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Neigh Sayer:

Indie Filmmaker Exposes NYC's Inhumane Horse-Drawn Carriage Industry

By Robert Stahl

Okay, I love animals as much as the next homo. Probably more. As a child, I transformed our home into a haven for all the wounded animals that I could rescue. The patio became an ersatz Romper Room version of Noah's Ark. After having been forced by mother to keep the place tidy and odor free, I have a new appreciation for that guy Noah. Unfortunately, there wasn't much I could do for the sicker animals. It was heart wrenching as a child to have to tuck another lost battle into a shoe or matchbox and carry it off for a backyard burial. It proved to be too much.

Eventually I lost interest, as kids do, and moved on to other things. Instead, I would spend hours in my room dancing to songs by Prince or Madonna, or flipping lustily through the underwear section of Mom's Sears & Roebuck catalog. Sometimes I would pretend I was a famous movie director, ordering my super-hero figurines around like a prepubescent Garanimal-wearing Martin Scorsese. "No, no, no! Cut! Let's try it again, Batman,

and this time with *feeling!*" The point I'm trying to make is that I eventually stopped trying to save all the animals.

Thank goodness Donny Moss hasn't.



Moss, 36, is an openly gay stand up comic cum independent filmmaker from NYC. He recently visited Dallas to promote *Blinders*, a documentary that exposes the truth behind the tradition of NY's horse-drawn carriage industry. For a comic, the film is surprisingly un-funny.

"For years, I walked by horse-drawn carriages and it always looked like something was wrong with them," says Moss. "But I would think since they're right here in public view, then surely it must be ok. One day I saw a group of people holding up signs and protesting, and I realized that I

wasn't the only one who thought something might be wrong here." Moss purchased a camcorder and set out to make a video for YouTube, but soon discovered that the situation was more horrible than he could ever have imagined.

Over the course of 53-minutes, Moss' directorial debut shines a light on the desperate plight of these horses. Using hidden cameras, Moss takes us inside the horses' living quarters-- cramped, poorly ventilated and unsanitary "stables" inside warehouses on Manhattan's West Side. Moss' eye is unflinching, showing in painful detail the injuries and lameness the horses endure by being forced to spend their lives on hard concrete instead of soft green pastures. The film follows the animals to their deaths as well, showing how they are cramped tightly into uncomfortable trailers before shipped off to slaughter. Perhaps most importantly, the film highlights the grim chaos left behind when the animals "spook", running blindly into bustling traffic with catastrophic and often fatal results.

"I know that some people think that riding in a horse drawn carriage is romantic," says Moss, "but if they knew how these animals lived and what their lives are like, they would never ride one again. I mean, other major cities like London and Paris have banned using them because they are inhumane, but New York hasn't yet."

"It's very clear to me now, there is just no way for this industry to be operated humanely or safely. Horses, buggies and cars just don't mix. Having a 19th century contraption in 21st century streets, the two just don't belong together."

So you've made it to the end of this article, Gentle Reader, and now you now know about the inhumane conditions of the horse drawn carriage industry. Looks like I haven't given up on helping animals after all, doesn't it? Please do me a favor and tell a friend about this film. For more information please visit www.blindersthemovie.com.

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