



MINIBIKES
WITH A
GIANT
DESTINY.

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THE CHARACTERS



DIMITRI BERA

Date of birth: 28/01/1972
Place of birth: Levallois-Perret
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Co-founder of YCF



LIU LIPING

Date of birth: 19/07/1978
Place of birth: Yi Feng, Jiangxi
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: CFO of the Jiangmen factory



FRANÇOIS ALAUX

Date of birth: 27/04/1973
Place of birth: Boulogne, at PSG
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Designer, Director



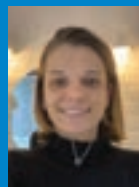
MICKAËL PICHON

Date of birth: 13/02/1976
Place of birth: Le Mans
Status: Married, 3 children
Profession: Retired professional motocross athlete and entrepreneur



YANNICK COQUARD

Date of birth: 02/09/1981
Place of birth: Louviers
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Co-founder of YCF



FANNY COQUARD

Date of birth: 23/08/1981
Place of birth: Caen
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: CFO at YCF



DIMITRI COSTE

Date of birth: 08/11/1977
Place of birth: Saint-Cloud
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Photographer



JORDAN LABBÉ

Date of birth: 27/05/1984
Place of birth: Sainte-Adresse
Status: Married, 1 child
Profession: Content creator



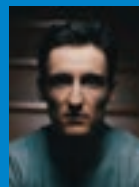
MIGUEL HERVÉ

Date of birth: 16/03/1978
Place of birth: Caen
Status: Married, 1 child
Profession: Technical and After Sales Manager at YCF France



ERIC PERONNARD

Date of birth: 13/04/1960
Place of birth: Grenoble
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Sports organiser



MARVIN MUSQUIN

Date of birth: 30/12/1989
Place of birth: La Réole
Status: Married, 1 child
Profession: Professional motocross rider



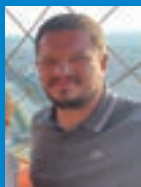
CHRISTOPHE MARTRAGNY

Date of birth: 23/04/1962
Place of birth: Bayeux
Status: Married, 3 children
Profession: Manager of Martragny TP



PIERRICK PAGET

Date of birth: 20/06/1977
Place of birth: Lons-le-Saunier
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Youtuber



JULIEN HUAN

Date of birth: 30/03/1983
Place of birth: Dreux
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Company director



STEPHAN LEGRAND

Date of birth: 06/10/1970
Place of birth: Paris
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Journalist



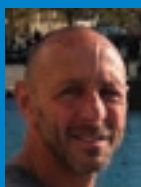
XAVIER AUDOUARD

Date of birth: 27/02/1956
Place of birth: Paris
Status: Married, 1 child
Profession: Paris supercross sports director



ALEXIS HOUSET

Date of birth: 11/02/1981
Place of birth: Tourcoing
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: VCF Factory Technical Manager



DAVID MAZE

Date of birth: 13/01/1970
Place of birth: Rouen
Status: Couple, 2 children
Profession: Head of fox service centre France at Tribesportgroup



PASCAL HAUDIQUERT

Date of birth: 09/02/1957
Place of birth: Forges-les-Eaux
Status: Married, 2 children
Profession: Retired from the SNCF and now a freelance photojournalist



Yannick Coquard, Florida USA, 2022

PROLOGUE

As Tom Hanks' character, Forest Gump, stated in Robert Zemeckis' 1994 legendary film:

*« life is like a box of chocolates,
you never know what you're gonna get. »*

If you apply this classic quote to YCF's story of entrepreneurship, you're certain to delight in some tasty tidbits. But perhaps, not initially... Like at the start of almost any adventure, unforeseen events can leave a bad taste in the mouth of any protagonist. "When I went to the banks in 2004 to tell them about my plans to sell minibikes, they laughed in my face. I still have a bitter aftertaste from this meeting because they took me for a rube. In any case, in the beginning it was simple, nobody believed in us" said Yannick Coquard, founder of the three-letter brand that turns 20 in 2024. More bitter-tasting bites from the corporate world ensued followed by sickening and gratuitous insults said aloud and in writing about manufacturing dirt bikes in China. "It was proclaimed in online forums that if what we made was going to be manufactured in China, our products were inevitably going to be, pardon my language, 'worthless pieces of crap.' We were criticized in every way imaginable and were even accused of sanctioning child labor. Although this was hard to swallow, I stopped reading the commentary and went full throttle, because we knew where we wanted to go" added the company head, confident in his values and beliefs. A few more nasty bites were served up as starters before our adventure became tastier. Over the course of two decades, our initially crazy idea transformed from a foolish gamble into a business success story, and YCF has rolled out well-crafted bikes in 34 countries.

Once upon a time, this acronym, YCF, meant everything to Yannick Coquard, and nothing to anyone else, when, he set up his one-man LLC on July 1st, 2004, started in his native Normandy. "At the time, there were motorcycle brand names the likes of Yamaha YZF or Honda CRF, which all sounded pretty good in motocross circles. I thought about it for a few minutes, took my initials and then added an F. Why did I add an "F"? Because F stands for 'Freestyle,' which I love in BMX; F also stands for 'France,' as well as 'four-stroke,' the type of engine we manufacture, along with the F in 'Factory' and it also stands for 'Fanny.' In any case, in just a few minutes, I made my choice" explained the native of Louviers in the Eure region of France, who is the dictionary definition of pragmatic—i.e., "relating to matters of fact or practical affairs often to the exclusion of intellectual or artistic matters: practical as opposed to idealistic." Consequently, the company's name falls perfectly in line with its character, said his long-time friend Christophe Martragny, whom he met in 1998 at a national championship race where Yannick regaled the public in his inimitable style. Gripping the handlebars of his bike he said: "You know, whether it's in his love story with Fanny, or in starting his company, or in life in general, Yannick has an iron-clad will for seeing his plans through and is ready to do anything to succeed. When he launched YCF, he knew the motorcycle world inside out, he'd mastered engine mechanics, and he knew exactly what he wanted to develop. But when he talks to me about this, sometimes I have to laugh because he's a bit of a windbag. But I hadn't noticed that he had such entrepreneurial drive and was able to create his own market." His "own market"?

Well, not exactly.

Like in life, or like in a box of chocolates, “you never know what you’re gonna get.” And you never know who destiny will put on your path at any given time. For Yannick, life chose to put Dimitri on his path in the fall of 2003. Dimitri who? Dimitri Bera more specifically. A native of Chartres and an expat who has lived in China since 1994, who went there to pursue a career “in God knows what, but in a country where few expats lived.” He’s a resourceful guy who’s just at home wandering the packed streets of Shanghai or as a former racer in his teenage years in the Eure-et-Loir championship.

«I’ve always been lucky in life, I’ve always found something to do, and I’ve never fallen on hard times»

said the other YCF co-mastermind and co-founder. However, his adopted country wasn’t merely beginner’s luck, he was always ready to seize an opportunity when it came along. Always roaming, sometimes he’d knock on doors because he was curious. Just like that day in September when the bond between these two protagonists was unknowingly forged forever. But before we rewind the story of this “chance encounter that changed everything” let’s head to the beaches of Normandy at the start of the 21st century. Did you notice anything? Sure, you did. Just follow the tire tracks in the sand of Christophe and Yannick’s Honda 100 XR, because that’s where it all started. As the boss himself explained: “Even if I’d won three Normandy Championships, a few rounds of 125 cc and scored points at the French Elite Motocross Championship, I would have never wanted to become a professional motocross racer. So, yes, I do love motocross and doing tricks, but I couldn’t devote myself to the daily grind of the sport. Training wasn’t what I wanted to do. It was just a good way of taking up challenges and seeing how far I could take things. And since it rains all the time where I live, my childhood friend and I bought these little bikes so we could train on the beach on Sundays instead of on motocross circuits.

Why ride them instead of the big ones? Because this way we didn’t have to spend all Monday power washing our bikes and then preparing them for competitions. We only had to hose them down, spray some WD-40, and that was all. And as I continued to deliver in my racing, there was really no reason to change. In fact, I’d lifted the constraints of the big bike, while maintaining the pleasure of riding” explained the man who fell into the world of motorcycles early on as a child because his parents owned a well-known specialty motorcycle shop in Amfreville-sur-Iton, France. Once he’d made up his mind, all he had to do was take the plunge. Easier said than done when you’re passionate about what you do. He formed a partnership with David Schuller in 2001-2002 with the Jet Moto Evasion shop (now called UP), Yannick had a great time serving customers behind the counter, selling all sorts of motorcycle parts and paraphernalia while developing his product knowledge and culture. His sales career seemed to be a foregone conclusion, with the successor to the Suzuki Coquard dealership already in his sights. But fate had other plans for him. Thanks to some customers who ended up driving him nuts because of their constant bickering and nitpicking, to put it politely. And his wife and right-hand woman Fanny, would never dispute this. “Seemingly overnight” she said, “he came to me and said: ‘I’m quitting everything, I’m going to start my own business’. No problem. He moved in with his mother to import big motorcycles in the first half of 2004. The final straw was that he was sick and tired of dealing with customers week after week. Many of them begged incessantly, because, as you probably know, motocross is an expensive sport done by people with champagne taste and a beer pocketbook. When it wasn’t about money, they’d annoy him on Saturdays, telling him:

« You’re not training hard enough, we’re going to smoke you on the track tomorrow. »

As a result, he demolished them when they raced on Sunday.



Max Martragny, Arromanches Normandy, 2008

Dimitri Bera, Yannick Coquard, Jiangmen China, 2010





Criticism has an opposite effect on us. While most people get depressed when criticized, we go out of our way to prove you wrong. If you give us a tough time, we're gonna raise our game. All this pent-up rage led him to sell his share of the business and start afresh. What goal did he set for himself? To work exclusively with industry professionals."

Meanwhile, 6,000 miles away, a quirky guy was doing odd jobs across China for a French company, Hycarex, specialized in subcontracting and manufacturing molds. "In particular, I dug up some compasses for them in a small shop, seven or eight hours from Shanghai. I was their local middleman, earning peanuts, but at least I got to travel" said Dimitri Bera as his memories came flooding back to him. While he was still in search of his calling, his passion for the world's most populous country was undeniable. He'll spend the rest of his life there, and that's all there is to it. Perhaps this was a question of karma? "Before I moved to China" he said, "I'd hardly ever left home. It would get me down every time my parents sent me to England or Germany for a week. But in China, this surprisingly never happened. As soon as I set foot there, I felt at home. In a previous life, I must have lived there. I loved everything about it: the smells, the rhythm, the movement. It wasn't long before I stopped getting

homesick for France. It also didn't take long before I met my future wife. And very quickly, I saw this phenomenon of small bikes popping up left and right, and so, as a self-respecting motorcycle enthusiast, I began to take an interest" he confessed, in both a determined and curious tone. He and Yannick didn't know each other from Adam. But he was well-acquainted with the Coquard name from his first family outings at the Paris Supercross in 1984, when the Suzuki mudguards were proudly emblazoned with this name. The rest is history: "I was wandering around China, and there, by chance, I came across a manufacturer producing these small bikes. The product was in its infancy, it was ugly, but what the hell, I told a friend with whom I was doing motocross in Eure-et-Loir and he said: come to France, I'm sure there's a way of offloading them here. I bought a nice little decal kit, polished up the bike and he set up a meeting with Yannick, whose story I'd read in a motorcycle magazine my father sent to me. I put together the bike and, at the beginning of September, I arrived in Caen at the store where he works to show the product to him and get his thoughts on it" as the project initiator recalled.

The meeting in a nutshell?

A mix of discussion, disillusionment, action, and solutions.

YANNICK

«Dimitri came over with his little Chinese bike and I immediately took it for a spin on the road. I went back and forth twice and snapped the frame and swingarm.»

DIMITRI

«I admit that this wasn't my proudest moment.»

YANNICK

«I didn't care, I still believe in it. I told him: I'm sure that if tomorrow we can make an affordable and reliable bike with all the spare parts available, lots of new people will take up the sport. I felt that with this mini, which was touring in the USA and had just arrived here, we could bring more people into motorcycling. I talked to him about the modifications to be made, and he went home. And said to myself, this is the last time I'll see this guy again! »

DIMITRI

«Despite the breakage, why didn't I give up hope? Because we got off on the right foot. I feel I'm dealing with a young, tenacious, driven man, who's got the entrepreneurial spirit, and who knows what he's doing. So, there was little chance I'd give up. What's next? Go back to China, put the bike back on the drawing board, send it back to France and try again. At the time, I just imagined doing a deal with him and possibly selling a few bikes to friends, but my ambition didn't go any further than that. But from a business standpoint, it didn't represent a viable future for me. »

Months went by without a word. Then Dimitri magically reappeared holding a made in China minibike suitcase under his arm. Yannick's verdict:

«He had kept his word; the modifications had been taken into account and the bike was now capable of handling jumps on a motocross circuit. Of course, there were still a few details that needed to be ironed out, but it was basically all there. It didn't break anymore.»

Was it a done deal? Not yet. A strategy still had to be mapped out, the target audience and the desired direction. No sooner said than done, by the ex-salesman already donned the cloak of an entrepreneur. "I immediately considered it a bike that could be ridden hard. For me, it was a real little motocross bike, not a bike for just pattering around in fields. I wanted to go fast, have a good laugh, do battle with my pals, close the gap in quality, while staying out of harm's way as much as possible. Because as soon as I took a tumble with a big bike, I could count on a broken shoulder or a shattered shin. The ultimate goal for making this a winning bet? To combine thrills with an accessible product that can be used by everyone, with premium customer service and sales aimed exclusively at industry professionals."

In the summer of 2004, they merely had a rough sketch of a business plan, or at least they liked to think so. They only had two minibikes assembled and were ready to start a charm offensive with nearby dealerships. The business was registered, and the joint-management structure came to fruition with Yannick Coquard located in Normandy, France, and Dimitri Bera in Guangdong Province, China. The salesman had a network as long as his arm, while the technician was in charge of delivering the motorized goods. What was their financial position before they took the plunge headlong into the business? The banks gave them the cold shoulder, they had no cash flow, Fanny was in training for a retail job and Yannick lived with his mother on €1,200 per month and drove an old subcompact. What about you, Dimitri? "No contracts or deals signed, everything done on the fly. But we had a few things going for us: a great deal of feeling and instinct." And so, what did the fearless Coquard-Bera duo do? They threw caution to the wind and went all-in with a weak hand and prayed that their main opponent (i.e., the economic situation, competition, or the market, or whatever you want to call it) doesn't flip over a pair of aces. So, the duo played truth or dare. Yannick, what's your move? Dare, of course. As is always the case with this big dude in perpetual motion: "And here, I'm taking the biggest risk of my life. With the Chinese putting pressure on us, I decided to order thirty new motorcycles from Dim. Now we only had to come up with €30,000."

**Life at YCF is like a box of chocolates:
"you never know what you're gonna get"
but you're definitely going to enjoy it.**



Photoshoot range 2018, Machery Track Essonne, 2017



CHAPTER 1

THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.



Yannick Coquard, Florida USA, 2021

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

Yannick Coquard:

a name that became a first name.

The boss' story seemed preordained from his birth on September 2, 1981. From day one, he was steeped in the daily life of motorcycles, between his "ultra-passionate" professional motorcycle enthusiast father, and his mother, Nicole Petit, whom his father met at a motocross race and who happily shares her husband's driven quality without missing a beat. Racing Director of the Paris-Bercy Supercross and former Moto Verte journalist, Xavier Audouard respectfully pays tribute to this family's history: "His father was a dealer who was quite involved in the business. For the event, we managed many of the Suzuki riders who rode for Coquard. Whenever I needed to find a bike for American riders with high-end performance, I turned to Bernard and Coquard Motos. I remember back in the 1990s when he lent us no less than eight bikes, a record. It was huge. So, I wasn't surprised when the family name was back in the news in the early 2000s, with this pit bike (or dirt bike, or minibike, editor's note) story. I immediately said to myself, okay, this is going to be quite an intense adventure. I had an extremely favorable bias towards his father because he'd had helped me, and I knew the family mentality."

Eric Peronnard, organizer of the prestigious X-Games, insisted: "My friends, the Coquards and I get on well because we love to work and never get bored. When I started working in this field, I had the pleasure of being a Suzuki dealer at the same time as Yannick's dad. He was the brand's benchmark in the northern part of France. When I saw his son for the first time, he must have been between five and ten years old and was already wandering around the store like it was his house. It would have been hard to imagine him anywhere else but on a motorcycle. I mean impossible, really." Impossible happens to be a word that's not in the boy's dictionary. If Fanny, aka the love of his life, is to be believed:

«When he talks, he's so persuasive that you want to follow him. He sells dreams, but these dreams always come true. Anything is possible with him, and people appreciate that because he's not a smooth talker. He does what he says and says what he does.»

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

So, what did Yannick the boy get up to? He attended school during the day and hung around the store after school. If he had to choose his favorite place between the two, the choice was simple. According to Yannick: “I was never a good student, and I didn’t care much for school. However, I couldn’t stand the idea of getting left back. Because to me, being held back a year meant losing a year. All I wanted was to get my high school diploma, and that would be the end of my formal schooling. My passion is motorcycles and that’s all there is to it. What was the best part of my day? Going to the dealership after school to help my parents at the counter, advising and selling helmets, motorcycles, and jackets to customers” recalled Yannick about his formative years. And it’s clear that the budding salesman had plenty of talent to spare. How old was he when he sold his first motorcycle? He’d just turned twelve. His happiness at the time was synonymous with customer contact and discussions he’d had every step of the way.

« Buying, selling, trading is what I’ve loved since I was a kid. By the age of ten, I knew every inch of the store. I could sell ice to an Eskimo. The path was clear for me: a vocational high school diploma in sales and merchandising from Lycée Aristide Briand, followed by another vocational diploma with an internship at my parents’ shop from 1998 to 1999. »

said plainly a future unnamed manager of Coquard Motos. Well, not really.

One divorce and a family trauma later, the die was cast. So, Yannick didn’t take up the family business and would strike out on his own, far from the revered dealership that had been beckoning him from his tender age. Did he regret this?

“There’s no time for regret, you only live once” said Yannick, more focused on the future than on the past. “At the time, my parents’ separation was hard to deal with, but in the end, for my future career, it was a blessing in disguise. I was able to build my own business, separate from Coquard Motos. Its crazy how fate works out when you think about it” he relativized. It was a great loss for the erstwhile Suzuki dealership, according to former professional rider Pierrick “Eastiboy” Paget. Paget, who has since transitioned into publishing and communications continued: “I mean no disrespect to Bernard, but I’m sure that if Yannick had taken over this business, he’d have been even better at it than his dad. Knowing him as I do, I’m sure he would have created massive events for anyone who’s afraid of racing competitions and these events would have been fun. Instead of selling ten Suzukis, he would have sold a hundred. But his father raised him right in the business and instilled values in him that means he always gets it right the first time. Yannick always gives it his all because he really likes making people happy.”





From left to right, David Lecomte, Robin Martragny, Dany Coquard, Etienne Mainini, Max Martragny, Christophe Martragny, Marco Bourdelles, Yannick Coquard, Arromanches Normandy, 2008

Yannick flew the family coop when he turned 18. Goodbye Coquard Motos, hello Jet Moto Evasion and then the UP store from 2001-2002 where he reported to his esteemed boss, David Schuller. Mr. Schuller helped broaden his skill set and taught him much before Yannick became his partner in 2003. The dealerships may change, but the passion is unchanged and everlasting. Motorcycles for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. To whom could this passion be attributed? His mother, Nicole, of course. She'd bribe him so he'd get good grades, recalled the YCF founder with a grin: "As a rather rambunctious child, riding motorcycles was good for me, it helped me burn off steam and I slept better at night. I did it for fun occasionally at first, then I followed it up with ten years of racing and competitions between the ages of twelve and twenty-two, where I separated myself from the pack on the circuits. But it wasn't easy initially because I had to convince my mother to let me ride. She was against it at first because she'd been through this in the past with my father and she was worried that I'd get injured and was a bit fed up with the whole thing. As my cousin Christophe was starting to compete, I wanted to follow in his footsteps. When I asked my mother, she said:

"No, it's out of the question, with the grades you're getting, there's no way. On the other hand, if you can pull a B+ average by your next report card, I'll let you race." On Yannick's next report card, he had slightly better than a B+ average. "This goes to show that where there's a will, there's a way" chortled Yannick, confident in his prowess and potential. The year was 1994, and Yannick Coquard wasted no time in taking part in the regional races, where he was demolished by the top finishers in his age group. However, these losses were not enough to discourage the young Yannick, as he recalled:

«I wasn't very good at first, but I learned fast.»

Then everything clicked for him. Yannick took 5th place in the 125 cc French National Championship in 2000, and he continued to move up the ranks at a breakneck speed. In 2001, he was the 250cc Normandy motocross champion, and in 2002, the 125cc champion; and he repeated this feat in 2004 in the 125cc Scratch Enduro category. What was his style like? He was unmistakable and remarkable, both a daredevil and an all-rounder (see sidebar below).

YANNICK COQUARD

THE RACER SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF...

PIERRICK PAGET

«You have to see him to believe it. When you put Yannick on a minibike, you'll see a dude who's almost 6'2" (1 m 88), who can pull off incredible

tricks on a bike that's 20 inches (50 cm) high. Things that even us old pros couldn't do on normal bikes. He's really impressive.»

