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Reinventing The ROGUE

IT'S BIG. It's bold. And it's the only one of its kind in existence. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the Vulcan 2000 that Kawasaki could have built — if they thought like Scott Nett.

This project was conceived last summer at *RoadBike*'s illustrious world headquarters, where a group of editors, huddled at a kitchen table, hatched a plan. We'd ask Kawasaki to lend us two stock Vulcan 2000s to give to two custom builders — one specializing in metric bikes, the other in American V-twins. We'd give them free reign to do whatever they wanted to the bikes, and we'd follow the builds in the magazine. Once the bikes were finished, Kawasaki would take them back and put them on display at events and rallies around the country, including Daytona Bike Week.

After getting an enthusiastic go-ahead from the manufacturer, we contacted Scott Britt, owner of Britt Custom Metrix, and Tim Edmondson, founder of American IronHorse Motorcycle Co., and threw out the challenge: take the biggest production V-twin on the planet and turn it into a radical custom ride. Chop, slash, and trash anything you want. Just make it big.

Thus was born our Two-Liter Challenge, a build-off between two masters of machinery who come from completely different ends of the spectrum. Scott has long been a metric leader with his standout Yamaha cruisers, while Tim made his mark with the first-ever mass-produced American V-twin customs. Both builders ripped into their stock Vulcans, to build their interpretations of the ultimate custom on the ultimate V-twin platform. The results, as you see here, have been outstanding.

So far, we've covered the project in the December/January, February/March, April, and May issues. In this issue, on page 86, is our final episode with the Edmondson bike before the final feature story. But before you turn the pages, read on. Here, George goes inside Scott's head to find out where the incredible Britt custom came from. — *JP*

For this story, let's start at the end, with the paint. After all, the paint job is one of the most important expressions on a custom bike. And this paint is nothing if not extraordinary.

In The Home Stretch

It was on a Saturday afternoon, early in February, that I tracked down Scott in his fabrication shop at Britt Motorsports, where the banging of sheetmetal made conversation almost impossible. Scott quickly moved to the front office, past throngs of customers and employees who vied for his attention. "On Saturdays, I mingle with my customers, and I show people what's going on in the fabrication shop," says the 46-year-old builder. "It's a big ride-in day for customers."

Scott, not only a master customizer but also a master of understatement, describes himself as "a motorcycle dealer who sells new bikes in my day job, so I can play with custom bikes after hours." He divides his time daily between his two stores, about 60 miles apart in Wilmington and Jacksonville, North Carolina, where he and his 55 employees pump out sales of about 1,800 units a year. They sell motorcycles, ATVs, and personal watercraft by manufacturers like Kawasaki, Polaris, Yamaha, and Suzuki, plus the far-out custom metrics he's known for. "Three of my guys are dedicated to customs," Scott says, adding humbly, "and I'm the painter."

At any given time, Scott has about five custom projects in the works. The critical one at the moment, with Daytona Bike Week fast approaching, is the *RoadBike* Two-Liter Challenge Vulcan. "Paint starts Tuesday," declares Scott. "I've got Matt Legwin helping with bodywork right now, doing the disassembly."

What would the paint scheme be? "I always say if I spend a lot of time figuring out a paint job and then I go into the booth and change my mind, it's all been a waste of time. I have some ideas in my head, but I haven't pulled the color yet. Right now I

want a paint job to highlight the blue on those wheels. I'm thinking Silver Pearl paint with blue graphics. And maybe flames."

Scott has warned his staff that he'll be on the project for four or five days, working day and night in the shop's offsite paint booth. He adds, "I really owe a lot to the staff at the store — they cover my tracks at my day job when I go into the paint booth for a month or so."

The Magic Touch

When I spoke with Scott the following Tuesday, he was laughing. "I changed my mind totally. It's green," he tells me. "I'm thinking that this has got to be a Kawasaki. The engine is signature Kawasaki; the fenders, from the side, look Kawasaki; the tank, though stretched, looks Kawasaki. I'm going for a Pro-Street Kawi look, so it's gotta be green. I used House of Kolor's Lime Gold over a green base, to get Kandy Lime Green. It's probably got 15 to 20 coats on it. It screams 'Kawasaki' from a hundred feet away." Scott sprays the frame and bodywork with an amazing six quarts of reduced paint.

The next day, he takes the frame home. Says Scott, "I'm going to put the frame in the living room, put all the green bodywork together, and then work on taping the stripe designs. More than likely, it'll be flames... but we'll see."

