

Storz XR1200

A rubber-mount Sporty with the soul of a racer



story by Dain Gingerelli
photos by Dain Gingerelli and
courtesy Storz Performance

Motorcycling, as we know it today, has its roots implanted firmly in the dirt where some of the first races were held on the horse racing tracks that populated America's state and county fairgrounds. Dirttrack rac-

ing's popularity grew during the teens and '20s, and by the mid-1930s the AMA (American Motorcyclist Association) instituted Class C rules for competition in order to make the racing more affordable for privaters. Class C essentially mandated that only production-based motorcycles were to be eligible for competition in the AMA. Moreover, through the years Class C rules

spawned some notable bikes, among them Harley-Davidson's WR and KR flathead racers. But without a doubt the most successful "R" model to race its way to fame and glory has been the XR750, a design originally based on the Ironhead Sportster back in 1970, with a revised model using alloy engine components debuting in 1972. Harley factory rider Mark Brelsford



won the AMA Grand National Championship with the new alloy-based XR that year, and to this day Harley's venerable V-twin continues to win races and championships. In fact, the XR750 is responsible for more AMA championships than any other model ever made.

But there's a new XR that might have an even greater impact on you. It's the XR1200, and while it probably won't win any races, it's sure to win your heart if you happen to be a fan of oval dirttrack racing. See, the XR1200 is actually a kit—fittingly designated as the XR1200 Kit—produced by Storz Performance for street use. The kit, designed by Steve Storz who tuned XR750s for the factory race team 20-something years ago, fits any late-model rubber-mount Sporty—883 and 1200—converting the otherwise sedate street bike into an XR750 look-alike. And that, my friends, is a pretty cool thing.

Even though Storz markets the XR1200 Kit as a single component, you actually can buy the individual parts that you prefer, to give your own rubber-Sporty a look of its own. The "kit's" most obvious cosmetic features are the aluminum 3-gallon gas tank, fiberglass seat with Saddle-



men pad, upswept BUB exhausts and the satin-black Ceriani inverted fork. The 18-inch-diameter laced-spoke wheels with aggressive-tread Metzeler meats stand out, too, as do the front Gremica brake caliper with 13-inch Galfer Wave rotor that weighs heavily on the design.

But the sum of those parts actually shaves about 80 pounds from the XL's original 557-pound (XL1200 Road-

ster) curb weight. And, considering that weight lost translates to horsepower gained, the XR1200 Kit is as much a performance item as it is a cosmetic treatment for your XL.

Less weight also can play a factor in how the bike responds through the corners, and it's cornering performance that many a diehard race fan is concerned with. And with 80 pounds of excess hardware left in the

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garage, the XR1200 becomes a rather nimble road bike, as we discovered when testing the Storz mule bike through the mountain roads near their shop in Ventura, California.

Steering response is especially improved, requiring only a slight tug on the Flanders flat-track-style handlebar to initiate turn-in. The Metzeler ME880 Marathon tires—130/70-18 front and 180/55-18 rear—have little problem gripping the road, and the Ceriani inverted fork and Works Performance adjustable rear shocks soak up any ruts, bumps or other road surface irregularities, with ease. And with the BUB exhaust pipes routed above the swingarm plane—much like a racing XR750's—there's plenty of cornering clearance to lean the XR1200 through the corners without scraping anything. In fact, you become so confident and have the bike so far over by the time you reach a turn's apex that you'd swear you're about to scrape your elbows.



Even so, the XR1200 tightly hugs the road, feeling nimble and quick like, well, a race bike. It sounds like a racer, too, and the burble from those upswept pipes is reminiscent

of the sound that reverberates through the stands when the real XRs freight-train through the corners at the historic Mile tracks of DuQuoin and Springfield. Actually the BUBs (the pipes on our test bike were painted black; chrome and black-coated finishes are now available) delivered a mellow, almost soothing, tone at low RPM. As engine speed picked up, the noise turned into more of the throaty, staccato growl that is associated with dirt-track racing. The pipes feature a step-up diameter near the exhaust ports, increasing from 1 1/4" at the port opening to 1 1/2" at a prescribed distance along the header, to maximize exhaust gas flow.

And by keeping the engine stock, with exception of the pipes and Mikuni 42mm flat-slide carburetor, the powerband remains linear so that there are no flat spots or abrupt power pulse-peaks during acceleration. Instead, the XR1200 pulls steadily through and out of the cor-

ners, allowing you to concentrate on connecting the corners rather than controlling a head-strong engine.

As you might guess, the XR1200 stops rather quickly, too. Most of the stopping force is found in the front 13-inch rotor, but the rear 10.6-inch rear disc plays its role, too; you can even use it to induce a slight amount of counter-steer by momentarily trail-braking with the rear into the turn, then releasing the pedal before the apex to set the bike back on its line for the exit.

Storz equipped the mule bike—which is actually their show bike that is displayed at dealer and consumer shows during the year—with a few other goodies that aren't necessarily found in the company's catalog, but help make for a unique package. The non-Storz add-ons include the Performance Machine hand controls, Dakota Digital HLY 6000 tachometer and speedometer gauge, Buell XB9 front fender, and of course the paint job (which happened to be applied by Bill Kee.)

So there you have it, all you flat-track cowboys, a rip-roaring street-bike that looks as much like the legendary XR750 racer as you'll ever find. Cost? Well, if you have to ask, then as in racing you probably can't afford it. But to give you an idea, the gas tank alone retails for about \$1045, and the fiberglass seat and pad combination lighten your wallet another \$357. The BUB pipes go for \$875, and the seat-mounting kit and taillight put an additional \$355 to the mix.

Racing ain't cheap, and neither is this conversion kit for the street. But when it comes to upping the performance factor on your rubber-mount Sportster, you'll be hard-pressed to find a better solution.

Resource

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