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AUGUST 2010

Volume 20 Number 6

IronWorks

JAMES SIMONELLI'S

ROADRUNNER MUSCLE BIKE



SPOTLIGHT: E-Fab
ANYTHING BUT TYPICAL
LED SLED HARDTAIL INSTALL
IRISH RICH SHOWS HOW

DADDY-O'S 1952 K • CHRIS ROSE'S CAVEMAN SPECIAL • BERT BAKER
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Eastern Fabrications

Perfectly out of step



story by Marilyn Stemp
photos by Stephen Berner

Lock Baker says he followed a common path, from racing bicycles to building motorcycles.

"I started racing downhill mountain bikes, that's what got me on two wheels, working on them, jacking them up. Then I went to dirt bikes to get all the crashing done on the dirt where it's softer. After that, my first street bike was a Harley."

Whether that's a typical route or not is up for discussion. What's beyond question is now that Lock is a participant in the motorized two-wheeled world, he's not following any prescribed direction; he's pursuing his own singular course.

The bikes on these pages, produced at Lock's shop, Eastern Fabrications, stand in witness to his eclectic tastes and varied creative abilities. As a self-taught fabricator, his early attempts were trial and error. "First you learn how to weld, then you think, 'now I can join it so how do I curve it?'" he said. This led him to lots of experimentation with different metals, wood and other substances. That unconventional attitude taps right into Lock's philosophy, too, about being an artisan, a craftsman who is way more concerned with the result than with the technology used to create it. In fact, he prefers to stay disconnected from current technology. "If something needs to be CNC'd I sub it out," he said. "I'm not computer oriented. I don't even have a cell phone."

"I wish I'd been born in the Middle Ages when the blacksmith was an important person," he said. "Now it's an obsolete skill, but the sparks flying, all the drama: I love it!"

And it's the ritual, the ceremony inherent in motorcycle riding—don-



ning the gear and tending to the machine—that impresses him. "It's all about the drama with Harleys, too," he explained. "The performance and reliability aren't so great but it's about the scene you make. Not an obnoxious scene, necessarily, but the procedures, the backfiring, the leaking oil, that's what's interesting."

The same goes for forming the parts: "All that heat and fire, and it's dangerous. That's sexy, ya know?"

In Lock's case sexy doesn't translate to physical comfort. He started E-Fab as a partnership with a friend and when he later obtained full interest in the business he maintained the Eastern Fabrications name. "It was a shitty garage in Branford, Connecticut. I lived there for four years, in an un-insulated garage," he said. "One half was my living space, the other half my workshop. You gotta start somewhere, but four winters there, it was cold, man." And is he still working from that place? "No I'm in a slightly less shitty garage now, but still in Branford." Lock shares space

with his significant other, Heyltje Rose, a leather artist whose work has appeared on custom motorcycle seats but leans heavily toward high-end wearable art.

Look closely at the details on these bikes and you'll see art there as well, in the cast metal, organically shaped components and turned wood pieces. Many parts are one-off but E-Fab does produce some multiples. Recognizing the intrinsic value of limited editions, Lock manufactures only the quantities he thinks he can sell, making perhaps ten of any given cast part. "The problem is, most of the stuff I do is too expensive. I like using exotic materials like stainless, bronze and brass," he said. "Only a certain number of people will spend \$500 on a kicker pedal."

He's found that his handmade seats and custom exhausts are popular but "there's no rhyme or reason. Someone will say, 'I love that fender or sissybar; can you build one for my bike?' So I do."

E-Fab has lately gathered with the other bike shops that form the Limpnickie Builder's Lot at major bike rallies and Lock feels that it's a good fit for E-Fab. "It's nice to be around people that actually build bikes," he said. "In Daytona, they had the most handmade bikes in the whole town."

And he should know. Let's take a walk around some of E-Fab's handmade, eclectic bikes, with Lock as our guide.

