Fall 2014

The Ohio Renaissance Festival: A Look Inside

Skye McCullough
smccull@bgsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/honorsprojects

Part of the Film and Media Studies Commons

Repository Citation
https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/honorsprojects/100

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@BGSU.
THE OHIO RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL: A LOOK INSIDE

SKYE MCCULLOUGH

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the Honors College
at Bowling Green State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS

APRIL 25, 2014

Cynthia Baron Advisor
Department of Theatre and Film

Lucas Ostrowski Advisor
Department of Theatre and Film
Ohio Renaissance Festival: A Look Inside

For my Honor's Project, I self produced, filmed, and edited documentary about the Ohio Renaissance Festival that takes place annually in Harveysburg Ohio. This is an alternative project and exists in the form of a 12 minute documentary attached in the form of a DVD, but can also be found online (YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEfbK2KOdio) and has recently been sent out to the PR department of the Ohio Renaissance Festival Inc. The production is an interview-based documentary with elements of cinéma vérité scattered throughout to give the audience a feel of the festival itself. This paper accompanies the project and is a reflection of the process and the experience itself.

This project took the majority of the past year to pre-produce, film, and edit. As far as the subject matter of my project was concerned, I knew from the start that I wanted to create a self-produced documentary, but over the summer of 2013 I decided that I wanted to combine my major of film production with a subject that meant something to me on a deeply personal level. That is when I decided, Renaissance Festivals. I have been attending these types of festivals since I was a young child and find them to be a fascinating and under represented sub-culture. In fact, none of my three cameramen had ever been to a Renaissance Festival and when I asked them what they thought these types of fairs would entail, I was surprised at their overall ignorance on the subject. They seemed to think that these types of gatherings were only for “nerds and geeks” or “people who were into Dungeons and Dragons.” When I asked them again what they thought
afterwards, they were, all three, singing different tunes and were almost as enthralled with the festival as I was.

Once I decided that this was a road I wanted to travel, I began emailing all of the Renaissance Fairs and Festivals in my area, including the Pennsylvania Renaissance Fair, the Pittsburgh Renaissance Festival, and the Ohio Renaissance Festival. I received responses from all three of these festivals offering aide, but the one that made the greatest sense logistically was the Ohio Renaissance Festival due to the fact that I live in Ohio for the majority of the year. After this, I began to further my contact with Cheryl Bucholtz, the Vice President of Marketing for the festival. She put me into contact with some of the major players of the fair, specifically Connie Pffiefer who plays Queen Elizabeth, Rob Williams one of the prop acts known as the Kamikaze Fireflies, and the Knights of Valor, the jousting troop that works in conjunction with the festival. I contacted all of these individuals via e-mail and telephone and secured their permission to interview them later in the season. Once that was solidified, I assembled a production team from a group of my peers. I was able to gain the help of three of my fellows from the department of film.

After I had acquired their aid, I began reading various books on documentary filmmaking and Renaissance Festivals in general, the most helpful of which were Documenting Ourselves: Film, Video, and Culture by Sharon Sherman and, Well Met: Renaissance Faires and the American Counterculture by Rachel Rubin. I then read everything I could on the Ohio Renaissance Festival in particular so that I would have a better understanding of the venue I was going to be filming. I knew I wanted to use this production as a way to market the festival itself and to entice tourists or to those who have never before been to this type of festival into giving it a chance in the future. The books that I read in preparation for the project aided in the decision of just what kind of documentary I wanted to create. It was after reading these sources and others
that I decided I wanted to create a documentary that relied predominantly on interviews of the people working at the festival interspersed with scenes and images of the fair itself so that those watching the film could attain an overall feel of what it is like to attend an event such as this one. These types of festivals were incredibly influential on my own childhood and I wanted this documentary to entice others into experiencing the joy that I have been exposed to almost all of my life.

