

Avanti Magazine

Issue 185 Winter/Spring 2019

AVANTI Owners Association
International, Inc.

\$7.75 US, \$9.75 CAN, € 5.73

Free for AOAI Members

Inside: An Avanti Thriller Movie

ALSO:

Avanti Passion from an Early Age

Granatelli Avanti: The Story of R-1025

Studebaker Performance is Alive in Plymouth, Michigan



An Avanti Thriller Movie!

Story and photos by Joe Leak
AOAI Indiana member

"Hey, what are you doing on the computer?"

"Nothing, Honey. Just looking at porn."

"No, you're not—you're looking at old cars again, aren't you?"

"No I'm not—I'm surfing for smut."

"Don't lie to me—I can tell when you are engrossed in car videos."

Sigh—how does my wife always know what is going on in my head and on my computer? Seriously, how does she know when I'm watching Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee—with the sound turned down to 2? I like to see what is new out there, and find any footage or posted pics starring my favorite car (Avanti, of course!). I wondered if I would ever see my Avanti in a video. Hey, I'm just a guy from a small midwestern town—I never thought anything like that would ever happen to me. Then Lady Luck beckoned me...

One day in late spring, I'd seen a distributive note in my email account, asking if anyone might be interested in allowing their classic car to be used in a video. It seemed legitimate, and my spam blocker did not reject it... Wait a minute—this still might not be legit. Are they going for Performance Art? How massive of an engine does it have to be to perform on this film? Do they cut in footage of a freakishly oversized engine that has its appropriate place in a PT Barnum circus tent? Well, I will respond—just to see what happens. If they ask me to ship the car to a prince stranded in Africa, I may get suspicious. But the

email only asked for pictures, not money. Well, ok—I'll send them one pic.

Surprisingly enough, a response came back. The filming was to be a music video, involving a singer-songwriter who was very interested in using a classic car in this short movie. Not only that, but he was specifically focused on finding an Avanti car—he was pleased with the picture I submitted and wanted to find out more about it. Wow—I made the cut!

Ok, maybe this is good—maybe not. I suddenly had nightmarish visions dancing in my head of 1980s music videos that I recall from my younger years... Whitesnake (with a woman cartwheeling over the hoods of 2 Jaguars), Sammy Hagar (who seemingly can't drive 55 in a Ferrari—ok, this I understand), and how will I ever get out of my head Dee Snider of Twisted Sister fame, writhing around on the hood of a Cadillac DeVille in "Pee Wee's Big Adventure"... Aack! I don't want damages inflicted on my car, no matter what the fame. Well, I need to dig a little deeper—this may not be for me.

Back in the day, I remember when my brother (who also has the classic car-collecting malady), had seen an ad in a national automotive publication where the initiator wanted an old car for filming purposes—specifically an early 50s Cadillac. That individual turned out to be someone from a Hollywood studio who needed to source out prop cars for an upcoming film (Going All the Way—a film based on the book



by Dan Wakefield). In the end, the deal between “Hollywood” and my brother didn’t pan out, as the studio really wanted to put a modern engine into the car, then crash/wreck/blow it up. Brother Roscoe decided he’d rather keep his Cadillac in a few unassembled pieces under his own garage roof, as opposed to seeing his darling car race gloriously on the Big Screen, then immediately ending its useful life by separating itself into unmentionable, unrecognizable fiery fragments--and ultimately being sold for scrap. I guess that is the dilemma in life, isn’t it? My point here is this: fame can touch any of us at a given time, but is it worth the sacrifice? Is your mark on life to be a timeless, subtle iconic reference, or an incredibly fast / contemporary explosion of light, sound and energy? ZZ Top video? Well, ok. Watch-Me-Blow-Up-This-Car video? Nope--not interested.

I really needed to interrogate this guy. I was hyped up now, and had a list of insightful, digging, searing questions ready for Mr. Musician. I was going to grill him, and I might even have to rewrite this script. Our correspondence ended with me giving out my phone number, and he was to call me later that evening. The call came in, and I was ready.

Mr. Musician was going by the name of “Eric.” “What’s the gist of this video, Mr. Eric?” I ask accusingly. Eric replied that it’s concerning a musician pursuing his career, and his love interest who is having distress following him / his dedicated, grueling pursuit of that elusive fame. She wants to end the relationship, and the musician is reflecting back on the time spent together in opposition to his time on the road... “Hmm, does this video involve an angry woman and a can of spray paint? Do the words ‘Cheating B*stard’ ever appear on the side of a car? Is any car folded, spindled or otherwise mutilated in the filming of this video?” Eric answers, “Actually, no... Still interested?” This is where I have maneuvered him into exactly the right place--I have him in the palm of my hand. My semester of Labor Relations & Negotiations is truly going to pay off now... I retorted without skipping a beat, “Well, ok--sure!”

