

## Fat Boy, Slim. Slim, Fat Boy

Words & Pics: Andy Hornsby  
Second Opinion: Rich King

**That's the introductions over. Now this wasn't something we originally set out to do - after all, who's likely to make a decision between a heavy-fendered disk-wheeled throwback from the fifties and the svelte, sophisticated, top-of-the-shop Softail Deuce.**

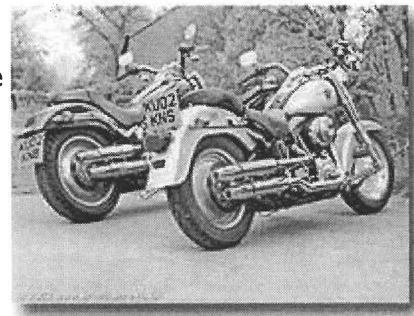
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It was an unasked question that hung in the air when viewing the two bikes from the rear while they were standing side-by-side. The Fat Boy never looked so much in need of a trip to the health clinic, and the Deuce looked like it could do with a good meal.

It takes such a realisation to give you cause to consider just how slim the revised tanks are on the Deuce, emphasised by the slenderest of the tank-top dashes. The width of the rider's seat is disguised by perspective, and tucked away behind the pillion's reduced perch and the mudguard that can look awkward from the side, with registration plate beneath finishes it off beautifully. Up front, the pull back risers and relatively narrow bars bring the controls back to you but without breaking the line too much, and if it weren't for the knowledge that you were looking at a Deuce, you could be forgiven for mistaking it for a Dyna: not as slim as a Sportster, but certainly not what you'd associate with a Softail.

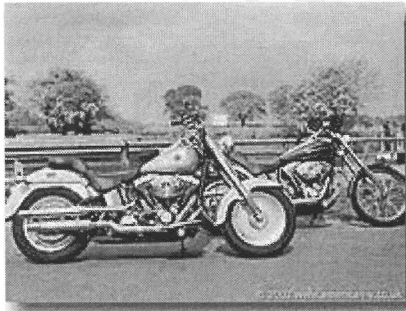


By the same token, the Fat Boy reminds you of the shapes and dimensions that have been so long a part of Harley heritage. Fat Bob tanks are huge at first sight, but you get used to them until you see the alternative. Going back some, it takes the sight of the smaller three-and-a-half gallon Fat Bobs of a 4-speed Low Rider next to the five gallon alternatives on the contemporary Electra to remind you that they ever made more than the one size, and there is more than a passing resemblance to the Deuce there. The short dash with its leather accompaniment doesn't create an illusion of anything but more width, and the broad 'bars underline what is obvious to anyone who cares to look. And you haven't even seen the capacious seating for both rider and pillion, or acknowledged the near total enclosure of the rear wheel and tyre beneath more metal than you'll find on some entire cars today.



But that's not the reason why we've never put these two side-by-side before. That's because as an FLSTF the Fat Boy sneaks past the FX Custom designation and lines up alongside the dressers, and not least the Heritage Softail. It's an FL, see, not an FX.

second letter of its model designation because it bears the heavyweight forks and huge front wheel of its base model, the FLSTC. Classic moniker out, Fat tag added and hey presto! Get the jigsaw out. What, bored already? No, the jigsaw that eats through tinware. It may be Fat but it doesn't mean it can't be shapely with it. Oh yes it can.



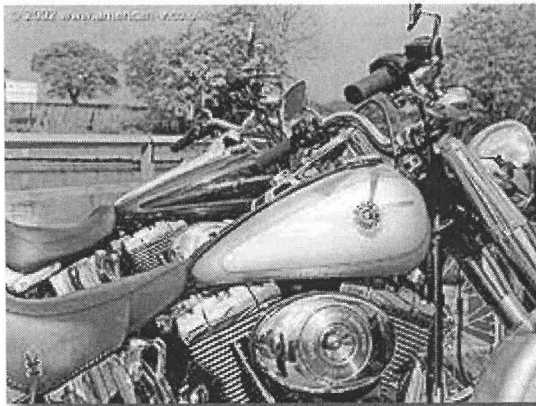
Okay, so the mudguards aren't actually cut-down versions of the age-old dresser items any more than the Wide Glide has a rear dresser 'guard rotated through ninety-degrees, but it looks like it, with the sleeker line emphasising the weight of the rest of the cycle parts in comparison - aided undoubtedly by the solid wheels.

