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Cover Story

Often times a motorcycle resembles its owner. Such is the case of Mike (Chopper Mike) Davis and his wild machine. What started out as a basket case and a chat with Dr. Tequila transformed into the beautiful bike you see before you. Chopper Mike is a stickler for details. Fit and Finish vintage parts and craftsmanship were part of Mikes vision. This was no 3 week "TV" build.

Around 15 years (or so) ago Chopper Mike ran across a basket case 80 inch flathead. Once he got the crates and buckets home he sorted the junk from the gold. He had some good cases and some great parts but much was missing and so the hunt began! Chopper Mike being a veteran of the motorcycle industry knows a lot of people and what a lot of guys love in their private stashes. Phone calls, returned favors, bribes, threats, blackmail, oh, and about 30 swapmeets turned up the parts he needed. What he didn't find he made.

Chopper Mike likes to do most things himself but that's not to say he doesn't enlist help from time to time. The Paucho frame was in bad shape so Mike took it over to Bill at Daun Engineering for straightening and stretching. Mikes instructions for Bill were simple, He said "I want it long, high in the neck, low in the saddle and long. Oh! And did I mention long?" Mike then handed over a 2-" extended widel glide front end and said "make it fit!" With a "mad professor" gleam in his eye Bill Daun made it so! Now by todays computer high tech rake trail flop and slop models this bike can't work. It's a damn good thing this bike can't use a computer because it handles super!

When you rebuild an old engine, machine shop work is a must. The lower end work was done by the guys at Kokesh Cycle. Lee Elmer and Bug balanced and trued the flywheels and rods. They also installed a sifton performance cam and did the boar and valve machining. Chopper Mike did the final assembly and installed a Mikuni Carb for easy starts and great performance.

With the mechanical chores handled Mike turned to style. The flathead engine looked too boring! Mike came up with those custom covers. He made them to look kinda like pan head covers but with vented sides. So is born the basket head! Mike also fabed up that great custom exhaust system, so the bike looks and sounds like no other.

During the winter he was doing the engine. He put the rolling chassis on the roof of his north Minneapolis house. It was quite a sight to be driving down the street and see a chopper on the top of a house with snow on it!



One thing Mike found at a swapmeet was an old triangle shaped chopper gas tank. He straightened it out along with an old fender. Then he custom skirted an oil tank to make it fit into the frame just right. Mike did his own molding on the frame before taking it all over to long time friend, Jack Livingston, for the many layers of primer and black.

The polish plate action was handled by Pat Obinger before Chopper Mike did the final assembly. After years of parts collecting and many hours of fabrication and fitting the wire and fire time finally came! Mike was a proud papa the day this baby roared out of his garage! The scoot wasn't even a week old when it took a first place in the old Donnie Smith/J.P. Show. Since the bike has been in many shows here and there where it almost always gets a first. Once a couple of years ago, in addition to a first in class the bike got an award for oldest and one for mast radical! I said to Mike "I thought they were givin' trophies for the bikes not owners!"

After riding the bike for a couple of years it needed some though ups. The cool little chopper tank was losing its appeal too, only being about 1.2 gallons. So Mike got out the steel and the funny shaped stones and banged out a new "touring" chopper tank. This one's 2.6 gallons. He then made some aluminum lightning bolt tank emblems. Mike then asked me to do the finish work on the tank and the touch ups on the rest, which I was honored to do. Little did I know Mike made an extra one of those tanks. When I handed his shinny blue tank back to him he gave me that extra tank as a tip! Thanks Mike! Shortly after that we were out for a ride. Goin' side by side up Hwy 65, rush hour, about 60, mini vans and semis all around us. All of a sudden mikes back wheel locks! He's skidin' slightly swervin'. I'm thinkin' oh #\$&?#* I'm gonna put my shovel over my pal or into the side of a car! Mikes thinking oh no! I'm gonna scratch my new tank! He didn't go down! I think it is half because of good riding and half good engineering of the bike. We got it to the side of the road and discovered the culprit to be a broken rear brake anchor bolt. After we got the wheel and brake reed up, Mike said "Wow anybody that thinks this bike don't handle needs to know this story!" He then rode the bike to my shop (about 4 miles) with no brakes!

I don't know how many times I've heard people say how much this bike looks like Mike or how well the bike fits him. It's wild to see him ride the jockey shifted 20" over highboyed chop, with no front brake-all while smoking a cigarette! I always say, "If ya think his bike looks like him you should see his matching custom 60 El Camino!"

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