

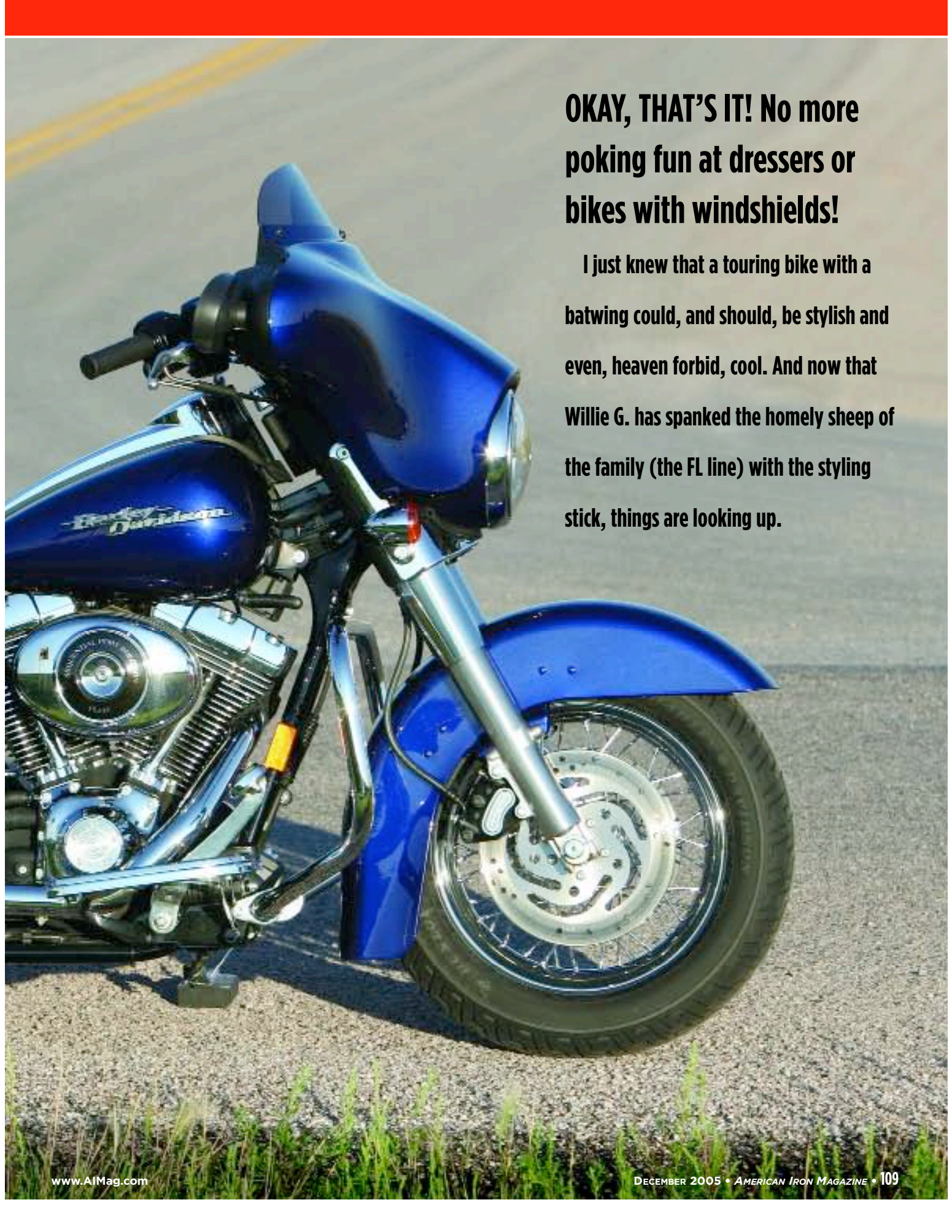
2006

H-D STREET GLIDE

A sleeker dresser for the street

BY STEPHEN BERNER • PHOTOS BY BOB FEATHER





OKAY, THAT'S IT! No more poking fun at dressers or bikes with windshields!

