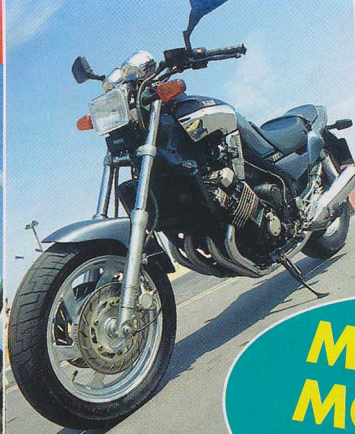


# Grey Bike

## STREETFIGHTER FZR250 PROJECT



SOMEWHAT  
SLIGHTLY  
FAZED  
FZR250

MORE BIKES  
MORE INFO  
MORE PAGES

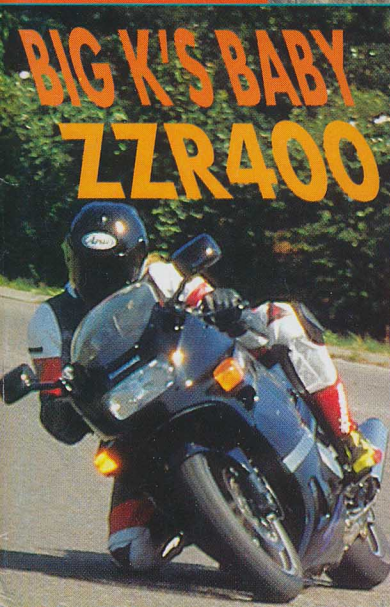


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MODEL HISTORY - FZR SERIES  
TUNING - NSR250  
RACING - NC21 & GSXR400  
TECHNICAL - READY FOR THE ROAD?

**PLUS: ZXR400**

**MVX250 ★ XR200**

**FZR400SP ★ LTD700**



**BIG K'S BABY  
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**SHADOWFAX VT1100C**



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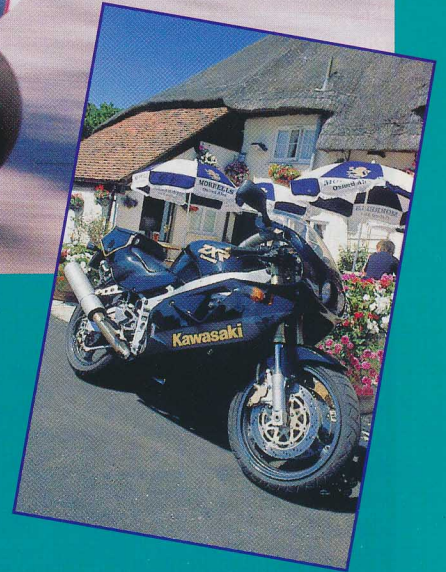
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# Grey Bike More Bikes More Choice More Freedom The Best Buys The Worst Buys And The Bikes You'd Give Your Soul For...



KEV Racing's GSR400RRSP in action at Mallory earlier this year.



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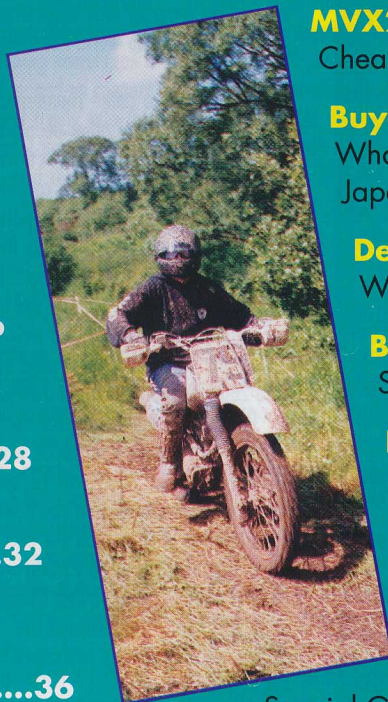
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# PROJECT FZR250

# GreyBike









## PROJECT FZR250



I'd been wanting to build a bike like this for a long time. For those who don't know, my background comes from custom biking - for six years I had my own little workshop, turning out streetfighters, hot rods, lowriders and choppers for customers - and it still seems quite natural for me to look at a stock bike and see how I could improve upon it, without being limited by the restrictions of mass production and the necessity for widespread appeal imposed upon factory designers.

