

Words & Pics David Cohen

VERY Special



Really Dave? The best Street Glide... EVER? Dave explains...

One of the (rare) criticisms fielded on our Facebook page recently said, “You guys say every new model is the best Harley yet.” Well, we offer that plaudit only when properly deserved. It’s true I claimed the 2017 Low Rider S was the

best Dyna of all time and the 2019 Softail Deluxe tested in #167 was, “easily the best Deluxe”. But those calls are undeniable and easily justified. When we award such a sweeping accolade as ‘best Harley ever’ it is warranted and given proper consideration and debate – and certainly not afforded to

‘every new model’.

So, with disclaimers firmly in place, here goes ... it is easy to make the argument that the 2020 FLHXS is the best new Harley ever. From a technological, appointment, safety and performance viewpoint it is an absolute standout.

"IT'S A BEAUTIFULLY BALANCED PACKAGE THAT IS VERY REWARDING TO RIDE; CARVING UP A VALLEY ROAD OR ROLLING AWAY THE INTERSTATE."



PLENTY OF PRACTICE

The first Street Glide appeared in 2006 and in the ensuing years, with numerous iterations and engine displacements, the familiar batwing bike has become one of Harley's best sellers. It's a highly developed package that goes, stops and everything in-between, with great aplomb.

The 4in bore and 4.48in stroke, 114 cube, Milwaukee-Eight engine keeps getting sweeter with every model year and this test bike was the smoothest and most responsive yet. It tapped out easily and pulled evenly and strongly through the rev range, even with the stock exhaust system fitted. No

doubt that's helped by the sports air cleaner that is included as standard. A Stage I upgrade would free the top end up even further. It has tons of low-down punch and it's a real delight to get on the gas and spool it up through tight roads. Conversely, on the boulevard or out on the freeway it's as comfortable and as close to vibration free as any air-cooled Harley has been so far. That certainly wasn't the case with earlier 114-cube models.

Combined with the latest Touring chassis and premium suspension it all makes for a 376kg (in running order) luxury tourer/cruiser that handles more like a nimble middleweight.

It's a beautifully balanced package that is very rewarding to ride; carving up a valley road or rolling away the interstate. It has become a good all-rounder that even works well as a head-turning hot-rod cruiser with great lines, stretched bags and that menacing blacked-out profile.

Behind the batwing the latest Boom Box infotainment system remains state of the art. It has a comprehensive array of navigational aids, GPS, route planner and range of diagnostic readouts available on the glove friendly TFT screen. It has a great sounding stereo that can bluetooth or hard wire your phone with options for linking to built-in speakers, headsets or intercoms.

Above: Three Musketeers in the forest Ces nis ea voluptassunt qui nonsequibus modit atur molorer ferferiantur asi audae sit ilia voluptat.

QUICK REFLEXES

The 2020 model takes the bike's technology to the next level and beyond with the introduction of Harley's Reflex Defensive Rider Systems (RDRS). The company line is that the RDRS system "Is a new collection of technology designed to match motorcycle performance to available traction during acceleration, deceleration and braking. The systems are designed to aid the rider in controlling the vehicle while accelerating and braking in a straight line or while in a turn. Most helpful when riding in adverse road conditions and in urgent situations, the systems are electronic and utilise the latest chassis control, electronic brake control and powertrain technology."

CORNERING ENHANCED ELECTRONIC LINKED BRAKING (C-ELB)

With quality 4-piston twin front and single rear calipers the Electronically Linked Braking system "provides more responsiveness and allows for more balanced front and rear braking under a wide variety of conditions."

Like most linked systems if you

squeeze the front lever it applies braking force to both front and rear brakes, similarly if you only use the rear pedal it will also apply a calculated, optimum amount of force to the left-front caliper as well.

The really clever thing about this system is that it takes into account the motorcycle lean angle and will alter the proportioning of brake pressure whilst cornering "to improve the ability of the bike to maintain the rider's intended path."

CORNERING ENHANCED ANTILOCK BRAKING SYSTEM (C-ABS)

This is an improved variant of ABS that takes into consideration the lean angle of the machine and the brake pressure required to prevent wheel slip when cornering, which is lower than in a straight line.

