

# Double Take

## '46 Indian Chief & '96 Cobra Kawasaki Vulcan

text and photos by Buzz Kanter

Fifty years ago riders could choose their mount from either Harley or Indian, and either a "big bike" or "sport bike."

The big bikes were the large, heavy machines like the Harley 74 ci Knuckleheads and Indian 74 ci Chiefs. The sport bikes were the Harley 45 ci W series and the Indian 45 ci Scouts, which were the preferred choice for all sorts of racing applications.

In 1947, they didn't have the specialized machines we have today. A rider didn't consider his bike a tourer, a cruiser, or an off-road machine. The bike was his all-purpose ride. If you rode long

**That cool-looking Kawasaki... looked an awful lot like my '46 Chief.**

distance you'd bolt on a windshield and bags, if cruising around town, pull 'em off. Want to race (hillclimb, Class C, or drags) strip off all unnecessary weight (such as lights, fenders, mirrors, etc.) at the trackside and have some fun before bolting them back on for the ride home.

While I enjoy the practicality of the new machines, I have a soft spot for older motorcycles (my wife, Gail, says the soft spot is between my ears).

During our first Classic and Custom Japanese Rally at Klassix Auto Museum In Daytona Beach, I spotted

### QUICK COMPARISON

1946 INDIAN	1996 KAWASAKI
<b>ENGINE</b>	
1000cc	1500cc
Air-Cooled	Liquid-cooled
Flathead	OHV
<b>BRAKES</b>	
Drum	Disc
<b>FORKS</b>	
Girder	Telescopic
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>	
Chain	Shaftdrive
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>	
3 Speed Handshift	5 Speed Footshift

### RECOMMENDED READING

*Illustrated Indian Buyer's Guide*, by Jerry Hatfield. 176 pages. #121471AP. \$21.95

*Indian Motorcycles*, by Buzz Kanter. 96 pages. #119001AP. \$16.95

*Indian Motorcycles*, by Jerry Hatfield & Hans Halberstadt. 160 pages. #122806AP. \$33.95

*Indian*, by Garry Stewart & John Carroll. 128 pages. #120138AE. \$19.95

*Indian Photographic History*, by Jerry Hatfield. 240 pages. #119046AP. \$28.95

All above books available from TAM Communications, 1010 Summer St., Stamford, CT 06905. (203) 425-8777.

### SOURCES

**Cobra Engineering**  
4915 E. Hunter, Dept MT&C  
Anaheim, CA 92807  
(714) 779-7798

**Heather's Leathers**  
2150 Edgepark Rd. Dept MT&C  
Clover, SC 29710  
(803) 222-5400

**Coker Tires**  
1317 Chestnut Street, Dept MT&C  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
(615) 265-6368

one cool-looking Kawasaki-Indian clone in the parking lot that looked an awful lot like my 1946 Indian Chief (which also happened to be in the same parking lot). I asked around and found out the Kawasaki is owned by Ken Boyko of Cobra Engineering, and many of the aftermarket parts on the Vulcan are available for sale.

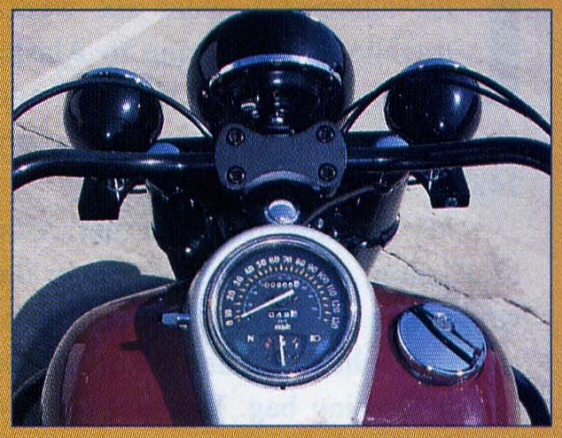
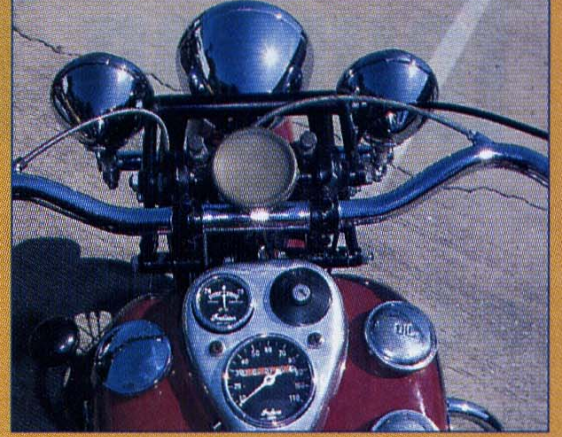
Here is a quick and fun comparison of the two motorcycles which are separated by a half century of technological evolution but joined visually by a common look, literally.



Indian flathead 74-ci pushrod, air-cooled, sidevalve, chain final drive. Kawasaki OHV 1500cc, liquid-cooled plant transfers power via driveshaft.



Indian has clean lines allowing plenty of air to cool the engine directly. The Kawasaki is liquid-cooled with a tidy and almost invisible radiator up front.



Rider's view: Indian has speedo, ammeter, and steering damper. The Kawasaki shows speedo and gas gauge.



1946 Indian Chief (left) and 1996 Kawasaki Vulcan 1500 Classic (right). While they look a lot alike, don't be fooled by the clever disguise. There's a half century of technology separating them. The Indian is sporting new Coker whitewalls. MT&C