JORDAN LABBÉ

«When I joined the motorcycle world in 2002, Yannick was in his prime in the Normandy league. As soon as I saw him on a racetrack, I thought wow, this guy is incredible. He was winning with mad style, pulling tricks on all his jumps. He had all the speed, talent,

look, and fun-loving spirit of a freestyler. Because of his height, friendliness, and charisma, he had a great aura about him. For me, Yannick Coquard was the French Travis Pastrana.»

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

A talented racer, a meticulous connoisseur, and someone who's highly conscientious (whenever he wants to be), Yannick Coquard is a warm-hearted guy who's fun to hang out with, yet he's also a serious and ambitious entrepreneur. He can be both simultaneously. Hats off to him! The words of his family, close friends, partners, and colleagues confirmed this. Who shall we start with? How about Stephan Legrand? Our story picks up live from his partner truck YCF-LeBigUSA. "I first met this guy as a journalist in the US in 2005-2006. The minibike scene was in full swing here and was all the rage with a world championship held in Vegas at the New Orleans Hotel. Yannick was obviously interested in growing his brand, so we had a good talk, and we clicked. The proof is twenty years on, we're still friends. God knows I've met a lot of people in this business, and God knows I've done big deals with him and with a lot of other people with big money on the table, but honestly something amazing happens with him, he's different in the way he relates to people. He's one of the only people I've ever met who I'd never had a run in with. He's a golden boy, you can write that." Done and dusted. It's black and white. Passionate about the great champions whose exploits fill the pages of books devoted to his sport of choice, Yannick Coquard is never going to sit on the sidelines and entertain the bench players. Participating is good, winning, creating, bringing people together, and innovating in this market is even better. So, when YCF began its adventure in the summer of 2004 with an empty bank account, it issued an insane challenge. This single-minded ambition was yelled from the highest rooftops by David Maze, a fully-fledged minibike

fan, a talented painter-customizer and future first customer and a YCF dealer. "As I was one of the first people in France to develop a passion for this type of bike, he contacted me right away and came to meet me at my place to help me assemble the bikes and show me how everything fit together. He then said:

« Next time, I'll bring one for you. You can tell me what you think of it, because I'm planning to import a few from China soon. I have a colleague there. »

Okay, sure. He goes on to tell me about his clear and specific global ambition—to become the world leader in minibikes. World leader, is that all? Did I believe him? I did because sometimes I'm prone to dreaming myself. He wasn't fooling around. He'd already envisioned everything about his future business, and you could tell his vision was clear-cut and precise. He was talking to me about ranges to be enhanced and parts to be improved. A year or two later, I was selling hundreds of his bikes. When you work with him, you've still got to be careful because he's a shrewd businessman. Like everyone else he's out to make a buck for his business but he's also always chipper at work. When you work side-by-side with him, you can't help but believe in what he's doing." At first sight, almost no one could imagine that he could have such a brilliant future in business. This is why his story could make such a compelling top 10 Netflix series. Guillaume Canet (a popular French director), if by chance you find yourself reading this after riding one of the 23 bikes in his 2024 line, you should call us. We're waiting to hear from you, Netflix.

Mickaël Maschio, Dignes-les-Bains, PACA region, 2007





Yannick Coquard, YCF factory, Jiangmen China, 2012

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

While we wait to hear back from the streaming service, let's go back to the story in which Yannick actually has the starring role. Over time, he's had a long list of glowing compliments bestowed on him. David Maze called him "inspiring" right off the bat. Why 'inspiring?' "Because he never quits. Even when his containers are held up in customs just before the Christmas season while his wife is in labor, he stays strong, determined, and focused, so you can't help following him no matter what happens. In addition, he always makes sure that everyone in the organization shares in the company's successes, which is extremely laudable." When asked about this, journalists Stephan Legrand and Jordan Labbé both hit the nail on the head about Yannick's inner drive without consulting each other. "Behind the successful business owner who says 'yes' to every challenge, and who takes the time to talk to everyone, there's a cool guy, a family man, a people person, for whom you want to give your all, because he constantly sets an example by rolling up his sleeves and getting his hands dirty, while giving his unfiltered feedback. Yannick is the driving force behind YCF. He's the guy who's made his mark on the motorcycle world while others drop like flies. When you go the extra mile and keep innovating, it's easier" sums up the Moto Verte journalist with aplomb. "Because he's close to people, likes to listen to them, is open to everything and knows how to take criticism or give his two cents on any topic, he's naturally an extraordinary asset for the brand. A genuine driving force, at the end of the day" added one of the journalists from LeBigUsa. A driving force who never runs out of gas and who manages to rev up

everyone around him. "Yannick is indefatigable, and he's not afraid to knock on any doors, anytime" added Eric Peronnard, recalling the fond memories he had across the pond. Directly owing to everything that's been said about him, almost no one wants to stay away from Yannick Coquard for too long. As Pascal Haudiquert, a prominent journalist at MX Magazine's rightly and affectionately pointed out: "He's a magnet. Once you've worked alongside him, you're in a bind because there's no question you want to spend time with him again. He attracts people with his likability, ideas, enthusiasm, generosity, shared passion, and approachability. And he's kept it simple and hasn't let success go to his head. He and Fanny could be grandstanding all the time or phoning it in, but no, they've stayed natural, themselves, and keep their noses to the grindstone." Any final words to round off this mini portrait with panache? "Ever since I crossed his path, he's been my mentor, he sets the example" said Alexis Housset, former YCF salesman who's somewhat of an expert in employee development strategy. "Let's not forget his charisma" cut in Julien Huan, the longstanding retailer and French market leader. Before proclaiming at length his affection and admiration, he said:

«He's a big guy with a big personality; he's loud and always on the move. No one is better at selling his product than he is. He's driven and enthusiastic 24/7, even twenty years on. That's the most impressive thing about him. He could act like a big boss, but no, he prefers to work all the time.»

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

That's how Yannick Coquard is. He's happier working alongside his wife Fanny or with his loyal teammate in the factory in China than he is sitting under a palm tree in Bora-Bora. "I'm not sure why, but I've always believed in YCF. I've always thought it would be a lot of fun to bring together young people enjoying themselves riding bikes with parts that didn't cost an arm and a leg. I could never have imagined creating all this with Dimitri, but opportunities came along, so we seized them" modestly concedes the forty-year-old. Yannick pays an honest and candid tribute to his partner, the cornerstone of this incredible success story:

« Without him by my side, there wouldn't be any story to write. We both made YCF; it's our baby. »

On the other side of the planet, in his office dozens of Chinese characters can be seen on a whiteboard in the background. Dimitri also proclaimed his friendship with the man he describes as a brother in spirit. Or better yet: "I find it amazing to see this relationship still going strong like it did on day-one, without any dust ups or doubts. There aren't many companies where, after twenty years, everything runs like clockwork between the two managers. We're unbelievably complementary. Yannick is more than a brother to me. If he said to me tomorrow that he wanted out of the business, I'd drop everything on the spot. Doing YCF without him would be of no interest to me. We started together, we'll finish together and that's for sure."

Did you say team-up?





«Dimitri is Yannick's main weapon. In any case, when you look closely, in any successful business, there's always a duo at the top of the pyramid that works well together. And here, the two make a perfect pairing. I don't know him personally, as he works in China, but he's undoubtedly added value for YCF»

said Stephan Legrand, eager to learn more about Dimitri. Nothing could be easier, simply read on.



Dimitri Bera, Jiangmen China, 2016

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

Dimitri Bera:

the indispensable secret partner.

As Coluche, the legendary French comedian, once said in his iconic 1974 sketch, “It’s a story about another guy.” The other guy in the YCF story is Dimitri Bera. And he refers to himself this way, when asked about the creation of the company name: “YCF had a nice ring to it. Could it have been called ‘YDF’ as in D for Dimitri? Yeah, probably, that could have worked, but the shoe fit, so I was fine with it. Maybe my ego wasn’t big enough to add the ‘D’ in my name to the company, but it never bothered me in the least. In this story, you have to understand that I’m the other guy; the one in the shadows. Few people know who I am because I’m almost never in France. Yannick is the face of the brand. And it doesn’t matter if I’m one of the main protagonists in this story because my job is to buy a bike and send it to him for testing. Take Tesla for example. Everyone knows Elon Musk, right? What about everyone else who works at the company? They’re a legion of unknowns.” This is a humble and sincere sentiment fully shared by the brand’s top French retailer, Julien Huan, who said:

« The main culprit in this story is Dimitri. Without him, YCF wouldn’t be where it is today, since he was the one who came up with the idea. But apart from that, he’s the type of guy nobody sees and who prefers to stay behind the scenes. He can go to any race on the motocross circuit, and no one is going to recognize him. What can I say about him other than he’s a great guy. And over time, he’s gained the Chinese work ethic and only thinks about one thing: working 24/7 to improve the quality of the bikes so the company is always moving forward. »

Writing a few lines about Dimitri’s background can be an extremely life-affirming experience. Anything can be achieved if you get the right resources. His glass is always half-full. He seeks out the extraordinary and never settles for the typical. A touch of madness keeps him in constant motion. He goes right when everyone else goes left. He chose to go East when everyone said the party was in the West.

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

“I was always different” the Chartres native confided, “after I graduated from high school in 1992, and then got my vocational training, all my friends headed for the USA. So, I chose China. I found a small association in the 14th arrondissement in Paris that provided Chinese classes, but it was complicated because I was surrounded by children barely five or six years old (laughs). Then I came across another organization that was sending French students to China. I requested my placement late: I’d asked for Beijing but ended up in Shanghai. My initial idea was to spend a year at a university to see what the country was like and to learn Mandarin.” Before he knew it, the Chartres native was on his way to the People’s Republic of China. How did he feel when he first set foot on Chinese soil? “I was overcome by an inexplicably good feeling about the country and the city. Shanghai was just starting to get built up, the new buildings only started dotting the landscape that was still mainly covered by the old ones. Crowds of people and dive places to eat were everywhere; the place was a zoo, but it had a great atmosphere.” He felt comfortable in the crowded streets of one of the world’s largest financial centers—almost too comfortable for that matter. When he made it to Jiao Tong University one Sunday evening at 8pm.

« I showed up and could only say hello and goodbye in Chinese. But I had blinders on. Only two minutes ago, I’d been scammed by the cab driver who’d charged me in dollars what I should have paid in RMB. »

recounted the 51-year-old, 30 years after the fact. However, this crazy adventure did end on a high note:

«In brief, I had a rough time finding my room, but deep down I felt happy and content. Regardless, you either love China or you hate it. This became clear to me from the get-go.»

Three hundred and sixty days in China and he wanted more. Surrounded by Americans and Japanese, the only Frenchman on campus signed up for an additional year. Then a third? No, he was called in for military service in France. “And that’s how I ended up in the Asia department of the Ministry of Defense in Paris for ten months” explained the self-taught Sinophile. His new goal? To earn money in 1998 and return to Shanghai in 1999 in the hope of finding work. This is easy to do when you’re highly motivated: “I found a job with a small French company specializing in sourcing office furniture, put some money away and was able to go back to China.” So, what happened next? Some “dumb luck” as Dimitri would likely say. But destiny had another twist in store for him: “My dad, who was a dental prosthetist, attended a trade show in Paris where he met some guys who were subcontracting dental molds in China. He told them about me and that I was looking for a job, and then one of the managers, Stéphane, called me and came over to meet me. We got on well and he gave me two weeks to find some compasses. Okay, why not, I figured I’d give it a try.”



Group photo of factory staff before the Chinese New Year, Dimitri BERA standing far right, Liu Liping 2nd from left in 1st row, Jiangmen China, 2015

The challenge was on. In the words of Gilles Marmy: “Nothing is impossible for a person of goodwill.” Immediately, Dimitri set out searching the endless maze of streets in Shanghai for his winning ticket. Nada. He traipsed off to Suzhou in the Jiangsu Province and came up empty handed. Then he traveled to Nanjing. Still no luck. “In a shop window, I found a compass. It had a phone number printed on the back of its packaging. I got in touch with the person in charge and headed off for seven hours by train to this little company located in a back alley. It looked like a garage” recalled Dimitri as if

it were yesterday. He continued “and then I bumped into a guy who had been making this item for two years. I had gotten good in Chinese, so we understood each other. I knew the deal was in the bag. I got back to Stéphane. He thought the price was great, he was happy, everything was fine. When I started working with him, I acted as an intermediary and the French company ended up giving me a modest job so I could live decently in China.”

Mission accomplished—the apprenticeship was a success.

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

In addition to seeing every nook and cranny of the country, Dimitri soaked up everything he could. He committed to memory everything he could involving production manufacturing and its monitoring, met contacts, and discovered the tricks of the trade along with the Chinese way of doing things. He learned a lesson perfectly that would soon serve the boss of the YCF factory with its 80 employees working in an 86,000 sq ft workshop. “Dimitri is our ace in the hole” stated Fanny with the utmost respect.

«I first met him in the summer of 2005 in Chartres. I immediately sensed the budding partnership with Yannick, and the three of us soon got on famously. He’s got the same mindset as we do, had a similar upbringing, and has the same dark sense of humor as well. Our advantage is and always has been that Dim speaks the language perfectly and can read about 30% of it. So, during negotiations, his language skills have saved us many times. »

While Fanny sang his praises, François Alaux poked fun at the “Chinaman” of the group while also lavishly praising him with great fanfare: “The first time I arrived at their workshop, I was surprised by the way he had everything set up. Everything was so rigorous and incredibly functional. He has such a love for this country that it really makes all the difference in the end process. It’s a shame, though, that he speaks Mandarin with a Chartres accent. When I heard him speak in the factory, I felt like I was

in a Louis de Funès (one of France’s best known and most beloved comedians) movie with a guy talking nonsense in a made-up language (laughs).” While selling compasses paid his bills, he still couldn’t get his mind off motorcycles. Is he a big aficionado? That’s quite an understatement for this “super fan” who fell into the motocross scene in 1983, riding the iconic Yamaha PW80: “We had a number of racetracks near our house, and a Honda store too. It wasn’t long before I got a bike as a gift when I was about eleven, after that I started easing into racing on Sundays, then taking part in a few practice races and then competed in the 125cc League Championships until 1989” said the amateur racer. Being in love with something is great, but making a living at it is far more complicated, especially if you don’t have the talent of Marvin Musquin, Mickaël Pichon or Jean-Michel Bayle.

«I never imagined for a second that I’d make a living in this sport, let alone earn a salary from manufacturing motorcycles. Especially since back home, in China, twenty years ago, this type of vehicle was only used as a way of getting from point A to point B, never as a hobby. These days, attitudes are changing as the industry evolves. A small segment of the population is starting to buy them for recreational use, but when we started YCF, there was nothing here. »

said Dimitri, without an iota of surprise in his voice. While out on a walk, his fate will take another turn.



From left to right, Yannick Coquard, Dimitri Bera, Patrick Flaguais, Foshan's factory, China, 2006



Dimitri Bera, Yannick Coquard, China, 2018

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

Dimitri Bera doesn't know it yet, but his unexpected encounter with a minibike on a street corner, and developed in China, is literally going to alter the trajectory of his life and that of hundreds of people and families who ride YCF bikes in 2024 or who work directly or indirectly for the French brand every day. Or in the words of French media legend Pascal Haudiquert:

« The strength of this company lies in having a Frenchman who moved to China and has lived there ever since. If it hadn't been for the symbiosis between him and Yannick, YCF wouldn't be where it is today, that's for sure. »

A glance in the rear-view mirror is enough for Dimitri to realize just how long the road travelled has been:

« Everyone laughed in our faces. Even before we imported the very first bike, nobody really believed in us except Yannick and me. And when I say Yannick, I mean Yannick and Fanny, of course. Without her, the story would never have been the same. She's a key player in YCF. »

Two decades on, the numbers are dizzying. More than two hundred dealers in France, nearly 80 employees in the Chinese factory working in an 86,000 sq ft production facility, 17,000 bikes sold in 2021, a record for that calendar year, more than 100,000 bikes sold since the company started doing business, 34 countries importing YCF bikes on every continent, more than 20 different models in the product line,

from clutchless bikes for toddlers and beginners, to beautiful mini GPs for riding on blacktop. Shall we stop here or push our luck? Let's push our luck. As always with the tandem at the helm of this flourishing business.

« A day doesn't go by when I'm not happy to get out of bed. But don't expect me to stop here. »

warned the key man behind the scenes as he sets his sights on the future. "We import to 34 countries, that's fine, but I'm sure we can do better. There are 194 countries in the world after all, so we still have room to grow. I'm convinced we can easily export to fifty more countries. Basically, we can take this as far as we want to. So yes, in twenty years, we've achieved something that nobody would have bet on, including us. We're happy with what we've built, even proud of it. When you see someone walking around the other side of the globe wearing a YCF cap, you think to yourself this is a beautiful thing. But we've really worked hard to achieve all this" laughs the duo's other workhorse, with eyes heavy with sleep turned heavenward.

As Henri Salvador sang in the mid-1960s, "If work is health, so if you do nothing you squander it." No one knows whether our workhorses will make it to old age (though we wish them and their families the best) but apparently, as Confucius once said, "when you do what you love, you never work a day in your life."

Isn't that right, Fanny and Liping?

Fanny Coquard, Edgewater Florida USA, 2022



1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

Fanny
Liping:

women who can do it all.

As it says in the Synoptic Gospels, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” In this story, we must ‘render’ homage to the female “Caesars.” Although we pulled this idea out of thin air, it’s still relevant. We could never tell the YCF story, without recounting Fanny and Liping’s major contribution to it. This is only natural.

« We would have never made it without our wives. They help us strike a balance between our professional and personal lives. Whether it’s my wife Liping or Fanny, they’ve been through a lot because of us. When Yannick and I were working round the clock, seven days a week, that wasn’t a problem because YCF was our baby. We gave it our all to ensure that it thrived, without worrying too much about the effect this was having on our respective homes. »

said Dimitri Bera, who’s well aware that the duo’s success was in fact due to a quartet of players.

1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

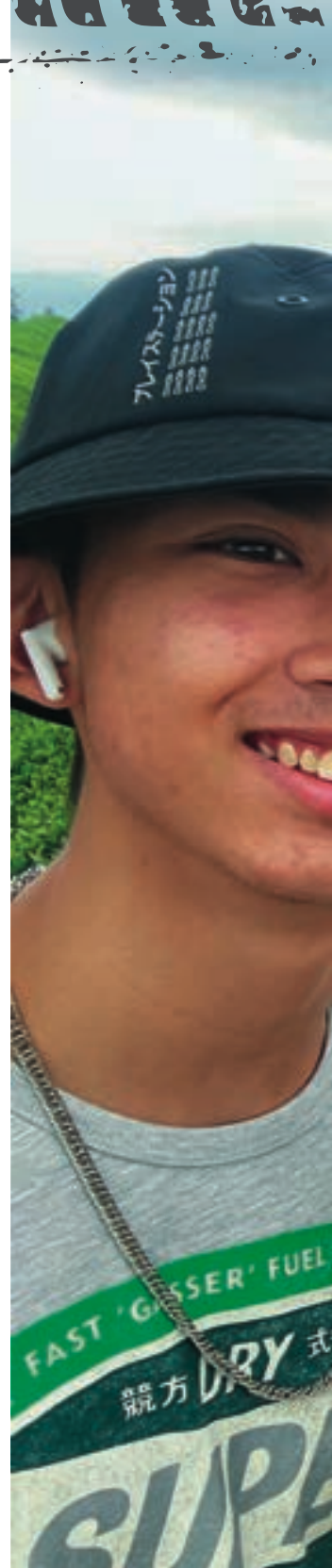
And before focusing on the legendary female face of the company, respected and admired by all connoisseurs and lovers of YCF, let's 'render to Liping the things are Liping's.' Don't know her? It's not surprising if you don't know her because she's the woman behind the secret partner. And yet, her vital importance to this business success story as a special partner and stakeholder on the upper echelons of the company organizational chart must be taken seriously. Her faithful companion of three decades would never downplay her role in the company when introducing her. Dimitri waxed nostalgic: "I met her at university almost as soon as I landed in China. I was 22 and she was only 16. And do you know what? In the span of only a few months, we managed to bump into each other in Shanghai no less than three times in a city with a population of 20 million. Crazy odds, no? And we've been together since 2001. Even though she'd always lived in Shanghai, and this wasn't an easy decision to make, she agreed to move to the Dongbao District out of love for me and for our business."

And for more than 20 years, live from the Prefecture-level city of Jiangmen where the YCF factory has its base of operations, Liping has been wearing many hats and putting in long hours for her husband's company.

«Quite simply, she helps me on multiple fronts such as staff relations, accounting, hiring and other human resource tasks, you name it.»

said Dimitri. Fanny followed suit with her high opinion of Liping:

«It's a good thing Liping was there to help get the company off the ground and take care of things administratively at start up. Having a Chinese woman on the team who could handle the paperwork and talk to everyone we had to deal with was a massive relief for us.»



