

You like the  
John Player Special concept,  
but you already  
own a Norton. Fear not.  
Ambition and money  
can put you behind  
a set of clip-ons  
and a breadloaf tank.

By Phil Schilling

# The Bolt-Up Racers

● Nortons are lean, muscular motorcycles. Devoid of extra baggage, the twins naturally lend themselves to the cafe-racer idiom. Commandos step lightly on certified scales; 440 to 460 pounds, depending upon year and model. The bikes have a reputation for first-string handling, and that reputation has been earned. The engine produces the kind of power most enthusiasts need for fast mountain riding. The power comes flowing out at 2000 rpm, and a river of torque runs wide and broad without ripples or rapids. Other machines may have an electrical snappiness to their powerbands, but not the Norton. Its power is almost hydraulic in character.

Compared to other bikes, mountain-road racers will find precious little to throw away on a Norton. True, the standard tank, saddle and fenders can be peeled off, and replaced with lighter—and presumably more functional—equipment. But there's no electric starter to yank off, no nine-piece exhaust system with four mufflers, no gratuitous little covers, hooks and plastic crests. Only a fool would throw away the standard forks and suspension units. The Norton is pure.

Forget about buying TT-100 Dunlops. Norton mounts them standard. A second disc for the front? It's not easily done (with stock components), but for those who insist, there's always the Dunstall twin disc assembly. Rear-set kits abound, and so do alternative exhaust systems. Some aftermarket exhausts increase cornering clearance—others leave the problem where the factory did, with pipes and mufflers and stands sparking under the earnest rider.

Those who enjoy riding—as distinct from wrenching—will leave their 850 Nortons in standard tune. Norton twins can be made quicker and faster, though it's doubtful whether most riders would enjoy the trade-off. A super-fast Norton with an intractable engine might easily be slower point-to-point over a mountain road than the standard model. Besides, highly tweaked engines can make even the best rider a hiker.

So what makes the Norton so attractive?

Simple. A Norton cafe-bike is a bolt-up racer. You avoid building your dream-racer from the bare frame, which is to say you dodge five-hundred pounds of grief and aggravation. And Norton buyers have their choice of looks. Norton enthusiast/businessmen have been hammering on alloy and laying fiberglass for more than a decade. Do you like the traditional Norton look? The new angular mode? The Dunstall approach? The John Player Special fashion? The American-style as built in Southern California? Take your pick. If you own a Norton, you can have it all.

The name Dunstall is synonymous with Norton cafe-racer gear. Barney Tillman's Sports Center, in Los Angeles, the place to go for Dunstall stock in Southern California, assembled a selection of Dunstall equipment which transforms a Commando into something special. The fiberglass treatment begins with a lightweight front fender (\$20.00); extends to a half-fairing which includes mounts, headlamp mounting plates and instrument panel (\$228.50); moves back to a distinctive four-gallon tank (\$109.75); and ends with a fiberglass dual seat which provides a place for taillamp and license plate (\$98.20). In the hardware department, there are the well-known Dunstall clip-ons (\$22.00) and the complete Dunstall exhaust system (\$154.75). The rearsets move the shift lever to the left and the brake to the right (\$126.00).

