

Bartering Old-School at Daytona Four-Way Trade Reveals Biker Values

FOR THOSE WHO SAY THE MOTORCYCLE INDUSTRY HAS LOST ITS WAY and that everyone involved is just interested in making a buck, we offer this story of old-school values from Daytona Bike Week.

It started at February's V-Twin Expo in Cincinnati, when Ami James and Marlowe B. of Love Hate Choppers met up with Duane Ballard of Duane Ballard Custom Leather. James and Marlowe were working on their debut bike and knew that they would need a custom seat to match the quality of the rest of their machine. They walked the floor of the show, and Ballard pointed out seats he had done for various builders.

Blown away by what they saw, James and Marlowe were even more impressed when Ballard offered to hand-tool a seat in exchange for a tattoo by James. Ballard, a huge Evel Knievel fan, wanted something to commemorate the motorcycle daredevil, so he called George Sedlak, Evel Knievel's painter, to see if he could get a sketch of the original *Color Me Lucky* helmet to use as the basis for his artwork.

Sedlak worked up a design from archival photos, and when Ballard saw the artwork, he knew it was exactly what he was looking for.

James decided to do the tattooing while he was in Daytona, so he called a friend, Gordon Chippewa, who contacted Chris Mack of East Side Tattoo. Mack was totally psyched to help out a fellow artist.

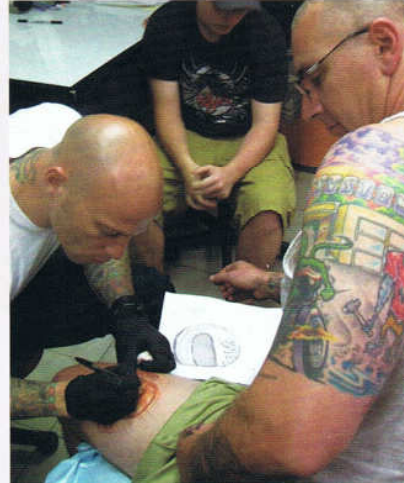
James wanted to add something of his own to Sedlak's design, and he decided on a Rat Fink-type guy wearing the Evel Knievel helmet. It would be an Ami James original.

While Ballard was getting tattooed, he spotted a rug by tattoo artist Chris Hawkens that was also reminiscent of Evel Knievel. On the spot, he made a deal to trade another custom seat for the rug.

Meanwhile, James and Marlowe asked Sedlak if he would be willing to hand-letter Marlowe's bike and pinstripe James' bike. George agreed to do that, and Carrie Repp of R&R Promotions offered the Dog House Bar and Grill as the place to get it done.

When Sedlak walked into the Dog House, he found himself in a great location to ply his trade — in front of a huge audience. With the music blaring and bikers peering over his shoulder, the pressure was on, but Sedlak lettered the bike flawlessly.

In the end, everyone involved took away more from the exchange than simple profit. And it reinforced the notion that when several artists get together, anything can happen. — *Ken Conte*



The four-way deal: Ami James gets to work on Duane Ballard's tattoo



Ballard's contribution: a hand-tooled Love Hate Choppers seat



The final piece: a rug with an Evel look