

Reel Wisconsin Film Descriptions

AMERICAN MOVIE (Documentary, 1999, 107min) www.americanmovie.com Struggling filmmaker Mark Borchardt is the subject of *American Movie*, and he may also be the most determined man you'll ever meet. The straggly haired, fast-talking, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, native lists his greatest influences as *Dawn of the Dead*, *Night of the Living Dead*, and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. He began making horror movies as a gangly adolescent, and is now set on finishing *Coven* (which he pronounces like "woven"), the "35-minute direct market thriller" he has worked on for two years. In the process, he steadfastly battles immense debt, the threat of losing his kids, and birds chirping gleefully through scenes set in the dead of winter. His mother would rather do her shopping than be an extra, his brother contends he's best suited for factory work, and his father just wants him to "watch the language."



Standing by him through it all is Mark's childhood buddy, Mike Schank, who is the strongest weapon against drug use a task force could ever hope for, and Uncle Bill, begrudging financier of *Coven*, who appears to be wasting away before our very eyes. In less perceptive hands these two could easily become caricatures--the burnt-out stoner and the crotchety old coot--but through director Chris Smith's lens we see why Mark loves them, why they love Mark, and why each of these stories is uniquely compelling.

Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival, the film has been compared to *Spinal Tap* and *Waiting for Guffman*—two unquestionably hilarious mock-documentaries—and, indeed, *American Movie* has plenty of laugh-out-loud moments. But in the spoofs, we feel encouraged to point and giggle at the poor slob trying to get a piece of the action. Smith, however, offers us a funny and overwhelmingly affectionate portrait; you may sit down expecting to laugh at Mark's pie-in-the-sky hopes, but you soon find yourself bursting with admiration. "The American dream stays with me each and every day," Mark says, and by the end, we want nothing more than for it to come true.

BEING BUCKY (Documentary, 2008, 80 min) www.beingbucky.com Being Bucky is a feature documentary about the seven students who take on the remarkable responsibility of playing Bucky Badger. Beginning with an in-depth look at the grueling and mentally challenging mascot tryouts, the film follows 7 students for a full year as they hone their skills at mascot camp, work their many games and events, and prepare for what will be this team's legacy—the National Mascot Competition. It is a film not only about who Bucky is—it's about the physical and emotional challenge, and the selfless commitment of Being Bucky. In other words, it's about seven guys in one head.



FEED THE FISH (Feature, 2009, 92 min, not rated) www.feedthefishmovie.com Joe Peterson is a



burned-out children's book writer who's on the brink of a mid-life crisis. With his career at a standstill and his relationship in shambles, he leaves town with his best friend to do the Polar Bear Plunge in the dead of winter in Northern Wisconsin. On his quest for inspiration, Joe encounters a motley crew of misfits including Axel (Barry Corbin), an inspirational mentor; The Sheriff (Tony Shalhoub), an obsessed law enforcement professional; a hockey player; and Sif, his potential muse. The crew guides Joe to find his lost passion, survive an assault by his ex-girlfriend, and stay out of the way of the law. In the end, he gets the girl and will publish again but not before testing the icy waters of Lake Michigan on a snowy winter day.

GO WEST HAPPY COW (Feature, 95 min, not rated)

www.gowesthappycow.com *Go West Happy Cow* chronicles the adventures of two childhood friends from Wisconsin, one dressed as a cow, who make their way to California promoting the contents of the 30-foot horse trailer they pull behind their pickup truck: cheese from Meister Cheese Co. in Muscoda, meat products from Berge's Whitelaw Sausage Company in rural Manitowoc County, clothing from Sconnie Nation in Madison and the fictitious Happy Cow beer, played by Spotted Cow beer from New Glarus Brewing Co. Or, in industry parlance, it's *This Is Spinal Tap* meets *Strange Brew* and *Road Trip*, with a little *Tommy Boy* mixed in.



The stars of the movie are Mike Tiboris, a former Bucky Badger mascot, and Kurt Jensen, who plays the Happy Cow. The duo grew up in Sheboygan, along with their soundman, Eric Hansen. The \$10,000 project included stops in Chicago, Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Kansas City, MO.

THE GODFATHER OF GREEN BAY (Feature, 2005, 88 min, rated "R")

www.godfatherofgreenbay.com In the vein of *Sideways* and *Waiting for Guffman*, *The Godfather of Green Bay* is a hilarious fish-out-of-water story! Struggling stand-up comedian Joe Keegan faces the audition of a lifetime – a chance to perform on *The Tonight Show*! But first he must leave the big city and travel to rural Pine Lake, Wisconsin to win over the talent scout and his toughest audience yet.

In the quirky style of *Waiting for Guffman* with a kickin' soundtrack by The BoDeans, this heart-warming crowd-pleaser featuring Lauren Holly (*Dumb and Dumber*), Tom Lennon (*Reno 911!*) and Tony Goldwyn (*The Last Samurai*) gets big laughs in its portrayal of small-town life and a dream that refuses to die. An all-star cast including: Lauren Holly (*Dumb and Dumber*) Tony Goldwyn (*The Last Samurai*) Tom Lennon (*Reno 911*) Mark Borchardt (*American Movie*) Pete Schwaba (*TV's Comedy Central*) and Lance Barber (*The Comeback*).



SONG SUNG BLUE (Documentary, 2008, 87 min)

www.songsungblue.com *Song Sung Blue* is the alternately inspiring and tragic love story of Lightning & Thunder, a homegrown Milwaukee husband & wife singing duo who pay tribute to the music of Neil Diamond. For Mike and Claire Sardina, aka Lightning & Thunder, dreams are the fuel and music the engine of life. *Song Sung Blue* goes behind the curtain with this brave couple, from their humble beginnings over 20 years ago to the threshold of fame, from disaster to rebirth through to the final chapters in the lives of these authentic American dreamers.