The weekend before we were scheduled to film, I drove down to Harveysburg to scope out the best places to film at the festival. The week after, my three camera operators/assistants and myself drove down to the fair for our first weekend of filming. We arrived at 8:30am so that we could film “morning meeting” with the cast of the festival, which started at 9:30am sharp. We spent this first weekend conducting interviews and filming those that we had interviewed as they went about their day at the festival. It was one of the most enriching experiences I have had in my college career. The people who we met and talked to that first week were expressive and welcoming and willing to share and teach at the slightest provocation. Everyone was very welcoming and open and we filmed some wonderful material for the documentary itself. After a 10-hour day of shooting, we packed up and headed home. The next weekend we headed back out to pick up some b-roll. Though the weather was a little questionable, we were able to catch some really exceptional shots of the festival and the people enjoying it.

Once I had all of my footage, I downloaded, logged, and relabeled all of the clips, which amasses around 25 hours of footage total. Then the editing process began. This was, by far, the most time consuming and maddening aspect of the entire production. I probably logged around 50 hours and had created a total of around 12 different edits by the time I finally exported the finished project. I am pleased with my final product, however and take heart in the fact that I
worked so diligently to produce this documentary from start to finish over the course of the last year.

Overall, this project has taught me about all of the time and work that goes into producing a film, even one as short as mine ended up being. In fact, the majority of the time spent on the project was spent in pre and post-production. There are countless aspects of production management that I had never before realized would be an issue until I was doing them myself, on my own project. Concerns like parking passes for the crew, travel time, and food budgeting. Things that you never even knew would be a problem until they happen, like dehydration and heat sickness on site, and issues with the equipment that come up halfway through the day. It also taught me a great deal about documentary filmmaking in general, specifically to expect the unexpected and to just keep filming, you never know what you're going to get from people and oftentimes the unexpected is the most awe-inspiring.

Attached are all of the documents that were created during pre-production and production for this film and includes; sketches of the stages with camera diagrams, disclosure signatures of interviewees, questions asked to each interviewee, etc. It also includes an annotated bibliography, which includes all of the books, and documents I viewed in preparation for this project. The film itself can be viewed (if not available with this document) on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEfbK2KOdio.
Appendix

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS:

INTERVIEWER (For all)

1. Can you please state your name and position/your role in the fair?
2. Can you give a brief description of what your act is/what you do here at the fair?
3. How long have you been on the payroll here at the Ohio Renaissance Fair?
4. What is it that you like the most about your job here or like about the fairs in general?
5. If there was one thing you wanted people to know about your act of the fair what would it be?
6. What is the most memorable thing that has happened to you while working here at the Ohio Renaissance Fair?

INTERVIEWER (For Performers)

1. Do you perform strictly here or do you perform at some other venue?
2. What do you do on your off hours, when you are not (Queen Elizabeth, Rob of the Kamikaze Fire Flies, etc.)?
3. People say that those who work at Renaissance Fairs are one big family. Is there any truth in that? Is it more click-ish?

INTERVIEWER (For Knights)

1. What is jousting and how is scoring kept and points given?
2. Why do you do it if it is so dangerous?
3. (For Female Joust-Jessica) Jousting is kind of known as a boy’s sport. What’s it like being the only woman out there?
INTERVIEWER (For Marketing)

1. How much work goes into putting this event on every year? What does it involve?

2. What about the Ohio Renaissance Fair makes it a worthwhile destination?

3. Would you say this fair is something that the entire family can enjoy?

4. Do you like your job here?
Saturday October 28th

3:00 pm Friday 27th pick-up equipment
9:30 am Monday 30th drop off equipment

**Itinerary (28th) Day 1 - Interviews**

Morning Meeting 9:30 a.m. sheep (Introductions)
→ Cheryl Bucholtz Interview 10:30 a.m.
   "Vice President of Marketing"

→ Connie Pfieffer Interview 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.
   "Queen Elizabeth"
   "Backstage"
   "Elizabeth, when not on break, ALWAYS in character"

→ Rob Williams Interview 11:30 a.m. Gloriana Stage
   "Kamikaze Fireflies (Juggler)"
   "Cannot film his partner individually"

