



PressureLife Productions

Presents

Inside Akron's Tent City

A film by Kevin Naughton

42 minutes - USA

Official Selection:

2019 Cleveland International Film Festival

FINAL PRESS NOTES

Press Contact

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SYNOPSIS

Shot on an iPhone 7+ for less than \$1K, “Inside Akron’s Tent City” documents a local homeless community’s attempt to self-organize and the Akron city government’s efforts to displace them. Juxtaposing interviews with city officials and the houseless residents of the tent community, the documentary subverts stereotypes and humanizes a marginalized portion of American society.

“INSIDE AKRON’S TENT CITY”

WRITE-UP FOR PRESSURELIFE MAGAZINE

In late September, I took a small video crew down to Akron to check out a community of homeless individuals living in a “Tent City” that I had heard about. We were unsure of what to expect. I think we were hoping to get a short 8 minute documentary piece out of it at most, but after spending the day at the site, it was clear that we had stumbled upon something truly incredible.

The camp is located on the private property of Sage Lewis, a passionate activist who dedicates immense time and resources to helping the homeless, and in spite of the fact that he allows the individuals to use his land for a stable form of shelter while they try to get back on their feet financially, the city has been moving to evict the residents in a long, drawn-out process filled with uncertainty, shifting deadlines, and unfulfilled promises.

The story we discovered was inspiring, heart-wrenching, and infuriating all at once, and it subverted virtually every stereotype and prejudice we held concerning homelessness. Oftentimes, we weren’t even aware that we held a certain preconceived notion as it was subverted, which was in and of itself a valuable lesson.

Our visits to the camp and subsequent research has coalesced into a multi-part, ongoing documentary series where we explore the elaborate inner-workings of the camp, why the residents prefer the tent community to the city’s shelter system, and most importantly, why the city is trying to shut the camp down. We’re thrilled to see that the episodes already have nearly 100 thousand views.

Over the next month, we’ll be following the story as it continues to develop. Before voting to evict the more than 40 residents of the tent community, the city promised to provide them housing by a seemingly ever-moving deadline. Now, as the unforgiving Northeast Ohio winter sets in, only half of the residents have been housed, the rest of the individuals served by Akron’s Tent City exist in a sort of administrative limbo.

We’ll be watching and reporting what happens to the remainder of the houseless individuals as the story unfolds. You can find the series at pressurelife.com/inside-akrons-tent-city, and if you wish to donate to the tent community, you can find out how at their website, <http://thehomelesscharity.org>.

KEVIN NAUGHTON - Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Writer, Editor

A Northeast Ohio native, Kevin Naughton is an independent filmmaker and journalist. He first start experimenting with filmmaking in high school, and his experimental short film “Mr. Smith” won an award for “Best Imaginative Short Film” at the 2006 TVT Awards, a regional high school student film contest held in Pennsylvania. After graduating from the University of Akron in 2011 with a degree in Anthropology, he returned to filmmaking, creating experimental film projects with his friends. His fictional narrative short films “Nothing To Do With Luck” and “Digging” were featured in the 2016 and 2017 “Short. Sweet. Film Fest.” respectively. In 2015, he started writing for PressureLife Magazine, and in 2016 he created the publication’s video department and began filming short documentary pieces covering arts, culture, and politics in and around Northeast Ohio.

PRINCIPLE CREW MEMBERS

IAN DOUGLAS - Sound Engineer

Ian Douglas’ fascination with capturing audio began in 1998— as a child, in his mothers laundry room, with an old cassette boombox and his fathers snare drum. It was so acoustically refined, so beautifully tuned, that a decade later Ian and his brother built a recording studio in that very laundry room. Today he captures, edits, and produces aural landscapes for music, film and podcasts. When he’s not busy bringing stories to life sonically, he travels the continent with his punk rock band, Harvey Pekar, listening to way too many podcasts, and (when he’s lucky) being featured in DRUM! Magazine. He enjoys Australian accents, the smell of Coastal New Jersey, and the taste of fancy coffees.

JASON DUNLAP - Writer, Interviewer, Narrator, Composer

Jason Dunlap is an award winning composer, actor and writer. His origin story begins in Northwest Ohio where, from an early age, he received professional training in both acting (stage and voice) and music composition. A life long storyteller in all its forms, Jason has been creating and working in professional and independent film and theater since his formative years and well into the present day. While still keeping a strong love and passion for the stage and film, he really has come into his own as a composer. His film score work has been featured in regional and international film festivals and his work with Garage Creative Studio landed him an Emmy for his work with that team. In his spare time, Jason is a principal songwriter and founding member of the Cleveland based instrumental band, Royal Beasts.

JEFFREY STEINWACHS - Writer

Hailing from upstate New York, Jeffrey Steinwachs moved to northeast Ohio in 2006 to pursue a degree in political science from The University of Akron. During his time there he discovered a passion for musical performance and campaign activism, touring regionally with multiple local bands as well as interning as a student organizer for pro-public sector union organization, We Are Ohio. After graduating in 2011, Jeffrey continued his activist work, lending his skills to local and national environmental action campaigns organized by the Sierra Club as well as Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential primary campaign. During this time, Jeffrey continued his involvement in music projects, releasing records from his bands Eddie Doldrum and The Swimfan. This is his first foray into filmmaking.

CREDITS

Produced/Directed/Shot/Edited by Kevin Naughton

Written by Jason Dunlap, Kevin Naughton, Jeffrey Steinwachs

Additional Writers - India Pierre-Ingram, Wilson Rivera, Ivy Simpkin

Sound Recording - Ian Douglas, Eric Kish

Sound Design - Ian Douglas

Original Score - Jason Dunlap

Production Assistant - Colin Murphy

Executive Producer - Jim Bacha