

HBO Documentary Explores Evolution of Gang Culture

Written by Robert ID3265

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HBO Documentary 'Bastards of the Party' February 6th

Raised in the Athens Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, Cle "Bone" Sloan was four years old when his father died, and 12 when he became a member of the Bloods. Now an inactive member of the notorious gang, Sloan looks back at the history of black gangs in his city and makes a powerful call for change in modern gang culture when his insightful documentary 'BASTARDS OF THE PARTY'.

Acclaimed feature film director Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day") produces along with Sloan, who also directs.

Haunted by his involvement in the Bloods' pervasive culture of violence, Sloan wanted to explore where it all began. In researching the subject, he discovered that the roots of black gangs were nurtured within a distinct political landscape. BASTARDS OF THE PARTY traces the development of black gangs in Los Angeles from the late 1940s, through the charged atmosphere of the "60s and "70s, to the breakdown of community in the "80s and "90s, and the brief truce between the Crips and Bloods that followed the Rodney King riots in 1992. Among the gangs that figure in the story are the Spook-hunters, Farmers, Slauscons, Businessmen and Gladiators.

The documentary features interviews with past and current gang members from the Bloods and Crips; LA historian Mike Davis, whose book "City of Quartz" sparked Sloan's own project; former FBI agent Wes Swearingen; and Geronimo Pratt, the former Black Panther Party minister of defense, among others.

Sloan's interest in the history of LA's black gangs began when he was still actively involved in street life. "I started learning from older members," he says. "It was interesting to learn about the "70s and "80s from people who had lived it." Just released from County Jail, Sloan read Mike Davis' history of Los Angeles, which had been given to him by an inmate, and it eventually prompted him to begin his own research.

Sloan's preliminary study started in the turbulent period following the Rodney King riots in 1992.

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With the city's fractious racial history under intense scrutiny, he found himself being interviewed by Larry King and Ted Koppel about the state of black neighborhoods. Soon Sloan began asking himself similar questions. "I wondered how we ended up killing each other," he remembers.

BASTARDS OF THE PARTY draws its title from this passage in "City of Quartz": "The Crips and the Bloods are the bastard offspring of the political parties of the '60s. Most of the gangs were born out of the demise of those parties. Out of the ashes of the Black Panther Party came the Crips and the Bloods and the other gangs."

Sloan was amazed by what he discovered in Davis' book. "I saw my neighborhood on a map depicting LAPD gang hot spots, connecting it to the larger history of the city," he recalls. "I was proud. I started showing it to my homies." His neighborhood Athens Park figured prominently in Davis' account, fuelling Sloan's growing interest. He started asking questions of other Bloods, only to realize that "a lot of bangers didn't know the history of how the gangs started" and resolved to educate himself.

His research quickly produced its first surprise. "I discovered that we come from a revolutionary background," says Sloan. One line of street lore traced the beginnings of the gangs to a single incident outside a movie theatre in 1972, when a high school student was beaten to death for his leather jacket. Other versions place the start of the gangs in the 1960s.

Through reading and talking to peers and older members of the community, Sloan discovered instead that gangs first appeared in Los Angeles in the late 1940s, when blacks started to move from the south into the predominantly white Los Angeles area.

'BASTARDS OF THE PARTY' traces the timeline from that "great migration" to the rise and demise of both the Black Panther Party and the US Organization in the mid- 1960s, to the formation of what is currently the culture of gangs in Los Angeles and around the world.

The documentary also chronicles the role of the Los Angeles Police Department and the FBI in the evolution of gang culture. During his tenure from 1950 to 1966, Chief Robert Parker bolstered the ranks of the LAPD with white recruits from the south, who brought their racist attitudes with them. Parker's racist sympathies laid the groundwork for the volatile relationship

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between the black community and the LAPD that persists today.

Cle "Bone" Sloan was introduced to the film industry by football legend Jim Brown, who helped him secure a job as a production assistant when he was released from prison. The job triggered Sloan's interest in becoming a cinematographer, and kept him away from the street. He met Antoine Fuqua on the set of Fuqua's feature directorial debut, "The Replacement Killers," and subsequently worked on Fuqua's hit movie "Training Day." During production of "Training Day," Sloan helped secure locations in Los Angeles' gang-controlled areas, and persuaded actual gang members to lend their credibility to the project on-screen.

Antoine Fuqua's films include "The Replacement Killers"; "King Arthur"; "Tears of the Sun"; "Bait"; "Training Day," starring Denzel Washington, who received an Oscar® for his performance, and Ethan Hawke, who received an Oscar® nomination; and the upcoming "Shooter," starring Mark Wahlberg.

BASTARDS OF THE PARTY was directed by Cle Sloan; produced by Antoine Fuqua and Cle Sloan; executive producer, Jack Gulick; editor, Keith Salmon; cinematography by Haskell Wexler, Joan Churchill, Mark Woods and Phil Parmet; original score by Joong-Han Chung; co-producers, Keith Salmon and Alex Demyanenko. For HBO: supervising producer, Jackie Glover; executive producer, Sheila Nevins.

HBO Documentary films will air 'Bastards of the Party' starting February 6th at 10:00 P.M.

For more information and to watch a trailer please visit:

<http://www.hbo.com/docs/programs/bastardsoftheparty/index.html>

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