

And now for something completely different. Building Renaissance's Yamaha M1 transkit

by Ed Roberts

According to a search that I did the animal with the longest gestation period is the African elephant at 700 days. The editor will, no doubt, agree that in the time it took for this review to be completed said elephant could have been born, gone to school, attained a university degree and moved back in with his parents (who, in the meantime had begun to rent out his room as a B&B).

Before I begin to cut plastic/resin and photo-etch I have two confessions to make. The first is that my knowledge of post-Hailwood motorcycle racing could be written on the head of a pin. The second is that I am only doing this review because I ordered the wrong kit in the first place. Long story short: I ordered the wrong Valentino Rossi kit and got this rather bland 2005 Yamaha YZR in post. Can't send it back Then along comes a copy of FSW with a photo of a very attractive YZR as a trans-kit from Renaissance ([RENTK12033](#)). Off goes the order to GPM along with the suggestion that my face-saving effort will make an interesting article.

When the rather large box arrives I open it to find a rather extensive decal sheet, an 'instruction' sheet and a dozen resin parts. What Renaissance have done, essentially, is to update the Tamiya parts to 2007 standard from the Dutch TT at Assen. The paint scheme celebrates the Fiat 500 with a sort of early 1960's set of images. It all reminds of either Dire Straits 'Communique' album or an old ad for a refrigerator - the effect of paint fumes.

The Tamiya kit is - well, a Tamiya kit. Sharp mouldings, perfect fit, accurate etc... My only gripe is that the paint call-outs are all in Tamiya's and one could be left puzzling out what 'Titanium Gold' looks like. (To be fair, go back to an old Heller kit or modern Revell and look at the painting directions. I'm still trying to figure out 'Sunflower Yellow'.)

The Renaissance conversion is typical for that company. The parts are very well-detailed but require a large degree of clean-up. Several of the parts had substantial scars and pour stubs need careful removal. The photo sheet included was not really a lot of help. It fails to mention that Rossi's and team-mate Colin Edwards' bikes differed in several aspects. Simply put, if you are doing Rossi's use the 'doggie' decal on the seat fairing, the 'heart' musical note and yellow 'Thrill' markings. My other gripe is that the photos used show coverings over the wheel/brake assemblies making it difficult to be sure of details. Anyway, enter 'Rossi Assen TT 2007' into a search device and you should be alright.

In an attempt to make life more interesting/confusing I decided to go whole hog (sorry, wrong bike metaphor) on this build. I purchased the Tamiya up-grade set for the bike which consists of turned metal forks, a steering damper and a yellow met-

al spring (which will never be seen once installed). I also wanted to use a carbon fibre decal and pattern set but its American manufacturer never responded to my e-mails so I bought someone else's carbon fibre decals from a Toronto dealer (thanks, Adam).

The final element was a rather large photo-etch upgrade set. I passed on the one described as 'challenging' with a 200 piece chain set and settle on one produced by a company called Crazy Modeler (sounds obvious really). The instructions for this were excellent, showing clearly what had to be cut off from the Tamiya parts and how the new bits fitted in. To be honest I did not use the whole set as some parts required the removal of major chunks of plastic and I wasn't convinced that the new parts had the necessary strength especially in the rear suspension. I was probably overly cautious though as what I used worked beautifully.

My next major hurdle was that I now had four sets of instructions to juggle and I have trouble following just one. In the end I simply wrote notes onto the Tamiya set and referenced them to the other sets. It must have worked as the few bits I had left over were ones I didn't plan to use.

The first few stages are pure Tamiya. Cut the parts off their sprues, clean up the odd mould line and glue them together. Easy. The first Renaissance bit is a new clutch plate. There is a change from the plastic bit but like several Renaissance parts I've run into over the years its not symmetrical - the bolts aren't evenly spaced.

At this point my wife convinces me we need to get away for the summer (who wants to stick around Toronto watching a) it rain every day at 3:00 and b) the Jays and Argos lose?) and the Yamaha gets put back in the box for a month while we head off to the Maritimes. A month later and I return to the kit.

By this point the engine is complete and, like most Tamiya bike kits, screws into the frame along with the rear arms. The resulting unit is very sturdy and stands up to a lot of handling. Remember the 200-part chain? Well, the Crazy Modeler one couldn't be too far off in parts count. It is a sandwich of four etched lengths that produces a very realistic unit. To this are added several dozen tiny chain links. Painted up in oily steel with gold dry-brushing the effect is brilliant.

