

The Atypical Home Run

Steve Iacona touches 'em all with this knockout Sporty





By Stephen Long
Photos by Mark Velazquez

It's easy to get caught up in listening to Steve Iacona speak about motorcycles, be it this radically custom Sporty he built for his friend Gerard Siani, the custom Triumph that took home show gold and shares a lot of its styling cues with this Sportster, or his general fandom of the MotoGP ("Some guys have baseball. I have the GP.") The loud, brash, bodacious Brooklyn accent carries more of a lilt as he walks me through each and every piece of the custom. We are on the phone, but it's as though he's giving me a personal tour around one of the centerpieces of his shop in Borough Park, New York.



Steve's history with automobiles is ripe and rich. His hands have worked on all kinds of machinery, from muscle cars to British twins. And he even has some amateur racing experience on his résumé. This helps explain many of the performance and aesthetic choices Steve makes when building his bikes: performance, power, and prestige. "I always want bikes to have good breaks, good suspension," Steve says. "I believe in using good parts and good technology."

So where did this Sportster come from, and how did it end up in his shop? Well, it currently belongs to Steve's friend Gerard, a New York Fire Department captain, but life for this Sporty started out in the hands of Greg Saucedo, another New York firefighter who lost his life during the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001. Greg served with Engine 24, Ladder Company 5 in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, a storied house that lost seven others along with Greg on 9/11. After another firefighter owned the bike for a few years, Gerard finally got the opportunity to purchase it, hoping to conserve and commemorate the memory of his friend.

Steve is quick to note, however, that this isn't intended to be a tribute build. On the left side of the repositioned oil tank that Steve fabricated, you'll note a small red *Ladder 5* graphic. Aside from the two other number 5s that show up on the bike—the racing plate-styled rear fender and the front plate—that's where the overt memorializing ends. At least in a literal sense. Apparently the motorcycle has amassed quite the fan base. Steve says that it's known by all the members of Ladder 5, as befitting Greg's legacy. When about 10 of the firefighters saw the custom, they couldn't believe it was the same stock Sporty that Greg rode.

As for the bike itself, it's one of those builds that packs a lot into seemingly a little, a minimalist build with an extrem-

ist core. "I have a plan. I have a vision in my head, and we go from there," says Steve. Up front, a repurposed 49mm V-Rod front end with Progressive springs handles the bumps, and the front wheel is also from a V-Rod, complete with a dual disc brake setup from Performance Machine. The triple clamp is from a Street Bob, and the fender mounts are from a Dyna. All this is mated with an Ohlins steering damper. Good brakes, good suspension, eh? Already the bike is taking the form of the sport speedmills that Steve prefers to emulate with his work.

Another common motif in Steve's builds is the unique front panel, made from sheet metal and held together by aluminum and a couple of things Steve says he always likes to incorporate, the off-center headlight—this one being a LED lamp from a Touring model—and the racing-style windshield. "I like the mechanical, industrial look," Steve says. "Everything on the bike is exposed."

And exposed it is. Basically everything on this Sportster was handmade, including the just mentioned oil tank that is now sitting just behind the front wheel. The oil cooler is housed in the same area, on the left side, and all the lines are exposed, adding to the rugged industrial theme that Steve is so fond of. He also fabbed up a skid plate that sits just below the oil filter and cooler, complete with the Iacona emblem. He hand-formed the gas tank and the tail section, following his initial vision of forming the contours of the GP racers he loves. The frame is a two-piece concoction, the front cradle being a holdover from the 1992 Sportster, the back half a weld-on kit from TC Bros. But even that got the Iacona treatment, as Steve cut it up, looping it around the rear fender and putting two bars into the backbone. He wanted the seat area to be narrower, more streamlined. The rear fender? Well, apparently trees do grow in Brooklyn. The centerpiece



is aluminum, with two sheet metal panels inspired by motocross racers, and Steve hammered that centerpiece on a tree stump before rolling it into shape. Necessity is the mother of all invention.