→ Jousting (?) Don't know which one 5:30 p.m.
   "Knights of Valor"

Doors Open 11:30 a.m.
Doors Close 6:00 p.m.
PERSONAL APPEARANCE RELEASE form

I hereby authorize Skye McCullough to record and edit into her senior project and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film. I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

Signature of Person Appearing: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

City, State, Zip: ____________________________

Date: __/__/13 ____________________________

Phone: ____________________________

E-mail: ____________________________

PERSONAL APPEARANCE RELEASE form

I hereby authorize Skye McCullough to record and edit into her senior project and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film. I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

Signature of Person Appearing: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

City, State, Zip: ____________________________

Date: __/__/13 ____________________________

Phone: ____________________________
PERSONAL APPEARANCE RELEASE form

I hereby authorize Skye McCullough to record and edit into her senior project and related materials my name, likeness, image, voice and participation in and performance on film. I agree that the Program may be edited and otherwise altered at the sole discretion of the Producer and used in whole or in part for any and all broadcasting, non-broadcasting, audio/visual, and/or exhibition purposes in any manner or media, in perpetuity, throughout the world.

Signature of Person Appearing: [Signature]

Address: 1210 ½ Myrtle Ave City, State, Zip: LA, CA 90028

Date: 09/28/15 Phone: 818.319.3061
Annotated Bibliography


This press release outlined all of the events for the season as well as who the key players are that make up the entertainment at the park every year. It introduced new acts and reminded readers of returning performances. It outlined where they would be performing and which weeks they would be appearing at the fair. It provided me with a framework as to who I would be interviewing and what their positions and acts were at the festival as well as where they would be performing (on what stages, which area of the park).


This book provides a short description as to what documentary filmmaking is, why people do it, and the different types of documentary filmmaking that have existed in the past and that exist today. It aided me in the decision as to exactly what kind of documentary I was aiming to put together, what I wanted to express to the audience and how I could go about doing that.


This book outlines how we have incorporated aspects of the European Renaissance into everyday life whether it be food, fashion, or even festivals. There is a chapter in this book that focuses extensively on Renaissance Festivals and how they are worked into American culture. This gave me a baseline into how Americans have historically received and perceived Renaissance festivals across the nation.
This book covers all of the practical steps involved from the concept to the completion of documentary films. It is meant to provide the budding documentarian with some basic information needed when endeavoring to shoot their first film of this type including things like documentary ethics, writing for documentaries, budgeting, assembling a crew, film and sound recording, and editing for the audience. Though my project is a student film, this book will gave me the basics in the art of documentary filmmaking specifically and provide a jumping off point for my film.


This book demonstrates how documentary collects and delivers the various American experiences to the public sphere, where it gives substance to the social imaginary. This book gave me an idea of how documentary films are made and received today and provided tips on how to make the message of the film more accessible to a wider audience.


This book is a study of contemporary American Renaissance fairs, focusing on the Maryland Renaissance Festival, where cast members recreate sixteenth-century England through performances of theater, combat-at-arms, processions, street hawking, and historical reenactments and reconstructions. This book gave me ethnographic information about renaissance fairs in general and a bit of a closer look into one specifically. After
reading this I had a more concrete idea of what I wanted to talk to the cast members at the Ohio Renaissance about.


This press release gave the names of all those working at the Ohio Renaissance Festival as well as how many years they have been coming to the fair and how many years they have been practicing their craft. This document helped me decide which, if any of the artisans I wanted to interview for the documentary ad provided me with more, much needed information about the festival itself.


This particular book approaches Renaissance Faires from the perspective of labor, education, aesthetics, business, and the key figures involved. It reveals the way the faires have established themselves as a counter culture and redefine ideas of family, our relationship to consumer goods, and our corporate entertainments. It uses testimonials from real Faire workers to explain how this counterculture began and grew over the decades.


This book examines the history of documentary film and discusses current theories and techniques of folklore and fieldwork. The focus on expressing folklore on the screen was immensely helpful as Renaissance Festivals have a touch of folklore to them.