The other major omissions are the big FL indicators and running lamps, but then this is a custom. For my money, it leaves the headlamp area bare, if uncluttered, and serves to remind me that I prefer the aluminium nacelle of the old Electra and current Road Kings to the tins of the Duo Glide, but that's me.

But otherwise it is a metal-scraping undresser that retains the comfort and practicality of the bikes that gave it its prefix, while appealing to those adhere to the minimalist school of styling. A good compromise, and a likely outcome of a back street builder with a surplus of Disk Glide wheels and a hatred of panniers.



From that point it couldn't be more different to the Deuce.



The FXSTD is a ground-up styling job that walked straight past the parts bin after leaving the section in the factory where they stick the motor in the frame. At most, the handlebars, front wheel, brakes and switchgear were conjured up from existing items, and arguably the headlamp from the Sportster customs but without that item's bracket that worked properly. All else is new. Keen eyes might spot the exhaust is shared with the Fat Boy, but it took us two years to see it, and a small amount of digging to discover that it only came into existence with the arrival of the Deuce, suggesting the Deuce donated it to the

Fat Boy rather than inherited it. Evo Fat Boys had a lower front silencer and something else to drag along the ground - but then Evo Fat Boys also had a lot more vibration pre-balance shafts, which made them all the more raw.

Just as the Fat Boy is a reflection of what has gone before, so the Deuce is an indication of what is to come - and indeed gives some pointers to the V-Rod. But before we all get too carried away, you can't fail to recognise a lot of sacred cows littered about its cleaner lines. The riding position is as it always was on custom Harleys: highway pegs, pullback bars and a seat designed to sit on. Very all-American and a major selling point for decades, if a little tiring at speed and while there are still many Harley fans out there for who speed is a distraction, when a bike goes as well as the Deuce, and gets round the corners as competently as the Deuce, you've got to question the wisdom of giving it the form of a straight-line mile-eater.



Yes folks, the Deuce is a new type of Harley in some respects, and respect is due. In so many ways it is the very antithesis of the Fat Boy and adds another string to the Motor Company's bow. You're never likely to race these two bikes, because racing is not their forte - at least it isn't as they come out of the box - but if you were to need to cover the ground quickly,



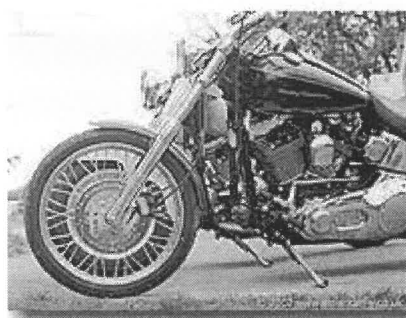
the Deuce would be the first choice of the pair. Supremely confident, sure-footed and comfortable on the long haul for both rider and pillion, it would arrive at the destination while the Fat Boy's equally comfortable rider and passenger were still ambling through the scenery. Sure, you can hurry the Fat Boy along, it's got exactly the same engine and frame, but to do so in a spirited fashion would cause it to lose weight: not in sweat but in metalwork ground off in the corners. It would be entertaining to take the two out for a

run over mixed roads at the hurry-up - which we really couldn't do in deference to their delivery milages - and see how long it was before the Fat Boy started seriously lagging as the Deuce got into its stride.

I'm reminded of a tale of two former colleagues: experienced riders of some decades, but one mounted on his own Norton Commando and the other on a test Yamaha TDM 850 - both parallel twins of the same capacity. After a twenty mile dash across open country the Commando rider commented on how much he'd enjoyed the run, and how much fun it was riding hard, while the TDM rider looked blank and explained he'd been pootling about, taking in the countryside, and not really thinking about it.



