

Harley-Davidson Night Train®

The Night Train® is the bad boy motorcycle from Harley. It resides in the Softails® family and has the frame mounted Air-cooled, Twin Cam 96B™ engine. As they say on their web-site, you can't be afraid of the dark if you like the Night Train®. There is not a lot of chrome on this bad boy and the more you look around at the metal surfaces you notice a lot of different shades of black. This includes engine and transmission covers and most of the accessories on the bike that includes the black tank console, rear fender supports, air cleaner, horn cover, belt guard covers and the oil tank.

The next thing that you notice is the 21" spoke front tire with a 32° front rake along with the drag style handlebars on the straight 4" risers. Match that with the nice low 26.8" seat, a 200mm rear tire and now you have that bad boy look attitude profile. Then add the flat crimson red denim color, bobtail rear fender, no windshield, saddlebags or sissy bar and the bike is complete. The Night Train® is BAD.

This is a fun ride bike. You want to be seen on this at all of the local events and where ever nightlife thrives. You can disappear into the night as you ride down the road, only to shine in the neon lights when you return. I have not seen very many Night Trains® decked out with windshields, sissy bars and saddlebags, but I have seen a lot of them on the open road. It is usually a solo rider and they have stuff tied to the seat with long bungee cords. Obviously there are exceptions, but you just don't want to mess with the bad boy look.

Test Ride

It was obvious when I first sat on the bike, that this bike was about riding, not checking your GPS or listening to the radio. The low seat and relatively high drag style handlebars give this ride a feel of sincerity. I was never able to get very comfortable with the drag type handlebars and way forward controls. I could tell by the extended fork, 32° rake, and thin front wheel, that this was not a cruiser or a sport bike. To get the look that you want, you have to give up some of the better road handling features that exist in the Sportster or touring bike groups. This is not to say the Night Train® is not a fun bike to ride, just don't buy it for your main touring bike or to carve out canyons.

One thing that I did find a little annoying was the flop factor of the front wheel at slow speeds. At very slow speeds, 5 – 20 mph, while turning, I had the feeling that I had to resist the front wheel from turning more than the lean called for. This did not come into play on the open road. Normally, you can take your hands off of the handlebars and the bike will remain relatively stable. With this Night Train®, it would turn one way and then over correct and go back the other way at speeds up to 30mph. Not sure if it was because of the 21" front tire and 32° rake or maybe it was just this bike. Aside from that, this was a fun bike on the road and in town.

The Twin Cam 96B™ engine is always smooth, even while idling. As you can see by the pictures, this motorcycle had a stage 1 upgrade. The Vance & Hines exhaust gave the Night Train® a good look and a little more power for the on ramps and to help power your way around some of the long smooth curves. Plus, it gave the ride a little better feeling, just from the great sounds that Vance & Hines produces. They were not



very loud, just enough so you could hear a little rumble. This is a must on any new Harley.

After merging on the interstate, I was able to grab the 6th gear for a nice carefree ride down the fast lane. The Night Train® is a nice solid ride on the highway. The only distraction to the long haul would be the seating configuration. That being the drag bars and the way forward controls.

On the back roads with nice slow curves and gentle hills, you can really get into the fun of riding the Night Train®. There were no distractions from too many gauges or accessories. It was just you, the bike, the sounds from the Vance and Hines exhaust and the great countryside.

Summary

The bad boy Night Train® has its place. It is not a canyon carver, nor is it a cruiser. Although you could do either in moderation. To me, what set this apart from the other Harley's are the bad boy looks and the desire to ride and not be distracted by so many of the accessories that have taken over the motorcycle world. This is a bike you want to be seen on and at the same time a fun bike to ride. What more could you want?

Ride safe,
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