

*The Ultimate Streetbike Magazine*

June '87 £1.10



A Link House  
Publication

# **SUPER BIKE**

**PLUS**  
**Works Yam**  
**SRX600**

**Project Proddy**  
**Racer**

**TT Preview**

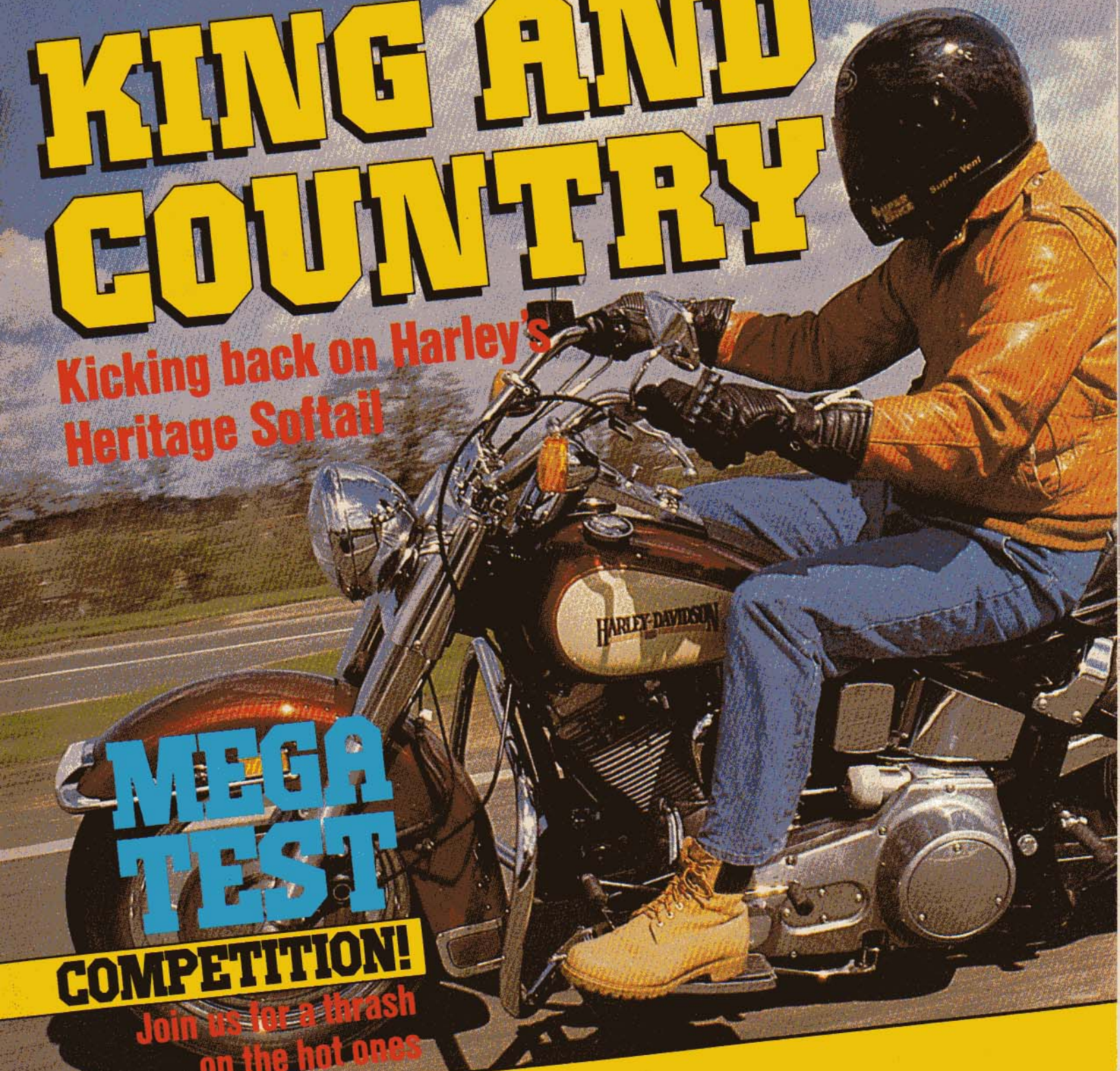
# **KING AND COUNTRY**

**Kicking back on Harley's  
Heritage Softail**

**MEGA  
TEST**

**COMPETITION!**

**Join us for a thrash  
on the hot ones**



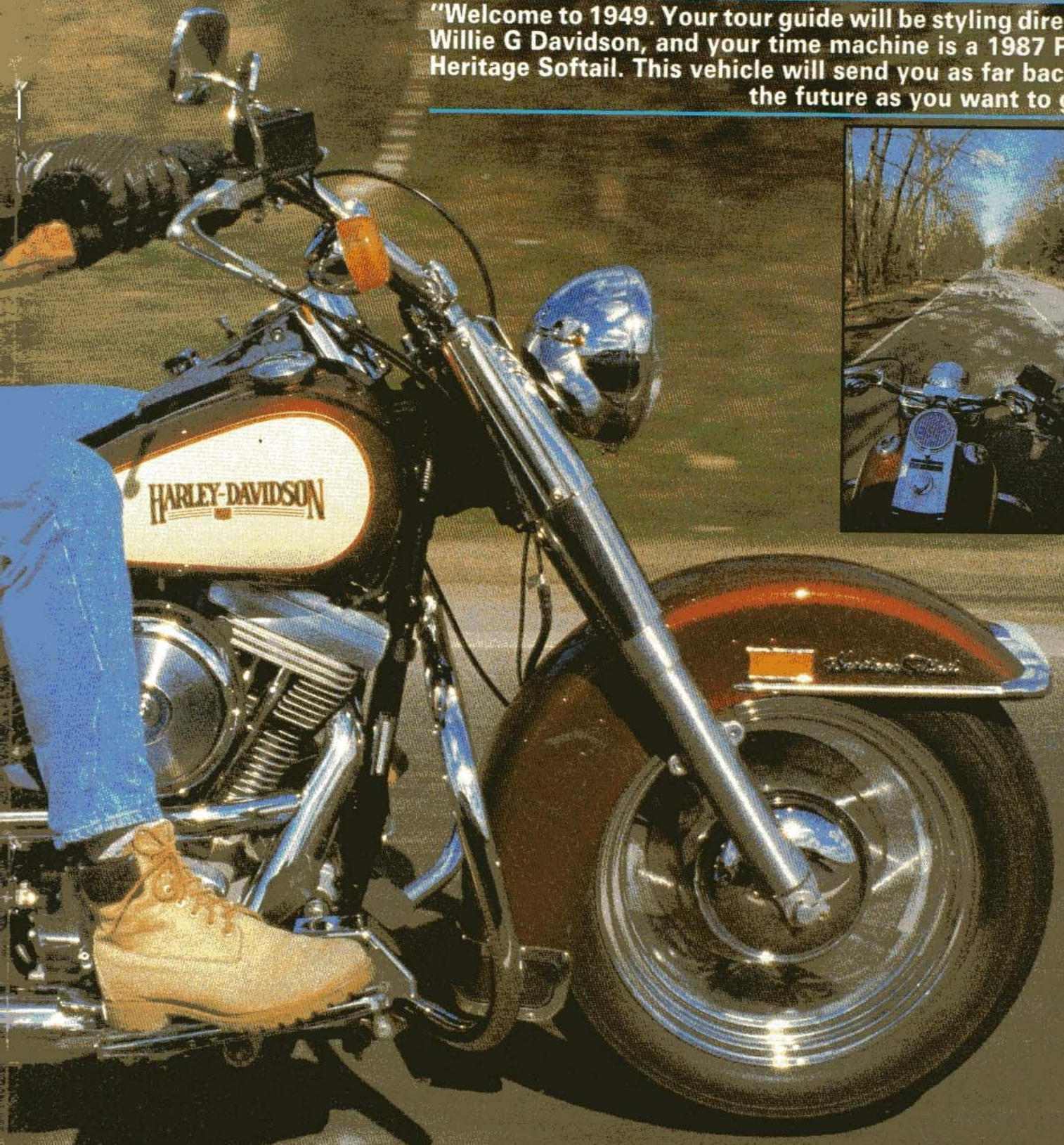






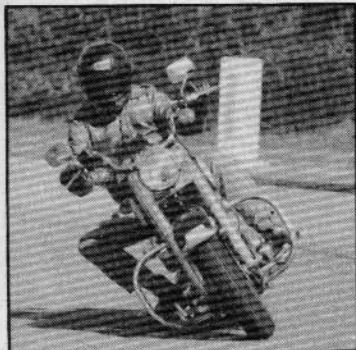
# KING AND COUNTRY

"Welcome to 1949. Your tour guide will be styling director Willie G Davidson, and your time machine is a 1987 FLST Heritage Softail. This vehicle will send you as far back to the future as you want to go."





I'm a cowboy  
On a steel horse I ride  
I'm wanted  
Dead or alive



Ah, the price of fame . . .

In the case of Harley-Davidson's FLST Heritage Softail, the price in question is £8009 and fifty-two p. That's the sum that'll *guarantee* you fame — albeit at the expense of your fortune — for there is nothing else quite like the Heritage. Not even elsewhere in Harley's own, some would say already eccentric, model line-up.

