

wp Closer Inspection

Real steel

For Maryland builder, bikes are outlets for creativity

BY KRIS CORONADO

When it comes to making custom motorcycles, Jeff Yarrington has one rule: No Harleys. “I like niche markets,” the 47-year-old says of eschewing the legendary bike brand. “I like underdogs.”

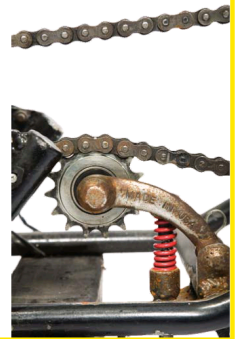
Yarrington (*Jeffyarrington.com*) has been building and outfitting bikes in Mount Airy the past two years. A gleaming black frame of a 1969 441 BSA sits on a worktable in his shed. Soon, he’ll add a light he made out of an oversize marble that will indicate when the bike’s high beam is on. On

another stand, a bare steel bike is waiting for a back wheel and copper accents along its body.

Yarrington worked in area auto body and paint shops for 30 years before starting Saint Motor Co. in 2011. He had hoped to retrofit bikes to his own design then sell them, but he ended up building more custom rides for clients, which “just kills the creativity,” he says. He’ll go back to retrofitting bikes after finishing two remaining custom jobs. Here, Yarrington is remaking a bike to his own specifications using found objects.



He estimates the bike weighs about 380 pounds — 20 pounds more than the original — with his embellishments, which include a **seat** crafted from an antique carriage step and a flag pole cap.



Yarrington goes antiques hunting to find parts for his bike. Here, the handle of an old **meat grinder** becomes the lever on the chain tensioner. In addition to bikes, he also creates metal art from repurposed objects.

To start the engine, you don’t turn the **ignition key**; you just plug it in, says Yarrington, who created the key from a lipstick case and a guitar jack. He estimates he has put about 120 hours of work into the bike and needs 30 more to finish.



Yarrington welded **metal sheets** over the bike’s original frame. “I was going to paint it vintage racing green or black, but everybody who’s seen it says to leave the bare metal.”

Yarrington says he’s going for a “20,000 Leagues Under the Sea” look with his bike. It even features a **fin** on the back. He’s unsure if he’ll sell it or how much he’ll ask for it if he does. “Most bikes I’ve done go from \$8,000 to \$11,000. This one I have no idea.”

Bought on Craigslist two years ago for \$1,200, this **1972 Triumph T120** is named Tesla, in honor of inventor Nikola Tesla, “who was way ahead of his time,” Yarrington says.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BENJAMIN C. TANKERSLEY

