

Before You Start

Building your own motorcycle is a very rewarding but sometimes tough task to take on. One of the toughest parts of the job is the planning and decision making that come before you buy any parts or turn any wrenches. In some ways it's easier to buy the basic canvas for your dreams from a dealer, that way you get a running project to mould into your own and with many choices of model and style there are many ways to go. But a limited number of chassis all equipped with the same basic engine (with fuel injection available on some models) does mean you have some big lumps to sell if you have planned for big inch motors and high end transmissions. Then you have options in terms of paint and accessories, but the total number of decisions you have may be limited.

A bike built from scratch on the other hand is kind of overwhelming, simply because there are so many possibilities. The four main parts suppliers not of course forgetting the mighty H-D are; W&W World wide Cycles, Custom Chrome, Motorcycle Storehouse and Zodiac all put together make over 7,000 pages of reading – then of course there is the Internet which is endless, all in all it will turn you MAD with ideas, you just need to dissect everything and start your list – Good Luck

While chassis selection usually falls into two categories, the twin shock, softtail or rigid, with varying degrees of rake and stretch, all able to take wheels from stock to VERY wide frame for that fat tyre in the back. Many manufacturers now allow for Right side drive with many combinations of frame/wheel/ transmission. Once you decide on the frame style and dimensions the next big choice is the engine, with motors now up to 145ci and some beyond the sky's the limit. Then if you are modifying a motor you need to look at Carburetor's, cam's heads, exhausts, ignition systems and loads more

Designing the New Bike

You aren't just building a machine, you're designing your ideas. Start with a budget figure, but be realistic about what it will cost and how much you have to spend, I guarantee you will exceed your budget. Avoid the trap of over-optimism because it leads to bikes that don't get finished or don't get finished on time. Next determine how the bike will be used. Big motors sound great and make gobs of torque but don't have the smoothness and longevity of a mildly tuned 80/88/96 V-Twin motor. Last but not least, determine the style for the new bike. Which frame, equipped with which fenders and tank will provide the look you're after. What colour will the new bike be and who will do the final paintwork. There is a tendency to skimp on the paint job and spending that 'extra' money on hardware. Before you decide to be penny wise and pound foolish consider that the paint is the one thing that people immediately see when they view your bike. It's the biggest, most visible part of your new design. They might not notice the button head bolts or the billet engine cases, but everyone will notice the paint job.

Finishing the job.

After you've been brutally honest with yourself about how you're going to use the bike and how much money you can spend, you need to consider style. What exactly do you

want this machine to look like, Chopper, Bobber, Retro, Ultra modern or just completely CRAZY.

Professional bike builders either work on your ideas having sent you off with a stack of magazines and photo files and told you to mark all the bikes you really like. Or just take your ideas and produce you the goods. Whatever the case, you need a picture or detailed sketch of what the new bike will look like and unless you've built bikes before, it's dangerous to just "let it happen" it could cost you a lot of that hard earned cash, all these principles also apply to building your dream or customizing a stock bike.

SVA – TUV – MOT

SVA or Single Vehicle Approval is a newly introduced test for built up motorcycles (custom bikes) in the UK. This test has certain requirements which you should be aware of prior to commencing with your custom bike build. Please email me for a comprehensive guide to these regulations. Make sure you complete your bike within these regulations. If you don't, you run the risk of having a very costly and useless motorcycle as a garage ornament. See at the end of this section how to obtain this free guide to these regulations. TUV This German inspired testing system is now being used throughout Europe as a means of ensuring environmental regulations are followed in respect of engine and exhaust systems and that major components such as frames/swingarms are strong enough for the job they were designed to do. This is a safety aspect which is very helpful to custom bike builders and owners who are rightly concerned their new custom bike won't fall apart as they corner a bend in excess of 100mph and send them on their way to heaven or permanent disability. All of these frames and swingarm kits in this catalogue have the TUV certification.

MOT

This is an annual test in the UK which motorcycles have to undergo as an annual 'health check' of their motorcycle. If you are unsure how these test requirements affect you, contact your nearest test centre. Many countries have a similar testing system, ensuring bikes are roadworthy and safe over the lifetime of the motorcycle.

Other Tests

Most countries have some form of regulations which help provide a basis for ensuring any custom bike build results in a safe and legal motorcycle. Please find out what these are before you start your build. This will help you build a safer motorcycle and prevent financial loss if your custom build is prevented from being used on the road.