



turning wheels



**More Entertaining
Than Humanly Possible!**



*"Frankly, Miss Piggy,
I Don't Give A Hoot!"*



SIR LEW GRADE and MARTIN STARGER present A JIM HENSON PRODUCTION
"THE MUPPET MOVIE"

Executive Producer MARTIN STARGER • Produced by JIM HENSON
Written by JERRY JUHL & JACK BURNS • Directed by JAMES FRAWLEY
Music & Lyrics by PAUL WILLIAMS and KENNY ASCHER
Co-produced by DAVID LAZER

Starring The Muppet Performers JIM HENSON • FRANK OZ • JERRY NELSON
RICHARD HUNT • DAVE GOELZ

Co-starring CHARLES DURNING and AUSTIN PENDLETON
Special Guest Stars EDGAR BERGEN • MILTON BERLE • MEL BROOKS
JAMES COBURN • DOM DeLUISE • ELLIOTT GOULD • BOB HOPE
MADELINE KAHN • CAROL KANE • CLORIS LEACHMAN • STEVE MARTIN
RICHARD PRYOR • TELLY SAVALAS • ORSON WELLES • PAUL WILLIAMS

Soundtrack available on Atlantic Records and Tapes Read The Bantam Muppet Movie Book



STAR STRUCK BY A STUDE

1951 STUDEBAKER CHAMPION FEATURED IN "THE MUPPET MOVIE"

SPECIAL REPORT TO TURNING WHEELS BY GRANT BOYD



"THE MUPPET MOVIE"
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STAR-STRUCK BY A STUDE

Studebaker Featured in "The Muppet Movie"

The newest, hottest 28 year-old starlet in Hollywood is a Studebaker. She's a 1951 2-door Champion who debuted in "The Muppet Movie," the fun-filled movie inspired by the popular Muppet TV series. Many folks like to imagine the Muppets are real people; witness the popular movement to have Miss Piggy nominated for an Academy Award as Best Actress! If Muppets can be considered actors, then perhaps the Stude is too... after all, it has the biggest non-speaking role in the movie!

She joins the full cast of over 250 Muppets used over the years in the TV show. The TV series is easily the most popular of all syndicated shows, with high ratings around the world. Not just for kids, Muppet humor is aimed at several levels and seen in 105 countries. Now it all comes together in "The Muppet Movie," the most advanced film ever in which puppets play the principal parts. To date the movie has grossed over \$60 million; not bad for a flick with no major roles played by human beings (Muppets are "people;" they just don't happen to be human).

The movie format is quite different from the TV series. All settings are very realistic rather than stylized sets, and it's a story rather than vaudeville skits. "The Muppet Movie" purports to tell the "history" of how the Muppets came from private life to enter show biz. Their trials and triumphs on the road to Hollywood make for many warm laughs.

The Stude appears throughout the first half of the movie. A synopsis of its role follows, written to avoid spoiling the plot. All dialog is approximate.

Kermit the Frog and Fozzie Bear are about to drive to Hollywood, hoping to make it big in movies. Under a street light in back of the El Sleazo Cafe stands Fozzie's pride, the 1951 Champion, looking thoroughly used but definately serviceable.



In this production shot the bullet is still in place in the car's nose.

Kermit asks, "Hey, where'd you get the Studebaker?"
Fozzie says, "It's not mine--it's my uncle's. He lets me drive it when he's hibernating."
They jump in and drive off, singing "movin' Right Along," an upbeat tribute to freedom of the road. This long sequence features the Stude seen from many angles, including aerial shots.

Later while driving through woods, Fozzie reflects on the passing scenery and says, "Ah, a bear in his natural element...a Studebaker."

Soon they are chased by Doc Hopper, the villain. He's a fast-food tycoon with a chain of fried frog leg stands, and he wants Kermit to be his trademark. Kermit has other ideas.

Many adventures later the car is painted a wild psychedelic color scheme in a futile attempt to disguise it.