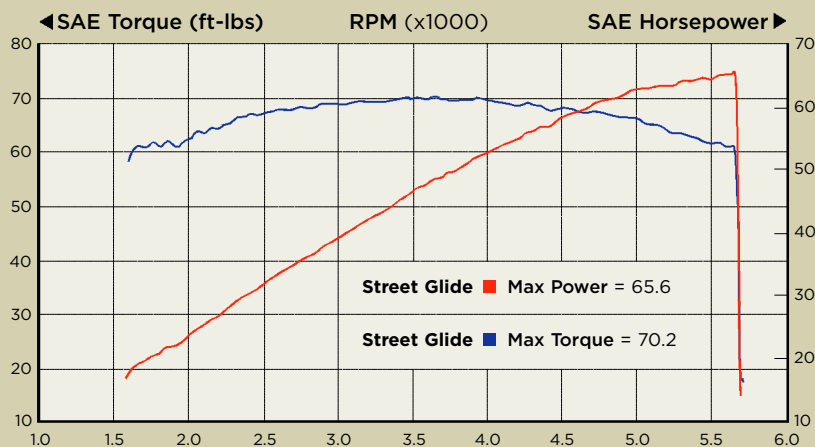
I just knew that a touring bike with a batwing could, and should, be stylish and even, heaven forbid, cool. And now that Willie G. has spanked the homely sheep of the family (the FL line) with the styling stick, things are looking up.

TECH SHEET

FLHX/I Street Glide

Length:	94.5" (240.0cm)
Unladen seat height:	27.3" (69.3cm)
Ground clearance:	4.7" (11.9cm)
Rake:	26 degrees
Trail:	6.2" (15.7cm)
Wheelbase:	63.5" (161.2cm)
Engine:	Rubber-mounted Twin Cam 88 (1450cc)
Compression:	8.9:1
Fuel system:	Carburetion or Electronic Sequential Port Fuel Injection
Transmission:	Five-speed
Front tire:	Dunlop Harley-Davidson Series D402F MT90B-16" 72H
Rear tire:	Dunlop Harley-Davidson Series D402 MU85B-16" 77H
Fuel capacity:	5 gallons (18.9L)
Oil capacity:	3.8 quarts (3.6L)
Dry weight:	745 pounds (338kg)
Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR):	1,259 pounds (571kg)

Front brake:	Dual four-piston calipers, dual 11.5" x .20" uniform expansion discs
Rear brake:	Four-piston caliper, 11.5" x .23" uniform expansion disc
Exhaust system:	Chrome crossover duals
Front fork:	41.3mm, triple circuit damping
Rear shocks:	Air-adjustable
Wheels:	16" black/silver cast aluminum alloy (laced option)
Instruments:	Electronic speedometer and tachometer with odometer and resettable tripmeter, voltmeter, fuel gauge, diagnostic readout, oil pressure gauge, clock (integrated in stereo), ambient air temperature gauge
Sound system:	Premium stereo sound system (40 watts per speaker) with AM/FM/CD/MP3 player, fairing-mounted speakers, weather band, digital clock, bi-directional seek and scan, track search and scan, 10 presets, automatic volume control with adjustable sensitivity
Handlebars:	Stainless steel Touring
Colors:	Vivid Black, Black Cherry Pearl, Black Pearl, Deep Cobalt Pearl
MSRP:	\$17,795-\$18,185



Our thanks to TP Engineering for the use of its dyno facilities



The universal reaction to the FLHX Street Glide seems to be “Oooh, cool bike.” And, as much as it goes against my nature to readily agree, I have to. But what exactly is it about the Street Glide that makes it so appealing? Is it an integrated collection of parts bin chicanery or is it really a new bike? These questions presented an opportunity to do some research. And no better way to do it than on a cross-country trip from Los Angeles to Sturgis and back to the East Coast. It meant a sacrifice, I know — but it was a job that needed to be done, and so, being the selfless sort, I volunteered.

Sporting a slim 4.7" of ground clearance, the trimmed-down Glide features slammed front and rear suspension, giving it a lower and more visually appealing stance. This bike sits in the weeds, a happening look that comes at a cost. The harsher ride reflects a lack of ground clearance when loaded with gear — in stock form, there is about 1" less suspension travel on the FLHX than other bikes sharing its chassis. It's an inch that is sorely missed in those circumstances. However, for the most part, the bike is still comfortable in terms of suspension and feedback.

