Two wheels up front are better than one

New scooter buyers who want a more flexible mobility solution in congested urban traffic have something to look forward to in the new Yamaha Tricity LMW. The LMW stands for "leaning multi wheel." It is a tricycle, with one wheel in the back and two in front. The front wheels can go up and down independently, thereby inducing lean. This comes in very handy when going into turns. A regular tribe can't lean, unless it lifts a tire off the pavement. According to people who have been taken it for a test drive, the Tricity LMW is immense fun. And industry analysts pretty much agree that the Tricity should debut as the narrowest, lightest and cheapest 3-wheeler on the market, backed by Yamaha’s excellent reputation and broad networks.

Yamaha is an iconic yet fairly new name in the history of motorcycling. Its story was started by Genichi Kawakami, who became president of Nippon Gakki, the predecessor to Yamaha Corporation. The story goes that in 1953, Genichi was looking for a way to make use of idle machining equipment that had previously been used to make aircraft propellers. This led to the development of the first Yamaha motorcycle, the YA-1, which was first introduced in 1955. The bike was powered by an air-cooled, 2-stroke, single cylinder 125cc engine. YA-1 captures first three places at the 1st All Japan AutoBike Endurance Road Race (Asama Highlands Race) in the Ultralight (125cc) class.

International recognition for Yamaha motorcycles came when the company successfully entered the international race arena. Its first racing attempt ended in an impressive 6th place in the Catalina Grand Prix race in the USA, and immediately won them an American fanbase. The race arena has also served to test-drive and perfect Yamaha innovations. In 1963, Yamaha demonstrated its focus on cutting-edge, technological innovations by developing the Autolube System. This landmark solution was a separate oil injection system for two-stroke models, eliminating the inconvenience of pre-mixing fuel and oil. Yamaha is additionally credited with the creation of the first true off-road motorcycle, the Yamaha DT-1, which debuted in 1964 to create an entirely new genre we know today as trail bikes. The DT-1's made a huge impact on motocycling in the USA because it was truly dirt worthy.

In years to come Yamaha Motor continued to grow (and continues to this day). Diversity increased with the addition of products including snowmobiles, race kart engines, generators, scooters, ATVs, personal watercrafts and more. The company has identified two core areas of technology: small engine technology originating from motorcycle development, and FRP process technology originating from boat manufacturing. Further to this, Yamaha Motor has expanded into developing control technology and component technology in order to build a multi-axial business structure while at the same time pursuing globalization of our corporate activities. Small engine technology is now implemented in new fields such as marine engines, RV’s, and other power products, while FRP process technology is now used for pool manufacturing and personal vehicle exteriors. But within this increasingly diversified group, the motorcycle has remained all important. Interesting about Yamaha Motor from an international business perspective is that it tunes into the varying demands between regions, for instance the North American market demands cruisers, the European market tourers, and the Oceania market requires dual-purpose sports models (both on and off road). To meet these varying demands of the worldwide market, Yamaha Motor has a wide range of motorcycle line-ups available.

With its new Tricity model, Yamaha seems to want to cater to the growing demand for new mobility concepts in heavily congested urban areas. Populations are on the rise, and the trend in most countries is toward urbanisation. The daily commute is already a nasty part of our day, and travel times are on the way up. Motorcycles are vastly more practical than cars in these types of cities, especially for solo travellers. Motorcycles are quick, fuel efficient, very easy to park and skinny enough to filter through gaps in traffic. This is great for the riders themselves, but just as helpful for other drivers. If a motorcycle sits in line with traffic, it acts almost identically to a car in terms of its impact on traffic congestion, but if it filters through traffic, it’s almost as if there was no vehicle on the road at all. So filtering bikes are a huge benefit to pretty much everybody on the road. It’s no surprise then that narrow track vehicles are evolving and sprouting up all over the place, but Yamaha’s brand new Tricity represents the first production effort by a major motorcycle company – and it seems to be focused in all the right areas to make it a huge success. The Tricity is powered by a simple 125 cc scooter motor. It features a tilting parallelogram frame.
front suspension geometry, and a unified braking system that is quite common in its larger sports tourers. Its key points of differentiation in this developing market are its light weight (just 152kg when fully fuelled and ready to roll), its apparently very slim front profile, and its affordable price – less than €4000.

The Japan-market release of the Tricity was announced on July 1st of this year. It was presented as the first in a series of vehicles that offer users new values through Yamaha’s “Leaning Multi Wheel (L.M.W.)” mechanism. As you may have gathered from the word “tri” in its name, the scooter has three wheels. Unlike a lot of more traditional trikes though, it has two wheels at the front rather than at the back. Yamaha claims that it has the same “ease of operation characteristic of an automatic transmission motorcycle”. The highly futuristic Tricity is also said to extend Yamaha’s vision of a growing world of personal mobility filled with highly distinct vehicles. A quote from the Yamaha press release on the subject: “Embodying the design concept “Smart for All,” the TRICITY will create a brand new world of riders, as well as a new market for personal mobility.”

The new Yamaha bike will be on the market in Japan from September, after launched in Thailand previously; European riders will have to wait a while to get their hands on it and no official release date has been announced. Tetsuya Tadachi, spokesman for Yamaha, gave some details on the reason behind the two front wheels on the 125cc bike: “This design provides stability even when driving at slow speeds, or when the driver is hit with a sudden gust of wind. But it still enables the riders to enjoy the agility of a motorbike.” He added: “In Japan we are aiming to sell 7,000 Tricity bikes in the first year.”