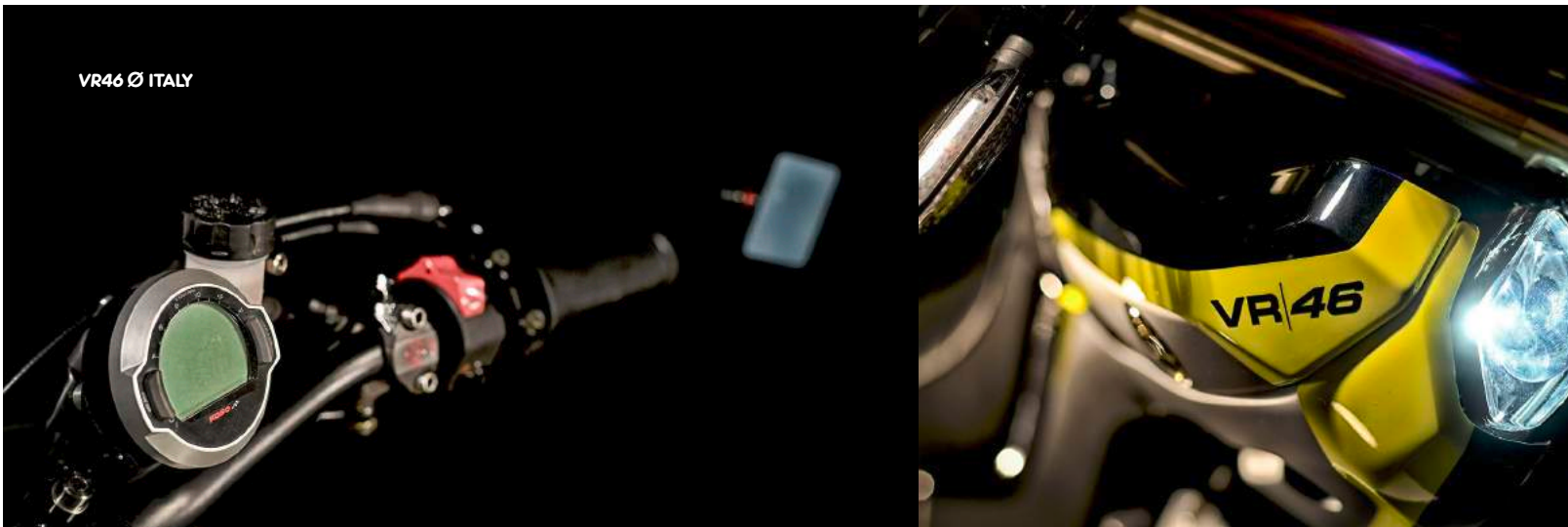


JUST WHAT  
**THE**  
DOCTOR  
ORDERED

Inspired by the legendary 1970's TZ750, this entirely unofficial Yamaha tracker was built for nine-time world champion Valentino Rossi

Words: Mike Armitage

Photography: VR46



*Evolved from the '84 FJ1100, Yamaha's old-school air-cooled four makes for one seriously big flat tracker*

Yamaha's sizeable XJR1300 might not appear the natural candidate for a flat track racer. But that's pretty much the point behind MYA, the 1251cc inline four created for Valentino Rossi – perhaps the greatest motorcycle racer of all time.

A nine-time champion with Grand Prix titles in 125cc, 250cc, 500cc and MotoGP classes, 'The Doctor' has a passion for all things two-wheeled. He grew up watching American racers such as Wayne Rainey, who'd perfected their bike control on dirt ovals, and was inspired by the legendary Kenny Roberts, who was as skilled on dirt as tarmac – and who famously won a flat track race on a bike powered by Yamaha's ludicrous TZ750 four-cylinder engine.

Like Roberts, Rossi has constructed his own Ranch – a huge dirt practice track at his home, on the outskirts of the village of Tavullia, Italy. Rossi owns the vast VR46 merchandising business, which also runs teams in the Moto3 and Moto2 world championships. MYA is the result of The Doctor's passion for dirt track and the creativity of VR46. Marco Riva, general manager for Yamaha Motor Racing and key in the bike's creation, talks us through the build.

