Meaner And Fatter

INSTALLING RAW DESIGN'S 300-SERIES TIRE KIT

BY STEVE LITA
PHOTOS BY BOB FEATHER

With the stock rear setup on the Mean Streak, it looks like something's missing.

Fat rear tires have been the rage since back in the day of the T-bucket and the little deuce-coupé hot rods. There's just something so muscular about a vehicle, car or bike, with a fat rear tread. And in the case of the Kawasaki Mean Streak, the bike's stock profile makes it look like Kawasaki forgot something — almost like the designers ran out of the proper-size rear tire and borrowed one from a smaller bike.

Enter Raw Design's Fat Box 300-series tire kit. It bulks up the back of your Mean Streak (or Suzuki Marauder) to give it the look that any self-respecting Streaker deserves. When Raw Design's Andy Laureti rode his fattened-up Mean Streak to our offices to show it off, we were duly impressed. The kit looks incredibly clean, like it comes from the factory. And here's some great news for VTX riders: They make a kit for the VTX1800, too. When Raw Design put a Mean Streak and a VTX on display at *RoadBike*'s metric custom rally in Daytona, the bikes were the stars of the show.

You'll need to add an additional half-quart of engine oil to the crankcase, because the offset chain drive box is lubed with engine oil. Be sure to drain the offset gearbox at every oil change.

To see what's involved in installing the Fat Box, we partnered up once again with Rich Alexander Jr. at Hudson Valley Motorcycles in Millwood, New York. You might recall that we installed a Thunder Mfg. big-bore kit in Rich's Mean Streak last summer (August and September '05 issues), bumping up the displacement from 1470cc to 1550. Looking to beef up the bike's stance, too, Rich volunteered his ride for this build.

While we're not going to show you every step of the installation, we'll give you a good idea of what's involved in the process. The kit comes with a 1:1 offset gearbox, swingarm, ultra hub, shock extensions, a longer rear axle, the rear wheel, and all necessary hardware. The installation is straightforward and even uses some of the factory hardware (which would usually be discarded in a custom build like this), including the rear wheel damper; the shock absorbers; the rear brake rotor, caliper, and caliper bracket; the pinion gear and pinion gear housing; and the rear differential final drive. You'll need to provide your own monster tire (we used an Avon Venom-X 300) and custom rear fender, which you can order from Raw Design or source elsewhere. The company claims that the job can be done in as little as four hours, but make sure you allow extra time for finishing touches.

1

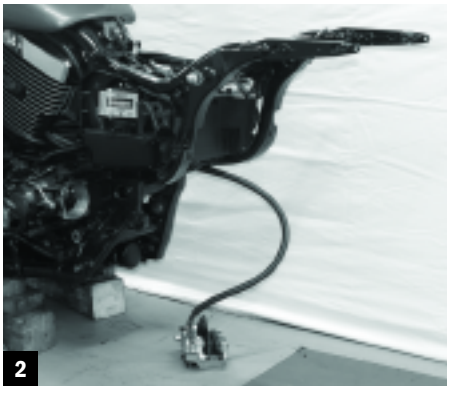
Here are the major components included in the kit. We've already mounted our Avon tire on the supplied rim. Also shown are the frame templates for trimming off excess, and the optional seat support pan and rear footpeg block-off plates.

SOURCES

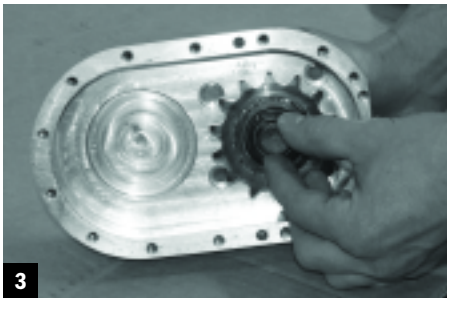
The Fat Box $4,875
RAW DESIGN
44 Homestead Ave., Dept. *RB*
Stamford, CT 06905
203/425-3214
rawdesign.us

HUDSON VALLEY MOTORCYCLES
96 Millwood Rd., Dept. *RB*
Millwood, NY 10546
915/762-2722
hudsonvalleymotorcycles.com

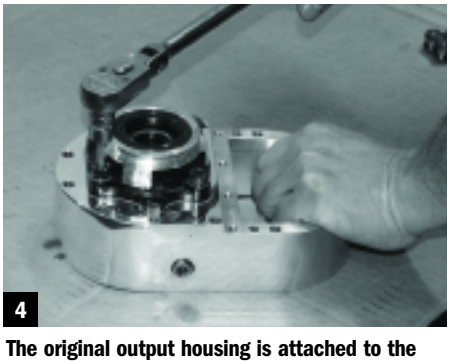
When starting the engine for the first time after the kit is installed, let it idle in neutral for five minutes. This will ensure that oil gets to the offset drive box to lube the gears and chain.



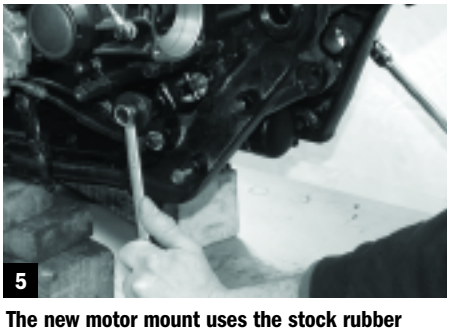
With the old parts removed, we can start the installation.



