	241mm (9.5in) disc	280mm (11in) disc	180mm (7in) sts drum
Rear.....	152mm (6in) drum	160mm (6.3in) drum	180mm (7in) drum
Suspension.....			
Front.....	Coil spring telescopic fork	Coil spring telescopic fork	Coil spring telescopic fork
Rear.....	2 shock absorbers, 5 spring preload positions	2 shock absorbers, spring preload positions	2 shock absorbers, 5 spring preload positions

## EQUIPMENT

Indicators.....	Yes	Yes	Yes
Electric start.....	No (Yes on deluxe)	No	Yes
Trip odometer.....	Yes	No	Yes
Steering lock.....	Yes	Yes	Yes
Helmet lock.....	Yes	No	Yes
Others.....	Twin mirrors, locking fuel cap, alloy rims	Twin mirrors, tyre pump, puncture repair kit, full toolkit including feeler gauges, OD wheels	Twin mirrors, locking fuel cap, stepped seat

## DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase.....	1350mm (53.1in)	1380mm (54.3in)	1335mm (52in)
Overall width.....	730mm (28.7in)	900mm (35.4in)	990mm (39in)
Seat height.....	770mm (30.3in)	835mm (32.9in)	735mm (29in)
Ground clearance.....	160mm (6.3in)	165mm (6.5in)	180mm (7in)
Weight (with 1 gal fuel).....	127kg (280lb)	139kg (307lb)	124kg (273lb)
Fuel capacity.....	13 litres (2.9gal)	17 litres (3.7gal)	10.8 litres (2.4gal)

## PERFORMANCE

Top speed.....			
Prone.....	87.84mph	83.73mph	81.18mph
Sitting up.....	83.81mph	79.73mph	76.08mph
Standing 1/4-mile.....	16.5secs/76.06mph	17.3secs/71.66mph	18.2secs/68.33mph
Speeds in gears @ redline (MZ @ 6000rpm).....			
	(1) 31mph (2) 45 (3) 62 (4) 77 (5) 92	(1) 24mph (2) 38 (3) 54 (4) 69 (5) 85	(1) 26mph (2) 40 (3) 54 (4) 68 (5) 84
Fuel consumption.....			
Average.....	63mpg (4.48 l/100km)	60mpg (4.7 l/100km)	68mpg (4.1 l/100km)
Ridden hard.....	60mpg (4.7 l/100km)	45mpg (6.28 l/100km)	62mpg (4.5 l/100km)
Speedometer accuracy.....			
At indicated 30mph.....	27.66mph	29.08mph	28.3mph
At indicated 50mph.....	48.21mph	48.44mph	47.61mph
At indicated 70mph.....	69.41mph	69.9mph	70.06mph
Supplied by.....	Author's own bike	Author's own bike	Mitsui Machinery Sales, Oakcroft Road, Chessington, Surrey.



Above: Yamaha's XT250 big single began the XT250 trail which began the SR250 custom which... Worst point of the SR is its puny SLS drum front brake.

filter, cleaning the air filter and checking the tappets, takes around an hour. The finish which includes the obligatory US Custom overdose of chrome, was still looking good, and the only rust visible was in the end of the shorty silencer. Overall the SR exudes a nice, understated air of quality; all the trappings of big expensive machines are present and correct, the attention to detail is good and it's a real pleasure to ride, especially in town. The one major fault — and it is the only one — is that front brake. Why Yamaha went to the trouble of adding full instrumentation and 12V electrics to a trail bike engine, gave it a new frame and then left it with a painfully inadequate front stopper is beyond me.

One more thing's got me beaten. That delightful gutsy little motor is available in a trail bike and in US Custom format, so why no roadster styled along Seca lines? That would have given the RS a run for its money.

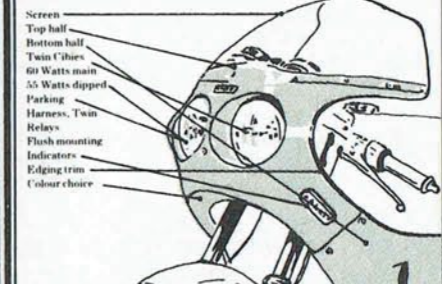
Julian Ryder

SO WHICH 250 SINGLE IS THE BEST? AS ever with decisions like this many factors must be considered. Without a doubt the Honda 250RS is the office favourite: its motor is a free-revving hard charger when you want yet can be plonked through town with ease. It's also the best equipped for everyday, all sorts of mileage, motorcycling, and currently being offered at discount prices which make the MZ look expensive.

