



ERIK BUELL IS BACK!

His inside story on new US-built 1190cc production bike

TOM SYKES

Man and machine behind the title



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RADIATORS

Owner Mark commissioned exact copies of HRC race-kit radiators for his RC45

FORKS

HRC-spec Showa forks as used by John McGuinness and Ryuichi Kiyonari on their Fireblades

BRAKES

Brembo X99 monoblock four-pad calipers, as used by top TT and BSB riders and cost £4000-a-pair

HRC KIT PARTS

The bike is smothered in HRC race-kit parts, but the magnesium clutch and alternator covers are exceptionally rare



TANIUM

...is how most people would describe this carbon-clad HRC-kitted RC45, but not committed owner Mark Smith who's scoured the globe for rare parts

Words Gary Inman Photography Paul Bryant



ENGINE

Engine had been already blueprinted but Tony Scott, who rebuilt the top end with HRC valve springs

MY FIRST BIKE was an RC45,' explains Mark Smith, as was his second – this stunning, carbon-draped, meticulously detailed RC45.

Ten years ago, at the tender age of 23, his bike nut of an older brother, Dean, told him his mate was selling a bike and that Mark had to buy it, saying he'd never lose money on it.

Thing is the bike was a Honda RVF750R RC45, the asking price was £8000 and Mark didn't have a bike licence or any plans to take the test. He still bought the bike, though.

'The bike sat as an ornament in the house for a while,' explains the farrier (horse shoe fitter to you and I). 'About a year later I took my test and my first road bike was the RC45.'

From not knowing anything about Honda's V4 homologation endurance racer, Mark has become an RC45 obsessive, though he didn't do anything but 'put a load of miles on it,' says Mark, of his first bog-stock bike. He sold it seven years ago to raise money for the RC45 you see here.

This RC45 was the former demonstrator for Carbontek – a now-defunct carbon parts and Honda modding specialists. Mark's second V4 had carbon bodywork, Marchesini wheels, Brembo brakes and a Yoshimura pipe. It also had a very

mid-90s shellsuit paintjob, all fluoro orange and bright blue on white, plus almost 200 blue anodised fasteners. 'I weighed them in for scrap,' says Mark. But it wasn't blue bolts that sealed the deal, it was the 122bhp Tony Scott blueprinted engine.

The Lancashire-based tuner has been regularly featured in PB, having made a name for himself, among the biking public anyway, by building the quickest and most reliable Honda V4 racers around. It was stories in PB about Scott that added the word 'blueprinting' to the British vocabulary, where an engine is rebuilt to the exact tolerances prescribed by the design engineer – the many small gains adding to one big one.

'I had an idea that I would make a full HRC replica, but people kept telling me I couldn't because I'd never find all the bits,' remembers Mark. 'In the end I rang up Phillip McCallen, who was brilliant. He said that because he had a soft-spot for RC45s, he'd give my number to his old mechanic. I didn't hear anything for two weeks, then Dennis Willey rang me up. He had worked for Rumi Honda and had built McCallen's TT-winning RC45s and Fogarty's WSB RC30s. I told him what I wanted and he said, "Why not?"'

Dennis advised Mark to speak to Tony Scott. Mark rang him,



ABOVE Mark's only ever owned two bikes, both have been RC45s. Lucky man. Interesting fact, he earns his living by fitting shoes to horses. 'There are more farriers around than you'd think,' he says

explaining that the bike had already been blueprinted, but he wanted it built to TT-race spec. Even though he was semi-retired, Scott agreed to take on the work. 'When I've told people that Tony Scott built the engine they ask how I talked him into it, but I think it was because he knew he had already done a lot of the hard work, all the blueprinting.'

Mark was given a list of parts: HRC race-kit items that were rare and very expensive when new 20 years ago and which had become even harder to track down today. Unobtainable is how a lot of people would describe these kinds of parts, but it's often only a matter of how badly you want them. And Mark wanted them rather badly.

