

Interview: Marc McCrudden, Director

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[After viewing the World Premiere of Livin' Free, we had quite a few questions to ask. Some of them were in regard to the technical elements and scenery used in the movie. Others were just the typical curiosities of the 'fish'. Read through to find out about the past, present and future of the bright minds behind Livin Free: the Heart of Longboarding] The Livin' Free Interview

[SF] Want to take a second and introduce yourself and the cast/crew of Livin' Free?

[MM] My name is Marc McCrudden and I am the director of Livin Free: the Heart of Longboarding. Myself along with Thom Mayer, Bryan Heffron, and Jason Clayton are the main culprits behind Livin Free: the heart of Longboarding.

[SF] Okay, so set the scene for us: what were you doing and where were you when the lens slipped from their reality to your reality? [MM]We were on a show that had us starting in Boston MA, and driving across the US stopping in 6 different cities along the way. We were on the road for about 6 weeks; we saw an opportunity and decided to seize it.

[SF] Why did you decide to do it? [MM]Thom was the only one who brought his board on the trip, a longboard. Jason and I realized immediately that we needed to get boards so went to a skateshop in Boston and bought a longboard and a shorty. The shop only had one longboard so I bought the shop's logo deck. It was the Beacon Hill skate shop and that's what the graphic said on the bottom. I still have it. We just started trading out boards and Thom has this POV camera rig he's made and he started shooting every time we'd skate. We got that footage of Jason wiping out and we knew we were on to something.

[SF] What's up with that Jason guy? Is he violent? [MM]Jason is such an animated character. People's first impression of him is always that he's intimidating, but that impression quickly evaporates when you talk to him and start hearing all of his descriptive sound effects. He's such a hilarious guy. When we checked into our motel room at the Broadway Inn in Goldendale a few weeks ago for MFOS, the hotel owner saw Jason from like 150 yards away and was like, "Whoa! Who's that guy?" I turned around to see he was talking about Jason way off in the distance just minding his own business standing by my truck stretching his legs. "I'm like, "that's Jason, uh, he's with me." The hotel guy, who's wearing a shirt that says Meth Free, is like, "Is he violent?" For a moment I laughed to myself and thought, "what's this guy gonna do if I say yes, he's super violent?" I swear on my life the guy literally sprayed Raid along all of the baseboards inside the room as we inspected the room before checking in. Needless to say, the advertising on the net failed to describe the Broadway Inn as the rats-nest it truly is, so we moved to a different hotel.

[SF] Did having the ability to get out and skate, to film, to just explore; did it add any levity to your lives that you hadn't expected when you first got into it?

[MM]For two years I felt like I'd been so stressed, moving to LA, trying to get consistent camera operating work, dealing everything that comes with going from just getting by to being established in this business. The four of us have all been through it, it can get really overwhelming at times. Most of the people I've met who've transplanted themselves to LA can relate. It's not a rags to riches story but we've all put in the work to get where we are and have earned everything we've individually been able to achieve professionally. For me, and I think I can speak for the other guys here, the levity came to us every time we captured another cool shot and skated another great hill. Skating is like surfing in that way where when you're doing it you're not thinking about all the crap going on in your life and you feel free in that way when you're not taking it for granted.

[SF] What would you say the most magical moment of the movie was? [MM]I think we would all answer this question differently, and I would really like to hear Thom, Bryan, and Jason's answers to it. For me, looking back in edit bay at the scene in Morocco and realizing just how happy those guys were to be on that board, the stoke in their faces, their curiosity in their eyes, their weird defiant habit of not getting out of each others way when one of them was on the board; that whole scene and vibe was just insane and beautiful. That was shot about a year after the Iraq war had begun and I'd become really sensitive to how we as human beings were and still are placing such a value on waging these wars against each other. The more I've traveled and the more I see different cultures and speak to the people in them, the more I realize how intentional the hate and negativity is that is out there.

