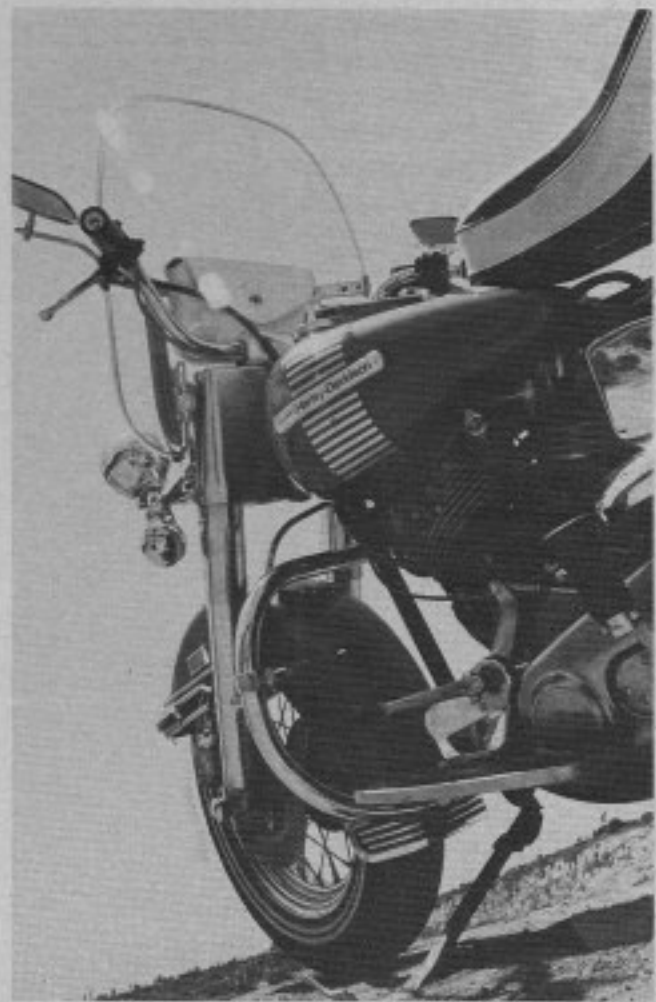


HARLEY- DAVIDSON FLH

A Rider On An Electra Glide
Can Be Positive About
One Thing . . .
The Whole World
Is Watching!



Cycle World Road Test

■ LIKE THE SHARK, the Electra Glide is a remnant of a past era—a remnant that somehow was able to thrive as the world changed around it.

For the shark, this phenomenon is relatively easy to understand. The shark fears nothing and has had relatively few natural enemies. Couple this with an endless thirst for the hunt and you spell out survival in two ages: reptile and man.

For Harley, survival has not been such a simple task. The big V-Twin, especially in Electra Glide configuration, is no longer a predator. Big iron barrel H-Ds no longer dominate board tracks or miles and are no longer the talk of the in-crowd at speakeasies across the land.

But somehow, during the '20s or '30s, H-D permanently etched its fame and mystique in the minds of America. That etching remains today and the machine that drags the hidden emotion out of people's subconscious is the Electra Glide.

Because the "Glide" is an emotional experience, people either love it, or hate it. There is no in between. On any given day a man may roll down his window and say, "I just want to tell you, that's some motorcycle. That's the most beautiful machine on the road today." Then, at the next light, a kid may yell, "Hey man, how do you like your Stone, Davidstone, I mean?"

In the West, a lot of people liken 74s to farm tractors, call them "Hoglyergusons" and threaten to use the iron V-Twin for pumping water. In the South, you may find an individual with two H-D 74s. One will be his everyday bike, a chopper perhaps, for just gettin' around. The other machine will be an Electra Glide with enough chrome and lights to put the optional "King of the Road" package out to pasture. And it will be ridden for special occasions only.

