

King of the road



"This time round, I passed on the king's outfit. But I was still wearing my old miles-and-more black leather jacket."

I know, I know. Everybody who rides and writes about Harleys uses either 'Easy Rider' as a headline or as a lead-in to their feature. It's a cliché, but I am going to do exactly the same.

The year is 1969, the premiere of *Easy Rider*. An 11-year old boy arrives in front of the cinema on his bicycle, stares at the movie poster, buys a ticket and ventures inside. After experiencing

Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper on the big screen, during their quest for freedom on those endless US highways, the young boy's perspective is changed forever. He determines then and there, one day he is going to ride a bike like theirs on endless highways, leading nowhere.

The first step to freedom was putting high-rise handlebars and a



Harley-Davidson is known for only the most subtle changes, so no wonder you can't even see the new ABS system, which is available as an option on some of the 2008 models. Dieter Losskarn took one of his favourite Hogs, the classic Road King, for a ride. Photos by Elke Losskarn.

longish banana saddle with a chromed sissy bar on his pedal-powered ride. Two sets of playing cards, fixed at the rear wheels with clothes pegs, were supposed to imitate the V2 sound.

The modifications weren't appreciated by his parents, but what really pushed them over the edge was the fact, that just like Captain America at the beginning of the movie, he threw

away his wristwatch, vowing never to wear one again.

Well, the young boy is almost 50 now and I must admit I'm still not wearing a wristwatch. I've ridden and owned many Harleys and have biked most of the famous American highways, from Arizona to Alaska. So much for what movies can do to your kids....

While writing for *Motorrad*, Europe's biggest motorcycle magazine, I had the opportunity to test-drive the new Road King when it was introduced in 1994. I even went to the theatre, borrowed some clothes and dressed up like a king, with beard, sword, burg *fräulein* and all, to beef up the story. And it paid off. For the first time, I made the cover story. And not only once, but three times. The feature was syndicated to Spanish and Hungarian magazines – they obviously couldn't resist the king.

So it's not surprising that it was a special moment for me when, 14 years later, Cape Town Harley dealer Ad Kerkelaar handed me the keys to the newest version of this classic bike. But this time round, I passed on the king's outfit. But I was still wearing my old miles-and-more black leather jacket (which, by the way, still fits perfectly).

Nostalgia rules

First of all, what's so special about the king of the road? Well, the FLHRC Road King Classic is pure nostalgia. Chrome aluminium profile-laced wheels carry wide-whitewall tyres. Tooled leather covers the seat and hard-shell saddlebags. Touring features include a

The low-down

Harley-Davidson FLHRC ABS Road King Classic
 Price: R219 000 black; R221 500 pearl; R224 000 two-tone (without ABS less R10 000); cheapest Harley: Sportster XL883 R65 000; most expensive: Electra Glide Ultra Classic 2 R339 000
 Engine: fuel-injected 1585 cc V-Twin, 82 hp
 0–100 km/h: No-one buys a Harley for its acceleration!
 Top speed: Come on, it's a Harley!
 Consumption/100 km: 5,5 litres

Fuel tank: 22,7 litres
 Tank range: 412 km
 Approach angle: 25,6°
 Seat height: 693 mm
 Weight: 332 kg
 For more information: www.harley-davidson-capetown.com
 For the same amount of money (R219 000), you could buy: Triumph Rocket III Touring (R186 000)
 A BMW R 1150 Adventure and a BMW F 650 GS, both with ABS (together R212 200)

Black beauty: the new Road King is a classic symphony of chrome, leather and steel, a fusion of tradition and hi-tech engineering.

large detachable windshield (the bike looks much cooler without it). For 2008, it's also available in a limited edition 105th anniversary livery.

The bike is still easily identifiable as a Road King. Modifications are in the details. The 2008 model now features a new Brembo triple-disc brake system, air-adjustable rear shocks and a larger 22,7 litres fuel tank. An optional extra

It's still the same old, unique, great Harley-cruising feel. Your leather boots rest on large footboards, which can skim the tar in tight curves



Boys' toys

is ABS, which is designed to help the rider maintain control during braking events in less-than-optimal conditions, such as on wet surfaces and gravel roads.

