

ous discrepancy, and our Street Rod clearly didn't launch as hard as our V-Rod had.

Still, the Revolution motor's clutch works as well as ever, easily able to handle the power and torque of the motor. And its transmission is the best on any Harley. It shifts easily and also very quietly, unlike the big twins.

Suspension

To help distinguish the Street Rod from the V-Rod, the new machine carries inverted forks with giant 56mm stanchions inside dramatically streamlined forged triple clamps. Internally, the forks are cartridge units, provided by Showa, a long-time Harley supplier. No adjustability is provided as the adjusting hardware would have detracted from the style, it was explained.

The rear shocks are slim and light-looking to reduce their visual bulk, but work well. Overall, the suspension soaked up typical road irregularities without disturbing the chassis and resisted porpoising on the freeways. The decision to retain the wheel sizes (19" diameter front and 18" in the rear), primarily for styling reasons, may also serve to smooth the ride as the larger diameters roll over bumps more easily.

Wheels, Tires & Brakes

We were impressed with the V-Rod's brakes, but nonetheless they have been changed on the Street Rod. Perhaps to give those "conquest" customers what they expect, Brembo has been given the nod to produce new calipers. They don't look like any Brembos you've seen before, styled in Milwaukee with raised H-D logos on the sides and perforated covers hiding the pads and retaining clips, but inside they contain four pistons each. The disc sizes have been increased marginally, from 292mm to 300 both front and back, and now mount to bosses on the wheel spokes, saving the weight of separate carriers. Brake lines are steel-braided and the master cylinders are also new, designed to reduce lever travel. Stopping performance was essentially unchanged—it was already good. But our main complaints are that the rear brake is too easy to lock, and worse, the rear brake lever is too high for comfort and completely non-adjustable, a serious oversight. Thankfully, using the front brake alone does not make the bike stand up while cornering, and the long wheelbase resists weight transfer, making trail braking a more useful technique than on some other bikes.

Also, when you need to get your toes back during aggressive cornering, your instep rests on the swollen pivot end of the lever and your heel bounces against the swingarm (you can feel it moving).

The tires are excellent Dunlop Sportmax D207s that are mounted on new 10-spoke cast rims that H-D refers to as "Bugatti" wheels, which finally eliminate the V-Rod's problem of being steered by sidewinds. They are undoubtedly lighter, too, although overall the machine is 17.5 lbs. heavier than the V-Rod, now at 636 lbs. wet.

Riding Impression

When first throwing a leg over the Street Rod, the bike gives the sensation that you're sitting *on* the bike, not in it, but it's not so extreme a feeling as you have on a Sportster. The seat initially feels hard, but the foam is fairly deep. However, after an hour, the shape of the seat pan becomes apparent, and it's boxy under the upholstery. Frequent rest stops are in order. Also, without wind protection, at speeds above 75 mph the wind blast is fatiguing as well.

But the good news is that the machine actually handles way better than we would have guessed. The narrow handlebars, big rake and long wheelbase giving great stability in exchange for somewhat heavy steering, but this allows you to lean the bike way over even at moderate speeds without the chassis feeling nervous.

The engine's throttle is unusual, with a 60° turn, rather than the more common 45°, so double handfuls are sometimes in order.

However, the engine's behavior isn't as flawless as we remembered on the V-Rod, and the mapping feels lean and hesitant, especially down low in the rpm-range (and unlike the press bikes at the intro).

Also, stuck in downtown traffic, significant heat could be felt coming off the rear cylinder's exhaust pipe.

Styling, Instruments & Controls

The rear fender and radiator shrouds are now plastic while the front fender and faux gastank are still aluminum. Five color options are available. Vivid Black gets a black frame, and all the others get a silver-leaf aluminum frame that's stunning.

The instruments are different from the V-Rod's. Still highly styled, the headlight eyebrow and gauges are now visually separated. However, the gauges angle back so much it's impossible to check them without looking straight down, taking your eyes completely off the



road, and even then are hard to read as they slant at about a 45° angle.

The mirrors are poor. Barely half an inch wider than the narrow handlebars, they feature a good view of your sleeves and vehicles off to the sides, but not where you need to see to change lanes. Bar end mirrors should be the first modification.

Your passenger's pegs are no longer on the swingarm, where they added to unsprung weight and could feel the force of the bumps through their pegs. They are now on frame brackets, but are still very high. The pillion seat is another style-driven shape, pretty much useless.

Also, the ignition switch has been moved forward from under the seat (where it also served as a seat lock) to the right front, and now uses a removable barrel-type key. Like the Electra-Glides, you can work the switch without the key. However, as you can't easily see the switch positions, turning it fully back doesn't mean "Off" but "Accessory" to flatten the battery overnight (we know). The gastank, accessed by swinging the rider's seat to the side, is now always unlocked.

Also, we had a serious issue with the headlight. Because the lens is swept back the way it is, light escaping from the top of the glass produces serious glare in the rider's eyes. The effect is bad even with a full-face helmet, but would be even worse with the an open-face design.

Conclusion

The rear brake lever really needs to be fixed and a new casting will probably be required, the seat is not long-term comfortable, the headlight has a problem, but the bike is really fun to ride, probably the best twisty road production Harley ever.

It is also exquisitely finished. The paint on the body parts gleams. The satin-finished engine is a work of art. The one-piece cast aluminum swingarm is highly polished and the frame is gorgeous. The bike is as custom as any Harley ever, and that's half the reason for owning it, isn't it? 🍷