

**EXCLUSIVE**

# SIR ALFRED DIMORA: *return of the king*

CREATIVE GENIUS GIVES LUXURY  
A NEW NAME IN TRANSPORTATION

*By Angela Dansby*

*Photographed by David Leslie Anthony*

**SIR ALFRED J. DIMORA**  
*in his Clenet Continental that was featured  
in the TV shows "Dynasty" and "Dallas."*

In the 1980s, the Clenet Series I was arguably the finest luxury car in the world. Its 1930s styling and hand craftsmanship was one of a kind. And it was designed by then 19-year-old Alfred J. DiMora, who took the original Clenet to the next level. He was a diamond in the rough who got the chance to shine when he created what *Automotive Age* called “Drive Art” and *Fortune* magazine dubbed the “American Rolls-Royce.” For decades, DiMora was the king of handmade luxury cars. Now, he is about to return as the king with the forthcoming launch of his Natalia SLS 2—a sport luxury sedan that one could practically live in, with amenities made from dreams.

Sir Alfred DiMora, founder and CEO of DiMora Motorcar, is a modern day Henry Ford, but with a knack for customization, not automation. Just as Ford’s Model T set the stage for future car manufacturing, DiMora’s inventions will impact the design, engineering and technology of transportation vehicles for generations to come. Similarly, as the Model T signified the beginning of the Motor Age, DiMora’s Natalia SLS 2 will bring about new types of luxury cars—ones that go beyond smooth rides, offering personal and professional services that have never been put in cars before.

*“I never quit. People once thought I was nuts. But I always knew that I was on the right track.”*

DiMora also designs exquisite motorcycles, boats, jet skis, jewelry and more as founder and CEO of DiMora Custom Bikes, DiMora Watercraft, DiMora Customs and DiMora Jewelry. He is a designer of the highest degree.

Who is DiMora? A self-made man and creative genius, whose clients are celebrities and billionaires around the world. Yet, DiMora keeps

it real, remaining true to his humble roots. He is down-to-earth, direct and personable with a great sense of humor.

“I never quit,” he said. “People once thought I was nuts. But I always knew that I was on the right track. I’m the most optimistic person you’ll ever meet. I don’t like the word ‘no.’”

His efforts have paid off. Today, DiMora is a millionaire in Palm Springs, Calif., who travels around the world speaking at events and working with rich and famous customers. He is the epitome of the American dream, a tale of rags to riches, who now makes other peoples’ dreams come true with his custom innovations and charitable spirit.

“The imagination can run in any direction,” he said. “I really try to think outside the box. I don’t want to end up with the box.”

#### DRIVEN AT AN EARLY AGE

DiMora’s mother passed away when he was two years old, so he was raised by his father and Italian-born stepmother. Both orphans, they were a plumber and tailor, respectively. DiMora grew up with three brothers and two sisters.

He was fascinated with cars since he was 10 years old as a fan of Carroll Shelby race cars and Pininfarina designs. At 14, DiMora was hugely influenced by the film “American Graffiti.” Ever since he saw it, he had a real drive to build cars. He worked at service stations in his early teens, rebuilding a burned-out 1939 Buick before he was old enough to drive. Working in a co-op program, he earned his machinist degree and became a certified welder.

But like Bill Gates, DiMora has limited higher education—he stopped after 12th grade—because he was off and running with his talents. It took huge personal risk and motivation. At 18, DiMora moved from his hometown of Rochester, N.Y., to Santa Barbara, Calif., the hub of car designers and Hollywood at that time, to follow his dream of building a dream car. He trekked across the country with \$400 in his pocket and slept on the beach for about four months while looking for work.

DiMora got his first job working at a gas station. A man came in one day with an original Clenet, which DiMora “fixed on the spot.” That man turned out to be an employee of Alain Clenet, founder of Clenet Coachworks Inc. Clenet hired DiMora as one of his first employees in 1976 to help take his luxury car line to the next level. Indeed, DiMora did.