For obvious reasons, I wanted to use a grey import as a base bike, and I also wanted to prove my point that you don't need huge amounts of engine capacity to create a decent bike (an extension of the thought process from the Does Size Really Matter? piece in the last issue). The final inspiration was simply that no-one had done it before - 'What, build a 250 Streetfighter? You must be mad.' Well, there maybe some truth in that, but here it is anyway.

Base bike was an FZR250R, lurking away in the back showroom at West Coast. I spotted it on my travels - I spend a lot of time in grey importers' showrooms, checking out what's around, what's new, and picking up general info on the state of the market and the industry - and it was still sat there the next time I went in. I liked the look of it - as a starter for ten it was a pretty good model - nice three spoke wheels, good brakes, Deltabox frame and swingarm, funky EXUP exhaust system, and sexily curved seat/tail unit. In addition, some Mad Jap had already made an attempt at customising it - the stainless front hoses, stylish rearsets, and tasty alloy headlight brackets were all good swag, although the risers mounted loosely (*very* loosely) to the top yoke would need some attention, and the tatty bracketry just about holding the clocks on would have to go, along with that disgusting red clutch cable. But on the whole it showed promise. It also kept squeaking 'Buy me Oddie' every time I went past it, and seeing as how I'd just sold my Bros, I happened to be in that rare state of 'Having Some Money' (which never lasts long and is soon overtaken by the less rare state of 'Just Bought Another Motorcycle'). I asked questions on the price, poked and prodded it a few more times, tried to get it cheaper and failed (seeing as how it was already being offered to me at cost price - cheers for that), and in the end parted with me dosh and carted it off.

Getting it fired up wasn't too much of a problem. I was lucky to escape with just draining the float bowls - carbs that have been stood a while can be a real bastard to clean out - but I had to sort the plugs out before it would go without bump starting. They looked to be sparking okay, but wouldn't fire the bike under load, so a new set of NGKs solved that problem. I bunged in some decent fresh oil (with an eye on the FZR's rev ceiling, I used fully synthetic Pro 4), and wondered whether the little internal cartridge oil filter might prove to be a problem to replace. But like any true grey freak, I fer-



**The final inspiration was that no-one had done it before - 'What, build a 250 streetfighter, you must be mad...?'**

reted around my local dealer's shelves, emerging triumphant with a UK model XT500 filter - identical in all respects.

Having made sure the motor was okay, I started to think about the styling. I've developed a minimalist tendency to my customising these days (a necessity due to the very limited amount of time I have to spend doing anything other than putting Grey Bike together), so I

like to see what I can achieve by changing as little as possible on a stock bike, using simple techniques to disguise the ugly parts and emphasise the pretty ones.

I'd chosen the FZR because of its inherently pretty shape - overall the bike looked good from almost any angle - so it was really just a case of sorting out the dodgy bits. I didn't like the huge silencer can, the holes in the frame for the wiring/hoses looked crap with no fairing, the black plastic rear light unit/mudguard looked as clumsy as they always do, the instrument console was big and bulky, and the top engine mount needed something doing with it.

A great deal of constructive thought (and a lot of not-very constructive thought...) later, I had a plan. Junk the end can and fit something much smaller, maybe in carbon fibre if possible, cover the holes in the frame with that stick-on carbon fibre stuff, junk the rear light unit and cut away the bottom of the tail piece to get the 'arse in the air' look, and, er, keep thinking about what to do with the top engine mounts. And as you can see, not everything turned out exactly according to plan.