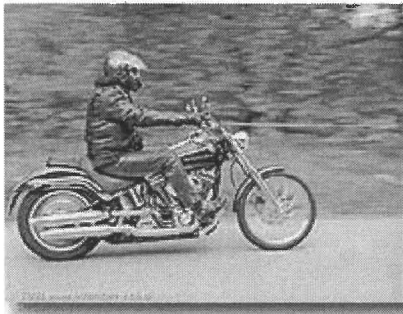
Different people, different bikes, but a comparison that could easily be drawn here. If the Fat Boy were in front, the Deuce would keep pace without any problem: anything the Fat Boy could do, the Deuce would be able to match and exceed easily. Put them the other way round though, and the ease with which the Deuce weaves its way across the landscape without trying would give the Fat Boy's pilot something to really think about.



Is it resolvable? Not without expense. Between five and seven degree of lean is difficult to introduce into the Fat Boy's dimensions without losing a lot of its shape and style. Part of it is down to the extra 10mm of ground clearance which doesn't sound much but looks significant when the two are side-by-side, but another part is attributable to the seventeen-inch wheel of the Deuce and its low profile tyre fitment, and I'm not aware of a seventeen-inch front tyre that would suit and look right on a wheel swap at the front of a Fat Boy.

But then, what's the point? Who is really going to buy a Fat Boy with the express purpose of trying to keep pace with a Deuce? It's really not that sort of bike, and to make it into one would be to lose the essence of what the Fat Boy is. It will go long distances, and it will do it with style and in comfort, but in acceptance of the cornering limitations endowed by its ground-hugging stance, forks, wheels and footboards. It doesn't make it any worse, it just makes it different.

You could reduce its springing to make sure it retains what ground clearance it has for longer, but would do so at the expense of the ride, or you could do some experimentation with the footboard positioning to shift them up and forward a little, but



footboards with forward controls, but then again you are still moving away from what the Fat Boy is about.

It isn't really a dilemma, the choice between the Fat Boy and the Deuce. I enjoyed them both but for different reasons. I loved the Deuce for its easy-going nature and for the fact it forced me to accept just how good a frame the Softail is. I loved the Fat Boy for the way it evoked the heritage of the marque, and brought back forgotten memories of my first Harley. If it came to a toss-up between them, though, I think it would have to be the

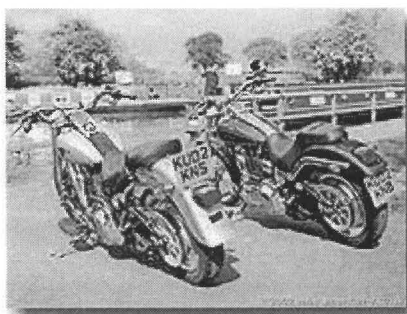
Deuce for the sort of riding I do, on the sorts of roads I prefer - and, at the end of the day, I felt the balanced Twin Cam motor better suited the sophistication of the new kid on the block.

That prices on the Deuce have dropped for this year is the unheralded news event for 2002, and the £300 reduction across the board brings the relative costs of these two closer, and that is enough to bring the Deuce back into contention on price too with just £200 rather than £500 separating the machines at identical specs.

## Second Opinion

Words: Rich King

The Deuce is a strange one that's for sure. Some look ungainly in their chosen colour schemes while other look sleek, sexy and oh so classy. When Andy and I arrived at Wayside H-D in Towcester to pick up the Deuce and Fat Boy for their head to head test, they had quite few Deuces scattered about the forecourt and inside the showroom - alright about four - but we only had eyes for one and both admitted later to silently praying it would be that particular rich red and black beauty on the forecourt. It was. It matters not one jot when applied to people, but when it comes to motorcycles, colour is important.



Any expectation that this carb'd Deuce would be less, shall we say, sophisticated in its manner than its injected sibling was soon dispelled. The carburetted variant is every bit as refined, just as comfortable over vast distance and handles just as well. Perhaps because we were nearing the end of Spring and ambient temperatures were on the up, the motor was usually warmed sufficiently from cold by the time I'd locked up and donned my riding gear, to effect a cough free take off, even in heavy rain. And it was just as happy at the throttle roll off at the first set of lights, frequently a time

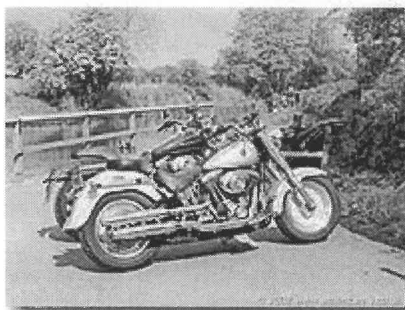
for irritating engine petit-mort on some other normally aspirated models.

