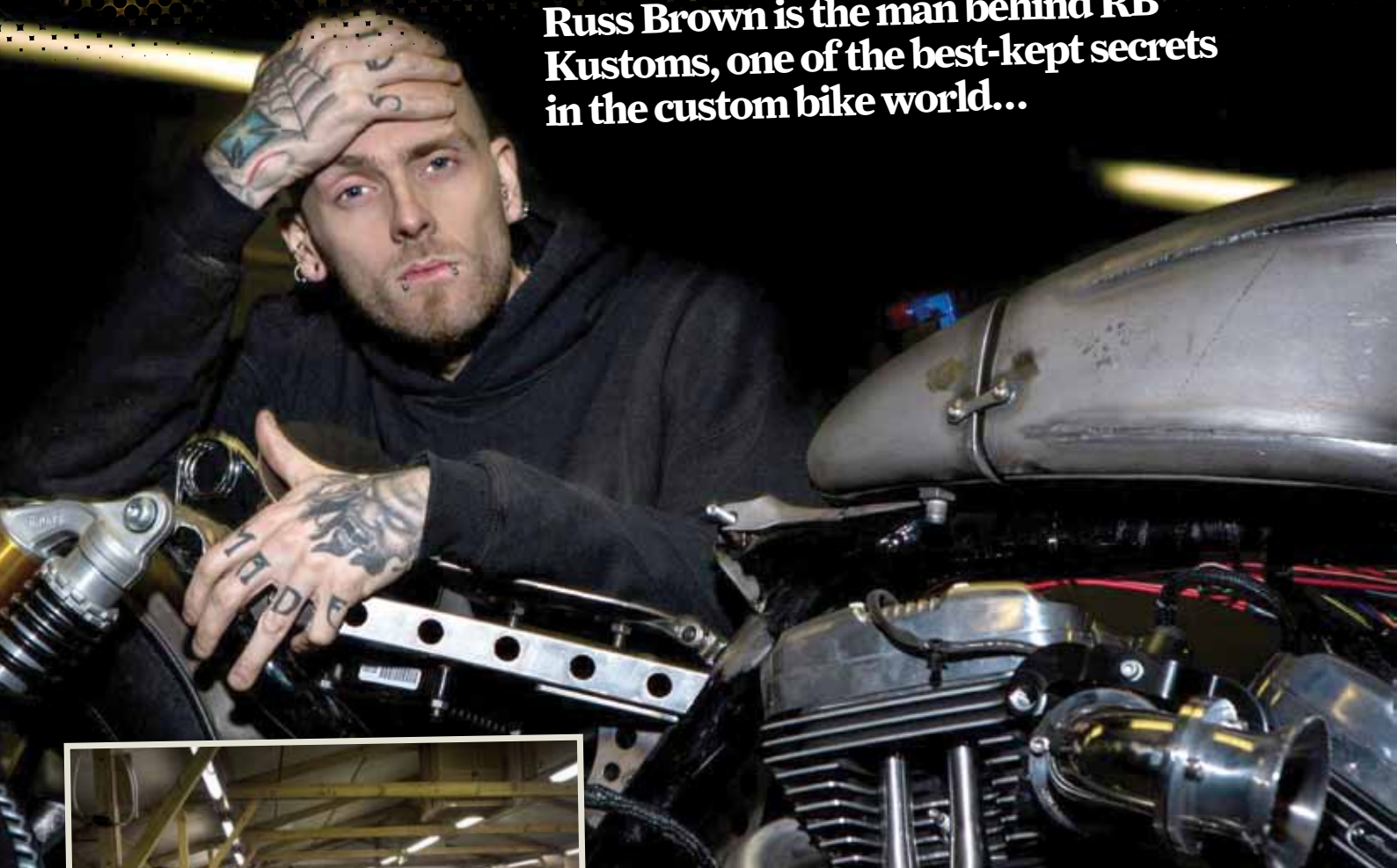




AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT ONE OF THE
LEADING FIGURES OF THE INDUSTRY

RUSS BROWN

Russ Brown is the man behind RB Kustoms, one of the best-kept secrets in the custom bike world...



