

hd highboy.

SURESHOT HARLEY IRONHEAD

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YACHIMATA JAPAN

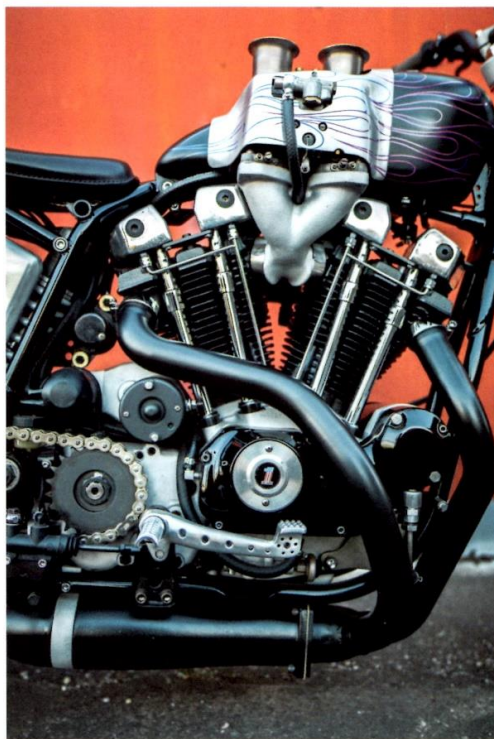


I've been a huge fan of the Japanese custom scene since my teenage years. It all started back in the early nineties when I discovered the Japanese sports cars that we couldn't get in Australia, like Toyota's twin-turbo JZ Supra, Mazda's 3rd gen RX7 and Nissan's mighty R32 GTR (aside from those rare as hens teeth Bathurst editions). In Japan, the custom scene revolving around those vehicles was all about performance and in typical Japanese style, they didn't do anything in halves. The biggest custom workshops were building 1000 horsepower beasts that ran nine second 1/4 mile times and took part in insane 300kmh+ illegal freeway battles (bear in mind this was almost twenty years ago). When my love for motorcycles eventually overtook my interest in cars it was the Japanese scene that I continued to look to for inspiration.

Contrary to the cars in Japan's custom scene, performance isn't usually the focus of custom motorcycle builders. In fact, if you were to look at uniquely Japanese styles, like the motorcycles ridden by the Bosozoku gangs or the ones displayed at the Yokohama Mooneyes show, you'll find modifications that have the complete opposite effect. Not to say that there aren't Japanese workshops that regard the performance of their builds as highly as their appearance, but the reality is that in Japan creativity and flair are king. Look back over forty years of custom motorcycles from America and you'll see the same thing. Although it's that scene that can be attributed to influencing Japan, the Japanese have a knack for always taking things that little bit further.

