

Tribute

WORDS: COLIN RUTHERFORD PIX: BRIBS

The AC Cobra one of the most awesome muscle cars ever built with its 427 cube motor, and the raw sound of the V8 coming out of the side pipes, the light weight body, the two race stripes, made it one sexy car.

Bill Smith, a good friend and customer of Area 51 Custom Cycles, came into the shop wanting a bike built to compliment his Cobra. After some brain storming (and copious amounts of Morgan's Spiced Rum to shake up the last remaining brain cell), we decided that the bike had to be low, long and semi-sporty-looking. We decided to use a genuine Walz Hardcore single-sided frame all the way from Germany as the style fitted the build perfectly, and we photographed the car in detail and used some of this in the design. The frame wasn't left entirely as it was when it came from Marcus Walz's workshop, though, we modified it and tidied it up a little so that it looked exactly as we wanted it to.

We really wanted to make the nose cone of the car the main feature in the bike, so we started from scratch to fabricate the belly pan that incorporates the oil cooler sitting inside but, rather than hide the oil lines, we pulled them outside the belly pan to give a more functional look. We also cut and re-shaped a genuine H-D accessories Softail nose fairing to mirror the shape of the car's wing and headlight, and the Walz tank was then modified and re-shaped and side-vents (which are on the wing of the car) were built in. We also wanted

the badge on the tank to replicate the one featured on the wing of the car.

The rear mudguard was originally going to be a bolt-on, just in case it got damaged at any time, so that it was easily removed for repair and paint but, no matter what we did to it, it looked crap. So we decided to weld it on as part of the frame and mould it in. It seemed like a good idea at the time and it does, it has to be said, look a hell of a lot better than when it was just a bolt-on, but it has created a problem - if you ever want to

change the battery you now have to remove the rear wheel. But what the hell!

The seat gave us a bit of grief, as we had to make it from scratch - the base was made out of alloy plate which was battered to death ... sorry, I meant 'hand crafted with precision and lovingly worked to the shape required'. Stuart Baillie, ex of Blazin' Saddles, then covered it and it now looks absolutely perfect.

A bike like this wouldn't look right with right-way-up forks so we opted for a set of narrow Ceriani upside-downies held in a set of billet yokes made in-house here at Area 51, and slotted a 4.5x18" Rick's Machine billet wheel with a 120 tyre in between them. The brakes are a combination of Rick's Machine discs and Walz Hardcore calipers, and they're operated by a Walz master-cylinder sitting on a set of custom 'bars that were originally intended for



VRod fitment. An integral MMB riser/clock arrangement supports them and all the wiring for the micro switches and the brake and clutch lines have been run through them for neatness. Finally, we made up the grips on either end because we couldn't find any anywhere that looked right as part of the design.

The wheels, both front and rear, were as close as we could get to the design of the ones fitted to the original AC Cars' Cobra and were colour-matched in the centre to, again, match the car. The Cobra badges were all made in-house, as was the spinner on the rear wheel too. The wheel itself is a nine and half by eighteen with a 300 tyre, and the brake disc and rear pulley are both from Rick's too. We fitted twin Performance Machine calipers on in-house brackets, and a Legend Air-Ride shock, and modified the Walz single-sided swingarm so that the rear brake line would run internally through it, again for neatness.

The motor is a sweet 120 cube that's been powder coated Cobra Blue and all the fins were diamond cut. With the twin Mikuni

Specification Sheet

Engine

Harley-Davidson Twin-Cam, Screamin' Eagle heads, Jim's 1550 barrels & pistons, Jim's 255 cams, twin Mikuni 42mm carbs on Riviera manifold, K&N air-filter, Jim's stroker crank, Barnett dry clutch, Primo open belt drive, stock gearbox, Area 51 Custom Cycles outrigger conversion, AMM P3 single fire ignition, Hooker Headers 2-4-1 exhaust (ceramic coated white), Screamin' Eagle oil cooler, Area 51 Custom Cycles oil lines

Frame

2006 Walz Hardcore single-sider, louvres welded above oil tank, rear mudguard welded to frame, all welds ground & smoothed, polished billet forward controls

Sharp End

Rick's Machine 4.5x18" wheel, Rick's Machine discs, Walz Hardcore calipers, Ceriani narrow usd forks, Area 51 Custom Cycles billet alloy yokes, Goodridge braided stainless steel brake lines, Harley-Davidson V-Rod custom 'bars with hidden micro-switches & internal wiring/cabling, Walz Hardcore master-cylinders, MMB risers & clocks, one-off handlebar grips by Area 51 Custom Cycles

Blunt End

Walz Hardcore single-sided swingarm, Legend Air-Ride shock, Rick's Machine 9.5x18" wheel, 300 section tyre, Rick's Machine disc & rear pulley, twin PM calipers

