

FROM THE BUREAU OF SOUTHERN STORIES

TV show treatment

Created by David Boatwright and Justin Nathanson
WGAE Registered
The Bureau of Southern Stories, LLC
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"From the Bureau of Southern Stories"

A one-hour hybrid short film series / TV talk show

Executive Producers:

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CONCEPT

From the semi-autonomous region of the southern United States comes a fresh look at the TV talk show format...

A hybrid.

A southern theme is presented to a snug live audience by our sharp-witted homeboy host – who then invites 3 celebrity guests to watch 2 short films on that theme and discuss without prudence.

Think "Real Time with Bill Maher" meets "This American Life" meets the future of hip talk-show TV: anecdotal, personal, and political.

As Southern culture teeters on the cusp of homogenization, as traditional attitudes crumble, as its' ranks swell with outsiders and upstarts we believe there is an audience that will sit at ringside for this cultural wrasslin' match.

Tone – upbeat, funny, ironic, self deprecating, irreverent, smart, hip, current, political, with an emphasis on raconteurship, embracing the full spectrum of the southern region.

"The South is America. The South is what we started out with in this bizarre, slightly troubling, basically wonderful country - fun, danger, friendliness, energy, enthusiasm, and brave, crazy, tough people."

DISRIBUTION TARGET**The Bureau is a brand.**

- 1 – HBO, Bravo, Sundance, IFC, among others.
- 2 – Downloadable episodes on the web after it premieres, with extra footage and a host of updateable information; a destination where viewers will come back to.
- 3 – DVD Specials.

PREMISE

The Bureau will have in-house filmmakers (and famous celebrity directors) that will produce documentary shorts on the show's theme. For instance, for a show on the blues, the Bureau will send a crew down to the Robert Johnson's Crossroads to see what's happening at that place today and later that night, when a modern day blues man sells *his* soul to the devil. It is our hope that these short, in-house produced documentaries will in the future become a natural part of the American historical dialogue, and be important pieces of work that have a vivid life, sprung forth from the Bureau. Additionally, The Bureau will draw from a vast supply of stories from the last 25 years, everything from Ross McElwee's "Sherman's March" to Martin Scorceese's take on the blues, from documentaries on Cajun musicians to the hilarious fire prevention film produced by Auburn University – and update them with the Bureau's take.

EPISODES

Episode 101 – **"Stars and Bars"** (treatment included)
The political and social struggle behind the confederate flag.

Episode 102 – **"Crossroads"** (treatment included)
Robert Johnson, pure legend and the Grandfather of Rock 'n Roll, sold his soul to the devil to become the greatest blues man ever. Could it be done again today?

Episode 103 – **"Tobacky"**
The most addictive, lethal drug of all times is grown right here in the South. Yet it has been and still is the financial cornerstone of generations. What would it *actually* take for America to stop growing tobacco and what would it look like?

Episode 104 – **"Restructured"**
Hale County, Alabama is one of the poorest regions in the United States, with 1400 of its dwellings considered substandard. Pushing the boundaries of accepted architectural practices and principles, forward thinking architects are rebuilding the homes and communities of the neediest families of our nation.

OTHER TYPICAL EPISODES

Gulf Coast Oil Refineries
Southern American Indian Reservations
127 Corridor Sale – The worlds biggest yard sale in Jamestown
Poverty – the poorest community we can find (what do they need)
Money – the wealthiest community we can find (what do they want)
Cotton Plantation dig with Anthropologists
Living on the Appalachian trail
Zydeco and Cajun music
Living in and on the bayou
"My property was cut by the US border fence"
A Kentucky Derby Story
Progressive Southern Gospel
Surfing in the south
Daughters of the American Revolution

