



SCRAPPERS

Recycling the American Dream

SYNOPSSES

50 words:

Set in Chicago's labyrinth of alleys, **Scrappers** is a vérité portrait of Oscar and Otis, two metal scavengers who search for a living with brains, brawn and battered pickup trucks. The 2008 financial collapse and crackdowns on undocumented immigrants jeopardize their means of providing for their families.

250 words:

Scrappers follows two Chicago families who make ends meet using brains, brawn, and battered pickup trucks. Shot in vérité style, the film focuses on work: finding metals; raising children; understanding the city. The film questions popular notions of poverty, race relations, and recycling and examines dreams of personal self-sufficiency and urban sustainability.

Arriving from Honduras, Oscar found scrapping more enriching than other occupations open to undocumented immigrants. He searches alleys 14 hours a day to support his undocumented wife and American-born son. Yet without a driver's license or insurance, Oscar's trucks break down or disappear to the impound lot. Police run-ins leave him conflicted over which might be the lesser of two evils, deportation or remaining trapped in the land of opportunity.

Otis, age 73 and proud father of 12, learned scrapping over 40 years ago. With help from his third wife and her son, he searches out metal from appliances and garages, enabling them to escape a decrepit public housing project. Even in the face of slumlords and brain surgery, Otis' wisdom and hustle light the way towards stability. But when the financial collapse causes metal prices to plummet, he faces near insurmountable obstacles to starting over.

Seasoned metal trader Mike explains the work of informal scrap laborers in a global context.

Scrappers tackles the geography of a still-segregated city, the hidden lives of undocumented immigrants, and the complex economics of recycling through an examination of daily life. The story is propelled by Chicago musician Frank Rosaly's percussive score.

BIOS

Brian Ashby (Co-Director / Co-Producer) studied Political Science at the University of Chicago, and has conducted research in India and Cambodia. Having taken notice of informal recycling abroad, he was interested to meet scrappers less far afield. Brian currently assists the photographer Laura Letinsky and works in freelance photography and videography. This is his first film.

Ben Kolak (Co-Director / Co-Producer) produced the documentary *THAX* (2007 Chicago Underground Film Festival) and co-produced *Crime Fiction* (2007 Slamdance, Vail, and GenArt Film Festivals). He assists the video artist Catherine Sullivan and produces video for clients including Brand New World and Catherine Edelman Gallery.

Courtney Prokopas (Co-Director / Co-Producer) studied Visual Arts at the University of Chicago, producing a series of documentary shorts. She currently works at the Experimental Station in Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood, programming community workshops and events.

Aaron Wickenden (Editor / Associate Producer) recently Co-Produced, Co-Edited, and was the Post-Production Supervisor for Kartemquin's award winning film *At the Death House Door* (2008). Wickenden's post career began in documentary when he was the Post-Production Coordinator and Graphics Composer for *The New Americans* (2004). He went on to be the Associate Producer, Post-Production Supervisor and Additional Editor on the feature documentary *Reel Paradise* (2005), which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was released theatrically. On his next project, *The War Tapes* (2006), the first war documentary shot by American soldiers themselves, Wickenden served as Associate Editor and Post-Production Supervisor. His recent work also includes Assistant Editor to the Academy Award winning Editor Lisa Fruchtmann on the dramatic feature *Bonneville* (2007), and Associate Producer and Additional Editing on the Kartemquin documentary *Milking the Rhino* (2008).

Frank Rosaly (Composer) is percussionist, composer, and teacher who performs regularly with some of the most well-respected musicians in Chicago, New York, and Europe, including Ken Vandermark, Peter Brotzmann, and Nels Cline of Wilco. Peter Margasak of the *Chicago Reader* says "Drummer Frank Rosaly has become an indispensable part of the local jazz and improvised-music scene—he's got a sharp sense of time, an imaginative vocabulary, and a knack for knowing just what a given context requires, whether it's the tumultuous free improv of the Rempis Percussion Quartet or the vintage tunes of Josh Berman & His Gang. But he's also developed a rigorous solo practice, where he focuses on color and texture using a hybrid setup of percussion and electronics...He carefully warps the sounds of tuned metal bowls, gongs, and of course his trap kit with real-time processing; fractured rhythms propagate through fun-house refractions, slow-moving figures swell and ebb, and digital sizzles and beeps pepper his acoustic drum patterns."

PRODUCTION PRESS

Scrappers focuses on the lives of three men who comb the streets of Chicago in search of metals and materials they can sell at scrap yards for cash. The film raises thought-provoking questions about environmentalism and recycling, immigration, and even city planning.

—Chicagoist

The film gains much from its verite style...Many scenes are shot from an inside-the-truck perspective, which makes the viewer feel as though they're along for the ride. Other shots focus on the trucks wheeling down the alleyways, their cargo reaching towards the blue sky.

—Gaper's Block

A metal trader since the late '70s with a preternatural ability to find scrap ("I can almost smell it," he says), Otis Corbett is perhaps the most experienced scrapper on the South Side...A prostate-cancer survivor who also underwent surgery to remove blood on his brain after a fall last June, Corbett works scrapping in the alleys into his route to the hospital for monthly checkups.

—TimeOut Chicago, "Metalhead: Scrapper Otis Corbett Makes a Living Turning Trash into Cash"

STILLS



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CREDITS

A film by: Brian Ashby / Ben Kolak / Courtney Prokopas

Original music: Frank Rosaly

Editor: Aaron Wickenden

Associate producers: Steve Clementi / Aaron Wickenden

Post-production supervisor: Ben Kolak

Additional editing: Brian Ashby / Alex Mackenzie

Additional camera and sound: Alex Mackenzie / Dinesh Sabu / Aaron Wickenden

Audio mix: Jonathan Schenke, Experimental Sound Studio, Chicago

Original music recording: James Wagner, Strobe Recording, Chicago

Original music performed by: Jason Adasiewicz / Keefe Jackson / Jason Roebke / Frank Rosaly / Jason Stein

Color correction: Mike Matusek, Nolo Digital Film, Chicago

Titles and graphic design: David Handschuh & Megan Ross, 11hundred, Chicago

Translation: Nora Becerra / Joshua Beck / Chris Noonan / Noam Perlmann / Laura Rico-Beck / Carolyn Silveira

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