

The Complete Evolution of Yamaha Motorcycles

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Yamaha Motor Co., Ltd. is a Japanese manufacturer of motorcycles, marine products such as boats and outboard motors, and other motorized products. The company was established in 1955 upon separation from Yamaha Corporation (however, Yamaha Corporation is still the largest private company shareholder with 9.92%, as of 2019), and is headquartered in Iwata, Shizuoka, Japan. The company conducts development, production, and marketing operations through 109 consolidated subsidiaries as of 2012. Led by Genichi Kawakami, the company's founder, and first president, Yamaha Motor began production of its first product, the YA-1, in 1955. The 125cc motorcycle won the 3rd Mount Fuji Ascent Race in its class.

History

The motorcycle division of Yamaha was founded in 1955 and was headed by Genichi Kawakami. Yamaha's initial product was a 125 cc two-cycle, single-cylinder motorcycle, the YA-1, which was a copy of the German DKW RT 125. The YA-1 was a competitive success at racing from the beginning, winning not only the 125cc class in the Mt. Fuji Ascent but also swept the podium with first, second, and third place in the All Japan Auto bike Endurance Road Race that same year. Early success in racing set the tone for



2019 Yamaha YZF R1



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Yamaha, as competition in many varieties of motorcycle racing has been a key endeavor of the company throughout its history, often fueled by a strong rivalry with Honda, Suzuki, Kawasaki, and other Japanese manufacturers.

Yamaha began competing internationally in 1956 when they entered the Catalina Grand Prix, again with the YA-1, at which they placed sixth. The YA-1 was followed by the YA-2 of 1957, another 125cc two-stroke, but with significantly improved frame and suspension. The YD-1 of 1957 was a 250cc two-stroke twin-cylinder motorcycle, resembling the YA-2, but with a larger and more powerful motor. A performance version of this bike, the YDS-1 housed the 250cc two-stroke twin in a double downtube cradle frame and offered the first five-speed transmission in a Japanese motorcycle. This period also saw Yamaha offer its first outboard marine engine.

Yamaha Motor Company was incorporated on 1 July 1955 (Japan). Highlighting its presence in the performance motorcycle segment, the company announced that in 2020 they will be celebrating their 65th anniversary on the 1st of July, 2020 with a holiday they call "Yamaha Day". The theme for Yamaha Day 2020 is "heritage" – Yamaha plans to use this holiday to enhance the brand's connection with its customers.

Yamaha's Growth

By 1963 Yamaha's dedication to both the two-stroke engine and racing paid off with their first victory in international competition, at the Belgium GP, where they won the 250cc class. Success in sales was even more impressive, and Yamaha set up the first of its international subsidiaries in this period beginning with Thailand in 1964, and the Netherlands in 1968. 1965 saw the release of a 305cc two-stroke twin, the flagship of the company's lineup. It featured a separate oil supply that directly injected oil into the gasoline before combustion (traditionally riders had to pre-mix oil into gasoline together before filling the gas tank on two-stroke engines). In 1967 a new larger displacement model was added to the range, the 350cc two-stroke twin R-1.

In 1968 Yamaha launched their first four-stroke motorcycle, the XS-1. The Yamaha XS-1 was a 650cc four-stroke twin, a larger and more powerful machine that equaled the displacement and performance of the popular British bikes of the era, such as the Triumph Bonneville and BSA Gold Star. Yamaha continued with both the two-stroke line and four-stroke twins at a time that other Japanese manufacturers were increasingly moving to four-cylinder four-stroke machines, a trend led by Honda in 1969 with the legendary CB-750 four-stroke four-cylinder cycle.

Two-stroke Era Begins: The 1970s

Not until 1976 would Yamaha answer the other Japanese brands with a multi-cylinder four-stroke of their own. The XS-750 (and later 850) a 750cc triple cylinder machine with shaft final drive was introduced almost seven years after Honda's breakthrough bike. Yamaha's first four-cylinder model, the XS-1100 followed in 1978, again with shaft drive. Despite being heavier and more touring-oriented than its rivals it produced an impressive string of victories in endurance racing.

The 1980s: Diversification And Innovation

By 1980 the combination of consumer preference and environmental regulation made four strokes increasingly popular. Suzuki ended production of their GT two stroke series, including the flagship water-cooled two-stroke 750cc GT-750 in 1977. Kawasaki, who had considerable success throughout the 1970s with their two-stroke triples of 250cc, 350cc, 500cc, and 750cc ended production of road-going two strokes in 1980. Yamaha bucked this trend and continued to refine and sell two-strokes for the street into the 1980s. These bikes were performance-oriented, water-cooled twin-cylinder machines, designed to achieve excellent performance taking advantage of the lower weight of two strokes. The RZ-250 of 1980 was the progenitor of this series. The RZ-350, the largest displacement model, was a popular hot-rod bike of the 1980s and continued to be sold in some countries into the early 1990s.

Throughout the 1980s the motorcycle industry gradually went from building a few basic but versatile models designed to work well in many roles, to offering many more specialized machines designed to excel in particular niches. These include racing and performance street riding, touring, motocross racing, enduro, and recreational off-road riding, and cruising. Yamaha branched out from the relatively small number of UJMs (Universal Japanese Motorcycle) at the start of the decade to a much larger set of offerings in several clearly defined markets at the end of the decade.

The XV750 of 1981 featured an air-cooled V-twin four-stroke engine and cruiser styling and was one of the first Japanese cruiser style motorcycles. By the end of the 1980s, Yamaha had offered dozens of cruiser styled bikes in a variety of displacements and engine configurations. The RZV500 was one of the first "replica-racers", a near copy of Kenny Roberts competition GP bike, it featured a liquid-cooled two-stroke motor of 500cc displacement in a V4 configuration, along with a perimeter frame and full fairing.

Another bike that was performance-oriented was the Yamaha RX-Z, introduced in 1985 as a two-stroke naked sportbike, related to the Yamaha RX-135 and Yamaha RD-135, borrowing its chassis and platform. Originally equipped with a five-speed transmission and a solid front disc brake rotor with rear drum brakes, it was popular in Malaysia and Singapore. After a few years on the market, the engine was upgraded with the installation of a six-speed transmission, together with a newer instrument panel and handlebar switches, as well as a cross-drilled front disc brake rotor, while the rear remained with the drum brakes.

The 1990s

In 1998 Yamaha marketed a 1000cc four-cylinder road bike called the YZF 'R1', this model introduced a new style of gearbox design which shortened the overall length of the motor/gearbox case, to allow a more compact unit. This, in turn, allowed the motor to be placed in the frame further forward, designed to improve handling in a short wheel-based frame.

In 1995, Yamaha announced the creation of Star Motorcycles, a new brand name for its cruiser series of motorcycles in the American market. In other markets, Star motorcycles are still sold

under the Yamaha brand. This was an attempt to create a brand identity more closely aligned with the cruiser market segment, one of the largest and most lucrative in the USA.

The 2000s

In 2007, Yamaha established the Philippine operations and distributed Yamaha motorcycles under the corporate name of Yamaha Motor Philippines, Inc., one of more than 20 worldwide subsidiaries operating on all continents. By 2008, Yamaha won the MotoGP triple crown. By this time, the V Star 950 and V Star 950 Tourer was released. By 2010, Yamaha won the MotoGP triple crown for the third consecutive year and by 2013, the Yamaha Bolt was introduced.

In 2015, Yamaha unveiled the Mt-25, FACTOR150, and XVS950CU Bolt-C and by 2018, the motorcycle company released a V-twin tourer called the Yamaha Star Venture.

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