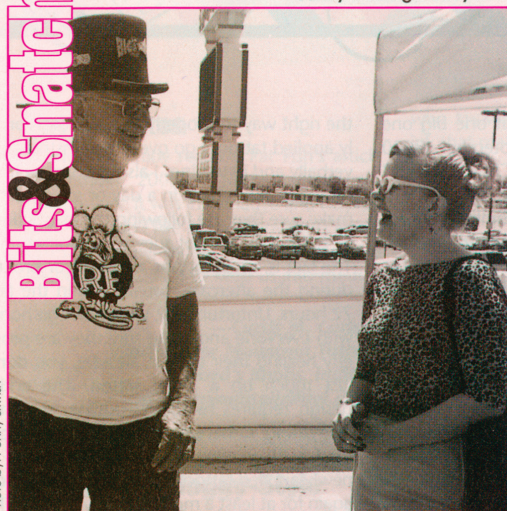


Sunny with Big Daddy Roth

Photo by Penny Skelch



# LAS VEGAS CONVENTION

I called up SKIN AND INK headquarters, looking for Bob Baxter the editor. I said, "Listen Bob, why don't you send me out to Las Vegas to cover the Viva Las Vegas Rock-a-Billy Convention? I have a feeling that this could be a big tattoo story." He said, "Okay." So with a little wheeling and dealing and a few phone calls, I was booked. I just had to get a few

things together for the trip.

First of all, I lugged all my matching blue Samsonite '50s suitcases out from under my bed. I started packing by throwing anything pink into my luggage. Anything sparkly or with rhinestones went too. Lacy underwear, ruffled crinolines, stockings, garters, high heels and backless dresses

economy pack of film. Just to keep me out of trouble, I brought along my sumo wrestler bodyguard, Hotei.

I was headed for the city of sinners—the pleasure seeker's oasis, Las Vegas. What better place to hold a four-day marathon of music, tattoos and cars? As we drove through the desert and the sun was rising, I braced myself for the coming frenzied orgy of debauchery and dissipation. Last year, when I was on my third day of barely any sleep (they pump something into the air in casinos that keeps you awake), I came to the realization that Viva Las Vegas was like a very specialized tattoo convention. You see on the exposed skin of all the hellcats and kittens mostly one style of tattoos—classic American flash variations. Tattoos you will see a lot include Mom hearts, upright basses, bluebirds, stars, dice, pin-ups and man's ruin.

We pulled into the Gold Coast Casino a few days early and already saw lots of dark-blue denim and greased hair. Right away I got my camera out and began to meet tattoo collectors from around the world. During the course of the weekend, I met people from Sweden, England, Germany, Australia, France, Canada and a piercer from Spain. The Gold Coast is a very inexpensive casino and you never have to leave. It has a bowling alley, lots of restaurants, heated pool, beauty salon, video arcade, shuttle to the Strip and, if you desire, gambling and vice. Even the billboard outside the casino offers a stripper to come to your hotel room!

## Viva Las Vegas Rock-A-Billy Convention by Sunny Buick



Rebecca  
tattoo by  
Andrew  
McLeod



Tina "Boom  
Boom"  
tattoo by  
Theo Mindell

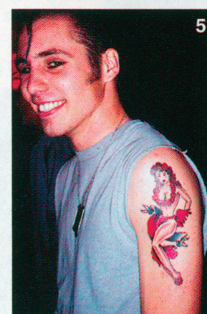
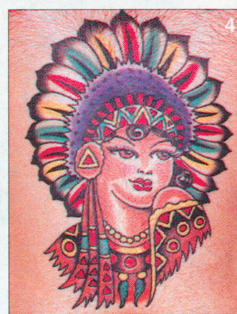


and tops to show off my tattoos. Lip gloss, black eyeliner, glitter, eye shadow, curlers and condoms. Dice jewelry, a new camera and an



Sunny Buick in pink at the car show





1. Chris tattooed by Marcuse in Germany 2. Brianna and Chris tattooed by Katie Rose and Eli 3. Billie Jo tattooed by Nathan at Miss Fortune, Texas 4. Carl "Sonny" Leland tattooed by Eric Maaske 5. Rock-a-billy Boy 6. Japanese couple at the car show 7. "Mothra" tattooed by Greg Rojas 8. Trixie from Chicago 9. Penny tattooed by Juan Puente

