



1977 Harley XLCR

## If I Owned Harley-Davidson...

*by Don Gomo*

I thought this month I'd use this space to ramble about a few things I would like to see with the Motor Company. Some are thoughts about past models and some about the future. I imagine that many of us have gone through the "what I'd do if I owned Harley," or "H-D should really..." conversations or thoughts before. So here's my

take on a few items.

One topic I've talked about with friends is how Harley could get younger riders into the fold. I have to say that I was a bit surprised when I read an article in a recent HOG magazine stating that Harley-Davidson has one of the highest sales numbers for new young riders in both new and used sales. Perhaps seeing that the average age of H.O.G. Chapters seems to be compiled of members over 45 yrs old, meaning few young members within the groups, leads me to think otherwise about the sales num-

bers. Maybe the young riders just aren't joiners or they don't like the idea of joining a group of "older" riders. Either way, I always thought the Sportster was a great platform to bring in the younger generation. I'm not saying that the model is a kid's bike, I still enjoy riding around on one when I do, and especially since they became rubber mounted.

For my first "If I were to...." The one Sportster model that I always had a passion for was the XLCR, which I believe was produced from 1977 to 1979. The resemblance to my Buell S3 may have

been one of the reasons for my purchase years back. Due to lackluster sales the XLCR model was dropped, but in subsequent years has become a very sought after model by fans. It's vintage Café Racer body style and custom dual exhaust always caught my attention. Granted the original models probably handled like a brick, but with the technology that Harley has incorporated into their XR1200X, an updated version of the XLCR could certainly be an eye-catcher for young riders. Now, if you were to take some of the

guts of the motors that Buell used for their Sportster engine-based models, you'd have an American Café Sport bike that not only looked great but would have the meat to back up the looks. As much as the H.O.G. article claimed sales volume to young riders, most of the ones I see around are on sporty looking machines. Seems to me that the transformation of making a newer CR would be easily achievable, and why not make a bike that would lure whatever-letter generation they're called into the H-D world?

Keeping along the

lines of sport bikes, I definitely would build a V-Rod from the roots it came from. A real sport bike built by Harley I believe would be a good seller. Granted it would more than likely be a bit weighted, similar to the former BMW K1200 GT, but it would be an attraction for buyers. I may be wrong, but as far as USA selling numbers go I do not think the V-Rod shoots up there in the high areas. It really is a great motor within that frame, just not my style of riding, but if it were rolled out as a track-style sport bike similar to its racing days, I definitely would

be interested in one myself, forget the fact that I'm a few years past the young stage.

To wrap up the sporty side of my blather, why not a CVO version of the Sporty? Sure there may be few folks willing to spend big bucks for a customized Sportster, but that's why they do those CVO's in limited numbers anyway.

Moving on to other ideas includes the Softail line. I realize that Harley discontinues and reintroduces models from time to time as a way of re-sparking interest. I always thought that the Springer Heritage Models with all

## FXRT Touring



the fringed leather was the classiest of all their model lines. It has come back before but a bit stripped down and in one sense the CrossBones can be considered a re-vamped version. I'd like to see it return in full glory again but even step it up a bit.

Go heavy on the deco designs, spruce up the saddlebags with some guards done up with chrome and more deco design reflectors and trinkets. How about some flex pipe headers and a buddy pogo style seat to bring things back to looking of days gone by? Once again

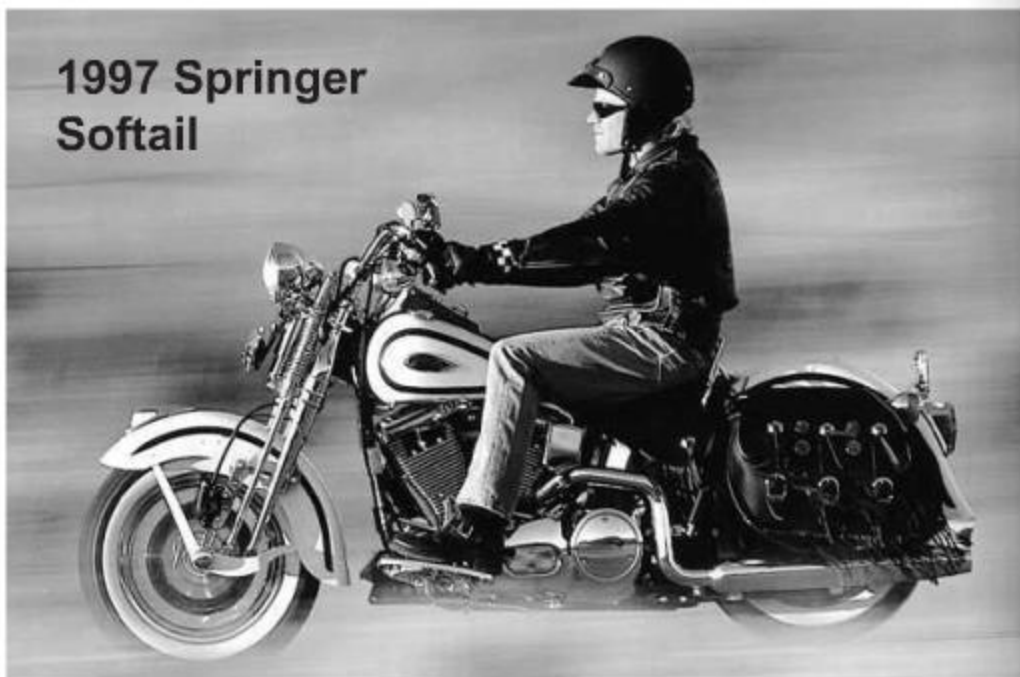
all this can be easily done and the public would have a bike that could be considered being part of an instant vintage club similar to buying into the world of Royal Enfields.

Now the next model hasn't been on showroom floors for around 20 years, but certainly can use resurgence. The former FXRT would absolutely work once again today with the high sales of touring bikes. To have a bike as a midsize tourer available for those whom do not want a huge ride to roll around on, or for those that may have certain physical challenges,

would be something no other company has right now. I know there are no more FXR frames/models and the Dyna style maybe different in many ways, but it is similar in just as many, too. If you can imagine a faired touring model with bags and tourpack that works for a wide range of customers, it's hard to imagine it not being built now.

Wrapping up my wandering thoughts with the touring models, it was so great to see that H-D finally stepped up and made the RoadGlide in an Ultra package. I have always considered the

## 1997 Springer Softail



RG to be the best handling and riding Harley with a fairing.

So now here are my thoughts for the big boys in the family; I am no way an engineer but I would think that if you're manufacturing counter-balanced big twins that run smooth, just think how much more of that vibration

edge would be gone if you rubber mounted that engine. Speaking with several folks, just about all of them stated that a smoother ride wouldn't be turned down, but welcomed. Since I'm tossing in ideas, the Motor Company should consider tossing in some water for the motors of the



tour family. I understand there is some heritage factor when designs and technology are looked at, but they already have the basis for such a motor with their V-Rod. A smoother, cooler running motor just could be well received by the touring crowd and possibly another step closer to making some of the ultimate touring machines on the road.

So that's it for me, at least for now, on some thoughts of "what I'd do...." Granted it's just my ideas, but companies do want to know what their customers are up to and think. If your ideas were to be considered, what would you do? Sometimes our thoughts come to life. It will be interesting to see if any of mine do.

-- Gomo