In Thailande, Bera Family, 2021



1. THE WINNING QUARTET DRIVING THE BUSINESS.

On the other side of the globe, Yannick has long since had the full backing of Mrs. Flaguais-Coquard, aka Fanny. They bring to mind some of the all-time mythical couples such as Musset and Sand, Lennon and Ono, Rivera and Kahlo, Birkin and Gainsbourg, Sinatra and Gardner or even Jay-Z and Beyoncé for those with more contemporary tastes. But we mustn't underestimate the importance of this power couple with regard to the origins of YCF. They may get less attention from the press than the couples mentioned previously, but they are legendary at motorcycle events. The formula is simple: there's no Coquard without Flaguais and no Flaguais without Coquard. There's no such thing as one without the other, period.

«My wife, Cass, and I have enormous respect for them, for what they represent, for what they've achieved, and for what they project. They're hard workers and are driven to succeed. Regardless of whatever is thrown at them, they overcome it together, and never give up. It's Fanny-Yannick and that's that.»

said designer-scriptwriter François Alaux. As soon as one is complimented, a compliment for the other is never far behind, such as in the comments that follow: "They're in such symbiosis, it's a sight to behold" said Pascal Haudiquert. He went on to refer to the departure from their familial cocoon in France for parts unknown in China as a concrete example of this skilled team's ability to work together: "I could never have done what they did. I'm sorry, you've got to be a little sick in the head to do what they did, if you think

about it. It's pretty daring to go to the other side of the world with an infant in tow with the aim of importing minibikes. But they weren't afraid to go, regardless of what everyone said." In the words of motocross journalist Pascal Haudiquert, followed by the high praise heaped on them by the retailer Julien Huan, who knows better than anyone the key role played by his wife in his husband's ascension. Julien Huan continued thus: "Their success is general and shared. Compared to someone as charismatic as Yannick, it's true that Fanny has a more discreet personality. But every time, no matter where she goes, everyone is happy to see her, from the industry professionals to the customers. He has a big debt towards her, and we owe her a lot in this wild and wonderful story." At the risk of blushing due to immodesty (the Coquards don't know the meaning of the word), who better than legendary photographer Dimitri Coste to capture this much-appreciated portrait: "What do I love most about her, about him and about them? Their enthusiasm. As for Yannick, he's always up for any challenge, any wild idea, and ready to face any problem. Fanny too is always upbeat, positive and she's also a constant and reassuring presence. In addition, she really knows what she's talking about. They're a truly amazing, wicked couple. In this day and age, it's not so often you come across such a duo, who work their butts off with a smile on their faces. In addition, they're really open and willing to listen. Even when François Alaux and I turned up at their place acting like know-it-all Parisian hipsters and said your logo's crap and your bikes are ugly, they didn't bat an eyelash. When we spoke ill of their industrial baby, they stayed calm, engaged, and ready to move forward. They're so tough."

When asked about the importance of Mrs. Coquard with regard to this business and heroic family tale, the big boss heaped praise on her. Welling up a bit, with a lump in his throat and a look of love in his eyes like a first crush, Yannick showed obvious admiration: YCF's story was, is and will be a success story because Fanny's past, present and future contributions.

«What can I say? She wasn't a motorcycle fanatic, she didn't know anything about them, but she always believed in me, and

could see my drive and commitment. She did everything for us. Anything that could help me save time, she took care of. All the grunt work too, I might add. Luckily, she was there! We've been together for 23 years, and we're still very close with the kids. Fanny put her career on hold for me and for YCF. So, if tomorrow she said to me: 'Yannick, let's call it a day, I want to move on' it would be my turn to follow her lead. In any case, which would be the fair thing to do.»



Fanny and Yannick Coquard,
Brooksville Florida USA, 2022

First name: Fanny.

Maiden name: Flaguais.

Date of birth: August 23rd, 1981.

Place of birth: Caen (Calvados).

Parents' professions: restaurant owners.

Dream job: restaurant owner, "but this job has too many constraints."

Education: high school diploma, then business school with a major in mass-market retailing.

Personality traits: fighter, assertive, generous, dedicated.

Relationship with motorcycles (before Yannick): none.

First kiss with the love of her life: see interview below with Fanny.

FANNY

« I GET A LOT OF RECOGNITION »

« Let's get down to brass tacks. You met Yannick Coquard in your senior year of high school. What was your first encounter with him like? »

It all started with my childhood friend, Christophe Martragny. His parents were friends with my parents, and I used to babysit their kids at their home in Saint-Côme. One day, when he was participating in a motocross event in the area, his son insisted that I accompany him. So, I suggested

to Christophe that we all go together, so that I could keep an eye on his son during the races. Even though my brother had owned a 50 cc when he was a kid, I knew absolutely nothing about the sport. I may have been to a race once or twice, but that's about it...

And then the handsome racer, Yannick, appeared before you and you fell madly in love with him like in a fairy tale? Or was the reality a little different?

No, actually, I really didn't notice him (laughs). I remember the weather was lousy, pouring rain and mud everywhere. Then I see Christophe coming back to the trucks with a guy who did lots of motocross. And then Christophe says: "Ah, my glasses are caked with mud." "Hand them over" I told him, "I'll wipe them for you." Yannick saw me doing this, and I'm pretty sure it made an impression on him. It's like I'm used to doing this kind of thing every weekend as his friend's assistant. Then I left, as if nothing had happened...

(When asked the day Fanny and Yannick met, the matchmaker, Christophe Martragny, explained: "As soon as he saw her, Yannick fell head over heels in love with her. The next day, when I came into the store, he asked me "who was that girl with you?" and announced, "She's really cute." He got her number straight away, and then the romance began!")

And when is the official start of the equation: Yannick + Fanny = love?

He invited me to go jet-skiing with the company he worked for, and we had two or three dates like that. Then, while I was on vacation at my grandmother's place in the Manche department, I heard that he was coming to the area to ride the following day. He'd been partying hard with his friends the night before, so I said: "OK, I'll meet you with my cousin." I had my driver's license, so my grandmother lent me her car and off we went. Everyone had had a few drinks except me, who was driving, and Yannick, who didn't drink. The two of us ended up going out on a Saturday night as designated drivers and took

the group out clubbing. We didn't sleep all night that night, we got closer, and we finished the evening at 4 a.m. By 7 a.m., he was off to work. I went to see him ride, spent the day with him and his buddies and then got to know his mother and sister... and from then on, we never left each other's side. The official date was July 1st 2001. July 1st was also the day the company was founded. So, on this day, it's more of a hassle than a big party, with the end of inventory, the items need to be counted, and all the tax info needs to be collected. So, we're wiped out every June 30th.

**Between then and the creation of YCF in 2004, how have you developed personally and professionally?
What are your future goals?**

I went to business school in Rouen and while I was there, my parents got to know Yannick and learned how to get to know him. They had a good opinion of him, and in fact they found him quite likeable. He had a good mindset, an entrepreneurial side that was a bit wacky, but quickly they got on well with him. As for me, I wanted to go into business for myself, but that never happened. Maybe one day, who knows? We ended up buying a house in 2003 in Saint-Côme-de-Fresné, and we went back and forth to see each other during my last year of school. Our relationship survived the long-distance. Then I found myself

doing an internship at Carrefour. My boss gave me extensive training and bet the farm on me. Then Yannick went into business on his own with YCF, so I ended up leaving the mass-market retail business to help him as best I could, as soon and as quickly as possible. We were very much in love, so I didn't see YCF as in any way detrimental to my career. My initial tasks were answering the phone, finding a location for the first container, shipping packages, preparing price lists, PowerPoint presentations, creating Excel spreadsheets, checking invoices, etc.

How were you welcomed into this new world of motocross?

To be honest, it's a very macho environment. You'd better be able to hold your own in it if you want to be accepted. Even more so if you're a woman, otherwise you'll get slaughtered. At first, with

the other guys, the atmosphere was a bit stormy because they were quick to give me a hard time. But since I've got a strong character, everything fell into place quite quickly.

When Yannick told you that he wanted to start a business importing minibikes from China, what was your reaction? Did you think he was nuts, were you okay with this idea, or did you say let's go for it?

Yannick is a visionary in this field. He's got a real flair for motorcycles, so when he told me this was something worth doing, I believed him. Only once, when he ordered his first 30 bikes did I ask him if he was sure of himself, and that was the last time. I'll always remember our early days. We'd filled the house with stuff, boxes were piled up in front of the garage and his mother was going nuts because she couldn't even get around her own house. But I immediately trusted him. He was quite stunned

by his parents' failed marriage. So early on it was important to him to avoid the same mistakes they'd made. He's always made it a priority to leave enough time for us to be together and for family, and he didn't want to devote every waking minute to work. In addition, his guiding principles were clear: don't waste money, be judicious with your inventory, plan ahead as best you can, and think about tomorrow. This far-sighted approach to the business appealed to me on paper, and it reassured me.

Twenty years have gone by. Two successful decades spent between China, Normandy, and the USA. More than 7,000 days of eating, sleeping, drinking, and breathing YCF, flying around the globe, with the kids and your suitcases in tow, while also having a store to run. When you sit back and think about your story for a minute, what do you tell yourself? Do you say wow that was crazy?

I wonder how I was able to get it all done, and how we were able to build all this. It's impressive. Moving around, traveling, living in countries you never thought you'd set foot in... Do I feel like I've sacrificed my career? Not at all. I believe it's perfectly normal that Yannick takes center stage because he's the one

who takes all the risks and deals with all the problems head-on. As for me, I've received a lot of recognition from the community. When I go somewhere, people sometimes tease me by saying "Oh, there's the boss." I'm the woman behind the scenes, but I'm also perfectly capable of running the company. »



Photoshoot with the actress Tiffany Doll, Formigny Normandy, 2017



CHAPTER 2

YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

From left to right, Mike Valade, Max and Christophe Martragny, Robin Laverdant, Laurine Bonnet and Axel Coquard, Saint-Côme-de-Fresné Normandy, 2015



2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

The Robin Hood of the motorcycle world.

This statement has been repeated over and over. And no matter how much it annoys or gets people talking at racing events, it was first said by Yannick Coquard, in a resolute tone that leaves no room for doubt: “Motocross is a rich man’s game played by the poor.” Before refining his targeted and well-oiled sales pitch, he continued:

«Right away, I noticed this as a salesman in a dealership. As everything is expensive, everyone negotiates, because people put a lot of money into their bikes, even if they don’t necessarily have enough to do so. This is also one of the main reasons I chose minibikes. On the one hand, you get just as much riding pleasure, if not more, than with a full-size bike, not to mention the danger factor is removed, and on the other hand, you can now afford four YCFs for the price of a full-size Japanese bike. As a result, the whole family can ride, not just mom and dad.»

A quick visit to the brand’s website in 2023 is enough to win you over. Fancy a YCF 50 ideal for your munchkin toddler? The bike is yours for only €1,349. Prefer a Supermoto? For €2,000, you can take off on hundreds of thrilling rides. For more experienced riders, we have Factory SP2 and SP3 models that you’ll long for. Save an additional €500 and the 12- and 14-inch dirt bikes can be customized to make it all your own. What if your pleasure is becoming the next Quartararo by racing around the track at 186 miles per hour? YCF is stepping out of its comfort zone and introducing its latest creation, two beautiful mini GP bikes at less than €5,000 each, so you can ride in style down the career path of your dreams.

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

YCF means low prices and great quality. Low prices mean accessibility for everyone. The democratization of the sport means delighted customers and YCF co-owners alike. “The basic idea behind the business is twofold. First, never leave customers stranded on the side of the road with their bikes broken down. This meant we had to have inventory, plenty of parts and top-notch customer service in France and China. If you have a problem, no problem because we’re here to help you. The other important factor was obviously the cost of these starter bikes. If you can’t afford a Japanese bike, no problem. You can start with a YCF bike that costs from €1,000 to €2,000 and you’ll see, it’ll be perfect” said the company’s founder, reminiscing about his days riding on the beach with a Honda or Yamaha. “Never in our wildest dreams did we intend to compete with these legendary brands. We just wanted to bring something different to this niche market by giving the most bang for your buck. Back in the day, finding a used Japanese bike was either impossible or extremely expensive. Working alongside Dimitri heading up made-in-China production, we were going to be able to reverse the trend by making a bike that was easy to use and that just about anyone could afford” continued Yannick looking through the lens of the Sunday rider. This was a gamble that has largely paid off 20 years to the extent that it’s made his sidekick living in the Hubei province proud: “Manufacturing in China has made this possible. Lower manufacturing costs mean a bike coming off the factory line is affordable in France, Europe, and in the rest of the world. Our success in generally democratizing this sport and our passion for a large majority of people is certainly one of our greatest achievements.”





Mickaël and Zachary Pichon, Le Mans Sarthe, 2017

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

With YCF, 'it's clear as day,' as French rapper Orelsan might say. You can ride without breaking the bank. All at once, the aspirations and dreams of each and every one of us come to life thanks to these "minis." Whether you're the son of a motocross champion, a CEO, a tradesperson, or a farmer, YCF works for blue-collar and white-collar folks alike. And what if that wasn't YCF's greatest victory? What if it was leaving no one stranded on the side of the road, irrespective of social background, beliefs, age, or gender? For David Maze, there's no doubt about it:

« Their story is crazy. With such a scope, such a vision and such an outcome, I only know one story like this and it's that of Fanny, Yannick, and Dimitri. You must bear in mind that YCF has provided countless people with access to a real motor sport every weekend. Before them, this didn't exist; it was impossible. They started a business that benefits everyone: customers, children, adults, families, and us dealers, because for once in this business, we're able to sell products that guarantee us real profit margins. It's a win-win situation for everyone concerned. »

Eric Peronnard, organizer of international events including the prestigious X-Games, also praised their economic and manufacturing success, which benefits every link on the food chain. Who deserves the credit for this? Chinese manufacturing is certainly a big help but let's not forget the business vision of the co-founders: "They have succeeded in making use of the Chinese ability to manufacture a motorcycle at

an unbeatable price, while keeping quality standards high. How did they achieve this? They relied on their European mentality of attention to detail that oversees the entire chain of production. In a sea of Chinese motorcycles sold just about anywhere, they were pioneers and the first to stand out from the crowd. It's no coincidence that YCF is the best Chinese-made bike on the market today." Sold the world over, the Bera-Coquard duo's minibike intrigues, fascinates, and challenges, but never leaves anyone indifferent. Whether on the pro circuit or on a private amateur one, the mere presence of this unusual two-wheeler raises many questions. Stephan Legrand, who's both a reporter and a rider himself tried to answer them as best he could when he travelled throughout the US:

« People here are curious, they inquired about the price, they took it for a spin, and you know what? Every time, they came back smiling. The next question inevitably was: where can we find them? The great thing about the USA is that customers give products a chance. And with YCF pit bikes, they immediately see the upside of the brand, namely its great value for money, which is absolutely unbeatable, to be honest. They don't care if the bike comes from China! As long as it works and costs 20-30% less, they'll buy it. At today's motocross prices, if a guy can buy his kid a fun, reliable bike that's a lot cheaper than a Japanese model, I can assure you he won't think twice before making his choice. »



Stephan Legrand with Yannick Coquard, photoshoot for leBigusa.com, Edgewater Florida USA, 2019

Is Yannick Coquard the Robin Hood of the motorcycle world? “Yes, in certain respects” said Fanny. “Let’s just say he’s not taking an elitist approach” added Dimitri Coste politely. The only difference is that, compared with the fictional British character thieving in Sherwood Forest, he doesn’t rob the rich to give to the poor, but rather markets a common item that brings joy to wealthy and disadvantaged communities alike. So, is he happy? Not quite yet, according to the man himself, whose brain is teeming with ideas:

« We’ve managed to do something great, but we can still do better. Tomorrow, for example, I’d like to see every school in France offering toddlers two hours of riding lessons a week on a YCF. I want to give everyone the opportunity to sit in a motorcycle seat, to learn how to ride and discover the thrill of the sport, just for the pure and simple pleasure of it all. »





2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

An
all-around
product

and ageless fun for everyone.

“From 7 to 77 years old” as Hergé used to say when highlighting the intergenerational aspect of the mythical Journal de Tintin, which was extremely popular in the 1970s and 1980s in France. Then, in 1973, Michel Sardou used it in the lyrics of his hit La Maladie d’amour to evoke the feeling that’s felt in the hearts of young and old children alike. “From 7 to 77 years old” also applies to YCF because its line of mini motorcycles is suitable for the enthusiastic grandfather, the experienced 30-year-old or the three-year-old interested in these noisy, multicolored bikes. Isn’t age three a little too young to start on a mini motorcycle? If you take a look at the brand’s website, under the description of the YCF 50, it is stated that: “The youngest riders can start learning on this safe and extremely reliable model of mini dirt bike, is age three. This starter dirt bike is available in both gas powered and electric versions. During the child’s first steps, this tiny pit bike can be fitted with training wheels, as well as a remote circuit breaker. It has a throttle that can be clamped, an electric starter and full chain protection, which gives the parents peace of mind about a safe learning experience for their little ones.”

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

That's what they're like at YCF: they always want everyone to be happy all the time. Doing so is easy on paper, but the co-founders have actually been pulling this off since 2004.

« We saw adults having fun with our bikes, so from the get-go the idea wasn't only to make them for kids, but really for anyone who wanted to play with and enjoy them. To prove this, I wanted to import a few to France so that I could give them to my friends to play with in their yards. We were immediately drawn to the idea of bringing the whole family or the community together around these bikes. »

recalled Dimitri, with a serious expression as he leaned back in his office chair. He explained this strategy in more granular detail and its development with all age groups:

« At the very beginning, all we cared about was having a good laugh with friends when we got together. Then the line quickly evolved to include mini motorcycles with training wheels, on which mom and dad could put their preschoolers. As the company obtained additional financial resources, it could develop new products, so we expanded our range to include the whole family. If we take a closer look at the numbers, we now sell almost as many 50s for toddlers as we do Bigys for adults. »

What's the takeaway from this?

Almost every year we add something new to the YCF product line. And we've been doing this for 20 years. The common thread running through it all is the notion of reliable performance and always bringing greater joy. Do you agree, Mr. Yannick Coquard that this brand is as much for the child rider as it is for the motocross Champion or average lady?

« In the end, our objective has always been very simple: to make the well-made product possible, so as to be the best in each of our target categories. Since 2004, we've only released products we like. If we don't like it, we don't make it. That's why I test every bike myself on the track before it rolls off the production line. Even today. I try out everything because I want to get to know my minibikes inside and out. Once I'm on them, I know what works and what doesn't after 20 years of riding and testing bikes. I go with my gut for which bikes go into production and which ones are mothballed. If I'm relishing riding a bike everywhere, then it's going to be a winner. »

Monitor quality for continuous improvement. Innovate but always know there's room for improvement. Be well-liked and keep expanding. This is a winning recipe that offers the company an infinite number of prospective customers because these values are shared by the greater motorcycling family.

Dimitri and Maxence Bera, Jiangmen China, 2013





YCF TOUR at EXTREM MOTOS, Saint Germain de la Coudre Normandy, 2015

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

With YCF, it's basically one for all and all for one. Or more specifically, every boy and girl for one, as the boss might say. Because he believes there's no fundamental difference between boys and girls when they're obsessed with a minibike. Yannick continued thus, insisting with a note of pride in his voice:

«One of our basic principles is to bring whole families together around the bikes, so we have to appeal to the entire family circle. If you take a father, mother, son and daughter, the idea has always been to bring everyone together around the bike, so that they can have a good time as a family. It's a lot nicer than seeing Dad off on his own riding around a field while Mom and the kids head off to the pool, isn't it?»

It's a milieu that has a reputation for machismo, where males rule the roost, but this type of thinking is surprising because it's outdated. But no one is surprised when it's said by the Normandy native. "Yannick thinks of everything and everyone. That's another reason for YCF's success. Nothing is left to chance, everything is thought out, calculated, solely for the pleasure of each AND every one. Some bikes come equipped with an automatic clutch; some with a manual starter or remote control; some bikes are full-scale for competitive racers. In fact, regardless of how you use the bike you'll find one that suits your needs at YCF. In addition, you'll also find a team on hand throughout France to help you out if you encounter any problems with your bike. Basically, the guy's got it all figured out" Jordan Labbé summed up with a

note of amazement. Dimitri Coste, another industry specialist, summed things up in a somewhat similar fashion: "Take YCF's semi-automatic bike for example. For me, it's the ultimate all-round bike on the market, because I can put anyone on it: a kid, grandma, or grandpa. And I can even put the most avid, thrill-seeking motorcycle fan on it too. Because if I show this motorcycle enthusiast five mini motorcycles in a line in the presence of 15 friends, he or she will have the time of his or her life riding a YCF, because this bike is going to give any other a run for its money right out of the starting gate. That's what YCF is all about: fun and smiles, no judgement, just the good life." If you change your contact person, the job you're doing, or the level of management, the message doesn't change one bit. As Julien Huan, the star retailer, put it:

«You know who comes into the store? People from all walks of life, and that's the fun of it. For example, I can sell five YCFs in one go with just the available inventory on hand to movie stars who just want to have a good time with their friends. They're not world champions in the sport, but they don't really care—that's not the point. Another textbook case: when my wife's friends come to visit us at our place, I'll put them on a semi and within five minutes, they're all riding, even though none of them had ever done so before. Do you remember how the go-cart craze was started in a spirit similar to Formula 3? Yannick and Dimitri did more or less the same thing but on motorcycles. And it's a hit, YCF is fun and the sky's the limit.»

