

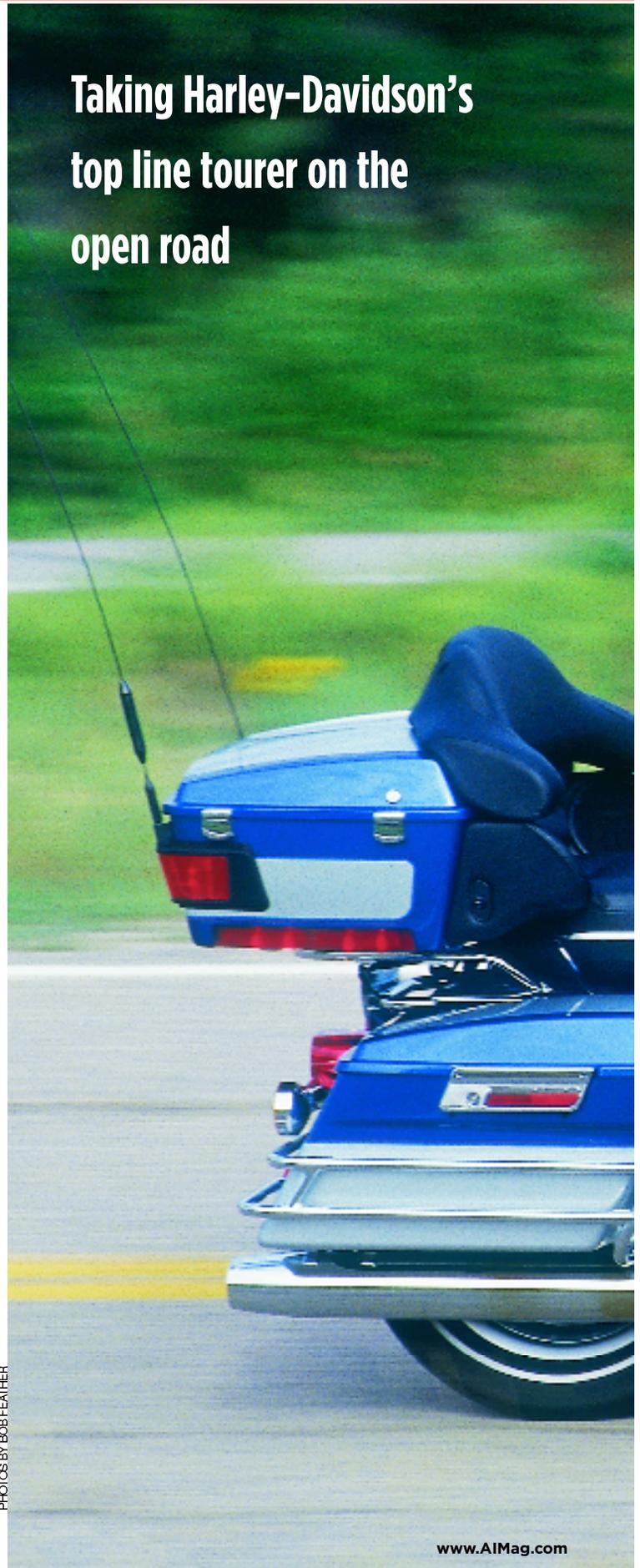
ULTRA — THE WORD IS THE PERFECT description of the lead touring dog of the Harley lineup for 2005.

When we were scheming, er, planning our staff trip to Sturgis this past spring, we discussed who'd like to ride what bike. No one, and I mean no one else, was interested in taking the big kahuna of the H-D lineup for the trip. As for me, I really didn't consider any of the other bikes fit for a trip as rigorous and demanding as this. I mean, honestly, what bike would you want to take on a two-week, 4,500-mile putt across the USA? Sign me up for a road sofa, please!

For me there was no option — a Road Glide or any Electra Glide would fit the bill. My esteemed associates do not see the beauty in a windshield or fairing, so they opted for the unfaired bikes that, for the most part, lacked any usable luggage space. Go figure. For me, the promise of luggage, protection, and music far outweighed the few moments sitting in hot traffic where I might be tempted to lament my choice of a bike like the Ultra. So, with my CDs packed, my half helmet in the bag, and rain suit stowed, we headed for Cali. I picked up my Ultra with a mere 300 miles on the clock from a Harley facility in Long Beach, California. The bike was glorious wearing its two-tone Rich Sunglo Blue and Chopper Blue Pearl paint in the midday sun.

