

**WHAT'S A CHOPPER?**

By Dr. Gizmo Doodad

I have been around forever or at least to it seems that way to me. I remember the days of the horse and wagon. By the way, if you think exhaust fumes smell bad, just check on what comes out of a horse. Anyway, because of my background and the turmoil that our world is experiencing these days I have come to a major decision. It is time for me to stand up for what I believe in and let the horse chips fall where they may.

As an educator, philosopher, historian, and world renowned know-it all, I feel it is my mission to guide those individuals who are less enlightened. Knowledge can come to us in several ways. Information can be learned through manuscript research or the spoken word. Most people, though, learn by the observation of events over a period of time. Observation is by far the best teacher, since you know what you saw rather than taking some one else's word on the subject.

Now, we all can't be around to observe everything. There are times when you just have to have faith in someone else. Every once in a while we have to take someone else's word for just how certain events take place. I'll never tell you that the check is in the mail or that I broke even at the casino. Nor will I ever tell you that I love you, however, I will tell you what a Chopper is. In an effort to achieve solidarity I will attempt to clarify the terminology used over the years to describe various types of altered American street motorcycle's.

Actually, I decided to write this column out of self-interest and to relieve some of the frustration I encounter on a daily basis from the, shall I say, uninformed. Just what are these people uninformed about? Well, I'm glad you asked. The word Chopper is being misused by print media and television to misinform the average Joe. Today Chopper seems to be a generic term used to describe just about any kind of V-Twin powered motorcycle. Therefore, after much sole searching I, Dr. Gizmo Doodad America's leading expert on Faux Erudition MC Sciences, have determined to throw caution to the winds. What follows is a glossary that I have compiled covering 90 years of American motorcycle history.

Dr. Gizmo Doodad's indisputable list of American motorcycle terminology:

**Stock Motorcycle-** A motorcycle that appears like it was the day it way manufactured. A motorcycle with factory authorized accessories that were added at a later time can also be considered stock.

**Bob Job or Bobber-** This term could date back as far as 1914. It was used to describe a motorcycle with the back section of the rear fender cut off, and headlight were

removed. The handlebars were angled downward so as to give the rider a lower profile with less wind resistance. These motorcycle's mimicked the race bike's of the time.

The word Bobbed was originally used to describe a horse whose tail had been cut shorter.

**Custom Motorcycle-** A motorcycle that was built as a one-of-a-kind or in limited quantities by skilled craftsman. The custom can also be built by the owner/rider. The custom can take on any form and frequently has a fair amount of extra elements added to the basic motorcycle form. Usually these extra components have nothing to do with the vehicles primary function. This sort of motorcycle is sometimes called a billet barge and at times mistakenly thought to be a Chopper.

**Bolt-on Custom-** A stock motorcycle with many of the parts changed from the original equipment, that the manufacturer used, to parts and chrome accessories supplied by the OEM and aftermarket sources. The frame is a stock component and has not been altered. A custom paint job may have been applied to the sheet metal.

**Long Bike-** A motorcycle frame that has been altered to a greater degree of rake angle at the neck area so that an extended front fork can be used without significantly raising the bikes steering head upward. The degree of rake used at the steering head is determined by the length of the fork and radius of the front tire.

**Pro Street Bike-** A hot rod bike built to drag race standards. Additionally this class of motorcycle is registered and tagged and is street legal. This class of motorcycle can take on just about any form.

**Chopper-** This term first came about after World War II to describe a hopped-up car with the fenders removed. This sort of car went on to be referred to as a Hot Rod. The word Chopper was also applied to a stock, striped down motorcycle. There was no source for speed parts for Harley-Davidson and Indian motorcycles in the late 40's and 50's. In those days the only way to make your cycle go faster than the next guys was to make it lighter. This meant removing or cutting-off (chop) unneeded items like fenders, headlights, and anything else deemed unnecessary. Custom Chopper- The classic Chopper form was born some time in the mid-sixties when an enterprising young man welded old Ford model B radius rods to the bottom legs of his Springer front fork. This lengthened the fork and pushed the front of the bike up into the air giving us the traditional Chopper look.

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