

## Local filmmaker pays homage to 8 Mile, talks with prisoners

BY TERRY LAWSON  
Free Press Movie Critic

**G**ary Glaser's new documentary, "Borderline: The Story of 8 Mile Road," gives credit to a couple of credentialed academics, American Studies department director Jerry Herron and communications professor Ronald Stephens, both of Wayne State, who appear on camera to explain 8 Mile's historical and cultural significance.

From them, we learn a lot, including the fact that long before 8 Mile was designated the unofficial dividing line between the city of Detroit and the northern suburbs, it served as an official surveying line of the Midwestern empire. Today, we are told, 8 Mile functions as a geographical confirmation of Detroit's racial and class divisions: Royal Oak's Main Street is

trendy coffee bars; 8 Mile is sleazy topless bars.

Which, if we are honest, is what makes 8 Mile more interesting than, say, the George Washington Bridge, and it's what makes "Borderline" the movie so much fun. As seriously intended as Glaser's movie might be, it's best when he is riffing on the oddballs and outcasts who walk and cruise 8 Mile and serve as ambassadors of its uniquely urban ambiance.

Some of these, of course, are sadder than they are sardonic, like the homeless guy who lives with his partner in a tent in a wooded area off 8 Mile and who squeaks by on the tips he makes from squeegee windshield washes. Dispelling the myth that stop-light wipers can make \$100 per day, he

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### 'Borderline'

★★★  
out of 4 stars

Unrated; vulgar language.

### 'Forgotten Voices'

★★★  
out of 4 stars

Unrated; vulgar language.  
7 p.m. tonight,  
DeRoy Auditorium, Wayne  
State University campus. A  
discussion with the  
filmmakers follows the  
screening.

## Film pays homage to history of 8 Mile

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points out he has does as many freebies as he gets paying jobs: "It's always 'All's I got is a \$20,'" he laments.

Less pitiable is the guy who turns roadside pebbles into street art attractions, and the inevitable strippers, whom Glaser has ingeniously integrated into a billboard touting their wares illuminated in the night sky, the billboard can barely contain the red and fleshy lips that tell us yet again that removing one's clothes for lonely men is actually a public service. We also

visit with a community group who wants to close down the strip clubs, not because they are offended by what goes on inside them, but for the impact they have on their neighborhoods.

If "Borderline" — which uses the anthem of the same name by Detroit's rock-rads the MC5 as its theme — is not completely committed to its sociology, it is obviously committed to 8 Mile, which more than makes up the difference.

An earlier, and more traditional, documentary by Glaser, titled "Forgotten Voices," will be screened with

"Borderline." It looks at the participants in a creative expression program at Western Wayne Correctional Facility (the former Detroit House of Corrections) called ArtGrowth. It also listens as the prisoners talk candidly (well, some of them) of the experiences that earned them their prison stays and about how the program has helped them deal with their pasts and their present circumstances.

Those who think rehabilitation is an outmoded concept might not have their minds changed, but they will have their eyes opened.