

# STREET BOB BOBBER



It is debatable as to whether the style or the sub £9k price tag was responsible for the meteoric success of the Street Bob when it was first launched as the last of the Twin Cam 88 models and the first of the 6-speed Dynas. It could also have been the best Harley fuel injection system to date, or the new 'Denim' paint scheme, to be fair, but whatever it was, it struck a chord with Harley's traditional customer base as well as newcomers, and has established itself in the range as a popular model on the new and 'pre-loved' markets.

It only got better with the 96-inch motor in its second year, and even when the price crept above nine grand, it did little to dampen enthusiasm for Harley's budget Big Twin bobber, and then – in an uncharacteristic demonstration of creative forward thinking – in direct contravention of the unwritten rule of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' – and while it was still riding the crest of a wave, Harley restyled it.

It could have spelt disaster, but the team in R&D did a brilliant job and turned out a stunning evolution of the original bike that made it fit its model name better than before.

In other words, they did what the rest of the world had been doing for the previous three years.

With its straight-cut exhausts, a new Sparto-style tail-light and black-rimmed laced wheels, it took the concept back another decade, but at the end of the day, it has still got to be a production bike, and that leaves the door wide open to those who are inspired by its classic simplicity.

And I'm not just referring to independant specialists or owners who have access to a decent toolkit and know how to use it, I'm talking about official dealers: in this case Europe's oldest dealership, Warrs in London, and as such one of very few who have been around long enough to have seen bobbers first time round – or would have done if it hadn't been an American trend that didn't really cross the pond: Harley-Davidsons were far too rare and exotic over here for owners to start taking bits off ad nauseum.

Warrs have been making special editions of bikes for years now: they've got the skills in-house and a diverse customer base, a number of who are still looking for that exclusivity.

They've majored on the Softail range so far, and produced some stunning looking machines that conjure up the golden days of the banked circuits at Brooklands and the Art Deco years of Harley two-tone schemes – frequently based on FL Springer Softails and more recently the Cross Bones – but it was perhaps inevitable that they would turn their attentions towards the bike that can conjure up the style of the Duo Glide for those who want something different again.

This 2008 model Street Bob is the first of the twin shock limited editions and demonstrates that either Harley's design team were right on the button, or else that they've got CCTV set up in Warr's massive workshop. Black rims, bobbed rear mudguard, uncovered rear mudguard struts and a Sparto rear light are all very familiar, but Warrs' custom specialists, Charlie Stockwell and John Towns, have a few advantages that Harley's design engineers don't have. They've only got to make it work for its intended market – Warrs ship a few bikes internationally themselves – they haven't got the EPA people breathing down their necks, they're not looking to create a mass market product – in fact quite the opposite – and like all custom builders they'll know what he can get away with.

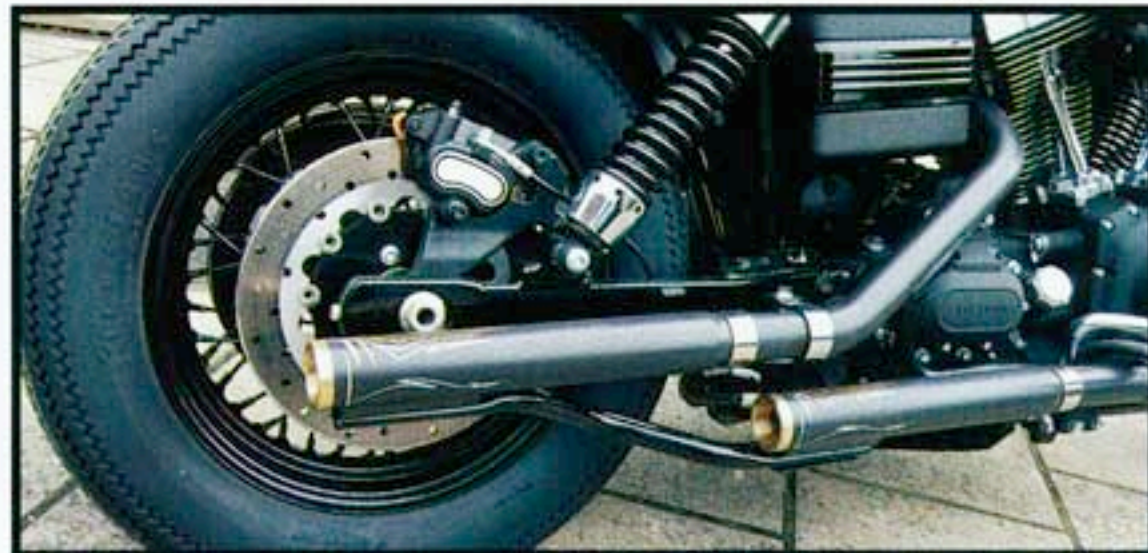
And so while Harley have trimmed the rear mudguard back a bit, Warrs have taken it back to the point where the hinge would have been on a dresser mudguard, because that's what used to happen, and they've fitted a classic, lightly-padded sprung solo seat, suspended on hairsprings above a chequerplate cover to hide the electronics.

They've gone further, and more effectively with the Von Dutch-style pinstriping, continuing the coachlines onto the exhausts' heatshields while exercising a lightness of touch that lends the overall effect an authenticity from the days of self-restraint.

The Hollywood bars, with their arching cross-brace, complement the classic Firestone tyres that indicate a return to a sixteen inch rear, but go a long way to establishing the bike's credentials, and it's the front disc brake that looks out of place on an old bike, rather than the retro touches on what is effectively a brand new one.

All that's missing is a replica of the transfer or plate that would have been fitted to the bikes that left Warr's in the fifties ... and if they didn't, I'm sure we could give them a degree of artistic license.

Words: Fat Bob Pics: Warrs Harley-Davidson



As indebted as we are to the Motor Company for grasping the nettle and giving us the Street Bob, it is – as is the case with almost any Harley – just the beginning of the story ... but what a blank canvas!