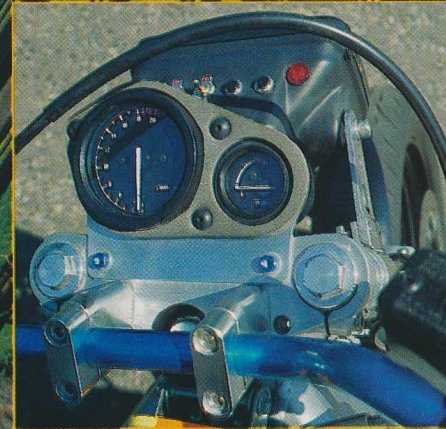
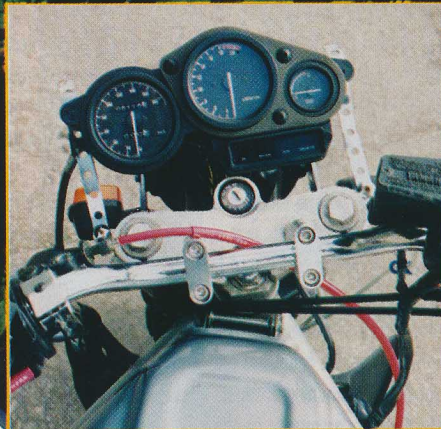
For a start, I spent 16 quid on two sheets of that stick-on carbon fibre stuff, spent ages cutting it out and sticking it on the frame, then decided it looked cheap and crappy and junked it. Plan B was henceforth concocted, involving grinding off the fairing brackets and screwholes, Aralditing circles of aluminium sheet inside the frame to cover the holes, filling them with bridging resin, smoothing with body filler, and then sanding down and spraying with silver spray from aerosol cans. I masked off where the welding was, and the result is a pretty good match for the original colour, and gets you a uniquely unblemished Deltabox frame - I figured it was a nice looking frame, and in the end deserved the time spent bringing out its best qualities.

The engine itself looked a little dull, so I Gunked it down and sprayed it with Steel Wheel spray, which has a nice blue/grey tinge to the silver. This wasn't a Big Bucks magazine project - Grey Bike doesn't have any Big Bucks - so I was paying for everything myself, and trying to keep costs as low as possible. I wanted to use anodised aluminium screws on the engine, simply because they look so hip, but couldn't afford them. So I used ordinary zinc plated allen screws (you get a big assorted box for about a tenner), and dipped them in blue candy paint. Two coats left to dry before shoving them in, and who can spot the difference?

Using blue engine screws also tied in nicely with the Renthal handlebars. I had this set lying around the workshop, unused from a previous project. At first I was going to exchange them for a set of genuine moto-cross style Renthals, since these were more or less a stock pattern, just a couple of inches wider. But when I tried them on they looked so perfect they've stayed there ever since. The blue theme also solved the problem of what to do with the top engine mounts. I couldn't just lose them - they did bolt the engine to the frame, after all - and there was no way to really disguise them, so I decided to make a feature of them instead, sanding them down



## *Oddie Shows Off*



### **SPEC:**

**Engine:** In-line DOHC 4, water-cooled, EXUP exhaust system

**Power:** 45ps/16,000rpm

**Torque:** 2.5kgm/12,000rpm

**Capacity:** 249cc

**Weight:** 146kg

**Frame:** Twin spar alloy Deltabox

**Forks:** 38mm telescopic

**Rear Suspension:** Alloy Deltabox monoshock swingarm

**Brakes:** Twin four-piston front, 280mm discs; single twin-piston rear, 210mm disc

**Wheels:** 100/80/17 front, 140/70/17 rear



and spraying them with candy blue and clear lacquer (from yet more spray cans...). This was an excellent plan, and would have been nigh-on perfect if I hadn't left the nearside mount on top of the dustbin to dry overnight on Wednesday evening.

Thursday morning the bin lorry came nice and early, and later that day I discovered that I had to decide whether to go and root around the rubbish dump for several fruitless hours trying to find the bloody mount, or make another one. Bollocks. Eventually I set to and made another (using bits from two old pairs of handlebars, some 25mm x 6mm steel strip, an electric welder and lots of patience...).

With the engine mounts bolted back in place, I carried on with my cunning plans. Wheels were easy, pull them off, unbolt the discs, and a spray can of satin black sorted them out. While the front wheel was off I dropped the fork legs out, and stripped and polished the bottom sliders. I ordered some Earls stainless hoses for the water system and back brake line, and ferreted around the breakers until I found a knackered (but alloy) NC21 aftermarket exhaust can, and a busted front mudguard off something or other (early NSR I think). The mudguard was cracked and split, but the bit I wanted was in one piece, so I marked it out and cut it to shape with an angle grinder, then gave it still more satin black. I bought a piece of alloy from the local sheet metal shop and made a fork brace, bolted the minimal guard to it, and hoped it would pass an MOT.

The alloy exhaust can had been down the road, the front half of the can had been ground right through, but the rest of it was intact. I cut the busted bits away, ground it all to shape so it would make a decent (short-

er) can, and got it alloy welded for just 20 quid. I polished it up on my buffer (made from a washing machine motor), and used more of the alloy sheet to make the curved supporting bracket.

I used the same buffer to polish up the stainless EXUP system, before spraying the rest of the exhaust pipes in heat-resistant black and bolting them back on the bike. It was starting to come together, so I moved my attention to the top half of the bike.