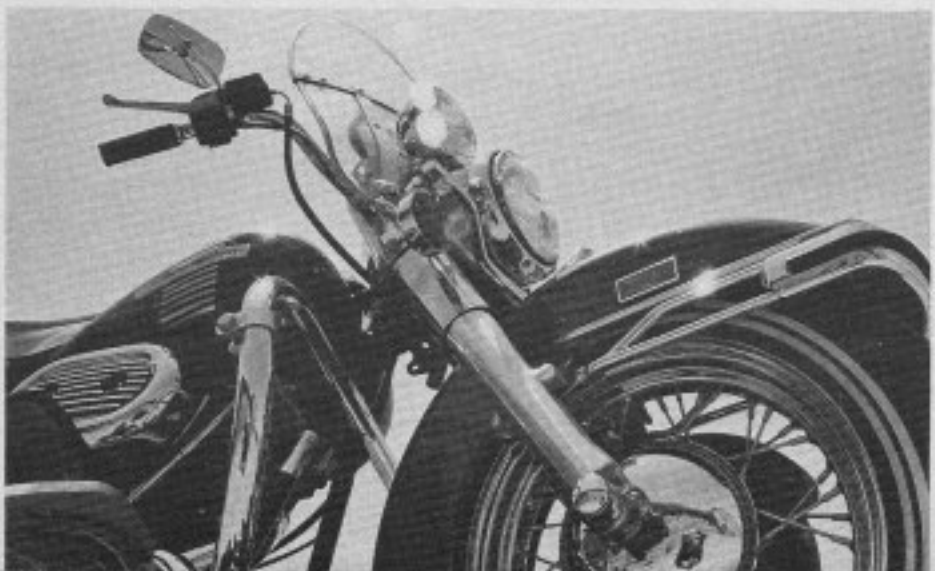
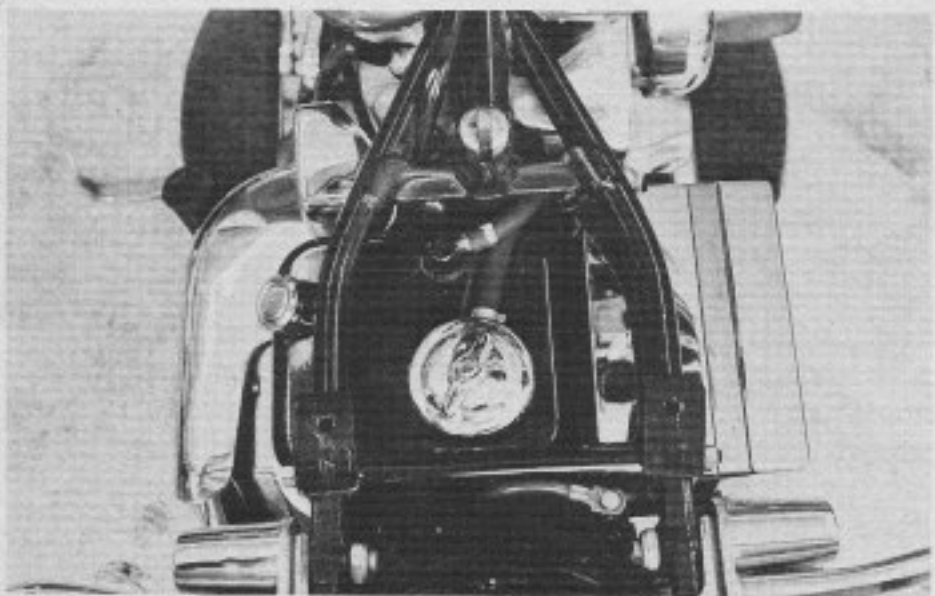
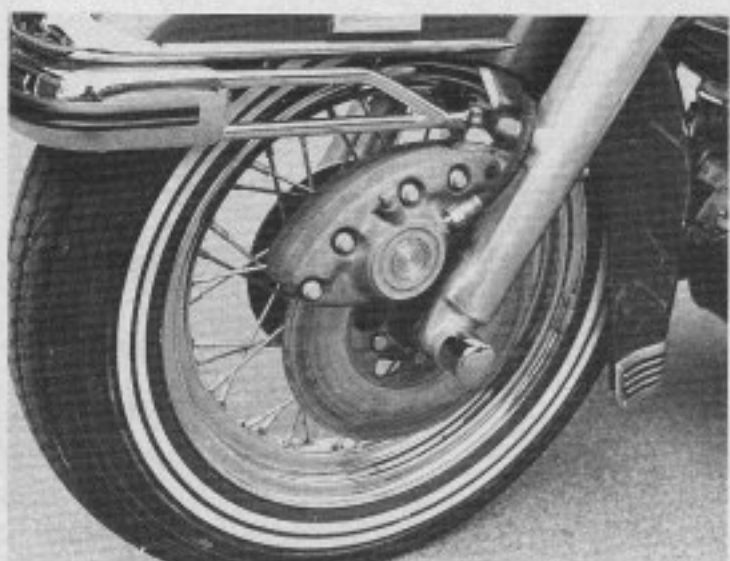
Such is the esoteric quality of the Glide, a quality that comes from the hearts of America like mom, the flag, and apple pie. So much for emotionalism. Let's take a look at an Electra Glide FLH with the "King of the Road" package, as it appears in 1973.

