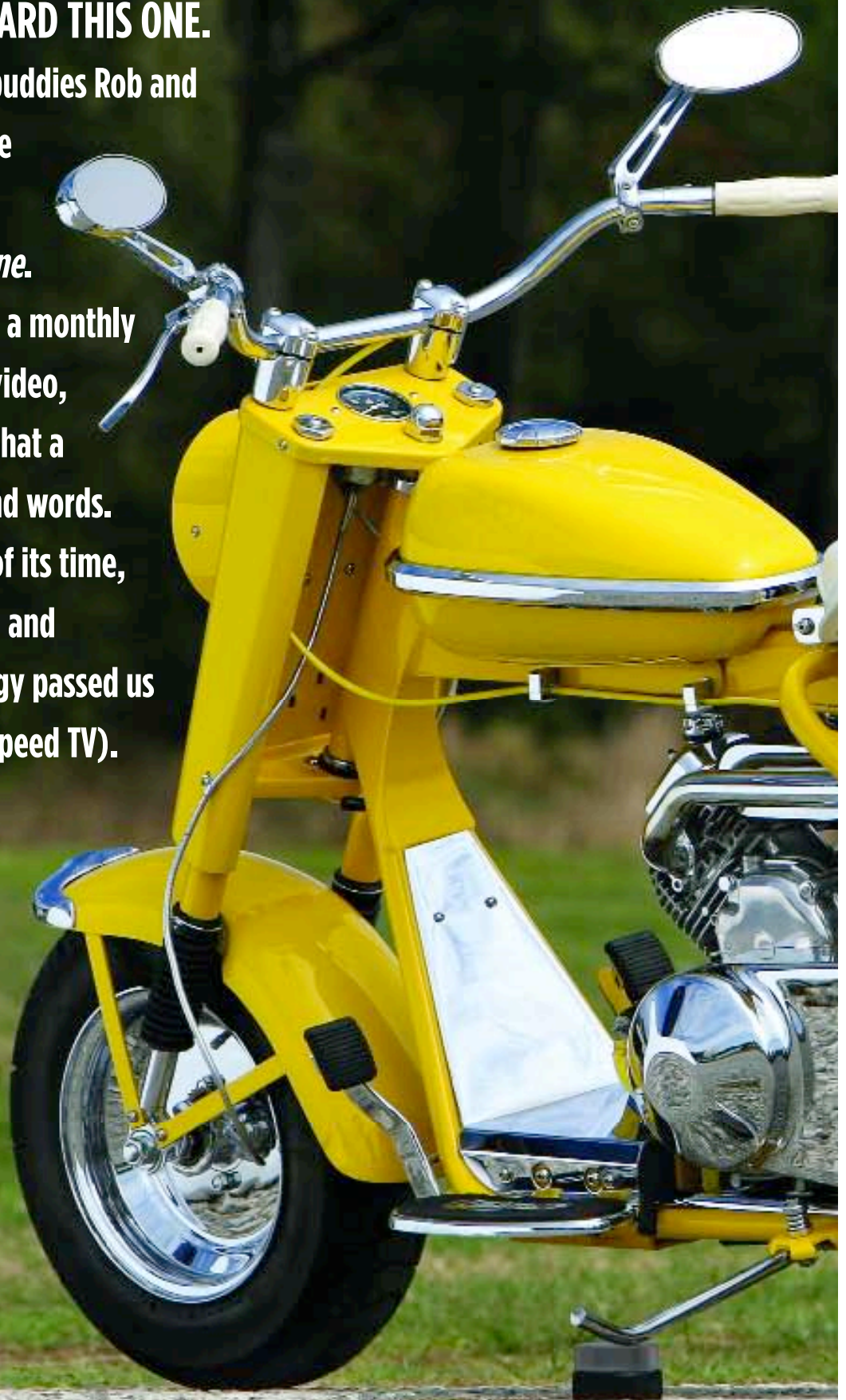


STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS ONE.

About a decade ago, my buddies Rob and John Nussbaum and I were working on a project we called *Cycle Video Magazine*.

Our idea was to distribute a monthly motorcycle magazine on video, reconfirming the theory that a picture is worth a thousand words.

The idea was well ahead of its time, but we were underfunded and outgunned, and technology passed us by (as did the advent of Speed TV).



1963 CUSHMAN EAGLE

Scootin' around with a classic

BY JIM BABCHAK • PHOTOS BY BOB FEATHER





1963 CUSHMAN EAGLE



How cool is that?

