

# Kaffeemaschine: A Singular Passion

Word has spread across Europe about Axel Budde’s custom Moto Guzzis. From his workshop in Hamburg, he’s delivered V-twins to clients all over Europe.



**H**ave modern mass-production motorcycles lost their way? In the relentless quest to be faster, safer, and more economical, some people think the vital connection between rider and machine has been forgotten.

Axel Budde is one of those people, and he’s made it his business to restore the connection. He’s now one of the world’s leading Moto Guzzi specialists, crafting elegant machines with raw, unmodulated power.

“I like to build ‘elementary’ machines,” he says. “Bikes that a rider can control, but only just. Machines that still have the capacity to surprise with their acceleration and noise. A Kaffeemaschine Moto Guzzi is a counterpoint to the cold and electronic nature of many bikes today.”

Most riders, unless they have a contract with a MotoGP team, can pilot a well-sorted 90 bhp motorcycle quicker along an Alpine switchback than a 180 bhp superbike. “That’s because you can dominate the machine and ride it

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at the limit, which is the most satisfying aspect,” says Axel. “Dominating 180 bhp is impossible for me and most other riders, especially on the road.” (And that’s coming from someone whose hobby is vintage racing.)

Axel works alone, in a cramped and dark workshop in Hamburg. German winters are harsh, and the workshop gets cold. But Axel is focused, and happy to be wrenching on his beloved Guzzis. It’s a very different lifestyle to his previous job, designing and building equipment for automotive shoots, with a bit of precision driving on the side. But he decided to switch professions when he saw computer graphics encroaching on his domain.

The turning point? “An English guy contacted me after seeing images of my early bikes on the internet,” Axel recalls. “He wanted me to build him a Moto Guzzi, and I’d always wondered if I could make a career of it.” So Axel said yes, and Kaffeemaschine was born.

Like many European builders, Axel is entranced by the mystique of the Mandello del Lario marque. But it was a circuitous path. Growing up in rural Germany, there were few motorcycles around. And it was only when Axel saw Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* that he started to take notice of bikes. “I was fascinated more by the lifestyle, though,” he admits. “I was a typical teenager, wanting to look tough and cool by wearing a leather jacket.”

As a teenager, Axel started saving for his first bike, and by the time he was 18, he had enough money in the bank. “I desperately wanted a Triumph Bonneville, and to this day

I know that was the right decision. But my parents said I would have to move out of their house if I bought a Triumph, despite it being my own money! So I got a BMW R45, a rational German choice.”

After two years, Axel was ready for a bigger bike. He test-rode most of the “classics”—more Bonnevilles, and a Honda CB750. He was close to buying a BMW R75/5 when, by accident, he happened across a Moto Guzzi Le Mans.

“I’ll never forget that first ride on a Guzzi,” he says. “The bike was long, low, and loud. A big engine in a tight Italian dress is a very special combination, which still amazes me after all these years.”



## Maschine 6

Kaffeemaschine’s sixth build is based on a 1980 Le Mans, customized for the British motorcycle racer Brian Cowan, who wanted a high-performance Guzzi for the European vintage race scene. Deeming his client a classic guy fond of original icons, Axel Budde decided to build a “1970s” bike that would be immediately recognizable as a Le Mans—a highly modified one, though. Cowan’s only design preference was for the bike to be red. Budde worked with fiberglass components, fairing, and cast wheels. To meet the needs for speed of the pro-

fessional racer, he completely rebuilt a V11 unit, boosting it with an HTMoto hot cam and valve kit. The heads have been ported and polished, and are now dual plug; the rest of the engine has been blueprinted and balanced to extract every last ounce of power. The bike weighs no more than 176 kg dry. The forks are from a 750S, but upgraded with modern internals. At the back, the shocks are custom-built Ikons and the brake system new and improved throughout.

<b>Bike Name:</b> Maschine 6 <b>Make:</b> Kaffeemaschine <b>Creator:</b> Axel Budde	<b>Frame Modifications:</b> Cleaned and reduced; extra seat brackets <b>Bodywork:</b> Magni-shape tank; modified Le Mans fairing; single seat; all fiberglass <b>Motor:</b> 1040 ccm V11 unit; HTMoto cam and valves; dynamically balanced crank assembly; twin spark/electronic ignition; improved clutch; lightened flywheel; revised Le Mans transmission/bevel drive, 95 hp <b>Exhaust:</b> Handmade, improved top-end	<b>performance</b> <b>Front Suspension/Fork:</b> Modern dampers; progressive springs; new fork tubes <b>Rear Suspension/Shocks:</b> Ikon <b>Tires/Wheels:</b> Le Mans 1-3 cast wheels, Bridgestone BT 45 tires (180 front, 120 rear) <b>Brakes:</b> Modern brake cylinders front and rear; stainless lines; brake torque support rear; V65 caliper rear <b>Hand Controls/Handlebars:</b> Brembo/ Domino	<b>Foot Controls:</b> Handmade, MI levers <b>Electrics/Instruments:</b> Custom wire loom, Motogadget instrument <b>Paint/Powder:</b> Black structure paint on frame; Ducati red on body <b>Parts:</b> Kaffeemaschine, Stein-Dinse, HTMoto <b>Other Modifications:</b> All aluminum parts handcrafted, 176 kg weight <b>Approximate Work Hours:</b> Over 300 hours <b>Edition:</b> Unique
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Since that ride, Axel has never had eyes for any other marque. And the scale of a Le Mans suits him. "It's not a classic beauty, unlike the English bikes I used to fancy. But it's the right size for me. I'm 1.88 m tall, and feel a little lost on some machines."

