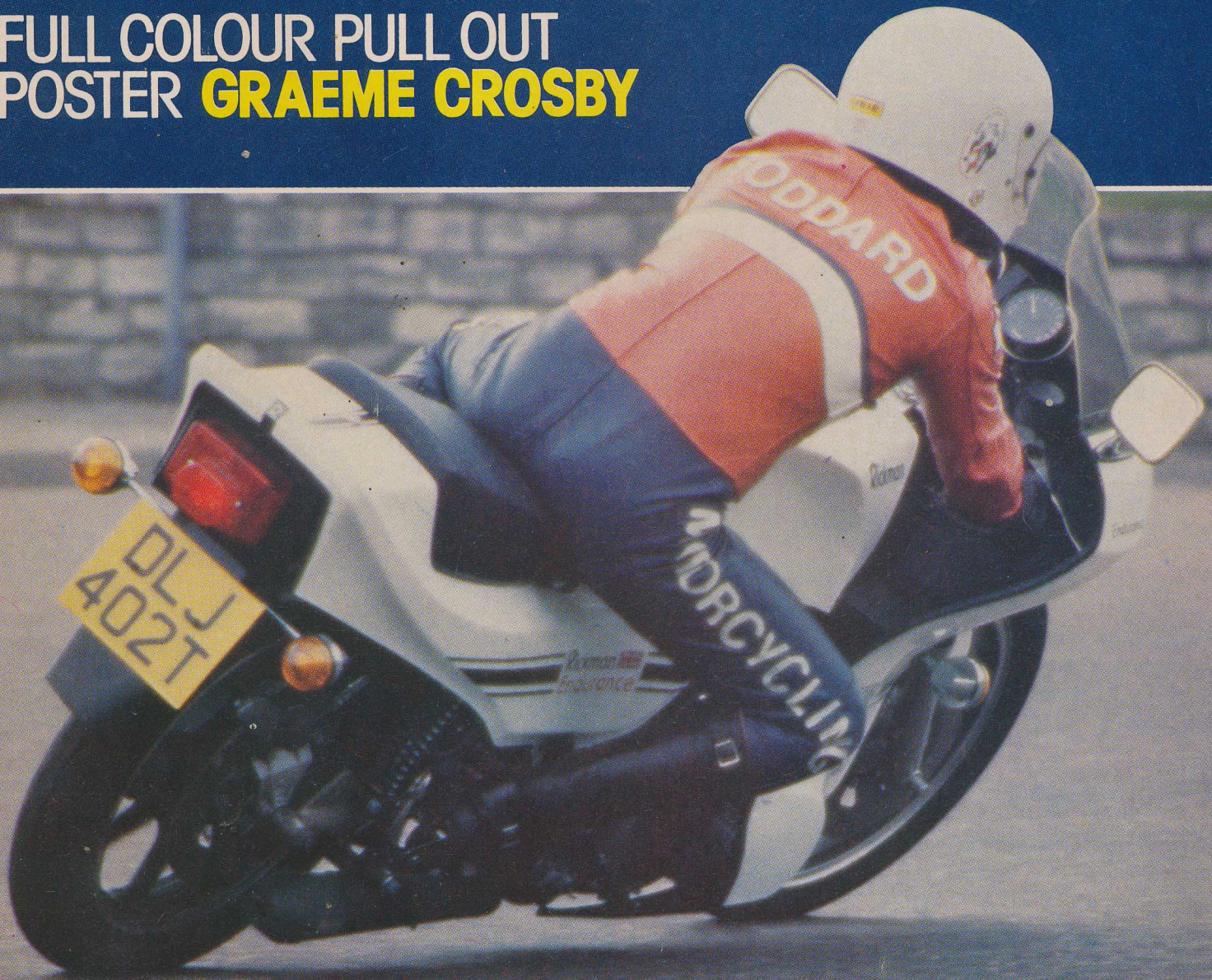


MOTOR CYCLING

50p

JANUARY 1980

FULL COLOUR PULL OUT
POSTER **GRAEME CROSBY**



Bike Tests

Yamaha 650 Special Marathon

Rickman-Kawasaki 1000

Fantic & Gilera 50s on the trail

Features

It's no Guarantee... read the small print!

