

'I used to rev the gas, dump the clutch and constantly flip it. I was only eight'



CARMICHAEL'S BIKES



STUNTER

Honda XR75

'The first bike I wheelied at eight years old. I flipped it every night'



SPEEDSTER

Yamaha TZR250

'I was mental on it. I just rode around looking for people to race!'



PARTNER

Customised Scrambler

'I've happily been with Triumph for 12 years now'

MY LIFE IN BIKES

Kevin Carmichael

On how he went from looping bikes in his back garden to becoming Triumph's official stunt rider

AGE 47 DAY JOB PROFESSIONAL STUNT RIDER **RIDING FOR** 40 YEARS **NATIONALITY** BRITISH



When did you first start riding bikes?

I got on the back of my uncle's bike when I was three, but I started riding my Italjet 50cc mini bike at seven years old. I tried to wheelie and jump it as soon as I got it.

Do you remember your first wheelie?

Yeah, it was on a Honda XR75 in my dad's garden. I used to rev the gas and dump the clutch with no back brake and I'd constantly flip it. I was only eight years old and I was flipping that bike once a night at least. It took about a year or two to get it right. Years later I saw an MX friend using the rear brake and then it clicked: rear brake brings it forward which stops the flip, great idea! I taught myself everything else, and I mastered it by the time I was 13.

What about your first jump?

I set up a big ramp and started showing people these jumps. One day a guy

who works for the local paper walks past and saw me, so he wrote a story on it. Another guy who ran the local motocross club must have read it because he rang my dad and asked him to bring me along. That's how I got into MX. I loved it, I was schoolboy champion, club champion and Scottish champion... but I also broke a lot of bones.

What happened after motocross?

I left motocross when I was 22 and moved onto road bikes. To be perfectly honest, I was going to kill myself. I had a Yamaha TZR250 and I was absolutely mental on it. As well as all the stunts that I'd started practising, I used to ride around my home town looking for people to race. I wanted to go fast and race, and I became obsessed with speed and the Isle of Man TT. It started to get silly and I lost a lot of friends.



'I won £5000 for 10 minutes' work. That was the start of my career'

What was the turning point?

I saw an advert in MCN for the European Stunt Championships and I happened to know the guy who was organising it from my MX days. I called him up and asked what I had to do to enter. He watched me ride and gave me the go ahead. So I bought a brand new Suzuki Bandit 1200 (which put me into £5000 of debt). I got it out of the showroom and started wheelieing immediately. I practised for two months, entered and won the European championship, my first ever competition. I won £5000 for just 10 minutes' work, which meant I could pay off the Bandit. That was the start of my pro career.

What happened next?

I ended up being sponsored by Suzuki and went to Japan to ride. I won the

world championship in 2002 and the European title twice, and then moved to Triumph. We both laid our cards on the table and they've stuck true to everything they said, so I've happily been with working with them for the last 12 years.

What's your most dangerous stunt?

I was the first rider to take the front wheel and fork out of a big street bike and ride around for a stunt. We carried two axle stands and set them up either side of the engine. My friends would take them away simultaneously and I was off. I won the European championship with that trick. I don't do that one often as it's quite a dangerous stunt. I have come down twice and it instantly chucks you over the bars.

What's in your garage?

A 675 Daytona, three Street Triple Rs, a limited-edition Kevin Carmichael Street Triple, a Rocket III that's about to be supercharged, a customised Triumph Scrambler, a Thruxton, a Speed Triple... oh and a Honda C90.

■ Next week Jenny Tinmouth on the bikes that got her to BSB