

# New documentary takes car buffs for a spin

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From left, veterans Don Kramer, of Mount Clemens; Art Meyer, of Clawson; Dave Zappa, of St. Clair Shores; Walter “Don” Gilbert, of Shelby Township; David Hoffman, of Fort Gratiot; Gerald Horn, of Fraser; Michael O’Neil, of Roseville; and Rich Tweedle, of Clinton Township, stand with their classic cars and hold photographs from their military days at Kennedy Memorial Park in Eastpointe July 21.

Photo by Patricia O’Blenes



The crew films Dave Zappa, of St. Clair Shores. Zappa served in the Army from 1969 to 1971. He drove his 1965 Chevrolet Chevelle Malibu SS Convertible for the filming.

Photo by Patricia O’Blenes

EASTPOINTE — A group of local war veterans got behind their steering wheels July 21 at John F. Kennedy Memorial Park in Eastpointe.

The military men sat down with local filmmaker Keith Famie to be part of his documentary, “Detroit: The City of Hot Rods & Muscle Cars.”

The veterans, who brought their cars with them, shared stories about drag strips, why they spend so much time under the hoods of their vehicles, and serving their country.

Executive producers of the film are Famie, and John and Carole Kulhavi. Famie is a producer, director and author with Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom. He grew up in Farmington Hills and resides in Novi. Famie had a Ford Mustang and a Chevrolet Corvette while growing up.

According to a letter from Fred Nahhat, the senior vice president of production for Detroit Public TV, “Detroit: The City of Hot Rods & Muscle Cars” will premiere “centered around Father’s Day 2023.” According to the letter, there also will be a special preview screening for families, sponsors and those featured in the film.

“Muscle cars didn’t just change Detroit automotive culture,” narrator Chuck Gaidica states in the film trailer. “They reimagined it.”

The veterans interviewed at Kennedy Park last month were Don Kramer, who owns a 1955 Chevrolet 210 Bel Air; David Zappa, who owns a 1965 Chevelle Chevrolet Malibu SS; Don Gilbert, who owns a 1970 Plymouth Cuda; David Hoffman, who owns a 1969 Dodge Dart GTO; Gerald Horn, who owns a 1967 GTO; Art Meyer, who is the original owner of a 1970 El Camino SS; Michael O'Neil, who owns a 1980 Chevrolet Monte Carlo; and Richard Tweedle, who owns a 1985 1/2 Mustang SVO.

“This is a tribute to the Motor City, the car buffs, the car builders and the impact Detroit has had worldwide. It’s about the people that have impacted the car culture. There are deep-rooted stories,” Famie said. “We are the motor capital of the world. We are ground zero. This is the birthplace.”

The documentary will showcase the appreciation people have for the craftsmanship of the cars and detail how they were able to modify their vehicles.

“They see it as a piece of art,” Famie said. “I’m excited about the stories we’re telling. It’s the people that drove the whole culture.”

Along with the veterans, several other car buffs make appearances in the film, including industry executives, one-time Michigan resident and actor Tim Allen, and American automobile designer Chip Foose. A number of female car enthusiasts with gasoline in their veins also tell their stories.



“I’ve been impressed with the amount of women who are car collectors and car builders,” Famie said. “That’s really cool.”

While the film focuses on the vintage vehicles, there also is another story going on: the fathers who introduced their kids to cars. Famie said he had an epiphany about that when interviewing Foose regarding all the times he spent working on cars with his dad.

“Ah, this film is about dads. It’s about fathers. I think a lot of it has to do with dads. Up until that point, I did not make the connection,” Famie said. “I think a lot of it has to do with youth. They grew up with it. Kids played with Hot Wheels. It was so deeply embedded in our culture and our psyche.”

Famie hopes the documentary not only impacts car aficionados, but also draws in people who don’t follow the car culture.

“I want them to understand the significance of Detroit,” he said. “At the end of the day, how does the film inspire you?”

The documentary also will explore the impact that music had on the car culture. Famie and the production crew are scheduled to be at the Woodward Dream Cruise Aug. 20 to do some filming for the movie.