Workshop

Yamaha Trail irons service guide

MOTOR CYCLING

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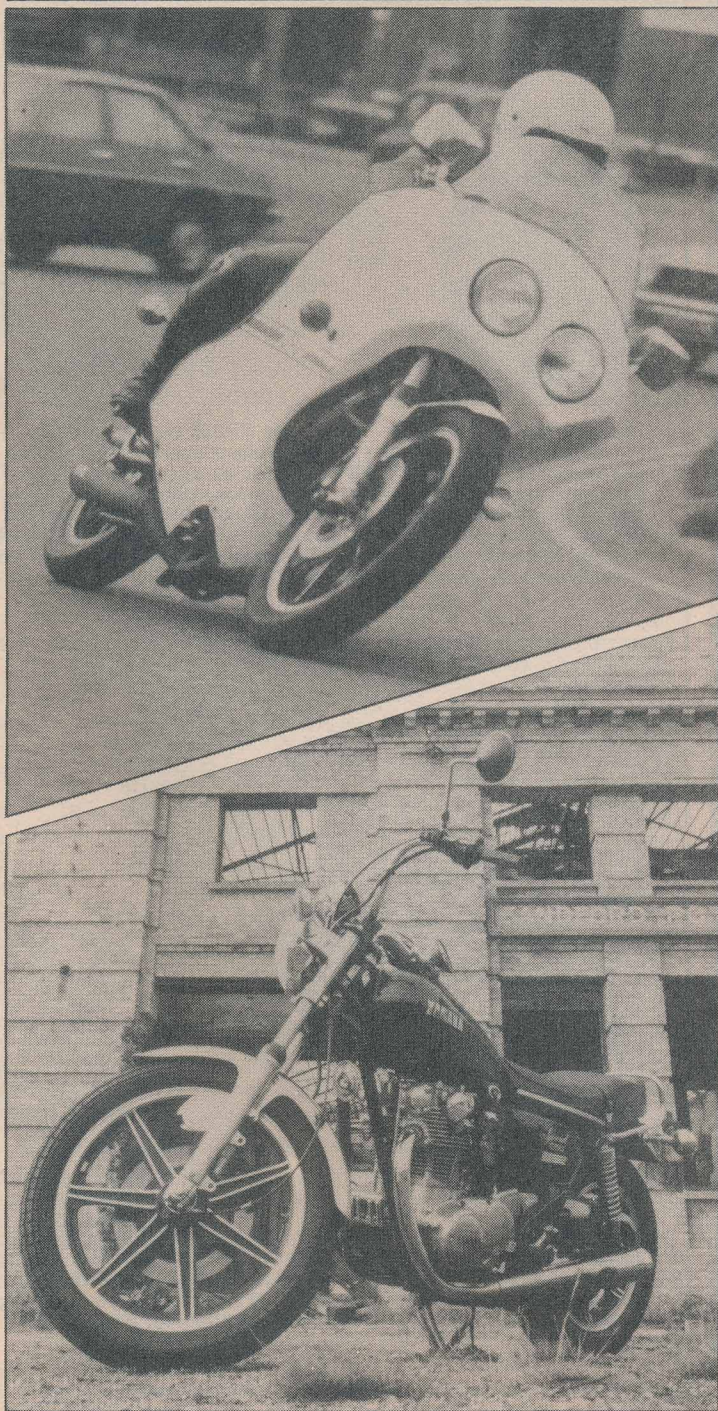
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Rickman Endurance

All that's best in a cafe racer
— with a touch of class

RICKMANS have been the most sought-after cafe racers since the days when they were still called boy racers.

Now that the Japs have sussed out the difference between frame flex and suspension, most people do their customising with bolt-on goodies. Rickman have grown even bigger with the boom in fairings, top boxes, panniers, crash bars, racks and the rest by manufacturing largely for Hondastyle.

Production has dwindled to about 10 frames per week. They are sold on their own, or as rolling chassis dressed in a limited range of glass-fibre styling packages. The bike in this article — the CRE — is the latest and most expensive of these. CRE stands for Competition Replica Endurance, but it is only a name.

Tight and tailor made

Japanese (and other) frames may have got better over the years, but they've still a long way to go. What I noticed most about the Rickman's handling were the things it *didn't* do.

Within a few hundred yards of the Rickman factory I was amazed by the accuracy and ease of the steering. Clip-ons

and rearsets make for a rotten town riding position, but straight away I was able to manoeuvre at walking pace with my feet up. Junctions and other low-speed corners needed no staggering second bites to tighten the line, nor dabs of the inside boot to compensate for turning in too quick.

One result of all this perfection came at the first roundabout, which marked the beginning of open road. Smoothly sweeping right, I kept tight to the island in low gear and let the noisy — but not antisocial — exhaust note warm my blood. At the third exit I banked to the left and opened the throttle much more sharply than I would normally do after only a few minutes on a strange machine. It wasn't dramatic, but the tail definitely turned more than the front wheel. Even this didn't take the edge off the instant confidence that the bike inspired, but it reminded me of the tyres.

Phantom tyres

This is the first bike I have ridden on Pirelli's new Phantoms. I wouldn't like to say that they are any better than the best conventional tyres, but they are fascinating. The compound, profile and tread pattern are more like wet-weather racing rubber than a road tyre. They seemed to take some time to warm up, but once warm they performed well, giving me the confidence to start looking for the frame's limits. Pushed hard enough they would allow the bike to drift, in the nicest way, all in one piece.

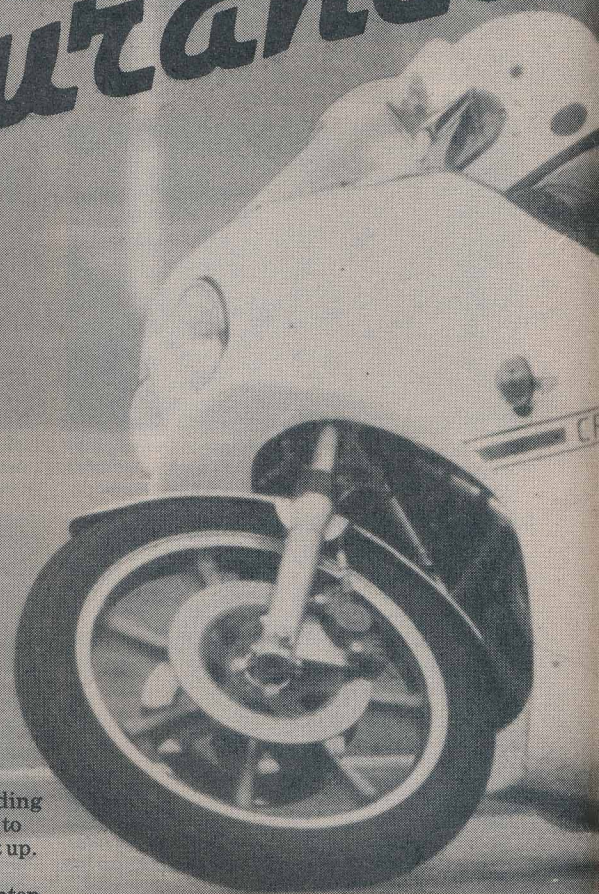
Looking for handling limits in a frame

like this is exhilarating rather than rewarding. I consistently failed to find faults, but I left bend after bend safely behind me despite my stomach's warnings that I was going in at least 5mph too fast.

