

“It’s a proper chopper”

What do you do when your bike is starting to look a little tired? Sell it and get a new one? What if you don’t want to part company with “Her”? She’s given me years of fun and got me into THE best owner’s club around. So, I’m sticking with her!

Suppose Yamaha still made a Virago, what would it have evolved into considering today’s styling? I’d already extended the forks, lowered the rear suspension and put forward controls on it, but you know it’s still a Virago courtesy of the tank, seat, side panels and those air filters. Some things mustn’t change so lets look at the paintwork and the minor components that date it.

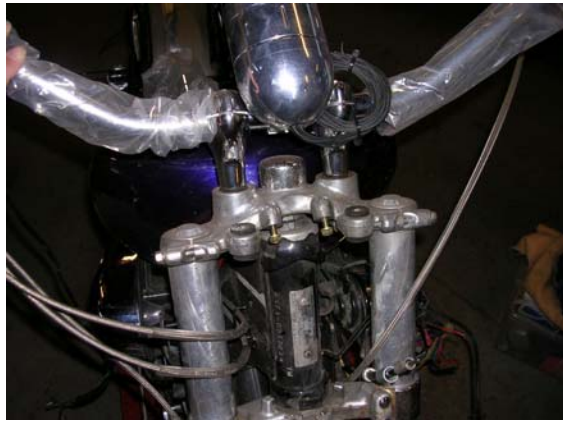
When Harley brought out the Vee Rod the most striking thing about it was the colour, it was all silver and chrome. So in typical Yamaha style, I’ll nick that idea! Lavish artwork sprayed across the tank and panels is THE way to go, but what design? A Virago is a fiery woman, I don’t want flames, how about semi naked fantasy women draped all over it? For a while I thought yes, it all fits. However, I’ve got another idea but you’ll have to wait until it’s done to find out. There’s a huge choice of lights, controls, mirrors, handlebars etc out there to update my “New Virago” with, so, everything must go!

How can I do this? I’m not the best man for the job.

Enter Nick Anderson and his fellow NCC member, “Maff”. One of Nick’s bikes just made the front cover of BSH in December and was on show at the NEC in November, Now I’m not talking that kind of budget but I’ve got “The Best Man For The Job”. So, One dark night in November my bike was put in the back of a van and taken to the chop shop.



This is what it looked like a couple of weeks later. “Sit on it,” said Maff “It’ll make a great lowrider” So I did, and it will. Even with straight bars it feels like apehangers. “You’ll need a new seat, trimmed down and about an inch thick” Oh, there goes my Virago armchair. “I don’t like the back end of the frame so I’m cutting it off”. Fine. “And I’ll make a new fender” yeah sure.



“I don’t like these yolks, I’ll make some new ones” Go ahead and with that I left him to it!

A couple of weeks later I went back to see how it was going.



One thing that struck me was how big the engine looks when you’ve stripped away a lot of the bike.

“I don’t like your idea of the cissy bar being part of the frame, I’ve thought of something else” Yeah whatever. Oh by the way, I’ll be entering this as “Best Non Standard Bike” at the south west custom show in May, We’ll be having the biggest stand in the hall and in the centre of that stand this bike will be on a raised platform i.e. It’ll look like the centre piece of the show. I’ll be back just before Christmas.

A couple of days after Christmas the three of us met up and we’d all had the same thought. The side panels had to go!! They may have suited the “Old Virago” with its armchair seat, but the new slimmed down version meant that there were too many gaps, so, off they came along with the toolbox, which meant that we could centralise the battery and go for flat panels.

This build is going beyond my first criteria but every step presents another opportunity that I’d never considered and instinct tells me that I should seize them.

Coupled with that is Nick & Maff, who keep torturing me with “Temptation” and as Oscar Wilde said “I can resist everything, but.....”



The exhaust system is now stainless steel with a ceramic lining to stop it miscolouring. Nick's not actually tried this before but he thinks it should work!!

I'm having trouble getting the risers that I want. “No problem” says Maff “I'll make some when I make the yolks, how would you like them to look?” He then went on to say” That rear light and number plate you can't get, I could fabricate a cats eye lens into the fender and side mount the plate if you like”.

Do you see my problem?

I am KEEPING the air filters, they're the only things left!!

It's now 7th January and there's still a lot of fabrication to do, which isn't surprising considering how far we've strayed from the original brief!! I think a trip to the spray shop is next on the list, I've heard that they're ready and waiting for us. You'll all have to wait until the April newsletter to find out how it's going. As for me, I'm still hoping to have her ready for The South West Show at the end of that month.

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