Forgotten Footage Finds a Second Wind

If there was ever a moment you felt those old, shaky home videos collecting dust in your basement were better off in the garbage, director and film archivist Steve Wystrach would beg to differ. “Never, EVER throw out film!” he proclaims. Wystrach’s first feature documentary, “Manry at Sea~In the Wake of a Dream,” about Robert Manry’s sailing voyage from Cape Cod to England, would have never seen the big screen had it not been for a fortunate rescue.

“It took me two years to locate [Manry’s] brother who was planning on throwing out Manry’s footage with the spring cleaning,” Wystrach recalls. “The footage would’ve been lost, and there wouldn’t have been a film. The following morning, there was a stack of pre-addressed FedEx envelopes on his doorstep.”

Manry, who graduated from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and lived in Cleveland with his family for many years, was a former copy editor for Cleveland’s newspaper, The Plain Dealer (PD). He embarked on his solo sail in 1965, a 16mm camera in hand to capture footage from the open seas. Manry left the PD to write about his adventure. His book, Tinkerbelle, named after his sail boat, was published in 1966 and became a best seller.

“I was familiar with [Manry’s] book and read it for the third time in 1997 while I was preparing to sail a boat from Los Angeles to Hawaii’s Big Island,” says Wystrach. “His book was very inspiring and included an extensive appendix for sailors including a complete equipment list. When I noticed he kept a camera, bells started ringing.”

For two decades, Wystrach worked with Manry’s book editor, his two children, and siblings, and located archival news footage, old radio interviews, and a recording of a lecture Manry gave describing his entire voyage. Four years ago, Wystrach began working with a film editor to start piecing it all together.

“The fact that it took so long was a good thing,” says Wystrach. “Some footage I was only able to locate a year ago, which turned out to be key to the film for a much more interesting, entertaining, thorough story.”

And Cleveland audiences should be grateful for the wait. Wystrach hopes to bring recognition for Manry to his hometown roots.

“He’s become a forgotten character, and he’s certainly a local hero,” Wystrach says. “Most importantly, I want audiences to consider what he did and what he stands for to do whatever it takes to fulfill your dreams. Find a way to keep it alive, prepare for it, and do it.”

—Amy Brown

Above: Steve Wystrach, a sailor himself, was inspired by Robert Manry, left. His film shares Manry’s story and hopes it will inspire others.
Festival Updates
Late Additions:
Friday April 13th
We the Animals 1:35 pm
Saturday April 14th
We the Animals 7:00 pm
Sunday April 15th
Lean on Pete 4:30 pm

Check for the latest festival updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ciff or Facebook at www.facebook.com/ClevelandInternationalFilmFestival. Or visit www.clevelandfilm.org/festival/

Challenge Match
The Challenge Match is the CIFF’s annual fundraising campaign, and the only time of the year that we ask for your support (we do not send out solicitation letters at any time). The challenge to you—our audience—is to raise $150,000, which will be matched by Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.

We are $4,187 closer to reaching our goal of $150,000!

A $10 DONATION QUALIFIES YOU FOR ONE OF THESE FABULOUS PRIZES!!

FITNESS FIRST CLASS: Enjoy a 3-month membership to Core Fitness Club at The Ritz-Carlton, Cleveland plus a shopping trip to Legacy Village so you’ll look your best!

INDULGENCE: Pamper yourself with a dozen facials from Bella Capelli Sanctuario, two one-year memberships for yoga at the Atma Center, a new hairstyle from Eddy’s on Coventry, and a bottle of wine to celebrate the new you! Don’t you deserve it?

THE MAKEOVER: Makeover your bedroom thanks to Wayside Furniture. Enjoy a 3-sectioned wall closet insert with professional installation from The Closet Factory and then celebrate with a custom decorated delicacy from Cakes by Michelle. Is it bedtime yet?

Stop by the Challenge Match table in the Tower City Cinemas lobby to donate.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

A Film that Plays Like an Album

S

outhern rock and Lynyrd Skynyrd are one and the same to most classic rock fans. But Stephen Kijak assures CIFF filminoers who aren’t familiar with the band or don’t particularly care for its music that they will still enjoy “If I Leave Here Tomorrow: A Film About Lynyrd Skynyrd.”

Kijak is a fan. “The first five studio albums and the one live album are extraordinary achievements in the history of American recorded music,” he says. “From songwriting to production, it is a near perfect run of albums.”

So when he was approached by Brian Philips, then-president of CMT cable television channel and a friend of the band, about making a film about them, he took the project on with gusto.

Besides filming interviews and riffling through old film footage and pictures, he dug deeper and uncovered “a lot of never-before-seen sources,” family albums, fan photos, and a recently discovered Super 8 movie of the band.

“It gives the film a real intimate and old-school vibe,” Kijak says.

Not a fan? This film still can hold your interest, assures Kijak. It’s much more than a film about sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

“It’s about music, it’s about America, the American South,” notes Kijak. “It’s the story of hard work and determination and great success cut down by great tragedy.

“I challenge any non-fan to see the film and not come away with a new appreciation for them,” he continues.

This is not Kijak’s first music-themed documentary: He’s also made films focused on The Rolling Stones; Backstreet Boys; electric bass legend Jaco Pastorius; and British-American pop icon Scott Walker. The latter, “Scott Walker—30 Century Man,” was executive produced by David Bowie.

Free Birds. After watching the documentary on Lynyrd Skynyrd, filmgoers may find themselves longing for the 1970s and having a new appreciation for the band’s music.

After that, the music docs kept coming.

“I love music,” he says. “I love sharing it with people, turning people on to new (or old) sounds.”

Kijak himself is a drummer—a talent he finds useful not on the stage, but when he’s editing a film.

“It helps having the beat when you’re in the edit suite,” he notes. “The films have to play like a good album.”

—Anne M. DiTéodoro