

## **CLUB RAT\$**

### **- A Female-Empowered Date Rape Revenge Story -**

Despite the dinosaurs clutching onto the old paradigm for dear life, the consciousness in our country is advancing towards a time of inclusion, particularly a time where women are being valued and offered equal opportunity in the ways that they've always deserved. Women are chanting their truths and standing in their power, and major players are finally listening. Among the most significant of women's issues currently being unveiled and revolutionized in the public eye is that of sexual assault. Men have been at the helm of telling stories of sexual violence in film and television for many years and, while their work is appreciated, it's important for females to be entrusted with the responsibility of telling these stories to provide the truth relative to perspective. Statistics prove that women experience these horrific encounters most, not men. Whether having lived through an unwanted experience and recovery themselves, or through someone that they know, women have access to the knowledge, raw emotions and wide-ranging behaviors that manifest after sexual violence occurs. These unique voices and perspectives on behavior deserve to be seen on screen. My writing partner and I, and our director, are all women and we, along with our producing team, cast and crew, believe that we have a unique narrative that will raise awareness – and eyebrows – for female empowerment, disconnection in our culture, and ending date rape. If we have peaked your interest, we would love to have the opportunity to tell you more about our story and our team.

A film is only as good as its story, and a story is only as good as its intended communication. Our short film, CLUB RAT\$, is an original dark comedy that aims to flip the script on rape culture by encouraging women to band together in the face of sexual assault. This story follows a vigilante girl gang in Los Angeles who go club hopping to target predatory men and teach them a lesson by giving them a taste of their own poison. On this particular night depicted in the film, the gang is giving a potentially new member a test run. We open on the four ladies who have just arrived at a secluded desert location with nothing in sight but a BMW and distant city lights. After splitting into two teams, they play tic-tac-toe in the sand to decide who will advance to the next level. When one team wins, it's revealed that the next part of the game involves their successfully captured prey from earlier at the club: two male sexual predators.

The film then weaves in a depravedly humorous way between the events at the nightclub – including how the gang reverse-roofies the male characters – and the desert, where the ladies emotionally torture them in ways that mirror the horrifying experience that women endure when roofied and sexually assaulted. Are they seeking vengeance? Absolutely, but it's all in an effort to school these guys, once and for all. By having our girl gang members turn the predators into prey, we have a chance to echo the loud roar of many survivors of sexual assault who want to get through to abusers that this behavior is completely deplorable and inhumane.

While the tone is of the dark comedy genre, our story takes a seriously unacceptable justification which is often used for date rape and harnesses it as a powerful message, driving our crusade for justice: "You were asking for it." My producing partners and I feel that this entertaining story of revenge, power reversal, survival and justice is the Robin Hood-esque female empowerment story about ending date rape that will permeate minds and connect with people on a deep level. In addition, we hope to inspire a proactive conversation between men and women about the dark cloud of entitlement and disconnection that exists in abusive males in our society that allows for date rape in the first place; this is by no means an anti-men piece but very much an anti-abuser

piece. Another goal is to shed light on the widely felt inadequacy of our justice system relevant to these crimes.

Unfortunately, date rape is nothing new and, regardless of the notable efforts that have been made by men and women everywhere to fight it, the war is far from being won. Thousands of date rapes have been reported in recent years, and one of the most talked about in 2016 – when we wrote this script - was the Brock Turner case. I'm sure that you were just as appalled and disgusted as we were when you heard that Brock Turner was convicted of just three felonies (instead of the original five) and sentenced to only a few short months behind bars after raping an unconscious woman behind a dumpster outside of a fraternity house and refused to assume responsibility for anything other than being a victim himself of intoxication.

The Brock Turner case has been a massive source of inspiration for us but it is just one of many cases in recent history that are causing a massive outcry against sexual assault. As we were moving into the production phase of CLUB RAT\$ in November of 2017, the news of Harvey Weinstein broke and, finally, the media outlets began to shout the stories and claims of the survivors rather than diminishing the reports. We have a long way to go but there is a critical shift happening in awareness and accountability related to this sensitive matter and we hope to be a part of this change.

Warped justifications and denial that have become commonplace when it comes to matters of sexual violence and not only is that unacceptable, it is the epitome of human betrayal. Within our narrative, we expose the overwhelming amount of toxic privilege, inflated sense of entitlement, refusal of rejection and overall disconnected behavior exhibited by many predators that use date rape as a means to get their way. Sometimes the only way you can get through to a person is by speaking to them in their own language. So, we have chosen to mirror the horror and trauma of the sexual assault experience and take away the power of the predator to force perspective on them for the greater good.

Since my writing partner and I gave birth to CLUB RAT\$ on the page, the project has grown into an entertaining, thought provoking, professionally produced short film led by a strong female director and talented cast and crew. It's inspiring to experience the magic that sparks when a group is working with intentions of togetherness and a greater purpose in mind. My team and I are overjoyed with the work we've been able to accomplish and, so far, we've had the opportunity to screen at 4 festivals - winning awards at two of them. We hope to share our film with more audiences and look forward to the possibility of developing this into a feature length film in the future.

Danene Montella  
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