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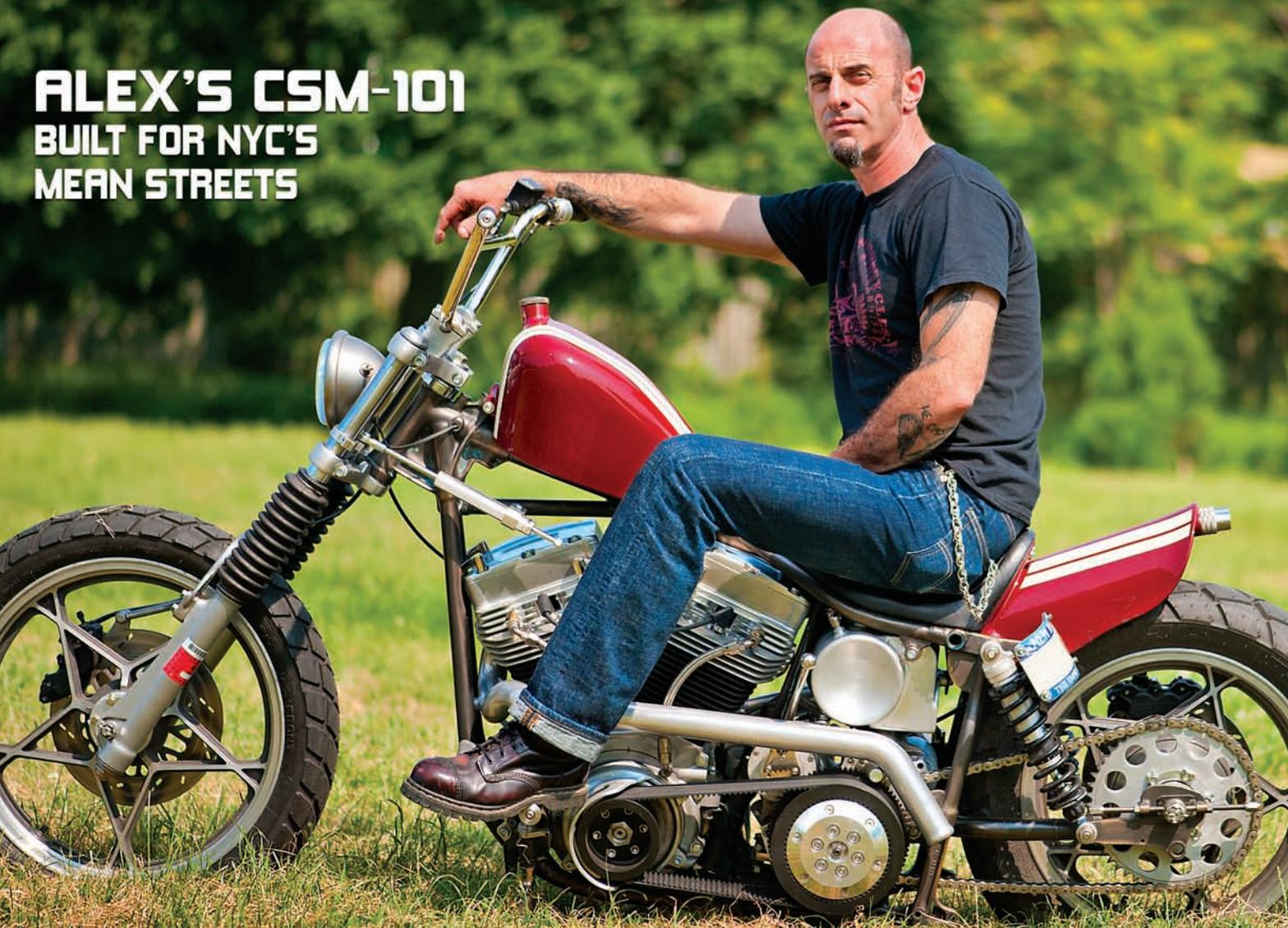
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ON THE COVER

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Taking on the urban jungle via two-wheels requires a certain attitude. Confidence behind the bars is a must for the pilot but the bike, too, must demand its space and roll with presence. This isn't news to Alex Lerner whose builds exemplify a savvy grasp of the places where they'll clock up their miles.



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SPOTLIGHT: Salinas Boys

Cole Foster's Salinas Boys style was distinctive from the get-go; the slim, lithesome bike he built in 2001 for CCI stood in stark contrast to the fat-tired behemoths so popular at the turn of the millennium. But keeping focused on what he wants to build isn't a problem for Cole, a builder whose organic themes flow from within, not prompted by current fads or trends. Let's be frank; that's why his work gets our attention.



The Life

The next month (I am writing this just before leaving for Sturgis) is going to be a busy one, just as the last one and the one before that have been. There is so much going on event wise, all over this big country of ours, that putting a calendar and a dance card of events together can be tough. I don't recall ever having so many options.