Resource

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Steel Butterfly

"This bike has been through more changes than any other bike I've built. The story begins back in 2003 when I bought a busted up 1978 Superglide off eBay. My intention was to chop it, so that's what I did, the same day I got it. I had done a basic sketch of a bike on the back of a business card and it just hit me that I had to build a bike with that basic shape. I set about building a frame from scratch, into which I put the '78 Shovel motor. That bike was called the "Rusty Buzzard" and was ridden in that form for about two years. I tend to get bored with bikes fairly fast so at a certain point I decided it was time for a change of pace. I pulled the motor out and, with the help of a local engine builder, converted it into an 84" stroker with STD pan tops, hand formed cylinder fins, relocated spark plugs, different carb, and a plethora of new internal components. This new mill went into an original rigid H-D frame, and was mated with a rotary top trans, powdercoated to match. This second version was named the "Steel Butterfly," after a South American dictator. The name just seemed to fit the new version. I built a very rat style tank and fender, mid controls very high, and tiny T-style bars. I rode around like this for a few months before deciding to go a bit more traditional, which is where the bike got its white Pradke paint job and fat bob tanks. Eventually it lost its front brake, got a brass spool hub, became jockey shift, got a new seat, and new bars. That is essentially how you see it in these photos. As you can tell, this bike has been reinvented so many times its hard to say what the "theme" is! I look at it as part of a rolling history of my company, skill development, and taste in bikes."—Lock Baker



White Line Nightmare

"Have you ever seen the movie *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*? It's a shitty movie but it has the best opening scene ever. It made me a fan of the FXR, a notoriously ugly but great handling bike. I was also inspired by the bikes I saw club members riding around NYC. They were either FXRs or Dynas, equipped with drag bars, tall risers, mid controls and performance exhaust systems. They're tough looking, and can take a serious beating. I bought a donor bike and got to work. I wanted this bike for the AMD show in Sturgis, and I was determined to make a good impression. I knew what I liked about the stock bike, and what I did not, so the trick was to make what I didn't like disappear. At the end I had a very light, oil-in-frame, Ohlins-equipped bike with enough tank capacity, horsepower, and ground clearance to do serious damage in the urban jungle. Since it was also designed for a show, I went nuts on the polishing. Every part on the bike that is shiny is polished, not plated. In fact, there is no chrome on the entire bike. It has hand built cooling fins on the engine as well, which I first did on the Steel Butterfly. They help cool the engine but also give it a very distinct look. The bike won its category in Sturgis, and is standing by in the display area of my shop waiting to be taken home by a lucky customer. One requirement, they have to know about that movie!"—Lock Baker



Copper Pan



"A guy named Scott came into my shop one day and told me about a project he had at another shop in Connecticut. He said the owner of the shop constantly demanded more cash even though nothing was getting built. In a matter of an hour he was back at my shop with the bike in his pickup. It was quite a mess; cool drivetrain but giant raked out frame, completely retarded Orange County-style fender on the back, and one of those cheapo generic springers everyone has—you know, the ones that break and kill people. I told Scott that all of the aforementioned shit had to go, except for the nice Panhead and Baker trans. He said OK—amazing! I liked this guy right away because he really just wanted to be shown some respect and get a handmade bike, something that is becoming harder and harder these days. Before we knew it, the bike was coming together and looking hot. I have a tight knit support system of other builders, painters, powdercoaters, electricians, and machinists to call upon. One such company is ACME Choppers out of Laconia, who built the new frame, a nice tight, small diameter tubing frame that fits the engine and trans like a glove. They delivered fast with a perfect job as always. Everything I suggested, Scott went for. Larry-style dual carb? Yup. Invaders? Sure. Tail section? Yes, please. Ummm, jockey shift? Why not? This bike was fun and easy to build and took about four months. I think it's a good mix of classic chopper parts and a flat track inspired look. We didn't intend on it being so shiny, but that's how it turned out. At least there's no paint job to worry about, and the nickel and copper will age to get a slightly more antique look. Building this bike for Scott made me proud to be in this industry."—Lock Baker



