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IronWorks®

LAURA KLOCK'S MEMPHIS CHOPPER



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ON THE COVER

Volume 21 • Number 3 • Our 173rd Issue

Credit for Laura Klock's jewe-like Memphis Chopper goes to everyone who punches the clock at Mitchell, South Dakota's Klock Werks. It was an "all hands on deck" build, finished in the race to get to Michael Lichter's Eternal Combustion Show in Sturgis last year. The bike's graceful lines and striking paintwork exemplify the type of bikes Klock Werks has produced for almost a decade and a half. Turn to page 24 to go behind the scenes on its genesis.



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IW GARAGE

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SPOTLIGHT

Germany's Bike Farm

Oh give me a home, where the hogs like to roam... but this one is across the pond! In Germany, actually, a country of craftsmen and engineers who know a thing or two about the mechanical arts. Gerhard Remmert has taken his countrymen's passion to heart, turning out remarkable hand-built machines over several decades and garnering worldwide accolades in the process. Come on and look around the Bike Farm with IW.



Investment

Meddling Editor Paul Holdsworth and I took a road trip in December on behalf of *IronWorks*. Our agenda was partially editorial, partially business. There were people and machines I wanted to get close to with camera and recorder, and Holdsworth wanted to do some ad sales missionary work.

Why did we travel at what is a pretty miserable time of the year, a time of the year most sensible folk would hole up in their nice warm crib and call it a season? I mean, this is December we are talking about and one never knows what one will find once they leave the safety of their abode. I brought the iPod for amusement during long hours of travel time. Shuffle never let us down once, and an expansive/diverse music collection kept us entertained, amused, sane, and filled in the gaps between rants and conversation.

As is our habit, we had a packed agenda that took us to visit a whole bunch of people over the course of a cold-as-hell, snowy seven days. Memorable visits were with Ron and Mike at Chicago Harley where we got a grand tour of a very well stocked and tooled-up dealership. This is a monster facility and has some tremendous capability and talent within its walls. As an aside, I saw what has got to be the largest single room of stored customer HDs ever. Far underground, this crypt holds an ungodly number of machines—750+ and room for 500 more—all sleeping with their siblings until spring. It was a cool visual of something you just don't get to see that often, if at all.

Visiting Andrews Performance in Mt. Prospect, IL, was cool. You interested in spotless automated manufacturing environments? In CNC tooling centers as big as a shed? In a company that has embraced innovation, technology and diversity? Well if these things interest you, check out Andrews. They have it going on. I am hopeful our visit with Mike and Gary results in some good info coming our way, because these folks have some mad knowledge locked up in their walls that I am itching to tap for *IronWorks*.

Hoppe Industries in Kenosha was up



next. Visiting with John is a treat. What a good guy and a smart inventor. You'll see some of his new thinking in this issue in the products section. We talked business, had a good meal, a few adult beverages, and then all too quickly our visit was over. John's a good guy, a great host, a bundle of enthusiastic energy—and his products are rock solid. It was cool to see his place.

Working our way up to urban Milwaukee, we spent a full day with the crew at Cook Customs where I got to do what I like to do best—shoot bikes, listen to stories, and ask questions of smart and talented people with opinions. It was great, really a wonderful visit where we got to spend some quality time with Dave Cook, JP, Colleen Swartz, and Warren Heir. What a talented, swell bunch of people. We got to know each other a bit and I came away with a deep appreciation for the work that Dave Cook is doing. No real surprise there; Dave is an AMD champ. It was also excellent to become acquainted with Warren Heir of JR's Cycle Products to learn about the machines he builds—traditional '60's and 70's era chops—and his products, which include slick hubs for customs. We needed to beat feet after my shoot was done, so I will have to take this crew up on their offer of a down and dirty Milwaukee tour next summer. It should be...brilliant!

Fort Madison, Iowa, home of Don Hotop, was next. The local HyVee serves a mean breakfast special and we didn't want to miss it. The sticky buns are killer. The bikes coming out of Hotop's shop are also killer and you'll see one of them in the next issue as a result of me crawling around in

the dirt during a 25-degree morning. The visit was special. Here is a man with 35 years in the V-twin business that couldn't be easier to talk to and spend time with. He's knowledgeable but not a know it all, he's mellow and easy going yet the bikes he builds and the parts he designs are anything but—they are stunning showcases of tasteful, bold detail and exemplify the essence of the hot rodder's art. Quiet, understated muscle and purpose is a theme through all of Don's two-wheeled work.

