

THE AMERICAN TIGER



Périphéria Productions presents:

THE AMERICAN TIGER

A film by Francis Delfour and Sébastien Tétrault

World Broadcast Premiere

CBC-TV - *The Nature of Things* with David Suzuki

Thursday, February 2, 2012

8 p.m. (8:30 NT)

(<http://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/episodes.html>)

(Montreal - January 16, 2012) Kids are still being taught that tigers are wild felines roaming the jungle. But this image belongs to the past, as there are only about 3,000 wild tigers left through Asia, and they are on the brink of extinction. Today in fact, there are anywhere between five and 10,000 tigers in the United States and most of these 'American tigers' are not found in zoos or laboratories—they are privately owned and kept as domestic pets.

Privately owned pampered American tigers are fatter, live longer and have never had to hunt for their dinner. Many Scientists believe these tigers serve no purpose and call them 'junk tigers.' Others believe their unique genetic makeup could help save wild populations. But no one really knows if these captive bred tigers can be taught to hunt and be re-introduced into the wild. And many of these tigers are a mixture of different subspecies, which scientists claim makes them ineligible for re-introduction.

Montreal-based *Peripheria Productions* presents a startling and very up-close and personal look at the debate over *The American Tiger*, in this most informative documentary - airing on CBC-TV's *The Nature of Things* with David Suzuki, Thursday, Feb. 2, at 8 p.m. (8:30 NT) <http://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/episodes.html>

"To find yourself in front of a 400-pound tiger, with only a leash held by a 160-pound human as protection is a heart-pounding experience," says co-director Francis Delfour. "Safety was always a concern while filming this doc, but in order to get our shots, our team had to step into the American Tiger's territory. It would have been impossible to get this close to these animals in their natural habitat."

Adds Sébastien Tétrault, "We filmed tigers running full bore at the camera, we had cubs on our laps, one of our lenses was 'sprayed' by a big lion... and we realized it wasn't the tigers that were held in captivity, but rather our DP who was locked inside a small cage in order to get some of these close shots."

Circuses brought the first tigers to America in the early 1900s. No one monitored their breeding and pretty soon surplus cute cubs found their way into private homes. By the 1960s, pet tigers had become trendy. In the doc, veterinarian Martin Dinnes describes that celebrities during this time were driving around in their convertible Jaguars with their pet tigers.

Today, nobody knows the exact numbers of tigers in the United States. No one paid much attention to this feline phenomenon until Las Vegas entertainer Roy Horn was mauled by one of his beloved tigers in 2003. Then there was the discovery of a 400-pound pet tiger in a Harlem

N.Y. apartment, then the time when there were a few tigers on the loose exploring the streets of American suburbia, just to mention a few incidents. People began to notice.

Well-known actress and animal welfare activist Tippi Hedren has been leading the charge against the private ownership and breeding of tigers in captivity. She has already introduced a law to congress and dreams of a world where the only place for wild animals would be... the wild. Private owners, on the other hand, are attached to their animals and are adamant about their right to own them. Some even argue that with the current crisis in the wild, captivity is safer for the tigers.

Tune in to *The American Tiger*, on CBC-TV's The Nature of Things, Thursday, Feb. 2, at 8 p.m. (8:30 NT), and you decide. <http://www.cbc.ca/natureofthings/episodes.html>

About the Directors:

Francis Delfour is a director and screenwriter based in Montréal, Canada. In the last twelve years, he wrote several scripts for both fiction and documentary films, which have been broadcasted in Canada, USA, Europe, Asia and South America. He was director of photography for *The Enemy Within* before directing his own documentary films *Mister Sabbagh* (RIDM) and *Rapayan* (TV5 Monde, TV3 Spain, TFO) who have been nominated in various film festivals. As a screenwriter for fiction films he worked on short (*L'Autocar*), medium (*Adéla*), and feature-length films (*Angoli Mala*) as well as 3D animation (*Last Exit*). He is also the restaurant critique for *Nightlife Magazine* and *Metro*.

Sébastien Tétrault is a director, screenwriter and journalist based in Montréal, Canada. As a screenwriter, he has worked on a short-length documentary about the surf guitar hero Dick Dale, *Dick Dale, B-Side Success*, and on a feature-film documentary about the political impact of hip-hop music in Africa, *United States of Africa* (Critic's prize - RIDM 2011). As a journalist and a music specialist, he has worked for radio, print and electronic media for many years and contributes to CBC/Radio-Canada's websites <http://www.bandeapart.com> and <http://www.espace.mu>.

About Périphéria Productions:

Founded in 2000 by Yanick Létourneau, Periphéria's main mission is to develop and produce innovative works that are engaging, inventive and accessible. Since its inception, the company produces documentaries and fiction that lean toward a more political and social mindfulness. As the world continues to change and new technologies emerge, Periphéria strives to work closely with new filmmakers to bring these stories to light.

About CBC/Radio-Canada:

CBC/Radio-Canada is Canada's national public broadcaster and one of its largest cultural institutions. The Corporation is a leader in reaching Canadians on new platforms and delivers a comprehensive range of radio, television, Internet, and satellite-based services. Deeply rooted in the regions, CBC/Radio-Canada is the only domestic broadcaster to offer diverse regional and cultural perspectives in English, French and eight Aboriginal languages, plus seven languages for international audiences.

Written by Gilbert Seah