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**A FILM ABOUT CUSTOM CARS, MONSTER T-SHIRTS, THE ANTI-MICKEY MOUSE
AND THE GUY THAT STARTED IT ALL - ED 'BIG DADDY' ROTH**

Official Selection
Toronto International Film Festival

an abramorama release

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Tales of the Rat Fink

LONG SYNOPSIS

From the award-winning director of **COMIC BOOK CONFIDENTIAL** and **GRASS** comes **TALES OF THE RAT FINK**, Ron Mann's wildly inventive bio about Renaissance man Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, who engineered a shift in mid-twentieth century culture with his customized cars, "monster" T-shirts and America's alternative rodent - "Rat Fink".

The subject of Tom Wolfe's essay "The Kandy Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby", Ed Roth helped fuel the "Kustom Kulture" / Hot rod movement of the 1960s in Southern California. Hot Rodding grew from crude backyard engineering where performance was the bottom line into a refined artform where aesthetics were equally important.

Mann's largely animated documentary features the voice talents of John Goodman, Ann-Margret, Jay Leno, Brian Wilson, Tom Wolfe, Matt Groening, Robert Williams, Stone Cold Steve Austin, Paul LeMat, Billy F Gibbons, and The Smothers Brothers.

Filmed in Kandy color. Recorded with real 426 hemi engines.

Rated F for Fink's everywhere.



*high rez images, press kit and trailer available at www.talesoftheratfink.com

Tales of the Rat Fink

SHORT SYNOPSIS

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Tales of the Rat Fink

CREDITS

Ed "Big Daddy" Roth	JOHN GOODMAN
Rat Fink	THEO ROSNICK
Old-Timer	ALEX XYDIAS
Cruisin'	PAUL LeMAT
Heartbreaker	ANN-MARGRET
Wagon/Trailer	THE SMOTHERS BROTHERS
Heavy Chevy	STEVE AUSTIN
Flamethrower	JAY LENO
Bill	BILL WEINSTEIN
Marilyn	MARILYN WEINSTEIN
The Outlaw	ROBERT WILLIAMS
The Beatnik Bandit	BILLY F. GIBBONS
Tom Wolfe's Car	TOM WOLFE
The Surfite	BRIAN WILSON
Finkster	MATT GROENING



produced and directed by
RON MANN

written by
SOLOMON VESTA

director of photography
ARTHUR COOPER

sound designer
JOHN LAING

original music score
THE SADIES

consultant
OLIVER TRAGER

animator
MICHAEL ROBERTS

editor
TERRANCE ODETTE

co-producer
BILL IMPERIAL

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Format	35mm
Sound	Dolby Digital 5.1
Running Time	76 min
Color	Color
Language	English
Country	Canada
Release Date	2006

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Tales of the Rat Fink

Ed Roth: BIO



Ed Roth began driving cars when he was 12 years old. It was in Southern California, right after World War II, and cars were what every young man was dreaming about. At first Ed did the same thing his buddies were doing: He'd buy an old car, like a '32 three-window coupe, and customize it for racing or cruising.

Then, in the late '50s, he did something no one else had tried. He started building cars from scratch.

Using simple tools, junkyard parts, and a new, inexpensive material called fiberglass, Roth created automobiles in his garage. The first one was named, appropriately enough, the "Outlaw." It was proof that anyone can indeed do-it-yourself, without a team of engineers and a Detroit assembly line. All that was really needed was hard work and imagination.

Ed had plenty of imagination. He became "Big Daddy," a hot-rod Dr. Frankenstein who was more of a struggling artist than a mechanic. His garage became his studio. His cars were never meant to be driven: They were sculptures on wheels.

The Outlaw was followed by the "Beatnik Bandit" and then "Rotar." Big Daddy Roth had to finance his creations by selling T-shirts. On weekends, he would set up a booth at a drag strip or car show or county fair and personally airbrush shirts. He would draw cartoons of monsters and pictures of cars, but when he airbrushed T-shirts with monsters driving cars, people began to line up at his booth.