**HOW DID THE PROJECT COME ABOUT?**

It is important to say that MYA (which comes from My Yamaha) is not an official Yamaha project. It is a personal venture, started by a few people who love of motorcycles, challenges and innovation.

The very first idea came during a meeting over pizza with Rodolfo Frascoli, a designer responsible for bikes including the Moto Guzzi Griso, Triumph Speed Triple and Moto Morini Scrambler. We were talking about the design of new production bikes, and how they're interesting from the technical perspective. But our common opinion, after pizza and good beer, was that the motorcycles are without a soul. Their design and development process is well organized, structured, efficient, and the quality of the products is very high. Our challenge was instead to think in a different way; to consider what we like, what we want to ride. Not to have a bike that's 100% efficient and perfect, but one able to create an immediate emotion – don't think about it, the emotions just come out without control.

The perfect word for it is 'Kando', a Japanese word for 'the simultaneous feeling of deep satisfaction and intensive excitement when you encounter something of

exceptional value'. My thoughts moved to the TZ750, the Beast of Kenny Roberts. His 1975 flat track bike used an inline four-cylinder two-stroke engine from a road racer – it was a unique bike that's still in the heart of fans. Rossi really likes Yamaha's XJR1300, and so I came up with a unique vision.

**WHEN DID YOU RUN IT PAST ROSSI?**

After a few months thinking about it, I had a chance to talk to Valentino. Knowing his vision and his spirit, I explained our crazy idea based around the four-cylinder four-stroke XJR and his immediate answer – smiling the way he always does when he likes something – was, "please start a study to see if it's feasible..."

Rodolfo and I started to think seriously and work on the idea. He designed two different solutions, one retro and the other more modern. Once we had designs, the kick-off meetings took place at VR46 and the Gym of Carlo, where Vale was training, in January 2015. Vale was very curious, checking the details on one-to-one scale drawings and studying sketches, and then selecting the modern styling solution.

**HOW INVOLVED WAS THE BUILD?**

I started to search for an XJR and found one thanks to a friend, Giovanni Buratti, at the Motoshop Parma dealership. I managed the project in terms of costs and schedule, bought and collected parts, and reported to Vale as the project developed. But our mechanic Francesco was the person most involved on the bike – he's a real master, able to solve any problem with his unique working experience and very high level of knowledge. His garage became the main workshop for MYA.

Francesco completely disassembled, checked and then re-assembled the engine. He modified the frame, adapting it to accept the new bodywork, and also refined the fuel lines, brake caliper installation, swingarm, fuel tank and many other technical aspects.

Many of the parts are actually from Yamaha's accessory catalogue. However, the bodywork, fuel system, exhaust, rims and hubs are unique, designed and manufactured specifically for MYA. Akrapovic accepted our challenge, and did

*Vale will set up the gear ratios and rest of the bike*

the R&D work to develop a complete exhaust system. It's simply a piece of art. Tuning specialist Peppo Russo then set-up the carburation. The Öhlins distributor for Italy, Andreani, modified the suspension for its new role, and Brembo supplied the calipers and master cylinders for the brake system. We worked with Eugenio Gandolfi – one of the finest brake technicians ever. I helped Riccardo, Ivo and Rodolfo with bodywork modelling, which was made in fiberglass by Plastic Bike, and Max Design painted all the parts. Colours and graphics were done closely with VR46.

#### HAS ROSSI RIDDEN THE BIKE YET?

We presented the bike to Vale in November last year. He is always very curious, wants to know about the technology that's in and around a motorcycle. He was able to communicate his appreciation with that simple smile...

He's due to test MYA in the spring. We've altered the gearing to suit the bike's new purpose, and Vale will confirm the changes to the ratios, as well as the set-up for the rest of the bike, during this final validation of its performance.

MYA has kept a very low profile. It was the challenge of people that are proud to work for Yamaha, who decided to spend their spare time doing something unique. All the people and companies involved in the build enjoyed the challenge, and the opportunity to do something special for a very special racer.

[vr46.it](http://vr46.it)