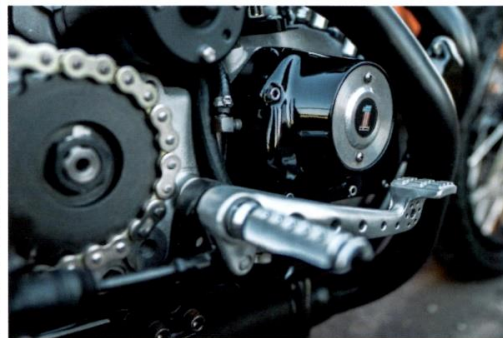
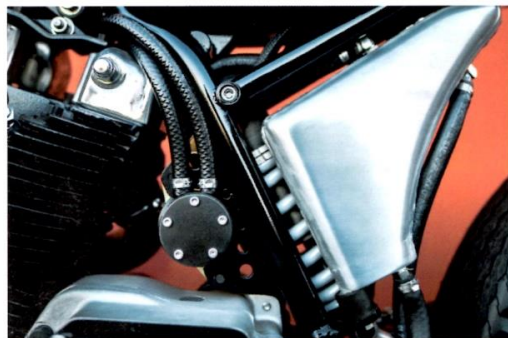
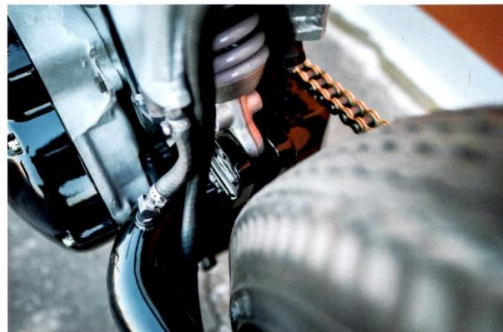
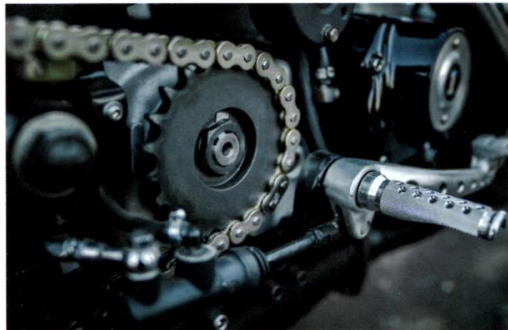
Japanese workshop 'Sureshot' have been building their own flavour of custom motorcycles since 2004. During that time, Takuya Aikawa and his three co-workers have amassed a portfolio of custom builds that range from mild to outright wild and this custom Harley sits firmly on the wilder end of the scale.

The inspiration for the build came once again from American history, but this time it was the four-wheeled flavour. "We built this bike in the style of an American hot rod," says Takuya. "We imagined we were making a Deuce hot rod on two wheels. A ride that runs straight and fast with a wide rear and narrow front wheel. That's why we made it as narrow as possible."



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The platform Takuya chose to base his hotrod bike on was a '77 Harley XLH1000 Ironhead. The frame and engine had sat unused in the Sureshot workshop for years making it a great candidate for the no-budget shop build. "The Iron Sportster motor was perfect because we liked its narrow style. However, the twin shock frame was too wide for our idea, so we modified it to use a mono shock." In keeping with their slim theme, they then converted the Ironhead's swingarm to a single sided set up, which proved to be much more challenging than anticipated.

"We combined an iron dish wheel with a Ducati hub for the rear wheel and fitted it with a 15-inch vintage car tyre like you'd find on an old hot rod. In order to support the wheel, we bent a 4mm thick oval pipe to form the swingarm which was very difficult." With the swingarm bent up and frame modifications complete, a new oil tank was designed. The custom aluminium tank was shaped to match the radius of the rear wheel and mounted beneath the seat. Unfortunately, after adding a channel for the rear shock to pass through, it fell short of the required capacity. Just when they thought they'd have to go back to the drawing board, Takuya realised their swingarm could easily accommodate the extra oil. So, after adding feed lines and pressure testing it for leaks, their unique oil system was complete.

The next step was tackling the bike's carburettor. The stock Harley setup protruded too far from the side of the engine so Takuya once again looked to classic hot rods for inspiration. To create a look similar to the Stromberg carbs seen on '50s hot rods, he fabricated an upswept intake manifold and fitted it with a Weber downdraft carb. The new fuel tank was then notched to fit around the carb and an aluminium cover fabricated to blend the two together. To balance out the bulk of the rear wheel, Takuya has mounted a set of thick forks up front and added tracker style handlebars, the widest element of the entire bike. A custom seat by workshop partners Studio Wokini and a classic flame paint job finish off the hot rod theme, but the finishing touch was Takuya's custom exhaust. The two-into-one system hugs the motor as close as possible and its muffler hangs directly beneath the engine, so it's almost impossible to spot from the front or rear.

The Sureshot Ironhead may not be a bike you'll be challenging any corners with, but if linear speed and '50s styling is your thing, you're sure to appreciate this two-wheeled hot rod homage. If not, perhaps a drag race could help change your opinion?

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