



Left: The Street Rod shares the same 1130cc DOHC, water-cooled motor and retains the basic layout of the V-Rod, but has increased cornering clearance, a higher seat, mid-mounted footpegs and flatter handlebars. The ignition switch is moved forward, the rear fender and radiator “jukebox” are made of plastic, and the handgrips are conventional size. Very custom, it is exquisitely finished and painted, ours a metallic yellow pearl.



Above: The Street Rod’s glistening angled triple clamps are gorgeous, and less rake improves the handling. But the mirrors really need to be wider.

Below: New “Bugatti” spoked wheels (H-D’s term) no longer fight sidewinds and newly enlarged brakes use Brembo calipers, all supported on inverted cartridge forks.



Left: The instrumentation has been redesigned, but is still quite difficult to read; small clocks with stylized white numerals on a low-contrast background. Also, they are angled back at about 45° and the rider must look steeply down into the angled faces.



Right: New silencers have a greater volume and are claimed to add 5 hp for a total of 120, but we didn’t find any increase. The seat is 5” higher than the V-Rod’s, hinged for access to a larger 5-gal. gastank. However, your butt will clearly feel the angular seat pan after about 50 miles—time to stretch.



TESTERS’ LOG

If the V-Rod was proof that Harley-Davidson could move into the 21st century, the Street Rod is proof that it could build a performance motorcycle that is reasonably comfortable and fun to ride. When I say performance, don’t think that the Street Rod is ready to take on a GSX-R or something similar, it isn’t. But, it performs well, doesn’t drag hard parts at steep lean angles, and makes a credible platform to build on. The brakes work quite well and refuse to fade, but the rear is too sensitive and the pedal too high, and there is no adjustment. The tires offer great traction.

Mid-range power feels weaker than the V-Rod we tested, but is still impressive. There’s a terrible surge at parking lot speeds that requires a lot of clutch use, and up to 4000 rpm there is a noticeable rumble in the pegs and handlebars. But at 4500 rpm the engine is silky smooth. Instruments are hard to read and the headlight casts a glare at the rider (duct tape worked as a fix). The only question is how committed is Harley-Davidson to fixing these problems and staying in the 21st century?

—Walt Fulton

With Porsche’s help, H-D’s Revolution motor is one of the nicest

powerplants around, and its transmission is the best ever from the Motor Company, quiet, smooth and slick. The torque curve is broad and easy to use with enough top-end rush to be entertaining. The sound is impressive—pure power—no rattles or buzzing, like its bearings are mounted in granite. And visually, it’s a feast for the eyes, with smooth surface finishes and great detailing.

When I heard we’d finally see a new member of the Revolution family, my hopes ran high for something like an older Buell, but without the earthquake vibration at low rpm, or maybe a BMW RT-style tourer—the engine would be perfect if it had a sixth gear.

I can’t blame them for basing the new bike on the V-Rod, it has a lot of specially built parts that aren’t shared with anything else in the line. But the V-Rod’s dragster architecture doesn’t easily lend itself to a sporting naked bike makeover. The wheelbase is still huge at 66.8”, about 10” longer than necessary. A 30° rake is maybe 5° more than ideal, too. But what’s amazing is that it works as well as it does—the first Harley that looks forward to twisting pavement. The rear brake and mirrors somehow got passed for production and the seat isn’t really great, but overall, the bike works. I’m impressed.

—Dave Searle