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The Life of a Greyhound

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THE LIFE OF A GREYHOUND

Christopher A. Lepp, B.A.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Lindenwood
College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Communications

2008

ABSTRACT

The Life of a Greyhound video focuses on the lives of Greyhounds. The Greyhound is an extraordinary breed. They can run up to forty-five miles per hour. This video examines their path from the racetrack to their adoptive home. Is it inhumane to race dogs for money? How are the dogs treated? Do they make good pets? These are the questions the video explores.

The Greyhound video examines the tough questions about Greyhound racing. Many say that Greyhound racing is cruel or inhumane. The video gives the viewer a feel for what Greyhounds go through during their earlier years and then later during their racing years. The video gives the facts about racing and lets the viewer decide how they feel.

The Life of a Greyhound also features a section on Greyhound adoption. In the dog world, there are many myths about Greyhounds. The video takes a look at how to adopt a Greyhound. The facts about Greyhound adoption are a revealing look at the breed. The dog ends up making a great pet for the right person.

This video is a wonderful educational tool. *The Greyhound Companions of MO* have already used the video to educate children about the lives of these

amazing dogs at the Saint Louis Humane Society during their Kids for Critters Camp. The Missouri organization will also use the video to educate adults about bringing a Greyhound into their home. These are just a few of the ways *The Greyhound Companions of MO* plan to use the video.

The Life of a Greyhound goes behind the scenes of the closely guarded racing industry to uncover the facts about the sport. It remains objective, while examining the controversial topic. Someday it might help break down many of the barriers between race tracks and adoption agencies. That would be the best triumph of all.

THE LIFE OF A GREYHOUND

Christopher A. Lepp, B.A.

A Process Analysis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Lindenwood College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Communications

2008

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

Professor of Communications Michael Castro, Chairperson and Advisor

Assistant Professor of Communications Peter Carlos

PROCESS ANALYSIS

The Life of a Greyhound video focuses on the lives of Greyhounds from their time as puppies on a farm to their adoption into a new home. The Greyhound is an ancient breed showing up in early artwork such as Egyptian murals and Greek panels.

The graceful lines of the Greyhound have, throughout the centuries, appealed to artists. Greek artists were particularly fond of introducing those lines of the Greyhound as ornamentation in their decorative workmanship. (Sullivan 7)

The Greyhound's first role in history was a supreme hunter. Today, the Greyhound is bred for speed. The dogs chase a lure around a racetrack at up to forty-five miles per hour. The goal of *The Life of a Greyhound* is to examine the extraordinary dog behind the industry. Greyhounds are not what some might expect. The video goes behind the scenes. It looks at their lives before the track and their lives after. In the next few pages, I will examine the background behind the video, the main objectives and the major challenges to bring the video together.

The Greyhound Companions of MO approached me about producing a video for their organization. *The Greyhound Companions of MO* help Greyhounds find homes after their racing days are done. Patty Luter is a board

member at the organization. She found out I was moving from Las Vegas to Saint Louis. In Las Vegas I was working for the FOX network. When I returned to Saint Louis, we discussed working together. Unfortunately, the organization had little money to spend on such an elaborate video. I decided to produce the video for my Master's Degree in Communications.

Greyhounds are bred by farms to race. You have probably seen video of Greyhounds chasing a lure around a track. You may have even bet on your favorite to win. Is Greyhound racing cruel? This was one of the main issues examined in *The Life of a Greyhound*. This was the hardest question to examine. I did not want the video to take sides. I was searching for the truth. The media can easily twist words to get the answer they desire. I worked in the media for twelve years and I have seen it happen on multiple occasions. The goal of this video was to be objective. I will give the facts and let the audience make their own decision.

Another reason this was a hard question to examine was because you have to walk a fine line when working with advocates from both sides of the issue. Greyhound racing organizations such as The Greyhound Hall of Fame are worried that racing will be shown in a bad light. On multiple occasions, I had to reassure them that I was just telling a story. I needed the help of both the adoption agencies and *The Greyhound Hall of Fame* to complete the project. The racing video used in the project was approved by *The Greyhound Hall of Fame*. This

was essential to complete the video.

