



LEFT: McQueen's other rides. 1963 T120 TT Desert Sled (#502), and 1964 ISDT TR6 Trophy (#278)

Tank dents and exhaust rust were painstakingly created to get a battle-scarred look



ABOVE: Bolt-over 56-tooth rear sprocket lowers gearing for off-road action. The standard sprocket is 46-tooth



'ONCE THE PAINT WAS COMPLETED, WE ADDED DENTS AND DINGS



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B15

Ace Classics do McQueen (again)

Great Escape replica Triumphs have been built before – but few have been as painstakingly created as this 1961 TR6R

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TRIUMPH SPECIALISTS ACE CLASSICS in south London have become experts in Steve McQueen replicas, thanks to a steady flow of commission builds from Cedric Colaert, a French-based McQueen fanatic. When he ordered a replica of Steve McQueen's bike from the World War II movie *The Great Escape*, he already had Ace Classics-built replicas of the film star's 1964 ISDT Triumph, 1961 TR6 desert sled racer and 1963 T120 TT racer.

This latest build is based on a 1961 TR6R, as per the bike in the film. "We originally planned to use a complete machine as the donor bike, but then found a matching numbers 1961 Triumph in bits and used that instead," says Kev Rushworth, son of Ace Classics owner, Cliff.

Different stories of who supplied the original bikes for the film abound, but Kev explains: "When Ken Heanes was alive, he told me that the jump bike used in the film was his own 1961 ISDT bike, which

he modified and painted specially for the filming. He'd been approached by the film company for bikes. I'm told there were three used in the film: the jump bike, another similar TR6 and one with a sidecar fitted. However, others say that Bud Ekins built the bike. I don't think anyone really knows the complete story."

To create the replica, Ace first had to restore the motorcycle, complete with paint finish, and then age it to give it the right kind of patina expected of a used and abused WWII motorcycle.

"We studied all the still images we could find and went through the film, freeze-framing it to get every last detail correct. That to me is the real joy of a project like this – the research. Plus, so much more goes into a build like this than into a straightforward restoration project, in which you just take new parts off the shelf. We used new parts, then had to age them!"

Although the movie is based on a real WWII escape, there's no evidence that one of the



Caption in here please if we can on the feature that the caption is talking about

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'IT'S AMAZING. IT LOOKS SO SCRUFFY BUT IT'S EFFECTIVELY A BRAND NEW MOTORCYCLE'



ABOVE: Centre stand is essential for post-escape chain maintenance

escapees stole a German army motorcycle to try to cross the border. The chases are said to have been added by bike-nut McQueen; the TR6, repainted in German military livery, was chosen because it was more nimble and powerful than a BMW.

Ace rebuilt the engine to stock spec, except for 7:1 compression pistons instead of 8.5:1. "The lower compression suits modern low-octane fuel we now have, plus the bike is easier to start and there's no real loss of performance. We even use 7:1 pistons in the Triumphs we race at Goodwood and Montlhéry."

Things like the three-gallon duplex tank, oil tank, handlebars and headlight are stock TR6, but visual mods include a 1954 pie-crust half-width front hub for a more period look, which meant using 1946-1956 fork bottoms. These slightly longer forks altered the stance of the bike, which meant adding feet to the bottom of the main stand. A bike with off-road pretensions would not have a main stand but Cedric specified one as the bike is going to be on display in his 'museum'.

There's also a 56-tooth bolt-over sprocket, now a hard-to-source American aftermarket accessory, which offers more acceleration for off-road racing than the stock 46-tooth version.

McQueen didn't like the Dunlop solo rubber saddle and had it recovered with extra foam and a canvas covering - which Ace have replicated using material from a military surplus holdall. But what stands out overall is the attention to detail and the finish. "We had

everything finished in green, even the chrome wheels and all the nuts and bolts," says Kev. "Everything that was powder coated came back shiny, so we wiped it down with carb cleaner to take away the shine. Once the paint was done, we added dents and dings. The tank was done the night before the bike was photographed!

"We initially tried an exhaust system with a dull chrome finish, but it didn't look right so we painted it with Halfords heatproof silver over the chrome, then sprayed it with acid to get some rust coming through. It's amazing really. It looks so scruffy but it's effectively a brand new motorcycle."

YOUR HELP REQUIRED

Kev would love to create a replica of the Bud Ekins bike (below, #102) but this pic is his only clue. "From what I can see it's a 1960/61 model but I need more detail. If anyone out there has more images, I'd love to see them, colour or black and white," says Kev. ©

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ABOVE: Bud Ekins makes the famous jump. He hit the ramp at 60mph and cleared 65ft

