

A FILM BY REMINGTON SMITH



# *the Derby*



[www.TheDerbyfilm.com](http://www.TheDerbyfilm.com)

**Title:** *The Derby*

**Runtime:** 14:38

**Year of Completion:** August 2018, shot 2013, 2016, 2018

**Format:** HD

**Language:** English

**Press Kit Files:** <https://goo.gl/6oub1d>

**Website:** [www.TheDerbyfilm.com](http://www.TheDerbyfilm.com)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/thederbyfilm/>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/ReelRemington>

**Teaser Link (42sec):** <https://youtu.be/qLrXHnoAgtQ>

**Contact:** theremingtonsmith@gmail.com // 502-341-9439

### CREDITS

**Director/Producer/Editor/Cinematographer:** Remington Smith

**Music:** Scott Carney

**LOGLINE:** A portrait of the disparate but connected worlds of workers and revelers at the fastest two minutes in sports, The Kentucky Derby.

### SYNOPSIS:

Following the haves and the have-nots during Kentucky Derby weekend via on-location interviews from varied perspectives, *The Derby* explores unseen sides of Kentucky's biggest sporting event.

From an anonymous reveler on Millionaires Row, to Guatemalan equine workers supporting their relatives, the film offers a thoughtful yet fun peek beyond the mint juleps and fancy hats and into the heart of the fastest two minutes in sports.

### DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

When I moved into a house just blocks away from Churchill Downs, the main road that led to Louisville's biggest sports event was a little worse for wear - Central Avenue had aging sidewalks and overall not much to crow about. It matched the working families who rented or owned houses in the neighborhood, which in my mind wasn't "blighted," just lived-in.

Within a year or so of moving in though, Central Ave got a face lift. University of Louisville banners hung from new street lights lining the road; landscaping was done, creating a grassy median. The City of Louisville demonstrated quite clearly that they wanted to rehabilitate the path leading out-of-towners from the airport to the Derby, so that visitors would see the best image of our town during their short stay.

But not much else was done by the city to beautify the neighborhoods surrounding

Churchill Downs. The working folks living close to the cathedral-like structure of the Downs still offered visitors their lawns for parking at \$20 to \$50 a car, trying to make some extra money till the next Derby. It was the classic “Don’t pay attention to the man behind the curtain,” gag that was done at the Rio Olympics in 2016, shielding the wealthy tourists from any scenes of economic struggle.

It was this contrast, coupled my own decade of living impoverished in Louisville, that piqued my interest in making *The Derby*. The alarming nationwide wealth disparity that’s been on the rise for decades seemed perfectly on display at the Kentucky Derby. I went in with a class-related chip on my shoulder, intent on filming the few places where haves and have-nots would interact.

But a funny thing happened along the way. The class angle was there, but *The Derby* as a film wasn’t going to be a polemical critique of the upper class. The humanity of all people at the Kentucky Derby, from Lexus SUV drivers to bar-backs working a 12 hour day, kept bubbling up. It reminded me (and the audience) that a lot of folks are just there to make some cash or have fun; there are few mustache-twirling villains. The film could still talk about the schism between these classes at a macro level (people at the event to work and make some money; others there to blow it on a good time) but it also had to embrace the humanity of the individuals along the way. The two could not be neatly separated.

I hope this film creates a portrait that, although subjective, has a ring of truth and captures the spirit of the event for Louisvillians and visitors alike. Thanks for watching.

-Remington

#### **ABOUT THE FILM’S PRODUCTION:**

The Kentucky Derby has an oddly specific, financial meaning based in director Remington Smith’s upbringing. “We were poor and so every year we were excited when my step-dad would come back from working Derby weekend as a cab driver with hundreds of dollars in extra tip money. It paid a lot of bills.” In 2006, *The Derby* director moved into a house blocks away from Churchill Downs. “It was chaos trying to get home during the Derby. Tons of traffic, people waving signs for parking, everyone descending onto our neighborhood.” It was in this chaos that Remington took note of the class divide that he’d go on to explore in the documentary about Louisville’s biggest sporting event. “Most people who live around Churchill Downs are working class or working poor. So they’re trying to make a little extra money parking SUVs on their lawn for \$20 - \$50 a car. You can’t see that and not acknowledge the class division.”

