

BANK Robber



ONE HOT BRIT BOBBER FROM OUTSIDE THE BOX ...

WORDS DOC PICS ROCKET BOB

Some say Rocket Bob is a retired CIA operative. Others dismiss that idea as fantasy, reckoning he was – and may still be – with the NSA. Either way, he's believed to have worked at the secretive Menwith Hill spy base near Harrogate in North Yorkshire, UK. Significantly, Rocket Bob and Pete Pearson

have never been seen in the same room at the same time. Well, whatever the truth about Bob, the British town of Swindon has made a name in recent years for the upper class customs rolling out of Rocket Bobs Cycle Works. We ran their Blackbird Rocker bike some issues back, and now the alleged head honcho, Pete Pearson, has sent us this one.

Now at first glance you might think, "Ho hum, another bloody old Shovelhead – who cares?" But Pete has two very British personality traits – national pride and tenacity. The shop's





This unique ride sure has its own distinct identity, which somehow just works.

GUTS & BOLTS

ENGINE

Type: 1979 98ci FXS Low Rider
 Make: H-D 1979
 Crank: S&S
 Bore: 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
 Stroke: 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ "
 Compression: 10.5:1
 Heads: Flowed
 Induction: S&S Super E
 Exhaust: RB 2-into-1
 Ignition: Crane Hi-4 single-fire

TRANSMISSION

Type: 4-speed stock
 Clutch: Stock
 Primary drive: Stock
 Rear drive: Chain

FRAME & SUSPENSION

Type: 1979 FX
 Mods: Windowed neck
 Seat: RB leather and Alcantara
 Front: 1977 Glide 35mm fork
 (lowered 60mm)
 Triple trees: 1976 Narrow Glide
 (by Rocket Bobs)
 Rear: Hagon heavy-duty Nitro

WHEELS & TYRES

F wheel: 40-spoke 19" alloy
 rimmed Narrow Glide
 R wheel: 40-spoke 16 x 4.5" alloy rim
 F calipers: Twin billet repros
 F disc: Twin (RB)
 R caliper: Repro Banana
 R disc: Stock
 R m/cylinder: RB

CONTROLS

Bars: Shovelhead Zombies (by RB)
 Gearchange: RB forward controls
 Speedo: Moto Gadget/RB
 Headlight: RB/Joker Machine
 Master cylinder: Joker Machine
 Switchgear: RB

GUARDS & FINISH

Fuel tank: 1976 Superglide
 Oil tank: Highly modified horseshoe
 R guard: RB Voodoo fender kit
 Taillight: Modified generic LED
 Numberplate: RB billet side-mount
 Painters: Paul and Joe at 8 Ball Paint
 Colours: Burnished gold leaf, black,
 ..blue, red, cream, teal stars and swirls



ABOVE: There are any number of neat touches throughout this ride, from the repro banana rear caliper to the Rocket Bobs headlight with Joker Machine bezel.



website (www.rocketbobs.biz) states, "Rocket Bobs is a company that draws heavily on rat-rod, dogtown, drag and road-race influences", and that philosophy is well illustrated right here.

Winner of the Freestyle class of the British affiliate round of the World Championship of Custom Bike Building held earlier this year, Rocket Bobs' '79 Shovelhead, 'Bank Robber', began life as a '79 FXS frame. The boys removed all the brackets and then re-welded the ones they required, then they windowed the neck, removed the rear frame and welded some Rocket Bobs Voodoo struts in place. The swingarm is a re-worked and modified Duo Glide 'Arrowhead' item from a 1963 Pan, which been re-worked and modified. Pete reckons it offers a more elegant line compared to the box-section affair that was stock. The whole shebang was then shot with a coat of denim black.

The engine was pulled down, then bored and stroked to 98 cubes; it features an S&S crank and a compression ratio of 10.5:1. The heads were flowed and a Woods cam was fitted, along with an S&S Super E carby and a Rocket Bobs velocity stack. A Crane Hi-4 single-fire ignition provides the spark and the burnt gases exit via a Rocket Bobs stainless

steel, aluminium and carbonfibre 2-into-1 race system.

There's still some work to go on the engine so the boys have not yet run it on the dyno, but they reckon it should be putting out about 95 rear-wheel ponies. Given its obvious lightness, and the fact that power-to-weight ratio is everything, maybe we should refer to it as Rocket Bobs' Rocket Ship!

The gearbox is a stock 4-speeder, which is as many gears as you need when you have a 98-cube torque monster at your disposal. Final drive is of course by chain, with a Rocket Bobs torque arm in the shape of a stainless steel tie rod assuring good hook-up.

Up front, a set of 35mm forks from a '77 Glide have been lowered 60mm and re-damped using Rocket Bobs rods, while the yokes (as the Poms refer to them, but which we call triple trees) are '76 Narrow Glide units extensively re-worked by Rocket Bobs. The handlebars are Shovelhead Zombies, by the same crew. The brake lines are stainless steel and fully custom units.

Joker Machine provided the master cylinder, Rocket Bobs the switchgear and Moto Gadget the speedo, which is nicely ensconced in a billet shell created by Pete's talented crew – or should that be Bob's?

The bike rolls on a set of alloy rims, both 40-spoke units that have been nicely trimmed with gold- and red-anodised spoke nipples.

The front wheel wears a set of Rocket Bobs rotors ready to be clamped by reproduction billet calipers, while the back unit runs a stock H-D rotor and a repro banana caliper activated by a Rocket Bobs master cylinder. Lighting the way is a Rocket Bobs billet headlight with a Joker Machine bezel and the forward controls are also by Rocket Bobs.

The fuel tank is '76 Superglide, de-seamed and converted to a screw-thread gas cap to accept one of Rocket Bobs' brass caps. The boys also notched the tank around the rear cylinder; it has a tang rear mount but a fully hidden front mount that's also height adjustable.

A tasteful horseshoe oil tank has been de-seamed



and tubed to take an internal coil mount, with Taylor leads running out through the left, while the electrics and battery box contain a Rocket Bobs Rocket Pack lithium ion battery, which Pete describes as a “tiny thing that weighs just 500g and allows for all the electrics, fuse box, coil and battery to fit in the original battery compartment.”

Powdercoating was applied to the clutch cover, inspection cover, shifter pedal and brake, the top tree, the fork lowers, the swingarm, the kickstand, the velocity stack and more. Rocket Bobs does all its own engineering work so the wheel spacers, shock

mounts, oil bag mounts, risers, billet grips and more were designed, engineered, and fitted in-house.

The seat is a Rocket Bobs item of leather and Alcantara, the latter an artificial substitute for suede. Impressively, the boys combined cool retro looks with what appears to be semi-reasonable comfort.

The Voodoo rear guard is not as minimalist as the front but it gives the rear section a real kick-arse, hot-rod look. A billet Rocket Bobs side-mount numberplate holder carries a modified LED taillight, while Hagon Nitro rear shocks handle the bumps.

The well-executed paint job is by Paul and Joe at 8 Ball Paint, and while it’s somewhat quirky, it works well on this ride. The gold leaf adds a classy touch and provides a centrepiece for the stars and swirls.

Pete would like to thank, “Tony Kriz for the Shovel, the talented Rocket crew, Trevor, Stuart and Flea for their professionalism. And a special thanks must go to Lisa – she runs the business and we wouldn’t be here without her.” **HD**

