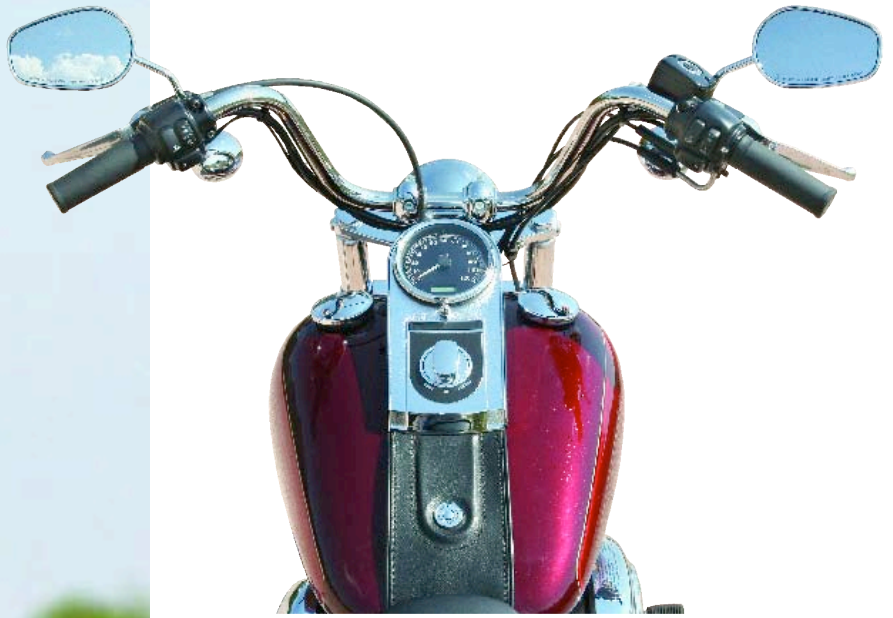




# FXSTC SOFTAIL CUSTOM

H-D's version of  
a mild chopper



**KNOW BLASTING ACROSS THE COUNTRY ON A BRAND new Harley is not what most people would call work. But since I get paid to do it, that's what I get to call it, right? So, last August, my job (heh!) was to get a new FXSTC from the Harley-Davidson press fleet center in Carson City, California, and ride it to Sturgis. Hopping a flight to Long Beach Airport and then taking a short cab ride to the fleet center brought Sam, my cohort for this trip, and me face-to-face with our rides for the trip out. (Efficient dudes that we are, we would be riding a different set of 2008 H-Ds on the return trip.) The FXSTC Softail Custom, which was new (again) in 2007, was going to be my ride for the trip east. I'd been looking forward to doing this trip with the Custom ever since I'd heard H-D had reintroduced it as a mild chopper. My goal was to take it on a long haul and see how it (and I) held up. I've been riding choppers for over 35 years and like taking long trips on them.**

To quote Motor Company press literature, "A signature element of the new Softail Custom is its tufted, 1960s-inspired, stepped seat. The raised passenger position features an integrated backrest and new chrome-aluminum sissybar." That, combined with a tad more rake, is the extent of the FXSTC's

PHOTOS BY BOB FEATHER

resemblance to a chopper. And that's just fine. I didn't expect H-D to come out with a 10'-long, 45-degree raked custom. It's not the H-D style. So, how does what H-D did come up with perform? In a word, great!

**The Softail Classic**, like all 2008 Softails, is powered by a Twin Cam 96B (1584cc) V-twin engine (with internal counter-balancers) that's rigid-mounted in the frame. The engine is connected to H-D's semi-new six-speed Cruise Drive transmission via the also semi-new primary drive system introduced on the 2006 Dynas. This primary setup also features an easier-to-pull clutch that makes the bike much more pleasant for women to operate. The intake system is basically the same as it is on all the Big Twins, but the exhaust is not. The FXSTC has new mufflers on its chrome staggered shorty dual headers. This system, which

flows a good deal of air for a stock (as in quiet and approved) setup, also has a slightly deeper exhaust tone that I like.

A chrome oil tank sits about the tranny, which I think adds to the bike's vintage look. I also like the 5-gallon Fat Bob gas tanks with their sewn-leather strap. I leave it to you to decide about the slotted rear disc wheel, Bobtail rear fender, chrome-buttoned and tufted two-up seat, and the rest of the cosmetics of the bike. Of course, the bike's fit and finish are superb.

