

# A NEW SET OF TWINS FOR 2011

Victory High-Ball



*by Don Gomo*

Winters living in New York certainly can make any rider a bit bonkers and jonesing for some motorcycle time. Sure, you can toss on some electric gear or other warm fabrics and get out oc-

asionally for some short rides, but the winter this year has been a bit brutal, leaving no real options for a ride at all. Besides the massive amount of snow and ice piled up on the sides of the roads, making them narrower and more hazardous to

H-D Softail Blackline



maneuver through, the dreaded potholes are in an abundance already – I can just imagine what Spring will have to offer. It will be like riding on the moon with all those craters. So when the International Motorcycle Show rolls into New York City

at the end of January it brings to me a breathe of motorcycling air I need to help get through the season. Sure, it would be better if I were to ride during that time, but this is definitely the next best thing to offer some sanity from the Parked

Motorcycle Syndrome.

This year I opted to take advantage of being able to check out the show during the media information tour before it was open to the public. Here you get a chance to see what the motorcycle companies have to offer for the new year plus a chance to see some unveilings of new models. This year the two American motorcycle companies, Harley-Davidson and Victory, both used the New York Show as their platform to unveil a new model for each. Victory introduced their High-Ball model and Harley rolled out their

new Blackline Softail model. Both models resemble the "old school," stripped down look that has been hitting the streets for the past couple of years now. I personally like this style of the back-to-basics chopper/bobber motorcycle, unquestionably far more than the excessive chopper craze that the industry was sucked into previously, but I am not sure how long the style will last. With the motorcycle industry in a turndown over the past few years, manufacturers are looking to the streets for help with what might be the next

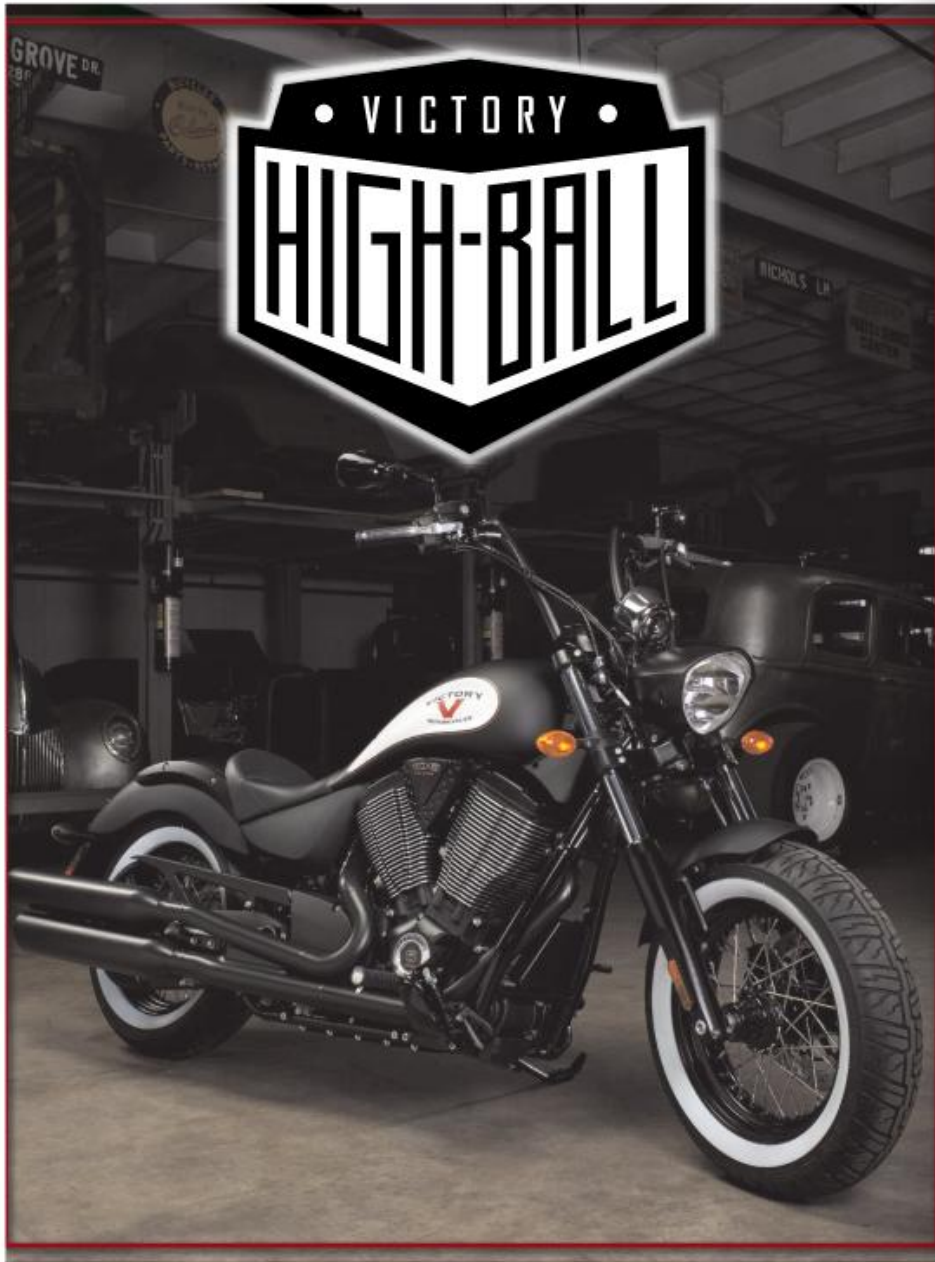
latest trend in motorcycle styling. Unfortunately, when you follow the style of the possible next best thing, being a large company there is a chance you may jump into it right when things are ready to change again. Sure it's a bit of a gamble but it could also be a possible reason for each of these new entries.