His most popular monster was a repulsive rodent named Rat Fink. Roth was a genius at designing cars, but it was "Finkie" who brought him fame and fortune. By 1963, pimply teenagers across America were buying Rat Fink model kits and mass-produced Rat Fink T-shirts.

His garage/studio evolved into the blue-collar equivalent of Andy Warhol's Factory. His new shop was located in Lakewood, California. Dozens of employees helped Big Daddy create more Kustom Kars, T-shirts, records, and Revell produced model car kits patterned after his creations. Rat Fink was soon joined by other gross, disgusting creatures driving the coolest hot rods.

Alienated adolescents who knew they'd never fit in now had their own heroes: Drag Nut, Mother's Worry, Mr. Gasser, and other members of the Rat Fink family. The message was clear (even if it wasn't the one Roth had intended): Ugly is beautiful, and being a weirdo is cool. It was a lesson some would never forget.

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Tales of the Rat Fink

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was a glue-sniffing model building, car-toon reading, beach boys listening, monster-t shirt wearing, weirdo kid - who did NOT relate to Mickey Mouse at all.

Before discovering Bob Dylan and girls it was a cool california customizer - and all of his stuff made made my young heart race.

Ron Mann: BIO



Ron Mann's exuberant films, whether on comic books "Comic Book Confidential" (1988), marijuana "Grass" (1999), or now custom culture "Tales Of The Rat Fink" (2006) are pop chronicles of alternative culture.

SELECT FILMOGRAPHY

Go Further (2003) which follows actor and activist Woody Harrelson as he takes to the open road on his "Simple Organic Living Tour".

Grass (1999) presents a humorous and surprisingly balanced history of recreational marijuana use in the late 20th century.

Twist (1991) combines interviews with rare and often hilarious archival footage to chronicle the evolution of rock and roll dance.

Comic Book Confidential (1988) a history of the comic book medium and look at the art form's most respected practitioners.

Poetry in Motion (1982) a lively anthology of multi-media performances by twenty four contemporary "Dial-A-Poem" poets.

Imagine the Sound (1981) brings together, in interviews and performance, the prime innovators of the once-controversial free jazz movement of the 60s.

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Tales of the Rat Fink

John Goodman: BIO



John Goodman was perhaps destined to play “Big Daddy”. According to legend, Goodman met Big Daddy at a car show in New Orleans and told him that he would one day play him in a movie.

John Goodman is best known for comic roles, including Roseanne Barr’s husband in the TV sitcom *Roseanne*, the voice of Sulley in *Monsters, Inc.*, and Fred Flintstone in the movie *The Flintstones*. He has appeared in many roles in movies by The Coen Brothers.

SELECT FILMOGRAPHY

- Masked and Anonymous* (2003) as Uncle Sweetheart
- Monsters, Inc.* (2001) (voice) as James P. “Sulley” Sullivan
- O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000) as Big Dan Teague
- The Big Lebowski* (1998) as Walter Sobchak
- Blues Brothers 2000* (1998) as *Mighty Mack McTeer*
- The Flintstones* (1994) as Fred Flintstone
- The Babe* (1992) as George Herman ‘Babe’ Ruth

“Tales of the Rat Fink”

Ed Roth was a giant as an artist as well as a behemoth as a man. He and his fellow Kar Kustomizers worked in the only uniquely American art medium, the automobile. He never thought of his creations simply as shells of molded sheet metal or fibre-glass. He always wanted you to see the engine, too, because the Only American Art Form is not an object. It's a kineticism. Its materials are speed, momentum, excitement, and freedom, which is to say, the American Zeitgeist, except that we don't say Zeitgeist. We say, the spirit of the American age.

---- Tom Wolfe



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ForbesLife

VAROOM! VAROOM!

