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Grandsons on grandads' race machines

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Aldana replica flat tracker

MY 62 NORTONS
All of them collected in just 16 years!



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Café hero

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One man's quest from crusty to concours



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Canadian Comedian Dave Fulton reveals his brainchild – a '70s biker flick



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BANKING ON A BIT OF FRENCH STYLE

We pay a visit to the Café Racer Festival at Montlhéry, France's famous stacked-up track

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: PHILLIP TOOTH

The Brits have Brooklands, but the French have Montlhéry and we have to admit that our Gallic friends got the best deal. While the tallest section of the Brooklands banking is 8.75 metres high, the concrete banking at Montlhéry climbs 12 metres into the sky. And while most of the Brit speed bowl is so badly deteriorated that only a very small section can be used, riders can get a real feel of the thrill of speed at the historic French track.

It's where, in 1927, Bert Denly packed 100 miles into the hour on

his Norton, the first time ever in the 500 class (see p64). That's why Montlhéry makes a magic venue for the Café Racer Festival. The three-day event is packed with track time, sprints, dirt track racing, trade stands and live music.

"There's so much going on here," says guest of honour Colin Seeley, surrounded by fans and autograph hunters. The Café Racer stand featured three race Seeleys, a Condor and a Seeley Honda.

"I'm really proud of that bike – it was much better than a CB750,"

said Colin. And that's something Georges Martin could also claim – there were at least 40 CBX sixes wearing his wrap-around frames.

It was Martin Brailsford's first visit and he was impressed. "On the long straights I could use all the power, but I was glad I've got good brakes because the hairpin is a bit tight," says the Triton owner. "The concrete is smoother than I expected. I got to the top of the banking – but only for a few seconds. It's a hell of an experience."

His Triton uses a 1957 Wideline frame and a 1971 Trident T150 engine. "It's got race cams, a ported head, high-comp pistons, 850 barrels and a belt drive conversion."

As if to prove that modified café racers are nothing new, Oliver Mabilie brought along a girder-

1 That banking is 12 metres high

2 First time at Montlhéry for Martin Brailsford and his T150 Triton

3 Gus Kuhn Norton Commando was a real period piece

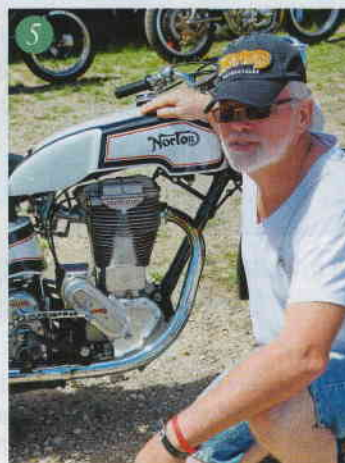
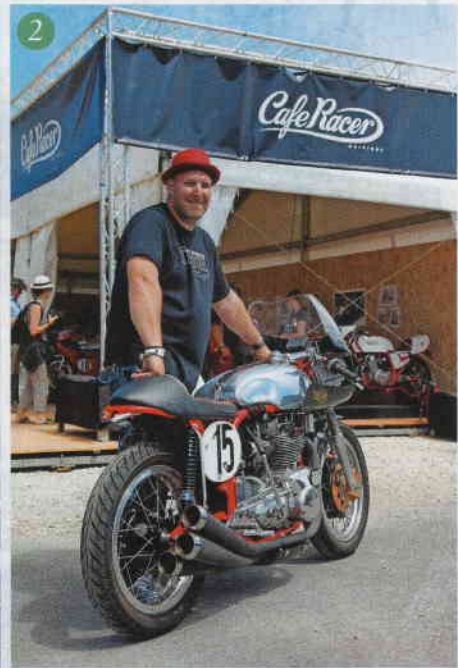
4 Frank Chatokhine gets his Triumph Metisse sideways

5 Oliver Mabilie's Norton 16H with OHV conversion was a tour de force

6 Dede Chardin's Triton blends top tuning parts

7 Dirt track action was just part of the fun at the festival

'RIDERS GET A REAL FEEL OF THE THRILL OF SPEED AT THE TRACK'



forked 16H Norton fitted with an alloy OHV conversion made by Gruppo Velox of Turin. "It has a high compression and a strong motor," says the Parisian.

