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JAN/FEB 2011

Volume 21 Number 1

IronWorks®

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VIO VIDEO CAM • BUELL BROTHERS • CAM SHAFT DYNAMICS • MIKE TOMAS**



Contents

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011



ON THE COVER

Volume 21 • Number 1 • Our 171st Issue

Sometimes the best, most creative machines come out of the barns, garages, and basement workshops sprinkled throughout this great country. Nailing the magical formula is no easy feat and not easy to accomplish for a seasoned vet, let alone a total newcomer to the scene. With that bit of pomp and circumstance, meet Leo Tancreti, proprietor of Leo's Speed Shop and builder of the Flor de la Muerte.

FEATURE BIKES



Trask V-Rod

Bad, Black and Boosted

Loosigians FXR

The FXR the MoCo never built

Leo's White Bike

From '75 FL to full-out custom

Big Green Bagger

By Perewitz Cycle Fab

FEATURE STORIES



Ron Finch

A look behind the curtain

IW Tried & Tested

VIO video camera

Viper Diamondback

Riding the pro-street muscle bike

Lehman's Renegade Trike

An all-terrain ride

IW Tried & Tested

Nolan Helmet

IW GARAGE



Biketronics Audio

Speaker upgrade for a rigorous ride

Buell Brothers

What's that sound?

JIMS motor mount install

A solid and stylish upgrade

Electric

Repairing two-brush generators

Engine

Camshaft dynamics

Demystifying Audio

Listen up!

All About...

Anatomy of a custom boot, part 1

Gasket Materials

MLS gaskets explained

Mystery Machine & Die

The big reveal...



Project FLHX

8 *Baker and Alloy Art opt in*

DEPARTMENTS

Letters

20 *Send us a shout out*

Buyer's Guide

42 *Engines and rollers*

REGULARS

Steve B

24 *Change is good*

Mike Tomas

36 *Becoming an American rider*

Sam Kanish

38 *To ride or not to ride*

Marilyn Bragg

46 *Ready and willin'*

Margie Siegal

51 *Red Fred's 1938 Chief*

52

54

56

58

60

63

64

66

68



SPOTLIGHT

The Shop and Industry Customs

We've learned that often times, some of the best work is done in some of the smallest, least acclaimed shops and that's certainly true of the two gear head havens in this issue's Spotlight. The Shop and Industry Customs are both located on Long Island and their days of anonymity are over. Come on and take a walk around with us.



Forward

2011 promises to be quite a year, yessiree. The world around us continues to demonstrate change is something we'd best learn to deal with and better yet embrace because, dear friends, fellow motorcycle enthusiasts and Americans, there is nothing we can do to successfully withstand the hydraulic pressures of change. Change is a wind we cannot help but bend to, it is relentless.

Along those lines, I've come to appreciate that not everyone embraces change the same way. Some folks resist, the proverbial sticks in the mud—and pay the price as saplings do in a mudslide; they snap, break, struggle, and eventually disappear. Some run from change, but that doesn't work. You can't outrun the fleet-footed beast of change. Others surf the tides of change, staying on top of the current, limber and flexible, open to the shifting course and finding a way to make the power of change work for them.

Change brings all sorts of other things to the forefront: opportunity for one. When things change, opportunity is abundant and some cool stuff can fall out of the ensuing movement. You have to be quick, you have to move with assuredness, and you have to have a sense of humor if you are going to succeed navigating the seas of change.

And so it is with *IronWorks*, that things continue to change, and in our case, change for the better and stronger. We've further refined our mission and will consistently deliver the great stuff you expect from us. For instance, we've lined up some really good (and diverse) column contributors for 2011, further broadening our voice, breadth, and perspective. All these folks ride, they have ideas, and they are talented. The subject matter they target will always center on the machines, riding and the riding experience, no calisthenics (mental or otherwise) or mind-cleansing mantras are on our editorial agenda. *Ironworks* is about bikes (V-Twins mostly), products and info that make the experience better (safer and more comfortable)—just to be clear.

Keeping within the theme of change, after being a faithful contributor for many a moon, Bert Baker, friend, advertiser, and supporter has asked for a sabbatical so he may



focus on his business and some new products he's got in development, to which we responded, "Right on!" Bert will continue to wax eloquent on everything from Coney Island hot dog farts to thieving trademark infringers, but without the pressure of monthly deadlines and my hassling phone calls.