Rat Fink Renaissance

Ed Roth is long gone, but his wild cars and subversive artwork are frisky all anew | By Jonathan Fahey



JAT LENO, 55, COMEDIAN AND GEARHEAD, SAYS OF ED (BIG Daddy) Roth, "When I was 14, 15, he was the guy. There was Elvis, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Big Daddy." Roth's medium wasn't music. It was motorcraft. Where other car-customizers modified Chevys and Fords, Roth built wholly new, surrealist cars.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when even mainstream U.S. car design looked pretty wild, Roth's work stood out. "He would build twin-engine deals and cars with a cartoony character," says Leno. "There's no equivalent to him today. Hot rods now are much more practical."

Roth, who died in 2001 at 69, also drew cartoon animals of whimsical repellency, such as Rat Fink. Now his cars and drawings are being sought by collectors. Two museums are planning shows devoted to him, and a film documentary (*Tales of the Rat Fink*, with John Goodman as Big Daddy) debuts this month. Both toymaker Mattel and clothingmaker Quiksilver are discussing tie-ins.

Ford dealer Beau Boeckmann hadn't thought about Big Daddy in more than a decade when in 2001 he was approached by a Roth groupie asking if Boeckmann's dealership in North Hills, Calif. would sponsor a Fink festival celebrating Roth's most famous animal character.

"I was way into Rat Fink when I was a kid," says Boeckmann, 35. "It was like discovering an old friend."

Never mind that this "friend" was a fat, hideous rat with bulbous, bleeding, bloodshot eyes, a gummy, fanged mouth and a hangdog expression. Boeckmann not only sponsored the event but also last August paid \$200,000 for a Roth-made car from 1961—Rotar—that resembles a fighter jet. It sold for \$5,500 in 1996 and for \$20,000 in 1999. "Big Daddy didn't fit any mold," says Boeckmann. "He was an originator. That car was worth every penny."

Roth licensed to toymakers rights to Rat Fink, Mr. Gasser (a green, fanged monster with an unruly tongue) and other charac-

From the top, Ed (Big Daddy) Roth (with Rat Fink T shirt) and some of his many progeny: Beatnik Bandit; Orbitron (with Ed at the wheel); Mysterion; and Rotar (original form).

Tales of the Rat Fink: Press Clippings Forbes - March 13, 2006 (Cont.)

ForbesLife

ters he created. He also commissioned artists to make Fink-inspired pens, stickers, posters and dolls. Roth's estate still sells such ephemera, but representatives won't divulge how much.

In the days before sit-ins, flower power and bra burning, Roth capitalized on the subversive appeal to kids of bleeding eyes and drooling rodents. Slap a Rat Fink decal on your lunch box and suddenly you had a talisman that could repulse teachers, adults and other bores. It was the ultimate way, says Jay Leno, of "thumbing your nose."



Ralph Whitworth's Winnemucca museum will boast two Roths.

The same images work the same magic now. Tristan Herold, an 8-year-old from Metuchen, N.J., discovered Ed Roth two years ago while watching TV. "He was wowed, and ever since it's been Rat Fink, Rat Fink, Rat Fink," says Andrew (A.J.) Herold, Tristan's 40-year-old father.

The most collectible creations are the cars themselves. Outlaw, built in 1959—the car that launched Roth's fame—looked like a Model T with a cleft palate. It made the cover of the January 1960 issue of *Car Craft* magazine. "I remember seeing that magazine on the rack on my way home from school," says Pat Ganahl, 58, a custom-car aficionado and author of a book on Roth. "It was better than a picture of Marilyn Monroe naked."

Tom Wolfe, in a famous 1963 *Esquire* story about custom cars, later expanded into a book, called Roth the Salvador Dali of the movement. Roth's Orbitron and Mysterion looked like spacecraft; his Druid Princess like a collision between a horse-drawn carriage and a hearse.

