

First Look: Harley-Davidson FXSTD Softail Deuce



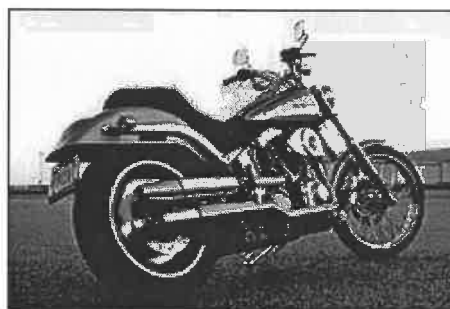
It's Contagious

By the Motorcycle Online Staff

LOS ANGELES, November 30, 1999 -- Harley's promotional literature says that the new Softail Deuce "pushes the edge to new limits, with a host of stylish details designed to set it apart from the crowd." From a standpoint of the casual bystander it looks like just another Harley, but for those who can explain the difference between a saucepan and a Panhead, a number of improvements of significant importance have been added to the Year 2000 FXSTD Deuce. Harley did quite a few things on the Deuce that might make a few people take a second look at a motorcycle that should appeal to more riders than ever before.

Phat ...

The Softail Deuce comes stock with chrome forks, the first time for a Harley. The Deuce also features another first for Harley -- a stretched fuel tank. Many similar tanks are available from aftermarket manufacturers, but none have ever been made to fit almost perfectly while integrating a chrome instrument panel. Almost all parts on new Harley-Davidsons are now CAD/CAM designed, right down to the offsets on wheels and degree changes in frame backbones to accommodate all the different seats deemed necessary by the good folks in the accessories department.



Even so, the most notable changes came from the minds of Harley's engineers, not a motherboard. From the rear of the bike, you'd have to be blind drunk not to notice the new, fat, rear 160/70-17 Dunlop K591 and almost-flush mounted brake light. The light is set deep into the rear fender

and, with the newly stacked shotgun exhaust, adds to the motorcycle's wide look.



The Deuce is powered by a rigid-mounted, dual counter-balanced, Twin Cam 88B engine, the first counter-balanced engine from the Motor Company. Its frame is 34 percent stiffer overall than other Softails and the Deuce also incorporates a steering head lock and new rear suspension bushings for

improved suspension action. To slow everything down, Harley has upgraded to the same four-piston fixed calipers, new brake pad material and newly designed uniform expanding rotors that previously debuted on the Y2K Sportster, Touring and Dyna families.

... and Phun

As one of our staffers put it, "I'd buy this is Harley." Exactly. We first noticed the Deuce shining in the early morning desert sun in front of the Spa Hotel in Palm Springs, California. After the ritual greetings we listened to tech info until we got antsy and just wanted to ride.

Heading out of town and cruising the boulevard on our way up to the mountain twisties, the Deuce felt extremely smooth and strong. The motor isn't V-Max strong but, for a cruiser, its more than enough. As for the counter-balanced motor, that's like Bill Gates having Steve Case over for dinner. This engine is one of the smoothest twins we've thrown a leg over and the deletion of vibes didn't create a corresponding drop in character. What vibration there is lets you feel the bike's inner-workings and pulse. This may be bad news for traditonlists, they're not the kind of vibes that numbs hands or makes women passengers scream in agony or ecstasy, as the case may be.



"Once we got up to speed our group separated into two very distinct cliques ..."
Check out the bold, new graphics helmet and guess which clique we belonged to:
The sportbike dork group.



Once we got up to speed our group separated into two very distinct cliques: Those from cruiser publications and those who were not. It was easy to tell the difference at the first rest stop, about 60 miles into the ride. The cruiser guys looked as if they had each had an epiphany while the sportbike guys were bitching about a lack of left-side ground clearance, although doing so with mile-wide smiles. Then, as the adrenaline subsided, reason kicked in and the whiners said "Damn, we sure got here quickly."

The Deuce is a blast. The new rear tire, stiffer chassis and improved front end make this a truly fun ride. We even entered into a few impromptu races down the mountain, hanging off wildly to keep cornering speed up without dragging the kickstand or frame rails, leaning over at angles where even this Harley has

no business operating. The motor pulled willingly out of corners at all speeds and, in part because of the counter-balanced motor, the shifting is much improved from what used to be offered with a Milwaukee pedigree. The only real flaw that our flogging uncovered was a seat that some short-legged riders complained about and a brake system that some of us wished had come with another disk up front, such as on the FXDX.



Despite this bike's 664-pound claimed dry weight and so-so stock power numbers, the Softail Deuce was much more fun than we expected. It has those classic, Harley good looks and it comes in nine color choices. And it *moves*. Even at the \$17,000 USD retail price, we are considering trading in our girlfriends

and make a down payment on a Deuce before they're all gone. Few other bikes can make us do that.

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