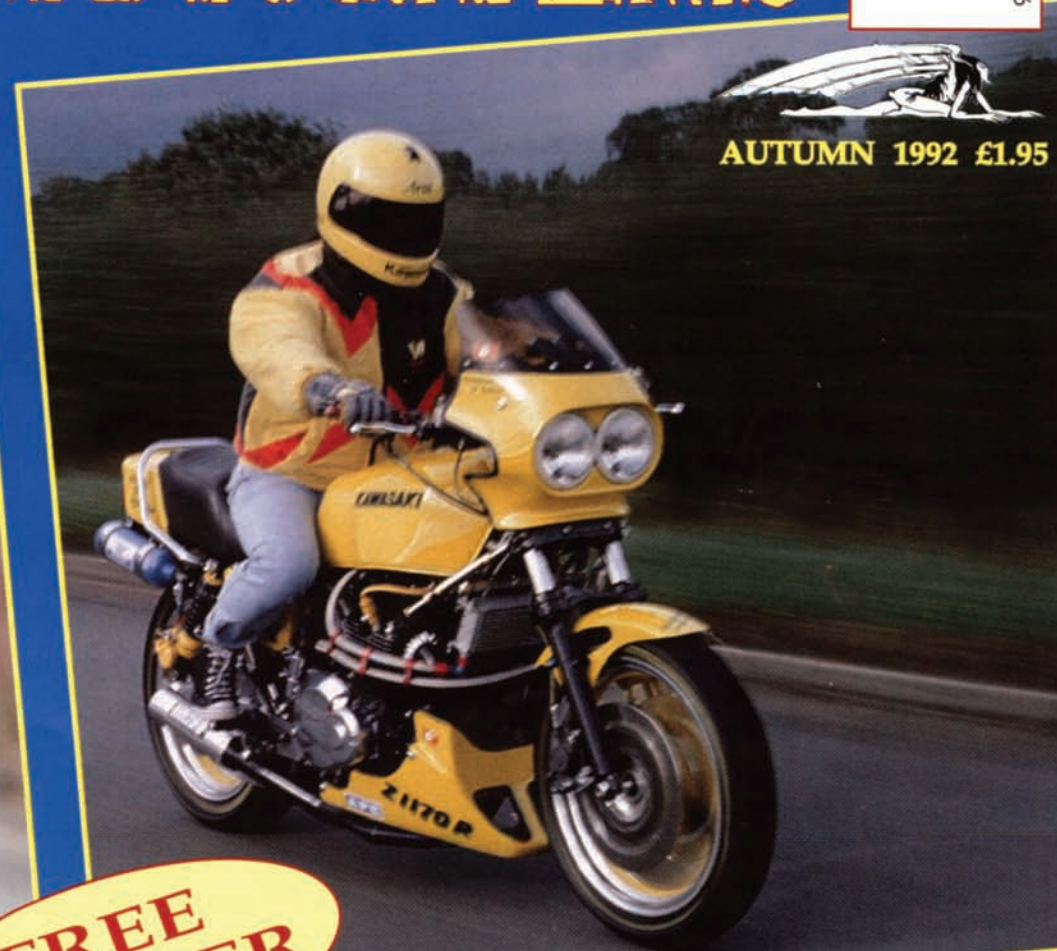


STREET FIGHTERS



AUTUMN 1992 £1.95

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STICKER

RETURN OF THE ROAD WARRIORS



IT'S BIKES LIKE THIS THAT'LL SPOIL MOTORCYCLING FOR EVERYONE!

HAMILTON HARRIS



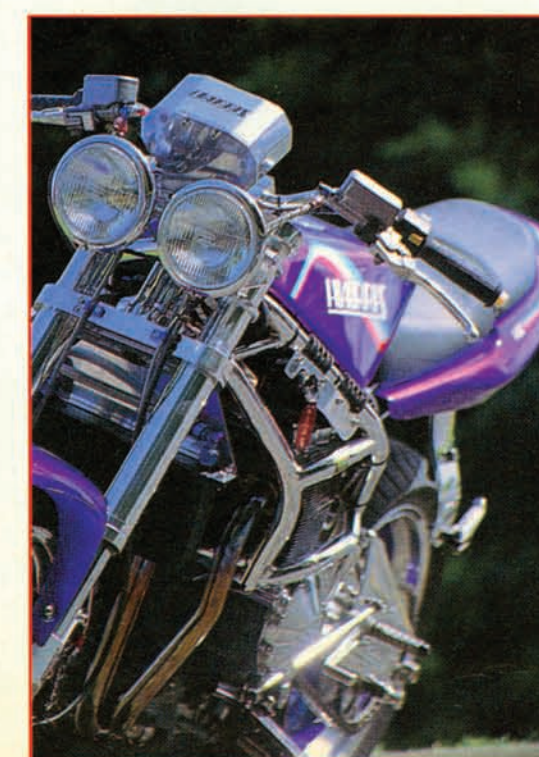


Robbie Kerr's GSXR1100-motored Harris Magnum Four is from the Scottish lowlands; built because his V-Max wasn't up to the job. Wielding both camera and pocket tape player, Steve Berry chased him up the A74 to report for Streetfighters

‘When I was first telling myself I needed to build this bike one the most persuasive arguments in it's favour was that it would be like a rolling advertisement for the paintshop I was – naively – trying to make a living out of back then. But that was really just one of those lies you tell yourself before you spend a lot of money you don't have on something completely unnecessary. The truth is that I built it because my V-Max wouldn't do good enough wheelies.’

