MCN

FREE SPIRITS TRIUMPH SCRAMBLER

'I'm terrified of dropping it!'

Italian custom house Free Spirits created this amazing Scrambler for Triumph's stunt ace *Kevin Carmichael*. MCN was there for his first ride

By Jon Urry

He's just taken charge of what must surely be the world's coolest stunt bike and it's fair to say Kevin Carmichael is peaking. "I've literally just picked this up from the Triumph factory," he beams. "The guys in R&D were all over it, they loved it."

Kev isn't your average café custom rider. He doesn't sport a trendy beard, sleeve of tattoos or obligatory chain hanging from his pocket and he certainly doesn't use his bikes for posing around London. As Triumph's official stunt rider, he is generally found engulfed in tyre smoke or pulling vertical wheelies. However, for 2014 he has something very different to ride – the Stunt Scrambler.

"Usually I ride triples – Speed, Street and Rocket III – but this is totally new. Free Spirits are based in Italy and they specialise in modifying Triumphs and Harleys. Marcello Fontana, who runs the company, caught me at the Tri-Days festival and said he'd love to build me a custom stunt bike. I ran the idea past Triumph and this is the result."

Kev delivered the brand new Bonneville Scrambler to Marcello's base in Vicenza with the brief of using as many Triumph parts as possible. As well as creating a bespoke exhaust, Marcello kitted the Scrambler out with a flat track style seat unit, inverted forks, stunt brakes, a custom airbox and countless other neat touches built in-house by Free Spirits. The results are not only stunning to see, but also now available to buy through Free Spirits website (www.freespirits.it).

Who's Kevin Carmichael?

Stunt riding since, 1997, Carmichael has won the European stunt title three times and the world title once. He has performed all over the world and has been an embassador for Triumph for the last 11 years.

The Scrambler isn't just about show, however, and having waited nearly two months for his first glance at the bike, MCN caught up with Kev at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground as he put it through its paces.

"The brakes are incredible; it's the first Bonneville I've ridden that I can actually do 180-degree stoppies on!" he enthused. "Usually a Bonnie is so long, heavy and low it pushes the front rather than digs in and stoppies, but this is totally different, The Bitubo shocks make it really secure on the back wheel and it sounds wonderful through those underseat pipes. It's so good looking I'm terrified of dropping it."

Kev will take the Stunt Scrambler to all his shows this year and it will star at this weekend's Triumph Live (see Event details on page 56) where it is certain to get a warm reception. It is also thought this bike hints at a future direction for the Bonneville range.

"I'm seeing more and more café racers, the scene is getting big. Triumph aren't stupid, they know what's coming and this is a rolling showcase of what can be done. Triumph's designers were certainly impressed by it."

continues over - drool over the detail

SEE THE VIDEO

See and hear Kevin stunting the Free Spirits Scrambler now, at: www.motorcyclenews.com

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Kev normally stunts on triples, so the twin is a departure

SEE IT IN ACTION AT TRIUMPH LIVE Page 56

Pipe dreams
Over a week's work of bending stainless steel pipes went into creating this twin-exit underseat exhaust system. The exhaust tape is to stop Kev burning his leg on the pipe, not just to look cool.

Sitting pretty
The Free Spirits flat track single seat unit sits on the original subframe and houses all the Scrambler's electrics, which have had to be modified to suit. The stunt kickplate is also built by Free Spirits and can be removed for road use. The number '31' is Kevin's old motocross racing number while the paint scheme is based on Free Spirits' colours.

The odd couple
The Scrambler's odd-sized 19in front and 17in rear wheels are replaced by a set of 17in Kineo spoked wheels that can run sportsbike size 120/70 and 190/55 tyres.

Stop slacking
With a massive 62-tooth rear sprocket, Free Spirits had to build a separate chain tensioner to stop the chain slapping on the ground. The front sprocket is a standard Triumph unit that has been modified so that it lines up with the wider rear wheel's sprocket alignment.

Breathe easy
Free Spirits have removed the Scrambler's airbox and fitted twin air filters instead, allowing the engine to breathe more freely. Combined with the race exhaust system, the Scrambler's 59bhp should be increased by a few ponies.

Keep it simple
The Scrambler usually has a rev counter as well as a speedo. However, Free Spirits have junked the rev counter and created their own speedo-holder that contains all the required warning lights.

Well adjusted
The forks are taken from a Triumph Speed Triple 1050 and sit in custom yokes. The Scrambler's twin shocks are replaced by fully-adjustable Bitubo units.

And it's road legal!
A single bolt mounts a bracket with a licence plate, making the bike road legal. Kev is planning to ride it around his home in Scotland, although the huge rear sprocket means it will be screaming its head off at just 70mph.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO RIDE?
(FOR NORMAL PEOPLE)

A Scrambler might only make 59bhp, but with a rear sprocket the size of a dinner plate I was worried this Triumph would flip me faster than a pancake. As it turned out, it wasn't that vicious. The riding position is very upright and pushed forward and the twin pipes cook your inner leg, while the filters force your knees outwards, which is a bit odd but not overly uncomfortable – aside from the heat. On the go the Scrambler sounds amazing but isn't a complete wheelie beast. A

'It takes real skill to do what Kev does'

quick flick of the clutch in first is required to get it to rise, but once up it takes real skill to do what Kev does. I can wheelie a normal bike, but the stunt bike was so alien I struggled to achieve much more than a small wheelie. I think I'll stick to cruising around on the Scrambler and enjoying the admiring glances instead of a career in trick riding.

Unsurprisingly, this is Urry, not Kev...

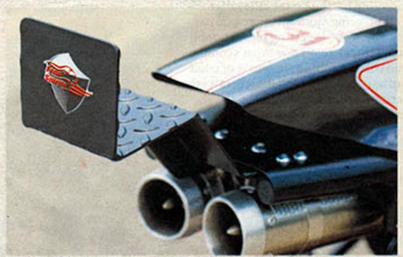

Plate protects the tail of the bike during Kev's more lairy wheelies

Whopping 62-tooth rear sprocket for huge front-wheel lifting drive

Fully-adjustable Bitubo shocks transform the bike's handling

You don't want your feet slipping off the pegs during stunts

Thought crash protection was geeky? Nobody's told Free Spirits

Numbers relate to adjustable bar angles. Note: it still has indicators!