

THE OPTIMIST, THE FAILED FILM, AND THE DEAD MONKEY

Written by

JOSH ROUSH

Based on the extraordinary true story of Ted Coombs and Tim-Bob

INT. DEN - NIGHT

A fire blazes. Next to it sits the NARRATOR, a distinguished gentleman in his 50's, smoking a pipe, wearing a robe, with a blanket draped across his lap.

NARRATOR

I'd like to tell you an unfortunately true tale. It's the story of an unyielding optimist, the promotion of a failed Hollywood film, and the unfortunate fate of a monkey.

The Narrator turns on a TV.

CLOSE ON TV

The TV plays animated footage of Idiocracy.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Long before the film Idiocracy, 1979's Americathon was a dark comedy that unfortunately predicted much of today's current political climate.

The TV plays animated footage of Americathon.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Among many things, the movie correctly predicted the rise of reality TV, China's embracing of capitalism, the depletion of crude-oil, and the selling of America's debts to foreign powers.

The TV plays animated footage of Donald Trump.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Perhaps the most frighteningly accurate prophecy was the coming of a brainless, man-child president who uses the media to exploit his power.

BACK TO NARRATOR

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

If anything in this situation doesn't sound familiar, you may want to avoid the news for the next few years.

BACK TO TV

TED COOMBS, an upbeat man in his 20's sporting a yellow tie-dyed shirt walks into screen

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

Ted skates in a wide open park.

NARRATOR

The aforementioned, unyielding optimist of our story, is Ted Coombs. Author, scientist, futurist, and avid roller-skate aficionado.

Ted smiles.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

While roller-skating one day, Ted decided he was fed up with the energy crisis of 1979, and had an idea.

A lightbulb appears over his head.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

As a protest, he would roller-skate across the entirety of the United States to prove that having eight wheels affixed to ones feet was the most efficient means of transportation for the future.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The Narrator stares into camera.

NARRATOR

Now one may ask themselves, "Self, didn't he mention a monkey?" Relax. He's coming up soon.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ted sits in his apartment, bong next to him.

NARRATOR

Coombs knew that it was financially unfeasible to fund his own trip across the country. After all, one must have help. A vehicle. A spotter. Fresh roller-skates. A place to sleep. Food. Water--

Ted's pet monkey TIM-BOB jumps into frame, climbing on him.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And most importantly: Tim-Bob, his monkey companion. After all, who doesn't secretly relish the idea of having a pet monkey accompany you on a cross-country roller-skating road trip?

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Deadpans to camera.

NARRATOR

I know that I do.

INT. HERMOSA BEACH ANIMAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Ted and Tim-Bob perform surgery on a cat.

NARRATOR

Among his other endeavors, the multi-hyphenate Coombs was a veterinarian at the Hermosa Beach Animal Hospital. One can only assume that this is how he came to become the owner of this cuddly little bastard.

EXT. PHONEBOOTH - DAY

Tim sits on the phone. Sounds of a MUTED TRUMPET (alla adult Peanuts characters) is heard.

NARRATOR

Ted had the idea to approach Los Angeles based radio station KZLA about his idea. Though they said no, they forwarded his request to United Artists, the company that had just made Americathon. They loved the idea and agreed to sponsor his expedition.

INT. DEN - DAY

The Narrator speaks to camera.

NARRATOR

The movie featured a character skating across the country as a publicity stunt. Go figure.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

BOB DOUGLAS, a musician in his early 30's and smoking a joint with the windows up sits in a van. The monkey inhales the second-hand deeply.

Coombs sits on the front bumper, tying his laces.

NARRATOR

On May 31st, 1979, Coombs, Douglas, and Tim-Bob, took off across America.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Ted skates in front of an extremely slow moving van.

NARRATOR

As romantic as two friends and a monkey traveling cross country at speeds up to 10MPH may seem, it wasn't long before harsh-reality set in.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The heat is sweltering. Ted is already exhausted.

Bob drives with his shirt off. Tim-Bob looks thirsty.

NARRATOR

Once hitting the desert, Ted not only had to endure grueling heat, blisters, and thirst--

Bob is confused, but continues to drive. The van runs over something.

Somethings.

Ted is freaking out and skating as fast as he can. Rattle snakes can be seen sparsely decorating the road.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He also had to avoid the local rattlesnake population, which proved to be more than a small task.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

Ted is now skating slow.

The van follows behind, the windows open. Bob and Tim-Bob look exhausted.

NARRATOR

Another unfortunate and unforeseen side-effect of traveling through the desert in a bus at incredibly low-speeds is that the van continually suffered over-heating.

Tim-Bob is draped out the window asleep.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It was these conditions that unfortunately led to Tim Bob suffering heat prostration.

Bob shakes Tim-Bob. He doesn't move.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It was somewhere in the middle of the Arizona desert, that Ted's lovable monkey-pal Tim-Bob kicked the bucket.

The van is pulled over. Ted and Bob stand over the monkey corpse.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
 Little archival evidence is available on Tim-Bob, but safe to say few things in life are as strong as the bond between a man and his monkey.

Flies begin to swirl around Tim-Bob.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
 However, it is easily surmised that as much as he may have loved him, having a monkey's corpse in one's overheating van does little for morale.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The Narrator addresses camera.

NARRATOR  
 For this reason, we assume that the once cuddly, now reeking corpse of Tim-Bob was given a burial by the side of a highway.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

The air is fresh. The sky is beautiful. Ted skates with purpose.

NARRATOR  
 It wasn't all bad news however, after narrowly escaping the desert, Coombs had a brief run-in with lady luck.

EXT. CHICAGO - PARADE - DAY

Ted skates as the star attraction in a parade.

