

Film Review: Cindy Meehl's 'Buck' Celebrates a Well-Lived Life

Submitted by [mattmoviemann](#) [1] on June 24, 2011 - 6:55am

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CHICAGO – Every once in a while, a life is profoundly enriched by the example set by another. For several animal lovers throughout the country, Buck Brannaman has served as an inspiration. His philosophical approach toward working with horses holds countless truths that can be applied to all aspects of life, and they are woven into the very fabric of Cindy Meehl's wonderful documentary, "Buck."



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

There's something rather refreshing about a documentary that doesn't try to wow viewers with flashy visuals and structural audacity. Meehl had attended a few of the many annual clinics held by Brannaman throughout the country, and was driven purely by her passion for the material to make this film. Her lack of filmmaking experience ended up being an asset to the picture, since it's devoid of the manipulative formula and manufactured sentiment that mars so many would-be feel-good docs.



[Read Matt Fagerholm's full review of "Buck" in our reviews section.](#) [12]

Meehl's film becomes an extension of Brannaman just as his horses become an extension of him. "Buck" is stripped-down and straightforward much like its human subject, whose clarity of mind was molded during a childhood fraught with hardship. His story deserved the observant eye and ear of a budding artist like Meehl, who trusted that it had the integrity and depth to be told as a feature lacking any semblance of excessive style. Her efforts paid off at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, where the film received a rapturous response and went on to garner the U.S. Documentary Audience Award. Yet this is the sort of accessible indie gem that could easily connect with a large mainstream audience in America. If marketed correctly, "Buck" has a solid shot at becoming one of the summer's sleeper hits, and I frankly can't think of any film more deserving of such success. Any time the film threatens to canonize its beloved subject, "Buck" is instantly grounded by Brannaman himself. He's the sort of humble, homespun gentleman who repels canonization of any kind, and his warmth is truly infectious. I spent fifteen minutes interviewing him over the phone, and by the end of the conversation, I felt like I was spending time with an old friend. By the end of "Buck," moviegoers might feel the same way.

'Buck' features Buck Brannaman. It was directed by Cindy Meehl. It opened June 24 at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema. It is rated PG.



[Continue reading for Matt Fagerholm's full "Buck" review.](#) [12]



Buck Brannaman communicates with horses in Cindy Meehl's documentary, Buck.
Photo credit: IFC Films

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