

TIGER KING: Part 1. What gets you hot?

SHOW NOTES

- Many articles have pointed out, Tiger King does not function like a typical documentary. Not everything in there is true.
- Tiger King has been rewritten like a work of dramatic storytelling to make you fall in love with a character who you probably should be reviling.
- The success of Tiger King has actually little to do with the questionable ethical decisions of its directors. Rather, it has to do with certain foundational ideas of screenwriting.
- The reason ethically minded people enjoyed Tiger King so much was not because of the distortion of facts. It's because of the genre experience.
- At the start of the COVID-19 crisis, all of America suddenly had the same genre craving: "I need to escape from this horrible apocalypse for awhile." And the wild escapism of *Tiger King* met that need.
- The person who wants the "wild escapism" feeling is completely different from the person who wants the "this needs to change" feeling. (Even when they're the same person on a different day!)
- If you deliver the "wild escapism" feeling your "wild escapism" audience came for, they will happily accept your "this needs to change" message. And if you deliver the "this needs to change" message that your "this needs to change" audience came for, they will happily accept your "wild escapism."
- If you don't deliver the feeling the audience came for, they will eat you alive.
- The "this needs to change" audience finished the documentary ready to kill. And the "wild escapism" audience finished the documentary ready to personally liberate Joe Exotic from prison.
- It was not necessary for Tiger King to take the creative leaps it did with the truth. As you can see as you get a little deeper into the documentary and the conservation issues and horrible treatment of these tigers start to emerge, they fit in effortlessly.
- Never write the genre you think others are looking for. Times are always changing faster than you can write. Write the genre that matters to you. Then wait for society to catch up.

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- To find your genre, ask yourself, “What’s the feeling that connects me to this script that I’m writing.”
- Then keep generating that feeling, checking in every 7 pages or so to make sure you’re still delivering it.
- You can later shape that genre experience for your audience so that they can have the same experience watching that you had creating it.
- At a different time, a documentary like Tiger King might not have had the same commercial success. But it still would have had the same structural success.
- *Next episode: Tiger King Part 2. Why did audiences fall in love with this unlikely, unlikeable character, and how, regardless of its ethical flaws, was the structure of the miniseries designed to make you do that.*