

THREE WEEK WONDER

By Wayne Scraba
Photos by Melissa Rademacher

GEARING UP FOR HYPERDRIVE







MARTIN BECKER

of MB Cycles in Heidelberg is a well-known and respected name on the German scene. Becker has been building custom bikes since 2001 with the main focus on American V-twins. Martin tells us his shop is not a classic repair workshop nor is it a bolt-on boutique, and he's quick to point out that he really doesn't like to have his bikes categorized. Instead, Becker aims squarely for clean and radical machines, many of which are unique hardtails. Evidence of this is the rigid-framed Buell you're looking at.

With a single glance it's clear that this is no standard build. And the way it came to be isn't exactly standard either. Martin had this 1992 Evo softail in his shop circa 2015. Word has it the old Evo wasn't all that nice, and he ended up taking a trade on the machine. That trade was the Buell hardtail rolling chassis used for this build. The roller frame is from VG Motorcycles out of the Netherlands, and it came with a cast neck, which pretty much locked in the geometry of the chassis. Martin had no concrete plans for the rolling chassis, but then a friend of his, Rolf Reick from Krautmotors in Heidelberg, came calling. Germans will

tell you there's a pretty cool end of the summer motorcycle race event in the southern part of the country called the Glemseck 101. It's a 1/8-mile sprint that incorporates a class which Rolf founded. That class is called Starr Wars (*starr* is a German word that loosely means *rigid* or *hardtail*). Regulations for the class are pretty loose—aside from rider safety gear, there are only three rules: the motorcycle must have a real rigid frame, the motorcycle must be street legal, and the motorcycle must be roadworthy (tires and brakes functional and no leaking liquids).

Additionally, the organizer of Glemseck 101 can check a vehicle at any time, and if it doesn't abide by the rules, out it goes.

Fair enough. A sprint in European terms means a good old-fashioned drag race to us. In this case, however, there are no Chrondeck timers, no Christmas tree, and no ET slips. The race (at least in 2017) is flag-started by a girl in a big poodle-style skirt. The first rigid to get to the finish stripe wins. Sounds like a good time to us!

Back to Martin's shop and his conversation with Rolf: Reick informed Martin that he had two spots open in his 2017 Starr Wars event. This was in the middle of August,



and in order to compete Martin would have to get a bike running and ready in a mere three weeks. No problem. Martin strapped the Buell hardtail chassis on one of his bike lifts and hit the throttle. He thrashed night and day on the bike, primarily using bits and pieces he already had in his shop (essentially leftovers from other motorcycle projects).

With the Buell on the lift, Martin slid in a stock 2002 Buell S1 Lightning engine he had tucked away. He didn't have time to go through the powerplant and simultaneously build the rest of the machine, so it was a leap of faith. As far as he knew, the 74" V-twin was stock. He added a Mikuni HSR 42mm carburetor topped with a Forcewinder air cleaner. The ignition system consists of Dyna bits while the stubby wrapped weed burners are pieces Martin whipped up in the shop. The transmission is a stock unit five speed. The only modification is to the clutch, which was treated to a Muller easy-pull conversion.

For rolling stock, Martin added a 2-1/2" x 21" DNA spoked wheel on the nose along with a matching 8-1/2" x 18" job out back. The front rolls on a MH 90-21" Avon Cobra while the back skin, also a Cobra, is a 250/40-R18". Bringing the beast down from warp drive is a Buell four-piston

caliper matched to a 10" rotor on the nose coupled with a Honda two-piston caliper with an 8-1/2" rotor on the back. The fork is a Buell upside-down job that was shortened 2". Martin added a set of clip-ons from a Kawasaki ZXR and fit them with ISR hand controls and levers. If you check out the photos, you'll see Becker also installed an NHK steering damper (likely a really good idea on a machine like this one). The drag-style pegs and foot controls are in-house custom-fabbed bits.

The gas tank is off one of those little '70s-era import "Indians." Martin added a fresh Indian logo decal to top it off (it definitely throws folks off!). Meanwhile, the oil tank is one of Becker's in-house cylindrical jobs. The seat is something he had in his cast-off pile, and the little headlamp fairing is another in-house MB Cycles component. Out back, the "legal" taillight is a LED setup from Paschburg. The axle-mounted tag bracket is a custom job that Martin fabbed from aluminum.

As for paint, anodizing, powdercoating, polishing, or chrome plating are concerned, well, there is none. In Martin's words, it's all "just rusty, raw, used, vintage iron." All good as far as we're concerned. Besides, chrome and paint



just add unnecessary weight!

Days before the big race, Martin had the bike pretty much nailed down. He wasn't even sure it would run, but of course it did. Even better, the scooter was also much, much faster than he thought it could possibly be. He was stoked! And to make the story even sweeter, the three-week wonder placed fourth in a field of 16. That's not the end of it, either. Directly after the race, a gentleman named Andy bought the Starr Wars racer. Talk about a good ending to the story! **AIM**

Tech Sheet

Owner	Martin Becker
Builder	MB Cycles, Hans Bunte Strasse 6, 69123 Heidelberg, Germany
Year/model	2011 custom build
Time to build	Four weeks

Powerplant

Engine	2002 Buell S1 Lightning
Displacement	74"
Horsepower	Approx. 80
Carb	Mikuni HSR 42mm
Air cleaner	K&N Forcewinder
Exhaust	Dual straight pipes (MB Cycles)
Ignition	Dyna S
Coils	Aftermarket no-name
Transmission	Stock Buell five speed
Clutch	Müller Easy Clutch

Chassis

Frame	VG Netherlands/hardtail with cast steering head and axle plates
Rake	32 degrees
Front forks	Buell upside down
Mods	Shortened approx. 2"
Front wheel	2-1/2" x 21" 60-spoke single hub DNA
Rear wheel	8-1/2" x 18" 60-spoke dual hub DNA

Front brake	Buell four-piston with Buell 10" disc
Rear brake	Honda two-piston with 8-1/2" Honda disc
Front tire	MH 90-21" Avon Cobra
Rear tire	250/40-R18" Avon Cobra
Rear fender	Handmade MB Cycles with integrated turn signals and rear/brake light

Accessories

Headlight	MB Cycles' Night Rod-style windscreen
Taillight	Paschburg LED
Fuel tank	Original 1970s Taiwan Indian OEM paint
Oil tank	Aluminum, MB Cycles
Handlebars	ZXR Kawasaki clip on bars
Seat	MB Cycles with red vintage leather
Pegs	MB Cycles rearset pegs
Chain guard	MB Cycles
License bracket	MB Cycles hand-formed aluminum
Hand controls	ISR
Foot controls	MB Cycles
Levers	ISR