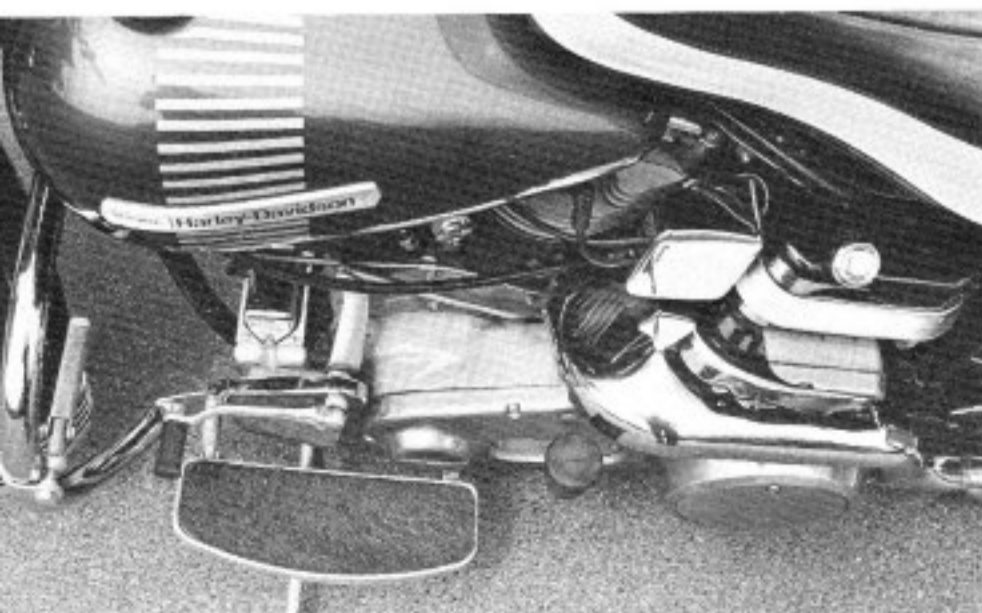
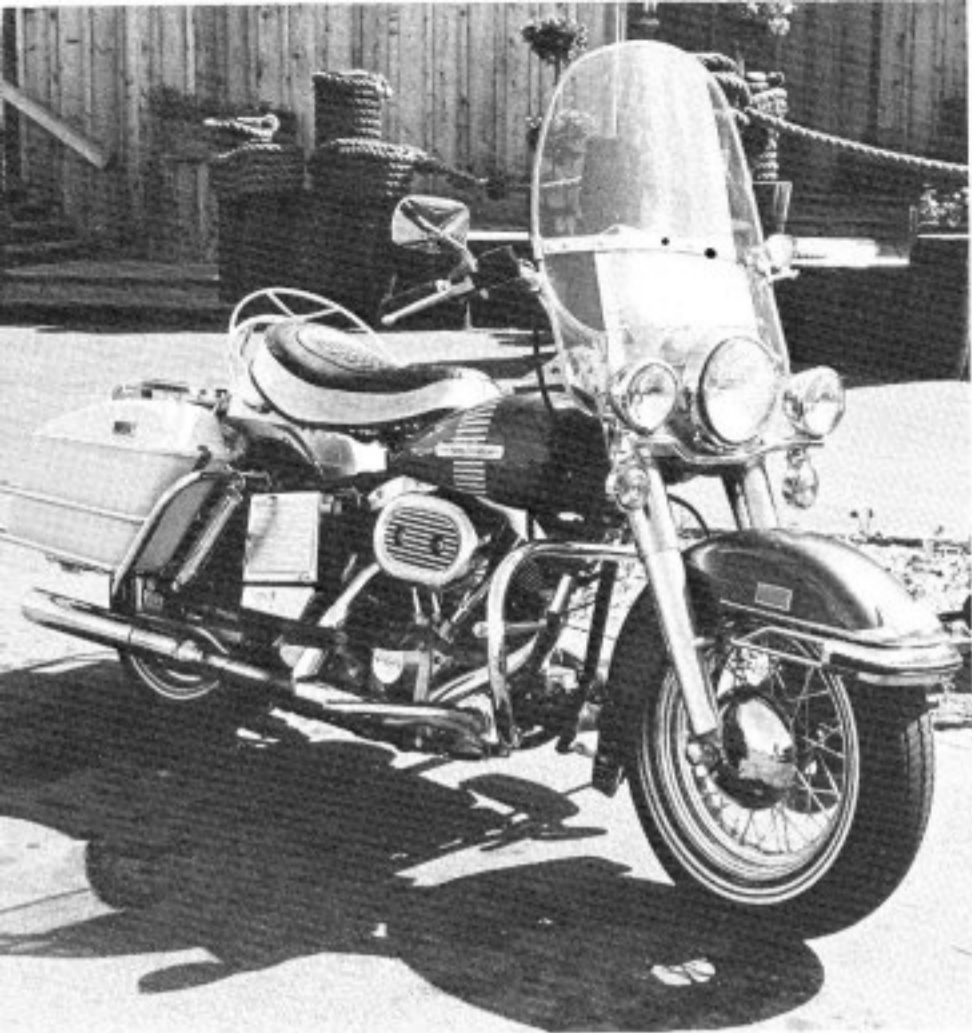
Included in the "King of the Road" group are a windshield, spot lights, front and rear safety bars, a luggage rack, "Pak-King" fiberglass saddlebags, substantial chrome plated saddlebag guards, twin mirrors and a small leather bag mounted behind the lower portion of the windshield. No lightweight in its stripped form, the full dress Electra Glide tips the scales at 738 lb., fueled and ready to go.

