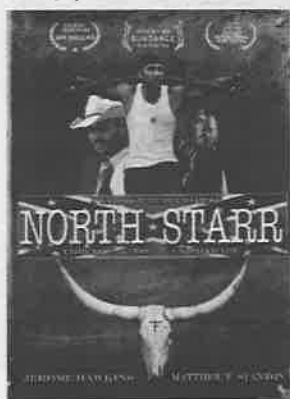


FROM CONCEPTION TO DELIVERY, THIS INDEPENDENT FILM CLINGS TO IT'S ROOTS

By Matthew T. Stanton - Independent Filmmaker, Fat Bessy Films, LLC



Thirteen towering palm trees hold steadfast against a mighty coastal El Niño windstorm raging across a sandy mound at the end of Dudley Court and Ocean Front Walk. Commonly known as the "Grassy Knoll," this weathered Venice sanctuary serves equal parts creative incubator, high ground homeless encampment, and distribution landmark base. Pragmatic in appearance, the open air

artistic space is the birthplace of a thought provoking screenplay and the intentional point of delivery for a powerful, racially charged independent film titled North Starr.

So much has changed during the nearly two decades long journey from when North Starr was first written on the "Grassy Knoll" to become a relevant film presentation today. Long gone is the corner market store off Speedway Avenue. Sponto's Gallery space and the dilapidated attic apartment rental on 26 Dudley Court which housed the dumpster found typewriter that inked the films' first screenplay revision, hauled away years ago. Along with the disappearing old guard residents who are now merely a symbolic generation of frayed remnants stitched to the iconically eclectic Venice culture that was once a mainstay here. But as much as things change, things always stay the same. The one constant still prevalent in existence are the creative forces entrenched in this precious environment as displayed along the Venice boardwalk's westerly concrete tiles that stage the vast displays of artists' dedicated wares. The most coveted gift of all are the visiting waves of cultural diversity rolling alongside this lengthy platform of signature self expression, lapping at the feet of artistry in search of a token treasure to unearth. It is at this point of intersection, between traveler and tenant, where the uniquely important powers of Venice are the most evident and opportune. Especially for this unheralded indie film being sold here.

Environment is a very important element to a film in order for it to be told truthfully. It is extremely necessary to go into these places that serve the story so profoundly and become primary characters. Being filmed in its entirety in the state of Texas, North Starr follows Demetrius, an aspiring rapper and writer, who is forced to stand his ground in a tiny Texas town after fleeing the badlands of inner city Houston. His journey is compounded with the obstacles of racism, police harassment, and the realization of a towns unspeakable past that quickly comes to the fore upon his unintended arrival. He soon meets up with Darring, a local black ranch hand who takes him under his wing. Together the two men conjure up a plan to rouse the demons that haunt the tiny town and bury them once and for all. Simply put, North Starr is a present day freedom song that focuses on the issues of race and redemption. It's about breaking the chains that bind

in the search for personal growth and understanding amid human vulnerability. A poetic fish out of water story.

Although a film's gestation period varies greatly depending on the resources and support available, it was a ten year span covering tireless location scouting trips in Texas to the very first market ready DVD unit sold. For such a slow moving intensive labor of love, one might question the films relevance today considering the rapidly changing times we live in. But timing can mean everything to the life of a film. Expectations were certainly high indeed and deservedly so for this locally produced ultra low budget independent feature film. After earning it's way into the prestigious Sundance Film Festival (2008) showcasing in the US Dramatic Competition category and earning a Grand Jury Prize Nomination among other high profile festival exhibitions around the world, the film failed to receive a single offer from any legitimate distributors. Screener's were passed through the black and white hands of some of the most successful and highly recognizable names in the industry but fell through the cracks of their prosthetic fingers, lost to a nearly certain extinction. Caught up in the celebration of a nationally historic political achievement that was sweeping across the nation during the time, North Starr was muted by a Kool Aide swilling Hollywood film critic as being "sixty five years behind the times in our new post racial America." Timing can be the damndest thing to a film as well but we have to keep it moving and continue to strive to improve on all levels and aspects of the industry.