For a '60s-style cafe racer, take a look at the Puma conversion on Dede Chardin's Triton. "This 1955 engine was built for racing and has a Norton crank with Harman & Collins cams and a T140 head," says Triton Club France's top man.

"The cylinder block is ARE, originally a 750cc kit for a T120, but it is now an 820. Oh, and it has titanium valves, special rods, a Morgo rotary pump and a five-speed box."

The Festival is organised by our French friends at *Cafe Racer* magazine. Keep up to speed with the 2018 event at cafe-racer.fr



A65 FLAT-TRACKER

Born to twin





At a glance it looks just like David Aldana's 1971 BSA factory tracker, but this is a brand new bike, built to race on today's flat tracks

PHOTOGRAPHY: LAURENT NIVALLE

This dead ringer is a BSA A65 twin built to incredibly exacting standards by Frank Chatokhine of Atelier Chatokhine. Regular *CB* readers will be well aware of the work of the French genius and British bike specialist from Ouerray, France, whose work we've featured before, but this new bike was built for customer Olivier Le Quellec – who has already given the bike its racing debut!

Frank, a top flat-track racer in the British Dirt Track Riders Association series riding a Rickman Triumph, said: "We've created this new flat-track racer using a replica Trackmaster frame as the basis of the rolling chassis. We've made all the custom parts, including the alloy gas tank, wheel hubs and rear disc.

"It's a BSA A65 engine, but we've taken it out to 750cc and it produces 74bhp on the dyno. The motor is the same spec as David Aldana's works bike, except Olivier's bike has an alloy cylinder barrel while Aldana's racing machine had iron barrels. And we are running the engine

A65 FLAT-TRACKER



Frame is replica of '70s flat-track favourite, the Trackmaster



Bored-out A65 twin motor is wrestled into its new home

a little lower in the frame and tilted forward for improved weight distribution, to get better handling and traction. I think the BSA motor is well suited to the Trackmaster frame. I tested the bike and it's totally crazy – in fourth gear, it just takes off!"

Fans of flat-track racing will know that David Aldana was one of those guys whose career really took off in the '70s when he raced BSAs. He also became a hero to British fans – not so much for his flat track racing, but rather for his performance on tarmac in the Transatlantic Match races, in which he raced for BSA originally before moving to Norton and then the Japanese works teams. He was also one of the leading lights in early superbike racing, and later in world endurance racing. And he's still racing competitively now, with a brace of Honda single-cylinder-based trackers and crossers.

Aldana, originally from Santa Ana, California, was arguably one of the most flamboyant racers of the '70s. From the age of 16 he worked in bike shops and raced in local events, becoming one of the stars of the famed Ascot Park half-mile and TT tracks in Gardena and had earned himself a BSA works ride by the time he was 19.

His antics on the factory BSAs in the '70s earned him the nickname 'Rubber Ball' – he crashed time and time again, but always seemed to walk away to fight another day.

In 1970, his first year as an Expert, he won two AMA Grand National championship dirt track races – a 20-lap half-mile race at Terre Haute, Indiana and the 30-lap Indianapolis Mile riding BSA twins – along with the Talladega 200 road race on a BSA Rocket 3. The latter was only the third road race of his career.

Aldana's rookie season was one of the most memorable in the history of the AMA Grand National series, but his championship challenge

came to an end with a crash at Sacramento Mile with three rounds left in the series. He finished third overall, then ended up in fourth place the following year (still riding BSAs) without chalking up further wins.

Aldana also became well known to British fans through his antics in two classic motorcycle films. Everyone who has seen *On Any Sunday* will remember his hard-charging, uncompromising riding style on the works BSAs, but there's even better footage of him starring in another lesser-known movie called *The Thrill Is On*. The movie, narrated by Roxy Rockwood and Aldana, lacked the funds to be launched and the tapes only recently resurfaced (it's on YouTube – go to tinyurl.com/yczwblje where you'll see Aldana's full-lock broadslides on the limestone Louisville half mile at 14 minutes into the film which are awe-inspiring). The bike he's riding in most of the footage in *The Thrill Is On* is the one Chatokhine has based Olivier's BSA on.

