



Big Daddy Roth might have shed a tear to see Rewaco's RF1. Built in Germany and now available in Canada, all that's missing from the Ford Focus-powered trike is Rat Fink smoking rubber into the sunset

OUTTA SIGHT MAN!

Story and photos by John Molony

I was skeptical when it was suggested we ride a Rewaco trike for this issue. Of all the more unusual vehicles we have ridden over the years, the machine in question was certainly the one that most blurs the line between motorcycle and car. Unlike other manufacturers, this trike isn't a motorcycle modified into a trike but rather a from the ground up build that created a trike from both car and motorcycle design and mechanical elements. The German-built Rewacos have a Canadian distributor based in Chilliwack, BC and we had been following the trials and tribulations the company experienced while getting the trike approved for Canadian roads. We had seen the trikes at various motorcycle shows over the years with Volkswagen, Harley and BMW motors, and they always seemed to be on the cusp of Transport Canada approval. While no major design revisions were required from the trikes to be found in the European market, small changes were constantly being required.

The Rewaco RF1 trike reminds me of something inspired by a "Big Daddy" Roth cartoon in which Rat Fink with his giant bloodshot eyes and flapping

tongue maniacally steers some kind of hot rod with smoking, cartoonishly oversized rear tires. The RF1 trike is one of those cartoons brought to the street in all its outrageous glory and I was about to become the bulge eyed rat. Whether it would smoke its large rear tires would be question for later. Admittedly, the RF1 is as close to being a car as anything we have ridden. Somewhere around the driver's seat is a demarcation line that separates a chopper with a long multi-linked front end from a Ford Focus drivetrain with a great fibreglass body kit. You never know what you are going to get until you put them all together.

Its dimensions are substantial. At 6'3" (1,880mm) wide and 11'4" (3,410mm) long the machine made even the Big Dog choppers we rode last issue seem compact. The dry weight is an impressive 1,300 pounds (589 kg). To some extent that statistic is irrelevant as there is no weight for the rider to lift or push. The normally aspirated 1.6 litre Ford Focus motor is rated at 115 hp and moves the trike, albeit not with earth-shattering quickness. The zero to 100 kmh time is purported to be about 6.7 seconds which is within the range of

many cars, though faster than the Ford Focus that donated the engine. Fuel economy is surprising good when compared to other machines of this weight coming in at around 45 mpg or 5.8l/100 km. There are a couple of option performance levels and the Turbo versions of the motor is the strongest, outputting 185 hp which will apparently knock a couple of seconds off the zero-to-60 time and bring the performance closer to its hotrod inspired spirit.

THERE HAVE BEEN FEW VEHICLES OF ANY TYPE THAT I HAVE BEEN apprehensive about jumping on. The Rewaco trike was one of them and I think that the shifting was the most unusual aspect of the machine.

The gear shift looks as though it is straight out of the Focus and sits in the centre of the gas tank—which isn't really the gas tank because that resides safely behind the driver's seat. To shift gears you need to take one hand off the bars, depress the foot clutch and move the stick. However, if you drive a car you are using the opposite hand to shift as you can't take your right hand off the throttle. It seemed like a lot to remember and inherently differ-



COUNTER-INTUITIVE: To shift gears, the Rewaco RF1 presents a stick jutting from the faux fuel tank. But the operation is left-handed, unless you can manage the move and still keep your right on the throttle.





WAY OUT THERE: A massive body width means that unless you're careful about keeping the nose down the centre line of your lane, the Rewaco RF1 will occupy part of the one next to you.

ent from anything I was in the habit of doing. But once underway, shifting was not as much of a challenge as I feared—after a few blown shifts, generally the result of trying to shift with my right hand while dropping the throttle. The clutch has a long engagement while the five-speed transmission offers a reverse gear—you won't be pushing this baby out of a tight parking spot. Slipping into reverse and feathering the throttle to back out of a parking spot is a novel experience. I was almost tempted to ride around the parking lot in reverse simply because I could.

On the road the Rewaco is surprising agile. The steering feel is light and unlike other three-wheeled vehicles such as the BRP Spyder, there is little of the lateral push when cornering due in part to the very low seat height. But, like operating a sidecar rig, you have to be mindful not to cut the corners or the right back wheel will be riding the sidewalk.

You also need to remember to stay in the centre of your lane because of the machine's great width, which

exceeds that of many cars. Stray too far and the left wheel will be playing chicken on the centre line.

Long hours on the road are spent comfortably with car-like seats, plenty of back support and pretty much limitless legroom. With hand grips and footpegs to brace the position, the passenger sits high with a good view over the driver's helmet. There are a variety of foot positions offered by a chromed horizontally mounted side impact rack that keeps the rider's feet off the road.

The seating position is so low the pilot actually peers over the bars to see the road—in the case of our RF1, line-of-sight was obscured further by a small wind deflector. This low seating position is great from a centre of gravity perspective because the trike feels glued to the road. The only time it becomes an issue is on tight roads with sudden drops where you must look up and over to see where you are going. Then the road would disappear from view.

On the flip side, the rider is out of the wind. However, being situated this close to the road it's best to wear a full-

face helmet as you are nose level to car bumpers and their exhaust while riding around the city.

Braking is done through a single foot pedal that links the front and rear disc-mounted calipers. The trike takes care of the dynamics of the braking so mash the pedal as hard as you see fit.

In the September issue, in my story "The Dark Knight," I mentioned that the Barnes custom V-Rod garnered more attention than anything we had ridden to date. But I must now revise that statement; the Rewaco RF1 has now claimed the title.

Again, if you don't want to be the centre of attention, this isn't the machine for you. People will stop you with photo requests, comments and family meetings. Much of its charisma stems from its exaggerated styling: six headlights mounted across the front; the long rake; the swooping fibreglass body with rear wing; the fat, low-profile tires and exhaust tips. There is absolutely nothing understated about this machine and it was certainly a hit with the non-motorcycle crowd and hot rodders alike.

Who is the potential buyer? Possibly wild men with cartoonish sensibilities. Possibly older riders who want to retain the tactility of a motorcycle but also appreciate the stability of a trike. An optional trailer hitch is available and here is one vehicle that can very likely pull a nice little tent trailer without compromising handling.

The back of the trike features a large luggage compartment—you could call it a trunk—with enough space for a couple of pieces of soft luggage.

It isn't inexpensive to get into a Rewaco trike—the RF1 GT Style model we tested had a pricetag of \$41,500. But, the the components are quality. The fibreglass body and paint are flawless, the billet aluminum pieces plentiful and the front engineering impressive. Slightly less expensive models are available and a trike with another engine configuration is on the horizon. Though it lacks the punch to bulge out your eyeballs, the attention I was drawing on the Rewaco RF1 made me think that, at the very least, my ears must have been flapping in the wind. **B**



NOTHING UNDERSTATED: From the rear perspective, a spoiler wing, pop-up trunk and broad rubber form the Rewaco RF1's expansive profile.

