

“he feels most comfortable on his bike. he has a passion for it that is incredible.”
— WENDY ON BOBBY



THE WAY BOBBY SEES IT

Blind Bobby, as he is known in the MTB race world, is always complaining that his guide needs to ride faster. He's not afraid to push his and his guide's limits as you can see in the movie.

really resonated with me as well. That is an issue that kept coming up and it's really clear in the movie. The scene where Jason tells Bobby, "It's all good," and Bobby tells him, "It's not all good," is something that we saw as a theme in a lot of shots that didn't make it into the movie. I have this negative outlook on the world and Jason has this really positive outlook on the world and we kind of balance each other out. There were times when I told Jason that we can't make this movie, that there are too many things beyond our control, it's too challenging, and Jason was always saying, "It's going to work out. We'll just hang out in Downieville for the weekend." He had a great perspective on it.

JASON: The big eye-opener for me was how we perceive blind people. Everybody has this idea of how a blind person, people with transplants or people that have had near death experiences should be. So many people react differently to what happens in the movie. I had my own idea of what Bobby would be like but that changed after I had a chance to hang out with him a lot over the course of a year. We learned so much about Bobby and ourselves. For me, the perception of what a disabled person should be like is really interesting and something that I never really thought about before this movie.

Were you worried about what Bobby would think of the movie?

WENDY: Watching yourself, or listening to yourself, for an hour is really intense but Bobby ate it up, which was great. We had a lot of anxiety about it because it is

hard to watch yourself when all your faults and all your strengths are up there on the big screen.

In the movie, Bobby seems extremely defensive about people taking advantage of his disability. Would you say that is a correct assessment?

WENDY: Yeah, there is a tense scene between Bobby and his guide right before the Downieville race. Just like most people, Bobby wants to be as independent as possible and yet there are many instances in which he needs to depend on someone, especially his guide. This dependency can set up an intense power dynamic that doesn't sit well with Bobby.

JASON: Bobby definitely reacts strongly to thinking that he is being taken advantage of. One of the interesting aspects of this movie is that at first glance, Bobby comes off as an able-bodied guy. But as we learn more about his health history and his disabilities, we uncover his fears of dependence and his feeling of vulnerability. It is interesting to watch Bobby's reaction to the situation once you realize where he is coming from.

How impressive is it to see Bobby ride in person?

JASON: The truth is, when we first started watching Bobby, I didn't know how blind he was because there are different stages and levels of blindness. He's so good on trails he knows that to me it seemed like he could see. It made me curious as to how blind he was. In the beginning, I wasn't that impressed because it didn't seem that difficult. Then when we guided him at Downieville on a section of trail that he'd never ridden,

I was blown away at what he could accomplish over time with the hard work and dedication that he puts into a trail so that he could race it. When we guided him, it became apparent that he couldn't see anything. The stuff that he is riding is really impressive and that he has the endurance and drive to continue on through the frustrations of falling and hitting trees. He's so determined to keep going so he can learn the trail.

What do you think drives Bobby to ride mountain bikes?

WENDY: We tried to get at that a little bit in the movie. I think it really is a place that he feels most alive. He feels most comfortable on his bike. He has a passion for it that is incredible. It is the same thing that inspires everybody, whether they ride a bike or not, to latch onto things that make you feel alive despite how hard it is. He attributes his dedication and determination to his family.

JASON: It's interesting when you talk to Bobby about riding. Normally, we talk about what we see. Bobby really talks about what he feels, how the dirt is, his tire pressure. He feels the bike and the trail in a way that I never thought about before. The way that Bobby feels the trail on a bike is something that he just lives for – to have that feeling of making a good turn, having his balance right, making a bermed turn or an off-camber – he loves that stuff. He'll talk about it for hours. I think that's what drives him to get out there – to be able to feel something that to him feels perfect.

How much help does Bobby get from his family and friends?

WENDY: He has an amazing support system in Redding [California], in the bike community and in the transplant community, so I think that is another thing that helps him continue on. He has a lot of people that are big supporters and fans of what he's doing.

Any surprises?

JASON: He taught us a lot about riding bikes. When you talk to Bobby about riding, he knows so much about body position. I'm not saying that other riders don't have this – if you talk to Mark Weir, it's the same thing – but Bobby helped us ride our bikes better.

WENDY: I was surprised at how much he made me want to push my own limits when riding my bike. I was scared to be riding Downieville but knowing that Bobby was kind of paving the way made me tell myself that I could do it and I might fall and it's okay. I felt pretty invincible riding with him and I was surprised by that.

Anything else you'd like to add?

WENDY: It is so exciting that people that don't ride bikes are inspired by this movie. Some people have even said that they want to ride bikes because of this movie, which is really cool. I am excited that bikes are such a part of Bobby's life and a part of our life and yet people that don't step into this world, like our parents, watch this and learn something. This movie has created a lot of conversation, which has been fantastic. This was going to be a 20-minute piece but it evolved into something bigger because the story is bigger. It's universal and yet people get to learn about the mountain bike community.

JASON: I always wanted to make movies that are about biking that make people watch them in a way that is still really compelling but isn't the format of music videos. I'm proud of this movie because it's a mountain bike movie that isn't bike porn but it still gives you that kick and tension, and it's a documentary. I am really excited about that.

WENDY: We had a lot of support in Downieville from Yuba Expeditions, all of the music was donated to us, and a couple of Jason's friends helped with color production and sound mixing. We are so thankful. When you have a project that people care about and can tell that you really care about it, they offer a hand and help out. ■

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