It's raining. Again. It was raining the first time I saw Robbie Kerr's outstanding Suzuki-powered Harris Magnum 4 at Barbon Hill climb and left a sodden piece of paper with a phone number on it under the seat strap. It was raining yesterday, when I called as arranged to do some photos before going on to Edinburgh to see a film – in which I have a small part – about a boy





who wears a rubber swimsuit, high heels and the kind of rubber gloves Marigold don't make and rides a Kawasaki. But not at the same time. So here I am, stood in Robbie's front room staring out the window like it's going to make a difference while he puts the kettle on. Again.

I'm not desperate, not yet, but I do think it's time to ask Robbie if he has any bad photographs of bikes taken with a crap camera. And of course he does. 'That's my Commando, isn't she beautiful ... I'm telling you, I loved that bike and in return it gave me nothing but trouble. When I sold it I made a solemn promise – no more British bikes.' Edited highlights of the next half hour would include two Z13s, an FZR100 Genesis and the V-Max, 'The first time I ever saw one of those bikes was at the Scottish bike show and I knew I needed to own one. And I did. Mitsui told me mine was only the second one they'd sold in Scotland. When you buy a bike like that and you know the doorbell not going to stop ringing for a fortnight your friends all want to ride it, people who – mistakenly – think they're your friends want to ride it and a boy you once sat next to in Biology 'O' level in 1979 wants to ride it. After a time there were five of us here in Hamilton riding V-Maxes. That's mine there on the end with the Kerker four-into-one...' he says, handing me an adequate photograph of five very handsome

motorcycles 'I still haven't ridden anything that transmitted the same sensation of pure power like that bike did. It was evil and brutish and I loved it. And if the factory had made it with a chain I'd still have it.'

But they didn't and he doesn't. Robbie thought about exactly what he wanted and went shopping, 'This bike had to be extremely fast, but the midrange was equally important...' The word 'vast' kept getting used in that context ... it had to corner like an RGV250 and wheelie like a CR500.' He came back with a low-mileage GSX-R1100L for one very good reason. You're probably well aware of it but it bears repeating anyway: 143bhp at 9,500 rpm. Again? Alright, 143bhp at 9,500rpm. Makes the hairs on your tongue stand on end, doesn't it?

Now, this is where it all starts to get tricky. He took the bike to bits. Some of those bits he kept and some he sold. Can you guess which bits he kept? 'forks, wheels, engine and brakes' Correct. But then you didn't need to be a journalist to work that one out. By now the skeletal Magnum 4 Frame, fuel tank, exhaust, Henry Moore-style swing arm and reassuring expensive Ohlins shock had arrived from Harris in Hartford at Specials in Glasgow. Robbie had something good to say about both businesses 'They know what they're talking about and they make things happen when they say they're going to happen.' Which you

couldn't say about Michel de Nostradamus the 16th century alchemist, philosopher and mystic — but then he didn't really have much to do with bikes. Apart from predicting Steve Hislop's historic TT victory, of course.

The scene now shifts to a small, but technologically sophisticated, fabrications firm in Strathclyde where a guy called Colin Black fed the specific information in a Computer and it spat the stuff out in stainless somewhere down the line. And you thought computers were boring. And they are. While we're in the advertising business we might as well buy a Harley-Davidson Softail... sorry, mention Claymore Motorcycles in Bellshill. Although I'm not sure why, it's just that their name's here in my notes, probably something to do with motorbikes.

It's all going a bit well isn't it? Can't be right. You want to hear about suffering, pain, broken fingernails. Well, he did have some trouble locating the seat unit 'I knew what I wanted and I knew that it would look totally right the only problem was that it came off a bike that's never been sold new outside of Japan, the Bandit 400 Suzuki' Which if you've never seen one is part of the all-new naked bike phenomena in the land of all everthing compact and involuted and is pretty. In fact if they made it a 750 I'd buy one.... alright I wouldn't, that's just one of

those things that say journalists say because...well, you know how it is. Anyway, he tried everywhere for the seat unit second hand but in the end he had to pay top price for a new one.

Bearing in mind the appalling hammering they were in for the forks benefitted from a Maxton a conversion that gives a deeper, more resistant stroke and stops them going pop after a couple of weeks of exuberance. NWS yokes do the same job for the forks that a piece of string does for my three-year-olds' woolly gloves

When he was sure that it all went together. Robbie painted the whole thing all-over in matt black. Except that he didn't because that's what we call 'a joke'. He actually painted it lovely customised colours in a eye-catching combination because he could.

But does it do proper wheelies?

'It does magnificent, towering, grandstanding wheelies right up to 120 mph in third gear — but it's more controllable with my girlfriend Islay on the back.' Er, doesn't she mind? 'Not at all. She loves it. You see she rides a Harley and needs a bit of excitement in her life.'

There, I got to the end and never once mentioned the football team.

■ **You can see Robbie Kerr's Magnum Four Harris and three of the other finest Streetfighters on stand number E18 at the NEC Show, Dec. 1-6.**

