

Proper tool, proper job

"We like to choose the proper tool, for a proper job," says Screwy. Ten years as a rock show lighting technician for Vari-lite, a major show lighting manufacturer, gave him plenty of experience with Fluke instruments like the Fluke 77 DMM he used on the road.

Working with such artists as Vince Gill, Mariah Carey, George Thorogood and the Destroyers, Def Leppard and the Grateful Dead gave Screwy deep insight into the importance of delivering flawless performance when the curtain goes up.

Today he's back home in Pontiac, helping his old friend Ron make sure lights are lighted and engines thundering when the curtain goes up on Finch customs like Double Cross, Ron's one-of-a-kind entry in the 2004-2005 Discovery Channel *Biker Build-Off*.

The bike is not 'old school' or 'stretched,' not a 'bobber' or 'hot rod.' As the Discovery Channel describes it, the style is "uniquely Finch." Built within the show's tough 14-day limit, the bike epitomizes Finch's independent approach as both biker and artist. There's nothing else like it.

At the front, a pair of tiny PIAA 1152 fog lights serves as headlights. They project from extended frame tubes like the eyes on a praying mantis. A custom fork, with special wide triple trees built to clear the frame, connects an 80-spoke rim to Finch-built handlebars. Above the 114 cubic inch S&S V-twin motor rise twin dual-throat Weber carbs. The frame tubes twist back and forth over the engine and the exhaust pipes cross too—thus the name Double Cross—but there's no gas tank to be seen. That's hidden in the rear fender, a trademark Finch approach.

"I've always liked power and speed," Finch says. "I like to show the engine. Without the motor, it's not a motorcycle."

The front fender is a filigree of steel rod—Finch's fancy rod work decorates every section of the frame. And the whole bike has received the artist's finishing touch: a custom Ron Finch paint job. It's the culmination of 40 years devoted to uncompromising artistic expression, using two wheels and a motor as a canvas.

Though many Biker Build-Off entrants were willing to assemble parts from a catalog, Finch insisted on building the frame for Double Cross from the ground up.

"Most people just go out and buy a frame," says Finch. "I couldn't lower myself to that standard, because that's just not me." When it comes to building a reliable electrical system, however, creativity can pose challenges. For instance, there's no standard wiring design for a Finch bike.

One of a kind

"Most of Ron's bikes are one of a kind," says Screwy. "So we don't use a pre-manufactured wiring harness. We build our own, and we pull our own wires. On the Double Cross bike we drilled holes in the front of the frame, and the frame crossed over. We had to make sure the wire that went in on the left came out on the left."

Multiple types of lights on the bikes—incandescent lamps and light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, for instance—require differing levels of current and resistance. So it's critical that the each wire terminates at the right place. And since Finch tries to hide all the wiring inside the frame tubes or behind other parts, it's almost impossible for Screwy to trace circuits without testing with the Fluke 88V, which features a beeper to signal continuity.



Stewart Felix, a.k.a. "Screwy" uses the 88V DMM for electrical and lighting tests on custom built Finch choppers.