



## CAPTURING CRAZY HORSE: FILMING ON THE MOUNTAIN

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“We were out there, standing in front of a little known American icon,” comments Patrick Pierson on his experience filming at the Crazy Horse monument in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

He says this with an air of both admiration and slight disbelief as he recounts the trip. “When we left [the Black Hills], we stopped by Mount Rushmore to see it. It didn’t even compare. You have to experience it [Crazy Horse] firsthand to understand the scope.”

Pierson has been directing and editing film for over ten years and works as a freelancer based out of the Minneapolis, Minnesota area. Originally born in Minneapolis, his family moved to England when he was nine and he attributes his interest in both filming and acting to the culture in Liverpool where he grew up. At age 18, Pierson decided to return to Minneapolis in order to further pursue his desired career.

“There were more opportunities here to pursue what I wanted to do,” he says of the artistically-enriched atmosphere of the Twin Cities.

And what he wanted to do was tell stories and create engaging and original pieces of work. “There is a lot of generic stuff out there. Everyone is trying to copy something else and a lot of individuality is lost.”

The concept of originality was one of the aspects of the Crazy Horse project which attracted Pierson. “It’s like it’s so undiscovered and it blows my mind,” he says of the relatively unknown monument being carved into the mountainous Black Hills as a tribute to the culture and heritage of the Native American Indians. Named after the late Oglala Lakota war hero, the project has been in the works since 1948 when Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear commissioned sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski to create the monument.

Today, a team of dedicated men work daily to blast away the rock and carve the mountain into a man. The finished sculpture will stand at 641 feet long by 563





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feet high and be in the form of man upon a horse, pointing out towards the Black Hills in representation of Crazy Horse's proclamation, "my lands are where my dead lie buried."

Pierson was approached by Brew Creative Company in Minneapolis to document the story of the team of workers sculpting the mountain. The documentary was a project for the Red Wing Shoe Company, who donates work boots to the team of workers on the mountain.

Before "Crazy Horse," Pierson directed, shot, and edited six videos for the Red Wing Shoe Company, all which offered intimate looks into the company and its employees.

"Crazy Horse" was going to be a little different. Rather than focus on the Red Wing Shoe Company and their employees, Red Wing wanted to profile the Crazy Horse workers and capture the dedication they have for their craftsmanship and the project, as well as capture the essence of teamwork which surrounds them. It was an opportunity for Red Wing Shoes to tell a story about true American workers, their lives, and their project.

"I was given a lot of freedom to put together a story. I was trusted to not discredit who they [the Crazy Horse team] were," Pierson says.

Dan Hundley, executive producer and co-founder of Token Media studio in Minneapolis, worked with Pierson on the filming of the "Crazy Horse" project.



"Dan and I got to see and experience things no one ever will and we get to tell that story. How awesome is that," Pierson says with a smile. Their guide allowed Pierson and Hundley into many areas closed off to the public. "We were scaling cliffs with our gear to get shots...I think I'm the first person to dolly off the top of a cliff at Crazy Horse," he comments with a laugh.



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The team of workers who are actually on the mountain, carving and blasting the rock, consists of five men who are there every day. “These are salt of the earth guys. They’re a team. They all know how to do everything,” Pierson says with a tone of respect while recalling the workers. “They’re up there scaling and blowing up mountains every single day working on something they believe in. We felt proud to represent that kind of honesty [in the film].”

Pierson and Brew Creative Company were very interested in getting into conversations with the workers and pulling more personal emotions out of those on film. “We didn’t want the automatic, documentary answers. We wanted to talk to them and hear their stories.” Pierson says he was surprised to learn from the workers that very few other documentary crews really dug deep into the more emotional core of those who are sculpting the monument.

“It’s a truly undiscovered story,” he says about the Crazy Horse monument. “And we wanted it [the film] to feel sincere. There’s a whole lot of pride in these guys and it was easy to capture it once you got them talking.”

When asked what he wants to accomplish with the “Crazy Horse” film, Pierson says, “I want people to visit the monument and donate. I think it’s pretty noble what they are doing and we aimed for it to be real; no misconceptions.”

If you are interested in the Crazy Horse monument, visit the project’s website at [www.crazyhorsememorial.org](http://www.crazyhorsememorial.org) to learn more. To watch the Red Wing Shoes film “Crazy Horse,” visit the Red Wing Shoes video page at [www.redwingshoes.com/red-wing-video-series](http://www.redwingshoes.com/red-wing-video-series) to view the film.