

HIPSTER KILLER

If I could give you one piece of advice, it would be, beware mixing Rocket Bobs Cycle Works with doughnuts. In some strange sort of sugary alchemy, you may find the plans for your motorcycle which you thought – really believed – were set in stone suddenly altering...



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When I decided to give my Harley Shovel a makeover, I called in to see Pete Pearson at the Rocket Bobs headquarters north of Swindon, basically with the intention of asking him to fabricate an exhaust for me. I didn't like the look of the existing 'trumpet' pipes because they didn't fit in with the idea I had for the bike. Instead, I wanted a two-into-one system with a sports bike-style carbon race can which would be perfect for the vision I had of a high-mounted Sportster-type fuel tank and knobby tyres. Which, as you can see, is not quite how the revamp turned out...

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discussions were discussed and a lot of arguments argued and, at the end of it, as we brushed the sugar and crumbs away, we formulated a plan. Shortly afterwards, I dropped off the bike at Pete's, along with the new tank

and half – the wrong half! – of an old Fatbob mudguard.

I visited the shop over several weeks in an attempt to persuade Pete that not everything had to be exact and spot on. The trouble is, Mr Pearson doesn't do 'not exact' ☺





SPECIFICATION SHEET

Engine:
1977 Harley-Davidson FLH V-twin, 93 cubic-inch S&S Cycle Sidewinder kit, reworked original heads, S&S Cycle barrels, Andrews cam, S&S Cycle crank, Rivera SU Eliminator carburettor, 4-speed gearbox, stock 3 stud clutch, Dynatek ignition, one-off 2-into-2 exhaust system by Rocket Bobs.

Frame:
Paughco twin downtube rigid.

Front end:
19" H-D wheel, 10.5" discs, early style reproduction calipers, Dunlop K460 90/100 x 19" tyre, 1977 H-D FLH 35mm forks, stock yokes, one-off braided brake lines, narrow Zombi handlebars by Rocket Bobs, Kustom Tech Econo-line master cylinders and controls, Kustom Tech raw brass horn button, Hippy Killer grips, headlight from eBay.

Rear end:
16" H-D FLH wheel, stock 13" disc, Jay Brake caliper, Dunlop tyre, modified old Fatbob mudguard, custom torque arm.

Miscellaneous:
Sportster petrol tank modified by Rocket Bobs, re-upholstered Easyrider seat, one-off stainless oil tank incorporating electrics/battery box, stock FL forwards, one-off side mount number plate by Rocket Bobs, one-off wiring loom by owner, taillight from eBay.

Paint and finish:
No paint. Lettering on tank by Art Slade, Oxford.

Thanks To:
"Pete and Lisa Pearson and Flea."

or ‘not spot on’ and his obsessive compulsive disorder was going into overdrive! I wanted a raw-looking ‘thug style’ bike and the only thing on which I was insistent was that the exhaust had to have a carbon end can. Everyone had told me that it wouldn’t work, that - in the words of many – ‘you can’t put a carbon end can on a Harley’. I was determined to prove them all wrong.

During one visit, I was looking through the increasing range of

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parts that Rocket Bobs offers and noticed ‘Gas Lights’, a variation on a sight tube. Pete pointed out that it would look cool if we fitted one to my tank. ‘No,’ I said. ‘I want three...’ I figured that I could use them as a fuel gauge because I’d already decided to fit one of Rocket Bob’s extended tube stainless fuel taps. But, as it would be mounted really low and at a ridiculous angle which would render the ‘reserve’ function useless, the three ‘gas lights’ would let me peer at the inside of the tank!

While I was at it, I also decided that I wanted the filler cap moved both to one side and higher up the tank. We offered up one of Rocket Bob’s stainless extended filler



necks and then had an argument over the placement and just how high it should be. (‘Right over to the right hand side and full height’. Obviously.)

Pete fabricated an awesome rear mudguard support and when I called in to take a look, I found it was perfect – slightly raised and ‘knifed’. He said it needed tidying up, but I told him to leave it just as it was because it suited the look of the bike. The rear ‘guard was just cut off and wasn’t even dressed – just fitted! Stuff like that drives Pete crazy because he can’t leave things unfinished.

And then talk turned to the exhaust, which is where it all

originally started. Pete started work on it, and what a job he did! It looks amazing, it sounds perfect and it just makes the whole look of the bike!

Over the next few weeks I was working abroad and so Pete sent me update pictures as he worked. Then, one day, he emailed me a photo of my bike and it no longer had its springer forks. Instead, he’d fitted a 35mm super narrow front end which only lifted the front by about an inch, but it changed the whole stance of the bike ... for the better. The problem was that the handlebars which Pete had already made were now too wide. He sent me a photo of the bike with the new front end and in the background was Pete’s own Shovel. The next picture I received was my bike, now fitted with a set of narrow raw stainless handlebars; behind it was, once again, Pete’s Harley – but now without its ‘bars. He’d stripped the handlebars from his own bike and fitted them. They just worked with the bike.

I told Pete when I would be collecting the bike – well, I’d

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actually already booked it into a show so there was indeed a deadline – and that sent Pete into meltdown. He was nowhere near finished with it, but I pushed him each day and then went over at the weekend to help complete it, rewire it and make, fit and bleed the brake lines. Finally it was done and we dragged it outside so we could hear the pipes. The Shovel hadn’t been started for at least seven months but, after a couple of kicks (well, okay, more like fifty!), it burst into life and we ran it round the block.

Now the bike goes like stink and looks frickin’ awesome. Not bad for a bike that originally went into the shop for just an exhaust... ☘