

THE KING OF FLAMES

DAVE PEREWITZ

When it comes to true master custom bike builders, the old guard of original custom builders are few and far between. I'm talkin' about the guys who started the whole chopper craze. When you think about the top three master bike

builders of the old guard of fabricators, only three men tick all the boxes to be named the best of the best. Those three intrepid bike builders are the late Arlen Ness, Donnie Smith, and Dave Perewitz.

The noble originator of "the Look" of what a chopper should be is Dave Perewitz

of Halifax, Massachusetts. His Cycle Fabrications shop has been around since 1971. Dave is known worldwide as "the King of Flames" and his amazing flame-painted designs have become legendary. Nobody paints flames like Dave. He began by painting his own 1964 Sportster and





rode it to Laconia where he and it won rave reviews. This led to more bikes, more customizing and more paintjobs. In 1975 he met California builder Arlen Ness at a Detroit show and formed a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

Soon selling Arlen Ness parts, painting and building bikes, Dave was instrumental in creating the long and lean nimble look

of what have become known as “Digger-style” bikes. Along with another lifelong best friend, bike builder Donnie Smith, Dave, Arlen and Donnie formed the trifecta of custom builders of the 1970’s and ’80’s, achieving god-like status in the biker world through exposure in custom bike magazines like this one.

Dave has built bikes for celebrities such

as Hulk Hogan as well as NASCAR drivers, NFL greats, and rock stars. Owning a Dave Perewitz custom motorcycle became a true status symbol for many riding celebrities. Then, stardom came knocking at his own door when he appeared in TV episodes of The Discovery Channel’s “Great Biker Build-off” series. After many years in the motorcycle



industry, Dave Perewitz was suddenly an overnight star!

Dave is one of the original Hamsters. These custom bike riding scalawags are known for doing good deeds for charities all across America and the riding club is made up of custom bike builders from all over the globe. Charter members include Dave Perewitz, Donnie Smith, Arlen Ness,

Ed Kerr, Barry Cooney, Steve Allington, and Jim Leahy. It all started during Daytona Bike week back in 1978 at the Mystic Sea Hotel. As the story goes, Jimmy woke up from a nap to find himself totally alone. His riding buddies had ditched him, and a bit peeved, he started calling them "Hamsters." He drew Ed "Big Daddy" Roth-style hamsters on paper plates along

with their names and taped them to the doors of their rooms. The Hamster name stuck and today, there are hundreds of members with chapters in Italy, England, even Japan.

With many celebrity bike builds and television notoriety under his belt, Dave changed the name of his company to Perewitz Cycle Fabrication. His sensational





Biker Build-off episodes included one where we went up against Billy Lane and a second episode put him up against Paul Yaffe. Fame did not hurt Dave's growing business and in 2004 he moved into a 12,000 square-foot, state-of-the art facility that includes his custom fabrication shop, a down draft paint booth, and a full retail store that showcases many of his legendary custom bikes. When he's not on the road at a bike event, pressing the flesh, you'll find him behind a paint gun, doing what he loves most.

Dave's daughter Jody has taken over the family business and is an incredible bike builder and custom painter in her own right. Plus, she's one of the fastest women on two wheels, racing bikes from Bonneville to the Motorcycle Cannonball and Sons of Speed and currently holds 16 land speed records.

I've had the pleasure of knowing Dave and Jody for over 30 years. Mike Lichter and I were looking back are remembering when Jody was just a little kid, attending bike events with her dad. It has been an

honor watching these two survive and thrive in a very competitive business. They aren't only extremely talented; Harley oil runs in their veins and they truly live to ride. Plus, they are magnificent people. Once you know the Perewitz clan, you are friends for life.

—Dave Nichols

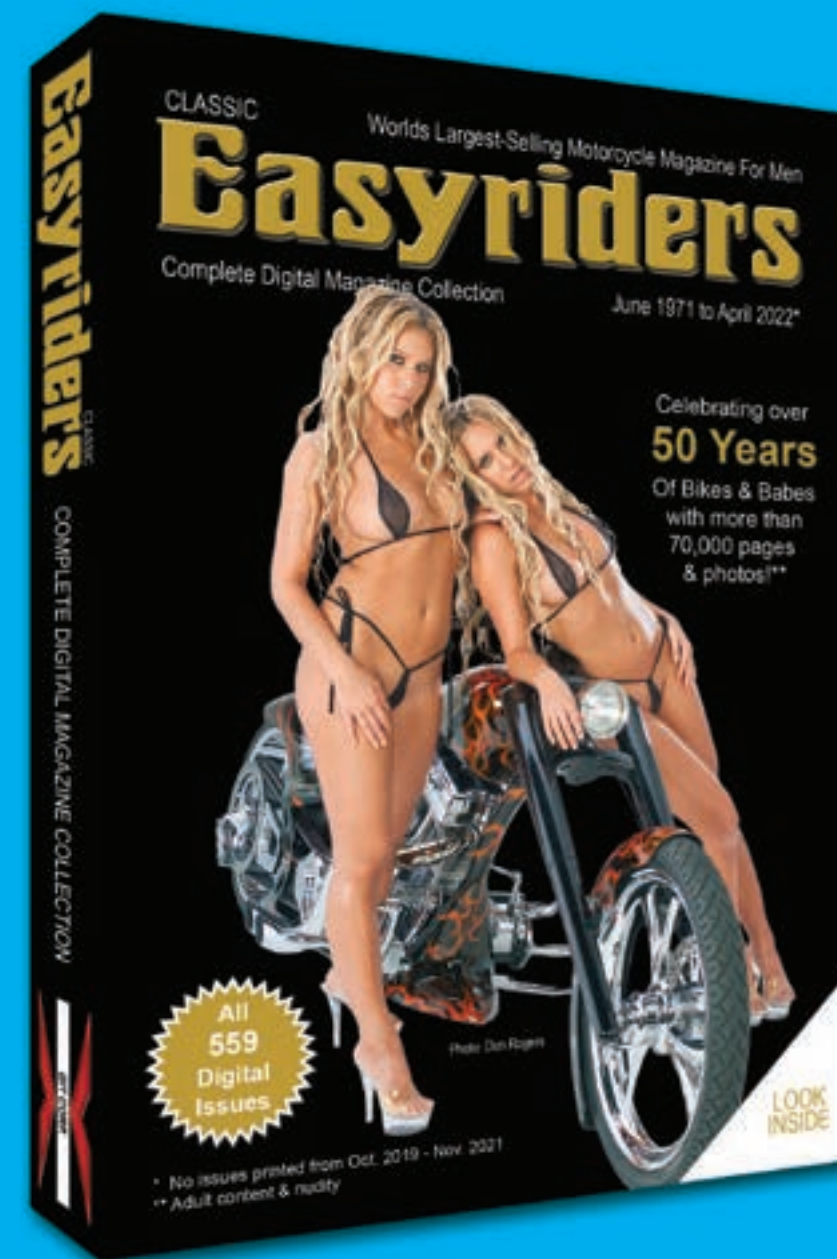
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