The brake components have been designed to be virtually invisible, preserving the uncluttered styling around the wheels. Unlike many other motorcycle ABSes, Harley's is not a linked system, meaning the rider maintains full, independent control of both front and rear brakes.

And it works. Just before I brought the road Hog back, a woman in a big SUV (what else?) decided to run a red light. I'm sure that without ABS, I'd have had to write this feature with voice-command software.

But otherwise, nothing much has changed in the last 105 years. It's still the same old, unique, great Harley cruising feel. Your leather boots rest on large footboards, which can skim the tar in tight curves. Your heel kicks in the gears and the V2 growls with pleasure.

If you're still not sure whether to buy a Harley-Davidson or a motorcycle, rent a Hog for a couple of days and hit Route 62 between Montagu and Calitzdorp.

After a couple of kilometres in the saddle, when the first cold one is running down your parched throat, either at the Karoo Saloon or Ronnie's Sex Shop, you'll know exactly what I'm talking about.

Myself, I can't wait for the next modification of the Road King. It's 2008 now, in 14 years I'll be....

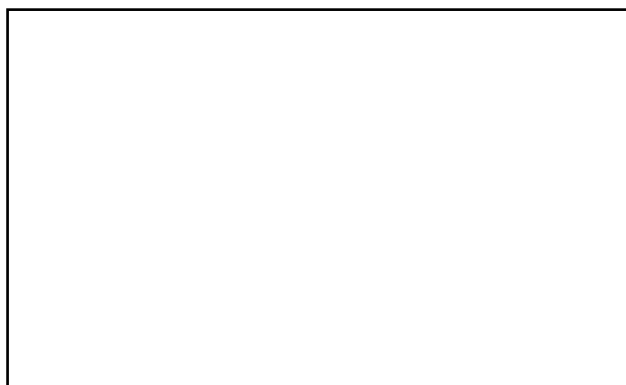


Next month: We go cruising in an Audi Q7 on tar and dirt, from Highveld to Lowveld, between Hazyview and Hoedspruit.



Watch your back

Whenever you ride a motorbike, on or off the road, your back is the most likely part of your body to get hurt. Depending on the bike suspension, uneven road surfaces and potholes can hit your spine with disc-crunching force. German manufacturer Ortema (web www.ortema.de) specialises in protective sports and motorcycle gear. Their Lumbo-X with integrated stabilising belts fits well and reduces external forces, protecting the lower part of the spinal column. The Lumbo-X comes in two heights (18 cm and 24 cm) and in five sizes (XS to XL). The price is around R500, including air freight to South Africa.



Take them where you want to go

To transport their mountain bikes around the rugged roads of Lesotho, Getaway photojournalists Alison Westwood and Jazz Kuschke used a Thule Euroway bike rack. It's got a built-in tightening mechanism, which makes it easy to take on and off a towbar, an accessible tilt function and, most importantly, is very robust. It's available from Load and Go SA and costs R3399 for the two-bike model or R3899 for the three-bike model. Getaway readers can ask for a five per cent discount on either rack. Tel. 021-424-5843, e-mail loadandgo@cybersmart.co.za or web www.loadandgosa.com.



Keep a cool head

Harley-Davidson's Bell chromed open-face helmet doesn't only look chilled, it keeps your head cool, even in scorching summer temperatures. The metallic surface reflects the sun's rays. The helmet has an adjustable visor and is available from S to XXL. Expect to pay around R1 700. Web www.harley-davidson-capetown.com.

We got bogged down in the mud at the Mamili reserve in the Caprivi. Handy hint: always send the troops into the deepest water and save the important stuff first! *Cris Trace, Simon's Town*

Stuck



If you have photographs of a 4x4 getting stuck, e-mail them to wheels@getaway.co.za or post them to Getaway Wheels, PO Box 180, Howard Place, 7450 Cape Town. You could win a Nissan Secure Tech Survival Kit worth R1 000, comprising an Off-Road Tactix manual and DVD, as well as a recovery bag with pull strap, shackles and a pair of gloves.

