2010 Yamaha YZ450F

Re-thinking the world's best racebike

From the graceful swoop of its "double-S" aluminum frame to its reversed engine with a backwards-leaning cylinder, the new YZ450F is looks – and is -- positively revolutionary. Everything is aimed at giving the YZ rider a competitive edge – easier to ride, more controllable and with better traction.

Take a look at the rear brake cable on the 2010 YZ450F. It's the only part on the entire motorcycle carried-over from the 2009 model. So when Yamaha says the oh-ten YZ is a clean-sheet redesign, they're not just slinging roost.

First, that crazy looking engine deserves some explanation. From the first moment a motor was mounted between two wheels engines have inhaled their fuel mixture from behind the cylinder and exhaled exhaust to the front. Probably for the protection of delicate carburetors, fuel lines and breathers. But with no carburetor to contend with, Yamaha engineers flipped things around by putting the intake at the front and the exhaust at the back, for a more compact design and mass centralization.

Below and behind the steering head is the airbox and a straight shot down to the Keihin electronic fuel injection system and 44mm throttle body. Radiator shrouds collect clean air and rams it into the air filter, getting it to the motor more directly and with less dirt and water than the typical ahead-of-the-back-wheel airbox placement.

The EFI has seven sensors and can automatically adjust fuel delivery by almost 50 percent. What's really cool is that Yamaha offers a handheld battery powered GYTR Power Tuner that lets you adjust the air/fuel mix and ignition timing at nine different points without the need for a computer. The memory function can save as many as nine custom maps that you can build off-line. More than 50 GYTR accessories are available for the new YZ.

Yamaha has abandoned their famous five-valve head in favor of four titanium valves. Spent gasses are jettisoned out the back of the engine into a twisting exhaust pipe and resonator hidden beneath the saddle and subframe. Quiet at low rpms, it sounds quite mean when the throttle is pinned. Other engine changes include a handy sight glass instead of a dipstick for checking engine oil. The end result is more low and mid-range power and an improvement in rideability.

Gone is the Y-shaped frame, replaced by a high-tech 16-piece aluminum "double-S" aluminum cradle that concentrates the weight of the machine into a small, centralized bundle between the rider's legs. Handling is lighter and tighter without sacrificing stability.

Out front the KYB speed-sensitive fork has grown to 310mm long while a bigger rear shock and larger piggyback reservoir keeps the rear suspension balanced. This is possibly the best stock suspension ever offered.

With its new frame, rotated engine design, adjustable fuel injection, mass centralization of even new styling, the 2010 YZ450F is as revolutionary as the first YZ450 that hit the dirt back in 2003. For talented riders it's a straight ticket to the center podium.

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