It still impresses me quite how impeccably the Deuce handles, for a long low motorcycle it puts most other cruisers to shame - especially if they too are fitted with a patented Softail frame and an 88ci air cooled twin cam lump. We've said it before and I'm saying it again, it is amazing how much difference that set of lovely front forks, solid rear wheel and wide low-profile tyre make. Other potential Softail owners should raise a holler and demand that these items are an option for their ride of choice. If at all possible of course.



So I enjoyed my turn with the pretty carb'd Deuce and to be honest I'd expected to ... if

the carb proved a viable alternative to the ultra-classy injection Deuces I'd been lucky enough to ride previously. And it most definitely was, well worth considering if that extra money you'd have to fork out for the injection is a bridge too far.



So poor old Fat Boy huh? Sat sulking in the corner, once the capitol ship of Harley's custom fleet, now a tardy old has been ... I wasn't particularly looking forward to it. Not really, been there before, uncomfortable posing tackle. Blah, blah.

Yes I was.

For a start, Fat Boy's look the absolute business, especially yellow ones and while this one wasn't yellow, I coloured it yellow in my head. Fat Boys should all be yellow. Ought to be law.

Unless they're black of course, I'm willing to make an exception for black.

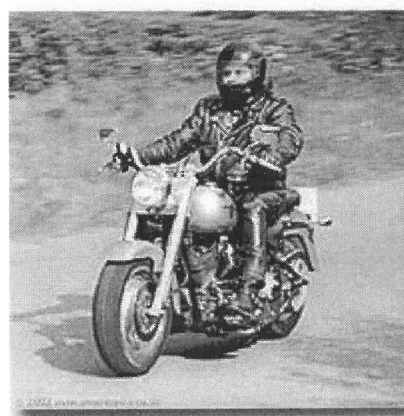
And the switch between the two made the bars feel much lower than I'd realised previously. They've always used FL bars for the Fat Boys: lower and wider than the other Softails and slightly lower than those used on today's Road Kings, and boy did that make a difference compared to the Deuce! Not just in the looks department either - and I did think they looked well - but also in the quality of the ride and while this Fat Boy was not quite as comfortable as the Deuce, I do mean 'not quite'. Whereas Fat Boys I'd ridden previously had been a literal pain in the butt after 50 miles, to my genuine surprise and not a little admiration, this one was not. Okay, it did start to get to me 50 miles later, but it still was not cripplingly so. Blimey.



So yeah, about the only logical reason I'd ever had for blowing out the Fat Boy as a bike in my wanted list was itself blown clean away. Dammit. Because I'd always loved the looks, the wide stance, the presence, the footboards and the way girls said I looked on it, but I could always complain that it wasn't a viable motorcycle because it wasn't comfortable. Now what was I going to do?

Easy, ride it.

And I rode it a lot. Bizarre: me, looking for excuses to ride a Fat Boy, of all things, out again and again. Into town, out into the country, choose a film developers 20 miles away, anything. And a lot, lot more than I had on the Deuce. Logic said that I should lean towards to the Deuce, as I'd thought it was the absolute bees knees not two years ago. Well stuff logic and I've changed my mind!



In truth I became bored with the Deuce's civility in comparison to the more raw experience of the Fat Boy, I'd enjoyed the Deuce for sure but it failed to bite into me as deeply as the Fat Boy did. Something I still find strange even now, but if logic was the over-riding factor when choosing a motorcycle ... well, you know what I mean. That this Fat Boy was the injection option made no difference to me personally, if anything I think I would have preferred a carb and would do if buying one.

'If buying one'? Jeez some change there.



It seemed slow but it can go a lot faster later - and, having said that, we pushed neither it nor the Deuce as they were both brand new with less than twenty miles between them when we picked them up - and while the Fat Boy desperately needs a hell of a lot more ground clearance, the little devil in my head grinned when the sparks flew off of the foot boards around the roundabouts.

