



Fighting Breed

Big Dog Pitbull » An extreme canine makeover

RIDING STYLE

Helmet: Icon Domain2 13
Jacket: Icon Strongarm 13
Gloves: Icon Timax TRX Short
Pants: Icon Strongarm
Boots: Red Wing 979

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By Mike Schulte » Ever try to put lipstick on a Pitbull? It's a hazardous enterprise. Blood is spilled. Fingers vanish. Michael Vick leaves nasty messages on your voicemail. Ignoring the obvious peril, the brave souls at Big Dog Motorcycles have given their vicious, 10-year-old Pitbull a complete makeover for 2008. Admirers of the ill-tempered street dog need not fear—this is no *Queer Eye*, metrosexual de-fanging. The snarling ProStreet machine has been transformed into a sleek, board track inspired beast. And, yes, Big Dog's pioneer rigid frame motorcycle is still a hardass.

The 2008 Big Dog kennel is divided into two pens: A pair of rangy choppers, and the three-dog ProStreet line. Among the latter, the Pitbull stands out as the most radically redesigned member of the pack, the new-for-'08 entry level Mutt notwithstanding.

The notion of hopping on a rigid custom is enough to send shivers down the compressed spine of anyone familiar with the chiropractic arts. Thankfully, this new Pitbull has some flex in its haunches. In the most notable change for 2008, the Pit features a suspended saddle, riding on twin adjustable shocks from Works Performance. The cushy perch sits atop an all-new frame and between totally reconfigured wheels.

The frame's sweeping lines, combined with the nostalgic wedge of the stretched 4.6-gallon fuel tank evokes the hellride styling of the notorious early-20th century board trackers. The fluid new design also sucks most of the daylight from between engine and frame, contributing to the Pitbull's malevolent stance.

Replacing 2007's 300mm rear tire is a more obedient 280, wrapped around a 20-inch billet spoke wheel, then countered by a 130mm, circling a 23-inch hoop up front. The taller, more balanced profile is complimented by a wheelbase that has been clipped to 73 inches and a rake diminished eight clicks to 31 degrees. These welcome changes propel the bike's styling into the post-fat tire, scrawny front-end era, while shortening the leash on the Pitbull's handling characteristics.

The tastefully pugnacious attitude trickles down to the details as well. Chrome struts anchor the classic, austere fenders. Discreet stop/turn signals and a side-mount license plate frame keep the Pitbull's hindquarters well groomed. The raised speedo/tachometer is mounted on the steering head; only a filler cap disturbs the clean, elongated stretch of the tank. As you drop into the saddle, the low-rise handlebars sweep back into your palms.

A muscular 117 cu in S&S motor rumbles in the Pitbull's belly. The carbureted V-Twin is no puppy mill, making substantial power and torque while growling through a two-into-one exhaust. Like all Big Dogs, the Pitbull utilizes the BDM Balance Drive system, which places the final drive on the right side to distribute weight and improve low-speed maneuverability. The Baker 6-speed internals are actuated by a redesigned clutch that, while requiring 50-percent less hand effort than last year, is still isometric enough to have you crushing dog food cans after a couple hundred miles of city riding.

It only requires a couple miles on the Pitbull's back to determine that

this dog is not entirely domesticated, despite its newly housebroken appearance. The S&S motor's inherent vibrations are a virile pulse as you roll on the throttle.

The ergonomics cast you into the familiar Big Dog attitude—fists forward, legs kicked out and slightly bent. It's a relaxed hooligan stance, settled back into the dish seat while the twin shocks ingest furrows in the road and the big diameter wheels flatten out smaller divots. It is certainly comfortable enough to get lost in the guttural snarl of the exhaust while the fact that you are on a rigid frame motorcycle momentarily slips your mind.

That's when you roll on the gas and take your eyes off the immediate topography. That's also when a three-inch-deep crater sucks the rear wheel into its gullet, causing your spine to collapse like a toy concertina, your teeth to slam dance and your retinas to file for divorce. In short, that is why you ride a hardtail. It is a primitive, bone-jarring connection to the road that ignites the primordial brain while keeping you keenly focused on



the pavement. If you wanted a relaxed, buoyant ride, you'd be on a Softail.

Once settled into a rigid frame of mind, the Pitbull reveals its moderately submissive handling characteristics. The sensible rake, wheelbase and reasonable rear tire make romping through the corners more fun than you would suspect. The torquey, long-stroke motor unleashes the bike's powerful, if unpolished, agility. Like all the other Big

Dogs, the Pitbull's paws are equipped with Performance Machine Brakes that assertively pull the halter with solid, utilitarian lever effort.

The new Big Dog Pitbull certainly cuts a more stylish figure than its ancestors, but this machine is still a wild dog at heart, aimed at a particular hard-bitten breed of rider.

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