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SALON MOTO LEGENDE

Suzuki was the celebrated marque at this year's Salon Moto Legende, but the show-stopper was a bike that earned Colin Seeley's seal of approval

WORDS: GARY PINCHIN. PHOTOGRAPHY: DANIEL BERES.





The big attraction for British bike enthusiasts at the 18th edition of the Salon Moto Legende in Paris was not in the foyer of the main hall, but in an aisle tucked away amongst the myriad of small French classic bike retailers.

There, on the Atelier Chatokhine stand, was the most gorgeous-looking, brand new Seeley Condor G50. The Chatokhine family business, based in Oerray, near Chartres, specialises in British bikes and this replica was built from parts for a customer, Martin Jouet. It was so beautifully executed that original Seeley constructor Colin Seeley gave it his seal approval and attended the show to unveil the bike in person.

Colin said: "We built seven Condors, all sold in this orange colour. I know the original bike is with an owner in New Hampshire but have no idea of the rest.

"Two years ago, Frank Chatokhine approached me to say he was part-way through a Seeley Condor project and he'd like me to come to the launch. He sent me pictures of the build progress and then the final images. They've created this bike from scratch and it's so perfectly done. Every detail is right – and even now, the Condor still looks the part, doesn't it?"

This particular Condor is four years in the making and a dream come true for builder Frank. He said: "When I was a child I saw a picture of this bike and said: 'what is this Condor?' It looked so different, but I never saw one in the flesh. I always had a dream to build something like this."

Martin owns an original G50 and had Chatokhine build him a replica. But then four years later he wanted a G50 road bike to give to his daughter, and initially discussed a racer with lights, until Frank remembered the Condor.

"We started four years ago, building a bike from original pictures of the Condor. We used a Titchmarsh frame and a G50 engine from Mick Taberer. Two years ago, I met with Colin and said if we build it nicely, would he give his approval? It's an honour to have him come here for the launch."

Frank used old photos to measure the dimensions of the bike, but was able to glean special information from Colin about the oil ►►



tank design – there appeared to be two different styles in the pictures – and the seat shape and construction.

“Everything was taking shape, but the one thing we weren’t sure about was the height of the bike. Luckily, we found an original centrestand from one of the Condors. It was bent and battered, but when we straightened it we discovered we had the perfect height.”

Forks are Seeley with Norton Roadholder internals. The rear hub is Seeley, machined by Frank to take a speedo drive. Front hub is Seeley magnesium.

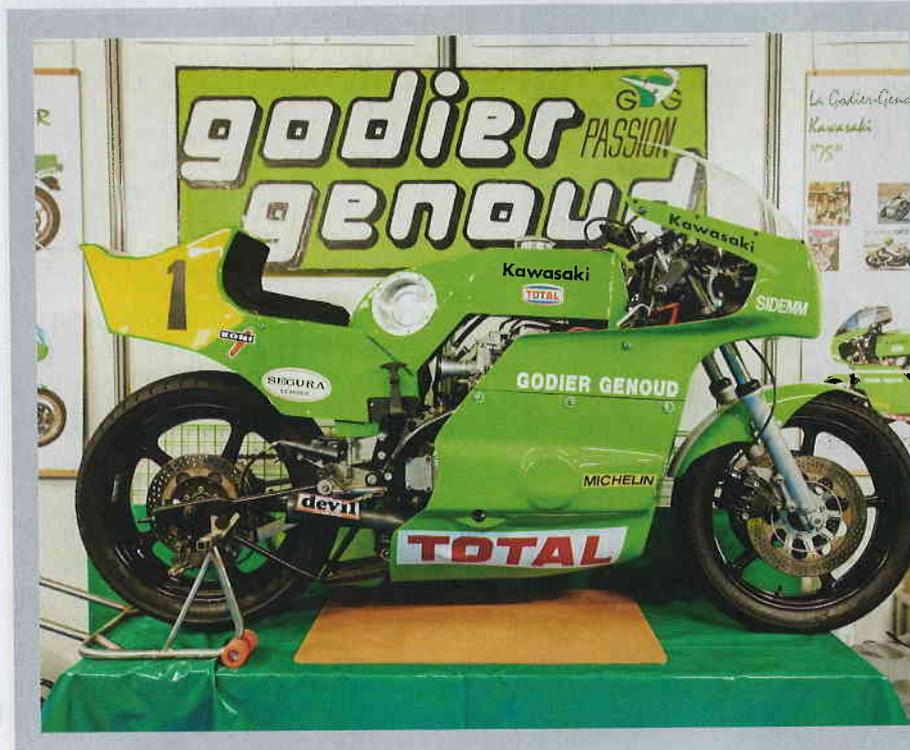
The Taberer-built G50 has lower compression for road use, and Frank added a decompressor for easy of starting. Ignition is BTH magneto and the carb is Amal Concentric, as per original – down to the plastic bellmouth Frank unearthed only two weeks before the show.