I sorted out the loose risers, bolting them securely to the top yoke with bolts that actually fitted, then stripped and polished the clutch and front brake levers. I wanted to do away with all the switches and wiring on the handlebars, so I found an old clutch lever mount and separate throttle assembly in the breakers. The throttle was for the normal twin cables (one to open, one to close), but experience has taught me you only really need the opening cable, the return spring will take care of the rest. So I cut away and filled the second cable hole, cleaned up the clutchlever mount, sprayed both (and the front master cylinder) with still more satin black, then used new zinc allen screws (from the same big box) to put it all back together. Result, clean shiny new-looking controls for less than a fiver.

I polished up the alloy headlamp mounts that came with the bike, and bought one of those little twin headlamp units from the local bike shop. A few switches, an evening's figuring out the wiring, another evening spent wiring it up, and all the electrics are controlled from the top of the headlamp - starter, horn, lights and dip. The ignition is on a separate switch hidden on the bike, and there was even room to squeeze the oil and neutral lights into the headlamp shell. Funky.

That problem solved, I could sort the crappy clock mounting. I really wanted to isolate just the tacho and water temp gauge, because of that lovely dummy rubber-mounted-effect bracket. Taking my courage in both hands, and the hacksaw in the other, I cut the panel about until just those two instruments remained, then used body filler to cover the holes left where the speedo and idiot console had been carved away. The last bit of alloy sheet was shaped to make the mounting bracket, which bolted nicely to the top yoke. Well clean and well racy, and I liked it.

But it struck me that keeping some sort of speedo would coincide with keeping some sort of licence, so I raided the

brains in the local cycle shop, and scored a digital battery speedo for just 12 quid. You Araldite the sensor to the front wheel, extend the wiring, stick the little mounting bracket on the handlebars, set the computer inside to the correct wheel ratio, and that's the end of that. Another neat and clean (and unusual) solution.

The bike was getting pretty close to being finished now, but I still hadn't quite decided on the paint scheme. I junked the ugly black mudguard/light unit bit at the back, and my original intention had been to cut away the plastic tail unit, but there's a lot of metal bracketry under there to support the pillion seat. I could have hacksawed that away and designed something that wouldn't show, but it was a lot of work I didn't have time for.

Which meant I knew I wanted to hide the back end under some satin black, to give the

impression of a kicked up rear, without actually cutting anything away. I also knew I wanted a rising sun somewhere, I knew I wanted a single colour and minimal graphics on the seat unit to bring out its natural aesthetic qualities, and I knew I wanted a sort of yellowy orangey white effect to complement the spots of blue I'd used here and there. Half a litre of Chrome Yellow and Ice White cellulose, a litre of clear lacquer, a dodgy old compressor (powered by yet another washing machine motor), a bunch of reddish spray cans, and several attempts later, I emerged from my shed with more or less what I wanted. I had the Grey Bike logo and graphics cut at the local sign shop; I'd already decided to flaunt the bike's tiny capacity by putting 250 graphics on each side, and it was also my way of taking the piss out of the 'my bike's bigger than yours' macho tendency of the 1100cc-plus streetfighter types - I'm proud of the fact that the FZR is only a 250.

It was a mad panic to get the bike finished for the BMF Rally. The Earls hoses were an unusual size, and only arrived the morning I was due to set off. I'd measured the diameter of the hoses accurately at the radiator - it was only when I'd pulled the old hoses off and tried to fit the new ones that I discovered the long nearside hose opens out at the bottom and is a much bigger diameter. Bugger. Sweating and struggling I managed to get the hose on, but the clip was far too small. Here Good Fortune smiled upon a loser, and I discovered just one large blue end clip inside my collection of Oddie's Lucky Parts. It still wouldn't fit the hose properly - too close to the engine - but I was able to cut it up and make it just slip over the jubilee clip to finish off the hose. It's a complete bodge up, but you'd never know unless I told you...

One of R&R's groovy twin tail light units carried the number plate down to the left side on a home-made bracket, so I could make a little alloy plate to fit where the original rear light used to be, sprayed up satin black to line up with the paint on the tail unit, and stuck in place with gaffa tape. I made the BMF with just hours to spare, got the bike MOTd when I got back, and trundled off to the Isle of Man for the Grey Bike/AWOL Alternative TT party...

