



**PROJECT
RICKUKI
PART 4**

Ums and arrs!

It's just one thing after another this month....ah, the joys of a project motorcycle.



Things have been picking up pace of late and as is the way of projects once they're underway they seem to gain a momentum of their own.

The team at Metal Malarkey Engineering is really getting there with Project Rickuki.

The expansion chambers from Titan Performance are a two-part design and obviously made for a standard Suzuki T500 or GT500 chassis so it was inevitable that some adjustment would be needed to persuade them to fit to the Rickman frame. Given that we're fettling, relocating and moving so many key items on the cafe racer it's still anyone's guess what will ultimately be required to get them to fit properly. I could have waited until the bike was a full rolling chassis and then had pipes made to suit, but sometimes enthusiasm takes over from common sense. The only stipulations I have are that the largest parts of the chambers don't stick out

in the breeze like a pair of clown's shoes and that the rear wheel spindle isn't obscured by the stingers. If there's one thing that winds me up it's stripping off an entire exhaust system to change a tyre.

Back at the build the team have reworked the Thundercat radiator and fabricated some very neat minimalist brackets that have been welded to the Rickman's down tubes. Utilising some clever rubber mounts and bungs, plus just one top bolt, and the rad drops into place nicely. The inlet and outlet were, predictably, both angled wrongly for our end use so Malcolm and Phil have neatly removed, relocated and rewelded – I am now very impressed. One area that had worried both engineer Rob and I from the inception of the project had been the use of the original Suzuki yokes. While they are doubtless perfect for a period resto they didn't really deserve a prime position on a project bike such as this. Given the level of input,

dedication, expertise and costs from all the team members it genuinely seemed like we could be ruining the ship for a ha'porth of tar.

With a Rickman chassis, some decent rear shocks and a reworked front end it seemed little short of heresy to use a set of yokes that would compromise the end result. Discussion with Malcolm and Phil reveals they're already ahead of the game and have been talking about the very same issues. When it comes to making yokes if you know the various geometries and ground rules you can almost do what you want, but it's also very easy to go OTT and produce something that looks over engineered and totally out of place. Custom-made yokes are never going to be cheap, but why compromise on something like this? Biting the bullet, I give the boys the green light and a few weeks later I get a tantalising shot of what's gone on at Metal Malarkey Engineering: there's now an alloy work of art lovingly caressing a fork leg, exquisitely



Original lower yoke wasn't required.



New lower yoke looks good.



New footrests fitted.

mounted in the Rickman's headstock. I can hardly wait to see the finished item.

With the front end now on track it's time to look at the Rickuki's derriere. We already know that the Marzocchi's fitted by Peter (the previous owner) were a little on the short side so longer shocks were a given. Calls to the Malarkey factory had led to several options being discussed and a general agreement to see what might be available as and when. The Stafford Show often turns up new and interesting options and, fortuitously, it was right place right time. Engineer Rob had found a company selling high-end pattern shocks at very good prices and in among all the OEM replica classic stuff was several sets of rather trick alloy units, complete with remote reservoirs.

Made to the exacting standards of TEC Bike Parts owner George Milburn, these units come from Taiwan, but you'd be excused for thinking they should have been made in Scandinavia. With loads of suspension adjustment, the ability to tweak the internal valving and the option to change the overall length, a pair were quickly acquired. Scuttling around the halls of the show the units were thrust into the arms of a slightly bemused Malcolm Shepherdson, on his own stand, who wasn't even aware he was due to take any parts back home! A week later the TEC units are on the bike, tweaked for height and looking the business. (Rear Shocks Picture)

Never one to pass up an opportunity, a second trip was made to the TEC stand, where I'd somehow missed a delicious set of cast alloy rear sets. Even if the wallet was almost drained completely I had to have them so they too made the trip to Shropshire. All that remains is to work out exactly how and where they should be fitted. (Rear set picture)

The final effort for this month's selection of Rickuki mayhem has been sorting out the fairing. In some ways, bike plastics irritate me simply because they normally mean more stuff to rip off before I can actually get to work. If I'm honest it was one of the reasons I reluctantly moved on from my Yamaha FZR250. That said a Rickman without some kind of fairing would be rather too naked so something needed to be done.

The chance of finding a Rickman CR750/900 fairing at anything less than an arm and leg was always going to be slim



Radiator mounted at last!



Rear shocks finally fitted.

anyway, and bearing in mind the recent overspend on the new yokes I'd resolved to try and rein in any more overt largesse. What's more, I really don't want to hide the water-cooled engine and rad behind sheets of glass fibre; it should all be on display. Therefore, an alternative strategy was needed. And then, in one of those rare moments of complete lucidity, everything came together – or more honestly, my addled brain recovered from a pronounced and prolonged senior moment... er, I already had a fairing!

Quite how you can forget several square feet of brilliant white glass fibre panelling in the roof of your garage is a mystery, but I somehow managed it. Acquired years ago for

another project that got shelved, the whole ensemble was just sitting there gathering dust. Unable to remember where I even bought the wretched thing, the whole lot was dusted down and hastily ferried to Shropshire once more. Initial offering up of the basic panel suggests it might even fit, which would be handy, but we may well need to sort out the bars if it's not all going to tangle itself up.

I really don't want clip-ons and the multi-way adjustable Jota bars that came with the bike really would be my preferred option. Once again, this perfectly illustrates the very perversity of building a special. Just which compromise am I prepared to compromise on this time around? Decisions, decisions! **cmm**



The mighty fine fairing of the Project Rickuki is mated to the frame. Magic!