There are pitfalls to Heritage ownership. For a start, there's the sometimes dangerous rubbernecking of boggle-eyed saloon car drivers. You're minding your own business, thumping along at 65 or so in the inside lane, when you're suddenly aware of a presence in the blind spot over your right shoulder, holding perfect station just long enough so that granny in the back can be poked into life for a squinting eyeful of the "lovely old motorbike".

Oh yes, "old". That's another lot again. "How old is it then?", they say, with that sickening "I know about these things" expression on their faces. "Just over a week," you tell them, even though you *know* they'll think you're joking.

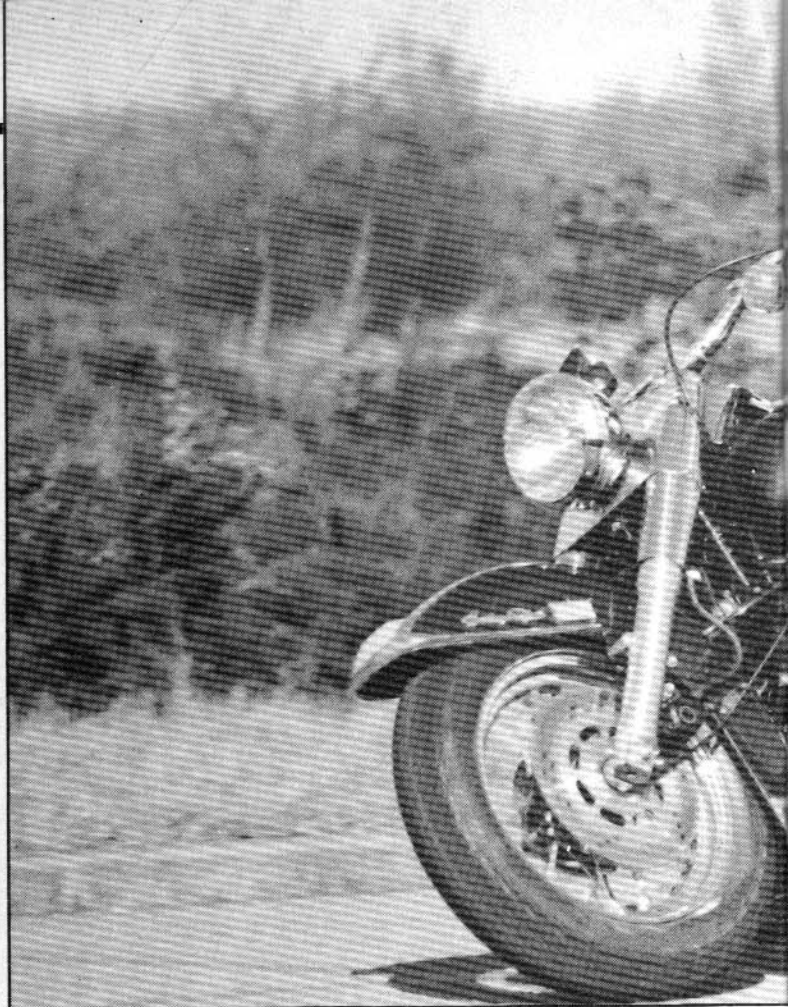
Then there are the "reverse gear" brigade. "Where is it then, eh, eh, where's reverse, this lever here is it,

eh, eh . . ." They always insist on boring your pants off with some turgid tale about going backwards into a parking place, even after you've made it abundantly clear that reverse gears haven't been fitted to Harleys for donkeys years.

Worse by far than the rubbernecker, the vintage expert or the reverse gear bore are the "wartime despatchers", the old boys who come up to you in the street and lie their heads off about how they had one just like that in the war, or rather, they knew this American GI who rode about on one, well, actually, it were the missus who knew someone who'd once seen one etc etc . . . ad nauseam, which in my case is not long in arriving. The most awful thing with the despatcher is the fact that he always has a strong back-up line in reverse gear bullshit as well, and by God you're going to listen to it, even if it means him shouting the last few lines at the back of your (rapidly departing) helmet.

I'm not asking for sympathy, but within two days of picking up our Heritage Softail demonstrator from John Davey's Harley Shop in Castleford, I'd been the victim of two wartime despatchers, three reverse gears, a couple of year-guessers and literally dozens of rubberneckerers. After a week or so, I had developed a fine line in brain-off responses — y'know, plenty of "mmms", "ahs", "is that a facts", and the odd mildly incredulous "reallys" just to allay suspicions that I might not actually be listening to a word they were saying. There is not real solution to the rubbernecker problem, other than cultivating Harley tunnel vision from behind a heavily tinted visor, and maybe throwing a sneaky V-sign at the brats leering at you from the back seat.