[SF] In the scene you have used for advertising, the background is so golden and just backlights the rider so well! In the movie you say the lighting was "just right". Was what we saw in the movie raw or was it visually adjusted at all? [MM]That scene in Nashville was exactly how it was shot, period. We messed with it in post to see if

was even possible to enhance it and it didn't make any improvement. That's another reason I feel so excited about that moment in particular, Thom Mayer at his best, warmed up, and loose, just flowing. The image is just so iconic in my opinion and represents so perfectly the whole vibe of the movie. For longboarding and this whole movement I truly feel that that image is something special. I really want people to get to know more about Thom too and what he's into cause he's such an amazing guy in terms of his spirituality, his family, his health, passions, and definitely his skating. He's on his own level and people need to hear what he has to say because he's truly connected to a pure form of living that's really so different from the consumer culture America is devouring so much of today. And that's an underlying message that I tried to highlight with some of the music choice I made, specifically with Cobalt Season and Ryan Sharps lyrics in Like Jesus. It's like I just found out that we've shipping 12 Billion is US Currency to Iraq and 8 Billion is unaccounted for. Most Countries in the world aren't worth 12 Billion dollars and we're supposed to act like it's not in the Swiss Bank Accounts of a very small number of people who we are all too familiar with? Say it was in 100 dollar notes, how many tractor trailer truck would you need to haul 8 billion dollars around in? Think about it cause it's no accident. [SF] What is Sir Richard Branson like in real life? [MM] Well speaking of billionaires, Sir Richard's one who actually earned his money. He's quite a character and was so cool to skate down the aisle like that. He's an open minded guy and gives back to all of his employees in such a big way that I think we could learn a lot from his business practices. My wife Christine, who edited Livin Free, she and I worked on his attempt at a Reality Show called, The Rebel Billionaire. It was one of the best experiences of my life from a travel standpoint and in terms of camera assignments. The first Challenge of the show, Richard, myself, two cast members, and a stunt guy stood on top of a hot air balloon at 7,000 feet. I shot the three of them having tea and was up there for about three hours total that day. I can only compare it to what floating on top of a cloud must be like, a once in a lifetime deal there. We also rappelled the Canary Wharf Tower twice, which is the tallest building in London. The show was incredible! It enabled us to capture Zimbabwe footage, the Morocco footage and was just one of those all time epic trips. I was so stoked I had my board with me. I learned my lesson for sure.

[SF] When you are shooting the reality shows, do you ever get the sneaking sensation that you are like some weird sociological observer studying and documenting a truly alien form of humanity? Which shows do you guys work on? [MM] Basically, yes. It's weird because it seems the characteristics of what make a good reality contestant always involve high doses of dysfunctional behavior. It's like rubber necking a car wreck, you can't help yourself from looking, the producers know that and they try to create those situations. It's not all bad though, they still use sex to get audiences attention. That's where the Girls Next Door comes in. I've been the Director of Photography of that show for the past two seasons. It's a lot of fun to shoot and the girls and Hef are exactly how they seem on the show, just loving life and living the dream. Other shows we've worked on, Biggest Loser, The Hills, Laguna Beach, The Apprentice, to name a few.

[SF] Of all the locations you filmed at, looking back what location really worked the best? [MM] I think the Valley of Fire area near Vegas really worked well for us. It's really untapped and vast and I feel like we could go out there again make it look different and just shoot different spots that are equally as visual or even more so.

[SF] How much slack have you gotten from people about the fact that you guys rock out on your boards sans protection? Has that changed anything? [MM] The bottom line is that we all wear pads now. We got a bit of slack up at Maryhill about it and I assured those who asked that we're fully padded now, helmets, gloves, everything. It's not about being cool, 'cause if you think about it safer is smarter and smarter is cool. [SF] I for one really hope you ride with helmets and gloves. I want you guys to be doing this for a long time! [MM] Copy that! [SF] What was your experience at Maryhill like? I know you said you had no expectations as far as what would happen there, you just wanted to share your movie. Did it become something more?

[MM] First of all John Ozmon, Bob Ozmon, and Marcus Rietema put on one heck of an event. You just know next year is going to be insane! Yeah, we didn't have any expectations driving up there. I just wanted to make it clear to the riders who did show up to the Livin Free Premiere just how important it was to me to take it to them directly and share it with them. They are the people I care most about getting validation from and I wanted them to know that.

[SF] What is your favorite slice of pie? [MM] Trick question huh? What am I supposed to say here something like hair-turn pie? I don't know I like Cobblers a lot, blackberry, peach, I don't discriminate.