I couldn't put my finger on any other reason why the Fat Boy's ride - and therefore its appeal to me - should have been so drastically different and I still can't. Who would have thought it would have made such a significant difference? Well, obviously not me anyway and it does firmly suggest that my earlier tirades at the Fat Boy's expense were not exactly well thought through, but in fairness I have ridden Fat Boys quite a lot over the years and they'd always been less than comfy. Perhaps because I'd always loved the look of them I was trying to find fault and, ah well, at least it explains why there are so many happy Fat Boy owners out there.

2002 Fat Boy, or 2002 Deuce?

Fat Boy. I like Fat Boys. There, I've said it ... and presumably I'd better take no bets that I suddenly find Heritage Softails and Ultra Glides irresistible next year.

But I wouldn't count on it.



## Specifications

<b>Make &amp; Model Harley-Davidson FLSTFI Fat Boy</b>	<b>Harley Davidson FXSTD Deuce</b>
<b>Engine:</b> Twin Cam 88B (balanced). Air-cooled 45° V-twin.	Twin Cam 88B (balanced). Air-cooled 45° V-twin.
<b>Displacement:</b> 1449cc (88 ci)	1449cc (88ci)
<b>Compression Ratio:</b> 8.81	8.8:1
<b>Bore &amp; Stroke:</b> 95.3 x 101.6	95.3 x 101.6
<b>Torque:</b> 105Nm @ 3000rpm	106Nm @ 3500 on injection
<b>Fuel System:</b> FLSTFI Sequential Port Electronic Fuel Injected (SPEFI) model tested. FLSTF Fat Boy also available with Keihin 40mm Carburettor	FXSTD model tested with 40mm Keihin Carburettor. FXSTDI Deuce also available with Sequential Port Electronic Fuel Injected (SPEFI).
<b>Exhaust System:</b> Over/Under Shotgun Duals	Over/Under Shotgun Duals
<b>Oil Capacity:</b> 3.3 litres	3.3 litres
<b>Fuel Capacity:</b> 18.9 litres	18.5 litres
<b>Primary Drive:</b> Double-row (duplex) chain	Double-row (duplex) chain
<b>Final Drive:</b> Kevlar belt	Kevlar belt
<b>Overall Length:</b> 2396mm	2424mm
<b>Seat Height:</b> 647mm	719mm
<b>Ground clearance:</b> 123mm	140.9mm
<b>Rake/Trail:</b> 32 degrees / 147.3mm	34 degrees / 126.9mm
<b>Wheelbase:</b> 1630mm	1690.3mm

<b>Dry Weight:</b> 320kg	305kg
<b>Lean Angles:</b> 28.7° left / 28.9° right	33.2° left / 36.7° right
<b>Instruments:</b> Electronic speedo with odometer and resettable trip meter. Fuel gauge, low fuel light, oil pressure light, engine diagnostic light, security light	Electronic speedo with odometer and resettable trip meter. Fuel gauge, oil pressure light, engine diagnostic light, security light.
<b>Colour Options:</b> Vivid black, diamond ice pearl, jade sunglo pearl, real teal pearl, white pearl, luxury rich red pearl, concord purple pearl, impact blue pearl. Two Tone schemes: Luxury blue and diamond ice, luxury rich red and black, real teal and diamond ice.	Vivid black, luxury blue pearl, diamond ice pearl, real teal pearl, luxury rich red pearl, concord purple pearl. Two Tone schemes: Luxury blue and diamond ice, luxury rich red and black, concord purple and diamond ice
<b>Price: FLSTFI EFI Models:</b> £13,595 single colour £13,795 two-tone <b>FLSTF Carb models:</b> £13,295 single colour £13,495 two-tone	<b>FXSTDI EFI Models:</b> £13,795 single colour £13,995 two-tone <b>FXSTD Carb models:</b> £13,495 single colour £13,695 two-tone
Prices include usual otr inc. PDI, full tank of fuel, 12-months tax, first service, 12 months membership of Harley Owners Group (HOG) including their European roadside recovery	Prices include usual otr inc. PDI, full tank of fuel, 12-months tax, first service, 12 months membership of Harley Owners Group (HOG) including their European roadside recovery
<b>Test bikes kindly supplied by:</b> Harley-Davidson UK. High St, Brackley, Northamptonshire NN13 7DT Tel: 01280 706752	

