



When Brian Dallner restored this Yamaha 650 Turbo, good enough wasn't good enough.

By Neil Graham

It is not uncommon for restoration projects to take on a life of their own. The process of rebuilding can so obsess the restorer that the elimination of flaws can cost thousands of dollars more than a machine is worth. But even we've seldom seen a man quite as obsessed as Brian Dallner.

The story is a common one. Kitchener, Ontario, resident Dallner bought a Yamaha 650 Turbo new in 1982 and rode it for 70,000 kilometres before selling it two years later. Then there was a long period without motorcycles as children and career consumed his time. Dallner didn't so much miss his old motorcycle as long for the period before kids, marriage, and the obligations of adulthood. But Dallner is wise enough to know that abandoning his family is a messy way to recapture the past, so he did the next best thing. He began searching for a Yamaha Turbo.

He missed one on eBay but an ad in the local paper turned up a mechanically sound example with tired cosmetics. For him to capture his youthful enthusiasm the bike had to be perfect, like it just rolled from the showroom floor—and so began his quest.

The engine ran well so it was externally refurbished by media blasting with walnut shells and repainted. Automotive Refinishing in Waterloo painted the bodywork and the frame was entrusted to Aegis Custom Powder Coating in Guelph. Replacing wear items like fork seals and brake pads was straightforward, but the project soon spun out of control. "I couldn't find the rubber boots that covered the mirror stems," says Dallner, "so I made a complex four-part mould and developed a process to suck air bubbles out of liquid rubber. It took me two-dozen tries until I was satisfied." Removing flaws from plastic mirror housings led Dallner on another quest. He discovered that heat applied to the plastic would make it pliable enough so that he could retexture the finish to original.

Warning decals required by the manufacturer's legal department—the sort that any sensible owner removes with a hair dryer as soon as the bike is home in the garage—also received the Dallner treatment. A small decal on the fork leg in both English and Japanese took 25 hours to replicate. At first he tried a simple translation program to generate the proper Japanese text, but that didn't work (he had a scarred original for comparison), so he spent 15 hours at the computer finding each individual Japanese character and then taught himself to mimic the graphic designer's handiwork.

By his own count, the restoration of an already good-running motorcycle took 840 hours and spawned a basement business (bdesigns.ca) that refurbishes plastic parts and supplies decals for mostly 1980s Japanese motorcycles. When I ask Dallner if he is going to do another restoration, he sighs. "I don't know. I'm not sure if I'll live long enough to do another bike like this."

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