

Power

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IF YOU THINK you can get the full effect of a chopper by seeing one side of it, think again. "When we took the Torch Bike to Ocean City for the first time, during Bike Week, we noticed a circle of footprints around it," says Rick Hill, CEO of Metropolitan Choppers in Frederick, Maryland. "We looked at bikes on either side of us and there were only half circles. People wanted to see all sides of our bike." Hill and team's philosophy is that each chopper should be tailored to the individual riding it. "We customize it like a suit. We measure your reach and the length of your legs, and make sure the bike fits you," he says.

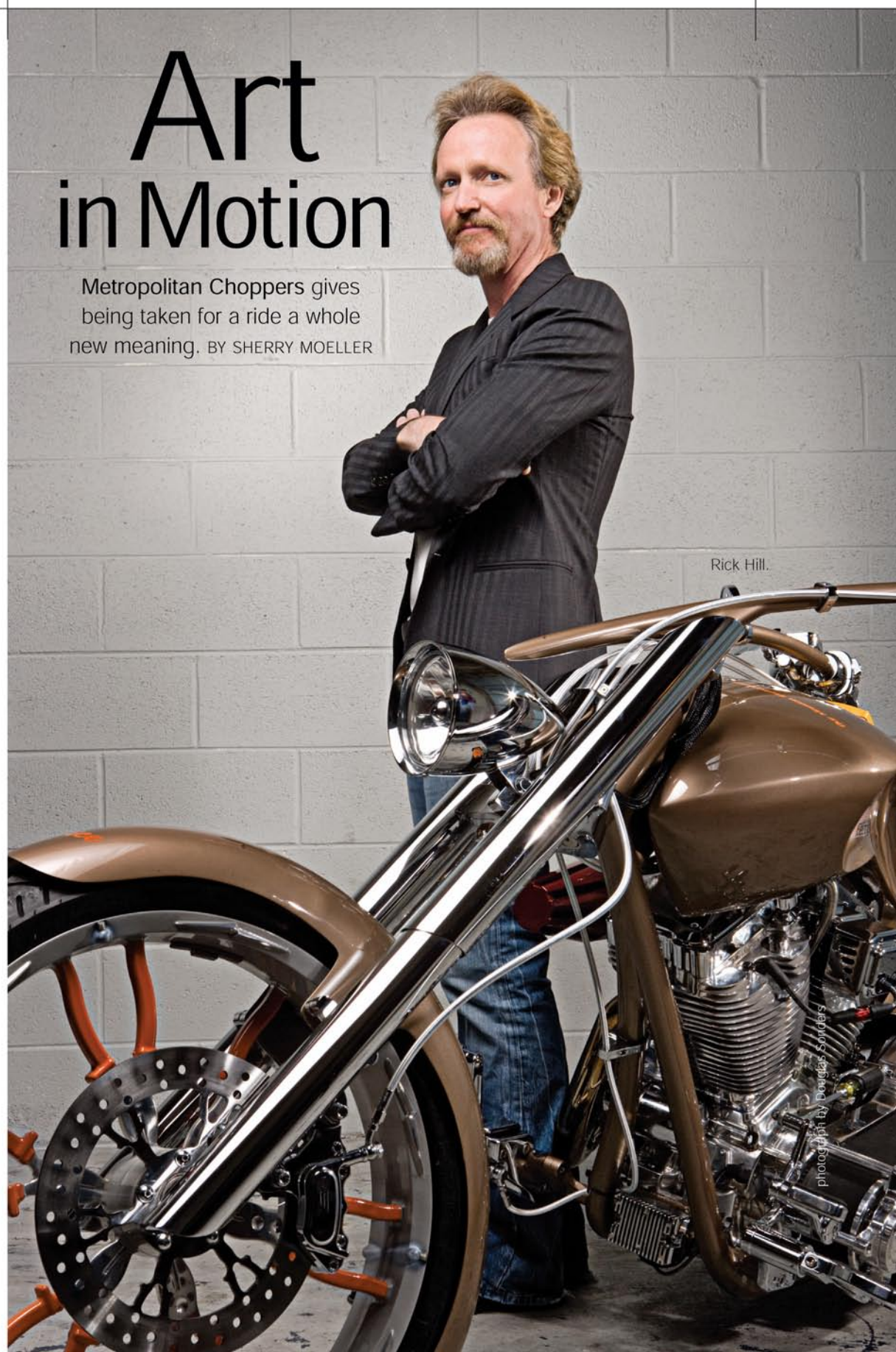
Hill has always loved motorcycles, but took a hiatus from riding while his children were young. Instead, he dedicated himself to the company his father, Jim Hill, founded in 1970—Metropolitan Steel. Years later, with a renewed interest in bikes, he recruited coworkers and used available materials from his business to design and build a chopper with a steel theme, and the Torch Bike was born. He found talent in his midst, including "Big Dan" Kessinger, who just launched an assemblage of choppers and a clothing line in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, in May.

Word spread, and soon Hollywood came knocking. Hill has manufactured choppers for Fear Factor on short notice. A typical build takes between three and eight months, with Metropolitan Choppers producing only 12 bikes a year. The bikes are also a sensational marketing tools, as seen in "The Sirens of TI," a chopper designed for Treasure Island Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. The chopper, which features the figure of a woman, is such a draw that the casino is debuting a "Sirens" clothing collection this summer.

Hill says he's also proud of what he's done outside the shop; he's helped to build Hagerstown High School's athletic field and has donated a Dragon chopper to Deborah Higgins, whose son was killed in Iraq, for her July 26 National Fallen Heroes Memorial fundraiser, which honors those who gave their lives in the war. Hill's motto is to leave the earth a little better than he found it. But while he's here, Hill is certainly making life for the lucky riders of his bikes a lot more fun. Visit metropolitanchoppers.com.

Art in Motion

Metropolitan Choppers gives
being taken for a ride a whole
new meaning. BY SHERRY MOELLER



Rick Hill.

photograph by Douglas Snyder