

TRIPLE THREAT

*The MEV tR1ke
Combines Supercar
With Superbike!*



Three-wheeled sportscars have long been popular in England, at first due to the considerably lower purchase tax levied against motorcycles than cars. Anything less than four wheels got the cut, so pioneering firms like Morgan sold thousands of trikes between the two World Wars. Today trike kits are still popular due to their incredible performance and low build costs. We recently had a chance to take the English MEV tR1ke kit car, built by Road Track Race, for a spin around the rural Texas countryside, thanks to their new American distributor, Dove Racing LLC.

By mounting two wheels at the front several important things are accomplished. One, there is more rubber on the front for improved handling. Two, it allows the use of a complete motorcycle power package in the back, in this case the potent Yamaha YZF-R1 (commonly referred to simply as an "R1"). The tR1ke can be configured to use any 1998-2007 R1, but Dove has specifically engineered the American version around the fuel-injected 2004-2007 models, which belt out an impressive 180 hp. The earlier carbureted R1s have 152 hp, and can be used as well. The 2008 and up R-1s have a different engine and would require custom engineering to fit, which Road Track Race is currently developing.

The tR1ke is based on a triangulated steel space frame that was computer designed with simulated suspension loading and refined by actual track testing. The frame mounts the Yamaha components and weighs around 715 pounds, which gives a power-to-weight ratio of 3.97 pounds per horsepower. Compare this to a typical 427 Cobra replica at 5.88, or even a Bugatti Veyron at 4.22! You get the idea – this trike is seriously quick.

The steering rack is sourced from a Ford Fiesta and has 3.5 turns lock-to-lock, but a quicker 2.8 turn rack is available. The steering column is also a Fiesta item and the factory switchgear can be made to interface with the bike electrics. The bike wiring harness can be used as a starting point, but requires some effort to figure out so Dove is ready to help. The Yamaha dashboard and gauges are used intact. The 14" Fiesta steering wheel is standard, or aftermarket wheels, like the one shown on this car, can be substituted.

The optional front disc brakes are Wilwood 4-pots with special rotors and hubs. The rear brake and sprocket assembly is from the R1. The \$8,113 kit includes the frame, adjustable shocks and springs, wishbones and uprights, a color gel-coated



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fiberglass body, Ford Fiesta steering components and the fuel system. Optional equipment includes the aforementioned brakes, powder coating, seats, paddle shifters and other performance upgrades. The wheels on our test car were chrome Crave #5s (17" X 7.5") mounting Yokohama Advan rubber in 215/35ZR17. The back wheel is the standard R1 wheel shorn with Yoko Advan Neova AD08 in 205/45-17. For better handling Dove recommends replacing the stock R1 rear tire with a high performance car tire. There is also an electric reversing motor kit as the motorcycle gearbox lacks a reverse gear.

The R1 donor bike contributes its engine, transmission, swing arm, chain drive, back wheel, wiring loom, gauges and ignition system to the cause. Dove Racing boss Pete Dove recommends buying a complete used bike and selling the unused parts to recover some of the expense (there's no shortage of bent superbikes, or owner's looking for parts to repair them). The tR1ke shown here was built from a straight 2004 R1 purchased for \$4,700, of which around \$2,000 was recovered from the sale of the frame (approx. \$1,000) and body parts. They also got a few "bonus" custom parts off the donor bike, like the chromed swing arm and wheel. You can also start with a damaged bike that has a healthy drive train, like the 2006 R1 Dove recently acquired for \$1,900.

Dove estimates a complete tR1ke can be built for around \$16,000, including shipping, while a turnkey model like the one we tested sells for around \$25,000. Assembly time is estimated at 300 to 400 hours.

After we finished our photo session near the picturesque country town of Leonard, Texas, I took the tR1ke for a spin down some twisty rural roads. It was just getting dark and the lighting is minimal for the level of performance available. You will need to dress motorcycle-style, warm and with goggles, as there are no wind-screens or side body panels to deflect the wind. The sequential shifter lever adapts the Yamaha transmission to the two-seat configuration and offers lightning-fast, positive shifting. The steering is race-car quick and a little nervous until you get used to it. If you haven't driven a trike before it's unnerving at first. You need to get the tires warmed up, then push it fairly hard to get the full effect. The best place to learn how to master this beast would be a racetrack where you could explore the limits in a controlled environment. With this much oomph the unwary could get in trouble on a potholed road. The tR1ke IS



a toy (and a really great toy at that), but a toy that should be approached with respect and concentration. Those with racing go-kart time should feel right at home!

Of course, this is no daily driver or fairgrounds cruiser. There is no heater, luggage storage or even rudimentary weather protection. A Harley Electra-Glide seems positively decadent by comparison. The tR1ke is a serious performance vehicle at an amazing price point, a combination bike/sports car that can run with a Veyron or a Corvette ZR-1 up to 100 mph,

for less than the price of a new Mazda MX-5 or Mini Cooper S. And it can humble a superbike on any road course.

MEV kit car designs are built in the UK by Road Track Race, and Dove Racing is the U.S. Representative for their cars. They also sell 4-wheeled kits and we know we expect to see other exciting models from them in the future. **KCB**