

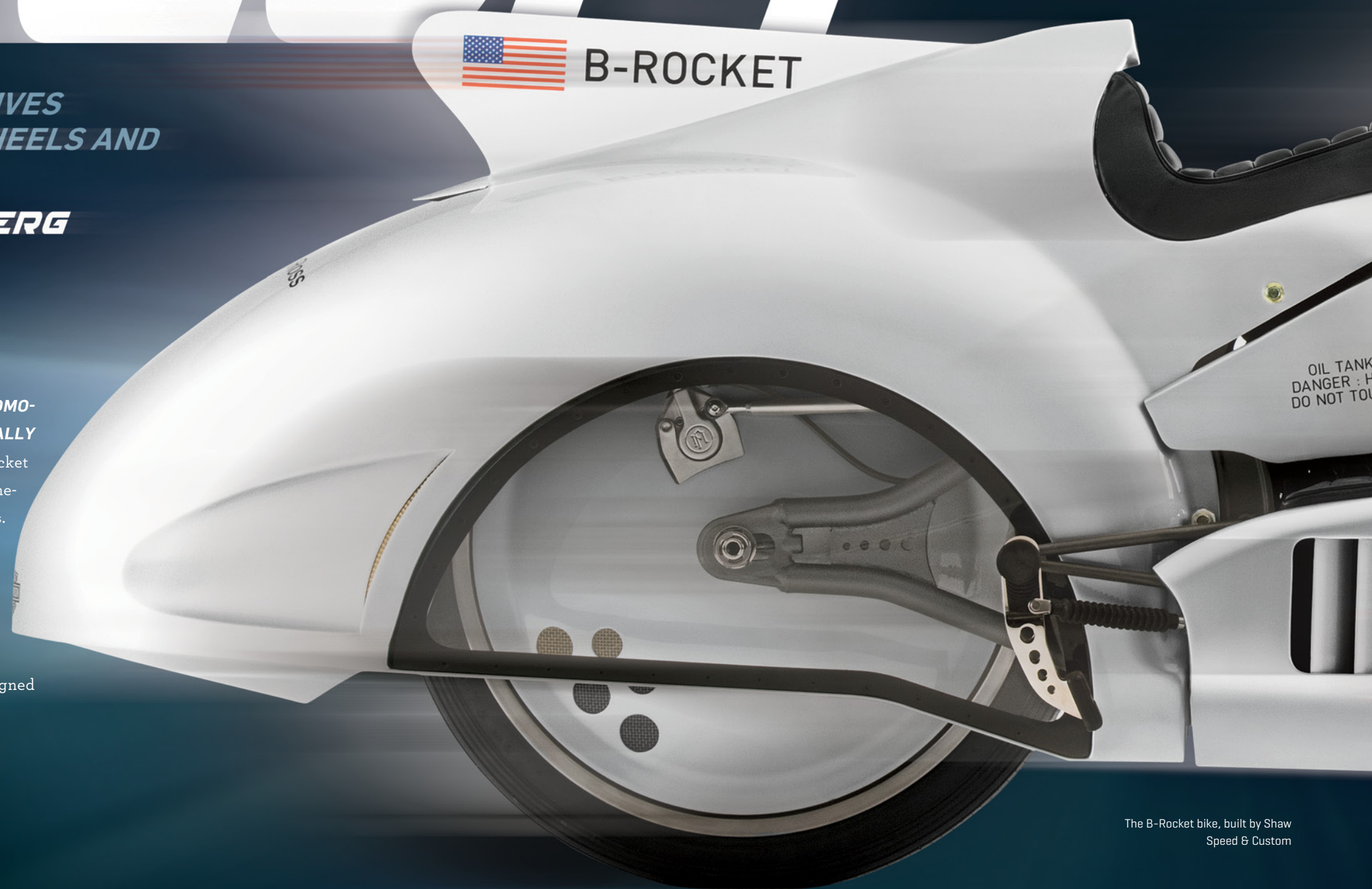
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*BELL & ROSS' LATEST COLLABORATION GIVES
ITS AERONAUTICS HERITAGE TWO WHEELS AND
THE FREEDOM TO HIT THE OPEN ROAD*

BY KEITH W. STRANDBERG

REVIEWED AT THE 29TH INTERNATIONAL AUTOMOBILE FESTIVAL IN JANUARY AND THEN OFFICIALLY UNVEILED AT BASELWORLD IN MARCH, the B-Rocket from Bell & Ross is a total concept, merging motorcycles and timepieces, all designed to evoke the “right stuff” era in aeronautics. This project follows Bell & Ross’ first foray into the world of custom motorcycles, when the watchmaker partnered with the UK’s Shaw Speed & Custom to create a Nascafe Racer with Bell & Ross graphics and a BR 01 watch mounted on the gas tank. Now Bell & Ross and Shaw have teamed up again to create the B-Rocket, and, this time, the concept features two brand new timepieces, designed specifically to complement the custom-built bike.



