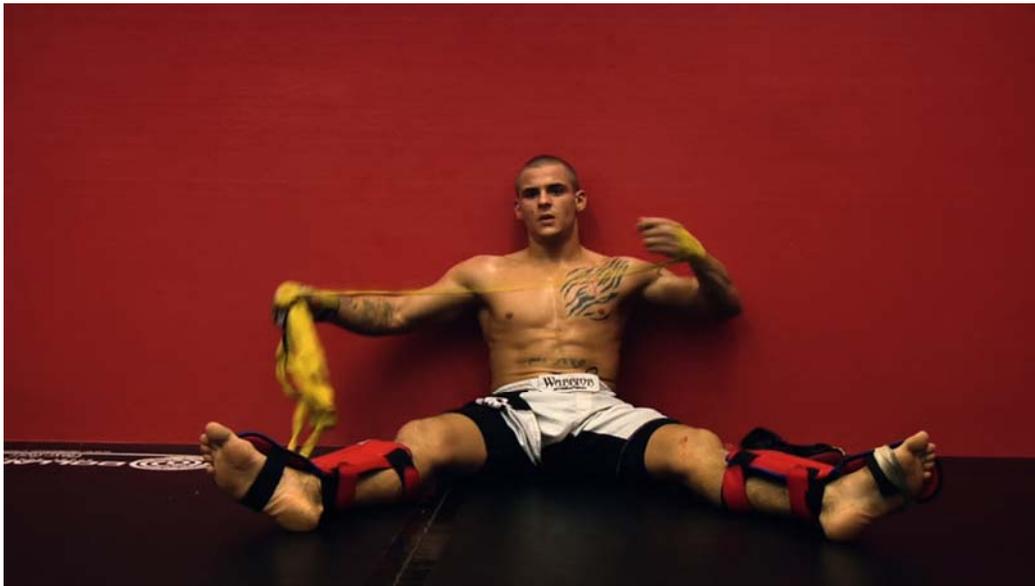


**Mongrel Media**

Presents

# FIGHTVILLE



**A Film by Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein  
(85 min., USA, 2012)  
Language: English**

<http://www.fightville.net>

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# FIGHTVILLE

We build better men.

Yell out “fight!” on a street corner and a crowd will always come running—at once attracted and repelled by the violent spectacle of man acting on his most primal urge. The draw of two men fighting is as old as civilization itself, but as far back as Plato, the sport of fighting has been at odds with the notion of a civil society. Over the last decade, Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) has grown from a controversial no-holds-barred gladiatorial sideshow into a billion dollar phenomenon eclipsing boxing as the dominant combat sport in the world. But far from Las Vegas, in sweat-soaked gyms and low-rent arenas across America, the big lights are but a dream. Here, men fight to test their mettle, fortified with the mythic promise that an ordinary man can transform into a champion.

FIGHTVILLE is about the art and sport of fighting: a microcosm of life, a physical manifestation of that other brutal contest called the American Dream, where men are not born, but built through self determination, hard work and faith. It may be a myth, but in FIGHTVILLE, that’s what champions are made of.

## **Welcome to FIGHTVILLE where FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS meets FIGHT CLUB**

Down in the petrochemical towns of southwest Louisiana--where the social rhythm is set by offshore oil paydays--**GIL “THE THRILL” GUILLORY** has quickly become the hottest MMA promoter in the South. In a business where the competition is as fierce out of the cage as it is in it, Gil regularly fills 3,000 seat rodeo arenas, while his competitors struggle to fill bingo halls in a flagging economy. "I come from a place where men worked hard, partied hard and on Friday night they were looking for a fight," he says.

And on Friday night they come: with paychecks cashed and a four dollar beer in each hand, the locals cheer on the fighters as they march out to the cage, while Gil--the ringmaster---happily counts the crowd and whispers something about *bread and circuses*. Bad economy or not, people need to be entertained, but more than that, they need champions.

The fighters come from as far as the Midwest to fight on his shows. The amateurs come for experience. The professionals come for the money--starting at \$500 to show and \$500 to win--and the chance to rise up from feeder shows like Gil’s to national promotions and maybe go all the way to the UFC. But the odds are simply against them. “Most of these guys will never make a penny and few will ever step into the ring or cage again.” Gil says, “If you can’t sell tickets, I can’t use you.”

Twenty-year-old **DUSTIN “The DIAMOND” POIRIER** sells lots of tickets. Raised in an area around Lafayette where you simply can’t back down from a fight, Dustin’s his youth reads like a handbook for failure. After his parents split when he was kid, his mother tried to provide a loving home for Dustin, but she couldn’t keep him in school, off the streets or away from the call of a fight. After multiple run-ins with the law, Dustin was sent by a judge to a correctional boot camp designed to scare repeat offenders straight. There, in the shadow of an adult prison, Dustin began his transformation from an overweight lost cause to a ripped 155 pound contender.

Two years later, he’s on a four fight winning streak and he’s the closest thing there is to hope for the crowds that pour in from the depressed Cajun towns that ring Lafayette. For them, he’s not just fighting, he’s slaying their dragons--the real objects of their rage. When he wins--which he often does with a knockout in the first round--he falls to his knees, a hat tip to redemption from a boy who found himself through fighting. “I want to be the best fighter in the world in my weight class,” Dustin says without a hint of self-doubt and you can’t help but want to believe in him.

