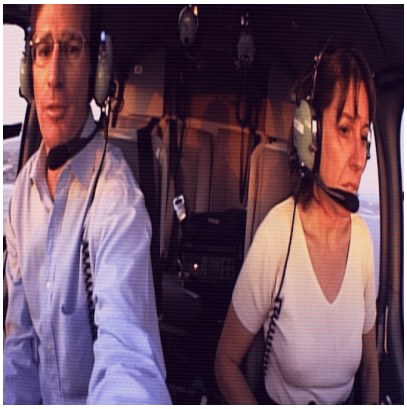
HOLLYWOODGLEE, LLC
1226 N Salsipuedes Unit C 1(805)704-5994 |https://hollywoodglee.com Larry@HollywoodGlee.com



AFI FEST 2020 FILM REVIEW: Whirlybird (Matt Yoka, 2020)

Description



eeson during the virtual 2020 AFI FEST presented by Audi.

Filmmaker Matt Yoka, who I had the distinct pleasure of connecting with at the AFI FEST Industry and Filmmaker mixer, brings home *Whirlybird*, a fascinating, real-world tale of Los Angeles-based reporters, Bob Tur and Marika Gerrard, who revolutionized real-time news reporting from the air. Yoka crafts his work from 2,000 hours of recorded flight tape, direct interviews, news archives, still photos, and more.

The result is a dynamic visual history of the biggest Los Angeles news events in the last 30 years including the Los Angeles Riots of 1992 and the pursuant, criminal assault of truck driver, Reginald Denny, at Florence and Normandy after the Rodney King beating verdict and subsequent acquittal of the four white police officers charged. And, if that wasnâ??t enough the duo broke and captured the infamous O.J. Simpson â??White broncoâ?? car chase which became â??the apex of live news coverageâ?• with approximately 80 million viewers tuning in.

Prior to these two major national news events, Bob had also previously rescued 54 people from a crumbling rooftop at the Portofino Inn in Redondo Beach, Calif. during a winter storm with winds up to

50 miles per hour. The hotel was surrounded by water and was being pummeled by massive, crashing waves. As what can only be described as a herculean effort, Tur managed to whisk away the stranded guests to higher ground in fourteen separate takeoffs and landings. The rescue made news headlines and jumpstarted his and Marikaâ??s network career with KCOP.

By itself, any one of these events would make for a great story. And they are. Interestingly, Yoka goes on to explore the interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics between Bob and Marika primarily with footage from their aerial reporting. What emerges is a strong working relationship with Bobâ??s perfectionism and Marikaâ??s â??go along to get along attitude.â?• The pair produced footage unmatched with Bobâ??s aggressive piloting and Marikaâ??s willingness to hang outside and keep a steady camera rolling under less than optimal conditions including live rounds being fired at them during their three-day virtually non-stop coverage of the 1992 rioting.

Unexpectedly included in present-day time is MSNBC journalist, and Bob and Marikaâ??s daughter, Katy Tur, an MSNBC journalist and author of the 2017 â??Unbelievable: My Front-Row Seat to the Craziest Campaign in American History,â?• as she reflects on the rise and fall of her parentâ??s helicopter reporting empire, the current state of, and decline of, major network broadcast news reporting, and her parentâ??s marital relationship. Yoka includes this section as Katy and Marika are seen in casual conversation.

With *Whirlybird* Yoka manages to distill a 15 plus year time span into a 1:43 film run time. With a focus on the newsgathering, Yoka delivers a very informative segment before introducing and exploring a surprising and deeply personal human-interest twist reminiscent of Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner as Zoey Tur comes to terms with who she is as a person and explains why she performed so aggressively and behaved so inappropriately as Bob.

A seminal piece on the newsgathering industry in Los Angeles coupled with a timely human-interest story involving transgenderism and news reporting at the highest national level, *Whirlybird* is highly recommended viewing.

Category

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hollywoodglee