

MODERN CYCLE

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RICKMAN-YAMAHA PROJECT: Part I
YAMAHA 175 HOP-UP ★ DUNECYCLE RACING
MAICO 400 TEST ★ HODAKA SUPER B ★ HONDA ATC IMPRESSION
SUZUKI HUSTLER TEST HONDA CHOPPER INDOOR RACING



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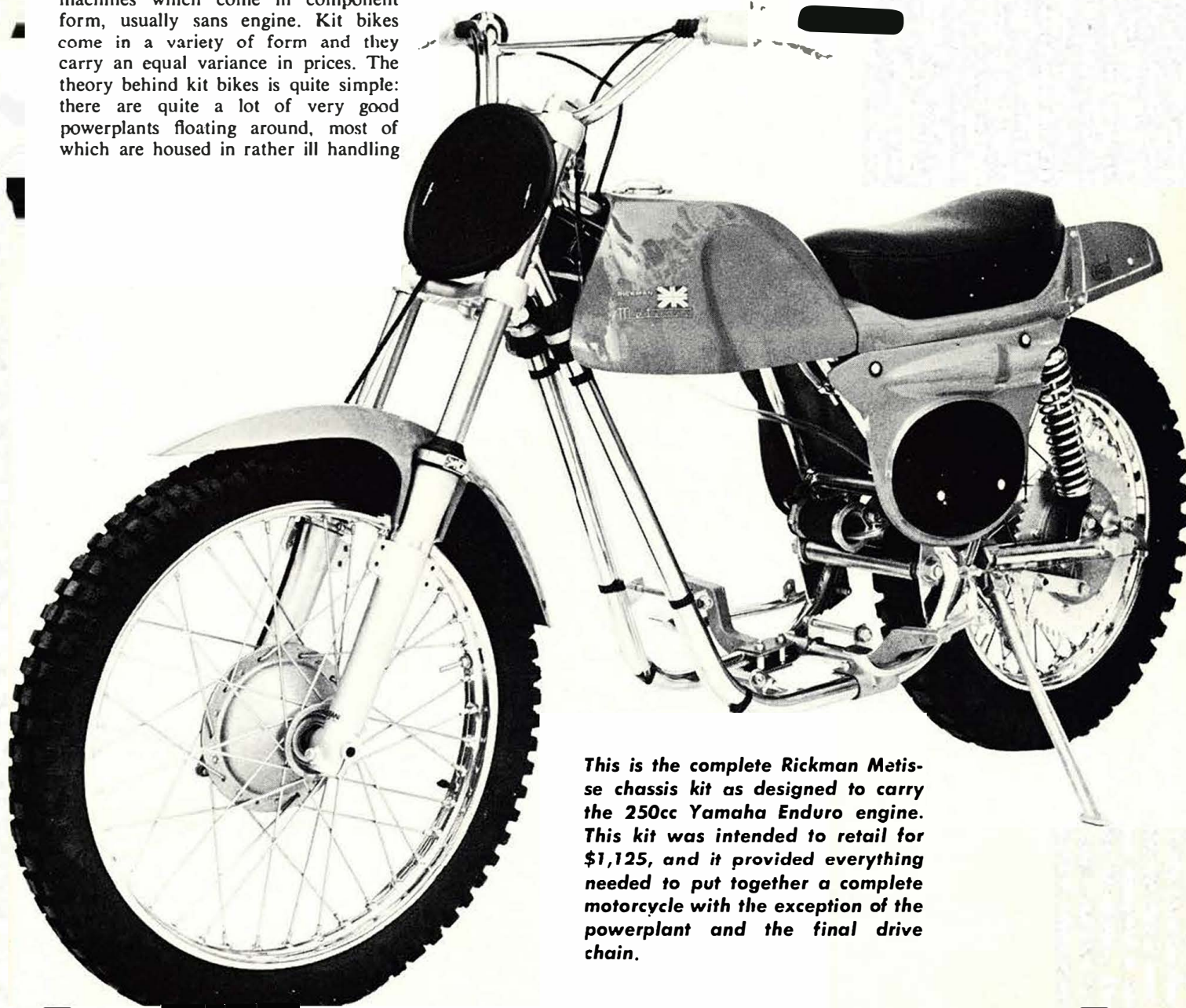
YAMAHA-METISSE:

For want of a better name we call them "kit" bikes. Frankly, we are not sure if this is the best way to describe the product, but it is a constant term, at least in our usage. When we refer to kit bikes, we do not mean the sort of things made out of plastic that are purchased in model shops; we mean machines which come in component form, usually sans engine. Kit bikes come in a variety of form and they carry an equal variance in prices. The theory behind kit bikes is quite simple: there are quite a lot of very good powerplants floating around, most of which are housed in rather ill handling

chassis. The kit bike constructors do what the original manufacturers fail to do—they create machines that handle, where the original manufacturer created machines intended to sell to the mass market.

