

HARLEY'S DARK PAST: THE DAVIDSON CODE REVEALED



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Everyone has secrets. In the spring of 1984 the Harley Owners Group had only 28 members. How did 28 become 365,000 within just 14 years? Cultural phenomena or Cult? Here's what we do know.

Exactly 14 years later in 1998, Harley-Davidson released the FXSTB Night Train. With big hair, bright chrome and bold paint all the rage, other manufacturers were not making blacked-out bikes. The insidious creation of this sinister cycle was in fact a secret plan giving birth to Harley-Davidson's "Dark Customs". As unsuspecting masses went about their daily lives, the Night Train cruised back alleys, looking for fresh prey and breeding. Suddenly, in 2007 the Nightster appeared in the Sportster line. They had now crossbred the dark blood line. In 2008 this diabolical plan spawned the FLSTSB Crossbones and HD's darkest motorcycle, the IRON ...the game had changed and black is the new chrome. Then suddenly, in a shocking move the blacked-out VRSCV-Rod Muscle appears with drop-dead-gorgeous blond bombshell Victoria's Secret model Marisa Miller draped over this dark demon. Accident? I think not. Taking the Night Train to Harley's dark past reveals the hidden secret and true meaning of **The Davidson Code.**

I decided to take on this dark persona, all black, all leather, all bad, and race around Long Beach. Cruising the docks by the Vincent St. Thomas Bridge where the Night Train seemed at home. Belonging to Harley's Softail family, this bike still requires a very aggressive riding posture. With forward foot, controls and the low drag bars, you really lean into this bike. The drag bars are only 28 inches wide and it's

the ultimate lane splitter, easily pushing your way to the front anywhere. The geometry of the 32 degree rake coupled with the narrow drag bars and 90mm front tire require some extra muscle for slow speed turning. I spent several days and hundreds of miles on this beast and you get used to the riding position and cornering characteristics pretty quickly. In fact, I actually liked the forward position around town. You

become what this bike is all about - fearless, brash and bold. On the freeway I put my feet on the passenger pegs and tucked in at high speeds. Because of the dragbar's width though, no matter what angle I adjusted the mirrors I couldn't see behind me and I like to know who's on my ass.

**An aggressive forward position
The foot pegs are wider than
the dragbars**



Looking at this demon seed of the dark customs, the Night Train still appears very modern, very muscular. The solid aluminum rear rim and 200mm tire are race inspired. Married to HD's 96B Twin Cam it packs a punch with loads of torque. With black powder coated engine, black cover plates, black transmission covers and most of the accessories on the bike. These include the black tank console, rear fender supports, air cleaner, horn cover, belt guard covers and the oil tank. The paint options of black are: Vivid Black, Black Pearl and Black Denim - who knew black came in so many colors! Besides numerous improvements through the years, rigid-mounted 96B twin cam engine, 200mm solid aluminum rear, 6-speed tranny and such, the 2009 Night Train is still very true to its original 1998 gene pool.

I am not sure what the Night Train is supposed to be, it's neither a sport bike nor cruiser. This black sheep of Harley's family tree is a bad ass, aggressively bold motorcycle. And that's the beauty



A more aerodynamic riding position at 80mph

of Harley-Davidson, there's something here for everyone. What ever this beast is, it spawned a legacy of Dark

Customs that has forever changed the way we look at American motorcycles.



Down and dirty, the Night Train is a one way ticket to the dark side



The Davidson Code Revealed:

Harley Davidson's dark designations and their true Marisa Miller meanings.

V-Rod

VRSC - VictoRia's SeCrets

Night Train FXSTB

Female Xtremely Sexy Tall and Blond

Crossbones FLSTSB

Female Leggy Slender Tall

Sexy and Blond

Sportster 883 IRON

I Ran Out of Nonsense

Giving credit where credits due: The 1991 Sturgis limited edition was the first modern blacked-out HD, then the largely unsuccessful 1995 Bad Boy Springer but neither are still in production. VRSC VictoRia's SeCret is Terry Roorda's concoction.