Charlie has a love for all things mechanical, and has built over 100 Norton, Cushman, and Boss Hoss custom machines in his day. This 1963 Cushman Eagle began as a basket case that he turned into the beautiful custom it is now. Ray Vining, also of Knoxville, saw the parts pile in Charlie's shop and commissioned him to build it. Well aware of Charlie's reputation, Ray knew he was in for a wonderful machine.

Since this was going to be a custom build, Charlie was free to make decisions about what to power the bike with, and how to approach it. He chose to go with a stock look, but lots of horses, so he bagged the original motor and in its place chose a Briggs & Stratton V-twin. He began by disassembling it, polishing

Anyway, we went to Daytona in 1997 to shoot some stories; it was the usual Bike Week with all its craziness and camaraderie. After shooting all day, we decided to grab a couple of cold beverages, hang out on Main Street, and take in the action. As you can imagine, amazing custom machines and outrageous iron rolled by to the point where we were numb to everything on display. There is just so much at every Bike Week that it's tough to process. Out of nowhere, we heard a group of motorcycles working its way down the main drag. As is well known, traffic moves slowly along this party route, so bikes are heard long before they're actually seen. This approaching group sounded different. It was not your usual V-twin rumble; it sounded more like a bunch of lawn mowers on steroids. Then a hush fell over the crowd as 15 or 20 guys appeared, riding Cushman scooters! People cheered and chanted, and the party continued. This was so off the hook, so radical, and so different, that the crowd went wild as this Cushman group passed by. Very big men on very small machines had stolen the moment, and they were not giving it back. It was like a scene from Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus when the clowns come out on the mini-bicycles and circle the Big Top. You couldn't help but bust a smile from ear to ear. We walked along with them for several blocks, and were able to catch up with them when they pulled over to gas up at the end of the strip.

Upon close inspection, the love and commitment these guys had for their machines was evident. They were amazingly restored, and in some cases overly so. They gleamed with paint and chrome, and one fellow had even built a dual-engine Cushman Scooter, which had to be seen to be believed: just spectacular workmanship and a fun execution.

Fast forward a decade, and I'm interviewing Charlie Cox, owner of Diamond Boss Hoss in Knoxville, Tennessee, the builder of our feature bike this month. I relayed the Bike Week story to Charlie, and he told me he was in that scooter crowd, and our feature bike is the machine he was riding!

the cases, barrels, and any other aluminum part he could add a shine to. With maximum output and maximum speed in mind, Charlie started with the heads. He flowed them; added titanium valves, special springs, and keepers; had some custom roller rockers fabricated, and went with Venola pistons. He shaved 5 pounds off the flywheels for quicker revving, and it's all mated to a variable speed transmission, which uses a Comet clutch to engage and disengage the power transfer. The carburetor is a modified two-barrel, and the bike is fired by a stock Magneto. It also uses a battery and alternator to light the lights and keep everything charged. The primary cover and flywheel cover are custom-made from fiberglass that was then chrome-plated to add some more bling to the overall look.

Charlie reinforced the frame (rebraced, rewelded, boxed) at the neck and added a battery box between the lower frame rails to increase rigidity, stability, and strength to handle the new power curve. The stock Cushman hydraulic front end and handlebars were rebuilt, and the bike runs on 10" wheels and tires (130/90-10"). It retains its original stock linkage and brakes, and all the sheet metal is original as well. It was painted PPG yellow by Bones Cooper of Knoxville, and Knox Plating did the bright work. The seat was lowered 2" and covered with a white leather that really stands out against the yellow paint.

The bike can pull wheelies upon takeoff and smoke the tires at will; there is that much power available. The original motor put out about 23 hp and Charlie figures this one to be at about 60 hp. That's a lot of ponies with little weight to slow it down. Charlie wanted to see what the top speed on the bike was, so

he had a 600cc Suzuki follow him to mark his speed. He did 120 mph on the Cushman! Somebody call a psychiatrist, this guy is crazy!

Ray uses the bike for shows and display now, and commissioned it because of the fond memories he has of these machines. Any high-school kid who had a Cushman in the late 1950s and '60s was definitely king of the hill. **AIM**

TECH SHEET

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|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Year/model: | 1963 Cushman Eagle |
| Engine: | Briggs & Stratton V-twin |
| Displacement: | .620cc |
| Horsepower: | .60 |
| Transmission: | Variable speed |
| Electrical: | Magneto/12-volt battery |
| Frame: | Rigid |
| Front end: | Hydraulic |
| Wheels/tires: | 130/90-10" |