One of the favorite features of a 74 is the riding position for long distance trips. The high (34 in.), thickly padded seat, medium high-rise handlebars and the low foot boards allow a large rider to assume a relaxed seating position, making him feel like he's sitting *in* rather than *on* the motorcycle.

Our major complaint about the Electra Glide is its weight. At speeds below 30 mph or so, there's no way to forget the sheer bulk of the motorcycle. At higher speeds control becomes a much easier thing to accomplish and the big Harley is fairly responsive to minute handlebar and body lean corrections necessary to keep the machine in its lane on the highway.

The instrument and control layout is traditionally Harley. The speedometer is located between the fuel tanks along with the main switch, the alternator and low oil pressure warning lights, the high beam indicator and the turn signal indicators. We would like to see this entire package moved up near the handlebar mounts because it is dangerous to shift one's gaze >





from the road to the speedometer cluster and back again.

Main control layout is typically Harley. The left foot operates the gearchange lever and the right foot actuates the rear brake pedal. Left hand controls include the clutch lever, horn button and left turn signal button while the right hand is responsible for operating the throttle, front brake lever, electric starter button and the right turn signal. The turn signal buttons are the self-cancelling type and must be held in to keep the blinker operating. This is okay for the left hand, which only has to operate the clutch lever while holding the button down. But the right hand has to operate the front brake lever and blip the throttle for downshifting while holding the turn signal button depressed.

Another Harley-Davidson tradition is that of using a non-spring return throttle. This is okay in that the rider may remove his right hand from the throttle control to make a small adjustment here or there without losing his place in the traffic line. But these throttles *always* seem to have a great deal of slack in them, making precise throttle control difficult. And in the event of a spill, the engine keeps running at whatever speed the throttle was set at when the spill occurred instead of returning to an idle.

Most H-Ds are shakers to some degree, but this one seemed to suffer from excessive vibration. The rubber mounted handlebars and softly padded seat didn't transmit much of the shaking, but buzzing of the foot boards made it practically impossible to keep one's feet on them at speeds of over 60 mph. You are better off using the passenger pegs or the footrests included in the "King of the Road" package. The excessive vibration also obscured our view in the rear view mirrors, making them almost useless at night.

Giving a valid impression of the Electra Glide's handling characteristics is difficult. In a straight line out on the highway the machine tracks like it was on rails, but the lowness of the foot boards and side stand cancels out any really spirited cornering. The Electra Glide's springing is also too soft to make it acceptable as a point-to-point racer through a series of bends. Harley-Davidson is constantly at work improving the 74s and the addition of a rectangular section swinging arm has lessened the tendency to "wallow" in fast bends, but it's still not a road racer; of course, it isn't meant to be.

Perhaps the biggest improvement is in the braking department. Each wheel is fitted with a double-acting disc brake caliper with pucks slightly over 2 in. wide, giving a total brake swept area of 99 sq. in. This may not look like a lot when you consider that some lighter Japanese machines have more square inches of braking area. But the Harley's brake master cylinders are so well designed that progressive stopping is as easy as applying the brakes in an automobile equipped with power assists. Even after repeated usage there is practically no fade and one of our testers managed to lock up the front wheel and slide the tire during a 60-0 mph panic stop! Since the front and rear brake discs are the same size, it's possible to interchange both wheels to equalize tire wear.

The 74 engine has remained basically unchanged for many years, but is constantly being refined. A 45-degree V-Twin, the cylinders sit one directly behind the other on a massive crankcase assembly. Because the cylinders are positioned in the same plane, a forked connecting rod is used for the rear cylinder while the front cylinder's connecting rod fits inside the fork. It has often been argued that it is better to offset the cylinders slightly (mounting the connecting rods side by side), which would allow the rear cylinder to receive more of the cooling air blast from the machine's movement through the air.