Casino magnate Bill Harrah acquired several of Roth's cars. But after Harrah's

death, parts of his collection—including some Roths—were sold to raise money for what would become the National Automobile Museum in Reno, Nev. That museum still retains one of Roth's most famous works, Beatnik Bandit. Outlaw belongs to the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, which will stage a Roth show this September.

Ralph Whitworth, 50, a founder and principal of the San Diego asset management firm Relational Investors, was a Roth fan while growing up in Winnemucca, Nev. in the early

1960s. He recently paid \$250,000 for Roth's Road Agent. He also owns a rebuilt version of the Mysterion. Both will be part of a museum he plans to open in Winnemucca next year.

Starting in 1959 Roth built a new car annually—not to sell but so he could get into car shows without paying vendor fees. He made money selling \$2 T shirts

and \$3 sweatshirts airbrushed with his creatures. Other income came from modelmaker Revell, giving him a cut of thousands of scale model kits of his cars sold in the mid-1960s. Leno remembers building them.

When car show organizers suggested Roth spruce up the grubby clothes he habitually wore, he acquired a top hat, monocle and set of tails. Thus attired—and sporting a Maynard G. Krebs goatee—he would stand by his car and explain its virtues while hawking Rat Fink wares.

In the late 1960s the custom-car craze cooled and so did Roth's production. Over the next 30 years he built several three-wheeled motorcycles but only a few more cars. Now his renaissance is being fueled in part by the proliferation of cable TV shows like *Monster Garage* and *Biker Build-Off*, where customizers create feral versions of standard vehicles. David Covington, a 28-year-old customizer in Woodward, Okla., has an 11-inch tattoo of Rat Fink on his left forearm. "People are looking back now, to old-school stuff," says Covington. "And when they do, they see that his stuff was the best." **F**

AMANDA FREEMAN FOR FORBES



Graphic designer and hot rod customizer Ed "Big Daddy" Roth with his creation, the Rat Fink. Toronto filmmaker Ron Mann debuted his movie *Tales of the Rat Fink* Saturday.

Hot rod radical

Ron Mann's film tribute to Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth lets the custom cars tell the story



Geoff Pevere
At SXSW

Austin, Tex.—"If the film is going to work, it's going to work in Austin," says Ron Mann, just two hours before the world pre-

miere of *Tales of the Rat Fink*, the Toronto director's fast-paced documentary about the life and legacy of the hot rod culture legend. Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, Saturday night at the South by Southwest festival, Mann is sitting beneath the eyes in front of Austin's Four Seasons Hotel. It's a beautifully warm and breezy Texas evening, although the curly-haired direc-

tor probably isn't thinking about the weather. "Nobody's seen the movie yet," he says. "I mean, almost nobody. I've seen it and some guy at the lab has seen it, but that's it. So tonight will be the first time it'll play for any kind of audience." This is unusual for Mann, who customarily runs test screenings for friends and colleagues at various stages during produc-

tion. But this time he opted not to, despite the fact that *Tales of the Rat Fink* is a highly unorthodox experiment (featuring talking cars in place of talking heads) and has taken nearly five years of the filmmaker's life to complete. Mann describes Austin as "just like home," and there's no question that he's something of a revered fixture here at SXSW.

Grass, his movie about the history of marijuana legislation, played here in 2002, and Ge Pifer, about actor/activist Woody Harrison's campaign for organic living, made a considerable splash in 2003. "In a way this is the perfect audience for a movie like *Rat Fink*. I mean, it's my audience," he

▶ Photo: Ken Mann, 64

A&E

The cars do the talking

▶ Mann From E!

says, adding with a heavy chuckle: "Stickers."

Mann began making his movie about Roth right around the time he finished *Grass*. Like a lot of North American kids, he grew up with Rat Fink stickers, custom and T-shirts, and he began to believe that Roth — graphic designer, entrepreneur and hot rod customizer extraordinaire — was one of the more unforgivably missing cultural figures of the baby boom.

Indeed, his movie makes the point that, without Roth, psychedelia itself might not have existed. We're talking counterculture pioneer.

