

GILROY SHOOT OUT _ 5 SPEED OR 6 ? Part 1

I have ridden Chris Horner,s Gilroy Chief a few times and on the Beafort run had the chance to sample Mr. Pilgrims example of the Marque. These scooters are 2002 & 2003 Chiefs, both with 100 ci."Power Plus" engines but they are very different beasts as we shall see.

Before getting into the Nitty Gritty it is worth having a look at the whole Mega Cruiser Genre. Once upon a time there were no cruisers. Bikes were manufactured for specific tasks.

In Europe with its always expensive fuel Bikes were either Ride to work utility Vehicles like the BSA Bantam, or sports/ race bikes such as the Gold Star or larger machines that did duty as tourers, side car tugs, cop bikes etc.

Things were different in the U.S.of A. where the motorcycle as transport had long lost out to the mass produced car . Also the states with its cheap fuel and vast distances fostered the evolution of large and heavy machines with dependability and comfort winning out over such European commie concepts such as Handling ,Brakes and Fuel economy.

Bikes in America tended to be ridden by young guys for fun or by law enforcement officers. The Civilian bikes tended to have a fair degree of decoration which was pretty much exclusively a home grown phenomena. It is worth having a look at where this came from. The first Europeans to settle extensively in What is now the U.S.A were the Spanish . They had a long tradition of horsemanship and unlike Anglo Saxons they had a great penchant for decorating the saddlery and harness of their steeds with worked silver and leather. After all, to be a Caballero [Horseman] marked you as a cut above the average Peon. The Leather Fringes, Studs and Concho,s that Both Indian and Harley offered from the thirties on can be traced directly to those Spanish Caballeros of centuries earlier together with some of the" look at me" attitude that goes with the territory.

So this brings us to the modern cruiser, a motorcycle that can sort of do most things average bikes can do but do none of them particularly well except get looked at. thats O.K. because you Cruisers occupy a special space. When comparing the merits of various cruisers conventional yardsticks such as handling, braking, horsepower, speed and ground clearance are always a distant second to the key parameters of Bling, Street Cred,profiling and Mojo.

For those new to cruiser land a short explanation of these terms is in order:

Bling: This refers to the level of finish and decoration the machine has. It does not always mean the sheer quantity of glittering crap that the bike is hauling but rather its overall impact on the viewer, E.G the severe "Blacked Out "look is very popular now. sometimes less is more even in cruiser land.

Street Cred: This is a harder to define but very real phenomenon. For example a new 1100 Virago is actually a great bike to ride but has a street cred rating of nil. If however the bike was old, beat to hell and customized with a grinder, oxy and a can of flat black spray paint It could well gain a degree of cred for its for its

fearless individuality. A few years back the international Vincent Rally was held in Australia. one day the Bikes were all lined up at Ballaratt airfield in a glittering zillion dollar display. And where were the crowd? Mostly thronging around this young Hippie looking guy with a long red beard Who was kicking over an ancient Russian Ural that had been chopped with an apparent budget of around fifty bucks. but to the general audience that bike just oozed street cred and stole the show.

Profiling: This is actually an operation carried out by the rider and seems to be de riguer with cruisers owners. Harley riders do this a lot so watch the next accountant you see on a new Softail and see how he does it. Basically it involves the bike being motionless in traffic or at the lights. The rider is apparently staring stonily ahead through his Memphis shades but in reality his peripheral vision is up there with a Blue tongue lizards in checking out whether any one is looking at his bike. Reflective shop windows may also be used.

Mojo: This one is important. It is a cruiser characteristic that could also be described as exclusivity The build- it- yourself custom has always been around with Harleys usually the platform of choice. In the end Willie G got the message and slapped a drum brake sporty front end on to a stripped down FLH tourer and Bingo! the first factory custom was born. Harley have relied heavily on customizing their own products ever since. Of course, those clever Orientals recognized a good thing when they saw it and in their patient way have gone from truly poor taste "Chinese Choppers" like the early VN 1500 Kawasaki,s and the original Suzuki Imposter to bikes that in some ways out Harley, Harley, certainly in the technical specifications and price departments. But of course they are still copies of an original and are ranked accordingly. However those good Ole' buys in Milwaukee have become victims of their own success. Even my 28 year old niece in the States who works in a Bank and has zip to do with bikes said that owning a Harley wasn,t such a big deal anymore and she is right, how does a bike retain its exclusivity when they are now as common as a Holden? By the way, Harley makes some great bikes and if they are judged as Motorcycles they do a very competent job in the real world. I have owned various Sporties, Road Kings and full Dressers and have ridden most models including the latest 110"CVO FLH [Harley Guys will know these codes] and enjoyed them all But we are not talking about the real world, Its back to Cruiser land and being noticed.

So, enter the **new Indian**. Now we have established that to be a successful cruiser a bike has to be widely noticed. Note that it does not have to be liked, just noticed, The General public just fall all over these huge bikes while some owners of the original Springfield machines practically projectile vomit at even the thought of the **New Indians** but Hey! either way it is mission accomplished. so lets go riding

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