Fortunately, the highs of running a Heritage Softail do tend to outweigh the lows. Best of all is the smugness that comes with exclusivity. At any one time in 1987 there will be no



more than 15 Heritage Softails in the whole of the UK; if there's a rarer production cycle cruising British roads this year, I haven't heard of it.

For the kind of person likely to invest in this machine (and I use the word "invest" with due aforethought), such rarity value alone would be enough justification for having one cosseted in the garage. But there's an extra bonus with the Heritage; character. To be perfectly honest, you can get more or less the same result by doing what the Yanks have been doing for years, which is to strip all the gubbins off an Electra Glide; in some respects you'd end up with a better motorcycle.

But most folks would happily settle for the "instant custom" convenience of the Heritage. The styling is, naturally, the main selling point of the cycle. It's based on the 1949 Duo Glide, and as such is totally unique in 1987. You either love it or you loathe it. Those of the younger two-wheeled generation, the vast majority of whom have never sampled the Harley experience, tend to fall into the latter category; older bods seemed to rather like it. One Scottish bloke came up to me on the forecourt of a Manchester filling station, practically overcome by emotion.

"S . . . beautiful," he blubbered, thanking me pathetically from the



FOR EVERYTHING HARLEY-DAVIDSON

HARLEY-  
DAVIDSON

To book your personal test ride contact: Three Cross Motorcycles  
Woolsbridge Industrial Estate, 6 Old Barn Farm Road, Three Legged Cross,  
Wimborne, Dorset BH21 16SP. Tel: 0202 824531. Telex No. 418252





gutter after I'd smacked him in the mouth with the butt of my "genuine Harley accessory" Magnum .44 pistol. You've got to be *tough* with these people, I always think. They respect you for it after.

The bleeding Scot hadn't even noticed the fact that there were three different shades of candy bronze paintwork on "my" scooter, depending on whether you looked at the tank, front fender or rear fender. John Davey averred — with an

ironic smile — that this was probably because it was a demo bike, for press and public use. Telepathy was not necessary to confirm our respective thoughts on the wisdom of this approach. Still, there are only 15 coming into the country, so there won't be much problem selling it; and anyway, taken individually, each separately coloured item looked superb in the spring sunlight. The overall finish of the bike is truly impressive.

"Hello mate, it's Tony, got a nice little job for you. Fancy riding a Harley-Davidson up to Leeds?" I fought the urge to agree immediately, and tried to sound nonchalant as I checked my diary. As luck would have it, I was free on the day, and a deal was struck.

I duly appeared at Link House, slobbering madly at the thought of riding my first Harley. There it stood, a huge awe-inspiring motorcycle, resplendent in a rich brown/cream paint job and gleaming masses of chrome. It had a classic HD look, the soft-tail cleverly hidden, and a massive chrome headlight. I leapt on, with an anxious editor muttering about being careful etc, and it started with a thunderous roar. It was easier to manoeuvre than it looked, and the low, plush seat allowed easy leg waggling. I rumbled off into the Croydon traffic and eventually discovered where to put my feet.

It was a bike like no other I've ever ridden — and there's been a few — an amazing beast that had to be treated "firmly". The toe and heel gearchange took some getting used to, and clunked heavily changing up. This, and the way the 1340cc shook the whole bike like some oversized vibrator, I put down mainly to lack of running in. The riding position, although normally comfortable, tended to make me sit on the tail of my spine, which over long distances massaged my backside into a peculiar numbness. The girlfriend, however, enjoyed these sensations more than I.

It cornered gracefully when solo, but as soon as my mate, Chris, jumped on the back, it ground easily on both sides. Slightly disturbing, but fun nonetheless. I found it slipped through traffic fairly easily, drivers either staring agog at it, or cowering from the noise. Out on the open road, obviously its forte, the Harley cruised beautifully, its low-down grunt proving irresistible, but restricting top speed somewhat. This paled into insignificance as it gobbled up the miles with not so much as a burp.

Without question, however, the "pose" was its most endearing feature, bringing neighbours and garage attendants running out with, "Fackin' ell mate, what's THAT?!"

Despite never having been an H-D fan, that bike converted me. The sheer class, noise and laid-back feeling of riding a "traditional" bike, outweighed any minor niggles, like its total impracticability or even the stupid indicator switches. As for the eight grand price tag, I dunno, but I do know that I've never smiled so much in one day.