With that news is the addition of two new voices to *IronWorks'* printed pages: the first, Mike Tomas, who you know as the visionary leader of Kiwi Indian. Mike is an interesting guy who has a lot of business, life, and motorcycle knowledge and is willing to share. Mike has been a long time friend of IW and we are glad to have him working with us.

The second contributor you'll know if you visit IWBlogger.com and that is Marilyn Bragg a.k.a Chessie. Chessie is gold: she writes, she shoots, she explores, and she most importantly rides her Sportster everywhere. I mean everywhere. This 1993 Sportster has in excess of 180,000 on it. Yeah, that's right, she rides everywhere. Chessie has been in the V-Twin business and world for quite some time and I feel like we have scored to have her join our team.

We've got a few projects underway in the IW Garage: Project FLHX being one. Taking this machine that a few short months ago was a stocker and transforming it into both a looker and a performance handling touring machine has been fun and an education in parts and process. Nothing better than working on your own bike to get a sense of how stuff works, day in and day out. We've addressed appearance, handling, and drivetrain as well as light engine mods. Coming up in future issues will be a deeper dive into engine work and a few other incremental upgrades and enhancements. The fact that this machine gets ridden a lot means that you'll benefit from the feedback from a first hand user's experience—namely mine.

We are writers and photographers that

ride and are proud of it. Although you won't find us covering events per se and the party at "so and so's" in our printed pages, you'll find us at these events, busy looking for machines to feature and people to engage for projects and contributions of knowledge. When we are out hobnobbing with bigwigs and hoi polloi, we have an agenda.

With all that said, we are looking for more "reader engagement," and hope that you'll take the opportunity to interact with us on the [IWBlogger](http://IWBlogger.com) site. Print is not the most interactive medium at our disposal and so we encourage you to use our very busy and vibrant site to connect with us. Blogmeister Sam Kanish is one busy man keeping [IWBlogger](http://IWBlogger.com) up to date on a daily basis with all the news that amuses and pertains to our V-Twin world. Sam is also a mean storyteller and funny as hell in his inimitable laid back manner, so I encourage you to check out [IWBlogger](http://IWBlogger.com) and look for his missives.

I have one request from our constituents—and that is to assist us in identifying talented local folks building bikes, performing customization, creating road going machines, and developing a body of work in the V-Twin arena. Looking for Spotlight subjects is something we could use your help with and if you know of a talented shop or individual who has built a number of machines of a high caliber and quality I'd like to know. Finding talented folks flying under the radar is something we've got a deep interest in, and if you can turn us on to some unsung talent, we'd be most appreciative.

So bring it on 2011, we are ready; gloves on hands, helmet tight, petcock switched, key turned, carb choked...ignition!

Happy New Year!

Yours on 2-wheels in 2011

Stephen Berner

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Leo's Backyard Build

Meet the Flor de la Muerte (Flower Of Death)

Story by Leo Tancreti
Photos by Stephen Berner

I've stated in these pages before that finding great bikes to bring to our readers is no mean feat and without help from our fans, colleagues in the business, and the talented builders we feature, the job would be much harder. Case in point, if IW bike-finding activities were powered simply by our own sniffer, we'd have never have found this truffle to bring to the table. I met

Leo, the builder of this great machine through a referral from Lock Baker (of E-Fab fame). After spending some time at E-Fab shooting the Spotlight Feature that appeared in our August 2010 issue, Lock asked if I'd like to see what "some guys I know" were up to. I said, "Absolutely," and that is how I came to meet Leo and be introduced to this machine.

Leo, like many of us, works in an unheated, crowded garage with few of the fancy pants tools you are likely to see in

most decently equipped bike building shops. Hand tools and a few power tools are what Leo has to work with, excepting the occasional; visit to E-Fab to use the lathe and mill. When I first spied this machine, up on a wooden bench, I was knocked out by the ideas and timeline this young, first time bike builder presented me. This bike with all these innovative ideas would be done and ready to ride by Sturgis 2010. Right on, I thought, right on young Leo, let's see how you do.