Olivier is 54 years old and comes from Saint-Tropez. He's retired, but not in a sedentary way: "I spend my life chasing waves all over the world, riding bikes at race tracks and I'm the ambassador of the Fotozino app," he explains.

Olivier doesn't like to call his bike an 'Aldana replica' as such. He says: "Frank has had a dream to build a David Aldana BSA flat tracker for many years, but it was out of the question for him to make an umpteenth replica. His vision was simple – use a Trackmaster frame, Ceriani forks, a '70s BSA engine and build the bike that Dave Aldana could have asked for, by using today's know-how and technology. Frank had the actual know-how and technical ability to build this motorcycle from scratch."

If Frank was inspired by Aldana's BSA, Olivier was always inspired by Bruce Brown's epic movies *Endless Summer* and *On Any* ▶▶



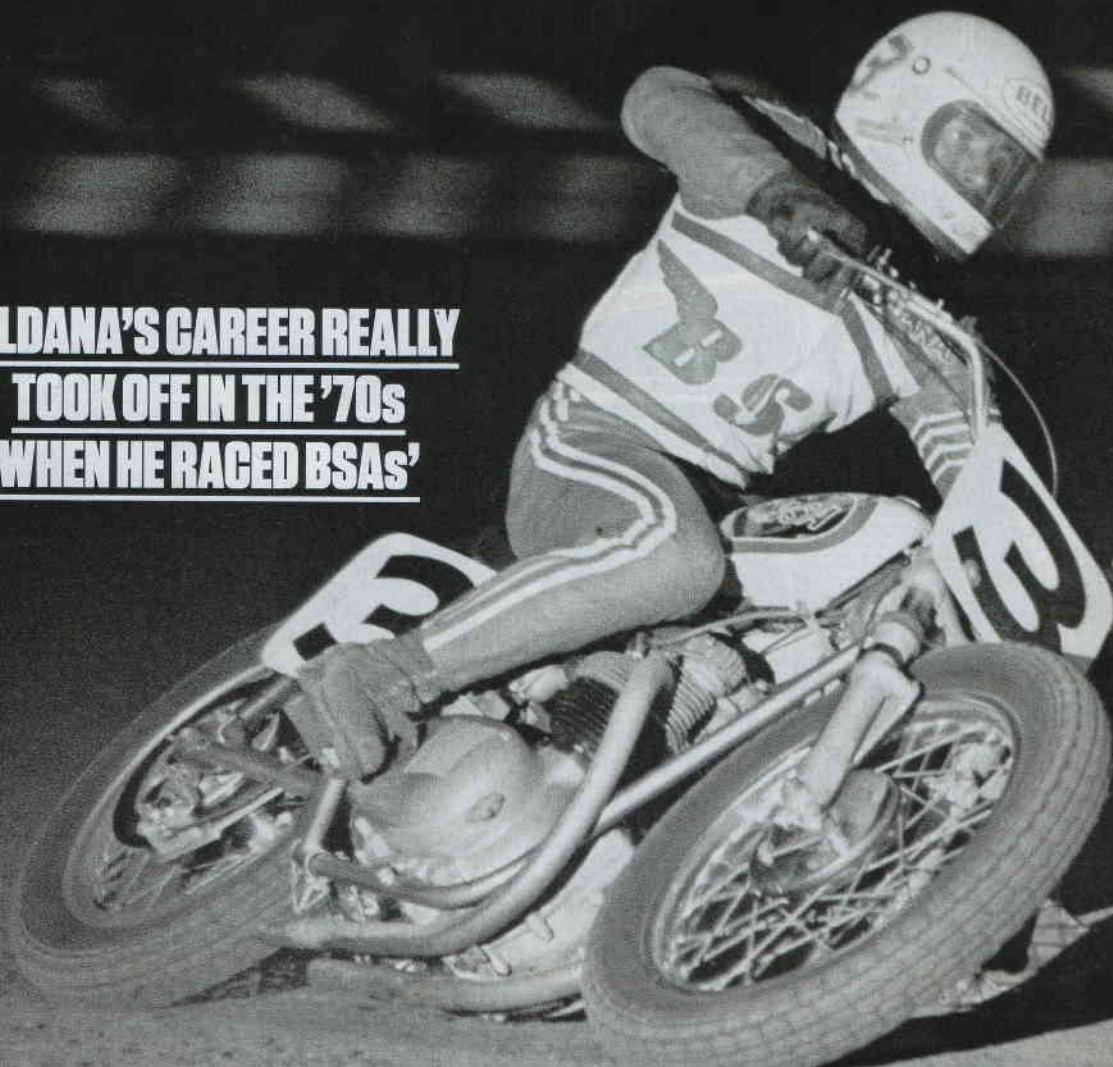
TOP: 'Just like that!' Builder Frank Chatokhine shows owner Olivier how to make flat-track magic on the bike

