

Bernie Clifford



Bernie Clifford was just 24 years old when he was involved in an accident at the Melbourne Cup.

He was struck by an interstate touring bus and due to the extent of the injuries he received to his left leg it was amputated above the knee.

He spent 6 months in hospital, initially at the Western General in Geelong before beginning his rehabilitation at the Royal Talbot. He made a choice not to wear a prosthetic limb due to the height of his amputation and the severe injuries he received to his right leg, which would make walking with a prosthetic far too demanding. Instead he uses axillary crutches which he has designed himself to make them more durable for his busy lifestyle.

Before the accident Bernie was in his final year of nursing at Deakin University, instead of completing his nursing degree he embarked on a Science Degree in Biology. During this year he also underwent multiple operations and a few set backs before he was able to start directing his future.

After finishing his Science Degree in 1994 he obtained his drivers licence for the first time and brought himself a touring van which he still drives and affectionately calls 'Van Dam'. In need of some emotional recuperation Bernie and 'Van Dam' took off around Australia, travelling, going to music festivals and "having a bloody good time".

Bernie always had filmmaking in the back of his mind, and on returning from his travels he started the process of applying to film schools. A year later he started up his own independent Cinema at a mate's night club in Geelong calling it 'Week nights at Bernie's' complete with coffee tables and couches it was a gold class cinema experience without the expense. Bernie showed a double feature of Cult Classic and Independent Films, and within 8 months he gained over 600 members. During this year he was also accepted into Deakin University and began his Media Arts Degree, he moved to Melbourne and completed his honours year in 2000.

The short film he made for his Honours year was called 'A Fist Full of Heart' with 65 cast and crew members. In 2001 he received an award for the film at the Long Island Film Expo in New York. The film also screened in Las Angeles and Las Vegas, the following year it was shown at local venues in Mexico and Canada. He spent time travelling around America and promoting his film, he especially enjoyed his time in Jamaica and Miami and even hurled himself out of a plane in Mexico skydiving. In 2002 A Fist Full of Heart won the Best Science Fiction award at the New York Independent International Film Festival.

On his return from America he established Bernzerk Productions, a media and production company. He produces funding and training videos, seminar presentations, weddings and Corporate Events, and also creates documentaries and works on film post production editing.

Bernie recently made a documentary for 'Team Handcycle' filming the first Murrey to Moyne Handcycling race. This year Bernie will be working as the associate director of the 'Other Film Festival'. The Other Film Festival focuses on films made by or about people with disabilities. His role as associate director includes curating, increasing awareness of and marketing the festival, obtaining sponsorship prizes and being a 'face' of the festival.

On the side Bernie also DJ's in an act called the 'Killer Beez' with his flat mate Steve Bruce.

Bernie's dedication to his career balances his creativity with his professionalism. He is currently working on a new screen play, and hopes to have a feature film in production soon.

Published March 2006



1300 782 231