For the most part each bike is just a modification of an existing model; stripped down a little, with some minor restyling, but basically another version of something that is already in production. Approaching the new

model this way shows the companies are moving to keep up with the latest flavor and doing it with far less costs than introducing a completely new model that would involve some major research and development costs. To be honest, considering the present state of the motorcycle industry I think it's a smart option to go with. So what about the bikes? Well let's start off with Victory's 2011 offering.

### **2011 Victory High-Ball**

Victory opted to release their new model live online the night be-



fore the New York City Show opened. If you were signed up with their website for email updates or just checked in to the site you would have been invited to watch the on-line presentation. The live “show” came from a bar/nightclub and was done almost unscripted with members of the design team and officers of the company on hand to talk about the bike. I enjoyed watching the event more than something rehearsed and scripted, it felt more like a couple of enthusiasts talking candidly about what they love and how that passion

became part of the new model. Great concept; real bikers and builders talking about building bikes (and without tantrums or throwing your kids out of the company).

The High-Ball is a undressed version of the of a bike that launched their Vegas, Kingpin and several other models. Victory describes the High-Ball as “a custom cruiser with high-rise bars, spoked wheels and whitewall tires. It’s an essential motorcycle loaded with style and featuring the Victory Freedom® 106/6 Stage 2 V-Twin that flat-out hauls.” They also state,

“Among bobber- and stripper-style bikes from major OEMs, the High-Ball delivers the most and the best:

- Most Performance: It’s got the largest-displacement engine, the most horsepower and the most torque.

- Lowest Seat Height: Cruise in comfort down low while reaching up to the too-cool high-rise bars.

- Best Value: The High-Ball delivers the most performance at the lowest MSRP.

- Coolest Styling: Sure, judging styling is subjective, but come on - look at this bike!

Some strong claims,

and to back them up they have the following information about the bike; high-rise handlebars are adjustable and can be set in the upright position or laid back. The controls mount on the bars in either position and the cables reach in both positions, needing only simple hand tools to adjust. Now this is such a simple idea I don’t know why others haven’t done this before. Imagine being able to change your bar position without having the expense of buying new cables. The bike sports 16” laced wheels with 130 and 150mm Dunlop



tires with whitewalls. Stainless steel spokes (that means no rust problems) and Gloss Black wheels and hubs. As stated before, the bike is powered by Victory’s Freedom® 106/6 VTwin: Fuel-in-

jected, counter-balanced plant which produces 97 hp & 113 ft-lb of torque. The High-Ball features a solo driver seat and footpegs (this is a plus for those of you that need an excuse not to bring



a passenger along), single-gauge instrumentation with speedo, tach, tripmeter, warning lights & more. A 2-into-1 exhaust (black, naturally) will be available and most Pure Victory Gear accessories de-

signed for the Victory Vegas, including passenger seats and passenger floorboards or pegs (for those whom can't get away with the solo excuse), also fit on the High-Ball. With all the available options



already at hand it's easy to personalize the bike to the way you want it, and build the perfect bike for you. Now you can get all this for the MSRP of \$13,499. Considering at that price you are

getting a basic custom that you can either leave as is or fix up to your likings, I think it's a reasonable deal. I did not have a chance to take one of these new rides out on the street, but I was surprised

how comfortable the bike felt with its bars in the high position along with the low seat height. It also felt light and easy to stand up. I actually started to have a wave of coolness sweep over me while sitting on the machine. I've ridden Victories before and know how they ride but I am interested in taking one of these out for a spin to get a feeling of the total package – I'll have to wait for the snow to disappear around here first.

### **2011 Harley-Davidson Softail Blackline**

Harley describes their new model in the press kits as "Lean as wire, hard as iron and dark as a tar road at midnight, the new Blackline motorcycle is a Harley-Davidson Softail model pared to the bone. A rebellious creation of the Dark Custom movement, the Blackline celebrates three fundamental elements of motorcycling: mechanical beauty, internal combustion, and the long black line of the road ahead.

