

Drivelines, on line

Hello My fellow Ford V8'ers

For those that don't know Me, I'm, Robert, & I am the Editor of Your DriveLines Newsletter

Now, What am I doing here???

I am starting this "On Line" only newsletter, page for stories that may not be just right for our standard newsletter.

Things like a long story, like the story in this first pub, it runs a little long, has pics & I didnt want to edit it down.

I'd like this platform to be for things like generic car stories, Our hobbies, how we got started

This way, we can still keep the page count down for the Mailer which coincides with the online version, but this will have a larger format

As with the main Driveline, This Drivelines on Line is YOUR, So contribute. It doesnt matter if your not a "wordsmith" That what I'm here for.

If you see a funny toon, submit it, A car show, a car on the street, You see a dog with his head sticking out of a Merc.....Please, Submit it

I hope you all will enjoy

Thanks

Rob / DriveLines Online, Editor, (DLOE)

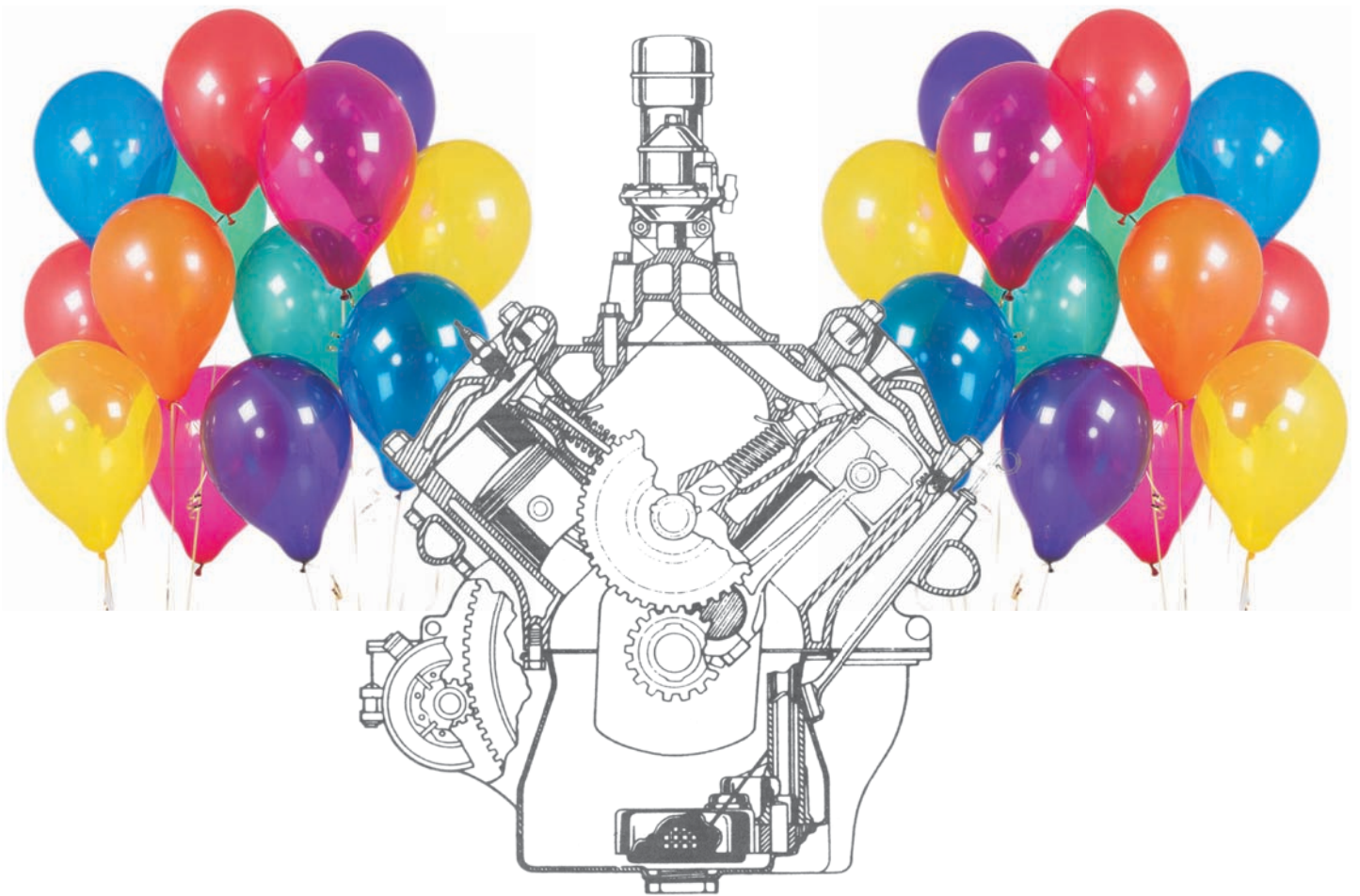
So, Our First Story comes fro Howard Brown
It's a story about Cars in the Movies & how to be part of that
Enjoy

Drivebines, on line



Chapter #40
Our 50th Year
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Feb 2021



FIFTY YEARS

So, You Want (your cars) To Be In Movies.