The kit bikes, on the other hand, are

aimed directly at the man who wants superior handling. Really good handling is the sort of characteristic that is usually essential to a man interested in one form of competition or another. Dirt track racing, moto cross, and road racing are usually the places where excel-



This is the complete Rickman Metisse chassis kit as designed to carry the 250cc Yamaha Enduro engine. This kit was intended to retail for \$1,125, and it provided everything needed to put together a complete motorcycle with the exception of the powerplant and the final drive chain.

The Rickman Chassis Makes One Of The Best Handling Motorbikes In The World; In An Effort To Find Out Why, MODERN CYCLE Builds A Very Rare Machine.



Externally, the braking system on the Rickman Chassis Kit appears to be a bit on the skimpy side. An examination of the internal components, along with a ride on the machine, indicates that the stopping system is more than just adequate. Sealed bearings used in the Rickman wheels do much to reduce down time and maintenance.

RICKMAN-YAMAHA PROJECT

lent handling is essential. To the best of our knowledge, no kit bike constructors manufacture components designed for the street rider; competition is the realm in which kit bikes shine, and the men who build these components are emanantly aware of that fact.

An indication of the specialization of the kit builders can be obtained by examining the products made by specialists in this country. Sonicweld and Trackmaster build beautiful frame kits designed primarily for use in professional mile and half-mile competition. (Trackmaster has diversified recently, and they now produce a frame kit called the Desertmaster, intended for use in the wide open spaces.) Other producers of dirt racing chassis' in this country are Yetman in New England, Doug Schwerma in San Francisco, and Van Tech in Los Angeles. Two of the most well known frame or chassis kits come from England. Eric Cheney produces gemlike creations from a virtual one man installation in the South of England, and the Rickman Brothers, Don and Derek, produce equally pleasant creations on a slightly larger scale. The Rickman Brothers are probably the world's foremost producers of kit bikes, they have been at the task for a long time and the products which bear their names have stood the test of time. Most kit bike builders seem to have gotten

into the business by being dissatisfied with the products currently available. This is certainly true in the case of Don and Derek Rickman.

The Rickman Brothers began scrambles racing in England back in the Dark Ages (not all that long ago) when everyone seemed to be trashing about on big single-cylinder four-strokes. In classic hot rod fashion the brothers quickly became dissatisfied with the weight and handling characteristics of most of the machinery then considered competitive. Eventually they built frames for their own machines and in short order they found that their competitor was interested in buying similar equipment. In equally short order Don and Derek found themselves in the business of producing equipment designed for the purist who wanted the very best and was willing to pay for it. The products that came from their New Milton plant bore the name Rickman Metisse. (Metisse is a French word which we will let you look up yourself if you are interested in the translation.)

The original Rickman Metisse components were frame and swinging arm

assemblies which were delivered with fiberglass fuel tanks, seat base, rear fender, and side number panels. The purchaser was expected to provide his own engine, suspension, wheels, control cables, and the various other bits and pieces that go to make up a complete motorcycle. The Rickman Brothers were in the business of providing handling and reduction in weight. As time passed, the Rickman plant got into the production of more and more of the basic components which go to make a motorcycle. Eventually the Metisse line was broadened to include a complete chassis kit which was a complete motorcycle less engine. Even the hated two-strokes saw the touch of the Rickman hand. A contract between the Rickman Brothers and the Bultaco factory in Spain accounted for the production of one of

Since its introduction in early 1968, the Yamaha DT-1 powerplant has proven to be one of the most popular and reliable engines in off-road competition. Bore is 70mm, stroke is 60mm, giving a total displacement of 246cc. For our project we obtained the stock Enduro engine along with the factory GYT Kit. In order to obtain tractability, only certain items from the GYT Kit were utilized.



