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

â??Riding the Railsâ?• â?? In Perspective

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

The award-winning documentary is available to stream for the first time since its PBS American Experience 1998 airing

Streaming Premiere: Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Amazon Prime, iTunes, Comcast (USA & Canada)

Having a grandfather who was the President of the St. Louis Railway Club during the height of the railroad industry in the United States and an uncle who carried on the tradition as a railway freight agent , I heard a variety of fascinating rail stories as a youngster. Naturally, I flew out of my chair at the chance to review *Riding the Rails,* a feature-length documentary film based on the Errol Lincoln Uys book, â??Riding the Rails: Teenagers on the Move During The Great Depression.â?•

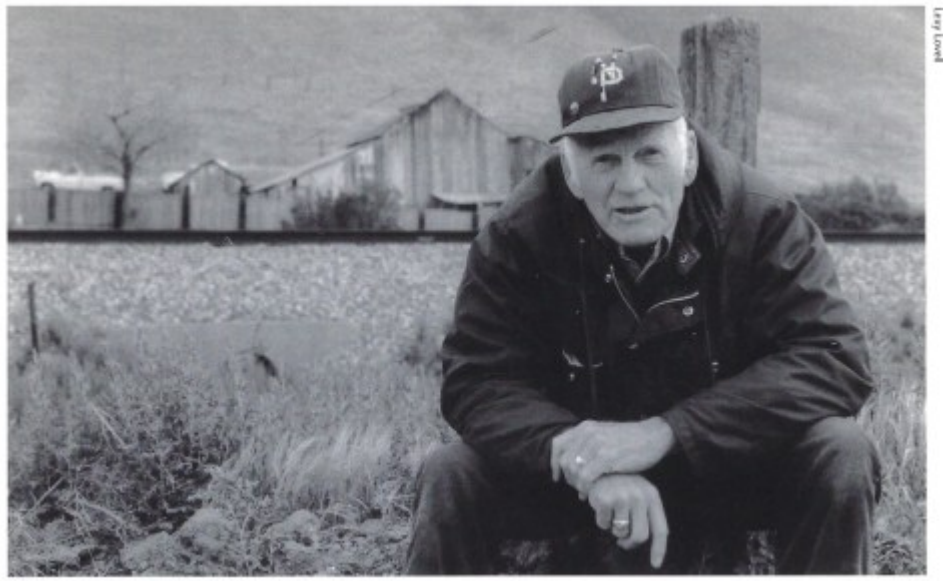
Riding the Rails â?? DGA Award winner â?? Trailer from Michael Uys on Vimeo.

This story is one of the vital sagas of America in the 1930s. At the height of the Great Depression, more than 250,000 teenagers were living on the road in America. Many crisscrossed the country by hopping freight trains, although it was both dangerous and illegal. *Riding the Rails* presents the poignant and little-known story of teen hoboes during the 1930s, a time of desperation and bitter hardship.

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

Grinding poverty, shattered family relationships, financially strapped schools with locked doors were the reasons most kids went on the road, usually with the blessing of parents at their wits end to feed them. Some left because it seemed a great adventure. The road was an education about the ways of the world, full of harsh lessons: cold nights, brutal railroad detectives or â??bulls,â?• the humiliation of arrest, panhandling, social ostracism, days without food, and the dangers of losing a limb hopping trains. Initially, they were all seemingly searching for a better life; what they found was a mixture of freedom, camaraderie, misery, and loneliness.

â??I was nearly killed on my very first train ride. As it picked up speed, the plank started to vibrate like a springboard throwing us up in the air and all we had to do was hang onto that one grab iron. And we could look down and see *the ties and the rails and she* was *going faster and faster. And all I could think of was I shouldnâ??t have gotten on this trainâ??and if I lose my grip Iâ??m gonna dieâ??and what would my mother think?â?• â?? Bob â??Guitar Whiteyâ?• Symmonds*



Bob â??Guitar Whiteyâ?• Symmonds

The 1933 Warner Brothers film, *Wild Boys of the Road*, tried to scare young people away from life on the rails. In it, a boy falls onto the track and loses his leg to an oncoming train. The film didnâ??t deter Guitar Whitey, who tells Uys and Lovell that seeing the movie actually inspired him to take to the rails. â??If you see the movie,â?• he says, â??that put the idea in your head, â??I could do that too, but Iâ??m not gonna get my leg cut off like the kid in the movie.â?•â?? To this day, the sound of the train whistle is in Symmondsâ?? blood. Now in his 70s, he still rides the rails, logging nearly 10,000 miles a year. During his absences, his wife tells those who inquire that he is on vacation, â??traveling by train.â?•

Peggy De Hart ran away from home at fifteen after her father struck her for cursing at a cow on the family farm. â??There was this girl called Irene Willis and she wanted to go to Issaquah to see her parents,â?• De Hart recalls. â??She was going to hitch-hike and she asked me to come along. And I thought that was a great idea.â?• De Hart sent letters to her family describing tight situations she and Irene encountered: â??The police picked up Irene and me last night and put us in a cell. We sure made use of the cots. I hope they turn us loose soon so that we can go again. This is the third time theyâ??ve picked us up.â?•

Jim Mitchell had similar memories: â??Hell, I knew right then I had made a mistake. But you know, youâ??re young and foolish and you donâ??t say you made a mistake.â?? San Jule recalls the bittersweet memory of receiving a package in the mailâ??a cake mailed by his mother for his eighteenth birthdayâ??and eating it alone on a hillside, in tears.

