

# Old VFR750 gets HRC therapy



**PAINTJOB**

Inspired by Fred Merkel's days in American superbikes

**INSTRUMENTS**

Acewell digital display

**ENGINE**

RC24 V4 with zero miles bought for £450 online. 180° crank, 95bhp

**FORKS**

Lengthened GSX-750 K5 items with CBR600RR yokes and original stem

**EXHAUST**

'80s-style Kerker can, unknown modified headers

**Mechanic Rob Wittey with his 1988 VFR750F**

► Early VFR transformed from classifieds bargain to exotic special ► Total budget just £5000

By Luke Brackenbury

The best specials are often the ones that look like factory-built machines and haven't spent life as garage ornaments. This 1988 Honda VFR750F is one of them.

It's hard to believe that two years ago it was a classified advert bargain with 72,000 hard miles under its Honda V4 engine.

This is the second 'special' VFR750F that Rob Wittey, 34, a mechanic at top UK tuner, PDQ, and a former painter of Williams F1 cars, has built. The first was for himself but this latest creation is for a friend in Italy.

Though they don't look it, the standard fork legs on the VFR are long by today's sporty standards, sitting closer to something like Ducati's Multistrada. "Changing the front end was a

nightmare," says Wittey. "The length of the leg causes a few problems for straight swaps, so in the end I simply lengthened a set from a GSX-R750 K5." Simple, eh?

The time and effort needed to make the 'parts bin' front end look right was worth it. Held in place with CBR600RR yokes and the original stem, the GSX-R750 K5 forks mount a CBR600F front wheel with late Fireblade calipers and early FireBlade discs.

In order not to foul the bodywork, bar risers from an unknown classic Italian bike with the essential 70mm rise needed have been machined to mate with alloy clip-on bars. A Racetech G2R Gold kit handles the bumps while an immensely powerful Brembo radial master cylinder and braided lines completes the braking.

The 72,000-mile original engine

**This engine is hard to tune without spending big money – £2000 for 10bhp wasn't an option**

ROB WITTEY

was ditched when a zero-miles powerplant was sourced online for a measly £450, complete with carbs and original factory coolant.

The Honda motor harks back to an era when the running-in procedure lasted quite some time. Wittey says the engine finally started to loosen up

after 1000 miles, then it was treated to a bit of tuning. Flowed heads (from a 50k-mile engine!), a set of cams with a higher lift and bespoke valve guides made from bronze were fitted. Standard carbs squirt fuel through needles from a Dynojet kit and suck air through K&N filters.

"We've now got 95bhp but the torque curve mirrors that of a stock machine," said Wittey. "This engine is hard to tune without spending big money – £2000 for 10bhp wasn't an option. I've tried tracking down race teams and tuners who worked on these engines originally and either they've forgotten what they did to them or it was farmed out to someone else."

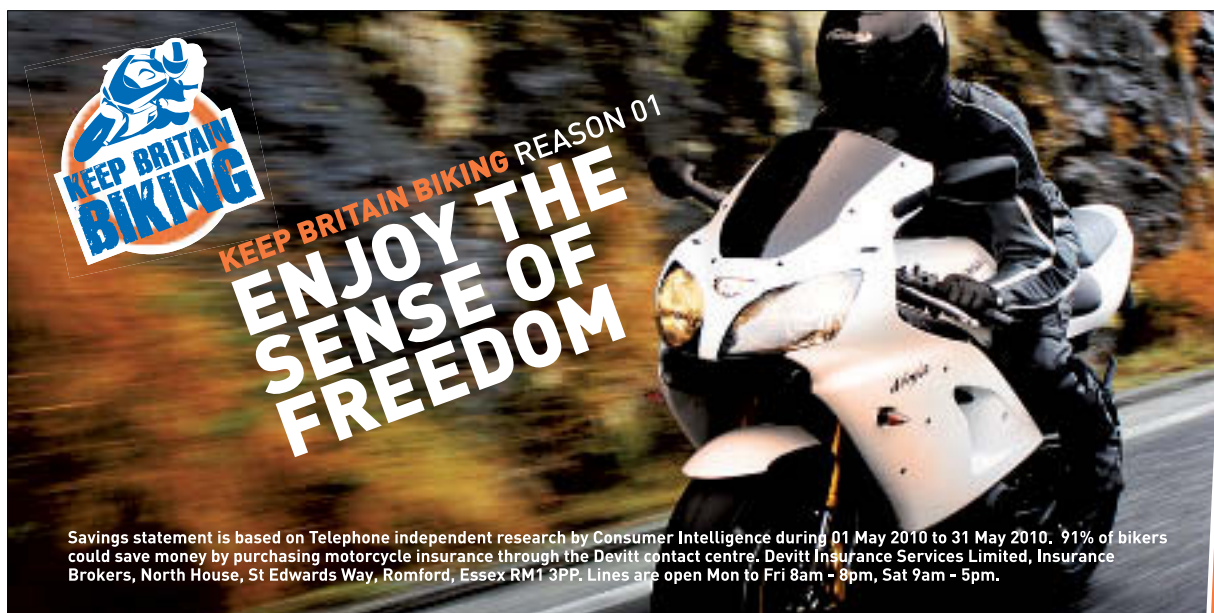
Exotic HRC parts are rarer than rare, but Wittey managed to get hold of some special carbs for an RC30 which, typical of the whole build, would only work

with RC30 heads. But when almost 100bhp sounds so good, do race parts really matter? Blipping the throttle outside PDQ, that question is answered when the hypnotic sound of the 180° crank V4 stops people in their tracks.

Protruding high level from the left-hand side of the trimmed and tidied subframe is a period Kerker can, mated to an unknown set of headers via Wittey's handiwork with a pipe bender and welder.

"In total it probably cost between £4500-£5000, including the original bike," said Wittey. "The result, I think, is an almost new bike that looks and feels like the original when pushing it around, but as soon as you're rolling it performs like any modern tackle."

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