Although this appears to be a better idea, Harley-Davidson >

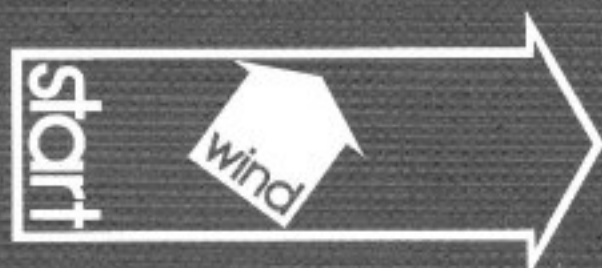
HARLEY-DAVIDSON FLH

SPECIFICATIONS

List price	\$2995
Suspension, front	telescopic fork
Suspension, rear	swinging arm
Tire, front	5.10-16
Tire, rear	5.10-16
Brake, front, effective diameter x width, in.	(2) 9.69 x 2.06
Brake, rear, effective diameter x width, in.	(2) 9.69 x 2.06
Total brake swept area, sq. in.	99
Brake loading, lb./sq. in. (160-lb. rider)	13.6
Engine, type	four-stroke ohv V-Twin
Bore x stroke, in., mm	3.44 x 3.97, 87.3 x 100.8
Piston displacement, cu. in., cc	73.66, 1207
Compression ratio	8.0:1
Claimed bhp @ rpm	66 @ 5200
Claimed torque @ rpm, lb.-ft.	70 @ 4000
Carburetion	(1) 1-5/8-in. Bendix/Zenith
Ignition	coil and battery
Oil system	dry sump, gear pump
Oil capacity, pt.	8
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	5.0
Recommended fuel	premium
Starting system	electric
Lighting system	12V alternator
Air filtration	oil-wetted foam
Clutch	multi-plate, dry
Primary drive	duplex chain
Final drive	single-row chain
Gear ratios, overall: 1	
4th	3.57
3rd	4.39
2nd	6.50
1st	10.74
Wheelbase, in.	61.5
Seat height, in.	34
Seat width, in.	12.5
Handlebar width, in.	33
Footpeg height, in.	8.6
Ground clearance, in.	5.0
Curb weight (w/half-tank fuel), lb.	738
Weight bias, front/rear, percent	44/56
Test weight (fuel and rider), lb.	873
Mileage at completion of test	2200 (approx.)

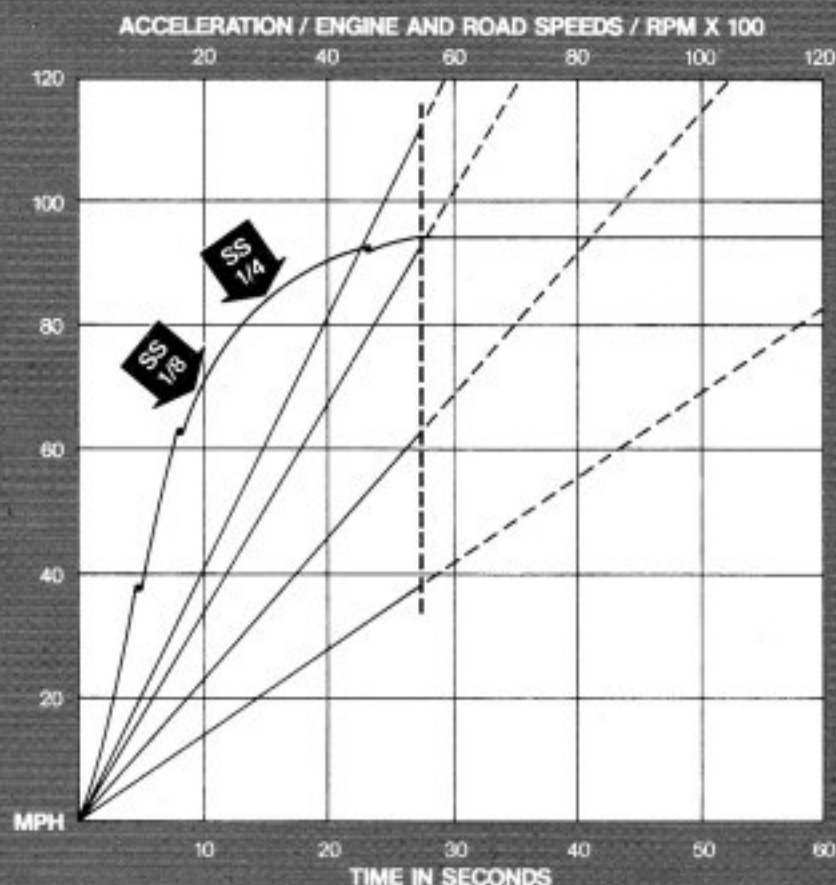
TEST CONDITIONS

Air temperature, degrees F	73
Humidity, percent	82
Barometric pressure, in. hg.	29.72
Altitude above mean sea level, ft.	383
Wind velocity, mph	2-4
Strip alignment, relative wind:	