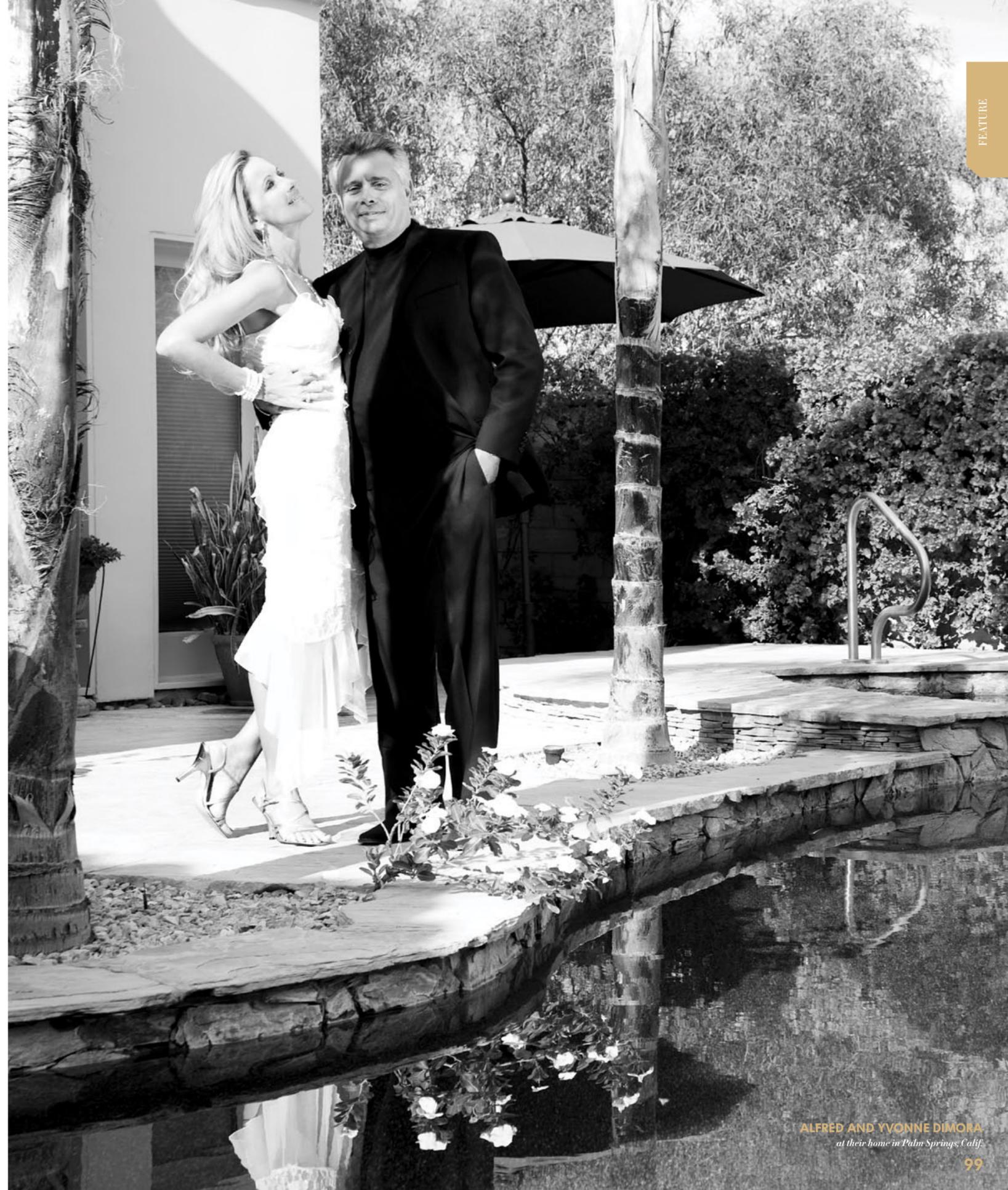
Shortly thereafter, DiMora co-founded Sceptre Motorcar Company. His Sceptre 6.6S car won the Best-of-Show award at the Los Angeles Auto Show in 1978 when DiMora was a mere 23 years old. In 1980, DiMora purchased the assets of Clenet Coachworks when it halted production and filed for bankruptcy. He revived Clenet production at a new factory in Carpinteria, Calif. As owner, CEO and Chief Automotive Designer, he created and manufactured the Series IV Sportster and designed the prototype Series V Clenet. Altogether, about 580 Clenets were produced and sold to celebrities, royalty and other motor enthusiasts around the world.

