



Written by
Robin Bradley
robb@dealer-world.com

Best known for their range of aftermarket front ends, the Hanlon brothers have turned to a near hundred year-old motorcycle for inspiration for an all new-made production bike that is a homage to the craftsmen of years gone by...

'Gray Ghost' back in production. Really!

A LIFE-LONG mold maker and machinist, Mike Hanlon is clearly a man who likes a challenge! With his brother Tim, his 'day job' is operating Mean Street Products, the front suspension and accessories manufacturing business that he and his brother Tim founded 9 years ago in their native El Paso, Texas.

These days Mean Street has a popular range of some 40 front ends, and has done much to help popularize the concept of the inverted front fork. Operating out of 40,000 sq ft, the company has some 27 employees and is a regular presence at the V-Twin Expo, among other events, and has an American made product line that wins friends in the custom dealer community for price as well as design.

However, this story isn't about Mike's 'day job', this story is about how a man who has spent all his working life involved in the casting/business became fascinated with the "unbelievable quality and tolerances" of the casting that was taken for granted as standard practice a hundred years ago, and as a result developed a fascination for the early single cylinder Harley that borders on the obsessive.

The bike you see here is no lovingly restored original, oh no. The bike you see here is a hand-built, faithful-as-possible newly engineered single inspired by the 1910 Harley-Davidson single that became known as the 'Silent Gray Ghost'.

Right down to the 'beefy' style 440cc engine with its one-piece cylinder and head construction, this is a brand new working and rideable motorcycle that has been built to be as new as humanly possible accurate and faithful to the materials and technology of the original.



Mike Hanlon: "we are manufacturing them as new motorcycles, just as faithful to the original materials and technology as we can be!"

"Those guys back then were incredible craftsmen," Mike told AMD. "What they achieved, with the materials and tools at their disposal back then, is truly awe inspiring," he says.

This project started to take shape seven years ago, and Mike is putting this bike into a 1,000 plus production run. Two designs are available. The original street version and the board track version which you see here with its race style drop bars and no fenders.

"The sheet metal was the biggest challenge," Mike says. "The original steel that Harley used was incredibly fragile at just 26 gauge and very, very difficult to work with. The only area of the motorcycle where you could say we have had to adopt modern alternatives to the original materials and processes, is with the tank and fenders. The tank is actually a one-piece cast aluminum construction, but other than that everything else has been re-made as exactly as it was originally as is humanly possible."

That even includes the tires. Mike has had new molds made for 1,000 pairs of button tread white tires, and over 150 molds and all the tooling have been made by Mike and his team in-house.

"We are not a foundry, so we don't pour our own metal, but other than that, and some of the specialist leather work for the 1 1/2" belt and the seat, everything is hand-crafted by us." That includes the motor, which has been cast to the original design.

The bikes, which will be available fully assembled with paint options or as kits, will have made their debut at the V-Twin Expo, Cincinnati, at the start of February, and are being sold as collectors items. But