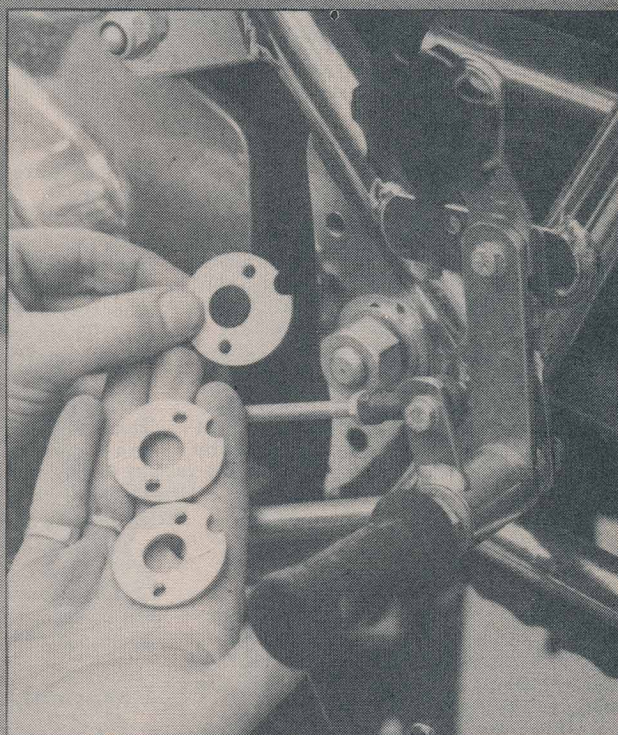
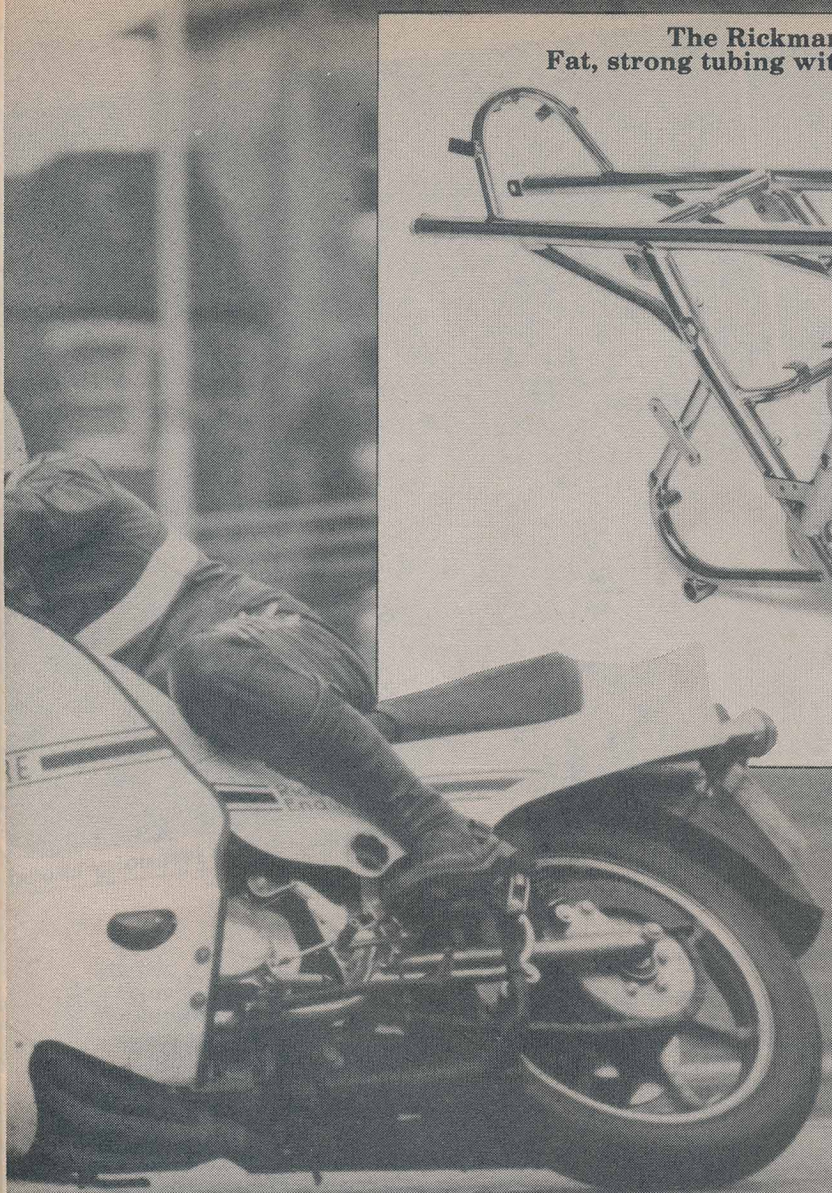
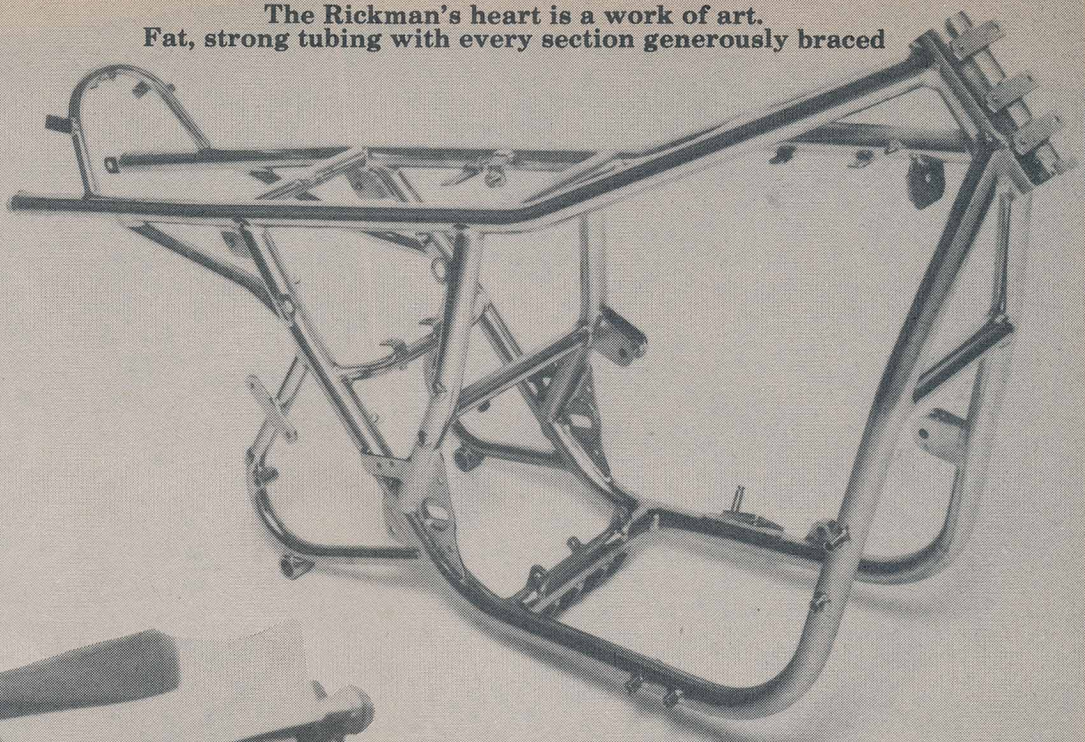
Bumps in bends felt much the same as bumps in straight lines — there was no weaving or wallowing. Sharp bumps hit quickly tended to make the ride rather harsh, and this could sometimes be felt as a little sideways skip if it happened while cornering. But recovery was instant and without any twitch. Most of the time the ride was pleasantly firm, although the front suspension got a bit choppy on rough surfaces at town speeds. High-speed stability was total, with no hint of a weave.