Bob can be spotted on the side, looking angry and upset.

NARRATOR  
 In Chicago he was honored with a parade in his name...

Playboy Bunnies flirtatiously skate around him.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
... starring the Playboy Bunnies.

Bob can be spotted from the sidelines looking extremely angry.

EXT. NEW YORK CENTRAL PARK - CONCERT - NIGHT

EDDIE MONEY, famous rock and roller, plays guitar as Ted sits on stage as the true focus of all attention.

NARRATOR  
Upon reaching New York, he was the guest of honor at a concert in Central Park performed by Eddie Money.

Bob stands in the crowd alone and angry.

EXT. NEW YORK LINCOLN TUNNEL - MORNING

Ted skates triumphantly. Crowds of people cheer him on.

NARRATOR  
They even closed The Lincoln Tunnel for him and allowed him to be the first person to ever skate through it.

Bob follows behind in the air-conditionless van. No one looks his direction.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
Though this was enough to contractually complete the contract for promoting Americathon, Coombs sally'd forth anyway.

Bob is livid.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The Narrator addresses camera.

NARRATOR  
This is widely accepted to have been a profound mistake.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Ted looks through a window at Bob outside.

Bob turns to Ted, flips him the bird, and storms off.

NARRATOR

Douglas abruptly gave up on Ted and immediately took a cab to the nearest airport.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Ted sees a man walking past. It's a DIRTY HIPPIE.

He motions for the Dirty Hippie to come over to him to have a conversation.

NARRATOR

He was replaced by a man whose name is not mentioned in the history books for good reason.

EXT. NEW JERSEY - CITY STREET - DAY

Ted skates forward, the Dirty Hippie drives and pays no attention.

A friendly acting MAN walks up the skating Ted.

NARRATOR

Upon entering New Jersey, an ambassador of Good-will greeted him.

The Dirty Hippie spots a sign for donuts and pulls into a gas-station.

Ted struggles to skate faster and faster away from the MAN, who is now wielding a gun.

Ted trips and falls.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The man robbed him at gunpoint and collected all the money he had in the world. \$63.

Ted sits by the side of the street. Defeated.

The van pulls over to him.

The Dirty Hippie comes out and pats him on the shoulder.

No donuts are offered.

Ted smiles regardless.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

NARRATOR

Not noticing God's attempt at  
dissuasion, the hopelessly positive  
Coombs continued onto further  
misadventure.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA ROADWAY - DAY

Ted happily skates in a beautiful, mountainous area.

Suddenly, he discovers he's going down an incredibly steep  
incline.

NARRATOR

In Pennsylvania, he lost control  
while going down a mountain.

A hairpin turn is in front of him.

If he doesn't make it, he'll go down a rocky mountain.

He looks to his right where there is nothing but asphalt and  
a safety rail and more rocks.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

To avoid a hairpin turn that would  
have sent him tumbling down a  
mountain, took a dive onto the  
asphalt instead.

Ted tumbles ass over tit. Blood spurts. SCREAMS are heard.

It's brutal.

He finally lands, hurt.

Ted and the Dirty Hippie momentarily make eye-contact.

The Dirty Hippie hits the gas. The van disappears into the  
night.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Having had enough of the entire exploit, the no-name driver stole the van, driving off into the night.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The Narrator speaks to camera.

NARRATOR

The van later turned up in Las Vegas. The driver was never heard from again.

EXT. MISSOURI - MORNING

Ted continues on despite everything that has happened.

HOWLING is faintly heard in the distance.

NARRATOR

There Ted was. Skating through Missouri penniless, friendless, and without supplies.

Out of the woods, a thin dog begins to run to him.

Ted slows down and looks excited to see company.

Another dog runs out of the woods.

And another.

Ted eyes widen. He begins to skate away.

The dogs are joined by the rest of the hungry pack.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

That was the exact moment when he was discovered by a pack of bloodthirsty dog.

Ted skates as fast as his body will allow. Just behind him, the pack of ravenous dogs nip at his heels.

He spots a city.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The dogs chased him through the Plains until he could take shelter in a neighboring city.

As he approaches it, the dogs slowly break formation and cease following him.

INT. SKATING RINK - DAY

Couples skate. Ted talks to the OWNER of the skating rink.

A banner stating KEEP TED GOING is draped on the rail.

NARRATOR

He continued on due to donations  
from several kind skate rink owners  
in the next few cities he visited.

EXT. KANSAS CITY - MOTORWAY - DAY

Ted skates slower.

Slower.

Ted stops.

NARRATOR

No one know the exact reason why  
Ted Coombs decided to stop skating  
that day in Yates Center, Kansas.  
But he finally gave up.

EXT. KANSAS CITY - CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

Ted sits on the sidewalk and removes his skates.

He walks inside.

A beat.

He walks back out and boards a bus.

NARRATOR

He threw his skates away, and  
boarded a bus for Las Vegas where  
his van was reported to have been  
found.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - IMPOUND LOT - NIGHT

A cop car pulls up to the now dilapidated van, now covered in graffiti.

The cop hands him a slip and drives away.

Ted climbs in the van, and drives off into the night.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The Narrator addresses camera.

NARRATOR

In the end, Ted Coombs skated 5,139 miles and averaged about 50 miles a day. He set several records and has a prominent place in the Guinness Book of World Records.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - RADIO STATION - DAY

Ted sits with headphones on, being interviewed by a DJ.

NARRATOR

When asked about the success of his trip, Ted had this to say:

TED

I believe I have vindicated the importance of roller-skating. It's here to stay, kind of like Rock n Roll.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

NARRATOR

Indeed it is Ted. Indeed it is.

The Narrator turns off the TV.

FADE OUT.