Speed Fetus

"The Speed Fetus is my homage to the Japanese Harley scene. A few years ago I started reading (or looking at, anyway) Japanese chopper mags. They have a style that is hard to put your finger on, but imagine a very compacted, intricate, cartoonized version of our 1960's and 70's style chops. That doesn't really scratch the surface of the amount of tiny detail, and most importantly, soul, that they engineer into their bikes. Shinya Kimora from Zero, Keiji from Hot Dock, and a few other OG's helped to forge this movement and there are hundreds of little shops turning out incredible bikes. The Speed Fetus is my attempt at making a cartoon out of their cartoon! I made a very small machine with very exaggerated features. Big parts made bigger, small parts made smaller, inside out and outside in. I used parts not meant to go together, such as the Indian trans with the Harley motor, or the Moto Guzzi fork with the Triumph brake. I made the frame tubing and handlebars smaller diameter to make the bike seem "under developed," hence the fetus in the name. The insides of the engine were also lightened, giving the bike a very quick revving, mosquito type sound. I was intent on engineering in a sense of history: it had to seem as if it were ancient, yet perfectly maintained, like an antique gun. To achieve this I used a combination of copper plating, brass, bronze, and blasted stainless treated with etching acids, then waxed and oiled. This gives it a very deep finish. When someone rides it past you on the street it looks like a speeding insect. That seems fairly Japanese to me." —Lock Baker



Interceptor



"The Interceptor is the cousin to the White Line Nightmare. The Interceptor started life as a 2000 Dyna FXDX. I am an original FXR fan, and because the Dyna is the successor to the FXR design, I was excited to try a similar approach. Another aspect of this bike that appealed to me was the simple fact that you *never* see a Dyna's frame, it's so well concealed by plastic panels and covers. Once I found the frame, I realized that although it was unconventional, it was not bad looking and with the tank and fender design, could actually look quite tough. So since "tough" was the theme, I made tough looking parts. Nothing polished, everything stainless, and very jacked up. If the trend in choppers is to go low, I was going up! I love seeing a Harley off road, take curbs with ease, and lay over far in corners. I like counter-intuitive concepts like this. I am so sick of seeing people baby their bikes; I wanted to make a bike that screams *abuse me*. I moved the battery box over to the side so I could see through the frame, under the seat area. I also removed a bewildering amount of wiring. A little chopper ingenuity and a magneto got us down to about 5 wires, maybe 12 feet total. Early carbed Twin Cam engines make power easily. Simply throw in Screamin' Eagle heads, gear drive cams, and efficient pipes and you're over 100hp. Plus, its 100 "easy" horsepower, where the engine is very happy and under stressed. Speaking of pipes, I wanted them to be quiet. Yes, I said quiet... remember the counter-intuitive part? The pipes are all stainless steel with straight-through glass pack mufflers that produce an awesome sound, somewhat like two four-stroke motocross bikes going side by side. This bike, like every bike from E-Fab, is for sale to the right person."—Lock Baker



Flash in the Pan



"I had never built a swingarm bike when I decided to build the Flash in the Pan, but I was ready to try. Bikes that are "socially acceptable" are not really my style. If I pull up to the pump at a gas station and someone says "wow, my dad used to have one like that," then I failed. That being said, a swingarm chopper is right up my alley. Obviously, too, are the benefits of a swingarm: added control and comfort—not typical chopper attributes. Besides the swingarm, I had made up a list of things I wanted for this bike: a jacked up tank that held around 3 gallons, a wide glide with no cowl and cowbells, and high pegs. The rest of the bike came to me as it went together. For instance, I'd never understood why the original swingarm frames had such a tiny, wimpy pivot design. In the factory service manual, it actually recommends you use a "fisherman's scale" to "set the preload" on the bearings! WTF? That had to change. I also studied a variety of late model crotch rockets and dirt bikes, and noticed that all of them had a serious swingarm pivot assembly. I used huge double-row sealed bearings on a hollow shaft, and made the entire swingarm hub area to accept them. Not only was there no more flex, "setting," or fisherman's scales, but the swingarm is smooth as ice. Whacky axle adjusters were taken care of, ugly forward controls... nope, fender struts—gone. The bike turned out just the way I wanted it. The great Robert Pradke applied the paint. The only thing I told him was that I wanted purple."—*Lock Baker*