Any H-D rider will find the Ultra's cockpit immediately comforting, as things look familiar. Even though this barge is Ultra large, it still has the comforting familiarity of H-D's other products. The batwing, fork-mounted fairing with full

Taking Harley-Davidson's top line tourer on the open road



PHOTOS BY BOB FEATHER

2005

FLHTCUI Ultra Classic Electra Glide



RIDING IMPRESSIONS



Sam Whitehead (5'8")
AIM Features Editor
Riding 12 years

IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY night ... Okay, it wasn't. But it was a dark and stormy day. Actually, it was a dark and stormy, cold and foggy day when I was tossed the keys to the Ultra Classic, so I could test it out. If you're going to ride a motorcycle in that sort of weather it may as well be the Ultra. The bike sits as solid as can be on the road, and you're remarkably

well-protected from the elements as you hide behind the generous fairing and vented lowers. In fact, the only drawback to the Ultra I experienced that ghastly day was the windshield. It was too high and I was forced to look straight through it — a nearly impossible task when it became caked with muck kicked up from traffic. Thankfully, the next day was clear, although bitterly cold. But who cares where the mercury stands when you've got that fairing? It was 20 degrees and I thoroughly enjoyed my ride. The Ultra may be huge and a bit sluggish, but it handles beautifully. And then there's that booming stereo. It makes you feel like a rock star — albeit a retired one.



Joe Russo (5'9")
AIM Ad Sales Representative
Riding 3 years

I WANT ONE! OKAY, MAYBE I liked this bike a little too much for a 26-year-old newlywed. Let's go back to first impressions: I have never driven an Ultra before and, truthfully, was a little intimidated by its size before I hopped into the saddle. Once nestled in, I was surprised at how light and well-balanced the bike felt, knowing it weighs over 800 pounds when full of fuel and ready to go. At 5'9"

and 160 pounds, I had no problems controlling this beast and could sit flatfoot comfortably. I'm at home on light, nimble bikes and was surprised how much I felt attached to the Ultra after a short 30-mile commute. I couldn't wait to get this bike out on the open road and enjoyed every minute it was in my possession. I wish I had a chance to take this bike cross-country.

I also took my wife out for a spin, so she could experience the comforts of H-D's rolling living room sofa and sound system. Result: I finally found a bike my wife really enjoyed and didn't hear her normal complaints during and after the ride. And that, as any husband will tell you, is priceless.



Tricia Szulewski (5'7")
RoadBike Art Director
Riding 10 years

RIDING THE ULTRA IS MUCH EASIER than most people would think. The front end geometry seems to make a very heavy-looking tourer maneuver easily through tight turns, as well as gentle sweepers. The stereo system is the best (and easiest) I've ever used, and the low, comfortable seating position is perfect for me. The floorboard position doesn't offer a lot of leg room for stretching out though, which may be a real concern for taller riders.

The craftsmanship of everything, from the paint quality to the hinged locking mechanisms on the saddlebags, is all first-rate Harley-Davidson.

I was having so much fun on this bike, that I was sadly disappointed when my Uncle Paul let me ride his '04 Ultra. For only about \$2,000, he had his dealer install Screamin' Eagle cams, heads, and

exhaust. What a phenomenal difference they made! I didn't realize until then how much the stock bike is suffocated by EPA regs. If you're in the market for this motorcycle, I would very strongly advise you to spend your money wisely. For the price of a few chrome goodies, you could have yourself a real fun powerhouse of a tourer instead.



instrumentation not only cuts a fine figure, it works really well, keeping you out of the lion's share of the breeze. Vented lower fairings with storage compartments can be a bit much on a hot day, but the new vents on the lowers certainly help in keeping a semblance of comfort while baking in the summer sun or honking along through the desert. It's nice to be able to reach down and adjust the vents depending on the time of the day and weather conditions. I always think of the lowers when the temps are on the extreme end of the scale: too hot and you wish you'd taken them off, too cold and you're glad to have them on. The vents help moderate comfort and I for one am glad to have them offered as part of the Ultra package. For the most part, you're not aware they are there.

