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SPIRIT

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OF THE SIXTIES 4

Café racers - you either love 'em or hate 'em, but you can't ignore 'em.



Now that most manufacturers are producing some sort of café racer, especially Triumph themselves, what of the guy in the street who wants to build one for himself?

Café racers are gathering momentum both here and on the other side of The Pond - with the price of Harleys out of the reach of a lot of people, they're looking for alternatives and, encouraged by the launch of specialist magazines targeting the café racer life-style, they're turning to the archetypal Ton-Up motorcycle.

These magazines and books are aimed at both the current generation of motorcyclists and those who remember the days when café racers were common sight and still have the desire to own and ride one. There's no particular winning





THE TANK'S OF A SIMILAR DESIGN TO A MANX SHORT CIRCUIT TANK, BUT IS CURVED AROUND THE REAR OF THE FRAME



formula for building one - it's what suits the individual and, I guess, clip-ons or Ace 'bars are the only requisite. However, kicking over some of the aging machinery traditionally used to build one can be heavy-going, not to say embarrassing when a crowd has gathered to watch you go and the bugger won't start, so with this in mind I turned my attention to building a modern one that would appeal to all.

The obvious choice of engine for me was the new Bonneville - it's a bulletproof electric-start engine and there are plenty of secondhand ones appearing on the market. I decided that, as with my previous specials (including the Norvin that was on the cover of issue 103), to build a café racer in the true '60s style and go for an authentic '60s looking machine, and it was at this time that a friend decided to sell his part-built Triumph special which was a

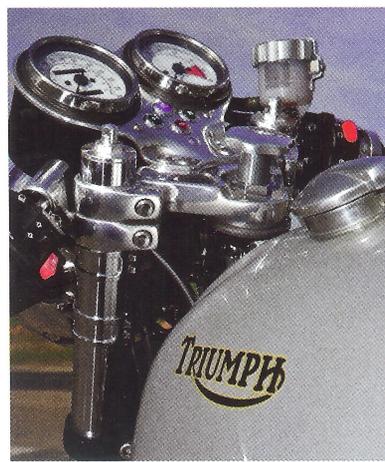
rolling chassis with a T100 engine in a frame. There was still lots of designing and fabrication to do so it was just what I was looking for.

This machine started life as a T100 Bonneville of 2004 vintage and only had about 1000 miles on the clock so was almost new. The engine was blue-printed and enhanced with a ported and 'flowed cylinder head, big bore kit, half race cams and high compression pistons. The swinging arm mounts were machined off as a conventional swingarm set up was to be used (the standard Triumph set-up pivots off the rear of the engine), and the engine is located in the frame by four small convention engine plates. As a matter of interest, the Unity Equipe frame that can be purchased to fit a Bonneville engine retains the original Triumph way of doing it.

The frame is a one-off made by Terry Meade from Maidstone, and has the appearance of a Featherbed, but is much lighter than a standard Triumph or Norton frame. The wheels and forks are stock Thruxton which've been stripped and polished, and the rear suspension units are Konis. The instrument panel is a stock item which has been stripped and

polished to give it that Sixties look, and the headlight is from a Bandit 1200 with fabricated headlight brackets milled to take the ignition switch and to bring the headlight closer to the clocks to improve the front end's appearance.

The petrol tank, seat and side panels were hand-made by the same local company who make all my tanks - the tank's of a similar design to a Manx short circuit tank, but is curved around the rear of the frame, and the seat's a straight copy of a Manx seat, while the side panels conceal the battery and other electrical components. They're all finished in British Leyland Fern ◊





SPECIFICATION SHEET

Engine:

2004 Triumph Bonneville T100, ported & gas flowed head, 85 big bore, half race cam, rejetted carbs, K&N air-filters, stainless steel swept-back exhausts with megas by Campbell Custom Exhausts, one-off oil cooler & lines by owner

Frame:

Hand-made one-off by Terry Mead, one-off rearsets

Sharp End:

Triumph Thruxton wheel/brakes/forks (stripped & polished)/yokes (stripped & polished)/handlebars/master-cylinders/switchgear/clocks, stainless brake lines

Blunt End:

One-off swingarm by Terry Mead, Koni shocks, Triumph Thruxton wheel & caliper, saw-tooth disc, AP master-cylinder, one-off rose-joined stainless torque arm

Tinware:

Triumph Thruxton front mudguard, one-off handmade Manx-style fuel tank & seat, one-off handmade side panels

Electrics:

Modified Triumph loom, Suzuki Bandit 1200 headlight, Lucas tail-light

Paint:

British Leyland Fern Silver two pack by Nigel

Powdercoating:

R&G Finishers

Polishing:

