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VERTEMATI 501

Hey, I know that name

By the staff of Dirt Bike



Those crazy brothers are at it again. Or maybe they are still at it. Whatever; the Vertemati brothers (sort of an Italian version of Brown Brothers Racing, at least with the same kind of mentality) are making beautiful motorcycles in Italy from scratch. And now those bikes are available in the U.S.—for a price.

Italians have a way of making things very confusing. The Vertemati company history is so interwoven with Husaberg and VOR that it's easy to lose track. Here's the company background as we understand it. Back in the early '90s, Vertemati was the Italian Husaberg importer. The brothers were heavily into GP racing and they started modifying the bikes very extensively—so much so that they were barely Husabergs anymore. Husaberg was offended at these liberties, so Vertemati just removed the Husaberg name from the bikes. In this period, the company had some success in racing; Donnie Cantaloupe, Mike Young, Trampas Parker and Joel Smets all took turns rid-

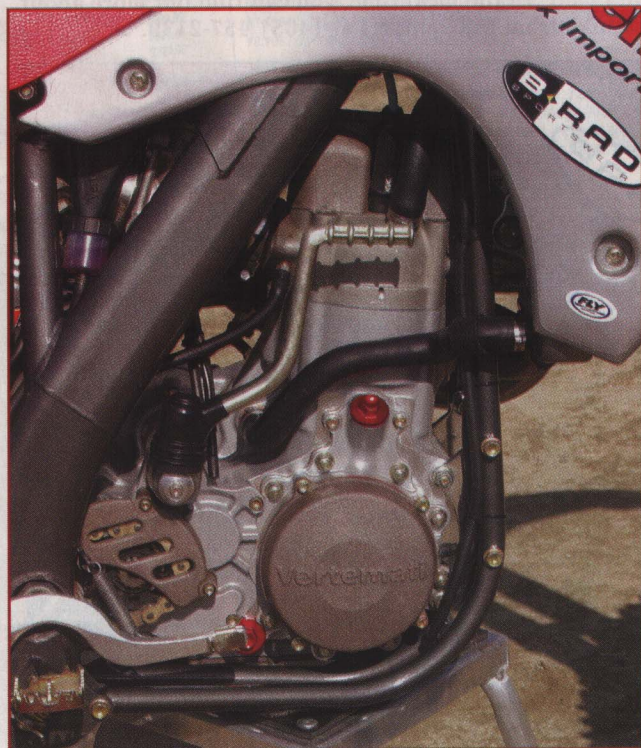
ing various versions. The goal was to eventually produce a real production bike.

Then along came some Italian investors led by Massimo Monti (from Yamaha Italy) and Antonio Rovelli (from Honda Italy). They set about developing the Vertemati race bike for production. But the brothers weren't happy with the relationship. The Vertematis wanted big changes before the bike went to the assembly line. Monti and Rovelli insisted that the bike had to be finished *some* time. The partnership broke into two different companies, and that's how VOR came into being. The Vertemati brothers got the rights to the name and set about building an entirely different bike. Darrick Lucchesi signed on to import the bike to the U.S. at a suggested retail price of \$9500, and that's where we are today.

The new Vertemati is probably the sexiest looking motocross bike on earth. It uses a steel perimeter frame with the fuel tank where the airbox should be and vice versa—you have to take off the seat to fill it with gas. It uses a no-link WP shock similar to KTM's and works-style WP forks. The engine is an absolute work of art, with billet parts and magnesium cases. The design is a single overhead cam which has oil delivered by an genuine oil pump, unlike the original Husaberg design with used crankcase pressure to get the job done. On the U.S. versions, the gearbox will be a six-speed. The kickstarter kicks forward like a VOR and an electric start version is in the works. Claimed dry weight is 230 pounds.



Keeping track of where VOR and Husaberg end and where Vertemati begins isn't a job for wimps. Now they are three separate and distinct companies—but that wasn't always so.



The kickstarter looks like it kicks back, but it's trying to fool you. Once unfolded, it locks into position and you kick toward the front of the bike.

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How does it work? We only had a few laps on the bike, but we're impressed with how slender and light it feels. Look for a full test in the near future.

We got a chance to ride the bike for a few laps around Glen Helen's super-tight REM course. The first thing that hits you is how the seat is long and flat. It goes from the rear fender all the way past the gas cap--except there is no gas cap. You can literally sit an inch behind the handlebar if it suits you. The bike is super slender; it makes a YZ426 seem like a big, fat pig. But on the track the Vertemati's steering is rather heavy and slow. It will take some getting used to if you get off a Japanese bike. In fact it will take some getting used to after any other bike. The Vertemati is a creature unlike any other. We didn't have time to fiddle with suspension settings, jetting or anything, but in our short ride, the bike was impressive. It's a revver; with soft power off the bottom and really screaming on top. We will get a bike for a real test in upcoming months. We can't wait. In the meantime, you can find out more about the bike from MX imports at (405) 457-2139. □



Now that's art. Those Vertemati brothers knows how to make a motorcycle pretty.



Either this bike was in a really bad crash, or Vertemati is trying the old reversed-fuel-tank-and-airbox trick. Might work, but quick pit stops in long races will require some thinking.