TAIL UNIT

Stock RC45 units are prone to spider cracking around the top bolts, so John Corrin added an extra layer of carbon and kevlar reinforcement to this

BST WHEELS

BST wheels are carbon fibre, of course. Mark specified black bolts rather than the usual stainless items





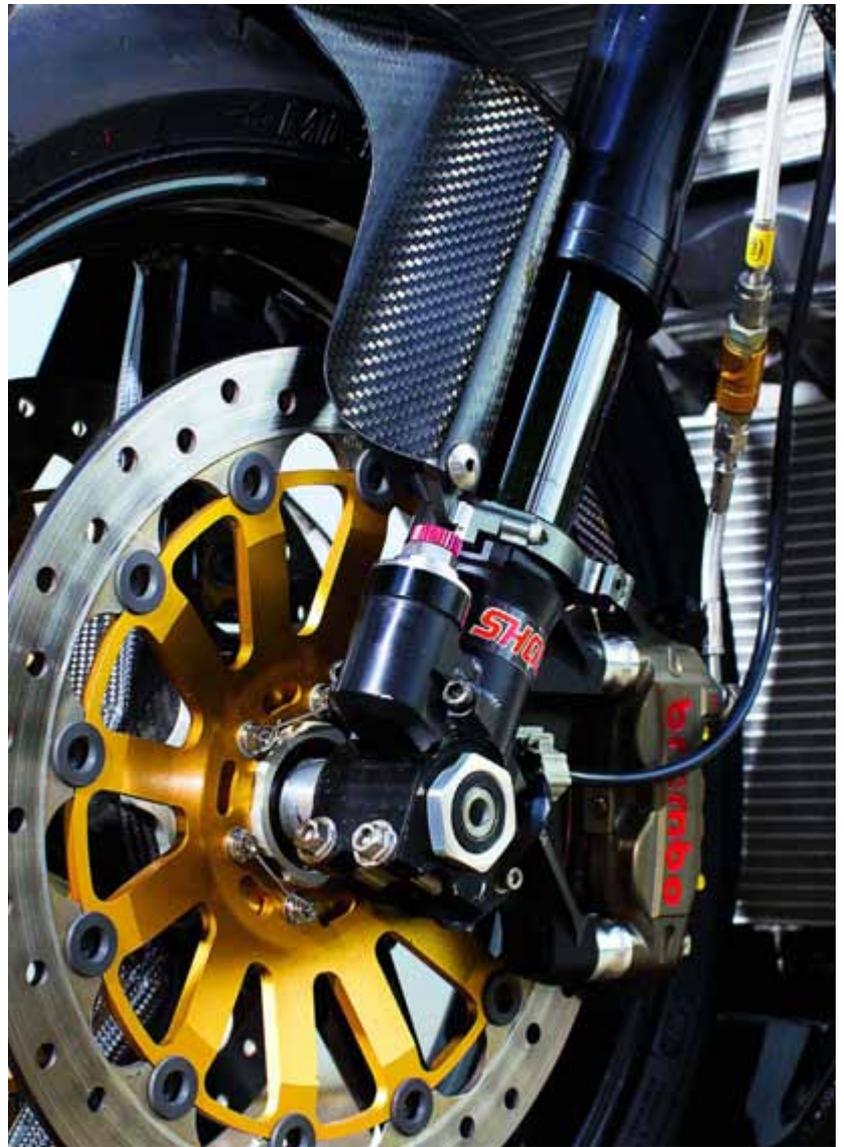
Radial master cylinder is Brembo 16 RCS



Magnesium engine covers are very rare

RIGHT
HRC-spec Showa forks are £12,000 brand-new. Mark managed to pick these up for £4000

BELOW
Carbon intake tubes took John Corrin three weeks to perfect



'People don't like selling the kind of parts I was after because they're so rare and they think they might need them, so they stockpile them. It was frustrating, but now I'm the same.'

Mark started scouring the internet for parts with the tell-tale NL5 part numbers. He found HRC cams and an airbox, then a wiring loom and Honda PGM-FI controller. Tony had initially told Mark that he never used to fit HRC valve springs to the engines he worked on, so that was one group of parts he didn't need to find. Then, after the engine had been built, Tony couldn't get rid of a nagging thought. 'He had looked back at his notes from the 1990s and couldn't remember 100% if he had fitted HRC valve springs or not,' explains Mark.

The engine was still a very fit mid-90s V4, but Mark knew what he wanted. If that meant stripping the top-end and searching for HRC valve springs, he was going to do it. And when he finally tracked down the 16 valve springs, which had done 50 miles, they set him back £500. The finished motor made 146bhp on Gunster's dyno in Grimsby, but with the fuelling set-up for road riding, not all-out power, it still made 141bhp.