Let me further qualify, I don't recall ever having so many *good* options, many of these new events, runs, rides, shows, and other experiential drama look pretty cool and relevant, not simply opportunities for carneys and cheap accessory guys to pick my already thin wallet clean. I see lots of smaller bike and rod shows, rides and runs popping up and widely attended with characters from near and far. It's pretty cool when guys from the east head west, northerners head south, and vice versa for runs, just to hang out and make friends and to put faces with names.

I think we can thank our favorite appliance—the Internet—for providing the connective tissue allowing us the ability to reinvent and connect individually on a grand scale instantaneously. It used to be that you had to actively scout local 'zines and sheets, and bulletin boards of shops to see if there was an event happening. Or, if the organizers had their act together and had some cake, they'd advertise on regional radio, maybe even advertise in national magazines like *Easyriders*, *Supercycle*, or maybe *Street Chopper*—or better yet, get some editorial coverage (with weenie bites and boob shots, of course), from Michael Lichter, Rip, Marla (and Scooter), Frank Kaisler, and of course, Bandit. There were fewer events. They were mostly regional and usually had little to do with commerce. Rather they were about the simplicity of enjoying each other's company, usually in a small town or in the woods at a remote location. It took years for the word to get out as op-

posed to today where it just takes one tweet to build a substantial presence.

I see lots of small events springing up, which are throwbacks to this hankering for earlier simpler times when camping, coolers and creeks were the staples of a "run." I think that's cool; it's good to see things get back to grass roots, that's the seed of new growth. Lots of seeds mean some will stick and thrive.

Personally, I am not so big on camping. I did my time in tents, quite a bit of it actually. At this point, after a long day on the bike, I like to get a room with AC, take a



shower, check my messages and email, look for dinner, maybe a place I can walk to and have some adult beverages, plug my electronica in to recharge, and call it a day. I think this may be a sign of softening (valuing comfort), and of ah, maturing (taking work seriously). I don't know when I got soft. I can't put my finger on the date—I wish I could. Something happened and I'm not sure what precipitated it. Now, don't get me wrong, I don't apologize for this condition. I am just a little surprised that it happened to me... ha!

I've been watching this softening for a while now. I think it was around the time when we somehow got permission for dressers to be considered cool. When I

got my first dresser, Big Blue, they were definitely *not* cool. No sir, no way.

Dressers were great for travelling, they were utilitarian, made sense, and handled great. Owning a dresser was the outward commitment to travelling or riding with a partner, otherwise why would you buy something so comfy, big, slow, ugly, and well... uncool? I finally gave up trying to explain my bike and just ignored the haters.

The desire for achieving greater distances drove me to consider a touring bike. Having a fairing allowed me to triple my daily travelling mileage. Putting in 750 miles a day on the big bike is easily accomplished and you still feel like you've earned your Hungry Man Breakfast with Meat...patties not links, please. Anyway my point is the slope is slippery once you start down the "comfortable is smart" path. Backrests? Not cool, but they sure are nice on a long day. Cup holders? You decide! You get the point. My POV is that baggers are not inherently cool but man are they great for travelling with a bunch of stuff at locomotion speed—in style, safely and comfortably. Ironically, the custom bagger enthusiasts of today are the same folks that called 'em garbage barges and sh*t wagons just a few years ago Funny how things turn.

So I look at some of the longriders in the current chopper culture and I feel a little soft, unworthy, a mite jealous, and maybe a little in awe to be honest. I mean these folks, more than any others the way I see it right now, are living the dream—they own the scene. Riding their handmade slim and sleek machines, sleeping in the dirt, camping with their bedrolls near an open fire—the ultimate and perfect epic David Mann image. *This* is why we were initially attracted to the culture; to get some of that, right?

If we got into this Harley thing when we were younger, we sure didn't get into it for dressers and cheap motel rooms (ala SteveB style as of late). At least I sure as hell didn't. I wanted some adventure; I wanted some of "that." I wanted a tough



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guy Dick Allen style chopper with a long front end sporting a spool hub and a rear car tire. "Hell yeah, sign me up. I am not interested in meeting nice people on Hondas." I wanted to be camping with my pals in the dirt sharing lies and good times, like the guys I saw in *In the Wind*. I saw those images and I was hypnotized. I wanted to get out there in the worst way. I wanted to see this place, America, where I was from, that I knew nothing of. I wanted to see it from the fringe, not from a tour bus or station wagon.

I'd like to think guys and gals get into the H-D culture and ride their bikes in an attempt to capture a bit of the rustic and rougher time gone by; simpler times, dirtier times, times of real friends, times of hands-on maintenance, times of wild rides spent in community, sharing the same experience, and reveling in it. No going to hotel rooms at the end of the night to chill to the sound of your own air conditioner and *Housewives of Hideous County*. "Sit your ass down by the fire NOW, where do you think you're going? It ain't bedtime yet."

Hang by the fire, drink and tell stories until you nod. Wind up sleeping in the open, heckled by your friends as you pass out. If you are lucky you have a tent to crawl to and you make it. Some wiseass with a camera can't help but capture the scene. Hope it doesn't rain. If it does, the bike will be a bitch to start tomorrow. But if it does rain and it doesn't matter; eventually it'll stop, it'll dry.

