

ROCK ISLAND HOPPER

Editor's note: the following story is told by a gentleman who, obviously, lives at the out-there end of the biking spectrum. The following tale, therefore, is not for the faint-hearted...

 **WORDS:** ANDREW BENNETT **PICS:** KING RAT



The full story behind this bike, named the Rock Island Hopper, can't be told for ongoing legal reasons so this is the PG version. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...

This bike was part of a three bike deal from a slightly crazy Russian living in Malta named Igor. He is in no way connected to Igor the Russian in Tamworth who sprayed the bike though... I'm told there're a lot of Russians around called Igor apparently. To cut a long story short the first two bikes were paid for and collected from Britain, but this bike was meant to be delivered and so was taken overland by me and my mate, Mow. The route was to take us down through France, over the Alps, through Italy, over to Sicily and then, eventually, to Malta – all that way in a tatty Transit van, just me and him.

A lot of strange things happened along the way, one of which was where we came up with a fantastic new game; 'tattoo the driver'.

Yep, you guessed it; the passenger rigs up a tattoo machine to the lighter socket in the van and... yep, tattoos the driver. While he's driving. It's a fun game to watch, I'll grant you, but not so good to play. It was Mow's brainchild and did what it was intended to; keep the driver awake. It still keeps me awake now too, but I'm sure the nightmares will pass... eventually. So as if the sat-nav taking us over the Alps in a Transit van, on roads I wouldn't attempt in a fuckin' Snowcat wasn't enough to keep me awake, the pain did. We eventually got to Malta after a

few days, stopping here 'n' there and getting into various situations that we'd rather not have been involved in, only to find the deal'd gone stale and not only was there no pot of gold for us, but there was no feckin' money either. We had to leave in a hurry, paranoid that it was all a big set-up and we were going to get hijacked, which, upon reflection, it probably was. Mind you, it might just have been a combination of far too much espresso, too many late nights on the road, and the pain from Mow's tattoos, but we decided discretion was the better part of valour (or running away is always best when the people you're running away from are possibly heavily-armed Russian gangsters) and hit the road a bit sharpish.

We zig-zagged our way back home in much the same fashion (far too much coffee, far too much ☺

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SPECIFICATION SHEET

Original Year, Make & Model:
2012 Hairy Bush Rock Island Hopper

Engine:
140-cubic-inch (2300cc) El Bruto race engine, one-off bellmouth/carb bracket with internal breathers, Ultima three-inch open belt primary, Barnett clutch, six-speed gearbox: six-speed, programmable digital single fire ignition, one-off stainless 2-1 exhaust, 165bhp/170ftlbs torque

Frame:
Modified aftermarket Softail-style, left side drive, four-inch stretch, re-welded, smoothed, plastic-coated

Sharp End:
180 tyre, aftermarket 60 spoke wheel, aftermarket disc, Jaybrake caliper, one-off caliper hanger, modified springer forks, clear-coated braided stainless brake lines, one-off 'bars with incorporated clock holder, Harley-Davidson master-cylinder & switchgear

Blunt End:
One-off mudguard struts, wide Softail-style swingarm, aftermarket shocks, 60 spoke wheel, 250 tyre, aftermarket disc, four-pot Ultima caliper, 1/5-inch Kevlar belt drive belt, un-plumbed nitrous bottle

Tinware:
Stretched H-D fuel tanks, one-off fibreglass/ foam/ leather seat, one-off 2mm steel rear mudguard, horseshoe H-D oil tank, one-off battery/electrics box

Electrics:
One-off loom (no block connectors, every joint soldered & shrunk), bobber-style headlight (drilled & modified to take dash lights), aftermarket tail light

Paint:
Aston Martin silver/ grey with artwork by Igor the Russian

Engineering:
Hairy Bush Bike Builders

Thanks To:
"Igor the Russian; Fate; those Maltese guys; Ford Transits; stab-proof vests; Mogley Mow; snow chains; espresso coffee; & Tom Tom sat-nav..."



WE ZIG-ZAGGED OUR WAY BACK HOME IN MUCH THE SAME FASHION (FAR TOO MUCH COFFEE, FAR TOO MUCH BEER, FAR TOO MANY TATTOOS) AND GOING THROUGH THE SOUTH OF FRANCE WE GOT HELD GUNPOINT BY POLICE WHO WERE CONVINCED WE WERE SOME KIND OF TERRORIST THREAT

beer, far too many tattoos) – going through the south of France we got held at gunpoint in Monaco at two in the morning by the police who were, apparently, convinced we were some kind of terrorist threat. I think the late nights were beginning to tell – they told us to keep our hands on the dash while Policeman Number 1 pointed a machine gun at us while Policeman Number 2 went to check our documents. It was at this point that a sleep-deprived and fairly loaded Mow had the strange urge to reach for his cheese and bloody crackers from under the seat. I nearly f'kin' crapped myself when the copper, panicking himself a bit, knocked his safety off and started yelling. What the fuck was Mow thinking? We did manage to calm him down, but, man, the Monaco police don't mess about!

Finally we got back to England, via Spain (still not entirely sure how that happened), and were asked by Customs, “have you anything to declare?” “Yes,” I said, “caffeine makes you paranoid and tattoos done at 90mph f'kin' hurt!” So the bike came back, I registered

it here and that's where it's staying – no more road trips for me, I'm too bloody old for it. I've come to love the bike; it goes like the clappers, the power is unbelievable, and there's a strange sensation when you let the clutch out; the revs don't seem to drop, it just gains momentum. Kind o' like a mouse jumping onto the back of a charging elephant... if you know what I mean?

Having said that, since these pics were taken, I've sold it to a guy in Manchester called Dave, and I'm thinking of doing another. The strange thing is just before I wrote this I got an email off the slightly crazy Russian in Malta – he says he wants another bike. Road trip anyone? ☘

AND...
Hairy Bush Bike Builders are based in Staffordshire and their number is 07790 017224, while their web address is www.hairybushbikebuilders.co.uk.



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