



Deuce of Spades

French-born, Beirut-raised Faith Granger fell down the hot rod rabbit hole a few years ago, bought a dingy old deuce and became so enamored with the American performance and custom culture that she decided to make a film about it all.

Never mind she never made a film before in her life. Or used a film camera, or knew how to edit, or any of the movie stuff you need to know if you have the notion to be a filmmaker. As far as she was concerned, she would learn what she needed to know and do it all herself if it came down to that. It damn near did.

Committed to a very cool concept, Granger made the film with her own money and damn little of that. She happily shepherded the project forward doing everything herself before a variety of film industry techies and professional actors got wind of what she was up to and started to volunteer time, equipment and services.

"The film is a pure labor of love and to retain the integrity of my artistic vision, I knew I would have to do it myself and keep investors, corporate funding and the film industry basically out," she noted, "Which meant going out on a limb financially and dumping every last dime I had (and quite a few I don't), into this film."

After a short time looking at the previews, photos and commentary on the Deuce of Spades website, most any rodder will get caught up in the adventure. Frankly, I was bummed that I couldn't help, but living 1,800 miles away from the production made it impossible.

If you wander around her website, you'll find the links to her previous music career and realize the girl has most certainly reinvented herself. We should all have such style, panache and courage to do the same when our lives get boring,

mundane or too hectic.

We all dream, but damn few of us throw ourselves into making reality out of the adventures of the mind. Deuce of Spades is the ultimate "home movie" that is, without exception, worthy of the big screen.

Mega faceted Granger invited me to her artful, southern California home in late May for a private screening of Deuce of Spades. The sound wasn't done, but being a creative sort myself, it was easy to



get past the "in-production-so-to-be-fixed" glitches. What I saw was an extremely rare vision into hot rod yesterday told in dramatic fashion.

I'll not be a spoiler and give away anything to decrease your viewing moments, except to say the film is diligently well-researched in terms of period clothing, scenery and even language. Watch for phrases no longer used today, but highly relevant to the well-paced storytelling.

A slice of hot rodding life carved artfully right out of the 1950s that even includes a few very recognizable land speed racing and customizing personalities playing themselves in the modern-day era segments.

"With over 90 minutes of period footage showing the '50s, the film aims at bringing the old jalopies back into the spotlight," stated Granger on the website, "Resurrecting the 'good old days' of hot rodding and bringing a slice of Americana back to life. It is my tribute to all the hot rodders who were a part of it."

The early portion of the plot mirrors Faith's real life experience - the acquisition of a '32 roadster that set her on course to produce the film. The plot unfolds from the curiosity of a modern day female hot rod enthusiast who buys a roadster of unknown origins and finds a letter behind the upholstery dating back to 1955 while restoring the car's faded glory.

The storyline pivots when she opens the sealed, stamped, but unmailed letter to find a gold ring on a chain accompanying an emotional, heart-wrenching declaration from "Johnnie" to "Betty."

Here begins the hot rodding hunt to uncover why the obviously important letter was never mailed, the hot rod's peerage, its builder and owner and his girl. This is NOT a chick flick. I can attest that the story will ring true for not only those involved with the hot rod crowd, but surely resonate with the general public as a pointed human interest drama focused on a fascinating segment of American culture.

"What amazes me about Faith is that she does every aspect herself," noted devoted land speed racer Dan Warner who plays himself in the film, "She did the make-up, set the scene, shot the scene, set-up the sound, does the editing, wrote the script."

It is a story to touch everyone in the family; she has been faithful to the period and does a wonderful job for someone who is relatively new to the hot rod scene. And she lives the lifestyle: drives her '32 all over town, wears the clothes, she is immersed in the culture."

Warner added that he has spoken to other rodders who provided their hot rods for the film and they all say the scenes are period correct, right down to an authentic vintage timing system.

"She has done lots of detail work," said Warner who got involved through land speed racer and historian Jim Miller who helped with the film's historical vehicle background and technical correctness,

"You won't find any modern items in the background."

With a feigned look of innocence he concluded, "I can talk the lingo now, I know what 'b roll' is and I have 'footage for my reel.' This could be my break out role, at age 68, for a short but blazing acting career."

Granger's devotion to authenticity began with her own hot rod. She went shopping with a long list and eventually found her heart's desire in a low mileage, fenderless high boy on an original frame. Under the chopped windshield were many original parts, black body paint with a red grille, guide lights. She had to have red steelies with beauty rings.

She also wanted a drivable car with an old-style bench type seat and steering wheel that still needed finishing touches and work. She hoped for and got a rumble seat set-up without the rumble seat, authentic Buick finned drums, tri-power and an engine fitted with a race cam. Remarkably, she got it all and it is this car that is the rolling star of the film.

The entire cast was unpaid, comprised of professional actors, land speed racers and hot rod customizers including Gene Winfield and Bill Hines. Because Granger plays the hot rod girl in the film, she did pay a couple of folks to run the camera, but only when she was in front of it.

A throw of the shifter also goes out to the volunteer main cast Timothy Luke who plays Johnny Callaway, Alexandra Holder as Johnny's girl Bettie Thompson, Kyle Clifford, Jordan Warren, Gary Miller Youst, Nathan Ramirez, Carol-Lynn Campbell, Kristen Findley, Alana Stites, Peggy Sue Honeyman Scott, Wes Kemp and Frank O'Leary.

The Deuce of Spades distribution plan was not finalized at the time of this writing, but if you sign up to be on the website's mailing list then Granger will ensure you get informed of any screenings as well as the premiere details. In the meantime, DVD copies can also be ordered on the website, www.deuceofspades.com.

Note: Photojournalist Louise Ann Noeth is the authoress of the award-winning book, *Bonneville: The Fastest Place on Earth*, a complete historical review of the first 50 years of land speed racing. The publisher is sold out, but Noeth has a few copies left, including a limited number of limited autographed editions. For more details and to order, go to: www.landspeedproductions.biz. It has been a GREAT run! 