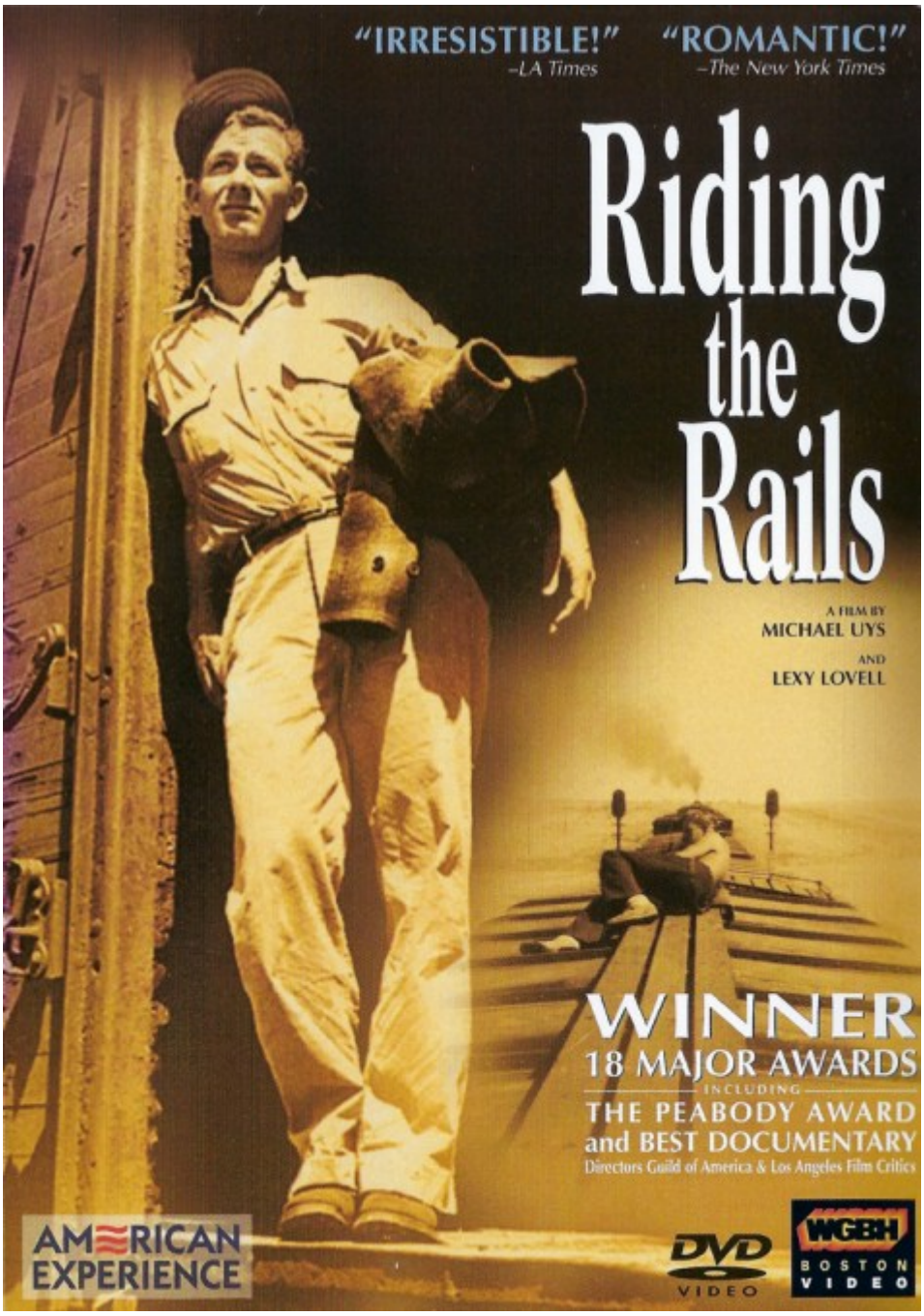
Riding the Rails, winner of 30 national /international awards, including a Peabody Award, â??Best Documentaryâ?• Directors Guild of America; Los Angeles Film Critics, and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. *Riding the Rails* is available to stream for the first time since its PBS American Experience 1998 airing with its streaming premiere set for Tuesday, January 26th, 2021 on Amazon Prime, iTunes, Comcast (USA & Canada).

Michael Uys and Lexi Lovell, wrote, directed, and produced *Riding the Rails*, and the two made the decision to place notices in national publications in search of individuals who rode the rails as teenagers. Three thousand people, then in their 70s and 80s, responded. Uys and Lovell selected a handful to tell their stories on camera. What results is a moving combination of clear-eyed memories coupled with archival footage of teens riding atop speeding trains and newsreel interviews with lean-bodied kids full of bravado ready to take on the world.

Riding the Rails is a storied masterpiece of Americanaâ??s heartland. Highly recommended. Donâ??t miss it!

Streaming Premiere: Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Amazon Prime, iTunes, Comcast (USA & Canada)



(Sourced from a press release provided by Marina Bailey PR)

Category

1. television

Date Created
January 22, 2021
Author
hollywoodglee