By Dave Evans, courtesy of Howard Brown

Hey, do you recognize the handsome, dashing, talented, young actor standing by the 'Squarebird' in the enclosed photos? Probably not because; 1). He's not handsome, 2). He's not dashing, 3). His talent level is questionable, and 4). He's definitely not young. That's because the car is the real star. The pictures are from the 2019 movie titled, "Motherless Brooklyn" about a private detective "as he ventures to solve the murder of his mentor and only friend" in New York City in the late 1950's.

The movie features such actors such as, Bruce Willis, Willem DeFoe, Alec Baldwin, and is directed by and acted in by Ed Norton. But, I digress; to me the cars are the real stars. Besides my black 'Squarebird' there are lots of 52-56 Fords, 55-57 Chevys, 46-48 Plymouths, and even a few period independents, such as Nash, Packard, a few Studebakers, Checker cabs, and the occasional Hudson. Most of the cars are chosen because they are NOT PERFECT! They are what's known as ND or non-descript cars. The idea is that they should look like typical "street cars" of the appropriate era. Nothing too flashy, unless it is the "hero car" which is for a main character, and should be recognizable immediately.

So how do the movie companies get all of these cars and trucks? Sometimes the vehicle prop master will go through a vehicle broker. There are several out there, and the brokers have on file pictures and a list of vehicles appropriate for the setting and time period. Example, Brooklyn 1958. At times brokers are still employed to find specialty vehicles, something the typical vintage car owner might not have. For example, a period police car/taxi/ambulance or even a panel truck or moving van that might be used as a "blocking vehicle" to park in front of something in the background. The blocking vehicle would be used to park in front of something in the background that might ruin the period look of the scene. Think of a cell phone ad on a New York City bus shelter or the ever present Starbucks storefront in an otherwise period consistent block (setting).

Now, many movie companies are using the casting departments to get the ND (nondescript) background cars. It's kind of like cutting out the middleman to save money, ironic since the TV/Movie industry is well known for its financial inefficiencies. By using the casting department to get the ND cars there is a trade off.

All of the knowledge / connections and expertise the brokers possess is gone. So each ND car costs the production company less. (Just imagine 20 ND cars for 25- 30 days on the set). Now, people who are experts at casting actors are now casting cars! So many times the conversation between the owner and the casting agency is to explain things like the fact that it is okay to use a 1954 Ford in a movie set in 1952 since the only difference is the grill bars, or that not everybody drove a new car in 1952, especially in a poor neighborhood. So, most of the background vehicles should be at least ten years old. Try explaining that to a twenty-something casting agent whose automotive experience is limited to taking Uber cars to go eat twenty dollar lobster rolls.

All this industry was going on quite well until March of 2020, when the unfortunate Coronavirus shut down all outside TV/film/photo shoot work for months. This put many people out of work - not just the car owners/brokers, but all the makeup and wardrobe people/prop set designers and builders/food catering companies/locations people etc. Before Corona, the typical day in the life of an ND car would be showing up on set at 6 a.m., going to the breakfast truck, and having breakfast made to order. Then, signing in at the holding location (typically a rented place in a church/synagogue/VFW hall) and having your hair and makeup either approved or modified to fit the time period/scene. Next, a short walk over to the wardrobe department to either have the clothes you are wearing approved or to be fitted with new clothes. You will not be able to get your clothes back until you return your "borrowed" clothes. Lunch/dinner/late meals were served buffet style to large crowds of actors/crew/car drivers/big shots (not necessarily in that order!) sometimes for more than two hundred people. All this came abruptly to a halt in March due to Coronavirus. Fast forward about eight months, and after several false starts, some outside (exterior) filming has resumed. Covid tests are required. Most people bring their own period clothes and everyone who is off camera is required to wear a mask. All food is served in pre-packaged containers, even down to the coffee, which is served to you by a designated staff person. It's nice to see the jobs back, and adapting to the "new normal" is a small price to pay for the return of so many jobs.

Back to what is involved in getting your car hired. Going through the casting department has its advantages and disadvantages. The daily car rate is less than when it was done through brokers, however going through casting will result in a “bump up” of take home because the car owner will also be paid as a BG (background actor). Typical pay is \$120 a day for a non-union background actor and \$170 for a S.A.G (Screen Actors Guild) union actor. The advantage will increase if the filming goes more than nine hours, as there is overtime for the “actor.” The car does not get any earned overtime, so it is rented for a flat fee whether it works for six hours or twelve hours. Since most people who work in the casting department are not “car people” or even old enough to know what a Studebaker or a Nash is, it’s not a problem to tell them your 1960 Thunderbird is a 1958 (since that’s when the production takes place). The only difference between the cars is that the tail lights are slightly different. Best to leave that information unsaid.