“I’d machined a velocity stack from aluminium and was in discussion to have one 3D prototyped. Then, when taking to a customer about trying to find an original, he said he had one I could have!”

The Quaife gearbox has road ratios. Clutch is Norton and primary drive is via

a Newby belt conversion. The exhaust is hand-made by Frank, with the silencer incorporating road baffles and the downpipe with necessary kinks to avoid damage from the kickstarter. In the absence of original parts, Frank also made the clip-ons and front mudguard.

Seb Lorentz, Frank’s brother-in-law and also a bike builder, confided: “Colin was super-emotional when he saw the completed bike on Friday. And Frank was super-honoured to have Colin’s approval. For Colin to be so impressed with the work means so much to Frank.”



KOOL KAWASAKI

This Kawasaki redefined endurance racing in the mid-1970s. After winning the European Coupe d’Endurance with an Egli-framed Kawasaki in 1974, Georges Godier and Alain Genoud built it for the 1975 season with help from engineering professor Pierre Donques and a team of students at Amiens College. The machine was the college study project.

Alain Genoud, the remaining partner of the original Godier Genoud Kawasaki enterprise, said: “The concept was for a machine that was fast enough to win 24-hour races but also easy to work on.”

The perimeter frame is from aircraft-quality tubing with enough space to be able to remove the cylinder head with the engine still in the frame. The fuel tank and seat unit can be removed in split seconds by means of two rubber straps.

It also has monoshock suspension with swingarm made from what might look very spindly tubing but is strong and light.

“For its time, it was a super-modern machine,” said Alain. “Despite the small



'I LOVE THE LINES OF RIGID MOTORCYCLES AND THE SHAPE OF THE HUSQVARNA ENGINE'



diameter tubing, nothing distorted or flexed. If anything, the steering was a little slow – it was hard to turn into corners but stability on the fast tracks was amazing.”

Godier Genoud received stock engines from Kawasaki and special racing gearboxes to dominate the 1975 championship. Honda returned to world championship racing the next year to set up one of the greatest battles ever seen in endurance racing against Godier Genoud. The Godier Genoud shop has since built 166 replicas of their race bikes.

HUSKY TRACKER

Fabrice Bazire built this Husqvarna dirt tracker simply because he thought the Swedish-made four-stroke single would look beautiful in a rigid frame.

“I love the lines of rigid motorcycles and I love the shape of the Husqvarna engine,” he said when asked why he built the bike.

Fabrice restored the 1959 Husqvarna scrambler he also displayed at the Salon. “It has engine No 2 and was made by Nisse Hedlund for the factory team. The frame is ex-Bill Nilsson [World MX champion in 1957 on AJS and 1960 on Husqvarna],” said Fabrice.

He claims the dirt track bike also has a Hedlund-built engine, but he has slotted it into a BSA A7 which has had the subframe replaced with a rigid rear end. “The engine is the same spec as my scrambler, but I’ve added a BSA gearbox. The forks are a mix of Ariel and BSA parts. The front wheel hub is from Adrian Moss.

“I did a sprint at Montlhery on this bike, but have yet to ride it on a dirt oval. But next year I will race with the English-based Dirt Track association in the UK.”