Mitchell, South Dakota was a planned stop. We spent a solid day with Brian and Laura Klock and their team of welcoming and warm associates. Both Holdsworth and I commented to ourselves as we left, "What a nice bunch of people." That kind of sums up our visit to Klock Werks: nice and very productive. You are getting one of the bikes in this issue, Laura's Memphis chop, and there's another Klock machine on the way in a following issue. This is a business that has persevered through some pretty challenging times and they look to be clearly focused on the future—and it looks pretty good when seen through a clear and tough Klock Billboard Flare windshield!

Leaving the Klocks to head further west put us squarely in the middle of a nasty blizzard with gale force winds on I-90. This was at night only to make it more interesting. After peeling my fingers off the steering wheel, I consulted the Nuvi 660 for lodging options. GPS rules in these situations and we'd located and paid for two rooms (from the car) within 10 minutes of realizing that there was just no way we'd make it to Sturgis. We made it as far as Wall that night and felt real fortunate to have snagged our rooms whilst cruising at

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Reader Service No. 14

A Mile a Minute

STEPHEN BERNER

an aggressive 5mph on 90 west because by the time we'd gotten off the road, the state had closed it and there was a bit of confusion with people hunting for lodging on this evil night. Holdsworth and I found a tavern close by, ordered beverages and some bison burgers, and felt fortunate to be seated inside in the warm. We needed GPS to find our way back the two blocks to our motel, the whiteout was that bad.

The next day saw us slide our way West to Sturgis on the icy highway. We had a great lunch at the Knuckle Saloon with Tom of Drag Specialties, visited the Sturgis Museum, got a good cup of joe at the Sturgis Coffee Company, took some pictures of Sturgis in the off season, and worked our way to Rapid City, where I was to fly out of the next day. Holdsworth would continue on for another two days. Holdsworth dropped me off and we said our goodbyes. It had been good travelling with him. We are, luckily, simpatico road tripping partners.

I caught up with Dan, friend and manager of the Prairie's Edge in Rapid, and had a few beverages and some fine grub at the Firehouse with him. Man, what a treat to be able to just sit and talk normally, something we can never do during Bike Week. I crashed hard at the Hotel Alex Johnson, a great old rehabbed Rapid City landmark, and the next morning left for home, which was a whole 'nother adventure.

So we'd invested seven days away from our families, two flights, a week's worth of motels and mediocre meals. We'd travelled many miles by car and seen many people. I'd shot some great bikes, grabbed some video, and felt good about what we'd accomplished. We'd shown respect to people by coming to visit them, to leave our comfy chairs and see how they make it happen. It was an excellent investment of time, money, and effort, to be able to see people outside the usual Cincy/Daytona/Sturgis cycle. To be able to just hang out and talk about what makes us tick and how we can work together.

If you don't make the investment, you don't get the good stuff. And life's too short to settle for anything but the good stuff, don't you agree?

Stephen Berner
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Reader Service No. 15



Memphis: One Machine's Story

A tribute to people and perseverance

Story and photos by Stephen Berner

Some machines demand to tell their stories in their own way, and such is the case with Memphis, a special chopper built by Laura Klock and the friends and crew of Klock Werks, a small shop located in Mitchell, South Dakota. Perhaps you've heard of them.

Memphis, the machine you see here, was debuted at Michael Lichter's Eternal Combustion Show in Sturgis this past year. Laura and Vagabond Choppers' Athena Ransom were paired up to collaborate and present machines in tandem, but

circumstances of life prevented Athena from finishing her machine and showing her work. Laura and her Mountain Dew drinking team busted major butt to finish up Memphis in time for the show. Every challenge known to man but locusts plagued this team, trying (unsuccessfully) to keep them from finishing.

Not a chopper girl in the true sense, the frame came to Laura as payment back in the day for working in the Klock shop. As far as she was concerned, if she was going to build herself a long bike and embrace the chopper style, the least it had to be was fat. An Avalon front end

from Mean Street certainly brings fat to the front of the equation and a big 300 meat out back balances the machine visually. This is a big bike, a long bike, with a low seat height. It's a new style chop in every sense—except heart. In that regard it is very, very, ahem, excuse me—*old school*.