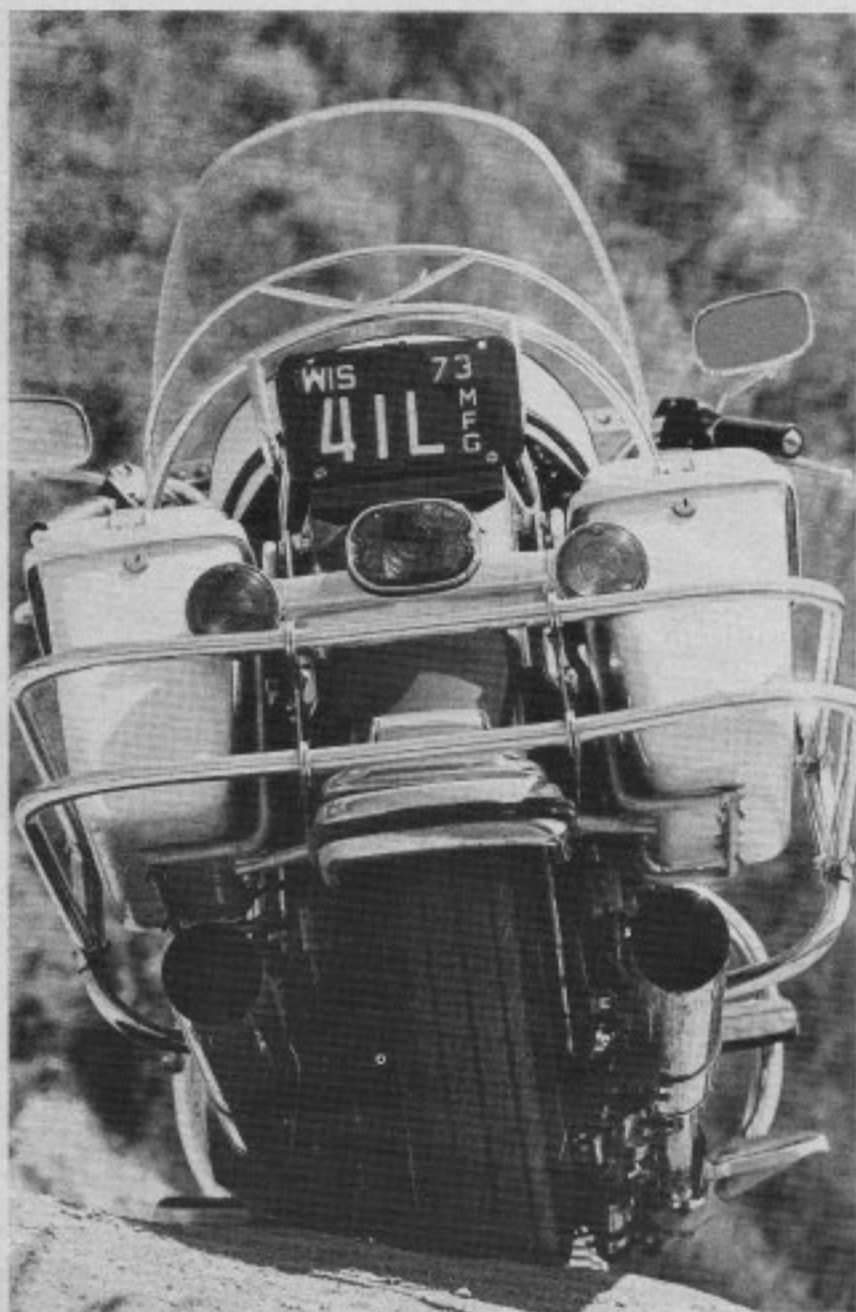
PERFORMANCE

Top speed (actual @ 4580 rpm), mph	95
Computed top speed in gears (@ 5500 rpm), mph:	
4th	114
3rd	93
2nd	63
1st	38
Mph/1000 rpm, top gear	20.7
Engine revolutions/mile, top gear	2898
Piston speed (@ 5500 rpm), ft./min.	3640
Lb./hp (160-lb. rider)	13.6
Fuel consumption, mpg	37
Speedometer error:	
50 mph indicated, actually	47
60 mph indicated, actually	58
70 mph indicated, actually	67
Braking distance:	
from 30 mph, ft.	39
from 60 mph, ft.	168
Acceleration, zero to:	
30 mph, sec.	4.0
40 mph, sec.	5.2
50 mph, sec.	6.4
60 mph, sec.	7.6
70 mph, sec.	9.2
80 mph, sec.	13.0
90 mph, sec.	20.0
Standing one-eighth mile, sec.	9.91
terminal speed, mph	69.87
Standing one-quarter mile, sec.	15.42
terminal speed, mph	84.03