Tinware

Modified Walz Hardcore front mudguard, modified Harley-Davidson nose fairing, modified Walz Hardcore fuel tank, one-off seat by Stuart Baillie, modified Walz Hardcore rear mudguard, Walz modified Hardcore oil tank, one-off bellypan by Area 51 Custom Cycles

Electrics

One-off loom by Area 51 Custom Cycles, stock Harley-Davidson headlight, one-off side-mounted Area 51 Custom Cycles rear light with cat eye unit, Zodiac indicators

Paint

Cobra blue with two white stripes by GS Custom Paints (07752 576525)

Engineering

Tank mods, rear mudguard mods, belly pan, swingarm mods, yokes, grips, side-mount number-plate, stainless wheel spindles/spacers/front hub by Richard Bower at Area 51 Custom Cycles

Thanks To

'Our friend & customer, Bill Smith, for giving us the opportunity to build this bike for him & for loaning us it so that we could have it on display at various shows & rallies; Richard Bower (fabrication), Stuart Baillie (seat design & manufacture), Alastair Reid (engine building) & Colin Rutherford (design & build) at Area 51 Custom Cycles; & a big thanks also to Gav at GS Custom Paints for the fantastic paint job as always ...'

carbs, one feeding each cylinder, the 1550 big bore, the high lift cams and the Screamin' Eagle heads, it'd give the V8 Cobra a run for its money from a standing start. In fact I think the sound of the two of them leaving the line together would be pretty awesome, but we have yet to try this against the car. The opportunity almost arose a couple of months back - it was a beautiful sunny Saturday morning and the Cobra was sitting outside our workshop when Bill arrived for a visit and he thought it'd be a perfect photo opportunity to get the car and bike together so he made a quick 'phone call to one of the drivers of his company to pick the car up from his garage and bring it up to the shop, approximately thirty miles away. But while we were shooting the breeze, drinking coffee and waiting for the car to arrive, we received a 'phone call from the driver to say that he had had a slight accident ... A slight accident? Try completely lost it on a dual carriageway and had stuffed it nose first into the Armco barrier. Anyway the car is still in for repair and amazingly, given that he crashed one of the rarest and most

desirable cars in the world by being a numpty, the driver still has a job ...

The handling is interesting as a lot of the weight is hanging over the left hand side due to the primary offset - we couldn't use a right hand drive due to the single-sided swinging arm. A reputable gearbox and engine company in the States, when I was requesting a longer main shaft to run the offset, kept telling us that we would destroy the main shaft bearing and shaft putting all that power through from that 120 cube motor, but we already knew this and had built in several big outrigger bearings to support the drive pulley and compensator sprocket as the offset is a whopping three inches! As you can imagine when you show the bike a right hand bend it tends to shy away like some people I know when you tell them it's their round but, in a straight line, it's awesome! A bit like the car really - it

too had awesome straight line performance, but wasn't quite as good a handler as perhaps it could've been.

The exhaust was a pain in the arse because, in order to ape the V8 in the car, it had to be a four branch 2-4-1. At the time of design we had came up with an idea for the 'pipe and were going to be starting it when, just one month later while looking through an American dealer mag, bloody hell - Hooker Headers had just developed one! It took us about four months to actually get one in the end - we needed one in its raw (as in unchromed or polished or painted) state as it had to be ceramic coated white, the same as on Bill's car.

Gav at GS Custom Paints, who we think it probably the best custom painter in the entire world, did his usual meticulous and flawless job and laid down the deep Conra Blue paint with the famous two-stripe white detail across the bodywork. Thanks, Gav, another top job ... as always!

The bike has now been shown at several shows - it was debuted at the Scottish Bike Show at Ingelston back in March 2007, and took 'Best In Show' at the Harley Rally in Ayr in May, second in the 'Radical' class at the European Rally in Fuengirola in Spain in June, 'Best In Show' at the Thunder

In The Glens Rally at Aviemore in August, and it was entered for the Zodiac Show at Rosmallen in Holland in November but, due to circumstances beyond our control, we had to cancel this. Unfortunate really, we were looking forward to the free bar on the Saturday night ...

Area 51 Custom Cycles live at Unit 1, South Elgin Place, Clydebank, Glasgow, G81 1XP www.area51customcycles.co.uk



GAV AT GS CUSTOM PAINTS, WHO WE THINK IT PROBABLY THE BEST CUSTOM PAINTER IN THE ENTIRE WORLD, DID HIS USUAL METICULOUS AND FLAWLESS JOB AND LAID DOWN THE DEEP CONRA BLUE PAINT WITH THE FAMOUS TWO-STRIPE WHITE DETAIL ACROSS THE BODYWORK.