As for handling, it's excellent! Slow, fast, stupid fast, sharp turns, sweeping turns, no hands, whatever I tried was fine with the Custom. As long as I didn't hit anything, the bike didn't seem to care. In the turns, that 200-17 rear rubber had no problem correctly following the MH90-21 front no matter what I did. If you were worried that the 200 would make trouble, forget it. This is one well-balanced cruiser.



## TECH SHEET

### FXSTC Softail Custom

<b>Length:</b>	94.5" (240.0cm)
<b>Unladen seat height:</b>	28.3" (71.9cm)
<b>Ground clearance:</b>	5.1" (12.9cm)
<b>Rake:</b>	32 degrees
<b>Trail:</b>	5.0" (14.7cm)
<b>Wheelbase:</b>	66.9" (169.9cm)
<b>Engine:</b>	Air-cooled Twin Cam 96B (1584cc)
<b>Compression:</b>	9.2:1
<b>Fuel system:</b>	Electronic Sequential Port Fuel Injection (ESPFI)
<b>Transmission:</b>	Six-speed Cruise Drive
<b>Front tire:</b>	Dunlop Harley-Davidson Series D407 MH90-21 54H
<b>Rear tire:</b>	Dunlop Harley-Davidson Series D407 200/55R17 78V
<b>Fuel capacity:</b>	5.0 gallons (18.9L)

<b>Oil capacity:</b>	3.0 quarts (2.9L)
<b>Shipped weight:</b>	672 pounds (305kg)
<b>Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR):</b>	1,125 pounds (511kg)
<b>Front brake:</b>	Four-piston caliper, 11.5" x .20" uniform expansion rotor
<b>Rear brake:</b>	Two-piston caliper, 11.5" x .23" uniform expansion rotor
<b>Exhaust system:</b>	Chrome, staggered shorty duals
<b>Front fork:</b>	.41.3mm, telescopic, chrome dust covers
<b>Wheels:</b>	Front, 2.15-21" chrome, profile laced aluminum; rear, 6.00-17" polished, forged-aluminum slotted disc
<b>Handlebars:</b>	Polished steel, apehanger style
<b>Colors:</b>	Vivid Black, Black Pearl, Dark Blue Pearl, Candy Red Sunglo, Pacific Blue Pearl/Vivid Black, Crimson Red Sunglo/Candy Red Sunglo, Purple Haze, Copperhead Pearl/Red Hot, Golden Glow/Black Glow, Anniversary Copper Pearl/Vivid Black
<b>MSRP:</b>	\$16,895-\$17,970

## RIDING IMPRESSIONS



**Genevieve Schmitt (5' 7")**  
**Riding 18 years**

I LOVE THE OLD CHOPPER LOOK — hands high, feet outstretched — so when Harley introduced the Softail Custom in 2007 I smiled and jumped right on. What a great ride. The ergonomics

reminded me of the Dyna Wide Glide: the handlebars are at about the same height and the forward controls in the same position. You either like this riding style or you don't. The spec sheet says the seat height is 26.4", but I felt like I was sitting higher than that because the seat is very thick and cushy and my 117 pounds is not enough to squish it down. I think I lost an inch or two in leg stretch here. As a result, I had to be methodical and slow when maneuvering in parking lots in order to maintain complete control. ■

Those in the not-at-all-tall category, like myself, also shouldn't worry about foot or hand positions. Comfortably reaching the ground or the forward controls should not be a problem for short guys like me either. And the bike's mini-aprehangers and riser setup put the grips into my hands at a comfortable spot.

As for gripes, the only one I have is this: it's getting hard to write about H-D's new bikes, since they are consistently great in every aspect. Sam and I didn't have a single glitch on the bikes we rode out. Not even a burp from the intake system the whole trip. Nor were there any excessive heat issues, though I do know some owners are having that problem. As for noise from the tranny, that seems to have been an issue only on some of the 2007 models, though I didn't hear it on any of the '07 bikes I tested. Tranny noise on our 2008s was just the normal stuff. Shifting through the gears was smooth and easy. Neutral was there for the taking anytime I wanted it. Clutch action was smooth and consistent, a two-finger affair for me. Though there is a wider gap between first and second than the other gears, the light Softail and my 170-pound frame didn't strain the 96B much.

**The bottom line is this:** If you like this bike's styling, buy it! I thoroughly enjoyed riding it, and I couldn't find anything wrong, though I tried. Now my only problem is what the hell to write when I review the Dyna Low Rider I rode back from Sturgis.

I guess some part of this job has to be hard. **AIM**