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

While YCF's private clientele resembles an infinite breeding ground, from well-known artists to anonymous users, from the young girl to the young man, from the woman in her prime to the teenager with limited resources, YCF also brings together under its large tent, enthusiasts from infancy, born competition enthusiasts and renowned champions. Pleasure and leisure, yes, but not only. Xavier Audouard, a former journalist, and editor at Moto Verte and now sporting director of the Paris-Bercy Supercross, knows the Coquard family like the back of his hand. From the first Suzuki bikes loaned by his dad, Bernard, for the legendary show, to riding the son's YCF mini during the event, the specialist has had a front-row seat for four decades to witness the advent of the Coquard dynasty in the world of two-wheelers.

«The name has always inspired great confidence in me. But above all, I've always been passionate about the greats who have been making motocross history for ages. The Coquards, and Yannick in particular, love to have fun and laugh, but they also love competition and performance. That's also why they're on the schedule of the biggest event in France.»

acknowledged the reporter. Why put on a show mixing minibikes with big ones piloted by the world's best talents? Why Yannick? Why YCF? What does this contribute? What's the purpose? These are just some of the questions that Mr. Supercross answered sincerely, directly, and unequivocally. A fascinating uncut interview that will give you thrills galore. **Ready? Read on.**





Supercross of Paris U-ARENA, Nanterre, 2022

XAVIER AUDOUARD

« YCF IS A WAY OF LIFE AND OF THINKING »

« In the early 2000s, the mini motorcycles or pit bikes phenomenon was in full swing in the USA. Is that when you became interested in Supercross? »

Yes, because everyone thought it was fun. Especially as some brands had created little motorized replicas for the stars of the show. Initially, I didn't start out with YCF, but rather with Bud Racing, run by Stéphane, a friend. For me, along with Yannick, they were the two most successful young entrepreneurs in the business by far. This brand imported pit bikes from China and then lent me bikes for the champions, complete with decal kits and other accessories. I immediately thought it was funny to have the world's greatest racers turn up on their own minis. In terms of optics, and to break up the rhythm of the event, it was perfect. Then we stopped working with Bud,

which wanted a change of scenery, and that's when Yannick came along. His company was really different. Instead of importing Chinese bikes and customizing them in France, he and his team were building them themselves in China and rolling them off the assembly line directly from their own factory. I was floored. Right away, I said to myself: okay, this guy stays focused, he's really going to be the pit bike guy to be reckoned with. And I was right about this because his approach was the most serious of all. He mastered everything from A to Z on the production line, so he wouldn't get any bad surprises. Great for him, and for us.

On a more personal note, are you a YCF customer? Have you bought bikes for your family?

My son was born in 2004, and I immediately wanted to get him on a bike. So, around the age of four or five, I got him a basic YCF 50. It had no gearbox and was simple but fun. It didn't cost an arm and a leg, and it did the job perfectly.

Even back then, the bike was already very well made and finished. In addition, I never had any mechanical issues with it. As a result, my confidence in the product was already high, even before I put YCF on the show schedule.

When the mini appeared at the Supercross, it was initially to parade around the racers on an unconventional bike, something fun for the public too. Then a real youth race was added. Why should a tiny motorcycle be given such a prominent place in a show where the sport's big names rub shoulders with bikes made in Japan?

Who comes to Supercross? Fans, obviously, but also the general public. So, you have to appeal to everyone. And even though we've been around for 40 years, nothing can be taken for granted. We need to prepare for the future and bring the younger generations into motorcycling. And who better to do that than YCF? Let me give you an example. The kid sitting in the stands with his parents wowed by the feats of skills and jumps the stars, is a future user. But he's not going to start riding on Ken Roczen's bike.

He'll start on a YCF. It's a cycle that must be maintained; we can't cater to only a portion of our clientele. What interests us here is the parent-child relationship. At a YCF race, the kid in the stands sees other 7- and 10-year-olds, all racing and all having a great time on one of Yannick's bikes. The goal is that next time he comes to one of these races, he'll ask his parents for a YCF T-shirt. And later on, maybe he'll want his own YCF bike, so he can work on his skills and ride with us one day. And so on and so forth...

So, Supercross and YCF share the same vision and guiding principle. You want to bring in the whole family into motorcycling and appeal to the widest possible audience, can you confirm this?

It's a core principle of his business. And it's complementary and consistent with what we offer at Paris-Bercy. We want to set an example and promote motocross from one generation to the next. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that YCF is a way of life and of thinking. When I was a kid, there was no such thing as a minibike. You had to wait until you were 16 to get your license, so you could

ride your motorcycle somewhere. Now, from the age of four or five, kids have been riding them. It's better this way because they're developing their passion for riding early on. YCF didn't invent the pit bike concept. But YCF has popularized it and brought it within the reach of all enthusiastic French and international families, thanks to the quality of their bikes.»

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

As an all-around bike for example, the YCF mini has an ace (yet another one) up its sleeve. It has the unparalleled ability to appeal to the uninitiated, initiated and weekend riders alike, as well as to decorated, revered champions or motocross legends. They offer their customers a unique and highly customizable product that they itch for while treating them to top-quality bikes as they hope to attract good publicity in return. It's a "double-edged" sword, as Mickaël Pichon rightly pointed out, whose reputation and track record speaks for itself:

«It took balls to ask me or guys like Carmi and all the top riders to show up in videos riding. The YCF team couldn't afford to mess this up. The bike had to hold up well at all costs. Just imagine if we'd got injured, or if the bike broke down...»

This was a risky wager, but it had a high reward. As usual over the past 20 years, whenever the three-letter brand takes a turn it's for the better. This time the turn was towards Marvin, Mickaël, Jean-Michel, Ricky, or Musquin, Pichon, Bayle, Carmichael as they're known to their friends. Every one of them is a world champion and/or a legend in the sport. And they all, without exception, came forward one day when Yannick called on them as Fanny said: "He always had the idea of putting stars on his bikes. As a fan of the sport who didn't miss a single Supercross in Paris as a kid, it was very clear that he wanted to break into this world and prove his credibility."

And how did he achieve this?

By posting a video of their collaboration on social media, or by taking a selfie with the handlebars of a mini emblazoned with the YCF brand name. To his star-struck delight, his favorite champions liked his bikes. Once upon a time, Yannick Coquard met the GOAT of the sport, Ricky Carmichael, to show him his bikes in Florida. The rest is history with a capital "H". So many memories. Eric Peronnard played matchmaker:

«Ricky is a friend. He hadn't yet signed with Triumph and had just left the Suzuki stable. So, it was now or never to show him off on a YCF bike. And this worked out well. Given the strength of character of a guy like Yannick right away really means it's going to be a done deal.»

They made an appointment to get together at Ricky's. Eric acted as the middleman. Yannick was thrilled to meet Ricky and had a YCF bike in the trunk of his car. Then, the magic happened.

« It was one of the best highlights of my career. He said he'd make a video with us. He agreed to ride one of our minibikes. He laughed and only had good things to say about it! And he shared this meeting online. I could feel a tear welling up. To have the best to ever do it, look you in the eye and tell you how great your product is, is quite a crazy thing to experience.»

What's Eric's verdict?

Photoshoot with Ricky Carmichael and Yannick Coquard
at his GOAT farm, Cairo Georgia USA, 2020



“Yannick is a great guy who’s not afraid to work, who will succeed in any project nine out of ten times. The key to YCF’s success is that he and Dimitri are always on the move. Anything is possible with them, as this episode in the US proves.” Carmichael one day, and the cream of the crop of French motocross stars the next. Did anyone say the owners were proud? “It was more than pride, it was like a gift that fell from the skies” summed up Dimitri Bera, before he added:

“Seeing some extremely famous riders using your product and saying good things about it, is personally extremely satisfying. But above all, it was good for the development of our brand, because a lot of people said to themselves: Okay, if Ricky and Pichon are riding YCFs, the brand must be pretty good, and I want one too.”

YCF

THROUGH THE EYES OF CHAMPIONS

MARVIN MUSQUIN

«When I became a rider with the Red Bull KTM factory team, Yannick had an opportunity to make me a customized minibike, with my name on it, my colors, my sponsors, my number (25)— his attention to detail was insane. Everything was identical to the full-size one I used to ride on the weekends, for the sole purpose of having fun and getting around on the racing grounds during competitions. Seeing this orange-painted frame in miniature, just like on my real bike, is **a very special gift. It's fun, rare, unique, and touching.** Afterwards, we couldn't help but to speak highly of this brand, which

is brimming with all sorts of ideas. When Guillaume Canet, whom I met in 2017 at Supercross, sent me videos of his little one riding a trail bike, I immediately said to him: “if you're interested, I've got this friend named Yannick who makes insane minibikes, and he can let you try them out whenever you'd like.” And that's how it happened. Immediately afterwards, he bought one sporting no. 25, with my colors. On balance, these are wins for Fanny and Yannick. Even though I'm a professional racer, I have as much fun on their minis as Guillaume's child or my sister-in-law learning on a clutchless 88 cc bike! »

PIERRICK PAGET

«Today's bikes have become incredibly good, but also scary. Even if I've ridden in the top five worldwide, riding a 450 cc today means always being careful. It's literally become a weapon with incredible technology. All the manufacturers have been fighting to make improvements, to go faster, but something essential has been missing from their thinking—the pleasure of riding. Pleasure means having fun without having to worry about a stopwatch or winding up in the hospital. I've had my own YouTube channel for a while. Over the past three years, we've tested 150 bikes.

MICKAËL PICHON

«We've known the Coquards for a while. My father rode with Yannick's father, so I've been following Yannick's rise closely. At first, we had our doubts about his plans, but very quickly, knowing the boy's temperament and the way he runs his business, we weren't surprised by the result. He's a smart guy who leaves nothing to chance. Using well-known names to build friendships, create replica bikes or generate buzz on social media was a very clever move on his part because it sells a lot of bikes. Seeing former champions enjoying themselves on a YCF inevitably gives those watching ideas. Today, he has

I feel most comfortable on the ones that are less powerful—i.e., the ones you can let loose on, such as Yannick's YCFs. Why is that? Because he removes all the negative aspects like fear, high cost and loneliness, all of which are holdovers from modern motorcycles, and has replaced them with notions of fun, ease of use and family. These are the three keys to YCF's success. If I ride these minibikes, it's because they're the ones on which I can get thrills and have fun with my girlfriend and my kids. **YCF is an ideal because it creates lasting memories.** »

virtually no competition in his market. And when I talk to friends or customers about minibikes, all I can think of is YCF. **There's no other product on the market at such a price and with such a high level of quality.** And above all, once you're on it, you're in for a treat, because I can ride with my ten-year-old and my wife, and we're all on the same bikes. What's more, it's a lot of fun to ride. If you're less experienced, get a clutchless model and off you go. The same holds true for me, as the bike has enough suspension, so I get a thrill when I ride it. It's great for the little ones, great for big people. In brief, it's just great. »

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

If there's a common thread that runs throughout what everyone we spoke to has said about YCF, it's the sense of well-being this company provides daily. The happiness you feel on the rides. The laughter they bring every weekend to every family member. "Where can happiness be found?" asked Christophe Maé in his song with the same title. Judging by the opinions compiled, it's likely to be with your hands on a YCF steering wheel.

«I'm telling you in all sincerity, but I've been hooked on YCF from the first time I rode one because people from all walks of life love them. As soon as you get on it, it's easy, you laugh, you feel like pulling wheelies, you feel like you can jump 50 feet, and you don't want to get off it. It's really the ultimate enjoyable entertainment product that leaves the competitive spirit in the dust.»

said Julien Huan, as he reflected on his first meeting with Yannick. A motorcycle fan since he was a toddler and a specialist reporter for Moto Verte, Jordan Labbé hasn't forgotten the first "wild times" he experienced on the beach at Arromanches-les-Bains, "across from Yannick's place, where we had a great time in a spirit of friendship and community" riding a distinctive motorcycle.

And what about competitive pit bike racing? Although pit bike racing has been gaining a foothold in Europe over the years, and YCF is involved in certain calendar events with riders who are willing to take part, it has never been one of the major profit centers for the French company. Much to the delight of the journalist, who is used to competing for top honors: "Even though I've taken part in a few events with YCF, riding one of their bikes competitively is never really what floated my boat. I've always preferred to use this mini for a Sunday lunchtime barbecue with friends, rather than to battle it out in the mud in Italy with one. And even if they do have an ultra-competitive customer segment, it's far removed from the original spirit of what YCF is all about. Fortunately, Yannick and Dimitri didn't make the mistake of going all in with this customer base." YCF is all about family and leisure. In love with this "industrial adventure" and a fan of this mini that has become "a source of endless curiosity on the market" the one and only François Alaux wrote:

«When we talk about YCF, we mean YCF Riding, not racing. Okay, some people compete, but we're still in the popular, mass-market business. We create products so that people can have fun on Sundays, and that's a really good thing.»



Travis Pastrana, Alice and Yannick Coquard at the event
DAY IN THE DIRT, Dade City Florida USA, 2021

From left to right, Yannick Coquard, Dimitri Bera and 2 employees from factory, Jiangmen China, 2010



2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

A communal passion.

As Henri Beyle, aka the legendary French author Stendhal, once said:

« The true calling is to have one's passion as a profession. »

This quote fits the Bera-Coquard duo perfectly, and it wouldn't be out of place on a YCF decal kit. But to avoid paying royalties (it could happen) to the descendants of the writer who penned *The Red and Black* or *The Charterhouse of Parma*, let's simply focus on its symbolic meaning. One was practically raised in a motorcycle shop, while the other spent all his free time atop a Honda. Both knew the sport's champions by heart from an early age, as well as the bike mechanics and were fixtures at the Paris-Bercy Supercross. They were destined to meet, and when they finally did, they built a company called YCF.

Isn't fate amazing?

« Yes, of course, it's great when you think about it. But we love our job, our company, our life so much... It's like having a child. That's why we're always keeping our noses to the grindstone and have a feeling of doing too much. And as I also have a big problem delegating and find it very hard not to be present in the factory, and this doesn't help (laughs). In fact, with Yannick and Fanny, we don't have time to sit back and pat ourselves on the back. We just work, but always with passion. »

summed up Dimitri from his office chair on the other side of the globe. If we were to make a list of the whys and wherefores that explain the success of this company made in Normandy (and China too), the notion of passion would sit right at the top of it. This passion is in the blood of the founding duo, but it also has quickly spread throughout the company's organizational chart and to key personnel.

Dimitri Coste ?

The brand's official photographer who became the man on the ground for the so-called Flat Track motorcycle, didn't come out of nowhere. His father was a journalist with Moto Verte, he's had motocross racing dreams in his head since he was a kid, and his love of the Japanese minibike led him to start the "Big Daddy Midjet Moto Club" in 2003. The photographer said:

«With my brother and a bunch of friends, including François Alaux, we set up this mini-motorcycle club simply to ride around Paris, in the streets of the capital. We all rode Hondas, in a Japanese-inspired universe. We souped them up, and our ultimate goal was to produce an officially recognized mini. A sort of Honda Monkey, which would have looked like a replica of Steve McQueen's motorcycle in The Great Escape. That's why we originally knocked on Fanny and Yannick's door, because we'd heard about this couple who were starting out in mini motocross. »

A quick word about his sidekick and old acquaintance François Alaux. He's YCF's star designer, who has taken the company to a whole new level with his creative catalogs and decal kits, has also been a fan of the whirring cauldron of magic potion since his teens. His senior thesis topic in college was an adaptation of Edith Piaf's L'Homme à la moto (The Man and the Motorbike) into a music video. His favorite manga is an Akira masterpiece about a gang of crazy bikers riding through Tokyo. His favorite hobby is hanging out at the infamous Paris club with a silly name that goes by "all the hipster-tude of Paris." Only "dads" in love with racing bikes and four-stroke engines hang out there.

Dimitri Coste and Yannick Coquard
at Wheels & Waves event,
San Sebastian Spain, 2023



«I have a very pop culture connection with motorcycles. I love the urban, youthful feel and that whole social dimension that goes with it. After that, I'm from Jean-Michel Bayle's generation, so it helped a lot to see this guy winning everywhere in the US, being able to switch from motocross to track racing... So obviously when I came across the passionate Yannick and Fanny based in Normandy while searching the Web, I was obviously hooked right away! »

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

Alexis Housset ?

He too has been a “huge fan of motorcycles since he was a kid.” In the span of only a few years he’s risen through the ranks of YCF. Initially, he started out working for a YCF dealer in a store in northern France. He then became a satisfied YCF customer himself, then a YCF salesman, a store owner in Normandy, selling plenty of YCF products, and now he’s a full-time employee in charge of “brand and new product development” specifically that of the mini GP motorcycle, into which “I’ve invested 400% of my time.” He may not own YCF, but he feels like he does: “I immediately connected with Yannick and Fanny and with their values. I had a strong feeling that this company was going to hold up well because it’s potential for development is huge. As soon as I got on the bike in 2004, I repeated to myself what Yannick had said: “this is so great, there’s something crazy to be done here.” I merely followed his lead and fit into their organization. Even from the outset, everything was structured in terms of the organization. There was a salesman who came to prospect retailers, and the whole thing exuded professionalism. With our competitors, nothing of the sort ever happened. YCF is great for everyone. It’s both a great toy for the user and a great deal for the professional’s business. When I talk to people about this story and how it came about, everyone is in awe. But it was easy to believe because Yannick had a vision.” We could go on at length about this. We should mention David Maze, aka the man from Malaunay, YCF’s first longtime customer and a minibike fan “almost since its arrival on French soil.”

Or Julien Huan, YCF’s leading dealer in volume sold each year in France, and a great admirer for all eternity of this small, no drama business founded in 2004:

«A lot of credit for this success is due to Yannick. In my success too. If I’m anywhere today, it’s certainly due to my hard work, due to my father who set me up in this position, but also due to my encounter with this extraordinary character. Without him, I’d never have organized the YCF Tour, the success of which is well known today. Without him, I wouldn’t have sold 257 new bikes in 2022. It’s a brand that’s doing well, that supports us and for which we’re invested, engaged, and motivated completely every day. So, yes, we’re not actual members of the Coquard clan, but we feel as though we are. With Yannick and his team, you can never lose motivation, because there’s no such thing as failure. We’re always pushing ahead, always going for it.»



Alexis Housset and Yannick Coquard at Normandy Karting, Rouen Normandy, 2024

2. YCF, OR IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE.

While we're on the topic of famous quotes, let's turn to the 35th president of the United States of America, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas while still in office. "The art of success is knowing how to surround yourself with the best" said the Massachusetts native. At YCF, the masterminds seem to have cut and pasted this thinking into their business practice, while keeping their ears to the ground.

«Their great strength is that they listen to feedback to keep moving forward and growing. They don't stubbornly stay in their silos.»

emphasized Stephan Legrand, behind the wheel of his LeBigUsa van. A childhood friend of Yannick's, whom he met in 1998 during a championship race, Christophe Martragny knows the YCF founder like a book. He describes him as "bubbly and friendly" but also as "unfiltered and direct, regardless of who he's dealing with." What does he do when he encounters someone new or a differing opinion? He digs deeper into questioning them and opens his ears wide, because "he thinks people are important and is interested in them."

So, what's the upshot?

«He's very quick to detect the things of interest they can bring to his business or his life. He's a particularly good entrepreneur, who's able to surround himself with the right people in the right places.»

concluded proudly the man who's been Yannick's friend for a quarter century. Pierrick Paget is living proof of this. A professional racer until 2016, he set up his own communications agency after he retired from racing. Who was the first person to call Pierrick for advice? None other than Yannick Coquard. "He said to me, 'Pierrick, I need you, I want to streamline communications, you're in the business, you're passionate and you're the one I want to work with.' He was really insightful, so I accepted" laughed the former motocross and supercross racer.

**What happened next?
A tremendous surprise
and a new model.**



Pierrick Paget during the photoshoot with Tiffany Doll, Formigny Normandy, 2017

PIERRICK PAGET

« THE SURPRISE OF A LIFETIME »

« When you arrived at YCF's Port-en-Bessin-Huppain showroom in the late 2010s, what was your initial reaction?

Before I set foot on the premises, I said to myself, "YCF, makes minibikes, I'm going to see some little Chinese bikes with decal kits, I'm sure they'll be pretty nice." But when I got to the factory-showroom, I got the surprise of a lifetime. In front of me I saw a timeline of the company's history, as long as your arm, then the bikes being meticulously assembled before the press arrived, not to mention an incredible inventory of parts in a huge warehouse decked out in the brand's colors. It was a real eye-opener. Truly. Especially as

you could feel the passion coming through in every direction, it was an incredible feeling. Everyone who worked there, without exception, was completely bought into YCF. I said to him, "Yannick, have you really built an empire?" Then we went to the track to try out all the models, and I was finally sold. Everything was thought out and calculated: from the clutchless pit bike to the electric and to the full-size bike. Nothing was left to chance.

After astonishment, what was the prevailing feeling you had about this motorcycle business with Yannick Coquard at the helm?

Throughout my life, I've met a lot of guys who are passionate about their business but unable to keep to a budget. I've met a lot of designers who imagined a good little product, but who were unable to distribute it. Guys who pulled out right in front of me a nice bag or a pair of motorcycle shorts, but with colors I'd never see again. There's nothing easy about being an entrepreneur. Because there's a huge gap between imagining and manufacturing, between thinking and distributing, between dreaming and turning a profit.