Unluckily for me, the test period turned wet. Very wet. But it was good for the bike because it gave it another chance to show off. My riding skill had been hard pushed to find fault on dry roads, but wet roads have a way of turning little faults into heart-stopping moments. Being sensible and cautious, I slowed down. Or tried to . . .

The Lockheed/Brembo brakes suffered from quite serious delay when wet. Maybe not as bad as the original Kawasaki horrors, but a problem nevertheless. The gliding pause only lasted about one second at the front, which is long enough, but the delay was far too long at the back. Could this be



The Rickman's heart is a work of art.
 Fat, strong tubing with every section generously braced



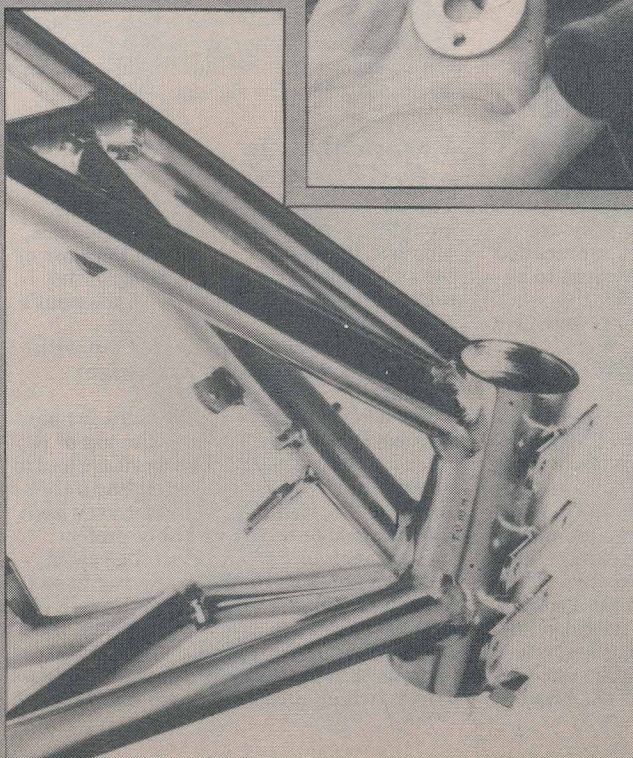
why Motor Guzzi enclose the rear Brembo on their V50?

The test bike's motor was standard, but still had enough power to spin the rear wheel from speeds as high as 70mph if the throttle was snapped open on a wet road. Smooth lines, caused by filling cracks in the road with molten tar, would also make the revs surge for an instant as the rear tyre crossed them in the wet. At first I thought that the clutch was slipping because there was no reaction from the frame to suggest that traction was being lost. Shutting off too quickly on wet roads, on the other hand, would sometimes produce a little wiggle from the back.