On Thursday, Scott tells me, "I laid out a flame design. Tonight I'll spray on a deep blue, with Kobalt Blue as the main color, to contrast with the green and match the wheels." On Friday, he hands over the bodywork to Mike Baumgardner for expert pinstriping. The white stripes turn out "awesome," according to Scott, and the parts are ready for four layers of clear coat. At last, the Vulcan is ready for final assembly — with only days to spare before Daytona.

Paint done, let's explore how Scott developed his design and theme for this outstanding custom.

Inside Scott's Head

What did you think when you first saw the stock bike?

It was all about the big, massive motor. I liked the look of the engine, and the first time I dropped the clutch on it, it leaped in a way that surprised me. The motor gave me motivation. I had to show more of it on my bike.

What was the overall look you wanted?

I wanted it to look like a Kawasaki product. I didn't want this to be another lone custom motorcycle that people can't even recognize as a metric until they study it for half an hour. I wanted this to look like the bad-ass Pro-Street Vulcan 2000 that Kawasaki would put out if they really stretched their imagination.

So you modified stock Kawi parts?

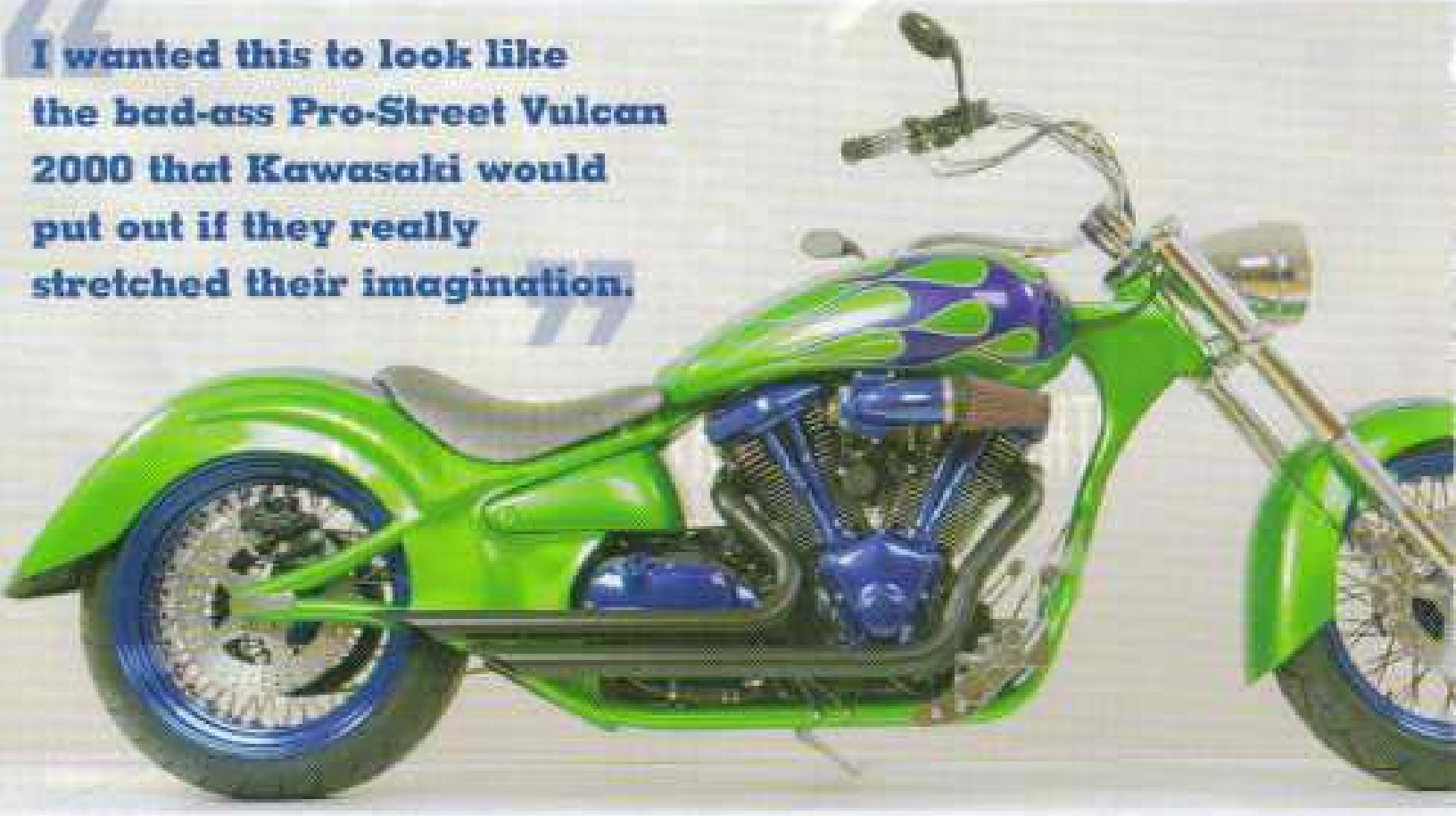
We retained the stock tank and fenders. Rob Connelly did all the bodywork, and he did an amazing job. Because our frame is longer than the stock one, we got a second Kawasaki tank and added it to the front, stretching it about 5", while the rear is original. This way, it's a massive but stock-themed Kawasaki tank. We also cut off all the stock instruments and added a flush-mount, pop-up gas cap from J&P Cycles.

