

WORDS: NIK PICS: KING RAT

HOT ROD BULLET

The origin of the term 'hot rod' is lost in the mists of ancient time, you know...

There are various explanations, one of which is that the term is a contraction of 'hot roadster', meaning a roadster that's been modified for speed.

Now, leaving aside the question as to whether a bike can actually be a hot rod or if the term applies to four-wheeled vehicles only, the above description describes the motorcycle you see here in front of you perfectly, don't you think?

The machine in question is a Royal Enfield 500 Bullet (but you knew that already, didn't you?) that's been built by Bruce Maconochie at Custom Classics in Oxfordshire – the same people who did the nifty little black Enfield we featured a couple o' three issues ago. This bike is, they say, a little more representative of what they do than the black one was; a bit more of a bobber sort of thing.



Based around, as I said, a 500 Bullet, the bike's heart has been painted and polished within an inch of its life, and fitted with a dry clutch to operate the stock four-speed gearbox with its one-off hand gear-change. The carb is a MKII Amal Concentric running sans air-filter, while the lovely (and it is lovely) high level 'pipe is a one-off that's been wrapped in heat-proof exhaust wrap for a period look (and to prevent the rider's left leg from looking like a side of badly cooked bacon) and fitted with a heat-shield (for a similar reason). The engine's been carefully set up and now makes a heady 30bhp which may not sound a huge amount these days, but in reality, is enough to make the bike wuffle along quite nicely. Yes, I'm aware that 'wuffle' isn't actually a recognised word, language pedants, but next time you're out and you see a old (or new) Brit single amble past, just listen to the engine note and tell me that 'wuffle' doesn't describe the noise it makes perfectly... Bruce and his crew cut the rear section of

the frame off completely, replacing it with a purpose-constructed hardtail rigid rear. Yes, they are aware, of course, that a rigid rear end gives a much less smooth ride, but let's face it, a bobber with rear suspension just really doesn't look right, does it? Try and picture this bike with a sprung back end... go on, imagine it. See? Looks wrong, doesn't it?

The theme of taking a step back in time to an earlier era has been carried further by the use of the whitewall tyres and the bright red wheel rims. The wheels themselves are stock Bullet items that've been cleaned up and painted, and the red rims and the black hubs laced together by stainless spokes. The rear wheel is from the stock 500 Bullet that donated the frame, engine, etc., but the front is from the 500 Electra – the electric start version. Yes, Royal Enfield do an electric start version of the classic old one-lunger, and the advert for them, when they were first offered, said something along the lines of "it's only taken us 57 years..." A bike manufacturer with an intentional sense of humour, who'd've thought it?

Beautifully sculpted alloy slab yokes hold forks from the same source, again cleaned up and painted, and are topped by what Bruce describes as "the bike's ☪

THE LOVELY HIGH LEVEL 'PIPE IS A ONE-OFF THAT'S BEEN WRAPPED IN HEAT-PROOF EXHAUST WRAP FOR A PERIOD LOOK (AND TO PREVENT THE RIDER'S LEFT LEG FROM LOOKING LIKE A SIDE OF BADLY COOKED BACON)



SPECIFICATION SHEET

Original Make & Model:

Royal Enfield Bullet 500

Engine:

Royal Enfield Bullet 500, Amal Concentric Mk II, dry clutch, belt-drive primary, four-speed gearbox with bespoke hand-change lever, custom-made high-level exhaust

Frame:

Royal Enfield Bullet 500, hardtailed, custom-made folding foot-rest hangers with shiny pegs

Sharp End:

110/90/19 whitewall tyre, colour-matched stock rim & hub, stainless spokes, Royal Enfield Electra X disc/caliper/forks (painted), custom-made slab yokes, braided stainless steel brake lines, one-off handlebars, Yamaha XT master-cylinder, minimal switchgear

Blunt End:

One-off mudguard struts, 120/90/18 whitewall tyre, colour-matched stock rim & hub, stainless spokes, gold O-ring chain

Tinware:

One-off front mudguard, modified unknown fuel tank with flush fit cap & speedometer, one-off tan leather seat with small shock absorber, heavily modified Enfield mudguard with brake light moulded in, one-off battery box, one-off chainguard, one-off side mount number-plate with integral LED light

Electrics:

One-off loom run through frame, 4.5-inch chrome headlamp custom mounted to headstock, one-off LED tail light

Paint:

Red & black with shaded tank emblems by Vince Simmons

Polishing:

Bruce Maconochie Custom Classics

Engineering:

Bruce Maconochie Custom Classics

Thanks To:

"Karen & Jane for the tea & sandwiches, Jim, Paul & Vince for being part of the team; all our loyal customers for their continued support; & the crew at 100% Biker for taking an interest..."

NEXT TIME YOU'RE OUT AND YOU SEE A OLD (OR NEW) BRIT SINGLE AMBLE PAST, JUST LISTEN THE ENGINE NOTE AND TELL ME THAT 'WUFFLE' DOESN'T DESCRIBE THE NOISE IT MAKES PERFECTLY...

crowning glory"; the wide and swooping 'bars. Handmade in the workshop, they're enormous in comparison with the rest of the diminutive bike, but somehow don't look out of place even so. Bruce says they're "a pain in the arse to get through gateways and in and out of the shop", but he loves them and wouldn't change them for anything. They're fitted with wonderfully minimal switches that are barely visible, and an XT500 Yamaha master-cylinder for powerful progressive stopping power.

An equal amount of thought and planning has gone into the bits that make the bike rideable too. The fuel tank, for example, is one they had laying about on a shelf that's been subtly modified to suit the Enfield frame, and it's been fitted with a flush-fitting pop-up fuel cap and an inset speedometer. The tan leather seat is mounted on a small shock absorber to try and soak up the worst of the bumps on the Oxfordshire roads, and both mudguards are heavily chopped 'n' channelled Enfield ones that've been cleverly blended into the overall design. The rib on the rear one is particularly well thought out - look closely and you

can see how the LED rear light has been neatly fused into it. Matching the red of the wheels in the red of the bodywork was the job of Vince Simmons, and a sterling job he's made of it too. Subtle shaded tank emblems are almost invisible to the naked eye and are only obvious when light falls upon them at exactly the right angle, and the depth of the shine in it is almost hypnotic - it's so deep you almost feel as though you could fall into it.

If you can see yourself riding around on a bike like this or something else built around the venerable old Enfield, then talk to Bruce and his chaps at BMCC - the number is hereabouts. And if you do commission one, drop us a line when it's done, yeah? We'd love to see it! ☘

AND...

Bruce Maconochie Custom Classics (BMCC) are on 01235 847345 or you can check them out online at www.oxfordshireroyalenfield.co.uk.



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