

# VARIANCE FILMS

presents



**RELEASE DATE:** September 16, 2011 (NYC), September 23, 2011 (LA)

**RUNNING TIME/FORMAT:** 89 minutes / Digital Formats / Dolby Digital / English

**RATING:** Not rated – appropriate for 16 and up, contains stunning amounts of profanity/"dirty music" of a harmless, though sexual, nature (as will this press kit, so be duly informed).

**DISTRIBUTOR CONTACT:**

Dylan Marchetti, Variance Films: [info@variancefilms.com](mailto:info@variancefilms.com) / 212-537-6769

**PRESS CONTACT (NY):**

Emma Griffiths, EG-PR: [emma@eg-pr.com](mailto:emma@eg-pr.com) / 917-438-5074

**PRESS CONTACT (LA):**

Sylvia Desrochers, Big Time PR: [sylvia@bigtimetoday.com](mailto:sylvia@bigtimetoday.com), 424-208-3496

**OFFICIAL WEBSITE:** [www.blowflyfilm.com](http://www.blowflyfilm.com)

**STILLS AND PRESS NOTES AVAILABLE AT:** [www.variancefilms.com/blowflypress](http://www.variancefilms.com/blowflypress)

## **SYNOPSIS (LONG)**

Miami musician Clarence Reid could be your cranky grandfather... until he puts on his gold-spangled superhero costume and starts singing some of the raunchiest tunes you've ever heard in your life. Having changed the game in 1965 by recording what may well be the world's first rap song ("Rap Dirty aka Blowfly's Rapp"), Clarence has shocked and grooved audiences for over forty years with Blowfly's hilarious and provocative hard-core songs and stage antics.

But before his X-rated career began, Clarence was a major force in the renowned Miami soul scene of the 1960s and '70s; writing Top-10 songs for some of the greatest R&B acts, including Betty Wright, Sam & Dave, Gwen McCrae and KC and the Sunshine Band. His songs have been sampled dozens of times by acts such as Ice Cube, Wu Tang Clan, and Beyonce- but having sold his royalties for virtually nothing, he's seen no income from any of it. So he continues to take his show on the road, playing small clubs and questionable bookings in front of hard-core bands all over the world.

An intimate and revealing portrait shot over two years, *The Weird World of Blowfly* examines Clarence's personal and professional contradictions, explores his legacy and celebrates his musical and cultural significance as a rap and soul music legend, and paints a picture of an unheralded, complicated, and stunningly profane man that is as touching as it is obscene.

## **SYNOPSIS (SHORT)**

72-year-old Clarence Reid could be your cranky grandfather- until he puts on his gold-spangled superhero costume and becomes his alter ego, "Blowfly"... and starts singing some of the raunchiest tunes you've ever heard in your life.

Reid began his career as a lynchpin of the esteemed Miami soul scene, where he wrote Top-10 songs for Betty Wright, Gwen McCrae, and KC & The Sunshine Band. But his insanely profane recordings as "Blowfly" have shocked audiences for over forty-five years, and include what may well be the world's first rap song, recorded in 1965. You may not know Blowfly just yet- but this loving, yet unflinching, film will fix that.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I bought my first Blowfly album in high school and, like most other Blowfly rookies, I was attracted to the weird and crazy song titles. Little did I know at the time that Blowfly was really Clarence Reid, the man behind Betty Wright and KC & The Sunshine Band, the inventor of the “Miami Sound”, and author of numerous R&B hit songs.

In the summer of 2007 I was going through my small remaining collection of records and came across that first album, *Blowfly's Party*. I couldn't listen to it – I haven't owned a record player in years – so I searched for Blowfly on the internet and found out he was still alive, still recording and still touring the world. A few emails and phone calls later and I was on a plane to Germany to ride along with Blowfly on his latest concert tour.

The more I learned about Clarence and Blowfly, the more I was compelled to tell his story. I thought then, and still do now, that it was a tragedy that this influential and important man was largely unheard of and that he had little to show for his lifetime of work. It didn't hurt that he was also funny, charming, unique, and decidedly weird. The more I shot with Clarence, the more I knew how compelling the film would be, and how necessary it was (and is!) to show his complete story to the world.

Clarence shows us, through Blowfly, that it's okay to embrace our dirty side. He demonstrates how powerful it is to be who we want to be and not to compromise ourselves in the face of adversity or failure.

**-Jonathan Furmanski**



## THE HISTORY OF BLOWFLY

Clarence “Blowfly” Reid was born on Valentine's Day in 1939. As a child, while working in the cotton fields of Georgia, Clarence would exact revenge over his white bosses by singing dirty parodies of their favorite songs – “I’m Walking the Floor Over You” became “I’m Jerking My Dick Over You”. To his surprise, the bosses loved his X-rated spoofs, and when Clarence’s grandmother heard what he was doing she exclaimed, "You're a disgrace to the human race, and no better than a Blowfly!" And so a legend was born.

When Clarence was 13 he followed his mother to Miami. After a few years, Clarence began singing at local record "hops", showcases for young talent in the burgeoning Southern soul music scene. There he met many of the people he would work with throughout his career, including Willie Clarke, his future producing and songwriting partner, and Steve Alaimo, who would bring Clarence to recording icon Henry Stone.

A young music lover and entrepreneur, Henry Stone started his career in the 1950s selling soul and R&B records from the back of his car. The business grew and soon he was distributing records for Atlantic, Motown and Stax in the South. He used his success and clout to start several labels, including powerhouse TK Records.

Clarence started working at TK in the warehouse, stacking records in exchange for studio time at night. He had some modest success with his first solo record, *Dancin' With Nobody But You Babe*, but his first hit came with “Girls Can’t Do What the Guys Do”, written and produced with Willie Clarke for Betty Wright after Clarence discovered her singing outside his window. Three years later they hit it big with Betty’s “Clean Up Woman”, again written and produced by Clarence and Willie Clarke. The song went to #6 on the Billboard charts and sold over a million copies.