For everyone, it's hard to survive. For everyone, except Yannick. He makes everything look easy. The budget, rising costs, new bikes coming out all the time, coming up with fresh ideas, keeping up with accounting, finding distributors... nothing slows him down. You get the impression that his business model is like a clutchless YCF 150 with a starter—it's easy to ride. The only thing he's missed out on in the last twenty years is the amount of time he spends on a bike, which has dropped off drastically (laughs).

Does it surprise you in the least that YCF has been in business for twenty years?

Not at all. This business is so amazing. In my career, I've seen huge brands get toppled, like Suzuki, which hasn't produced a single motocross bike in five years. There's a crisis everywhere in this business, staff turnover is

constant and the big companies are slashing budgets or stopping their projects. Meanwhile, Yannick, Dimitri and YCF are still here. It just goes to show that being creative, always on the ball and ultra-passionate pays off! »



Yannick Coquard in the first warehouse in Bayeux, Normandy, 2005



CHAPTER 3

A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.



David Maze, Foshan China, 2006

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

Twenty Years :

key dates and unforgettable memories.

SUMMER 2004.

Time for the first import.

The first order for minibikes made in China, was a kind of Honda or Kawa replica. Dimitri Bera was hard at work in the Middle Kingdom, negotiating with manufacturers as he awaited the green light from France to start production. With an almost empty bank account, no place of business and no business plan, but with the unflagging confidence and support of Fanny Flaguais, Yannick Coquard took “the biggest risk of his life.” He bought 30 mini motorcycles, brought them to France and then tried to sell them to industry professionals in his native region. But there’s a small problem. They were €30,000 short to launch YCF. Were the banks on board? Not at all. However, Mrs. Coquard and Yannick’s future father-in-law were determined not to leave the budding entrepreneur in the lurch. “Seeing my boundless motivation, they each lent me €15,000, and told me, ‘Do your thing and you’ll pay us back in six months.’ In the meantime, Dimitri airfreighted my first two motorcycles so that I could take them around to various stores—that’s all there was to it!” recalled the man who drove a Renault Clio. The Clio is great for going out and about with friends, it’s easy to park, but it’s a bit tricky when you have to fit in it two motorcycles worth of parts.

They’re a bit small for this. “So, Fanny’s dad, once again came through, and lent me his much larger Renault Espace. And I was off on my crusade with my pilgrim’s staff in hand to make my rounds with the local pros.” This time, it worked. Nothing could stop Yannick and his dazzling ascent. Not so fast. The gear box broke twice. Was this a disaster? On planet Coquard there are no problems, only solutions. A phone call later to David Maze, manager of the DMD Malaunay store with whom he had an appointment to show his bikes, and the situation was back under control.

«I picked up the phone and I heard Yannick ask me if I can come and pick him up in my truck. I got there as quickly as I could, then we went back to my place and got on the minibikes together to see how they rode.»

recalled the man who went on to become the first dealer to sell a YCF on French soil, and thereafter the brand’s biggest customer from 2004 to 2014. The product was indeed appealing, and both protagonists had a good feeling for each other. “We had the Espace repaired, and I went off to see other dealers. I ended up selling all thirty bikes quite easily, to be honest” said the visionary founder with a wry grin.

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

Rather than repay his mother and father-in-law right away, they generously extended the due date another six months. This worked out well in terms of keeping cash available so his hands wouldn't be tied for paying the Chinese exporter. What do you do after you've easily sold 30 bikes? Do you order 60 next time? No sooner said than done. All of them sold as well. "It was great to be a part of" recalled his friend and special advisor Christophe Martragny with a note of nostalgia, during this pivotal period in YCF's history:

«When the first containers arrived, we tried out everything together. We tweaked the bikes, developed some things, and gave our feedback to the manufacturers in China. I gave my opinion, of course, and was listened to, even if Yannick knew more about it and was a much better rider than I was. Even in 2017, before the launch of the Bigy, he still left his prototype at my home before officially releasing it. He didn't need me, but he always liked to have another opinion to validate the product before selling it on the market.»

With the same slogan repeated over and over by Yannick before each market launch:

«With YCF, it's choice, service and quality, with the obligation to improve our bikes every year. That's really been our mantra since 2004.»

One container, then two, then three. "Nobody expected the business to start up so strongly, but neither did he" chortled Jordan Labbé, the Coquard couple's journalist friend, before explaining his vision of YCF in its early days: "As Yannick was very attracted by novelty and trends, it didn't surprise me that he launched himself into the mini, as this phenomenon was really starting to make inroads all over France. He gave it a go, thinking, if I can do it, let's do it. And in the end, his entire shipment sold out. So, there was definitely a place for him in this industry. For most of us, the pit bike was the fun machine you rode around the yard three times before putting it away. Or it's the bike you put in a truck to ride around on the racing grounds, but certainly not one to make a guy like Yannick Coquard ride like a maniac."

Yannick Coquard, Christophe Martragny, Normandy, 2006





Yannick Coquard in the first warehouse in Bayeux, Normandy, 2005

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

So as to take a step back from the orders, the YCF boss turned off the engine of the business (to strategize calmly) for a few days. Okay the mini was selling; there's demand for the product and the bikes look pretty good overall. But something was missing. Perhaps another permanent presence was needed on site in China to work alongside Dimitri, the other key link in the chain. "I needed to see with my own eyes, to experience production for myself, to understand what was going on over there" the boss insisted. He purchased airline tickets and Coquard and Bera went off to China for a week. And what about the business back home in France while Yannick was away? No worries—Fanny was on the job, so everything would be fine. "Even though she was still working in a hypermarket at the time, she worked diligently in the evenings after returning from work, packing and shipping parcels to customers" said her future husband showering her with praise. In China, Dimitri and Yannick plunged headlong into product testing and improvement.

«I arrived at the factory that used to make all the parts for us, but also for lots of other manufacturers. I now want to try everything. I'd drive around, break things, fine-tune overnight, bring out new things, rebuild the following day, and so on and so forth, every day I was there. Finally, we settled on a new bike with an aluminum frame. We developed it as best we could, and in the end, the Chinese said to us: 'We'll sign an exclusivity agreement with you, but only if you order 240 bikes from us.' »

said Yannick, the memory clear as day "as if it were yesterday." His response to the proposal was crystal-clear:

«I looked at Dim and said to him: 'Honestly, I believe I can sell them in France, the stores sell them for us also recommend them— cool, let's do this.' But on the other hand, I need a workplace, I can't continue to put them in my mother's garage like I've been doing.' »

One bike and then two. Thirty and then 60. In the space of just a few months, the number had quadrupled. Buoyed by a good deal of intuition, the pair were confident and shook hands with the Chinese manufacturers. All we had to do was convince Ms. Flaguais, a few thousand miles away: "I called her and said, 'Fanny, I'm going to order 240 bikes.' What did she ask me? 'Are you sure of yourself?' 'Yes, I've got a good feeling about it, don't worry, we'll do it in two deliveries of 120, but you'll have to find me a place.'" said Yannick, pressed for time. Barely a week later, were his products already available in France. For €500 a month, he rented part of a hangar in Bayeux. The contract was signed, the first hires made, and the 240 bikes delivered.

Thank you, Fanny!

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

SEPTEMBER 2005.

Fanny joined the dance.

And for good. She said farewell to the supermarket and a career in the food industry, long live YCF and the brisk development of the company. Whether organizing events, travelling to and from China, dealing with the bank, coordinating deliveries, the brilliant Fanny immediately started pulling out all the stops without the least bit of apprehension, so the company as a whole would succeed.

«I was confident and collected. As soon as I left my old job, we immediately got to work on the building, then hired David to manage the customer service department and spare parts for me. Everyone had their own place and role to play.»

she commented. It was October. Yannick, who had been going back and forth to China since the end of last year to assist Dimitri and improve processes, suggested that we go there together for a few weeks to get a feel for the country and how things worked for YCF on the ground. My first impression? “I discovered a huge, impressive country, but one that was light years away from what we were doing back

home in Europe. The telephone barely worked in China; the Internet was a mess, we stayed in cheap hotels... it was like being on the Flemish-Dutch reality show called the Peking Express. What’s more, I was really shocked by the food—it was a nightmare. We didn’t want to eat anything at the suppliers’ because the food was so disgusting. Frankly, I had no problem staying in China for three weeks, but never in a million years would I have considered living there for a few years” said the businesswoman. An amusing anecdote for the road before returning to France and continuing the search for new customers and growing sales?

«The Chinese liked to feel that the European customers had cash on them. So, Yannick and I convinced them we were loaded. How did we pull this off? We’d set up meetings at an expensive place at appointed time whereas we were staying in a cheap place right next door. They thought we were staying in an expensive hotel, when in fact we were in a cheap one. It’s just that we’d arrived 30 minutes before the appointment, and we pretended to be rich, but our scheme did reassure them.»





Dimitri Bera at Jiangmen factory, China, 2014

2006.

Frustration crept in.

Specifically for Dimitri, aka our man in China. Busy monitoring production shipments and part modifications, the industrial manager of YCF was annoyed. Yes, he smiled, because “here, the best thing is that everyone gets a chance. From the moment you place an order, people take you seriously.” But your smile quickly fades when creating and developing like fanatics because ultimately you end up getting copied. Here’s what happened per Dimitri:

« The factory that produced all our parts worked for a huge number of customers. As a result, as soon as Yannick and I innovated any part, the things we created for YCF were immediately sold to other brands. At a certain point, it got old. No matter how many patents we took out on a muffler, for example, nothing changed. The other companies would make a tiny change to our products, and it would no longer have patent protection. »

All our competitors buy Chinese products, change the decal kit, but at the end of the day, they all have the same bike as their neighbor, except for a few minute details. So, right from the start, I thought about having our own identity. Our aim was to make a statement. If someone came across one of our bikes, we wanted it to be clear that it was a YCF. Dimitri’s thought gained ground, slowly but surely, until the trip in October, when Yannick, Fanny, and her dad joined Dimitri in China. More specifically, they went to the Canton Fair (in Guangzhou) for a rare moment of escape and relaxation far from the manufacturing plant. It was

the ideal place for remaking the world, making plans, setting goals as well as for reflection. “I’d found a cute little restaurant filled with only expats around us” recalled Fanny. The scene was set, and the discussion started: “And then Dim told us loud and clear that the Chinese had been copying us, and we must put a stop to this. The only way to stop being copied was to have our own factory. My father was in favor of this idea, and said, ‘You’re young, you’ve got nothing to lose, go for it.’ Yannick too was all for getting our own factory, and thereafter we started making contact with a supplier who wanted to sell his assembly line... It was going to take time for us to take over the lease on the building, but from that point forward, we had a very clear goal.”

But in 2006, there was more going on than just hot takes about the company’s future agreed on behind the scenes. In France, Yannick and Fanny didn’t know it yet, but they’re about to meet two key players who would propel the brand into a whole new galaxy in the months to come. One was François Alaux, a jack-of-all-trades, equally at home in production, directing and design. The other was Dimitri Coste, a professional photographer. Both are members of an urban minibike club aspiring to mass-produce these small bikes for the streets of the French capital. All they had to do was find a rare gem who could manufacture these bikes. After a quick Internet search, the name Coquard popped up. The co-writer and director of the Oscar- and Cesar-winning 2009 animated film entitled Logorama was convinced of the brand’s seriousness after only a brief phone conversation. Now all that remained to do was to meet the new key player to see if they were on board to work together. So, what happened next? Alaux and Coste tell all unprompted straight from the heart in the sidebar below...

FRANÇOIS ALAUX

«I made a prototype of our dream bike and we set off in our Subaru Impreza with the minibike in the trunk, heading for Normandy. Dimitri and his graphic designer brother, Jérôme, were with us. Our goal? To show them the beast and to see whether they wanted to market it together. At the time, I didn't know anything about the YCF brand, except that they had a logo that anyone could make using free typefaces taken from CorelDRAW. And when we got there, we saw a hangar and a container. To be honest, it was like being in a movie about smugglers. We arrive looking like snobby Parisians, wearing our Vans and North Face slippers, then spot Yannick and Fanny. They give us a friendly welcome, even though they look at us like anthropologists who'd discovered a new tribe in the deep forest.

DIMITRI COSTE

«What can I say about this meeting? Except that it was extremely interesting on every level, even if we had a big culture clash. I remember one of the first comments I made to them was that I didn't think their name YCF was great. To me, it sounded more like the name of a bike model. I kept harping on it, but they weren't interested in changing the name (laughs).

I picked up my Mac and made my presentation... I immediately understood that I was dealing with some really hard workers. The meeting went well, but I didn't follow up. My bad. Then, just as I'm about to start production on Logorama, my phone rang. Yannick on the other end of the line said, 'We're not going to make your bike, but how would you like to design one for us?' I agreed but on one condition: designing is good, but it's only half the job. You can't just make a motorcycle; you have to create a brand. Coming from a school of applied arts, I knew you can't create a brand if you make the same products as everyone else. And in the pit bike world, nobody was making original products. We had to make YCF the first brand in the world to create a minibike that wasn't a copy of Honda or Kawa. Initially he said no; thought about it, then said, let's go for it. »

But at least they listened to me. They listen all the time regardless. In any case, I'm very proud to have played a modest role in this amazing story with my photography and later with the development of the Flat Track motorcycle. They gave me the opportunity to get fully involved, and it was an honor to participate in its development by providing technical advice. »

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

2007.

France-China. China-France. France-China...

While the number of the couple's round-trip flights continued to rise, and the YCF product line expanded considerably, there was more good news for the company in 2007. With a new design and a revamped graphic charter, the work François Alaux initiated was beginning to pay off: "I couldn't do everything on my own. So, I told them from the outset: 'let's keep the Honda-style tank and mounting system and create all the plastics so we can design compatible equipment.' My goal? To make a product that can be used on older models while creating a new line." We had a "bold albeit off-budget" meeting in the Paris suburbs with a subsidiary of Pininfarina, the Italian car design firm. This company specializes "in building prototypes for Audi or Renault" and the deal was in the bag. Or rather, on the marble, as the multi-faceted designer liked to say: "Yann, the guy we're meeting, convinced his boss to make a motorcycle because they'd never made one before. So, they're going to provide us with some marble, a kind of square on the ground, on which we'll be able to put together a YCF and then install our parts directly. Behind it is a projection of my drawings in actual size, so that the assembler can work on the bike simultaneously. We did one side, scanned it in 3D and then moved on to the other side. It was magic." As its look got updated, YCF started to get better known to the general public. But how? By taking part in major events such as the Motorbike and Scooter Show in Paris. This immediate visibility paid off, as Fanny recalled:

«Participating in this show gave us more credibility and removed the 'made in China' label. What's more, we could see that the Coquard name was getting noticed, and that our image was improving. With the new logo and the brand-new fairing designed by François, we felt it drew interest to our stand. As luck would have it, we got a lot of requests immediately afterwards. From then on, it was a simple matter of hiring one person a year, including a sales manager to oversee our teams on the ground. Our staff was growing from one event to another, and this was a good sign.»

Simultaneously, Yannick Coquard had a brilliant idea. What if he used the facilities of one of his dealers, Julien Huan, who had set up his Extrem motos off-road shop in the village of Saint-Germain-de-la-Coudre, which has a lot of space, three tracks right next to the store and is in an extremely calm location? "Seeing our concept, our brand and our tracks, Yannick immediately suggested we organize an event, a sort of big rally for the brand, as is common practice in the industry. He immediately believed that this would be a huge hit. It was dubbed the YCF Tour. The goal was to get riders and their minibikes to come to my place for a great day out, without it being a big deal, no stopwatches, nothing to win, no licenses, no starting gate, just riding and fun" explained the boss of the motorcycle shop. It was a done deal. The two men high-fived and the inaugural Tour was organized in 60 days.

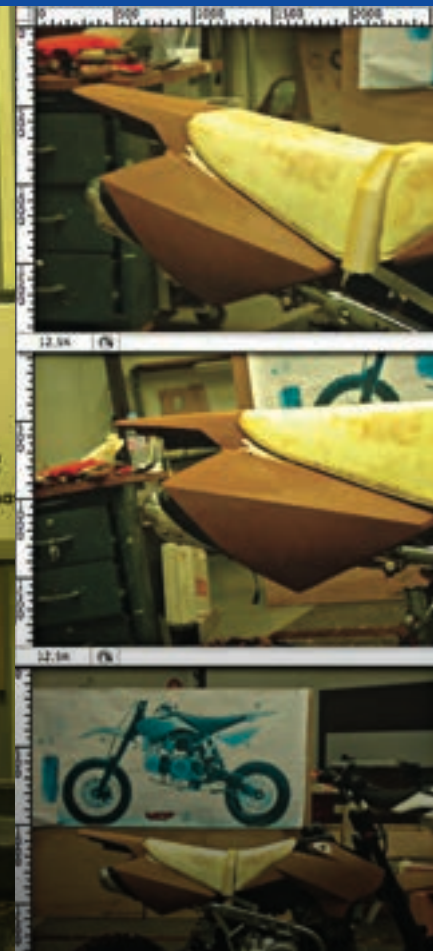
**Was it a big success right out of the gate?
Of course not!**

“Even Yannick, for whom there’s no such thing as failure, would have to admit the first edition was a bit of a bust. There were barely 30 participants and no one in the audience. We even had to add a board to hold the pit bikes, because otherwise they would sink” recalled the dealer, in a dejected voice. So, did we call it a day? “No way” continued Julien, a specialist in trails and quads:

«Despite all that, Yannick was happy, so that’s cool, we said to ourselves, let’s go for the second edition next year.»

Time went by. And the YCF Tour exploded in popularity. The 2023 event sold out two months before registration closed, and “we’d been clocking these numbers for 10 years already” smiled Julien, as he commented on YCF Tour attendance. “Two hundred participants have been turning up every year for seventeen years now with their YCF in the trunk of their car, not to mention the 30 volunteers who help us out.”

Hold everything, the numbers are good.



François Alaux at Pininfarina in the Paris region, 2006

2008.

YCF had already been rolling out its expertise and quality products on all sorts of playgrounds. With success and satisfaction at every level. “The initial results are good. We’re selling more and more bikes and parts, we’ve got some really good riders riding around our bikes on event grounds, we’re developing new models every year, our customer service is up to snuff, and we’ve got a serious image. YCF is synonymous with good equipment that improves over time and can be quickly repaired” said Yannick Coquard with satisfaction, before reflecting on 2008, a pivotal year in the brand’s history. This was the year when the discussion initiated three years earlier by Dimitri Bera, at the Canton Fair, was put into practice. This time, it was a done deal: YCF got its own factory in China. This was a revolution that would take the brand to a whole new level.

«This is one of the most important key dates for YCF. Having our own place to manufacture enabled us to control quality, and design based on our ideas and own our molds. A small core team stayed with us, while others went elsewhere to try their luck for an extra 100 RMB a month. But basically, we were up and running, and in control of the entire production line in a 27,000 sq ft facility that was almost too big for us. Were we happy? Yannick and I were particularly stressed, because it represented a huge investment, a major risky undertaking, and a new beginning. It was really intense.»

laughed the company’s co-owner. Intense and unprecedented. The experts were unanimous about it being an unprecedented undertaking. To this day, there is still no other foreign motorcycle manufacturer with its own factory on Chinese soil. As journalist Stephan Legrand summed up: “Yannick and Dimitri are the only ones in the world. I have a lot of respect for that, because I know a lot of people who have tried their luck there to develop any one of a number of industries... and God knows, it’s not easy. You have to work very hard with the locals to achieve a decent result. But they have a vision and refuse to ever give up, and that’s what has made and continues to make a huge difference.”

A few weeks later, they had to make a major business decision, which was followed by a major personal upheaval in the Coquard family. One key condition had to be met before the brand could start making its own forks, finding importing countries, bringing out nice looking functional parts with the YCF label, recruiting engineers and designers, etc. It was out of the question for Yannick to let Dimitri steer the YCF ship directly from China without being present on a daily basis with him and his new colleagues: “It was a foregone conclusion from the very first discussions. If we became builders ourselves, we’d come and join him on site, after we’d found someone to manage the French side. And that’s what we did. We got a one-way ticket. Fanny had a babe in arms and was in tears when we left her parents back in France. At the time, I said to myself: ‘Okay, Yannick, you’ve got to get this right.’ But this was the logical thing to do. We had to maintain continuity, and we had to go all the way. We didn’t have a choice.”



Assembly line in Jiangmen factory, China, 2010

Yannick and Axel Coquard with Maxence Bera in Jiangmen factory, China, 2009



3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

2009.

The New Year had just been rung in, and the Coquard family moved to China. They took a leap into the unknown with no return ticket, packed suitcases, and one-year-old Axel in tow in his stroller. With a head full of ambitions and a heart full of emotions, as Fanny explained: “All my friends and family thought we were nuts, but I let it happen. Yannick was so sure of himself that, as usual, I trusted him. And then I said to myself, that even if it doesn’t work out, too bad, we’ll make something else work. It was still hard to leave everything behind. Even though I’d been going to China since 2005 and knew a bit about the country, it was really the first time in my life I’d seen my parents break down in tears in front of me. On the way to Charles de Gaulle Airport, I remember having to stop the car every 30 minutes to throw up on the side of the road. But once I’d got over the complicated first month of getting used to being there, during which I cried almost every night, I managed to take it all in and get my bearings. The guys would go out early in the morning, I’d take the little one to the factory and we’d put him near the fan because it was so hot. I had a lot on my plate, managing sourcing, suppliers, and communications, etc. We were at it day and night.”