Mann started filming various hot rod rallies and Roth-related events, and began to devise a movie that would also feature Roth, but then something happened which shifted the landscape in 2003 when Roth died.

"Mann set *Tales of the Rat Fink* aside for a year. He wasn't sure when, or even if, he'd ever get back to it. How do you make a movie about the guy if the guy it's about — whom Mann had only managed to film signing T-shirts at a rally — has permanently left the drag strip?"

Mann started hearing voices. In particular, the voices of cars — talking cars. Weird as it sounds, the fact is that such



John Goodman, Brian Wilson, Ann-Margret and author Tom Wolfe provide voices in *Tales of the Rat Fink*. Above, Ed Roth with a classic custom hot rod and model.

car that Roth designed had an individual personality as big and distinctive as the man that created it, and that's how *Tales of the Rat Fink* finally began to find its form. Let the cars tell the story. Let the cars do the talking. After all, isn't that what Roth himself did?

Great idea, but tough to execute. The movie Mann had in mind involved complex feats of animation, an intricately layered audio soundscape and needed to seem like a dragster peeling across an open wall. In Mann's words, "It had to have Ed's spirit in it."

Using a cast of voices that include such formerly cloistered Rothheads as John Goodman (as Roth), Brian Wilson, Z.Z. Top's Billy Gibbons, Ann-Margret and author Tom Wolfe, Mann proceeded to make *Tales of the Rat Fink* not just as a movie about Ed, but as a way of making the dude's goofy genius real. "I hope I've done that,"

Mann says. "Find out soon enough, I guess."

A minute or so later, Mann is off to dinner and then a date with a gorgeous Texas hot rod, it's his ride to the theatre for the premiere, but it won't be admitted to the auditorium.

At SXSW, they have a very strict policy prohibiting talking during movies.

Goodman embodies 'Big Daddy' spirit



Peter Howell
 Greenlight

Only a true Rat Fink could imagine John Goodman playing hep-cat hot rodder Ed "Big Daddy" Roth.

And that's exactly the way Goodman and Toronto filmmaker Ron Mann like it.

Goodman has signed to play the otherworldly voice of Roth, the California artist and "Finkster" who put his psychedelic stamp on two popular crazes of the 1950s and '60s: Rat Fink gear and customized hot rods.

The burly actor is the marquee star of Mann's upcoming *Tales of the Rat Fink*, a combination biopic and cultural commentary on Roth, the man who helped put some zoom in the Baby Boom. The movie has been renamed from its earlier handle *Confessions of a Hot Roddier*, *Pinstripin'*, *Kustomizin'*, *Teen-age fun*.

Goodman narrates the film from heaven, playing Roth as he looks down on Earth with fond memories. The real Big Daddy will be seen in the film only in archival footage and new interviews. But his untimely death from natural causes in 2001 forced Mann to get even more creative than usual to finish the film.

Mann and Goodman were in an L.A. recording studio this week, taping Goodman's voice-over.

"I'm not a religious person," Mann said via email.

"But John told me that about 10 years ago, he met Ed, who told him he would be the guy to play him in a movie. Some things were meant to be." Mann didn't have any trouble getting Goodman for the gig.

"Goodman responded immediately to my request to play Roth. Typically it takes months to even get a phone call returned in Hollywood."

The actor embodies Roth in looks and spirit, Mann said.

"Goodman is soulful. He has New Orleans soul. As an actor he captures the spirit of Roth. Physically, he uncannily resembles 'Big Daddy.' I had to blink a few times to check if it wasn't Roth himself."

The actor comes with the bonus of hands-on experience.

"Goodman said he used to do Roth hot-rod monster drawings as a kid — and still can," Mann marvelled.

"He said the script took him back — 'Hey, that was me' — while recording the narration of kids putting models together. He often broke out in loud laughter. He owned many of those wildly designed Roth models, with names like *The Outlaw* and *Beatnik Bandit*.