has used its design since year one with complete success. Because the rear cylinder runs hotter than the front, many riders fit a cooler heat range spark plug there for safety.

In spite of its size and cast iron construction, the 74 is a relatively quiet engine mechanically. Care used in assembly and tight running clearances contribute heavily to this quiet. Pistons, for example, are fit with a piston-to-cylinder wall



H-D FLH

clearance of only 0.001 to 0.002 in. Other clearances are similarly tight so the H-D requires a lengthy break-in period.

Because of the extreme "growth" of the cylinders when the engine is hot, often in the neighborhood of 0.040 in., hydraulic tappets are used to maintain zero valve lash and mechanical silence. All the engine's internal drives are by gear, but great care in machining and fitting them keeps the mechanical noise down.

Oil to lubricate and cool the big engine is circulated from the 4-qt. oil tank through the engine and back to the tank by twin sets of gears in a common pump body. A nominal oil pressure of 35 psi is sufficient to provide adequate lubrication of all the engine's internals.

The clutch is a large, dry-type assembly which receives its power from the engine via a twin-row primary chain. Clutch lever pressure required to disengage the clutch is moderate, and the take up of the drive is very smooth. Much abuse was given to the clutch during our afternoon at the drag strip but it neither slipped nor dragged; quite a compliment when you consider the total weight of rider and machine.

Sturdy enough to be installed in a Mack truck, the transmission performed its job well enough, but with considerable crunching during gear shifts. Gear lever travel is decidedly long, but gear changes were positive, if somewhat noisy. Gear ratio spacing is fairly wide, but is well suited to the power characteristics of the engine. With the automatic spark advance now fitted, pulling away from low speeds in the higher gears eliminates much gear changing, even if the power impulses give a somewhat jerky ride. A cush-drive assembly on the engine sprocket lessens chain snatch and lengthens chain life, too.

Something we missed having on the 74 was a kickstarter. The electric unit worked exactly as advertised every time, but we'd hate to try to push the Electra Glide to get it started with a dead battery!

Electrical components are first rate. The familiar generator which was mounted at the front of the engine has been replaced by an alternator inside the primary chaincase. In the generator's place now sits the rectifier/voltage regulator mounted on a finned aluminum heat sink. The electrical system's wiring is enclosed in a plastic harness to prevent shorts from the wiring wearing through, and the harness is neatly routed to keep the machine's appearance clean. An item which is so inadequate on many of today's motorcycles is the horn. The H-D has no such problem. Should some dimwit fail to see the glitter of all that chrome, a H-D horn blast will surely spur him to awakeness.

Quality control has slipped slightly on the big Glide. Paint on the fuel tanks and fenders is smoothly applied, but there was a run in the paint on the oil tank. Chrome plating on the handlebars, wheel rims and exhaust system is good and the polished aluminum on the headlight nacelle and the primary chain cover is well done. A protective clear plastic is sprayed on the polished aluminum point cam housing, but the coating had a run in it. A couple of small points, to be sure, but such an expensive motorcycle should have a little more time spent on it to make sure it is perfect when it leaves the factory.

Other small complaints we had were that the motorcycle comes without a tool kit (although one may be purchased from your H-D dealer) and that the automotive type tires require special tools to remove them from the wheel rims; that is if you can figure out a way to get the wheels off a motorcycle which doesn't have a center stand.

All things considered, however, the Harley-Davidson Electra Glide is still one of the top choices of the rider who wants a big, dependable motorcycle, one which will provide him with many years and many thousands of miles of riding. 