

# REVIEW - HARLEY NIGHT ROD

## REVIEW BY WILLIAM MORRIS

Our cover bike for this month, the VRSCDX Night Rod Special, was made available to us by Harley-Davidson 1000-Hills. Thanks, Chris, for organizing the bike for us.

**FIRST IMPRESSION:** Picture it – low, long and mean; the Night Rod Special glides towards you, its dark framework just inches off the road surface. It sweeps past with a throaty growl; its ultra-wide rear rubber leaving its imprint etched in your mind. The Night Rod is an absolute showstopper. I had instant reactions from other road users and got hounded for specs and details at every stop, even had one guy ask if he could take some pics! If you ever wanted to turn heads...

Matte black finish looks stunning, and the black exhaust covers and red pinstriping on the rims just did it for me. "No penny spared" build quality is superb. In a world of cheap plastics and "breaks just after the warranty runs out", the heavy-duty components, built to last, speak volumes about both the people who make these bikes and those who ride them.



**CONTROLS AND GADGETS:** Controls are the typical Harley setup, self-cancelling indicators and all; and I love the keyless ignition – what a pleasure to just swing your leg over and go! Searching for a key in endless leather jacket pockets with gloved hands is a royal pain. Another great thing is the digital fuel gauge that estimates the amount of kilometres left in the tank. Night riding becomes a beautiful thing as the display lights glow in an easy to read, vivid orange.

**PERFORMANCE:** Where's the sound? A disappointingly quiet exhaust system masks the thrust potential of the 5-speed 1130cc V-twin. But the VRSC is no slouch... 100kph in 1st, just touch the limiter at 9000revs, slide it into 2nd and hit 150kph before clutching again; a top speed of well over 200kph (if you can hold on); astounding brute force! Power delivery is smooth and completely usable with huge torque all the way through the revs. Fuel injection is now common to all Harley V-Twins, but the V-Rods (the VRSC models built for higher performance) are the only twins assisted by liquid-cooling. The average Harley engine's peak torque output is somewhere around 3500rpms, while the V-Rod's peak torque is made at 7000rpms. This engine is made to rev higher and push harder than any of its stable mates; a Harley built for speed freaks?!

**SUSPENSION, HANDLING, & COMFORT:** Forward controls (feet out in front of the motor) and exaggerated 1715mm wheelbase take time to get used to, but once you're settled in it feels good and is unquestionably the ultimate way to cruise. The Night Rod Special has a lower ground clearance (107mm) and seat height (640mm) than the standard Night Rod version, and the widest tyre ever (240mm) to roll off the Harley-Davidson production line. How does that handle? Well, the rigid hydro-formed frame maintains a surprisingly low amount of flex for all that length and traction out of corners is phenomenal. The 18.9 litre fuel tank is found under the seat, so as well as avoiding a tank cap ruining the tank's smooth looks, the additional weight of a full tank of petrol stays down low, keeping it from becoming too top-heavy and unwieldy; one of the reasons the Night Rod feels far lighter (thankfully) than the 292kg manufacturers claim.

**OVERALL RATING:** The Night Rod Special offers much: exclusivity, power, speed, style, cruising comfort and above all – the Harley-Davidson badge that represents far more than just a name. Styling inspired by the drag strip, power inspired by a heritage of racing.

**PRICE:** R180 000.00 incl. VAT



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