

Band brings Andes folk to Nebraska

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quena. The quena is a straight flute with no mouthpiece that has the same fingering as a recorder.

Band members also play the zampona, a pan pipe usually made of bamboo that can range from 4-feet tall to "as small as your pinkie," Rynearson said.

The band's instrumental repertoire includes stringed pieces like the classical guitar and the charango, a Bolivian instrument similar to the mandolin. It is a 10-string guitar originally made of turtle shells.

Finally, the band uses a large drum called the bombo, which is African in origin. Rynearson said the bombo was similar to a drum in an army marching band.

Rynearson said that the band would like to continue by starting educational outreach programs with other colleges. The group could complement the music by documenting artifacts, talking about Andean people and telling traditional stories, he said.

"When we perform, people find out what (the music) sounds like, but they don't know much about the culture," Rynearson said. "I think it would help people when they listen to music to have some sort of presentation with it."

Pohrieth says he's already motivated by the response the band has received in Lincoln.

"At the beginning, people were just getting used to the sound, but now, they hear it and recognize it."

'Mad genius' of autos comes back

Rat Fink's creator must balance cars, marriage, faith

MANTI, Utah (AP)—Ed Roth, the beatnik wild child whose mad-genius car creations and fantastic artwork shaped the Southern California hot-rod culture of the '50s and '60s, is heading pedal-to-the-metal into matrimony.

Roth's seemingly unlikely slide into semi-retired domesticity actually began in 1974 when he converted to the Mormon church and abruptly abandoned his lawless lifestyle.

"My fanaticism with cars has just destroyed my personal life," said the twice-divorced Roth, 65, who nonetheless is building another — he claims his last — in his backyard garage.

"It's an obsession, an addiction. Every day I pray to God, 'Release me from my calling!'"

A generation of teen-age rebels-without-a-car stood in awe of Roth's chrome and fiberglass creations at car shows, and adopted his airbrush anti-hero, the bug-eyed, slaving Rat Fink, as a cultural counterpoint to Mickey Mouse.

They forsook their homework to labor, woozy from the fumes of airplane glue, on intricate scale plastic models of Roth's "Outlaw" roadster, the bubble-topped "Beatnik Bandit," or the futuristic "Mysterion." To the chagrin of their parents, they plastered Rat Fink stickers everywhere.

Mormon motorhead

Indeed, while Roth is considered a genius and visionary among car designers — he pioneered the use of fiberglass in car bodies, for instance — it was the Rat Fink and a host of other wild characters that paid the bills.

"Ed was doing these sort of zany

yet evil designs that your mother would hate," recalls Pat Ganahl, former editor of Hot Rod, Rod and Custom and Street Rodder magazines and a longtime fan and friend of Roth.

"He's the Salvador Dali of the movement — a surrealist in his designs, a showman by temperament, a prankster," author Tom Wolfe wrote in 1964.

Whence comes the inspiration? Roth isn't sure himself. He's more than half inclined these days to see his inspiration as personal, divine revelation, in keeping with his Mormon beliefs. But it has taken him years to get comfortable with the idea.

"If I'm having a design problem, I'll go to the (Manti Mormon) temple for three or four hours and it will come to me," Roth said.

Roth's conversion to Mormonism in 1974 came at a time when he was disillusioned with making cars and had turned his attention to "trikes," the hybrid three-wheeled motorcycles shunned by hot-rod traditionalists and banned from auto shows.

Roth said he was "really ripped" one day, working in his shop, when a friend dropped off a copy of the Book of Mormon. Roth read it and soon joined the church.

Jacked-up for Jesus

While Roth says religion saved him from a destructive lifestyle, it brought with it new turmoil: how to reconcile his outrageous genius with his newfound beliefs.

"Some people thought Rat Fink was ghastly, with his bloodshot eyes and teeth," Roth said. "Moms used to drag their kids away from my booth."

So for a decade, Roth turned his

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PAT GANAHL
former editor of Hot Rod magazine

considerable talents to the mundane: He painted signs and pinstripe trains at Knott's Berry Farm.

In 1988, he abandoned L.A. altogether for the bucolic isolation of Manti, where his attitude toward his cartoon creation mellowed.

"It took me a while to figure out that there was nothing wrong with Rat Fink," he said. "People who bother to find out about him know he's just a good-natured clown."

The nexus between Roth's God and the ghoulish Rat Fink can be found today on a cluttered table in his living room: Boxes of modeling clay and an unfinished character are stacked beneath his Mormon scriptures. A painting of Jesus Christ hangs above a photo of one of his trikes.

Two years ago, Roth built his first new car in nearly 30 years — the Beatnik Bandit II — and spent nearly five months on the road at car shows. Earlier this year he started work on "Stealth '99," an extravagantly angular creation based on the stealth bomber.

A backfiring proposition?

Last month, when Roth proposed to Ilene Brotherson, a divorced mother of two and the Sanpete County auditor, his old dilemma of compet-

ing lifestyles came roaring back. "How can I expect to stay home and be sealed to a woman if I'm doing this?" he asks.

The question is a serious one for Roth, whose creations have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in the four or five years since he sold the rights to the Rat Fink and his name to Mooneyes Inc., a California car-parts company that has aggressively marketed his wares.

The Oakland Museum of California hosted a retrospective of California car culture, which prominently featured Roth, and the Laguna Museum of Art recently featured works by Roth and other underground "Kustom Culture" artists.

In sleepy Manti, Brotherson was unaware she was marrying a cultural icon. It wasn't until days before Halloween that Roth reluctantly gave her a book about his cars.

"I looked at this and just said, 'Wow!' It's always been his imagination that I thought was so neat," she said.

"Of course, I haven't had to deal with the cars yet, have I, Ed?" she said.

Roth, who was helping Brotherson's younger son carve a pumpkin in the kitchen, only smiled.

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