DiMora’s Clenet Continental was selected as the Official Centennial Car in 1986, the year that President Ronald Reagan declared the Centennial Year of the Gasoline-Powered Automobile. As a result, DiMora was honored at the Automotive Hall of Fame in Dearborn, Mich.

#### ROYAL DRIVES

Based in Palm Springs, Calif., DiMora Motorcar designs and builds custom luxury automobiles that blow away any conventional notion of a car. Imagine pulling into your garage and watching a movie on the back wall through the car’s headlights. Or keeping your smoothie cold with the touch of a button on a cup holder. Like Oz behind the curtain in the “Wizard of Oz,” DiMora designs cars, motorcycles and more in his office, creating magic outside the walls.

DiMora has created many cars to date including the Clenet, Sceptre, Scattare and JX Coupe—and forthcoming is the Natalia SLS 2. Each car is a limited edition that sells for about \$2 million. They have around 6,500 components compared to roughly 6,000 pieces in “normal” cars.



ALFRED AND YVONNE DIMORA  
at their home in Palm Springs, Calif.

DiMora cars are owned by the likes of Wayne Newton, Sylvester Stallone, Rod Stewart, Julio Iglesias, boxer Ken North, Jenny Craig and the late Farrah Fawcett and King Hussein of Jordan. But the lion's share of DiMora Motorcar customers are in the United Arab Emirates, Russia and China and soon, DiMora expects, India.

## NATALIA SLS 2

The forthcoming Natalia SLS 2 is named in honor of DiMora's stepmother, Mary, whose maiden name is Natale.

"It's important to create things that people won't forget," DiMora said. "If you name cars after women, that's fun and simple."

Similarly, the SLS 2 stands for sport luxury sedan, \$2 million. Like DiMora himself, it's straight-forward.

"The goal for the Natalia is to be completely distinctive from bumper to bumper, the most powerful four-door sport luxury automobile in transportation history," he said.

The Natalia SLS 2 has 18 more months of development to go. But here are a few teasers: its body will be made from lava rock, so "it can take punishment," DiMora said. It will absorb heat at night and reflect it by day. The window glass will shade itself in grades from one to 10 as opposed to just opaque or clear and windshield wipers will be heated. Each Natalia will be numbered with a plaque and only 75 a year will be initially produced.

"Natalia is a real James Bond car," DiMora said. "The concept is that you can feel like you're in a sports car while drinking fine wine in the back seat with all the amenities to do business, including a fax machine."

DiMora Motorcar plans to make its advanced technologies available industry-wide to further car design and engineering for everyone, not just those lucky enough to drive one of his models.

"I want to improve things for the future of mankind," DiMora noted. "The Natalia will change the futuristic nature of cars. People say 'you're giving away all of your trade secrets' and I say 'yeah, but I own many of them.'"

It's no secret that he has contributed to many patents related to automotive design and engineering. Next up are potential patents related to environmental sustainability. For example, he's currently working with a company that makes paper car batteries.

"Smog is an issue in so many cities," DiMora said, "but I'm not convinced about electricity or hydrogen yet for cars. Google is sucking up our grid as it is. If you want an electric car, buy a golf cart."

In spite of his joke, DiMora hopes to build an electric car that doesn't cost a lot and can do better than the current speed and distance limitations of electric vehicles. He also has a two-passenger luxury car in the works.

## A TRUE DESIGNER

"I'm a designer," DiMora said. "I love designing anything. I see things differently than most people."

Ain't that the truth. Not only does he create the world's most exquisite cars, he designs high end motorcycles, boats, jet skis and even jewelry. But his number one passion is cars, followed by motorcycles.

"I guess I just like things on wheels," DiMora said.



*"This country was built on small companies and people in their garages... Money doesn't build companies, thinkers and innovators do."*

Like DiMora Motorcars, newly founded DiMora Custom Bikes focuses on innovation in technology and engineering in motorcycles along with beauty. "Hand Built Just Feels Better" is the new company's slogan.

"The motorcycle industry is hurting really badly," DiMora said. "Most people are going out of business and I'm going in. If you build the best, you get the best. People want quality. Our reputation of design work over the past 35 years gives us brand recognition."