Doc Hopper tells his assistant, "Keep your eyes open for a frog and a bear in an old gray Studebaker."

Soon the garish painted car zips by. Hopper asks his assistant if he's seen them yet. The assistant says, "Nope, just a frog and a bear in a brightly painted Studebaker."

Hopper accepts this, forgets it, does a double-take, and the chase is on again. Kermit and Fozzie use the car's bright color pattern to their advantage in a very clever way (go see the movie!) and elude Hopper.

In inevitable Muppet fashion they go from frying pan to fire and are soon involved in a hilarious crash with Gonzo's Citroen plumbing truck. Kermit suggests that they definately need new wheels.

Fozzie is shocked, saying, "Oh no, my uncle will kill me if I sell his Studebaker."

The Muppets trade at a used car lot for a '47 Ford woodie. Not much later it breaks down in the desert. They eventually get to Hollywood, but would have gotten there sooner if they could have stuck with the Stude!

Special Photos

Front Cover: Fozzie Bear, Kermit the Frog, and their "disguised" bulletnose Stude star in "The Muppet Movie" with virtually all of the Muppets characters from the largest (Big Bird) to the smallest (Squirmly the Worm). Included in the human cast are Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Milton Berle, Mel Brooks, James Coburn, Dom DeLuise, Elliott Gould, Bob Hope, Madeline Kahn, Carol Kane, Cloris Leachman, Steve Martin, Richard Pryor, Telly Savalas, Orson Welles, and Paul Williams.

Back Cover: Even the tires didn't escape the Muppets' paintbrush in their zeal to camouflage their 1951 Champion.

Preceding Page: The Studebaker is featured prominently in the publicity releases from the studio promoting the movie.

At right, Fozzie is ready to head west in his '51 Champ. Note the deteriorated paint. This was intentional to give it a weathered look; the original paint was in better condition.



TOUGH COOKIE...James Coburn guest-stars as the proprietor of the notorious El Sleazo Cafe, where Fozzie Bear is the stand-up comic rescued by Kermit the Frog from a hail of rotten vegetables in *THE MUPPET MOVIE*, an AFD release opening _____ at the _____ Theatre.



FROGENSTEIN...Mad scientist Mel Brooks straps Kermit the Frog into a machine that will "turn his brain to guacamole" unless he endorses a dastardly French Fried Frogs Legs Fast Food Franchise, in a sinister scene from *THE MUPPET MOVIE*, an AFD release opening _____ at the _____ Theatre.



WILD AND CRAZY HOLLYWOOD...Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy welcome Steve Martin, who plays a surly waiter at Miss Piggy's favorite romantic rendezvous in *THE MUPPET MOVIE*, which opens _____ at the _____ Theatre. The AFD release introduces the fabled Jim Henson characters to the silver screen.

The car makes one last appearance in the finale recap, appearing as a flat stage prop carried by singing Muppets. "The Muppet Movie" creators were very specific about wanting the Stude in the film along with the minor vehicles: the '47 Ford woodie, '60 International bus, and '69 Citroen truck. All were written into the first shooting script by Jerry Juhl, even before actual cars had been located. Director James Frawley had seen a '51 Champ bulletnose in a photo, and insisted that had to be the main car. The task of finding it and the others fell to Don Casella, Transportation Captain for Marble Arch Productions, the filming company.



Here, the bullet has been removed to provide a view hole for the driver's TV camera. Fozzie and Kermit are ready to hit the road.

Don actually had to find two identical Studes of the model and year required, for technical reasons explained later. One turned up in the Los Angeles area at a special-interest used car lot. The other took much longer and was found in Tacoma, Washington. Each was to be repainted to fit movie needs, so color was not important. By coincidence both turned out to be dark blue.

