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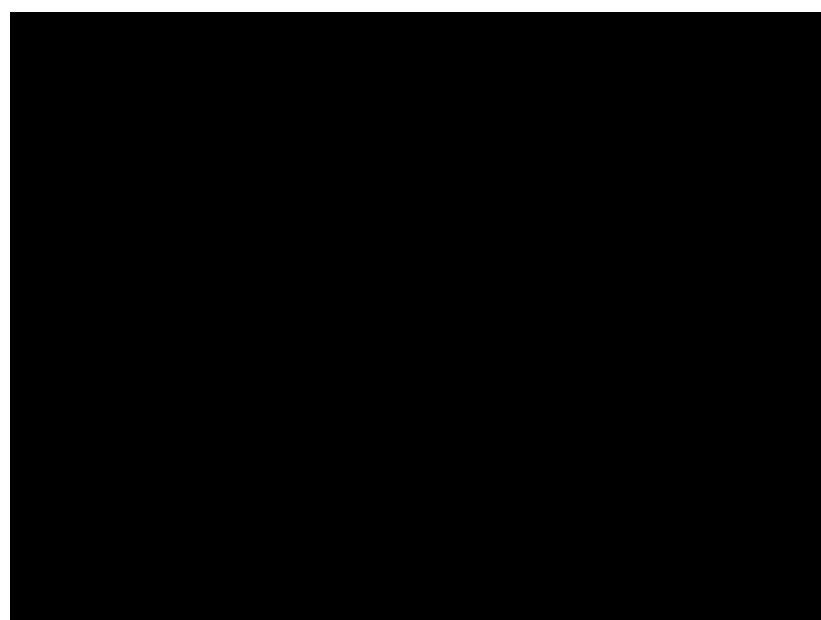
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ROXBURY

Director, star discuss acclaimed Roxbury school hoops documentary

Posted by Matt Rocheleau August 15, 2011 03:22 PM

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(Courtesy: Kreateabuzz, LLC)

A trailer for PUSH: Madison versus Madison.

By **Matt Rocheleau**, Town Correspondent

Following the Madison Park Technical Vocational High School's basketball team through the triumphs and trials of its 2006-07 season, film director, producer and editor Rudy Hypolite has created an award-winning documentary, "[PUSH: Madison versus Madison](#)."

Reduced from some 30 hours of raw footage shot inside the Roxbury school, the 1-hour and 46-minute [documentary](#) has been well-received at a growing list of film festival screenings, including [at last month's](#) held around the Roxbury area.

The basketball team's coach, the film's lead character and its co-producer Dennis G. Wilson, along with director Hypolite – both of whom grew up in Roxbury – spoke with Boston.com about the film and the buzz it's earned thus far:

How did the idea for this film come about?

Coach Wilson: It was an idea [Rudy] had. It would be great to follow this team. All of the ideas and subplots and everything and let the cameras roll and see what happens. And, I said 'hey man, let's do it. I wasn't hiding anything. [Let's] show the real side of inner-city coaching and all the things that a coach and players go through.

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and players go through.

What was the reaction around the school when the film began shooting?

Coach Wilson: Everybody was excited about it, but the kids were excited that 'oh wow, there's going to be cameras and a film made about us.' But, they didn't understand the magnitude of this to be honest with you. But, of course, kids, anytime it's about being interviewed, they're excited about that. The school was buzzing in excitement about it. ... There were times when we really, we didn't even know the cameras were there, and then there were times we did know the cameras were there.

What has the reaction been from folks in Roxbury and at Madison Park High School who've seen the film?

Director Hypolite: We've played at a few festivals and had pretty much packed audiences, but the reaction from the Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan areas has been incredible. They've embraced the film as their own. You can hear and see their reaction while they're watching the film. They're watching – you know there are some light moments in the film, they are laughing. There's some really heart wrenching moments and you can hear that reaction through the crowd.

Coach Wilson: They love to see that Boston was in this film – the State House, the Common, Charlestown, Blue Hill Ave., Dudley Station. So everybody would say, 'oh, there's Charlestown, there's Downtown, or there's Blue Hill Ave.' So they really felt good that they were able to see them portrayed and their city and their community portrayed and stories.

Here are the kids who are doing the right thing. There's too much in the newspapers and on TV is always about what, it's too much about the bad kids. It's not about the kids that are doing the right thing – going to school under adverse circumstances, passing, struggling, dysfunctional families, trying to balance living in tough neighborhoods and also being a student athlete and also trying to be a champion. Not being sucked in to drugs, gangs or just quitting school.

Being their coach, I was standing in there being a surrogate father. Most of the guys on my team did not have fathers, or fathers in their lives. Their fathers were either not in their life, locked up or just not there for them. Two of my kids lost their father. One of them lost their father a year after that season and the other lost their father at age 14. A couple of the other ones, their father was not as positive as they need to be.

So, for them to see their story being told is going to be showing the positive side.

They are really proud of the film, happy about the film. All of Boston gave a standing ovation – young, old, white, black. Everyone who was in that theater – 900 at Somerville Theater, 400 people at the Museum of Fine Arts – everyone stood up and cheered those kids and cheered me and cheered the film and that was a special moment for Rudy and I.

What was your reaction to learning the film was voted number one by the audience at Independent Film Festival Boston and won the Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking at the Roxbury International Film Festival?

Hypolite: Getting the audience buzz award at the IFFC [Boston] was amazing because we had well-financed, independent films in that festival, 90 films, very prestigious festival and some of the films that were at that festival are now in theaters. So it was great to have our film, a documentary, come away with the audience buzz from all the – in some cases studio-type films with bigger budgets. That was great and that was an honor coming from a prestigious festival like that.

To get the Henry Hampton, best documentary award, that's really special to us and to me because of who Henry Hampton was and the legacy that he left in documentary film making as the person who produced the "Eyes on the Prize" series. It's really special to be recognized with an award like that.

Things like that have really helped us to now just not being having to submit to festivals, now we are being invited to have our film showcased at festivals, like the festival at HBO in New York. They invited us to come with our film. Those are the things that happen when you have reaction like we're having.

The film will be screened at the Flickers Rhode Island International Film Festival as well as the HBO NY Latino International Film Festival screening this month. Where do you expect the film will go from there?

Hypolite: What we're looking for is distribution for the film. Essentially, by playing at festivals, we're looking for a studio or someone to come in and say 'this film is a film that I think can play well to audiences.' We're looking for limited theatrical viewing to get into cinemas and after that we're looking to get on a cable network, like an HBO, Showtime or PBS, and beyond that DVDs and we're also looking international.

So, we have high hopes for this. It's going well, the momentum is great.

We couldn't have done this without an incredible. This is really a collaborative effort. ... This isn't just myself and coach. It's a collaborative effort and that's why I think we're successful with this project, and because coach and the subject matter is so compelling.

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(Courtesy: Colette Greenstein, RIFF 13)

At the 13th annual Roxbury International Film Festival's Gospel Closing Brunch Awards at Hibernian Hall on July 31, (from left to right) "PUSH: Madison versus Director Rudy Hypolite; Bill Willis of "The Last Shot" for 2011 Emerging Local Filmmaker; Lisa Simmons, Director of The Roxbury International Film Festival; Terri Brown, Program Manager for The Roxbury International Film Festival and Director James Cheeks III for Best Short Documentary for "On The Grind."



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