"Everybody calls me the dreamer," he added. "I dream first, then I come up with a theme—whether it's sky, women or shapes—and build."

DiMora is also developing an electric jet ski that makes no noise or pollution. It was inspired by the silent stealth bomber plane. This jet ski will have four seats so a cooler and other amenities

will fit in it. The jet ski will attach to mega yachts and be able to run in the open sea. DiMora plans to launch his electric jet ski in 2010. It will sell for about \$100,000.

"A larger jet ski is more comfortable, plus you can fish from it," DiMora said. "In Dubai, for example, the water is low, so it's ideal for fishing."

He is also developing a two-seater jet ski, which will be half the price and scaled down, for launch in 2011. DiMora wants to do as much good as possible for the environment with electric vehicles, including motorcycles and helicopters.

And that's not all. DiMora is working on a light aircraft for one person that will take off vertically like a rocket. It will be a hovercraft with excellent maneuverability. He is also a major participant in the development of Voyager, the world's largest Ferris wheel. The first two 600-foot diameter "observation wheels" will be built in Las Vegas and Dubai.

"It's an out-of-this-world project that I'm happy to be part of," DiMora said. "Las Vegas and Dubai are obvious places for an over-the-top object like this. Most of my customers are over the top."

Case in point, several of DiMora's customers hire him to design jewelry that costs \$250,000 and up, made from the highest quality diamonds, metals and/or other precious gems. According to DiMora, each piece of jewelry is hand-designed and no two pieces are alike.

"A woman once said to me," DiMora laughed, "you just kind of wish for something and bam! It's right in front of you." That's why I always tell people 'be careful what you dream for.'"

Indeed, it seems there is nothing he can't create.

## PASSION FIRST

"My life is my work," DiMora stated. "I don't feel like I'm at work ever. I feel like a little kid in a sandbox. People ask, 'when are you going to grow up?' And I ask 'why?'"

That's an appropriate question for someone who averages 4.5 hours of sleep a night. His typical work day is speaking somewhere in the world, then designing from around 9:30 pm to 3:30 am.

"I can't get inspired during the day because too many people are yanking and pulling at me," he said. "I'm going to get all the sleep I want when I'm dead."



SIR ALFRED J. DIMORA  
driving his Clenet Continental in Palm Springs, Calif.





**NATALIA SLS 2**  
Image from DiMora Motorcar

## Dream Car of the Future

DiMora's Natalia SLS 2, a \$2 million sport luxury sedan, will be the world's fastest, most technologically savvy and luxurious four-door car in transportation history. Not only will it be one heck of a ride for lucky owners, it will inspire improvements in all cars down the road with the introduction of never-been-seen-before technologies and amenities. Here are some examples:

- A V16 VOLCANO ENGINE WILL PRODUCE 1200 HORSEPOWER WITH EXCELLENT GAS MILEAGE BY USING VARIABLE-CYLINDER TECHNOLOGY AND A SUPER LIGHTWEIGHT ENGINE BLOCK.
- AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FUEL SYSTEM WILL OFFER GREAT GAS MILEAGE, WHILE INCREASING PERFORMANCE AND DECREASING EMISSIONS TO THE POINT THAT A CATALYTIC CONVERTER IS UNNECESSARY.
- ADVANCED AEROSPACE MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES WILL GIVE SUPERIOR STRENGTH TO THE CAR'S BODY AND CHASSIS, ADDING TO PASSENGER SAFETY AND IMPROVED GAS MILEAGE AND PERFORMANCE.
- MORE THAN 60 ONBOARD COMPUTER SYSTEMS WILL CONTROL THE CAR'S PERFORMANCE, SAFETY, COMFORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND ENTERTAINMENT.
- FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE AND STEERING WILL OFFER OUTSTANDING HANDLING AND SAFETY.
- VARIABLE SUSPENSION WILL MAKE FOR AN EXTRA SMOOTH RIDE.
- REVOLUTIONARY PAINT TECHNOLOGY WILL MAKE NATALIA CHANGE FROM BLACK OR BLUE WHEN IT'S COOL OUTSIDE TO WHITE WHEN IT'S HOT.
- SUPED-UP BUMPERS WITH A PATENTED NEW DESIGN WILL MINIMIZE ANY DAMAGE UPON IMPACT.
- NIGHT VISION WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO THE WINDSHIELD DISPLAY AND EXTERNAL CAMERAS THROUGHOUT THE CAR WILL ELIMINATE ANY BLIND SPOTS.
- VIDEO-PROJECTING HEADLIGHTS WILL CONTAIN SMALL SCREENS AND A VIDEO PROJECTOR TO DISPLAY ANY VIDEO STREAM FROM NATALIA'S DVD PLAYER, SATELLITE TV BROADCASTS OR LIVE VIDEO COMING FROM ANY OF THE CAR'S CAMERAS.
- HOLLYWOOD-ESQUE LIGHTING WILL BE INSIDE AND OUT OF THE CAR FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS AND TO HELP KEEP THE DRIVER ALERT.
- A PHYSICALLY ACCOMMODATING FRONT PASSENGER SEAT WILL GLIDE FORWARD, ROTATE 90 DEGREES AND TRANSPORT THE PASSENGER TO THE SIDEWALK OR A WHEELCHAIR.
- NASA FOAM TECHNOLOGY, A GEL LINING AND SPECIAL LEATHER WILL MAKES SEATS EXTREMELY COMFORTABLE AND COMPUTERIZED REAR SEAT MASSAGE WILL PREVENT ANY PASSENGER FROM CALLING "SHOTGUN."
- NORMAL ELECTRIC OUTLETS WILL BE INSTALLED TO POWER UP ANYTHING IN THE CAR.
- A WIRELESS PERSONAL COMPUTER WILL BE SMALL AND LIGHTWEIGHT BUT POWERFUL WITH ONE GIGABYTE OF MEMORY AND A 100-GIGABYTE HARD DRIVE; IT WILL WIRELESSLY CONNECT TO AN EXTERNAL MONITOR, FULL-SIZE KEYBOARD, THE INTERNET AND PORTABLE PRINTER, IN OR OUT OF THE CAR.
- BACK-SEAT PASSENGERS WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY A BAR AND REMOTE-CONTROLLED, RETRACTABLE TV SCREENS THAT HAVE DIRECTED SOUND TECHNOLOGY SO EACH PERSON CAN WATCH DIFFERENT PROGRAMMING WITHOUT SOUND INTERFERENCE.
- THERMALLY CONTROLLED CUP HOLDERS WILL KEEP DRINKS HOT OR COLD WITH THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON, OR PASSENGERS CAN ENJOY WINE FROM A BOTTLE WITH A SELF-UNCORKING SYSTEM.
- LUXURIOUS ACCENTS WILL COME FROM ITALIAN WALNUT, HAND-INLAID BURL WOOD ON THE DASH AND BAR, ENGLISH WOOL CARPETING AND LAMB'S WOOL MATS AND A LIGHTED WATERFORD CRYSTAL ASHTRAY.
- A LIMITED PRODUCTION PURSE WORTH \$12,000 WILL BE INCLUDED WITH EACH NATALIA SLS 2.

*The first prototype of Natalia SLS 2 is now under construction. It's slated for completion in 2011, with limited production to follow. Roughly four cars a month will be handmade by 200 employees. For more information, go to [dimoramotorcar.com](http://dimoramotorcar.com).*

DiMora loves doing things people say can't be done and enjoys taking on good challenges.

"Passion and desire are the keys to success," he noted. "Always do what you love. You have to be willing to sacrifice and the people you're with have to understand."

### RENAISSANCE MAN

While DiMora says his work is his main "hobby," cooking could be his second. Embracing his Italian ancestry, DiMora frequently cooks, especially on Sundays, as a stress reliever. He is known for his eggplant parmigiana and tri-tip steak, but he will make anything, especially healthier dishes for his wife, Yvonne, and stepdaughter, Chanel.

How does the chef stay in shape? He tries to walk five miles a day and rides his bicycle. He prefers the outdoors to a gym in spite of coyotes, snakes and quails in his backyard.

"If you don't have your health, you don't have anything," he said.