For the fenders, we didn't lengthen either one. But we added about 5" to the width of the rear fender and about 1-1/2" to the front, along with making new mounts. From the side, the fenders look stock; from the rear, they look massive. Rob actually made the fender to be one piece with the frame.

Why build a rigid?

Because less is more. And, as a rigid, it's a really different bike than the stock one, not just a modified stock bike. And because it's such a big bike, we can use a fat tire and get the pressure down, maybe run it at 22 to 25 pounds so it's comfortable. I also

"I wanted this to look like the bad-ass Pro-Street Vulcan 2000 that Kawasaki would put out if they really stretched their imagination."



wasn't planning to use a skinny seat.

What were your biggest challenges – the frame and the cooling system?

Absolutely. I needed a massive frame to hold the massive motor. I took the stock frame to Chris Prince at Prince-Tech and told him what I wanted, and he designed it. I also didn't want the radiator exposed, so we had to come up with a way to hide it in the frame.

What is the frame made of?

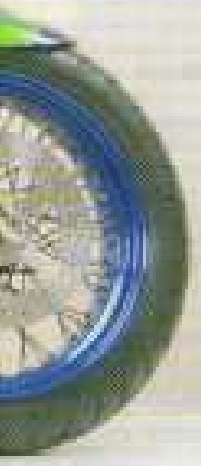
Chris took his raw frame to a steel company and told them he needed steel with the same configuration and high strength. He used 1-1/2" DOM tubing [versus 1-3/8" steel on the factory frame], with a single downtube to expose the big motor in front. The backbone is a square piece of steel, about 4" wide by 2" thick.

How did you deal with the cooling system?

First, we talked with the tech people at Kawasaki, who told us the only thing the radiator does is cool the head — the big fins cool the rest of the engine. So, we just had to find a way to cool the head with a radiator that we could hide. Actually, we think we're overcooled now.

We found the best spot to fit a hidden radiator, then went to a local radiator shop with the frame and looked up radiator specs. We chose a heat dissipater for a '64 Rambler. It was the right size and capacity to tuck away. We used the original cooling hoses coming off the motor, but modified things from there. The radiator is tucked down low in the bike — it lays horizontally, way below the seat, and it's screened from debris. We retained the original Kawasaki thermostatic fan, which is on top and pushes air down toward the road. There's also an airflow effect across it.

We didn't touch the engine water pump. It sits on the bottom right, as usual, with the radiator behind it. We kept the radiator fill under the gas tank, which is its stock location. Water is pumped into the engine and comes out through the head, goes through the hose running within the frame backbone, exits the bottom of the backbone under the seat, and then goes into the radiator. Then it flows out of the radiator into a 2' hose on the back side of the bottom frame rail, and into the bottom of the engine to the water pump. We ran the hoses through, down, or behind the frame.



Any engine mods?

The bike's power and torque are already awesome. And we also lightened the motorcycle by maybe 150 pounds, so we didn't feel the motor needed much work. We added a Tornado air kit from Thunder Mfg. and remapped the fuel injection with a Dynojet Power Commander. We went through the powerband to smooth things out — I wanted a tire-smoking but reliable Pro-Street bike.

We made the one-off exhaust ourselves by combining three Road Star systems from Bub Enterprises. We cut them up to make one pipe with a combination of bends, turns, and cuts.