Well the bikes got done (did they ever) and they went to Sturgis, Leo did it and he did it in high style! After Sturgis, I travelled North to Leo's farm to shoot this great machine so without further ado, meet Leo and learn the story of the Flower of Death.—Stephen Berner

My friend Adam, collector of all things old and in need of help, brought me his recently purchased stock '75 FLH. The idea was to do some minor fabrication and give the bike a stripped down ratty look, keeping the build to a small budget and having it out of the shop in a couple months at the latest. Something however must have been lost in translation along the way.

The bike was torn down and the motor and trans found a cozy spot cradled in a re-pop wishbone frame. The fork he was

set on using was an original I-beam and I knew just the place to find this gem. I paid a visit to my friend Lock at E-Fab and took the fork, which he had already fitted with an inch and a sixteenth steering stem. Lock likes to build things strong and this was just another example of his genius at work.

I mocked everything up and called Adam. We discussed a plan for the build and he decided to go for a full custom. As we talked he eyed an old Moto Guzzi gas tank along with a Knucklehead fender on the shelf, which he proceeded to pull down and quickly arrange on the frame. He also requested a 15" Hoosier drag skinny to be paired with two calipers. As for the rest, that was up to me.

I started by narrowing and adding a deeper tunnel to the tank, then when the

mounts were made the gas cap was relocated to suit the new mounting angle. Once he dropped off the slick I chopped and formed the fender to fit. Getting the bike rolling and off the lift was the next task but finding a 15" rim designed to accept an H-D dual flange hub would prove to be a challenge. To make this work I took a solid tractor rim with the correct dimensions, cut and smoothed the center, then sent it to Buchannan's for dimpling, punching, and to have a set of stainless steel spokes made. We also ordered a 21" Sun rim and spokes to mate the Triumph vented front drum brake.

When everything came back I laced and trued the wheels then made an axle to adapt the Triumph hub to the Harley fork. I needed a way of attaching the front end to the frame and I wasn't about to buy





some mass produced top clamp from Taiwan, so I decided to make one from aluminum. The bike was coming together and looking good except for the old crusty motor. I split and massaged the hell out of the rocker boxes then made an oil distribution block and ran stainless hard lines to each rocker arm.

The top end was torn down and freshened up and the heads, case and tranny castings were smoothed and finished with a Scotchbrite technique. To finish the motor off I beat a piece of 1/8" aluminum around a wooden buck I made to form the air cleaner and welded it to a backing plate. Then it was polished and finished to match the motor.

The rear brake was the next major issue to overcome. I decided to make an aluminum brake plate to hold the two Tokico calipers we were going to use. Using a set of parallels I was able to get the calipers properly spaced to the rotor, with everything moving freely. I wanted to mount the foot controls as cleanly as possible so I decided that since there

was no need for the stock brake crossover tube this would act as the perfect mounting point.

I cut away the bulky areas then machined two lengths of 7/8" stainless round stock so that a snug slip fit was achieved. They were finished off with small, almost invisible levers and a set of knurled aluminum pegs. The seat pan was sent over to Heyltje Rose where it received the full treatment. She tooled the shop name and logo in both the top and sides, finishing it off with a "samurai" type stitch.

Adam wanted a sort of retro style paint job with a classic touch, so the sheet metal was sent down to Bob at French Kiss Kustoms. In keeping with the drag race look I decided to form an aluminum strap over the top of the tank, which gets fastened by a quick pull pin. I topped the fork off with a set of low narrow bars and used hockey tape for the grips, keeping the look simple and functional. I wanted to build a bike that would exemplify a clean high tech style of craft, while keeping an overall vintage drag style look. The hard

part was creating a finished product that didn't look confused and this bike sure as hell isn't confused.

Kind of amusing to read Leo's account, as it seems so logical, clear, and the process linear, but it wasn't exactly that way. As anyone who has attempted back-to-back full custom builds with hand fabbed parts knows, the path to the finish line is never a straight one and the challenges are rarely all simple to solve, especially by someone new to the game. Leo's sense of style, indefatigable spirit, desire to overcome and willingness to approach others in the quest for knowledge is clearly exemplified by this first machine rolling out of his modest shop. The next bike we share from this young talent (in March) will be Leo's personal ride and it is a bit more radical so stay tuned!

—Stephen Berner

*RESOURCE

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