"The Blackline balances allegiance with rebellion, discarding previous conventions of color and chrome for a Dark Custom look



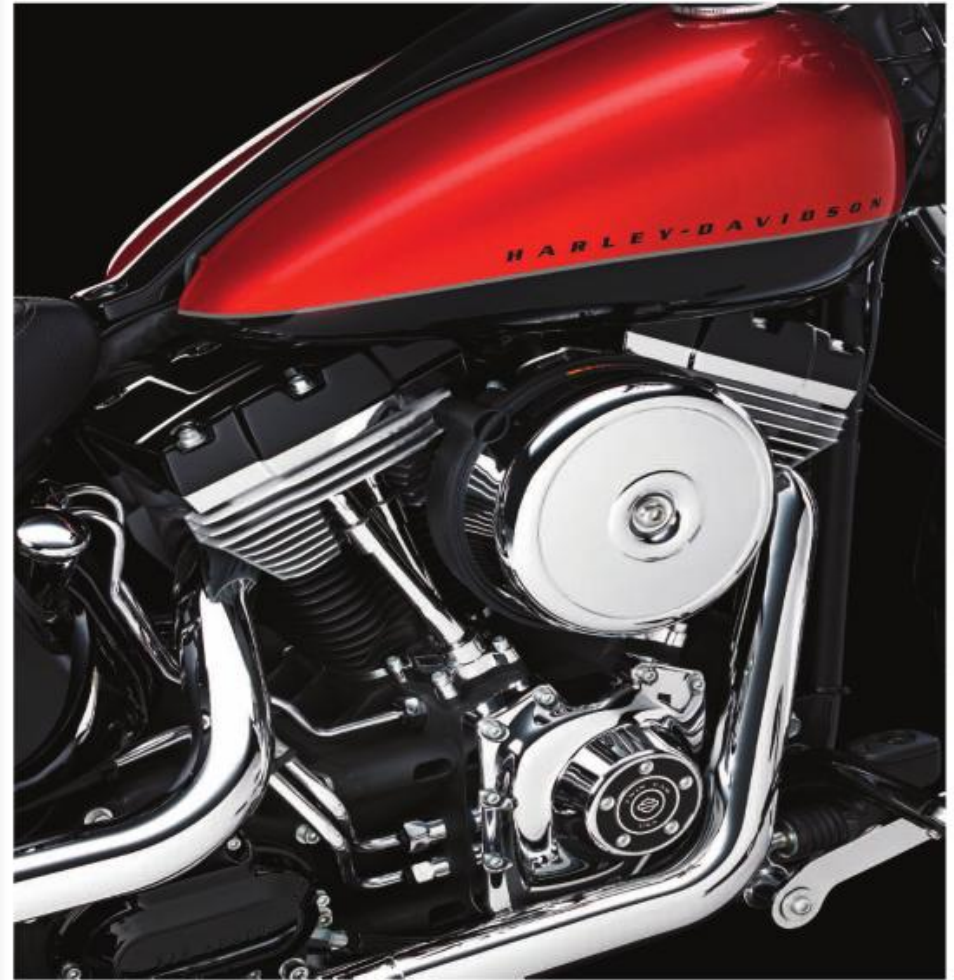
that's honest, functional and attainable. Visual elements of the original bobber movement are combined with the raw, hand-hewn style embraced by today's young builders. The Blackline throws new fuel on a fire that burns across generations, an unquenchable desire to ride."

That's a lot of description for a bare bones Softail which bears a resemblance to the original 1984 Softail, but who's checking?

The bike is torn down to what they consider the legal limit, the Blackline keeps deco-

orative trim sparse. The rear fender is bobbed high-and-tight over a slim, 144mm tire that helps show an authentic hardtail profile. The compact headlight and speedometer are mounted onto a wide, FX-style front end. Limiting the amount of chrome helps the distinction of the blackened parts which includes black-rimmed laced wheels complete the dark old school style, a statement the Motor Company can lay claim to that it's undeniably Harley-Davidson.

Like the Victory High-Ball, it has a low seat height but comes



with a saddle you can ride two-up on (in my mind, if you're young enough to handle it – not me). The motor is black with silver and

the frame is the now-infamous Softail with the shocks mounted below the frame to help give the bike its vintage hardtail look. The



bike is powered by the company's internally counter-balanced Twin Cam 96B™ engine that is rigid-mounted to the frame, with Electronic Sequential Port Fuel Injection (ESPFI), rated at 89 ft. lbs. peak torque at 3250 rpm. There is no listing of

horsepower and the torque is less than Victory's 113 ft-lbs claim, still enough to get you around quick enough.

Along with the styling changes for the Blackline the famed HD five-gallon fuel tank is clean on the left side, with flush-mount

fuel fill on the right. A die-cast "Blackline" trim panel runs down the center of the tank, just high enough to cover the fuel pump hardware. Once again, as like the High-Ball, the bike has an array of accessories that are from its sibling model line that give you the opportunity to dress up or just add a couple personal touches to the bike. Now, this bike will take a little more out of your wallet, about \$2000 more than the Victory at a MSRP of \$15,499. Granted, you get a few more styling features and the name of Harley-Davidson, the root of the original

old school ride, but I will have to also take this new submission out for a ride to see which of these twins fills my fancy better than the other.

For the rest of you looking to that bike with a style of days gone past, you now have a couple of choices to pick from without busting up your knuckles stripping one down and building it yourself. Both models are ready for you to roll out of the dealership, so besides waiting for Spring, what else are you waiting for?

-- Gomo