

# Born Fighter

Victory Through Air Power

**By Michael Schulte »** The venerable P-51 Mustang fighter plane represents one of the most strikingly recognizable physiques in aviation. The single-seat warbird that played a crucial role in WWII has been honored in countless films and written histories. When Tom Hicks of Southern California Motorcycles decided to commemorate the Air Force's winged horse with a tribute bike, he didn't have far to look for inspiration. The WWII airplane aficionado, and owner of the Brea-based compound that houses his Triumph, Ducati and Victory dealerships, has a shoulder-to-bicep tattoo of a bathing suited Varga Girl perched atop a U.S.A.F. roundel on his left arm. "I wanted something American," the enthusiastic Hicks declares, rolling up his sleeve

to display the nose-art inspired tattoo. "I also wanted something that was a combination of all my wives and girlfriends," he adds with a grin. "I've always liked blondes."

Literally wearing his pride in America's fighting forces on his sleeve wasn't enough for Hicks, so he pulled a brand new 2007 Victory Hammer off his showroom floor and redeployed the power cruiser for P-51 tribute duty. Starting in-house, Hicks and his team installed an S&S 106 cubic-inch Stroker Kit into the Hammer's Freedom 100 engine. Lengthening stroke to 108mm increases displacement from 1634cc to 1731cc. The kit also boosts compression from 9.8:1 to 10.2:1, while an S&S High Flow billet air cleaner adds snort to the increased lung

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"There have been so many World War II aircraft style bikes," he says. "I did my best to make mine clean and a little different."








capacity. The stroked powerplant discharges through a Santa Rosa Vee-Twin Black Jack Hammer Exhaust.

Hicks also replaced the stock rear shock with a Hi-Lo Air Ride Suspension from Bike Buddy Pro, which raises and lowers the rear end from passenger carrying height to slammed custom stance via push-button controls hidden behind the ignition. An avid motorcyclist who has set world endurance records, Hicks takes his riding position seriously. He commissioned his own Tom Hicks Edition drag bars from Caleb Custom to make the Victory P-51 a long-range fighter, like its airborne inspiration.

For the Mustang's warpaint, Hicks contracted Rock & Roll Custom Paintworks of Orange, California to assist in refining his vision. "I'm not an artist," he demurs. "I said, 'This is what I'm looking for,'" referring to the aluminum skin and rivet work that adorns the tank, fenders, side covers and headlight. Meanwhile, Hicks and his crew stripped the Hammer of its chrome sparkle, leaving a combat-ready black and aluminum profile. Triple trees, fork lowers, engine covers, the swingarm, the Arlen Ness Three Spoke Pulley and assorted trim were all powdercoated by Specialized Coatings.

In addition to recreating Hicks' tattoo against the riveted husk of the P-51, Rock & Roll contributed to the bike's aerodynamics by crafting an LED turn signal display that is tucked under the rear fender, behind the flaxen Petty Girl from the Memphis Belle B-17 Flying Fortress. The iconic bombshell kneels atop a winged V, which serves as the P-51's turn indicators.

Hicks also outfitted the P-51 with a host of martial details. In addition to re-covering the seat in Bomber Jacket brown, he added Signal Dynamics bullet pattern LED front turn signals and Hozehead braided oil lines to give the bike a rugged military-industrial complex. The key is mounted in a palm-sized winged-bomb fob, cleverly fashioned from a belt buckle. The timing cover carries Calvin Coolidge's prescient warning from 1920: "The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten."

Jockeying the P-51 Mustang on a reconnaissance mission through Orange County's Carbon Canyon puts the bike's American muscle on display and the locals on Red Alert. The stroked engine unleashes torrents of finger-peeling acceleration to the accompaniment reminiscent of an M2 Machine Gun. The added brawn is reassuringly countered by the sharp bite of the stock Brembos. Taking a little off the top of the Air-Ride suspension sets a nice, mid-height seating position, while allowing plenty of cushion for some unexpected canyon craters and a kamikaze squirrel. While a little muscle is required to induce the 250 rear tire into turns, it pops into the upright, locked position nicely as you accelerate out of the bends. By far, the most fun to be had is on long freeway onramps. Racing through the gears, the Santa Rosa exhaust opens up like a tail gunner in a firefight. The awestruck look I got from one startled SUV pilot reminded me of Hermann Goering's famous Nuremberg recollection, "The day I saw Mustangs over Berlin, I knew the jig was up." 

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# SPECS

## Victory P-51 Mustang Fighter

### ENGINE

Victory Freedom V-Twin  
with S&S 106 cu in Stroker Kit

### AIR CLEANER

S&S High Flow Billet

### EXHAUST

Santa Rosa Vee-Twin Even  
Cut Black Jack Hammers

### POWER

114 hp, 108 ft lbs of torque



### SUSPENSION

Front: Inverted cartridge  
telescopic fork, 5.1 in of travel  
Rear: Bike Buddy Pro Hi-Lo  
Air-Ride

### PAINT

Rock & Roll Custom  
Paintworks

### POWDERCOATING

Specialized Coatings

### HANDLEBARS

Caleb Customs

### GRIPS

Arlen Ness Battistini