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H-D's V-ROD



Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.
- Mark Twain

Vol. V
August, 2001

Number 3
AdFax™

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V-ROD Pix And Copy
American Motorcycle Network
► <http://www.americanmotor.com/news.cfm?newsid=1726>

Bikernet
► <http://www.bikernet.com/harleydavidson/prodfeatures/PressreleaseV-Rod.asp>

How The NY Times Sees Us:
"They came roaring into town this afternoon, 10 miles or more of chrome, leather and thunder headed for this dusty locale that calls itself the birthplace of the American biker."
► <http://partners.nytimes.com/2001/07/12/national/12ANGE.html?todayshadlines>

The Economist: Build To Order - Mass Customization
► http://www.economist.com/business/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=691227

★ **Movie Magazine Trivia**
Spot the "Quick Throttle" t-shirt in "28 Days", now playing on cable.

If we're showing up on your fax and you'd rather we wouldn't, please let us know and we won't.

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What's New? A Strategic Solution

If a naked Ducati (perimeter frame) and an up-start aprilia (water-cooled, 60-degree, FI v-twin) had a jumbo BMW (cruiser), they'd call it V-ROD. You can bet your last master link that when the Wall Street Journal announced H-D's new addition last month of liquid refreshed metric to traditional air-cooled SAE, it's real news.

Initial reactions include the predictable yowls of purists who see the bike as abandonment; a Houston rider christened the newest v-twin "ugly," while a Florida loyalist thought it merely "expensive." As opposed, we wonder, to what?

Big Guys With Bellies And Beards

Mainstream articles regularly recognize the threat aging baby boomers pose to H-D; a market summarized by an analyst for Bear Stearns as, "...a finite pool of big guys with bellies and beards." It's true. I just looked in the mirror. Thirty years ago we were skinnier, much better looking, and with lots more hair. We carried Harley's water through the lean years and beyond, but today's MTV lads haven't followed up in anything like the same numbers.

In a well written send-up on America's graying biker, the New York Times (left) had this to say about Hollister's recently revived yahoo, where five decades ago the biker persona first sprang to life and in turn inspired "The Wild One".

"By nightfall, they were fumbling with bifocals trying to read the small print on a flyer advertising the all-you-can-eat breakfast and biker worship service, and complaining that the Hells Angels booth would not give a senior discount on Death to Snitches T-shirts." Niiiice. Hardly the way you want your brand defined. Hence, big changes afoot and not a moment too soon.

Elvis Has Left The Building

Harley, having lost it's top sales slot to Honda last year, proves the point that when everyone has one it's no longer a trend. And once the trend's been redefined, swapping paint schemes just won't hold the market; or build a new one.

When metric multis easily top the 100-horse mark, there aren't many ways a salesman can finesse the traditional V-twin's performance gap. Factory performance mods to the 45-degree layout were, given century-old technology, an evolutionary dead end.

These and other factors provided plenty of push for the next chapter in Harley's grand experiment – adapting the brand to a contemporary design that packs power, styling, and performance into a package much more likely to draw the aggressive interest of the youth market.

Will It Work? It's Robot Fightin' Time!

At first the market will gladly pay a premium as the new models are rolled out. But even with Harley's exceptional ability to brand and sell everything from coffee grounds to road grime, success has to be considered within context. Notwithstanding the bar and shield's enormous marketing clout, it's a level playing field.

The way we see it, V-ROD's will go head-to-head with established Euro marques, no longer the esoteric exception in a technically sophisticated metric market.

There'll be variations to come. Porsche's multi version is just over the horizon – maybe the 100th? – but if you remember when the world didn't clamor after a golf cart named Harley or a scooter named Topper, then assume only that the ad wars are going to generate heat.

Need New Markets? Check Out...

The Thunder Down Under

Kelly Ashton, editor of Australia's outrageously entertaining Ozbike, may yet finish his Old School Ironhead Sportster (OSIS) revival project. Originally titled 'Sportster 2000', the globe's other OzMan missed the international dateline last January and has to take another lap around the blue planet to catch up. Besides, who else'll talk to you at four in the morning?
► <http://www.ozbike.com.au/>

...and The Thunder Down South

The Horse/Backstreet Chopper's making good progress on their road to rehabilitation, capturing in print enough fine chops and sassy commentary to rekindle the flames of how you think you remembered it used to be back when in 'those days'. California who?
► <http://www.ironcross.net/>

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