

Leelanau Enterprise

MICHIGAN NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

PBS car documentary to film in Npt.

Thursday, September 22, 2022

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Darin Irvine and his wife, Lynelle, are seen next to the Cars in the Park founder George Irvine's car earlier this year. Irvine and his father's car will be featured in a segment for the upcoming documentary called "Detroit: The City of Hot Rods and Muscle Cars." A number of cars will drive into Haserot Park for the film segment the morning of Oct. 2 to highlight the Leelanau peninsula's collector car culture.

Enterprise photo by Meakalia Previch-Liu

A new car documentary in the making set to release on Fathers Day weekend next year will feature a few familiar faces and places from the Northport area.

Keith Famie, metro Detroit native, director, and producer of the upcoming documentary called "Detroit: The City of Hot Rods and Muscle Cars," will be filming in the area at the end of the month, conducting interviews with local car enthusiasts like Darin Irvine, Bill Collins, Jerry Palmer, Keith Ashley and Dan McDavid. The segments highlight the Leelanau peninsula's collector car culture, but the entire project will ultimately capture the unique Detroit muscle car community and how Motor City iron has reached across the globe and shaped world culture.

The final two hour-long film will debut on Detroit Public Television (PBS) as a holiday special in 2023, and will premiere at the Henry Ford, with classic muscle cars and hot rods also on display. With media, community leaders, celebrities, and other supporters present, some of the proceeds from the premiere gala will benefit five local Michigan charities. There are plans to show the film at a location in Leelanau with details of when and where set to release at a later date.

Darin Irvine, owner of Custom Automotive Restoration LLC in Northport, is one of the first people Famie — and his team with Visionalist Entertainment Productions — will visit when they head up to film and conduct interviews in northwest Michigan. Irvine is also well known for his work in helping organize the annual Cars in the Park event, which is the longest-running auto show in Leelanau County. As a third generation of craftsmen in body work who follows in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, Irvine's ties to cars and how it influenced his life will be part of the many stories told in the documentary.

"I'm a little stunned I guess, especially after watching the trailer to see the people that are already part of the film and their interest in Leelanau County," Irvine said. "I feel fortunate that I've been included...I'm kind of a big PBS watcher and I watch a lot of programs on there, so to think that I have the opportunity to be part of a documentary that's going to air on PBS is flattering."

One of the threads that runs through the movie talks about how fathers have influenced their sons, and Irvine said his passion for what he does to this day is thanks to his father and what he loved to do.

"I learned from my father who learned from my grandfather, and those are the kinds of ties that they're trying to show across many different areas," Irvine said. "People that are collectors, and people that work in the automobile industry and their fathers were in the same industry... my piece of it is I've been in the restoration customization field because I learned it from my father and he learned from his father."

The film takes viewers to different states, too, with several large segments filmed on the west coast in Los Angeles featuring other notable people and car executives like Jay Leno, Tim Allen, and Bob Lutz.

Famie said while doing his research of where he and the crew would have to go, the Leelanau peninsula, and specifically the Northport area, was a magnet to retirees/enthusiasts who were once involved in the auto industry. In order to tell the in-depth story about the history of muscle cars and hot rods, Famie said he knew he had to go directly to the sources.

"Besides the fact that the retirees and the treasure trove of individuals that have navigated and moved to that area in the world for their retirement and the stories that they keep and can share with us, Darin's happens to be a really strong story about fathers and their love of cars... The film is really a celebration of fathers and the impact they had on their sons and daughters' passions for cars," Famie said.

Although the film is about cars, Famie said he wants people to know it's really a film about people, and in this case, it's about people who have grown up and have a tremendous connection and love for the Motor City, the state of Michigan, and everything that Detroit did worldwide for the car industry.

"While I'm drawn to the cars and everything, I'm really drawn to the people, community, and the area and what I can do as a filmmaker to shed a light on the beauty of why people gravitate there (Leelanau)," Famie said. "In the film, there's a lot of story to it that's much deeper than fast moving tires and loud sounding engines. While that is the soundtrack of the film, it is not the story. The story is about the people."