Very modern Contrast Cut wheels look great hung on this big frame and the amazing engraving by Canadian Heather New of New Line Engraving sets off the outrageous "*got a whole lot going on*" paint. Taking a good look at the engraving gives you the distinct impression that the



metal on this bike has been hand forged, pounded, and gouged by an old world craftsman and, in many regards, it has. The elaborate primary cover is a great example of the engravers art.

A BAKER RSD, a very modern part on a bike that references so many old world styling cues, works great and allows the slick rear wheel to run clean. A Goodson air cleaner gave Heather an amazing canvas to showcase her engraving handiwork whilst displaying the name of Laura's machine.

Mid-mount controls make sense for someone who is a rider (and Laura is certainly a rider with WFB titles to her name) and so our heroine implemented a real nice clean set. A solid mount motor was Laura's call as was the gas tank's shape. Ah yes, the tank shape, the amazing tank shape! Referencing a basketball, the spherical shape of the tank's front portion flows seamlessly and beautifully to the seat. Looking at the tank, you want to reach out and hug it; your hands just want to run over the curves of it to try and really understand how cool a shape it is.

The oil tank comes from Sucker Punch Sally's, the seat leather and saddlebag came from Joe Mielke, shop fab guru and head mechanic at Klock Werks. Rob Roehl at Donnie Smith's shop helped construct the gas tank and it is a masterful piece of unbelievably distinctive





metal work. Dan Cheeseman constructed the rear fender, seat pan, motor mount, and other custom touches—all with Laura in there as hands-on as possible in the rush.

The paint by TJ of TJ Design (www.custombikepaint.com) was hit and miss right up until the final coat of candy brown was shot—the colors were off the card and the painter was in uncharted territory. But in the end it turned out brilliantly, a deep and sophisticated palette set off by some great '70s style taping and use of variegated gold. Not one part of this build didn't throw up a challenge.

Floods visited Mitchell, South Dakota, this past spring and in addition to making a horrible mess of their business, their ability to make a living, and pay salaries it also got in the face of those Klock Werkers trying to get this (and one other bike you will meet in a future issue) done on time. This flood happened right in the middle of the build, a short time before Sturgis. Crowds coming through

Mitchell on their way to Sturgis helped as best they could. It was madness. It was amazing. It was a friggin mess. Nothing went together easily, but everyone persevered.

There is so much personal heart tied up with most every part of this machine, every bit of engraving and graphic iconography has deep meaning, as did Laura's decision to take every piece a step further than is common. The names of the special kids in her life, dedicated on the trans top cover to Erika, Karlee, and Austin, are 10 books of life stories right there. The Horsepower Ranch logo engraved on the primary cover is another story I encourage you to ask Laura about when you see her. The paint and engraving are great examples of what happens when you trust the skills of the artists around you.

Making her debut at The Eternal Combustion Show in Sturgis, placed in the back of the room, Memphis (and her brother Kwiksilver, Brian's FXR) seemed



kind of shy, hanging out in the corner, acting kind of low-key, as if she were just getting used to being out in the public eye. The bikes being on platforms presented themselves a bit awkwardly, as if to say: *"I haven't been on the road yet, screw being on a pedestal, I want to run."* The folks that took the time to get to know Memphis at the Sturgis show were rewarded with a rich experience; this is a bike with a deeply personal story.

So at the end of the day, the bike got finished, the tins got fitted, but the machine never got fired. There wasn't time to sort through all of the small issues and little adjustments necessary to make a machine safe and roadworthy before the Sturgis show. The Klock team was exhausted, it'd been a rush to the finish line, and they'd made it. And the way Laura saw it, there would be plenty of time to get to know and ride Memphis once their shop was put back straight. Sometimes it's about more than the ma-

chines; it's about the things you learn about people and the stories of their lives along the way.

In case you were wondering, the stars appearing all over the machine are to remind all that meet Memphis to shine, and Heather News' small hidden "LTWs" remind us to "Love the World." Good messages, good energy, good people, and a killer machine! **IW**

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Why the name Memphis?

Laura and Brian met some eight years ago, made a good connection, dated for a bit, and subsequently, as often happens when lives are complicated, they parted ways. Well, Laura came back some short time later to visit and as is often the case, there was a crowd of customers around the Klock shop so the crowd went to dinner. Brian tired of introducing Laura as "Laura from Wisconsin" and began introducing her as Memphis, an inside joke. Well the "stage name" stuck and folks around the shop referred to her as Memphis. In looking back, the name reminds Laura as much of a time in her life as the spirit that powers her forward.