The handlebars and controls are standard FL fare, and, as such, they are comfortable, familiar, and easy to reach. Also standard and offering no surprises are the brakes, a dual-disc arrangement up front, and a single four-pot disc in the back. The brakes work well. They're not grabby, and they're able to easily haul the Glide down from more-than-necessary speed without crushing hand strength.

The paint is what I have come to expect from the Motor Company — flawless. H-D has always dished up the best paint I've seen on a motorcycle, and the Street Glide is no exception. The Deep Cobalt color coating this bike was stunning!

The one-piece custom, model-specific seat works well for around town and short trips, placing the driver farther back on the bike than a full FL touring saddle. It's surprising how sitting 3"-4" back on the bike affects everything. A taller rider might appreciate the additional room, but all it did was make me slouch and reach farther for the bars. Seams on the vinyl seat are an unwelcome addition after a long day in the saddle, prompting a bit of squirming. All told, the cruising position is just about standard “FL neutral” and a home run for larger riders in terms of ergos and comfort.

The batwing, ah yes, the batwing. The star of the show and the classiest piece of industrial design ever bolted to an FL chassis, the batwing fairing lives on and is now presented as cool. Go figure! The iconographic fairing is a fantastic canvas for the beautiful paint. In Street Glide trim, the batwing is devoid of the spotlight bar with turn signals. This is a sleeker fairing, and the bike looks less clunky up front due to the careful selection, and omission, of accessories. Stripped of its familiar cowcatcher trim, a la Road Glide, the front fender is a traditional FL number that perfectly fits the bike's style.

Attached to the batwing is what I can only describe as a whisper of a windshield. It holds the promise of protection, but it delivers diddly. H-D calls this slice of Plexiglas the “smoked mini wind deflector,” and mini it is. Though it looks cool, this stock windshield is useless and only serves to remind one that there can be too much sacrifice in the pursuit of style. I started my FLHX road trip with my favorite scarred-up half-helmet.

But after being buffeted by the diminutive wind — ahem — deflector, I asked my better half to overnight my full-face helmet. The full-face cut most of the fatiguing noise and kept my glasses from blowing off. A 4" or 6" higher windshield would work wonders for comfort at highway speed and allow for better enjoyment of the new stereo that rocks the Street Glide.

The gem of the cockpit, this greatly improved stereo is a fancy Harmon/Kardon Advanced Audio System, a 40-watt road scorcher featuring AM/FM/WB/CD/MP3, and XM Radio — all easily controlled by your fingertips. I enjoyed the stereo and spent time playing with its settings and features before heading out. It was my first XM Radio experience, and I must say I loved the endless variety and accessibility of music. The sound is great, clear, and strong with no tinny noise. Home run!

Gauges in the batwing include speedo, tachometer, voltmeter, oil pressure, and air temperature. Given my druthers, I'd like to see air temperature replaced with something more useful, like oil temp. The easily read gauges are white during the day and soft amber at night. Nice additions to the cockpit

are rearview mirrors that mount to the inner fairing and not to the handlebars, as in years past. Again, these details clean up the fairing and the overall look of the front end.

Visually quiet and molded from GTX nylon, the lightweight, durable saddlebags are Road Glide fare. Absent from the saddlebag mounting area is any semblance of protective trim, or even a place to attach a bungee. My advice to Street Glide pilots is to be careful and keep those bags far from car doors and other bikes that park too close. Additionally, hook up a way to attach bungees without scarring the paint. The most impressive piece of new bodywork, unique to this model, is the rear fender tip that incorporates one light and integrated saddlebag filler panels. This molded feature cleans up the rear and supports the low and lean look.

The engine and drivetrain are based on the proven Twin Cam platform with the seemingly bulletproof five-speed transmission. The bike runs hot, a common characteristic of Twin Cams — they hate to sit in traffic. There is no substantive news in regards to power updates. I was hoping for a six-speed for the FL line, but, in all honesty, it's not critically needed, as the stock Twin Cam has enough beef to collect autographs from law enforcement officials nationwide. The chrome dual exhaust is traditional, with all the snarl and bark of a church mouse.

