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Issue #101



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# WORTH EVERY PENNY



## WHATEVER YOU RIDE



# FLYING EIGHT

Switzerland has always been popular with Harley-Davidson riders, with its stunning mountain roads and cool events, and for all its reputation as an orderly society verging on the clinical, Swiss customising ranks very highly in Europe, and is strongly encouraged by an authorised Harley-Davidson network who build their bikes to ride.

Words: Motographer and Andy Hornsby Photography: HRF

**H**usband and wife team, Rainer and Denise Bächli are more involved in the scene than most, with Rainer running his father's original operation – Harley-Heaven Bächli – just outside the country's financial capital, and Denise recently taking over at the smaller but no less significant Zürich Harley-Davidson in the historic heart of the busy city, not far from the old town walls and scenic Lake Zürich.

Felix Bächli, a trained precision engineer, had been fixing the Harley-Davidsons and Indians of his friends since the mid-1960s before getting into new bike sales and opening as an authorised agent in 1978 in Deitikon: a shop that has been synonymous with Harley-Davidson in the Wild West of Zürich ever since.

Having served his apprenticeship under his father, Rainer moved to the US where he worked in the racing department of Bartels in Los

Angeles and the American Motorcycle Institute, returning to the family business in 1997 with a head full of customising ideas that would take root in Harley-Heaven Bächli, which went from strength to strength. →



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Denise taking over the Zürich dealership in 2018 opened up new opportunities, making the most of the synergy between the smaller city branch and the bigger, out of town workshops that already have a reputation for high-end customised bikes; and this bike – the Flying Eight – is one that bridges that gap.

One of Rainer's talents has been to spot upcoming trends in customising, to make sure he stays ahead of the game – he knows that his clients are looking for state-of-the-art individual motorcycles that are both eye-catching and of long-lasting quality – but with three decades in the custom bike business, he knows that there will always be a place for the classic Bobber style. And this Vintage Bobber ticks all the right boxes without compromising rideability or performance.

The custom talents of both shops have combined to demonstrate that there is no shortage of potential within the new Softail: that it can live up to the best traditions of the bikes that exploded onto the world stage, together with the small Californian town of Hollister, in 1947.

The Flying Eight is proof positive that the new models can still wind the clock back, and in this case with surprisingly little effort: a convincing result in which the distressed retro-style paintjob plays a critical part.

That was the work of Fabrizio Caoduro out of Vicenza in Italy, and the connection between Fabrizio and Rainer has a long and successful history. Despite the complicated customs procedure involved in shipping parts between Switzerland and EU-countries, many sheet metal parts have travelled from Zürich to Vicenza and back over the years.

Fabrizio's own brands, 70s Helmets and 70s Design, have earned him a well-deserved reputation and his work is in demand – especially after his immaculate Ironhead, The Skinny, won him international acclaim as well as many awards – but Rainer and Fabrizio go back much further and a good number of Bächli-built, 70s-painted Old School and Retro customs now prowl the roads of Switzerland.



The Flying Eight is based on Harley-Davidson's new Milwaukee Eight Softail Slim, for obvious reasons. The stock bike is the ideal donor, being half-bobbed already with fat 16-inch laced wheels, a short-cut rear mudguard and a front end that is closer to the classic Fat Boy look than the current Fat Boy itself. Featuring the stylish combination of polished yokes with black covers, they have been retained on this custom because why change something that is already cool?

The Slim's not so slim stock front mudguard was substituted for a much smaller SCP part, but it's the rear mudguard that has fundamentally changed the overall stance of the bike, realised by the use of a super-tight SCP Fender Kit that

mounts the snug fitting steel as close to the tyre as is feasible. The stock fender horns are removed from the frame first, obviously, and the back of the frame cleaned up, and then the new mudguard is mounted by struts to the nearest thing to a seat stay that the Softail's swing-arm can offer. Visibly a hardtail, functionally a swing-arm but with no need to provide an ugly space for the wheel to bounce up and down in because the mudguard moves with the swing-arm. And all done without needing to remove the swing-arm from the frame, saving time and money.

A non-starter for pillions, and you wouldn't want to carry a dozen eggs across a ploughed field on a mudguard-mounted rack, but with →







## TECHNICAL DATA

<b>Name:</b>	Flying Eight
<b>Owner:</b>	Harley-Davidson Zürich
<b>Assembly:</b>	Harley-Davidson Zürich & Harley-Heaven Bächli AG
<b>Original Model:</b>	H-D FLS Slim 2019
<b>Motor:</b>	Stock 2019 107-inch Milwaukee Eight
<b>Fueling:</b>	Stock HD EFI with Sportster fuel pump and Midland air cleaner
<b>Mufflers:</b>	Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde adjustable sound system
<b>Frame:</b>	Stock FLS with fender strut removed and swing-arm-mounted Fender.
<b>Mudguards:</b>	SCP
<b>Wheels:</b>	Stock 16-inch faced wheels with Avon SM tyres
<b>Leatherwork:</b>	Solo seat, tank strip and swingarm-mounted leather bag by Spirit Leather
<b>Grip, pegs, derby cover:</b>	H-D Part & Accessories
<b>Sidemount plate:</b>	Bächli sidemount License plate
<b>Taillight and Indicators:</b>	Kellermann Atto
<b>Paint:</b>	Rusty Metal distressed on lacquered bare metal by 70s Design

a solo seat hovering above the main frame you'd be forgiven for thinking it was a rigid frame. In this case that is a beautifully crafted single seat made by Spirit Leather – so you're doubly forgiven – who also created the complementary tank strap that suggests a classic two-piece fuel tank, and the tool bag fitted to the drive side of the swing-arm that recreates the lines of Harley's classic Softail.

On the timing side, of course, a pair of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde's Shorty mufflers with 3½-inch slash-cut end caps, all in black, successfully mask the new Softail swing-arm's lack of a chain stay – and keep the noise down on demand, of course, in a country known for a zero tolerance attitude to exhaust noise. They are attached to the original exhaust headers, which have been toned down by blacked-out heatshields.

Those high profile tyres look taller than block-tread Avon SMs but that's what they are, with a little external ornamentation that contributes to

the illusion and ties them together beautifully with Fabrizio's striking hot rod paint.

With the project completed in time before EICMA in Milan, Fabrizio asked Denise and Rainer if the Flying Eight would be available for display on the 70s Helmets booth during the show, and they were delighted to make that happen.

It grabbed plenty of attention there, just a few steps away from the world's first sight of the Bronx and Pan America on the Harley stand, and was a return visit for Rainer, who last attended as one of the finalists in the European Custom Kings competition.

As we said at the beginning, these bikes are built to ride and the hills will be alive to the sound of the Flying Eight throughout 2020, and it will maybe be making a little more noise on demand at the events, or once across the border.

A Swiss-made retro bobber, with a touch of Italian art – a winning combination! ★



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