A total change of scenery, with a life for three to create from scratch in an unknown land, and just one employee to run the store. Not a bad plan, right Yannick? “After a month, our Chinese employee managed to convince other Chinese employees to join our team, telling them that we paid well and that we

were serious and respectful. But at first, they definitely thought we were a joke when we set up interviews. Seeing an empty company with only one Chinese guy present to make motorcycles, people thought: those guys are completely out of their minds. Then, after a few months, a dozen or so employees joined our ranks and the factory hit its cruising speed.” And so did its managers. Our rule of thumb? Work seven days a week, from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., and never take a day off, as the successful entrepreneur insisted without blinking:

« When Fanny and I came here, it was purely for work. We were young, ready to do anything to achieve our goal. Looking back, I never took a single vacation day during our time in China. Once, Fanny went with her dad to see the Great Wall of China and a world exhibition in Shanghai with some friends who had come to visit us, but that’s merely the exception that proves the rule. We were obsessed with one thing and one thing only: producing for growth. »

Dimitri Bera was delighted that his loyal partner joined him in his adopted country to help “their baby” thrive and said: “Being there on site helped move things forward a lot. Yannick and I complement each other so well and it was great to work together for a few years in China. I often say that we were really lucky to have met each other. When he returned to Normandy and then left for the United States, I was down because I didn’t only lose my partner, I also lost my friend.”

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

2010.

While the company grew more prosperous in Guangdong, its growth in France also boomed and the company brought in new employees for targeted positions (sales manager, accountant, marketing manager, customer service manager, etc.) and the number of orders bloomed. The company's top brass decided to purchase a 16,000 sq ft facility located in Port-en-Bessin, to have more storage space and a showroom along with motorcycle tracks right next door, so it didn't look like the upward sales trend was going to die off any time soon. The intended aim was to win over customers and gain their undying loyalty, Yannick confessed: "I decided to get this place so that store managers could offer their potential buyers the chance to try out our products on site and to instill confidence in them. Simultaneously, we created a supermoto circuit, with blacktop and bumpy terrain—something that you couldn't find anywhere else. And people still talk about it to me to this day..."

2012.

For the first time in its history, YCF participated in the Paris Supercross at the Accor Arena (originally known as the Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy). This was a real milestone for Yannick Coquard and Dimitri Bera who, in their younger days, used to follow the event as spectators, as the former confirmed: "Taking part in Supercross was a really important step for me, for our development. I was delighted to be able to do it. It was very important to me to see kids on our bikes during this show, because the kids who ride YCFs at Bercy today are going to be the future champions of tomorrow."

2012-2013.

When asked to list pivotal moments in YCF's success story, co-owner Dimitri Bera only needed a second's thought. Unsurprisingly, "meeting Yannick in Normandy" was a key moment for him. Next was "the shipment of the first two or three containers, followed by the arrival of François Alaux and the factory going into production in 2008." Meanwhile, he doesn't forget to mention the numerous trips, the arrival of importing countries such as Austria at the top of the list, the development of the Factory racing bike in 2011, the 50 cc in 2013, the Bigy in 2017, etc. He paused for a second and added:

« But above all, of the decisive events that marked a before and after in our development, there was the release of the first catalogs in 2013 thanks to the fabulous work done by François Alaux and his teams. »

The Catalog? A word still on everyone's lips a decade later. What is it? It's a photoshoot and a complete product list and a key marketing tool that was orchestrated by the master, François Alaux.

What changed?

YCF entered the big leagues. See interview below.



Photoshoot for catalog 2013, at YCF France warehouse in Commes, Normandy

FRANÇOIS ALAUX

« A TRULY EXTRAORDINARY SAGA »

« Can you tell us about the genesis of this legendary catalog? Why was it created? »

When people talk about organizing photoshoots or creating catalogs, the same idea comes to mind repeatedly. From the start of our adventure with Yannick and Dimitri, I told them that the strength of your brand isn't the bikes, it's your catalog. Why's that?

Because people are fascinated by the parts. When they leaf through it, they immediately understand your organization and whether you are serious about your business. We didn't have a choice, we had to have such formidable firepower.

A YCF catalog means an established charter, a defined column system and, as the pages turn, all the bikes in the range are shown with product information, along with details of the parts displayed, photographed, and meticulously presented. Is that the idea?

Yes, our intention was to create a catalog in 2012-2013 that 10 years later would be virtually unchanged. As this catalog is a common tool for salespeople, retailers, and customers, I immediately told Yannick

that the product we were about to create absolutely had to be an iron-clad marketing tool. We had to inspire dreams about our products in both B-to-B and B-to-C markets after our catalogs were opened.

How did you create this dream product, which is still the talk of the motorcycle world in 2024?

I required something right off the bat: we had to standardize how we took the photos. Then I asked Yannick to provide me with a complete list of spare parts, so that I can draw up a logistical cost estimate. It was obviously going to be expensive, but they went along with me because they understood that it was worth it. Afterwards, I explained the process in detail—i.e. we're going to take all the shots this way, as if we were doing a technical shot, with a camera set up 12 ft off the ground, a long focal length, 7 lbs. of lighting, a white background, the parts tilted at 45° with a 35° slope... What's the point of all this set-up? Once you've photographed the rooms from the same angle, under the same light and without perspective, you can then

combine them without difficulty and shoot them in rapid succession. We photographed almost 1,000 items in a day and a half in my studio. A friend of mine, a film stage manager, mapped everything out in Excel at the same time. There really was an incredible symbiosis between the inventory teams, who were extremely well organized. Someone would line up the parts to be photographed in a series, while someone else was preparing other parts for the shot, while someone else was cleaning parts and someone else was setting up the next shot... It was a truly amazing saga. The upshot? More than 80% of the photos taken on that day are still being used today.

How did the creation of this bespoke catalog revolutionize the brand as a whole?

It's not for nothing that 2012–2013 was a pivotal year in the history of YCF, This catalog is a showcase for the work done by all our teams, and it instills greater confidence in the brand. We have our own factory, we can design everything, and we can say that 80% of the parts on a bike were designed by one of us. Whoever buys a YCF is buying a unique product, not just a carbon copy of a Japanese bike. And this is reflected in the

catalog. A final example to show you the impact of this documentation? Without asking for our permission, the Daytona brand put up exploded photo views of our engine on its website. YCF has massive influence everywhere, and it's great to be part of something where so many fantastic things are happening. No matter what's going on here, you do something, and you see the result of what you did come to fruition. »

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

2015.

YCF motorcycles participated in the world's top annual team event, the legendary Motocross des nations (MXDN), held that year at Ernée in the Mayenne region of France. Following this prestigious event, the company invited a slew of foreign journalists to spend a day at its facility in Port-en-Bessin-Huppain, France, to discover its entire product line. Pascal Haudiquert, a journalist well-known to his loyal readers of Moto Verte and MX Magazine did not hesitate to "help out on the YCF website by adding technical descriptions." He remembered a highly successful and useful roll out:

« We brought together a dozen or so of the world's leading journalists to create a YCF Normandy Day, on the heels of the Motocross des nations. They visited the facility and took a motorcycle ride near the warehouse. The aim was to make a name for YCF outside of France, to attract more importers. In the end, they got quite a bit of coverage, with articles in the New Zealand, UK, Australian and Italian press. Everyone fell in love with Yannick, even though his English left a lot to be desired at the time (laughs). »

2016-2017.

As the years rolled by, news came thick and fast. We decided to get "more space, especially for storage" said Fanny, and YCF became the owner of a new 39,000 sq ft location. And what better way to christen this brand-new building than with the launch of the Bigy. But the highlight of 2017 was the sale of YCF's French distribution to a third party in November. A "logical" choice, given the emerging challenge for the Coquard family on their way to the US, as Yannick explained bluntly: "Since 2014, we had returned to France because living in China wasn't really Fanny's thing. But that didn't change anything in the business. We continued to speak with Dimitri on the phone every day, so it was as if we were over there. Why sell our French distribution? Because I'm a guy who likes challenges. You give your all to succeed, but then you need other challenges to keep moving forward. At the time, things were going well, we were selling 5,000 motorcycles in France, Axel was about to start fifth grade, Alice (who arrived in China at the age of two months and one day and was born on December 28 like her brother, editor's note) was about to start elementary school, so it was time. The French distribution period had to come to an end, so I took the sale in stride, without a twinge of regret. If YCF France was sold, it was because we were successful, period. From then on, I wanted peace of mind for the next mission that awaited us. The question then arose. Where should we go next? Yannick wanted them to try their luck in Thailand. Fanny, on the other hand, opted for an English-speaking country. Where did they end up? The United States won out in the end. We didn't have an importer there, and it's the land of motorcycles, so we thought: let's go for it!" concluded the CEO, ready to take on the US market.



Pascal Haudiquert with his customized YCF, Motocross of Nations, Normandy, 2015

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

2018.

The big jump. So as to enter the North American market and develop their business across the Atlantic, the Coquard family packed their bags and headed to Florida. A new departure, nine years after their move to China. The same doubts and questions from their entourage swirled around them, as the couple amusedly recalled: “Everyone said to us: Do you really think they need you over there, do you really think they’re going to buy your motorcycles? Did you even do a market survey? The answer to the last question? Of course we didn’t! How did this adventure wind up? We stayed there for five years, sold our bikes despite the Covid years, and YCF made a name for itself on the US market. The gamble paid off, so we could go home.”

2021.

A record year for YCF, with 17,000 bikes sold worldwide. What was the recipe for success? Work, work and more work, according to Dimitri Bera: “At the time, it was simple, we all worked like mad six days a week from 8 a.m. to at least 10 p.m., as well as two Sundays a month.”

2023.

After the Bigy in 2017 and the Flat Track in 2018, YCF pursued its development in a completely different direction— this time they created a bike for the track rather than dirt, with the launch of its mini GP. Another leap into the unknown, which was perfectly planned, and which got a big thumbs up by the biggest names in French motocross, such as Marvin Musquin, who said:



« There’s no doubt about it, this is a project going to be big. Yannick knows quite well that GP riders can’t train on their racing bike all round, and that they sometimes ride more on the road. He did the right thing by getting into this market. It will help some riders going forward. With their history in motocross, it’s a revolution that shows the innovative side of this brand. It never stops growing. »



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From left to right, Christian Vimond, Alexis Huset, Nicolas Aubin, Mathilde and Marvin Musquin, Yannick Coquard, Mickaël and Lenny Pichon, a Mini GP testing session at karting track in Lessay, Normandy, 2023

MIGUEL HERVÉ

« I HAD THE VERY FIRST MOTORCYCLE THAT ROLLED OUT
OF THE SHIPPING CONTAINER »

Technical and customer service manager for YCF, the former rider and Normandy League buddy of Yannick Coquard looks back over 20 years of history, which have seen the brand go from “good fun with friends” to an international success story.

« What memory of 2004, the year the company was founded, comes to mind first? »

I've known the brand since its start. Yannick and I used to race together in the Normandy League. So, when he started importing pit bikes, he called me up and said: “come and have a look, I think you might like what you see.” I went down to the beach to meet him; we messed around on his bikes; it was great. When he

told me right away that he had a container arriving for delivery in a month, I said: Okay, bingo, I want a bike. I even want three, for my little brother and sister. And in the end, it was a nice little story because I got the very first bike out of the container that YCF imported to France.

What image did the brand have in the motorcycle community back then? And how did it evolve over time?

To get the word out, circulate and grow, we went to more and more events. These were 100% Chinese products, so there were minor problems, but at the

time, we all stuck together and didn't say anything, of course. If the bike had a problem, we'd put it in the back of the garage, re-do the belt and off we'd go again.

Then we took part in various French championships with my little brother in particular, him as a rider and me as a mechanic. When we arrived on the scene, the others all had bikes for €3,000, for €11,000, so they looked at us strangely with our Chinese bikes. But when Yannick started making the top five lists and

big jumps that even guys with €11,000 bikes weren't doing there, I can assure you they started talking to us seriously. In the end, everyone contributed to the image conveyed by YCF, which has now become a real brand in its own right.

What do you think were the ingredients for this runaway success?

There are a lot of ingredients to take into account. First of all, there's Yannick, someone who knows how to surround himself with good people and who knows how to take advice from everyone, both financial and technical. He's also someone who's very involved in product development. It's simple: as soon as you make a comment to him, he picks up the phone, flips through his notes and ends up sending an e-mail straight to

Dimitri Bera in China. This constant responsiveness is one of the keys to our success. It's the same in terms of customer service since the brand's core values have always been about recreation and reliability. I know the whole catalog by heart, from the smallest screw to the complete frame, because I have 20 years of YCF knowledge in my head. I can tell customers which part is compatible with which model.

If you had to come up with a single anecdote that sums up your experience with YCF, what would it be?

For me it was getting introduced to JMB (Jean-Michel Bayle). I remember it well. It was August. I was on vacation, and I hadn't started working for YCF yet. Yannick called me and said: «I'm going to deliver a bike to someone, would you like to come with me and the bike is for Jean-Michel Bayle.» No question about it,

I'm there. When we got to his place, I heard a voice that I usually heard on TV. It's really weird, I finally got to meet my childhood idol. And today I've got his cell number, we text each other, it's crazy... I've become buddies with my idol, thank you YCF. »

Dimitri Bera in Jiangmen factory, China, 2012



3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

A well-oiled machine

and the revised ten commandments.

“One must not trifle with love” as Alfred de Musset wrote in 1834 in one of his three-act plays. Yannick and Dimitri never trifle with Fanny and Liping’s love, and the same holds true when it comes to business, customer service quality and responsiveness are absolutely essential. The first and founding pillar of the ten commandments of the motorcycle company.

1) THOU SHALL HAVE IMMACULATE CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Definitely true in 2024, but only theoretical in 2004, said Yannick: “This was a key issue for us from the get-go, and it still is twenty years on. The basic idea is simple: we just want buyers to have spare parts available quickly in case their mini suddenly breaks down. Because as a customer myself, I hate having to wait a month or more for a part to arrive before I can ride again. If someone has a problem, it’s up to us to fix it right away, and to find the most effective solution to get customers back on their YCF as quickly as possible.”

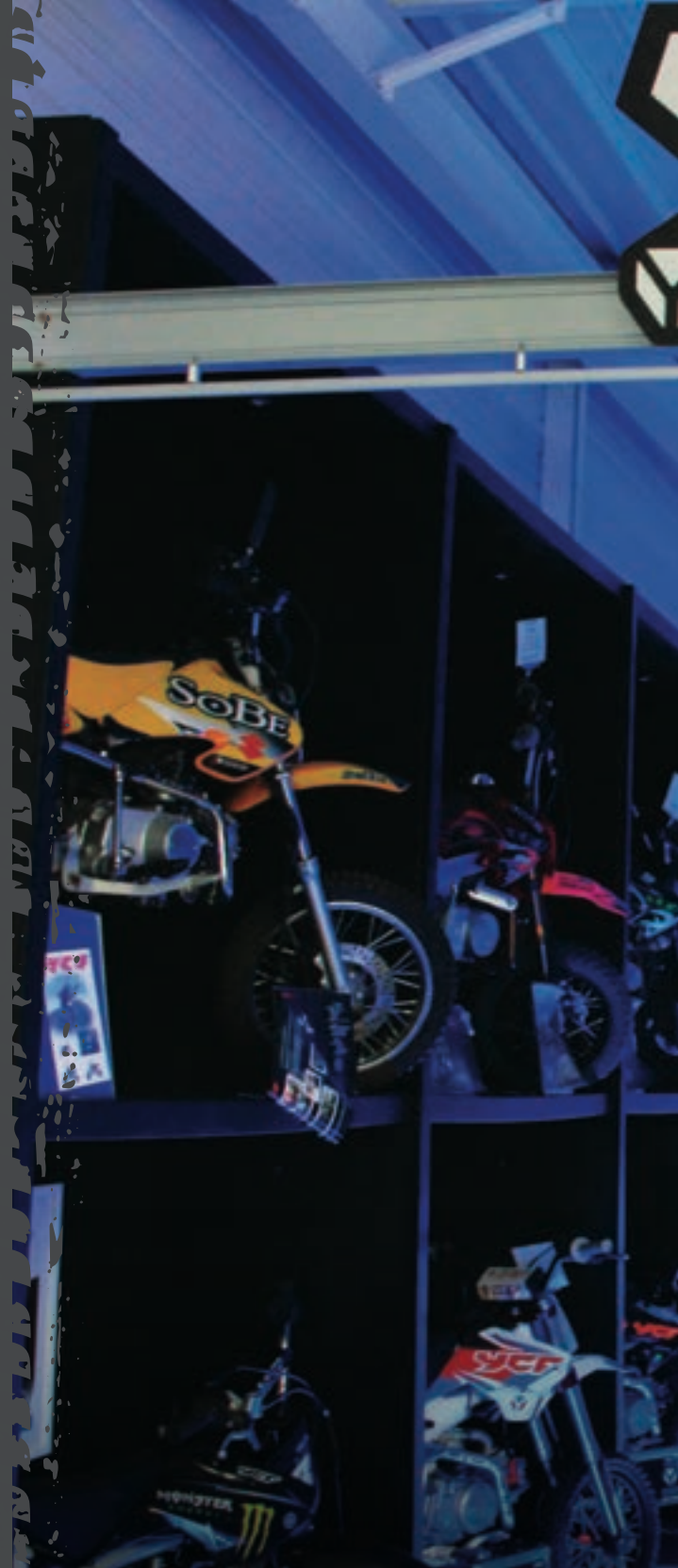
A three-letter brand name met top-notch customer service and became synonymous with success, said to David Maze:

«In 2004, I immediately said to myself, this guy, Yannick, looks very serious. He’s on time for appointments, he gives his all and he never stops talking about customer service. That was the key for him. And as luck would have it, YCF’s development took off at breakneck speed in the years that followed. Why did this happen? Because he was able to keep his promise about reliable, responsive customer service, and as a result, everyone trusted him blindly.»

When asked why YCF is now considered the undisputed leader in the world of minibikes, journalist Jordan Labbé didn’t mince words.

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

There's no doubt that the company's great strength lies in its impressive firepower via its "huge distribution network", unlimited parts, premium customer service and dedicated outlets: "You know, there were a lot of pit bike dealers on the Internet back then, but the problem was that you didn't have any follow-up on parts with them. Yannick, on the other hand, has duplicated the business model of the big motorcycle dealers, with importers in every country and brick and mortar sales outlets. So, when you have a problem with your bike, the solution is within reach. Whereas with typical Chinese pit bikes have no customer service whatsoever, you'd buy one on the fly and then just hope and pray you don't have a problem." Customer service from day-one; customer service every day. What would have become of YCF without this unshakeable faith in this favorite motto? What would have happened to the company? Would it still be around in 2024? Impossible to say, but one thing's certain: it wouldn't have been able to count on the talent of its star designer François Alaux, who fondly recalled meeting Fanny and Yannick. "Before I went to meet them in Normandy with the Coste brothers in our Subaru, I knew nothing about the Coquards. Before I left, I said to myself, let's see whether they're serious. So, I called their customer service department to see what would happen. Right away, I sensed that the tone was professional, passionate, and responsive. Immediately, I understood that this brand wasn't there just to sell motorcycles off the back of the truck. In the end, that's what makes all the difference between YCF and the others who are trying to make a living in the minibike business. They have a dealer and salesperson culture. If your bike breaks, you call, you get your parts, and you're back on the road. It's very well run."



VCF MUSEUM



VCF motorcycles museum at VCF France, Formigny Normandy, 2016

Buttage Party event, 2017



3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

2) THOU SHALL PARTICIPATE IN MANY EVENTS.

Well-timed visibility. At YCF, we quickly realized that if we were to grow, we couldn't remain isolated and hidden away in our silo.

« Being present at the world's most important events, such as the Paris Motorbike and Scooter Show, the Milan Motorcycle Show, the Paris Supercross and the Daytona Supercross, has been essential to our development. »

said the boss forthwith. A good product is a product that sells, and on this particular issue, management quickly realized that designing something attractive and original, while focusing on targeted communications, would be one of the keys to success. As Mickaël Pichon put it: "It wasn't a foregone conclusion we could make a go of the business, so we had to do the right things at the right time to succeed. We had to do the right advertising at the right time and the right communication for the right event. The sales work was really well thought out. Thanks to this, they've created a brand with a solid reputation."

3) THOU SHALL LISTEN.

As his loyal friend Christophe Martragny said: "YCF is the story of many amazing chance encounters. For example, Yannick crossed paths with François Alaux, an extraordinary man who did all the drawings and product design for them. In the final analysis, many

people guided him towards making the right choices that facilitated this success story. But it wasn't just a matter of luck, it was also a matter of interpersonal skills too. He had to be able to grasp these people's intentions and listen to their suggestions and advice. François could have easily said that this guy was a joker and that he wasn't interested in working with him. But he knew how to see the little things that make all the difference and then contribute wonderful things to the company." At YCF, success is collective; everyone checks their egos at the door. Even though Yannick and Dimitri are on the frontlines of this extraordinary adventure, they know how to breathe deeply and keep their minds clear so they can make the right decisions in a timely fashion. The founders believe that no one has a monopoly on the truth and anyone's opinion can be a game-changer.

