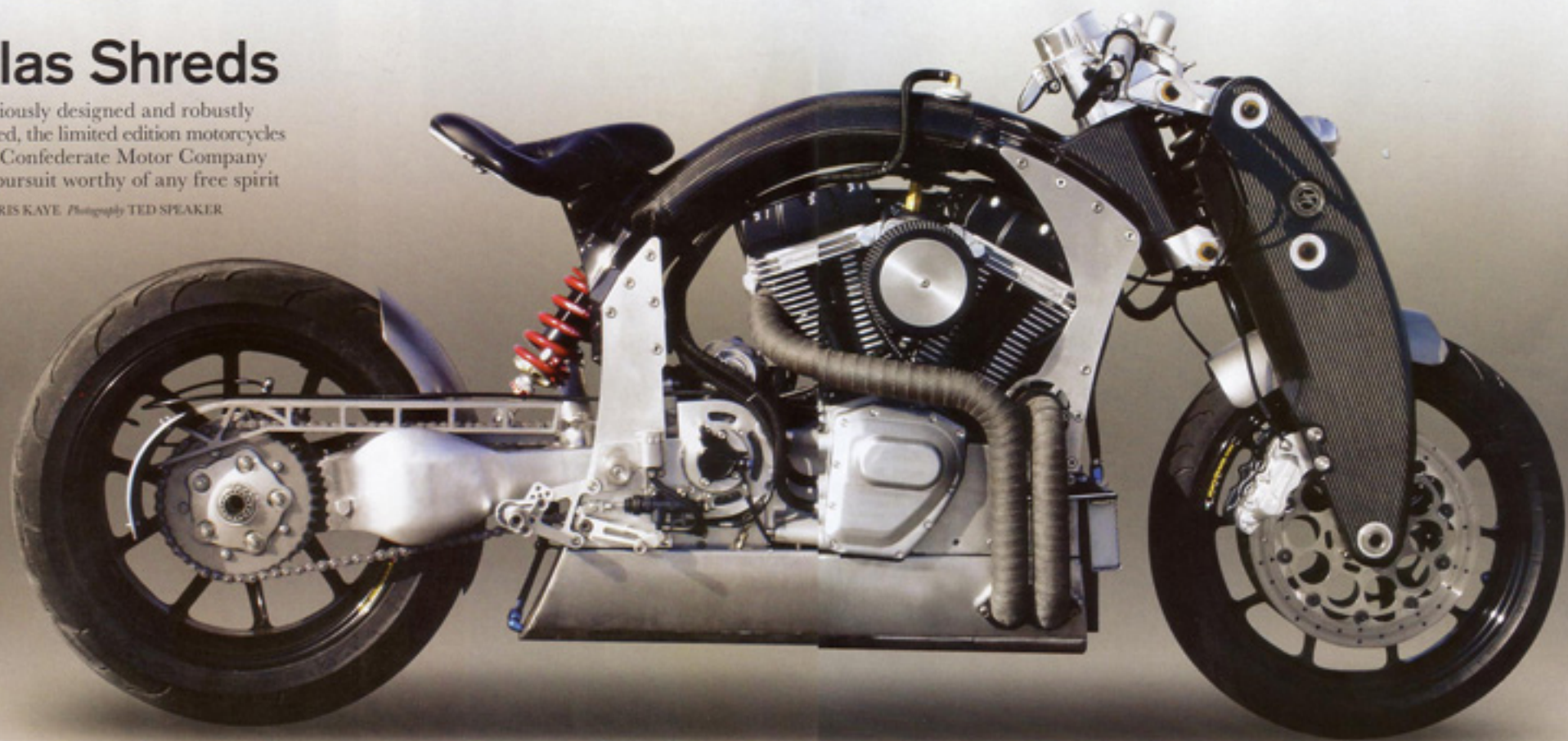


Atlas Shreds

Ambitiously designed and robustly executed, the limited edition motorcycles of the Confederate Motor Company are a pursuit worthy of any free spirit

Hair: CHRIS KAYE Photography: TED SPEAKER



The B120 Wraith motorcycle from the Confederate Motor Company is so stark and audacious, you may find yourself wondering which superhero it's been designed for. "It's a little over the top, but it's sophisticated, not vulgar," says the company's founder and managing director Matt Chambers, who is quick to differentiate his vision of a hot rod from that of the competition: something light-years away from the chromium monstrosities typically lacquered with heavy metal decals.

Chambers is a purist, an individualist and an aficionado of both motorcycle history and Ayn Rand. "I think she's right about everything," he says, citing the mother of Objectivism, whom he credits with being just as much an inspiration as golden era motorcycle manufacturers like Brough Superior, Vincent and Crocker. The Wraith is a postmodern remix of the pre-1916 motoring era, when daredevil riders

strapped themselves to a bike and went around a 45-degree track at 75 mph with no brakes. "There was something creative and romantic about that period," he says. "We were very inspired by it."

Chambers compares the company's design approach to that of the watch industry, where artistry and literal transparency are key. "With the Wraith, you have all these very difficult but necessary engineering solutions and you want to visually engage a person with all that craftsmanship." This mantra extends from the wiring harness—which has a transparent shield that displays the intricate electric threads—to the use of paint, not employed for decorative reasons, but simply as an anti-corrosive agent. "It's skeletal minimalism," he says.

"There's nothing frail about it. If it's skeletal, then it's big boned," adds production designer Brian Chase, whose final draft of the 400 lb, 125 hp bike is the basis for the production model, only 250 of which will be constructed. "It's all about thick parts and beefy connections. Robust connectivity. Not rigid suspension, but a rigid chassis. You don't often see that in motorcycle design."

As far as having an Elsworth Tooney to his Howard Roark, Chambers doesn't see one. "There hasn't been a motorcycle that costs three times more than any other brand since the 1930s," he explains. "Talking about being avant-garde may be a little hokey, but we just want to be in the lead." So who is the perfect consumer for such a machine? "Someone who seeks truth through reason," says Chambers. "I talked to a potential client in Russia who said, 'You make honest machines.'" For an objectivist, that's the highest compliment there is. **CK**



SPEED DEMON: (l-r) Confederate's B120 Wraith is designed so its bulk is pushed farther forward, as a piece of sheet metal is folded around the underside of the bike and bolted to the backbone, guaranteeing a smooth ride; renderings of the Wraiths, the company's carbon fiber and aluminum concept bike, powered by a Kasech V-twin Engine