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Keith Martin's Sports Car Market

The Insider's Guide to Collecting, Investing, Values, and Trends

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\$4.4m in Paris

\$1.9m Matra MS650

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pair totals \$424k

Ferrari GTC/4
Bargain V12



Dieci: Bimota's Solid 10

Watch-quality CNC triple clamps, axle spacers, frame features, and other components decorate the machine like jewels on a crown

by Ed Milich

The Bimota YB10 is a marriage of performance, utility, and singular Italian engineering. With only 224 total examples created, the Dieci ("Ten") remains a hallmark in Bimota's progression and is an undervalued classic.

The YB10 continued the Rimini, Italy, manufacturer's history of taking a proven Japanese powerplant and complementing it with upgraded performance and design features not limited by cost. In this case, the engine was Yamaha's FZR1000 EXUP motor, and Bimota's results were, as expected, stunning.

The YB10 was designed by Pier Luigi Marconi and first presented at the Cologne Moto Show in 1990. Production continued between 1991 and 1994. Earlier 1970s and '80s Bimotas had a huge performance margin over machines from the Japanese manufacturers who supplied Bimota with engines. But by the early 1990s, this margin had narrowed significantly.

As of 1991, the base model Yamaha FZR1000 still paled in comparison to the Dieci, though. The YB10's massive, rigid aluminum frame and swingarm were years ahead of the FZR's. The YB had one of the first production aluminum twin spar frames, with no lower frame rails and a partially stressed engine. Such designs are now common, having been adopted and mass-produced by Japanese manufacturers.

Though its pedigree approaches 15 years of age, the YB10 is still potent. The DOHC, water-cooled, 20-valve Yamaha-powered Dieci will hold its own with modern sport-bikes on a spirited ride. The powerhouse engine has three intake and two exhaust valves per cylinder and astronomical (for 1991) 12:1 compression. The Dieci features Yamaha's EXUP system, in which a solenoid-controlled valve increases exhaust system backpressure at low rpm to increase torque.

Forks are early upside-down Marzocchis with rudimentary adjustments and are sufficient, if not modern. The rear swingarm is extruded and welded aluminum alloy with eccentric chain adjusters. Wheels are modern-sized 3.5"x17" and 5.5"x17" aluminum Oscams. Brakes are by Brembo, with early four-piston calipers and full-floating front cast-iron racing rotors. The bodywork is fiberglass. CNC triple clamps, axle spacers, frame features, and other components decorate the machine like jewels on a crown. And the motor and electrics are unchanged from the production Yamaha.

Handling is modern and inspiring

The only significant change to induction is the use of Bimota's airbox. Carburetors on the YB10 are easy-to-tune-and-maintain 38-mm CV Mikunis. These are far preferable to the rudimentary, frustrating FI system found on the YB8 and other early fuel-injected Bimotas. Handling on the YB10 is very modern and inspiring. Wheelies can be executed in the lower gears simply by whacking the throttle wide open.

YB10s are temperamental low-production Italian machines. Still, their maintenance chores are the least Herculean of the 1990s Bimotas (unlike the Tesi, which requires a 40-hour complete engine removal to replace cam belts every third year). Most service tasks require removal of the entire fairing and gas tank, which can take as little as ten minutes. All fluids are



easily serviced. Valve adjustments are required infrequently, mainly after break-in. This is fortunate, as valve adjusters require removal of the engine from the frame. Spark plugs are much easier to replace with the engine removed, too. Otherwise, the engine must be rotated in the frame to remove all four plugs.

The Dieci motor gets hot, so electrical wires should be routed away from hot exhaust pipes and the exhaust fan or they can fail. Rear wheel drive bolts can break or back out; check these whenever the rear wheel is off. Carburetor jets on the CV carbs can ovalize and richen the intake mixture. A Factory Pro jet kit solves this and includes titanium needles for around \$100.

Oil filters and other sundries can be found at any Yamaha dealer. Some YB10 parts are scarce, though.

Better off looking for parts in Europe

The web site of former U.S. Bimota distributor Bob Smith/Motopoint recently disappeared, but parts stashes occasionally turn up on eBay. Airtech makes replacement YB10 bodywork, but YB10 owners may be better off looking for parts in Europe. Otherwise, you'll need a resourceful mechanic to maintain a Dieci—none of the eleven current U.S. Bimota dealers ever stocked these bikes in 1991. Bimota's 2000 bankruptcy effectively obliterated the then-current dealer network.

Diecis respond well to freer aftermarket exhausts as well as to K&N air filters. A well-sorted stockish YB10 in sensible trim should display around 125 hp. Race-tuned bikes with little more than cam and head porting are closer to 150 hp. An aftermarket 6-speed gearbox was offered, but was not particularly necessary. There are unsubstantiated rumors of an optional factory-produced titanium kickstand.

Superbike racer Dale Quarterly raced a YB10 in the WERA Endurance series in 1991. Superbike pioneer Randy Renfrow also raced the same bike. More recently, Seattle's Tim Keane rode the Quarterly Dieci to a championship with the Washington Motorcycle Road Racing Association, battling with vintage GSXR1100s, often in the rain.

Unlike the earlier Yamaha-engined YB6 or YB8, YB10s were among the first Bimotas imported in significant quantities into the U.S. The Dieci was originally priced at around \$24,000 in 1991 dollars and is now bargain-priced between \$6,000 and \$10,000, though the spare parts void probably scares off most buyers. Complete 1990s vintage Yamaha FZR motors are cheap (\$1,000) and plentiful. A Dieci engine can be exercised vigorously to the 11,500 rpm redline, without fear of expensive failure, to the point that complete engines can almost be treated as consumables.

Diecis make great Sunday morning rides and very manageable Italian exotics. Like most 1990s Bimotas, their prices can only climb from current levels. ♦

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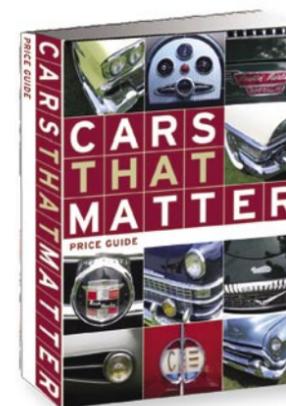
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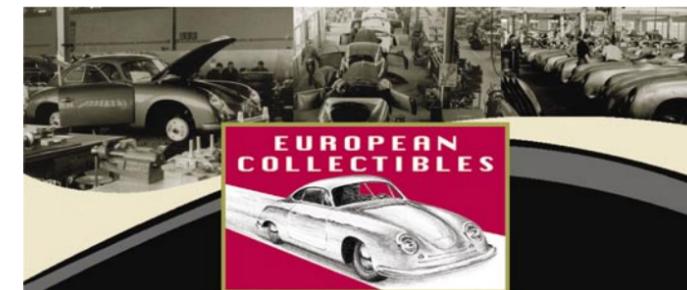


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