

## History of the three-piece patch

The AMA [American Motorcyclist Association](#) A 290000-member-plus organization with an unparalleled history of pursuing, protecting and promoting the interests of American motorcyclists, was founded in 1924 as an organizing arm of Motorcycle Manufacturers and mainly supported by the Motorcycle Manufacturers to promote motorcycle riding in America. They sanctioned groups of riders from the same area that rode together as motorcycle “clubs”. Some wore complete matching dress outfits with the name of their motorcycle club stitched on the back of their shirts and jackets. At events, the AMA gave awards for the best-dressed club so this was the start of motorcycle club’s patches.

During an event in 1947 in Hollister, CA when a member of the Booze Fighters Motorcycle Club made the headlines with an exaggerated news story that was later made into a movie called "The Wild Ones".

The AMA wrote an article in their magazine, shortly after this stating, “99% of all of their members are law-abiding citizens and only 1% are “outlaw””. This then, began what is today known as Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs and one percenters. Clubs that were not sanctioned by the AMA and non-members of the AMA were banned from attending AMA events.

In order to designate themselves as an outlaw club to all other clubs, the one percenters cut their club patches into three separate pieces. The top rocker was the name of the club, the center was the emblem of the club, and the bottom rocker was the local from which they came. These outlaw motorcycle clubs put on their own events and parties and did the opposite of what the AMA had been doing. There were no Best Dressed awards, they “chopped” down their bikes to go faster and look different, rode with no mufflers, they would drink, and do other “wild” things. Such is history.

The term “colors” is used in referring to a motorcycle clubs’ patch set up. In the case of a 3 piece ..... One is placed over the top of the middle large graphic patch and one placed underneath it. The “rockers” are usually curved bars with the top bar designating the club name and the lower bar designating the location of the club. The two rockers are separate from the middle, larger graphic type patch, hence the term three-piece patch. Motorcycle clubs differ from motorcycling organizations as they traditionally have “prospecting” time required before the club members decide whether the individual will be accepted into the group and allowed to wear or “fly” the “colors” of the group. Most club “colors” will also have M/C printed on the “rocker” or a separate "cube" patch with MC on it to further clarify it as a club rather than an organization.

Many national organizations in the early 1980’s set policy to unite their “rockers” with their patch to make it one piece to avoid any designation or confusion within the motorcycling club community. H.O.G. (Harley Owners Group) and the Blue Knights (police officers) are an example.

As motorcycle club patches are recognized today:

- A one-piece patch normally signifies a family club or Social motorcycle club when it's done with respect to the area clubs.
- A two-piece patch can have many different meanings as long as it's done with respect to the area clubs.
- A three-piece patch normally means that the club is a Traditional MC club. With the top rocker being the club name, the middle being their patch and the bottom being the territory they exist in. There are also a few 3pc patch clubs where the bottom rocker has something other than territory, such as a saying. The traditional MC is one that adheres to the protocols and traditions established. There are few exceptions, but, traditional clubs are approved by the local dominant. The traditional 3pc patch club is not necessarily a 1% club or even the dominant club.

### **SUPPORT CLUB**

The Diamond patch with "1%" or "13" worn with the 3pc back patch signifies the club is a 1% or 1% support club.

While rare, they may not be the dominant club for the area but will be sanctioned by the local dominant. There are also a few areas where the dominant is not a 1% club, but those are few.

### **PROSPECT**

When one is just hanging around, he has no part of the patch. Then when he is sponsored by a full member and approved by the club as a prospect he may wear the lower rocker that only says "Prospect". In some areas, the prospect wears the "Prospect" rocker at the top of the vest. Some clubs even allow the lower rocker saying prospect and the upper rocker with the club name but not the main patch. Different clubs do things differently across the country. Different rocker combinations of what a prospect might wear differs depending on each club. If he is approved after his prospect time has been determined to be over and the vote goes in his favor, he then is allowed to have the full colors and is considered to be a full member, having all three pieces if that club uses the 3 piece patch.