A Kaffeemaschine motorcycle throws the focus onto the Tonti frame that cradles the distinctive V-twin. The lines are clean, the engineering is discreet, and the balance is impeccable. And it's always a single-seater. "You have to hold on to the rocket. It's my little asylum, which I don't want to share," says Axel.

His bikes are designed to be ridden hard on entertaining roads. "They're not really ideal for long-distance travel, or race-tracks. Or even for cruising to cafés. But they can handle that stuff just fine."

When a commission comes in, Axel locates a donor bike—usually a Le Mans or California. Then he takes it apart, right down to the last nut and bolt. He checks and rebuilds the engine and transmission, tuning the engine according to the client's needs. "I like to leave decisions on bodywork

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and paint to the end," he says. "Then, after it's all put together, I'll start testing it, and setting up the carburetors to break in the engine." Only when the bike is running perfectly can the client collect it.

When seeking inspiration, Axel looks to 1960s café racers from England, and more modern racers—notably the monstrous Moto Guzzi race bikes built to compete in races such as the 1980s Battle of the Twins. He studies shapes, proportions, and colors.

The frame will be put on a diet, the first step to drop the weight of the bike down to around 180 kg. The suspension will be upgraded, but look stock. An aftermarket tank will be fitted—subtly different from the original, but in perfect keeping with the classic Guzzi lines. The brake system and electrics will be upgraded with the best modern components, and the wiring loom and battery will disappear from sight. And although the internals of a Kaffeemaschine engine might employ current technology, often from the renowned tuner HTMoto, the visible parts are invariably "authentic," being cast or handmade. The "technic" and the "optic" must be in perfect harmony.

The result is a motorcycle with the looks and quality of a factory bike, but a unique provenance. And it's the handmade nature of these machines that makes them so appealing. "There aren't many opportunities left for people to own something that's so and personal," says Axel. "Custom motorcycles are a projection of dreams, for people who want to ride something different. You're making an alterna-



## Maschine 8

Commissioned by Guillaume Bureau from Switzerland, Kaffeemaschine's Maschine 8 was conceived as a reduced café racer with an aluminum tank, polished spoked wheels, and a stainless sport exhaust that would still be able to carry a pillion. The double seat Axel Budde built for it resembles a single café racer hump. A slightly shorter tank gives a little extra space. Budde cleaned up

the Moto Guzzi's frame shape, added extra seat brackets and modified the rear. The bike's tank and fenders are of brushed aluminum. To add a little roughness to the overall neat design, Budde chose black structure paint for the frame, lights and stripe, wrinkle paint for the valve/generator covers, and brown leather for the handmade seat.

**Bike Name:** Maschine 8  
**Make:** Kaffeemaschine  
**Creator:** Axel Budde

**Donor**  
**Manufacturer:** Moto Guzzi  
**Model:** Le Mans 2  
**Year of Build:** 1980

**Rebuild**  
**Bike Category/Genre:** Café racer  
**Year of Rebuild:** 2013  
**Frame Modifications:** Cleaned; reduced; extra seat brackets; and modified rear  
**Bodywork:** Handmade tank and seat  
**Motor:** Total revision; dynamically

balanced crank assembly; 1990 cc cylinders; electronic ignition; revised transmission and bevel drive with shorter ratio; 80 hp  
**Exhaust:** Handmade, polished stainless steel  
**Front Suspension/Fork:** FAC dampers; new fork tubes; progressive springs

**Rear Suspension/Shocks:** Ikon  
**Tires/Wheels:** Morad aluminum rims (2.15" front, 2.5" rear), stainless-steel spokes; Bridgestone BT45 tires (100 front, 120 rear)  
**Brakes:** Modern brake cylinders front and rear; stainless lines; brake torque support rear; V65 caliper rear

**Hand Controls/Handlebars:** Brembo, Domino  
**Foot Controls:** Handmade, M1 levers  
**Electrics/Instruments:** Custom wire loom; Motogadget instrument  
**Paint/Powder:** Black structure paint on frame, lights, stripe; wrinkle paint on valve/generator covers

**Parts:** Kaffeemaschine, Stein-Dinse, HTMoto  
**Other Modifications:** All aluminum parts handcrafted, 183 kg weight  
**Approximate Work Hours:** Over 300 hours  
**Edition:** Unique





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tive lifestyle choice, and these days it doesn't have to be a chromed-out Harley-Davidson—it can just as easily be a Honda 250."

Despite his success, Axel is unsure of what the future holds for custom motorcycle builders. "There's a big demand now for products like this, and for the chance to ride a 'dinosaur' down the street. But will future generations feel the same attraction?"

If they don't, the motorcycling world will be a poorer place. (CH)



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