Mom and pop stores are dying
 Yankees in the south
 Snobbery and elitism of the southern blue blood
 Cornbread Nation / Southern Food Alliance (John Edge)
 The Hootchie Kootchie Show
 Trailer Park Economy
 The Carolina Chocolate Drops – southern black bluegrass
 Juke Joints and Honky Tonks
 Michael Vick / Dog Fighting
 Macon, Georgia – the cradle of civilization
 Eccentrics
 Hunting
 Farming
 Accents
 Politics
 Race Relations
 Rednecks
 Barbeque
 Double Wides
 Religion
 Literature
 Shrimping
 Romance
 Nascar
 Football Rivalries
 Art
 Environmental Issues
 Beauty Pageants
 Pirates
 Factories
 Military
 Diamond Hunting

EVERY FEW EPISODES, WE WILL FEATURE THE PEOPLE FROM A SMALL TOWN WITH A UNIQUE NAME. LIKE THESE:

Intercourse, Eclectic, Burnt Corn, AL
 Success, Greasy Corner, Hooker, Okay, Romance, Weiner, Flippin, AK
 Red Head, Yeehaw Junction, Two Egg, FL
 Do Stop, Ordinary, Hell for Certain, KY
 Hot Coffee, Whynot, Chunky, MS
 Meat Camp, Lizard Lick, NC
 Due West, Cowpens, SC
 Bootleg, Ding Dong, Uncertain, TX
 Ordinary, VA
 Big Ugly, War, Odd, WV
 Jinks, Hopeulikit, Enigma, Climax, GA
 Sweet Lips, Difficult, TN

TYPICAL GUESTS – (all will be either *from the south, live in the south, or can tell a story about the south*)

Classic southern rock gods – like Greg Allman, Charlie Daniels, Johnny Van Zant
 Shooter Jennings
 John Edwards
 Ted Turner
 Lisa Marie Presley
 Billy Bob Thornton
 Kinky Friedman
 Hank Williams III
 Brett Butler
 Little Richard
 Tyler Perry
 Emmylou Harris
 Willie Nelson
 Evan Smith – Editor, Texas Monthly
 Erykah Badu
 Jim Brown
 Clarence Thomas
 Smokin' Joe Frazier
 Ron Daise
 Jazzy Jay
 Faith Hill
 Michael Stipe
 Darius Rucker
 Bobby Ginn
 O'Neal Compton
 Russel Tyler
 Chris Pratt
 Alex Saunders
 Edward Gardner
 Russel Tyler
 Chris Pratt
 Jimmy Buffett
 Lionel Ritchie
 Percy Sledge
 Hank Aaron

ALSO GUESTS LIKE:

+ A Southern Prison Warden – (great ones down in LA.)
 + Modern day relatives of Historical Southern Figures – ie Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Pocahontas (& Cptn. John Smith), Doc Holliday, Will Rogers, Tennessee Williams, Faulkner, Mark Twain, Gene Autry, Babe Ruth.
 + Southern Socialites

TREATMENT for EPISODE 101: "Stars and Bars"

SHOW OPEN: A montage with jaunty southern funk music edited with shots around the town of Hollywood South Carolina - a lone stoplight with a junk store on one corner, a well-worn convenience store with a sign with burnt out letters on another. The stoplight changes, a Mack truck thunders through the intersection....

The vast exterior of the misplaced Hollywood, SC television studio dissolves to the interior stage with our set. Sauntering from behind a worn antique bureau, with decades of work and papers stuffed throughout, walks our HOMEBOY HOST. The set looks like somebody has been hard at work for ever - a cluttered office with a desk that has been allowed to get out of hand. Mismatched chairs, a filing cabinet, collectibles, interesting curio's on the walls, with a big set of deep couches for the guests, all dot the stage set facing a studio audience.

The lighting is not typical talk-show flat, but has a filmic quality with pools of light that allow for darks in the background and modeling on faces of the GUESTS and HOST.

HOST stands in his light addressing a well-miked but unseen, cozy studio audience. They could be part of his living room.