Over the next few years, Clarence would continue to strike gold, penning the first hit for KC & the Sunshine Band, “Sound Your Funky Horn”, and his biggest record as a songwriter, the sexy and soulful “Rockin’ Chair”, performed by Gwen McCrae. With these and other Southern soul acts, Clarence created and defined the “Miami Sound”, a fusion of soul and funk with Caribbean arrangements, and a presage of the disco revolution.

While Clarence Reid was cranking out great soul and R&B tracks, Blowfly was just beginning to emerge from behind the scenes. While working in the studio, Clarence would entertain people between takes with bawdy versions of “Sittin’ On the Dock of the Bay” (“Shittin’ Off the Dock of the Bay”), “Soul Man” (“Hole Man”) and “Rain Drops Keep Falling on My Head” (“My Baby Keeps Farting in My Face”).

The first Blowfly album, *The Weird World of Blowfly*, was released in 1971 on the Weird World label, a division of TK created to protect everyone’s “clean” careers. The record was a big hit but, because of obscenity laws and fears of copyright lawsuits, it had to be sold under the table. Indeed, several record store employees were prosecuted for selling Blowfly records, and, in 1976, Blowfly was sued by then-president of ASCAP, Stanley Adams, for Blowfly’s parody of “What a Diff’rence a Day Made” as “What a Difference a Lay Makes”. This marked a change in Blowfly’s career as he shifted from parodying other people’s work to writing original X-rated material. (Eventually, in the early ‘90s, parody laws were changed – ironically involving the Blowfly-influenced 2 Live Crew – and all Blowfly records were openly sold around the country.)

In 1978, Blowfly released *Blowfly’s Party*, a collection of dirty dance tunes including “Blowfly’s Rapp”

[sic], the epic story of Blowfly as a trucker, driving coast to coast and battling the KKK in a redneck bar, a song that was originally recorded in 1965 with the title “Rap Dirty” and released on a small label in Germany (American distributors wouldn’t touch it). While most journalists and historians put the seeds of hip-hop in the mid- to late-1970s, Blowfly by then had been rapping for more than ten years. Today, neither Clarence nor Blowfly is recognized for their contributions to rap music.

TK Records, heavily identified with the disco craze, went out of business in the early ‘80s. Clarence spent several years without recording anything before releasing a string of Blowfly records with Miami’s Pandisc label, but he never came near the level of success he reached with TK. He would also never release another album of clean material as a performer, songwriter, or producer. And despite recording and touring with some of the hottest acts in the 1990s, including the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Fishbone and the Pixies, Clarence Reid’s career foundered.

In 2003, Tom Bowker, a freelance music journalist and former concert promoter, interviewed Clarence for the Miami New Times. As their conversations developed, Tom asked Clarence if he wanted to start a new band and began acting as Clarence’s manager. Tom worked to rejuvenate Blowfly’s career by arranging several international tours and releasing two albums with Jello Biafra’s Alternative Tentacles record label. Besides managing Clarence’s career, Tom also played drums in the band.

Today, with almost a thousand songwriting credits to his name, Clarence has newfound popularity with music producers and fans everywhere. His songs have been used in numerous TV shows and movies, and have been sampled by dozens of artists, including Jurassic 5, the Wu-Tang Clan, DJ Quik and Beyoncé. Tragically, Clarence signed away his writer’s royalties and doesn’t see any income from his giant body of work. Despite all this, Clarence continues to write new music – he recently released the first single under his own name in more than 25 years – and tour the world, struggling for the success and recognition he so rightfully deserves as a hip-hop pioneer and music legend.



## **KEY CAST AND CREW**

**Produced and Directed by**  
Jonathan Furmanski

**Edited by**  
Cy Christiansen

**Location Sound Recording by**  
Jonathan Furmanski  
Ben Logan  
Mike Lawson

**Post Production Services by**  
IKA Collective

**Supervising Sound Editor/Re-recording Mixer**  
Eric Offin Tandem Sound

**Sound Editor**  
Jeff Formosa

**Titles by**  
Interspectacular

**Blowfly Logo Designed by**  
Chuck Loose

**Music Supervisor**  
Doug Bernheim

### **FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH:**

Clarence Reid  
Tom Bowker  
Otto Van Schirach  
Die Ärzte

*And*

Ice-T • Chuck D • Bo Crane • Norwood Fisher • Bob Perry • Jello Biafra • Jaime Lowe  
Steve Alaimo • Jimmy Maslon • Dorothy Martin • Patricia Johnson • Joe Galdo  
Rodrigo González • Bela B. • Clarence Reid, Jr. • Tracy Reid

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## **CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

### **JONATHAN FURMANSKI – Producer/Director**

Jonathan Furmanski has been working in the film and television industries for over 15 years since graduating from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with a BFA in Film Production in 1993. He is a member of IATSE's Local 600 camera union and has worked as a Director of Photography on numerous independent films, episodic television shows, commercials, and music videos. Since 2002 he has focused on shooting documentary films, including *loudQUIETloud: a film about The Pixies*, *Arctic Son*, *I Am An Animal: The Story of Ingrid Newkirk and PETA*, and *Unstrung. The Weird World of Blowfly* is his directorial debut.

### **CY CHRISTIANSEN – Editor**

Cy Christiansen graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 1998 and immediately began working in post-production on projects with Michael Moore and Jay-Z. Since 2006 he has edited various projects for PBS, MTV, and @radical.media, including *In the Heights*, *Britney Spears – For the Record*, and *Two Roads to the Taupo 1000*.

