

VSRN-ONLINE

Vintage Slot Racing Newsletter

Greg Holland, Ye Olde Editor

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From The Editor

Hi Gang-

Due to Big Daddy Roth's passing, the content this month is a bit different than originally intended. Check out the Revell "Rat Fink In Lotus" and "Mr Gasser in BRM" iron-ons in the VSRN Library.

Next time, I'll be starting a series on home track layouts. Using some of the neat software that's out there, I'll show you how to recreate some famous US tracks, including some you may not have thought of in a long time!

Plus, I'll also be building up a long delayed 1/32 scale Cobra Daytona Coupe, using both old and new goodies.

As the result of an e-mail request, I've scanned a Russkit pamphlet that shows you how to built both an inline and a sidwinder frame from brass. Check the VSRN Reference Library under Russkit. At some time, I may put together a CD with all kinds of oddball things not posted on the VSRN Web Site. I'll keep you posted.

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome - I do appreciate the feedback!
You can contact us at: greg@vsronline.com

Keep It In The Slot !!!

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Rat Fink Forever

By Ye Olde Editor

On April 4th, 2001, the world lost Rat Fink's father – Ed "Big Daddy" Roth.

He started working on real cars at age 14, when he got a 33 Ford Coupe. Around this time (1946), he became really impressed with a new material – fiberglass - that Ford was touting as the material of the future. The demo was of Henry Ford wacking a trunklid made of 'glas with a sledge, and all it did was bounce off. High School, Junior College, then a stint in the Airforce, and it was 1955. He obviously had been thinking about cars the whole time he was in the service, because when he came out, he started hustling to make ends meet by pinstriping and flaming cars, and by 1957 had joined forces with "The Baron", and went into business with him as "The Crazy Painters". By 1958, business was so good that he quit his day job at Sears, and went full time. By the end of '58 they ran this ad in the digest sized Rod & Custom:



Note the mention of "Individually Styled Weird-O Shirts". These started out as t-shirts (or sweatshirts) with a name on it, drawn in magic marker, with color added from a spray can. Caricatures soon followed, which evolved into how gross could you make the person look. From this the "monster" designs developed – no cars, just grotesque "outer space" creatures.

At that time, Disneyland was all the rage in California, and all the goody-two-shoes stuff was the complete opposite of what Big Daddy and the Hot Rod Kool movement was all about. BD came up with a critter to counter Mickey Mouse – and Rat Fink was born! Here's the recently reissued Revell plastic model kit:



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Letters To The Editor

Greg,

I'm another VSRN reader who was wondering whether you went to the Web! Fortuitously, I did a keyword search on "anglewinder" looking for chassis, and an Old Weird Herald citation came up that directed me to you. Since I still have 60-70 cars from the late 60's and 70's, including a number of Auto World products, I'm interested in your contributions on the vintage "knowledge".

I can verify that EJ's is still around, or at least their product is available on a couple of the 1/32 scale web sites. I too am wondering about Mike Gillette, he was a good source of Strombecker parts.

Anyway, good to see VSRN on the Web!

Alan Brugler
Omaha, NE

(ED NOTE: Yep Mike Gillett is still around also – I recently got his latest list: Note the new Area Code....

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Hey Greg!!

Stumbled across VSRN on-line today. You sure kept that a secret!! Glad to see you are out here with us 21st century computer nerds on the web. Still racing here in Detroit, and now I got some good reading to do. I sure miss getting VSRN in the mail. But now I am three on-line issues behind!! Your site looks great. I always enjoyed your writing style and I see that you haven't lost your touch. Keep up the good work.

Dave Thomas aka SmokyLinks@aol.com
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Hi Greg,

I was just searching around and found the article you wrote about the variations in Strombecker track. I have a variation you didn't mention, and quite a few pieces of it too. It has the aluminum rails but they are stapled in place and not glued. There are 5 mini staples per rail on the standard curves. They look like the sandblasted surface with the inner lip and marked "Dowst". I have been trying to use some of the outer curves by removing the staples and rails and replacing them with glued on braid. They are too lumpy and have bad conductivity as they were originally.

Besides that I have definitely seen literature on the 3 lane sets and I think I have seen a piece or two in my travels but have always been concentrating on the 4 lane stuff.

So far I have been experimenting with a few pieces of standard radius curve. I've removed the staples and laid

braid into the recess, but I'm looking for the proper thickness of braid that is the right level. I have several braids, some extra from my 8 lane commercial track, some from a co-axial cable and some from an old microphone chord which looks too narrow.