There are a few brokers who advertise to put your car in the TV/movie/photoshoot business. If you go that route, you would be best advised to be on set with your car as many actors/prop people will treat your car as if it is only a prop, like a phone booth or a newspaper stand. Sometimes they think your car is a leaning post, place to eat lunch, or nothing special that can’t be replaced. I was once asked by a director if I would drive my 1963 Cadillac limo through a showroom plate glass window because that was “what the script called for.” I politely declined, and ultimately used a different one of my cars for a different scene in the same movie (Cadillac Records 2008). When I saw the final product someone else's car was driven through the play glass window and then it dropped down eighteen inches to the sidewalk below with a loud bang. If your car is a show car, garage queen, or one hundred point restoration, don’t even think about submitting it for a production. If your car is too nice to park in a supermarket parking lot without you worrying about it, then don’t submit it for a production unless you can be there the entire time with your eyes on it. Occasionally, a production company will ask if it is “okay” for an actor to drive your car, this is your call, and it is sometimes negotiable for a bump up in pay scale for your car. This may not be a problem if your car is a 1960’s or newer with automatic transmission, power steering and brakes, but you might want to think twice about putting a twenty something actor behind the wheel of your 1939 Buick, three on the tree, no power steering or brakes, floor mounted starter switch, etc.

So, how do you get going on this? There are basically two ways to go. One is through casting agencies like Central Casting, Grant Wilfley, Silvia Fay, and many more on the West Coast for my LASDC friends. You typically need to send in a picture/headshot of yourself and pictures of your car. It’s probably best to describe the cars as “mid 60’s high end sedan” or “early 70’s muscle car” instead of the exact year of the car because that would limit its range of years in the eyes of the casting people. The second method is to go online and look up vehicle rental agencies a.k.a. brokers. Each of the brokers will have a website list, usually by year/decade, of what vehicles they have for rental. Most of the vehicles are not owned by the broker, but the broker represents them for the owner as being available. As you look at the various broker’s websites, you will notice some of them specialize in motorcycles, some in professional type vehicles (police, taxi, ambulance, limos), and some just a little bit of everything. All the broker’s websites tell you how to contact them to have your vehicles listed by them. They will typically get you more money for your vehicle than casting but you will not get the aforementioned “bump up” as a BG actor. Typical daily rental payment through casting varies with the age of the car with late 60’s to late 70’s paying \$250 per day plus acting bump up. Older cars like early 60’s back to early 50’s usually get \$300-400 daily rate depending on the production. Pre-war cars get the most as they are the hardest to find, especially stock looking, and can get \$500+ per day. Cars from the 2000’s and newer barely get enough money to cover your gas and tolls. When working through casting you are on your own to get your car to the location, so if your ND car breaks down on the way to the set, you are out of luck since one or two ND cars will not hold a production. As they say, that’s show business.

Going through a broker has its advantages of typically paying more per day and many brokers can provide transportation for your cars to and from the set. This can be negotiated and may result in less money in your pocket but it is a “no stress” method of getting your car to a location. No tolls, gas, wear and tear on your car, and no driving an eighty year old car on a 90 degree day in New York City traffic while pedestrians jump in front of your car to take a picture. Another advantage of going through a broker is that your car will get a lot more exposure and job opportunities. Some brokers specialize in commercials and photoshoots for print ads,

these are usually the easiest types of jobs since the car usually doesn't need to be moving, there are no big name and big ego actors to be coddled, and no strangers trying to find first gear in your transmission. Typically these are magazine ads, catalogue ads, etc.

Enclosed you will find some photos of my cars on various jobs and a typical TV/movie call sheet. The call sheet has the name of the production (City On A Hill Season 2) and other information such as filming location and time, scene numbers, and a brief overview of the scenes. In addition, base camp location, cast members and their character names, and a list of props; some being location props and some being vehicle props. If a car is labeled as an ND, the only prep work usually necessary is to put on appropriate license plates for the year and state that the scene takes place and to cover any registration or inspection stickers on the lower side of the windshield. The nice prop people will cover the stickers from the outside with black tape, the nasty prop people will scrape off your stickers into a thousand little pieces, leaving your car illegal to drive home (which is another reason it's always good to be on location with your car).

So, the big question is – is it worth it? Many days are twelve to fourteen hours long (usually in the spring and summer when there is the most daylight) and in my opinion it is not glamorous in any way, shape, or form. Driving an eighty year old standard shift car around the block can get tedious after twenty takes, especially on a hot day as you nervously watch the temperature gauge peg toward the high side and the inevitable vapor lock that accompanies it. But, it's really not any investment (besides your time) since you already own the car. If the car can make you some money it's a good way to rationalize it's ownership with your better half. Sometimes, one job can lead to another, and the money earned can go into your "car fund" for your next purchase (ask me how I know). You get to meet some interesting people and see other cars you may have no knowledge of or previous exposure to. Of course, you can always try it a few times and see if it's something you enjoy, and there is always the thrill of watching the finished product and pointing to the scene and yelling, "Did you see that taillight go by at 30 miles an hour? That's my car!"

Happy motoring and stay safe,
Dave Evans