Mornings are slow, smoky from the fire, and filled with the scent of cowboy coffee. Sit on the ground or log, have a smoke, amused by the antics of those freed from the expectations of a "normal" and well-behaved morning. You eschew the comforts of a hot shower, cable TV, and wireless connection, followed by the ubiquitous and indigestible continental breakfast, where afterwards your electric leg insures you get 'er going reliably, quick and easy—not that there is anything wrong with that.

Good times, living the life, moment by precious moment. Whatever your style. Peace. See you out there.

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Tom's Perfect Pan

Tom Kotarsky's Lifetime Pan Project

Story by Gregg Dahl ■ Photos by Stephen Berner

There are guys that have been around a long time, and then there are the ones that the old timers say have been around a long time. Tom Kotarsky belongs to the latter group. He and his younger brother, One Arm Bob, started Tom's Kustom Shop back in 1969, just to be able to access parts for their own builds. Forty-two years later Bob still operates the Uniontown, PA establishment, a full time, old style motorcycle shop.

The bike you see on these pages represents Tom's idea of the perfect Panhead. Bikes similar to this one are what began

to appear after the long, high-neck choppers began fading from popularity. This particular example is a build completed in 1980 when Tom felt it was time to step back to simpler times.

The engine is one that propelled a couple of choppers back in the day, before being reunited with its original frame for this black masterpiece. During this build the engine was expanded to 80 cubes and filled with all the best components of the day. The cylinders were bored .060 over and contain a set of Venolia pistons. Down below are S&S rods swinging from H-D

4.250 stroke flywheels on S&S shafts. The original heads were brought back to spec with Manley valves and springs. Rounding out the rest of the valvetrain is an Andrews B grind with solid tappets.

The tin rocker covers and outer primary were replaced with finned aluminum castings from Cal Custom circa 1970's. A Rivera SU carb sits nicely behind the original '59 air cleaner which has been spring loaded to keep it from turning loose. On the exit side of things are clampless Paughco pipes.

The whole thing is sparked to life with





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the original points ignition. Transmitting power to the driveline is a Supermax belt drive with the starter ring machined off for the purpose of making belt replacement easier. Inside the bike's tool box is a crank nut socket with a replacement belt neatly wrapped around it, while tucked underneath the engine and trans assembly is a breaker bar and 4-inch extension making roadside belt service a ten minute affair.

Up front is a custom set of chromed trees with 2"-over tubes supporting fork boots and turned down sliders. The front fender is mounted with bolts that come from inside the sliders through the fender mounts for an uncluttered look. The headlight is a KC from the local off road supplier. On top of all this is a set of classic pullback bars with internal wiring and throttle cable.

That internal throttle cable, by the way, is another trick feature engineered by Tom. The old twist assembly used here had a solid cable instead of the multi-strand cable used on modern bikes. In order to get the feel of a modern throttle and also to work with the SU, Tom needed to make a modern cable work. Rolling the

grip open was fine, but no amount of return spring would bring the carb back to idle without manually turning the grip back. The solution was to wind an internal spring within the bars just inboard of the twist assembly to make the throttle snap back perfectly. It hasn't failed in 30 years!

The gas tank is from a 1975 Super Glide. The top was cut and flattened for the dash assembly, which was milled from a solid piece of aluminum and houses a Super Glide speedo and Triumph warning lights. On the sides are vintage, chromed, 1951 H-D emblems. The gas caps are from old aluminum BSA gas tanks that Tom fitted and leaded into place. All of this creates a mini Fat Bob look perfect in proportion and appearance.

The foot controls are the Kotarsky Brothers signature Battle Axe mounts with Allen bolt pegs, all pieces and parts hand made, then chromed. These axe mounts were a perfect place to carry a piece of chain for securing the Pan to a pole or parking meter. The rear pegs are from a Harley Sprint.

The rear fender is a bobbed original



with the stock taillight relocated and recessed slightly for a frenched look. Below that is a factory brass trim edge polished and chromed. The struts came from a solid piece of steel and were made by an anonymous friend at a Pittsburgh steel mill. When he brought them to Tom they were so heavy they had to have holes bored in them just to lighten them up. Then the struts were fitted with saucer type freeze plugs to fill the holes. Convincing a chrome shop that only did bike parts that the plugs were for a motorcycle was another story!

The frame has been slightly smoothed and detailed, leaving the chromed swingarm out back. Tom liked the feel of the old rigid bikes and also the look of the '59 shocks so he mounted them almost vertical to stiffen the ride and to keep the suspension from hopping when kicking the Pan over. A Mustang seat was modified to accept a backrest that can be relocated to the rear should a passenger ride along.

Paying tribute to the chopper days, Invader wheels serve as rolling stock. Now I personally know that Tom has been riding this bike almost unchanged for more than 30 years. It has been back and forth across this country more times than most of the Baggers out there. It stands as proof that a well thought out and properly built custom can be dependable, stylish, and last for years. That's what these guys, the Kotarsky Brothers, do. **IW**

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