Julian Mackie

As you might guess from the name, the Heritage Softail is based on the so-called "softail" frame. This captures the rigid rear end look that was *de rigueur* in 1949 and which is still popular in custom circles in 1987. The rider's butt is pampered by a brace of non-adjustable under-chassis shock absorbers. Although the ride is undoubtedly more comfortable than would be the case with a true hardtail frame, comfort can still only be described as acceptable-plus when compared to the average Jap machine.

The front end looks original Electra Glide, but the forks are actually brand new Showa items poking out from under a '50s-style shroud. They work well enough under smooth road conditions, but both ends get crashy on typical British roads. With 650 pounds of metal plus a sack of flesh and blood to support, there is no way that handling under pressure can be described as anything other than wobbly. The rubberised footboards prevent you from exploring anything other than modest limits, as they scrape (rather tinnily I thought) at a measly 30-degree angle. Folding them up gives you a bit more margin, and in this mode the fat ole tubed Dunlops (16in front and rear) hang on much better than you'd expect.

Check out the size of the rear disc. There's a reason for its size; the single front disc needs all the help it can get. Luckily that truck-sized brake pedal likes being stomped on, but rider input at both foot and hand is heavy duty at all times. Take comfort from the fact that anything you might hit whilst in charge of a rampaging Harley is likely to come off second best. I'll never forget the look of surprise on the face of a BMW car driver when a previous H-D Twin I was testing punted him up the arse, shunting his car some 30 yards up the road. The Harley, needless to say, was completely undamaged.

The engine on our test Heritage was only 200km old when I picked it up, so not surprisingly it wasn't exactly full of beans. However, we all thought it was smoother than the Softail Custom we tried last month. It consumed no oil, and petrol at an average of almost exactly 45mpg. Up to 75mph it was perfectly happy, above that predictably rough. The Softail variants, with their solidly mounted engines, do not benefit from the excellent vibration-damping properties of the so-called Rubber Glides, but those in the know maintain that (given long and careful running-in) they can end up being almost as smooth.

I recall the last big twin I rode having what was for Harley-Davidson an unprecedentedly smooth and quiet gearbox. The Heritage was a return to the glorious days of 16-ton steam hammer gearchanges, with a head-turning double *clunk-clunk* on the first to second shift leaving you in doubt as to what was happening

inside those vast cases. There was a fair bit of noise from the first four gears too, indicating that there were still some rough metal edges to be work-polished into submission. Fifth was correspondingly quiet, and as good a reason as any to run it in that gear whenever possible. Even factory-fresh, the big twin motor (allied to the flexibility of belt drive) pumps out sufficient torque to enable the rider to select fifth as quick as his foot can hook through the shift pattern.

On the subject of the belt drive, other manufacturers may care to note that Harley expect an average life of 50,000 miles out of their Kevlar-reinforced toothed belt. At £113 a time, that strikes me as good economics. The drive and driven sprockets would, for all practical purposes, never need to be replaced — unless you anticipate covering upwards of a quarter of a million miles on your machine. An old Californian boy by name of Al VerCruysse has racked up well over 100,000 miles on a couple of Evolution-engined Tour Glides, during which time the list of replacement parts had reputedly covered no more than three speedo drives and an exhaust bracket, so I suppose it's more than possible that someone might end up having to shell out for sprockets. Don't hold your breath though.

There's not really an awful lot you can say about the Heritage Softail that isn't going to be a repeat of JC's write-up on the Softail Custom. One pleasure John didn't get on the FXSTC, however, was the tremendous feeling of well-being generated by the sight of overhead foliage, blue skies and fluffy white clouds reflecting off that thickly chromed headlamp shell. There's nothing else quite like it in motorcycling. Don't knock it till you've tried it; and don't try it unless you're willing to mortgage your mum to buy one.

## PARTS BIN

### All prices include VAT

Indicator assembly (front) £23.97, indicator lens £1.99, forks (complete, including shroud) £485.02, front fender (steel, painted) £203.00, front wheel (complete) £311.83, petrol tank (one of twin tanks, painted) £252.55, seat £137.51, silencer £109.63, heel 'n' toe gearlever £66.17, rear brake pedal £60.28, footboard £72.22, headlamp housing (chrome, less light unit) £31.60, brake lever £19.26, clutch lever (incl anti-rattle spring) £19.79, primary chaincase £118.34, piston (incl rings, gudgeon pin and circlips) £50.18, conrods (available only as a pair, c/w big ends and crankpin) £275.15, head gasket £3.98, six clutch friction plates £76.56, ignition unit £152.29, final drive belt £113.65, front belt sprocket £109.05, rear sprocket £143.50, oil filter £5.50, battery £49.50