

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Crutch

Sarah Elgart · Tuesday, March 17th, 2015

Every so often, regardless of its cinematic qualities, a short grabs me because of its sheer audacity of subject and movement. So when my good friend, producer and ocean activist Steve Reiss, with whom I frequently share views of and conversations about dance media, sent me several links – including David La Chappelle’s WAY over seen and over the top if not beautifully filmed short for Hozier’s “Take Me to Church” (which is way too burlesque for me to feature beyond this mention), and a nine-year-old, black & white and grainy short called **Crutch** – the latter popped out with a quiet roar.



Shannon, of Crutch, navigates through the streets of NYC

Crutch follows its subject Bill Shannon, aka Crutch Master, who has bi-lateral hip deformity, as he stumbles, falls, and ultimately glides and dances through the streets of New York City on crutches. In the notes to the long form doc from which this short is extracted, both of which are Directed and Produced by Sachi Cunningham and Chandler Evans, Shannon is referred to as “an internationally renowned artist, break dancer and skate punk, who wields his crutches as tools of expression and weapons of provocation.”

And in it we hear him say that what he does is *not* really dance: “*You can call it dance if you want to, but, I mean as a kid I wasn’t going around ‘I’m dancing right now’... You know, all I was doing was figuring out my way to get up the stairs without anybody seeing me and doing it in this very strange way... Technique, you know, style, nuance, you know all those things were falling into place but I wasn’t calling it that and I didn’t consider it that and I still don’t.*”

In **Crutch**, we get a docu-style glimpse at Shannon’s mastery on crutches, and what he procures is a very individual and extremely idiosyncratic way of moving. Shannon refers to what he does as “*relating to your environment as it comes to you on an improvisational, free style basis,*” which is what I think we all do more or less in our own way either intentionally or not. With a fantastic score, “Inner City Boundaries” by Blackalicious, **Crutch** is an invitation for all of us to reconsider our physical navigations through the urban environment and our lives in general as dance. And of course it is a great testament to the power, perseverance, and indelibility of the human spirit.

Enjoy.

***Part 5 of Poetry + Murder, My Dance with the Manson Women** will be appear in next week's ScreenDance Diaries.

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