The B-Rocket bike, built by Shaw Speed & Custom

"WE HAD TO UNLEARN EVERYTHING WE KNEW AND DEVELOP A BIKE AS IF WE WERE IN THAT ERA." —STEVEN C. WILLIS



"We decided to do another project together to develop a special bike inspired by the Bell & Ross universe," explains Bruno Belamich, creative director for the independent watch company. "We wanted to design a bike like a plane. The lines of the bike are inspired by aerodynamics and the speed bikes and planes of the 1960s—it's a neo-retro concept. The most mythical period in aeronautics is the '60s and '70s, with all those experimental planes and radical concepts, so out there that sometimes you don't even understand what it is—is it a futuristic concept or something from another planet? This era expresses innovation and intelligence. It's a timeless moment."

For Shaw Speed & Custom, the goal was to build something unique, something stimulating to the eye, and something that would be appreciated by the motorcycle com-



The project produced a pair of B-Rocket watches in addition to the B-Rocket motorcycle

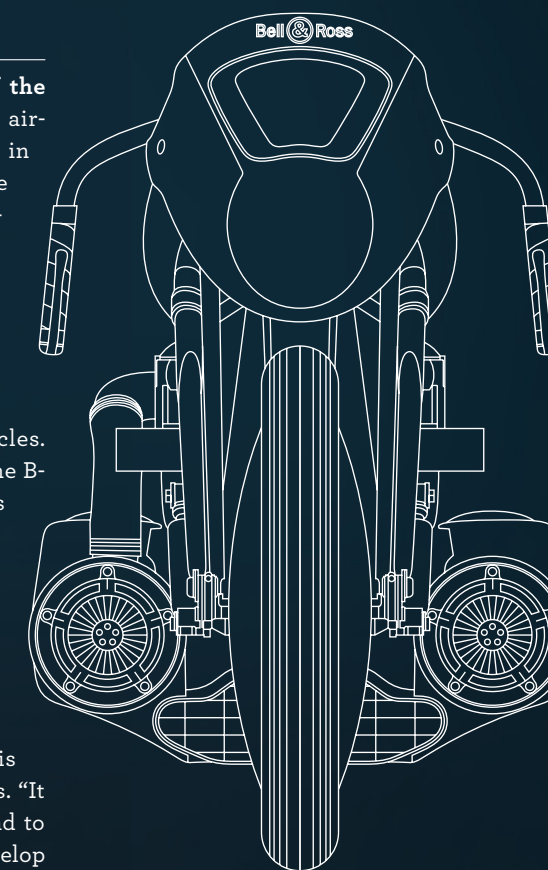
munity. "It is a straight line bike, airplane meets motorcycle," says Steven C. Willis, team principal, Shaw Speed & Custom. "I wanted it to be recognized for its engineering rather than just a bike that someone put their brand name on. I wanted to make sure everything we did was backed up by mechanical works."

a bike as if we were in that era. The most exciting part for me is when the frame, wheels and engine come together, and the bike comes to life. I love working with the Bell & Ross brand. The first Bell & Ross bike was pretty sensational for both of us, so to beat that was always the task, and I think we've done that with the B-Rocket."

THE BIKE

The bike is gorgeous, evocative of the era of the daredevil test pilots, fast airplanes and pushing every envelope in sight. Built for the straight line of the Bonneville Salt Flats, the motorcycle looks fast, even standing still. Shaw used the Harley-Davidson Softail Blackline FXS as a starting point, but everything was modified for the B-Rocket. The finished bike looks like nothing else in the history of motorcycles. Streamlined and aerodynamic, the B-Rocket is meant to go fast. It has a jet-style nosecone, a shape that protects the pilot from the wind blast, twin turbines on either side of the engine and a fin at the back. The 1,584-cc V-Twin engine has a custom exhaust system that sounds, in a word, awesome.

"I love that we have captured this era of the 1960s and '70s," says Willis. "It was an exciting project in that we had to unlearn everything we knew and develop



B-Rocket watches: the BR 01 chronograph (left) and the BR 03 with big date and power reserve, \$5,800–\$7,200

THE WATCHES

Bell & Ross' two new B-Rocket watches launched at Baselworld are the 46-mm BR 01 B-Rocket and the 42-mm BR 03 B-Rocket. The former is a chronograph with tachymeter scale and three uniquely designed counters. The latter is a three-hand model with a large date window and power-reserve indication. The padded leather of the straps is directly inspired by the bike's cushioning, on which the rider lies almost completely prone to pilot the bike. "I like how the watch fits into the overall design mission," says Belamich. "It's a perfect mix between the plane and the bike. When you see it, you know it is a part of the concept."

THE WORLD TOUR

Like the Nascade Racer that preceded it, the B-Rocket will tour the world, appearing at watch and motorcycle events and even entering some competitions. "It is designed to show our customers what can be done, to allow them to dream," says Belamich. "With this project, we've done much more than simply put our logo on something. We've demonstrated our creativity applied to a motorcycle. When you see the bike, you see a motorcycle, a plane and a Bell & Ross watch all in one."

bellross.com, shawspeedandcustom.co.uk

