

SportsterPaul's 1977 Sportster XLCH

My 77 Sportster has gone through a lot of changes in the 35 years I have owned her.



She started life a stock XLCH kickstart-only bike. This last rebuild I put on a set of big bike tanks, fenders and saddlebags. I had previously had the electric starter pocket cut off and adapted an Evo-era primary cover. I also put in the pre-1970 dry clutch that I run wet with Barnett Kevlar plates. I fabricated a clutch mechanism and a kickstart support bracket. I removed the peg mounts from the engine and put them on the frame like 1976 and earlier bikes.

I used the 1974 to 1976 rear brake pedal type peg to operate the brake. The front end uses a Bates-style headlight on a billet mount I designed. It also uses a generator mounted voltage regulator. The lunchbox oil bag has been centered in the frame and an external filter brazed to it. It uses a front mount battery box of my own design. The most recent change is a 1970 ultra-quiet exhaust system to keep the neighbors happy. The bike seems just as fast as with the old headers.



The primary cover without a starter pocket is beautiful, like an early 1960s bike. I had an Evo Sportster primary cover welded up along with the left case half. It was done by a Lockheed Martin welder who did jobs on the side.



People seem to freak out about the battery being mounted down low behind the front wheel. After enough ruined blue jeans from battery acid in the stock location, I wouldn't have it any other place. The weight is down low and yeah, if I get in a wreck the front wheel might crush the battery, but that would be the least of my worries. I would probably be over the handlebars by then.

I tried to adopt the chopper ethos of nothing being hidden behind covers, hence the lack of a sprocket cover on the bike. It's worked fine for decades.



The fenders are from a set of Shovelhead tins I got from a bike shop. The tanks are Softtail flat-side tanks that work great.



Before the Softtail tanks, I had a set of 5-gallon flat-side tanks for range.



Here is the bike with the Shovelhead tins a couple decades ago. I had to bash the inside of the tanks to clear the Sportster rocker covers, not a good thing to do.

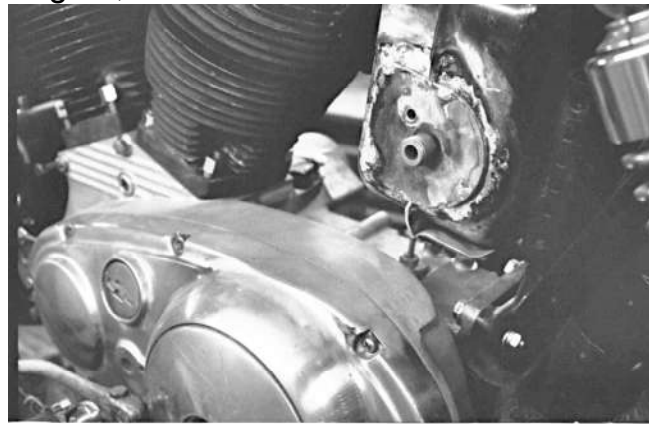


I widened the rear struts to fit the fender.



I started customizing the bike in the late 1980s, after getting a few years of stock experience. I got a little radical, but some of the major changes were a big improvement. I was living in that van in the background, so the bike was my daily driver.

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1977 XLCH Sportsters did not have an oil filter, I added one to the "lunchbox" tank.



I broke sprocket covers when I would drop the bike, so I tossed it and made a steel kickstart bracket that worked 30 years.



I welded peg mounts on the frame to use the early model footpegs. I don't like pegs mounted on the engine.

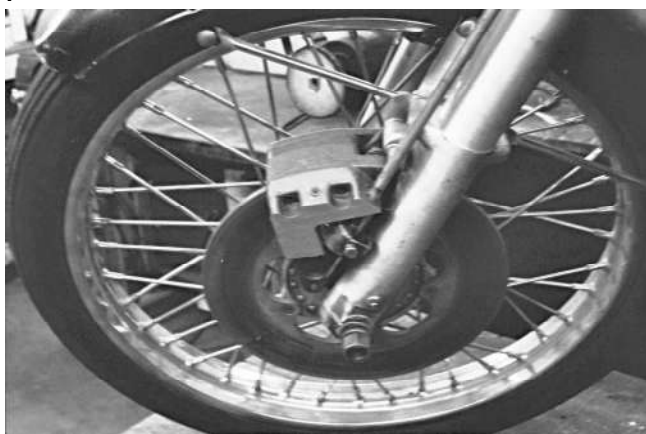
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This was the first prototype of the battery box, with a gel-cell battery no less.



Not everything was a good idea. I tried brazing a Hummer tank ignition mount to an FX tank.



Worst idea ever-- using the clutch ball mechanism to make a mechanical brake.