BELOW: Frank makes sure the bike feels right as well as looks right

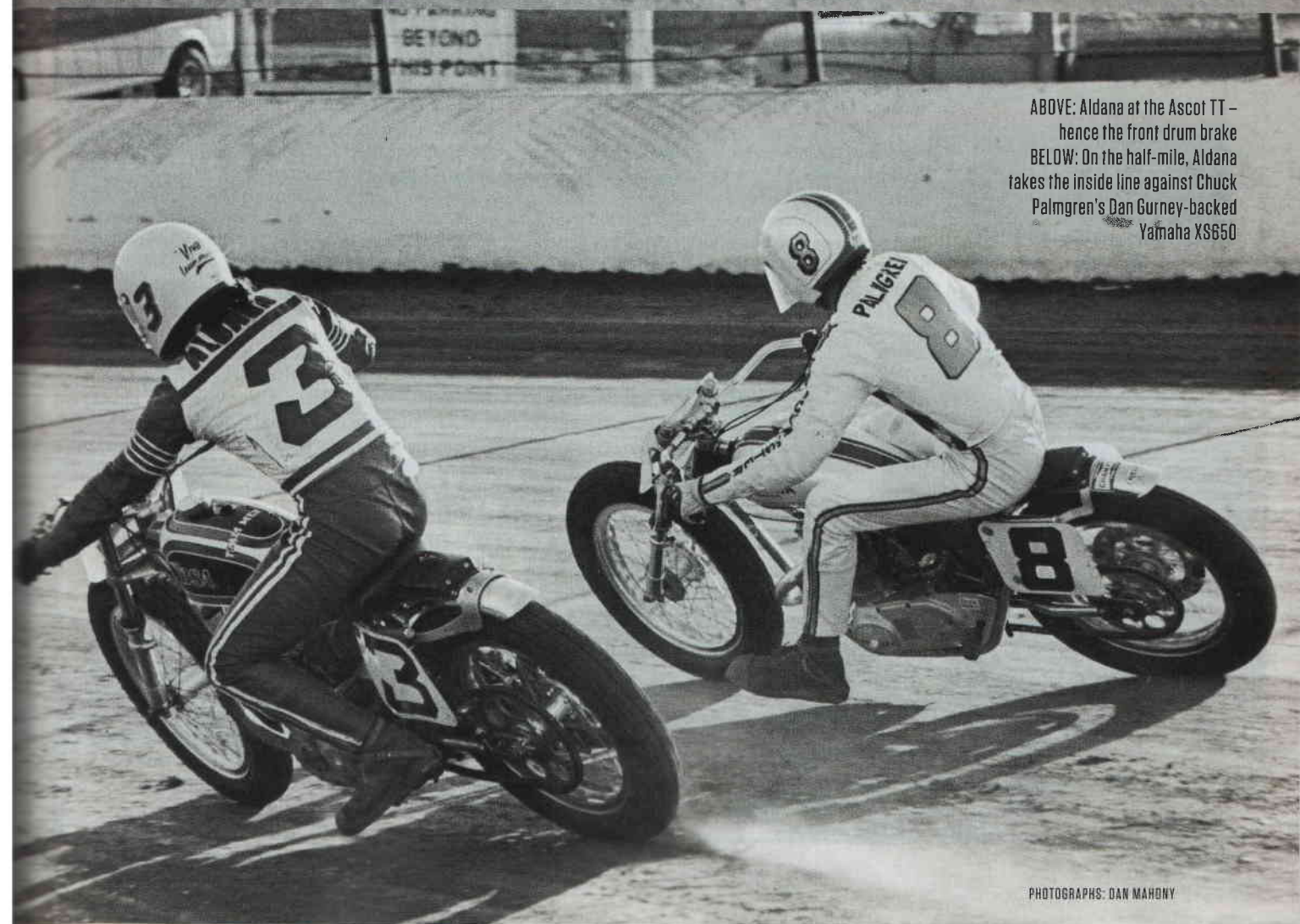
BOTTOM: Aldana's factory mount for the 1971 AMA Grand National Championship provided inspiration for the build