Wet weather friend

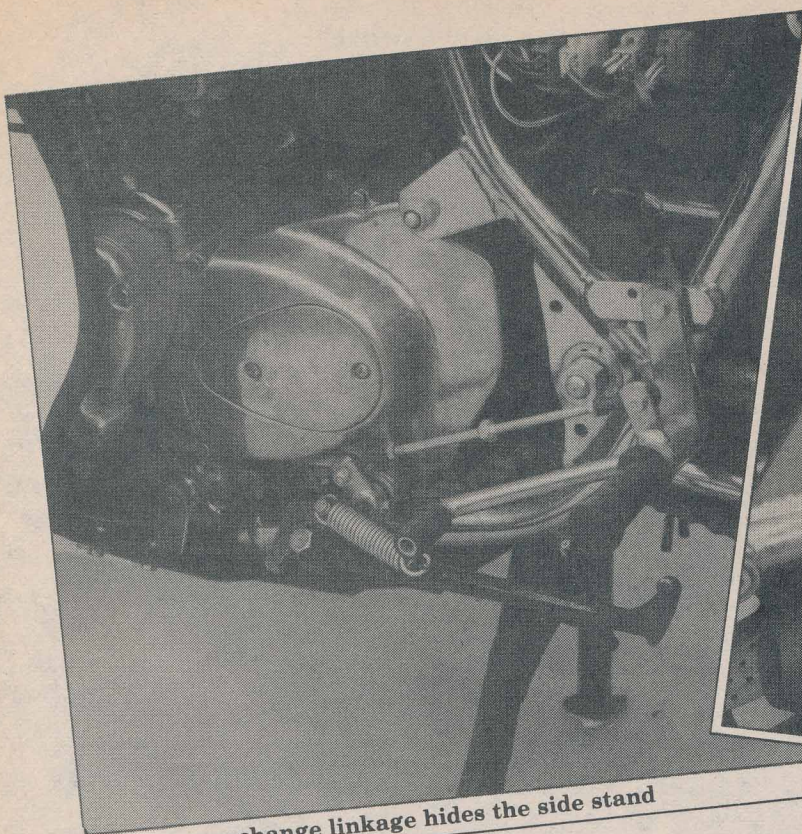
But the tyres were generally very surefooted. Even wet drain covers only managed enough of a flick to remind me that I shouldn't be riding over them in the first place. Overall, remarkably high speeds could be kept up safely in wet weather.

For me, the riding position was good. The knee cutaways in the tank cover couldn't have been better placed. The side panels formed a pleasant, fat shape to grip with my legs which added to the feeling of total control in bends. At 31 inches the seat is

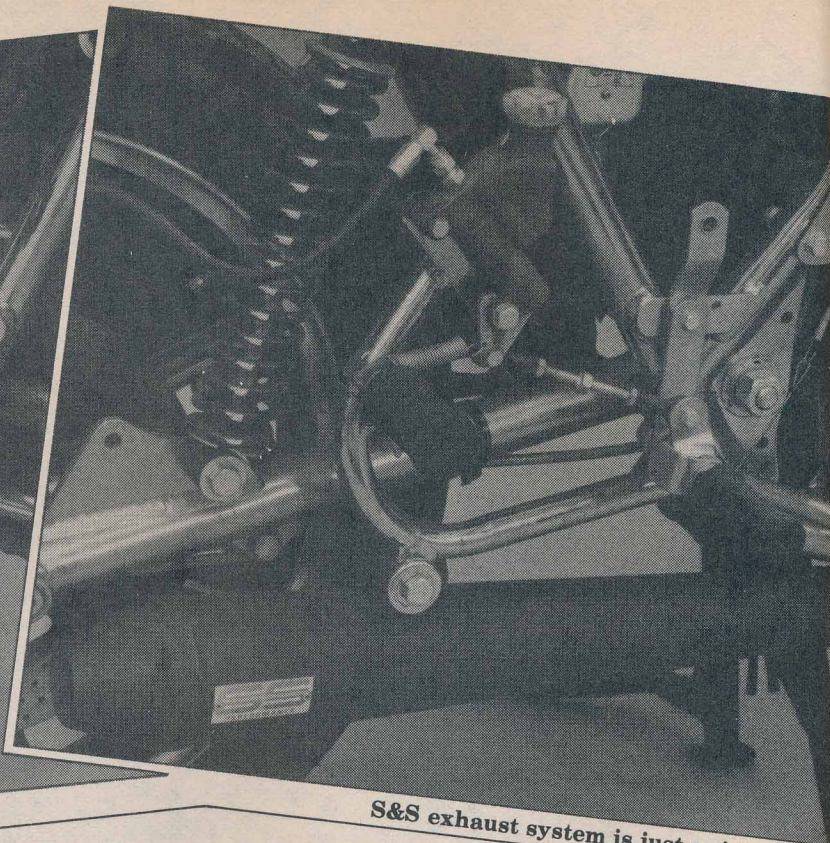


Above: pairs of eccentrically-drilled shims make chain adjustment fiddly but foolproof

Left: Not even The Incredible Hulk could make this steering head flex



Rearset gearchange linkage hides the side stand



S&S exhaust system is just noisy enough

quite high which, with the width, meant that I could only get the balls of my feet on the ground. Shorter riders had to slide off one side of the seat to get just one foot down.

One rider with very long legs found that there wasn't anywhere to put his knees. The footrest position is fixed.

Clip-on-shaped bars are a matter of taste, but I don't like them. The heels of my hands ached and this became worse on long journeys, because the fairing ensured that none of my body weight was supported by the wind. People with longer arms would have less of a problem.

Warm hands

Being low and narrow has meant that the bars can be kept inside the fairing without making it wide and ugly. There's a lot to be said for keeping your hands warm and dry. Only occasionally did the controls, in particular the clutch, feel cramped — and then only near full lock, which is restricted.

The rearsets look as though they are bound to be sloppy. All that linkage recalled the engineering abortions that used to be part of boy-racer biking. But no, the gearchange and rear brake pedals were firm and positive.

Among the other pleasing details were the fairing-mounted mirrors. They didn't vibrate too much. In fact, they were at least as good as BMW R100RT items in this respect. It was nice to see that a steering lock hadn't been forgotten.

There weren't many ragged details, but the Italian-made fuel taps came top of the list. They leak when in the off position, and Rickman are looking for better ones. The centre stand came second. You need a lot of strength, a lot of practise, or a friend to help you use it. The test bike's side stand was a spring-loaded Kawasaki model. It can't be used without first stepping off the bike

because the rearset pedal/gearchange get in the way.

You can almost forgive people for buying the CRE just to pose on. It looks so good. The quality of the glass-fibre work is excellent. All the inside surfaces are finished about as smoothly as is possible without using a gel coat. There are no ugly strands to rip your fingers apart.

One of the few criticisms I have is that the fairing is held in place by a lot of brackets. Taking the fairing off and replacing it could be a long job. The bottom half is easier to get off for access to the engine, but unfortunately the top can't be used on its own in the summer.

