

The Luck of

Article by Dave Howe
Photographs by Daniel Peirce of Trick Photography



RIDE TEXAS

the Irish

*Here's to a long life and
a merry one.
A quick death and
an easy one.
A pretty girl and
an honest one.
A cold beer—
and another one!
—Old Irish toast*



Owner, Jeff Graves was inspired to tell a an Irish tale with his Softail custom.

From across the glen can be heard the sounds of shovels digging gold from the streambed and hammers pounding the nuggets into coins. But soon something else replaces the sounds of toil...loud singing and laughing! Although hidden from view deep in the forest, we follow the rainbow that marks the spot and suddenly there they are. Passing the little brown jug like there's no tomorrow and laughing their wee arses off!

Irish Leprechauns, of course, are known to work hard and play even harder, gathering treasure by day and drinking by night. No wonder then that Jeff Graves, of Double Oak, Texas was inspired by them when it came time to choose the theme of his custom Harley Davidson. Graves, you see, is of Irish descent and working hard and playing hard are in the genes.

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The leprechaun landscape is filled with subtle detail that invites a closer look.

Talented painter Chris Cruz of DeLand Florida, has created a miniature view of a miniature world.

He spends his day “gathering treasure” as an investment banker in the Personal Wealth Division of a major financial investment firm but something was missing from the other side of the equation. He wanted a custom Harley, but not just any custom Harley. The little brown jug made the rounds a few times with Jeff and his friends and his dream-bike was born.

The bike began life as a 1995 80 c.i. Softail. Custom parts were sourced or fabricated, the bike was totally rebuilt from the ground up and the engine was built bigger-stronger-faster. It was obvious the bike would be special. But what to do about the paint? A nice subtle solid color, maybe red or black? Nah. A wild candy with flames, scallops or psychedelics? Nah. Lemme see that jug again Bro. A “Leprechaun Bike”, yeah, that’s it!

In collaboration with friend Chris Cruz, of Chris Cruz Artistry of DeLand, Florida, the exquisite Leprechaun airbrush paint job was commissioned. The right side of the bike is festooned with images of the hard-working-by-day Leprechauns while the left side chronicles the misadventures of the hard-drinking-by-night little elves. The photo-realism of artist Cruz’ work is simply

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Top: Don't ask Grave's wife about the winged female on the front fender..

Bottom: The detail is amazing. See the group of toadstools at the fender's bottom left?

amazing and draws people in for closer and closer looks until they have studied the entire bike. Not noticed by some are the many subtle, nearly invisible gnome faces cleverly worked into the trees, flowers and rocks of the forest scenes. Once they begin to “jump out at you”, you must reexamine the entire bike to search for the others.

Cruz apparently is somewhat the mischievous gnome himself as the front fender sports an image of a lovely pointy-eared female fairy clad only in her diaphanous wings. The fairy is a stylized image of Graves' wife, who is a blonde. The image however is brunette and causes no end of consternation!

There are literally hundreds of Shamrocks all over the bike. But as in life, amongst the 3-leafed clovers is a single 4-leafed one. Find it for good luck! Hint...a 4-year old will have a definite height advantage.

The popular “Leprechaun Bike” has won many trophies and awards and always draws an admiring crowd wherever it goes. Jeff Graves is a pleasant, affable man who knows how to enjoy life. He describes his green-machine as the “Ultimate Bar-Bike” and I suppose he is right. I guess we'll just have to take his word for the hard-work-by-day part!

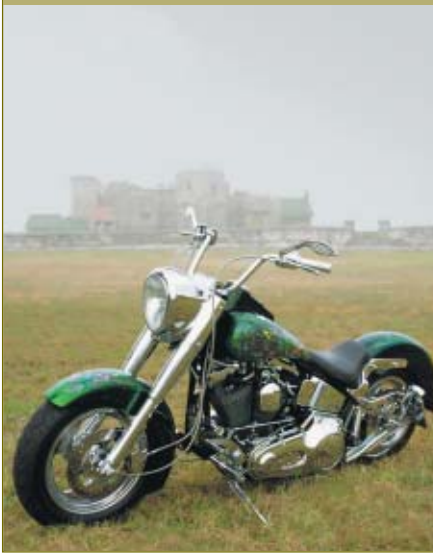
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Motorcycle subjects for the Texas RoadRunner series are selected from the files of TRICK Photography. The Grapevine based photography company produces custom images of motorcyclists and their machines. See more images or contact Dan Peirce at www.trickphotog.com, or call 817-251-5069. "Have Camera, Will Travel."



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