[SF] If you could cut yourself a blank check what would OrangeFiist do, where would you take this? [MM] After Maryhill, I see how we need to really hunker down and focus on distributing Livin' Free and give it as big a life as it deserves. I would spend some of that blank check on advertising the film for sure. I also am super motivated now to profile guys like Martin Siegrist, Erik Lundberg, Mischo Erban, the entire posse of Team Green who I barely got to experience until it was too late, Fredrik Lindstrom, maybe Adam Colton and his crew if they were up for it, the Landyachtz crew, Chris Chaput as a major ambassador of the sport. I don't know I'm just throwing this out there but I see an Endless Summer 2 type flick that really does the sport and it's core athletes justice. I want to do something way beyond the skate porn style of content and I believe with Livin Free we've proven we're qualified to do

that.

[SF] If, through all of your work, only one thing could be accomplished, what would you hope that to be?

[MM] This is tough. On one hand, I see this as a super-international sport that could get to the point where professional riders can actually make a living competing on a worldwide tour like Surfings WCT and WQS systems. It's a sport like surfing where you don't have to compete to enjoy doing it, it's fan friendly, and for the youth coming up it's maybe easier to train for because hills are so easy to find. I did sense a White Elephant in the room up at Maryhill though so my smart ass answer might be, Sector 9 actually nuts up and starts directly supporting a sport, and it's most accomplished competitive athletes, that they are in large part responsible for creating and fostering. That answer might get me more of the zero-support that company has shown not only me but the people who put on these downhill events, and the riders who race in them. 0+0=0 though, so I'm not that worried about it. I just couldn't believe that they didn't have presence up in Washington, something more than one guy handing out hats out of his trunk, something that would directly benefit the IGSA and Volcanic Promotions. I'm supposed to be honest here right? Good, cause now that I've started I don't want to beat around the bush about this. Respect is a two way street and it's obvious the race community, especially the racers themselves feel the lack of respect and support they get from the most establish corporation within the sport. I think the racers themselves, the independent board companies, Chris Chaput, the IGSA, the event organizers, and people like myself understand the power of this internet age well enough to push the sport in the right direction just fine. Wait, they won't even read this because they don't support the best online information resource the sport of longboarding has going. Interesting.

[SF] Can you explain in extreme detail how the POV footage in the Thom and Zillard piece was captured.

[MM] Thom made a rig that could attached to either the front or back truck and was capable of being positioned in different angles.

[SF] Bryan has to be one of the most memorable members of the cast, and I don't mean to put this the wrong way; but he epitomizes not just in style and fluidity but in his physicality as well the transition you all went through. He got stoked, got wrecked, got fit and now rips. Does he still ride? [MM] He rides more than the three of us combined. He doesn't own a car, though I heard he might be getting one soon. I'll believe it when I'm riding shotgun in it. Yeah, he epitomizes getting stoked on the sport. I didn't see him for a while after the show we shot most of Livin Free on. He was living with Thom at the time in Venice just skating the boardwalk all day everyday and really focusing in on his choices health-wise. I'll never forget when he told me that he had the muscles back in his fingers. I was like wow, to even think he'd gone past that line and come back was just amazing. He's starting to burn these images into the bottom of some decks and he's got some cool clips of him skating up on youtube, just loving it. Bryan will skate for the rest of his life, I'm sure of that!

[SF] Is there anything more you wish you could have done differently? [MM] There were a few times, skating my neighborhood with Jason where he wiped out just as bad as he does in the movie. I was skating without a camera and I wish I wasn't. I wish I had those wipeouts to share and the subsequent knock on the one neighbors door to take responsibility for destroying this huge glass light fixture he crashed into and shattered.

[SF] Since the movie has evolved through production, has the stoke continued?

[MM] Well, I skated today but that was the first time in a long time and that has to change. The stoke is there but it's gotten funneled into the film and the details with that. My 45 year old neighbor saw the trailer, he hasn't even watched the film yet and he went out and bought a two longboard skateboards, one for the neighborhood and one to keep at work so he can skate in between the buildings he works in. It's stuff like that that keeps me stoked.

[SF] So what's next? [MM] Edit the Maryhill footage, then starting the rider profile project, and have a few Livin Free screenings thrown in between.

Thanks for the support everybody. Don't be afraid to think big and remember the power of your will is infinite. Thanks to Malakai and Erik.

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Or for online media links to the trailer please link your story to:
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