As for the nylon alloy hard saddlebags and fiberglass King Tour-Pak, the Tour-Pak is the best, most useful piece of gadgetry ever attached to an H-D. Anyone who has had the opportunity to use one knows exactly what I am saying — you can stuff damn near anything you need into it, as long as you don't exceed the 25-pound weight limit. The Tour-Pak comes in real handy when you're stopped and need a place to stow your gear rather than carry it. For most of this two-week ride cross-country, I lived out of the Tour-Pak, as the saddlebags were filled with my associates' gear.

The 40-watt per channel, four-speaker AM/FM/WB/CD sound system; CB and intercom; passenger sound system; and CB/intercom rock. The sound is so much better than the old-style cassette players it's laughable. The volume can easily satisfy the most demanding "Freebird" karaoke rider. Seriously, the CD player system is one of the best I've ever seen in any vehicle — I don't think it skipped once during my two-week trip. The single CD dash player is easy to load and there is even (surprise!) an optional changer available.

I didn't get to play with the CB and just as well, because as an East Coast-corridor urban dweller and native New Yorker, I have no idea what to do with it. However, the Weather Band was a real handy addition to the Ultra's entertainment section. A number of times I would get a handle on what weather was coming up ahead and could warn my crew about impending storms (or clearings). It was a surprise to me how these absolute luxuries could become so necessary when you have them at your fingertips.

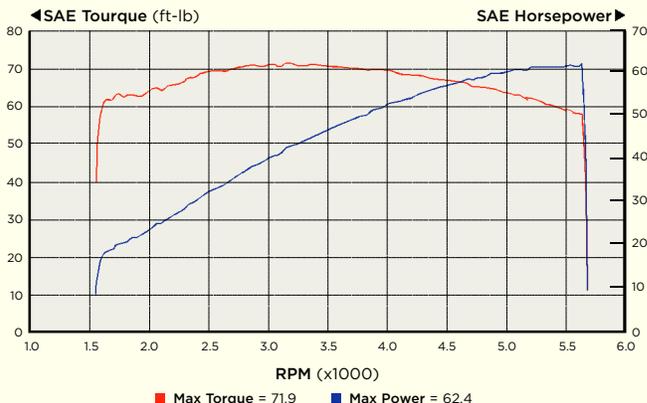
The Ultra's engine is H-D's tried and true 88" Twin Cam, resplendent in black and chrome and injected with fuel — so it's a mighty civilized beast. In a bike that cuts a trimmer figure, the 88 is plenty of engine, but there were a number of times that I had wished for either less weight or a bigger, burlier engine. Between carrying its own ponderous girth and being loaded to the brim with gear, the bike does not have much in the way of snap. Another thing I noticed was that you need to slowly spool up the engine to get the revs up. Cracking the throttle under load did not get the bike moving, but a slow, metered application of throttle worked much better, if not more slowly. Gas mileage was pretty good and my smaller-tank-equipped associates always prompted the gas stops.

The driver accommodations on the Ultra are great. The seat is the best stock seat I've ever sat my hindquarters on, making for painless long days in the saddle. The floorboards are still in the perfect spot and even the windshield — too high for my initial liking — was totally acceptable. I tend to like a shorter windshield, preferring to look over it rather than through it, but the stocker on the Ultra did not distort my view, and the reflec-