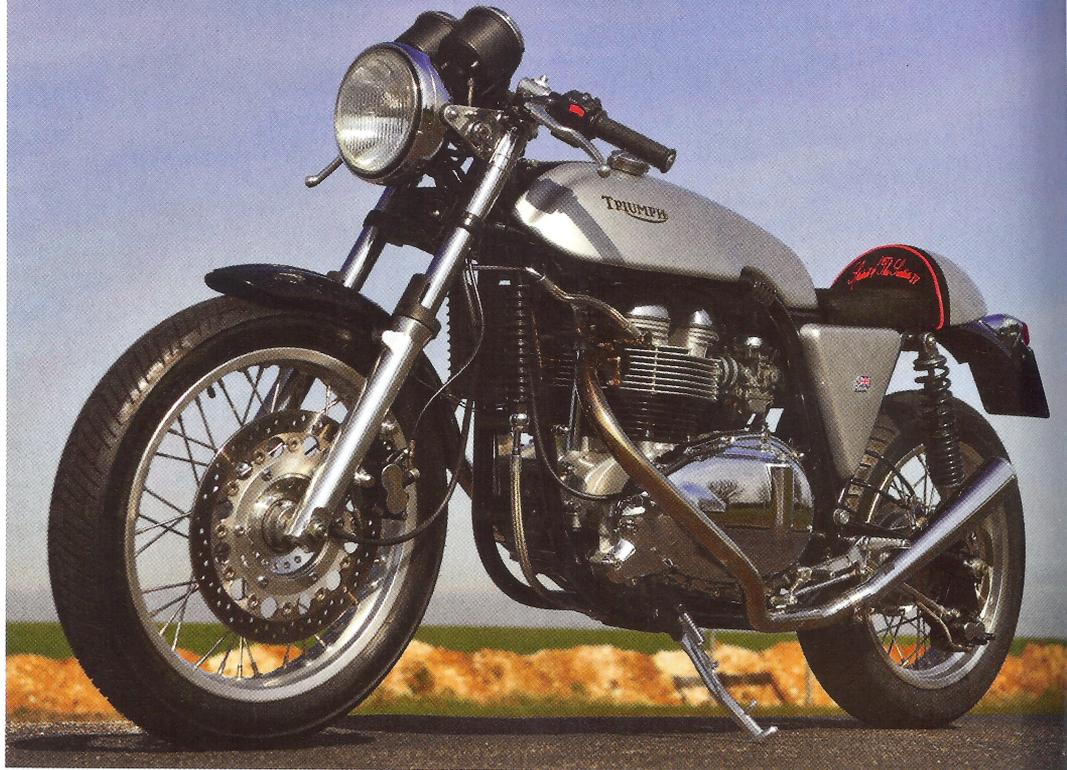
Owner

Engineering:

Frame & swingarm by Terry Mead (01233 840323), engine modifications by Bob Farnham at Gasoline Alley Motorcycles (01732 887455), tank/seat/side panels by Steve at JP Tanks Kent, exhausts by Campbell Custom Exhausts (07946 759990 or www.campbellcustom.co.uk), all other modifications & designs by owner

Thanks To:

'R&G Finishers (01322 526723) for powder coating; Terry Mead for the frame & swingarm; Bob at Gasoline Alley for engine mods; Steve at JP Tanks for bodywork; Blackbird Leathers (0870 850 9482) for seat cover; John at Campbell Exhausts for exhausts; Nigel for paint; & Paul at All Bike Parts for Triumph spares ...'



Silver and I decided not to put coach lines on them as they would look too much like Manx items.

The oil cooler is fitted on the outside of the front frame down tubes which meant I had to make new oil feed and return pipes, and the exhausts are stainless steel swept-backs (as traditional as you can get!) which had to be cut and re-welded to get a perfect fit to the megas that came via eBay. The side-stand is another standard Triumph item that's been cut and welded to the frame, and all other brackets were designed and made by myself to be as minimal as possible.

The most difficult part of building this special was the wiring. I started by sourcing all the switches and relays from a Triumph breaker and purchased a new wiring loom. I opted for a new loom instead of a second-hand one because the wiring diagrams are, to say the least, difficult to read so, armed with a meter, I checked out all the wiring circuits myself. This was a time-consuming and frustrating procedure as the colours given in the diagrams did not match the switchgear, but I finally got the wiring sorted out.

With the dry build completed it was time to strip it down for powdercoating, paint and chrome and final assembly. This is where modern machinery comes into its own - press the starter button and away it goes. It started and ran without any major problems.

The result of all this work is that people who've seen it think it's a '60s motorcycle, which was the object of the project, and those who

PEOPLE WHO'VE SEEN IT THINK IT'S A '60S MOTORCYCLE, WHICH WAS THE OBJECT OF THE PROJECT

know better think that Triumph should've built it. On the road it's very quick and handles very well, and stopping is well catered for with discs front and rear and modern rubber. I rode 1000 trouble-free miles on it, and took it to several meets including the Ace Cafe where it has attracted a lot of interest and attention, but I've now sold it to an airline pilot (who thinks it's the best bike he's ever owned!) and I've started the next project which, you won't be surprised to read, is another café racer, this time powered by a Ducati bevel drive engine. Watch this space! ☒

