



tchoupitoulas



82 Minutes / 2012 / USA / Color / 16.9 / 5.1 Surround / HDCAM

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SYNOPSIS

In sync with innovative instincts they demonstrated in their first feature 45365, Bill and Turner Ross' Tchoupitoulas takes the term documentary to mean, primarily, the documenting of an experience—a distinct time and a place and the people that inhabit it. No interviews, no voiceover; just the evocation of an existence and the feelings it conjures.

Three young brothers take a secret sunset journey across a river to a pleasure island that's always been forbidden to them. As such, the narrative conceit of Tchoupitoulas is as timeless as a fairy tale. But through the eyes of our juvenile protagonists, we experience an impressionistic immersion into this beguiling kaleidoscope of dancers, musicians, hustlers, drag queens, and revelers that parade through the lamp-lit streets between Rampart and the river. While the kids can only glance at the glittery surface, the camera follows the melodies that emanate from these corridors to admit us to the cabarets, into the dark alleyways, next to the barflies, behind the curtains, and on the bandstand with the people who make this place their audience, their stage, their home.

The Ross's capture the fleeting moments of an enduring experience in one of the world's most unique cities.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The impulse to go about making what became Tchoupitoulas was borne out of memories from our childhood: wandering the carnival streets of New Orleans, dazzled by the vibrancy of the night, of the mystery emanating from the open doors spilling life out onto the streets. It was a far cry from our other home in the cornfields of Ohio. We wanted to find that again.

Most current descriptions of the place, most documents, rely heavily on the caricatures of New Orleans--the easy identifiers--and the fall back issues of hurricanes and oil spills. But for us, three young brothers became our surrogates, our guides, and our way in to the reality of the city. Through them we found the perspective we needed; just a big step back and it all came in to focus. It felt like being a kid again. We found what we were looking for.

Most of all, Tchoupitoulas is an artifact of an adventure. As with our other films, the number one reason we made it was for the experience. We like things in motion--running constantly with camera in hand, chasing what's sparkling. The camera allows us entry into these worlds and keeps our mom thinking we're actually being productive.

This was a fun one. An entire year without sunlight. We found lots of trouble and met lots of new friends.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The idea was always to make a documentary filmed entirely at night that took place over the course of one evening. We chose our second home, New Orleans—a place with its share of night life. When it came to shooting, this one was similar to how we usually go about things: exist in an area for a long stretch and shoot what's interesting. The involvement of the kids, who stitched the whole thing together, was a lucky accident.

We shot from sundown to sun-up for nine months. It was us and our lifelong co-conspirator Kyle Rouse, who as always acted as our Muscle. We shot on two broke ass cameras with two empty wallets and ended up covered in an unreasonable amount of transvestite stripper glitter. We drank too much, slept too little, and broke the law. It got weird. We disrobed at a gay karaoke bar to Duran Duran so that we could get permission to film there. We shot under the pier with a homeless man and the next day while watching dailies listened on the lavalier mic as he plotted with his buddy to kill us. Turner filmed on stage with Dr. John but didn't use the footage in the end because it didn't fit. Bill arbitrated an aggressive argument between the members of a rap group in the back of an Escalade. We wish we could show and tell everything that we got into, but in the end, this slice'll work.



CREW

Directed by	Bill and Turner Ross
Executive Producers	Michael Gottwald, Dan Janvey, Josh Penn
Executive Producers	Ed Rieker, Billy Peterson, Herb Campbell
Associate Producer	Jonny Leahan
Cinematography/Editing	Bill and Turner Ross
Featuring:	William Zanders Bryan Zanders Kentrell Zanders
The Muscle:	Kyle Rouse
Sound Finishing:	Lawrence Everson
Picture Finishing:	Bossi Baker Josiah Howison Markus Rutledge
Additional Photography:	Chris Keohane Kyle Rouse
Music Supervisor:	Joe Rudge



ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

BILL AND TURNER ROSS Directors

Bill and Turner Ross' first feature length film, 45365, was the winner of the 2009 SXSW Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary Feature and the Independent Spirit Truer Than Fiction Award in 2010. They went on to receive numerous accolades, including nominations for Editing, Cinematography, and Debut Feature at the Cinema Eye Honors; the film was also broadcast as part of PBS' Independent Lens Series.