The photo-etched brake disc is also added at this time after putting on a wash of black to highlight the detail. Renaissance provides new brake calipers and a resin mud-guard that differ greatly from the Tamiya bits and fit without any trouble. The rear end is now complete.

The front end does provide a few hang-ups and illustrated the need for modellers to be genetically-modified with at least one more arm (guess I'll need new shirts...). The metal forks in the Tamiya upgrade look excellent



but make the painted lower ends look rather shabby. I would have liked to have seen the whole unit in metal for consistency. The head set (that's what I'm going to call it) is a new bit from Renaissance and took a bit of paring down to fit properly. There are also new resin inserts for the top of the forks but I used the metal ones in the up-grade set instead.

Is life getting too complicated? Each of the two front brake disc assemblies in the Crazy Modeler set has 19 parts - they look fabulous but is all that necessary - that's more parts than in some old Starter or PM kits! What colour are bike brake discs? After rejecting Tamiya's call-out I went through every metallic colour in my paint bin. Nothing looked right and each time I had to throw the discs into lacquer thinner to strip them. I looked at real bikes. I looked at pictures of real bikes. After stripping them ten times I realized that the process had left a patina that looked perfect.

Renaissance provides a new set of wheels that look very nice but need careful cleaning up inside the spokes. There are no valve stems on the Renaissance wheels (and none obvious in the obscured photos) so I cut them from the Tamiya parts and glued them in place. I now had a complete frame and running gear. Time to face the cowlings, the heart of the Renaissance set.

The upper cowl was no problem. As with the other cowling parts it was painted white and decalced. I had no faith that the one piece decal would fit properly on the complex form so I cut it into the separate colours and applied each individually (hold that thought). The replacement windscreen was cut from its vac-form and fitted easily. The fuel tank and tail cowl were less forgiving. In the Tamiya kit the upper part of the tail cowl was meant to be held together with one of those plastic grommets and be open at the bottom. Not so with the Renaissance bit as the two parts had to be glued together and the gap filled/sanded. This meant that the fuel tank fairing (which has a sort of 'duck-tail') would no longer fit as intended. I carved off the duck-tail and then found that the previously installed air intake duct would no longer fit. Off that came. By this point I admit that my enthusiasm for the project had suffered the same fate as my dreams of qualifying for the Boston Marathon. I put it aside for a couple of months.

Come another summer vacation and with it the urge to finish all my semi-completed kits. Very keen-eyed readers will note that the exhaust on the finished bike is not correct - it is the 2005 standard. My excuse is that I wanted to use a neat etched muffler covering that came in the Crazy Modeler set. It really set off the exhaust system and I like it! The etched bracket supporting the exhaust also came from the Crazy set and is a vast improvement on Tamiya's moulded piece.

Renaissance recommend painting all the cowlings white - don't! The tail cowl has to be painted white with a blue section from the seatback forward. Decals cover the rest. Renaissance's decals are really quite good. Registration is excellent, colours are sharp but the numbers are not really opaque enough to prevent bleed-through. It should be noted too, that the green and red bits are day-glo and therefore very brittle. Take care and be sure to overcoat with a clear varnish.

The side cowlings were the last task. Renaissance provides a one piece decal for each side but all the Solva-set ([SS](#)) in the world isn't going to get those puppies to settle into place. The only solution I could think of was, once again, to carefully cut each colour into a separate piece (apologies to John Knowles), put into place and drench with softener and hit them with the hair dryer. Touch-ups were needed - the green is matched by Humbrol #208, the red by Model Master Fluorescent Red and the blue by Tamiya TS-23. The cowlings screw into place using Tamiya's tiny screws (neat! - they're magnetized!). I would suggest creating a thread in the upper cowl holes by turning the screw into the hole before trying to attach the side cowl. A quick touch-up of the day-glo panels due to the fitting process and the Rossi Yamaha was done.

The original Tamiya kit is just brilliant - worthy of that company's name. The upgrade set was useful but the lack of a metal lower fork irks me. Crazy Modeler's etched set was a great addition and easy to use. Of the Renaissance set, the decals were excellent, the resin parts a nice bit work once cleaned up. The only real criticism is the lack of a really decent set of instructional photos. I'm happy with the finished product but I need a break from bikes. Where's my 1/32 Bristol Fighter...?