The Isle of Man was the first chance I had to try the

**This was an excellent plan, and would have been nigh-on perfect if I hadn't left the nearside mount on top of the dustbin to dry overnight.**





bike out properly. Even with the rearsets and raised bars the bike's dead comfy, and with so much leverage and control, and so little weight, you can really throw it around. As soon as I started to use the bike properly, a fork seal knackered itself and bollocks up the front damping, so it got a bit jittery here and there, but even so it tracked better than most bikes when they're spot on. The rear end is faultless, the brakes superb, and the whole chassis package is well above anything the miniscule engine can throw at it. Performance is pretty good up to about 90mph, when the sit up and beg riding position really starts to produce too much wind resistance, but on a naked bike you don't need to go much faster anyway.

The six speeds in the box are really nice and close, and at the moment the motor will pull from way down low, dipping a little around 8-10,000, before coming in strong at 12,000, with an accompanying scream from the more or less straight-through end can which has to be heard to be believed when the EXUP opens. Keeping the motor boiling above 12 grand is the way to make the FZR sing and dance, and it takes a little while to get used to keeping the revs that high in mid corner. It's not an easy bike to get the best out of (have you ever tried keeping an engine above 12,000 on the road..?). But it's eminently satisfying when you do. And a redline at 18,500 (the rev limiter kicks in at 19,000rpm, I've discovered...) gives you an exhaust note previously only attributed to F1 Grand Prix cars. Redlining through the gears on Douglas promenade saw every head turn to see why such a tortured sound didn't end with the noise of a con-rod whacking out through the cases. Groovy.

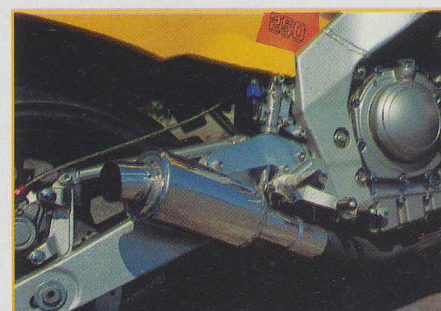
It's a brilliant bike to ride, though, so much fun you wonder why not many people have cottoned on to 250 fours yet. It's too easy to dismiss them as quirky or bizarre, and plump for a good 'ol two-stroke instead. Turning one into a streetfighter is the ultimate expression of absurdity, and I love flying about on it. The most common question as soon as I park it up is, 'That's not a 250, is it?', which gives me an excuse to drone on about how great a little bike it is, and how under-rated 250 fours are in general. I usually get them to check out the rev counter at some point, just to watch them freak out, which was particularly entertaining when I did it to a bunch of French guys down at Kent, who could speak no English but knew how to express the noise the bike must make to each other.

Gallic screams notwithstanding, the FZR certainly goes well enough. There's enough poke even way down the rev scale to make the bike useable round town, or for just bimbling round the country lanes, without feeling you *need* to thrash it to get anywhere, and it's actually far more tractable than many bigger bikes, pulling without fuss even from below the 3,000 starting point on the rev counter. There's not as much power as a 400, of course, but just being able to say your engine spins at over 300 times a second (think about that) more than makes up the difference! There's a slight burbly misfire which creeps in around 15,000, which means it's probably running rich because of the pipe - I haven't done anything to the carbs yet - and maybe that slight hole around 10,000 could be tuned out with some careful attention. I'm hoping to try and get it on a dyno over the winter, to see if it can be improved, and if all that works out I'll be printing the graphs and telling you that tale in the Spring.

**Odgie**



**A redline at 18,500rpm (the rev limiter kicks in at 19,000, I've discovered) gives you an exhaust note previously only attributed to F1 Grand Prix cars...**



**TOTAL COST (Excluding bike)**

Extra Earls Hoses .....	£56.00
Cellulose Paint .....	£23.54
Lots of Spray Cans .....	£19.75
Stick-On Graphics .....	£12.48
Headlamp .....	£15.60
Digital Speedo .....	£12.50
Throttle (S/Hand) .....	£5.00
Clutch Cable .....	£4.87
Alloy Welding .....	£20.00
R&R Rear Light .....	£12.00
Rental Bars .....	approx £25.00
Switches/Idiot Lights .....	£6.00
Alloy Sheet .....	£10.34
Oil Filter .....	£4.84
Plugs .....	£9.20
.....	<b>£237.12</b>