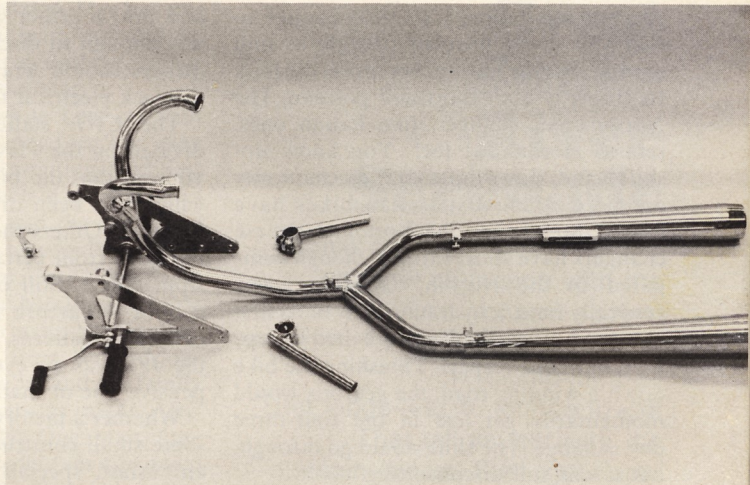
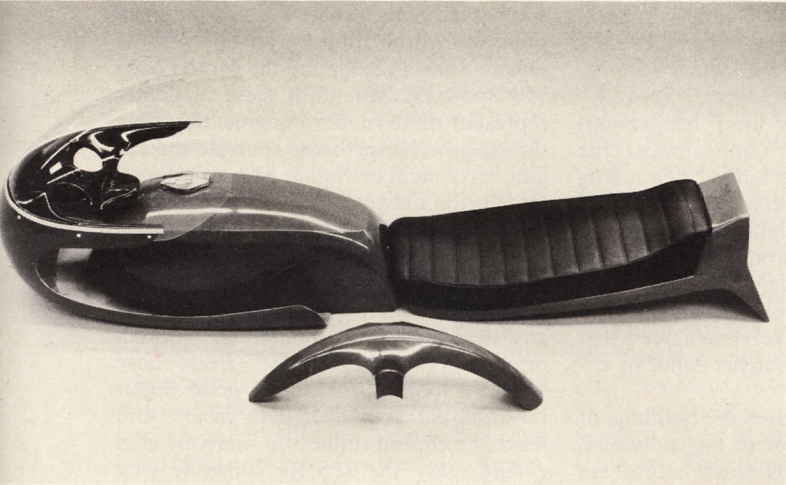
Norton goodies from International Cycle Sales in San Jose, California greatly resemble the items fitted to Norton Production Racers, circa 1970-71—for good reason. ICS's Max Gordon bought out all the Norton PR spares at the factory and on the West Coast. ICS now duplicates the original PR equipment to maintain supply lines. Replica half-fairings (\$99.50) have an interior ring-boss for headlight mounting. Price of the ICS half-fairing includes cad-plated mounting hardware. The PR tank—built in San Jose—also retails for \$99.50. The seats (\$42.92) lack the original PR's full number

plates; numbers are bound to catch law enforcement eyes. Large rear-sets, which utilize alloy plates and include kick-start and rear-facing shift levers, are Norton PR pieces retailing at \$89.95. An alternative is the smaller rear-sets that ICS imports for \$39.95 complete. The Norton PR exhaust headers (\$39.95 for the pair) tuck in close to the frame rails and give more cornering clearance than standard pipes. The handsome alloy tank is a bargain at \$99.50; it fits directly on a Commando. Any number of accessory seats will complement the alloy tank.

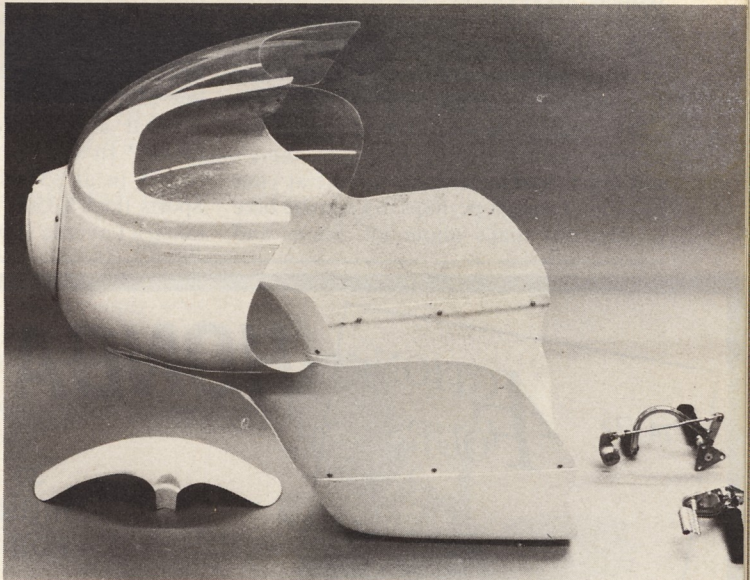
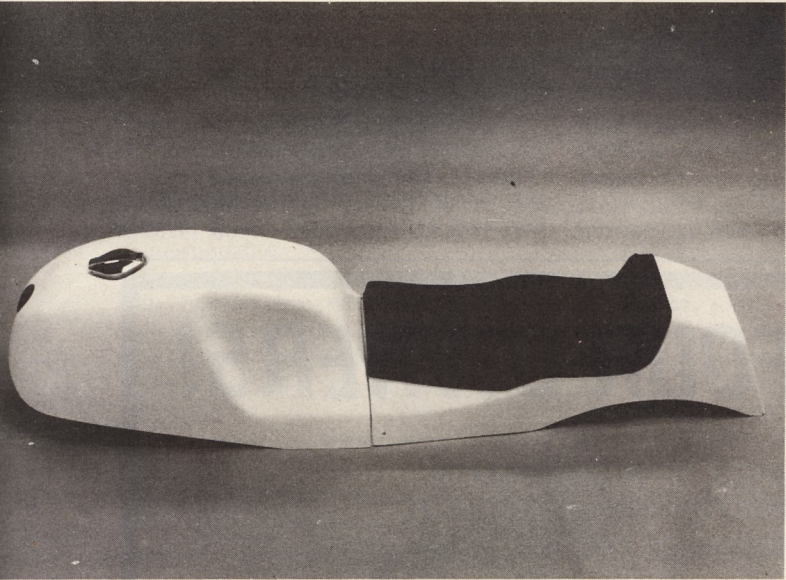
Dick's Cycle West in San Gabriel, California markets a fairing, tank and seat. The fairing is labelled the "Norton Commando John Player Monocoque Fairing." Obviously the fairing isn't monocoque; it's just a near replica by Curley Specialised Mouldings in England of the genuine thing. The fairing is a two-piece affair and has a headlamp mounting plate. The fairing costs \$185.00. The tank and seat are sold only as a unit for \$185.00. You have your choice of seats; the solo seat is very similar to the one on Norton's John Player Special (the street bike). DCW has a range of clip-ons from \$17.50 to \$24.50 in both black and chrome. The rear-sets are small compact units (\$78.00) which include all mounting gear and brake cable. The new "Funny Fender" (\$15.00) has a wide, rounded shape which works with wide-section front tires—and the fender coordinates well with the soft curves of the tank and fairing.