Four more labor intensive years elapsed while the fledgling film inched it's way toward completion. In an incredible twist of fate however, eerily similar to the film titles' metaphor itself, North Starr traveled north in search of refuge and a desperately needed life line eventually finding a haven in the welcoming arms of The Media Concierge and the Duplium Corporation in Toronto. Canada is the third largest film industry in North America but second to none in recognizing the important value in relationship building and genuine independent film support. It's a completely different culture up there altogether and Canadians, quite frankly are the best. Finally polished and readied for circulation, a three thousand mile North American sales and promotional journey officially launched from Montreal to Los Angeles in July of 2015. It was Nelson Mandela who famously said "There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered." This wisdom served instrumentally in the decidedly unconventional but necessary self distribution approach to delivery. North Starr needed to voyage back home to the shores of its conception by the means of its original intention. Doing it the hard way. No longer regarded as the festival darling with the high hopes of lucrative offerings recognition often brings, the film would deliver itself back to California humbly by selling one unit at a time out of a van.

Timing has a way of creating relevance. It can shed new light on a voice that has otherwise been silenced and allow it sing again. It's interesting how the familiar sound of the industry elite scream out today about the racial injustice of being overlooked for award show accolades and are now posturing with calls for self reliance when they too passed on North Starr's "uncommercial artsy fartsy" racially poetic message so many chapters ago. We're boardwalk miles ahead of that red carpet campaign and we've learned that the best way to make a state-

ment when dealing with such provocative issues is to focus your energies wisely and to exercise your creative muscles resourcefully and the Venice boardwalk serves as the perfect pedestal to be heard from. It may not be glamorous by today's standards of fashionably obnoxious movie roll outs, but it is a necessary and worthy cause to connect directly with the real people out in the streets and to build your community one story at a time. And besides, lest not forget that filmmakers have been doing it this way since the beginning of cinema after all.

What makes this film so compelling is that you don't have to be entrenched in the deep southern states of America to understand the significance of racial or cultural intolerance. The thoughts of vulnerability affects everyone in life at some point or another. The universality of the films' central theme is directly related to the human experience no matter who you are or where you come from and the boardwalk's dynamic melting pot is a fitting example of this notion. Of course being out there in a public setting doesn't come without the occasional "It's never going to happen" quip from a random passerby at times, but it is happening. It's happening right in front of us and it's happening all around us because this is Venice Beach and this is why we come here. From the fellow artists who gather up precious change in support of other artists work to the local residents and globetrotting visitors alike searching for a genuine nugget in the sand to value as their own, the artisans on the boardwalk often-times under appreciated in this highly valued territory are the real diamonds in the rough. Buried deep inside the treasure trove of creative riches just waiting to be discovered, all good things take time. Born from an idea upon the "Grassy Knoll" so many years ago and returned to the very base of the determined palm trees that are clinging to their own survival, North Starr will always be attached to their roots.

To purchase a copy of North Starr on DVD (a special \$5.00 unit price for a limited time) come down to the Venice Boardwalk between Dudley and Paloma from 11 AM to 7 PM daily or visit fatbessyfilms.com for more information. Please join us on Facebook @ Fat Bessy Films, LLC and follow us on Instagram @ fatbessyfilms.

Let Dr. Karma help you on your path. He knows nothing.

Dear Dr. Karma

I have taken to bouncing around the house and often rant on without finishing a sentence but my you tube videos of this are becoming popular. Why? Why? Why?
- Bipolar in Venice

- Dear Bipolar in Venice

As a Gemini I can appreciate your self-love and self-loathing, it is the eternal dance, the dynamo around which we spin thru the dark and thru the light. About your video, if you desire opera, go deeper into love, and the fall. Humble suggestions: add deeper longer notes, using deeper breaths, all feeling. Go Banshee, wailing is a well established method of channeling inner demons. If you do it right the neighbors will call the cops. Under Free-ways is good. Mountaintops during Santa Ana Winds can work. Quiet tunnels are really good, but they have been walled off to prevent the houseless from camping. (i.e., at Venice BL and Strongs Dr.) It's your pain, embrace it.

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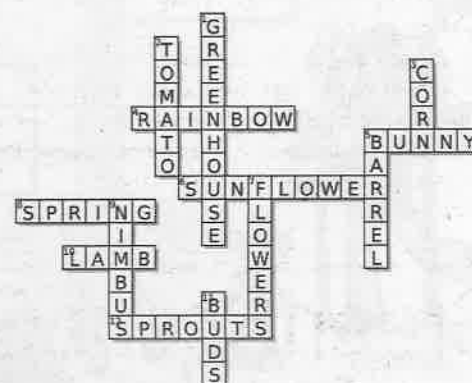
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Do you remember "The Garrison" store that was located at 1329 1/2 W. Washington in the late 60's, or the owner, Rikki Roberts? If so, please contact me for possible inclusion in upcoming self-published book.

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