A time was established for him to come over, meet in person, and then he can also see the car. Mr. Eric

happened to have a last name--Eric O’Daffer--and goes by Eric O’ on stage. And in reality, he is an easy-going, sincere and polite individual with a good sense of humor. We talked about the script, the car, his direction and aspirations. He is like other ambitious artists that I know, trying to pursue his art and balance it with a day job and all the other things that need to be done on a daily basis in life. I have a family member who is on this same Musician’s Path, and I know it is not easy—but oh, so rewarding when you catch a window of opportunity. It just felt right for me to lend assistance in making this video a success.

Eric showed up at the designated day and time, and we looked at the car. He was pleased, and thought the car was perfect for the video. I suggested a test drive around the block, and we both took turns behind the steering wheel on the trip. We’d been driving the backroads around my wife’s farm, and we were passing by a particularly lovely late-1800s farmhouse when Eric made a comment about it: some of the script scenes take place in a house just like that one--ah, it would be absolutely perfect to film in that location... He did not realize that it was part of the farm, and I thought it best not to mention it until I spoke to my wife first. We arrived back home at the same time wife Kelei was arriving. I introduced Eric, and we spoke at length about the

filming. I brought up the topic of shooting some scenes at the farmhouse. I immediately put her mind at ease by telling her that there would be no explosions, no sprayed graffiti, no Twisted Sister involved—she stared at me like a horn was actually sprouted and grew three inches out of my forehead. Other than that, she seemed ok with the idea, and it was settled.

Eric needed to work out a date with the producer, filming crew, and the actors—but he would get back with me soon. True to his word, he texted me with the filming date—July 1 is when everyone’s schedule would accommodate. And true to July, it would be the hottest day of the year to that point.

See MOVIE, page 17



Movie, from page 15

Everything was set—the sun shining, the yard mowed, and the Avanti cleaned. Everyone showed up, as planned. The crew was extremely professional and courteous—and busy. There were even mini-dramas with the actors—script lines, script direction, etc., etc. Wife Kelei (who has some experience with Hollywood, as she was a studio lighting sales rep in a former work life) watched contentedly from this distance and smiled at our little microcosm of activity... this is the reality of Hollywood. We sat in director's chairs (I found those at Goodwill, and thought them to be most appropriate for wife and I to use on The Set) while the action happened all around us. I, on the other hand, was restless and could not sit still—what in the world are they doing now? Why are they shooting every scene over and over and over? How many angles do they really need? Yes, Country Rube goes to Hollywood—that will be the name of this chapter in my autobiography. Wife Kelei rolled her eyes, thumped my head, and told me

ragged. They pushed hard, and worked as long as there was daylight (and then kicked into overdrive when other lighting had to be used after dark). Everyone kept their composure, despite the very long and hot day. We were the lucky ones, living merely an hour from downtown Indy. Others drove home to Chicago and St. Louis, among other locales.

Did I appear in the film? No--no cameo appearance from me. But the Avanti looked great! Many car scenes did not make it into the final director's cut, but the Avanti is unmistakable. (When looking at one scene, "rain" was pounding down the window—not to spoil the filming effect, but that was done with a special water hose—operated by me! Yes, they found that special job only I could do, out of camera view!)

I hope you have time to see this video. If you live or drive near Seymour, Indiana, watch for Eric O'. He is an absolute gem of an individual, and a great singer-songwriter! As far as your car daydreams / fantasies are concerned: yes, it can happen to you. Depending on where the bar is set, you can have your 15 seconds of



to behave. Sigh—a day in the life of a Hollywood backer.

It was a brutally long and hot day—filming in the yard, in the house, along the country road next to the house. The producer had a flying drone with a camera, so there was even footage taken with an aerial view. Once these scenes were shot to satisfaction, we all drove to downtown Indy for the next film setting ("Swanky Hotel" according to the script). Filming lasted over 14 straight hours—and that was just the first day of shooting.

One may think that the film industry is blanketly overpaid, and you may be right. Some are obscenely overpaid, but I assure you this crew worked their butts

fame. Maybe even 15 minutes.



- Watch the video "Rain in Louisville": TheAvanti.com/louisville.html
- Jay Muster, Video Director;
Jordan Wyatt, Cinematography and Editing
- Eric O's newly released CD ("Bricks"), at Amazon:
<https://amzn.to/2MiFwQH>
- Eric O's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Eric.ODaffer1>