When not cooking or exercising, DiMora is likely at a car, motorcycle or plane show, out on the water, overseas or at the Palm Springs Polo Club. While he's just a polo spectator now, he says he may play it in the future. Meanwhile, he enjoys boating and fishing. (One time, he reeled in a 134-pound halibut in Alaska!)

DiMora also loves the drums. He has played them since he was 10, joining several bands over the years. He even toured a bit with an R&B style band called Thunder Up years ago. Today, jazz is his preferred style of music by artists such as Chuck Mangione, Steve Tyrell and Sade.

A globetrotter, DiMora's favorite travel destinations include Italy, Dubai and Abu Dhabi of the United Arab Emirates, the south of France and Monte Carlo. He works hard and plays hard.

"I love travel," he noted. "It's a real priority in my life. It inspires my designs and new ideas."

Not surprisingly, if you sat next to DiMora on a plane, you would likely find him reading a book perhaps an old one related to cars or motorcycles. Case in point, his recent favorite book was a biography about an automotive manufacturer.

DiMora has a car collection comprised mainly of his own creations, including a Sceptre 6.6S (only 16 of these were ever made), three Clenets, including one he created for the television shows "Dynasty" and "Dallas," a car he created for the movie industry and a Mangusta Qvale. In 2009, DiMora was one of several people included in a photo for the Guinness Book of World Records for the most movie cars in one location at a time.

While DiMora clearly enjoys some of the finest things in life, he describes himself as a "pretty simple guy."

"I love high tech stuff like supercomputers, my Dell notebook and iPhone (an incredible little

### Watch How Dreams are Built

Want to learn more about DiMora's inventions? Stay tuned for DiMora TV, which will be coming online in 2010 at [dimoracustombikes.com](http://dimoracustombikes.com) as well as broadcast on CBS-TV, the Speed Channel, Discovery Channel and more. The reality show, "Where Themes Begin by DiMora," will focus on designing small transportation vehicles like motorcycles, jet skis and choppers for companies' marketing or advertising purposes. Think the opposite of MTV's "Pimp My Ride."

piece of equipment)," he said, "though normally, I'd rather buy a piece of machinery or an old book."

### A RICH HEART

DiMora is very compassionate to people in need. He participates in a lot of fundraisers for charities and is known for his humanitarian efforts for such causes as breast cancer and Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's diseases. He actively supports DesertArc for the mentally handicapped and the Make-A-Wish Foundation for children with life-threatening medical problems. One of his pet projects is supporting injured Marines as his stepson, Josh, is serving in Afghanistan with the U.S. Marine Corps.

"I do whatever I can to help people help themselves and to make peoples' lives a little better," he said. "I've been down and out before myself. I wish I had more time to do more."

He noted that his stepmother Mary instilled in him the importance of giving back to society.

"She taught me values, respect for others and drove my interest in philanthropy," DiMora said.

For example, on a forthcoming DiMora TV show, he's going to design complimentary wheelchairs for people who are physically challenged. It will be a charitable program that's educational.

In 2001, DiMora was inducted into the Knights of Malta, an order devoted to defending the sick and the poor, for his philanthropic work.

"It was a very big honor to become a 'sir,'" he said. "It means to have really given something of yourself."

DiMora was honored in 2009 with a star on the Palm Springs Walk of Stars as an entrepreneur and humanitarian.

### DARE TO DREAM

Entrepreneurs, take note.

"Follow your dream, don't listen to anybody and move forward," DiMora said. "If I listened to people who told me how crazy I was, including my parents, I wouldn't be where I am today. Some of the strongest people out there have had all kinds of problems but they got right back up on the horse and started riding. If you think you're never going to make a mistake, you're kidding. You're going to fall and learn from mistakes."

Such qualities are what DiMora looks for in employees—those who are street smart, witty and believe in themselves and want to help themselves be better people. Higher education is less important; for example, DiMora has never hired someone with an MBA.

"This country was built on small companies and people in their garages, who focused on innovation," he noted. "Money doesn't build companies, thinkers and innovators do."

Hence, the slogan at [dimoramotorcar.com](http://dimoramotorcar.com) says, "Let us drive your dreams." Thank you to the return of the king for dreaming the drives. They will be the rides of our lives. 🍌