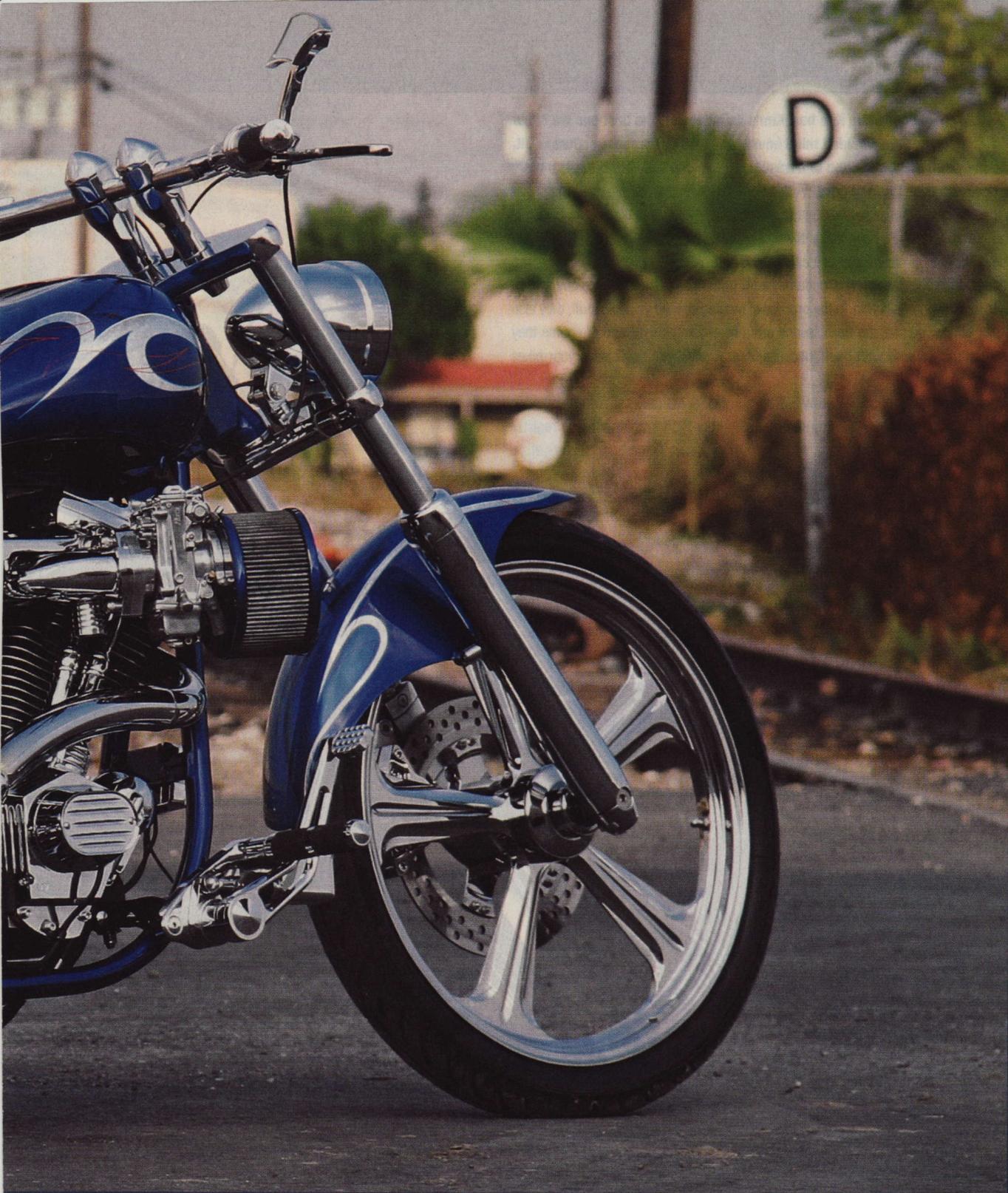


BETTER THAN



STOCK

A SURPRISE
MAKEOVER FOR A
SON'S WELL-WORN BIKE

BY STEPHEN BERNER ■ PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIC ELLIS

“We want one like Kim has. Kim’s definitely got the best one we know of, and we wouldn’t mind having one like that ourselves. Ours is OK, but we’d trade ‘em in a minute to have one like Kim Berndtsson’s.”

What does Kim have that’s so great? A dad who gets it, and we mean *really* gets it—he gets it so much that he gave Kim a surprise birthday present: a makeover for his well-worn and -loved ‘94 Softail. How cool is that?

The story is about as convoluted as it can be, and parts of it are, dare we say, top secret. But suffice it to say that the Berndtsson family hails from Australia and, due to one reason or another, relocated to California. In the process of moving all their valuable stuff, they also moved their bikes; you see, the Berndtssons are a bike-riding family, and of course they brought their trusty steeds with them, because, dear friends, you don’t leave your bikes behind, right?

All things looked good for some two-wheel adventures for the newly arrived Berndtsson clan—up until the point where they ran headlong into the DMV in their quest to register their bikes in California. Through this most tortuous ordeal, they came to find Junior at ►





Lifestyle Cycles, who got them all sorted out, inspected, registered, certified, and legal. In the process of getting the family's stockers back on the road, Kim's dad spent some time shopping the bike-laden floor at Lifestyle and got himself an American IronHorse Texas Chopper straight from the showroom. Welcome to America, Mr. Berndtsson.

So Mr. Berndtsson came home with a fresh new bike for himself and proceeded to park it next to Kim's tired, ratty-looking trans-oceanic Softail that was once upon a time the bike you see here. In the garage that night, though, beauty was definitely parked next to the beast.