The MZ has a certain charm, however, and its long term ease of maintenance, low spares prices and availability shouldn't be ignored. The fact that the RS and various MZs are popular among London's hard-riding despatch riders proves their toughness and economy. The sticking point here could just be down to a preference for a two or four-stroke motor, or the proximity of your dealer.

Yamaha's SR250 stands alone rather than as a direct rival for the RS or ETZ. The custom styling doesn't take every rider's fancy but despite magazine testers' general dislike of the concept, they sell. Again, the motor is a strong unit and cheap on fuel. Its main opposition is Kawasaki's similar Z250G or there is a twin custom from Honda, the CM200T. □

## Cross bow EQUIPE



## The Complete Fairing

Whichever bike you own we have a CROSSBOW TWIN HEADLIGHT FAIRING to compliment it.

HONDA	SUZUKI	KAWASAKI
CX500	GS750	Z650
CB650	GS850	Z750
CB750	Katana 550	Z900
CB900	Katana 650	Z1000
MOTO GUZZI	YAMAHA	Z1000J
Le Mans	XJ550	DUKATI
V50 Monza	XJ650	All Models

Twin h/light % sports to fit most machines.

You can order by quoting your Access/Barclaycard no.

Send large SAE to: CROSSBOW EQUIPE (Free Catalogue Dept) 274 Haydens Rd., Wimbledon, London SW19 Tel: 01-543 5141

## PERFORMANCE & CUSTOM MOTORCYCLE PARTS



## LASER THE PERFORMANCE EXHAUST SYSTEM

Available in Chrome or Black Chrome for:—

<b>SUZUKI</b>	GSX250, GSX400, GS550, GS650, GS750, GS850, GS1000, GSX750, GSX1000, GSX1100 including Katanas.
<b>HONDA</b>	CB250/400N, CB400/4, CB500, CX500, CB550, CB650, CB750K&F, CB750KZ, CB750FA, CB900F, CB1100R, CBX1000.
<b>KAWASAKI</b>	Z250, Z400, Z500, Z550, GPz550, Z650, Z750, Z900, Z1000, Z1R, ST, GPz1100.
<b>YAMAHA</b>	XS250, XS400, XS750, XS850, XS1100, XJ550, XJ650, XJ750.

SUMMER SALE PRICES!!! 6 MONTH WARRANTY

All 2-1 systems only £67.50 inclusive  
All 3-1 systems only £89.00 inclusive  
All 4-1 systems only £89.00 inclusive  
All 6-1 systems only £135.00 inclusive

NICK PEPPER MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORIES  
31 Bolens Road, Wisbech, Cambs. Tel: (0945) 63510

## ROAD RIDER

FOR THOSE ITEMS NO ONE ELSE SEEMS TO STOCK

## DIAL-TYPE TYRE PRESSURE GAUGE

Every garage air-line seems to show a different pressure reading. It's critical on bikes, so make sure you check yours accurately.

£2.50 plus 50p P&P

## CABLE OILER (pneumatic)

Just slip the cable off the lever, fit the Oiler rubbers and screw together. Put a small amount of oil in the Oiler and screw down the top.

£3.50 plus 50p P&P

## GRAB-ONS GRAB ON GRIPS

£4.50 plus 50p P&P

## SPOTLAMP BRACKET

£1.95 plus 50p P&P

## "DRI-BIKE" COVER

Designed to be carried on the tank or tank-bag this cover is neat and convenient and will keep the wet off your essential parts. When packed, the cover & case can double-up as a cushion or pillow — a most useful and practical addition to your regular gear.

£10 plus £1.50 P&P

## FORK-OIL INJECTOR

£6.50 plus 50p P&P

## ANGLED TYRE-VALVE

No more hassles on the garage forecourt trying to find an airline that will fit around the rear discs or shaft drive. Simple, quick and easy.

£1.95 plus 30p P&P

## S&W MAXI & MINI PUMPS

See the pressure as you pump, without having to leave the gauge fitted to the bike. Ideal for off-road machines.

MAXI £8.50 MINI £6.50 + 75p P&P

## DUCT TAPE

Sticks like smelly stuff to a blanket! Totally waterproof and the ideal 'get you home' tool.

THREE ROLLS IN ASSORTED COLOURS for

£2.50 plus 75p P&P

## ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE 50p

MAIL ORDERS: Send cash with order to:

Road Rider Ltd FREEPOST 3008 Potters Bar, Herts. EN6 2BR.

TELEPHONE ORDERS:

Potters Bar 44808

Or call in and see the hundreds of goodies we stock at 10 Eastfield Parade, Forbes Avenue, Potters Bar, Herts. EN6 5ND.

NO STAMP NEEDED