Billy Corben: A Video Chat with "One of the Miami Guys"

By: JohnResistance | Published: March 20, 2017

Billy Corben (b.1978), is an American documentary film director. As a co-founder of the Miami-based studio rakontur, he has created films such as Cocaine Cowboys and Miami Guys. In 2011, Corben wrote "Screen Trade," which was mentioned in the New York Times. Corben said of Raw Deal, "Billy Corben is one of the most compelling pieces of reporting and filmmaking on the screens today."

Corben was born in Fort Myers, Florida, and raised in South Florida. As a child actor, he spent a large portion of his early days in Los Angeles, California. He graduated with honors from Florida. After graduating, Corben returned to the University of Miami football program, produced by rakontur.

In 2011, Corben produced Dawg Fight, a brutal exposé of unlicensed dogfights. In April 2011, Limelight, a documentary about the rise of Miami's electronic music scene, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival. The film utilized extensive clips from videotape footage of the alleged assault.

EXPOSURE TO BROAD MEANINGS:
- Law enforcement officers and firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty.
- Miami-based Hope For Vision, a not-for-profit organization that gives financial support to the families of blind children.
- Miami Guys, a group that supports and creates exposure to men with HIV/AIDS.

INFLUENCES:
- The explosion of big money in sports and the epidemic of professional athletes who have gone broke.
- The sensational Miami-based federal trials of Sal Magluta and Willy Falcone, the most successful Cuban drug traffickers in history.

Creatives: The Evolution of a Documentary:
- Corben oversees the soundtracks for all of rakontur's productions.
- He consults with Grammy-winning electronic music pioneer DJ Le Spam on Limelight.
- Corben has contributed his own original songs to the soundtracks of Raw Deal: A Question of Consent, The U, and Square Grouper.

Documentaries and Culture:
- Corben made Cocaine Cowboys, a film about the Cuban drug lords of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The New York Times called Cocaine Cowboys, "a hyperventilating account of how the drug trade literally built Miami and its beach territories.
- Corben consulted with Grammy-winning electronic music pioneer DJ Le Spam on Limelight.
- Corben was the executive producer on Miami Guys.

Documentary: Cocaine Cowboys:
- Corben has stumbled onto one of the most controversial films of the modern day, "calling it "one of the most compelling pieces of reporting and filmmaking on the screens today."

The U:
- A feature documentary about the championship history of the University of Miami football program. Produced by rakontur, the film tells the story of how the drug trade literally built Miami and its beach territories.

Square Grouper:
- A feature documentary about Miami and its Venetian Pool. The film utilized extensive clips from videotape footage of the alleged assault.

Raw Deal: A Question of Consent:
- The film utilized extensive clips from videotape footage of the alleged assault.

Miami Guys:
- A group that supports and creates exposure to men with HIV/AIDS.

Miami Says...:
- Miami music fixture DJ Le Spam wrote his first ever film score for Square Grouper.
- Corben consulted with Grammy-winning electronic music pioneer DJ Le Spam on Limelight.

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BUSINESS ACUMEN: 1:04 min.

What is your position on film incentives provided by the State of Florida?

CRITICAL THINKING: 4:13 min.

What are your criteria for taking on a new project?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:46 min.

The Surf Club at 90th & Collins Ave. was developed during prohibition, and hosted everyone from Frank Sinatra to Winston Churchill. It has been reimagined by architects Richard Meyers & Kobi Karp, and will open as a Four Seasons Hotel and condominium complex in 2017. Is there a mob backstory to the Surf Club?

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 1:57 min.

Who are your most important influences?

UNDERSTANDS THE AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE: 1:42 min.

It's difficult to get most Millennials to watch black & white movies. Do you agree?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 3:30 min.

What brought about the demise of the Cocaine Cowboys era?

CREATES A UNIQUE BRAND: 4:26 min.

Tell us about ESPN's "30 for 30" series.

What do people want to make films in Miami?