

Devil Dance

Performance perfection.

By David Morris » In the concrete cocoon of Ecosse Moto Works' Denver warehouse, Donald Atchison forges his industrial art, spurred by his deal with the demons that drive him and stoked by the inspiration of his heroes and icons. One is met at the entrance by neat rows of classic bikes, from Nortons to Velocettes. Upon a diamond-plate dais, the Heretic Ti holds court. The result of four years of research and prototyping, and more than a million dollars invested, this nearly two-liter titanium, chrome molybdenum, billet aluminium, Kevlar and carbon-fiber roadster is designed to shatter the concept of the exotic motorcycle.

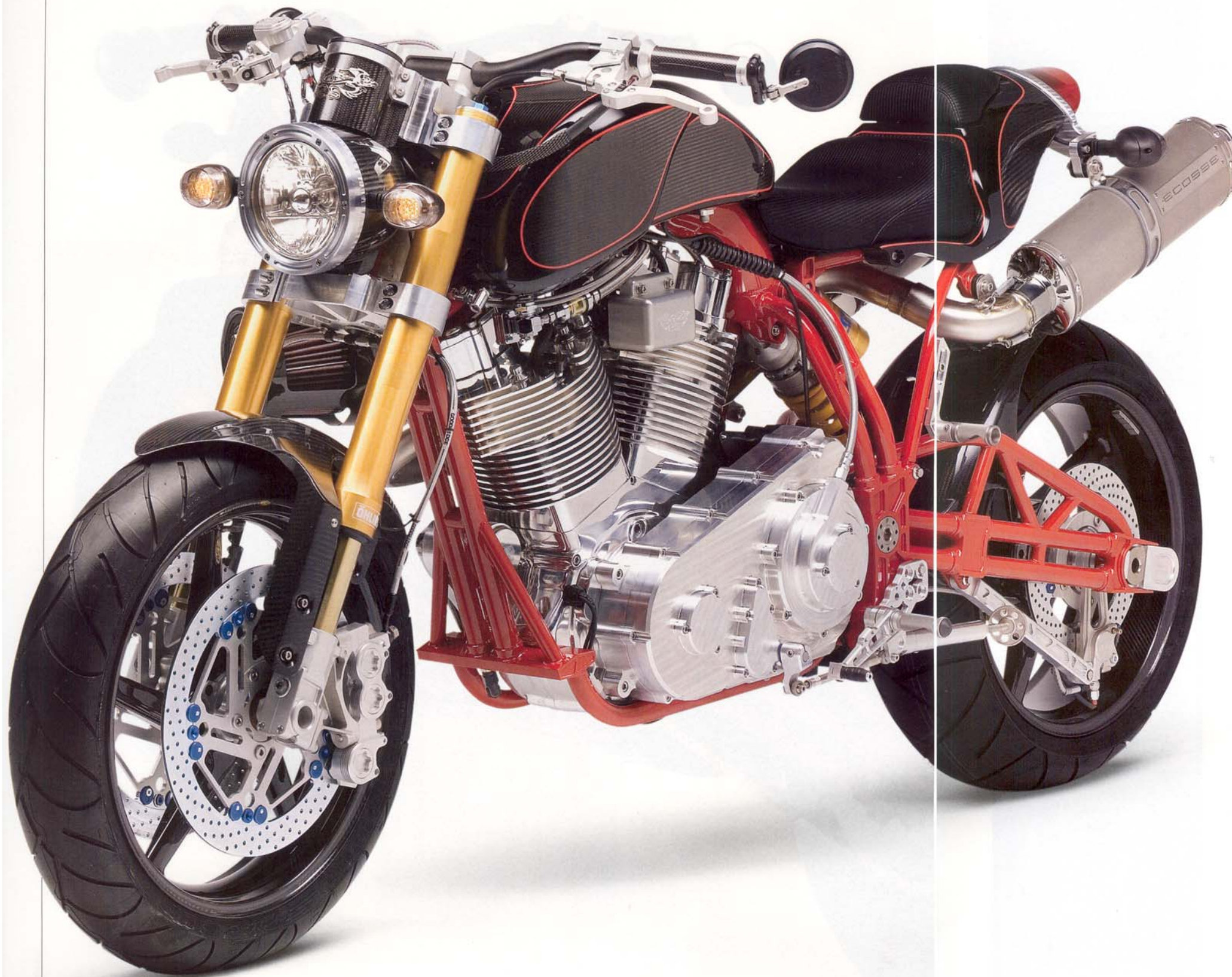
"I call the Heretic the anti-chopper," he says. He believes the styling-for-styling sake trend of customs is waning, as clients look for practicality and performance over posing. The Heretic is, in his words, "the heart of a hot rod in a Grand Prix-level chassis with the style of a '60s Italian muscle car." The development agenda has included best-in-class components, three-dimensional computer modeling, finite element analysis, and thousands of miles of real-world road and track testing. The Ecosse Heretic is cued to the idea of individualism and nonconformity. Only 100 instances will be constructed.