Also similar to two other builds he's done, Steve installed dual shocks beneath the seat, which is attached to a pivot on the backbone to allow the rider to adjust the height. The seat's leatherwork was handled by Brooklyn's Meccanica Custom Upholstery, whose attention to detail included the snap-down buttons on the seat's tail, which brings us to the significant substance with which Steve constructed this bike. Its accents are relatively small when taken as individual notes, but together they form a harmonious final product, something we often see from the upper echelon of bike builders. Aesthetics aside, everything on the bike is secured, whether with a clamp or machined bracket; all the axle nuts and brake calipers are safety-wired. At the rear, he mounted a bracket to the brake caliper and extended the axle plate, thus allowing for the simultaneous movement of the caliper in case the chain needs to be adjusted. "Nobody really has that," Steve says. "That took some time and thought. The whole bike, nothing is just thrown together."

The motor, after being completely rebuilt, sports that wicked 30mm Mikuni carb setup, which Steve says "sounds amazing when those things open and close." Plus, it's an additional racing touch. The motor was powercoated bronze and the cylinders black. The chain is black with gold links, the pipe wrap pops against the powercoated black exhaust, the forks obviously the Ohilns damper, and the sole gauge on the bike,



and his group of "assistants." Down to the paint, which was inspired by a vintage Harley that Steve and Gerard saw at the Handbuilt Show, everything was a cooperative decision between builder and owner, and the decision-making process equaled the time spent actually working on the bike. Speaking of that yellow skin, Nub Grapfix in Walden, New York, handled the work, meeting the expectations of both Steve and Gerard. "You see red, blue, black, gray customs," Steve says. "Not too many yellow bikes out there."

Well, there's not too many bikes out there like this one at all, be they red, blue, black or gray. It has racked up several awards, including the IMS Mod Harley class, and as of this writing the fellas are preparing to take it to Vegas. Then, and only then, will Gerard be allowed to ride it down The Strip. Greg Saucedo's former Sporty is a standout. Helluva way to make sure to never forget. **AIM**

a tachometer from Speedhut, is housed in a gold-colored case. Between the two wider black tires, bronze-colored powercoated wheels, worn brown leather seat, and dark pipes and motor, the gold accentuates the nontraditional yellow paint. All the electrical components are housed on the left side of the bike behind the transmission, with a cover that says, "Danger: High Voltage."

The bike's unique ignition, a product that Steve prototyped for this bike and now sells, relocates the switch to just above the rearsets sourced and machined to fit from one of his first builds. Also prototyped on this bike were the front fork guards, which he has now put into production. As much as Steve and Gerard wanted to take home show gold, this bike was also a proving ground, one on which some creative risks needed to be taken.

Those risks wouldn't be possible without all the help that Steve receives from friends and even family. He has a full-time job aside from running his shop, handling maintenance duties at a hospital, and most of the guys that work the shop with him are also employed in various professions across the city, as firefighters, carpenters, electricians, etc. — a pure band of utilitarians. And this build took three months, albeit with an average of 15-hour-days. His brother-in-law fabricated the taillight, something he has previously done for Steve's builds. Even Gerard got his hands dirty, handling Scotch-Brite and sandpaper, so much so that he may have thrown his hands in the air more than once as Steve kept making and sending parts his way. Steve credits Gerard's organizational skills as a major contributor, however, to the "best build I've ever done."

In its totality, this Sportster truly encapsulates the work ethic of Steve and his group of "assistants." Down to the paint, which was inspired by a vintage Harley that Steve and Gerard saw at the Handbuilt Show, everything was a cooperative decision between builder and owner, and the decision-making process equaled the time spent actually working on the bike. Speaking of that yellow skin, Nub Grapfix in Walden, New York, handled the work, meeting the expectations of both Steve and Gerard. "You see red, blue, black, gray customs," Steve says. "Not too many yellow bikes out there."