TECH SHEET

FLHTCUI Ultra Classic Electra Glide

Length:	98.3" (249.6cm)
Unladen seat height:	30.7" (77.9cm)
Ground clearance:	5.1" (12.9cm)
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:	Electronic Sequential Port Fuel Injection
Transmission:	Five-speed
Front tire:	Dunlop Harley-Davidson Series D402F NW MT90B-16" 72H
Rear tire:	Dunlop Harley-Davidson Series D402 NW MU85B-16" 77H
Fuel capacity:	5.0 gallons (18.9L)
Oil capacity:	4.0 quarts (3.8L)
Dry weight:	788 pounds (358.0kg)
Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR):	1,259 pounds (572kg)
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, telescopic cartridge-style damping
Rear shocks:	Air-assisted
Wheels:	16" nine-spoke, black/silver cast aluminum alloy (laced option)
Instruments:	Electronic speedometer and tach, fuel gauge, volt- meter, oil pressure gauge, clock (integrated in stereo), ambient air temperature gauge, odometer, and resettable trip meter
Handlebars:	Stainless steel Touring
Sound system:	Premium stereo sound system (40 watts per speaker) with AM/FM/CD player, fairing-mounted speakers, weather band, digital clock, radio controls for passenger, bi- directional seek and scan, music search and music scan, eight presets, automatic volume control with adjustable sensitivity
Colors:	Vivid Black, Sierra Red Pearl, Black Cherry Pearl, Glacier White Pearl, Lava Red Sunglo, Rich Sunglo Blue, Two-Tone Rich Sunglo Blue and Chopper Blue Pearl, Two- Tone Chopper Blue Pearl and Brilliant Silver Pearl, Two-Tone Black Cherry Pearl and Black Pearl, Two-Tone Sierra Red Pearl and Brilliant Silver Pearl, Two-Tone Smoky Gold Pearl and Vivid Black, Two-Tone Vivid Black and Lava Red Sunglo
MSRP:	\$19,995-\$20,405

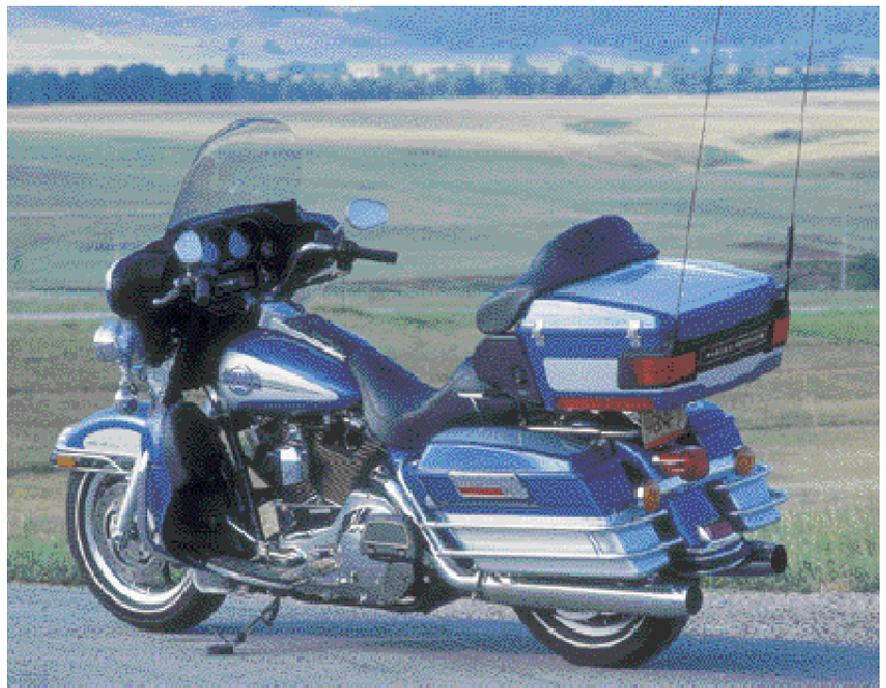


tions at night were not bothersome. These are small but welcome changes from baggers of yore.

New and improved lighting makes nighttime riding a less tense affair in animal country than it has been. The new headlights and spots work well and they look even better.

The brakes also work well. I had the opportunity to test them in a major way as three of us swept out of a mountain pass in Utah during dusk, down into a valley with a dark spot in the roadway that turned out to be a cow, and a big one to boot! Coming down out of the hills, fully loaded on the big bike, in a blind sweeper turn is one way to check your brakes, and I am happy to report they worked really well.

Traffic, the bane of the dresser rider, was a bummer. The Ultra is a bike that needs to be moving as it hates, deplores, and rejects the heat generated by sitting still in traffic. More than once, while sitting on Lazelle Street traffic in Sturgis, the bike just plain stalled due to heat stroke. The Twin Cam engine in general throws out a lot of heat, but the Ultra in traffic was an absolute thigh cooker. (You've all seen the picture of those deep-fried turkey legs, right?)



So in summary, I really like the new 2005 Ultra, despite my minor complaints. The bike lives up to the promise of its heritage in every way and truly is an ongoing refinement of the concept of touring in comfort and convenience. Ride on! **AIM**

