

# ROLAND SANDS' VICTORY



**V**ICTORY Motorcycles has always had a keen eye for the custom scene and as such commissioned Roland Sands to build a high-barred version of a Vegas 8-Ball, the entry level product in the Victory range.

The bike is known as the Capone, it's a name chosen by Sands to reflect the bike's deliberately sinister looks, and in keeping with Victory's gambling name set - Vegas, Jackpot, Kingpin, 8-Ball, etc.

"We were working to broaden our appeal and attract younger customers, so we thought a relationship with Roland could also help us appeal to guys that are maybe more sportbike and performance oriented," says Victory boss Mark Blackwell, explaining how the project began. "We had several ideas when we first reached out to him about two years ago, and the Capone was the first to get completed. We have more plans for future bikes, and we thought Roland would be a perfect

designer to develop some of those ideas with us. Unfortunately, just about at the time we were kicking off our relationship with him, the market went into a downturn, and some of our plans have had to be delayed.

"We still completed the Capone project with Roland, but had to hold off on some other concepts he and our team were very fired up about. We had also wanted to do a kit for the Capone and some accessories, but with the economic environment and market conditions getting so ugly, we were forced to delay some of these projects. We'll get back to them though when things pick up."

"We're really trying to separate ourselves," says Sands, talking about his business Roland Sands Design (RSD) and his work for companies like Victory. "We're

not exclusively a custom bike builder, we're a design house - our business model is not one that exists in the motorcycle industry right now, which is why there's a lot going on - a lot. We're really fortunate to be in the spot we're at - people in the industry seem to be looking to us to help out and supply new ideas and new concepts.

**W**e're now producing a catalog and retailing parts for people to use to customize their own bikes - which was the way the Capone was originally conceived. I wanted to develop it in a way that it could be built very easily by a customer, so I wasn't trying to chop the frame up and rake out the front end. In the future I'll probably end up building Victory a concept bike, but for now it was like, let's give them something that is do-able, let's give them something that is

# CAPONE

## BIKE PROFILE



producible. So that's what this is."

To build the Capone, Sands started with a stock Vegas 8-Ball, fitted at the Victory factory with the new 106ci version of the company's V-twin Freedom motor. RSD then set about transforming this into a lightly chopped bike, still with the stock chassis and bodywork.

"It's not really hugely different," says Sands, "just a lot sharper looking. We fit different bars that are 13in high, and we chopped them a little from our standard bars, because we wanted to get them to a certain height to be sellable countrywide. We've got new grips, kept the tank the same, kept the rear fender and struts the same, all the sheet metal is the same, and just took some of the stuff I've done on some of my more extreme custom bikes, and slammed it on the Capone."

With the Performance Machine factory right next door to RSD, custom rolling stock is the basis of the Capone transformation. "I designed special wheels for it with Dunlop tires, and made the front a wider 21 x 3 1/2 in," continues Sands. "Then we redid the covers, the belt guard and the belt cover, and drilled the belt pulley cover out. Did a different key switch on both sides, got that black drill piece with a nice key switch rather than a triangular piece. We built a different exhaust for

it, which was something that I really wanted to do. It's a custom bike with a factory feel, and it just happens to have that great Victory engine, too - that engine rips."

The Capone is improbably comfortable for something with such an extreme riding position, just so long as you don't expect to go anywhere fast on it, else your torso will get toasted or chilled by the windblast, depending on the season. The forward-slanted ape hanger handlebars deliver a very upright but straight-backed stance. The fact that Sands has pulled back the location of the footrests a good 6in is key to providing a good fit, bringing them back the other side of the crankcase from the feet-forward Vegas position into what, if not for the high handlebars, is a relatively normal semi-sportbike posture.

The Victory motor is as strong and smooth-running as ever, denoting its modern design and evolved engineering, with no undue vibration, and it sounds great, too, with the satisfying rip through the relatively unsilenced flat track-style exhausts. There's a fair bit of heat given off from these, though, and the heat shield isn't very effective.

Cornering is quite good within the limits of the available ground clearance once you're committed to

the turn, the ape-hanger 'bars make this strictly a point-'n'-squirt machine. The stock Vegas isn't exactly quick-steering, but it's quite easy-handling by cruiser standards, whereas the effect of raising the Capone's bars so high is to make changes of direction seem very ponderous, because of the reduced amount of leverage you have to bear on the steering.

"You know, when you build bikes, nothing is better than having them out on the road, with other people riding them or looking at them or sending each other photos of them. It's cool that it's doing a tour of America with Victory dealers... just without me! That means I don't have to take it anywhere, and can get on with doing other things - but people get to see our stuff, and send feedback, which helps me think about what to do next time. We've never standing still - wait till you see the gnarly idea I've had for the next Victory bike. It's even more bitchin' than this one..."

**VICTORY MOTORCYCLES**  
Medina, Minnesota  
Tel: 763 542 5000

E-mail: [josh.kurcinka@polarisind.com](mailto:josh.kurcinka@polarisind.com)  
[www.victorymotorcycles.com](http://www.victorymotorcycles.com)



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