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Vocational education facility in Roseville to be featured in PBS documentary on hot rods

Documentary will include segment on “next generation” of mechanics

By **MITCH HOTTS** | mhotts@medianewsgroup.com | Macomb Daily



Paul Tregembo Sr. points out something to students at Drive One Detroit during a filming session last week. The documentary will premier in June at the Henry Ford in Dearborn. (PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIONALIST ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS)

Sixteen-year-old John Cavataio expected a laidback vibe when he met with local film director Keith Famie in Roseville to tape a segment for Famie’s upcoming documentary, “Detroit: The City of Hot Rods & Muscle Cars.”

But with an energetic film crew rushing about with cameras and boom microphones taking in every move and sound made by auto tech class students at Drive One Detroit on Common Road in Roseville, the vibe was more uptempo than anticipated.

“It was a little more chaotic than I thought it was going to be, but in a good way,” Cavataio, who attends Grosse Pointe North High School, said last week.

“There are so many people working every project and every single car had a hand on it, it’s a huge change of pace. We just got done wiping down a car for that perfect shot. That’s how things are going today.”



Evan Heimberger, 18, Desmond Charlet, 17, of Harper Woods, and John John Cavataio, 16, of Grosse Pointe Woods, stand by a hot rod inside of Drive One Detroit. (MITCH HOTTIS — THE MACOMB DAILY)

Drive One is a non-profit facility that provides at-risk youngsters with vocational training in automotive technology, machining, welding and other aspects of working on cars, according to its mission statement.

For Famie, an award-winning documentary maker, the students at the tech center will be included in his next project because “they represent the next generation.”

“When you think of hot rods and muscle cars and you think of the older generations,” Famie said. “A place Drive One is where these kids come to chase their passion. They’re turning a wrench and starting up a car. It’s so cool to see them react. What better place than the Motor City?”

Over the course of the past year, Famie and his crew have traveled around Michigan to interview classic car owners, hitting events such as the Woodward Dream Cruise in Oakland County and others to capture the essence of Detroit’s car culture as told by vintage vehicle collectors, military veterans, female gearheads, and actor Tim Allen.

According to press materials, the two-hour documentary film is a historical tribute to Detroit’s unique hot rod and muscle car community and how Motor City iron has circumnavigated the globe and shaped world culture.

Famie’s Visionalist Entertainment Productions team visited Drive One Detroit to capture footage of young up-and-coming auto buffs.

“Our film is really about people and cars, but even more so about the impact Detroit has had on the car culture and hot rods, and music and where the next generation is going,” Famie said. “We have students from a variety of schools here in Macomb County because they are the next generation of car builders and designers.”



An unidentified student works on a clay model of an automobile on the second floor of Drive One Detroit in Roseville. (PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIONALIST ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS)

Opened in 2017, Drive One is a 16,000-square-foot training facility for individuals interested in careers in the automotive industry including restoration and customization. Students take classes at Drive One Detroit while enrolled in their home schools.

Drive One has been operated by four generations of the Tregembo family including Stanley Tregembo, Paul Tregembo Sr. along with his son, Paul Tregembo Jr. Paul Tregembo Jr.'s sons, Joseph and Brandon, are the next generation.

Part of Famie's film documents high school students from Fraser, South Lake, Lake Shore and Grosse Pointe working on several classic cars — including a 1931 Ford Roadster pickup and a 1967 Pontiac LeMans convertible — which students are finishing while restoring the other four cars for Autorama.

The special six-vehicle exhibition at this year's Detroit Autorama for the 50th anniversary of Student-Built Project Vehicles at what is billed as "America's Greatest Hot Rod Show."

"For this year's Autorama, we're taking down six cars representing every decade that has been part of Autorama," said Paul Tregembo Sr.

Tregembo said Keith Famie's documentary will contain footage of his students working on various vehicles of today and yesterday, including electric vehicles — even though many of his students haven't bought in to the EV concept.

"When you say something happened 10 years ago, today's students were in the first grade. To them, that's another lifetime. So when they come to the party, EV's are a reality. Hybrids have been forever in their world. They have a whole different viewpoint," he said.

For youngsters like John Cavataio of Grosse Pointe North High School, the EV equation is incomplete. He sees hydrogen-powered vehicles as the more likely next generation of cars.



The crew filmed segments for Keith Famie's upcoming documentary, "Detroit: The City of Hot Rods & Muscle Cars." It will premier June 14 at the Henry Ford in Dearborn. (PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIONALIST ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTIONS)

"I don't think it's been really thought because of all the inconvenience it can bring and a lot of people can't afford one," he said. "A car running on hydrogen is like a gasoline-powered car but it has no emissions, so it's better for the environment."

The film will premier in June at the Henry Ford Museum in support of five Michigan children's charities before it is launched on Detroit Public Television/PBS and it will also premiere in Los Angeles.