ABOVE
Translogic dash is a worthy substitute for an incredibly rare HRC display. Fluid reservoirs are mounted mid-yoke for racy look



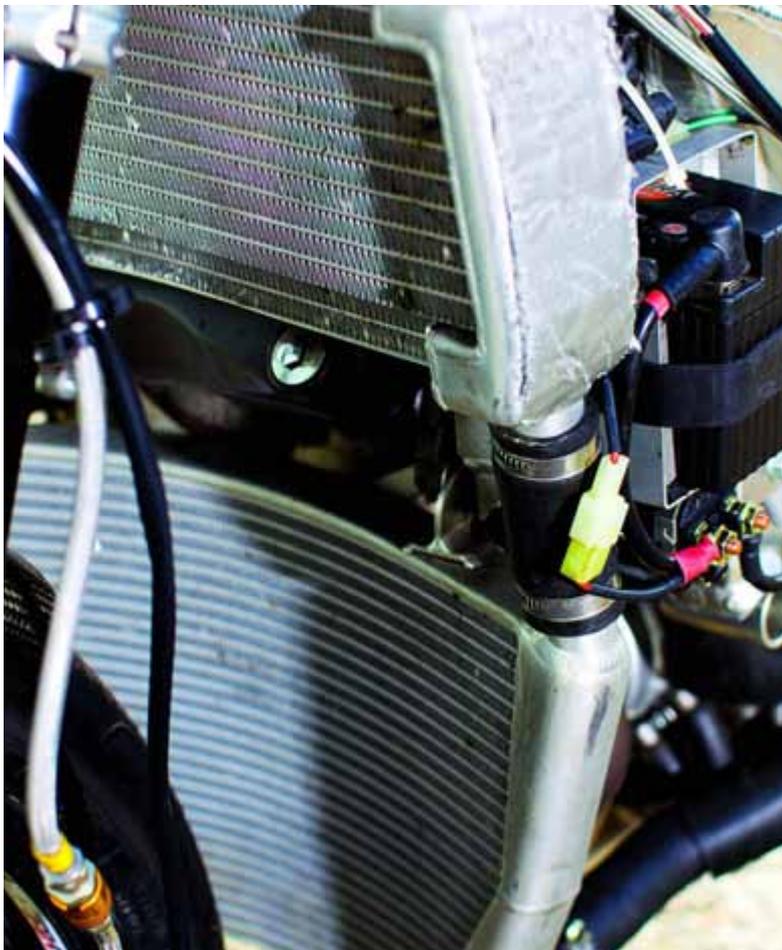
LEFT
Rear axle is a copy of an unobtainable HRC item. Tiny grub screw is the only clue that it's not a race-kit part

Other parts came from all over Europe and Japan. A 1000-mile-in-a-day road trip saw Mark come back from France with a load of components, including the very rare, HRC 24-litre tank. According to Mark this tank was made for the 1994 season but then banned because it restricted the steering lock so much. But then it is a race part.

The fuel tank is a good example of HRC's frustrating practice of making one kit part work with another, but not the original part. As Mark explains, 'Having 90% of the HRC parts is no good if you're missing one, they won't work together.' For example, the HRC kit tank doesn't fit over the road bike's original air box. But, as ever, Mark's made it work.

The frame has also been re-polished and looks great against the black of the tank and the black carbon fairing. The RC45 had been loaned to another of Mark's brothers to ride for the summer. He lived close to the sea and the salt air started to attack the bare frame. At least it shows the bike has not become a precious ornament.

Mark then bought a full fairing to replace the garishly painted one it had come with, but sadly it didn't fit.



LEFT
Rads are exact HRC replicas

ABOVE
Fuel filler needed nine bolt holes to match HRC tank

TOP RIGHT
Alloy headlight and clock bracket is HRC item

RIGHT
Rear shock is one of the few stock components to avoid the cull



SCREEN

Screen is one of the many factory parts Mark has managed to source. 'I love the thrill of the chase,' he says

PARADE LAP

Mark has kept the number 53 sticker the bike wore during a parade lap at the Isle of Man Classic TT. 'It was a bit daunting,' says Mark