Only one Stude is seen at any time in the movie, but two were needed for Special Effects reasons. One is a regular car driven in normal fashion. It is used in long shots and other scenes where puppeteers are not needed to control the Muppets. The other Stude was converted to give the illusion of Muppets driving. It is blind drive with a professional midget driver in the trunk, modified steering linkage, and a TV monitor for driver vision. The bullet shaped chrome nose piece was removed from the converted car for TV camera placement. It was also removed from the other car for visual continuity.

The Muppets in the regular car are dummies, while those in the converted blind drive car are manipulated by puppeteers under the dashboard.

Both cars were painted a subtle vague color to give an impression of age and faded glory. Some say it's kind of a rusty light gray. Hard to tell. Movie peel-paint was used to simplify changing back and forth between the gray and psychedelic treatments because some scenes were shot out of sequence with the story line.

The regular drive Stude is completely stock, and required only minor work to bring it up to adequate running condition. The converted car required extensive repairs. Don Casella had an awful time locating the parts because he hadn't known of SDC or the many Stude clubs and parts resources. You can bet

he knows now! All replacement parts are original, even the upholstery fabric, which took a month to find. Once repaired, the cars now smoke just a bit in the noble un-rebuilt Stude fashion. This was for the sake of authenticity. Apparently Fozzie's uncle had bought it new and just drove it forever.

Now that "The Muppet Movie" has its niche secured in cinema history I asked Don what became of the cars, fantasizing that I could buy one. Fat chance. All the cars are being saved for the forthcoming sequel.

The cars are still at Marble Arch. One of the Studes is out in the lot with Gonzo's truck still on top of it from the crash scene. The cars are being used again because the studio got much appreciative mail and comments on them.

Don says more work is needed to get the cars into better running condition as they'll be used extensively in the sequel. I gave him several contacts for Stude parts and information, but he could use more. People with parts and solid mechanical experience on '51 Champs are encouraged to drop a line to Don. If you become involved you won't become a movie star or get rich, but you might have fun! Don's address is in the Acknowledgements.

Many of the professionals I spoke with while obtaining photos and info were very impressed with the size and nature of our Studebaker Drivers Club. All found the Studebaker phenomom intriguing and asked for copies of this issue. Maybe our club can benefit from this friendly response.

How about making Fozzie Bear an honorary SDC member? Imagine a photo of an SDC officer presenting Fozzie the award, in his Stude. This kind of tongue-in-cheek publicity is exactly what the Muppet organization likes to do...remember all the little news stories recently about the campaign to give Miss Piggy an Oscar? This publicity could increase public awareness of SDC. Also it might be a good investment to give Don a free subscription to Turning Wheels to aid him in research for the sequel. If you like the idea, tell your national club president.

Upon reflection, the '51 Champ seems to have been the perfect choice for a Muppet car. It is a friendly car with bulbous, cartoony lines, remembered by all with fondness...



The car is driven here by the driver in the specially equipped trunk. The wind vent on the side is open, but that's surely not helping the real driver!

somewhat like a Muppet. One prestigious film critic said he believes Muppets are real people who just happen to be made of cloth. Perhaps this Stude is real too, but just happens to be made of metal.



Not all of that dust at the rear is dust...some of it is burnt oil. Everyone knows that bears aren't very good about keeping up their Studes!

Post Script: Jerry Juhl, writer of "The Muppet Movie," wrote to me after this article had been submitted. Some of his comments are especially worth sharing and quoting.

"My script specifically called for that year Studebaker because I think it is the goofiest looking car ever put into production. I hope your club members won't be offended by that. To we who work for the Muppets, goofiness is highly respected."

"By the way, my father bought one of the very first 'can't-tell-if-they're-coming-or-going' Studebakers in 1947 (or was it 1948?). A green Champion. It looms as one of the major memories of my childhood. These days I'm more interested in Morgans. But if you know of a '47 Champion for sale...."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In obtaining photos and information for this article I worked with many people involved in "The Muppet Movie." All were unusually helpful and friendly, especially considering that there's not much in it for them except fun!

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