Some details that differentiate the Street Glide from its dowdy FL roots are the chrome floorboards, fairing-mounted rearview mirrors, small bullet turn signals, optional spoke wheels, extended chrome dash trim, passenger footpegs (no floorboards!), and color-matched saddlebag trim pieces. Little bits, yes — but the effect adds up.

So where does the Street Glide fit into the scheme of things? If you're a dedicated touring rider, you'll probably opt for an Ultra or a Classic. But if you're a day-tripper or light-traveling weekender who wants some music to keep you company, appreciates the storage and security hard bags afford, and digs the batwing style, the Street Glide might be the ticket for you. The FLHX has great clean looks and a sophisticated, yet tough, attitude. It's not rehash. It really is a new bike, and it demands consideration. I think H-D will sell a lot of them.

I want one. It's cool. Okay. I said it.



RIDING IMPRESSIONS



Joe Knezevic (6'1")
AIM Associate Editor
Riding 23 years

EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO HIS opinion, and every good American should have one. So, for the record, I think that windshields are for cars and batwings should be on, well, bats. There, I said it. Now, before you send me hate mail, let me say

that I logged my fair share of miles on the Street Glide and enjoyed it, but I like the wind in my face when I ride. The saving grace of this fairing is the

new state-of-the-art Harman/Kardon advanced audio system with XM Satellite Radio and CD capable of playing MP3 discs. That this stereo comes standard is a knockout.

The overall less-is-more look of the bike and its curbside stance are right on. However, the low profile suspension leads to a loss of travel, which for a guy my size translates to limited handling in the twisties. Some styling cues I dig are the color-matched latches on the GTX Nylon hard saddlebags, fairing-mounted mirrors, and a smoked chrome 3-D tank emblem.

It's not my favorite H-D, but it does have plenty of style and has earned a place in my heart.



Trish Szulewski (5'7")
AIM Designer
Riding for 10 years

I'M A SUCKER FOR SUBTLE BEAUTY. Even if you don't like the giant fork-mounted fairing on the new Glide, you can't deny that it's a real showpiece. Just look at the luster of the Deep Cobalt Pearl paint, and

the custom details like the extra taillight that's frenched into the rear fender. I actually tried to ride the FL a little less aggressively, for fear of scratching the chrome floorboard trim, but I can't help it.

Getting the Big Twin leaned over was just too easy. It's so smooth and torquey. And with the XM radio tuned in to some good rockin' blues, I often found myself going faster than intended on my favorite curvy back roads. Luckily, the cornering clearance is excellent, and the boards survived unscathed.

I'm a big fan of FL front ends. Even though the fairing looks like a bear, the bike is easy to maneuver, even in parking lot situations. The only problem I have with the fairing is the tremendous amount of wind turbulence it throws at me. But I could easily replace the tiny windshield with a taller one and redirect the wind over my head. Then, this bike would be the perfect tourer for me.



Sam Whitehead (5'8")
AIM Features Editor
Riding 13 years

Trish should have checked out the Street Glide a bit more closely before she took her spin. Then she would have noticed that her beloved chrome floorboard trim was already a touch violated.

You see, I rode the Glide before her and let's just say I had a lot of fun. Yes, it's smooth and torquey. Yes, it's cool looking, and the details rock, and the luster of the Deep Cobalt Pearl paint pops. No, the windshield doesn't need to be any bigger (in fact, toss it entirely). But most of all, you can really sling this tourer around. I very much enjoyed carving corners with the greatest of ease, and occasionally (only once or twice, I swear) hearing the ever-delightful "ccrrrhh" of those boards. Mind you, unlike Trish, I wasn't relaxing to "some good rockin' blues." Oh, no. Motorhead fueled my ride. Seriously, on every

level the Street Glide is a gorgeous machine.

My one real qualm is with the new ignition switch, which can only be locked when the fork is fully cocked to the left. In other words, no pushing the bike around your garage (or anywhere else) with the ignition locked. A step backward for sure.

AIM