AT WHAT AGE DID YOU GET INTO BIKES?

I've been into bikes and cars since about the age of 15; more so cars than bikes, because I wasn't allowed a bike due to my mum putting her foot down. I was a bit of a late starter on bikes—I started at age 22 when I used to ride my motocross bike everywhere, including on the roads.

My first legal bike to go on the road was a Yamaha XS650; I bought it because I knew that I wanted to do a custom build for myself using this particular

engine. I bought the bike standard and rode it as it was for about four months so I could get a few miles and some riding experience under my belt.

AND HOW SOON AFTER THAT INTO CUSTOMS?

I got into customs about eight years later when I was 30. I was watching the usual stuff on Discovery Channel and thought 'I can do that'. I'd been a welder/ fabricator since the age of 16 so kinda had a pretty good head start to get me going, and I was getting bored with my everyday job.

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RB Kustoms was born in July 2011 after Russ found that he just didn't have the time to do his full-time job and work on people's bikes at the same.

He now does fabrication and also full builds for customers, as well as a fair amount of fabrication for Warr's Harley-Davidson in London, which'll give some indication of the regard he's held in.



I started to customise some of my friends' bikes in my spare time which, in turn, led to me getting more and more private work than I had spare time for, so I took the plunge and quit my day job and set up RB Kustoms. I've not looked back since!

My first custom for myself was my XS650. I stripped the bike, sold all the bits apart from the engine, and started to build the hardtail frame. I still haven't quite finished it two-and-a-half years later; finding time to work on my own bike is near-on impossible due to work commitments!

WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR INSPIRATION? WHO ARE YOUR HEROES (BIKING OR OTHERWISE)?

I find a lot of my inspiration just through the passion I have in my work and in trying out different things. I guess a lot of it is 'thinking outside the box' and just being creative. Being creative to me means being different, and there's nothing wrong with being different and standing out from the crowd.

My hero has to be Jesse James. He has a great mindset and is one of the most skilled fabricators on this planet. Seeing what he was doing back in the '90s was the reason I got into welding/ fabrication in the first place; not so much the interest in bikes as such, but in the hardcore fabrication. I think I've adopted the same way of thinking as him; if it looks cool, then it is cool!



WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE BIKE YOU'VE BUILT? AND WHY?

I haven't really got one; every time I finish a bike it seems to become my favourite. That's mainly because with every bike I do, I always start the build thinking to myself, 'how can I possibly better my last build?'

I think it's a good way to be, as you constantly set the bar a little higher each time and then strive to clear it. And, when you do, it's best feeling in the world!

WHERE DO YOU SEE CUSTOM BIKE BUILDING GOING IN THE FUTURE?

Hmm, I'm not sure, that's a tough one. I do feel that it's a tough to keep being recognised in this game and keep the work coming in. I think laws are gonna come into play in the future which will make it harder for us custom bike builders to stay in business and survive doing what we love doing.

I think that 'big money builds' are few and far between now, due to the economy and people wanting to build a bike on a budget, and I think they're going to get fewer. I'm finding more people are asking me to do the



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skilled fabrication and then they want to take the bike away to finish themselves.

I'm noticing people shying away from Harleys because of the costs, and going down the path of doing cheaper, more unusual bikes. This then creates a really cool trend which loads of people follow, and conversely, that puts up the price of whatever bike is in at the time. Then it's time to move onto something else, something different, and the whole cycle starts again.

So I think if you can move with the times, and try different things, then you'll do just fine and keep the industry alive.



RB Kustoms are at Unit 2A, Thornhill Court, Coolham, West Sussex (RH13 8QN), and their phone number is **01403 741037**. Check them out on Facebook or go to their new website at www.rbkustoms.co.uk.