« When I say Yannick and Dimitri, I immediately think of instant responsiveness and that they listen to feedback from all quarters. »

said journalist Stephan Legrand, before he cited a specific example to convince his reader (as if he or she still needed convincing): "I thought my kickstand on my YCF 125 Start was a little too straight, and as a result, my bike frequently fell over when it was on the kickstand. I told Yannick this and the following year, the angle of the kickstand was corrected. Problem solved. This may seem like a minor detail, but it's actually quite extraordinary. Try doing the same thing with a Suzuki or Honda rep, and they'll laugh in your face."

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

4) THOU SHALT CONTINUE TO TOIL.

“You can’t start a fire without a spark” or so the song goes. Yannick and Dimitri are both the fire and the spark, and YCF can’t succeed without their hard work and diligence. They’re present on all fronts and on every continent, 24/7, or almost, come rain, shine, snow, or heatwave, like the intrepid mail carriers of yore. As Fanny said:

« They never stop. Whether it’s seven in the morning or midnight, it’s all the same to them. They give it their all, all the time. In China, this left a deep impression on our employees. They would often say to us: ‘You really aren’t normal. Bosses here don’t work.’ They could see that we were working just as hard as they were, and that we were deeply involved with our business. »

5) THOU SHALL RIDE.

What’s the point of buying or selling bikes if you can’t ride them? That’s the question Yannick Coquard was quick to answer when he launched his business. After all, if you’re going to get on a YCF, you’re going to need to find a suitable place to ride it, as is stipulated in black and white below each model displayed on the brand’s website: “Vehicle not approved for and prohibited on public roads, for use on closed and private circuits only.” This crucial fact was immediately taken into account, and won the admiration of Mr. Paris Supercross himself, aka Xavier Audouard: “More and more circuits are closing due to noise and urban development, so motorcycles are required to ride on

officially sanctioned tracks. But there still have to be some of these tracks available. Yannick’s strength lies in the fact that he immediately took this key factor into account by developing riding and learning centers right next to the dealerships, which was very clever of him. He didn’t just say, there’s a market out there and I’m going to sell my bikes to it. He went the extra distance and also ensured that the infrastructure was in place so that his customers could ride his bikes.”

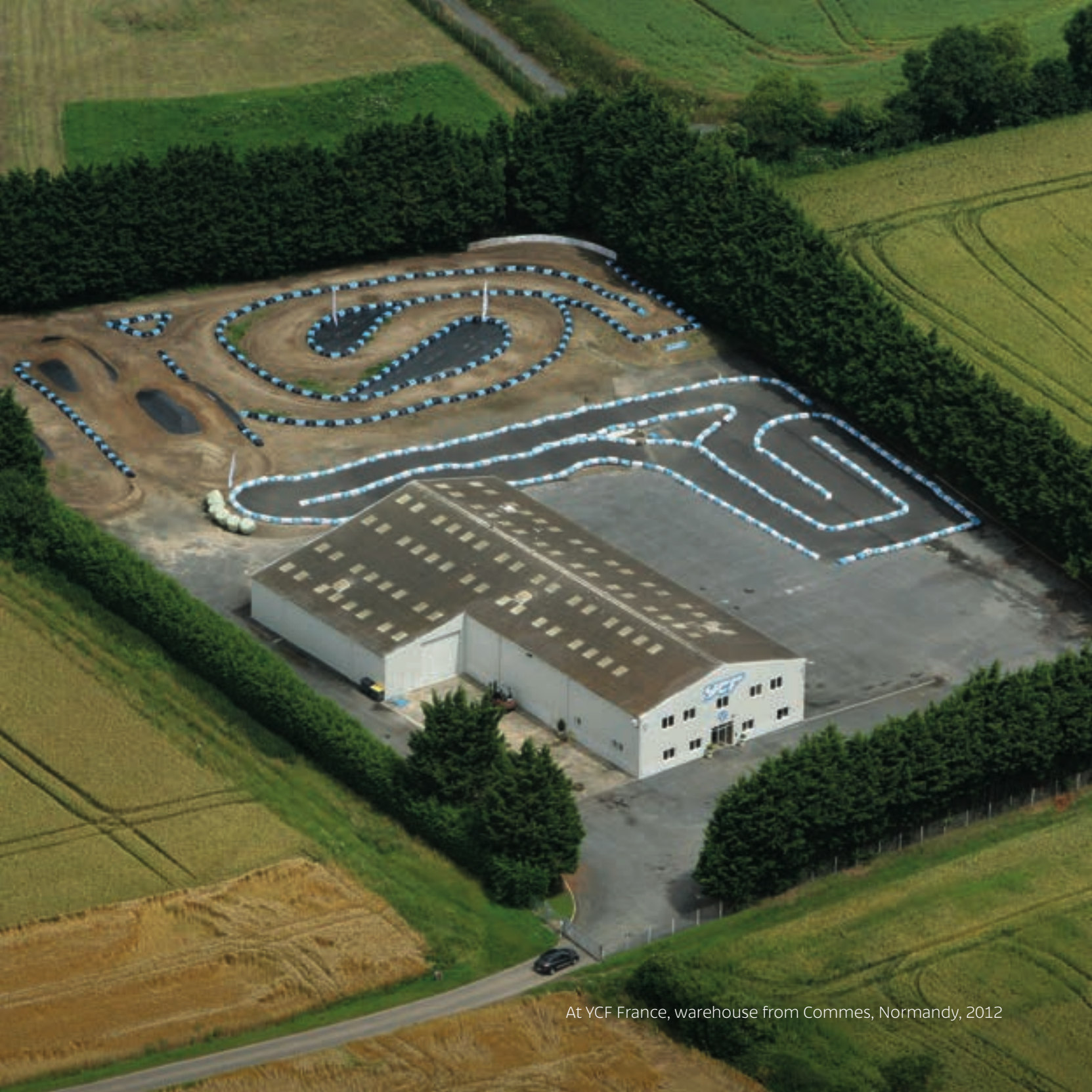
6) THOU SHALT SPEAK TO EVERYONE.

“A product that’s ageless fun for everyone” is what is written in subtitle B of Part II of this book. For further explanation and so as to stay on track in your reading, please turn back to the section referred to in the previous sentence.

7) THOU SHALL BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY IN FOREIGN LANDS.

YCF is an acronym, a company, and a brand name that gets traction outside of France. Austria was the first foreign country brought into the YCF fold. In less than two decades, 33 other nations followed suit. This was achieved without ever soliciting anyone, as Yannick Coquard proudly points out:

« Every time, people would come to us. They’d see our products on the road, they get in touch with us, and we would sell them containers from China. We establish trust-based relationships, and by word of mouth, our network grew. »



At VCF France, warehouse from Commes, Normandy, 2012



Photoshoot with Bubba Shobert, Callahan speedway, Florida USA, 2023

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

8) THOU SHALT BRING GREAT CHAMPIONS INTO THE FOLD.

The GOAT, Ricky Carmichael is a fan, Mickaël Pichon was pleased as punch with the products, Marvin Musquin was won over, Johann Zarco another satisfied YCF rider, and the French GOAT Jean-Michel Bayle could be counted on as a regular rider. Not to mention a list of respected racers as long as your arm (Ashley Fiolek, Stefan Everts, Mariana Pajon, Jeremy McGrath, among others) who ride or have ridden YCF year-round on the circuit grounds or on Supercross courses. YCF is a small company with an outsized reputation.

9) THOU SHALT HAVE A BOUNTIFUL PRODUCT LINE.

“Choose your weapon” is written on the home page of the ycf-riding.com website. Its purpose is to cue the website visitor that there’s a wealth of minibikes to scroll through and choose from. Whether a child, a beginner, or a pro, YCF has a bike for you—from the Bigy, to electric bikes, to the Supermoto, to Sunday Motors or to the mini GP, etc. As of late-2023, YCF’s product line consisted of 26 different standard models. An impressive number to say the least, but the company didn’t stop there, as boss Dimitri Bera explained:

«If an importing country asks us for a specific bike with special colors or a specific component, we’d tell them okay, no problem on condition that they order at least ten units, thereafter we’ll customize the bikes for them. Every country has its own tastes, so we adapt to them. Aside from us, no other factory, especially in China, would do this for its customers. That’s really

one of our great strengths: we know how to adapt to each market and bring something extra to the table. »

How can we give that little extra something that will make all the difference? By constantly creating and innovating, as stated in the next commandment. Or by listening to and following good outside advice, as commandment no. 3 reminds us. Once in 2018, the official launch of Flat Track was the result of a brilliant idea and sincere desire expressed by photographer Dimitri Coste, a total fan of this sport practiced on the other side of the Channel. Memories, so many memories. “I was dreaming of those English bikes that were on the road in the 1970s. That’s why I went to England to race them, and I managed to get a dozen fellow countrymen to take part in the championship there. Inevitably, whenever I saw Yannick, I’d constantly repeat the same mantra to him: ‘I hope you’ll make a Flat Track bike; nobody’s making a miniature version, I’m sure it will be killing.’ After working on it for three years, he said to me:

« Okay, Dim, that’s it, we’re going to build it and I know how to do it. »

The guy already had all his specifications in his head. They made their tires 14 in, then worked on the tank, and two years later we found ourselves in an underground parking lot trying out the prototype. After I took it for a test spin, I immediately said to myself: amazing, it already runs smoothly. I came up with the name “Sunday” competed with it in the British championship for a year and won with an unmodified version of the original bike. That’s the power of YCF in a nutshell.”

3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

10) THOU SHALT MAKE YOUR MARK.

As with the bottom-up design of the Flat Track model in 2018, YCF's core truth seems to be: where there's a will, there's a way. This was only possible due to the fact that YCF had owned its own Chinese factory since 2008. This gives them the freedom to be flexible and show their boundless creativity.

«Right from the start, I was convinced that having our own identity would become crucial for us. We had to make sure that when someone got on our bikes, they thought to themselves, this is definitely a YCF.»

insisted Dimitri Bera, before he paid tribute to François Alaux, head designer of the company's made-in-China products. "Thanks to him, we've been able to create our own image over the years. We did this by rolling out our own plastics, our own kits, while all the other brands were copying Honda and Kawasaki." This homage moved the man in question who's proud to have played his part in helping increase the popularity of such a distinctive brand. "I've been consulted on practically every part released. And each time, we've managed to finalize the projects on good terms thanks to the many exchanges between us. This was the case for the swingarm used on the mini GP. This was also the case when we lowered the weight on the front discs by about a pound, or when we improved the Ts and the air ride system. What's the bottom line? Just because YCF is a small company that only produces 15 to 17 K bikes a year, doesn't mean that they're not punching above their weight in terms of image and reputation."





Dimitri Coste in Flat Track, 2021



Week-end in China with staff of the factory, at the middle of the 2 banners, Liu Liping and Camille Bera, at the right Dimitri and Maxence Bera, 2020



3. A VERY FRENCHY SUCCESS STORY.

Unforgettable memories.

bold statements.

When you ride a YCF, you ride for pleasure and enjoy every mile of it. What if we turned off the engine for a minute and had another type of fun?

How about if you tested your skills at matching the statement, unforgettable memory, or anecdote about YCF's wild trajectory with the person who initially expressed the idea.

Ready? Think carefully about your answers and we'll meet you at the other end of this quiz. And don't forget, your participation is mandatory!

1 «Yannick is the best YCF dealer by far. If we could clone him and send him to every country where the brand does business, there wouldn't be just one factory in China, there would be three. He's even been successful in the US, which is the worst market in the world, the toughest and the most demanding. »

2 «When I saw Yannick leave for China with Fanny and the kid, I thought to myself: Wow, what courage, what insanity. Not speaking the language and landing there with a baby to live and develop a business, that's crazy. We'd discussed it beforehand, but he'd made up his mind. He was upfront about it, because he knew that to move forward and master the whole production process, he had to be there. »

3 «They put an end to the era of making cheap Chinese knockoffs. YCF is a fully-fledged, world-famous brand. Well-known riders are openly and proudly associated with it, which was the case at the Paris SX (Paris Supercross). »

4 «Our minibikes were frowned upon by customs, who likened them to the dirt bikes used on the road in traffic. At Christmas 2007, they wanted to hit back hard, limiting the influx of bikes, and were destroying containers. Two of our containers were held up in customs. Almost 300 motorcycles were going to be impounded, at a cost of €300,000. And then I got into an argument on the phone with a lady from customs on December 24 and every day after that. She said, «Don't you ever stop? Don't you celebrate Christmas?» “How can I celebrate?” I replied.

“My motorcycles are going to be destroyed for no reason? I'll have to lay off five people. And I may lose my business.” To make matters more stressful, Fanny's water broke on the morning of the 27th. I took her to the hospital, and Customs called me and said: “You've been granted authorization to recover the bikes on the sole condition that you assemble them yourselves, and a customs agent will check everything at half past four.” Straight away, I called my brother, Christophe, and his children and we all raced off to Noyon to the shipper to act as quickly as possible; I told the midwife to tell Fanny that I'd be there for the delivery. Customs arrived and, fortunately, we'd almost completed our end of the bargain. There must have been barely fifty bikes left to assemble. At around 5 p.m., Fanny was moved to the maternity ward, I put the pedal to the metal to join her and Axel was born at 1 a.m. on December 28. What a day! »

5 «In terms of what we have to pay out in taxes, it would be practically impossible to manufacture YCF bikes in France. In China, on the other hand, we can produce products at a reasonable price since raw materials are affordable. And above all, we can work seven days a week and 13 to 15 hours a day if we need to. If there's a problem, we can solve it. It's the land of the resourceful here, and everything moves fast. »

6 «YCF has managed to break out of a niche by doing motocross, super motocross and even track racing. In the motorcycle world, young people love it but the old can get a bit grumpy about the brand and often say: 'sure it's fine but it's not a Honda.'»

7 «We were amazingly lucky to have the Mandarin-speaking Dimitri Bera working alongside us. As a result, no one could take us for a ride. One of our favorite jokes, when we went to meet a new supplier, was to speak exclusively in English. That way, his associates could speak freely without ever suspecting that Dimitri could listen in on them and understand whether one of them was trying to get over on us. Thanks to this tactic, we could test whether our relationships were based on trust. »

8 «One of the cleverer things about YCF is that they make the most of the parts they already have by swapping them out on their other models. Nothing goes to waste. And if they have to design something for the good of the brand, well, they design it. They listen, they take in the technical details, they develop, and it's a done deal. »

9 «Over in China, next to their factory, Yannick created a track to test the models before shipping them. But the Chinese who lived next door just couldn't believe it. To their minds, they're 6,000 miles away from the end-user of the bikes. They merely manufacture them, and they couldn't care less how they're used after they leave the factory. But just imagine their faces when they saw a strapping, white European man, who's 6'2, speeding along at 100 mph on a tiny bike right next door to them! »

10 «The big difference between Yannick and other entrepreneurs in this field is that he's the only one to offer a complete package to motorcycle buffs. If you buy a YCF, the experience doesn't stop there. You can ride nearby, take courses with trained instructors... He has a real total entrepreneurial vision. I keep saying it, but Yannick's got it all figured out. »

11 «Between the minibike of 2004 and the one of 2024, let's face it, there's a night and day difference. At the very beginning, parts were falling off, bolts came unscrewed, the frame was too rigid and riding comfort left a lot to be desired. Now, it's awesome. »

12 «In the 1990s, all the major brands made minibikes such as Honda, Suzuki, Kawa, etc. But the arrival of the four-stroke changed all that. This helped YCF grow because many of these manufacturers pulled out of this market. They've done this by combining the concepts of leisure, quality, reliability, pleasure and, especially, accessibility. »

Answers: 1) François Alaux ; 2) Christophe Marttragny ; 3) Alexis Housset ; 4) Yannick Coquard ; 5) Dimitri Bera ; 6) François Alaux ; 7) Fanny Coquard ; 8) Dimitri Coste ; 9) Jordan Labbé ; 10) Xavier Audouard ; 11) Stephan Legrand ; 12) Mickaël Pichon.



From left to right, Miguel Hervé, Yannick Coquard and Jean-Michel Bayle, photoshoot with JMB in Manosque, Haute Provence France, 2013



CHAPTER 4

**GROW
YOUR
OWN
WAY.**



Chinese team from the assembly line of Jiangmen factory, China, 2012

4. GROW YOUR OWN WAY.



“A bad reputation is really hard to undo” sighed journalist Stephan Legrand, before he went on at length, with a dejected look on his face, about the general opinion of the YCF mini during the company’s early years:

« In the motorcycle world, it was easy to sum up: small bikes come from China, so they’re crappy and unreliable. But this was wrong, dead wrong. Despite its initial teething pain, the brand’s strength is precisely that it has always been responsive in modifying parts and developing them. Even more so after it got its own factory in 2008. Although it’s not easy to change minds, I’ve always tried to defend YCF against gratuitous criticism. If you hear someone say today that a YCF bike is worthless, you can be sure this person is lying. »

When we hear the words “Made in China”, or see them in print, we immediately jump to conclusions about the company or product, regardless of how good that company or product may be. The solution for countering the naysayers is simply to ignore them. Sometimes you must even go so far as to stop them firmly and politely in their tracks. These days, however, when asked if you’d be prepared to buy a YCF motorcycle made in China, those who’d normally say, “not a chance in hell” have started saying “why not” or “I’d gladly do so.”

How did YCF pull this off?

By applying the “simple” three-fold rule below.

1) NEVER COUNT THE HOURS AT WORK.

Never mind how repetitive the work might be. The true value of the work is appreciated when interviewees explain the whys and wherefores of this industrial success story, we call YCF, which appears as clear as day. When they went to China, tourism was never a question on their minds; the only tour they went on was an endless one of their own factory.

«From 2009 to 2012, we were all gung-ho, but especially Dimitri and Yannick. They were crazy, they never stopped. Day or night, it didn't matter. Fortunately, we were lucky enough to have a well-behaved child who spent his days in the factory and never complained, despite the stifling heat. He was happy to stay in his stroller, with a fan blowing in his face and his games by his side. The kid got so caught up in what we were doing that we ended up taking him with us everywhere, all the time. That's because there was so much work to be done.»

recalled Fanny, who grew tired just talking about their former fast and furious pace of life. David Maze, a YCF dealer, who was part of this adventure from the very start, said the following, which was in keeping with Fanny's statement: "I was part of the first convoys, Yannick paid for the trip. But why me? Because of my experience in the store, I could see the issues with the bikes, and I could tell them what tweaks they needed to make to them. I remember he'd gone to great lengths thinking about how to adapt the fairings to all types of bikes; basically, he was already looking ahead

five years down the road. Once we got there, we came up with a bike in one week. We really had our noses to the grindstone; it was totally nuts." As organizer of the prestigious X-Games, Eric Peronnard also had the opportunity to visit the YCF factory in the Guangdong Province. What gave him the biggest thrill? Seeing two young people under the age of 30 "busting their butts" to achieve their goals: "It was completely astonishing to see such young people making a living from their business in China. I went through sort of the same thing myself when I moved to the United States, but compared to China, the US is Club Med. I have to say that I was very impressed by their courage and unbreakable determination, with Dimitri as the key link in the chain of production and manufacturing. Without him, there would be no business in China, and consequently no business at all. Even though I'm twenty years older than both of them, I could still appreciate crossing paths with two winners. Working hard is fine, but only if you've got plenty of food for your lunch breaks, right? Just thinking about it" Dimitri impishly smiled when the subject of food was put on the table: "In the early days, Yannick only ate French fries here. Given that he'd hardly ever been out of France before he left for China with his family, he was super closed-minded when it came to food." Anything else you want to add Yannick, as a case in point? "No, but wait, in restaurants, they eat chicken feet, salmon eyes and all kinds of things you don't want to put in your mouth. But when meeting suppliers, you have to make a good impression. The solution was to tell our contacts that we were professional racers and therefore on a special diet or, if need be, we'd make a mad dash for the toilet."

Maxence Bera and Yannick Coquard at the test track
in Jiangmen, China, 2013



4. GROW YOUR OWN WAY.

2) TESTED AND APPROVED.

What if product testing was YCF's secret weapon? The quality of riding coupled with the unflagging passion of the fastidious entrepreneur, Yannick Coquard? "I don't send a product into production if I don't know it and if I'm not sure of it myself. As a result, I test everything" said the boss without blinking. The masterminds behind YCF immediately set up a full-scale motocross circuit next to their Chinese production site, so that the founder himself could try out and tweak the future minibikes in any product line before green lighting them for production.

« Yannick's direct involvement in developing his own products made all the difference in the world. »

said Jordan Labbé, confident in his theory: "When a big guy who likes to go fast builds a mini motorcycle as if it were for himself, it's bound to make everyone happy. Given how big he is and how hard he takes turns and hills, he's going to run into problems on his mini long before the average person. This way he can anticipate problems and solve them before he puts the bikes into production." It's a vital business tool for checking product quality and satisfying future users around the world, but it was also a magical way of inspiring the Chinese children living right next door, as a slight tremble could be heard in each of the three top managers' voices.



Dimitri and Maxence Bera, Yannick and Axel Coquard at



FANNY :

«My best memory of the YCF story? Seeing all the little Chinese kids living in the shantytowns around the factory rush around the field to watch, wide-eyed, as Yannick spun around on his motorcycle. It had a profound effect on me and touched me deeply.»