The other main objective was to educate the public on the dogs themselves. Greyhounds are often thought of as hyper active dogs that need wide open spaces to run. While a retired Greyhound does like to run, a small yard is often enough. Also, the dogs tend to sleep for hours on end. After their racing careers, they tend to be lazy. This was another essential element I wanted to get across in the video.

We also learn the process of adopting a Greyhound. A Greyhound does have specific needs which are covered in detail. The audience learns what kind of home is suitable for a Greyhound and how to begin the adoption procedure. *The Greyhound Companions of MO* do extensive research before allowing a Greyhound into a home. After watching the video, the audience should have a good idea of what it takes to adopt a Greyhound.

One of the challenges to producing *The Life of a Greyhound* was the small budget. The budget was around \$150. While producing other videos during my career in television, I have worked with budgets even smaller. However, the station provided all the equipment I needed to complete each project. This time I was on my own. The main piece of equipment I needed was a camera. I owned the equipment necessary to edit the piece and produce the graphics and music.

I was fortunate that Lindenwood University was able to provide a camera. However, using the University's camera posed another problem. I had to

schedule shoots at least a week in advance. This was not always possible due to the changing schedules of my interviews. During the various shoots, I used a couple different cameras. This is not the way I would have preferred to shoot the video but it was my only choice. I was worried that each camera would have a different look. However, it ended up working quite well. The two cameras matched almost perfectly.

Another major challenge to producing *The Life of a Greyhound* was getting the audio to sound good on a television set. It sounded great in the video editor but audio levels are always tricky. The audio mix ended up being extremely loud and distorted on a normal television set. It also had quite a bit of variation in levels. I started to work on bringing all the separate pieces of audio down, when I had an idea: I could export the audio as one giant clip and then edit it in a program called *Soundtrack*. I took this one large audio clip and compressed the signal down to eliminate the distortion on the television set. This was a key decision during the editing process. It saved hours of extra editing.

Another challenge to editing a piece like this is the music. Music is a necessity. Again, the budget did not allow for royalties. The only solution was to produce music of my own. This ended up working really well. I used *Soundtrack* to produce three songs for *The Life of a Greyhound*.

It was difficult to finish making small changes to the video. Since there was not a specific air date for the project, I had more time to perfect the project.

This ended up being the greatest challenge yet. I kept adding things and agonizing over every frame of video. In the workplace, I would let certain things go due to time constraints and the fact that no one would ever notice the tiny things I obsessed over. This time it was my video. It was not a FOX video. It was personal. I spent hours and hours examining every cut and dissolve. It was really hard to just let go. This is one of the reasons I work better under tight deadlines because I tend to be a perfectionist when it comes to video editing. A good friend used to tell me, "You are only one who is going to notice that."

The final challenge to completing the project was making the video menu at the beginning of the DVD. The scene menu that I created was an important part of the final project. Patty and I discussed using the video as a tool to help people decide if they were ready for a Greyhound in their home. We had talked about producing another five minute video just on the adoption process. Instead of producing a whole new video, I built a scene called Adopting a Greyhound. This way potential clients could skip to that particular scene. It was a key decision in the development process. I produced a final copy of the video and played it on a standard DVD player to make sure everything worked properly. Unfortunately, the scene selection buttons did not work. I rebuilt the menu from the beginning. This time the scene selection worked and the final project was finished. I made multiple copies for *The Greyhound Community of MO* and for Lindenwood University.

The Life of a Greyhound was successful in examining Greyhound racing and providing a wealth of knowledge about Greyhounds and how the adoption process works. *The Greyhound Companions of MO* used the video to educate children during a summer program run by the Humane Society of Missouri. Children ages 12-14 came to learn about animals and the issues in our community and the world. I was fortunate to be able to produce something that will help educate children and potential Greyhound owners. *The Life of a Greyhound* will be a useful tool for years to come by educating the public about Greyhounds and Greyhound racing.

Works Cited

Sullivan, Mark. The Ultimate Greyhound. New York: Howell Book House, 1999.

Vita Auctores

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