Crammed between a Piggly Wiggly and a discount furniture store in a strip mall outside Lafayette, is **GLADIATORS ACADEMY** where Dustin trains with “**CRAZY**” **TIM CREDEUR**, a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Black-belt and veteran UFC fighter. At the gym, he doesn’t just teach, he holds court, dispensing Yoda-like wisdom to the dozens of kids and aspiring fighters who worship him. At Gladiators, fighting isn’t a sport, it’s a rite. On the back of their team shirts, it says, simply, *War all the Time*. Before you can go into the cage with Tim in your corner, you have to prove that you have heart and that means submitting not only to a grueling training schedule six days a week but also to a lifestyle that demands that you put the art of fighting above all us. “We don’t just make fighters,” Tim says, “We build better men.”

**ALBERT STAINBACK** learned to fight because he wanted to defend people. When he was a kid in Kentucky, he watched his father savagely beat his mother while he stood helpless. Later, his father killed himself in despair. So, when he arrived in Lafayette from Kentucky, he sought out Tim, believing he had the inner stuff to be a pro fighter. “I want to be remembered,” Albert says. For his first pro fight in Lake Charles, Albert came out dressed like Alex from *A Clockwork Orange*--with a bowler, a white jump suit tap dancing and twirling to *Singing in the Rain*. They may not remember his name, but they certainly won’t forget him either. The question is, beyond the showmanship, does he have the discipline and dedication to be a *real* contender?

## Directors' Statement

When we started filming FIGHTVILLE, all we had was a cooperative promoter, a gym that would have us and a location straight out of Hollywood. Cajun Acadiana, with its distinct patois, roughnecks, shotgun houses and hot nights was about as far away from the big lights of Vegas as you could get. It was a world of survivors--underdogs--a place where adversity is a lifestyle. What other place has a neighborhood (Fightville) named after its passion for fighting? Quite simply, these boys love to fight.

We approached the subject armed with literature. The sweet science--boxing--has long been a literary staple. Jack London used to spar with his wife in his garden. Hemingway bragged of his fighting skills. Mailer wrote as much about boxing as he did about culture. Joyce Carol Oates--the most unlikely fan of all--spent her childhood with her father at the Garden watching the champions of the day battle it out. FIGHTVILLE is the kind of place where they would have saddled up to the bar and written about the next big thing.

There's something about a fight that attracts and repels us. When two men square off toe to toe, they aren't just fighting, they are brutally acting out the drama of life. It's undiluted competition and while in its sanctioned form, it may be a sport, it's a sport that isn't *played*. It's about giving and receiving hurt, domination and submission. For the audience, the arena is the place where their dragons are slain. A champion isn't just fighting his opponent, he's fighting to overcome life itself.

That triumph is the stuff that movies are made of. What kid hasn't wanted to run the stairs like *Rocky*, arms in the air, victorious not in the fight, but in life. We all want to be better, advertising tells us so. *Just do it!* says Nike. But what does it take to be a champion? In the end, FIGHTVILLE may be less about fighting and more about what it takes to be the best at anything.

## **The Filmmakers**

FIGHTVILLE co-directors Petra Epperlein and Michael Tucker AKA Pepper & Bones met in New York in 1994. Their first project, the groundbreaking THE LAST COWBOY (1997) explored the myths of Epperlein's childhood in the former East Germany and was one of the earliest examples of digital filmmaking and demonstrations of DVD technology. That experimentation, led them to form the European DVD-Lab at Studio Babelsberg in 1997 where they worked with European rights holders to successfully introduce DVD to the market while continuing to work on their own film projects around the world.

In 2003, the outbreak of the war in Iraq pulled Tucker to Baghdad, where he followed an armored car salesman making sales calls for BULLETPROOF SALESMAN. While filming BULLETPROOF SALESMAN, Tucker took interest in the story of US soldiers deployed in Baghdad and began to work on GUNNER PALACE.

After the critically acclaimed release of GUNNER PALACE in the Spring of 2005, Tucker and Epperlein began work on THE PRISONER: OR HOW I PLANNED TO KILL TONY BLAIR which told the story of an Iraqi journalist whose arrest was shown in GUNNER PALACE. The film went on to be nominated for an Independent Spirit Award.

In 2007, BULLETPROOF SALESMAN was completed by following the title character to the turmoil building in Afghanistan. In 2008, the duo began work on HOW TO FOLD A FLAG, the fourth and final chapter of their epic war chronicle, which premiered in Toronto in 2009.

FIGHTVILLE is their fifth feature documentary. Epperlein is currently working on a graphic novel about life in East Germany and together they are working on a meta-documentary about ten years at war.

## **FILMOGRAPHY**

The Last Cowboy, 17 minutes, DVD, ZKM 1997

Nomados, digital series, 2002

Gunner Palace, 85 minutes, Telluride/TIFF 2004

The Prisoner or: How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair, 72 minutes, TIFF 2006

Bulletproof Salesman, 70 minutes, SXSW 2008

How to Fold a Flag, 85 minutes, TIFF 2009

Fightville, 85 minutes, 2011

**FIGHTVILLE**  
**“We Build Better Men”**

**A FILM BY PEPPER & BONES**  
**PETRA EPPERLEIN AND MICHAEL TUCKER**

**CREDIT LIST**

Directed by: Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein

Featuring Dustin “The Diamond” Poirier, “Crazy” Tim Credeur,  
Gil “The Thrill” Guillory and Albert Stainback

Produced by: Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein

Executive Producers  
Michael W. Gray, Dan Cogan, Rachel Schnipper

Photography: Mike “The Truth” Tucker

Editing: Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein

Sound Mix: CJ DeGennaro

Music: Alex Kliment