

## **Kenny Youngblood** biography

It was 1960. Kenny Youngblood was fifteen years old, sitting at the kitchen table and drawing his favorite subject (slingshot fuel dragsters) when his mother walked by and said: "Someday you'll get paid for doing that."

"At the time", says Youngblood, "I thought she was crazy; who would ever pay someone to draw dragsters?"

If you're into motor sports, you've probably heard his name - if you're not, you've probably seen his work. Kenny is not only the most prolific artist in the field, but also it's most significant pioneer.

Youngblood's amazing career grew out of his own need for speed. "I'm a racer at heart" says the Los Angeles born painter, who built and drove two fuel dragsters of his own. Kenny went from racer to motor sport artist in 1968, when (after doing the lettering on his friend Gary Messenger's car) custom painter Dick Olsen saw his work and hired him on the spot!

"I was in the right place at the right time and with the right abilities" says the Las Vegas, Nevada resident whose talent (inherited from a family of artists) was put to good use during what he calls "The Great Funny Car Boom of the Seventies."

"It was 'BC' back then (before computers) - everything was hand painted. The funny cars needed nice looking graphics, airbrushed grills, headlights and taillights", says Kenny, whose eye for what looked good quickly became the standard. With introductions made to an even wider audience by his mentor and motor sports marketing genius Bob Kachler, Youngblood was soon doing paint schemes and proposal renderings for all manner of racing and performance vehicles, and shipping them to customers throughout the country.

His list of clients was a virtual "Who's Who" of racing, including the likes of Don Schumacher, Tom "Mongoose" McEwen, Don "Snake" Prudhomme, "Jungle Jim" Liberman, Parnelli Jones, Chris "The Greek" Karamesines, Shirley Muldowney, Jim Busby, Gary Gabelich, Danny Ongais, Raymond Beadle, Al Segrini, Fred Castronovo, John Mazmanian, Mickey Thompson and countless others.

Two of Youngblood's most recognizable contributions to the beautification of motor sports would be his graphic designs for the rock group ZZ Top's "Eliminator" coupe (and subsequent pattern for its infamous key chain), and Dale Earnhardt's iconic backslash number "3" (the world's most identifiable numeral). Kenny's work has been featured in films like "On Any Sunday II" and "Snake & Mongoose", as well as in every major automotive magazine.

The final phase of Kenny's career moved him from the paint shop and drawing board, to the easel: "I knew there were a lot of fans who, like me, would hang paintings of race cars on their walls if given the choice, so we gave them that choice." In the late seventies Youngblood began publishing his "race car portraits" and offering them to the mass market. In so doing, he unknowingly became the sole pioneer of what (almost a decade later) would become the billion dollar racing collectibles industry.

Most of all, Youngblood's work has been an inspiration to those who have followed in his footsteps. "The greatest compliment", says Kenny, "is being thanked by someone you've never met and who says you inspired them to pickup a paintbrush or a spray gun and get into the business."

Making the most of his legendary status, Kenny enjoys traveling and making personal appearances at car shows, racing events and trade shows in the U.S. and abroad. "I love meeting people and giving them something special to take home", says Youngblood, whose mom (as it turned out) was right!

For more info, go to [KennyYoungblood.com](http://KennyYoungblood.com)