The way the tank cover bolts to the fairing is very neat. Not only does it keep the inside of the fairing looking tidy, but it also keeps out mechanical noise that would otherwise be amplified by the fairing.

Practical style

The one-piece seat and side panel moulding has a lockable bolt at the back, plus two screw-on knobs at the bottoms of the side panels. These hold it rigid and rattle-free, but it's not exactly a moment's work to get it off.

Underneath there's a big tool bin with enough spare room for a lightweight oversuit.

The screen was the right height for me because I could just see over the top of it when sitting naturally. Shorter riders had to strain to see over it. Although it had a flick-up at the top, it didn't lift the air very high and tall people would probably prefer another inch or two added to the screen.

The screen was mildly annoying in wet weather because it kept most of the rain off, but still allowed spray to build up on my visor. Flicking the visor up to get a better view put it in the airstream at the top of my helmet, which pushed it down again. In

between getting mad at the screen and my visor, I appreciated the fairing design. It managed to keep the worst of the weather off without making the bike feel unwieldy or isolating the rider from the road.

Conservative excellence

The current frames retain the basic geometry of the original Metisse. That may not sound very exciting, but it's hard to beat. Over the years most of the tubes, brackets and mounting points have moved about to accommodate different engines and accessories.

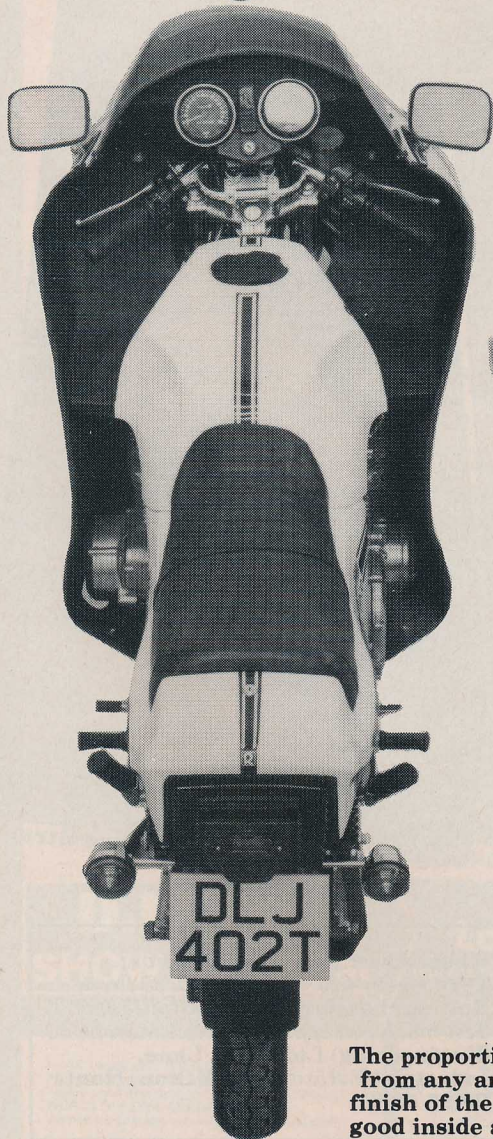
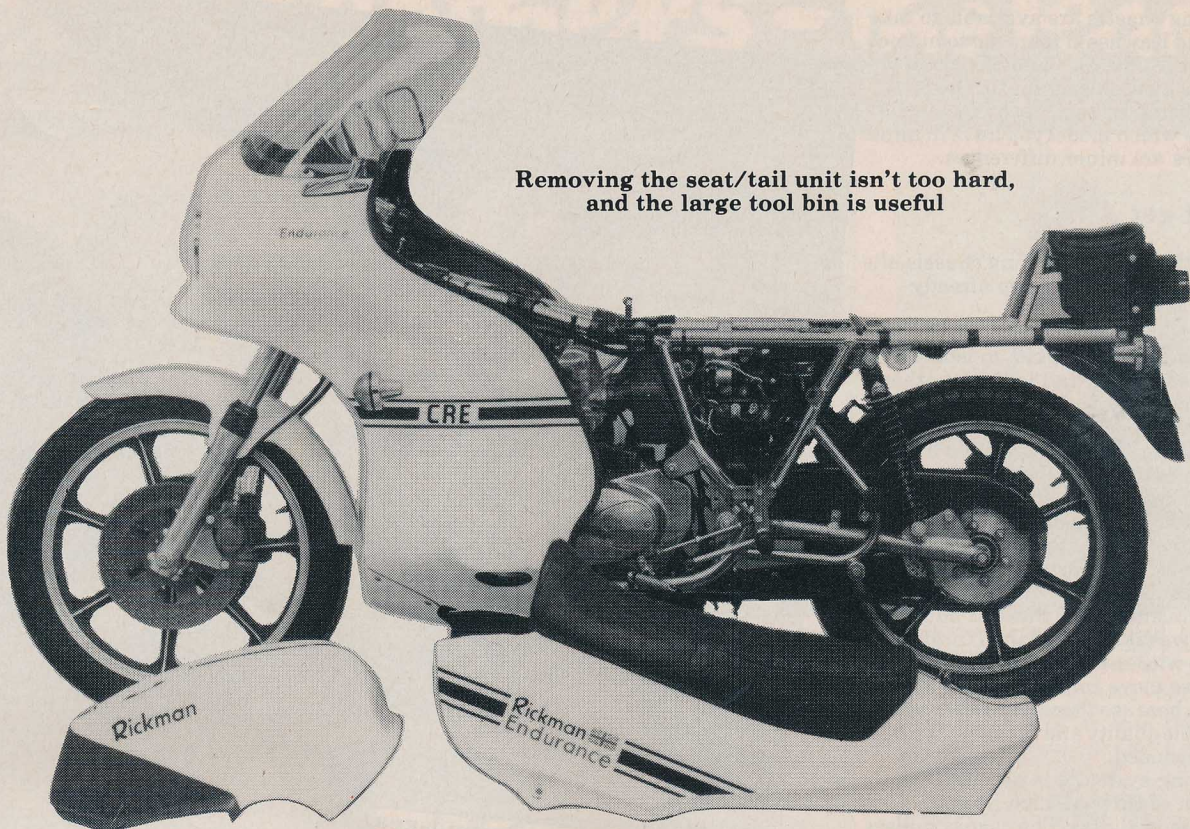
Built of 16-gauge Reynolds 531 tubing, bronze welding is used because it permits such a high level of craftsmanship. Each seam is a joy to behold without any need for grinding or dressing. It is also a low-temperature process so there is no distortion. The whole frame is nickel plated afterwards without needing further preparation. Any slightly blue areas on the finished product, and these are rare, are caused by gently heating the frame to make minor corrections at the final jiggling and trueing.

