

Spotlight: Test Drives

## Scream like an Eagle

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With the 2008 model-year looming large, Harley-Davidson is road-ready with the return of its custom-styled, limited-production motorcycles built exclusively by its Custom Vehicle Operations (CVO) team.

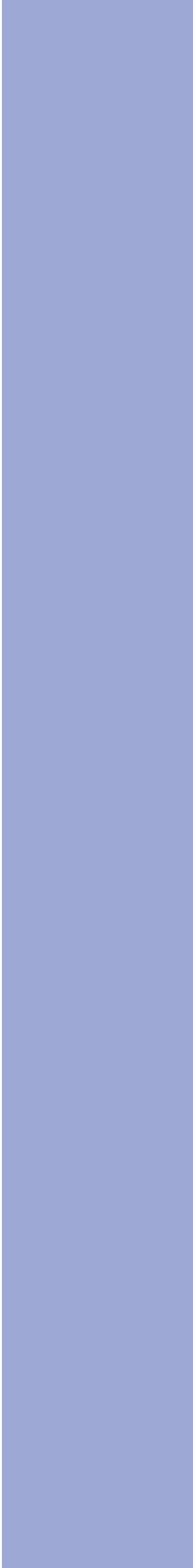
I settled into the low 647-mm (25.5-in.) saddle of a barely-out-of-the-box Screamin' Eagle Softail Springer and prepared to roll the power cruiser out onto the boulevards of the big city where it was meant to prowl.



Thumbing the starter immediately fired up the potent 1800-cc Twin Cam 110B. It replied with the same crisp report as a rifle crack, followed by a pleasing rumble from deep in its bowels.

Then, feet ensconced on the forward controls and at the ready, I picked my way through a constantly changing stream of afternoon traffic. While the deeply padded saddle encourages you

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to sit back and enjoy the scenery, the distance to the handlebars can be a long reach for some.

Shifting is accompanied by a resounding clack as the shift lever found its mark every time. Like its Harley brothers, the Softail Springer is fitted with a six-speed Cruise Drive transmission. It puts power to the ground through a primary chain and carbon fibre belt drive.

The bike's high performance mill, the largest displacement production V-Twin Harley-Davidson offers, pumps out an impressive 110 lb.-ft. of torque at just 3,000 rpm. It inhales through a trick "Heavy Breather" air intake that Harley claims increases torque by 5%.

Acceleration is ably abetted by an electronic sequential port fuel injection that's standard on all CVO models.

Rigid-mounted in the tubular Softail frame, the big TC is equipped with internal counterbalanced shafts designed to eliminate engine vibration. Indeed, I wasn't bothered by any pesky shake and both bullet mirrors held steady.

Confidence-inspiring handling is assured by a leading-link springer front suspension with anti-dive qualities. Stability is further enhanced by a long wheelbase (1,656 mm/65.2 in.) and a new front wheel and tire combination. Otherwise, the lowered rear suspension proved to be jarring when riding over rough pavement.

The single disc brakes are on the soft side, requiring a good prolonged squeeze to bring the 326-kg (719-lb.) custom to a quick stop.

The CVO Softail Springer gets plenty of points for style. This year's version of the hot rod custom boasts a badass paint job with three colours to choose from – including a serialized 105th Anniversary livery of Copper and Black Onyx with gold leaf trim — and enough shiny

stuff and colour-matched parts to fill a catalogue.

There's also a wider front fender that's slammed down over a new 18-in. front wheel (last year's model sported a 21-incher) shod with a 130-mm Dunlop tire. While out back, under a wide Bobtail fender, the Springer rides on a 200-mm Dunlop wrapped around a 17-in. rim. Both wheels are 10-spoke forged aluminum.

Lighting on the bike is a mix of nostalgic and modern, featuring a small headlight common on choppers and a Tri-bar LED tail lamp. A chrome console is topped by with an elegant spun aluminum speedometer. It sits just below a matching mini-tach that's smooth-clamped to the handlebar.

The 18.9-litre Fat Bob gas tank sports a distinctive fuel gauge on the left-side tank cap. A row of LED lights that show the fuel level, together with a fuel pump icon, amounts to some clever visual engineering.

With its hefty price tag, the CVO Springer Softail won't be for everyone. Especially since the Motor Company is building only 2,500 of them along with 1,050 Anniversary models (for an extra \$580). But it's sure to appeal to the die-hard enthusiast who wants a unique factory cruiser that looks good and is fun to ride.

### **New & Noted**

Congratulations to Jordon Szoke for winning his second consecutive Parts Canada Superbike Championship at Shannonville Motorsport Park on Sept. 2. It was also the 28-year-old's fourth Championship making him only the second rider to ever win four Canadian Superbike Championships. Szoke finished the season aboard his Kawasaki ZX-10R with 298 points followed by his closest rival, Steve Crevier, who racked up 290 points.

### **Fact File**

**2008 Harley-Davidson FXSTSSE CVO Softail**



## **Springer**

**As tested, before tax:** \$29,099

**105th Anniversary model:** \$29,679

**Engine:** air-cooled 1800-cc Twin Cam 110B

**Fuel system:** electronic sequential port fuel injection (ESPFI)

**Transmission:** six-speed Cruise Drive/chain primary drive, belt final drive

**Horsepower:** N/A

**Torque:** 110 lb.-ft. @3,000 rpm

**Brake Front:** single 292-mm disc/single-piston floating caliper

**Brake Rear:** single 292-mm disc/twin-piston floating caliper

**Seat height:** 647.7 mm (25.5 in.)

**Fuel capacity:** 18.9 litres (4.7 gal.)

**Dry weight:** 326.13 kg (719 lbs.)

**Basic warranty:** 2 years, unlimited km

**Strengths:** Engine, styling, handling

**Weaknesses:** Rear suspension, brakes