

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Cohn Racers leaves the orchard
for greener pastures



By Stephen Long
Photos by @raw350





What happens when you quit Apple? Yes, Apple. What happens when you drop one of the largest corporations in human history, the omnipresent pocket-fruit of knowledge, AirPods innovator and OS-updating meddler? What happens when you take a bite out of Apple, and then promptly toss it aside to pursue your passion?

Chete P-Ilarbe can show you; let his shop, Cohn Racers, guide you through the transition, drifting away from the tech sector toward the mechanical sector, the greasy, dirty, sweaty, grimy sector. Let this custom Sportster XR1200 serve as the beacon.

Chete did indeed leave the tech behemoth to open his own garage, with the intention of building custom motorcycles. (We all find our way into this industry through different paths.) A team of three runs the Cohn Racers shop in Miami, Florida, and like many others, they depend on help from friends in the trade. Chete and his two companions have been riding since they were kids, which he says, “gives us a nice combination

of old-school and new-school style.” Cohn Racers have been in business for 10 years, building high-end customs for a clientele that enjoys indulging in the extravagant (hey, it’s Miami Beach). As such, these elevated tastes require the Cohn Racers shop to focus on the most minute details; this generates the harmonic synergy in the shop, as each member of the trio sweats the small things, the meticulous, the painstaking, the minutiae. Then they arrived at the Harley XR1200.

“We just knew we wanted an American V-twin with big knobby tires,” Chete says. “We first looked at the Dyna, then various Sportsters. Eventually we realized that the XR was the way to go if wanted to nail the flat tracker vibe.” It took some time to find a donor bike, however, as the XR1200

only survived a short production run from 2008-13 (which is interesting to consider six years later, when Harley’s future plans include once again building models to appeal to younger riders and the European segment). When the lads





finally got their hands on this 2009 XR1200, naturally they took it for a rip. Next thing you know, the bike had a name: Muscle R. Soon, the vision started to take shape.

“The Muscle R needed a mean, athletic stance. We wanted to capture the essence of modern muscle cars, while taking styling cues from vintage racecars, such as wire wheels, loud exhausts, and headlight grilles,” Chete says.

The bike was in top-notch condition, low mileage and all. They wasted no time (except for maybe one or two more laps) in getting right to the cutting and welding. They welded on their own custom-made subframe and new mounts for the tank. The seat pan is also a Cohn creation, though the upholstery, a suede-like material often seen in high-performance, exotic cars, was handled by Relicate Leather in Johnstown, New York.

You’ll notice an Alcantara accent on the gas tank. “Getting the designs right, to the point that we were happy, was a long and complicated process. Mechanical aspects weren’t overly difficult, but we operated on quite the learning curve,” Chete says. They left the engine stock, but tuning for better response and smoothness was on the menu. That’ll help the engine breathe fire through the custom-made 2-into-1-into-2 exhaust, which is coated with Cohn Racers’ “top secret coating.”



Up front, those sleek, sexy inverted Ohlins forks absorb anything in the Muscle’s way, which were unmistakably matched by Ohlins piggyback shocks out back. Let’s remember, we’re on Miami Beach now, so only the finest from the Cohn Racers: Brembo brakes,

320mm rotors, and eight-piston calipers. Just as fast as this beast will launch, it’ll screech to a halt. They also machined

custom triple trees, a custom clutch, and employed stainless steel lines.

Given the inspiration for this build—an XR flat tracker—new wheels and tires were required; knobbies were one of the few definite designs from the start. The custom wire wheels spin on a pair of Shinko 805s, “which we consider the best dual-sport tires on the market,” Chete says. “It’s hard to believe how well they handle on the road.”

That’s refreshing to hear, because if it handles anywhere as well as it looks, this bike is a showstopper. Helping those handling capabilities is the weight loss; by molding all the body work out of 1x1 carbon fiber—front fender, tank, side covers, and the license plate holder—Cohn Racers shaved 67 pounds off the stock form!

Rounding out the build are the electrics, for which the trio used the stock harness but a Cohn’s custom speedo, LED signals, and a brake light integrated into the license plate. “We try not be tacky or over the top with our builds,

something I think plagued the custom scene for far too long,” Chete says.

The subtleties of the build are exactly what helps it stand out. Even nonriders compliment the work the Cohn team accomplished with this XR. “The balance is smooth and natural. The bike flows nicely and stands like a bull, mean and lean, and the Alcantara accents blend perfectly with the seat and the clear coated carbon fiber.”

Moving on from iPods to Sportsters might seem like a leap, but Chete put together the right team to handle the spectacular work coming out of their shop. He handled the transition with remarkable aplomb. And the custom XR handles curves with a similar calm disposition, as the lads took the bike to North Carolina for a week’s worth of riding. “It’s a dream to ride. A big, powerful, American V-twin, with all the suspension and braking capabilities of a Ducati. It’s hard to describe in words.”

Well, Chete, perhaps there’s an app for that? **AIM**





Tech Sheet

Builder	Cohn Racers
Year/model	Harley-Davidson 2009 XR1200
Time to build	Eight months
Chromer/polisher	Cohn in house
Powdercoater	Miami Powder (MiamiPowder.com)
Carbon fiber	Done in England by ex-Formula 1 engineer

Powerplant

Engine	2009 XR1200
Builder	Cohn Racers
Horsepower	102
Exhaust	Custom by Cohn Racers

Chassis

Frame	2009 XR1200 with modifications
Forks/shocks	Adjustable Ohlins
Front wheel	18" x 3-1/2" aluminum
Rear wheel	18" x 6" aluminum
Front/rear brake	Brembo
Front/rear tires	Shinko 805s
Fenders	Carbon fiber custom made

Accessories

Headlight	Custom-made retro style
Taillight	Custom Dynamics
Fuel tank	Carbon fiber custom made
Handlebars	Renthal Fatbar
Risers	Rizoma
Seat	Custom-made with Alcantara
Pegs	Arlen Ness
Speedo	Custom by Cohn Racers
Hand controls	Brembo RCS19
Levers	Brembo/Domino