



55 Washington St. Suite 420 Brooklyn, NY 11201

## **Driftless by Danny Wilcox Frazier and MediaStorm**

<http://mediastorm.org/0025.htm>

### **Who produced the project and how? (What'd they specifically do on it, and how long did they work on it?)**

Driftless is a collaboration between Danny Wilcox Frazier and MediaStorm.

Driftless began as a photography project by Danny. He spent approximately five years on the project, which culminated in the publication of the Duke University book *Driftless: Stories From Iowa*. The book was the winner of the third biennial Center for Documentary Studies/Honickman First Book Prize. The book's introduction was written by Robert Frank.

After the book was published, Danny hired Director of Photography Taylor Gentry to shoot interviews and b-roll of some of the people he photographed in the book. That process lasted about a year and continued through the early stages of post-production.

MediaStorm then produced *Driftless* over the course of a year. The project is 31 minutes long and can be viewed in its entirety online at <http://mediastorm.org/0025.htm>. An interview about the process with Danny will also be added to the site soon.

Eric Maierson produced and edited *Driftless* along with Brian Storm, who provided oversight and lots of hands-on collaboration. Production began in May of 2008 and continued until May of 2009. Brian also did the initial picture edit, looking at every single frame Danny shot over the course of the five-year project.

At MediaStorm, interactive designer Tim Klimowicz created all of the graphic elements in the piece as well as the Web site graphics and the flash player.

### **What gear / tools / technology / programs / plugins / CMS / applications did you use?**

All of the photographs in *Driftless* were shot by Danny Wilcox Frazier using a Leica film camera with a single 35mm lens. Video was shot using a Sony camera at 24p anamorphic, a standard-definition format that letterboxes footage to make it look like 16:9 inside of a 4:3 box. The video was then blown up to 1920x1080 HD during post-production.

We used Apple's Aperture to organize more than 2,500 scanned images and to output



55 Washington St. Suite 420 Brooklyn, NY 11201

them to a more compliant Final Cut Pro size and color space.

Final Cut Pro was used to edit *Driftless* on a Quad-Mac desktop computer. For Web delivery, we used Sorenson's Squeeze with the on2vp 6 plug-in. (MediaStorm's flv compression guide is available online at <http://mediastorm.org/submissions>.)

### **What lessons did you learn?**

It takes lots and lots of time to create a "simple" story. To use an analogy, I think of the process as being akin to sculpting. You start with a large slab then you spend weeks and weeks whittling it down to its essence. At MediaStorm, we're fond of reciting a Blaise Pascal quote that's often attributed to Mark Twain, "If I had more time, I'd have written a shorter letter."

To achieve a cinematic feel, it's important to really understand film grammar and shoot with editing in mind. The more I produce multimedia, the more I understand that it's really just filmmaking. For me, it's important to continue my film education by reading books on both theory and practice as well as viewing lots and lots of films, both fiction and documentaries.

### **What would you do differently if you had to create this project today?**

Brian Storm and I worked hard to fine-tune the six stories that comprise *Driftless*. We went over and over the narrative many times during the months of production to make sure they were as finely tuned as we could make them. I'm not sure there's much I would do differently at this point. I'm also still very close to the project.

I do think there's always room for improvement in terms of organizing a large-scale project like this. Basic organization and the ability to immediately find a b-roll shot or a photograph is key to producing a successful project, and after every project I consider ways to improve that process.

### **What kind of feedback, response, page views did it get?**

The feedback so far has been very positive. We've received lots of very supportive blog and Twitter responses. Wired.com was also very gracious and enthusiastic in their review of *Driftless*: <http://www.wired.com/rawfile/tag/mediastorm>.

You can also see a variety of other sites linking to us and discussing the project at <http://mediastorm.org/0025.htm#LinkingToUs>.



MEDIASTORM

55 Washington St. Suite 420 Brooklyn, NY 11201