

# Honda-Davidson

## A Service Manual And A Lot Of Gumption

BY DAVE BARLETTA  
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**A**fter losing both my parents to cancer in 1994 and '95, and then watching my sister lose her battle with breast cancer in 2003, I realized that life is too short not to enjoy oneself.

I was coming home from a sales call in February of 2004 and happened to pass by a Honda dealership. Since I had time to kill and the weather was terrific, I decided to stop in and browse. After three

hours (and some haggling), I purchased my first bike, a Honda Shadow ACE 750 Deluxe. It was delivered to my house a few days later because I did not even have a permit, let alone a license. Fast forward a few months, and I rode it to work for the first time that summer. Doing about 70 mph and shaking like all get-out because of the bike's vibration, I felt like I couldn't get out of the way of oncoming traffic, or get over the cars flying past me like I was standing still. I came home that night and told my wife that I needed more power and a bigger bike. So, I went back to the Honda dealer in August in search of a green bike that I'd seen previously. Within a few weeks, I traded in my 750 on a 2003 VTX1800C.

I drove the bike stock for awhile, intending to add a windshield and saddlebags and such. I did put on a sissybar so my kids could ride with me, but after attending a custom bike show and seeing a Yamaha V-Star all done up, I started to think that I



could do the same to my ride. Countless hours of Internet searching and many phone calls later, I embarked on my three-year journey of customization.

Since 2004, I have replaced and or modified just about every part of the bike except for the frame. My first (and most expensive and extensive) redo was to add a Glacial Graphics 240 fat tire kit, which included a chrome swingarm, fiberglass rear fender, flame seat, and strut assembly along with new Progressive shocks. The crew at Glacial Graphics, led by Kurt Peterson, mocked up my new system and shipped it to me ready for assembly. Since they were so professional and easy to work with, I sent them all my tins to have Kurt custom-paint a flame job of his choice. Also, I requested that they remove that unsightly tank seam and the rivets on the front fender.

I purchased custom Spiegler brake lines and cables, Hard-Krome pipes, a Power Commander, a Hypercharger, chrome RC Components rims, three

custom-matched rotors, a custom Super Hub, and a Down Under brake bracket from Cycle House. There were some other adds-ons, such as custom green LEDs from Dave at Custom Dynamics. I replaced the stock risers and bars with custom bars from Barons, I put on a Cycle Craft tachometer, and I also hooked up a custom-designed set of Supreme Legends forward controls and pegs with matching grips.

The nightmare aspect of the job came when I removed the engine and sent it out for powdercoating and diamond-cutting. My good friend Alex Baynard also owns a custom VTX, and we share a lot of ideas. So I had the dealer rip the engine out and apart, and sent the parts down to D&G in Philadelphia to a friend of Alex's who specializes in powder and chrome work. The job was beautiful, and we were onto the next step, diamond-cutting the jugs. If you've never looked carefully, VTX jugs are huge and make Harley jugs



## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>OWNER</b>	Dave Barletta
<b>HOME</b>	Philadelphia, PA
<b>BUILDERS</b>	Dave Barletta, Glacial Graphics, Cycle Stop
<b>YEAR/MODEL</b>	2003 Honda VTX1800C
<b>TIME TO BUILD</b>	Two years (and still going)
<b>COST TO BUILD</b>	\$25-30K, including bike
<b>CHROMER</b>	Various
<b>PAINTER</b>	Kurt Peterson, Glacial Graphics

### ENGINE

<b>DISPLACEMENT</b>	2000cc
<b>PISTONS</b>	Kustom Kraft Performance
<b>HEADS</b>	Kustom Kraft Performance
<b>CAMS</b>	Stock
<b>CARBS</b>	EFI
<b>AIR CLEANER</b>	Küryakyn
<b>EXHAUST</b>	Hard-Krome
<b>FINAL DRIVE</b>	Shaft, polished

### CHASSIS

<b>FRAME</b>	Stock
<b>RAKE</b>	Kewmetal custom triple trees
<b>STRETCH</b>	45-degree rake
<b>FRONT SUSPENSION</b>	Modified stock
<b>SWINGARM</b>	Custom built shaft drive
<b>REAR SUSPENSION</b>	Progressive
<b>FRONT WHEEL</b>	RC Components
<b>REAR WHEEL</b>	RC Components
<b>FRONT TIRE</b>	Metzeler ME880 130/70R-18"
<b>REAR TIRE</b>	Metzeler ME880 240/40R-18"
<b>FRONT BRAKES</b>	Stock chromed
<b>REAR BRAKES</b>	Stock chromed and relocated
<b>FENDERS</b>	Glacial Graphics rear

### ACCESSORIES

<b>HEADLIGHT</b>	Xtreme Revolution
<b>TAILLIGHT</b>	Küryakyn
<b>TURN SIGNALS</b>	Küryakyn
<b>FUEL TANK</b>	Stock, modified by Glacial Graphics
<b>HANDLEBARS</b>	Barons
<b>SEAT</b>	Custom Flame Stiche
<b>PEGS</b>	Supreme Legends
<b>HAND CONTROLS</b>	Supreme Legends
<b>MIRRORS</b>	Supreme Legends
<b>FOOT CONTROLS</b>	Supreme Legends
<b>TAG BRACKET</b>	Glacial Graphics
<b>UNIQUE FEATURES</b>	LED lights by Custom Dynamics

look like a minibike's. The machinist wanted to charge us extra because of their size, but he, too, was a friend of Alex's, so we were spared the surcharge. I had to go to Vegas on business, and soon got a call from Alex saying the parts were done — but there was a problem. "A problem?" I inquired.

It seems that some powdercoating had gotten into the cylinders. Alex had a buddy of his try to hone the cylinders, but unfortunately he used the wrong hone and ended up leaving us with pistons that rattled. Alex was beside himself. Once I was home, I again went to the Internet in search of answers. I found a big-bore kit that would fix the issue, which took my overall cc to 2000. Albert Bold from Bold Precision did the custom-machining to make the new parts work with the cast heads and cylinders, and then the finished parts went back to the dealer for final assembly. Problem solved — expensively!

Recently, I replaced the stock fork assembly with a Kewlmetal 45-degree rake system. Kewlmetal makes some extremely high-quality custom parts, and Joe did a fabulous job on the chrome finish. Kewlmetal claimed it was an eight-hour job to hook up the front end, but not for a novice with a service manual and a lot of gumption! It took two days to finish, including the custom-wiring scheme. Plus, I'm a bit anal, so every joint is soldered and heat-shrunk.



I would estimate my overall cash layout to be in the \$15-20K ballpark, not including the cost of the bike, which was \$9,900 because it was a limited-edition color. I have over three years of blood, sweat, and tears in the bike. Every time I take it out, the first question I get is "What is it (or was it)?" On those occasions, I refer to a phrase that Alex coined: "It's a Honda-Davidson!"

**RB**

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