HOST

"Welcome folks, denizens and deacons, hicks, rednecks, yankees, whatever...you might be wondering why you're here.....we know why we're here. We're working hard to bring you a little entertainment....get a little spike on the meter, some eyeball stimuli, something to snark up your dreams,...I mean, we are, after all, a semi- autonomous region of America, am I correct? This is Dixie for chrissake in whose name we pray....Not to get religious on your ass, but something to think about, some ponderables.....hey ya'll. Speaking o' Dixie. tonight we 're just gonna go right at it. This is the twenty first century, so tonight we're taking a look at the most relevant issue of our time - a little battle flag they used back in

the nineteenth century: the freakin' stars and bars, man.

The two large TV monitors on stage reveal the confederate flag.

HOST

"And like always, we've got a couple of little films to look at and some esteemed colleagues to walk us through the cow pasture, you know what I'm sayin'.

HOST walks toward the 3-GUEST PANEL, already sitting down in shadow, but revealed by light as introduced – which now opens up to more of a living room type atmosphere. HOST sits down with them, introduces them one by one, as they provide a hello and gain applause:

An assortment of well-known men with some pretty strong feelings on the controversial subject of our United States flag.

1. CELEBRITY GUEST 1 looks like a hipster, but actually a surprising member of SCV, or the Son of Confederate Veterans, a pro-flag guy who happens to be a Hollywood DP. He can trace his lineage back to the late unpleasantness. He's a down-home Christopher Hitchens kind of contrarian which is to say, he's committed to the honor of the confederacy and is articulate and cagey about defending it.

2. CELEBRITY GUEST 2: (JOE DARBY type) A politically involved minister with an African-American church in Charleston, SC. Darby is in the upper echelon of the state NAACP which has recently raised the ante on a boycott of the state for it's official recognition of the flag on it's grounds. Tough and suffers no fools.

3. CELEBRITY GUEST 3 – (WILL MOREDOCK type) – A writer for an alternative newspaper, decidedly liberal but has recently written a piece that takes both the SVC and NAACP to tasks and challenges them to come together to rehabilitate the symbology of the flag by taking on the neo-Nazis and racist who've adopted it.

HOST referees some bantering among guests before gesturing to our stage monitors and presents FILM FEATURE - # 1.

SHORT FILM # 1 : "Stars and Bars" - (15 minutes)

Through the eyes of the filmmaker and the folks who were there, SHORT FILM # 1 gives a brief history of this particular version of civil war – where battle flags provide context for the massive demonstrations that resulted when the flag was removed from the top of the SC capitol building and placed directly in front of the capitol in the summer of 2000. The legislature felt they had reached a reasonable compromise between those passionate pro and anti flag groups. The documentary shows all manner of extreme behavior from the groups voicing their dissatisfaction between the opposing parties. On the day they ripped the flag down and ritually raised it in the new position there were demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. It was a circus. Some black people step up in front of a crowd with a combination confederate and swastika flag and burn it. Included are some personal anecdotes about a black man who reveres the flag and a bubba who repudiates it.

END VIDEO / Audience responds/applause.

HOST

“There you go....I mean, what is it about Southerners that gets them so fired up about this issue or should I say this non-issue?”

Over the next 15 minutes, the GUESTS and HOST discuss the filmed topic and theme.

HOST talks to FILMMAKER of “Stars and Bars” via satellite – an actor and political activist. He’s a bear of a guy with the look of Burl Ives who easily demonstrates verbal deftness and serious political chops.

HOST

“I understand you were in the smoke filled room brokering the deal that took the flag from high above the dome and placed in folks’ face front and center on the Capitol grounds?”

FILMMAKER

Well Bo, you got a 75% white dominated legislature that has to be somewhat responsive to their more vocal constituents and then you’ve got....”

More panel discussion with GUESTS.

HOST suspends and wraps up the discussion – forwarding a further discussion with the FILMMAKER and the viewing audience on the Bureau website.

HOST introduces SHORT FILM - # 2.