YANNICK :

«As there were hardly any foreigners or French people on site, and as we were helping to support a lot of local people, we were immediately given a great welcome by the locals. You should have seen the track some days; it was packed with people when I was trying out the minibikes. There were kids everywhere, lots of smiles, it was just so much fun and beautiful to see.»

DIMITRI :

«Nobody ever complained about the noise. Everyone was happy to come and see us on the track. It was a lot of fun for the families who lived around us. We almost became the main attraction there. In any case, we were immediately embraced by the locals. They knew we were serious about our business, that we put a lot of people to work, and that families could earn a living from our business.»

3) BUILD LOYALTY AND DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS.

« I've always liked the idea that anything, really anything is possible in China. This was a great thing to experience as an entrepreneur. There are no problems in China, only solutions. You try and try again, but you never say no. »

said the brand founder with a nod. Whatever the time of day, Yannick and his faithful sidekick know they can count on the support of their teams. Nearly 80 employees, some of whom are long-standing staff, who never shy away from making the brand's collective success possible. "Exploitation", some distant observers might call it, wagging their tongues? It's a different culture, with a different relationship to work and with a different reality on the ground as Fanny would say. "When you come to China, you hear all kinds of things like they make children work here, but in all the years I've been here, I've never seen a child at work in a workshop with my own eyes. Sure, it must happen, but not at YCF. Here, we do everything we can to take good care of our employees. We brought our European methods, we have employees punch in, and we supervise them. But I can assure you we have always pampered them with organized outings, holiday meals and a good salary at the end of the month. In fact, it's all of these things taken together that have contributed to our success here. They could see that we were working like mad and that we had respect for the people around us. This helped us to win the loyalty of a real local team."

It's an observation that co-owner Dimitri can't help but share, as he looks back on the phenomenal evolution of the "little 27,000 sq ft factory with just one employee in 2008" into a completely different scale fifteen years later: "As the boss who's lived at work 24/7 for as long as I can remember, it's night and day. When you take stock, you realize just how far we've come: three side-by-side warehouses covering 86,000 sq ft, with a fleet of six CNC machines on 27,000 sq ft of floor space, another for inventory, another for decal kit production, another for assembly. Not to mention a development office, designers, a quality department, a model maker, and a head of planning...". As French singer Alain Bashung could have sung about YCF:

« This little business has never known a crisis. »

I hope you don't mind that we borrowed liberally from one of your songs, Alain.



Photoshoot for Moto Verte Magazine,
Yannick Coquard, Dimitri Bera
and the Chinese staff from the factory,
Jiangmen China, 2010

From left to right, Johnathan Edwards,
Yannick, Fanny, Alice and Axel Coquard,
Daytona Beach Speedway, Florida USA,
2019



4. GROW YOUR OWN WAY.

Once upon a time

in the West.

Why pursue development in the USA? Because it was the natural thing to do, answered Dimitri Bera quickly, on a video call from China: “In the motorcycle world, everyone looks to the USA because all the best riders live there. For our company’s image, our presence and selling our products there would only boost it. And who do you think was the right person for this challenge? Yannick of course, but who else? And as they were looking for something different for their family life, moving from Guangdong to Florida was great, because there was something for everyone in Florida.” Farewell to life in Asia. Much to Fanny’s delight, “Yes, after China, and our return to France, it was the right time to try our luck elsewhere. The children were starting new schools, so the timing was perfect. And, I must admit, I loved the change of climate and location, meeting great people and discovering another culture. So yes, there’s overconsumption and overpopulation in Florida, but the great thing is that anything is possible at any time. Just like in China.” In July 2018, the Coquard family landed with eight suitcases in hand and ended up at the house of a friend, Eric Peronnard, organizer of the biggest Red Bull events in the US. After they bought a few pieces of furniture and quickly opened a US bank account, their new undertaking was back in business.

We started from basically nothing again. At the time, YCF motorcycles were selling like hotcakes all around the world; however, none were being sold in the USA because no importer had been brought on board. As a result, we were forced to travel back in time to 2004, we replaced French for English in our conversations, and the highly motivated Yannick Coquard of old reared his head driving an old pickup truck with YCFs in the back. “It’s incredible when you think about it. The guy was willing to start from scratch with his pilgrim’s staff in the US, his minibikes in storage when he could have been taking it easy with his wife and kids. Challenging yourself like that is quite the challenge.” This is a challenge called passion. And despite the competition, the pandemic and the unknown, “we’ve managed to get a foothold in this country and won over a good market with thousands of motorcycles sold. What’s more, we’ve kept our pied-à-terre there to come back a few months a year for all the great events like the Daytona Supercross. You could say that YCF has made a name for itself in the US, and that’s great” concluded Fanny.

Don’t we deserve an interview with Fanny’s husband to complete the circle before returning to Normandy?

YANNICK COQUARD

« I REALLY WANTED IT TO WORK OUT »

«Why did you choose to set up shop in Florida rather than on the West Coast, for example?»

After Dimitri and I attended a trade show in the U.S., we had the opportunity to take an afternoon off in Miami. The day's activities included jet-skiing, go-karting, basking in the sun, looking at palm trees, and looking at beautiful landscapes... It's fair to say that I

fell under the spell of this postcard. I was won over, in fact. And since I knew very well that Fanny would like it, we sold the French company at the end of 2017 and set off to conquer the US, and we didn't ask ourselves too many questions.

It must have been quite a change from your years in Guangdong. What was it like getting used to being there, and what were your personal goals when you landed?

In terms of having a comfortable lifestyle, we definitely took a big step up. The weather's always good, we eat burgers, go to the beach, take weekends off, wear shorts and t-shirts... And what's more, the motocross circuits are great. What more could you ask for? It's a good thing we did things this way and didn't go to the US first and then on to China (laughs). From a strictly business point of view, the idea was quite simple in 2018: we wanted to go and check it out over there,

make ourselves known and sell motorcycles. It took us three weeks to find a building, then we struggled with insurance, but in the end, everything fell into place, and we were finally able to take the plunge. I really wanted it to work out, without setting myself a target figure. Whether we sold 500 or 5,000, I didn't really care, as long as the company could sustain itself. The most important thing was that people discovered our products and liked them.

In the end, you stayed for five years before returning to Bayeux in 2022. What memories do you have of your time in the US?

We arrived with nothing. We didn't have a business plan. We only had the idea of importing a container so we could get our visa. I got back in my truck, and I went from store to store. We attended all kinds of events, and we worked our asses off to make a name for ourselves. Above all, we adapted to the American market. Over there, customers prefer to ride bikes with electric starters. They also like more powerful bikes, so we also brought out 190cc models. But then again, it's normal that when you move somewhere, you adapt to the country and its preferences, not

the other way round. In the end, everything went well, and we sold quite a lot to private customers. Fanny even managed to sell motorcycles all over the country through our Facebook YCF USA page. And as an added bonus, we had this crazy moment at Ricky Carmichael's place. Why return home? Because we missed Normandy, and our friends and family too. And let's not forget that the Covid 19 period was like being hit in the head, since no one could come and visit us anymore. We sold our American distribution in 2022 with no regrets.

After China and the U.S., will the Coquard family be trying to make it three in a row by developing YCF somewhere else on the planet?

No (laughs). I've got lots of ideas for the future of the company, but we're not going anywhere. I say this in all honesty, but I feel I don't have the strength to start again from scratch. My only aim is to continue developing new products, and that's what I really enjoy doing every day. And we've come full circle now

that we're back in our home region, in a building just a few hundred feet from our first building, which we rented in Bayeux in 2004. It's a nice nod to our past. It's as if nothing had changed, I've got Dimitri in China on the phone every day, containers loading and unloading, and the factory running at full tilt... »

From left to right, Axel and Alice Coquard, Mathilde Musquin, Florida USA, 2018





4. GROW YOUR OWN WAY.

The Fast-paced

challenges ahead.

In the summer of 2024, Yannick Coquard, Dimitri Bera, and their respective families will be enjoying a picture-perfect retirement, with bottomless cocktails, sunbathing, nearby turquoise waters, their mantles of entrepreneur neatly folded and permanently stowed away in the attic with their minibikes, so they can enjoy their lives without ever looking back. This looks like a tempting (and well-deserved) plan on paper, after two decades of success spent knocking about, building, and selling their own motorcycles from Bayeux to the Backside of Beyond. Fact or fake news?

« Thanks for the suggestion, but there's no way. »

as the famous duo would likely respond. YCF still has a lot of work to do, many wishes to be fulfilled, a lot of love to give and off-road passion to offer, as evidenced by a few challenges already ticked off their to do list...

4. GROW YOUR OWN WAY.

- A REVOLUTION CALLED THE MINI GP.

“Be realistic, demand the impossible” was one of the most popular slogans of the May 1968 riots in France. So, when YCF, the world’s top specialist making mini motocross bikes launched a mini GP in late-2023 to win over the thrill-seeking track riders, this iconic quote could be applied to the company as the impossible became a reality. Change is now.

«Why am I saying this today? Because I also want people to have fun riding on blacktop. This is going to be the biggest challenge for this bike. You’ll have to get used to it, because YCF isn’t exclusively about motocross anymore. We’re evolving, that’s how it is.»

confessed Yannick Coquard, spontaneously, to the sudden but natural question: why a mini GP? Conceived and fine-tuned behind the scenes with Dimitri and all the technical teams, and we shouldn’t forget the diligent involvement of Alexis Housset, the mini GP is the latest addition to the YCF product line and now has pride of place on the French brand’s website. It is expected to break all sales records, and it’s already got many people drooling for it, like Pierrick Paget who is foremost among them: “Honestly, I can’t wait for it. All I can think about is riding it, because I know that with this mini YCF, I’ll be hanging off it, that I’ll fall four times a day and won’t care, that I’ll be able to do five wheelies in a row and slam the brakes right in front of my buddies. And as usual with this brand, of course, I’m going to spend a crazy day having fun on a go-karting circuit.”

Mickaël Pichon, a legendary enduro and motocross racer, is full of praise for this sudden shift in direction of business strategy:

«Yannick’s a clever guy, he’s diving headfirst into this and he’s right to do so. For the five to seven year-olds who want to start riding on a track because they want to be like Zarco or Quartararo, it’s difficult or almost impossible to find bikes their parents can afford. But with this YCF product, this is going to change.»

Professionals in this business are not the only ones who have been won over. A big fan of Akira and its band of bikers racing through a post-apocalyptic Tokyo, designer François Alaux’s is drooling when he imagines this model flipping the GP motorcycle world on its head: “Who today offers this kind of bike, which is an ideal tool for any riding school? YCF is the only one. Where did the current crop of French stars in the sport train? They trained in Spain. Why in Spain? Because there was nowhere in France available to them where they could get their hands dirty. But now, with this mini, YCF can put future champions, eager to grow, in the driver’s seat. And we’ve gotten back to basics with YCF riding. We’re out to teach and inspire people.”



Geoffroy Dehaye known as « Casimir », mini GP photoshoot, karting track in Landes-le-Gaulois, Centre-Val de Loire, 2023



Yannick Coquard and Claude Zouin, photoshoot in Brooksville, Florida USA, 2022

4. GROW YOUR OWN WAY.

- EXPANDING HIS ERA OF INFLUENCE.

When asked what he's hoping to see over the next ten years, Yannick Coquard first dons the cloak of a modest and cautious business owner: "I'd be very happy if we could stay where we are. Or just try to have an even bigger product line; that would be good enough." After further probing he opened up and his ambition took flight again.

«I'd love to see lots of blue-and-white stores everywhere, stocked exclusively with YCF products. It would look like this in France: we'd have single-brand dealerships and entities that are all our own.»

That's the dream in France. And when it comes to international expansion, what are we hoping for? "Entering other countries like England, for example. We're not there yet, but maybe the mini GP will help open up our horizons, who knows... South Africa and New Zealand too, we've got a few contacts, but there's no one we can trust on the ground who's saying, okay, let's do this. In fact, the hardest thing is to find the right local contact that's a good fit. Because if people want to sell our YCFs and they turn out to be morons, we'll stop talking right away, regardless of how this impacts our business."

- ON THE NOISE POLLUTION FRONT.

Journalist Pascal Haudiquert ranked this "emergency" as the no. 1 priority for all companies like YCF that work in the motorcycle business. "Right now, noise reduction is really the biggest challenge facing motor sports as a whole. Courses are closing all over the world because of this issue. Fortunately for the brand, Yannick has taken up the issue and is working to make his mini-bikes quieter. Because soon you'll see that this is the only way for motorcyclists to continue riding." Without falling into the doom and gloom trap, the company's CEO, like the rest of the motorcycle community, has shared this sad observation: it's a fact that the amount of available land is vanishing, due to this tricky problem. A motorcycle that starts up, drives, and speeds along makes noise, a lot of noise. But times are changing and so are mentalities, so noise pollution is now on the radar of the authorities (and of the municipalities). YCF's response? To tackle the issue head-on and to come up with a viable, long-term solution as soon as possible, as Yannick confirmed:

«We're likely to be the first manufacturer to have extensively worked on this issue. Yes, it's true that motorcycles are too loud and too powerful, so we're going to do everything we can to fix that in our products by 2025.»

Louise André and Axel Coquard, Commes Normandy, 2012





EPILOGUE

« Success isn't about how much money you make, it's about the difference you make in people's lives. »

proclaimed Michelle Obama, former First Lady of the United States of America, at the end of 2017. When she uttered this quote, was she thinking about YCF, the little French company, which like the itsy bitsy spider in the nursery rhyme continued climbing regardless? Nevertheless, we can apply this quote to this French brand of minibikes that has continued pressing on two decades later, and which has been bringing its enthusiasm, happiness, and good cheer wherever it's gone, while challenging the status quo.

What is your proudest achievement, **Yannick Coquard**? Having a brand that's thriving around the world? Is it being able to laugh back in the face of the banks who refused you a €30,000 loan to start up your business? Is it seeing that you're turning a tidy profit at year's end? Nothing of the sort:

« Just seeing kids riding around with big smiles on their faces while spending a Sunday with their families is what motivates me every day, and nothing else. »

And what makes you happiest **Dimitri Bera**? Knowing that the young French student who left for China in the late 1990s is now making a living from his passion? Is it seeing your name associated with this industry-leading company? Is it being the boss of a gleaming Chinese factory that skillfully produces the best bike on the market? Nothing of the sort:

«It's just knowing that we're making families happy because they're having fun on weekends with our minis. This reality inspires me even more than seeing the GOAT, Ricky Carmichael, filming himself on our product.»

And what is one of **Fanny Coquard**'s takeaways from this business adventure, which started from nothing and has kept going, and that's still consistent with the company's original core values?

«Never give up. That's the YCF story, that's our success in a nutshell. If we've managed to develop the way we have, it's because we've always had determination, courage, faith and a desire to succeed regardless of what people say, and without ever getting discouraged when we hit a roadblock.»

And **Jordan Labbé**, a consummate connoisseur of the motorcycle world and esteemed motorcycle journalist, what do you think has made this company such a runaway success over the long haul?

«The fact that every year, YCF has been able to find solutions and make quality improvements to its products without raising its prices. In my humble opinion, this is THE key to its success. They were able to create ever more solid, high-performance minibikes without putting their loyal customers in the red.»

And what if we let **François Alaux** have the last word? According to the designer-director-graphic designer-producer-screenwriter, the X-factor behind this industrial success story is that they broke the mold when they made YCF. Alaux helped propel the company into a new era. YCF became a brand in its own right, with its own designs, in-house decal kits, revitalized branding, stylized logo, original parts, and unmistakable style. If I asked you François Alaux, who or what comes to mind when I say YCF?

«There's a quote by photographer Raymond Depardon who when asked to name the best camera in the world. He replied: 'The one you have in your pocket.' YCF is like Depardon's camera because it's a product that you can easily keep in your pocket, so to speak, or rather in the trunk of your car.»

At the top, Mike Alessi, at the bottom Yannick Coquard at Okefenokee MX track, Folkston Georgia Florida USA, 2019

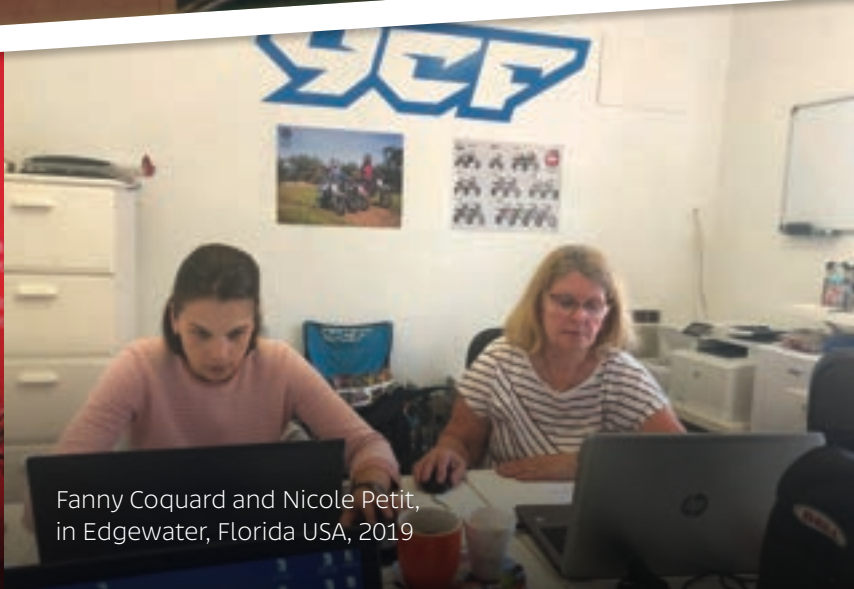




From left to right, Sylvain Tropé, Dimitri Bera and Yannick Coquard Mac Donald's, China, 2005



From left to right, Dimitri Bera, Yannick Coquard, Sylvain Tropé, at the Canton fair, China, 2005



Fanny Coquard and Nicole Petit, in Edgewater, Florida USA, 2019



With the Peronnard, Coquard and Bera family, Jiangmen, China, 2009



Yannick Coquard child in Amfreville sur Iton, Normandy, 1984



Yannick Coquard at Skate Park in Le Havre, Normandy, 2007



Dimitri Bera, Yannick Coquard at the test track, Jiangmen, China, 2009



From left to right Marion Madline, Fanny Coquard, Célestine Bertin and Elisabeth Margueritte, at Lessay track, mini GP session, Normandy, 2023



From left to right, David Madeleine, Christophe and Max Martragny, Yannick Coquard and François Alaux, Saint-Côme-de-Fresné Normandy, 2008



Yannick Coquard with Julien Huan at EXTREM MOTOS, Saint Germain de la Coudre, Normandy, 2008



At Daytona Beach speedway, Flat Track stand, Florida USA, 2020



Yannick Coquard with Ricky and Kadin Carmichael his home at his GOAT farm, Cairo Georgia USA, 2020



Dimitri Bera, Yannick Coquard, Alexis Huset at the test track, Jiangmen China, 2019



Yannick Coquard with Maxence and Camille Bera at the test track, Jiangmen China, 2019



Yannick Coquard and Xavier Audouard, Hossegor, Nouvelle Aquitaine, 2023



Staff meeting at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2022



Travis Pastrana with Sunday bike at DAY IN THE DIRT event, Dade City, Florida USA, 2020



Yannick Coquard and Dimitri Bera at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2011



Liu Liping posing at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2011



2 Chinese employees assembling plastic kits at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2013



Fanny Coquard at the Canton fair, China, 2007



Francois Alaux at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2013



Jordan Labbé posing with 2 employees at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2013



Julien and Mady Huan at domaine de la butte ronde, Yvelines, 2023



From left to right, Yannick Coquard, Eric and Alec Peronnard, Blake Warton, Florida USA, 2021



Mickaël Pichon riding the Bigy, Le mans Sarthe, 2017



Aurore, Chantal and Corentin Bera on the track at the warehouse of Commes, Normandy, 2011



Yannick and Dany Coquard, Alexis Huset at supercross in Paris U-Arena, Nanterre, 2022



Yannick Coquard in Flat Track, New Smyrna Beach, Florida USA, 2021



Dimitri Bera and Yannick Coquard thinking at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2009



Yannick Coquard jumping at the test track, Jiangmen China, 2009



Yannick Coquard and Marvin Musquin at MXDN, Ernée, Pays de la Loire, 2023



Yannick Coquard at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2009



Debriefing between Yannick Coquard and Dimitri Bera at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2013



Maxence Bera trying a bike with the technical manager at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2011



CNC factory (Computer Numerically Controlled), Jiangmen China, 2013



Stephan Legrand and Yannick Coquard at MXDN, Red Bud track, Chicago USA, 2022



Yannick and Axel Coquard at the test track, Jiangmen China, 2009



3 Chinese employees sticking graphic kits at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2014



Loading container at the factory, Jiangmen China, 2018

Interviews, writing and coordination



Artistic direction

Léa Gomes

Traduction

AxioTrad

Printing

IMB imprimerie moderne de Bayeux (14)

Photographs

Fanny Coquard, François Alaux, Dimitri Coste, Dimitri Bera, Jordan Labbé, Pascal Haudiquert,
Stephan Legrand, Pierrick Paget, Julien Huan, Jeff Kardas

