

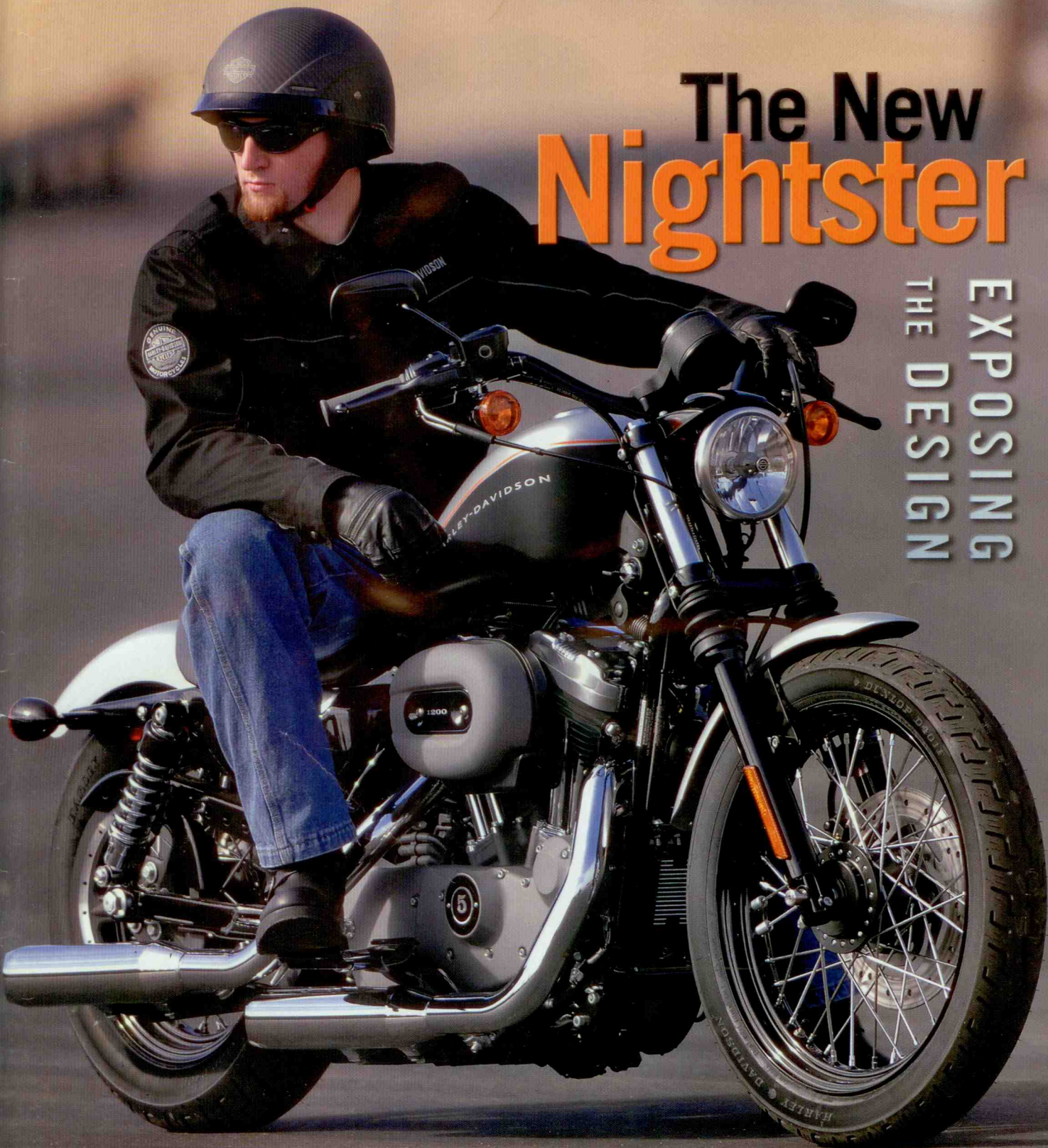
FROM HARLEY-DAVIDSON® SINCE 1916

Enthusiast®

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The New Nightster

EXPOSING
THE DESIGN





SHARED PASSION

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PHOTO BY DARRYL CANNON

I WAS TOLD BY A GROUP OF PURISTS from a motorcycle club in Chicago that somewhere in the Smoky Mountains there was an 11-mile stretch of road with 318 turns called “The Dragon.”

As luck would have it, eight riders from this group were planning to make the trip and one had an extra spot on her trailer. It sounded interesting enough and since I had never been to “Rocky Top” Tennessee, I figured I would check it out.

The only problem was that they all rode sporty “crotch rockets,” and I wasn’t sure how my 2006 Harley-Davidson Sportster 883R would fit into the mix. But considering I had a model inspired by its racing predecessors, I decided to give it a try.

After loading the bikes and our gear, we

left Chicago for a 10-hour trek to Eastern Tennessee. When we arrived, we immediately unloaded our bikes and went for a ride. As we started to approach The Dragon on Highway 129 we were greeted by all kinds of motorcycles and beautiful scenery. Some riders were coming down the mountain while others were on the side of the road taking pictures of a waterfall. As we continued up the mountain, the road became twistier, with blind turns, raised embankments and 200-foot cliffs. We had met The Dragon.

Our group rode very cautiously at first. Once we became familiar with the stretch of road, the pace quickened. I was amazed at how much the sport bikes could lean into the turns and was shocked by their speed! Since my experience with this type of riding was limited and I wasn’t sure how the Sportster would negotiate the tight turns, the pack pulled away.

Rather than chase, I kept my speed low through the twisties and settled into a groove that was comfortable for me. The road was smooth and my tires really gripped the hot asphalt. As my bike performed flawlessly, I began to feel one with the machine and my confidence skyrocketed.

After I made it through the 11-mile stretch, I caught up to my group just as we came upon Blue Ridge Parkway, a road ideally built for a Sportster. Cut into the backside of a mountain with long sweeping turns and foothills, the Parkway’s contours perfectly matched the Sportster’s torquey engine. Since I had been behind the numerous sport bikes in our group until now, I decided this was the road to show them what my bike and I could do. I picked my lane and rode my Sportster to our comfortable limits.

To our surprise, I passed everyone in my group. And when I came upon other riders, I passed them too. This went on for about 10 miles until I pulled off to the side of the road for a scenic overlook. When the group finally caught up, they were amazed. One of them, a veteran sport bike rider, shouted, “You were rockin’ that Sporty!” Another asked, “What got into you?”

As we were slapping shoulders and whooping it up, another rider from a different group rode up to me and said, “You are the fastest Harley-Davidson rider I have ever seen.”

I was immediately filled with a sense of pride and admiration for Harley-Davidson motorcycles and the 50-year performance bloodline my Sportster descended from.

I turned to him and said, “Thanks, but that title is really held by Harley racing legends like Cal Rayborn, Scott Parker and Jay Springsteen!”

It was fantastic because on that particular day in the Smoky Mountains, among a group of foreign-bred sport bikes, my Sportster and I were still ranked Number One.

Respect the Dragon



DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE WITH OTHER H-D AND BUELL RIDERS?

Send us your type-written story (500-750 words). Include photography, your full name, address and phone number. Send submissions to: *Enthusiast* – Shared Passion, Harley-Davidson, Inc., 3700 West Juneau Ave., P.O. Box 653, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0653.