The swinging arm is a conventional layout in round-section tube running in oil-impregnated, sintered-bronze bushes. Drive-chain adjustment is set by replacing eccentrically-drilled shims at the swingarm bearings. This method might seem a little fiddly, but it guarantees perfect wheel alignment and can't slip. A set of shims are supplied, numbered in pairs.

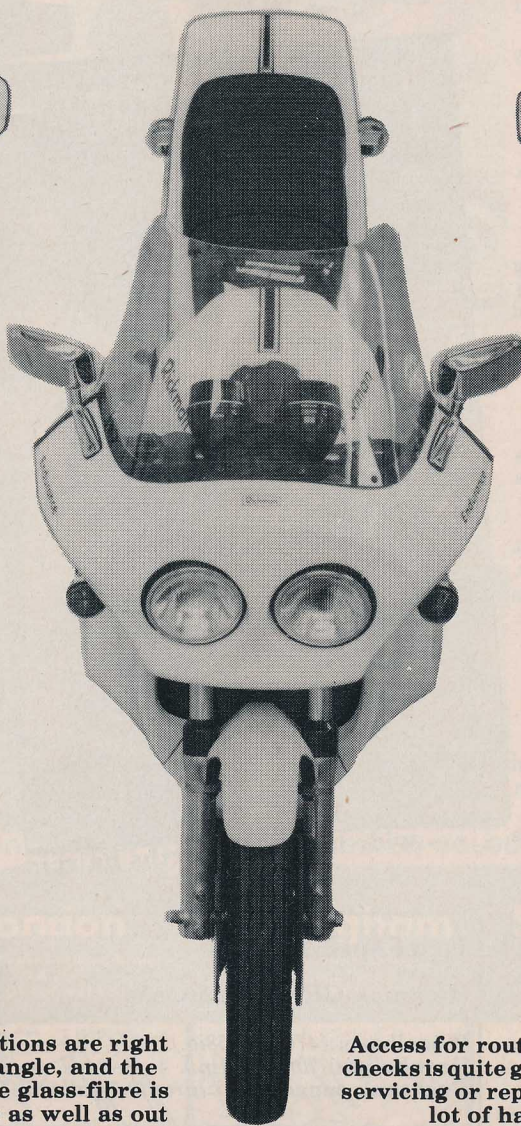
The rear suspension units are Girling Gas Shocks. These pick up on the swing-arm several inches forward of the rear axle. The sweep-sided, triangular brackets date back to an earlier experiment with laid-down shocks. It was an idea that didn't work and so the second set of holes are obsolete.

Continued on page 24

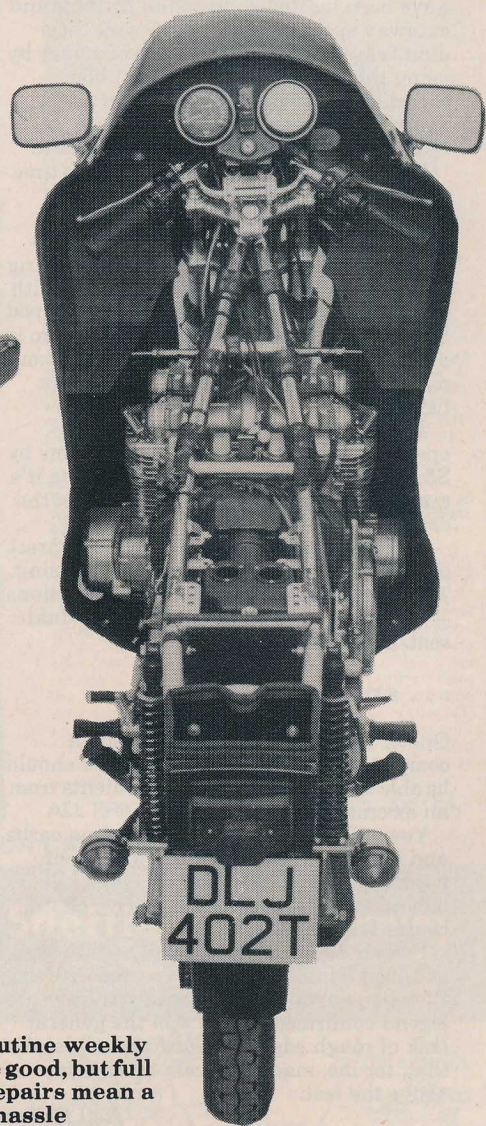
Removing the seat/tail unit isn't too hard,
and the large tool bin is useful



The proportions are right
from any angle, and the
finish of the glass-fibre is
good inside as well as out



Access for routine weekly
checks is quite good, but full
servicing or repairs mean a
lot of hassle



CRE rolling chassis are available to take any of the big Kawasaki fours, up to but not including the Z1000 MkII and ST. There are also versions available for any of the SOHC Honda 750 fours. In each case you should state exactly which model you have in mind because there are minor differences.

