

Fritz Schenck builds custom cars that reflect his wild imagination

Fritz Schenck of Belton has more than cars in common with Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, an automotive icon best known for his wild bubble-top customs and the Rat Fink character that he airbrushed on thousands of T-shirts.

He seems to embody much of Roth's fun-loving automotive creativity and his philosophy that "everything has a second life."

"I keep all kinds of junk because I just can't get rid of it," Schenck said. Schenck said Roth once told him, "If you're going to build something, make it unique and you will have something no one else has. Plus, it's cheaper."

Schenck and his wife, Carrol, moved from Long Island about 18 months ago to escape the hectic pace and the cost of living. They are delighted that they found a home with nine acres.

"This would be a park back on Long Island," Schenck said as he looked over his yard.

Most people know Schenck simply as Fritz, and his website is spritzbyfritz.com.

Why does Schenck love Roth cars? "Because they are simple and fun," he said. It's also clear that he admires Roth's approach to life. "Imperfections make things perfect," he said.

Roth, who died in 2001, built about two dozen vehicles, but his most famous car is probably the Beatnik Bandit, a car that was also sold as a model kit by Revell and was one of the first group of

Hot Wheels.

Schenck said Roth's old show cars didn't get much respect until the last few years.

Schenck has restored Roth's Druid Princess, and he built a clone of Roth's Outlaw that is now on display at "Speedy Bill" Smith's museum next to Speedway Motors in Lincoln, Neb.

Schenck built the Roswell Rod as a tribute to Big Daddy, but now he's started on a new bubble car that will have Volkswagen power and be called the Baja Bandeeto. It was inspired by a drawing by his artist friend Jimmy Smith.

Schenck forms his bodies like Roth did. He dips wads of newspaper into a mixture of plaster, water and vermiculite and then shapes the "spit wads," as he calls them, into a form. Fiberglass is then applied to the form.

"This is nothing more than a big movie prop," he said. "It's like



Tom Strongman

Schenck's latest creation is beginning to take shape. It has a Volkswagen engine and a handmade chassis.

building a full-size version of a model car. I may be 46 years old but deep down inside I'm still 12," he said.

When he's not working on creating another Roth-like car, Schenck does pin-striping and custom painting on cars and motorcycles.



Tom Strongman

Large round taillights will give the back of the car a visual presence.

GALLERY



TOM STRONGMAN

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Tom Strongman

Schenck downs around with the well-used bucket that he uses to apply fiberglass.



Tom Strongman

Schenck built the Roswell Rod as a tribute to Ed "Big Daddy" Roth. The handformed body, bubble canopy and supercharged engine create a visual caricature.



Photo by Fritz Schenck

The cockpit of the Roswell Rod reflects Schenck's attention to detail.

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