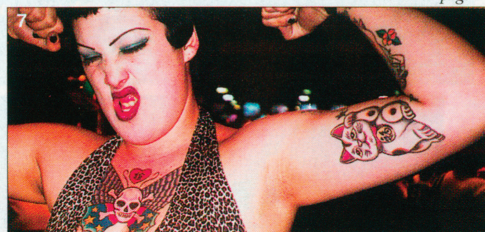
However, if you are a good girl like me, you can go to VLV and stay out of debt and away from the pawnshop. Or you can spend your dough at the many wonderful Las Vegas tattoo shops. A few traveling tattoo artists were also doing their thing discreetly in their hotel rooms.

Tom Ingram, who used to put together a similar show in England called Hemsby, produced this shindig. Some of the bands

included Ray Condo, Ronnie Dawson, High Noon, No. 9, Big Boy Bloater, the Planet Rockers and Lew Williams, a Rock-a-Billy relic who did such '50s hits as "Something I Said," "Cat Talk" and "Centipede." Also as a tribute to the great almost-lost art of burlesque there was the Jean Rose Burlesque Show and the Gun Street Girls. Just like the old-fashioned bump and grind with pasties and g-strings, but with lots more tattoos. There

were loads of vendors selling new and vintage clothes, records, CDs, videotapes and hair grease. Besides drinking, rock and roll, boisterous Europeans, fancy clothes and tattoos, there were a lot of good-looking single guys and girls hanging around. Here's where certain transgressions and weaknesses of the flesh really came in. It's kinda funny at 4 a.m. at the all-night record hops watching all the girls and boys on the make.

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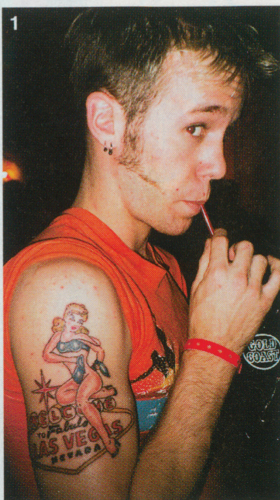
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On Saturday, day three of VLV, there was a great car show put on by the Shifter's Car Club. A little piece of bad luck in the parking lot turned out to be my good fortune. I tripped and banged up my shins on a trailer hitch and I limped into some shade to check out the damage. I looked up from my nearly bleeding leg and saw Big Daddy Roth and a die-hard fan posing for a photo, showing

off their matching Rat Fink tattoos.

Then Ed Roth turned to me and said that he's thinking of having his tattoo re-done because it was so old. I told him not to. I said that it was the general feeling at Goldfield's where I work that old tattoos are a whole lot cooler than re-done ones. "You're a tattoo artist?" he asked. "How did you learn how to do that? Did you practice on oranges?" I told him matter of factly that I just practiced on boys who had crushes on me. He thought that was pretty funny and made me repeat the story to his wife. I was so excited that I got to talk to him about tattoos. The Shifter's did an awesome job with the car show and meeting Big Daddy Roth was one of the highlights of the weekend.

Saturday night was the biggest party. The best bands played and everyone dressed up the most and stayed out the



1. VLV Fan 2. Tattooed Mama from Spain 3. Girl at car show 4. Billie Jo tattooed by Nathan at Miss Fortune 5. Guido tattooed by Eddy Deutsche



latest. Sunday was the last day and many people started getting ready to go home, saying good-bye until next year. The next Viva Las Vegas Rock-a-Billy Convention

is scheduled for Easter weekend 2001 and should be even bigger and better than this year. ■

—Sunny Buick



Photo by: Bob Baxter

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

One of the very first writers/bon vivants to help put SKIN & INK on the map was our pal, Joe Vegas. Well, sports fans, Joe has resurfaced at Tattoo Circus in sticky Miami Beach, Florida. Call Joe at (305) 534-4900 for an earful.

—Editor