

CLASSIC DRIVER

Clutch's XS650 is a Japanese café racer à la française

Lead

We wouldn't usually feature a customised Yamaha XS650, simply because it's such a common phenomenon. But this subtle yet stunning rework of the 45-year-old bike by Parisian workshop Clutch Custom left us with no other option...

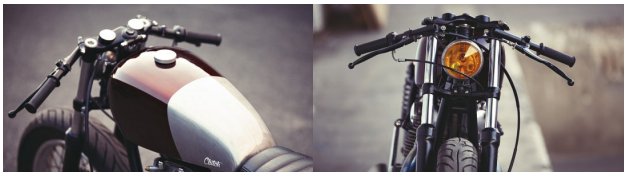
Our collective eye has been caught by Clutch's creations before, when founder Willie Knoll went to work on a [Triumph Bonneville T100](#). This time around, his company went for a café racer appearance, albeit with some details that make the concept its own.

Brave decisions



The donor bike's engine was soon rebuilt with a big-bore 750cc kit and Dell'Orto carbs. Despite the extra power, Knoll made the brave decision to stick with drum brakes, machining a new axle to fit the front forks borrowed from an SR500. A custom tank was fashioned, and then came a rebuilt rear frame with a custom café-racer-style seat cowl. "I didn't have a specific inspiration for this bike," says Willie, "I just wanted to created a solo ride that was different from other custom XS650s, with a bit more power and some nice bespoke touches." It worked.

Deft details



As is always the case with custom bikes, it's the little details that separate a great build from a good one – as Willie has clearly discovered. The bespoke tank is crowned with one of Clutch Customs' trademark knurled filler caps, while the yellow headlight is a nod to France's automotive past.

Photos: Clutch Customs

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