

On your mark... Get set... Show!



Former racing champion revs up for automotive film festival.

By Shawn Godberry
Imagine Fresno Staff Writer

Dave Wolin is a man with drive — literally. Wolin is a former SCCA/IMSA racing champion. He also knows movies, having worked on many car-themed feature films over the years. Is it any wonder that this former racer-turned-car-buff and now film commissioner for Madera County came up with the idea of combining his two passions — cars and movies — to create the world's first automotive-themed film festival?

The Southern Yosemite Automotive Film Festival is set to debut March 21 through March 25 in Oakhurst. Unlike most film festivals throughout the world, the automotive festival isn't showing new films, per se. It isn't giving prizes for best film. What it is doing is celebrating cars on

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"Cannonball Run II" is one of the films that will be shown during the festival. The movie stars Oakhurst resident Richard Kiel, who is scheduled to appear at the festival. Dave Wolin, who put the festival together, built the Mitsubishi used in the film.

Photo: Southern Yosemite Automotive Film Festival



Above: The 1966 film "Grand Prix" will be among the films screened at the festival. The movie's star, James Garner, is expected to be in attendance to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award.

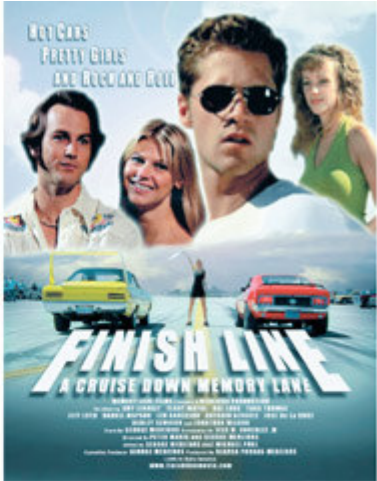
Photo: Southern Yosemite Automotive Film Festival

Top Right: The locally produced film "Finish Line: A Cruise Down Memory Lane" will be playing at the film festival.

Photo: Memory Lane Films

Bottom Right: Acting legend James Garner will be the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the festival for his work in "Grand Prix" and the documentary, "The Racing Scene." Both films will be shown during the run of the festival.

Photo: Southern Yosemite Automotive Film Festival



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celluloid in a grand fashion unlike anything ever done before.

"It's like a no-brainer that would be kind of fun," Wolin says. "Everyone's a movie buff or a car buff."

In addition to exciting films such as "Corvette Summer," "Two-Lane Blacktop," and the original "Fast and the Furious" from 1954, which will all be shown in Oakhurst's Met Cinemas, the festival will feature celebrities from the auto world and Hollywood, an extensive car show and a memorabilia sale.

Those scheduled to appear include film-legend James Garner, who will be receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Automotive Films for "Grand Prix" and "The Racing Scene" (which will also be screening), Dick "Mr. Corvette" Guldstand with his 50th

anniversary ZO-6, and John Schneider, best known for the "Dukes of Hazzard," with the orange Dodge Charger used in his latest film "Collier & Co." (also showing).

Richard Kiel, best known for his portrayal of James Bond's nemesis Jaws, is also scheduled to appear.

"Richard and I worked together on 'Cannonball Run II,'" Wolin says. "Arguably, it's not the greatest movie ever, but it has a lot of Mitsubishis in it. I built the Mitsubishis used in 'Cannonball Run II.'"

Wolin also worked on "Grand Prix," "Days of Summer," starring Tom Cruise, the Steve McQueen movie "Le Mans" and Paul Newman's "Winning."

"[Winning] got Paul Newman interested in racing from this," Wolin says. "He's been doing it ever since. In fact, they all got into it. In 1988, Cruise even raced a

season."

George Medeiros, a filmmaker from Clovis, is pleased that his locally produced film, "Finish Line: A Cruise Down Memory Lane," is being included in the festival. He and other filmmakers will be on hand to discuss their movies.

"I really think it's a good thing for the public and independent filmmakers," says Medeiros. "Most of the time you see a movie, but you don't get to meet the people behind the scenes. I find that fascinating."

Wolin says many car clubs have been invited, so a car show will also be part of the festivities. Wolin, who had as many as 50 cars at one time, currently owns eight. He will be bringing several of his cars to the show.

Carolyn DeVore is a former "Hot Rod" magazine cover girl from the '60s and was the first woman to drive a Shelby on television. Currently the owner of DeVore Talent & Casting in Fresno, DeVore has had a long history with cars and will be coordinating fashion shows, including a '50s fashion show celebrating the era when the car was king.



The 2004 Pontiac GTO is one of the world's fastest production two-door sedans.
Photo: Southern Yosemite Automotive Film Festival

"I don't think young people are as into their cars as they were in the '50s and '60s," she says. "In those days, you were who your car was."

In addition to creating the event, Wolin says the festival also fills another need — bringing business to Oakhurst in the off-season. "From Memorial Day to Labor Day, this place is full," he says. "In the off-season, it's very quiet," Wolin says.

Kathy McCorry is the executive

director of the Oakhurst Chamber of Commerce. The organization has been key in helping Wolin get the festival going.

"We will be hosting the event, making sure that everything runs on time," she says. "We are setting up the collectible and memorabilia vendors. We are setting up the evening activities and the celebrity coordinating."

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AUTOMOTIVE

"Finish Line: A Cruise Down Memory Lane," was filmed in Clovis, Fresno and surrounding Valley towns, using local classic cars.
Photo: Memory Lane Films



Southern Yosemite Automotive Film Festival
March 21 to 25
Raley's Shopping Center
Intersection of Highways 41 and 49
Oakhurst
(559) 683-7766
www.southernyosemite.com

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McCorry says the festival should bring in extra revenue to local businesses such as hotels, restaurants and shops.

"We're going to bring tourists, which is a good thing, but we'll also be raising money for some worthy causes," Wolin

says. McCorry and Wolin say proceeds from the festival will all go to charity. The Lee Iacocca Foundation and the Children's Miracle Network will be the principle recipients, but local charities will also benefit. "Small communities have the same needs as big communities," McCorry says. "They just have smaller pockets."

Locally, the money will go to Boys & Girls Clubs, warming centers, band uniforms and many other needs. "It just goes on and on," McCorry says.

The festival is already generating a lot of buzz and is expected to be a success. Everyone involved points to Wolin as the

main reason it is expected to do well.

"Dave has just been phenomenal, reaching out and getting the celebrities and the racing celebrities to come to this first-time event," McCorry says.

As interest pours in, plans are already in the works for an event in 2008. "Next year is the 100th anniversary of the Model T," McCorry says. "That sets our stage."

Wolin is focusing on this first festival, but even he can see that it has the potential to take off.

"This event has taken on a life of its own," Wolin says. "In two or three years, it's going to be the biggest event in Oakhurst." ■









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