

NORRIM

JONATHAN HULL © UK



WAMAN

WORDS

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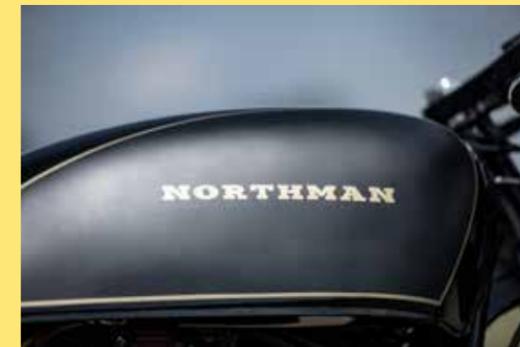
AFTER
FILLING HIS
CV FULL OF
CGs, IT WAS
TIME FOR
JONATHAN
HULL TO
TURN HIS
ATTENTION
TO A CB



TOP
That's the chuckle of a man who's finally found his calling. Jonathan was a music teacher before

ABOVE
The classy lines of the rear end are in part down to the hand-made seat unit...

RIGHT
...which took Jonathan 140 hours to fabricate. Look closely and you can see why



There comes a point in all our lives when we must jump in at the deep end. Where you think 'oh sod it' and commit. If you're a rational thinker it could be after a five weeks or months, but if you're impulsive it could be after five hours or minutes. For Jonathan Hull, a self-confessed "over researcher", it's been five years. That's five years from when he built his first custom bike until it was time to say sod it to teaching secondary school music and move into the garage full time. The Northman is the first fruits of his pro endeavour and by the looks of it, he's hit a hole in one.

"I'll be honest, I'm sort of here by accident," admits Jonathan. "A few years ago, I made a custom Honda CG125 and I accidentally made it quite pretty. When I'd finished it, I popped a few photos on Instagram and suddenly all the big influencer pages reposted it and the rest is history."

When he started Jonathan didn't even have a licence. Having grown up working on cars with his dad, he already had some oil in the blood. Even so, he still had to find help when moving his skills over to two wheels and found the custom motorcycle community incredibly generous. "Instagram has been an amazing tool to connect with the custom motorcycle community and everyone has been so helpful," he says. "When I started I didn't have any training, so all my fabrication skills are entirely self-taught. If I had a question, I'd just message someone and they were always so happy to share that knowledge. I've made a lot of good friends this way."

"I like to pass it forward now. Because I'm known for the CGs, I get lots of messages from young guys and gals who are building their first bike, so it feels great to be able to help them out."

After five years of perfecting his work on CGs and becoming known for his 72-spoke rims – "I wish I'd known how much work they are before I started..." – it was time to move on to bigger things.

"I had this idea of what I wanted to do for years but I was finally ready to do it after selling some of the CGs. The Northman started life as a mid-70s CB550 because I just fell in love with the engine block. There's something amazing about the motor and the no-nonsense engineering that went into it."

"It was also nice to be able to do a build without constantly worrying about the budget. I'd sold a few bikes and decided I wanted to invest all of that into this – so premium components from the off."

In typical fashion, the build was only part way through when he made his first entry into the pro-category of the *Bike Shed Show*.

"I was nervous they wouldn't let me in because entry can be quite selective. I hadn't finished the build, so I had to send them what I'd done and what my inspiration was. Amazingly they let me in. When I asked them about it at the show, they admitted they'd mostly let me in just to see if I could do it!"

Jonathan's initial idea was simple: if it wasn't making the bike go faster or stop quicker then it wasn't featuring on the bike. That idea started to evolve a little as it went along, including needing to

make space for dull but important road legal bits, but that basic thread runs through the whole machine.

Scan your eyes across the bike and, as an outsider, it's hard to pick a favourite piece. For Jonathan though, it's easy. "The seat cowl. It must be the seat cowl. I could have had that made or just bought a stock part but I really wanted it to match the lines of the tank, so I handmade the whole thing from steel. Now it all sits together really nicely."

"I used to just sit there with a cup of tea, staring it at. Then I'd move this or tweak that. All together it was 28 different pieces that were cut, shaped, welded, filed and polished. There are over 140 hours in the seat unit alone."

The first bit of bad news, for us at least, comes now: the Northman is already



sold. In fact, it was sold while it was still in bits.

“A chap had been popping round who was interested in having me build a CB and he kept asking ‘oh could you put that on my build?’” says Jonathan. “Before long he’d specced components that were miles out of his budget, so I had to break it to him. A few days passed, he came back in and had decided to hell with the budget; he would just buy this one. I delivered it in August and he was absolutely made up, although by then he’d already seen it at a few shows. I took it out for a few shake down rides and it was brilliant – so snappy on the throttle.”

It was a bittersweet moment for Jonathan and he reluctantly admits he keeps opening the garage door, seeing the empty space it used to occupy, and having a pang of sadness. But that’s the nature of a custom bike business, plus it means there’s space for something new.

“I’d like to tackle something chunky next. I’m tempted by an R100 but they’re everywhere, so I’m leaning towards something big like a GoldWing. Just strip everything off it and see what’s left underneath. Or maybe a Sportster to piss off the local Harley lovers...”

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