



Tickled Discussion Guide

Director: David Farrier, Dylan Reeve

Year: 2016

Time: 92 min

You might know this director from:

This is the debut feature film from this directorial team.

David Farrier previously starred in the comedy mockumentary series **SHORT POPPIES**.

This is the debut feature film for Dylan Reeve.

FILM SUMMARY

Nearly everyone has stumbled across unsuspected subcultures and unusual things while roaming the wild west that is the Internet, but when New Zealand-based journalist David Farrier happened upon videos promoted as “competitive endurance tickling,” his curiosity got the best of him, taking him down a bizarre rabbit-hole of fetishes, fraud, and cyberbullying. The videos featured athletic young men being restrained and tickled into submission. After contacting its producer Jane O’Brien Media to acquire more information about the video for a news story on his curious find, Farrier received a rather sour and blatantly homophobic reply that attempted to assert that the sport was a “passionately and exclusively heterosexual athletic endurance activity.”

Baffled by the unprovoked hostile response and more inquisitive than ever, Farrier enlisted his tech savvy friend Dylan Reeve to help him investigate the mystery, and shortly thereafter, they co-authored a blog post that prompted threats of legal action from Jane O’Brien Media. As it turns out, the company has a history of precarious behavior, deflecting any and all media inquiries, and domineering any former employees or performers into silence—but that isn’t the half of it.

Part unusual fascination that reminds us that we’ve all got our own quirks that we prefer to keep hidden, part investigative thriller in which a bully with extremely deep pockets comes into focus, Farrier and Reeve’s **TICKLED** is a rare, non-fiction narrative during which you will repeatedly utter aloud—“What the?! Why?! How?!”—and laugh uncomfortably as if being tickle-tortured yourself.

FILM THEMES

Diving down a rabbit-hole of underground tickling rings, professional deceit, and an extensive history of cyberbullying, TICKLED takes viewers on an unimaginable investigative journey like no other. If “competitive endurance tickling” is not a real sport, who is paying all these young men to strap each other down and tickle each other into submission?

FETISHES

Do you know the definition of knismolagnia? You guessed it: “A sexual arousal and erotic gratification derived from tickling or being tickled. Synonym: titillagnia.” It should be no surprise that people find pleasure in the most unlikely places, but as long as everyone is consensually involved and no one’s getting hurt, who’s to judge? It may actually be more common than you think. “Women’s Health Magazine” reports that one in six people have a sexual fetish of some kind, while the “Journal of Sex Research” finds that one in three people have experimented with at least one unusual sexual interest at some point in their lives.

HOMOPHOBIA

Despite the fact that half-dressed young men tickling other half-dressed young men while bound to a bed has homo-erotic undertones, the producer of these tickling videos, Jane O’Brien Media, vehemently argued without provocation via email correspondence with Farrier that the productions were a “passionately and exclusively heterosexual athletic endurance activity.” So adamant against any suggestion that the videos contain any gay themes, the organization regularly sued those who merely questioned this fact publicly, resorting to personal threats and bullying if deemed necessary. Most mind-bending of all? Their bullying tactics involved attempting to publicly shame participants by calling their participation in the videos home-erotic and devious.

FRAUD

After directors Farrier and Reeve finally are able to lift the veil on all this fishy business, it is revealed that the real personality behind Jane O’Brien Media and the infamous early Internet tickle video pioneer “Terri Tickle” are one and the same. A master of online manipulation, for years the film’s antagonist has been remotely running tickling cells around the world under false identities as a ploy for their own personal pleasure, tricking young men into “auditioning” for productions in exchange for much needed cold hard cash.

POWER AND CONTROL

Like most bullies, it turns out that this one has a fondness for picking on people they have the power to exploit. Most of the men asked to sit for an interview for TICKLED declined for fear of cyberbullying. Some former participants claim to have had their public images smeared, career prospects shattered and family lives torn apart after the film’s antagonist vindictively posted their “audition” tapes online, made defamatory websites in the victim’s name, and went so far as to call employers. When the film’s antagonist doesn’t get exactly what they want, they throw a tantrum and threaten to sue.

“When they tickle us do we not laugh?”

William Shakespeare

“A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.”

Mark Twain

FILM FACTS:

- After having its debut at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival in competition for the Grand Jury Prize for best World Documentary, co-directors David Farrier and Dylan Reeve's TICKLED went on to be nominated for three Cinema Eye Honors awards, including Outstanding Achievement in a Debut Feature Film, Outstanding Achievement in Production, and the Audience Choice Prize.
- Following the release of TICKLED, New Zealand TV3 arts reporter David Farrier left his longtime post at the news network to move to the United States to continue making documentary films.
- Before diving into the underground world of competitive endurance tickling, TICKLED co-director David Farrier starred in the New Zealand mockumentary TV series called SHORT POPPIES, created and written by Rhys Darby and directed by Jemaine Clement and Michelle Walsh. The series was swiftly purchased by Netflix for US distribution.
- In an effort to thwart TICKLED's release, a website has been created titled [Tickled, The Truth](#), which published unsubstantiated smear articles with lines like, "The first thing you need to know about David Farrier, the director of the 'alleged' documentary TICKLED, is that he lies with the ease of room temperature butter melting on hot toast."
- According to the headline of Jane O'Brien Media's official website, "Only 12 guys from over 1000 applicants are generally selected for my salaried Reality TV/Video projects."
- While screening TICKLED at the True/False Film Fest in Columbia, Missouri, in March of 2016, co-director David Farrier was served with a defamation suit over the film.
- At a screening of TICKLED at the Nuart Theater in Los Angeles in June of 2016, the film's antagonist made a surprise appearance, confronting co-director Dylan Reeve during a post-screening Q&A, saying, "You need to lawyer up. You need to get criminal counsel."
- In 2001, the film's antagonist pleaded guilty to two federal misdemeanor charges of computer fraud and abuse for their role in attacking computer systems at three colleges while posing as a 23-year-old female college student to obtain tickling-fetish videos from other students.
- In the early days of the Internet, the film's antagonist secretly went by the online monikers "Terri DiSisto" or "Terri Tickle" in their quest to acquire underground tickling videos. Using this forged identity, they were able to hire David Starr, a former Hollywood casting agent, to serve as their personal talent scout for tickling videos.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Volunteer** a few hours a week as a Cybersmile Support Advisor for [The Cybersmile Foundation](#), an international, cyberbullying non-profit organization committed to tackling all forms of digital abuse and bullying online.
2. **Stand** in support of your local LGBTQ communities. Look up local support chapters, send them your love, and donate if you are able.
3. **Keep** your identity safe by reading up on ways to reduce your risk. Read these [5 Quick Tips for Protecting Yourself From Identity Theft](#) and if you think you have fallen victim to identity theft find local resources for your country on what to do right away.
4. **Check** the credibility of any business before entering any sort of employee contract. You can do this just like a journalist might check the credibility of a news source. [EasyBib's](#) outline of how to evaluate sources is an excellent place to start.

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.