

Justin Escue's film "500" tells the story of a man who was instrumental in the creation of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

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CARMEL RESIDENT WORKING TO
BRING INDY 500 ORIGIN STORY
TO NATIONWIDE AUDIENCE

*Writer / Renee Larr
Photographer / Sarah Browning*



Many Indiana residents are more than a little familiar with the Indianapolis 500. Carmel resident Justin Escue is working to bring the story of the first running of the iconic race to a nationwide audience. The film "500" tells the story of a man who was instrumental in the creation of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway - Greensburg native Carl Fisher.

"The screenplay is written by Bloomington native Angelo Pizzo, who wrote 'Rudy' and 'Hoosiers,'" Escue says. "It's the origin story of the greatest spectacle in racing. It will be his triple crown, so to speak, of Indiana sports movies. What he does from now on will be markedly different."

Escue is currently working to secure well-

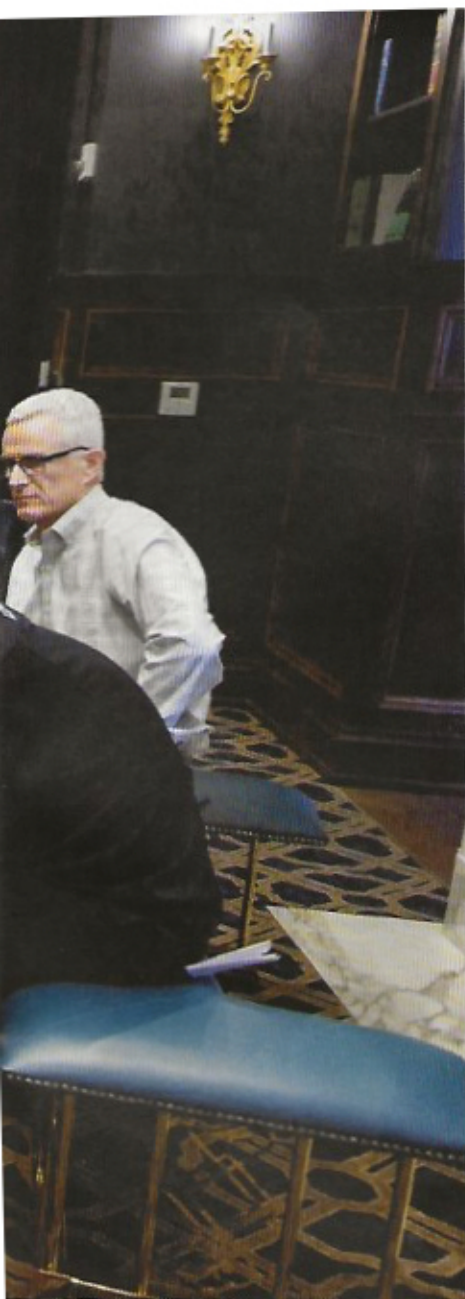
known A-list actors for the film, which will be filmed in the Hoosier state. The movie's theatrical release will be followed by a television series with the same actors. He says it would be lunacy to have it filmed anywhere but Indiana. Escue is negotiating for the actors to be in the state seasonally for the next six years.

"I'm so excited to tell the story of Carl Fisher," Escue says. "The Speedway and the race are almost minuscule in terms of what he did during his lifetime. He built Miami Beach, Montauk, New York, our highway systems, and was a huge civil right and women's liberation proponent. Fisher did so much for the country, but he became a forgotten figure in American history because he didn't have any children. I'm so

happy we get to do the film, but telling his life story through the series is what compels me to push this project forward."

Just don't expect "500" to be shot at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The current track looks vastly different than it did in 1911. Initially, Escue hoped to reproduce a small section of the 1911 Speedway for film production. However, Escue is now negotiating to bring a facility to Indiana to produce the movie with The Volume technology.

"It's the same technology used for 'The Mandalorian' movie and the new 'The Batman' movie," Escue says. "It's a game engine. Essentially you walk into a room and the entire inside of the room is LCD



screens. You build the background and the sets digitally with the game engine, and your actors are literally standing in the world. So there is no more green screen and it's much cheaper."

Escue hopes that filming the production in Indiana will bring more filmmakers to the state and make it comparable to Los Angeles and Austin, Texas, for filmmaking. Starting July 1, Indiana filmmakers will receive a much-needed incentive through the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. Indiana production companies will be eligible to receive tax credits on up to 30% of their production expenses via the implementation of Senate Enrolled Act 36.

"Hopefully this tax credit will be a game changer for the Indiana filmmaking scene," Escue says. "When I was in undergraduate and graduate school, we all had to travel to other places for work. The goal is to bring the work here to Indiana. That's not only positive for the local community, but it's also bringing out-of-state talent into the state."

Escue credits Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard for navigating the politics of tax credits. He says the mayor's been highly supportive, and his open-door policy of assistance has been a considerable help to propel the project forward.

"There is currently a huge appetite for racing culture in the entertainment industry," Escue says. "The Indy 500 is well-known worldwide but not necessarily in the United States. There is a huge IndyCar market in Europe, but the race isn't as well-known outside of Indiana within the U.S."

Escue says the old days of green-lighting a movie are no longer the way things work. He works to attach actors to a project. Once the actors are connected, a preset deal is arranged with a company like Amazon, Apple, Hulu or Netflix. This means Escue no longer has to work to raise funds, as in the past.

Escue is originally from New Palestine, and moved to Austin, Texas, after college to work in the music industry. He moved back to Indiana to pursue his graduate degree at Indiana University. After completing his degree, Escue moved to Los Angeles. He moved back to Carmel from Los Angeles during the height of the pandemic in 2020. He is the director and producer at My First Bike Productions. His credits in film and television include "Cypher," "#2WheelzNHeelz," "To Do List," "Open Mic's" and "Saving Star Wars."

For more information, visit myfirstbike.net.

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