Bill and Turner Ross were born and raised in Sidney, Ohio, and both graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design. Bill Ross' documentary, fiction, and multi-media short films have been featured at festivals that include Cannes and the Seattle Film Festival. He has taught filmmaking to students at the elementary and secondary level, and conducted a summer film program for children in the Los Angeles area. Turner Ross has worked in the art departments of studio features such as Déjà Vu, Skeleton Key, My Own Love Song, and Idiocracy, as well as a handful of independent features.

As brothers, they have worked together on everything for the past twenty-eight years. They have lived and created together for all of their lives. As adults, they moved to Los Angeles and began work in the film industry, honing their skills and crafting their roles as a unit. Five years ago they started off on an adventure to make their own films, free of the constrictions of commercial work. They are now producing their third independent documentary feature together. They conceive, scout, produce, shoot and edit all of their own work.

MICHAEL GOTTWALD Executive Producer

A principal member of New Orleans based film collective Court 13, Michael was Executive Producer of Benh Zeitlin's Glory at Sea in 2007. He was a Field Organizer for Obama for America during the primaries in 2008, and was Ohio New Media Director in the general election. With Josh Penn and Dan Janvey, Michael produced Court 13's first feature film Beasts of the Southern Wild, which won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance in 2012 and will be distributed by Fox Searchlight. For Beasts, Michael led a grassroots casting operation that auditioned more than 4000 non-professional local children and adults in eight parishes across Louisiana. He also produced New Orleans bounce artist

Big Freedia's music video "Y'all Get Back Now," and wrote and directed a short for Seattle's Bilocal in 2010. Currently, besides Tchoupitoulas, he's producing the Ross Brothers' third documentary feature, Untitled Bordertown film (in post-production), for which he was also Spanish language production coordinator during photography in Eagle Pass, Texas.

DAN JANVEY Executive Producer

Dan Janvey is an independent film producer based in New York City. Short films he has produced have played at Sundance, SXSW, and the NYFF, as well as being programmed on McSweeney's Wholphin DVD. These include Ray Tintori's Death to the Tinman, and Benh Zeitlin's Glory at Sea, both of which were made by the filmmaking collective Court 13, of which Dan is a founding member. After completing these short films, Dan took a break from filmmaking to join the 2008 Obama campaign, eventually ending up as a Field Organizer in New Bern, North Carolina. Following this, Dan moved to New Orleans, LA, to produce Beasts of the Southern Wild, directed by Benh Zeitlin. Beasts was supported by the Sundance Institute, and Dan participated in the Creative Producing Labs as a Mark Silverman fellow. The film premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival in the US Dramatic Competition section, and won the Grand Jury Prize. Additionally, Dan works with Mandragora Movies, most recently on the theatrical release of The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu. Last, he is in development on numerous projects that he hopes will take him on more adventures soon.

JOSH PENN Executive Producer

Josh Penn is a New Orleans based film producer with Court 13. His first feature film Beasts of the Southern Wild won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2012 and he was also given the Sundance Producers Award for his work on the film. The film will be released nationwide by Fox Searchlight in 2012. Over the past few years Josh has been selected to take part in both Sundance's 2009 Creative Producing Initiative and Cannes 2011 Producers Workshop. He previously produced the short film, Glory at Sea, which won 15 film festival awards including SXSW and The Woodstock Film Festival. In addition to films, Josh has also produced a number of music videos including MGMT's Time to Pretend and Electric Feel. He is currently producing two documentaries in post: the Ross Brothers' "Tchoupitoulas" (Premiering at SXSW 2012) and Sara Dosa's "Roots and Webs," (To premiere in 2013) as well as developing two fiction films; Ray Tintori's "Untitled Adventure Serial." and Mark Elijah Rosenberg's "Ad Inexplorata". Outside of film, Josh's work includes acting as The Michigan New Media Director for Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign and Senior Program Manager for the launch of Obama's 2012 Re-election campaign.