

THE TIME MACHINE

From basket case to show-stopping museum piece

By the powder-coated DIRT BIKE Staff



◀ Tom White does his best Brian Wade (who was a Greeves factory rider in the late '60s and early '70s) impression with the Time Machine '67 Greeves MX5.

Time capsule. Tom White's goal was to restore a 1967 Greeves and preserve a piece of history for all time. In early '85 Tom, of White Brothers fame, bought a '65 Greeves from Feets Minert, but he found it was a mismatch of parts so he bought a '67 250cc Challenger 24MX5 from Greeves guru Frank Conley, who is located at 13 El Cuenco, Carmel Valley, CA 93924 ([408] 659-4958). Tom also bought original shocks, tires, cables, stickers, tank badges, grips, cables, fenders and a dilapidated airbox, along with the original Greeves motor and chassis parts manuals. Then someone gave Tom another '67. The plan was for Tom and his son to restore one bike to original condition in their spare time.

Tom hunted down original magazine tests on '64-'67 Greeves' and even glossy photos from the tests. He also bought an Osprey Collectors Library book on Greeves, from Classic Motorbooks International (729 Prospect Ave., Osceola, WI 54020, [800] 458-0454). Mr. White did considerable research on what the bike is supposed to look like, to the littlest detail, then he dismantled the cleanest '67 and put it in boxes, along with the parts cache. However, business was so good that he never found the time to work on the project. So the boxes holding history





◀ Dan (left) and Tom White pose with the Time Machine '67 Greeves MX5 Challenger. If you want a fully restored machine but don't have the time or patience to do it yourself, give the Time Machine a call.

When the bike left the Greeves factory, it didn't look near as pristine as it does now. Check out the weird motor mounts. ▶



got shuffled around, from the garage to the attic to the shop, and the project looked like it would never get any closer to getting off the ground.

Then the White Bros. hired Denny Berg as their R&D manager. Berg was into restoring or tricking-out exotic European machines in his spare time, what little there was of it, so Tom started hounding Berg to restore the Greeves. Other projects were taking up all of Berg's spare time so he had to make a decision—he could restore bikes for a living or have no spare time at all. Berg told Tom that the only way he'd ever get Tom's project going was to quit the White Bros. and start his own company, The Time Machine.

