

Nine years in the making: new Yamaha V-Max is here!

With over 200bhp, 2009 V-Max reclaims its title of world's fastest-accelerating production bike

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FEW bikes have ever sparked as much anticipation as the all-new Yamaha V-Max which is set to hit dealers in 2009. Now we can exclusively reveal the new machine a full week before it makes its official debut.

Yamaha plans to reveal the V-Max before the world's press next Wednesday at a presentation in Madrid, but MCN has already received these photographs of the final machine in all its glory.

Although these pictures show the American-spec bike, badged under Yamaha's subsidiary "Star" brand, the machine is otherwise identical to the one that will be on sale over here early next year. And we can't wait.

Information on the bike was sparse as MCN went to press, but there's little doubt about how much performance the new V-Max will offer. Yamaha's made no bones about its intention to make it the fastest accelerating production bike on the planet, just as its forerunner was when it was launched a

quarter of a century ago. In 1984, the original V-Max was quicker off the line than any sports bike, and with 145bhp it was also the most powerful production bike you could buy. The same pair of titles are due to go to the new machine.

Power-wise, insiders claim the engine has been detuned to "just" 210bhp, down from an incredible 295bhp when the first prototype motors were run on the dyno. All that power comes from a combination of capacity and technology. The exact size of the engine has yet to be

released, but insiders claim it's between 1600cc and 1800cc, hinting at the larger end of that capacity range - a big step up from the 1200cc original. And on top of that, it incorporates the most high-tech variable valve timing system ever seen, altering the timing of both the inlet and exhaust cams as revs rise to maximise both bottom-end torque and top-end power.

One big question hanging over the bike is how much it will cost. It's too early to have an exact figure, since the V-Max won't be on sale until next year, but given the bike's position at the top of Yamaha's range it's not going to be cheap. Don't expect to get much change from £12,000 if you want one.

HOW YAMAHA'S NEW V-MAX EVOLVED

YAMAHA'S 2009 V-Max might be all-new but the firm has been dropping huge hints about the bike for the last seven years.

The first came at the Tokyo Motor Show back in 2001, when Yamaha's stand was dominated by a sculpture of a V4 engine. It went under the name "Otodama" - a made-up word deriving from the Japanese term Kotoda-

'The firm has been dropping huge hints for seven years'

ma, meaning the power of words. Yamaha explained the word Otodama was intended to express the "mysterious power in the pulsing sound of an engine".

Displacing 1800cc - the same as expected from the new V-Max - the Otodama motor's V4 configuration clearly pointed at the development of a new generation of V-Max.



The 2009 V-Max will be the world's most powerful production bike

Four years later, in 2005, another "sculpture" formed the centrepiece of Yamaha's Tokyo Motor Show stand. This time around, the firm made no bones about it, calling it "Next V-Max". While the overall shape was clearly the same as the 2009 machine you see now, there were no details incorporated into it.

At last year's Tokyo Motor Show, Yamaha was expected

to reveal the finished machine, but yet again, there was just a sculpture to represent the V-Max, this time a block of metal with the indented shape of the bike imprinted on it, and with parts of the finished bike - including the engine - in place within the imprint. During the same show, a short video showed the smoking rear tyre of a proto-

type for the new V-Max, emphasising Yamaha's intentions to make the machine seriously powerful.

During the years of development, Yamaha launched two websites dedicated to the new machine. The first, www.next-vmax.com, contained a questionnaire about the machine, asking for input about the design and performance. The questions

HISTORY OF THE V-MAX

1984-1985

V-Max first shown as a prototype. First production V-Max appears on American market in 1985 with 145bhp.



1986

Goes on sale in France, but not the UK. On this side of the Atlantic the V-Max was watered-down, with no V-Boost and just 104bhp.

1987

Minor changes including a new aluminium disc front wheel and black air scoops.

1990

Digital electronic ignition was added, while the air scoops went back to aluminium. V-Max sold in Japan for the first time.

1991

At last, V-Max goes on sale in the UK. European bikes got changes to reduce exhaust noise, dropping power to a disappointing 95bhp.