You will get . . .

As with all the Rickman rolling chassis, the CRE arrives on your doorstep already assembled.

The 3.5 gallon steel fuel tank is already festooned with rubber blocks to isolate the cover. One sensible detail is the breather, which is mounted towards the back and so petrol doesn't pee out under heavy braking.

Slotted into the steering head you'll find a set of 38mm Betor forks. These are made in Spain to Rickman's specification. Girling Gas Shocks hold up the rear.

Stuck on the ends of the front and rear forks are some handsome looking cast-alloy wheels that a Kawasaki Z1R owner might recognise. Rickman buy these in bulk through Kawasaki UK and then fit them to their frame with a few hub modifications. This surprise move comes about, apparently, because there's no other source of comparable quality and at the right price. Tyres are included.

The braking system is a peculiar combination of three 11 inch Brembo discs with Lockheed calipers. The cast-iron discs have been lightened by radial drilling and cutaway spokes. When asked why they didn't save their customers a bit of money by using the brakes off the original bike, especially now that sintered pads are available from Kawasaki, Rickman answered that they liked to use the best.

New lights are also supplied, but this time for better reasons. All the lights are carefully styled into the glass-fibre mouldings. The twin six-inch Lucas headlamps in particular are a major styling feature. They are the type used on cars with twin-lamp set-ups, so one lamp is the dipped beam and the other is main. Dipped beam is a bit dim on its own, but it stays on when main beam is added giving useful extra light.

The four-into-one exhaust system is specially made to fit the Rickman frame by S&S. It comes in any finish as long as it's matt black, and there's no need to re-jet the carbs.

Add the handlebars, footrests and rearset controls and you're ready for the dressing. The glass-fibre comes in four major sections — two-piece fairing, tank cover and dual-seat/side panels.

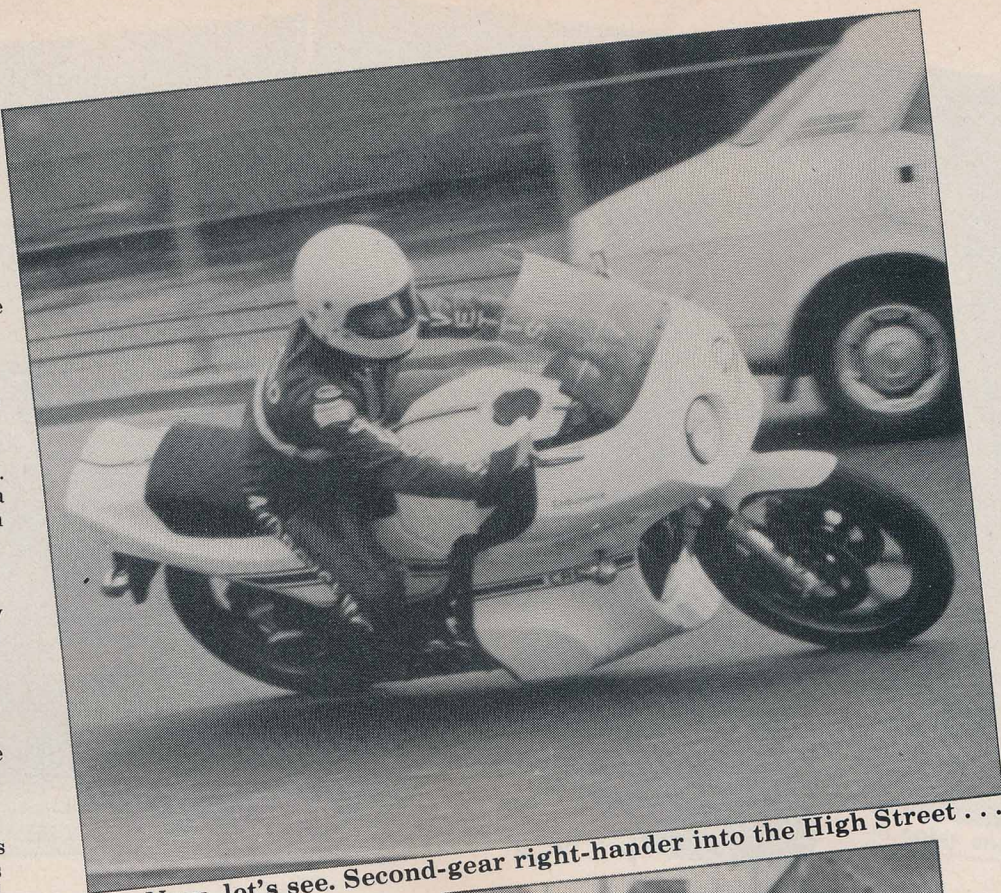
. . . and you will need

One of the beauties of having such a complete rolling chassis is that you should be able to get all the added ingredients from an ex-crash bike.

You will need: the engine including carbs and air filters, instruments, switchgear, wiring loom and electrics (less lamps), cables, longer-than-standard drive chain, centre and side stands.

Petty quibbles aside, I loved it. Although excellent handling is to be expected with the Rickman name, it's still pleasant to have the legend confirmed. But it was the general lack of rough edges and unfinished details that, for me, made this cafe racer a cup above the rest.

Neil Millen



Now, let's see. Second-gear right-hander into the High Street . . .



. . . wide into Woolworths hairpin



. . . then left onto Tesco Straight

Brief specification

Rickman CR Endurance

Wheelbase: 1470mm (58in.).
Seat height: 70mm (31in.).
Fuel tank capacity: 17 litres (3.5 galls.).

Wheel sizes: 18in. rear, 19in. front.
Tyre sizes: 4.25/85 rear, 4.10/85 front.
Rolling chassis price: £1290 inc 15% VAT.
Test machine supplied by Rickman Bros
(Engineering) Ltd, Stem Lane,
Industrial Estate, New Milton, Hants
BH25 5NW.