In his quest to create the premier hand-built American V-twin street bike, Atchison has had his share of epiphanies. Having probed his limits as a racer on a Bimota DB4, he turned his talents to the sales of high-end motorcycles in the U.S., working with his wife, Wendy. The couple learned quickly the travails of targeting the narrow end of the niche. It became clear that if they wanted to provide the ultimate motorcycle to their clients, they would have to build it themselves. Armed with a degree in mechanical engineering, an MBA, and his Marine Corps officer's discipline, Atchison took his dreams and sketches on their journey to reality. In 2001, Ecosse Moto Works was born.

Three iterations of the prototype, X1 through X3, the latest being the basis of the limited-production Heretic, have been blessed by an intimate collaboration between Atchison and his technology partners. The powerplants from Patrick Racing and Engenuity have been massaged to match the Heretic's Italian-inspired trellis frame. The 6-speed transmission is a proprietary design built with Baker. Swedish suspension masters Öhlins consider their contribution to the Heretic as a benchmark accomplishment: fully adjustable front forks with Ecosse-specific internals and the rear shock with a unique triple-adjustable setting that allows the Heretic to be at once cruiser, sportbike and dragster. The President and founder of ISR, Acke Rising, personally crafted the six-piston radial caliper braking system. Everything else, from the Momo grips to the BST carbon fiber wheels, is selected for optimal efficiency and effect.

Baroque embellishments abound, such as a spiral machined into the ignition cover; the etched turn signal indicators; the carbon fiber woven leather gel seat; and the bezel-like notches in the headlamp frame. Yet, these never become statements of self-indulgence. "Every esthetic decision is based on something that is useful to the bike," Atchison says. "For example,





when we machined grooves into the crankcase, this was intended to increase and optimize the cooling surface area." Attention to detail is virtually microscopic. The seals are hand-poured urethane that is transferred to vacuum jars to eliminate bubbles. The telescopic side-stand was inspired by the lunar module, but its functionality is pure logic. "Because the Heretic is designed with three adjustable ride height settings and ground clearances, the stand can also be adjusted accordingly."

The smallest pieces are crafted from the finest materials with aerospace precision. I watched as one of his staff finished banjo fittings machined from billet aluminum. Atchison explains: "Castings would limit our ability to change and refine components. Machining means we can build to tolerances that far exceed industry standards." Watch-like design and craftsmanship give the Heretic a personality not unlike grande complication timepieces—and such is Atchison's intent. It is, effectively, a jewel on two wheels. "Our clients often tell us they would like two Heretics, one to ride and one to look at. And that suits us just fine."

To ride it is to court Mephistopheles. The red starter button ignites an explosion of violent harmony. The sound from the pipes is a battery of .50 caliber machine guns. Lightweight, compliant and friendly at a walk or canter, the Heretic feels as bulletproof as a P-47 Thunderbolt. But, it is a Doberman ready to slip its leash, and compels respect. As power is fed in mid-curve, the rear wheel slide brings Moto GP bikes to mind. Atchison's smile tells you this is exactly what he intends. The performance brings us into territory the skilled will be thrilled to explore. At excursions topping the ton, the machine is only just hitting its stride.

From his aerie in the crystal atmosphere of the Colorado peaks, Donald Atchison may well have rewritten the definition of the exotic motorcycle. The fortunate few who acquire this masterpiece will know its true meaning. M

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SPECS

Ecosse Heretic

ENGINE
1966cc, air-cooled V-twin,
Ecosse billet aluminium,
polished finish,
45mm Mikuni carburetor

WEIGHT (DRY)
445 lbs.

MAX TORQUE
142 ft lbs

DRIVE SYSTEM
6-speed transmission
Regina chain final drive



FRONT SUSPENSION
Öhlins;
fully adjustable

REAR SUSPENSION
Öhlins shock for Ecosse; fully
adjustable, including three dif-
ferent
riding modes

EXHAUST
2-into-1-into-2 crossover,
stainless steel pipes,
titanium cans

The red
starter
button
ignites an
explosion
of violent
harmony.

