

A Review of the Indian Chief Dark Horse

by Wally Wersching

I spent the Labor Day weekend with an Indian Chief Dark Horse motorcycle. I picked it up on Friday and kept it until Tuesday. I rode the heck out of it and put on over 500 miles during which time I had fun putting it through its paces.



The Motorcycle: 2010 Indian Dark Horse, rigid mounted fuel-injected 105 Cubic Inch Power-Plus V-Twin engine, 6-speed Trans, and Brembo disc brakes. It was all stock except for the fringe on the seat – it was the only added option. List base price (from the website): \$27,999.00 plus set-up and taxes.

The Man: 5' 9", 190lb, 30" inseam, 66 year old that has been riding many different motorcycles for over 50 years.

The Ride: Interstate, backroads, winding mountain roads – no gravel roads. Elevation change was from 853 to 6,578 feet above sea level (Mt. Mitchell). The temperature ranged from the mid 40's to the mid 90's. I went to Cruise-Ins, Bike-Nites, Club meetings and biker get-togethers - anywhere to show off the Dark Horse. Everybody liked it. I let many of the on-lookers sit on the bike so they could get the feel of the new Indian. I also rode The Parkway and stopped at overlooks where I met other bikers from all over the country – Michigan, Ohio, Maryland, Florida, Wisconsin, etc. Some asked if it was a custom that I personally built. Others didn't know that Indian was back in business. I wish I had some Indian sales brochures to give away but even if I had some, I couldn't have carried them. There's no place to carry anything on the bike. I have a back-pack but it is bright reflective yellow and I didn't think that it would fit the killer image of the bike. I tried to roll up some things in an old black canvas briefcase. It worked and I attached it to the handlebars. It didn't detract from the look of the bike. While on The Parkway, I encountered stiff cross winds (over 30 mph) and the Dark Horse kept going straight and true. The 750 lbs makes it hold the road very well.

I also looked for great back-drops for the Dark Horse – old buildings, old cars, scenic vistas and other things that would enhance the Indian Chief image. I took a lot of pictures.

At one place I stopped, there was a little girl – about 8 years old. She said that she liked the bike. I asked her why and she said that the seat looked "like a cowboy's jacket". She didn't know the name of it but she liked the fringe anyway. I would imagine that she would have liked it even more if it had a set of fringed leather bags. All during my ride, I looked at the on-coming bikes as I waved – looking for that signature teardrop headlight of the Indian. I didn't see any – not one!

The Evaluation:

Ergonomics – Even though the ergonomics were designed for a 6' 1" rider, the seating position of the bike was comfortable with everything at my fingertips, the speedometer was not only a very classic design (looks like the old "Cat's Eye" speedo – the two sides are directional indicators) but it also was completely functional with the multi functional display with large readable LCD digits controlled by the button on the left hand grip. The bars were wider and higher than I was accustomed but were very comfortable. The mirrors were placed in such a way that my shoulders were not even in them. They were also very clear despite the solid mounted engine's vibration and rigid mounted bars. The kick stand was easily located with my left foot and went down securely unlike some of the other big V-Twins' side stands.



While sitting on the seat at a stoplight, I have both feet on the ground with my legs slightly bent. The low seat height (27.25") is a perfect fit for me.

Performance – The Power-Plus engine is the heart of the motorcycle. It has more torque and power than most people will ever use. It is also very quick and the fuel-injection makes it very responsive. I was very impressed by the lack of engine noise. Many of the other V-Twins sound like thrashing machines but the Indian's engine sounds like it was made well and is very quiet. The sound of the exhaust is not harsh or loud but sounds healthy – especially when under acceleration. Many would say that it is too quiet. It is a two into one configuration with a catalytic converter – so it's a "green" motorcycle with fewer emissions. During my ride, the bike got just over 40 mpg on hi-test (it requires a



91 octane minimum)

Braking – The dual 4-piston Brembo front brakes with floating rotors will bring the 750 lb motorcycle to a quick and smooth stop with little effort on the lever. The adjustable brake lever will make it a perfect fit in your hand. The dual piston rear Brembo brake with floating rotor will lock the rear wheel under hard braking. Threshold braking should be practiced on the rear brake pedal so the bike doesn't go

into a skid. There are no ABS or linked brake systems available.

Transmission – The 6-speed trans is perfectly suited to the engine. The gear ratio puts the engine at about 2100 RPM at 60 MPH which is very smooth. The hydraulic clutch has minimal pull and with the adjustable lever, the left hand doesn't get sore - not even in stop and go traffic. The "Heel-toe" shifter worked well but I never used the heel part of it and would easily remove it to get more movement of my left foot. The heel part



of the shifter kept my foot from moving back during the ride. The final drive is a belt which adds to the smooth and quiet operation.

Suspension – The front has 41mm hydraulic telescoping forks with 4.25" travel. The rear is a mono-shock design (under the seat) with preload adjustments and just less than 3" travel. It smoothed out the bumps in the road but not so much that you couldn't feel them. The suspension didn't dive in the turns and kept the floorboards from dragging. It has the appearance of a big heavy bike but it's very agile.

Handling – Once on the road, the Dark Horse handles very well. It is very agile despite its 750 lbs. The problem is doing "Parking Lot" maneuvers. The turning radius is wide and there were times that I had to back up to get a better angle to make that sharp turn. It wasn't a problem moving the bike. I easily straddle walked it forward and backward.

Styling – This is where they really hit the mark. Everyone who I talked with loved the overall look of the bike. Terms like "Bad-Ass", "Killer" and "Kick-Ass" were commonly used to describe their feelings. The matte black makes it look sinister and the "long fenders" make it look old school. The colored Indian Headdress on the sides of the tank added just enough color. The small amount of chrome on the blacked-out engine stood out to enhance the visual appeal of the big V-Twin. One man said that it was something old with the newer reliable electronics. He wouldn't stop talking about the looks and how much he liked the bike. Maybe he'll stop in the showroom and buy one.

Fit and Finish – I was very impressed by the level of fit and finish on this motorcycle. It had the appearance of a custom motorcycle with the chrome pieces in "Show Chrome" not just normal chrome plating used on other V-Twins.

Accessories – Indian has a full line of accessories available with some specifically geared for the Dark Horse like: Passenger seat, Black over-the-fender luggage rack, passenger backrest (black frame), black engine guards, black frame windshield, hard and soft saddle bags and a other items.