SHORT FILM # 1 : "Southerntown, USA" - (5 minutes)

Every other 'Bureau' episode ends with a short documentary on a tiny Southern town with a unique name - and its inhabitants.

END VIDEO / Audience responds/applause.

For the last 10 minutes, the GUESTS speak to each other and respond to "Southerntown, USA".

GUEST plugs.

Show END.

TREATMENT for EPISODE 102: "Crossroads"

SHOW OPEN: A montage with jaunty southern funk music edited with shots around the town of Hollywood, South Carolina - a lone stoplight with a junk store on one corner, a well-worn convenience store with a sign with burnt out letters on another. The stoplight changes, a Mack truck thunders through the intersection....

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The FEET of THE HOST, up and crossed on top of the Bureau, begin to reveal him in total as he pulls himself down, straightens, and sits upright. Some bottleneck guitar plays underneath it all.

HOST

"Excuse me ya'll, just feeling sorry for myself cause I got them tired old GIRLFRIEND-WALKED OFF, POWER COMPANY SHUTTIN' OF THE JUICE, FINANCE COMPANY DONE RE-POED THE CADILLAC, DOG UP UNDER THE CRIB HAVING BABIES AN' SHIT, BORN UNDER A BAD DIAGNOSIS BLUES... times is hard and gettin' harder an' that's why were celebratin' the blues tonight. It's soothing to hear about somebody else's problem and expressing your own, right?"
We've got some outstanding blues-o-cologist and the one and only T -Model Ford sittin' in with John Spencer and the Blues Explosion. Pretty excitin'!

HOST walks toward the 3-GUEST PANEL, who are already sitting down in shadow, but revealed by light as introduced - which now opens up to more of a living room type atmosphere. HOST sits down with them, introduces them one by one, as they provide a hello and gain applause:

MATTHEW JOHNSON, founder of Fat Possum Records, who has revitalized the blues recording scene drawing on the artists from Northern Mississippi and pairing the old masters with some punkish white boy elements from the Northeast.

JOHN SAYLES, the preeminent American independent filmmaker, who'll show a clip from his recent film "Honeydripper" that chronicles the advent of the first electric guitar to play a juke joint in Alabama circa 1950.

T-STeady, the noted urban scholar and hip-hop artist who will give us some insight into the history of the blues as it relates to modern day hip-hop, and will explain why his music is the blues of the 21st century.

After the introduction and a few anecdotes, HOST reintroduces our theme – "Crossroads", and then our first short film. The stage lights dim, and a large screen in the back of the stage flickers on, and lights up to create theater. The TV audience will see the live screen cut to a full screen showing of the film.

SHORT FILM # 1: "DOWN TO THE CROSSROADS" - 15 minutes
Produced at the famous 'Crossroads' of Highway 61 & 49 in Northern Mississippi, "DOWN TO THE CROSSROADS" documents the almost mythical story of Robert Johnson, infamous blues man, who literally sold his soul to the devil on this corner. Live music scenes from local blues clubs will be interwoven, as we follow modern day blues-man JINGLE JANGLE, who then sells HIS soul later that evening. "Crossroads" includes interviews with locals, with those who work at the new KFC at the legendary intersection. OTHER MATERIAL: Clips from "Honeydripper", "Black Snake Moan", Martin Scorsese's "Blues: Feel Like Goin' Home", among others.

END VIDEO / Audience responds/applause.

For the next 15 minutes, the GUESTS get to speak about and respond to "Crossroads" with each other, inserting their own points of view.

HOST introduces SHORT FILM # 2.

SHORT FILM # 2: "The Shack Up" - 5 minutes
Our camera's spend a night at the Shack Up Inn, which is a funky motel set on a farm in the Mississippi Delta. The

sleeping units are rehabbed sharecropper shacks decorated with blues records and other memorabilia.

For the last 10 minutes, the GUESTS speak about and respond to "The Shack Up".

GUEST plugs.

Show END.