**'ALDANA'S CAREER REALLY
TOOK OFF IN THE '70s
WHEN HE RACED BSAs'**



ABOVE: Aldana at the Ascot TT –
hence the front drum brake
BELOW: On the half-mile, Aldana
takes the inside line against Chuck
Palmgren's Dan Gurney-backed
Yamaha XS650



A65 FLAT-TRACKER

**'IT'S A HAND-MADE THING
OF BEAUTY. BUT IT'S
ALSO BUILT TO RACE'**



ABOVE The bike looks pristine in this shot, but owner Olivier has already used it as intended – on the track

Sunday. “Both of them are iconic movies and when you’ve ridden motorcycles for 40 years and you’re a goofy surfer, you’re going to naturally love flat-track racing. And who doesn’t love Aldana’s style?”

Olivier gave Frank the go-ahead to build the BSA for him to race. The pair had met in the UK during a DTRA flat-track meeting in 2015.

“It was during my championship campaign when I was riding an authentic WR Harley Davidson flat-tracker from 1949,” says Olivier. I met Frank and we hit it off. He’s a genuine guy – and a great racer – but he’s also a really top class engineer. The Chatokhine family in general have an incredible wealth of British bike and racing knowledge.”

Olivier owns a variety of motorcycles including a 1941 Knucklehead Harley, Ducati Hypermotard, 1949 WR Harley flat-tracker, 1945 WL Harley, and a 1971 Honda CB 175. But the BSA is centre-stage in his life right now. “I didn’t get involved too much in the build process,” he says. “Frank measured me up for the foot peg position and fitted the brake and gearchange on the left side... and then he built the complete machine. It’s a hand-made thing of beauty. But it’s also built to race.”

“My BSA ‘debut’ was at the El Rollo flat-track race during the Wheels and Waves festival in June. I qualified on pole position for the final on the bike. It’s a beautiful machine with fantastic balance. It has a great engine and a perfect frame. I just need to spend more time riding it to get more good results.”

“Working with Frank has been so good because he’s a fantastic flat track rider, the best British bike technician/engineer I know of in France – and may be beyond that. He always focuses on producing the best quality machine and has fantastic knowledge. And he knows exactly what we need to ride fast.”

And the next project? “Organisation of the First Fotozino Flat Track Endurance race with three riders per team,” Olivier states. “When I gave Frank the green light to fulfil his fantasy, there was just one goal – make this bike the ultimate weapon to establish the first global flat-track endurance record in 2018. The rules will be simple: a circuit, a team of three riders, a time of one hour and 30 minutes, and we count the number of laps completed.”

“This founding race will be the starting point of a championship which will unite the fastest and toughest riders in this spectacular sport. And yes, Frank is on my team!”

BELOW: The moment when Olivier first saw the bike Chatokhine had created for him. He doesn’t look disappointed...