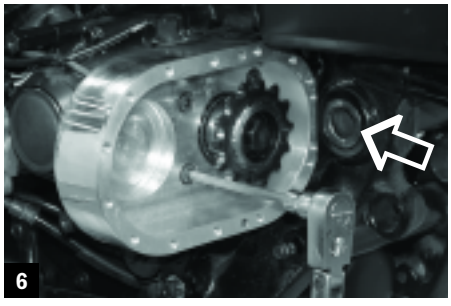
The original pinion gear, bearings, and shims are installed into the new offset gearbox.



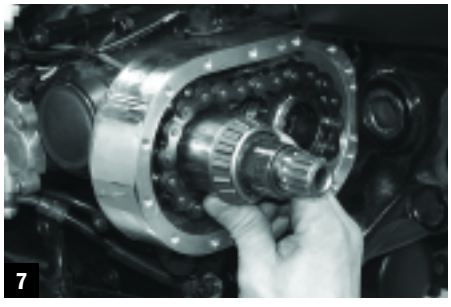
The original output housing is attached to the offset gearbox.



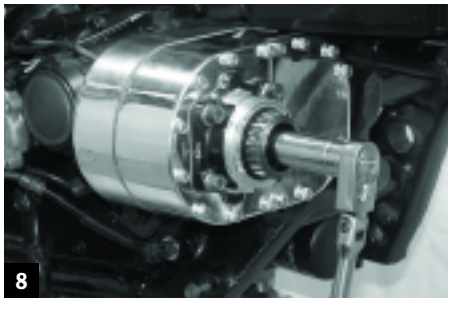
The new motor mount uses the stock rubber damper and new hardware.



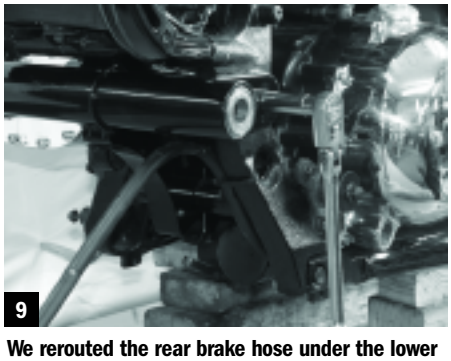
The new swingarm pivot is slid into place (arrow). Then the forward half of the offset gearbox is installed on the engine, using the original shims to maintain correct pinion depth.



The chain is snaked onto the offset drive gear, and the driven gear is installed.



Next, the rear portion of the offset gearbox (with inspection plate) is installed. Here, the output hub bolt is tightened, then staked.

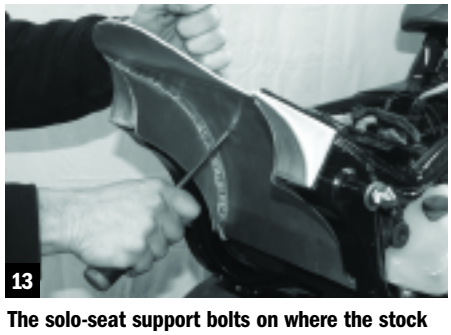


We rerouted the rear brake hose under the lower frame tube and installed the new swingarm pivot.

The output rubber boot, driveshaft, and new swingarm are installed next...

...and the stock final drive is bolted on with stock shims and hardware.

After marking the frame with the provided template, we used a cut-off wheel to shorten it. Small steel plates were then welded onto the open frame tubes for a clean look.



The solo-seat support bolts on where the stock fender was mounted.

The stock engine side cover (right) is marked with a template and cut with a cut-off wheel, and then sanded clean. Note: This step compromises the factory chrome plating.


15

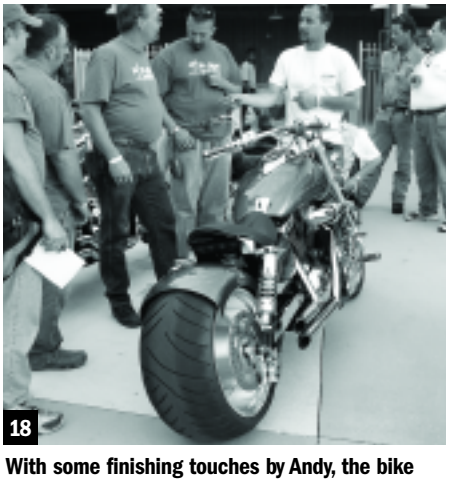
The rear shocks are installed next, using the shock extensions provided with the kit. The footpeg trim covers finish the look.


16

The rear wheel is slipped in place with a new, longer axle (provided). However, it uses the original brake caliper bracket and spacers. Lining up the splines is a bit tricky, as the wheel hub needs to fit straight onto the differential hub.


17

Here's the basic kit, finished. The exhaust still needs to be modified to accommodate the fatter rear end.


18

With some finishing touches by Andy, the bike was ready for our Daytona metric show. But stay tuned — there's still more to come. RB