

February's "On the Road with Johnny & Jay"

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIKE BUILDERS GONE?



Throughout the tour season last year I was asked this question on multiple occasions and for good reason "WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIKE BUILDERS GONE ?". There has certainly been a noticeable decrease in the number of custom bike builders. Why? The answer is not as obvious as you might think. The economic climate is certainly a factor and people can no longer afford to spend \$40,000 to \$100,000 on a

custom bike. The home equity loan is no longer an option and banks are no longer loaning money to buy luxury items. Let's face it people are very unsure about their future compared to five years ago. As a general rule there are two types of bike builders: Guys like Arlen Ness, Dave Perewitz or Jesse James who build bikes for a living and have created multi faceted revenue streams from merchandise and aftermarket components. And the guys who built bikes as a hobby in their garage, maintained a regular gig to keep cash flow rolling in, but during the boom quit their regular jobs because they were selling their bikes for big bucks. These are the guys who didn't understand the bubble would eventually burst. They had no backup plan. Harley-Davidson was not oblivious to the fact that custom bikes were becoming increasingly popular and took aim at this market. Harley began to produce bikes with radical designs, more chrome and wider tires. Suddenly enthusiasts could now buy a custom styled bike less expensively, with financing, a warranty and no hassles with registration. During our 2009 tour season I actually did shows where people commented to me that I was only bike builder there. Let me



state for the record that Strip Club Choppers is not a custom bike shop. While I did design and build the bike you see at my booth those bikes were built as promotional tools and to display our line of components. Although I love building bikes for my personal use my business model was planned around merchandise and lifestyle. I always tell people that sex sells and there is no warranty on a t-shirt. So when you are at a show this year and you see a guy that built his own scooter stop and appreciate the workmanship, it means a lot. Custom bikes are about pride not about making a quick buck. It was a tuff lesson that many learned the hard way. You can visit us this month at Daytona Bike Week on US 1 across from the Iron Horse Saloon. For additional Johnny and Jay articles visit www.stripclubchoppers.com

