

## **James Dean Motorcycle Joins Celebrities in Whatcom Museum of History & Art Exhibition**

*Honoring the 50th anniversary of his death, James Dean's first motorcycle - a 1949 CZ- will be installed June 14 in the new exhibition Motorcycles: the Good, the Bad, and the Custom at the Whatcom Museum of History & Art in Bellingham, WA.*

Bellingham, WA ([PRWEB](http://PRWEB)) May 31, 2005 -- He lived fast, died young, and left an indelible mark on American popular culture. In honor of the 50th anniversary of his death this year, James Dean's first motorcycle -- a 1949 CZ -- will be installed June 14 in the new retrospective exhibition Motorcycles: the Good, the Bad, and the Custom at the Whatcom Museum of History & Art ([www.whatcommuseum.org](http://www.whatcommuseum.org)) in Bellingham, WA.

Featuring 47 classic bikes, including Steve McQueen's 1963 Desert Triumph and Jack Lily's 1939 Crocker, the exhibition interprets the history and development of the motorcycle and its impact on American culture through the 20th century. At the same time John Wayne was riding across the prairie in search of America's nostalgic past, young actors such as Dean and McQueen, as well as Marlon Brando, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper were thundering up the highway and the silver screen on a quest to define our future. As we moved from a pastoral to an urban society, dominated by machinery and technology, the choice to ride a motorcycle increasingly symbolized individuality, freedom, adventure, and an intimacy with nature.

Dean's CZ was a Czech-made motorcycle (ceska zbrojovka or Czechoslovakian weapon factory in English). He bought the bike in his youth from a local Indian dealer. In 1948 the first series of 350 cc's appeared in the frame used by the 250 cc. The motor had flat pistons, reverse flow and a capacity of 358 cc. The top speed was 65 mph. When he later bought a new Triumph, Dean sold this bike back to the dealer.

Dean became a teenage icon for his role in the 1955 film Rebel Without a Cause (co-starring Natalie Wood and Sal Mineo), which debuted one month after his tragic death. Although he doesn't ride a motorcycle in the movie, his character represents the rebellious, disenfranchised feelings that drove many young people of the era to motorcycles and the open road. On June 14, the Whatcom Museum also presents a special showing of Rebel Without a Cause at the Pickford Dream Space, 1318 Bay St.

One year earlier, Marlon Brando's starring role in The Wild One (1954), portrayed a 1947 brawling incident including Jack Lilly and the Booze Fighters Motorcycle Club in Hollister, CA. Although the facts were not accurately reported, Hollywood seized on the idea of the leather-clad, rebellious biker and a new stereotype was formed. This image persisted in biker movies of the 1960s, but finally began to change in with the 1970s film On Any Sunday, starring Steve McQueen. This documentary film focused on the phenomenon of motorcycle racing, showing the excitement and camaraderie enjoyed by the racers.

Motorcycles: the Good, the Bad, and the Custom traces the cultural impact of this iconic machine on American society as well as the technological development of the motorcycle over the past 100 years. Numerous motorcycling pioneers and present day legends are represented of both regional and national significance. These classic bikes range from a 1912 Black Hawk and 1924 Brough Superior to the 1973 Triumph Hurricane and the 2005 Dragon Bike by HawgZotic. The subject matter features women, racing, military and police uses, touring, collecting, design and customization.

The exhibition is sponsored by Harley-Davidson of Bellingham, Antique Motorcycle Club of America,



ConocoPhillips-Ferndale Refinery, Bob Lanphere's Beaverton Honda Yamaha Suzuki, HawgZotic Custom Cycles, Louis Auto Glass, Skagit Powersports, Starbucks Coffee Co., Vespa Seattle, The James Company, and V-Twin Super Market. Additional support provided by Trek Video, Whatcom Film Association, Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro and Bob Wallin Insurance, Inc. Special thanks to the Pacific Northwest Museum of Motorcycling and the Trev Deeley Motorcycle Collection.

The Whatcom Museum of History & Art is located at 121 Prospect St. in Bellingham. Regular Museum hours are Tuesday through Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For additional information visit [www.whatcommuseum.org](http://www.whatcommuseum.org) or call (360) 676-6981.

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