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Oil for the Yamaha Autolube Injection System is carried in the frame members. The small plastic tube at the left allows the owner to visually check the capacity of the "oil tank."

the prettiest competition 250 machines ever to grace the scene—the Bultaco Pursang.

In the past couple of years it became apparent that the Rickman Brothers were toying with the idea of producing a complete motorcycle. Negotiations and attempts to purchase engines from outside suppliers always seems to be the hang-up with this scheme. In the meantime, the factory kept experimenting and producing chassis' to accommodate a wide variety of powerplants. Last year two Rickman produced machines, called Micro-Metisses, went on sale. One, a 100cc machine, was powered by a Honda engine, while the other, a 125, utilized a Zundapp powerplant. Just prior to last Christmas it was announced that a complete 250cc Rickman machine would soon be available.

The new Rickman machine(no longer is the name Metisse used) is a light weight moto cross machine powered by a 250cc Montesa engine. The Rickman Brothers have contracted with the Spanish factory to provide powerplants and at last they are capable of producing their own motorbike.

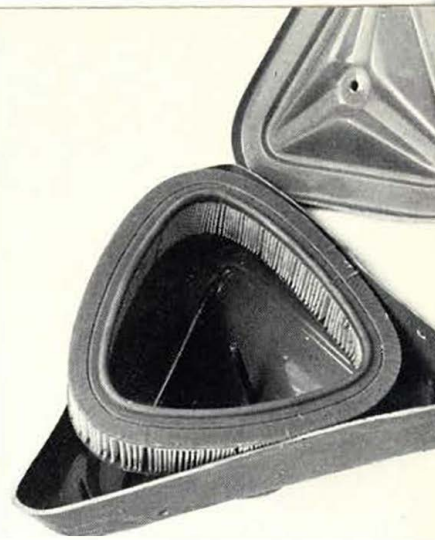
We have already indicated that over the years the Rickman plant has produced a wide variety of equipment designed to accommodate an equally varied number of powerplants. One of the most interesting, when we first heard of it, was a chassis kit designed to be wrapped around the popular 250cc Yamaha Enduro engine. Initial press releases indicated that the Rickman-Yamaha would be produced

in quantities; however, upon checking with the American distributor of Rickman products, Steen's, Inc., of Alhambra, California, we were told that only a few had been imported into this country. We were also given to understand that the Rickman firm had already discontinued production of the chassis kit designed specifically for the Yamaha powerplant. Steen's did, however, hold out a glimmer of hope; they told us they would check with the factory and see if any were still on hand, and if possible, they would try to obtain for us one of the very last of the Yamaha units. Luck was on our side. We obtained one of the very last complete chassis kits designed for the Yamaha mill.

Obtaining the 250 Enduro engine from Yamaha proved to be no great problem, and we were now faced with a decision: what kind of bike were we going to build? Logically, you might

(Text continued on page 78)

Looking like they were made for one another, the Yamaha powerplant and the Rickman frame kit await the beginning of construction. Suspension provided with the Rick-



Clean air is drawn through a paper element carried in this fiberglass housing. The housing is mounted high on the right side of the machine, and sealing is quite effective. The smooth contours within the element housing do nothing to restrict the flow of air.

man chassis is by well proven Ceriani components. The nickel plated frame is attractive and obviously needs no maintenance from the paint department.



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assume tht we would go for an all-out moto cross racer; the thought crossed our mind. Another thought also crossed our minds, "Rather than build another out-and-out racing machine, why not try to build the ultimate dual purpose bike?" The more we thought about it, the better we liked the idea, and finally the decision was made to go the dual purpose route. We first planned to turn the machine into a proper Enduro bike and eventually we will bring the machine close to street legal.

Because of adverse public reaction to noise, we felt that some form of muffling would be required. Construction of the expansion chamber to fit the machine was turned over to Torque Engineering, and J & R Engineering provided us with a neat little silencer/spark arrester to be welded in place of the more common stinger. Harlan Bast of Bast Welding fabricated an aluminum skid plate to protect the underside of the Yamaha engine. Aside from the skid plate and the muffling system, just about everything else on the machine is either stock Rickman or stock Yamaha.

This first portion of our two-part series on the Rickman-Yamaha Metisse is devoted to the history of the Rickman product and an evaluation of the component parts of the machine. The accompanying photographs are almost self-explanatory. Join us next month when we put the bike together and conduct a road test of sorts.

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