I intentionally over-braked while tipping into a corner and you can definitely feel the lever modulating as the system takes over. It is very confidence inspiring when you get used to it although stomping on the rear brake pedal and feeling the ABS activate on the front wheel is a little weird at first.

CORNERING ENHANCED TRACTION CONTROL SYSTEM (C-TCS)

Designed to prevent the rear wheel from lighting up under acceleration when going straight or cornering. It works well too. I tried spinning up the rear on a dirt road and the system cut in seamlessly. There are two riding modes. 'Standard' – optimised for dry surfaces and Rain Mode, optimised for wet. The system can be turned off for when you want to 'rack it up' on the dirt (guilty). The action of the system is also tailored when cornering, based on lean angle.

DRAG-TORQUE SLIP CONTROL SYSTEM (DSCS) & CORNERING ENHANCED DRAG-TORQUE SLIP CONTROL SYSTEM (C-DSCS)

Similar to a slipper clutch on sportbikes this is designed to reduce excessive rear-wheel slip under deceleration or when the rider makes an abrupt downshift on slippery surfaces. When DSCS detects excessive rear wheel slip it will adjust engine torque delivery to better match rear-wheel speed to road speed and it is (importantly) tailored for cornering, based on detected lean angle.

VEHICLE HOLD CONTROL (VHC)

This system has been available on cars for some time. When you pump the lever or pedal when stationary brake pressure prevents the motorcycle from rolling backwards on hill starts. The system applies the brakes until the rider actuates the throttle and clutch to pull away. Unlike car systems however the clutch has to be pulled in for the system to work. You can't sit in neutral on a hill and wait at the lights.

TYRE PRESSURE MONITORING SYSTEM (TPMS)

This clever system displays current front and rear tire pressure on the Boom Box screen and displays an alert when tyre pressure is low.



DO YOU NEED THE RDRS?

Well, yes, you do. Particularly less experienced and returning riders. These are brilliant additions for those finding their way back into heavyweight motorcycles. For older hands, well, maybe you won't need all the features all the time, maybe you'll never need them, but some of these systems, particularly the ABS, operate in a realm and time scale beyond human capability. No matter how good you think you are. I once thought that as a widely experienced and professional rider I didn't need all this ABS 'malarkey'. But one rainy afternoon on a treacherously slippery overpass in Auckland I had to perform an emergency stop when a 'goober' pulled right in

front of me. The front wheel of my Buell 'tucked' in an instant. Before I knew it, I was on the deck and looking up at my bike as it about to land on top of me. I was lucky and was able to ride home but it could have been a lot worse. If that bike had ABS back in 2006 I wouldn't have spent the following two nights in hospital from the crash injuries. You might never need to bring these systems into play. But I learnt the hard way that an advanced ABS might just save your bacon one day – even if you are a gun rider. Help with hill starts, maybe not so much, but then remember when you were a bit green too?

SO ... IS IT?

With the latest 114 motor, chassis, performance, handling, looks, safety and style the whole 2020 Street Glide Special package now adds up to a bike that I think is worthy of the accolade: Best New Harley ever. With pricing just under the \$40,000 mark in the Australian market it's reasonable to expect that it should be. There. I said it. Meanwhile, I'll prepare our defence for the Facebook page. **HD**

GUTS&BOLTS

ENGINE	
TYPE	Milwaukee-Eight 114
BORE	102 mm
STROKE	114 mm
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
FUEL SYSTEM	ESPFI
EXHAUST	2-1-2 dual
MUFFLERS	Tapered
DIMENSIONS	
LENGTH	2425mm
SEAT HEIGHT	690 mm
GROUND CLEARANCE	125 mm
RAKE	26°
TRAIL	173 mm
WHEELBASE	1625 mm
FUEL CAPACITY	22.7 litre
OIL CAPACITY	4.9 litre
WEIGHT	375 kg
PRIMARY	Chain 34/46 ratio
WHEELS & TYRES	
WHEELS	Gloss Black Prodigy
F TYRE	130/60B19 61H
R TYRE	180/55B18 80H
BRAKES	4-piston fixed
INFOTAINMENT	
SYSTEM	Boom! Box GTS
POWER	Watts Per Channel 25



Plan your ride on your computer import the route as a GPX file to the Boom Box.