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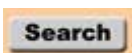
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## EXCELSIOR-HENDERSON LIVES AGAIN!

By: C. Gagnon

Excelsior-Henderson is one of the American manufacturers of motorcycles, that for a variety of complex reasons, fell to the wayside. However, the company was recently revived, and is being resurrected by Dan Hanlon, Dave Hanlon and Jennie Hanlon. This year they begun production of motorcycles, and previewed at Daytona with demo rides. But the lines were so long I never got close to a bike to demo it. However, Excelsior-Henderson showed up at Laconia. And this writer got her opportunity to try it out.

But, let's begin at the beginning. Excelsior staged themselves at the Dexter Shoe complex, which is just across the bridge from the Weirs. Good location as it gave them high visibility as well as proximity to the Weirs Beach area for both foot and other traffic. I pulled in, and was waved to a nice parking area. This is a class act, and first impressions count. I am impressed. I enter the store and there is a nice display of old Excelsior's. It gives me a pleasant feeling to know this is a company that has a history here. But I am here to try a bike!

So I made a beeline for the demo ride tent. The line to demo one of the Big X's appeared to be fairly small. The staff was friendly and helpful - always a big plus. I signed my release and got in line. Friendly chat in line helps make the wait go easier. Plus I found out that the average wait is 15 to 20 minutes. Not bad. I can handle this. Excitement wells up inside me and threatens to burst out all over when I am the next person to walk towards my steel mount. It is a pretty bike and the fork through the fender design is a distinctive and very attractive.



The staff explain the controls (not very different from any other motorcycle- there's an engineering limit as to exactly how different controls can be!). This is a full sized cruiser, and I have momentary doubts. Can I handle

this? The motorcycle I rode for the demo was green and metallic oyster.

This baby has a 62.9 inch wheel base, and is 92.5 inches in length. It has a seat height of 26.5 inches (if you are a 180 lb. rider). The tank holds 5.5 gallons. I sit on the bike, and I can't get my feet quite flat on the ground. Momentary panic, but the bike is so nicely balanced that I decide to be brave. The bike has a 1386 cc engine with fuel injection.

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The handlebars sweep back and I can reach all the control functions as easily. And the shift is heel/toe with floorboards (I'm not sure how I feel about these as I see them.) I start the bike and it springs to life - momentary panic again (this is a bigger bike than I'm used to) but a slight touch of the throttle and I'm off. It handles nicely, and I am able to do a tight turn. Relief hits first, then I begin to enjoy this motorcycle. The route is pleasantly long--long enough to get the feel of the bike. And you don't have to ride in annoying large groups with people of varying abilities. Just you and the motorcycle and about 8 miles of mostly pleasant New Hampshire country road.

The staff told me not to be afraid to open her up. Well, I do (as much as one can in Laconia with the increased police patrol). The bike responds smoothly and efficiently, and sounds great. I loved the way bikers passing the other way turned to look as I roared past (my demo had the slash cut pipes that added another dimension of richness to the ride). People waved at me and several asked about the bike under me



I get back into town, and drive in crowded, congested start and stop conditions. The bike performs well, but I do notice it is much, much hotter than either my HD Sportster or the HD Softtail (bikes I am familiar with). I would not want to wear shorts on this bike. I drive back into the Excelsior compound and reluctantly give this bike back.

A nice gentleman comes over and asks me about my ride. I am very enthusiastic and give him my honest response. I tell him I love it! I talk about the great ride I got on the bike. We talk about the company a little bit. When I am asked if I would buy one, I unabashedly say "Yes, as soon as you make one that's one to two inches lower in height!" Later, I realize that I had been talking to one of the cofounders of the company! Well I have never been anything other than myself!



This is a great bike and, in fact, I go back another day so I can ride again with a friend. The only major downside on this bike is the seat height. Because the straddle is slightly wide, the seat is not as low enough so that someone my height (5 ft. 5 in.) is flat-footed. You could probably do some adjustment and lower the bike. I understand marketing of new products and I am quite aware that this is the launch for E-H. I'm also confident they will find a way to accommodate those of us who aren't tall. After all, right now they only have one model, and that is sure to change as well. I am looking forward to following their development. And, one of the cofounders is a woman, so I'm sure exciting things are in the works.

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