Acting as director, producer and cinematographer, it required multiple trips to the Kentucky Derby before Remington had all the pieces he needed to make the final film. “I wanted *The Derby* to be anchored by my perspective, so I didn’t hire out other crews to do it all in one swoop. I shot in 2013, 2016 and 2018, usually filming all day, meeting

different people outside Churchill Downs, on the backside, Millionaires Row, and of course the infield.”

The last round of filming was especially serendipitous for Remington, as he had wanted to interview someone wealthy at the Derby, but did not have the connections to make that happen. Then luck and confidence intervened. “I was trying to make my way to the media area during Derby day 2018 and avoid getting rained on, but I somehow ended up in Millionaires Row. I think security saw I had a camera and just waved me through. That’s how I was able to get an interview with an anonymous Wall St. fund manager. He was willing to talk, but only if his face wasn’t shown. I still don’t know his name, but our conversation is in the film.” This capped off a day that started at 4am talking to workers on the backside stables, which was a unique experience for Remington. “It was surreal to start the day on the backside and somehow end up in Millionaires Row, looking down on the infield after so many years of looking up at where I was standing. I knew I had the film’s arc then.”

Completing production opened up opportunities to bring in other artists. “I wanted to make this as Kentucky as possible,” says Smith, who worked with local artists at Lexington-based Cricket Press for the poster. Remington recruited Scott Carney, lead singer of the Louisville rock band Wax Fang, to do the music for the film. “I saw him do a live score performance to Tod Browning’s *The Unknown* and given the pop rock sound of Wax Fang I thought he was a good fit for the big brightness of the Derby.”

Carney gave Remington his rendition of “My Old Kentucky Home” to consider, but Remington was hesitant to use the track. “It’s a bit cliché to use that song and there is some racist baggage to the lyrics. Since I was making *The Derby* to create an alternative view of Louisville and Kentucky, I didn’t want to use things that might play into previously established stereotypes or clichés.”

However, some 1:30am tinkering led to the film’s biggest moment. “I wondered what Scott’s version of ‘My Old Kentucky Home’ sounded like if you played it backwards and then slowed it down - all of a sudden it was a new thing that worked with my slow motion footage. So it might feel vaguely familiar to people, but they won’t be able to put their finger on it until they read this.”

The final film has elicited different audience responses about the Kentucky Derby. “One friend said it made him want to go; another said it highlighted why they never wanted to go.” In the end Remington finds the differing audience experiences to be a positive thing. “I think that’s a good sign, it’s open to interpretation. I’m not trying to beat you over the head with a single message, or just give you a single experience. I’m just trying to show that the Derby isn’t all mint juleps and pretty horses.”

## THE FILMMAKERS:

### Remington Smith

Director, Producer, Editor, Cinematographer



Remington Smith is a working filmmaker and assistant professor of film production at the University of Louisville.

In 2009 he earned his MA in Film Studies from the University of Edinburgh in 2010 for his thesis, "Unsafe Horrors: A Critical Analysis of Horror Cinema, Torture Porn and the Unsafe Horror Film". While at Edinburgh he made his first documentary short, *Last Good Thing*, which spurred his eventual interest in pursuing an MFA in Film and Video Production from the University of Iowa, which he earned in 2014.

His MFA thesis film, *Rubbertown*, is now a feature length documentary of the same name, available on [Amazon Prime](#). His arthouse horror short *The Woods* screened at film festivals, comic cons and art shows nationally and abroad, and has earned over 22,000 views on Vimeo.

Remington most recently shot a teaser trailer for the feature vampire film, *Land Lord*, about a Black woman who moves into an aging apartment complex tracking a bag of stolen money, but has to choose between her job as a bounty hunter or saving a young

African American boy whose parents have been killed by the white vampire landlord. This will be his first feature narrative film and he is raising funds for the project.

When he's not teaching, producing new work or assisting other filmmakers, you can find him reading Stephen King novels and going on long bike rides.

## **Scott Carney**

Music



Scott Carney is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, producer and the creative driving force behind the art rock band, Wax Fang, for whom he has written and released 4 LPs, one EP, and a handful of singles over the past 15 years while touring across the United States and Europe.

His composing credits include scoring the 150th episode of the popular animated sitcom, *American Dad!*, the soon-to-be-released feature documentary, *Distant Conversation*, as well as several short films. He lives in Louisville, KY.