

Livin Free Longboarding DVD Review

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[When we initially ran across Livin's Free, it was just a website and a concept. We knew that traveling videographers were working on a movie and it was to be "about longboarding", but nothing more. Several months later, we found ourselves in the high school auditorium at Goldendale, Washington, waiting for the projection-screen premiere of "Livin's Free - The Heart of Longboarding". This is our review.]

It turns out that this flick is more than a little autobiographical. The videographers are pros that found longboarding as something to fill the time between shifts shooting video for television reality shows at various locations across the globe. They are, in fact, masters of their craft. They traveled with their shows, longboard in tow - and it was just one, shared board at first. By the time the idea to start lugging \$10,000.00 video cameras around came up, they'd gathered some basic boards and began capturing footage that may change viewers' understanding of Point of View video with longboards. With the videographers and the hardware, this production might have turned out too polished, too professional and maybe beyond the appreciation of the general board riding world. It doesn't, if only for one aspect of the documentary: the Cast.

All across the board, as we meet the partaking members in this longboarding odyssey we are greeted by genuine people, bent on conquering their local hills wherever they may find them. We are introduced to Marc, Jason, Thom, Bryan and Owen gently letting their rides be their stories and their influence on each other as riders be their legacy. Thom's words flow throughout, helping to tie it all together and provide us with insight to the crew.

There are contrasts in style as we follow the skaters' infection by longboard stoke and their seizure of every opportunity to skate. Thom's surf style demeanor, synchronized with flow and traffic in urban settings, is contrasted with Jason's "Hurtin Was Good" mantra after rookie mistakes that will give viewers the same urge to yell at the TV that comes when you're watching some college kid heading to certain slaughter in a slasher flick. If it is the velvet smooth delicacy that Thom shows, tracing the street with an outstretched hand or the abusive attack of Jason's body on concrete, there is a genuine nature to it and a guilty appreciation at being able to experience it all with them. Just like stoking a bro on a well-taken line or laughing 'til it hurts at yet another masterful bail.

The skaters ride with humility. If it was a true attribute of their nature or if it is something perceived because we've all been there, I'm not sure of. We watch them improve and we watch their unique styles become more focused and distinct. This is no more poignant than in Bryan's case. Through the movie, his identity as rolling danger and comedic relief changes as he becomes more capable on the skateboard. We eventually see him competently carving, if only too briefly.

On the subject of carving, this movie makes carving look better than it has ever looked in any video. The scenery, long, drawn-out panning shots and synergy of dual riders carving a stretch of road provide fantastic segments. Livin's Free validates the beauty and definitive style that is high speed carving, showing the intrinsic connection between rider and scenery in perfect harmony.

The POV shots are amazing and provide some unique vantage points rare to be seen. However, if you want to see some really amazing POV footage you need to check out the Thom and Zillard extra segment. The angles and field of view in that segment not only make it a beautifully crafted video on its own but might also give you a serious head-scratcher over the technical abilities needed to capture those shots. The video is simple, the soundtrack and riding style are smooth and melodic, but the footage presented on-screen is mind-blowing, I have only seen shots like that from a few sources and none of them were as smoothly filmed or as expertly edited as you'll find in Livin's Free.

The one thing it truly reminds me of is Downhill Motion, but what's accomplished in Livin's Free is infinitely more mind-boggling.

This movie is so many more things than it is not. It's a genuine everyman's tale of longboarding from the

genesis of being impressed into the first ride to the state of competency that causes someone to ask of themselves, "Maybe I should wear a helmet?" Anyone who has learned or taught others, has gone too fast, has failed to run it out or leaned in desperation and stuck a corner will live it again with this film. Almost every longboarder of any competency can relate to this movie and come away from it with a renewed appreciation for how lucky we truly are to be able to partake in this sport.

The overall editing and flow of the video is masterful. Christine McCrudden did an exquisite job with the editing and the entire video flows as seamlessly as the stoked-out riders portrayed within. She manages to keep the momentum of the video steady while still taking the time to introduce people and places essential to understanding the path the riders follow throughout the video.

The soundtrack is very complementary to the video, linking many of the epic, long shots with flowing down tempo and soul-filled vocal testament to the stoke of riding. After speaking with Marc about the difficulty in securing the soundtrack, it is easy to have an even greater respect: the music used is complementary to the fluid scenes they follow and all together help to tie it all in to help the viewer get pulled even deeper into the riders passion for what they are doing

To be critical of this movie requires the viewer to abandon the exuberance and thrill of the ride and get technical: although it was never billed as such the skating isn't high-level or high-speed. The crashes will make you wince with a certain sense of impending doom when you see the rear-heavy stances some skaters use and experienced longboarders may find the absence of helmets until nearly the end of the movie to be distracting. However, this is a film about discovery and many of us followed the same paths these skaters do.. Other than that the artistic quality is without reproach and the extras fulfill the need to see more just when we think it runs too short..

Just like the ride itself, the viewer should approach this movie unassuming -- you need to just let it all go and enjoy the visual journey. As with any reality, there are many points of perception and everyone takes something away from it that is unique and we have no doubt that the same carries true for Livin Free – The Heart of Longboarding. No one can tell you what it means to you, you have to experience it for yourself.

You can order Livin Free – The Heart of Longboarding from orangefiist.com

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