

COPPER MIKE'S 'COLE SHOVEL'

# OUTTA MY WAY



Looks like being something of a Shovelfest this month, what with Jeff Cochran's 'Speed King' Shovel featured elsewhere, and the 1972 FX1200-engined, custom-built 'Cole Shovel' bobber belonging to Copper Mike Cole in front of you right here, right now. Originally a partner of Big Charlie Lamantia in New York's Street Smart Cycles (when his copper-plated Knuckle-Shovel was featured in BSH 290 last year), Mike has since gone solo with a new venture called Gravesend Cycles, but he still retains the 'Copper' prefix to his handle as his love of the living colours from burnished copper continue to be a feature of all of his bikes, from the original hand-beaten 'Coppa



Choppa' 1939 Knucklehead to his latest copper accentuated Panhead which lifted the runner-up Best Bobber trophy at the Rat's Hole show at this year's Biketoberfest.

his copper-framed Shovelhead (as in entirely covered in copper leaf and then clear lacquered, not as in entirely constructed from copper...) features just the V-twin engine on its own from the original 1972 Harley-Davidson motorcycle – albeit having been rebuilt by Mike and featuring many modifications intended to eliminate the dreaded 'Shoveltrouble', such as the S&S oil pump alongside the usual go-faster mods like a performance cam and lifters, adjustable pushrods, Dyna ignition (with its coil tucked away beneath the fuel tank) and an S&S Super E carb with a suitably retro Goodson cast aluminium air filter. The long

high-level pipes are of Mike's own design and come with the now-obligatory ceramic heatwrap, and dragging the Shovelhead engine into the 21st Century is a 6-speed gearbox by Baker (a Baker's half-dozen...?), mated to a 3-inch BDL open belt primary drive and clutch featuring matching blue custom-painted covers, and with a high torque starter motor replacing the efforts usually supplied by the owner's right leg.

The rigid frame, oil tank, footrest assemblies, battery carrier, rear mudguard – plus struts – and number plate bracket are also all Mike's own work, while the fuel tank came from a 2008 Sportster, ▶

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though Mike had to modify it to fit the frame, add a pop-up filler cap and re-locate the petcock. The solo seat – sans springs but with that sought-after distressed look – came straight from a swap meet, and the nondescript headlight (yet another swap meet score) was reworked by Mike to match the FU vintage-style taillight. The minimal wiring requirements were handled in-house at Gravesend Cycles.

Like many bike builders from the New York area, Mike likes to use a modified version of stock contemporary Harley-Davidson forks on many of his bikes. In this scenario, a set of 2009 narrowglide legs were trimmed of their mudguard mounts, reshaped to look smooth and sleek, and fitted with a pair of bespoke machine turned and chromed oil seal covers, while the stock yokes were de-lugged and polished. Both the brass risers and tall handlebars are Mike's own work, however, and feature a vintage style Harley clutch lever assembly with grips and throttle from Performance Machine. Looking cool and brakeless was what Mike

wanted, and he achieved it with a skinny 21-inch spoked wheel rim wearing just a minimum of Metzeler rubber laced with stainless steel spokes to a rechromed swap meet spool hub.

Another nearly-new stock Harley-Davidson part put to good use was the 16-inch cast alloy Street Bob rear wheel, complete with original Dunlop tyre and OE master cylinder, both parts polished (the wheel and master cylinder, that is – not the tyre...). The latter was fitted with a braided stainless line to improve the braking efficiency of the RevTech 4-piston brake caliper and disc in lieu of the absentee front brake. By using an original Harley rear wheel and OE tyre, it's clear that Mike doesn't subscribe to the popular 'bigger-is-better' theme when it comes to rear tyre width;

*"To me, a huge rear tyre just doesn't look right – it's not symmetrical. A 200 is probably the widest I'd ever go with one of my bikes."*

Mike likes his bikes clean and simple, with an absolute minimum of shop-bought bling and expensive aftermarket parts.



## SPEC:

**ENGINE:** 1972 74 cu in (1200cc) Harley-Davidson Shovelhead V-twin rebuilt by owner, performance cam and lifters, S&S oil pump, adjustable pushrods, S&S Super E carburettor, Goodson air filter, hand-made ceramic heatwrapped upswept high-level 2-into-2 exhaust system by owner, Baker 6-speed gearbox, 3" BDL

belt primary drive, BDL clutch, high performance aftermarket starter motor.

**FRAME:** One-off twin downtube wishbone-style rigid by owner.

**FRONT END:** 2009 H-D narrowglide telescopic forks and yokes modified by Gravesend Cycles, 21" spoked wheel laced to spool hub, 21" Metzeler tyre, one-off risers and handlebars by Gravesend Cycles, Performance Machine grips and throttle, vintage H-D clutch lever assembly, swap meet headlight reworked by Gravesend Cycles.

**REAR END:** 16" H-D Street Bob alloy wheel, OE Dunlop tyre, RevTech 4-piston brake caliper and disc, H-D master cylinder, braided stainless steel brake line, RevTech final drive sprocket, DID chain, mudguard and struts fabricated by Gravesend Cycles, vintage style FU taillight.

**OTHER STUFF:** 2008 H-D Sportster fuel tank with tunnel modified by owner, fitted with pop-up filler cap and re-located petcock, swap meet solo seat, one-off oil tank, footrest assemblies, battery box, number plate holder and wiring loom by Gravesend Cycles.

**PAINT AND FINISH:** Custom paintwork by Fast Eddie. Powder coating by Action Powder Coating. Entire frame covered in copper leaf and lacquered. Chrome and copper plating by Capt Steve's Plating. All polishing by Gravesend Cycles.

**THANKS TO:** "P-Chop, Manny Ferreira, Agnus from Fresco, Fast Eddie, Action Powdercoating and Capt Steve's Plating."

Those things that he can't make himself will generally be adapted from either a stock motorcycle component or a choice swap meet find. According to Mike;

*"I like the old look; some would call it retro. I like my bikes to have the air of a piece of antique jewellery or fine old hand-made furniture. There are enough bikes out there already in bare metal and primer."*

This concept is evident in the finish on the Shovelhead; copper leaf on the frame and oil tank motif, brass and brass plating on the risers, rear mudguard struts, battery holder and number plate, with yet more copper leaf on the Ed Roth-style 'Outa My Way' tank graphics. What appears to be blue anodising on the rear wheel and primary drive covers is, in fact, a very cool translucent powder coating over a chrome finish by Action Powder Coating. The actual custom paint on the fuel tank and rear mudguard was carried out by Fast Eddie – unlike the typical New York subway train graffiti on the trailer. Mike just left it parked in the street one day and that's what happened to it ... vandals, eh?

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