The plan is to have the film ready in time for a March 2006 world premiere at the SXSW Film Festival in Austin, Texas, a favourite of Mann's.

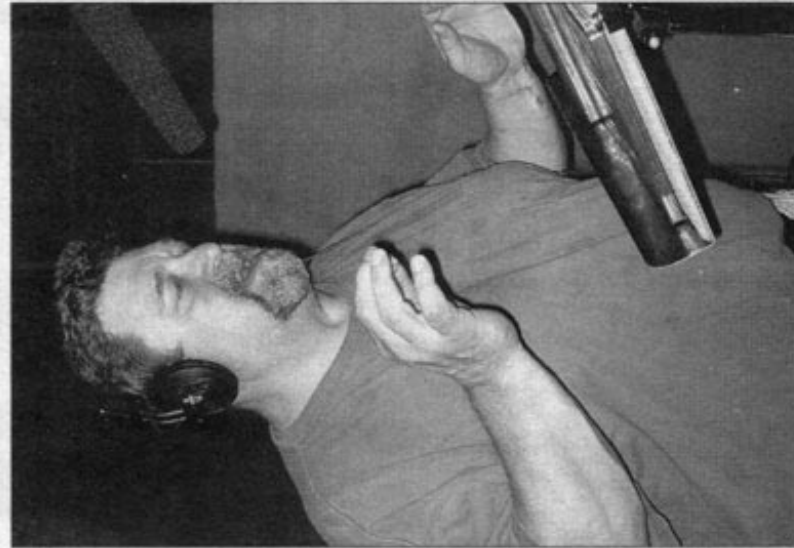
"The programmers saw a rough cut while in Toronto," Mann said. "Goodman and I will likely lead a parade of custom cars down Main Street that the SXSW organizers are planning to throw for the film."

Goodman will probably feel like taking it easy by then, after what happened to him recently in *The Big Easy*.

He lost his two New Orleans homes to the floods of Hurricane Katrina, along with cherished Roth memorabilia.

SPIDEY FILES: Did Kirsten Dunst let the bug out of the bag concerning the villains for *Spider-Man 3*?

It sure looks that way. Pop culture website Double Agent (www.doubleagent.com), quoting another site, zap2it.com, blames Dunst for tearing the cobwebs off the *Spidey* villain file.



John Goodman lays down tracks for the Ron Mann film *Tales of the Rat Fink*, a biopic about Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, above right. Roth, who died four years ago, told Goodman a decade ago that he would on day play him in a movie.

Venom and Sandman," Dunst said. "Maybe I wasn't supposed to say that."

She's right, she wasn't. But now it's too late.

DA VINCI GOAD: Righteous indignation over Ron Howard's movie shoot of *The Da Vinci Code* bestseller has followed the production to Scotland.

Howard and his cast and crew — including stars Tom Hanks and Audrey Tautou — are currently in the small town of Rosslyn, where they're shooting a climactic scene at Rosslyn Chapel,



Roth, who died four years ago, told Goodman a decade ago that he would on day play him in a movie.

the place where significant religious truths are revealed.

But that's the truth as defined by Dan Brown, the author of the novel, and religious fundamentalists have taken strong exception to Brown's speculation that Jesus Christ might have married Mary Magdalene and started a family.

The *Sunday Herald*, a Scottish newspaper, found a real Harvard professor to damn fictional Harvard scholar Robert Langdon, whom Hanks plays in the movie, due May 17, 2006.

Dr. Andrew Sinclair, a historian and novelist who has written his own book on Rosslyn, damns *The Da Vinci Code* as "corrupting" for its blend of fact and fiction. "It is rubbish. Old lies are taken as truth by millions of people as a result of this book, in a really terrible confusion of fact and fiction. The main character is supposed to be a Harvard professor — he is more akin to a professor of Sodom and Gomorrah. John Harvard (who established the university) would be turning in his grave."

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