With its faded green paint job; tired, clappy motor; and a bunch of bad-quality, mismatched early-'90s bolt-on accessories attached to its nether regions, Kim's Softail looked like a middle-aged trailer-park queen going through a hormonally induced identity crisis. What to do: dump and run and start fresh with a new bike, or work with what they had?

The Berndtsson's philosophy was, after some consideration, clear and right in line with our own thoughts: Why lay out the cash for a new H-D, only to spend a small fortune on top of that to get it right? On the other hand, why buy an aftermarket bike, only to create something based on the very platform they already owned—a Softail? They had a good starting point, and Kim loved his bike even with its dowdy clothes on.

It is also important to note that the H-D platform is an excellent starting point for a build or a rebuild, as is the case here. The frame has numbers that match the motor, and, with a bunch of tedious work, the stock chassis cleans up nicely. It also happens that Lifestyle Cycle is home to Performance Techniques, the folks who build a special-configuration motor on a stock 80-inch Evo platform that yields 90hp/90 lb-ft of torque, so the drivetrain was going to be as solid as stock.

Since Kim is a rider, and this bike was going to spend a lot of time traveling hither and yon, the decision was made early on not to slap monster meat on ►



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the back of this bike. It was decided that a 200 rear tire would more than suffice—more beef than stock, but nothing outlandish or squirrely at speed. It was decided by Mr. Berndtsson and Junior that the overall style and personality of the bike would be that of a street fighter: short, clean, mean, and ready for business. Not a flat-back bomber, but a sleek and prettied-up gentleman's road-going hot rod.

With some of the big decisions made, Junior and his team, using their vast knowledge of what the aftermarket has to offer, began putting together a fresh new look for "this ol' bike." Picking the right parts that match up—not only with your vision and style, but with your budget and platform—can be tough, if not overwhelming. How many of you have ordered parts, only to realize that "it just ain't gonna work"—either stylistically, fitment, or quality-wise? Well, Junior and his crew know their business and their products, and they have good taste to

boot. The shopping list for this bike reads like a who's-who of the very best the aftermarket offers. Gentleman, start your checkbooks.

A Heartland rear fender/fender strut and taillight license-plate mount make the back of the bike look a bit tougher, cleaner, and tighter and work great as an integrated package. The Lifestyle crew had to massage the parts a wee bit to get the ultra-clean, integrated look you see here. A Ness cam cover was selected and looks great with the Roadmax transmission end cover. The Martin Bros. exhaust allows you to really appreciate how open and clean the front cradle of the frame is around the area of the forward controls. A pallet must have been delivered from Performance Machine for this bike: brakes, wheels, and rotors all sweeten the makeover and work perfectly as a package, and Accutronix forward controls match up with these units real well. Getting all these parts and manufacturers to play nice together is not for the faint of heart.

A bunch of work was done in-house to the stock H-D frame: The neck section was raked a bit, then strengthened and boxed. Gratuitous mounts and tabs were removed and the area prepped. The frame was then ready for the Santee swingarm, which was designed to accommodate a modest but still meaty Avon 200-series tire.

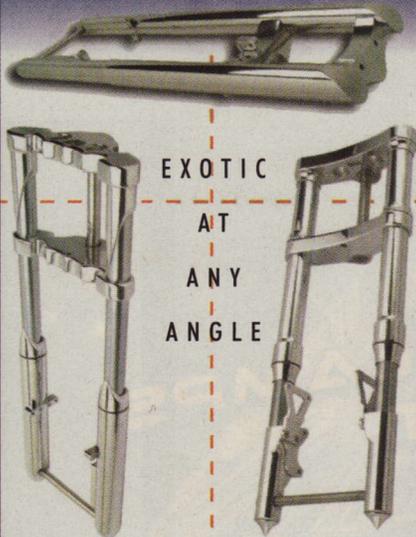
The CCI fuel tank was modified a bit, and a Matt Hotch original pop-up gas cap was installed to ensure trouble-free operation. Yes, folks, sometimes it's worth going to the best. In the gas cap's case, it's well-known that the cheapies can stick, bind, and cause all manner of embarrassment at the pump.

The carcass was now ready for paint, so it was shipped off to Buck Wild Designs to get a dose of the magic that he does. Using a Candy Blue as a backdrop, Mr. Wild proceeded to lay on some sweet silver leaf—not an everyday touch, as gold is more common. It was getting exciting at the shop, because how many bikes from this era have a chance to rise like a phoenix from the ashes? Not many, and the crew at Lifestyle was getting jazzed about how the bike was shaping up. ▶



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As it turns out, the cat had to be let out of the bag before Kim's birthday. It was pretty important that the graphics and color matched up with what Kim wanted, so the bike was revealed. Kim loved the bike exactly as it was planned. Final assembly allowed the details such as wiring to be attended to, and all the parts were given a once-over before final fitment.

It has been some time since the build was completed, and the crew at Lifestyle Cycles can only imagine that Kim is riding all over, wearing out those 200-series tires. You see, they haven't heard from Kim or his father since the bike was rolled out of the shop and the pair rode off together on their new sleds.

Looking back on the job, Junior opines that "it was a lot more work to bring this bike to where it is today than it would have been to build a bike from scratch, but in the end, it is still a H-D, which is cool, and it is still the owner's original bike, which is also cool."

Junior, we couldn't agree with you more. Now, if anyone has a line on a rich guy wanting to play sugar daddy to a couple of well-deserving bike riders, send him over. **HB**