I designed and built a 4 lane track in my buddy's basement, and I loaned him 8 pieces of outside curve to complete it. He already had 16 pieces from a set. I put 6 of the stapled variety together into one turn, but it is too lumpy and conductivity is bad so I have to repair it.

As far as glue, I used contact cement on my commercial track when I restored it, and reglued about 1/2 mile of braid that way. I still have to make repairs to it as time goes by, since pieces come loose. There are 16 lines of braid @ 165 ft. each on the Kingleman, which is set up now in a warehouse. I still have my 36 ft. 4 lane Strombecker track set up here at my home, but I had 16 pieces of the steel rail outside curves for that.

I want to use 4 single lengths of braid for the 6 pieces of curved track and then connect it at each end of the curve, to the power source. This has to be better than what we have now! The layout uses 96 straights, 24 outside curves and 12 standard curves, so conductivity is a priority. Two of the lanes are working fine, with no jumper wires, but the other two need some help. We are still working on skid aprons and then guard rails outside the aprons. I'll keep you posted on our progress.

Keep on Groovin,

Gary Bluestone

(ED NOTE: Thanks for the info on the "new" variety of Strombecker track. I now have photos of a 3 lane set, and a number of references to it. It still amazes me that we're still finding out about stuff that's been around almost 40 years! At some point in time, I will be updating the Strombecker Track article. GREG)

Dear Greg,

The Reference Library and and Article Index are simply superb, You sure are making many hearts happy. Why didn't anybody think of this before ?

I wish you can help. I am earnestly looking for two articles that I guess appeared in around '68. One describing construction of a brass chassis with independent suspension! Actually, I built that chassis at the time and won the Lebanese Championship..I would love to build it again). The second article describes building front wheel steering. Please Help.

Keep Them Rolling.

Best Regards.

NICOLAS BIKHAZI
BEIRUT-LEBANON

(ED NOTE: I haven't be able to find the articles that you mentioned yet. However, I did find an article on DeDion Suspension – these pages are posted under the VSRN Search Index on Construction Articles. GREG)

Rat Fink Forever

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In addition to the obvious driver change, the GMC blower, roll bar and decals are all "special"....plus the steering wheel is gone – obviously not necessary!

The companion kit is "Mr. Gasser In BRM". Big Daddy though of himself as "Mr. Gasser" – sort of a self portrait!



More Roth Art inside:



The official color of the body is listed as "Mildewed Tangerine" !

For a kid who had really enjoyed BDR's creatures (what can I say – it was right for the times!) going to see Big Daddy in person was something I never thought I'd get to do, especially almost 40 years later! My parents had taken me to a "Cavalcade of Cars" car show in Philadelphia in 1963 where he was supposed to make an appearance, but he wasn't there when we were (although "Mouse" was), and I always regretted missing him.

When my buddy and I got to the show in 1999, we walked into the building, and saw his banner up on the back wall,

and the line waiting to see him. We got in line, and bought our share of stuff. We had also come prepared with other stuff for him to sign. As we got closer, he was kind of subdued and tired looking – but it was early Sunday morning, and he had probably flown in on the red-eye. The guy ahead of us had a copy of Roth's autobiography "Confessions of a Rat Fink".

Big Daddy took it, then stopped and got his first bite out of his bagel. He opened the front cover, drew Rat Fink across both pages, and inscribed it "Buffalo Bagels Rule!". My buddy had a Custom Car Show program from the early 70's with one of Roth's cars on it, plus a babe in a bikini. He picked up the program, pointed to the girl and said "You do know that this isn't me, don't you?" and laughed. He called his wife over and repeated it for her. She kind of rolled her eyes, and said "Yes Dear"!

I showed him my "Rat Finks Of America" certificate as a joke to get a conversation started. He took it and scrutinized it carefully – pronouncing it as an original he had done (which I already knew) as opposed to the later ones done by Mooneyes. As we were ready to leave, I asked if I could get a picture of him, and he obliged. Naturally, I neglected to turn on the flash. He said "Try again", and repeated the pose. Here's the shot (note the half eaten bagel in the picture....)



Last Fall, my buddy and I learned that Big Daddy was scheduled to make a repeat appearance in the Buffalo area this June, and we've been making plans ever since. We won't get to see him again, but we've both glad we had our one chance.

Ed "Big Daddy" Roth created enduring characters that were part of American Pop Culture – and went far beyond what he ever thought they would be. They were sure a part of my life – and I'm sure glad they were!

Aloha, Big Daddy

Book Review by *Ye Olde Editor*.

