



Presents

SEVERE CLEAR

Written, Edited and Directed by
Kristian Fraga



SYNOPSIS

Shot by First Lieutenant Mike Scotti on his Mini-DV camera, and told through his own journal entries, Kristian Fraga's "Severe Clear" is more than a documentary. It is a first person account of the Marines who were on the front lines of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This is what they saw.

In this digital age of embedded reporters and filmmakers directing their "war" pictures from the internet, "Severe Clear" strips the barriers between audience and soldier, personalizing the fear, moral conundrum and sheer adrenaline rush of life on the battlefield. The personal story of Mike Scotti and the Marines in his unit is the backbone of this intimate, extreme and often times horrific tale.

The story begins with Scotti on a 40-day voyage across the Arabian Sea, aboard the USS Boxer, where his days are filled with physical training, tactical study, and mental preparation. For the Marines, who have been in a constant state of war since the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the political wrangling of world leaders and diplomatic debates over the merits of UN resolutions are nothing but a smoke screen for a war they all know is inevitable. So they train, blow off steam, and wait.

The forces reach Kuwait, but there is more waiting to be done. That is, until President Bush addresses the nation and orders the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As they push onto Baghdad, patriotism and youthful enthusiasm gradually gives way to the real, brutal horrors of war. As the resistance to their presence escalates, Scotti and his fellow soldiers are forced to come to grips with the magnitude of the situation they find themselves in.

Severe Clear is a motion picture that captures the chaos and complexity of war.

Q&A WITH KRISTIAN FRAGA

How did this project come about?

It was all pretty random. Mike Scotti, the Marine our film is about, walked into NYU with a bag full of his Mini-DV tapes from the war. He figured he'd find some young filmmaker who might be interested in doing something with the footage. Luckily for us the first person he bumped into was an intern of ours who

suggested he meet with us and that's how we met up with Mike.

Once we saw the footage and talked with Mike I knew right away this was a story that I wanted to tell.

What were some of the major challenges when putting this film together?

Right off the bat, the biggest issue we had was figuring out how to take this random footage, that was never intended to be used as a film, and put it together in some sort of coherent manner. I thought the trick to making it all work was to focus on the narrative structure of the film and not get too caught up with the style of the footage. I knew it was going to be a challenge to take this jagged footage and cut it in a more classic kind of Hollywood way but the fusion of these two opposing styles is what I think gives the movie it's energy.

Beyond actually pulling the film off in the editing room, getting the money to make it all happen was a whole other saga...

What do you hope audiences take away from this film?

I've often said that *Severe Clear* doesn't answer any questions but hopefully it'll raise a few. Our goal with this film wasn't to make the "definitive" film on this subject or use it as a platform to push any political agenda. In fact if I've done my job correctly you shouldn't know if I was for or against this war because ultimately that's irrelevant.

At the end of the day it's really a blue-collar film about these men getting up for work everyday and doing their job. It's about what that job represents and everything that goes with a Marine being good at what he does which is a part of the inherent depth and complexity of Mike Scotti's story. I'm hoping *Severe Clear* encourages conversation and it's the kind of film that'll stick with you well after you left the theater.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Kristian Fraga (Director / Producer / Editor)

Kristian is a graduate of the prestigious film program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. His senior thesis film, *The Mind's Eye*, was the first digitally shot student film at NYU. In 2005 Kristian directed the feature length documentary *Anytown, USA*. He won the Emerging Filmmaker Award for Best Documentary at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Film Festival and Best Director at both the Trenton and Staten Island Film Festivals. *Anytown, USA* was awarded Best of the Fest status at the Atlanta Film Festival, Woodstock Film Festival, and

Newport Beach Film Festival and was theatrically distributed by Film Movement.

In 2001 Kristian directed the award winning PBS documentary *Inside Reel: Digital Filmmaking*, which the Hollywood Reporter dubbed a “a must see for anyone loves movies.” He currently serves as producer on the popular television series, *The Inside Reel*, gearing up for its 10th season.

In 1997 Kristian and his producing partner, Marc Perez founded Sirk Productions, a New York based film and television production company. Together they produced the restoration of the first Robin Hood film shot in 1912 on behalf of the Fort Lee Film Commission. The restoration was screened this past year at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Marc Perez (Producer)

Marc is a graduate of New York University's Stern School of Business. In 1997 he founded New York City based Sirk Productions with Kristian Fraga, producing dozens of projects from feature films to television commercials.

In 2005 he executive produced the award winning feature documentary, *Anytown, USA*, distributed by Film Movement. The film had a 12 city theatrical run and has been broadcast in North America and the United Kingdom.

Marc is executive producer on the national broadcast television show *The Inside Reel*, now in its 10th season. The program covers the film industry and features interviews with the most recognizable faces in the business from George Lucas to Brad Pitt. In 2001 Marc produced an award winning documentary for PBS called *The Inside Reel: Digital Filmmaking*. Marilyn Moss of The Hollywood Reporter called it "a must see for anyone who loves movies."

In addition to producing film and television projects Marc has also produced dozens of award winning commercials and corporate films for clients that include MySpace, GBX and Verizon.

Marc is a member of the Fort Lee Film Commission. The commission was created to preserve film made in Fort Lee, New Jersey and secure the towns historic role as the birthplace of the motion picture industry. In 2006 Marc and the Sirk Productions team restored the original Robin Hood (1912) for the Commission. The restored version of the film went on to premiere at the MoMA.

Benjamin Charbit (Executive Producer)

Benjamin Charbit started Charbit & Co., LLC in February of 2005 to produce, finance and distribute low-budget independent features, documentaries and short

films. As President of Charbit & Co., LLC, Benjamin functions as executive producer of the projects the company takes on- he solicits and manages financing and investors, as well as coordinating distribution and marketing. In 2004, he co-financed and co-produced "Help Wanted", a short film written and directed by Hilary Downes. The film is currently playing on various online venues such as jaman.com and vuze.com. Benjamin is currently working on numerous projects including executive producing a feature film documentary based on the Debra LaFave story, called "After School". That project is currently in post-production. Most recently, Benjamin was co-executive producer of "American Cannibal", a feature film documentary based on reality television that was in competition at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2006

John L. Sikes (Executive Producer)

John L. Sikes graduated from Boston University's School of Public Health Masters program where he studied social and behavioral sciences and health communication.

In 2008 he produced and directed the award winning short film *Kiku: The Art of the Japanese Chrysanthemum*, commissioned by the New York Botanical Gardens.

In 2005 John produced the feature length documentary *Anytown, USA*. The film went on to win several awards at a variety of festivals around the country and was picked up for domestic distribution by Film Movement. In 2006 the film aired on television on the documentary Channel in Canada and the UK.

In 2001 John was an associate producer on the award winning PBS documentary *Inside Reel: Digital Filmmaking*, and currently producing the popular television series, *The Inside Reel*, in it's tenth season. In 2000 John joined Sirk Productions as a partner, a New York based film and television production company. John is currently working with the Fort Lee film commission on a documentary short film about the first woman director, Alice Guy Blache. In addition to producing films and television John has produced and directed several award winning commercials and corporate films.

CREW

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Benjamin Charbit

Co-Producer
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Jose Martin K. Casado
Devin C. Church
Thomas Del Cioppo
Billy Wade Clark
Ilario Costa
Jose Cueva
Jeremy G. Davis
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