OWNER:	Kawasaki Motors Corp.
HOME:	Irvine, CA
BUILDER:	Britt Custom Metal
YEAR/MODEL:	'04 Kawasaki Vulcan 2000
TIME TO BUILD:	Five months
COST TO BUILD:	Upwards of $12,000
CHROMER:	Black Bike (blue chrome)
PAINTER:	Scott Britt
ENGINE	
DISPLACEMENT:	2053cc
PISTONS:	Stock
HEADS:	Stock
CAMS:	Stock
FUEL SYSTEM:	Stock EFI
AIR CLEANER:	Thunder Mfg. Tornado
EXHAUST:	Bub, modified by Britt
FINAL DRIVE:	Belt
CHASSIS	
FRAME:	Prince-Tech
RAKE:	38 degrees
STRETCH:	5"
FRONT SUSPENSION:	Arlen Ness 53.5mm inverted fork
SWINGARM:	Rigid
REAR SUSPENSION:	None
FRONT WHEEL:	Black Bike 80-spoke 18 x 4.25"
REAR WHEEL:	Black Bike 80-spoke 18 x 10.5"
FRONT TIRE:	Metzeler ME 880 180/4.25-18"
REAR TIRE:	Metzeler ME 880 280/10.5-18"
FRONT BRAKES:	Galfer rotor with Performance Machine caliper
REAR BRAKES:	Galfer rotor with stock caliper
FENDERS:	Stock, modified
ACCESSORIES	
HEADLIGHT:	Arlen Ness 7"
TAILLIGHT:	Russ Wennmorn LED/tag bracket combo
TURN SIGNALS:	None
FUEL TANK:	Stock, modified
HANDLEBARS:	Flanders beach bars
SEAT:	Todd McLeod, Quality Automotive Upholstery
HAND CONTROLS:	Performance Machine
MIRRORS:	Rizoma
FOOT CONTROLS:	Supreme Legends, modified
TAG BRACKET:	Russ Wennmorn

Did you have any trouble fitting the 280 Metzeler in the rear?

Clearance is the word in a custom bike. You either have it, or else everything rubs. We wanted the 280 tire, but it was a tight fit. So we were going to use a chain drive to gain a little extra room, but we reworked the chassis instead to fit the stock belt. We used front and rear pulleys from Evolution Industries, though we had to make a custom rear pulley to adapt to the wheel through some trick machining.

We have the tire on a beautiful 10-1/2" Black Bike rim, and the front tire is on a 4-1/4" rim. We ordered blue chrome wheels (they're powder coated over a chrome base) with laced black spokes. We think they're a highlight.

There's not much chrome on this bike — why's that?

My eye is very sensitive to balance. There's a minor amount of chrome splashed around, but the rest is paint. We chromed the bars and levers, and had Black Bike do the motor — the valve covers, clutch and side covers, and pushrod covers were all chromed in blue. We had the exhaust and parts of the controls powder coated black by Coastal Coatings, and the cylinder fins were diamond cut by Diamond Heads in Las Vegas.

What made you choose the Arlen Ness front end?

I spoke with Cory Ness a while ago. He told me he's been watching the metric market closely, and I said this is your chance to make a statement to metric riders. He sent a 63mm inverted fork and triple trees, all made of billet aluminum. To make the front end fit, we took the steering stem off the Kawasaki tree and grafted it to the Ness tree, and used the stock stem and steering head bearings. Since we already had American-style wheels, they bolted right up.

What are other highlights on the bike?

We've got a set of Yamaha forward controls from Supreme Legends, which Rob Connelly converted to fit the Vulcan. It was a little tricky — we had to change the controls three times, using a 5' 10" guy as a model to reach the pegs.

Up front, we used Performance Machine levers and J&P Cycles grooved grips. I chose Flanders beach bars, because the bars had to come way back. J&P also supplied us with an Arlen Ness 7" headlight, black brake lines, and Ness throttle and clutch cable clamps.

For the seat, we modified the stock pan and foam, and made a frame to accommodate the pan. But once we put the seat on the bike, we didn't like how it turned out. So, Todd McLeod at Quality Automotive Upholstery stepped in and created a kick-ass seat from our pan. It made a huge difference in the overall look of the bike.

The brakes have Galfer discs, front and rear. The front caliper is a four-piston Performance Machine unit for Harley softails, and we used the stock caliper in the rear. For a taillight, we frenched a Russ Wernimont LED/license plate combo into the rear fender.

Parting Words

"I couldn't do this alone, without talented people," Scott emphasizes. "Mike Paulson and Garry Lane worked as mechanics, Chris Prince created the frame, Rob Connelly took the raw tubing frame and created the metalwork into a one-piece body, Matt Legwin did outstanding bodywork, George Reaves did expert fabrication on the mock-up, and Bud Milza brought all the parts together. And I'm blessed to have my sons Garrett, 26, and Dane, 19, working with me in the business and on various parts of this build."

Scott sums up the entire experience in his typical low-key manner. "It's a big day for me to have Cory Ness contribute to this project, and for my name to appear on the same pages with him and Tim Edmondson. When I took on this build, I felt I had nothing to lose. I expect Tim to come out with a strong statement in metal." But there's no denying the strength, originality, and beauty of Scott's Vulcan. RB

SOURCES

ARLEN NESS
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63.5mm Spyke front end

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