"I Was A Teenage Monster Shirt Painter" by Von Franco

A month or so before I heard of Big Daddy Roth's passing, I saw an ad in Custom Rodder Magazine, for this new book. As I've been infatuated with Weird-O shirts since the ads started appearing in Car Model Magazine back in 1962, (and actually did a half dozen of my own) I knew I just had to get it. A week or so later, the book arrived. What a Gas! A real trip down memory lane!

Von Franco doesn't pretend to tell you how the whole Monster Shirt thing got started, sticking to what he does know, from the time he got into it in the early to mid 60's. He worked for many of the West Coast "names", including Big Daddy, over the past 30 years, and has stories about most of them. Several of these "names" contributed their own stories, including the person that Von Franco himself says is the best shirt painter ever – Ed "Newt" Newton.

The real meat of the book, however, is the page after page of old ads, catalog cuts, and photos of actual shirts. 16 of these pages are in color, which is really rare, since there were never any color ads that I saw, and even catalogs at best had only a color cover. This book is a rare chance to see what the art really looked like! There is at least one ad from each shop/artist who advertised in the magazines of the period.

There is a fair amount of coverage of "Mouse" and the "rivalry" between he and BDR, as hyped up by show promoters. "Mouse" also advertised heavily in the magazines, and I liked his work, but never bought any of it. Of course BDR got famous with his "Rat Fink", which was turned into plastic models by Revell. Mouse's most famous character "Fred Flypogger" was also converted into plastic by Monogram, but it never caught on as well. Of course, "Mouse" went on to fame as the cover artist for the Grateful Dead....

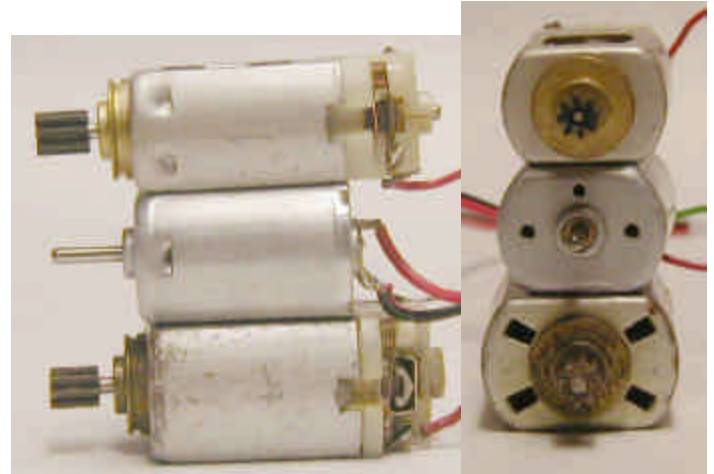
Another interesting feature in the book is pictures of a supposed "Leave It To Beaver" show, where "da Beav" and his buddies all get monster shirts, and are all going to wear them to school on the same day. The buddies get caught by their parents before they leave the house, so Beaver flies solo, and gets in the deep doo-doo yet again. I've never seen or heard of this particular episode before, so it is possible that Von Franco is having a little fun with us, just as BDR & his buddies had a little fun with VF at their first meeting!

There are only 2 "wishes" I have after devouring this book: The first is more color! This was limited to keep the cost of producing the book down to a manageable level. The second is more Von Franco! He modestly didn't include much of his own work, in a book devoted to the works of others. He is a very, very talented artist himself!

Anyway – if you've ever had any interest in Monster / Weird-O shirts, this book is a MUST HAVE! It's Koolsville, man! You can order it at www.VonFranco.com

What's New?

Got a box the other day from Down Under, with some goodies from our old friend, Bruce Patterson of "Patto's Place". He's got a new home set motor, called "Little Ripper". Here are some pics to compare it to the old standbys: the Mabuchi 13 D is on top, and a 16D is on the bottom:



The whole "Little Ripper" is the size of the 13D can – without the endbell. And as another bonus, the can bearing is small, like the original 500A Mabuchis. In fact, it fits a Russkit 22 motor bracket perfectly, even though the can only has one mounting hole in the "up and down" direction. I haven't track tested it yet, but it looks like just the ticket for most people's home track needs.

Next time, I'll stick this in a hardbody Cobra Daytona Coupe that I've been waiting to finish for a million years – OK only since the old VSRN days, but it's still been a long time. Bruce also sent along a nice decal sheet, and a set of his new vac-formed wheel inserts that would go with this car.

A real bonus with this motor is that I've heard rumors that the price is under \$5 US !!!!!!!

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