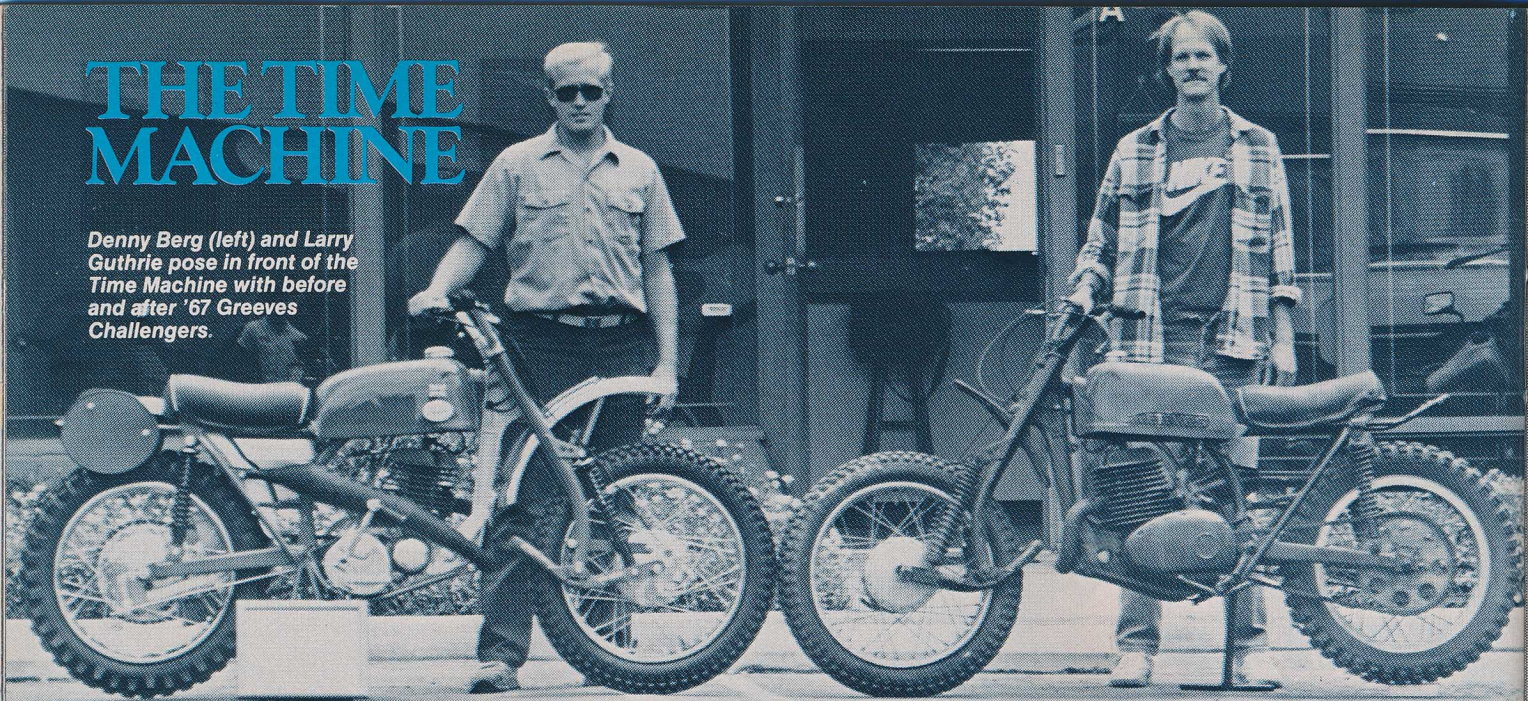
TIME MACHINE'S FIRST PROJECT

Denny Berg worked on the Time Machine from November '88 until the grand opening in January '89. Although Berg was mainly interested in '50-'60s Euro bikes, both street and dirt, more ancient or modern machines were also welcomed (while there, we slobbered over a nitrous-injected, 108cc Honda ZB50, road-race Ducatis and Nortons and a dirttrack YZWR). Anyway, the Greeves project was the first Time Machine effort. Tom dumped off the boxes and literature and Berg's first project began.

First, the motor came all the way apart and it needed main and big-end rod bearings. Conley sent the required parts in a week; in the meantime the cases and such were glass-beaded and the primary cover was buffed out and powder-coated. All bolts were cleaned and cadmium-plated. The motor was carefully reassembled as per the literature and photos and the finished mill looked completely original—right down to the carb guard/heat sump.

THE TIME MACHINE

Denny Berg (left) and Larry Guthrie pose in front of the Time Machine with before and after '67 Greeves Challengers.



◀ *Meticulous disassembly and cleaning of the motor revealed what needed to be replaced in the ancient mill.*

At the same time every chassis part was either plated, powder-coated, painted, re-fabricated, chromed or otherwise massaged to a sparkle. Two days were spent completely on the fiberglass airbox. It was re-resined and coated and the carb inlet was inlaid with metal to keep the fiberglass from being crushed by the hose clamp. Engineering became art.

Berg made up new cables, chromed the rims and spokes and buffed-out the hubs. Instead of trying to repair the mangled chain guard, he used it as a pattern for a new unit made out of stronger T-6 aluminum. The pipe was also completely disassembled, peened, filled as needed and welded back together, then painted. He even cut modern bungies to size and used the original Greeves ends to secure the gas tank.

Wherever possible Berg updated the internal parts for more reliability while keep-

ing the exterior looking as original. Greeves used felt wipers on their wheel bearings and crud easily worked its way past to damage the bearings. Berg cross-matched modern sealed bearings to the Greeves wheels and retained the felt wipers for cosmetics. He also reworked the ignition to accept more modern points and provide more reliable spark.

THE 100-POINT RESTORATION

In seven weeks the project was finished and the Greeves had been saved from the ravages of time. As with all major jobs, The Time Machine had completed it in less than two months. For the complete, 100-point restoration cost is between \$3000 and \$5000, depending on how much fabrication and parts chasing is needed. This may seem very steep, but the man is an artist. He looks at a bike and sees hardware. If he doesn't like a piece, he makes another one so it'll be better than original.

After the restoration process, Tom's Greeves looks and runs better than when it rolled off of the assembly line in '67. The 100-point restoration covered every detail, down to the chain-oiler system in the swingarm, and the machine could win its class at the track or a bike show, although Tom has no urge to race it. Mr. White's goal is to own a museum-quality example of each of the landmark machines in dirt biking history, but his Greeves MX5 will always be his favorite. "When I retire, I'm going to park it in the middle of my house and just look at it."

If you own a rolling bit of history that you would love to see sparkle again but can never find the time to do it yourself, The Time Machine may be your answer. But be forewarned—if you plan on racing it, you may not want to get the 100-point restoration. When you lay eyes on the finished product, you'll think it a sin to ever get it dirty. If you want to turn your old iron into an immaculate example of motorcycle history, contact the Time Machine at 755 W. 17th St., Unit A, Costa Mesa, CA 92627; (714) 548-4424. □