Those who like a very traditional look in Norton equipment may opt for the DCW TT tank and seat combination (\$175.00). The tank is available in two versions—large and small. Norton owners who like a low riding position but don't like clip-ons should investigate DCW "Clubman" bars (\$15.00 in black chrome finish). The bars are long enough to allow easy mounting of hydraulic master cylinders and levers. More attractive are the low-rise European touring-type bars (\$10.95). Completing the package is the Racer I clamp-on fender (\$15.00). ●

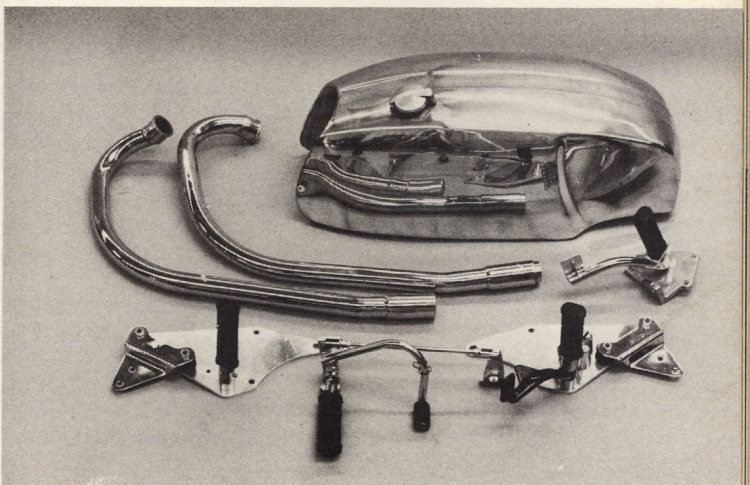
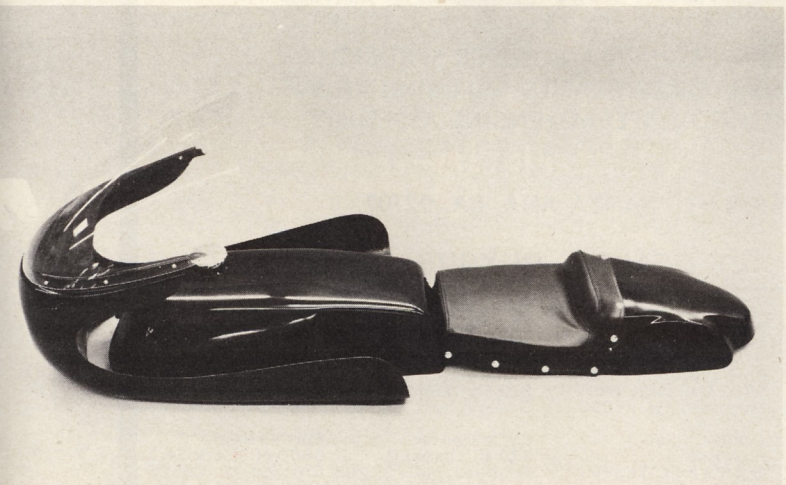
CYCLE



**Paul Dunstall Ltd.**



**Dick's Cycle West**



**International Cycle Sales**